Technical Tips for Windows 95
Last-Minute Information

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What Is This Document?
This document is intended to be a source of technical information and tips to help you get your Windows 95-based Maxis product running.

This document is NOT a replacement for the documentation for Windows 95, for you computer, or for your video or sound cards. You should use those other docs as your primary source of information and as the final authority on how Windows 95, your computer or your cards work.

Warning!

Some of the information in this document is very technical. Read it very carefully before you do anything to your computer. If you don't understand something, don't do it. It is possible to cause bigger problems than you're trying to solve if you aren't experienced--and careful.

With that in mind, read on!

Some Common Questions and Answers

What Are System Conflicts and What Can I Do About Them?
Conflicts are rare but they do occur. If you are using other programs in Windows 95 that load on startup, you may want to disable those programs to prevent potential conflicts and free up additional memory and system resources. The most common potential conflicts come from screen savers. If you are using a screen saver other than the default Windows 95 screen saver, you may wish to disable it to prevent conflicts. Some virus protection programs may also cause conflicts. If you experience trouble running a Maxis product for Windows 95, try disabling virus protection programs.

How do I disable or check open applications?
Your Taskbar will whow you which applications are currently open and running. A clean (empty) Taskbar is the best way to run your Maxis program. To turn off an application using your Taskbar, click on the Taskbar item with your *right* mouse button, and select **Close** from the menu.

How can I free up memory?
One of the benefits of Windows 95, is that it manages memory on it's own so you don't have to free up memory. If you have 8 MB (megabytes) of RAM memory physically installed in your system, then Windows 95 will always keep that number at 8 MB, regardless of how many programs you turn on. There are some things, however, that you should know about Windows 95 memory management...

Windows 95 relies on *virtual memory* to keep your memory at a specific amount while running applications. When you start an application, Windows 95 borrows a portion of hard-drive space as needed to emulate RAM in order to keep your free memory constant. This means that the more applications you open, the more hard-drive space Windows 95 will require. If your hard-drive is close to full with very little space free, then Windows 95 can't borrow any space for RAM, and you'll likely receive an error telling you there's not enough memory, or program operation will become very slow.

How can I remove the Taskbar?
If the Taskbar interferes with the normal operation of the program, or if you want it removed for aesthetic reasons, you can hide the Taskbar out of view.

1. Click on the **Start** button.
2. Select **Settings** from the menu.
3. Select **Taskbar** from the next menu.
4. Click the **Always on top** option *off,* and the **Auto hide** option *on*.
5. Click on the **OK** button to accept the changes.

To retrieve your taskbar, you must minimize or close your open application and return to the desktop. Move your mouse cursor to where your Taskbar used to be, and your Taskbar will now show itself. To undo the changes, follow the above procedure and reverse the settings in Step 4.

How can I set my computer for 256 colors?
Although this program will run in any resolution and color depth, best performance is achieved when running in 256 colors. To change or verify the color depth at which Windows 95 is running, access your Display control panel.

1. Click on the **Start** button.
2. Select **Settings** from the menu.
3. Select **Control Panel** from the next menu.
4. Double-click on the **Display** control panel.
5. Click on the **Settings** tab at the top of the window.

Your color depth is shown in the middle of the window, on the left side. If the colors are not set to **256**, then you may wish to click on the arrow next to the color selection and change the color depth to 256 colors. When done, click on the **OK** button, restart your computer when prompted. The computer must restart in order for new Display changes to take place. You will then restart in 256 color mode.

Why am I not hearing any sound?
Your Maxis program comes complete with music and sound effects. You'll only hear sound if you have a sound card installed in your computer. If you know you have a sound card installed, but you still don't hear any music or sound effects, try the following:

»»» If your sound speakers require power, make sure you've installed fresh batteries or have the power adapter plugged in properly.

»»» If you're not hearing any sound with other applications either, chances are the problem isn't specific to your Maxis program. Follow the *"How can I test my sound system?"* instructions below for further assistance.

I'm hearing sound, but why is the music 'choppy' or pausing?
Running your Maxis program directly from the CD-ROM may cause your computer to pause occasionally while it is performing other internal tasks. CD-ROM drives operate much slower than your hard-drive. Sound (as well as video and speed) performance will improve by installing your Maxis program to the hard-drive, if that option is available.

There are many different sound cards on the market today, and sound performance will vary from manufacturer to manufacturer.

How can I test my sound system?
Most Maxis programs utilize music (MIDI) and sound effects (Wave samples) for your enjoyment. If music or sound effects are not playing cleanly, or if you hear no sound at all, it is best to make sure your sound system is properly running on your computer.

»»» First, check to see if your problem is solved by reading "*Why am I not hearing any sound?"* and *"I'm hearing sound, but why is the music 'choppy' or pausing?"* above.

»»» Windows 95 uses a sound mixer control panel to set the volume of different sound devices, like music and Wave samples. Make sure that your volume levels are turned on and turned up.

1. Click on the **Start** button.
2. Select **Programs** from the menu.
3. Select **Accessories** and then **Multimedia** from the next menus.
4. Select **Volume Control** from the Multimedia menu.

This will display your sound mixer control panel. Make sure all volume controls are about 3/4 of *maximum*, and that none of the **Mute** boxes are selected. Close the Volume Control control panel when done.

Caution: *Be aware that some speakers are amplified, and the sound may be much louder than anticipated. You may have to fine-tune the volume levels of your speakers (if applicable) or the sound mixer control panel to suit your taste.*

»»» Make sure your sound card's software is properly installed. Follow the sound card manufacturer's instructions to verify proper installation of the sound drivers in Windows 95.

»»» You can verify the playback of MIDI and Wave sounds on your computer, using the Windows 95 Media Player utility. This will help determine if your computer is having a global problem playing sound, or if it's only with your Maxis product. If the problem is global, affecting all applications, then contact your computer vendor or sound card manufacturer.

1. Click on the **Start** button.
2. Select **Programs** from the menu.
3. Select **Accessories** and then **Multimedia** from the next menus.
4. Select **Media Player** from the Multimedia menu.
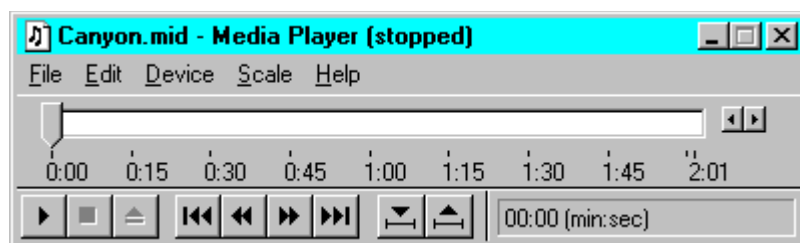
Play a sample MIDI file to see if MIDI music is playing properly on your system.

1. Make sure Media Player is open.
2. Click on **Device** in the menu bar and select **MIDI Sequencer**.
3. Scroll to the end of the folders of the Open window, and double-click on the music file **Canyon.mid**. This will load the sample CANYON.MID MIDI file into Media Player.
4. Click on the "play" button (the **triangle** button on the bottom-left) to start playing CANYON.MID. You should see the position bar scrolling along as music plays through your

speakers. Pressing the "stop" button (the **square** button next to the "play" button) will stop playing the file.

If you hear music playing through your speakers, then MIDI is working on your system and the problem is likely specific to the Maxis program which you are running.

» To verify that your system is playing Wave samples properly, follow the same procedure for MIDI music above, substituting **Sound** instead of *MIDI Sequencer* from the **Device** menu, and loading **Chimes.wav** instead of *Canyon.mid* from the Open box.

Again, if you hear the sound through your speakers, then the problem is most likely specific to your Maxis program.

Media Player works fine, but I'm still not getting sound!
If you hear music and sound playing properly through your speakers while running Media Player, but do not hear any sound from your Maxis program, then make sure sound is turned *on* in the program (usually found in a **Sound** or **Options** menu.)

If you still don't have music or sound effects, then the Maxis program may not be using MIDI or Wave samples, or still yet another issue to be addressed. First, check the **Read-Me** file (icon in the Goodies folder) for additional information. Or refer to the Quick Start Guide inside the box or CD-ROM jewel case of your Maxis product for more information about your problem or how to contact Maxis Customer Support for technical assistance.

I'm still stuck! What do I do?
If this document does not answer your question, and you've tried solving your problem through your vendor or manufacturer **first**, then you may want to contact Maxis Customer Support for technical assistance with your Maxis program.

How to Reach Maxis Customer Support
Don't worry! We're here to help!!
You may shudder and cringe at the thought of having to take such drastic measures to run our software. We want every computer to run our software straight out of the box, but occasionally you may need a hand installing a program or determining why your computer may be acting funny. We're here to help. The following are some tips to help make your experience with us more efficient and less time-consuming. Most problems can be solved in 5 minutes or less by phone, but you may wish to reach us by FAX, email, or letter. Refer to your Maxis Maxims card inside your product's box for numbers and addresses.

What To Do Before You Call Customer Support
Before you call Customer Support, please be sure that you have read this file and any other appropriate material first. When you are at your wit's end, scratching your head and grumbling, read on to find out what to have ready when you call, so that we can get you up and running as quickly as possible.

Note: Please make sure that your computer system meets or exceeds the requirements defined on the system label. The system label is located in the lower-left portion on the front of the box or on the spine of the box. If your computer doesn't meet these requirements, then there's nothing Maxis Customer Support can do for you. Sorry.

What You Should Have With You When You Call
1. Have information about your computer at hand. Most dealers give you a packing list or sheet with all the goodies under the hood of your computer. Also, there are some special configuration files installed on your system that tell us how your computer is set up. You can easily print all of these files by typing MSD [ENTER] at the C:\ prompt. This will run the Microsoft Diagnostics program which will allow you to print out a report of your system. We're looking for files called WIN.INI, SYSTEM.INI, CONFIG.SYS, and AUTOEXEC.BAT. (Note: Some of these files may not be present on your system.) If you can't print out your system files (you don't have a printer), it isn't the end of the world, *as long as you are at your computer when you call!*

2. If you are getting error messages or General Protection Faults (GPFs), write down *exactly what the error message says*. That will help us diagnose the problem.

3. Write down all of the steps you have taken to solve the problem. If we know what you've already done, we may be able to get you running faster.

4. Have your program disks/CD-ROM, your manual, and your Quick-Start Guide available and within easy reach.

Where You Should Be When You Call
Please, please call us *from your computer!* We need to have you at your computer to explore your system to identify what is causing your problem.

Let's Do the Numbers!
There are a number of different options that you can use to contact Customer Support. The best way to reach us is by e-mail, FAX, or telephone. If you decide that you would like to call and hear a friendly voice, you'll find the number for Customer Support listed on the Maxis Maxims sheet, included in the box your program came in. There's lots of other useful info there, so keep your Maxis Maxims somewhere handy.

We have established an automated Support service in addition to our live Support team. Automated Support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By calling our Customer Support technical line, you may select automated Support in lieu of live assistance. Calling during non-Support hours will automatically prompt you for automated Support. Automated Support allows us to help you find a solution quicker, and helps to reduce on-line waiting time.

We are present on all of the major on-line services and the Internet if you subscribe to any of these services. If you don't currently subscribe, many on-line services will give you a 30-day trial membership. Refer to the Maxis Maxims for more information.

If you have a modem, on-line support is often a better option for you. We maintain a BBS that is free-of-charge (excluding long distance charges from your phone company) to all registered users of Maxis products. The BBS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We support up to 14.4k bps and currently have four nodes. The settings are 8-N-1. You can also find the latest FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions), hints and tips from other users and other good stuff.

Refer to your Maxis Maxims card inside your product's box for specific addresses and numbers.

Fill in That Card!
Make sure you register your software! We've included a handy little postcard for you to send in. This will entitle you to FREE Customer Support for the life of the product. The product life ends when a new version is released or the product is discontinued.

As if our pre-paid, short form, non-abusive registration card wasn't easy enough, our newest Maxis products have *Electronic Registration*. If your computer has a modem, you can send in your registration directly from your computer to ours -- toll free. At the end of installation, some of our Maxis products will give you the option of registering electronically. Simply follow the instructions, and you never have to pick up a pen. (And you thought home shopping was a kick!) If you don't have a modem, don't worry; just drop your registration card in the mail.

Introducing Maxis Customer Support...

And now what you've all been waiting for. Here's a little bit about the support staff: It just wouldn't be fair to give you all of this information without mentioning a little bit about the guys in Customer Support. No, they didn't make or write the code and no, they didn't write the manual, but they do provide support for the product which far outlasts jelly doughnuts (and other comestibles).

Roger "Our Fearless Leader"Johnsen
Aaron "Dr Emu" Shephard
Brian "Here's the latest version" Smith
Jeff "http://www.emf.net/~quam" Feil
Tracy "Life is a collective theory" Leighton
Nolan "No, I don't play bass" Erck
Ken "No, that's a *flail*" Mace
Rick "Babar" Acquistapace
Leo "He's there for ya!" Kunkle II
Lisa "You have questions, Lisa has answers" Laverty
Shannon "She makes great popcorn" Dawes
Charlie "Alrighty then!" Dragics

Special thanks to the Pirate Squid Club and the Maxis Llama.

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