1000 Greatest Windows XP Tips

148-page book! Essential advice compiled from the only official Windows XP magazine...

◆ 25 instant troubleshooting solutions
◆ 60 suggestions for better digital photos
◆ 250 expert hints to boost Windows XP
◆ 300 tips for Microsoft Office XP
◆ And 450 more PC tricks inside!

PLUS! OVER 50 ESSENTIAL KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

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Windows xp

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Windows XP: The Official Magazine presents... 1000 Greatest Windows XP Tips

Microsoft Windows xp

Windows XP: The Official Magazine presents...

1000 Greatest Windows XP Tips

Over 1000 of the most useful tips for Windows XP compiled and collected in one handy pocket guide

Microsoft

start   Advice and hints | Tricks and tips | Expert solutions | Official guides | 1000 tips!

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Media with passion

Welcome

This is the ultimate tips book, compiled from a year's worth of expert advice...

Too bold a claim perhaps? With 1,000 of the greatest Windows XP hints and tricks, it's entirely possible when you consider the source. Microsoft Windows XP: The Official Magazine is the fastest growing PC magazine in the UK and it's the only home computer magazine to be officially endorsed by Microsoft.

It's proved to be so popular since it launched at the end of 2001 that almost all our back issues are sold out already! We receive regular requests from readers keen to get their hands on previous features or articles, but the simple fact is that many of our editions from last year just aren't available any more. Since issue 16 we have been working in conjunction with Zinio (www.windowsxpmagazine.co.uk/emag.asp) to turn our magazine into a downloadable digital format, and it's possible to buy back issues of those versions from the internet. However, magazines from before then are simply unavailable.
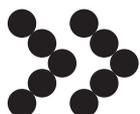
Hence this tips book, a compilation of the essential advice we've crammed into Microsoft Windows XP: The Official Magazine over the last year or so. We feel that even those readers who have been with us from the start will benefit from this volume. All the best tips have been combined into one convenient source, a miniature companion for your PC. It has been organised by category so you can pull it out of your pocket and refer to it whenever you need a quick solution.

We've enjoyed reliving some of our best moments while compiling this collection, and we'd like to think that you will get a great deal of use out of the tips we've selected. Contact us via the website below to let us know how you get on…

David Bradley
Editor

www.windowsxpmagazine.co.uk

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Getting Started

Before you buy new software, take a closer look at the many features built into Windows XP...

Windows XP is far more than just an empty platform on which to install a slew of third-party applications and multimedia programs. Take a closer look and you'll see that many powerful features and useful apps are built in, and over the next few pages you'll discover what these programs do, and how to use them more successfully. For instance, discover how to communicate instantly with your friends and colleagues with the versatile chat program Windows Messenger, including how to send faxes, text messages and video mail from it.

If you're tired of talking and want to relax with your favourite music, brush up on Windows Media Player, the powerful music and video application that's included in Windows XP. We tell you how to have a karaoke singalong with your favourite songs, how to download visual effects that dance in time to the music and how to improve music quality, along with other top tips.

If you're more productivity-minded, you can learn how to streamline and personalise Windows XP with our top ten system tools tips. Also, if you haven't got around to buying third-party applications yet, be sure to look at our tips for using word processing and drawing applications within Windows XP.

If you're in need of some time-out after all of that, improve your playtime with salient advice on how to make Windows XP games more fun, both on your own and in an online multiplayer environment.
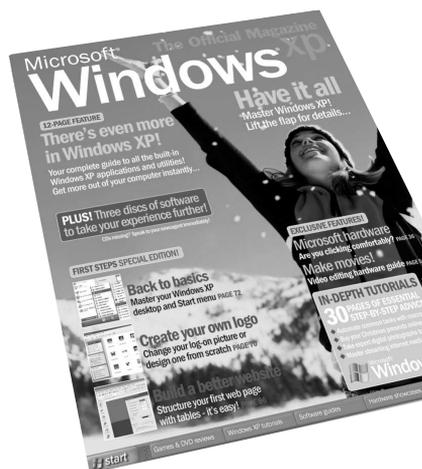
Issue 13 Christmas 2002
SUBSCRIBE +44 (0) 870 444 8475
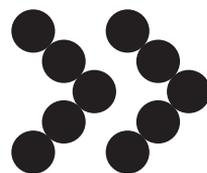
50 Getting Started tips

> In this section, we've got tips on everything from mail, music and Minesweeper to get you started.

1 Use templates
When sending a fax, use existing templates as a basis from which to create your own.

2 Faxing support
Find out how to fax a scanned document by looking at article number Q306663 on the Microsoft Support Center website.

3 Hide from view
When using Windows Messenger, click on File > My Status > Appear Offline, to have use of the program with no interruptions!

4 Send files
Use Windows Messenger to send files directly to another user. Click on Actions > Send a File or Photo.

5 Check web mail
You can check your Hotmail or MSN mail from within Windows Messenger. Just click on File > Email Inbox, and download the add-in first.

6 Share apps
You can share your open applications with your Windows Messenger contacts. To do this, simply click on Actions > Start Application Sharing.

7 Video talk
If you've got a webcam, you can put it to good use with Windows Messenger and your contacts will be able to see exactly who they are talking to.

8 Texting
Ask your contacts to set up their mobile phones with Windows Messenger and you'll be able to send them text messages from your computer.

9 Different users
You can have up to nine different users configured for MSN Explorer, each with their own personal preferences. This is a particularly handy feature when you're using a shared PC.

10 Filter web mail
Spam is a growing problem for anyone with an email account. Make use of the filters on your web mail to reduce the amount of unwanted mail.
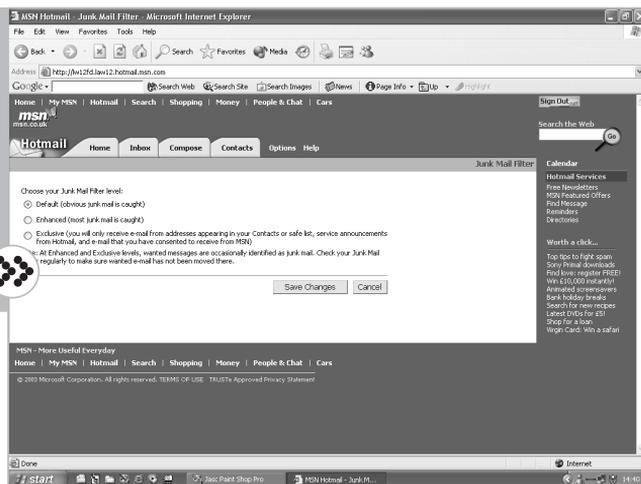
11 Edit your own sounds
You can mix, play and edit sounds with Sound Recorder. Simply click on Start > All Programs > Accessories > Entertainment > Sound Recorder.

12 Audio settings
Double-click on the speaker icon in your system tray to get quick access to all of your PC's audio settings.

13 Karaoke style
It's easy to sing along to your favourite tunes in Windows Media Player. Simply click on View > Now Playing > Lyrics, and join in with the song!

14 Moving music
See what your music actually looks like and get some great special effects by clicking on View > Visualizations, and choosing a theme from the list.

15 Shuffle tracks
Bored of listening to songs in the same old order? Click on the first round button at the top of the Windows Media Player window to shuffle CD tracks for a random playlist.

16 Get more styles
Get a more personal look when you're playing music by clicking on Tools > Download Visualizations. You'll be able to get some great styles to make your Windows Media Player look even funkier.

17 Choose quality
You can set the levels for copied music to get a good balance between the sound quality and the saved file size. Do this by clicking on Tools > Options, then select the Copy Music tab and adjust the slider to suit your preferences.

18 Smooth streams
If your streamed video and audio is jerky and erratic, you can easily improve the smoothness by increasing the Network buffering. This option is found on the Performance tab.

19 Adjust volume
There are some handy keyboard shortcuts that let you control Windows Media Player even more easily. For example, you can use the [F9] and [F10] keys to adjust the volume of your audio or video.

20 Music types
Windows Media Player features several preconfigured graphic equalisers. By adjusting these, you can get the best audio quality for your favourite type of music. Classical, pop and rock styles are featured, among many others.
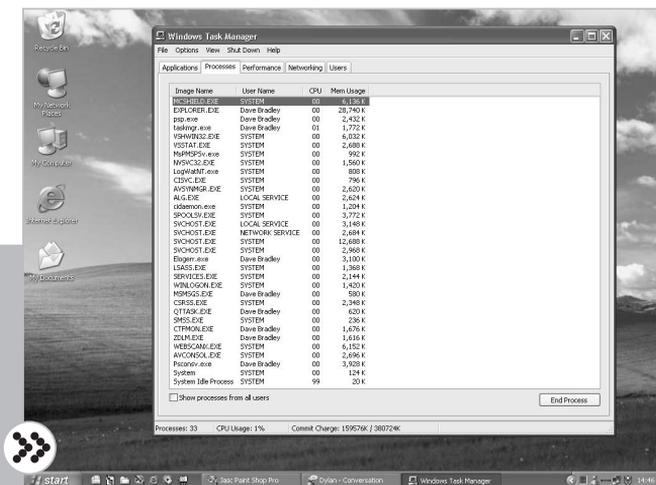
To start your music playing without using the mouse, highlight a track or playlist in Windows Media Player 9 Series and hit [CTRL] + [P].

Getting Started 50 Tips

21 Task Manager
Press [Ctrl] + [Alt] + [Del] to launch the Windows Task Manager and see details of what's running on your PC.

22 Check the spec
Click on Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > System Information, in order to get a detailed breakdown of your PC's specifications.

23 Net connection
Add a new internet connection the easy way by selecting the New Connection Wizard. This option can be found under the Communications menu.

24 Defrag regularly
Run Disk Defragmenter about once a month because this is an effective and simple way of keeping your PC running smoothly.

25 Commands
You may need to run processes from the command prompt. For quick access to this, click on Start > Run, type cmd and then press Enter.

26 Updates
Right-click on My Computer and go to Properties. From there, make sure you select the Automatic Updates tab to ensure you don't miss out on any essential updates and upgrades.

27 Add/Remove
It's easy to install new software and drivers or remove unwanted or unused items from Windows XP – just click on the Add/Remove Programs option and select the software that you'd like to add or remove from your system.

28 Icon see you
Change the picture that's shown for your individual user account by going into the User Accounts control panel. From there, you have the option to replace the image used for your account.

29 Hard drive space
It's always a good idea to keep an eye on how much hard drive space you have available on your computer, especially when installing new software. To check it, right-click on your C: drive in My Computer and go to Properties. From here, you'll be able to see how much space you have available.

30 Backup utility
There's a handy backup utility included on your Windows XP CD. To access it, go to VALUEADD\MSFT\NTBACKUP and open NTBACKUP.MSI.

On the Windows XP desktop, hit [Windows] + [F] to open the main search window, where you can search for any files you may have lost.

31 Hard sums
The Calculator is great for simple arithmetic, but it can also cope when your calculations are getting really technical. You can click on View > Scientific, from within the Calculator to get some more advanced options that should solve your trickiest sums.

32 Find an address
Find phone numbers and email addresses quickly and easily by using the Address Book. In Outlook or Outlook Express, this can be found under Accessories on the All Programs menu.

33 Offline pages
Offline browsing is a great way to get the best from the internet while avoiding connection costs. Using the Synchronize tool, found under Accessories, ensures that your offline web pages are kept completely up to date.

34 Symbols
If you need to type a specialist symbol that's not on your keyboard (for example, many keyboards don't feature the symbol for the Euro, which is essential for most business documents today), try accessing the Character Map, which is found under the System Tools menu. There's a large selection of useful characters located here.

35 Insert the date
When you're using Notepad, an extremely useful shortcut is to press F5. This will then automatically insert the current date and time into your document.

36 Small pictures
If you intend to email an image that has been created in Microsoft Paint, make sure you save the file as a JPEG because this will keep the file size to a minimum.

37 Adding captions
Don't forget that there's a handy Text tool located within Microsoft Paint. This is ideal for easily adding captions and comments to your images.

38 Launch Explorer
A very easy and fast way of launching Windows Explorer is to click on Start > Run. Then all you have to do is type 'explorer' and press Enter to get Windows Explorer up and running straight away.

39 Send a movie
Why keep your film-making talents to yourself? Any movies which you have created using Windows Movie Maker 2 can be sent to friends or business colleagues by email. To do this is incredibly simple – just click on File > Send Movie To.
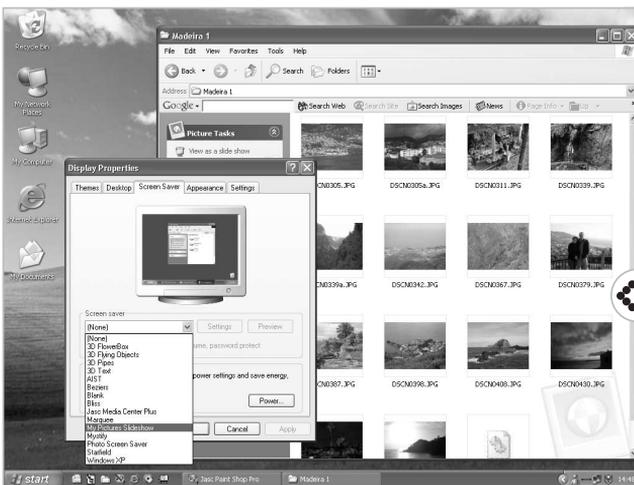
40 Image slideshow
If you save all of your images and photos in the My Pictures folder, you'll have the handy option of being able to preview them all as a slideshow.

Getting Started 50 Tips

>> Want to quickly hide the game you're playing? Simply hit [Windows] + [D] at any time to minimise every open window on your PC.

41 Reshuffle
If you waste as much time playing Solitaire as most PC users worldwide do, you'll want to customise it to suit your own particular preferences. You can start by changing the pack design that's being used – just click on Game > Deck, and you'll be able to select a new card deck.

42 Different options
By selecting Options in some of the games featured in Windows XP, you'll be able to change the game styles and the scoring options to suit your style of play.

43 Resigning
If you're in the middle of an online game, finding a new opponent will not count in the same way as resigning victory.

44 Playing again
Even if you resign in an internet game, you still have the opportunity to play the same opponent again.

45 Lost connections
Remember that if you're disconnected in the middle of a game, you won't be able to rejoin it again.

46 Same speed
Having a dial-up modem or broadband connection makes no difference to the speed of these types of game (Internet Checkers, Hearts, Spades and so on).

47 Opponent
You can't select the type of opponent for a game – this is done automatically.

48 Keyboard shortcuts
Each game has its own keyboard shortcuts. Take a look at their Help files for more information on these.

49 Internet Spades
In Internet Spades, you work as a pair with another player and together you have to try to amass more points than your opponents. It's simple but you'll soon get hooked!

50 Minesweeper
It's tricky yet addictive and you'll be glad to know that everyone's favourite old game, Minesweeper, is still available in Windows XP.
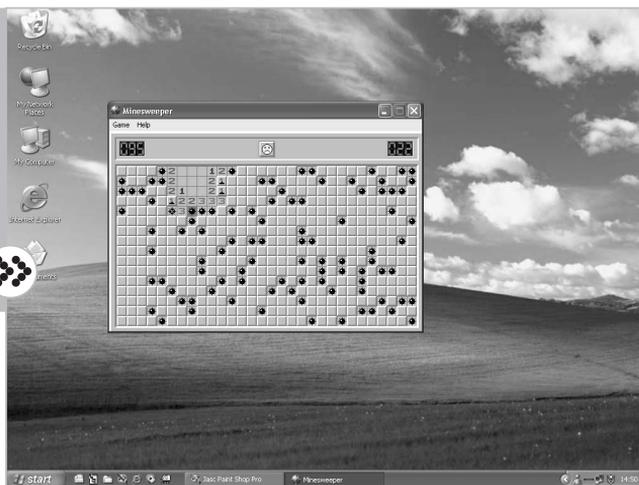
Your Notes ....

Security

:::: Safeguard your privacy and information by crash-proofing and protecting your Windows XP PC

There are two types of PC safety, and you need to ensure that your PC is well versed in both of them. The first involves hardware or system errors, which can lead to the loss of important data. Over the page, we've compiled 50 of the best tips to prevent your PC and Windows XP from going belly-up, as well as some safeguards and recovery plans in case the worst does happen.

You'll learn, among other things, how to restore your entire system to a previous, stable state, how to update Windows XP with any new software that improves its safety features, how to deal with common hardware problems, how to prevent your PC from overheating, how to clean up your hard disk to improve speed and reliability, and even how to back up your entire system so you can recover everything in the event of disaster. If all that sounds complicated, don't worry – simply by being familiar with a few major safeguards, you should easily be able to deal with most PC catastrophes.

Then there's the other type of PC safety, which is all about protecting your system from malicious outside influence. There are folk out there determined to hack into other people's PCs and steal or destroy data, not to mention the thousands of viruses released purely to cause havoc. In this section, you'll find our 18 most crucial tips for safeguarding yourself against this sort of enemy incursion, enabling you to get your PC locked up tighter than Fort Knox.

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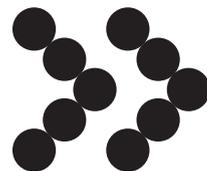
System Settings

Windows XP has a host of tools to keep your PC safe and stable. Here are some of the best

1 Get updates
Are you using automatic updates? If not, go along to windowsupdate.microsoft.com – keeping your security settings and virus checkers up to date is essential.

2 Send alerts
In 'Startup and Recovery' in the System Properties, check 'Send an administrative alert' under System failure.

3 Restore updates
If you have declined updates previously then click on 'Restore Declined Updates' in System Properties.

4 Keep your CD
Always keep your Windows XP installation CD handy as you'll be able to boot your PC from it if all else fails.

5 Use Microsoft Support
Search support.microsoft.com for help on specific error messages or faults.

6 Back up your data
Make sure you've got a backup of all your important data, just in case the worst happens – it only takes a single crash and you could lose all of your essential work. The File and Settings Transfer Wizard makes an excellent backup tool.

7 Try Safe Mode
It is often easier to remove a troublesome application by booting your computer up in Safe Mode.

8 Bin unused apps
Old, unused applications are just going to clog up your PC and slow things down. Regular housekeeping is a must to keep things running smoothly and efficiently.

9 Reallocate space
Free up the space that has been allocated by System Restore on drives that don't use Windows XP. You can then use this space to create backups.

10 System Restore
Go to the System Restore settings in System Properties and make sure you're using the maximum amount of hard drive space available to you.
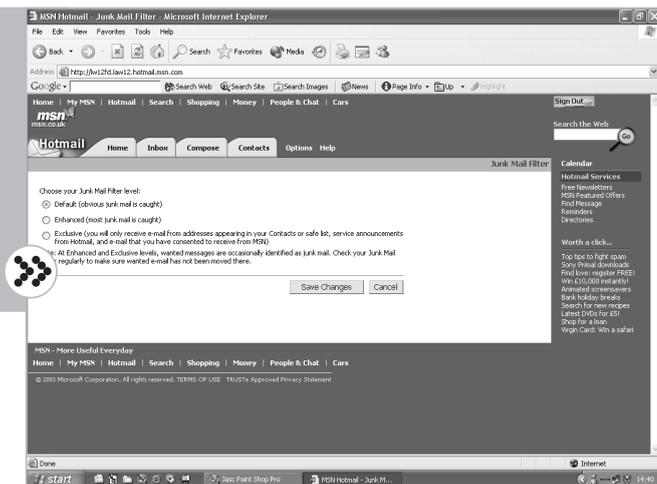
Managing Hardware

Printers, CD burners, digital cameras... These top tips will get them working happily with your PC

11 Recent drivers
Use www.driverguide.com to check for driver updates, or try your PC manufacturer's site.

12 Latest virus info
Pay a visit to www.bigfix.com for all of the latest virus information.

13 Regular upkeep
If you have a program like Norton Utilities, make sure you use it regularly to keep your system in top shape.

14 Patch problems
If an application is causing problems, check the manufacturer's website for a patch.

15 Switch slots
Problems with conflicting PCI hardware devices may be resolved by switching the slots they use on your motherboard.

16 Signed drivers
Set your Driver Signing options so that you're always alerted during a hardware installation if software hasn't passed the Windows logo testing.

17 Keep it cool
Overheating can cause your PC to crash so make sure it's not getting too hot. Take a look in your BIOS as some will give you temperature readouts.

18 The right driver
When installing video card drivers, try to use those on your card manufacturer's website, rather than generic ones.

19 Hardware Profiles
Use Hardware Profiles to disable a peripheral or component that you suspect is causing problems.

To minimize open documents, hit [Windows] + [M], then to restore them all quickly, hit [Windows] + [Shift] + [M].
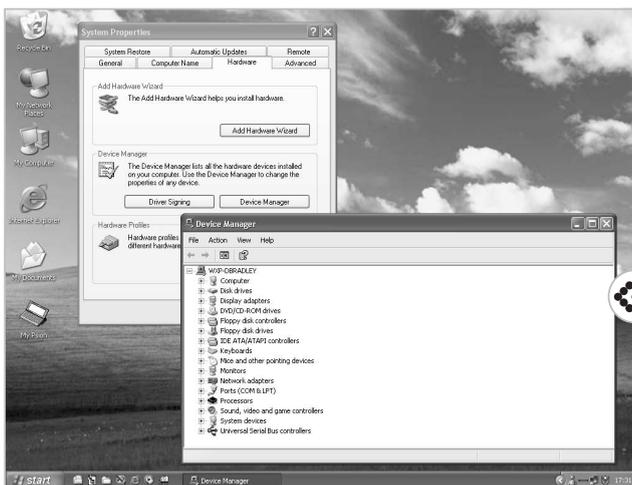
20 Device Manager
The Device Manager is incredibly useful in Windows XP. Use it to check the status of your installed hardware and to identify any problem areas.

Managing Hard Drives

Find out how to avoid crashes, and how you can recover your valuable data if the worst happens

21 Backup utility
Prepare for the worst and install the Windows XP backup utility from your installation CD. It's found in \VALUEADD\MSFT\ NTBACKUP\NTBACKUP.MSI

22 Older applications
If an older application is crashing your system, try running it in Compatibility Mode.

23 Free up RAM
On an older system, freeing up RAM can help to make things more stable.

24 Support tools
You can get some extra help with diagnosing problems by using the Windows Support Tools on your installation disc. Browse to support\tools\setup.exe to use it.

25 Read the logs
If you have a problem, the Application and System Logs in Event Viewer may explain why your system crashed.

26 Overclock with care
Exercise caution if you're overclocking essential components like your CPU and video card as this is a very risky process that can cause massive instability and even permanent damage to your setup.

27 Is it compatible?
Problems can often be caused by hardware that's not compatible with Windows XP – check your devices in case of trouble.

28 Update your BIOS
Check your motherboard or your PC manufacturer's website for a BIOS update as these may iron out recognised bugs that are causing your system's problems.

29 Floppy boot
If necessary, you can boot your PC up from the installation CD. If you need to use a floppy disk then make sure you take a look online at article Q310994 on the Microsoft Knowledge Base first.

30 Support Center online
Try the Windows XP Center at support. microsoft.com/ default.aspx?scid=fh;en-us;winxp since you'll find help and troubleshooting tips from the experts.

WXP32.sup_chap2 18/3/04 12:17 pm Page 21

File Stability **Security**

File Stability

Find out how to avoid problems caused by out-of-date software or driver incompatibility issues

31 Matching memory
Mismatched memory can cause instability problems. Try using memory modules that are the same speed.

32 Store your drivers
Keep all your driver files on a separate disc in case you need to reinstall hardware.

33 Display settings
If you're trying to run a graphics-intensive game and it quits back to Windows, check your drivers and display settings.

34 Use the Help file
Use the troubleshooters in the Windows XP Help file to sort out specific problems.

35 Scheduled clean
Use the Task Scheduler to automate maintenance and cleanup processes.

36 Check driver
If your display appears to be stuck at a low resolution, this usually points to an incorrectly installed video driver.

37 Get help online
If you're having problems finding help on a specific error, try entering part of the error message in a search engine – there are many dedicated sites offering help online.

38 Hard drive status
Use the Windows XP error checking utility and check the status of all the hard drives installed on your PC.

39 Check reinstall
Having reinstalled Windows XP, type upgrade.txt in the run box so you can see the full details of how successful your reinstallation has been.

> You can quickly and easily rename any file simply by selecting it and then hitting [F2] to open up its title box.

40 Defragment
Windows XP has its own defragmenter tool. While this does provide you with basic functionality, for a more fully featured program, you should try out something like www.diskeeper.com.

1000 Greatest Windows XP Tips **21**

Internet Settings

Going online exposes you to viruses, hackers and other perils, but Windows XP can keep you safe

41 Using ICF
If you use multiple dial-up connections, make sure you've set up the Internet Connection Firewall to work with all of them.

42 Firewall stability
Don't run different versions of anti-virus or firewall applications at the same time as this can lead to instability.

43 Rescue discs
Make sure that you've created rescue disks for your anti-virus applications in case a virus stops your PC from booting.

44 File sharing
Along with the obvious copyright issues that are involved, you should be wary of file sharing services because you cannot be 100% sure that what you're downloading is safe and genuine.

45 Stop pop-ups
Use a pop-up stopper program to prevent multiple browser windows from opening and overloading your system.

46 Scan floppies
Scan any media with your anti-virus program before opening files, even floppies.

47 Unsafe ActiveX
Ensure that you have a reasonable level of security in your browser to avoid running unsafe ActiveX controls.

48 Virus updates
Keep your anti-virus software regularly updated to avoid problems.

49 Use an uninstaller
Use a specialist program to remove apps that don't come with their own uninstaller.

50 Compact email folders
Fragmented email folders can take a while to open and this may look like a crash. In Outlook Express, click File > Folder > Compact All Folders.
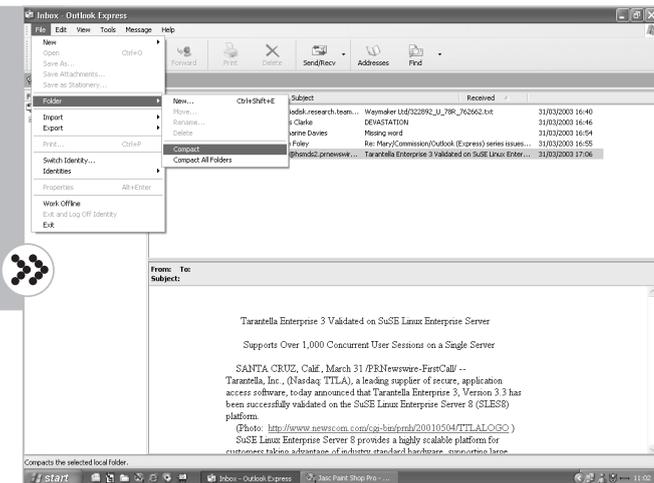
[Alt] + [Tab] is your fast task switching shortcut. Press these two keys together to switch to the next open application.

Your Notes ....

www.windowsxpmagazine**.co.uk**

18 Security Tips

From selecting an effective password to avoiding viruses, here are 18 invaluable hints and tips

51 Don't pick an obvious password
Don't use your name, your dog's name or your birthday: hackers use programs which generate random passwords, so obvious ones are easier to discover.

52 Pick a good password
Make up a word and add a number to it. Take two unrelated words and join them with punctuation or throw in some capitals. Or, even better, use the handy WinGuides Random Password Generator, found at: www.winguides.com/security/password.php.

53 Pick different passwords
Don't use the same password for everything: if one site displays your password in error, or gets hacked by another user, other accounts will be vulnerable as well.

54 Special offer passwords
If a competition asks for your email address and password, never use a password that you use elsewhere – people can use fake competitions to harvest these details.

55 IE knows
Don't let Internet Explorer remember your passwords. Go to Tools > Internet Options > Content > AutoComplete and clear the 'User names and passwords on forms' option.

56 Is it secure?
A headline saying 'secure site' means nothing, especially if it's flashing. Look for https:// in the URL, or a closed padlock in the status bar.

57 Keep it secret
Never give out your password: genuine technical support people won't need to ask.

58 Sign out of Passport
If you share a PC or use an Internet café, tick the increased security option when using .NET Passport so it deletes cookies and cached pages.

In an open folder window, hit [F4] to bring down the list of recently accessed locations, then you can skip to one by highlighting it.
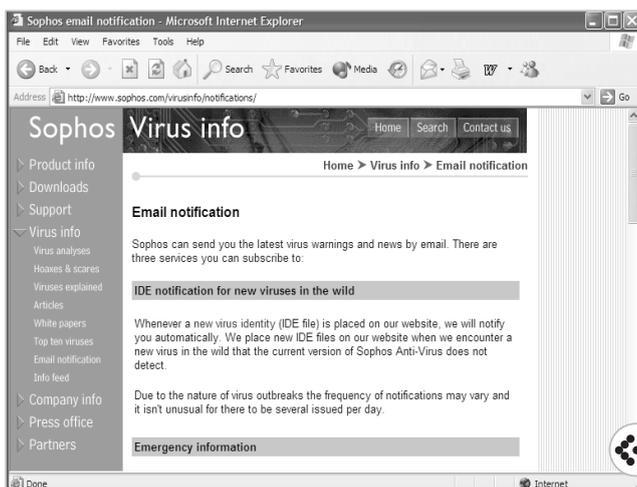
68 Keep up to date
Make sure you're always aware of the latest viruses. Visit a site like dispatch. mcafee.com or www.sophos.com/ virusinfo/notificat ionsa/ for all the latest news.

59 Control IE6 cookies
Internet Explorer 6 enables you to choose whether to block or accept cookies, based on who they're from and the site's privacy policy. Choose Tools > Internet Options > Privacy, to select your cookie preferences.

60 Fine-control cookies
If you don't like the pre-set cookie schemes, or to find out which sites send cookies, click Advanced > Privacy, and create your own customised settings.

61 Not OK
Never click OK or Yes in a box without understanding exactly what it's asking. If you're not sure, click on No. If the site won't work, just reload it and try again.

62 Check links
To see where a link takes you before you click it, hover your mouse over it and look at the status bar above, where the URL should be displayed. If you can't see the URL, click on View > Status Bar.

63 Beware HTML mail
Email messages in HTML have the same potential problems and hazards as web pages (such as scripts, web bugs and so on), so make sure that you're always careful where you click.

64 Outlook security
The Outlook Security Update stops you opening 'unsafe' file types, plus you'll get a warning if a script tries to read your address book or send emails without permission. Specify which file types can be opened with Attachment Options (www.slovaktech.com /attachmentoptions.htm).

65 Digital signature
A digital signature proves the identity of the sender and shows that the email hasn't been tampered with. Get a free digital ID from Thawte (www.thawte.com/certs/ personal/contents.html) or a trial from VeriSign: in Outlook, choose Tools > Options > Security > Get a Digital ID.

66 Types of viruses
There are several virus types. Worms replicate themselves, often mailing themselves to every entry in your address book disguised as images, jokes or even anti-virus software. Trojans pretend to be another file but don't replicate; someone has to trick you into downloading them. Trojans often steal passwords.

67 Remove floppies
Floppy disks left in your drive when you shut down or restart can spread 'boot' viruses, so remove floppies once you've used them.

Troubleshooting

Don't panic! Most common errors can be fixed with a minimum of hassle – we show you how

The technical support line for your PC or software should only be a last resort. Most problems are common and not too serious, and can be solved almost immediately, without spending hours and a fortune talking to someone who may or may not be able to help over the telephone. Once you're relatively familiar with Windows XP, and with the help of the following six pages of advice and tips, you should be able to get working on the solution to most common problems before you can even begin to worry.

As well as 25 of our own fix-it solutions on what to do if your PC or Windows XP starts behaving badly, we've spoken to expert Richard Mannion, Partner Support Technical Lead at Microsoft, who's shared his top 10 support solutions that Microsoft is asked for by Windows XP users. That's advice straight from the horse's mouth, and it deals with troubles such as upgrading from previous versions of Windows, restoring your PC to a trouble-free state and transferring settings and files across from other PCs or operating systems.

We've exhaustively compiled solutions to most of the common conundrums that Windows XP users have been faced with, but if the problem you're having with your PC isn't covered by the tips in this section, your first port of call should be the enormously detailed Microsoft Knowledge Base, which is available for free online. You'll find it at http://support.microsoft.com.

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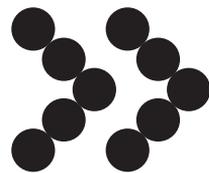
35 Fix-it Solutions

If you've had a problem with your PC, our top tips should help you get it back on its feet in no time

1 Automatic updates
By default, Windows is set to look for and download critical updates in the background while you're online. To adjust this, right-click on My Computer and choose Properties > Automatic Updates for options.

2 Manual updates
To manually check for non-critical updates and new drivers, click on Start > All Programs > Windows Update, to connect to the internet. Follow the on-screen instructions to see what's new.

3 Shut it down
Close down all other programs before installing any Windows XP updates as it will almost certainly need to restart.

4 Hot fixes
For a list of 'hot fixes', head over to the http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx? scid=/support/servicepacks/windows/xp/ pre-sp1_hotfixes.asp website.

5 Stay up to date
Regularly check manufacturers' websites for new drivers and patches, or use a free program like CatchUp (www.catchup.com).

6 Last known good system
If Windows XP seems to be behaving strangely after you've loaded it, restart your PC and press [F8] before Windows XP loads. Choose 'Last Known Good Configuration' to see if this solves the problem.

7 Registry backups
It's a good idea to back up your Registry in case it corrupts, and prevents Windows XP loading. Try ERUNT from http://home. t-online.de/home/lars.hederer/erunt/.

8 Bootlogging
If you can't boot into Windows at all, select 'Enable Boot Logging' from the start-up menu. This will record the bootlog in the Ntbtlog.txt file in the %systemroot% folder, which you can copy to floppy for analysis.

9 Problems lists online
For a collection of startup problems with links to the relevant Knowledge Base articles, pay a visit to www. aumha.org/ kbstrtup.htm.

18 Shutdown advice online
For an excellent site that offers troubleshooting advice on all sorts of shutdown problems, head over to http://www.aumha.org/a/shtdwnxp.htm.

10 Knowledge base
The Windows Recovery Console is essential for any PC which is suffering from crashes. For more information on the Windows Recovery Console, take a look at article number Q314058 in the Microsoft Knowledge Base.

11 Hardware support
Find out whether your hardware is supported by Windows XP by going to www.microsoft.com/hcl/ and browsing though the lists.

12 Look for the logo!
When buying any new hardware, make sure you keep a look out for the 'Designed for Windows XP' logo. To find out more about this, head over to the Microsoft website at www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/howtobuy/upgrading/compat.asp.

13 Signed drivers
Wherever possible, always try to use digitally signed drivers with Windows XP. Most of the problems which occur in Windows XP are simply down to non-signed drivers because these are drivers that haven't been rigorously tested by Microsoft.

14 Unsigned drivers
By default, Windows is set to warn you when you attempt to install an unsigned driver. You can prevent it from allowing any non-signed drivers on to your system by right-clicking on My Computer > Properties > Hardware and clicking the Driver Signing button. Now click on the Block button, followed by OK.

15 Rolling back
To roll back a driver to its previous version, right-click on My Computer and select Properties > Hardware. Click on Device Manager, double-click on the device you wish to roll back and click the Driver tab. Now click Roll Back Driver, followed by Yes.

16 Shut down technique
Never switch off your PC with the on/off switch – always select 'Turn off computer' from the Start menu so Windows can close itself down properly.

17 STOP errors
If your PC restarts when you select Shut Down, it's probably not shutting down properly. Windows XP automatically restarts after a STOP error by default.

In any window, hit [F5] to refresh and update the view. This also works with an internet page and will reload any website.

Troubleshooting 35 Fix-it Solutions

19 Expert help online
Post a question in the Microsoft Newsgroups (http://communities2.microsoft.com) where thousands of other users and experts are watching and are able to assist you.
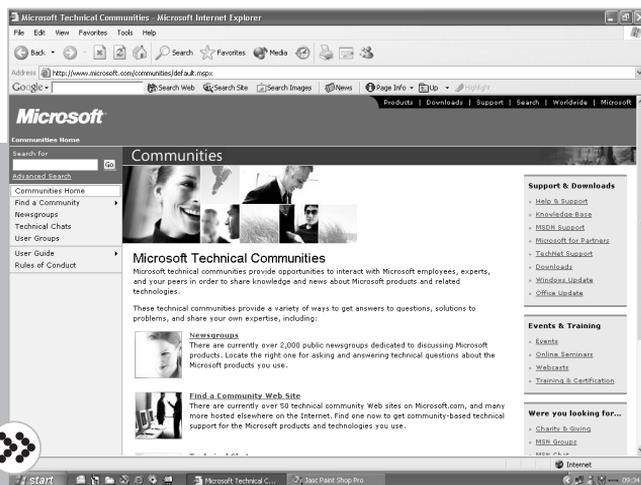
20 Stop auto-starts
To stop Windows XP from automatically restarting after a crash, all you have to do is right-click on My Computer and select Properties. Now you need to switch to the Advanced tab. Click the Settings button under Startup and Recovery, then untick the Automatically Restart button. Now click OK twice for manual control over your PC's restart options.

21 Use the Task Manager
You can restart or shut down your computer by using the Task Manager if you need to. To do this, simply hold down [Ctrl] + [Alt] + [Del] and use the Shut Down menu options which appear.

22 Thawing frozen programs
If a program freezes up, the best way to solve the problem with the minimum of disruption is by pressing [Ctrl] + [Alt] + [Del] to launch the Windows Task Manager. A list of all of your computer's running programs will now appear. If any of these are listed as Not Responding, you can click on that program to highlight it and then click End Task to close it, without affecting any of your other running programs.

23 Help and Support Center
If you can't get access to Windows XP – maybe you're on a different PC, or you can't get your computer working properly – then you can get access to all of the Help and Support Center's material online at www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/techinfo/productdoc/default.asp. There is a wealth of information here, covering almost every aspect of Windows XP, to help you get things running smoothly again.

24 Search the Knowledge Base
The Microsoft Knowledge Base has a vast amount of information. The quickest way to search it and find what you need is through the Help and Support menu. Whenever you use it while online, Windows XP will look at the Knowledge Base for more help.

25 Finding information online
Start your online search for Windows XP material at Microsoft's dedicated support site, which can be found at www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/home/support/default.asp. This has links to the Knowledge Base and several other useful resources which can provide you with help and advice on keeping your PC safe, stable and healthy.

Most new keyboards have a Windows button on them that will open the Start menu, but [Ctrl] + [Esc] will do the same thing.

10 Microsoft Solutions

We asked Microsoft Support Solutions for the 10 most common problems, and their fixes

26 I'm having trouble upgrading.
Most installation problems occur when you are upgrading from an earlier version of Windows and are down to compatibility issues. For a guide to Windows XP setup problems during an upgrade, check out the Microsoft Knowledge Base article Q310064.

27 I'm having modem troubles…
Most, but not all, modem problems are driver-related. Article Q308022 will help.

28 How can I restore my PC?
If Windows is working (and you're logged on as an administrator), choose Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > System Restore. Select 'Restore my computer to an earlier time' and click Next. Now click the most recent checkpoint and hit Next. A System Restore message may appear – click OK. Now select Next on the confirmation page and the last Windows XP configuration is restored. If you can't get Windows XP to start, press [F8] at startup and select 'Last Known Good Configuration' to load the last restore point which loaded Windows XP. See article Q306084 too.

29 I can't create audio CDs in Windows Media Player.
Check that the CD player is properly connected, that a blank CD is in the drive and that no other program is using the CD player. Article Q306319 will help too.

30 I can't open a new window when I'm in Internet Explorer.
This is common when you right-click a link on an internet page and then click Open in a New Window. It may occur if the registry values that control this function are missing or incorrect, or if the Internet Explorer files that control this function are not registered properly. See article Q272322 for details.

31 I can no longer use the Search Companion after errors.
After you connect to a website, you may receive the following message: 'A file that is required to run Search Companion cannot be found. You may need to run setup.' After you receive this, you cannot use Search Companion. Article Q319949 solves this.

32 My PC says the 'System Has Recovered from a Serious Error' every time I start it.
If Windows XP restarts because of a serious error, you're prompted to report the problem to Microsoft. Windows may begin prompting you to report this every time you restart, even if no error occurred. Article Q317277 has a step-by-step solution to this problem.

33 My system doesn't power off when I shut down.
Contact your motherboard manufacturer about updating the motherboard BIOS and its drivers. Windows XP uses a later version of Power Management which has to be supported by your PC.

34 Where have all my Outlook Express settings gone?
After you upgrade to Windows XP you'll find your mail folders, address book and emails are missing because the file structure is different and the files are no longer in the correct location. Find and import them using the steps outlined in article Q313055.

35 How do I transfer my files and settings between PCs?
You need is a blank floppy disk and the Files and Settings Transfer Wizard (click on Start and select All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Files and Settings Transfer Wizard). It's easy to follow, but if you want a guide, check out article number Q306187.

Clean-up Tips

Do some spring cleaning to get a faster, more stable PC. Our top tips will help you do the job

Atidy house is a happy house, and the same applies to your PC. Getting rid of all the junk and unnecessary files that build up over time will give you a much more efficient machine.

Everything wants a piece of Windows XP. Every application you install, web page you visit or email you download leaves pieces of itself all over your system, all of which takes up valuable hard drive space and can even slow down your PC's performance. Regular house cleans are necessary to clean out the detritus and they have the added benefit of giving your system that straight-from-the-shop feel all over again.

In issue 10's lead feature we unearthed the 50 best ways to use Windows XP to give itself a good old wash behind the ears and get running at full pelt again, without any of the accumulated rubbish from months of PC usage slowing it down.

You can discover which files are safe to delete, how to completely remove an old application from your system, how to pick and choose which programs and processes are loaded whenever you boot up your PC, which types of file take up the most space and impact most heavily on performance and how to improve hard drive efficiency.

Nothing's too complicated either. Most of these tips can be carried out in just a few seconds and one decent clean up a month should keep your PC running smoothly, leaving you with tons of space to install new programs and store your documents.
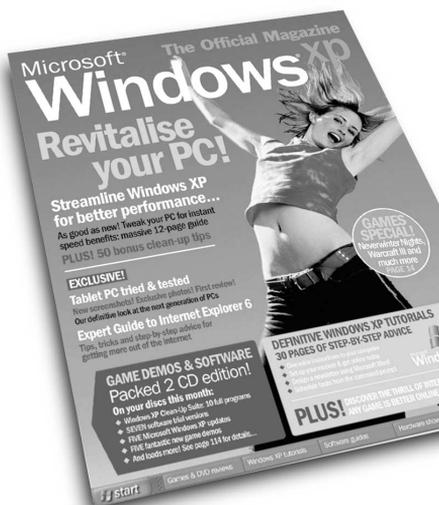
Issue 10 October 2002
SUBSCRIBE +44 (0) 870 444 8475
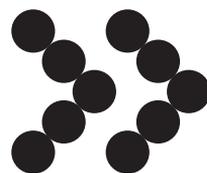
Spring Clean Your PC

Bin those unwanted files, folders and shortcuts to increase speed, efficiency and productivity

1 Cut the shortcuts
You can easily remove any leftover program shortcuts that are still residing on the Start menu by right-clicking on them and then hitting Delete.

2 Customise shortcuts
Right-click on the Start button and choose Customize. Here you can clear all of the shortcuts that display your most frequently used programs.

3 Binning icons
To delete any unwanted desktop icons, all you have to do is right-click on the desktop and choose Arrange Icons By > Run Desktop Cleanup Wizard.

4 Instant clarity!
Clear your desktop in an instant by hiding all of your icons. Right-click on the desktop, choose 'Arrange Icons By', and then uncheck 'Show Desktop Icons' for a perfectly clear working environment.

5 Easy access
Right-click on the Start button and choose Open for direct access to all the folders and shortcuts that appear on the Start menu.

6 Don't delete these!
Some programs are vital – like Rundll32 and the .exe file relating to anti-virus software – so don't remove them from Startup.

7 Drive checking
You can view the status of all your drives at once. Open My Computer, hold down the [Ctrl] key and click on each drive to select it, then right-click and choose Properties.

8 Defrag your drives
Use Disk Defragmenter about once a month.

9 Automatic tidying
Create automated clean-up processes using the command line: cleanmgr /sagerun:100. Change the 100 to another number in order to get more processes.

10 Speed up
Click on Start > All Programs, and then check the Startup folder. The file shortcuts here may be slowing your computer down.
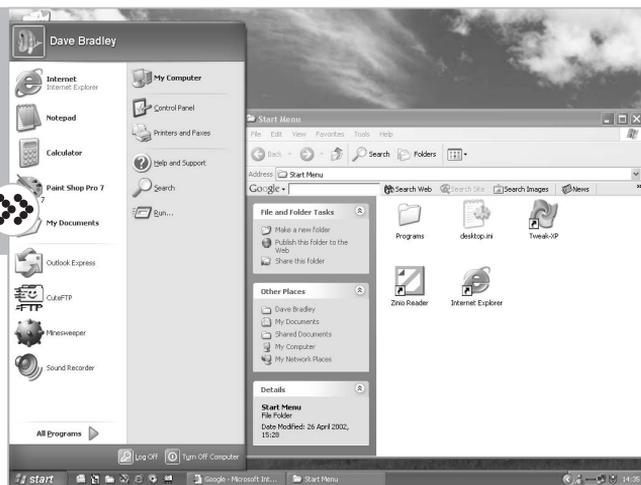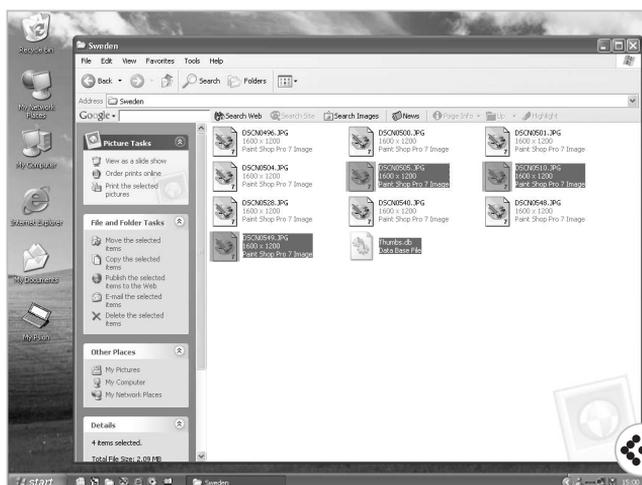
11 Binning files in bulk
Select multiple files for deletion by holding down [Ctrl] and clicking the individual files to select them.

12 Permanent deletion
Hold down the [Shift] key when deleting files to ensure that they are deleted permanently, rather than just sent to the Recycle Bin. This can save you quite a lot of space!

13 Check folders
Be careful when you're deleting program files and folders – take care to make sure that there are no important documents or game files that you want to keep.

14 Password protection
Along with key system files, there are other files you shouldn't delete. Always keep those which have the extension .pwl because they contain your password details.

15 Deleting shared files
When performing an uninstallation, don't worry if a message appears about shared files. In the majority of cases, deleting the files won't have any effect on your system.

16 Clearing fonts
One file type that can take up vast amounts of space is fonts. There are probably dozens on your PC that you'll never actually need. Take a look in Windows\Fonts now.

17 Empty the bin
It's incredibly easy and quick to clear the contents of your Recycle Bin, yet it's something that many PC users rarely do. All you have to do is right-click on the Recycle Bin icon and choose Empty Recycle Bin to permanently delete all of the files and folders which are stored within it and that you've probably forgotten about!

18 Old ISP information
Remove any ISPs that you don't use any more. You'll be able to find them all stored away in your Network Connections folder where you can simply delete them.

19 Remove user accounts
The more users you have on your PC, the more hard drive space is used up, so you should make sure that you remove all unused accounts.

20 System Restore settings
System Restore may be in effect on any partitions on your hard drive that don't have Windows XP. Go into System Properties > System Restore and select a non-Windows drive. From here, simply click on Settings and turn off System Restore.

> In most applications, as in Windows XP itself, you can hit [F1] at any time to launch the appropriate Help file.

50 Clean-up Tips Spring Clean Your PC

21 Registry Favorites
Use the Favorites option in the Registry Editor to bookmark all of the areas of your registry that you access regularly.
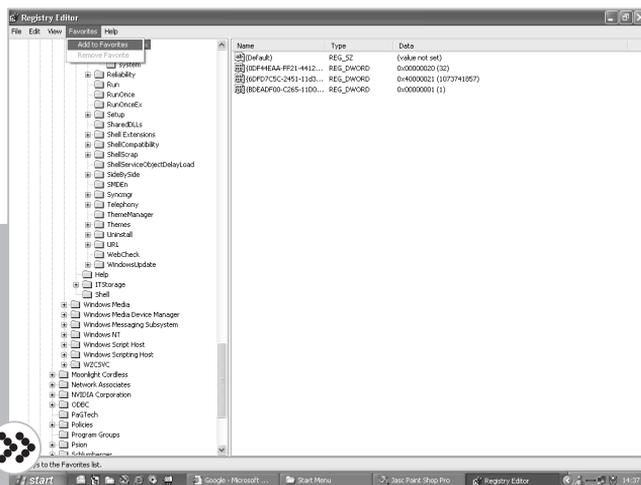
22 A word of caution…
Registry editing is not for the inexperienced and it can seriously affect the operation of your PC, so only make alterations if you're sure you know what you're doing.

23 Tiny tunes
Convert your MP3 files to WMA format and you'll reduce their size by around 50%. You can use Audio Converter LE to do this – it's part of the Windows Media Bonus Pack. This is available to download online from www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia /download/bonuspack.asp.

24 Defragmentation process
Before you run the defragmenter tool, close your anti-virus software as it can cause problems with the defragmentation process.

25 Hard drive checking
Run the hard drive error checking tool and make sure that both disk options are checked so that system errors and bad sectors can be fixed.

26 Switch to NTFS
Convert your hard drive to NTFS to improve performance and security.

27 Organise partitions
You can use a program like Partition Magic to create different partitions so that all of your audio and image files can be moved to a different drive.

28 Registry problems?
If you have any problems with your registry, press [F8] when your PC restarts. From the menu that appears, select 'Last Known Good Configuration' and press Enter to run your PC from a trouble-free setting.

29 Back up!
We've got a lot of great tips for helping you to fix any problems your computer may be having, but before you try a repair or reinstallation of Windows XP, you should always make sure you have backed up all of your important settings and information, including your emails and Address Book. This will save you a lot of trouble in the event of things going wrong!

30 Adaware awareness
A word of caution: removing spyware with a program like Adaware 6.0 can cause the affected program not to work correctly, so use it with care.

> If you can't use the mouse for any reason, simply hold down [Alt] to have access to the file menus in an application.

31 Activating Windows XP
If you can't remember if you've activated Windows XP, all you have to do is go to Start > Run and enter oobe/msoobe /a to find out.

32 Boot info online
For some essential information about making boot disks for Windows XP, head along to Microsoft's support website at support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;EN-US;q310994.

33 Clean installs
Make sure you install the Windows Installer CleanUp utilities from the Windows XP disc for a tidier PC.

34 Start Defrag tool
While the Windows XP defragmenter tool gives you some basic functionality, for a more fully featured program, you should try to use something like the Start Defrag software instead.

35 Fast display
There's an easy way to speed up your display. Go into System Properties, click on the Advanced tab and then click on the Settings button under Performance. Now clear the 'Fade or slide menus into view' check box and click OK.

36 Zip it
Save space on your hard drive by compressing files and folders with a program such as WinZip.

37 Recall passwords
Have you chosen a completely unique password that no one will ever guess and then completely forgotten it? It happens to most PC users! Avoid this problem by going into Control Panel, clicking on User Accounts and then using the Forgotten Password Wizard to create a password reset disk for peace of mind.

38 Check your upgrade
If you've reinstalled Windows XP using an upgrade disc, you can type upgrade.txt in the run box to see how well the installation went. Any problems will be highlighted here so you can see if more tweaking is going to be necessary.

39 Keep up to date
One of the most helpful pieces of advice we can give is that you keep Windows XP fully up-to-date. Not only will this solve potential compatibility problems, but you can get new features and upgrades for Windows XP and your other programs. Go into System Properties and set updates to be installed automatically and then forget all about it.

40 Keep the bar steady!
Right-click on the taskbar and choose 'Lock the Taskbar' to avoid it being moved or resized by accident.

41 Keep clear
Keep your desk and your Windows XP desktop clear of clutter. Don't just hide your icons – move the shortcuts into folders or create a menu and group items.

42 Organise your folders
Sort your work into separate folders – don't mix work and personal items by saving them in the same folder because this can cause a lot of confusion.

43 Tidy up!
Don't leave old items lying in the Recycle Bin, and make sure you regularly clear up all of your temporary files too. While we're on the subject, it wouldn't hurt to tidy up your desk once in a while either!

44 Instant karma
Certain items can be distracting, such as angry emails and those containing bad news. Remove them all.

45 Think positive
At the end of every work period, make sure you turn off your PC and shut your office door. A fresh start provides a much more positive mental attitude.

46 Desktop design
Believe it or not, your choice of desktop wallpaper is actually very important. An image of flowing water is said to be particularly calming.

47 Images to avoid
In Feng Shui, certain images are deemed to be particularly inauspicious – for example, wild animals, churches or any pictures which show still or stagnant water. You should avoid these at all costs.

48 Screensaver selection
For your screensaver, pick an image of the globe or a world map as this is thought to help promote opportunities and travel. You never know, it might just work!

49 Planting ideas
PCs generate a lot of electromagnetic energy. To counteract this, you should clear your working atmosphere by keeping a cleansing plant such as a Jade (money tree) or Poinsettia on your desk.

50 Keep it clean
Always keep your PC and the area around it clean – clutter means you're more likely to be unproductive and can cause a lot of frustration when you can't find that essential file you need! Also, make sure that your mouse and keyboard are working correctly as, again, defects are both unproductive and annoying.

Hitting [Windows] + [L] enables you to quickly lock the desktop and swap out to the standard log on screen.

Your Notes ....

www.windowsxpmagazine.co.uk

Makeover Tips

Give your computer a fresh new look and feel by customising the flexible features of Windows XP

Windows XP may well sport its own distinctive, stylish look, but it's only natural that you'd want to modify it so it feels more personal. Fortunately, there are tons of tweaks and customisations built in to the operating system so you can give it a look tailored to your own tastes. But it's not just the visual side of Windows XP that you can give a makeover – sound, menus, small performance preferences, features and security, along with many others, can all be customised so that using your PC feels like an experience made specifically for you.

Over the next six pages, we've catalogued 50 of the best ways to create your own, personalised version of Windows XP, covering everything from choosing a different mouse cursor, customising the appearance of menus and text, tweaking password security, adding or removing text to title bars, altering logon settings and pictures, installing new screensavers and even magnifying the screen or turning on speech control to improve access for visually impaired users.

It's possible to create an operating system that looks and behaves in a hugely different way to the default settings, and it's all done without installing any new software or hardware, or even having to spend much time doing it. Ultimately, as well as the cosmetic differences, you'll end up with a PC that's easier and faster to use because it's more in tune with what you need.

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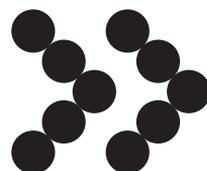
Makeover Tips Personalise Your PC

Personalise Your PC

Customise the way your PC looks, sounds and operates with our selection of top makeover tips

1 Change sounds
It's easy to download your own WAV files and have Windows trigger them at various events to make your PC's sounds really unique and personal. Just open the Control Panel, click 'Sounds and Audio Devices', and then hit the Sounds tab.

2 Internet Explorer Kiosk mode
If you want to leave Internet Explorer so that it completely dominates the desktop, press [F11] to launch the full-screen Kiosk mode.

3 Moving the Start menu
Don't like where the Start menu is? You can easily move it to the other three sides of the screen just by clicking on a blank spot and dragging it to your preferred position.

4 Move toolbars
Stop your applications from squashing your Quick Launch buttons by locking the taskbar in place. Right-click the taskbar and check the option.

5 Add an address bar to the toolbar
Browse folders and open websites from the taskbar by enabling an Internet Explorer-style address bar. Just right-click on the taskbar, click Toolbars, then click Address.

6 Add your own sign-in photo
In the Control Panel's User Accounts section, click 'Browse for more pictures' and select an image of your own.

7 Turn folders into toolbars
Drag your favourite folders to the edge of the screen to display their contents as easily accessible toolbars. This is extremely useful for short periods of time.

8 Google toolbar
Google is the most popular search engine on the internet and we all use it, whether for business or personal browsing. To access it quickly, you can install the Google Toolbar from http://toolbar.google.com.

9 Hotbar
Use the 'Hotbar' plug-in to skin your Internet Explorer toolbar with patterns and pictures. Go to www.hotbar.com.
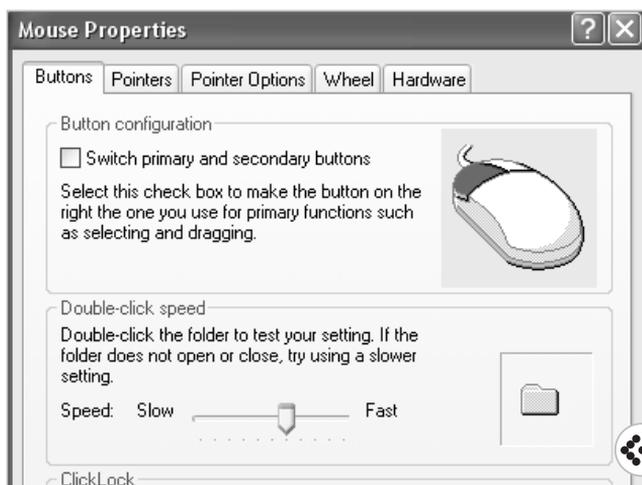
10 Change your Windows pointers
The Control Panel's Mouse section has loads of alternative cursors that you can choose from.

11 Alter the colour of your encrypted files
Encrypted folders can be a different colour. To pick one, find AltEncryptionColor in the registry and change its value to 'RR GG BB 00', substituting R, G and B for the new colour's RGB value.

12 Delete the Windows Media Player URL history
To scrub the history, find and delete the RecentURLList Registry key that's located in KEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\MediaPlayer\Player.

13 Log in after a screensaver
Look in Control Panel's Display preferences to select the option to log in.

14 Different buttons
If the Maximise and Minimise buttons are too large, make them smaller by adjusting the setting in the Display Settings > Appearances window.

15 ClearType font smoothing
Turn on ClearType font smoothing if you use a laptop or flat-panel VDU. Go to the Display Control Panel > Advanced options.

16 Enabling menu transitions (fade effect)
Also in the Display Panel's Advanced options are some menu fade effects to spice up your desktop.

17 Menu shadows
The same screen also enables you to add shadows to your menus.

18 Hide contents when dragging
You can easily disable the viewing of the contents of dragged windows. Just click on Disable in the Control Panel's Advanced Display settings.

19 Windows Media Player
Windows Media Player protects its files so that only your PC can play them. To turn this option off, head into the Copy Music tab in the Options and then uncheck the Protect content box.

20 Taskbar grouping
Similar application windows are grouped together in the Taskbar. If this doesn't suit your style of use, you can turn this off by going to the Taskbar and choosing the option in the Start Menu Control Panel.

In Microsoft Word, hit [Ctrl] + [F] to bring up the Find dialogue box and hit [Ctrl] + [H] to quickly access the Replace options.

Makeover Tips Personalise Your PC

21 Change IE text style
Sick of your ISP's Internet Explorer branding? In the registry, click HKEY_CURRENT_ USER and find Software\Microsoft \Internet Explorer \Main. Under the Window Title, you can change REG_SZ to suit.
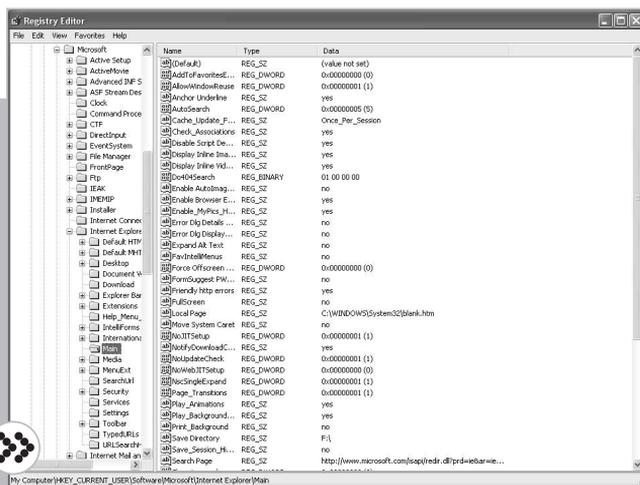
22 Turn off balloon tips
Right-click HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ Software\Microsoft\Windows\Current Version\Explorer\Advanced and choose New > DWORD Value. Label it EnableBalloonTips. Right-click on that, choose Modify and change the Value to 0 (1 re-enables them).

23 Microsoft Narrator
Windows XP has a built-in speech program. To turn it on or off, go to the Speech Control Panel for a range of options.

24 Guest accounts
Protect your settings when others use your PC. Set up a guest account in the Users section of the Control Panel.

25 Disable error reporting
Want to turn off the Error Reporting pop-up? Open the Control Panel, click 'Performance and Maintenance', then select System. In the Advanced tab, you can now disable the error-reporting button.

26 Close multiple windows
Got lots of Internet Explorer windows or folder windows open? Close them all by holding [Shift] as you click to close one.

27 Turn off CD autoplay
If you don't want your CDs to start playing as soon as you pop them into your drive, type GPEDIT.MSC into Run. Choose Computer Configuration, then Administrative Templates, then System. Now click 'Turn off autoplay' for manual control of CD playing.

28 Stop password expiration
To stop passwords expiring every 42 days, type userpasswords2 into Run. Pick Advanced in User Accounts and press the advanced button in Advanced User Management. Right-click on your username and turn off Expiring Passwords.

29 Create your own password reset disk
Go into User Accounts in the Control Panel and click the 'Prevent a forgotten password' link for a handy password backup in case you forget the ones you've chosen.

30 Turn off System Restore
There's an easy way to instantly save up to 1GB of disk space. All you have to do is go to Find System Restore on your Start Menu, load it and then choose to disable it under its options.

In most applications, including Microsoft Word, hit [Ctrl] + [O] to access the Open File dialogue box quickly.

31 Make all your folders look the same

Do you want to get the same view settings for all of your computer's folders? It's easy to do. Simply get a folder in the style you like and then click on the 'Apply to all folders' option in the View menu and they'll all appear according to your preferences.

32 Stay online when you've logged off

When you log off, so does your internet connection. However, you may want to keep it open for the next user. To do this, just navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE \SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\ CurrentVersion\Winlogon in the registry. From here, you need to right-click in the right pane and point to New and String Value. The next step is to name the value KeepRasConnections and, finally, double-click on the new entry and set the value data to 1.

33 Display your PC's volume in the taskbar

To display the volume control in the Windows XP taskbar, go into Sound > Speech > Audio Devices in the Control Panel. From here, click 'Change the speaker settings' and then select the checkbox to activate the icon.

34 Use Narrator to read the internet for you

Start Narrator from Accessories and then browse to a website you want it to read. Press [Ctrl], [Shift] and [Space] and it'll read out all of the information that's in the website window.

35 Create a personal logon message

In the registry, go to HKEY_LOCAL_ MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon and right-click on LegalNoticeCaption. Now modify it with the text you want.

36 Internet time server

To turn on this option, double-click on the clock and, from the Internet Time tab, check the Synchronisation box.

37 Minimise all windows

To instantly clear your desktop, all you have to do is press [Windows] + [D] together to minimise all windows.

38 Automatic camera recognition

Try plugging your camera in without launching the utility that came with it – Windows XP might recognise it and copy off the pictures itself.
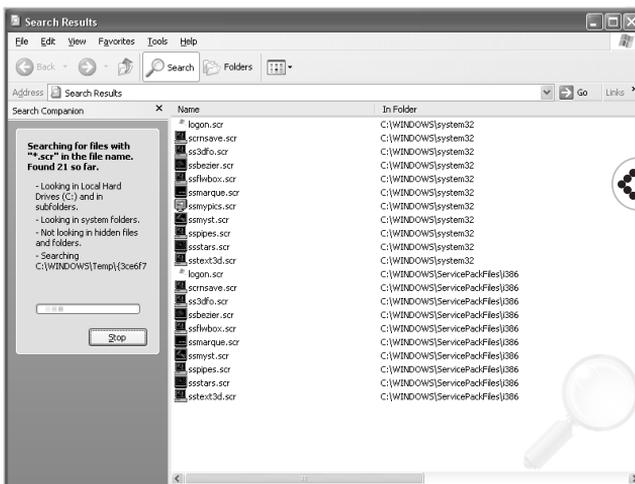
39 Use old Windows 98 screensavers

Locate the .SCR files in My Computer, right-click and hit Install.

Makeover Tips Personalise Your PC
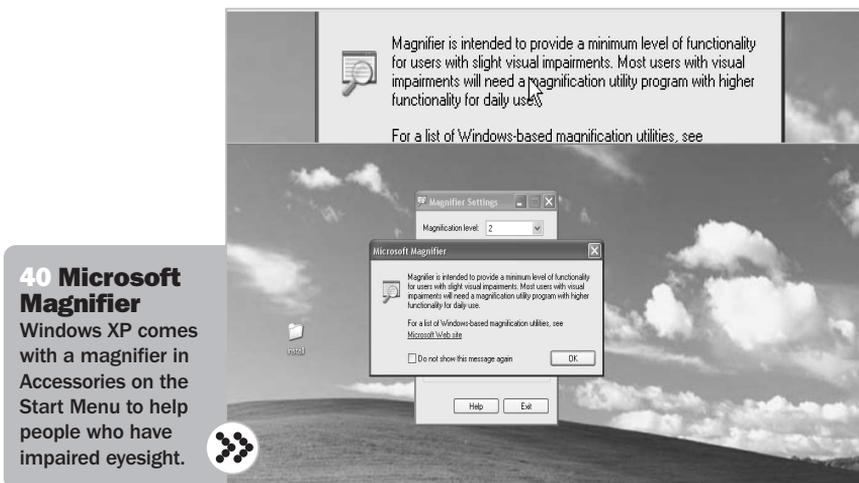
40 Microsoft Magnifier
Windows XP comes with a magnifier in Accessories on the Start Menu to help people who have impaired eyesight.

41 Launch a firewall
Worried about hackers when you go online? Use the firewall that's built in to Windows XP. Just right-click your network connection and click on the Advanced tab.

42 Windows Update
Don't want to download updates while you're online? Turn off Windows Update in the Control Panel's System menu.

43 Instant background
Have you seen a picture that you really like while you've been browsing the internet? You can set it as your desktop wallpaper really quickly and easily with Windows XP. All you have to do is right-click on it and choose the 'Set as Background' option from the drop-down menu.

44 Lock up
You can quickly lock your workstation by hitting [Windows] + [L].

45 Undo minimise
If you've just minimised your windows and then changed your mind, press [Windows] + [Shift] + [M] to instantly maximise all your windows again.

46 Bliss screensaver
Aah, the Bliss screensaver with its rolling clouds and lush meadows. We love it, and recommend you try it out! You can download it from the Microsoft website.

47 Go grey
Don't like the new look of Windows XP? Right-click on the desktop, select Properties and then choose the Themes tab. Now select Windows Classic from the menu and you'll go back to the grey style.

48 Customise the SendTo menu
You can customise the menu that pops up when you right-click on files. Find the hidden folder c:\Documents and Settings\ username\SendTo. Drop shortcuts to programs and they'll appear in the menu.

49 Hibernate
Are you sure you need to shut down? Try hibernating instead. You can then reboot in just five seconds.

50 Make a boot disc
Insert a blank disc, right click your A:\ drive and format it as a boot disc to help your PC to recover in the event of a bad crash.

In Microsoft Outlook, hit [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [H] to open a new blank email message quickly. Pressing [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [C] will create a fresh contact.

Your Notes ....

www.windowsxpmagazine.co.uk

Microsoft Office

It's brimful of productivity and power and we've got 300 great tips to help you get more out of it

Long gone are the days when a typewriter and a calculator could support an entire business, or even when they were adequate for a home user. Microsoft Office (currently on its 2002 or XP edition – Office 2003 is due sometime in the next few months) is surely one of the most detailed programs ever created, which means there's an awful lot in there you might not even have realised existed. In tribute to its enormity, we've rounded up a whopping 300 tips on how to use it better. That's a sum total of 30 pages, so we've usefully split these tips into sub-sections, covering each of Office XP's major applications. There's a mighty 100 on Word 2002, the incredibly powerful word processor that's arguably the heart of the Office suite, which teach you how to format your documents for improved presentation, customise the toolbars, tweak the spellchecker and use tables and keyboard shortcuts, along with more great advice.

Then there's another 100 on the spreadsheet package Excel 2002, a crucial application for modern businesses, so these tips will be invaluable in speeding up your productivity and getting your head around how to set up those complicated formulae. Next, brush up on your emailing skills with 50 of our favourite pieces of advice on using Outlook and its slimmer, free sibling, Outlook Express, before getting creative with a final 50 tips on creating presentations and slideshows in Powerpoint 2002.
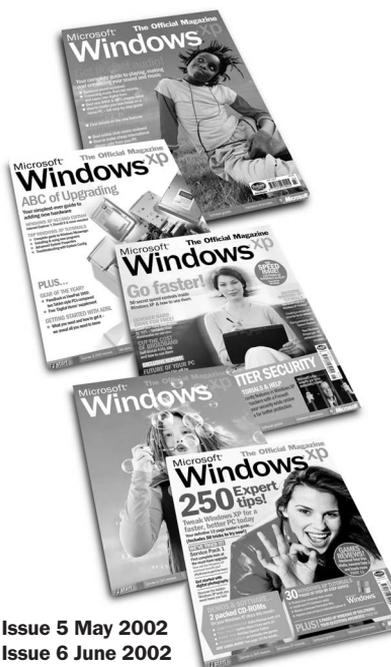
Issue 5 May 2002
Issue 6 June 2002
Issue 7 July 2002
Issue 8 August 2002
Issue 11 November 2002
SUBSCRIBE +44 (0) 870 444 8475
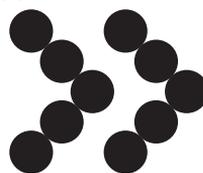
Microsoft Word Tips

Work faster and smarter with our great advice on using this immensely powerful word processor

1 Type anywhere
Select View > Print Layout and you can type anywhere on your document simply by double-clicking where you wish to write.

2 Reject AutoCorrection
To reject an AutoCorrection as it's inserted into your document, press [Backspace]. If that doesn't work, try using the shortcut [Ctrl] + [Z] instead.

3 Pasting alternatives
You can use [Insert] to paste text instead of [Ctrl] + [V] – just enable it from the Edit tab under Tools > Options.

4 Find alternative words
Used a word one too many times? Access Word's built-in Thesaurus by right-clicking the word and choosing Synonyms > Thesaurus to find an alternative.

5 Change deletion mode
If you want to switch quickly between insert and over-type mode, all you have to do is double-click the OVR button at the bottom of the screen.

6 Make the most of AutoCorrect
You can type faster by making use of the AutoCorrect option. It's possible to use this feature to enter abbreviations for long words or even entire phrases – for example, typing in 'addr.' could trigger your entire postal address, saving you a lot of time.

7 Add formatted text
To add formatted text to an AutoCorrect entry, all you have to do is select and copy the text, then choose Tools > AutoCorrect. You'll see the text that has already been entered – all you need to do is add your own abbreviation to it.

8 Themes
To apply a themed style to your work quickly, select Format > Themes and choose from the various options on offer, such as Artsy or Romanesque.
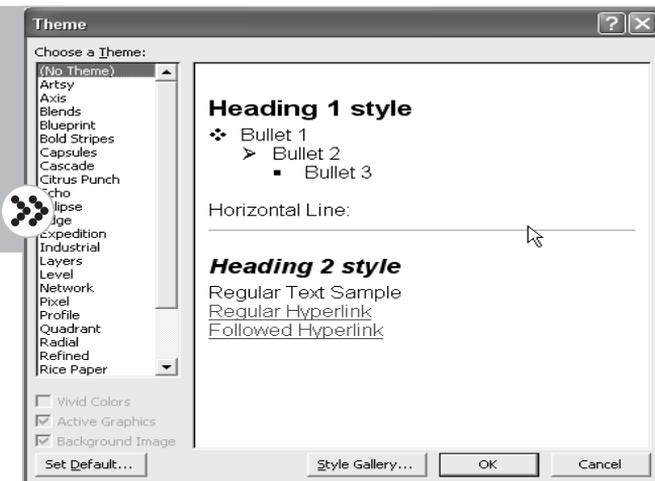
Need to see all your files? Simply hold down [Windows] and tap the [E] key for instant access to the standard Windows Explorer interface.
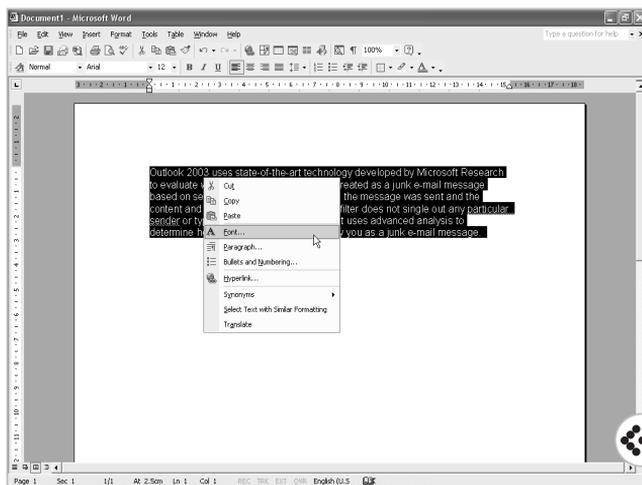
18 Styling up

You can quickly and easily alter a block of text's styling just by right-clicking it and choosing Font. Select Paragraph to apply a style – which includes any justification and tabs – right across the entire paragraph.

9 Use AutoText

It's easy to put common phrases on the AutoText toolbar (from the View > Toolbars sub-menu). Highlight the phrase, then click the New button on the AutoText toolbar to add it.

10 Stop hyperlink conversion

You can prevent Word from automatically converting web and email addresses into hyperlinks by selecting Tools > AutoCorrect, switching to the 'AutoFormat As You Type' tab and clicking the 'Internet and network paths with hyperlinks' box.

11 Get font facts

To get the font and paragraph format details of a block of text, simply hold down [Shift] + [F1] and click the text. Make sure it's the main text as opposed to an italicised or similarly styled word. Press it again to quit this mode.

12 Applying formatting

For a faster way to format your text, select Tools > Options and switch to the Edit tab. Make sure the 'When selecting, automatically select entire word' check box is ticked and you'll now be able to apply formatting to a word simply by placing the cursor within it, as opposed to having to highlight the entire word.

13 Control your fonts

Reading a document created on another machine and don't have the required font to view it properly? Take control of the font substitution process – choose Tools > Options > Compatibility and click on the Font Substitution button.

14 Hyphen options

You can switch hyphenation on and off, or alter the margin at which it comes into play. To access the hyphenation options, select Tools > Language > Hyphenation.

15 Get some style

You should try to get in the habit of formatting your text using the Style drop-down list at the top of the page. You can then easily and accurately make stylistic changes across your whole document.

16 Define your copy

With the last tip in mind, use or define a Body Text style for your main text, instead of using Normal.

17 Change measurement units

By default Word measures in centimetres. Change this to inches, picas, millimetres or points, depending on your personal preference, using the General tab under Tools > Options.

19 Moving your tables

To move or resize a table quickly, make sure you're in Web or Print Layout view. Click and drag the handle in the top-left of the table to move it. The bottom-right handle resizes it.
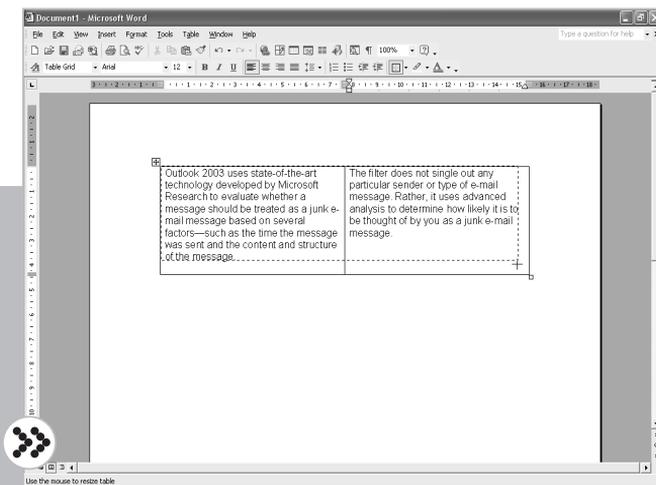
20 Table tools

There's only one button for inserting new rows, columns, cells or tables on the Standard toolbar. Its appearance is defined by how you select part of the table – for example, select a row and click the button to insert a new row.

21 Use formulae

You can place formulae in tables. Just highlight the cell in question and select Table > Formula to enter one.

22 Erase gridlines

Remove a gridline when drawing a table with the Draw Table button by holding down [Shift] to convert the pointer into an eraser.

23 Change cell formats

Quickly alter a cell's formatting by right-clicking the cell, then choosing from the Cell Alignment sub-menu.

24 Quickly sort text

To sort a list of text quickly, select the text, then choose Tables > Sort. You can choose to sort by paragraph or by fields (if you're using tables), text, numbers or dates. You can sort in ascending or descending order.

25 Divide tables

You can split a table in two by moving the cursor to where you wish to split the table. Press [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Return] and a line will be inserted between them.

26 Combine cells

It's easy to combine adjacent cells in a table. Do this by selecting the cells in question, right-clicking and then choosing Merge cells.

27 Convert tables and text

Quickly convert a table to text, or vice versa, by selecting Table > Convert and then either Table to Text, or Text to Table, depending on your preference.

28 View guides

If you've hidden the borders on your table, you can still view the guides. Just choose Tables > Show Gridlines.

29 Table toolbars

If you find yourself working with tables a lot, choose View > Toolbars > Tables and Borders to bring up a floating toolbar. You can now attach this to your standard toolbar by dropping the floating toolbar on it.

We all know that [Ctrl] + [X] will cut an item, but did you know that you can also cut by holding down [Shift] when you hit [Del].

30 Floating toolbars

The View > Toolbars sub-menu enables you to display a selection of toolbars, which gives you access to a range of useful commands. To view these toolbars, just tick the relevant box to put a floating toolbar on the screen.

31 Move toolbars

While these floating toolbars are useful, you may find they're getting in the way. If you do, simply drag them on to the Taskbar at the top of the screen and they'll be transferred onto there instead.

32 Menu options

Annoyed at Word's ability to only show recently used items on its menus? You can switch the feature off. Choose Tools > Customize and switch to the Options tab. Untick the box called 'Menus show recently used commands first'.

33 Custom toolbars

You can create your own custom toolbar very easily in Word. Start off by choosing View > Toolbars > Customize. Now switch to the Toolbars tab and click on New. Give your toolbar a name, then switch back to the Commands tab. Finally, just drag and drop your choice of items from the menus on offer onto your toolbar.

34 Making menus

You can create your own menu just as easily too. Switch back to the Commands tab, choose New Menu from Categories and drag New Menu from Commands onto the menu bar where you wish the menu to go.

35 Add items to menus

To add items to your new menu, just drag and drop whichever ones you want from the Commands list onto the menu. Remove the menu, but this time, drag the menu back onto the dialogue box.

36 Resize lists

Recently Used Files list on the File menu too small? Adjust it via the General tab under Tools > Options to a maximum of nine.

37 Use the Work menu

The Work menu enables you to store frequently used documents permanently on it for fast access. Add it by selecting Tools > Customize. Click the Commands tab and choose Built-in Menus from the Categories list and Work from Commands.

38 Adding and removing files

To add a file to the Work menu, open it and choose Work > Add to Work Menu. To remove a file, open the Work menu, highlight the file and press [Delete].
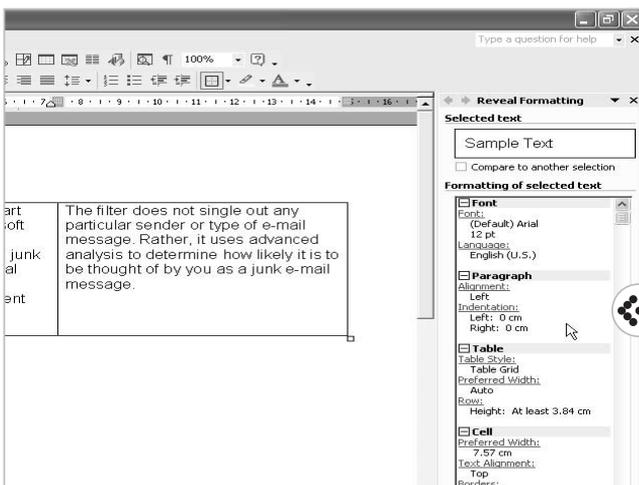
39 Uncover complex formatting

Under the Format menu, choose Reveal Formatting to open a task pane on the right that contains details of all the formatting that's been applied to the current document position.

Microsoft Office Microsoft Word Tips

40 Review documents
When you're finished with your document, you can review any changes using the Reviewing toolbar. You can choose to accept a change, in which case the mark is removed, or you can reject it to quickly reinstate the original text.
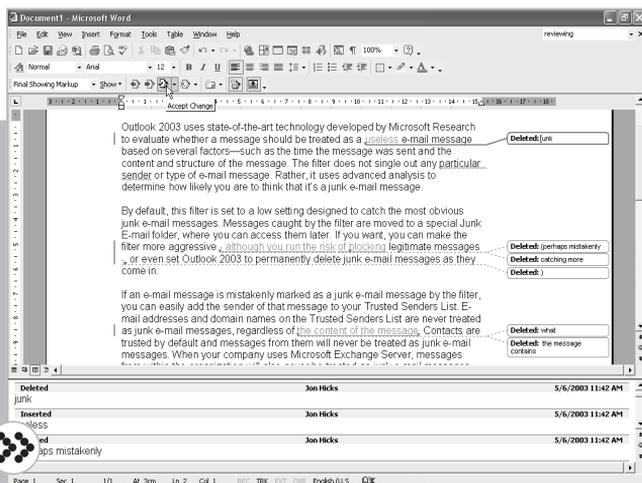
41 Track changes
You can track any changes you make to a document. Select Tools > Track Changes to switch the document on, then view your document in Web or Print layout to view all of your additions, deletions and changes.

42 See alterations
In Word 2000, changes are marked within the text itself – for example, deleted text remains visible, but is marked as red with a line through it. In Word 2002, changes are marked in balloons in the page margins.

43 Comment on changes
You can make use of comments with the Track Changes tool. Just position the cursor where you want the comment to refer to, then choose Insert > Comment. The text where the comment is placed will be marked in yellow – all you need to do is hover the mouse over it and you'll be able to read the comment.

44 Editing comments
You can quickly edit or delete comments – just hover the mouse over the comment, then right-click and choose the appropriate option from the menu.

45 Multiple conversions
If you need to convert a large number of documents to or from Word format quickly, you can save yourself a lot of time and effort by getting Word to do it all for you automatically. To use this productivity-enhancing feature, just select File > New > Other Documents and pick the Batch Conversion Wizard.

46 Selecting copy
It's very simple to highlight a rectangular box of text within your document. You can do it just by holding down the [Alt] key as you click and drag to select.

47 Choosing sentences
If you want to select an entire sentence the quick and easy way, all you have to do is hold down [Ctrl] as you click anywhere within that sentence.

48 Selection shortcuts
Make use of Word's built-in keyboard shortcuts when you need to highlight sections of text. You can use [F8] and the cursors to select a character, word, sentence, paragraph or entire document in an instant.

> **Highlight everything from the cursor to the end of the line by holding down [Shift] and tapping [End]. This works in many applications.**

49 Quitting selection mode

Have you had enough of pressing the [F8] key? Just press [Esc] and you'll be able to quit the selection mode and return to normal typing.

50 Personal shortcuts

If you want to use different keyboard shortcuts to those already included in Word, you can define your own. Do this by selecting Tools > Customize, and then clicking the Keyboard button.

51 Assigning shortcuts

When you're creating shortcut keys, you can assign them to all or just some of your documents. Use the 'Save changes in' menu to make your choice. If you select Normal, your new shortcut keys will affect all documents.

52 Smarter searching

When you're searching your documents for specific words, always make sure you allow for misspellings too. You can do this by ticking 'Sounds Like (English)' in the 'Find and Replace' dialogue box.

53 Finding word forms

You can choose to search for all uses of a word by checking the 'Find All Word Forms (English)' option. For example, if you want to look for uses of the word 'go' in your document, you'll find all the instances of 'went' and 'gone' as well.

54 Do sums

If you have other Microsoft Office XP components installed on your PC as well as Word, you can insert items such as Microsoft Excel worksheets into your Word documents from the appropriate toolbar buttons. Use that instead of a table for enhanced calculations.

55 Paint styles

Click on the Format Painter button (the little paintbrush) and then click anywhere else in your document to instantly transfer the formatting from the first location to the second – handy if you need to make different styles match.

56 Spelling tools

Word's proofing tools enable you to check spelling and grammar
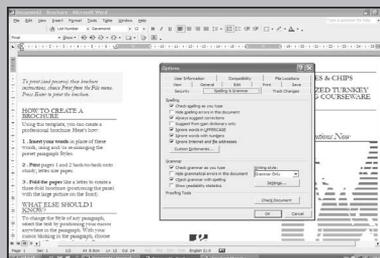
MANUAL SPELL CHECK

Word checks spelling as you type. To check it manually, pick Tools > Options > Spelling & Grammar, and tick the 'Check spelling as you type' box. Press [F7] to check manually.
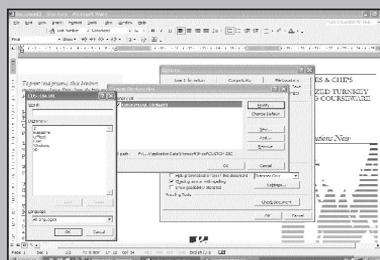
EDIT THE DICTIONARY

Remove mistaken entries by clicking Spelling & Grammar > Dictionaries. Choose the dictionary and click Edit. Locate and remove any misspellings, then click Save.

USE THE THESAURUS

To find synonyms and antonyms, select a word, then Tools > Language > Thesaurus. For an unrelated word, type it in the box 'Replace with Synonym' and click Look Up.

57 Cut and paste tips
Word 2002's AutoFormat tag makes cutting and pasting text easy. Right-click on the icon that pops up after the text is pasted and choose the style to apply to the new text.

58 Merging mail
Mail Merge in Word 2002 is easier than ever thanks to the new Mail Merge Wizard. Start it by choosing Tools > Letters and Mailings > Mail Merge Wizard.

59 Show formats
Quickly view your document's formatting using the Reveal Formatting task pane. Just select Format > Reveal Formatting.

60 Outlook contacts
Word links with your Outlook 2002 Address book. The next time you enter a name on your contact list, right-click on the name and choose to view it or send an email.

61 Join documents
Tie several documents together by creating a single overview document. Include each document by selecting Insert > Field. Choose Include Text under Field names, fill in the other options and click OK.

62 Moving lists
If you want to move or copy a numbered list to the end of another numbered list, click on the Smart tag that appears after the list is pasted. You can now choose to Continue List or 'Paste as a New List'.

63 New Track Changes options
Although Track Changes was introduced in Word 2000, it's been vastly improved in 2002. For example, you can filter what additions, amendments or deletions are displayed via the Show drop-down menu on the Reviewing toolbar.

64 Add a watermark
You can now add a watermark to your document, such as 'Draft'. Simply choose Format > Background > Printed Watermark.

65 Watermark options
Your watermark can either be a picture or some text – for text, just type your phrase and choose the styling.

66 Format clearing
Don't like the way Word has formatted your text? Just select the affected text and choose Edit > Clear > Formats.

67 Switch off Smart tags
You can switch off this option by selecting Tools > AutoCorrect Options > Smart Tags. From here, untick the 'Person Names (English)' option.
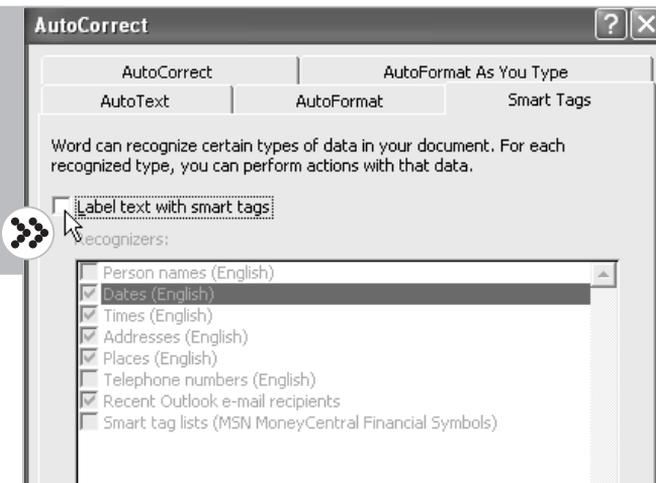
Hold down [Alt] and [Shift] and then hit [Tab]. This enables you to cycle backwards through your running programs.

Word Count

263 Words ▾ Recount

Outlook 2003 uses state-of-the-art t
to evaluate whether a message sho
based on several factors—such as t
content and structure of the mes
sender or type of e-mail message.
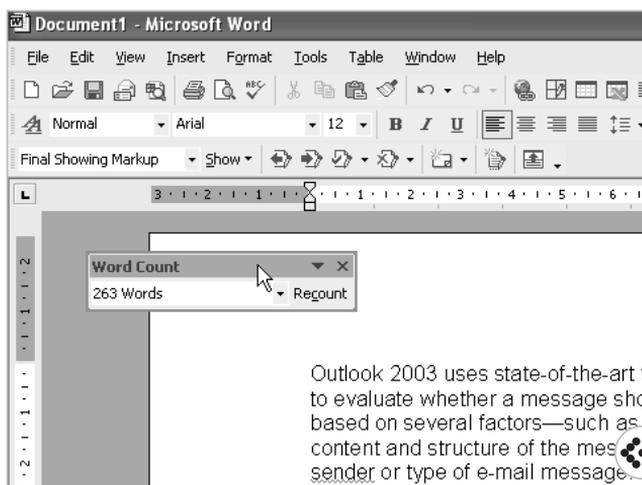
81 Count your words
One of Word 2002's great new features is the Word Count toolbar. Add it with View > Toolbars > Word Count.

68 Delete a Smart tag
Remove a Smart tag by simply clicking the tag and choosing 'Remove This Smart Tag'.

69 Remove all Smart tags
To do this for the whole document, choose Smart Tag Options > Remove Smart Tags, under the Smart Tag tab.

70 Eyes wide
Remove all toolbars and fill the screen with your text by selecting Full Screen from the View menu. Click on the floating button to instantly switch back to the usual view.

71 Demand a recount
Click on the Recount button for a Word Count update.

72 Clipboard previews
Preview the contents of the clipboard on Word 2002's new thumbnail clipboard.

73 Open the clipboard
Do you want to keep the Clipboard task pane open? Choose Edit > Office Clipboard.

74 New templates
You can create a template based on an existing document. Choose File > New and pick Choose Document under New from Existing Document.

75 Translation tasks
Use Word's new Translation task pane to make translating single words fast and easy.

76 Web warning
Word 2002's web components make creating a web page easier, but they only work if your page is hosted on a site that supports Microsoft's SharePoint services.

77 Designing a booklet
Choose File > Page Setup > Margins and select Book Fold under Multiple Pages, and All under 'Sheets for Booklet'. You can then create pages where you fold the paper in half and staple it in saddle-stitch style.

78 Printing a booklet
When you print a document this way, you need to print on both sides of the paper. If your printer doesn't do this automatically, check the Manual Duplex option.

79 Print with changes
You can print a document with your changes marked – select 'Document Showing Markup' under Print What.

80 Open windows
Choose the number of windows that open with multiple documents. Select Tools > Options and switch to the View tab.

Essential Shortcuts

Here are shortcuts to some of the more popular symbols, as well as a few more obscure ones!

82 Hyperlink creation
To create a hyperlink, type [Ctrl] + [K]

83 Moving words
To move to the previous/next word, type [Ctrl] + [<-] or [->]

84 Move to a line end
To move to the beginning or end of a line, type [Home] or [End]

85 Document positioning
To move to the beginning or end of a document, type [Ctrl] + [Home] or [Ctrl] + [End]

86 Font size
To increase or decrease font size by one point, type [Ctrl] + []] or [Ctrl] + [[]

87 Symbol font
To assign a symbol font to the next character, type [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Q]

88 Align text
To align text left, right or centred, type [Ctrl] + [L], [Ctrl] + [R] or [Ctrl] +[E]

89 Remove formatting
To remove formatting from selected text, type [Ctrl] + [Space]

90 Track Changes option
To switch Track Changes in Word 2002 on or off, type [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [E]

91 Personalised shortcuts
If you want to add your own shortcuts, all you have to do is choose Insert > Symbol, then select the character you want and click on the AutoCorrect button.

92 Word Count toolbar
To update the Word Count Toolbar, type [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [R]

93 Insert the copyright symbol
To get the copyright symbol, type [(] + [c] + [)]

94 Registered trademarks
To get the registered trademark symbol, type [(] + [r] + [)]

95 Trademark symbol
To get the trademark symbol, type [(] + [t] + [m] + [)]

96 Forward arrows
To get a forward pointing arrow, type [-] + [-] + [>]

97 Backward arrows
To get a backward pointing arrow, type [<] + [-] + [-]

98 Bold forward arrows
To get a bold forward pointing arrow, type [=] + [=] + [>]

99 Bold backward arrows
To get a bold backward pointing arrow, type [<] + [=] + [=]

100 Assign shortcuts
There's an alternative way in which you can select your own keyboard shortcuts. Just click on the Shortcut Key button and you'll be able to assign a keyboard shortcut to the character in question. You can also right-click on an area of a toolbar and choose Customize... to make other changes to the interface.

> **Hit [Ctrl] + [F4] to close the window that is currently operating within an application – but the program will continue running.**

Your Notes ....

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Microsoft Office Microsoft Excel Tips

Microsoft Excel Tips

Learn the secrets of this detailed and flexible spreadsheet package with our 100 best tips

1 Syntax recall
Can't remember a formula's syntax? Type the first part, for example, =pmt(and then wait. A tooltip will appear showing the syntax – simply hover your mouse over any argument to find out more information.

2 Monitor values
Keep track of the value in a cell by setting up a Watch. Right-click the cell and click Watch to set it up.

10 Keep up to date

Let Excel keep your workbook updated automatically

Take advantage of automatic calculation updates
If your workbook is updated constantly, you need to make sure that Excel is set up to update calculations automatically. Choose Tools > Options > Calculation tab and check that Automatic is selected under Calculation. Also, remember to tick the 'Update remote references' box before finally clicking OK.

3 Evaluate formula
Confused by the result of a formula? It happens to all of us! You can evaluate it in a step-by-step fashion by choosing the Evaluate Formula on the Formula Auditing toolbar to try to see what's happened.

4 Add or subtract cells
You can change the cells that are referred to in a formula by moving the blue range finder area over the cells that you wish to include in the formula. You can add or subtract cells in this way.

5 Automate Excel
You can turn on AutoSum, AutoAverage or auto just about anything using the drop-down list to the right of the AutoSum button on the toolbar.

6 Examine contents
When you see the entry ### in a cell, you just have to hold your mouse over that cell in order to see its contents.

7 Merge cells
You can merge cells by selecting them and clicking the Merge and Center button. Repeat this to undo the process.

8 Move to certain cells
You can move to the first cell in a row at the press of a button. Simply click on [Home] to get there. Similarly, you just have to press [Ctrl] + [Home] to move to cell A1.

9 AutoCorrect speed-ups
Set up AutoCorrect to replace a short keyword with text you commonly type to save yourself some time. Choose Tools > AutoCorrect to set it up.

To highlight everything in a line of text from the cursor back to the start of the line, hit [Shift] and [Home] at the same time.

11 Entering days

To enter a series of weekdays into your spreadsheet you should type the first date in a cell and then drag the fill handle using the right mouse button. Now choose the Fill Weekdays option from the shortcut menu and Excel will fill in the days for you.

12 Enter numbers as text

When you want to enter a number as a text entry, you can prefix it with a single apostrophe ('). Note that you should never do this to a number that you plan to use in a calculation.

13 Add the date and time

Enter the date into the current cell by pressing [Ctrl] + [:] and the time by pressing [Ctrl] + [;].

14 Hide columns

Hide a column by right-clicking its column letter and then selecting Hide.

15 Hide sheets

Hide a sheet by making it the current sheet and selecting Format > Sheet > Hide.

16 Show columns

If you've hidden a column, you can make it visible again by selecting the columns on either side of it, right-clicking and then choosing Unhide.

17 Constant creation

Create a constant to use in your calculations by choosing Insert > Name > Define. Now you just need to type a name for the constant and enter its value in the Refers To area.

18 Using constants by name

You can use your constant in a formula by referring to its name – for example, =VATRate*23.4 (where VATRate is your named constant).

19 AutoSum shortcut

It's easier to create an AutoSum by using the keyboard combination [Alt] + [=]. This is a much faster alternative to clicking on the toolbar button.

20 Get a better view

Don't scroll around – put the cells you want on-screen together
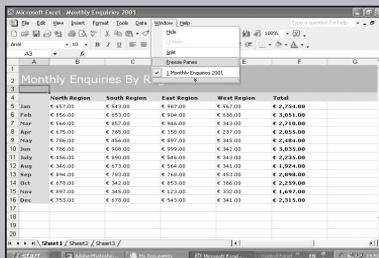
KEEP TRACK OF HEADINGS

Keep labels at the top of columns visible as you scroll down by clicking in the cell under the labels and choosing Window > Freeze Panes. Hit Unfreeze once you've finished.
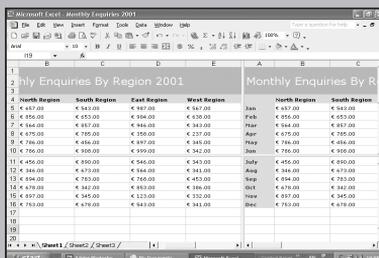
CHOOSE WHAT YOU SEE

To see sections of the worksheet you can't normally fit on, choose Window > Split. Press [F6] to jump from pane to pane and double-click to remove the split.
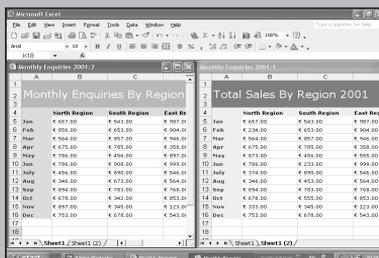
SEE MULTIPLE SHEETS

Choose Window > New Window to open as many sheets as you want. Select Window > Arrange and check the 'Windows of active workbook' box.

21 Multiple paste
If you want to paste multiple items, first you need to copy them. The next step is to choose View > Toolbars > Clipboard. The Clipboard toolbar displays its contents, so from here you'll be able to click the ones you want to paste.

22 Rotate text
You can rotate text in a cell simply by choosing Format > Cell > Alignment, and then selecting from the range of Orientation options there.

23 Text creation shortcuts
If you want to create multiple lines of text in a cell, the fastest way to do so is by pressing [Alt] + [Return] every time you need to start a new line.

24 Copying sheets
You can easily create a copy of a worksheet by holding down [Ctrl] as you drag the sheet's tab.

25 Add it up
Quickly sum the values in a range by selecting it and reading the value from the SUM=n area.

26 Multiple data entry
You can enter the same data in more than one worksheet at a time simply by selecting the worksheets that you want to use. Do this by holding [Shift] as you click on their tabs and then typing in your data. You'll find that this can be a real time-saving and hassle-free tip!

27 Sheet numbers
You can set the number of blank sheets for every new workbook you create by choosing Tools > Options > General, and then setting the 'Sheets in New Workbook' setting to your preferred value.

28 Alternative addition
Another way in which you can quickly sum all of the values in a range is to view the Count > Count Numbers > Average > Maximum or Minimum of a selection by right-clicking the Sum=n area of the Status bar. From here, you just need to select another calculation.

29 Fast chart creation
The easiest and quickest way to create a chart from a range is by selecting it and then pressing [F11].

30 Moving chart location
Move a chart to a new location by right-clicking the chart object, selecting Location and choosing a new location for it.
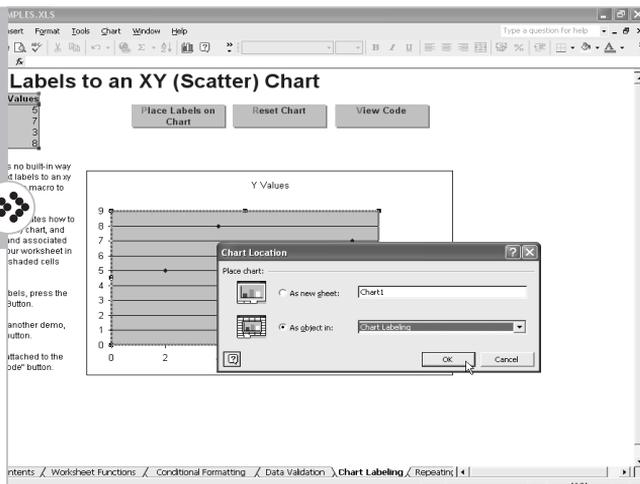
If you want an alternative to right-clicking, press [Shift] and [F10] simultaneously to bring up the usual context-sensitive menu.
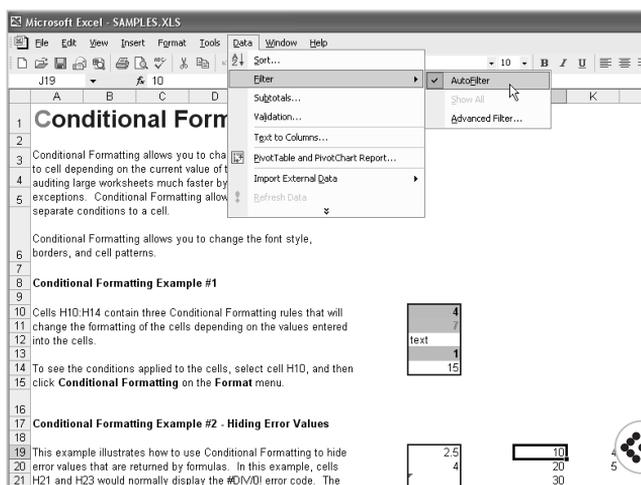
40 Filters
Filter data in a sheet by selecting it and choosing Data > AutoFilter. Now pick the data to view from the drop-down lists next to the column headings. Finally, select Data > Filter > Show All, to view all the data.

31 Close workbook shortcut
You can close all of your open workbooks in an instant by holding down the [Shift] key as you choose the File menu and then selecting Close All.

32 Add a data series
You can add a data series to an existing chart simply by selecting the series and then dragging and dropping it onto the chart you've selected.

33 Remove a data series
It's just as easy to remove a data series from a chart. In order to do this, you just have to select the series that you want to remove and then press the [Del] key to get rid of it.

34 Customised lists
Create a custom list by choosing Tools > Options and clicking on the Custom Lists tab. Now type the entries into the List entries area and click Add. Use this as you would any other built-in Excel list.

35 Non-contiguous charts
Create a chart from non-contiguous ranges on a worksheet by holding [Ctrl] as you select each range in turn. You should then continue as you normally would to create your chart.

36 Entering fractions
Entering a fraction into a cell is a simple process but it's one that many people struggle to get to grips with. To enter fractions, all you have to do is type the fraction, remembering to include a leading 0 if it's between 1 and -1. For example, you can enter 1 3/4, but you must type 0 3/4 and -0 3/4 for the smaller figures.

37 Data sorting
You can sort data in a sheet by selecting the data that you want to sort and then choosing Data > Sort. Be careful to select all of the data to avoid sorting only one column of it.

38 Data form creation
In order to create a data form for entering data into a list, click in the list and select Data > Form.

39 Viewing toolbars
Some toolbars, like the Auditing toolbar, aren't available via the View menu, as you'd perhaps expect them to be. If you use these a lot and would benefit from having them available all the time, you can choose to show this toolbar permanently. To do so, all you have to do is select Tools > Auditing > Show Auditing toolbar, and you'll have access to it.

41 Adding text
You can add text to a chart by selecting any non-text part of the chart (for example, a data series). Now you just need to type and a text area will be automatically created for you to write in.

42 Number formatting
If you want to change your format so that numbers like 2350 appear as 23.50 (with the decimal point inserted automatically for you), you can set up the process easily. Start by choosing Tools > Options > Edit tab. From here you need to enable the Fixed Decimal box and set the number of decimal places to use.

43 Empty screens start
In order to start Excel with an empty screen (instead of a blank workbook), you need to add /e to the desktop shortcut for Excel. It should now read something like this: "C:\Program Files\MicrosoftOffice\Office\ excel.exe" /e

44 Ordering calculations
If you want Excel to perform addition or subtraction first, place the sum in brackets, like this: (3+4)*2 = 14.

45 Internet tables
To copy data that is being displayed in a table within Internet Explorer, just select the table in Internet Explorer and drag and drop it into Excel.

46 Save previews
Ensure that previews are saved with your worksheets so you'll be able to see them in the File Open dialogue box. To do this, you need to select File > Properties > Summary, and then make sure you enable the 'Save preview picture' box.

47 Visual Basic shortcut
Open the Visual Basic editor by pressing [Alt] + [F11].

48 Personal macros
Get into the habit of saving any macros you've created, which should then be available to all worksheets, in your Personal Macro Workbook.

49 Add comments
You can easily add a comment to a cell just by clicking it and choosing Insert > Comment. You'll then be given the opportunity to type your text.

50 Zooming in on sheets
Zoom in to view part of a sheet in the editing area by selecting the area and then choosing Selection from the Zoom drop-down list that appears.
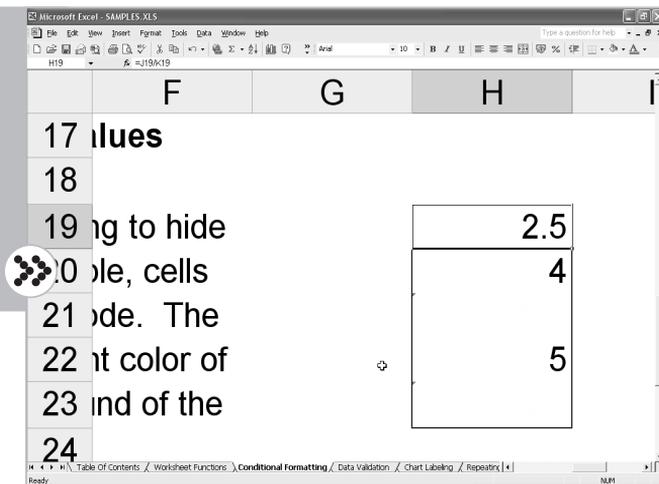
The taskbar at the bottom of the desktop displays buttons for all open applications – cycle through them with [Windows] and [Tab].

Page Setup

Page | Margins | Header/Footer | Sheet

Print area:

Print titles
Rows to repeat at top:
Columns to repeat at left:

Print... | Print Preview | Options...

Print
☑ Gridlines
☐ Black and white
☐ Draft quality

☐ Row and column headings
Comments: (None)
Cell errors as: displayed

Page order
◉ Down, then over
○ Over, then down

OK | Cancel
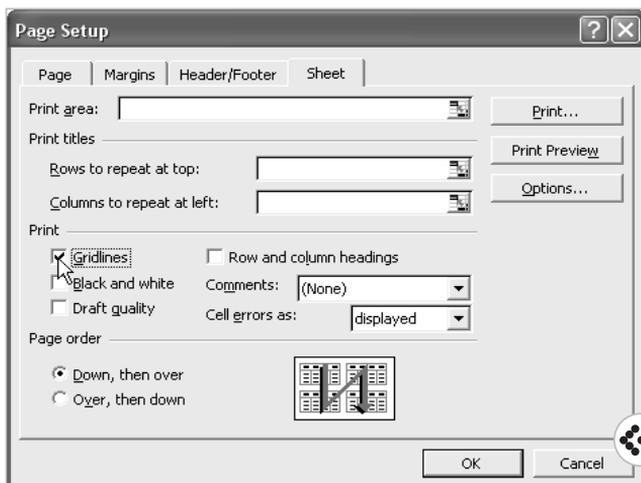
60 Get rid of gridlines
Remove gridlines from your prints by choosing File > Page Setup > Sheet. Now check the 'Disable the Gridlines' box.

51 Format dialogue shortcut
If you want to reformat your worksheets, you'll need to use the formatting dialogue box. The quickest way in which you can open this box is by pressing the [Ctrl] + [1] keys. This is a very handy shortcut to get a range of formatting options.

52 Draw cell borders
From the Formatting toolbar, you should choose the drop-down button by the Border Drawing icon and choose Draw Borders. This will enable you to draw cell borders onto your document using the mouse.

53 Change colours
Make your worksheets more interesting by giving them a new colour scheme. You can change the colour of a worksheet tab easily, simply by right-clicking it and choosing the colour you'd prefer to use.

54 Add graphics
Adding art to your worksheets can make them appear far more eye-catching and interesting, and can also help them to look more professional if you include your company logo, for example. You can add a logo or an image to a worksheet footer very easily in Excel by selecting View > Header and Footer, and then inserting the image or graphic of your choice.

55 Margin adjustment
Adjust the margins in Page Preview by clicking the Margins button and dragging on a margin to adjust it.

56 Choose fonts
It's easy to set the default font for all new workbooks. You can do it by choosing Tools > Options > General. Now set the desired font and size.

57 Design a book
You can create plans and charts using the cells in Microsoft Excel. This book – like Microsoft Windows XP: The Official Magazine – was 'flatplanned' (organised on paper) using an Excel grid.

58 Fitting worksheets
You can fit an entire worksheet onto a single page by choosing File > Page Setup > Page, and setting it to Fit to 1 page(s) wide by 1 tall. This is a very useful way of getting an overview of your documents.

59 Edit colours
The fastest way to alter a colour in Excel's palette is by heading over to the Tools > Options > Color tab, and select the colour that you want to change. All you have to do is click Modify and choose a replacement colour of your choice.

Microsoft Office Microsoft Excel Tips

61 Naming a cell range
Name a range of cells by selecting them, then type a name in the Name box at the far left of the Formula bar and press [Return].
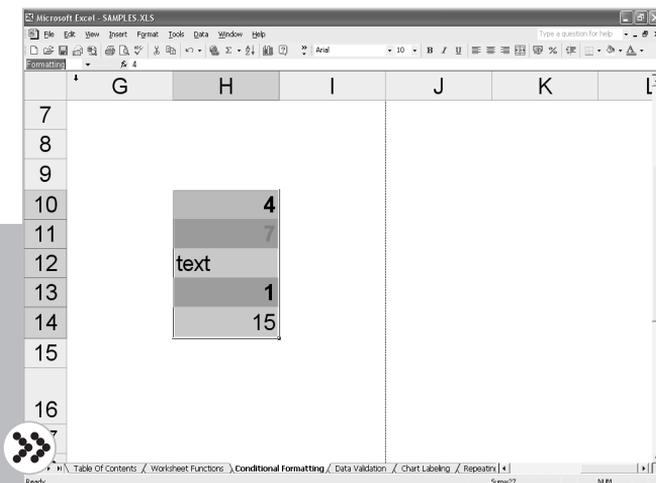
62 View comments
It's simple to view the contents of a comment – all you have to do is hold your mouse over its marker in the top right area of the cell and the information will automatically appear.

63 Fast formula copies
You can quickly copy a formula just by clicking in the cell with your selected formula, then holding [Ctrl] and dragging the fill handle across the cells.

64 Select a cell
You can easily go to any cell in your worksheet in an instant by pressing [F5] and then typing in the cell reference. Finally, click on OK.

65 Cell indents
You can indent all of the text that's contained in a cell simply by clicking the Increase Indent button on the Formatting toolbar. If you decide that the text doesn't need to be indented then just choose Decrease Indent to undo the formatting.

66 View macros
If you press [Alt] + [F8] you'll be able to view a list of all of your available macros. Now you just have to choose one and then click on Run.

67 Assign macro shortcuts
A handy tip to save time is to assign a macro to a shortcut key. In order to do this, you need to press [Alt] + [F8]. Now select the macro and click Options, then set a shortcut key to run it.

68 Print selections
If you'd like to print out only one particular part of a workbook, select the section that you'd like to print and choose File > Print > Selection. Finally, print your selection by clicking OK.

69 Using the Name box
When you've named a cell range (see tip number 61 in the box above), you can select it quickly by choosing its name from the Name box.

70 Select all
If you want to highlight every cell using just a single mouse click, you can do so by clicking the button at the intersection of the row and column titles.

71 Add hyperlinks
You can easily add a hyperlink to an AutoShape by selecting the shape, then pressing [Ctrl] + [K] – this will then open the Hyperlink dialogue box, giving you a range of different options.

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72 Print previews
If you'd like to see how your worksheet will be broken up when it is printed, choose View > Page Break Preview, and you'll get an on-screen view.

73 Moving worksheets
Move a worksheet from one workbook to another the easy way by displaying both workbooks side by side, then dragging the sheet by its tab to the other workbook.

74 Print charts
Excel gives you the option to print any chart on its own page simply by selecting the chart in question and then choosing the File > Print option.

75 Sheet shortcuts
The fastest way in which you can add a new sheet to a workbook is by pressing the [Shift] + [F11] keys.

76 Deletion options
To remove all of the data, comments and formatting that you may have added to a particular cell, all you have to do is select it and then choose Edit > Clear > All, to leave it blank.

77 Check names
Are you ever unsure of what part of a chart you have selected? It's quite easy to get confused if you're working on a large project or multiple spreadsheets. However, Excel has some handy tools to help you out. For example, you can clarify that you're looking at the right section of a chart simply by reading its name in the Name box (the Name box is located at the far left of the Formula bar).

78 Copy data
Here are a couple of handy Excel shortcuts to help you to work in a faster and more productive fashion. First, you can copy data or a formula from the cell above simply by pressing [Ctrl] + [D]. You can also copy it from the cell to the left by pressing [Ctrl] + [R]. Check out the boxes at the foot of the pages in this chapter for many more Microsoft Office shortcuts.

79 Freeze titles
You can easily freeze any worksheet's titles just by placing your cell pointer below and to the left of the titles that you want to freeze and then choosing the relevant option from within Window > Freeze Panes.
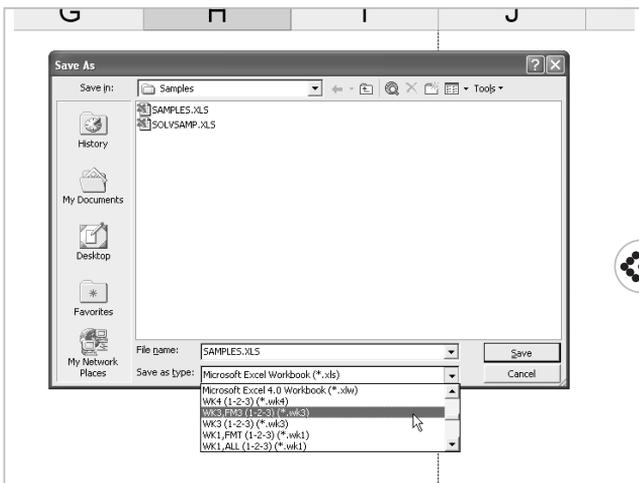
80 File saving formats
Save an Excel file in a different file format (for example, Lotus 1-2-3) by choosing the format from the 'Save as type' drop-down list.

To search for other computers on your network, hold down [Windows] + [Ctrl] + [F]. This will open the Find Computer window.

Microsoft Office Microsoft Excel Tips

81 Icon boost
Increase the size of your toolbar icons by choosing Tools > Customize > Options, and then enabling the Large Icons box.
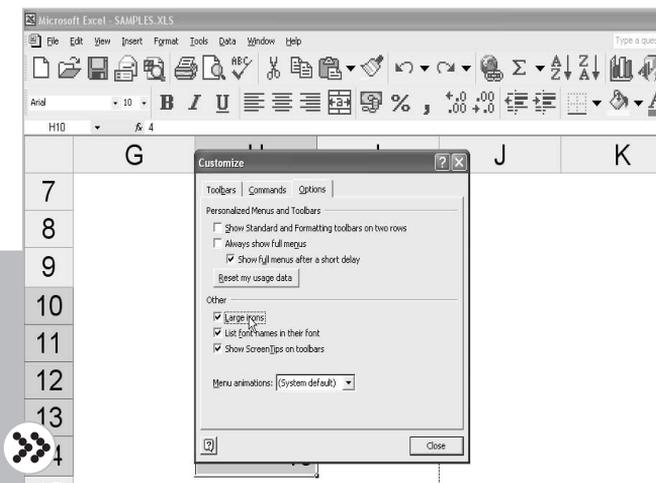
82 Undo options
If you think you may want to undo something you've worked on at a later date, don't save your workbook, as this clears the Undo list and disables this option.

83 Cell style
If you click on any of the Currency, Percent Style or Comma Style buttons, you can apply the style you've chosen to the current cell.

84 Modifying style
Alternatively, you can personalise one of these styles by choosing Format > Style. Select the style that you wish to alter, then click on Modify and make your changes to the style.

85 Dual display
You can display two areas from the same worksheet at the same time by clicking on Window Split. You are then able to move the split bars so that they create the display areas.

86 Multiple deletion
To delete more than one cell at once, hold down the mouse button and drag it over a range of cells to select them all. Then drag the fill handle back over them to remove their contents.

87 Sum conditions
You can use the useful =SUMIF function if you want to sum (add up the total of) a range of numbers in your worksheet, based on a single condition.

88 Multiplication and sum tools
You can use the function =sumproduct(range1,range2) to multiply the contents of range1 by range2 and sum the results.

89 Spice up your sheets
It's simple to add extra interest and colour to your worksheets by varying the styles and fonts used. Just click on Insert > Picture > WordArt, and then choose an effect that you want to use.

90 Remove zeros
Hide any zero values in your worksheet by clicking on Tools > Options > View. Then disable the tick by the Zero Values box and click on OK.

91 Analysis toolpak
You can enable the handy Analysis toolpak for Excel by clicking on Tools > Add-ins. Then check the box next to Analysis Toolpak and wait while the application installs onto your PC.

92 Find the last day
If you need to quickly find the last day of a particular month, you should use the Analysis toolpak's =EOMONTH(date, month_forward) function – for example, =EOMONTH("01/01/2002",1) for the last day of February 2002.

93 Get a double underline
You can apply a double underline to the data in any cell. Simply select the cell, and then hold down the [Shift] button while you click on the Underline button.

94 Start shifting
Some Excel buttons have a double function and change their effect when you hold down the [Shift] key. For example, you can hold [Shift] and then click on Sort Ascending to reverse the function and perform a sort in descending order.

95 Function help
If you are having trouble with using a particular function, you can get help with it from within Excel. Simply click on the cell in which you want to use the function and simultaneously press [Shift] + [F3].

96 Insert workbook information
You can enter the current workbook's file name and location into a cell using =CELL("filename").

97 Select blank cells
If you need to highlight all of the blank cells in a worksheet, do it the quick and easy way by selecting Edit > Go To > Special > Blanks, and clicking OK.

98 Background images
To make your document a bit more interesting, you can insert a background image that will be tiled under your worksheet. You can do this by choosing Format > Sheet > Background.

99 Sheet navigation tools
You can right-click on the sheet navigation tools, found in the bottom-left corner of a workbook, if you want to view a selectable list of available sheets.
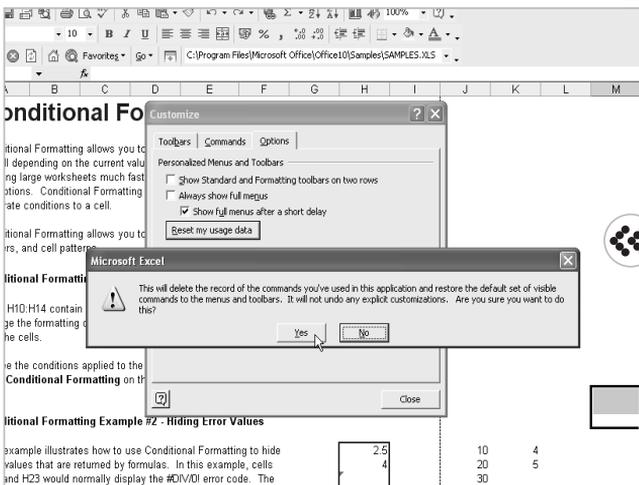
100 Toolbar restoration
Restore toolbars to their original state by selecting View > Toolbars, selecting the toolbar to restore and finally clicking on Reset.

Skip backwards and forwards through internet pages by holding down [Alt] while tapping either the [<] or [>] key.

Tablet PC

Take Windows XP on the road and learn how to use your ultra-slim Tablet PC more efficiently

There's a new breed of PC around these days: the Tablet PC. Sporting a specially modified version of Windows XP to support its mobile and touch-screen functions, Tablets are perfect for anyone whose job requires a lot of travelling, but still needs them to have near-constant access to a PC. Heavy and bulky laptops can only really be used while you're sitting down, and still depend on standard keyboard and mouse inputs. Tablet PCs use a magnetic pen to literally write straight onto the screen, so you can even use it standing up on a train. Even if you don't need it for business, a Tablet can improve your home computing experience – you can use it to browse the internet or watch movies while in bed, or use its unique capabilities to read books or send handwritten emails.

Over the next six pages, we'll tell you exactly how Microsoft Windows XP: Tablet PC Edition will change your life in the office, at home and on the road, with some top tips on how it's being used by different people and industries across the world and why it's more environmentally friendly. We'll also give you some great advice on how its special functions can be seamlessly used in conjunction with your existing PC and a full range of peripherals.

There are hundreds of potential uses for Tablet PCs and they're revolutionising the world of mobile computing. The laptop is definitely advancing to its next evolution…
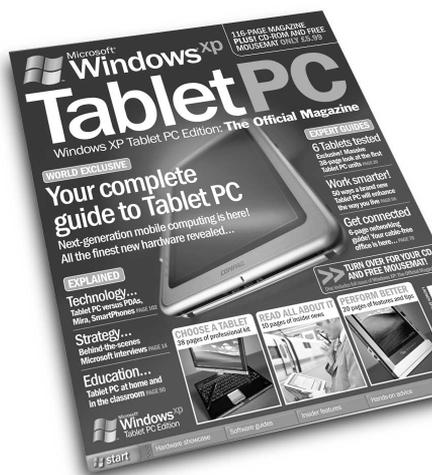
Issue 1 Special 2002
DETAILS **+44 (0) 870 444 8475**
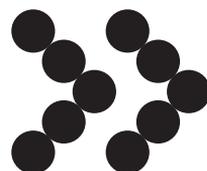
50 Top Tablet PC Tips

With hundreds of innovative features, we've cherry-picked 50 of the best Tablet tips for you

1 Make perfect presentations
By plugging your Tablet PC into a projector, you can make PowerPoint presentations stand out. You can highlight or add points on the fly by drawing on your Tablet's screen with its pen. Tables and charts can be added and filled in exactly the same way.

2 Walk and work
Its clipboard size means the Tablet is ideal for surveyors, architects, shopkeepers or anyone who needs to work on the move.

3 Never forget anything!
Keep on your toes in important meetings thanks to your Tablet's built-in 802.11b wireless network connection. Documents can be called up instantly, so you'll never be caught off-guard by an awkward question.

4 Keep everything in one place
It's easy to add a monitor or keyboard, so you can make a Tablet your main PC, meaning you can keep your work with you.

5 Get more from Word
Handwritten notes in digital ink can make full use of Word's annotation features.

6 Never lose another note
Journal stores notes in your own handwriting and can still search them for keywords, so you'll always be able to find them.

7 View documents on screen
At the touch of a button, you can switch the screen from portrait to landscape. By changing the viewing angle of the screen, the reading of documents becomes more natural, enabling you to put more text on the screen at any one time.

8 Be polite – use Journal
Using Journal with your Tablet in slate form is less distracting than a keyboard.

9 Travel light
A Tablet weighs just over a kilogram, so it's goodbye to sore shoulders!

10 Short on screen space?
Go to Control Panel > Pen, and select the Tablet Options. From here, you can set the writing pad to auto minimise when it's not in use.

Please read the text below out loud:

As you read the text, each recognized word is highlighted. A mispronunciation or mistake will cause the wizard to stop highlighting words. The wizard will then back up to the last pause detected.

Skip Word   Pause

Training progress:

< Back   Next >   Cancel
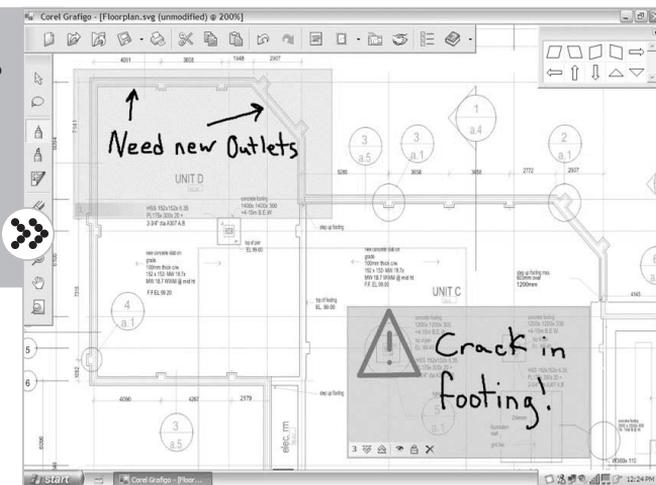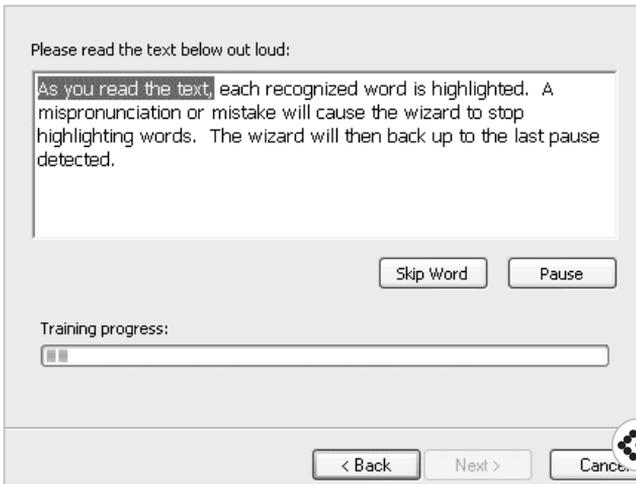
11 Speak your mind
The latest Microsoft Office tools will enable you to add voice notes to all your documents.

12 Complete contracts
Seal deals with style by quickly filling in a contract and letting your clients sign it on the Tablet's screen.

13 Don't run out of power
A Tablet must be capable of four hours of work time and 72 hours in standby on a single charge.

14 Have an instant PC
Say goodbye to admiring the view from the train while your laptop boots up. This Porsche of portables goes from standby to fully on in less than five seconds.

15 Dictate your letters
Digital ink isn't the only new way of working. With a built-in microphone and the voice recognition capabilities of Windows XP, you can dictate documents straight to screen.

16 Get a promotion
A Proudfoot Consulting study demonstrated this year that Britain's poor productivity record may be depriving the economy of more than £111 billion. So, get yourself a Tablet PC, work smarter and save your company money.

17 Internet access
You'll need broadband and a wireless router, but being able to access the internet from anywhere in the house with a Tablet will change your surfing habits forever.

18 Never visit the shops again
Imagine the scenario: you're squatting in front of the fridge, jotting down items you need into your Tablet. You then tap your pen and the list is sent straight to your local supermarket (see www.sainsburys.co.uk or www.tesco.co.uk for details). Easy.

19 Send handwritten emails
Your parents may be getting along with the digital age pretty well, but we're sure they still find typing out personal letters in an email fairly formal. With a Tablet you can send a handwritten email to anyone, whether they have a Tablet or not.

20 Find your way home
Next generation route-planning software will work with your Tablet PC's pen. This enables you to tap your destination and start points on a map and get detailed directions. You can use this feature when you need it the most, too – when you're in the car.

You can hit the [Backspace] key in Internet Explorer 6 to take you back to the previously viewed website, instead of clicking the Back button.

21 Download magazines

With software like Zinio (check out www.zinio.com), you can buy magazines online and download them to your Tablet PC. You can get Windows XP: The Official Magazine so give it a try!
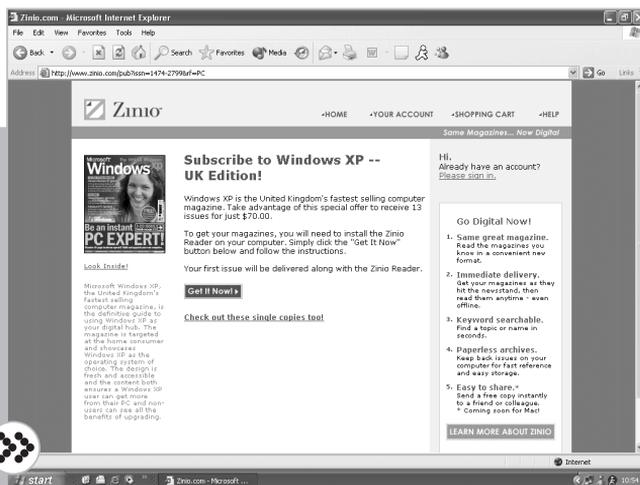
22 Jot it

Need to jot something down while you're reading? Call up the input panel at any time by waving the stylus back and forth in a small section of the screen.

23 Keep your own library

Ebooks may not have posed a serious threat to traditional publishing methods yet, but Tablet could be the way forward thanks to ClearType technology, high resolution screens and sites like the Million Book project, where classics like Huckleberry Finn can be found. Visit www.archive.org/texts/millionbooks.php for more information.

24 Efficient editing

Don't keep changing your pen type in Journal – use the pressure-sensitive settings for quicker document edits.

25 Make the most of your music

Stream music straight from your Tablet PC's hard drive, or store MP3s on it.

26 Teach your kids

Run Easiteach software and discover exercises to improve your child's maths and computer skills.

27 Use your existing peripherals

If you still can't give up the traditional keyboard and mouse, don't worry – a Tablet PC comes fully featured with USB and FireWire ports so you can use all of your favourite peripherals with ease.

28 Never buy a newspaper...

Many local and national newspapers put their print content straight online so that it's ready for you to download to your Tablet PC to read on the train on the way to work, or wherever and whenever is convenient for you. Try visiting The Guardian newspaper's website, found at www.guardian.co.uk.

29 Chat on video

It's easy to hook your easy-to-carry Tablet up to a webcam. This means that you'll be able to chat with your friends or business colleagues wherever and whenever you want, all on video.

30 Be team captain

If you load up pictures of cricket or football pitches, you can use the digital pen to easily draw circles and lines all over them, helping you to organise your local team's tactics just like a professional coach.

If you turn off number lock on your keyboard, you can use the pad to navigate within a document – 8 is up, 6 right, 2 down and 4 left.

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31 Play games online
Forget Minesweeper – Inkball will get you instantly addicted.

32 Be decadent
Surf the web or read while you're in bed. With no cooling fan to get clogged up in the duvet, it's far safer with a Tablet PC than it is with a laptop.

33 Play Pictionary
Tablet PC is a serious business instrument and not a toy. But Journal does have its own entertaining uses…

34 Edit images on-screen
Pens and tablets have been available for graphical artists to draw freehand images for quite a long time now, and they have proved to be a popular instrument. But with Tablet technology, images can be drawn and edited on-screen with true precision. Corel is already updating its acclaimed graphics suite to take advantage of this.

35 Waste no time!
Your Tablet PC supports grab-and-go removal from a docking station, which means that you can yank it up and run off without any fear of damage. Plus it has a fast resume-from-standby time, so it's going to be switched on and ready when you need it.

36 Use current applications
Tablet PC will run every application you're familiar with and is even upgradable to a certain degree.

37 Make your PC work for you
Windows XP Tablet PC Edition is Microsoft's most customisable OS to date. Combine this with at least five programmable buttons on your machine and as many shortcut keys as can fit on the pen, and you'll soon realise that you'll never have to work around your PC again. It will even adapt to right or left-handed use.

38 Tear it out and hot dock it
One of the biggest and most useful benefits of a Tablet PC is its hot docking feature. Even if you're in the middle of transferring a file, you can simply lift your Tablet out of its docking station and walk off, without losing any data at all.

39 Save space
It may not be an issue if you live in a mansion, but if you're crammed into a one-bedroom flat then you'll know the joys of trying to work at an Ikea workstation. And what about those fold-out tables on aeroplanes? Pah. The Tablet PC is the smallest and most effective way of working in compact spaces.

40 Need a handy shortcut?
For even faster manipulation of your Word and Excel documents, set two shortcuts up for the Cut and Paste tools.

41 Keep your work safe with digital security
Tablet PC is equipped with the latest in secure digital technology, including new EFS file encryption.
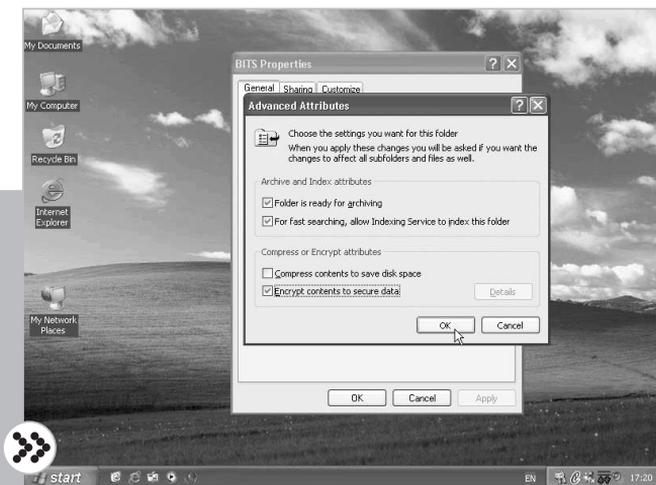
42 Write your music on-screen
If you write your own music, Tablet PC can do for sheet music what word processing did for letters.

43 Make a gesture, use the pen
As well as all those customisable buttons on the Tablet PC, shortcuts can be triggered by intuitive gestures that are made by the pen. And because it's an absolute joy to use, stabbing the pen down hard on the screen and damaging either of them won't be one of the gestures it makes.

44 Save the world – part one
Conserve energy, thanks to low-power processors and the highly efficient components that are used throughout.

45 Save the world – part two
We've all heard the phrase 'paperless office', but using a Tablet is as natural as using paper, so why not hear it again?

46 Save a life
Tablet-like devices are being used by ambulance crews and police forces to enable them to rapidly access critical data while on the move.

47 Use menus
Think you'll miss the functionality of your keyboard if you switch over to a Tablet PC? A simple tap and hold of the pen brings up a wide variety of context sensitive menus in any application, which should help you to feel right at home.

48 Pretend you're in Star Trek
Take work to your Captain (okay, boss) to approve in digital form like they do on TV. If you share a wireless network, you can also transfer your documents directly to his or her machine.

49 Which way of working?
It's a good idea to invest in a convertible Tablet which has a foldaway keyboard if you're reluctant to give up the more traditional method of mouse and keyboard altogether, giving you the best of both data input worlds.

50 Pro printing
You can print more accurately from Journal by formatting the page as an image first. While this will take slightly longer, it will make the finished product look considerably more professional.

Hit [Ctrl] + [D] while using Internet Explorer 6 to quickly add the current web page to your Favorites list.

Your Notes ....

www.windowsxpmagazine.co.uk

Camera Tips

Take pictures like a pro with our great advice on how to make the most of your digital camera

J ust when the rising cost of decent SLR cameras looked as though it was going to price out the amateur photographer from taking decent pictures easily and cheaply, we were met by the dawning of the age of digital cameras. The technology is still evolving, but it's already possible to take some wonderful photos and see them instantly, as well as editing, printing and emailing them, without having to bother with any of the time or cost of developing them.

However, it's also possible to take really bad photos if you rely too heavily on the automatic or default settings of your camera, so it's well worth having a fiddle with the settings until you learn what gives the best results in different locations.

To help you, we've compiled our series of digital camera tips that ran for three issues into one enormous archive. In fact, we reckon that within just half an hour, you'll be taking immeasurably better shots and will be able to wield an impressive working knowledge of what makes a good photo.

Just a few of the things we've covered include how to take better exterior or indoor shots, how to create cool effects, how to ensure the foreground is always in focus, what size of memory card to choose, how to take better head shots or pictures of water, a guide to night-time photos, a close-up look at macro shots and more. There are 60 tips in total, and while we can't quite promise your photos will be 60 times better as a result, it's a near thing for sure.

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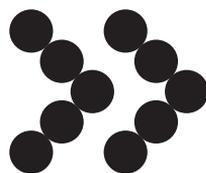
Taking Better Pictures

Our 20 simple tips will help you to start taking more creative, better quality images in no time

1 White Balance
When we first start using digital cameras, most of us leave all the settings on Auto. There's one manual control that can make a real difference to your shots though, and that's White Balance. When outdoors, try switching it to Cloudy to get warmer colours, or try Tungsten for some cool effects.

2 Flash to the rescue
On a beautiful day, outdoor shots of friends can really catch life at its best. However, if the sun is bright, you may capture the colours in the sky and landscape while leaving your foreground subjects dull. The solution is simple – switch on fill-in flash.

3 Use the screen
Although most digital cameras have optical viewfinders, it's often a better idea to compose your shots using the screen on the back. Why? Digital SLRs excepted, there's always a slight difference between what you see in the viewfinder and the actual photograph, which is magnified with close-up and zoom shots.

4 Level headed
On a small LCD screen, it can be hard to see if your photograph is level or not. To get a level shot every time, pick something in the shot that you know is horizontal, such as the sea's horizon or a rooftop, and use that to ensure you don't end up tilting.

5 Maximum memory
The last thing you want to do is run out of room on your memory cards. To work out how much space you need, estimate the maximum number of photos you're likely to take, then add 50%.

6 Flattering faces
When taking a close-up shot of someone's head, the jaw line can often look unflattering because of the way the shadows fall. To get a more defined jaw line, ask your subject to hold a white sheet of paper under their chin, keeping it out of the shot.

7 Use a tripod
You may think that only professional photographers need to use tripods but they can come in handy even if you're just taking shots of the family. Tiny tripods that can fit into your pocket are very cheap and make that self-timed group shot far easier.

8 Perfect your portraits
You can achieve great results by keeping one area in focus while allowing the rest to blur. Your digital camera almost certainly has a Portrait Mode setting. Use this, get in close on your subject and try to leave as much distance as possible between the subject and the background.

9 Manual exposure
Your digital camera is the ideal tool for taking pictures at night, and cityscapes and sunsets often make for stunning photos. The key to a good shot is to turn the flash off and manually control the exposure, ensuring the camera is held absolutely still.

10 Zoom options
There are two types of zoom: optical and digital. Optical uses lenses to increase the size of your subjects while retaining the resolution and quality of the final shot. Digital reduces the resolution of your final image, so get into the habit of never using it and your photographs will thank you!

> **Outlook Express is a very popular email program. Navigate quickly through your messages by holding down [Ctrl] and pressing [<] or [>].**

11 Master Macro Mode

Choose the Macro Mode on your camera and you'll be able to get up close and personal with plants, insects and more.

12 Protect your kit

Digital cameras are even more sensitive to water, dirt and vibration than film cameras. Make sure your kit stays in perfect working order by buying a specialist padded camera bag, ideally with a waterproof hood. Don't forget to put the lens cap on whenever you're not actually shooting.

13 Capturing movement

When it comes to capturing fast-moving objects, digital cameras can be a little tricky. If your camera has a long pause between pressing the button and taking the picture, you'll need to practice timing the process so that the photo is taken when your subject is actually in front of you.

14 Black and white shots

All digital cameras shoot in colour but it's easy to convert your pictures to black and white, either on your PC or on the camera itself. To get a strong black and white shot, forget about the colours and concentrate on the contrasts between them.

15 Turn the flash off

Digital cameras are far better than their film cousins at taking shots in low light, so if your flash is making everyone look ghostly, try turning it off.

16 Make your own filters

Proper coloured filters can cost an arm and a leg but there is a way to do it on the cheap – just put translucent coloured plastic or sunglasses in front of the lens for a funky effect. For instance, red is good at adding warmth to a scene. Be careful not to touch the lens, though.

17 Rest at night

Take good night-time shots by turning the flash off, setting the camera's autotimer and resting it on a flat surface. There'll be no camera shake due to the solid base, and a long exposure will catch any light.

Perfect composition

Get your photos looking their best by carefully framing each shot

18 CLOSE-UPS

It's usually good advice to avoid cutting people's heads and feet off in photographs, but for close-ups, try framing your shot around the face, rather than the head.

19 LANDSCAPES

When photographing landscapes, there's an easy way to compose natural-looking shots: just place the horizon a third of the way up from the bottom or down from the top.

20 PICTURE ANGLE

If your subject doesn't inspire you then you may struggle to get a good shot. Try shooting from low down or high above to literally get a change of perspective.

On-screen Editing

Taking your photo is just the start of creating the perfect image. Now it's time to boot up your PC

21 Use dedicated software
Many digital cameras have built-in effects, such as sepia or groovy frames. These may be handy but you'll get an infinitely superior result, and much more control over the effect, if you add them afterwards using dedicated software on your PC.

22 Auto Levels editing
Whatever photo-editing software you use, there will always be an Auto Levels command of some form. This automatically adjusts the brightness, contrast, colour balance and other settings to their optimum values for the best result. Much of the time, it'll be all the editing you'll need to do.

23 Storing your photos
Photographs tend to make for huge files and your PC can struggle if you put too many of them in one folder, particularly if you're viewing the contents of the folder as thumbnails. Get round this by using lots of sub-folders to store your pictures.

24 Creative crops
Cropping is the technique of cutting off the edges of a photo to home in on the part you want, creating a stronger image. Try doing this with a middle-distance portrait shot, zooming in on the face and shoulders.

25 Slideshow displays
A slideshow is a great way of showing people your pictures and most photo-editing suites (or the software that came with your camera) can generate them. Make sure you rotate any sideways images and only keep the best ones to show your friends – that way, you're guaranteed to have a more appreciative audience.

26 Software progression
There's lots of dedicated software out there. Start simple and only progress to more expensive and complicated packages when you're well and truly bitten by the bug.

27 Getting organised
In any folder containing images, click View > Customize This Folder, and choose Photo Album as the template. Click View > Filmstrip, to view the folder with thumbnails at the bottom and a big version of the one you click on on the screen.

28 Clear skies ahead
Bright blue skies make for great pictures but shots on digital cameras often end up with speckles of different colour in them. To get around this, select just the sky using your photo-editing software and apply a low-level Blur command for a smooth effect.

29 Zooming in
Zoom in close on bits of the photo you're working on to make your alterations easier, quicker and more accurate.

30 Maintaining image quality
Your camera saves photos as JPEG files to squeeze lots of pictures onto a memory card, but some image quality is lost when the file is saved. Once the file is on your PC, save it in your image editor's default format, or as a TIFF, to maintain its quality.

31 Get creative!
Cut people, animals or anything else out of an image and drop them into another photo. Use the Selection tool in your software package to specify the area that you want to copy, then just paste it in to the new image.

> **In almost all applications, hitting [Ctrl] + [A] will select everything. That might be all the words in a document or all the messages in your email program.**

32 Images on the internet

When creating images for the web, you may be tempted to use transparent GIFs, where the web page background shows though sections of your image. Unfortunately, this usually results in terrible image quality. It's much better to put your pic on a background the same colour as your web page and save it as a JPEG.

33 Create stunning landscapes

You can create amazing panoramic landscapes by taking several photos with your camera, capturing a slightly offset image in each one. The tricky bit is sticking the shots together to form one long scene. You can do this manually or use software such as Adobe Photoshop Elements to create the panorama for you.

34 Remove red eye

We've all taken photos with the dreaded red eye, which makes people look like the devil. Use the special red eye removal tool that's available in most photo-editing suites, you can remove this unwanted effect easily.

35 Storing original pictures

While saving your photographs as files gives you supreme editing control over them, it also makes it easier to lose the original images. Whenever you download images from your camera, save the original files somewhere permanent (on a CD-R or other removable media) and work on the copies.

36 Sharpen up

All digital cameras produce a somewhat soft image compared to their film cousins. To achieve the same crisp, sharp edges and definition in your digital images, use the Sharpen tool in your photo-editing software. Apply the sharpening gradually until you get exactly the image you want.

37 Portable network graphics

A relatively new file type, PNG, can compress a picture file to almost as small a size as a JPEG, but without as much loss of clarity. This combination of size and quality makes this the ideal file format to email or upload to the web.

Web wonders

Make sure your photographs stand out on the internet

38 FILE FORMATS

The two main formats for images on the internet are GIF and JPEG. JPEG (bottom) will give better results on photos, while GIF (top) is better for logos and simple graphics.

39 RESOLUTION

When you're creating a web photo album, ensure that you lower the resolution to 72dpi (dots per inch) in your photo-editing software to ensure faster download times.

40 CAPTIONS

It's always good to caption photos on the web. These don't have to be next to the photo – put text in your picture by using the Text tool and typing on the photo itself.

Displaying and Printing

Once you've created the perfect image, follow these tips to make sure you get the perfect print

41 Up the resolution
To get the best possible printed results, you need to take your photos at your highest possible camera resolution. If that's three megapixels or higher, you may be able to get a decent A3-sized print out of it.

42 Organising images
It's important to organise the digital photo files on your computer, but you can also organise them on paper. An A4 contact sheet, with tiny thumbnail-sized versions of each picture and details of where each file is saved, can make life a lot easier!

43 Multiple prints
You can save money by printing multiple, different sized versions of the same print on one sheet of paper. For instance, an A4 sheet can be divided into one A5, one A6, one A7, one A8 and two A9 (passport size) prints. You'll need a steady hand with a scalpel to make clean, straight cuts, though.

44 Compressing images
While we recommend taking pictures at the best possible resolution, your friends will come to hate you if you constantly email huge files to them. To get around this, highlight the file in My Pictures, then click on 'E-mail this file' in the task pane on the left. Choose to send it as a compressed file for faster sending and receiving times.

45 Finding photos
In any folder containing photos, click View > Thumbnails to display the files as miniature versions of the pictures. This makes it much quicker to find the file you want, but it can slow your PC down if you've got more than a couple of dozen files in any one folder.

46 Protect your printer
Keep your printer away from anything that might drop in to the paper feed, such as leaves and hair. It sounds obvious, but any mysterious ink smears could well be down to a foreign object lurking inside your printer.

47 Colour compensation
There's a big difference between the colours on your computer's monitor and those that your printer can print. On-screen colours have more impact and appear more vibrant than those on a photo. To compensate for a seriously vivid, colourful print, try upping the intensity of the colours until they appear to be really garish on the screen.

48 Borderline issues
Do you want white borders on your prints? We suggest that you keep a border if you're planning to put the photo in a frame – this enables you to cover as little as possible with the mount. If you want a print to be passed around, go for borderless.

49 Filing your photos
You'll soon find that you've taken a few hundred shots, so organising your files becomes vital. The best place to store them is in the My Pictures folder within My Documents, but give yourself the best chance of finding the pictures you like by creating individual sub-folders for times, people, places or events.

50 Printing panoramas
If you've created a panoramic scene, check to see if your printer can accept photo paper on a roll. If it can, print out the panorama using the full height of the paper, with the image extending as far in width as you like.

> **In both Microsoft Word and Outlook Express, you can hit [F7] to quickly bring up the built-in spell-checking tool.**

51 Preview prints
If your photo-editing software has the option, print using the Print Preview function. This will give you a virtual version of the print on the screen that you can check, before using up your valuable ink and paper.

52 Get the optimum output
Expensive paper always gives better results so choose good quality photo paper that's designed for your printer – and remember to put it in so it prints onto the glossy side!

53 Creative printing
You don't just have to print onto A4 photo paper – you can buy sticky labels, miniature-sized paper, CD labels and all sorts of stuff to help you be as creative as possible.

54 Minimum resolutions
Some people will say that you need a specific, minimum resolution to print at particular paper sizes, but experiment and find out for yourself. As long as you're happy with your results, that's all that matters!

55 Instant picture show
You can turn your photos into a personalised screensaver for your PC. Simply right-click on the desktop, choose Properties, look under Screen Saver and then choose 'My Pictures Slideshow' from the drop-down list.

56 Keeping track of photos
If you get to the stage where you've got thousands of photos filed away in the My Pictures folder, even the most cleverly devised system may not be enough to stop you from misplacing some of your shots. A media management software tool will give you the option to attach keywords to photos, making them a lot easier to find.

57 Buyer beware
When you're buying a new printer, be careful that you haven't been duped into paying for a cheap model, only to find that the replacement ink cartridges cost almost as much again! Always ask about how much the consumables are going to cost you in the long run.

Golden printing rules

Following these tips will help you make the most of your photo printer

58 INK CARTRIDGES
Find out the cost of the replacement ink cartridges before buying a printer and look for one with separate ink tanks so you only need to replace colours that have run out.

59 MAXIMISE QUALITY
Printer driver software gives you a number of printing options. If you see a slider bar with a choice between Quality and Speed, put the Quality up as high as it will go.
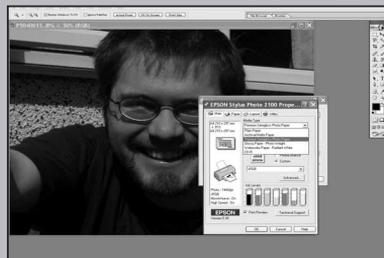
60 PAPER SETTINGS
Tell the printer settings what sort of paper you have. Set the highest print resolution for that paper to get the best detail without using more ink than the paper can handle.

250 Expert Tips

Everything you've always wanted to know about Windows XP but didn't have the time to ask

We've finished the warm-up – are you ready for the main event? With the help of Microsoft's top boffins, we've crammed no less than a quarter of a thousand of the very finest tips for Windows XP into the next 26 pages. If you don't learn something new by the end of this section, you should probably be writing this magazine yourself. But the chances are you'll learn a lot, and hopefully be inspired to fiddle with elements of Windows XP you've never ventured into before.

As there's such a wealth of material, we've grouped the tips into convenient sections. The first, Files and Folders, deals with the fundamental file system of Windows XP – customising it, setting up shortcuts, undoing errors, cut and paste basics, keyboard shortcuts and much more. Next, we show you how to Customise Your System: in other words, how to really make Windows XP your own, both in terms of performance and function, as well as tips on how to activate, alter or disable all manner of nifty features.

Following that, you can give the engine of Windows XP a tune up with our System Maintenance tips, then you can learn more about using email in Outlook Express and browsing the web with Internet Explorer. Finally, brush up on your Windows Media Player skills in our Audio and Video advice section. You'll also find tons of bonus tips, straight from the razor-sharp minds of Microsoft's Technical Support team.

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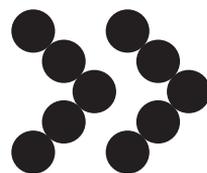
Files and Folders

Work smarter with these tips on managing your documents, directories and desktop space

1 Clear the clutter
Let's start right at the beginning and clear up all of the rubbish that's on our desktop. Just right-click the desktop and choose Arrange Icons By > Run Desktop Cleanup Wizard, to do this.

2 Toolbar lock
Stop the toolbar from being moved around the screen by right-clicking it and choosing 'Lock The Toolbar'.

3 Flexible toolbar
For a vertical toolbar, stretch it to double its size and then drag it to either the left or right of your screen.

4 Customise the toolbar
To create a custom toolbar, open My Computer and drag any drive or folder you want on it to the edge of your screen.

5 Adding buttons
You can easily add a button to the Quick Launch toolbar just by dragging any folder or shortcut icon onto it.

6 Liven up your folders
Are you bored of your plain old yellow folders? If so, you can click on View > Customize This Folder, and choose an image to use instead.

7 Permanent drag and drop
When you're dragging and dropping files, make sure that you hold down the [Shift] key to ensure the move is permanent.

8 Miss out the bin
You can avoid the Recycle Bin and delete items permanently by holding the [Shift] key down while you press Delete, saving you valuable hard disk space.

9 Improving image display
For an improved image display in a folder, just click on View > Thumbnails or Filmstrip for a sneak preview.

Both [Ctrl] + [C] and [Ctrl] + [Ins] will copy a selected item in most Windows XP applications, including Word.

10 Undo drag and drop errors
There's no need to worry if you drag and drop and make a mistake with your file or folder placement. Any errors that you make can easily be rectified by clicking on Edit > Undo Move.

11 View folder contents
To quickly display the full contents of the current user's folder, all you have to do is click on Start > Run, enter a full stop and then click on OK.

12 Dragging the right way
It's a very good habit to start dragging your files or folders with the right mouse button. Doing it this way means you'll get a menu that asks if you want to Copy, Move or Create a shortcut to the folder, allowing you to confirm your actions.

13 Classic view
We personally love the sophisticated and frankly gorgeous new Windows XP view. However, if it's not quite your cup of tea and you'd prefer to see things differently, you've got the option of clicking on 'Switch to Classic View' for an alternative.

14 Adding to the Start menu
You can right-click a program icon in the Quick Launch toolbar and choose 'Pin to Start Menu' to quickly add a shortcut to your Start menu.

15 See item information
To get access to item descriptions, just right-click on the Quick Launch toolbar and then choose Show Text to display the relevant information.

16 Secure your folders
If you're using an NTFS-format drive, you can choose to make a folder Private. Simply right-click and choose 'Sharing and Security', then tick Private.

17 Select folder categories
When you're viewing the contents of a folder in My Computer, you have the option to right-click on a column heading and choose your own categories.

Get the thumbs up
Change the size of the thumbnail images that appear in My Computer

20 Adjusting thumbnails
In order to make this alteration, you'll need to be familiar with editing your registry. If you're confident of tinkering here, launch the Registry Editor and go to this location: HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer. In the right pane, right-click and choose New > DWORD Value, and give it the name ThumbnailSize. Once you've done this, right-click on it, select Modify and give it a value of between 32 and 96. Obviously, the higher the number, the larger the thumbnail preview is going to be. Now close the Registry Editor. You'll need to log off and on again for the changes to take effect, but this is usually quicker than a restart.
To put things back the way they were originally, all you have to do is delete the registry key that you just created.

18 Changing defaults
It's easy to change the default application that's selected by Windows XP for opening a certain file type. Under the File Types tab in Folder Options, click on Advanced and from here you can pick the program you'd prefer to use when opening particular files.

19 Archive files the easy way
Archiving files can save you a considerable amount of space on your computer. While dedicated archive software is available, Windows XP has its own built-in archive capabilities – just right-click and choose Send To > Compressed (zipped) folder.

250 Expert Tips Files and Folders

21 Cut down on clicks
You can save yourself a considerable amount of time just by using fewer clicks to navigate through your computer's files and folders. To get this speed boost, click on Tools > Folder Options in My Computer and then choose the Single click option, rather than Double click.

22 Discover your desktop
Many people don't realise this, but your desktop is actually a folder too. You'll be able to find it under C:\Documents and Settings\USER\Desktop.

23 Simplify shortcut icons
You can make your icons a little bit clearer by removing the arrow that is automatically inserted on file shortcut icons. To do this, you need to go to HKEY_CLASSES_ ROOT\ lnkfile and delete the IsShortcut value that you'll find there.

24 Change folder icons
Bored of the icons used to represent folders on your computer? There's no need to be since you can easily change the icon used for a folder. Click on View > Customize This Folder, and select Change Icon.

25 Easy access desktop folder
Another great time-saving tip is to set up your computer so that you can get much quicker access to your desktop folder. You can do this by opening My Computer and then selecting the Desktop option from the Address drop-down box.

26 Make nameless folders
To create a folder which has no name, all you have to do is highlight the title box below the icon as if you were going to rename it as normal and then, holding down the [Alt] key, you need to type in 0160 on the numeric keypad.

27 Cancelling drag and drop
If you're right in the middle of a drag and drop operation and then you change your mind about it, just hit [Esc] to cancel the whole process.

28 Undelete items
Have you accidentally deleted an important file? We've all done it, but there's no need to panic because it's easy to recover items from the bin. You can simply right-click on any item in the Recycle Bin and then choose Restore to undelete it.

29 Get more with Explorer
You may find it easier managing files and folders with Explorer. Click on Start > Run and type Explorer to do so.
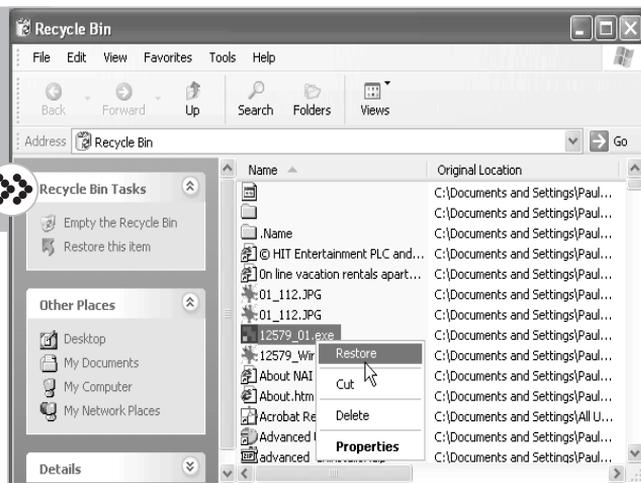
Hold down [Shift] when inserting an audio CD and your PC will not automatically play it. This also works for data CDs that would otherwise autorun.

30 See it all
It's easy to view everything that's open on your desktop at once. The way to do this is to right-click on the taskbar and from here you can choose the 'Tile Windows Vertically or Horizontally' option.

31 Automatic inserts in Notepad
When you're working in a Notepad file, pressing [F5] will automatically insert the time and date for you.

32 Choose everything at once
If you've got a lot of files all located in a single folder, you can quickly select the entire contents of that folder by pressing [Ctrl] + [A].

33 Multiple deletion
To delete all of the items located in a folder apart from one, select the item that you'd like to keep and then click on Edit > Invert Selection, and press [Del] to get rid of all the others.

34 Extend the Send To menu
You can easily add items or functions to the Send To menu in Windows XP. All you have to do is click on Start > Run, type sendto and then click on OK to open the Send To folder. Now you just have to right-click and create a new shortcut here, or drag the item you need into the folder.

35 Drive access shortcuts
You often need to access your drive partitions and CD drive quickly. Rather than having to click through numerous menus to get there, you can access them by pressing [Win] + [E] instead.

36 Multiple minimising
The desktop is an extremely convenient area in which to store your various files and folders, but getting to it can prove to be a little tricky sometimes, especially if you've got to minimise a number of windows on the way. For speed and simplicity, you can minimise everything with one simple shortcut – you just need to press [Win] + [D] and you'll be able to get straight to your desktop without a problem.

Essential desktop hints

Clutter-free or easy access to everything? The choice is yours...

37 CONTROL PANELS
Right-click on the desktop and create a new folder called Control Panel.{21ec20 20-3aea-1069-a2dd-08002b30309d}. Double-click it for access to Control Panel items.
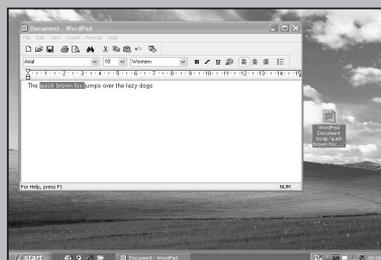
38 SCRAPS OF TEXT
If you're working in Word Pad and want to save part of the text, highlight the text you want, drag it onto the desktop to create a document 'scrap', then rename it and save.

39 COME BACK ICONS!
To bring back old desktop icons, go into Display Properties, select the Desktop tab and click on Customize Desktop. Choose the icons you want to display and click OK.

The ClipBook Viewer

Now you can easily see what you've been copying and cutting
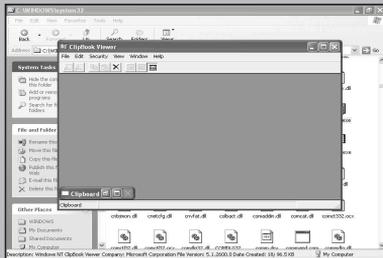
40 See clipboard contents

You can view the contents of whatever is stored on the clipboard by using a tool that's available within Windows XP. It's called the ClipBook Viewer in this latest version of Windows, but it's not right at your fingertips. It's simpler to create a shortcut to it for easier access.

Using My Computer, open up and view the contents of your C: drive. Open the Windows folder and go into the System32 sub-folder. In here you'll find a program called clipbrd.exe. Click on it and drag it onto the Start button, pause while the menu opens and then drag the icon into position. Your newly created menu item will be called Shortcut to clpbrd. Right-click on this, choose Rename and call it ClipBook Viewer.

41 View all Windows XP files

To see all files, click on Tools > Folder Options, select the View tab and check the options 'Show all files' and 'Don't hide any'.

42 Change folder details

Information displayed about the contents of a folder can be changed for each one. To do this, click on View > Choose Details.

43 Altering attributes

Change a file's attributes by right-clicking on it, choosing Properties and checking Hidden to remove it from view or Read-only to stop it being altered.

44 Get full-size files

If a file or folder window doesn't open to the full screen size when you want it to, you need to drag its corners to the edges of your screen. Now close it and when you open it again it should be back to the size you want.

45 Tidy the taskbar

If you find your taskbar is getting full up with program tabs, there's an easy way to remove some of them. Right-click on the taskbar, select Properties and then choose 'Group similar taskbar buttons'.

46 Closing files and folders

In order to close an open file or folder the quick and easy way, just hold down the [Alt] key and press [F4].

47 Folder size shortcut

When you're viewing files and folders in Windows Explorer, pressing [Ctrl] + [+] on the numeric keypad will enable you to reset columns to their default sizes.

48 Reclaim the Recycle Bin

If your desktop is so cluttered that the Recycle Bin is obscured, there's an easy way to get rid of unwanted documents. All you have to do is drag the files or folders which you want to be deleted onto a blank space on the far right of the toolbar. Don't believe us? Try it!

49 Rename in bulk

If you've got a large amount of files that you need to rename, Windows XP can take the hassle out of the task for you. Select all of the files you need and then press [F2]. Now you only need to rename one file and the rest will be done automatically for you.

50 View CD contents

To browse through all of the files located on any kind of CD, instead of letting it autoplay, select Open from its icon in My Computer. This enables you to browse it, as you can do with any other folder.

Hit [Windows] + [R] to quickly open the Run box on your desktop. Quick commands can be entered here, or even web addresses.

Customise Your System

You can change the way Windows XP looks and operates in a number of ways. We show you how!

51 Get retro menus
Do you suffer from pangs of nostalgia for the old Windows-style menu? Well, it's remarkably easy to get it back again. All you have to do is right-click on the Start button, choose Properties and then select the Classic Start menu.

52 My Network Places key
The My Network Places key is {208D2C60-3AEA-1069-A2D7-08002B30309D}.

53 Multicolour music
Want to personalise Windows Media Player 9 Series? Quickly change the colour scheme by clicking on the paintbrush icon at the bottom of the main screen. Press it again to cycle through the available colours.

54 Alter command colours
If the command prompt window is too dull for your design tastes, you can change its colour to get something that you'd prefer. To do this, you just need to click on the icon in the top-left corner, choose Properties and select the Colors tab.

55 My Computer key
The My Computer key is {20D04FE0-3AEA-1069-A2D8-08002B30309D}.

56 Rename the Recycle Bin
You can change the name of the Recycle Bin in a couple of easy steps. First of all, go into the registry and head to My Computer\ HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\ Windows\CurrentVersion\ Explorer\CLSID\ {645FF040-5081-101B-9F08-00AA002F 954E}. Right-click on Default and then choose a new name.

57 My Documents key
The My Documents key is {450D8FBA-AD25-11D0-98A8-0800361B1103}.

58 Tinker with transitions
Clicking on the Effects tab under Appearance in Display Properties gives you the opportunity to change the way in which transitions for all of your menus look, giving you some cool new effects.

59 Internet Explorer key
The Internet Explorer key is {871C5380-42A0-1069-A2EA-08002B30309D}.

Using key combos

Open files and applications quickly at the touch of a few buttons

60 Assign key combinations
Right-click on an existing file or program shortcut and choose Properties from the menu. Switch to the Shortcut tab and click on the Shortcut key field. Next, you will need to decide which key or combination of keys will be starting the file or program. You have the choice of using one of the function keys – for example, [F8] – or a combination of keys, such as [Ctrl] + [Alt] + any key.

If you want to use a function key, just press the one you would like to use to select it. For a combination shortcut, just hold down the [Ctrl] key and press the additional key you want to use. When you are done, click on Apply, then OK. When you next want to launch the program or file, just press the relevant keys.

61 Fast log on
One of the quickest ways in which you can get to the Windows XP login screen is to press [Win] + [L].

62 Customised pointer
Bored of your mouse pointer? Windows XP has a range of different designs you can use instead of the default arrow. To choose one, simply open the Mouse option in Control Panel, select the Pointers tab, pick a new Scheme and get customising!

63 Invisible taskbar
If your taskbar is getting in the way, or you just want to hide it for a while, select the 'Auto-hide the taskbar' option, found in Toolbar Properties.

64 Computer readouts
Windows XP has some incredibly useful options for computer users with impaired vision… or for those who just can't be bothered to read what's on their screen! By pressing [Win] + [U] you can instantly launch the Utility Manager and from here you can start using Narrator. This innovative program will then read out whatever is displayed on your computer screen.

65 Shut multiple windows
Want to close down a lot of windows in a hurry? You can do it by holding down the [Shift] key when clicking on the X to close a window and all of the other windows will close too.

66 Add to the Send To menu
You can customise the options which are available to you when you right-click. Simply go to C:\Documents and Settings\USER NAME\SendTo and you'll be able to create your own program shortcuts to add to the right-click Send To menu.

67 Monitor manipulation
To adjust your monitor's power options, right-click on the desktop, choose Properties and then select the Screen Saver tab. From here, clicking on Power will enable you to tinker with your monitor's power until you get the settings you want.

68 Moving icons
You can organise your working environment by moving your icons from the desktop to the taskbar. Do this by right-clicking on the taskbar and selecting the Toolbars option, then select desktop.

69 Themes for free
For an excellent choice of free themes, including celebrity wallpaper for your PC, go along to www.themexp.org.

ay
gs

A little-known trick is to hit [F4] in Microsoft Word to repeat the last action again! This is handy if you're performing a lot of repetitive tasks with the menus.`

70 Positioning Quick Launch
Not happy with the location of your Quick Launch toolbar? You can move it by dragging it from the taskbar onto your desktop and putting it where you want.

71 Disable screensavers
If you don't want to tinker with your screensaver options, you can stop it from operating simply by leaving the Start menu open. This will disable your screensaver and stopping it from cutting in.

72 Change icon size
Are your icons too big or too small? You can change their size by going into Display Properties and selecting the Appearance tab. Now click on Advanced, select Icon from the drop-down list and change the default size.

73 Organise your Start menu
Once you've installed a few programs on your PC, you may find it takes a while to find them on your Start menu. You can get organised by putting them all in alphabetical order just by right-clicking on any item and choosing 'Sort by Name'.

74 Personalised slideshow
After following the tips in our Digital Camera chapter, you're bound to have some great images that you want to show off! One way to do this is to choose the My Pictures Slideshow screensaver and then you'll be able to watch a played sequence of all the images in that folder.

75 Flexible icons
Right-click the desktop, choose 'Arrange Icons By' and uncheck 'Align to Grid' for much greater freedom of movement for positioning your icons.

76 Instant access
You can access the My Computer folder in a jiffy by pressing [Win] + [E].

77 Hide old icons
In Taskbar properties, check 'Hide inactive icons' and click on Customize and you can choose which icons to display.

Keep it personal
You know how you like it, so change Windows XP to match your tastes

78 CHANGE ICONS
Right-click on a shortcut icon, then Properties > Change Icon… . Browse to C:\windows\system\pifmgr.dll or C:\windows\system32\shell32.dll.
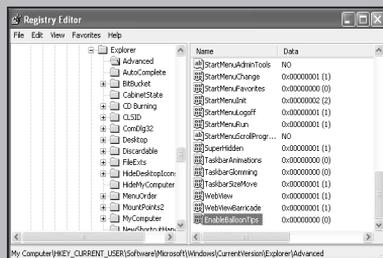
79 DISABLE BALLOON TIPS
Find HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\ Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\ Explorer\Advanced. Create a DWORD value, EnableBalloonTips (valued 0) and set it to 1.

80 ADAPT FOLDER TYPES
Right-click in a folder and hit Customize This Folder > Customize. Under 'What kind of folder do you want', select the option that fits your folder type the best.

250 Expert Tips Customise Your System

81 StyleXP
Use StyleXP to make alterations to the Windows XP theme. It's available from www.tgtsoft.com.

82 Classic welcome
You can make your computer give you a more retro welcome when you log on. To do this, go to User Accounts, click on 'Change the way users log on or off' and uncheck 'Use the Welcome screen' and your PC will revert to the classic look.

83 Perfect resolution
A resolution of 1,024x768 pixels is ideal for a 17-inch screen.

84 Taskbar cycle shortcuts
Pressing [Win] + [Tab] enables you to cycle through all the taskbar button icons.

85 Get your version number
If you want to display your Windows XP version number, locate the Registry Key HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop. Right-click on PaintDesktopVersion, choose Modify and then enter 1 to display or 0 to disable it.

86 Hide the logo
You can remove the Windows XP logo from view while your PC is booting. Do this by running msconfig, selecting the BOOT.INI tab and checking /NOGUIBOOT.

87 Alter appearances
Windows XP provides you with an operating system that's more customisable than ever. In Display Properties, select the Appearance tab and click on Advanced. In the Item list you'll be able to make changes to almost all aspects of the display.

88 Get a new theme
Change the way in which Windows XP looks by using one of the themes in Display Properties. A theme can change all areas of your display, including the icons, wallpaper, mouse cursors and even sounds. Try Microsoft Plus! for even more themes.

89 Search options
Click on Start > Search and Change Preferences to change the Search Companion. You should enable the Indexing Service for faster searches.

90 Change your menus
It's easy to change the appearance of your menus, buttons and more. All you have to do is go into System Properties and select the Advanced tab. Under Performance, pick Settings and you'll be able to alter the style of your menus and other features.

> Hit [Ctrl] at the same time as either [Backspace] or [Del] to remove the word to the left or right of the cursor position.

91 Altered images
Bored of the picture that appears on your Start Menu? You can easily change it. Simply select your account in User Accounts and click on 'Change my picture' to get the image you'd prefer to use.

92 Colour changes
If you want to keep the Windows XP style but you don't really like the colour scheme that's being used, just go into Display Properties, click on Appearance and then 'Color scheme' to choose a colour you like.

93 Audio visual extras
Take your music and video further. Purchase the Microsoft Plus! Digital Media Edition to add more visualisations and tools to Windows Media Player 9 Series. Find out more at www.microsoft.com/windows/plus.

94 Line up icons
One particularly handy feature of the Windows XP desktop is the way in which it can automatically line up icons to give your PC a tidier appearance. To enable this feature, right-click on the desktop, choose 'Arrange Icons By' and then select the 'Align To Grid…' option.

95 Smoother fonts
For an even more attractive appearance, you can make all of your fonts look smoother. Go to the Appearance tab under Display Properties, click on Effects and choose ClearType from the options that appear.

96 Get stripey!
To get some yummy candy stripes for your computer, select the Screen Saver tab in Display Properties. Now you just have to choose 3D Pipes and then click on Settings > Multiple Pipes > Mixed Joint Type and Textured to get this cool effect.

97 Stop highlighting
It's easy to stop your new programs from being highlighted on your computer's Start menu. All you have to do is click on Customize in 'Start Menu Properties' and then make sure you uncheck the option under the Advanced tab.

100 Add album art

Add original album art to your music folders
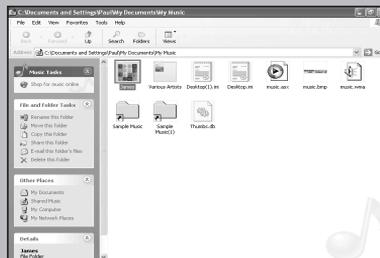
Customise music folders
The great thing about Windows XP is that you can personalise its folders, inside and out, to suit the contents. We've already seen how you can display an image on a folder while in Thumbnail view. With this in mind, you can use this effect to add album art to any of your folders that contain music files and in turn you'll be able to completely personalise them.

Album art is widely available on the internet – a good place to start is www.windowsmedia.com. When you've found the file you need, download it, give it the name folder.jpg and save it in the folder you want to personalise.

98 Speedier starts
If you want to speed up your computer's Start menu, there's an easy way to do it. You need to go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER \Control Panel\Desktop\MenuShowDelay. By default, the value is 400. Change this to a smaller value and you'll give yourself a faster Start menu.

99 Save your desktop
If you've followed all of the tips in this chapter, you'll have painstakingly personalised your desktop with your own screensaver, icons, wallpaper, colour schemes, font style, folder appearance and much, much more. To make sure all your hard work isn't lost, you should click on the Themes tab and then select Save as, to make a permanent copy.

System Maintenance

All the advice and tips you need to enhance and maintain your Windows XP system

101 Best performance
In System Properties, select the Advanced tab, click on Settings and tick 'Adjust for best performance'.

102 Get the latest updates
It's essential that you keep your computer up-to-date. Not only will you get extra features and enhancements, but you'll have a more stable and efficient machine. It's easy to forget to keep updating, so you should set your PC to do the task for you. Just select the Automatic Updates tab in System Properties and check the option to download updates automatically.

103 Find hidden hardware
In the Device Manager, click on View > Show Hidden Devices, and you'll be able to see all of the hardware that is currently installed on your PC.

104 Save space
An easy way in which you can save hard drive space is by going into System Properties and turning off System Restore in all of your PC's drives (except C:).

105 Printed configuration
In the Device Manager, click on Action > Print, and you'll be able to get a paper copy of your PC's configuration.

106 Shrink your C: drive
In System Restore, select your C: drive, click on Settings and you can reduce the space which is allocated to it.

107 Disk Cleanup
Regular disk cleaning can keep your PC in top condition. Right-click on one of your drives, choose Properties and select Disk Cleanup to carry out essential maintenance.

108 Delete spare fonts
You can free up hard drive space by removing unwanted fonts, which are stored in the folder C:\windows\fonts.
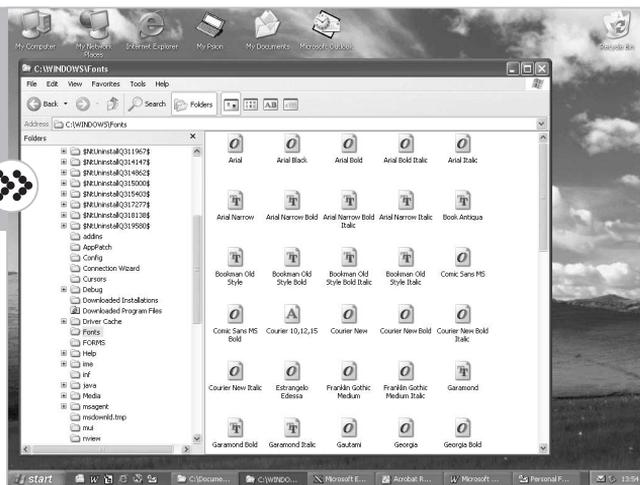
In Internet Explorer, hitting [Ctrl] + [N] will launch a new browser window, which is open at your home page.

109 Accurate time
You can keep the time in your system tray perfectly accurate by using Internet Time in 'Date and Time Properties', found in the Control Panel.

110 Allocate resources
In Windows Task Manager, select the Processes tab, right-click on a process and then choose Set Priority to increase its allocation of CPU resources.

111 Clear Startup
It's easy to use msconfig to remove unnecessary items from the Startup tab. Once you've done this, you'll find that your boot time should be considerably faster.

112 Bootvis tool
Download the bootvis tool from www.microsoft.com/hwdev/platform/performance/fastboot/BootVis.asp and make you'll be able to make changes to your startup.

113 Faster application starts
Go to HKEY_LOCAL_ MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager\Memory Management\PrefetchParameters in the registry and adjust EnablePrefetcher from 3 to 5. This simple tweak will speed up the start times of your applications.

114 Free system resources
Free up some of your system resources by going into Control Panel > Administrative Tools > Services. Next, double-click Indexing Service and choose Disabled.

115 Remove themes
You'll be able to disable your computer's themes by going into Control Panel > Administrative Tools > Services. If you don't use themes, deleting them can free up a substantial amount of RAM.

116 Remove components
In Add/Remove Programs, click on 'Add/Remove Windows Components' and uncheck any items you don't use – this will help to streamline your system.

120 Add Defrag
Get instant access to defrag tools with this menu addition
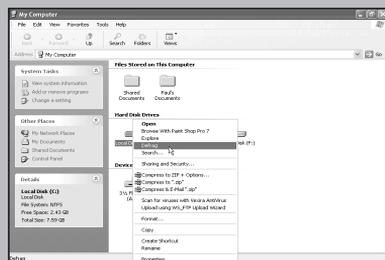
Get defrag at a single click
This excellent tip enables you to add the defrag command to the menu that appears when you right-click on one of your drives. It's quick to add and only requires a simple change to your system registry. The first thing to do is locate this Registry Key: HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\Drive\shell. Next, right-click on shell and choose New > Key and label it Defrag. Then right-click on Defrag, choose New > Key and call it command. In the right pane, right-click on (Default), choose Modify and enter DEFRAG.EXE %1 as the Value data. Close the registry, then open My Computer and right-click on one of your drives to see the new option. You can easily remove this option by deleting the Defrag folder under HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\Drive\shell.

117 Password recovery
With passwords for email, online banking and more, a password recovery disk could prove to be essential. Go into Users in Control Panel and click on 'Prevent a forgotten password' to create this disk.

118 Multiple icon selection
By holding down the [Ctrl] key and clicking on your taskbar icons, you'll be able to select several icons at once.

119 Faster command prompts
For quick access to a command prompt window, click on Start > Run, type cmd and press Enter.

```
 Command Prompt                                                    _ □ ×
Microsoft Windows XP [Version 5.1.2600]
(C) Copyright 1985-2001 Microsoft Corp.

C:\Documents and Settings\Jon>system info
'system' is not recognized as an internal or external command,
operable program or batch file.

C:\Documents and Settings\Jon>systeminfo

Host Name:                 WXP-JONTY
OS Name:                   Microsoft Windows XP Professional
OS Version:                5.1.2600 Service Pack 1 Build 2600
OS Manufacturer:           Microsoft Corporation
OS Configuration:          Standalone Workstation
OS Build Type:             Uniprocessor Free
Registered Owner:          Jon Hicks
Registered Organization:   Future Publishing
Product ID:                55274-005-6235847-22867
Original Install Date:     22/04/2003, 13:41:04
System Up Time:            0 Days, 8 Hours, 14 Minutes, 57 Seconds
System Manufacturer:       Gateway
System Model:              N0CPP063
System type:               X86-based PC
Processor(s):              1 Processor(s) Installed.
                           [01]: x86 Family 15 Model 0 Stepping 10 GenuineIntel
~1695 Mhz
BIOS Version:              GATEWA - 20010309
Windows Directory:         C:\WINDOWS
System Directory:          C:\WINDOWS\System32
Boot Device:               \Device\HarddiskVolume1
System Locale:             en-us;English (United States)
Input Locale:              en-gb;English (United Kingdom)
Time Zone:                 (GMT) Greenwich Mean Time : Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon
, London
Total Physical Memory:     383 MB
Available Physical Memory: 111 MB
Virtual Memory: Max Size:  1,306 MB
Virtual Memory: Available: 807 MB
Virtual Memory: In Use:    499 MB
Page File Location(s):     C:\pagefile.sys
ain:                       DIGITAL
on Server:                 \\WXP-JONTY
ix(s):                     44 Hotfix(s) Installed.
                           [01]: Q147222
                           [02]: Q322011 - Windows XP Hotfix (SP2) Q322011
                           [03]: Q323255 - Windows XP Hotfix (SP2) [See Q323255
```

121 Config
Open a command prompt window and enter systeminfo to view details of your PC's configuration.

122 Faster shutdowns
Speed up your shutdowns the easy way. For a one-click log off, create a new shortcut and use the command line rundll32.exe user32.dll,LockWorkStation, then copy it to the Quick Launch toolbar.

123 Hardware boosts
If speed is a serious issue for you, it may be time to consider a hardware upgrade. Extra RAM is extremely cheap and can give Windows XP a considerable boost. See www.crucial.com for more information.

124 Automatic ending
Windows XP can automatically end any tasks that aren't responding. To enable this feature, go to HKEY_ CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop\AutoEndTasks and set the value to be 1. Then go down to WaitToKillAppTime out and set the number of milliseconds you want to wait.

125 Windows Support Tools
Your Windows XP CD comes with a range of handy tools. You can access them by putting the CD in the drive and browsing to support\tools. Click on setup.exe to install the Windows Support Tools.

126 Command line tools
Create a file shortcut using the command line hh.exe ms-its:C:\WINDOWS\Help\ntcmds.chm::/ntcmds.htm for full details of all the command line tools that come with Windows XP.

127 Stop automatic restarts
If you don't want your PC to restart after a crash, you can disable this feature. In System Properties, select the Advanced tab and click on Settings under 'Startup and Recovery'. Under System Failure, uncheck Automatically restart and you'll be able to manually restart your PC.

128 Stop error messages
If you don't want your computer to send error messages to Microsoft for analysis after a crash, go to the Advanced tab in System Properties, click on Error Reporting and check 'Disable Error Reporting'.

129 Upgrade report
If you've just upgraded to Windows XP, you should click on Start > Run and type upgrade.txt for a full, printable report, getting details on your system and how successful the installation process was.

In a hurry in Microsoft Excel? Get more work done by hitting [Alt] + [Shift] + [F1] to open a new workbook.

130 DMA settings
In the Device Manager, select your IDE controllers, right-click and choose Properties. Now select the Advanced Settings tab and make sure that the DMA option is selected.

131 Silent running
Suppress all Windows XP beeps by going to HKEY_CURRENT _USER\Control Panel\ Sound, then double click on Beep to modify and enter 'no'.

132 Mouse editing
Go into the registry, head to HKEY_ CURRENT_USER\Console and QuickEdit, and then give it a value of one. Now you'll be able to edit at the command prompt using a mouse.

133 Wizard backups
Although it's not really intended to be used as a backup tool, you can use the File and Settings Transfer Wizard to copy your important files.

134 Monitor events
You can keep an eye on your system by using the Event View in Windows XP. Through this tool, you'll be able to monitor all of the significant events that occur on your system. In Control Panel, double-click on Administrative Tools and again on Computer Management.

135 Switch configurations
You may have different system requirements when you're using certain devices, particularly with a laptop, for instance. Set up Hardware Profiles and switch between the configurations.

136 Effective defrags
The defragmentation process can take a fairly long time so always make sure that you check your drive before beginning to defragment it. Do this by opening the Disk Defragmenter tool, selecting the drive or partition that you want to run a check on and then clicking on Analyze. Finally, you should click on View Report to see if defragmentation is actually needed.

It's all about speed...
Here are three great tips that can save you some time
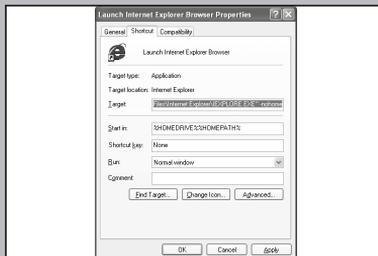
137 FAST INTERNET LAUNCH
Right-click on the Internet Explorer shortcut, choose Properties and make the command line in Target read: C:\Program Files\ Internet Explorer\IEXPLORE.EXE" -nohome.
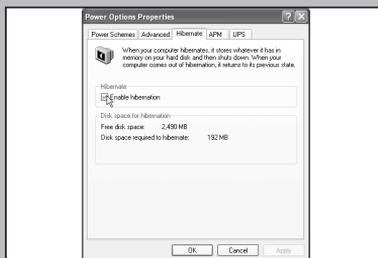
138 GO INTO HIBERNATION
Add Hibernation to your list of shutdown options and save work automatically. Go to Control Panel > Power Options and select Hibernate. Hit Enable Hibernation, then OK.

139 QUICKER PRINTING
Move your Spool Folder. Create a folder on a different partition, go to Printers and Faxes > File > Server Properties > Advanced. In the Spool box, enter the path to your new folder.

250 Expert Tips System Maintenance

140 Hidden programs

Get more from Add/Remove Windows Components

See your hidden programs

This tip will enable you to uninstall some of the Windows XP tools which aren't normally displayed in Add/Remove Programs or 'Add/Remove Windows Components'. Having the ability to see these 'hidden' programs will enable you to remove or repair them accordingly. Even better, there's no need to go rooting around in the registry for this tip. Instead, you'll need to locate C:\Windows\inf\sysoc.inf. Double-click to open the file and its contents will be displayed in a Notepad file.

You'll see various items listed and next to some of them will be the word 'hide'. It's this that's stopping them from being displayed in Add/Remove Programs. All you need to do is delete the word 'hide' and all of these items will now appear in the list.

141 Restore points
You should use System Restore now to create an up to date restore point.

142 Back up files
Use the backup utility on your Windows CD. Browse to E:\VALUEADD\MSFT \NTBACKUP and double-click on NTBACKUP.MSI.

143 New user profiles
The simplest way to create a new user profile is to base it on an existing one. Go to User Profiles in System Properties and click on Copy To.

144 Automatic shutdowns
If your PC doesn't shut down automatically any more after you've upgraded to Windows XP, you can easily fix this problem by going into the Power Options in Control Panel and then enabling the Advanced Power Management support.

145 Defragment drives
Defragmenting your hard drive will help to increase both its speed and performance. Always ensure that applications such as your anti-virus software are disabled when you're doing this as they may interfere with the process.

146 Activate old programs
Click on Run in the Start menu and type msconfig. Select the Startup tab and click on 'Restore Startup Programs'. This will activate any programs that were disabled after upgrading.

147 Cache your thumbnails
If you cache your thumbnail pics, you'll really be able to speed your computer up. To do this, go to My Pictures, click on Tools > Folder Options > View and uncheck the 'Do not cache thumbnails' box.

148 Compatibility mode
If you're having trouble running any of your old programs, you should try right-clicking on its .exe file and choosing Properties. From here, click on Compatibility and use the Compatibility mode.

149 Roll back drivers
Are you having problems with an unstable device driver? Right-click on the item in Device Manager and choose Properties. Select the driver tab and choose Roll Back Driver to revert to a stable, working driver.

150 Recovery console
If you're having problems with your PC, restart and then press [F8] while it's booting. This will enable you to enter the Recovery Console.

When you've finished writing your email, hit [Ctrl] + [Enter] to send it. This is quicker than clicking on the Send button.

Internet and Email

We'll let you in on some secrets to get the most from Internet Explorer and Outlook Express

151 Automatic addresses

If you find that typing full web addresses is just too much hassle, this is the tip for you. If you type part of an address into your browser – for example, Microsoft – and then hold down [Ctrl] and press [Enter], the www and .com will be inserted for you.

152 Taskbar browsing

You can save time and browse the internet directly from your taskbar. To do this, all you have to do is right-click on the taskbar and choose Toolbars > Address.

153 Thanks!

For a big thank you, open Internet Explorer, click on Help > About Internet Explorer, and then click on Acknowledgments.

154 Personalised toolbar

Go to HKEY_ CURRENT_USER\ Software\ Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Toolbar and modify BackBitmapIE5 to read the file location of a bitmap image of your choice. You can then use this to change your Internet Explorer toolbar image to anything you like.

155 Update file list

For a complete list of update files, go to the Corporate Windows Update website, which can be found at http://corporate.windows update.microsoft.com.

156 Applying message rules

Remember that any message rules that you have created in Outlook Express can be applied to your existing messages, as well as to all of your new arrivals.

157 Quick web access

For much quicker access to the web, all you have to do is click on Start > Run and then enter a URL.

158 Fast browsing

You can also click on File > Open, and enter a web address there.

159 Start menu Favorites

Add your Favorites to the Start menu. Right-click on it and choose Properties. Click on Customize, select the Advanced tab and then check the Favorites menu.

160 5th Security Zone

Be safe and expand your PC's internet security zones

Access hidden security

Normally hidden away from sight is the 5th Security Zone in Internet Explorer, otherwise known as My Computer. You may find it useful to activate this to make security on your PC extra tight. To make it visible you'll need to go to the registry and locate HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\InternetSettings\Zones\0. You'll see that Flags is currently set to 0X00000021 (33), which is the default setting. You'll need to right-click on it, choose Modify and change it to 0X00000001 (1). Once you've done this, close the registry editor and restart your PC. When you next boot, the 'hidden' zone should now be visible alongside standard settings such as Trusted Sites and Restricted Sites.

161 Auto emptying
In Internet Explorer, click on Tools > Internet Options and select the Advanced tab. Go to Security and check the 'Empty Temporary Internet Files folder when browser is closed' option.
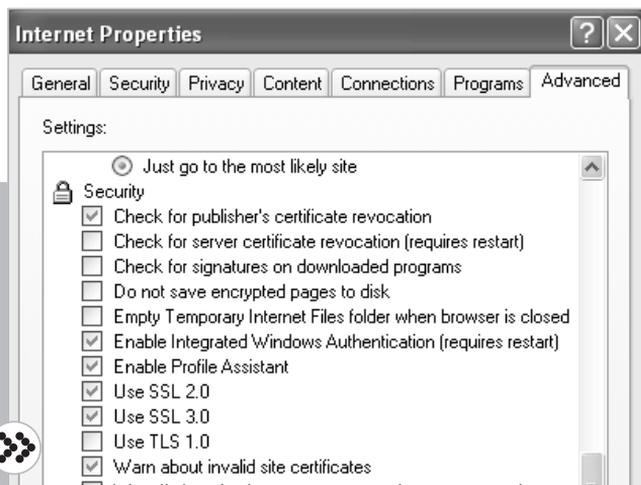
162 IP browsing
If you know the IP address but not the URL of a website that you want to visit then you can just enter that instead. Try typing 212.113.202.50 into your browser and see where it goes!

163 Remove your home page
Tired of starting with your ISP's home page? It can be a lot faster to start up Internet Explorer by launching with a blank page because you won't have to load lots of ads and images. To do this, go to Tools > Internet Options, and click on Use Blank.

164 See your connection
You can right-click on your DSL or cable connection, choose Properties and then check 'Show icon in notification area when connected' if you want to get visual confirmation of your internet connection.

165 Custom titles
It's very simple to add a custom Internet Explorer window title. All you have to do is go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\ Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main and change the value under Window Title – it's as easy as that!

166 Faster website loading
If you want to quickly go to another website, just press [Alt] + [D] and start typing the URL from there.

167 Zoom in
If you've got a wheel on your mouse, you can use it for much more than just scrolling up and down through web pages. For example, if you hold down [Ctrl] and move the wheel, you'll be able to zoom in on the website. This is a great fun trick, but it's also an essential tool for visually impaired computer users.

168 Faster browsing
Select the Advanced tab, scroll down to Multimedia and uncheck Show pictures. This will dramatically speed up your internet browsing as no pictures will be loaded.

169 Radio tuning
Online radio is becoming hugely popular and new stations are springing up every day, covering every possible genre. Of course, you can take advantage of this in Internet Explorer. Click on Media on the toolbar and then select the radio guide to see the best stations which the internet has to offer.

Need access to the System Properties box? Simply press [Windows] at the same time as the [Pause/Break] key at the top-right of your keyboard.

170 **Full-screen viewing**
If you want to get a full-screen view of a website, all you have to do is press [F11] in your browser.

171 **Password memory**
Do you keep forgetting your user names and passwords for email, message boards, online banking and so on? Well, you can let your browser remember them all for you. Select the Content tab, click on AutoComplete and check the option.

172 **Virus-free emails**
You can help to stay virus-free in Outlook Express by following a few simple safety precautions. One way to increase your security is to open the Options, select the Security tab and then check the box that stops dangerous attachments from being saved or opened.

173 **Kill spam**
Spam mail is a rapidly growing problem, but you can cut down on the amount you receive in your email account. Click on Tools > Message Rules > Blocked Senders List, and add the spammers to it to make sure you never get an email from them again.

174 **Automatic email sorting**
If you want to sort your email automatically, click on Tools > Message Rules, and create some custom filters.

175 **Synchronise Favorites**
If you've stored some of your Favorites offline then you should make sure that you use Synchronize regularly. This will ensure that the saved pages are kept up to date.

### 176 **Copy your Address Book**
Click on File > Export, and make a copy of your Address Book. You'll be grateful for it if things go wrong later and you lose all of your contact information!

177 **Compact folders**
A simple way in which you can free up hard drive space and speed up Outlook Express is by clicking on File > Folder > Compact All Folders.
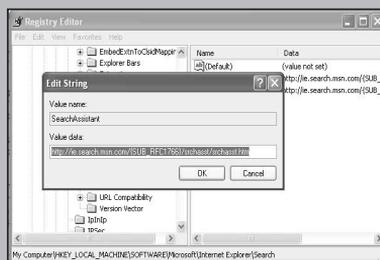
Great browser tips
Get enlightenment via the registry and an old Windows 2000 tool
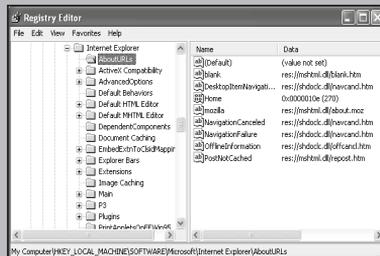
178 ERROR MESSAGES
You can customise online error messages by changing the values in the registry at HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\AboutURLs.
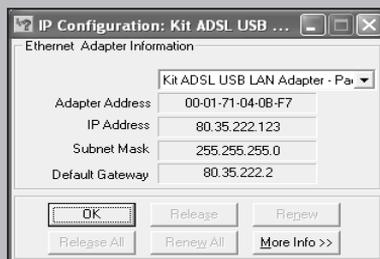
179 ADD WINIPCFG
You can add winipcfg to Windows XP. Download it from www.microsoft.com/windows2000/techinfo/reskit/tools/existing/wntipcfg-o.asp.

180 A NEW SEARCH ENGINE
Find HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Search. Right-click on SearchAssistant, choose Modify and enter the URL for a new search engine.

181 No noise
Don't like the clicking noise in Internet Explorer? You can get rid of it by going into the registry and finding HKEY_CURRENT_ USER\AppEvents\Schemes\Apps\Explorer\ Navigating. From here, simply delete the .Current key.

182 New noise
Alternatively, you can just change the sound that Internet Explorer makes by amending the file path so that it matches the location of a new sound file.

183 Sender information
For exact details of who has sent you an email, open up the message and click on File > Properties, and then click on the Details tab.

184 Automatic email
When we boot up our PCs, the first thing that most of us do is check our emails. To speed up the process, you can add a shortcut to Outlook Express in the Startup folder on the Start menu. This means that it always opens when Windows XP starts, saving you time.

185 Hotmail compatibility
If you've got a Hotmail account then you can add it to Outlook Express. This means you'll be able to send and receive mail from both accounts within the same program.

186 Fast window opening
It's often useful to have another browser window to hand while you're surfing the internet. You can quickly open an additional one by holding down [Ctrl] and pressing [N].

187 Windows Messenger
To speed up your communication online, you should use Windows Messenger for instant conversations with friends and colleagues over a network or the internet. You can even use it to make voice calls too!

188 Firewall protection
Windows XP comes complete with firewall protection. Note that you'll need to enable it separately for each internet connection that you have.

189 Check your speed
Just how fast is your web connection? Visit www.numion.com/YourSpeed to find out!

190 Get a new passport
If you want to start using Hotmail and MSN Messenger then you'll need to get yourself a Passport. Go to www.passport.com and you'll be able to sign up for one.

In Microsoft Excel, drop the current time into the selected cell by hitting the combination of the [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [;] keys.

191 Watch TV online
You can use your computer to watch TV over the internet by using Windows Media Player. Go along to http://wwitv.com to try it out, but don't blame us if it stops you from getting any work done!

192 Delete history
You may be able to save yourself a considerable amount of hard drive space simply by reducing the number of days that Internet Explorer keeps pages in your History folder.

193 Find the exact route
Click on Start > Run, type cmd and then press [Enter]. Type in a URL or IP address and you'll be able to see the exact route over the net to the address you specified.

194 Delete items
You can remove unwanted items from the File > New menu in Internet Explorer. To do this, locate HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Explorer. Now right-click in the right pane and create a new DWORD value. Give it the name of 'NoExpandedNewMenu' with a value of 1.

195 Turn off the image toolbar
Head over to Internet Options under the Advanced tab, scroll down to Multimedia and uncheck 'Enable Image Toolbar' in order to turn it off.

196 Reposition windows
Repositioning your skewed browser windows is an easy process. All you have to do is locate HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main. Once you've found it, right-click on Window_Placement and choose Delete in the right pane.

197 Keep it secret
If you want to send an email to a number of different people but you want to keep the recipients and their email addresses private, enter their addresses in the Bcc field and none of the recipients will be able to see the name or address of others on the list.

200 Email security
Email is the main method of virus infection. Stay safe with this tip
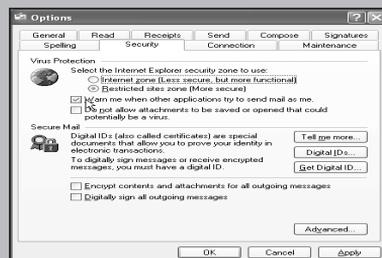
Block viruses
In Outlook Express 6 you can stop viruses from being sent to your address book list by clicking on Tools > Options, and selecting the Security tab. Check the box 'Warn me when other applications try to send mail as me'. With most viruses being sent in the form of an email attachment, a good way to avoid infection is to set up a mail rule in Outlook Express. This way you can move any such emails that come into your inbox into their own special folder for closer inspection. If you look carefully you can sometimes spot a virus in an attachment by part of its filename. If the filename ends with .VBS then you should be concerned. For example, letter.txt.vbs is not a text file but a Visual Basic Script file that may well contain a virus. Don't open these files.

198 Outlook Express stationery
You can use stationery in Outlook Express. Click on Message > New Message Using, and select a design.

199 Kill the cookies
Cookies can benefit your web browsing considerably because they can remember which sites you've visited and so they can ensure that your return visit is personalised specifically for you. However, many people don't like the idea of cookies storing personal information about them. If that's you, then you can easily turn them off. Open Internet Explorer, click on Tools > Internet Options, and, under the General tab, click on Delete Cookies to get rid of them.

Audio and video

Make your Windows XP computer the hub of your multimedia experience with these essential tips

201 Alter font sizes
To change the sizes of your fonts, select the Settings tab in Display Properties, click on Advanced and change the DPI (dots per inch) setting.

202 Save RAM
To conserve RAM and improve your computer's performance, it's worth dropping down to 16-bit colour quality in Display Properties.

203 Add comedy sounds
Bored of the bleeps and bings of Windows XP? Why not add your own sounds? You can easily add specific sounds to Program Events in Sounds and Audio Devices. For a great collection of fun sounds which you can use, we'd recommend a visit to the BBC sound website, which can be found at www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/wavworld.

204 Delete Media Player files
To delete a file permanently while you're in Windows Media Player, always make sure that you choose 'Delete from Library' rather than from the playlist.

205 Personalise your display
Go along to www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/home/using/howto/personalize/cleartype/tuner/default.asp and use the ClearType tuner to personalise your display.

206 Edit movies
Edit your home movies or existing video files with Windows Movie Maker. You'll find it under the Accessories menu.

207 Use introductory images
You can use still images or Title Slides in Movie Maker to introduce different sections of video clips.

208 See it all
See all your audio files at a glance in Media Player. Click on Media Library and then hit All Music.

> The [Esc] key is a wonderful thing. One of its uses is to instantly interrupt the downloading of any webpage, like clicking on the Stop button.

209 Import files
You can use the Import function in Windows Movie Maker in order to open a non-.mswmm file type.

210 Update Movie Maker
Movie Maker 2 is the latest version of the software, with a range of new additions and updated features. To update to this version from Movie Maker 1.2, and to make sure you stay up-to-date in the future, go along to Windows Update now.

211 Transfer videos
If you've got a TV or Capture card in your computer, you can hook up your video recorder and transfer your old video tapes to your hard drive. You can then edit them in Windows Movie Maker 2, improving the quality of the recordings.

212 Edit clip information
If you click on View > Properties, you'll be able to edit the Title, Author, Date and other information about a clip.

213 Change recording quality
In Record, click on the Settings drop-down box and choose the quality you'd like to record your files as. Click on Other for access to the more specific options which are available to you.

214 Time your clips
Click on View > Timeline, to see details of exactly how long each clip will last. This is a very useful tool when you're trying to find music that will match the length of your video clips for your home movies.

215 Alter audio levels
You can adjust Audio Levels under the Edit menu to give more or less preference to the Video and Audio tracks.

216 Lower the volume...
Use [F9] to quickly bring the volume down in Windows Media Player.

217 ...and turn it up!
Hit [F10] to turn the volume back up, and [F8] to mute and turn on again.

220 Burning CDs

Cut your own discs using Windows Media Player 9 Series

Make your own compilations
It's possible to create audio CDs with Windows Media player using existing audio tracks on your drive. The first thing you'll need to do is create a playlist of all the tracks you want to include. These can be a mixture of MP3 and WMA files – Windows Media Player can handle both file types. Remember that most CDs have around 74 minutes of play time available so the total length of your tracks will need to fit within this limit. With your playlist complete, click on 'Copy to CD or Device' and your tracks will be listed. Every track with a tick next to it will be copied. Make sure there's a blank CD in your burner and click on Copy Music. You'll see a percentage progress bar as the program works its way through each track. When it's finished you'll see a message and your drive tray will open.

218 Smoother streamed video
If your streamed video appears to be rather jerky when viewed with Windows Media Player then you should click on Tools > Options. From here, select the Performance tab and increase the buffer time. This should give you a smoother, uninterrupted video streaming experience.

219 Adjust copy quality
Select the Copy Music tab and adjust your copy settings. Obviously, the higher the sound quality, the more space the files will take up so balance your desire for top notch sound with the space you have available on your computer.

250 Expert Tips Audio and Video

221 Automatic updates
Choose the Player tab and you'll be able to change the Automatic updates period to once a month.

222 Keep visible
If you want to be able to always keep Media Player visible, go to the Player tab and then check the 'Display on top when in skin mode' box.

223 Change display size
On the Visualizations tab, select one of the options from the list and then click on Properties. You'll now be able to adjust its display size.

224 Smooth visualisations
Are your Visualizations not as smooth as they could be? It's easy to put right. In the Task Manager, switch to the Processes tab, right-click on wmplayer.exe and choose Set Priority > Above Normal.

225 Sing along!
If you've been bitten by the karaoke bug and want to practise with your PC, you can sing along certain favourite tracks. Click on View > Now Playing Tools > Lyrics.

226 Keyboard shortcuts
If you want to stop a file from playing, you just need to press [Ctrl] + [S]. Alternatively, if you want to play or pause a file, pressing [Ctrl] + [P] will do the job for you, saving time navigating menus.

227 Get updates
You can check for Windows Media Player updates manually by clicking on Help > Check For Player Updates. Make sure you do this regularly in order to make the most of any new versions of the software that are made available to download – Microsoft's boffins are always making improvements!

228 Free official extras
If you'd like to get some free online extras, safe in the knowledge that they're all top quality and fully supported by Microsoft, all you have to do is click on Tools, then hit Download Visualizations.

229 File facts
If you want to know more about what you're viewing or listening to, clicking on View > Statistics in Media Player means you'll be able to see all of the facts and figures on the file that's currently playing.

230 Skin your computer
There's nothing like a good bit of customisation. Ensure you stand out from the crowd by going to www.windowsmedia.com/9series/Personalisation/Skins.asp site to get a new look.
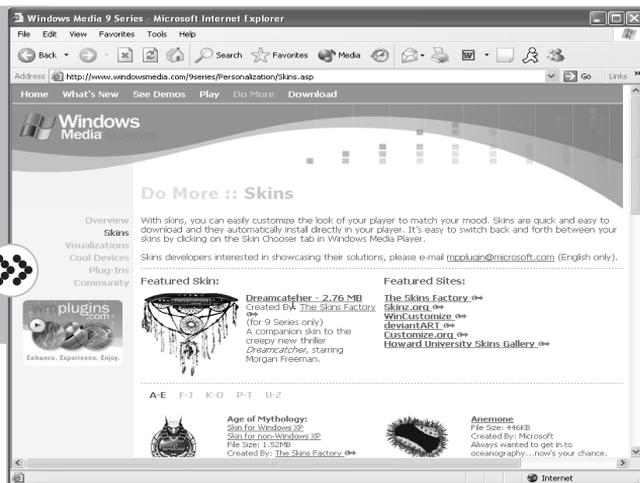
In all applications that use text input, like Microsoft Excel or Word, hitting [Ctrl] + [B] will put your copy into bold.

231 Track skipping shortcuts
Here are some more time-saving shortcuts to help you get the most from your multimedia experience. In order to skip back one track, press [Ctrl] + [B] and to fast forward, press [Ctrl] + [F].

232 Audio hardware details
For information about all of your audio hardware, go into 'Sounds and Audio Devices Properties' and click on the Hardware tab. Here you'll find all of the details you need.

233 Test your kit
Is your audio hardware working correctly? If you're not really sure, there's an easy way to test your system setup and find out for definite. First, select the Voice tab in 'Sounds and Audio Devices Properties' and then click on Test hardware. This will provide you with a detailed report.

234 Get licensed
If you're upgrading to Windows XP, make sure you run the Personal Licence Update Wizard so that protected CD content can be copied and moved. Go to the website at www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/wm7/drm/pluwiz.asp for more information on licensing.

235 DirectX issues
There can be problems with some games and multimedia programs in Windows XP. These are normally down to out of date drivers or the wrong version of DirectX being installed your computer. For more information and some helpful advice, make sure you head along to Microsoft's support website at support.microsoft.com and take a look at Knowledge Base article Q310697 which covers these subjects in depth.

236 Refresh your display
It's easy to change the refresh rate of your monitor in order to get a better display. Go into Display Properties and select the Settings tab. Now click on Advanced, choose the Monitor tab and make sure that the Screen Refresh rate is set to at least 72 Hertz.

A better view
Here are some great tips to make Windows XP look even better
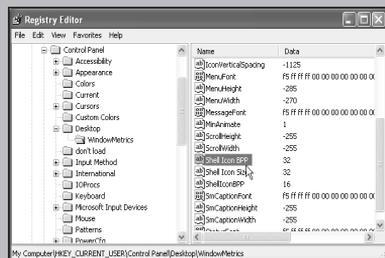
237 JAZZ UP YOUR ICONS
Go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ControlPanel\Desktop\WindowMetrics. Create a String Value, ShellIconBPP, with a value equal to the colour depth support of your video card.
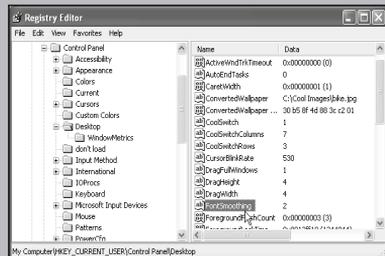
238 SMOOTH YOUR FONTS
Go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ControlPanel\Desktop, then right-click on FontSmoothing and change its value to 2 to enable font smoothing for a clearer display.
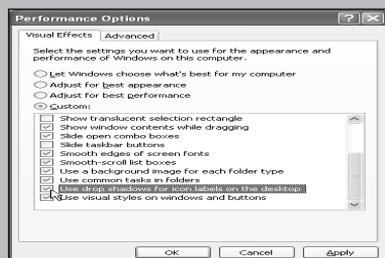
239 ICON TEXT BOXES
Go to System Properties > Advanced > Settings under Performance. Check the box 'Use drop shadows for icon labels on the desktop' to get rid of boxes behind icon text.

240 Get a moving desktop
If you want to incorporate an AVI file into an HTML document and create a moving desktop, go into Display Properties, click on Customize Desktop, select the Web tab and pick an HTML file.

241 Voice effects
On the Voice tab, click on Advanced under Voice Playback, choose your Speaker setup, then select the Performance tab and make sure that playback is optimised.

242 Watch DVDs
You can watch DVDs in Media Player but you'll need to get a decoder pack first. Visit www.microsoft.com/windows/ windowsmedia/windowsxp/dvdplay.asp for all the information you'll need.

243 DVD decoding
Note that you'll only be able to access the DVD tab in the Windows Media Player Options menu once a suitable decoder has been installed.

244 Compare clips
If you want to compare video clips, run two copies of Media Player at the same time. Launch one and then right-click on the icon and choose 'Run as' to start the other.

245 Sound schemes
Sound schemes are just like themes and there's something for everyone. Go into Sounds and Audio Devices, select the Sounds tab and choose a Sound scheme.

246 Default player
To ensure that Media Player is the default for all your audio and video, select the File Types tab under Options and check the file types that you want it to open.

247 File formatting
It's worth converting all of your MP3 files to WMA (Windows Media Audio) as the file sizes can be halved and there's no loss of sound quality.
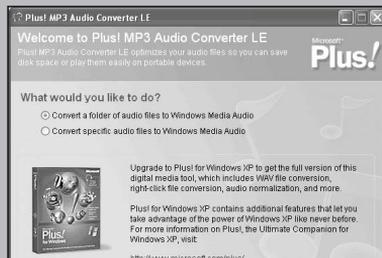
250 Free media tools
Get some great free tools and tweaks for your favourite app!

Media Player Bonus Pack
A must-have download (particularly if you haven't updated to Media Player 9 yet) is the free Windows Media Player Bonus Pack, available from www.microsoft.com/ windows/windowsmedia/download/default. asp. Packed with tools and tweaks, the Bonus Pack includes Audio Converter LE which you can use to convert MP3 files to WMA and shrink their size. There's also the PowerToys skin, plus new visualisations.

To help you organise your files, there's the Media Library Management wizard which includes an option to export your playlists to Excel so you can reorder them if you want to.

If you have the Plus! Digital Media Edition, you can also download new dancers for your player from the Microsoft website.

248 Quick playing
If you want to instantly play a file, all you have to do is drag an audio or video file onto the Media Player 9 Series icon and it will begin playing straight away.

249 Graphic equaliser
To get the best from the music you're listening to, click on Select Preset next to the Graphic Equaliser and choose the settings for the type of music playing. Windows Media Player 9 has a range of presets to enhance all types of music, from rock to classical and pop.

You can turn your text into italic by selecting it and hitting [Ctrl] + [I] in most Microsoft Office applications.

Your Notes ....

www.windowsxpmagazine.co.uk

100 Top Tips

The best of the best: the most useful tips you can use right now to improve your system

I f all that's gone before in this book is just too much for you due to the sheer volume of it, then this chapter might be your best starting point. Rather than compiling tips based around specific subjects or technology, we've simply laboured hard to bring you the ultimate century of guidelines for Windows XP.

It's a little like a lucky dip of advice – you never know what you're going to get next. These tips cover the basics, from beginner hints like how to change desktop wallpaper, all the way up to editing the registry to permanently change complicated aspects of the operating system. We've even thrown in some tips just for fun, such as how to cheat at the addictive built-in game Minesweeper.

But don't worry because most of these tips concern either how to tailor Windows XP to your specific needs and preferences, or how to improve performance by disabling system processes you don't really require. For instance, we've got six ways to improve memory performance by turning off certain networking processes which you don't need if you're just using a single home computer.

There are also loads of tips about hidden programs and functions in Windows XP, altering the contents of menus and even running older applications that don't seem to be compatible with your operating system. And once you've gone through the top 99, you'll find out what the number one tip for Windows XP is. We won't spoil the surprise just yet, so keep reading...

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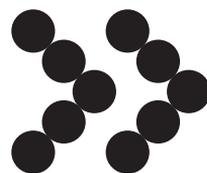
The Essential Tips List

> **Whatever your experience level, you'll learn something new from these ultimate tips...**

100 Browser shortcut
Moving the mouse pointer over to the address bar in Internet Explorer is just too much bother. Hitting [F6] will get it there far more quickly.

99 Try a new font
Change the look of your text by selecting a different font. Open the Fonts folder in Control Panel and double-click on a font for a preview.

98 Old-style menu
If you liked the Start Menu the way it used to be, right-click on the Start button, choose Properties and select the 'Classic start menu' under the Start menu tab to get the look you want.

97 Desktop clean-up
Clean up your display in an instant. Right-click on your desktop and choose 'Arrange icons by' and then uncheck 'Show desktop items' for a tidier environment.

96 New user image
You can change the image allocated to your user account. Go into User Accounts in Control Panel, choose an account to change and click on 'Change my picture'.

95 Internet time
Double-click the clock in the system tray and, under the Internet Time tab, check the option to 'Automatically synchronize with an internet time server' for an accurate clock.

94 New desktop wallpaper
Right-click on an image and choose 'Set as background' to set it as desktop wallpaper.

93 Keyboard shortcuts
Press [Win] + [Tab] and you'll be able to cycle through the taskbar icons. Press [Alt] + [Tab] to switch between applications.

92 Faster browsing
If you know the URL, just click on Start > Run, type the address and press Enter.

91 Classic Windows
Curvaceous title bars and buttons not your thing? Go into Display Properties and, under the Themes tab, choose Windows Classic.

90 Quick address entry
Type part of a web address in Internet Explorer, then hold down [Ctrl] and press [Enter]. The rest will be added for you.

89 Pin to menu
Right-click on any file shortcut or program file and choose 'Pin to Start menu' to put a shortcut on there, just below your User Profile image.

88 Clearer with ClearType
Make your text sharper. In Display Properties, select the Appearance tab and click on Effects. Check the option 'Use the following method to smooth edges of screen fonts' and select ClearType.

87 New home page
Display the home page you want and not the one your ISP chooses for you. In Internet Options, select the General tab and enter your choice under Home page.

86 Command prompt colour
The command prompt doesn't have to be black and white. Open a command prompt window, click the icon in the top left, choose Properties and select the Colors tab.

85 System shortcut
Right-click on My Computer and choose Properties. This gives you access to the System Properties dialogue window where you can get hands-on with Windows XP.

84 Outlook Express security
Go into Options in Outlook Express and select the Security tab. Make sure the check boxes protecting you against unauthorised use of your Address Book and virus infection are both checked.

83 Rename shortcut
You can rename the entire contents of a folder by selecting all the files you require and then pressing [F2]. Rename one file and Windows XP will automatically rename all of the others for you.

Colour changes
Bored of blue? Give your PC a whole new colour scheme

82 Get a new look
The default colour scheme for Windows XP is blue. It's a nice blue, but if it doesn't quite suit your particular taste, you can easily change it. Do this by going into Display Properties and clicking on the Appearance tab. In the Color Scheme drop-down box, you'll be able to choose either Olive Green or Silver instead.

Official screensaver
Download the official Microsoft Windows XP screensaver

81 Slinky screensaver
You've got Windows XP but what you probably won't have is the official 3D screensaver. It's the perfect way to spice up your desktop when you're not using your PC, and you can download your copy from the Windows XP screensaver site, found at: www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/downloads/xpscreensaver.asp.

Apart from Windows Media Player, most applications use the shortcut [Ctrl] + [P] to print out the current page.

80 Speed up your display
You can speed up System Properties by selecting the Advanced tab and, under Performance, clicking on Settings. Check the option 'Adjust for best performance' under the Visual Effects tab to get a much faster display.

79 Create a screensaver
You can easily turn your own pictures into a screensaver for a more personal desktop. Save the images you want to use in the My Pictures folder. In Display Properties, select the Screen Saver tab and choose 'My pictures slideshow'.

78 Stay updated
To make sure that Windows XP is always fully updated, enter System Properties, click on Automatic Updates and choose the option to retrieve and install updates when they're available.

77 Customise sounds
Choose the sound that plays when Windows XP performs a certain task or action. Go into Sounds and Audio Devices in the Control Panel and select the Sounds tab. Choose an Event and then pick the sound you want.

76 Use AutoComplete
If you've already visited a website, Internet Explorer will remember its address. You can then use this information to have your web addresses automatically completed for you. To turn this feature on, go into Internet Options, select the Content tab and click AutoComplete to save yourself a fair bit of time and effort.

75 Keep folders private
You can ensure that any folders in your Documents and Settings folder stay safe from prying eyes. Secure them by right-clicking on a folder and choosing 'Sharing and Security'. With the Sharing tab selected, check the box 'Make this folder private' and all your secrets will be safe.

74 My Computer toolbar
Create a brand new toolbar by dragging the My Computer icon to the edge of the screen. You can now select a drive by clicking on a button instead. To revert back to normal, right-click on the toolbar and choose Toolbars > My Computer.

73 Copy user profiles
A quick way of creating a new user profile is to go into User Profiles in System Properties and clicking on Copy To.

72 Ending tasks
If an application stops responding, press [Ctrl] + [Alt] + [Del] to bring up the Windows Task Manager. Select the item that is 'Not responding' and hit End Task.

71 Built-in backup
There's a complete backup utility on your Windows XP installation CD. Browse to E:\VALUEADD\MSFT\NTBACKUP and double-click on NTBACKUP.MSI to install it.

70 Fast Start menu
Click on Start and you'll probably experience some delay while the All Programs menu appears. You can speed things up by editing the registry using regedit. Locate HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop and then reduce the value of 'Menu show delay' from 400.

69 Start IE faster
The quickest way to start Internet Explorer is to right-click on your IE shortcut and choose Properties. Edit the command line in Target to read C:\Program Files\InternetExplorer\IEXPLORE.EXE" -nohome.

68 Windows XP fax
If you need your PC to have fax capabilities, you should install the Windows XP fax. In Add/Remove Programs, click on 'Add/Remove Windows Components'. In the Windows Component Wizard, check the box next to Fax Services and make sure that you have your installation CD to hand.

>> **Most applications, including Microsoft Office programs, will instantly save the current document if you hit [Ctrl] + [S].**

67 Click to clean up

Tidy up your system tray and remove some of the icons. Right-click on the Start button and choose Properties. Select the Taskbar tab and check 'Hide inactive icons'.

66 Edit shortcuts

For direct access to all of the application shortcuts on the All Programs menu, right-click on the Start button, choose Open and double-click on the Programs folder.

65 Control restarts

Windows XP is set to restart automatically if it encounters a serious problem with your system. To change this setup, go into System Properties, select the Advanced tab and click on Settings under Startup and Recovery. Then, under System Failure, uncheck Automatically Restart.

64 Talking Windows XP

Let Windows XP talk you through each and every move it makes. You can do this by holding down [Windows] and pressing [U]. This will launch the Utility Manager. All you need to do now is launch Narrator and Windows XP will explain all of its arcane machinations to you.

63 Password backup

If you forget your password, you'll need a recovery disc. Create one by going into Users, then enter your profile and click on 'Prevent a forgotten password'.

62 Close programs

You can set Windows XP to automatically deal with any tasks that aren't responding. Locate HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop\AutoEndTasks and set the value to 1. Then, under the 'Wait to kill app timeout' option, set the number of milliseconds to 'wait'.

61 Check CPU usage

Qslice enables you to see a graphical representation of how much CPU power each process on your system is using. You can download it from: www.microsoft.com/windows2000/techinfo/reskit/tools/existing/qslice-o.asp.

60 Win at Minesweeper

Find the mines before they find you in this addictive Windows XP game

Win every time!

Start Minesweeper, type xyzzy, then hold down [Shift] and press [Enter]. Now you can minimise all of the other program windows and start playing.

Black or white?

Look at the pixel at the very top left of the screen. If you run the mouse over a mine square, this pixel turns black. If it's a safe square, the pixel turns white.

59 Use the firewall
Anyone connecting to the internet will need to ensure that they are protected from malicious users. Right-click on your internet connection and choose Properties. Select the Advanced tab and check the box under 'Internet Connection Firewall'.

58 Quicker without sound
Speed up Windows XP startup and shutdown times by removing unnecessary sounds. In 'Sounds and Audio Devices', click on Sounds > Program Events. Now locate Exit Windows and Start Windows and select None in the Sounds drop-down box.

57 Line up wallpaper
Your options for positioning wallpaper restrict you in that you can only centre or tile an image. A small change to the registry enables you to put it where you like. Locate HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop, then create two string values, 'Wallpaperoriginx' and 'Wallpaperoriginy'. The 'x' string is the horizontal position and 'y' is vertical and the values are measured in pixels. Set yours up as you wish.

56 Quick profile access
Rather than going into Control Panel to access your user profile, there's a much quicker way. Just click on Start, then go up to the image that's used for your profile and click on it.

55 Try System Restore
If things don't go as expected after you've added a new item of hardware or software to your system, you'll be glad you created your own restore point beforehand. This will enable you to launch System Restore and take your system back to a point in time when everything was working correctly.

54 Find your IP address
Do you know what your IP address is? The quick way of finding out is to launch a command prompt window, type ipconfig and then hit [Return].

53 Compress data
You don't have to delete all your files and folders to create more space on your hard drive. Right-click on any file or folder and choose Properties. Click on the Advanced button and check the option to 'Compress contents to save disk space'.

52 Improve video playback
If streamed video playback is jerky on Windows Media Player, click on Tools > Options, select the Performance tab and increase the buffer time.

51 Clean your desktop
Your desktop easily becomes a dumping ground for all sorts of program shortcuts that you're never likely to use. Right-click on your desktop and choose Arrange Icons By > Run Desktop Cleanup Wizard.

50 Quick program shortcuts
Instead of going into the registry, it's far simpler to open Windows Explorer, find the .exe file that you want, right-click on it and choose Send To > Desktop.

49 Older version compatibility
If you have problems running some of your older applications with Windows XP, there is a solution. Locate the executable file (.exe) for the program, right-click on it and choose Properties. Click on the Compatibility tab and check 'Run this program in compatibility mode' and choose the operating system it worked with from the list.

48 Start menu tweak
Stop Windows XP from highlighting newly installed applications on the All Programs menu by right-clicking on Start and choosing Properties > Customize. Now select the Advanced tab and uncheck 'Highlight newly installed programs'.

47 Shutdown shortcuts
Launch a command prompt window and type 'shutdown' to see a list of all the available shutdown options.

Don't hammer the [Down] and [Up] arrows! Move rapidly through a document by holding down [Ctrl] and hitting [Home] or [End] instead.

46 Run command shortcut

Click on the Start button, choose Run and drag it onto your desktop. This will create a shortcut to the run command that you can then copy to your Quick Launch toolbar for added convenience.

45 Network tool

Previous versions of Windows used the winipcfg tool to display your IP address and network information. Although this isn't an integral part of Windows XP, you can download the utility from the following site: www.microsoft.com/windows2000/techinfo/ reskit/tools/existing/wntipcfg-o.asp. After installation, just click on Start > Run and type winipcfg.

44 Keep data secure

You can keep you data safe and make sure Internet Explorer doesn't store any of your personal information. In Internet Options, select the Advanced tab, scroll down to Security and check 'Do not save encrypted pages to disk'.

43 See all files

By default you won't see all the files and folders that are stored on your PC because Windows XP hides items so you don't tamper with them by mistake. To see them all, open a folder and click on Tools > Folder Options, select the View tab and check 'Show hidden files and folders'.

42 Extra disc tools

There are dozens of utilities on the Windows XP disc that can help you to diagnose system problems. Put the CD in your drive and browse to the Support\Tools folder and double-click on Setup.exe to begin. With a complete installation, you'll get a massive 103 new tools.

41 Display hidden apps

To see all of your PC's hidden applications, go into My Computer and locate the file C:\Windows\inf\sysoc.inf. Double-click on this file and you'll see various items listed. Next to some will be the word 'hide'. To make these items visible, all you have to do is delete the word 'hide'.

40 Defrag in a click

Add defragmentation options to your right-click menu
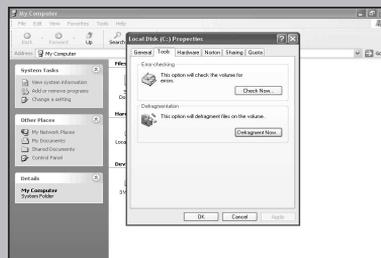
CREATE A NEW KEY

Open regedit and find HKEY_CLASSES_ ROOT\Drive\shell. Right-click on shell and choose New > Key. Give it the name Defrag and then right-click.
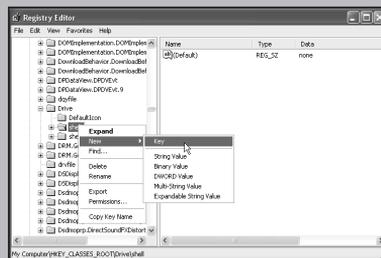
CHANGE THE VALUE DATA

Now choose New > Key and call it Command. Right-click on Default, choose Modify and then make the Value data DEFRAG.EXE %1.
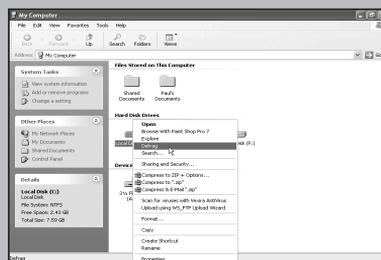
TRY IT OUT

The next step is to close the Registry. Open My Computer and right-click on one of your drives and you'll be able to see the new option that you've created.

39 Encrypting data
Windows XP Professional users can protect their data by right-clicking on a file or folder, choosing Properties > Advanced, then checking 'Encrypt contents to secure data'.

38 Erase a CD-RW
If you have a CD-RW installed, you can delete all the files from a disc. Right-click on the drive in My Computer and select Open. From the taskbar on the left, choose 'Erase this CD-RW' to get rid of it.

37 Remove indexing
All the files on your hard disk are indexed so search results are displayed quicker, but this indexing can affect the speed of normal commands. Unless you do lots of searching, turn the indexing service off by right-clicking on your hard drive and choosing Properties. Uncheck 'Allow Indexing Service to index this disk for fast file searching'.

36 Control Panel toolbar
Click on Start, then move the pointer up to Control Panel and drag it onto your desktop to create a file shortcut. Next, drag the shortcut to the very edge of your screen. You'll now have a new toolbar displaying all the items in your Control Panel.

35 Magnify display
When using an application like Microsoft Word or Internet Explorer, you can magnify the on-screen display. Just hold down [Ctrl] and rotate the mouse wheel.

34 Your own pop-ups
You can create pop-up menus, similar to the Start menu. Copy all the files or shortcuts you want to access into a new folder. Now right-click on the toolbar and hit Toolbars > New Toolbar. Select your folder and hit OK.

33 System tray icons
Right-click on the Start button and choose Properties > Taskbar. Check 'Hide inactive icons' and click Customize. Now you can specify the behaviour of system tray icons.

32 Easy volume control
You can move the volume control icon to the system tray. In Control Panel, go to 'Sounds and Audio Devices'. Under the Volume tab, check 'Place volume icon in the taskbar'.

31 Convert to NTFS
A hard drive formatted as NTFS gives you added compression and security features. You can switch to NTFS without losing your data by opening a command prompt window and typing: convert C: /fs:ntfs (where 'C:' is the drive you want to convert).

30 Back up your files
The Files and Settings Transfer Wizard is also a great backup tool. When using this utility to back up data, check the Old computer option. When you want to restore your backed up files, select New computer.

29 Modify your toolbar
You can change your toolbar background so it displays the image of your choice. In the registry, find HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\ Toolbar. Modify the entry BackBitmapIE5 to point to the bitmap file of your choice.

28 Faster icon redraw
You may have obsolete icons in the icon cache that could be removed. Use Windows Explorer or My Computer to browse to Documents and Settings > Username > Local Settings > Application Data. Locate the file IconCache.db file and delete it.

27 Change your folder look
Right-click on a folder, choose Properties > Customize, click on Change Icon and select a system dll file to see alternative icons.

26 Change priorities
Windows XP assigns different priorities to applications. You can change the levels of these setting manually. In Windows Task Manager, select the Processes tab, right-click on the item and choose 'Set Priority to set an appropriate level'.

> **Tap [Shift] five times to activate StickyKeys, an application that makes it easy to use any key combinations without having to hold multiple keys down.**

25 Order your drives

Having created additional partitions or installed an additional hard drive or CD drive, you may find that your drive letters are out of sequence in My Computer. You can rearrange things by right-clicking on My Computer and choosing Manage. Select Disk Management, right-click on the drive or partition you want to amend and choose 'Change Drive Letter and Paths'. Click on Change and choose a new drive letter from the drop-down box.

24 Customised icons

You can remove the coloured box that sits behind the text label of your desktop icons. In System Properties, select the Advanced tab and click Settings under Performance. Check the box 'Use drop shadows for icon labels on the desktop'.

23 Rebrand programs

Certain ISPs customise Internet Explorer and Outlook Express and include their own branding in the name of the program window title. You can revert to the default settings or add your own customisations. To alter Internet Explorer, go into the Registry and find HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main. Scroll down to Window Title to modify the text. To change Outlook Express, locate HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Identities\{YOUR IDENTITY ID }\Software\Microsoft\Outlook Express\5.0. Add or modify the string value WindowTitle and enter the text you want.

22 Use album art

You can personalise the folders that contain your MP3 and WMA files with original album art. Find and download the image you want and save it in your music folder. Name it folder.jpg, then switch to Thumbnail view.

21 Using system properties

Right-click on My Computer and choose Properties > Advanced. Now you can change customisation effects for icons, menus and text, watch each user profile to see how much disk space someone is using and set Windows XP to send details of any errors to Microsoft, and to automatically update itself.

20 Faster broadband

It may be quicker than your old modem, but it could be even faster

DefaultTTL	REG_DWORD	0x00000080 (128)
Domain	REG_SZ	
DontAddDefaultGatewayDefault	REG_DWORD	0x00000000 (0)
EnableICMPRedirect	REG_DWORD	0x00000001 (1)
EnablePMTUBHDetect	REG_SZ	0

TIME TO LIVE

Use regedit and locate HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Services\Tcpip\Parameters. Change the Time To Live setting to DefaultTTL = 128 (decimal). Amend the next setting to read EnablePMTUBHDetect = 0. Alter the size of the Maximum Transmission Unit (find and change EnablePMTUDiscovery = 1).

SackOpts	REG_SZ	1
SearchList	REG_SZ	
Tcp1323Opts	REG_SZ	1
TcpWindowSize	REG_DWORD	0x00007fff (32767)
UseDomainNameDevolution	REG_DWORD	0x00000001 (1)
TcpMaxDupAcks	REG_DWORD	0x00000002 (2)

NEW DWORDS

Amend GlobalMaxTcpWindowSize = 32767 (decimal). You may need to create this entry if it doesn't appear. It's a DWORD Value called TcpMaxDupAcks and it requires a value of 2. The same applies to SackOpts, which needs to have a value of 1.

Tcp1323Opts	REG_SZ	1
TcpWindowSize	REG_DWORD	0x00007fff (32767)
UseDomainNameDevolution	REG_DWORD	0x00000001 (1)
TcpMaxDupAcks	REG_DWORD	0x00000002 (2)

TWO FINAL CHANGES

For the final steps, you need to amend the values of the two remaining items: Tcp1323Opts = 1 and TcpWindowSize = 32767 (decimal). Experiment with other settings for the latter, such as 93440, 186880, or 372300, which may improve the speed of your broadband connection.

100 Top Tips The Essential Tips List

19 CD to hard drive
When you make changes to your system or install new applications, you're often asked to insert the Windows XP installation CD. Avoid this by copying all the files you need to your hard drive. Browse the contents of the CD, locate the I386 folder and copy it.

18 Clear pagefile
Your pagefile is used as a temporary storage area for files and data that won't fit into your system memory. This can include the likes of personal information and unencrypted passwords. As a security precaution, you can configure Windows XP to delete the contents of the pagefile when you shut your PC down. In the Registry, locate HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager\Memory Management. In the right-hand pane, go to 'Clear page file at shutdown' and give it a value of 1.

17 Clear the prefetch
Windows XP monitors its own activity to see which applications are launched. It stores this information in the Prefetch folder. This may become full so clear the contents and let Windows XP start building up its usage profile. The folder is in Windows\Prefetch.

16 Clear web history
Internet Explorer keeps details of the web pages you visit. To remove this information permanently, select General > Clear History, in Internet Options. Now click Delete Files to remove any temporary files and hit Delete Cookies to remove them too.

15 View clipboard contents
Browse the contents of your C: drive and locate Windows\System32. You'll find a program called clipbrd.exe. Click it and drag it onto the Start button. Wait for the menu to open, then drag the icon into position. Your new menu item is called 'Shortcut to clpbrd'. Right-click on it, select Rename and call it Clipbook Viewer. Use this when you want to view the contents of your clipboard.

14 Outlook Express folder fixes
If you've tried to back up Outlook Express folders, you may have encountered the problem where the folders you hoped to restore don't actually appear. The solution to this problem is to rename the file folders.dbx to folders.old and then restart Outlook Express. This will recreate the folders.dbx file and re-indexes the mail folders that you have in Outlook Express.

13 Find hidden files and folders
When you search for a file or folder, you may get zero results. There's a good chance this is because what you're looking for is a hidden or system file or folder. Before you start your search, click on 'More advanced options' and make sure they're included.

12 Free up processing power
Free the processing power that's being used by idle tasks running in the background. Click on Start > Run, type Rundll32.exe advapi32.dll, ProcessIdleTasks and click OK.

11 Free up RAM
One process in Windows Task Manager is ctfmon.exe. This enables various advanced text services. If you don't use these, turn them off to save memory. Hit 'Turn off advanced text services', under 'Regional and Language Options' in Control Panel.

10 Driver roll back
Having installed a new driver, you may find your system isn't as stable as it was. Solve this with System Restore, or go to System Properties > Hardware > Device Manager. Double-click on the item that has been causing problems and hit the Driver tab. Now click on 'Roll Back Driver' to delete the new driver and revert back to the old one.

9 Lock your PC
You can lock your PC by right-clicking on the desktop and creating a shortcut. Enter the item location rundll32.exe user32.dll, LockWorkStation. Click on Next, enter a name for your new shortcut and click Finish.

> Hit [Alt] + [F4] together to close the current program – this is a handy 'kill' shortcut that will close any open windows too.

8 Add Safe mode to boot menu

In System Properties > Advanced, click on Settings under 'Startup And Recovery'. Click Edit to see your boot.ini file in Notepad. Go to Operating Systems and copy the line that has your normal choice of operating system and paste this in below. In the new line, change the description in quote marks to 'Windows XP Safe Mode'. At the end of the line, add /safeboot:minimal /sos /bootlog.

7 Don't reinstall – repair

Boot from the Windows XP CD. Press [Enter] on the 'Welcome to Setup' screen, then [Enter] again. Hit [F8] to agree to the licence agreement, then select your installation and press [R] to repair. This will repair critical system files while ignoring your data files.

6 Control individual user access

In Windows XP Professional, adjust the settings in Properties > Security, to control read and write access permissions. This option won't be visible for Windows XP Home edition users, although it can be enabled by rebooting in Safe Mode.

5 Animate your desktop

Create a folder to store all the elements of your web page, including your AVI file. Now create the HTML using an application like FrontPage 2002. Give your file the name desktop.htm. Incorporate the AVI file into your page. The video file will only play once so add the text loop="infinite" after "fileopen". The width and height settings need to match those of your display or your AVI won't fit correctly. If you're running your display at 800x600, 1024x768 and so on, amend the two figures accordingly. Save the changes and close both desktop.htm and FrontPage 2002. Now right-click on the desktop and choose Properties. Select Desktop > Customize Desktop > Web > New > Browse. Locate the file Desktop.htm and click Open > OK. Under the list of web pages, your file is checked. Click OK, then Apply, then click OK again to finish.

4 Customisation

All aspects of Windows XP can be altered to give you a unique and personal PC.

3 The right drag and drop

Get into the habit of right-clicking when you drag and drop. On releasing the right mouse button, a menu will be displayed so you can confirm the action.

2 The group policy editor

Click on Start > Run and then type gpedit.msc and press [Enter]. The gpedit tool saves you the hassle of having to poke around in the registry. For example, go to Administrative Templates > System, and you can 'Turn Off Autoplay' for all your CDs. Another tweak you can perform without the registry is browser customisation. You should note that gpedit only works in Windows XP Professional edition.

The best tip... ever!

We all want a faster PC and this simple tip has a big effect on speed
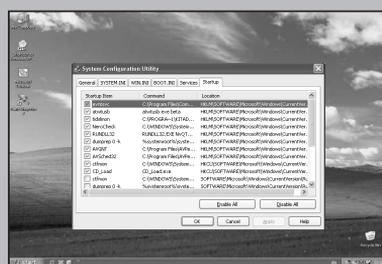
1 Faster startups

Click Start > Run, type msconfig and press [Enter]. Select the Startup tab and you'll see a list of all the programs that are invoked when Windows starts. If you see the names of any applications that you don't use, uncheck the relevant box. Performance can also be improved by moving the pagefile to a different partition. In System Properties, hit Advanced > Performance > Settings. In Performance Options, select Advanced > Change. Under Drive, select a partition other than the one where Windows XP is installed. Check the Custom size option and, in Initial size, enter the figure listed under Recommended. Enter a figure in Maximum size too, then click Set. Under Drive, select the partition where Windows XP is installed, check 'No paging file' and click on Set.

80 Expert Tips

Check out these insider tips about almost every subject from the experts who write the magazine

For over 20 issues, Windows XP: The Official Magazine has been bringing you the best advice on how to improve your home computing experience, and in every one of those issues, we've had several expert tips from professional contributors who have been using PCs for years and know Windows XP inside out. They've shared their own favourite pieces of advice for speeding up processes, customising the look of the operating system or on finding hidden features or programs, and we've collected the lot and crammed them into this chapter.

There's no rhyme or reason to the order of this chapter, so it's worth flicking to a random page of it each day and trying out whatever you find – this is a great way of getting to know parts of Windows XP you've never ventured into before. For more complicated tips, it's always worth making backups or copies of whatever you're going to be modifying, just in case you slip up. In fact, that was another expert tip just there – now that's value for money!

If by the end of this book there's still some aspect of Windows XP you're not sure about, drop us a line at the usual address – snapshot@windowsxpmagazine.co.uk – or visit the friendly folk on our online forum at http://forum.windowsxpmagazine.co.uk. Alternatively, if you've got a tip of your own that you'd like to see featured in the magazine, email it over to us. Send it to jon.hicks@windowsxpmagazine.co.uk.

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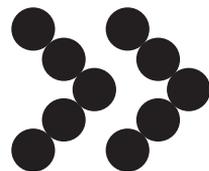
80 Expert Tips Essential Advice

1 Sound formats
One benefit of Windows XP is that any video or sound format can be integrated into the system as easily as downloading the relevant codec.

2 Advice for music makers
Trying to sound exactly like your favourite artist is a bad idea. Learn your equipment. It takes time to discover what your kit can do, but this is time well spent.

3 The Start menu
The Administrative tools live in the Performance and Maintenance control panel but you can put them on the Start menu. Right-click on the Start button and choose Properties > Start Menu > Customize > Advanced > System Administrative tools.

4 System services
It's safe to turn off the following services in certain cases. No network: On a standalone PC you don't need Net Logon, Wireless Zero Configuration, NetMeeting Remote Desktop Sharing, DHCP Client, Distributed Link Tracking Client or DNS Client. No printer: Print Spooler. No CD Writer: IMAPI CD-Burning COM service. No MP3 player: Portable Media Serial Number (this grabs the serial number of digital music players for copyright protection).

5 Release RAM
Many memory utilities 'free up' RAM by forcing Windows to allocate a large amount of RAM to the utility and then releasing it. To get the memory, Windows takes it from other programs. Windows XP is more efficient at managing memory, but it's also better at freeing up memory when the utilities request it, so these can work well.

6 Photos as icons
Use a photo as a personal user account icon. Go to User Accounts, select an account, click on 'Change my picture' and then choose 'Browse for more pictures'.

7 Driver signing
Check driver compatiblity by enabling driver signing. Go to Start > Control Panel > Printers and other hardware > System. From the Hardware tab, click on Driver Signing.

8 Finding a copy of Cacls
You'll find an advanced version of Cacls on the Windows XP CD. It's called Xcacls and it's in Support\Tools\Support.cab.
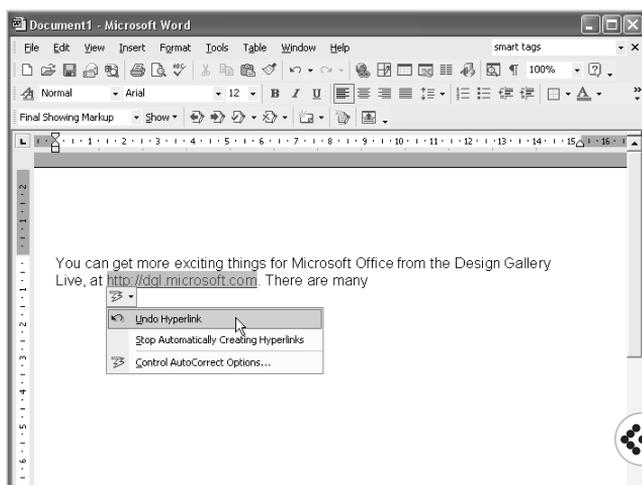
9 The pagefile
Don't think you can do away with your pagefile.sys. Windows XP requires it to be present, or you could get a lot of 'Out of memory' error messages.

10 Group chats
Send a message in MSN Messenger and choose Actions > Invite Someone To This Conversation, to include more people in the chat.
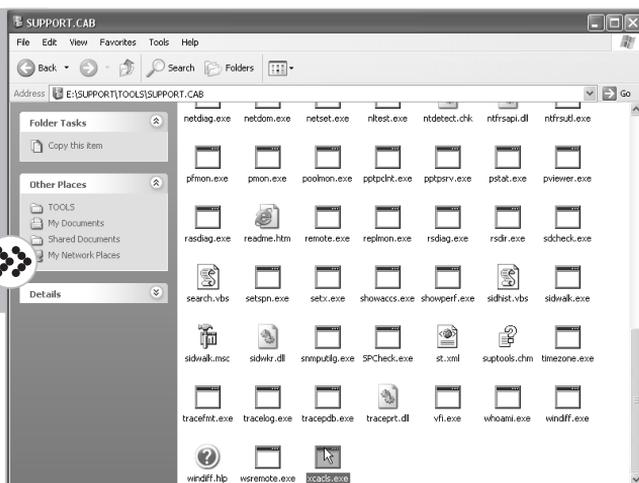
21 Undo hyperlinks
When Word turns a URL into a hyperlink, you can undo it by choosing Undo Hyperlink from the Smart Tag Actions menu, which appears when you hold your mouse over the left end of the new hyperlink.

11 Download folders
Create a folder called Downloads for any files you download. This helps you locate them more easily.

12 Extra software
Get to know what Windows XP offers before buying new software. That way you won't waste money by duplicating one of the pre-installed programs.

13 Using shortcut keys
You can use shortcut keys to access Smart Tag options. Hover the mouse on the Smart Tag button and press [Alt] + [Shift] + [F10].

14 Turn off other users
If other users on your PC leave applications running when they're away, it slows you down. If you can't log in under their names to close programs, use Logoff in Task Manager's Users tab to shut them down.

15 Desktop wallpaper
If you're using a web page as wallpaper and the page doesn't fit your display area exactly, edit the dimensions you input to correspond with your screen resolution. Adjust it by a few pixels at a time.

16 Boost your connection
A larger Receive Window will benefit high-bandwidth internet connections. By reducing the size of the Window, an acknowledgement will be sent to the sender that data has been received. This can help stop time-outs on your connection.

17 Navigation in Explorer
You can move to a higher folder using the 'Up One Level' button, which you'll find next to the Search button in the Windows Explorer navigation toolbar.

18 Find lost files
If you last used a file within the previous few days, you should be able to find it under My Recent Documents. If not, all is not lost. Click on Search in the Start menu. Choose Documents and supply answers to the questions there. Windows XP will search all your computer's drives. If you saved your document somewhere, Search will find it.

19 The taskbar
You can resize the taskbar by moving your mouse pointer to the top of the bar and dragging your mouse upwards to make it bigger.

When in Microsoft Excel, if you want to strike out any text, hit [Ctrl] + [5]. This will put a line through any selected text.

21 Filming tricks
When filming pets, hold their favourite toy or a food treat under your camcorder when you want them to look into the camera.

22 WMA files
The audio files that Windows Media Player uses are compressed using the WMA standard. This is more efficient than the MP3 standard.

23 Going alphabetical
Want the programs on your Start menu or Internet Explorer Favorites in alphabetical order? Right-click on any item in the menu (or choose [Shift] + [F10]) and choose 'Sort by Name'. It works on any menu of shortcuts, and on the Documents menu too.

24 MBSA tool
The MBSA uses the HFNetChk tool, which network Administrators have been using since August 2001 to check network security. HFNetChk is a command line utility, but the MBSA has a more user-friendly graphical interface.

25 Event Viewer
Event Viewer can display five different event types:

Error: Should anything happen, such as a program crashing and data being lost, then details will be logged here. Should a particular service fail to launch at startup, this will also be recorded as an error.
Warning: This indicates something that may require attention in the future but isn't critical now.
Information: This is used to record a successful event, such as an application launching or a driver loading.
Success Audit: This notes when a security access succeeds – for example, a login attempt that works.
Failure Audit: This notes the opposite – a login failing because it's unauthorised, or a user attempting to access a certain part of the system.

26 Stay secure
.NET's versatility can be a disadvantage as well as a blessing. Your email address and password are all that protect your .NET Passport's contents. When some browsers cache passwords, you could see your private data get into other people's hands. Check Public/shared computer as you sign into .NET. This stops any password caching and any of your emails being saved.

27 Digital postcards
Try a virtual world tour and send virtual cards from loads of different places. Check out www.neonpages.com/cards/scenery for a good place to start.

28 Broadband provider details
If you want to find out what users think about your local broadband providers, you can visit some user forums on the net. Try www.dslreports.com/forum/ukbb and www.ispreview.co.uk/broadband.shtml.

29 Successful backups
Under Options, select the General tab and check the box to 'Verify data after the backup completes' to ensure that your backup has performed correctly.

30 Restoring backups
Before restoring a backup, go into options in the Windows XP Backup Utility and check your settings under the Restore tab. Here you can configure how an existing file will be treated if an attempt is made to restore it.

31 Movie Maker file formats
Project files are saved with a .MSWMM file name extension. They contain information about your clips and how they are edited and organised. Saved projects are works in progress and can still be edited when they are reopened. Movie files are saved with a .WMV file name extension. They're compressed and optimised for streaming. Collections files are saved with a .COL file extension. These database files contain information about your source image clips.

>> **If you wish to minimise the current working window when using spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel, hit [Ctrl] + [F9].**

32 Speedy shortcuts

If you hit the wrong keys, you'll see unusual things on-screen, so here are some handy combinations you will want to use. Hold down [Windows] and press [D] to hide your applications and show the desktop. [M] does the same thing but it won't minimise windows with open dialogue boxes. [Windows] + [R] is faster than Start > Run. [Windows] + [Pause Break] is the fastest way to the System Properties control panel, and [Windows] + [U] opens the Accessibility Utility Manager. If you don't have a [Windows] key, press [Ctrl] + [Esc] instead.

33 Overwriting system libraries

When installing new software onto your computer, you might find that the software has not been optimised for Windows XP and attempts to install old system files (DLLs). If an installer asks to overwrite a file, select No or Skip wherever possible.

34 Passwords

When you back up the registry keys for Outlook Express, they won't include passwords for mail and news accounts because those are encrypted. Remember to write them down somewhere safe (in a utility like Whisper 32 or AnyPassword) because you'll need them when you restore a saved registry file.

35 Narrator

Narrator is built into Windows XP. To hear Narrator describe a particular area on screen, there are a number of keyboard shortcuts you can use:
[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Spacebar]
Hear an entire window (select it first).
[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Enter]
Hear information about the current item.
[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Insert]
Hear a detailed description of an item.
[Alt] + [Home]
Hear the title bar of a window.
[Alt] + [End]
Hear the status bar of a window.
[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Enter] or Arrow keys
Hear the contents of an edit field.
[Ctrl] + [\]
Silence Narrator.

36 Changing drive icons

You can change drive icons in My Computer by creating an AUTORUN.INF file in Notepad that points at the icon you want to use. You can save it in the root folder of the drive. If you're using an icon from a .DLL or .EXE file with lots of icons in, you need to specify the number of the icon (the first icon is 0). The file needs to look like this:

[autorun]
ICON=c:\windows\system\cool.dll,11

37 Burning to CD

Windows XP doesn't treat a CD burner like a hard drive (you need extra packet writing software to work like that) but you can create data and audio CDs from Explorer easily enough. Check that Windows XP recognises your CD burner by right-clicking and choosing Properties > Recording, and ticking 'Enable CD recording on this drive'. Now you can drag and drop files onto your CD writer as if it were a hard drive, then right-click on the drive and choose 'Write these files to CD'. If you decide to cancel the burn and delete the queue of files, right-click on the drive icon and choose 'Delete temporary files'. If you want to create an audio CD from files in different folders, you need to use Windows Media Player and create a playlist, but you can create a music CD from one folder using the task pane. Use View > Customise Folder to pick a music template for the folder and you'll see a command in the task pane to Copy items to audio CD.

38 Correct syntax switches

When using the Msiexec tool to run Windows Installer from the command prompt, it's useful to know which syntax switches to use. You'll find full details here: www.microsoft.com/technet/prodtechnol/winxppro/proddocs/msiexec.asp.

39 Sharing your PC

You don't have to shut down your computer when you've finished using it. If you log off, someone else can log into their account without having to wait for Windows XP to boot up again.

80 Expert Tips Essential Advice

40 Fax cover pages
If you are using Microsoft Word to create your faxes, go to the website http://search.office update.microsoft. com/Template Gallery/ct112.asp and download some alternative cover pages.
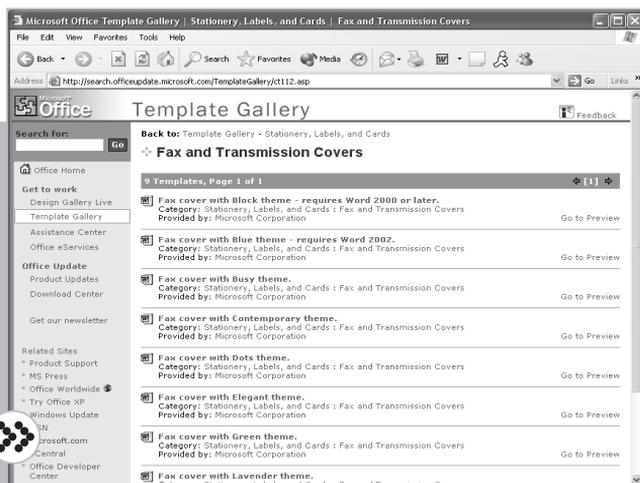
41 Problems installing?
If software isn't working after installation, reboot your PC and try it again.

42 New firewall?
Disable the Windows XP firewall before installing an alternative firewall. Do this by going into Network connections, right-clicking on your internet connection and choosing Properties > Advanced. Uncheck the box under 'Internet Connection Firewall'.

43 Reducing dust spots
If you use a film camera rather than a digital model, you can get better results by scanning your negatives and slides with a film scanner, rather than by scanning prints with a flatbed model. They offer better colour and sharpness, but they highlight every scratch. Many newer models use special systems for eliminating blemishes. Nikon has Digital ICE technology, while Canon has a rival FARE system.

44 Add table functions
You can force Excel and Word to work together by creating your table as an Excel spreadsheet. Word will use all the functions of Excel within that table.

45 Improve your sound card
Dedicated music soundcards will improve sound quality and can record and play back at extremely high quality.

46 Better speech recognition
Speech is bundled with Word 2002 and Office 2002. The best way to use it is in conjunction with your keyboard. The recognition engine won't understand intonation so when you're speaking into the mic just say the words at the same speed. Also, don't shout or whisper; talk at the same speed; don't pause; work in a quiet environment with a quality microphone; keep using the training tool; talk clearly and naturally; and don't separate syllables.

47 Using Speech
To delete the last thing you said, say "scratch that". It's also possible to highlight items of text too.

48 Saving downloaded files
Need to work out where to save a file that you're downloading? Click the Folders button to get the Explorer bar that lets you navigate your computer and the web from within the same window.

Also in Microsoft Excel, you can maximise any currently selected window by holding down [Ctrl] and tapping [F10].

49 System files
If you choose to manually erase or clean files in your system, don't erase information in your Windows/System folder. The contents are key system files that are required for booting up.

50 Be wary of pop-ups
Watch out for pop-up pages as you visit websites – never just click OK or Yes in a dialogue box without understanding what it's asking. If you're not sure, say no or close the window without clicking. If the site won't work without it, reload and try again. Close unwanted web pages by right-clicking the icons in the toolbar, then hit Close.

51 Pre-installed support tools
Don't forget the range of tools installed with Windows XP that are available from the command prompt. Take a look at 'Command line reference A-Z' in the Windows XP help file or type 'help' at the command prompt.

52 Backing up folders
If you want to back up music, pictures or anything else, do this by changing the path in the set MyDocPth line at the end of the first section of backup.bat. For example, if you want to back up everything in the C:\games\highscores folder, change the line to set MyDocPth=C:\games\highscores. Remember that some files, particularly pictures, take up a lot of disk space.

53 Audio-free AVI clip
A Firewire card transfers video and audio signals simultaneously. Therefore, video is always captured with audio. The only way you can have a DV AVI clip without the audio is to go to the Storyboard Step and adjust the volume of the video clip to zero by clicking Mute. Once the clip is rendered, the Audio Track will be gone permanently.

54 Stop Errors
Should you be unfortunate enough to receive a blue screen Stop Error, you'll find more advice on how to deal with it at www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/home/using/howto/gettingstarted/guide/troubleshoot.asp.

55 Safe mode
If you're unable to restart normally after a crash, try going into Safe mode. Turn your PC on and keep pressing [F8] until the Safe mode menu appears.

56 Back to good configuration
If you can't get into Windows XP at all after a crash, try selecting 'Last Known Good Configuration' from the Windows Advanced Options menu.

57 Troubleshoot
If you're having problems with persistent Stop Errors, you should try sharing your problem with others at this website: http://support.microsoft.com/newsgroups/default.aspx. You'll find a lot of good advice from people all over the world – some of them are bound to have encountered the same problems as you.

58 Tech support
Remember, you're not alone. If your PC is still under warranty, you can always just call up the experts at the manufacturer's technical support centre for some help in solving your problem.

59 Edit shortcut icons
You can remove the black arrow on file shortcut icons by editing the registry. However, there is another way that's much easier and safer, but you'll need to install TweakUI first. Once you've done this, all you have to do is select Explorer on the left and then choose Shortcut. Here you can remove the shortcut overlay from your icons.

60 The Start menu
Customise the Start menu to link to the tools you use the most. You can add any program to the permanent list by right-clicking the icon in Explorer and choosing 'Pin to Start menu'. Add Search, Network Connections, Control Panels and other useful tools as links or flyout menus by right-clicking on the Start button and choosing Properties > Start menu > Customize > Advanced. From here, all you have to do is pick from the list of Start menu items.

61 Self-healing
If an application is causing your system to crash, locate it in Add/Remove Programs and click on Change as some programs are able to repair themselves.

62 Run Scandisk
If your PC crashes and you need to restart from the on/off switch, make sure you run Scandisk afterwards to check for damage.

63 Try Microsoft
Depending on how you purchased your copy of Windows XP, you may be entitled to direct support from Microsoft. Call 0870 60 10 100 for more information.

64 Power surges
Power surges can cause your system to crash and can damage hardware. Consider installing an Uninterruptible Power Supply.

65 Damaged system files
Boot from the Windows XP CD and use the Repair function to reinstall damaged or missing system files.

66 Start again
If you have backups of your important data, a clean start won't do any harm. Format your drive and reinstall Windows XP.

67 Scandisk
If Scandisk runs automatically after a system crash, don't cancel it. It's performing a vital task by searching for any errors and physical damage.

68 Internal problems
Problems relating to internal hardware components can sometimes be resolved by opening up your case, then removing and reseating the offending item.

69 Device Manager
Select troublesome components in the Device Manager, then click on Troubleshoot in order to help to diagnose and solve any problems they're having.

70 Stop or don't stop
You can't just go around stopping any old service. Some are vital to the operation of Windows XP, so exercise a bit of caution. Right-click on a service, choose Properties and select Dependencies. You'll be able to see which system components rely on this service by looking at the information in the bottom section of the tab.

71 Customising Favorites icons
Look at the links in your Favorites menu – Internet Explorer puts a little icon next to each one to say whether it's a web page or a file on your PC. Some websites have started creating their own Favorites icons which really help sites stand out in the list. Make one for your own website with Favicon's free online icon generator at www.favicon.com, or grab the Favicon.com version of the IconForge software.

72 Stop script errors
If you visit a website that uses JavaScript or VBScript and those scripts don't work properly, you'll see a dialogue box asking if you want to debug the problem. Unless it's your own web page, you don't need to see the error messages and Internet Explorer then defaults to not showing you any more errors unless you tick the box asking for more information. If you need to see every error at a later stage, choose Tools > Internet Options > Advanced > Browsing and choose 'Display a notification about every script error'. If you don't want to see any errors at all, just tick 'Disable script debugging' on the same tab.

73 Reinstalling Windows XP
You should only think about reinstalling Windows XP if your computer develops a serious problem that cannot be removed using System Restore or via any other reasonable method. Windows XP is stable and includes plenty of features that prevent serious problems from occurring. Reinstallation is really a last resort because it can create problems of its own.

>> **In most Windows XP applications, including Office programs, holding down [Alt] and hitting [E] will pull down the Edit options menu.**
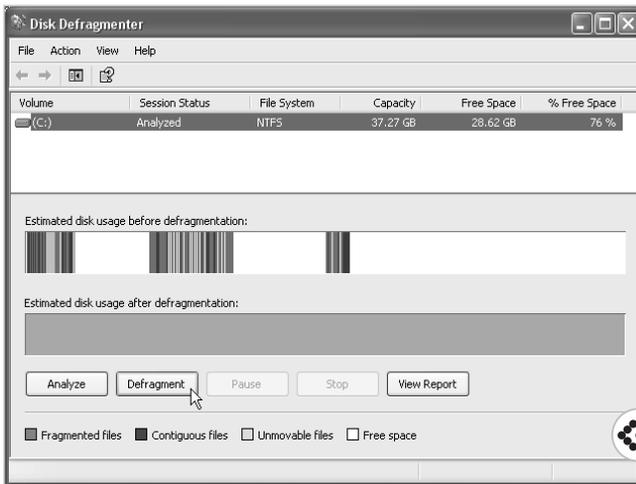
**74
Defragment**
Defragmenting your drive on a regular basis will help to prevent crashes and it improves the overall stability of your system.

75 Network gaming
You can play multiplayer game across your home network. The connection speed is much faster than even broadband internet, so you can challenge other family members to high-speed, real-time gaming. You'll need to install the game onto each computer you want to play on, so they will have to reach the game's minimum specification, and you'll need to buy copies of the game for each PC. Consult the game's instructions for setting it up for network playing.

76 Indexing Service
The Indexing Service has been inherited from Windows 2000. It extracts contents from files and creates an indexed catalogue so you can search the contents of files quickly. To use the Indexing Service you need to enable it. Go to Start > Search > Change preferences > With Indexing Service. The benefits won't be apparent instantly as it takes time for your PC to create the index catalogues and it will only do this while your computer is idle, so leave it switched on overnight.

77 Digital video rendering
To speed up rendering times and reduce dropped frames, you should choose project settings and output formats that match those of your source files.

78 Film-making online
There is a collection of great websites and communities on the internet aimed at film-makers. Try www.filmfour.com and click on the Making Movies section. Alternatively, take a look at www.filmmakers.com.

79 Microsoft Paint
Use different file names to save your images several times as you are creating them. This way you can go back to an earlier version. Paint will undo a maximum of three times, and some actions can only be undone once. However, a saving strategy giving file names a number allows you to pick up an image at numerous stages during its editing.

80 WMA v MP3
While all the hype about digital music has centred on MP3, the truth is that it's an ageing file format. To get near to CD quality you need MP3 files encoded at 128Kbps, which take up approximately 1Mb per minute of music. Windows Media Audio (WMA) is a much newer format with an improved psycho-acoustic model. This means that it can achieve the same quality of music with files encoded at 64Kbps. These files take up half the disk space as equivalent sounding MP3 files so you save space and get great-sounding music!

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