

Win XP Tricks and Tips

How can I tell what type of Windows XP I'm installing?

Before installation

Windows XP uses a file called `setup.ini` that is located in the `I386` folder on your installation CD. The file controls how the CD acts, for example, is it an OEM version or retail version and so on.

How do I tell what type of CD am I using? First, find your `setup.ini` file in the `i386` directory on your XP CD. Open it with Notepad or similar:

```
ExtraData=707A667567736F696F697911AE7E05  
Pid=55034000
```

The `Pid` value is what we're interested in. There are special numbers that determine if it's a Retail, OEM, or Volume License edition.

The `Pid` number is made from two parts:

- The first five digits determines how the CD will behave, meaning is it a Retail CD that lets you clean install or upgrade, or an OEM CD that only lets you perform a clean install?
- The last three digits determines what type of CD key it will accept.

You can mix and match these values. For example, you could make a Windows XP CD that acted like a Retail CD, yet accepted OEM keys.

The actual values can be:

```
For Retail = 51882 335  
For Volume License = 51883 270  
For OEM = 82503 OEM
```

For example, if you wanted a Retail CD that took Retail keys, the last line of your `setup.ini` file would read:

```
Pid=51882335
```

And if you wanted a Retail CD that took OEM keys, you'd use:

```
Pid=51882OEM
```

Note that this does NOT get rid of Windows XP's activation. Changing the Pid to a Volume License will not bypass activation. You must have a volume license (corporate) key to do so.

During installation

Notice that each of the 3 different versions has a different CD key page:

Here is a screenshot of an OEM installation:



Here is a screenshot of a Retail installation:



Here is a screenshot of a Volume License installation:



Can I Turn Off the "New Programs Installed" Message?

Question: Is there a way to turn off the thing that tells you new programs have been installed on the Start menu? I already know I installed new programs - I don't need to be told. I know it's a little thing but it's annoying. Thanks. - Rhonda

Answer: Yes, it's easy to disable the "New Programs Installed" notification. Right click the Start menu and select Properties. Click the Start Menu tab. Click the Customize button, then click the Advanced tab. Now just uncheck the box that says Highlight newly installed programs. That'll do it.

No More NetBEUI?

Question: I want to switch to Windows XP from Windows NT, but my small network uses the NetBEUI protocol. I understand NetBEUI is no longer supported in XP, and I don't want to have to change to using TCP/IP for my network. Is there no way to connect a Windows XP computer to my little network without installing TCP/IP? - Don

Answer: It's true that TCP/IP is the default networking protocol for XP, and you won't find NetBEUI as a choice when you configure your networking protocols. However, if you really need it, NetBEUI can still be installed from the ValueAdd folder on the installation CD.

To install it, open the Network Connections window from Control Panel and right click the network adapter on which you want to install NetBEUI. Select Properties. Click the Install button and click Protocol, then click the Add button. Click Have Disk. Ensure that your XP installation CD is in the CD-ROM drive and navigate to [CD-ROM drive letter]:\ValueAdd\msft\net\netbeui.

Error Message: Windows Media Player Cannot Play This File

Are you trying to play an audio CD with Media Player, and keep getting an error message? If it says "Windows Media Player cannot play this file." Connect to the Internet or insert the removable media on which the file is located, then try to play the file again," you might have a corrupt file in the Windows Media Library index file. What to do about it? Create a new library index file. For instructions on how to do so, see KB article 326680 at:

http://www.winxpnews.com/rd/rd.cfm?id=030923CO-Media_Player

How to tune ClearType on your laptop

Microsoft introduced ClearType technology at the Comdex show in November 1998 and included the feature in Windows XP. It improves the display of text on laptop screens and some CRT monitors that have flat tube faces, although ClearType can actually make type look fuzzier on ordinary CRTs.

There's been controversy over whether Microsoft actually "invented" ClearType or essentially copied the technique from pioneers who came before. Either way, it does make a visible difference in your flat-panel display because it "anti-aliases" the text. That means it uses shades of grey to smooth the edges of your fonts. But you must turn ClearType on in order to use it at all. To do this in XP, click Start, Settings, Control Panel, Appearance and Themes, Display, Appearance, and Effects, then turn on ClearType in the list that appears.

Some laptop vendors include utilities to "tune" ClearType, but Microsoft offers a Web page that not only turns on ClearType for you but shows several samples of type so you can select the level of the effect that works best for your particular display.

Reader Rick Blaiklock tried it and recommends it for those who want the best-looking display of text possible on their screen. The current location of the tuning process at Microsoft is:

www.microsoft.com/typography/cleartype/tuner/1.htm

How to Set the Size of the Internet Explorer Window on Opening

When you open IE, do you always have to resize the window because it's too large or too small? You can change the window size at opening by doing the following:

1. Close any open IE windows.
2. Open IE, right click on a link in the page you opened, and select Open in New Window from the context menu.
3. Resize the new window to the size you want all IE windows to be when you open them by clicking a link.
4. Hold down the Shift key and click the Close icon (X) at the top right of the window to close the new window.
5. Resize the first window you opened to the size you want IE to be when you launch the browser. Close it by holding down Shift and clicking the Close icon.

Now your IE windows should open in the sizes you've set, depending on how you open the browser (from a link or by clicking the IE icon to launch the browser).

Too Many Programs in the Programs Menu

Question: I've installed so many programs that I can't see them all in my Start menu when I click All Programs. It extends past the boundaries of my screen in multiple columns. Is there anything I can do about this? - Roy J.

Answer: One thing you could do is to change the display to single column mode. You'll have to scroll to see all the Programs, but they'll all be accessible. To change the mode, do the following:

1. Right click the taskbar and select Properties.
2. Click the Start menu tab.
3. Click the Customize button, and then the Advanced tab.
4. Under Start Menu items, scroll down to the checkbox labeled Scroll Program and click to check it.
5. Click OK and then OK again to close the dialog boxes.

Now the programs will all appear in one long line and you can scroll through them. You can also organize the programs into submenus as described in this week's How To section.

Windows Explorer Opens in My Documents!

This is very annoying!!

The simplest method is to open Explorer with the [windows] + E keystroke, and explorer will open with "My computer selected" and all drives and folders minimized.

OR

Navigate through the start menu to Explorer, and right click it and select properties on the "Shortcut" tab the target should look like %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe to change the default opening view try the following.

"My Computer" highlighted in left side with all drives visible but not expanded and C: highlighted in right side: %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe /e,/select,c:

Desktop highlighted and nothing expanded: %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe /e,/n,/select,/root,c:

All drives visible and the system drive highlighted and expanded in full screen: %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe /e,/select

All drives visible and the system drive expanded in small screen: %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe /e,/select,%systemroot%

Only Windows Directory visible highlighted and expanded: %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe /e,/root,%systemroot%

All drives visible but only C: highlighted and expanded: %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe /e,c:

Nothing expanded and My Computer highlighted in right side: %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe /n,/e,/select,

Opens the Windows folder as a folder: %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe %systemroot%

Opens as "My Computer": %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe %systemroot%,

This opens the Desktop folder with "My Computer" highlighted: %SystemRoot%\explorer.exe %systemroot%,/select,

"Desktop" highlighted in the left side and no drives visible: %systemroot%\explorer.exe /e,/root,::{20D04FE0-3AEA-1069-A2D8-08002B30309D},/select

"My Computer" highlighted in left side and all drives visible but none expanded: %systemroot%\explorer.exe /e,/root,::{20D04FE0-3AEA-1069-A2D8-08002B30309D}

"Desktop" in left side highlighted and "My Computer" highlighted in right side and no

drives visible:

```
%systemroot%\explorer.exe /e,/select,::{20D04FE0-3AEA-1069-A2D8-08002B30309D}
```

Strange File Keeps Appearing on Desktop

A friend emailed me this week with a question about a strange file that keeps appearing on his desktop. The filename is "~" (the tilde symbol) and the contents appear to be email addresses from his address book. When he deletes it, it always comes back. What's up with that?

Well, it's a common problem for folks using Outlook Express (OE). It seems one of the patches for OE causes this to happen. The file is a backup of the OE address book - which is a good thing to have, just not on your desktop. The good news is that you can change the Start option for OE so it will put this backup file in a different location.

- Find the shortcut to Outlook Express and right-click on it
- Click on Properties
- Make sure Read-only is unchecked on the General tab
- Click on the Shortcut tab
- In the "Start In" field, change it to an alternative path where the tilde file will appear, for example C:\
- Click on Apply

How to Restore the Show Desktop icon to the Quick Launch Bar

A reader wrote to say that she accidentally deleted the Show Desktop icon from the quick launch bar, and she wants to know how to get it back. Here's the procedure:

1. Click Start | All Programs | Accessories | Notepad (or you can use any other plain text editor).
2. Create a text file that has the following lines:

```
[Shell]
Command=2
IconFile=explorer.exe,3
[Taskbar]
Command=ToggleDesktop
```

3. Save the file with the name Show Desktop.scf. Put it in the Windows\System32 folder. If Notepad adds a .txt extension, remove it.
4. In Windows Explorer, right click the file you just created. Select Create Shortcut.
5. Copy the new shortcut to the following folder:
Windows\System32\Config\Systemprofile\Application Data\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Quick Launch

6. Rename the shortcut to Desktop

Now the Show Desktop icon should reappear in the Quick Launch bar.

Create a Windows XP Password Recovery Disk

On today's "Call for Help" it doesn't matter if you never again remember a Windows user password. Thanks to XP's Forgotten Password Wizard, your conscience will be free and clear should your mind happen to accidentally misplace your user password.

Here's how to launch the Forgotten Password Wizard to create your very own password recovery disk.

1. Click Start menu, Control Panel, and User Accounts.
2. Click your user account name.
3. Under Related Tasks on the left, click "Prevent forgotten password" to launch the wizard.

Now that you've launched the wizard, let it walk you through creating the recovery disk. Make sure the disk you use is formatted and in the drive. After it's finished creating the disk, label it and stash it away for an emergency.

If you happen to forget your password, all you need to do is click your user icon at the logon screen. Even though you don't have your password, go ahead and click the green arrow just like you would to finish logging on to your computer. This will launch a little yellow dialog box directing you to use your password recovery disk.

Don't lose the disk, however, or you're out of luck.

Can't Access All Space on Large Hard Drive

Question: I bought a 200GB hard drive and installed it on my Windows XP computer, but the computer doesn't see all of the drive. Did I get ripped off by the hard disk manufacturer or is there some setting I need to change? Thanks! - David D.

Answer: In order to access drives larger than 137GB, the operating system must support 48 bit Logical Block Addressing (LBA). Service Pack 1 for Windows XP (and Service Pack 3 for Windows 2000) add this support. So you need to install the service pack if you haven't already. Note that your computer's BIOS also must be able to support 48 bit LBA. If it doesn't, you'll only be able to use the first 137GB of the disk.

It is also possible to enable 48 bit LBA in the original release of XP Home or Pro by creating a Registry value named EnableBigLba in the following registry key: HKEY LOCAL MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Services\Atapi\Parameters. The data value for the new entry should be set to 1 to enable 48 bit LBA.