

XP TIPS ^{CC}

Jim McKnight www.jimopi.net XP_Tips.lwp revised 3-5-2009

AUTOPLAY~AUTORUN: To enhance PC security, Autoplay should be disabled for all removable devices. This includes; CD/DVD drives, Flash drives, Floppy Drives, External Hard drives, etc.

- The simplest way to do this is to download and install the "Tweak UI" utility (free from Microsoft), then use it to disable Autoplay for all drive types. "Tweak UI" works for all versions of XP.
 - 1) Download and install "Tweak UI" <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/powertoys/xppowertoys.msp>
 - 2) Click Start > All Programs > Powertoys for XP > "Tweak UI".
 - 3) In the left-hand column, click: (*the + in front of My Computer > the + in front of Autoplay > then Types*).
 - 4) *Uncheck the boxes* for " Enable Autoplay for CD and DVD drives" and " Enable Autoplay for Removable drives".
 - 5) Click OK to exit TweakUI.
- The following manual methods also work, but require you to edit Group Policies or the Registry.
 - ◆ XP Pro: <http://www.howtogeek.com/howto/windows/disable-autoplay-of-audio-cds-and-usb-drives/>
 - ◆ XP Home: <http://antivirus.about.com/od/securitytips/ht/autorun.htm>

BOOT:

- How to Delete, Modify or Disable an Incorrect or Duplicate Entry on the XP Boot Menu. See: <http://www.howtogeek.com/howto/windows/how-to-delete-modify-or-disable-an-incorrect-or-duplicate-entry-on-the-xp-boot-menu/>
- MULTIBOOT INFO: Here is some general info from Dan Goodell: <http://www.goodells.net/multiboot/principles.htm>
- RECOVERY PARTITION BOOT: To make a regular or hidden recovery partition boot when a PC starts, go into XP Disk Management and make that partition the ACTIVE Partition.
- BOOT FAILURES: See the section below under Troubleshooting XP.

BROWSER CACHE SIZE:

- a. FIREFOX: *Tools > Options > Advanced > Network tab > set Cache to 50 MB > click OK.*
- b. IE6: *Tools > Internet Options > General Tab > under Temporary Internet Files, click Settings > select 50MB > click OK to exit.*
- c. IE7 & IE8: *Tools > Internet Options > General Tab > under Browsing History, click Settings > select 50MB > click OK to exit*

CHKDSK: TO ERROR CHECK THE HARD-DRIVES, run this on all your hard-drives 2 or 3 times a year: (Note: Drive X represents your drive of choice)

- **RUN CHKDSK:** (*My Computer > right-click Icon for Drive X: > Properties > Tools Tab*). Then, under Error-checking, click <Check Now>. Choose Automatically fix errors & Scan for and attempt recovery of bad sectors. To scan drive C, you will have to restart the PC and the scan will run during the boot.
- **CHKDSK LOG:** To find the log for a CHKDSK Scan: (*Right-click My Computer > Manage > Event Viewer > Applications*). Double-click the "Winlogon" entry for the date and time of the scan in question.

CLOCK - Change to 24 hour Format: (*Control Panel > Regional & Language Options > Regional Options tab > Customize button > Time tab*). Make the desired changes, then click Apply or OK, then Apply or OK again to exit. (Note: HH or hh gives leading zeros in the display, and :ss gives seconds)

Time Format: 24 hours = H:mm:ss tt or HH:mm:ss (Add tt if you want AM/PM displayed)
12 hours = h:mm:ss tt or hh:mm:ss (Remove the tt if you don't want AM/PM)

CUSTOMIZING XP In addition to these tips, see my "XP INSTALL & CUSTOMIZE" Checklist and my SYMPTOM/FIX sheet for ideas on fixing many XP issues and annoyances.

DESKTOP TIPS

- **WALLPAPER - HOW TO CHANGE THE BACKGROUND IMAGE:** See my separate document at www.jimopi.net called: "DESKTOP - CUSTOMIZE THE BACKGROUND IMAGE".

- **ICON LABEL TEXT BACKGROUND:** For details on how to play with this, see my IMPROVE DISPLAY READABILITY - XP checklist (Transparent vs solid color background).
- **TASKBAR & SYSTEM TRAY ICONS SIZE INCREASE** (*Right-click anywhere on the Desktop > Properties > Appearance tab > Advanced*). In the drop down menu, select Item: **Active Title Bar**,. Set it anywhere from 22 thru 28 & hit OK. (Default is 18). *The bigger you make the ICONS, the blockier and more mis-shapen they get, but they are easier to see.*
- **FOLDER ICON IMAGES - CUSTOMIZE:** You can change the Icon Image for most folders: (*Right-click the folder Icon > Properties > Customize Tab > Change Icon button*). Select an Icon, then click <OK>, <OK> to exit. The new Icon Image should be there.
- **SHORTCUT ICON IMAGES - CUSTOMIZE:** You can change the Icon Image for Shortcuts: (*Right-click the Shortcut Icon > Properties > Shortcut Tab > Change Icon button*). In the "Look for icons in this file box". enter: %SystemRoot%\system32\SHELL32.dll and click <OK>. Many Icons should now be visible. Select an Icon, then click <OK>, <OK> to exit. The new Icon Image should be there.
- **"SAFELY REMOVE HARDWARE" DESKTOP ICON - CREATE:** You may have noticed that the "Safely Remove Hardware" system tray Icon is not always there when you need it. Here is how to create an Icon on the desktop that is always there for you: (*Right-click desktop > New > Shortcut*). In the Location box, enter: %windir%\system32\RunDll32.exe shell32.dll,Control_RunDLL HotPlug.dll , click <Next>, then name the shortcut: "Remove Hardware". You can then customize the Icon Image as shown above.

DISPLAY READABILITY (Improve): See my checklist called "IMPROVE DISPLAY READABILITY - XP".

DRIVERS: Most Driver sites do not offer them free. The best free drivers are from the manufacturer's website. See my "WEBSITES - USEFUL" Tips sheet. Also try signing up for www.drivermax.com (Free).

FILE EXTENSIONS - VIEW: To make file extensions show up on file list in folders (*Control panel > Folder Options > View tab*). Uncheck " Hide Extensions for known file types). Click OK to save and exit.

FONTS

To print a sample page of a given font, do the following: Go to C:\windows\fonts\ and open the desired font file. Click the <Print> button on the upper RH corner of the window.

IDENTIFY UNKNOWN DEVICES (In Device Manager). <http://pcidatabase.com/>

To get the Ven or Dev number to use with this website: Go to Device Manager, right click on the Unknown Device. Click Properties. Go to the "Details" Tab and choose "Hardware ID's" from the dropdown box. Enter these numbers at the website and it will identify what the device is.

INSTALL NOTES:

See my Install & Customized XP Guide.

If you do not have an install CD for the system, see this article:

http://www.pcworld.com/article/122487/answer_line_create_a_windows_cd_for_pcs_that_dont_have_one.html

INTERNET EXPLORER:

- "RESET TO DEFAULTS" (IE7 & IE8)
 - ✓ Open IE > Tools > Internet Options > Advanced Tab > click Reset.
 - ✓ On the Reset IE Settings window, click Reset. When done, click Close & restart IE.
- Remove IE7 or IE8
 - ✓ Start > Run: %windir%\ie8\spuninst\spuninst.exe
 - ✓ Start > Run: %windir%\ie7\spuninst\spuninst.exe

INTERNET OPTIONS: "RESET TO DEFAULTS"

- Control Panel > Internet Options > Advanced Tab > click Reset.
- On the Reset IE Settings window, select Reset > click OK. When done, click Close.

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS for POWER

Shutdown/powerdown	<Ctrl/Esc>, U, U	(Lower case is OK)
Hibernate	<Ctrl/Esc>, U, H	(Ignore the commas)
Restart	<Ctrl/Esc>, U, R	
Switch User	<Ctrl/Esc>, L, S	
Logoff	<Ctrl/Esc>, L, L	

Note: <Ctrl/Esc> is the same as the "Ⓜ Windows" Key

Note: These only work if you do not have any start menu Icons that start with U or L.

MEMORY UPGRADES (See RAM below)

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"MY DOCUMENTS" FOLDER - MOVE TO A DIFFERENT HARD DRIVE. This is a good idea for several reasons: 1) You can speed up the PC by turning off System Restore Monitoring for Drive D. 2) You can more easily back up your personal data by having it all in one spot. 3) If you need to re-install XP, all your data is safe and will not be destroyed during the XP Reinstall.

- See this site: <http://thundercloud.net/information-avenue/my-documents/>
or http://www.kellys-korner-xp.com/win_xp_mydocs.htm
- Verify and/or change the default file-save and file-open location in Office
- Verify and/or change signature file location in Outlook (and Outlook Express)
- Verify and/or change file-save and file-open default location in all other applications.
- Make sure the new My Documents folder is the default data location for all programs that normally would not use My Documents (Quicken, Lotus Wordpro, Tax programs, etc).

MICROSOFT OFFICE UPDATES

- If you have Office 2002 or older, as of 8-1-2009 Microsoft no longer supports updates.
- MICROSOFT UPDATE: If you have Office XP, 2003, or 2007, then go to the regular Windows Update site and click "Get Microsoft Update today!". This will install another ActiveX add-on into IE which will merge all your Office and other Microsoft Program updates into your regular XP "Windows Update" process. Once this is done, the "Windows Update Home" screen will now show up as the "Microsoft Update Home" screen. This change also adds a "Microsoft Update" Icon you the "All Programs" menu. It can be accessed using the regular "Windows Update" Icon, the "Microsoft Update" Icon in the Start menu or via this link: <http://update.microsoft.com/microsoftupdate/v6/default.aspx?ln=en-us>).
- Repair OFFICE 2003: <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx/kb/896866>

OPTIMIZING XP FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE: *See my "XP Tune-up Checklist".*

PASSWORD CHANGING: LOG ON AS ADMINISTRATOR TO RESET A PASSWORD

Windows XP Professional

- a. Restart the computer.
- b. At the Welcome Screen, press CTRL+ALT+DELETE two times, and then type administrator as the User name.
- c. In the Password box, type the administrator password, and then click OK. Note If the administrator password is set to a blank password, do not type a password, just click OK after entering the User name.

Windows XP Home Edition

- a. Restart the computer, and then after the Power On Self Test (POST), press the F8 key.
- b. On the Windows Advanced Options menu, use the arrow keys to select Safe Mode, and then press ENTER.
- c. Select Microsoft Windows XP edition, and then press ENTER. Note In this step, "edition" represents the correct Windows edition.
- d. On the To begin, click your user name screen, click Administrator, and then type the administrator password.
- e. Press ENTER, and then click Yes.

Resetting the password

a. Windows XP Professional

1. Click Start, click Run, type <control userpasswords2>, and then click OK.
2. Click the name of the user account that you want to reset the password for, and then click Reset Password.
3. Type a new password in the New password box, and then type the password again in the Confirm new password box, and then click OK.
4. Restart the computer, and then try to log on to Windows XP again.

b. Windows XP Home Edition

1. Use Control Panel, User Accounts.

PASSWORD RECOVERY:

1. SAFE-MODE ADMINISTRATOR LOGIN: First try this: Go into Safe-mode (F8, F8, F8). From the Welcome screen, Log in as Administrator and do not enter a password, just press enter. (*Most XP PC's do not have a password set for the administrator log-in.*)
2. OPHCRACK: Download and burn the Ophcrack CD for XP. Run this and see if it finds the password.
3. UBCD4WIN: Download, create the ISO and burn a UBCD4WIN CD. (*NOTE: This is a complex process and not for the faint of heart. WARNING: If you reset a user password and the user has XP encrypted folders, they will lose all data in those folders.*) If you are still willing to proceed, try these two utilities:
 - ✓ Try PASSWORD PRO. (*Start > Programs > Password Tools > Password Pro*)
 - ✓ Try the SALA PASSWORD RENEW Utility. (*Start > Programs > Password Tools > Password Renew*)
4. TOP 5 PASSWORD RECOVERY TOOLS: <http://pcsupport.about.com/od/toolsofthetrade/tp/passrecovery.htm>

PRODUCT ID:

The MPC and CID codes indicate in general how the disc will function. For Windows XP install discs with SP2 or SP3 integrated, the following MPC and CID codes are normally used:

Code:

MPC Version

55274 XP Pro Retail

55276 XP Pro Upgrade

55277 XP Home Retail

55285 XP Home Upgrade

76477 XP Home Retail/OEM

76487 XP Pro/MCE Retail/OEM

76588 XP Pro x64 OEM

76888 XP TPE

Notes: OEM = Original Equipment Manufacturer (Royalty OEM or System Builder OEM), MCE = Media Center Edition, TPE = Tablet PC Edition. Newer XP Home/Pro Retail discs (post SP2) use the 764xx MCEs.

RAM:

- CRUCIAL.COM offers a free scanner that tells you what memory slots there are on your PC, what memory is currently in those slots and what upgrades are available.

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- When adding RAM, if you plan to also leave the old RAM in the PC along side the new, it is better to put the bigger RAM sticks in the first or original slots and move the old smaller RAM to the unused slots. (Be sure to clean slots with spray air first). If all RAM sticks are the same size, then the location does not matter.
- After adding RAM, XP requires that you manually update the Virtual Memory settings to match the new RAM size. See the section below on Virtual Memory.

RECOVER AN HP SYSTEM USING HIDDEN PARTITION: Using the HP Recovery CD's is better, but here is the process: <http://www.pctechbytes.com/hp-recovery.htm>

RECYCLE BIN

ANNOYANCE. To stop XP from asking for confirmation every time you go to delete a file: (*Right-click the Recycle Bin > Properties > Global Tab*). Uncheck the box " Display delete confirmation dialog".

REGISTRY Corruption error in the registry path: windows/system32/config/system. From a Recovery Console Command prompt, try: `chkdsk /f /r` , then: `fixboot`

REGISTERED OWNER OR ORGANIZATION (Change): Run "regedit" and search for RegisteredOwner or RegisteredOrganization (no spaces) and change the values. (You should back up the Registry first).

REINSTALL XP WITHOUT RE-FORMATting

- Check out this article: <http://www.komando.com/tips/index.aspx?id=3177&page=1>
- REPAIR XP <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/helpandsupport/learnmore/tips/doug92.msp>
- REPAIR XP http://www.help2go.com/Tutorials/Windows/how_to_repair_XP_and_Avoid_a_full_Reinstall.html
- XP's No-Reformat, Nondestructive Total-Rebuild Option, Langa Letter: <http://www.informationweek.com/news/windows/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=189400897>

RUN COMMANDS:

- msconfig - Startup stuff. I do not recommend using "msconfig" to change startup programs and services. Use the Microsoft "Autoruns" Utility or the Codestuff Starter Utility.
- ipconfig - Network stuff. Note: ipconfig command works better from the DOS Command Prompt. See ipconfig /? and ipconfig /all
- sfc /scannow (This runs better from the Command Prompt). You may be required to insert your XP Install CD to finish the scan.

SPEED UP XP See my checklist called "XP - SPEED UP XP".

START MENU CUSTOMIZATIONS This section has been moved to a separate document called (START MENU CUSTOMIZATIONS XP).

STARTUP PROGRAMS & SERVICES MANAGEMENT

- The first place to try stopping an automatic startup during boot, is within the un-desired program. Many programs have an option box that when unchecked will stop the program from loading when Windows starts. This is the first and best way to stop programs from starting up on every boot. If this option is not available, continue.
- Most programs that start during boot, start from one of three places. *Note: To stop a program in a startup folder from starting, you must delete the Program Icon from the startup folder.* To find Program Startup Icons, look in:
 - a. ALL USERS STARTUP FOLDER:
C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Start Menu\Programs\Startup
 - b. YOUR STARTUP FOLDER:
C:\Documents and Settings\\Start Menu\Programs\Startup
 - c. REGISTRY. Some Registry startups can be changed with Windows Management Services (*Right-click My Computer > Manage > Services*). Microsoft also offers a startup manager called "AUTORUNS" from <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb963902.aspx>. . It is vastly better than MSCONFIG.
- Personally, I use the free utility by Codestuff called STARTER for managing all the remaining startups. It allows me to manage all kinds of startups from one window. See the writeup on Starter in my UTILITY

PROGRAMS sheet. Get it: <http://www.snapfiles.com/reviews/Starter/starter.html>. You can also use STARTER to kill unwanted processes. (In general, I NEVER recommend using MSCONFIG to manage startups or processes).

- SERVICES (XP) THAT CAN BE DISABLED Go to this link: www.blackviper.com

USER ACCOUNTS

- To copy a User profile to a new account:
 - 1) From the existing Admin Account, create two new User Accounts (*Control Panel > User Accounts > Create a new account*) (First, the desired new account name, named "Fred" for this example, and another account called "Test", for managing the profile copy process), then log-off the existing account (Not switch user).
 - 2) From the Welcome screen, log-on to the new account ("Fred") to create a default profile folder. If all looks OK and you are fully logged-in, log-off (Not switch user).
 - 3) Restart the PC.
 - 4) From the Welcome screen, log-on on to the account called "Test".
 - 5) Now go to: (*Control panel > System > Advanced Tab, and click the User profiles <Settings> button*) and click the profile you want to copy "From", then click the "Copy to" button. Warning: Both the "From" and "To" users must be fully logged off.
 - 6) Click <Browse>, go to the new account profile folder C:\documents and settings\Fred, and click OK. Be patient and wait while it copies. When done, click OK to exit.
 - 7) Log-off of user "Test" and log-on to user "Fred" and see if all looks OK. Warning: If certain settings like the desktop background image reside in the original user's private folders they may not be accessible to the new user. These files must be manually copied to a location that is accessible by the new user.
 - 8) Once everything looks OK, you can delete user "Test" if desired. (*Control Panel > User Accounts > select the account = Test, then click Delete the account*).
- The "control userpasswords2" command gives additional user control. Run from Command prompt or from Run box. (XP Pro only)

USER PROFILE HIVE CLEANUP SERVICE. This optional fix for XP clears up some shutdown issues. IMO, it should be installed on all PC's. To download: <http://www.snapfiles.com/get/uphcservice.html>

VIRTUAL MEMORY (PAGE FILE SIZE)

- To change the size of the virtual memory: (*Control Panel > System > Advanced Tab, "Performance", click <Settings> button > "Performance Options" window > Advanced Tab*). Under "Virtual Memory", click <Change>.
 - 1) On the Virtual Memory Window, verify one of the following is selected: (1) Custom size: Initial size (MB) set to a value of 1½ times the physical RAM size and the Maximum size (MB) set to 3 times the physical RAM size (*IE: with 512 RAM: Initial size = 768 & Maximum size = 1536*) (Warning: You MUST click the <Set> button for the change to take) or (2) select System managed size.
 - 2) For PC's with 2GB or more, you can set the Initial/maximum both to 3072/3072 MB.
 - 3) If there is a second hard drive (Drive D:) on the PC, it is a good idea to put the paging file on the second drive for improved PC speed.