

Bug-Bytes

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USE THE POWER OF THE INTERNET

SEARCH THE INTERNET FOR ANSWERS TO YOUR MOST PERPLEXING PROBLEMS



At times you may feel that you are all alone when it comes to troubleshooting thorny problems. However, with internet access you are a small part of an enormous community of users that share similar interests and problems.

You may feel that your particular problem is unique, but you can take comfort in the knowledge that others have experienced and solved the same problems. As a result, you can find helpful information about you problems on the Internet.

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR PROBLEM

Use your favorite search engine to search for information about your problem. Start off by including the error message or a brief description of the problem.

Let me give you an example. Recently whenever I right-clicked on a file and clicked on "Send To" and then "Desktop" I got an error message saying "Either there is no default e-mail client or the current mail client cannot fulfill the messaging request." It then asked me to run Outlook and to make it my default e-mail client. I prefer Outlook Express, so I did not want to make Outlook my default e-mail client.

I use Google as my preferred search engine. It took me a couple of trials to best describe the problem before I got

a useful answer. The search string that worked for me was "Send To Desktop error." The resulting link told me to Run `regsvr32 Sendmail.dll` and to restart my computer. The problem was fixed.

The point I make is that the Internet is a powerful tool that can help you solve most of the problems you might ever encounter with your computer. You just need to search for the answer for your problem.

Use the following resources:

1. Read softwares's help files and troubleshooting section.
2. Software vendors' FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)
3. Vendor's Knowledge base
4. Search with your favorite search engine for information related to your particular problem.
5. Post your question to the Computerbugs list server
6. Contact one of the helpers listed on the help tab of the Computerbugs website.

HELP OTHERS TO HELP YOU

Provide good supporting information about your problem to assist the person that will attempt to help you. If possible, tell him or her what lead up to the problem.

For instance did you just install or uninstall hardware or software? As a

minimum, let that person know the following information:

Is the problem software or hardware related? What version of the operating system do you use, and what CPU does your computer (386, 486, Pentium, Pentium II, Pentium 4, AMD, Cyrix). How much RAM is installed in your computer? If you don't know the answers to these questions download "Everest" (formerly Aida32) to get the answers. Run the summary and print the results.

<http://www.lavalys.com>

SOFTWARE PROBLEMS

Write down the name of the software, the software version, and the software vendor.

Describe the problem you are experiencing so that the person helping you can reproduce the problem or at least visualize the problem as you see it. It is not helpful to simply say that the software "doesn't work." Run *Notepad* and use it to document your problem step-by-step.

Think back to the date before the software developed the current problem. Perhaps you can roll-back the software to that time using the restore function of *Mscconfig* built into ME and XP

Can you think of anything that you did that might have contributed to the problem? For instance, did you delete a program or programs without using Window's add/remove program in the control panel? Did you accidentally spill coffee on your keyboard? Did you make manual changes to key Windows programs as in Msconfig, Services.msc, the registry, software preferences, or make changes in your firewall? Don't conceal vital information. Remember, we have all done things that we later regretted, but we have learned from those mistakes.

HARDWARE PROBLEMS

Hardware problems are solvable with many of the same hints include in the software section.

Here are some common hardware-related problems and suggestions on how to fix them:

- Loose power cord to computer or cable to your monitor (Reseat cord or cable)
- Corroded peripheral card contacts (clean with a pencil eraser) and
- A power blackout shut down you uninterruptible power supply (restart UPS).
- Computer battery is low (replace and reset BIOS)
- There is a conflict between two or more peripherals attempting to use the same resources. (Resolve conflict in Device Manager)
- A driver is bad or conflicts with the current operating system. (Get an updated driver from your hardware vendor).
- Overheating (Remove dust accumulation, ascertain that your power supply will support all the new hardware you recently installed. Check that your CPU fan and case fans are working).
- Mouse stops working (replace batteries if wireless, look for software conflict, check cable connection).
- The computer slows down (See Dec. 2003 Bug-Bytes for tips)
- The computer won't shutdown (Search for solutions related to your OS.) In a pinch, unplug your
- computer, wait about ten seconds and restart your computer. There are patches for some versions of the OS.
- You can't hear sounds from your CD. (Be sure that cable is connected from your CD player to your sound card and that CD is enabled in the Sound Volume Control Panel).
- You can't hear MIDI and/or Wav File play. (Uncheck mute in the Volume Control—See Control Panel, Sound).
- Cable modem stops working. (Unplug the modem for about 15 seconds and then reconnect it.)
- Your printer stops printing. (Check that your printer is not out of paper. Open print dialog in Control Panel and be sure that the printer is not in pause mode. If so, uncheck pause to restart the printer and to release the print queue).
- You get strange colors from your printer's output. (Check your color cartridge for a low ink status).

WHY PARTITION YOUR HARD DRIVE?

A single partition may not be in your best interest



Partitioning is the process of subdividing a hard disk into separate organized pieces called drives. Usually this is done by your computer vendor before your computer ships, or it is done by you when you install a new hard drive. Microsoft includes a utility called FDISK with its operating system for that purpose. A word of caution, if you use FDISK it will wipe out all of your data. So be prepared for that if you decide to repartition your hard drive later in the game. Alternatively, purchase Symantec's PartitionMagic (formerly from Powerquest). It enables you to repartition your drive on-the-fly without losing your data.

Think of your hard disk as a series of tracks as on a music CD, or as a filing cabinet where each file drawer is equivalent to a drive. With very large hard drives it is quite

common to see only one partition, the C: drive. That works just fine if you are a casual user and you do not store very much stuff on your hard disk. However, if you are a very active user, you may want to consider partitioning your hard drive into two or more partitions.

The benefits are:

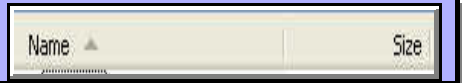
- It separates the Windows operating system and program files from data or other files
- If preserves your data if your operating system (OS) fails and you have to repair the OS. You only overwrite the drive with your operating system files and not the whole drive if it is partitioned.
- It provides a dedicated partition for the swap file to cut down on file fragmentation

- It simplifies backups. You can backup just the data partition, or any other specialize partition that you create

If you need to reinstall your operating system you can usually preserve your data.

CUSTOMIZE EXPLORER COLUMNS

LOOK AT DATA IN THE WAYS THAT ARE BEST FOR YOU AND YOUR DATA



Set the view mode to “Details” in Windows Explorer to control what you see on the headers toolbar, and so you can sort the data (double click on the heading name to toggle between ascending and descending order). In detail mode the usual defaults are Name, Size, Type, and Date Modified. Right click anywhere on the bar for a list of options. See Figure 4. Select the column headings that will give you

the information that you want to see. Pick the headings that are relevant to the types of data that you are displaying. You can pick relevant column headings for CDs, photos, documents, etc.

Click on “More” at the bottom of the list to display a longer list with control features. See figure 3. For example, you can reorder the column information to best fit the view that you want. To do that, click on an item and then the button to move the item up or down in the list. See Figure 4. Note that you can arbitrarily enter a number in pixels for the width of the selected column.

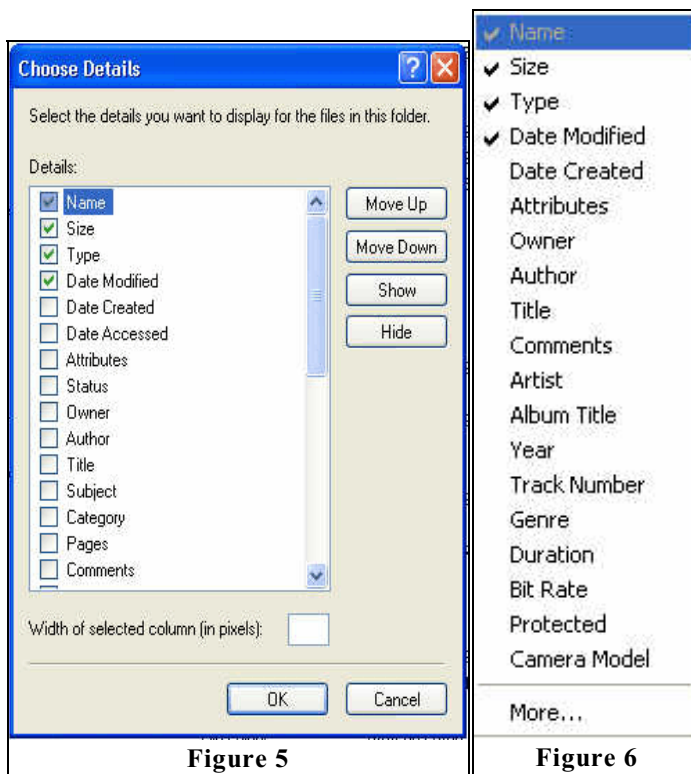


Figure 5



Figure 6

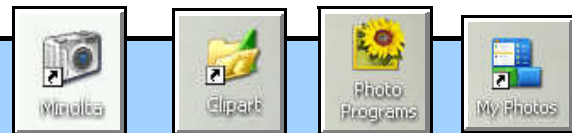
To automatically size each column to fit the longest item in the column, double click on the separator bar between each column heading. Your cursor will change to a double-headed arrow with a vertical separator bar. That column will shrink or expand to fit the data contained in that column.

Customize the settings for any folder. Click on the folder, View, Choose Details. For example for photos, why not add a column for dimensions and when your photos were taken? For a music CD folder with music tracks, you might add a column for Artist, Album, and Track and Duration and maybe Genre. Experiment to see what information is most meaningful to you.

This is one more example of how Windows can be customized to do things your way. Try it. You’ll like it.

CUSTOMIZE SHORTCUT ICONS

Explore alternative icons



The default folder shortcut icon is a yellow folder that looks the same as any folder icon. You can give your

shortcut icons on your desktop a new look—a look that better reflects what the purpose of the shortcut. For exam-

ple, a shortcut to your digital film reader might be a camera icon, and a shortcut to your CD drive a music CD.

To customize a desktop shortcut icon, right click on it and select Change Icon. Select one of the icons offered by Windows from the Shell32.dll file, or browse to the executable file for your program and look for icons there. If you created a shortcut to one or more of your drives, right click on the drive shortcut and pick properties, change icon. Click OK. Note if you change the shortcut icon for a drive associated with a digital film reader, insert a digital film chip in the reader before changing the icon. If you want to create a digital film reader icon, insert the film in the reader. Next, click on the drive associated with the reader and right click to create a shortcut. It will be placed on your desktop. Rename the drive from the generic

“Removable Drive” to something that will distinguish it from the other drives. Renaming is especially useful when you have a film reader that reads more than one kind of film (6-1 reader is an example). Otherwise, you won’t know which of the many displayed removable drives contains your film. For example, you might name one of the multifunction drives Compact flash, one Smart Media, etc.

DEFAULT DIGITAL FILM SETTING

If you have not already created a default setting for your digital film when it is inserted in the reader, you may want to do so. The next time you insert the film in the reader and Windows ask you what program to use

each time, select one of the programs. The Scanner and Camera Wizard is one good choice as might be your favorite photo enhancement program.

The Scanner and Camera Wizard is a Windows XP feature. It makes it easy to select all photos or random photos from your digital file and to transfer them to your computer.

The major advantage of a digital film reader is that it can stay connected to your computer. It prolongs the life of camera batteries since it draws its power from your computer via the USB cable. When you need it, just pop in your film and let your reader do the rest.

PLAN FOR WINDOWS XP SERVICE PACK 2

THE WORD IS “GO SLOW!”



Windows XP SP2 (Service Pack 2) is a major effort by Microsoft to plug security holes in its operating system. It is primarily designed for those who do not take any steps to protect themselves. SP2 provides a beefier firewall, pop-up blocker, anti-virus status monitoring, improved wireless support, and some minimal spam protection. Users of third-party software that cover these same features will want to hang onto their third party software. Think of SP2 as providing basic functionality and the third party software as offering additional features, options, and control.

As all active members of Computerbugs know, each of us needs to be proactive in our behalf to thwart virus and worm attacks, to deny our computers to hackers, and to minimize the effects of spyware and adware. We do this by automatically loading a good anti-virus program every time we boot our computers and by automatically downloading the latest AV updates and Windows Updates (exclusive of SP2). We use spyware removing/blocking software (Spywareblaster and SpyBot Search and Destroy) and ad blocking programs such as Ad-Aware and AdSubtract, or something similar. We run a good firewall as in ZoneAlarm, Norton Internet Security, or Trend Micros’ Internet Security. Because we do ALL these things, our computers are relatively safe and pest

free. We still believe and practice the old adage “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Be aware that the initial release of SP2 will not work with a long list of popular software. For example, it is not compatible with Adobe Photoshop Elements 2, McAfee Internet Security Suite 2004, scads of popular Microsoft software including Word, Nero 6 or 5.5.6, Norton AntiVirus 2003, and ZoneAlarm 5.0.590 to include just some of the listed programs. See the following link for a complete list of compatibility problems. <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?kbid=884130>. See this support link for more SP2 information.

<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=fh;EN-US;windowsxpsp2>

The advice of many PC magazine professionals (and this writer) is to wait a month or two before installing SP2. As indicated by the list of compatibility problems, some time will be needed to fix these problems. Remember, while SP2 is a must-install upgrade, it will pay to wait until some of the initial bugs have been squashed.