



BUG-BYTES

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FILE VIEWERS TO THE RESCUE

GET ANSWERS TO "WHY CAN'T I OPEN THAT DOCUMENT?"



From time to time people may send you types of documents that you cannot open. That is because when you double-click on one of those files, it expects to be opened by the program that created it. DOC and PPS are two of the most common files where this occurs. That is, files that end with .doc or .pps. DOC files are Microsoft Word document files and PPS files are Microsoft PowerPoint slide presentation files. The files contain proprietary headers, features, and codes. Therefore, they have to be opened in the programs that created them, or by one of the viewers designed to read that particular type of file.

There may be slight differences in the appearance of the documents if the target computer does not have the same fonts as the computer that generated the files. That is because without the original fonts, the target computer attempts to substitute a similar font or fonts from those installed on the target computer.

WORD AND POWERPOINT VIEWERS



Microsoft provides free viewers for Word documents and PowerPoint slide shows. If you do not have Microsoft Office, or the free

OpenOffice substitute for those products, then download the two Microsoft

viewers. Given that the links change from time to time, use your favorite search engine (such as Google, Yahoo, or MSN) to download the viewers. Search for *Word Viewer*, and then *PowerPoint Viewer*. Currently, the latest version of those viewers is 2003. The previous version was 97 (1997).

The following are copies of the text descriptions from Microsoft for the two products.

WORD VIEWER 2003: View, print and copy Word documents, even if you do not have Word installed. That download is a replacement for Word 97 Viewer and all previous Word Viewer versions.

POWERPOINT VIEWER 2003: PowerPoint Viewer 2003 lets you view full-featured presentations created in PowerPoint 97 and later versions

PDF VIEWERS

Documents save in the *Portable Document Format* (abbreviated as PDF) require a reader (viewer) to read the documents. Adobe Reader is the best known of such readers. Adobe Reader is free as a download from Adobe. Documents saved in PDF preserve the native formats, graphics, and fonts included in those documents. For those reasons, we call PDF documents *device-independent documents*. You can view the documents without having

to own and use the same programs that generated those documents.

UNIVERSAL FILE VIEWERS

Third-party viewers are available to view many, but not all, data files and graphic formats. Irfanview (free), Quick View Plus 8.0 (shareware), PowerDesk Utilities (free), KlikView (shareware) are some better-known products.

Quick Viewer Plus opens about 200 different types of files, and lets you print and zip (compress) the contents. It also supports the latest browsers and email programs.

<http://www.avantstar.com/products/Quick View Plus/G QVP>

Go to www.avantstar.com and click on Software Store, and then the link in the text to see the list of supported file types.



Quick View Plus is the Swiss Army Knife of file viewers. It covers word processing and spreadsheet documents, database formats, graphic formats, presentation formats, compressed formats, and another formats, but not PDF files.

SAY IT, I DID IT MY WAY!

PERSONALIZE THE LOOK OF YOUR DESKTOP

The song *My Way* became Frank Sinatra's signature song. The words went like this:

"And as tears subside, I find it so amusing . . ."

"To think, I did all that, and may I say, not in a shy way"

"Oh no, oh no, not me, I did it my way."

As a Windows user, you can put your individual stamp on the look of your desktop. The choices are a little mind-boggling, but they can be oh so satisfying.

Are you still using the default desktop-look that came with your computer? There is nothing wrong with that. However, be aware there are many ways to create your own space, with its personal look and feel.

BACKGROUND/ WALLPAPER

Windows comes bundled with background/wallpaper choices that can produce different looks for your desktop.

TO CHANGE BACKGROUNDS

Right-click on your computer's desktop. Select Properties, Desktop, Background. Select none, if you want to see only a solid color for the background. **Change the color from the desktop tab. Click other to custom mix your color.**

Experiment with the various backgrounds. In XP, try Azul (seen at the right) for a cool summer look. Doesn't that water look refreshing? Dive right in!



How about the warm tones of Home, or Red Moon Desert?

Do you prefer a business look? Try the Windows XP background.



Don't see any background that you want? Click the browser button and locate a favorite photo to use as your desktop background. Click and the center, tile, or stretch position choice to see how the photo will appear on your desktop. Choose a background color. It appears around the edge of smaller photos if you don't use the stretch option.

Click OK. Your choice will now show on your desktop. Create a copy of your photo and resize it (if needed) to a smaller size to use as a background. This will create a colored border around your picture, and make it easier to read the icons on your desktop.

Here is the Windows XP Tulip background, centered on a sample screen.



Repeat the process to change to a different look when the mood strikes you. Let's see. There are four seasons.

THEMES

Themes include changes in wallpaper, screen saver, fonts, icons, background color, matching cursors, and even accompanying sounds.

Think of themes as a collection of coordinated desktop items built around a common artistic element. Themes let you express your preferences with the overall look you want for your desktop. Do themes make your computer run better, or run faster? No, they don't do that. Do they let you accomplish more work? No, not at all. In fact, some theme elements may place additional workloads on your processor.

For some people, themes, backgrounds, wallpapers, and widgets (desktop accessories), are just plain fun to have. They love to pick a theme or background that suits them, as they love to decorate their home to reflect their personal tastes and interests. They give their PCs the equivalent of home curb appeal. Widgets are discussed on the next page.

Gamers go so far as to choose wild color schemes for their computer cases—cases that come with glowing lights that can be seen through a window in the side of their computer's case.

Microsoft puts out programs called *Microsoft Plus! Digital Media Edition* and *Plus! Superpack for Windows XP* that up the ante with additional themes, games, and photo, music, and movie enhancements. Third-party vendors offer themes and skins to change the look and feel of your Windows experience. Many sites charge for their themes. Others offer themes for free.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/desktop/default.msp> offers some free Windows enhancements.

WILL GADGETS BE ON YOUR DESKTOP?

THEY WILL BE A PART OF VISTA



Widgets in the Mac world, and *Gadgets* in the PC world, are very small desktop applications. They're the same thing. They have been around in many guises since the early '80s. Gadgets use a dashboard metaphor, like the speedometer, odometer, gas gauge, temperature gauge, and ammeter display in your car. Many gadgets display data in real time. They create a flashy desktop appearance, while often providing real time information on the desktop. Borland's SideKick™ (early 80's), and Norton's System Tool™ are two examples of dashboard style applications.

For instance, here is a weather widget. By clicking on the original widget, you can get additional information. In the screen shot at the right, the weather widget is connected to www.weather.com to display the weather in Medford at the time the screen shot was created. It also included the forecast for that day plus the next four days. Pick the city or cities that you want to monitor.



Widgets are available as free downloads from www.widgets.yahoo.com. Set the number of widgets viewed at one time at the bottom of the Yahoo! screen. Yahoo bought *Konfabular*, one of the best-known widget source. As you will see, widgets require a lot of memory horse power. That is probably why we have not seen more of them. They also need a really good distribution channel to make people aware of them. The combination of Yahoo's distribution channel and the availability of Widgets in Microsoft's Vista operating system should make them a household name. There are more than 2,800 widgets in Yahoo's Widget Gallery.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

- Windows XP with Service Pack 1 installed, or Windows 2000 with Service Pack 3 installed or newer, or Mac OS X 10.3 or newer.
- A connection to the Internet (broadband or DSL is preferred).
- They recommend 512 megabytes of RAM

Be forewarned. Widgets use lots of memory for each widget. For example, the Yahoo Widget Engine running just the weather widget on my computer requires 22,412K of memory. Therefore, my advice to widget users is to keep the number of widgets to the bare minimum.

Widgets are a cottage industry. Yahoo offers widgets produced by people from all over the world.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE TASKS WIDGETS CAN PERFORM?

This is an abbreviated list of widget types:

- Show RSS feeds
- Show current gas prices in your area
- Display stock graphs
- Display CPU load or RAM usage
- Provide metric or other converters and calculators
- Listen to radio station feeds
- Keeps sticky notes nearby
- Watch weather Doppler images or current information
- Watch breaking news feeds
- View ticket availability for popular events
- A historical currency calculator; calculate in today's dollars or other currency
- Provide web cams to your favorite sites
- Provide fancy clock displays
- Provide shared calendars
- Provide interactive games
- Provide alternate media players
- Display fancy shortcuts, or multiple shortcuts from one widget
- Type text and convert it to speech
- Language converters
- Amazon customer review browser

The list above just scratches the surface of what is available.

You can quit the Yahoo Widget Engine to conserve memory. All of the open widgets will close. Just click on the Yahoo! Widget Engine shortcut to open them again.

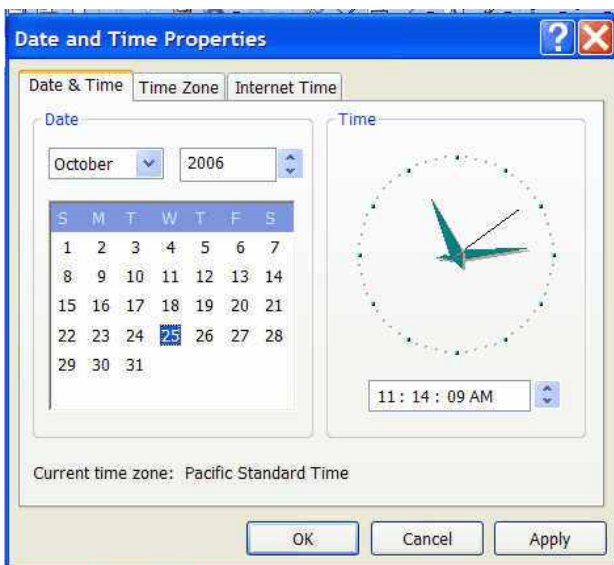
PSST! WANT A CALENDAR?**October****IT IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK**

If you have looked in Start, Programs (All Programs), Accessories, you know you can find many helpful applications, including a calculator. However, you will not find a calendar program there.

Double-click on the time display in the lower right corner of your screen. Voila! There is your calendar. Want to know what day falls on a particular date next year? Just click on the year box in the calendar and move forward or back to the year of your choice. Do the same for the month. Click on the day to highlight a particular day.

The calendar pops up with the current date and time, and shows you the day highlighted on the calendar. Click on the Time Zone tab to view the default setting. Change it if it is not right.

When connected to the Internet, click on the Internet Time tab to force the program to update your date and time, or manually set the time using the box under the dial clock display.

**WORKAROUND FOR
NAGGING SOFTWARE**

**REDUCE REQUESTS TO REINSTALL YOUR
SOFTWARE FROM A CD**



Some programs are notorious for nagging you to insert the original CD so they can reinstall something that is supposedly missing. The messages ask you to insert the original CD, or to provided the location of the file on your hard drive. I know that Roxio Easy Media Creator, and an earlier version of Microsoft Digital Image Suite fall in this category.

THE WORKAROUND

Usually there is no way, short of permanently uninstalling the offending software to prevent it from looking for files it thinks are missing, such as fonts that you removed that support their built-in labeling program. However, you can minimize the problem. Here is how.

Temporarily, uninstall the software. Copy the entire CD, or CDs that contain the setup/install programs. Sometimes it is a CD labeled Program. To do so, create a separate folder for all the programs on the CD, such as Roxio, and create a folder for each CD, i.e., disk 1, disk 2 (if necessary). Then, reinstall the software by clicking on the setup or install files in the disk 1 folder.

Then do the same for the disk 2 folder, if it is needed. That way, if the program thinks it needs something, it automatically goes to the folder from which the installation occurred. While the problem will not be totally eliminated, you will no longer be asked to stop, find, and then insert the CD that it wants. Hopefully, at some time in the future, the vendor will fix the problem. However, it will probably not be until the next release.

SOFTWARE SITE OF THE MONTH**THE INFLATION CALCULATOR**

Do you ever wonder how much a present day item would cost in 2005 dollars, or the reverse, how much something that cost X dollars in year Y would cost in 2005? The year 2005 is the last year for which complete information is available.

Go to <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/> and plug in the numbers. Comparing figures to see the effects of inflation is fun. We enter five cents as .05. See what a 1950, 12 ounce, nickle Pepsi would cost today in 1950 money.

THE DREADED RED X PROBLEM

HOW TO FIX OR PREVENT IT



This discussion involves Outlook Express and understanding why you may see a red x in the spot where a photo or graphic should be. The red-x problem can also occur in Internet Explorer, but that is reserved for a discussion later. [Another special case is a red-x in OE if you receive a Word document but do not have Word or a Word viewer installed on your computer].

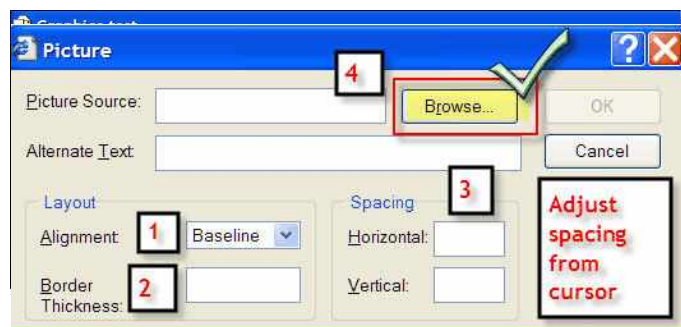
I believe there are four major reasons why the red-x shows up in Outlook Express.

- A graphic or photo contained in the email message is not one of the supported graphic formats (Generally BMP, GIF, JPG, or WMF).
- The inserted graphic points to an invalid location for the graphic or photo, or the file are corrupt
- The OE security setting does not allow attachments
- The OE security setting blocks images and other external content in HTML e-mail

HOW TO TELL WHICH FORMATS ARE SUPPORTED BY YOUR VERSION OF OUTLOOK EXPRESS (OE)

Open OE. Click on the Create icon. Click on blank area of a new message. Click on the Insert icon of the Formatting bar. If OE does not display the Formatting Bar, click View, Toolbars, and select the Formatting Bar.

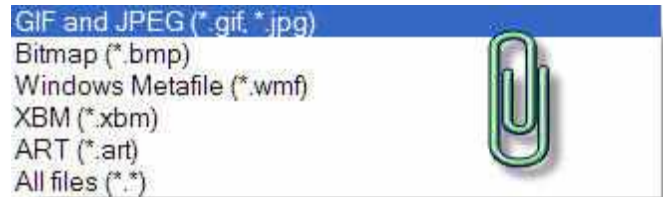
Click the Insert button on the Formatting Bar then Browse. Click at the end of the File Types dialog. Note which formats are displayed. Those are the supported graphic types. See the screen shots for examples of these steps.



XBM is a very early format. XBM is not supported in the latest version of OE (version 7.0).

ART is an Apple Mac format used by some illustrators to combine information in one file.

Therefore, for PC use, there are four supported graphic formats for e-mail—GIF, JPG (the most popular formats), BMP, and WMF.



Supported graphic formats

Notice that the “All Files” choice in the insert file menu will display all files in a folder, even those not supported by e-mail. Interestingly, other graphic formats may work in some e-mail but not in others. Therefore, it is best to stick to the recommended graphic formats. Otherwise, what you may be able to view in your version of OE, may not be what one or more other recipients of your message see.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF GRAPHIC FORMATS

Graphic formats vary from one another in very important ways. For instance, JPG images may involve significant data compression. I believe that the differences are too technical for this discussion. What is really important to remember is that **JPG is the format of choice for photographs**, or for very detailed graphics. **GIF is the format of choice for line drawings and simple graphics**. If you stick with those two choices for e-mail, everyone should be able to view what you send them. It is as simple as that.



GIF graphic below



JPG photo above