BUG-BYTES

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HOW TO BACKUP AND RESTORE YOUR WINDOWS DRIVERS

PREPARE FOR THE DAY WHEN YOU MIGHT HAVE TO REPAIR WINDOWS OR REINSTALL IT

The October 2005 issue of Bug-Bytes covered how to search for missing software drivers. The procedure mentioned there is useful if an error message pops up asking for a specific driver. I referred to *Driverguide* as one very good source.

However, a much better procedure is to anticipate the day when you may need one or more drivers. Such a case occurs when you reinstall Windows, and sometimes when you repair Windows.

Not so long ago Jermar (www.jermar.com) provided a free version and a professional version of a driver backup utility. It did a great job of backing up drivers.

Apparently Jermar sold the rights to their program to Driverguide and it is now available in an enhanced form as *Driverguide Toolkit*. www.driverguidetoolkit.com. Download a free trial of the toolkit--buy it for $19.95. It is a worthwhile investment.

Their toolkit identifies and lists all of your computer's drivers and enables you to backup those drivers. When you are connected to the Internet the program lets you search for driver updates, or for replacement drivers.

The backed up drivers are saved in individual folders and are instantly available if you need them in the future. Burn them to a CD, label the CD, and put them away where you can find them.

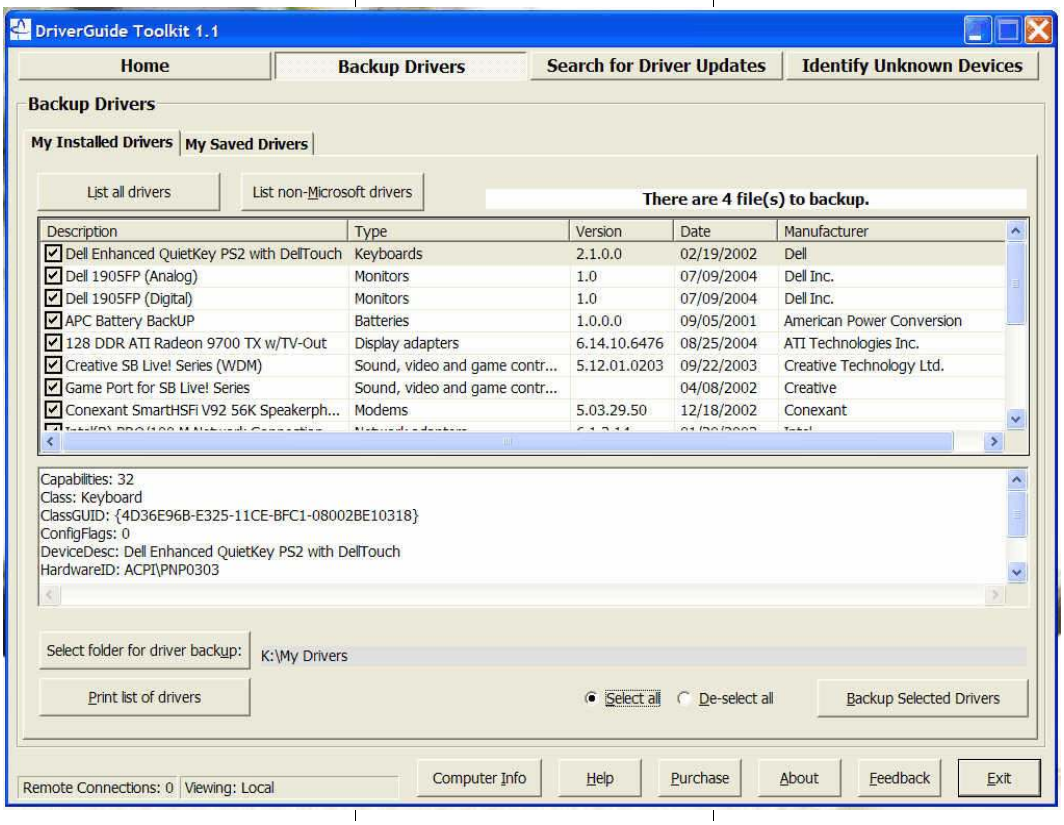
Theoretically the drivers you need are already on other CDs, floppies, or from the individual vendor's web sites. In practice, you will discover that you can't locate certain drivers that you need, or can no longer find them on a vendor's site.

The recommended procedure is to backup only your non-Windows drivers. All the Windows drivers are already on your Windows CD or available when you access Windows Update.

If you need to restore a driver, go to each driver folder and right-click on the INF file contained in the folder and select Install. That will register that driver. Then repeat the process for each of the other drivers. An INF file contains setup information needed by your computer to recognize devices installed on your computer. Some examples include audio, video, and network drivers.

You may need to restore only a few drivers by this method, but it is comforting to know that they are there if you need them.

See the screenshot below to get an idea of what is available to you.



LEARN HOW TO REPAIR WINDOWS

THE DAY MAY COME WHEN YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO DO IT

There may come a day when *Windows* stops working for you. You may get a blank screen, or have a tough time starting *Windows*. This can happen because of a corrupt or damaged registry, from the damaging after effects of malware, viruses, worms, and trojans, or because of hardware conflicts or other reasons.

REPAIR WINDOWS

The difference between reinstalling Windows and repairing Windows is that a repair usually preserves your settings and leaves your data intact. When you reinstall Windows, you start all over from scratch and lose all of your data.

There is always some risk when you repair Windows. So it is best to first backup your data. Better safe than sorry.

Recently I did a repair on a computer with Windows 98 SE. SE stands for Second Edition. The computer had been used by the young children of family friends and had not been updated.

In the process of updating it from Windows Update, the Update process stalled after a few updates. No amount of coaxing would get it to proceed with the needed critical and other recommended updates.

Microsoft provides free support for installation problems, and I worked with a Microsoft technician by e-mail to resolve the problem. After some unproductive suggestions, he suggested that I use the repair procedure that is specific to Windows 98.

It involved placing a Windows CD in the CD drive and issuing the following command from Start, Run. I typed in C:\setup /ns /nd in the open box and followed the in-process instructions.

When prompted I said Yes to save the previous System Files. I would have replaced C:\ with the correct drive letter if a different drive held the Windows files on that computer.

The repair rolled the computer's windows files back to their original state, and Internet Explorer back to version 5.0. With that done, I was able to restart the computer and download all of the available updates for Windows 98 SE. It is wonderful when something like that works right.

Unfortunately, each version of the operating system uses its own specific repair procedure.

I highly recommend consulting the following web site for step-by-step repair information for your OS version.

Carefully note the warnings before proceeding with any repair.

http://www.windowsreinstall.com/index.htm

SYSTEM FILE CHECKER (SFC)

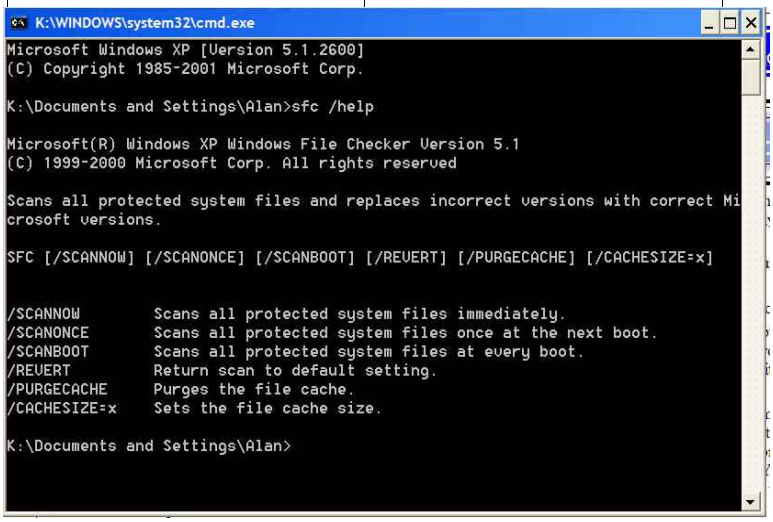
A minor repair technique that works well for Windows 98, ME, and XP is to use the SFC command from Run. SFC stands for *System File Checker*.

For most versions of Windows, in the Run box, type Command or CMD, and then the command you intend to use (SFC) with a space (press the spacebar, and add /? or /help after the command. This sometimes display the command line options (switches) that are available for that particular command and the correct syntax to use to issue the command.

For instance, in Windows XP, the correct command for SFC (System File Checker) is SFC /scannow. See the screenshot below. Check your version for the specific command line switches that are available.

Configure SFC to work the way you want it to. If you wish, check only for deleted files, or include files that have changed. In operating system versions before Windows XP, it was possible to overwrite the current system files with earlier and less capable drivers.

In Windows ME and XP, System File Checker verifies that all protected windows files are intact and in their original version. If that is not the case you will be prompted to insert the Windows CD and the needed files will be copied to your hard disk.



XP system files are protected so that they will not be deleted, corrupted, or overwritten. That concept was introduced in Windows ME and was improved in XP. Still, sometimes you may find that some files have been altered or deleted. SFC will restore those files.

For earlier OS versions, use the latest version of system drivers.

SHORT TIPS

DO IT YOUR WAY

RESIZE QUICK LAUNCH ICONS

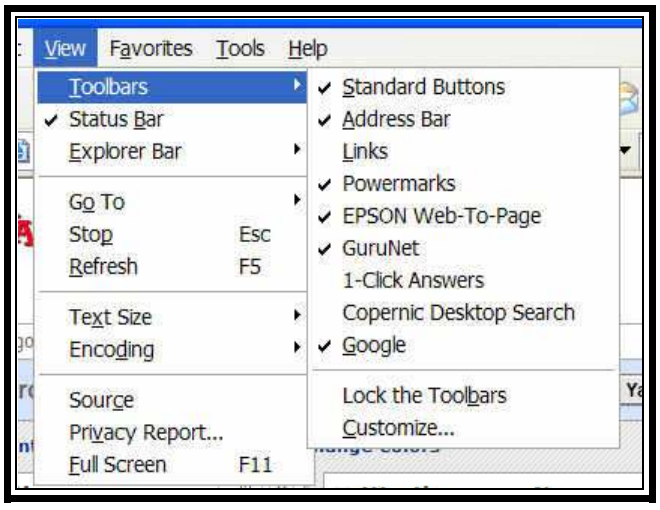
Right-click on blank area at the right of your Quick Launch area. Select view and either large icons or small icons.

ADD QUICK LAUNCH IF ITS NOT THERE

Right-click an empty spot on the taskbar, select toolbars. Select Quick Launch

CREATE A NEW TOOLBAR

Right-click on the taskbar, select Toolbars, New Toolbar. Navigate to the folder where you keep your data, or maybe to the folder where you save all of your photos. Click OK. The new toolbar shows up with the name of the folder you selected, and two carets to the right (>>) indicating the subfolders. Click on the carets to see the subfolders. Click on any one of those to instantly jump to the subfolder. Happy hunting.



ADD ADDITIONAL TOOLBARS

Optional toolbars are available in Internet Explorer, and in popular applications such as Word, and WordPerfect. Click on View, and Toolbars. Choose from the offered toolbars or download others that will meet your specific needs. For instance, in this screenshot, I downloaded Kaylon's Powermarks (creates indexed bookmarks), Google's toolbar, Epson's Web-to-page printing utility, Gurunet (research tool), 1-Click Answers (dictionary, thesaurus, and encyclopedia), and Copernic Desktop Search (web and desktop search tool).

Only the items shown with checkmarks are currently active. Click on Customize to add or remove toolbar buttons.

BE COMPUTER SAVVY

GO TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS

You take a big plunge when you learn new computer terms and skills. At first the terms are confusing, but soon they are very familiar friends.

Today, I was reminded of this when I received an e-mail from a friend that include a computer version of the old Abbott and Costello "Who's on first" baseball routine. In the updated version Lou Costello calls a computer store to get information on buying a computer. The phone was answered by salesman Bud Abbott and the fun begins.

Their dialog illustrates what happens when a very knowledgeable person meets a rank neophyte who is just beginning to learn about the game of baseball, or in our case, to understand computers and computing.

A small percentage of seniors own and use a computer. It is a testament to you that you are willing to brave the unknown to learn these new skills. Your life will be enriched because of what you learn and from your new computing friends.

Let me share with you some of the many ways that you can increase your computing knowledge:

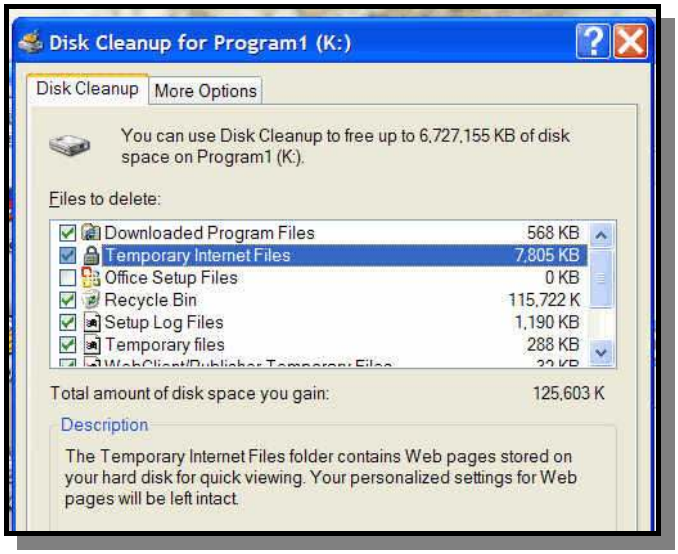
- Participate in Computerbugs meetings
- Sign up for computer classes
- Subscribe to the Computerbugs list server (See http://www.computerbugs.cc/help.htm)
- Read the manual that came with your computer to familiarize yourself with your computer
- Subscribe to popular computer magazines such as PC Magazine, PC World, and Maximum PC
- Try new things.
- Buy computer books that touch on topics of interest to you
- Bookmark the following websites:
- http://www.pcwebopedia.com/ for the meaning of PC terms
- www.google.com to search for just about anything, including the meaning of error messages. Download their toolbar to quickly input search requests
- www.answers.com for computer answers. Download their 1-Click Answers toolbar for instant spell checking and answers
- Learn by doing. You can climb the highest mountain one step at a time. Don't try to learn everything in a day. It can't be done. Give yourself time to learn and to practice what you learn. Enjoy computing!

Q and A

What is Windows Disk Cleanup?

Disk Cleanup was introduced in Windows XP as a convenient means to rid your computer of its accumulation of unnecessary files. This frees up disk space.

Third-party programs are available to do the same thing, but



it is handy to have the capability already built into Windows so you don't have to spend any more money to get that capability. The screenshot above shows part of the list of files that are covered by that utility.

Start the program by one of the following methods and select the drive you want to clean and which files you want included in the cleanup:

- Create a shortcut to Cleanmgr.exe on your desktop. Click on the icon
- Type Cleanmgr in the Start, Run box and click OK
- Click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Clean Files
- Click on My Computer, right-click on a drive, select Properties, Disk Cleanup (on the General tab)

Be aware that you get a long list of options for the drive or partition that holds your Windows program files, but only a short list for all other drives and partitions. See the sample screenshot at the right for the short version.

The program searches your disk for files that you can safely delete and reports how much space will be saved for each option. You select the categories of files that you want cleaned.

One of the options is to compress your drive to free up more space. That option is useful if you have very little free available space. Otherwise, it is a good idea to leave your drive uncompressed. Compression requires additional work for your computer as it reads files. If you have a huge disk, why bother with compression?

FIGHTING AVAILABLE SPACE?

Still need more space? Click on the More Options tab to review windows components, installed programs, and the amount of space used by system restore. You can gain needed space there.

However, BEFORE you exercise those options, right-click on the recycle bin and review how much space is being is set aside for deleted files. If you are like most users, you can reduce the amount of space reserved for that purpose.

ARE YOU A CANDIDATE FOR A NEW HARD DRIVE?

If you find that you are constantly fiddling with your computer's hard drive to free up needed space, and suffering from slow disk access, you will benefit from a larger hard drive. A new drive can be installed in a few minutes.

Your new hard drive can you an abundance of free space, and will, in all probability, read and write data much faster than your old drive with its small buffer and slow rotational speed. Fortunately, new drives are reasonably priced.