

Chapter 10

Customizing Your System

Introducing the Control Panel

When Windows XP was installed, it gave you a standard configuration for your desktop, keyboard, mouse, etc.

Control Panel is used to:

1. Customize your workspace by altering the default settings and the appearance/behavior of the workspace.
2. Maintain your system (add/remove programs/hardware).
3. Support networks, modems, and multimedia devices.

Windows XP tracks system peripherals in Registry. During installation, preferences are written to the Registry. After installation, the Control Panel is used to make changes to the system. Changes made are written to the Registry. Can configure system without directly editing the Registry.

Options available in the Control Panel:

- ❑ Accessibility Options – provides support for physically challenged individuals.
- ❑ Add New Hardware – detects and installs (plug/play) hardware.
- ❑ Add/Remove Programs – install and uninstalls Windows XP components and programs.
- ❑ Administrative Tools
- ❑ Date/Time – changes the system date and time.
- ❑ Display – alters desktop settings and controls type of monitor and monitor related settings (device drivers for video card).
- ❑ Folder Options – how folders appear/displayed.
- ❑ Fonts – lets you see what fonts you have installed and allows you to add and remove fonts.
- ❑ Game Controllers – control settings.
- ❑ Internet Options – configure settings for Internet Explorer, change home page/set up security and email program/news reader.
- ❑ Keyboard – changes keyboard settings.
- ❑ Mouse – lets you customize several settings related to the mouse such as the double-click speed.

- ❑ Network Connections – allows you to configure your network, if you are connected to one.
- ❑ Phone and Modem Options
- ❑ Power Options – configures any power-saving features of computer.
- ❑ Printers and Faxes – perform printer-related tasks and add/delete printers (printer drivers).
- ❑ Regional and Language Options – adapts use of Windows in different countries.
- ❑ Scanners and Cameras
- ❑ Scheduled Tasks
- ❑ Sounds and Audio Devices – enable or disable event sounds and controls MIDI devices.
- ❑ Speech
- ❑ System – provides information about all of your system's resources.
- ❑ Taskbar and Start Menu
- ❑ User Accounts – add/delete/manage user profiles.

Themes

Coordinated look for desktop. It affects background, fonts, colors, sounds, pointers, etc..

All items that affect desktop associated with a theme are preselected items.

WXP provides 2 desktop themes:

1. Windows XP
2. Windows Classic

Can browse on Microsoft's web for other themes.

Wallpaper

A wallpaper is a graphic image used to cover the background of the desktop.

It is stored as a bitmap graphics file – standard .bmp (bitmap) format – simple images or .jpg (Join Photographic Experts Group) which is more powerful.

WXP comes with several wallpapers that are stored in the Windows folder.

Create your own wallpaper.

1. Use graphics program.
2. Scan in image and modify it.
3. Modify existing wallpaper.
4. Purchase wallpaper files.

Other Features of Customizing the Desktop

Use Customization feature of Desktop tab to customize desktop.

- Icons – change size/color/shape.
- Clear desktop of all icons and moved to folder if they have not been used in 60 days.

Active Desktop –

- Integrates desktop and Internet.
- Microsoft's description of how WXP displays Web pages and other content downloaded from Internet.
- Implementation of **Push technology**. Automatically brings/updates requested Internet content to you.
- To add items to desktop may use Web tab in Display Properties/Customize Desktop/Web dialog box.
- Toggle Active Desktop on or off.

Screen Savers

Should computer be left on/turned off when user is away from it?

- Turn off – Save energy. (Minimal savings). Prevent wear on electronic parts.
- Leave on – Mechanical parts most likely to break. (Switches)
Turn on – higher power surge can damage electronic components.

Screen saver –

- Blanks the screen or changing display.
- Averts “burn in” (not problem today).
- Provides limited security. Use password to end screen saver.

Power management –

- Reduces energy consumption.
- Turns off computer/monitor and switches to standby.
- Monitors supporting VESA Display Power Management Signaling specifications (DPMS). Need Energy Star compliant monitor and video card that supports APM (Advanced Power Management) or VBE/PM (VESA BIOS Extensions for Power Management).
- WXP supports VBE/PM.

Changing the Appearance of the Desktop

The Appearance Tab in Display Properties property sheet used to:

1. Change wallpaper/patterns.
2. Choose color scheme.
3. Change icons – Different fonts and styles. Icon spacing can also be altered.

Screen Resolution Settings

Standard VGA is the default screen configuration.

It has a grid of 640 x 480 pixels.

It has a 16-color palette.

WXP does not take advantage of all settings a video card/monitor can support.

Popular monitor size: 19” – 21” gaining.

1. Most prefer flat screen or LCD.
 - Weigh less.
 - Take up less room.
 - 17” flat panel monitor has bigger viewing area than traditional CRT 17” monitor.
2. Settings used
 - Common resolutions are 800 x 600 for text.
 - 1024 x 768 settings for graphics.

Depending on monitors/video cards may change how many colors can be displayed.

1. Two choices -
 - High color (16 bits – 16,000 colors)
 - True color (32 bits – 16 million colors)
2. Higher resolution –
 - Gain more workspace on desktop.
 - Display – sharper but smaller.
 - System works harder to manage display.
 - Can slow down work.

The Mouse and the Keyboard

Several mouse settings can be customized. The following settings can be altered:

1. Double-click speed.
2. Pointer size/movement.
3. Tracking speed (the rate at which the pointer moves across the screen).
4. Pointer trails –
 - Can be enabled/disabled (leaves images tracking the mouse's path).
 - Useful on notebook computer/or monochrome monitors where pointer is difficult to see.
 - Switch left/right buttons to accommodate left-handed users.

The keyboard can also be customized in several ways. The following settings can be adjusted.

1. The rate at which a character is repeated when a key is held down.
2. The rate at which the cursor blinks.
3. Install keyboard support for different languages. Must have original WXP CD-ROM to do so.

Sound and Audio Devices and Speech

Where you control all audio devices on system.

Related to events. An event is an action performed by you or a program that your computer can notify you about.

With sound card, you can change assigned sounds, and add/delete sounds.

WXP provides sound schemes which are groupings of sounds under a specific name. These are similar to color schemes. Files have a .wav extension.

Speech enabled applications use Speech icon in Control Panel to control speech features. 2 Speech features that are independent of each other.

1. Ability to play back text in a spoken voice (text to speech or TTS).
2. Convert spoken voice into electronic text (speech recognition or SR).

Date/Time and Regional Settings

The computer has an internal clock that keeps the current date and time. These are referred to as the system date and the system time (the date and time as indicated by the computer's clock). These are used by all programs when you save/modify file, the date/time is stamped on the file. It is also used for any activity relying on date or time (Fax, mail, schedule tasks).

The date/time is set to the local geographic area.

Display based on where you live.

- Alter regional settings – may affect display.
- USA uses mm/dd/yy – Long form: August 1, 1999 Short form: 8/1/99.
- Many other countries use dd/mm/yy.

Currency symbols also vary.

- USA - \$ sign used.
- Great Britain - £ used.

Use Control Panel to customize date/time/currency/and numbers displayed.

Customizing the Start Menu

Installation of a program can place items on Start menu as well as on Program menu.

Menus can become large and unwieldy.

Purpose of menus: Click/point/choose program of interest.

To make efficient use of menus:

1. Add items to Start menu by pinning applications.
2. Alter All Programs portion of Start menu.
 - Add items to All Programs menu to avoid extra step of cascading menus.
 - Remove seldom used programs.
 - Organize existing program choices.

To make changes to Start menu – go to Documents and Settings menu under your user name (profiles).

Sometimes changes made to All User profile under Documents and Settings.

Creating User Profiles and Passwords

2 or more users can use same computer and maintain own customized settings.

1. User logs in – computer restored to his/her settings when s/he logged off.
2. Created in Control Panel.

3 types of accounts:

1. Computer Administrator – most powerful account. Can do the following:
 - Make changes to entire computer system.
 - Install new hardware/programs.
 - Access all files on computer.
 - Create/delete user accounts.
 - Create password for other user accounts on computer.
 - Alter other user's account names, pictures, passwords, and account types.

Must be at least one user who is administrator on computer system.

2. Limited Account – can do the following:

- Can access installed programs.
- Change his account picture.
- Change/delete his password.

Cannot do the following:

- Install programs/hardware.
- Change his account name or account type.

3. Guest Account –

- Has no password – can log on quickly.
- Has fewer privileges than Limited Account.
- Can: use computer to check email or browse Internet, use installed software, change guest account picture.
- Cannot: add hardware/software, change guest account type.

On network – WXP will already be set up with specific users and groups. Network administrator determines how much customizing user can do.