

Making Windows Your Own

If you are a Windows user, it is important that you understand how you can customize Windows and many of its applications to suit your taste as well as make them more efficient for you to use.

The main areas of customization are the Start Menu, Taskbar/Tray, Desktop, and various application options. Any customization setting that you change will be linked to your sign-on, if you use one and will be saved. Thus, when you start up your PC it will remain in the same state of your last settings.

Start Menu & Taskbar

The Start Menu and Task Bar are normally at the bottom of your screen. Click the **Start** button and select **Settings**. Then select **Task Bar and Start Menu**. A Window will open up that allows you to change the way both the **Task Bar and Start Menu** looks and operates. The **Auto Hide** option for the Task Bar causes the bar to disappear when you are not using it. When you move your mouse to where the Task Bar is, the Task Bar appears. This is a nice space saver when you want a full screen. Review all of the options and see what they do.

Desktop

The desktop is that area of the screen that is always present even when it is buried under your work. The main areas of customization can be set by right-clicking on an empty space on your desktop and selecting **Properties**. The most common setting changed is the background using the **Desktop Tab**. Microsoft provides a selection of over 20 backgrounds or you can add you own image or artistic design. There is also a **Desktop Customize** button on the **Tab**. Push that button and see what you can control. The **Screen Saver Tab** is used to set or remove Screen Savers. We suggest you only use the "Blank" screen saver. Cute screen Savers use lots of computer resources and can bring your system to a crawl, even when you turn off the screen saver by moving your mouse. The **Appearance Tab** can be a lot of fun. It takes a little practice, but you can change the way every Window, font, and work area looks, including Icon size and spacing. We have found that sometime some of these changes made may not take effect until you restart your computer, so be careful. The **Settings Tab** is used to change the resolution of your screen. Most computers can work with different resolutions. Changing this setting will make things appear either bigger, but crowding your screen or smaller, but harder to see.

Another part of the desktop that may important to customize is what Icons are on your desktop. An Icon is a small graphical picture that is linked to a Program or File buried somewhere in your computer. The small arrow in the lower left hand corner of the Icon tells you it is just a link or what we call a Shortcut. You can select a Shortcut Icon and delete it by pushing the Delete key. Icons that are not Shortcuts should not be deleted, because you may actually be deleting the program or file. There are two common ways to add a Shortcut Icon to your desktop. The first involves finding the selection on your Start Up menu and Right-Clicking on your selection and holding that mouse button down. Drag your selection to an open space on your desktop and let the right mouse button up. It will then open a small box where you can select "Create a Shortcut Here". The second way is to Right-Click on an open space on your desktop. Select the **New** menu item. Then choose **Shortcut**. A series

of dialog boxes will open up allowing you to find the program, folder, or file that you want to create a shortcut for. You must name the shortcut, and finally this program will create the shortcut. As you add and remove shortcuts to your desktop you may want Windows to arrange them so they look organized. Right-Click on an open space on your desktop and select **Arrange Icons By:** then select **Name**.

Office Applications

Most Office applications have settings that can be customized using their **Tools** menu by selecting the **Options** menu item. While each application has different settings, you can look over each **Tab** and see what is available to change. Common settings are: where a document is normally saved, will a document be saved automatically every so often, and how many documents in a list of previously active documents will show on the **File** menu. Look over each application's setting and see if any of the settings offered can make your life easier.

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