

## **CLEAN UP YOUR ROOM/DESKTOP - (PART II)**

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Last month we started on managing your icons. In this issue, we'll be continuing the saga of the icons. When have completed the exercises below, and learned the various activities involved, you will be on the road to becoming an "expert" to your friends. You can then play the role of teacher rather than student.

There are many different versions of Windows currently in use. As such, the material which follows may bring up a slightly different listing of choices on your machine, when one right-clicks on the desktop. With all these varying situations, it is very difficult to present the many fine points exactly. In general, the "differences" will be obvious by simple inspection. When they are not, the most direct approach is just to experiment to see what is produced when a choice is made. Generally, all such choices are reversible. In the process, you will get to better understand what is happening. To me, the aspect of experimenting is usually the best approach to understanding and learning.

In the latest Window's XP and Vista, MS has made a lot of changes, including the default desktop which is displayed. I personally don't like it, but that's a matter of my taste. However, MS did leave the door open to go back to the older style of desktop, which you may prefer. If you right click on the desktop, there should be a choice to have a classic Windows desktop. Try selecting this and see which you'd rather have. You can always revert back to the new style if you choose.

Remember what I have been preaching for years in my articles. As you become more conversant with using your computer, you will gain more confidence in expanding your horizons with the most amazing machine that mankind has produced. But, it is only a "machine", and you should be in charge of it, even though Microsoft tends to try and make it in charge of you. You are the boss, and the sooner you let your computer know that, the sooner you will stop feeling intimidated by your it.

### **ARRANGE THE ICONS**

Right click on an empty space on the desktop, and a menu will come up. The first item on the XP listing is "Arrange Icons by." Put the focus on "Arrange Icons by" and will get a listing lots of choices on how you want them arranged. If you have carefully positioned all your desktop icons in the various areas where you want them, and you use the "Arrange" feature, they will all line up like soldiers, starting at the upper left part of your screen. Then you will have to manually reposition them to where they were before you started. Again, this is a good area in which to experiment.

In the window that pops up when you click on "Arrange Icons by", you will see an entry named "Auto Arrange." If you check this, your icons will always stay arranged, but not in any groups that you have established. They will all line up like soldiers, and stay that way even if you move them. They will jump right back into line. I personally don't like using this. But, you can try it to see if you'd like it. "Auto arrange" is the equivalent of constantly invoking the "Arrange" command. I personally use the "Align to Grid", which auto aligns all icons so that rows and columns are straight. With this checked, sometimes when you move an icon, it snaps to a different point on the grid. It will always snap to the nearest point. When this happens, just click and drag it to where you want.

In the early days of XP when one had temporarily booted into safe mode, and then returned to normal mode, the desktop layout was totally garbled up, But, MS apparently improved things in recent times, as the original desktop layout does return now.

There are also a variety of simple programs available free, on the Internet to save and then restore your desktop layout. This can come in handy when something/someone has messed up your desktop layout. The one I used is called "iconlayout.zip", but the page for this appears to be gone now. This link appear to have a similar free program at ZDNET.

What these utilities generally do is add two items into the dropdown list when you right-click on your desktop - "Save desktop icon layout" and "Restore desktop icon layout". Browse around for something similar, if you'd like to have this handy utility, or try this ZDNET link.

## **CHANGING ICONS**

Except for a few Icons that Windows is very possessive of, the icon images that display for the shortcuts on your desktop can be changed to suit your desires. When you right click on an icon, and select properties from the window which shows, a small window will come up. Near the bottom right of that window is a button marked "Change Icon." If you click on it, another window will open, with other Windows supplied icons which are. The selection is somewhat limited. But, there's a "Browse" button. If you have any icon library files on your computer, click on the "browse", and navigate around to find these libraries. When you find one, double click on it, and a whole bunch of icons will appear. Find one you like, double click on it and click OK, and when you exit the window, you'll have a new icon for that shortcut.

If you'd like to get some icon libraries, one of the best places to go is [www.zdnet.com](http://www.zdnet.com). Once you get there, navigate around to their download area, and then do a search for "icons". You should get lots of results. These are generally free files, and there are lots of them available - so have fun.

Google is also a good hunting ground for icons. Do a search for "icons for Windows XP". You'll get lots of hits, most of which are free downloads.

The spacing of icons, and the color and many other properties of the desktop layout can also be changed. But, that's outside of this area for now. In a future article, we'll go over the ways to change your desktop colors, the sizes of things, the display resolution, and many other elements that can make your display "better", and easier to use.

## **STARTING PROGRAMS**

Left click on the START button on the lower left of your desktop. On the menu which comes up, left click on "All Programs". This should bring up a large window listing all the programs installed on your computer. This is probably where you have been to run a specific program. You would move the cursor over the desired program, and click, and the program would then run.

Some of these items are links to start the program, and others are folders, which you must click to display the links that are within the folder

How about making copies of the startup links for the programs you use often. Doing this is simple. Put the cursor on a program shortcut, and then right click. There should be a listed item "create shortcut". Clicking on this will create another shortcut, with a (2) showing that it is the a duplicate of the original shortcut. Then, drag this onto the desktop. You can now edit the name to remove the (2). Or make it any name you would like.

At this point, take a break, and make sure that you are now well versed in the icon activities that are presented above. It would also be a good idea to play with the capabilities you have just learned, in preparation for the next venture. This will be a major step for many of you, as we'll be making new folders, adding icons to the desktop, and storing all the icons we don't need in a folder which we'll call "Icons in Storage."

Next month, we'll pick up where we left off, and go through a variety of procedures that you should understand relative to controlling and manipulating windows. We'll also "play" with icons, setting up a storage folder for the excess icons that are presently on display. And, we'll go through the process of getting some new icons on the desktop to save searching for them when we want to use them.

Remember, if you learn a little bit each day, your new skills will make using your computer much easier.

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