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Top 10 Tips for WinXP Users

By Anna-Marie Stewart

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Are you new to WinXp? Just upgraded, or gotten a new computer maybe? Or you might have friends and contacts who use it and you want to "show off" a little by teaching them a few tricks? I've collected 10 of my favourite WinXP tricks, each of them easy to use, and very helpful, and if you follow the instructions step-by-step, they work perfectly. So here goes:

Top Tip #1:

Having a problem making your desktop icons stay exactly where you put them?

When you temporarily change your desktop to a lower resolution—for example whilst using Safe mode, Windows can wreak havoc with your careful positioning of desktop icons.

Right click your desktop click arrange icons and uncheck auto arrange. You can now drag & drop them wherever you want them. Note that if you start your computer in SAFE mode you will have to rearrange them again.

Top Tip #2:

Accidentally moved your taskbar and want it back where it was?

Point your mouse to a 'blank' area inside the taskbar, THEN hold down your left mouse button, and DRAG it down where you want it to go. It may take a couple of tries to get it over.

Top Tip #3:

Feel like changing your Start Menu?

- (1) Right click a blank spot on the Start Menu.
- (2) Select Properties

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- (3) Select Customize
- (4) Select the Advanced tab.

Most of those preset items which don't have the option to check or uncheck will be there. For each item listed you'll have the option to Display as link or Display as menu or Don't display this item. Make your selection as you desire. Note that you will have the option to display the Control Panel as a menu, which you might find very useful.

Top Tip #4:

Getting grey popup boxes with ads in? Stop the spam like this:

- (1) Select "Start"
- (2) Select "Settings"
- (3) Choose "Control Panel"
- (4) Choose "Administrative Tools"
- (5) Choose "Services"
- (6) Right-click on "Messenger"
- (7) Select "Stop"

To permanently disable Messenger:

- (8) Right click "Messenger"
- (9) Select "Properties"
- (10) Change "Startup Type" to "Disabled" and click "OK"

Top Tip #5:

Having problems viewing sites cos your computer isn't accepting the cookies?

Open a New Browser window.

- (1) Click on Tools (in toolbar).
- (2) Click on Internet Options.
- (3) Click on Privacy.
- (4) Click on Advanced.
- (5) Click on Override Cookie Control.
- (6) Click on Enable First Party Cookies.
- (7) Click on Enable Session Cookies.
- (8) Click OK.

Top Tip #6:

Want to change how you see your emails? Try this:

Click on "view" at top. "Layout" will allow you to fix what you see. "Sort by" will let you arrange the order the messages appear in.

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Top Tip #7:

Want to disable the Automatic Update reminders in Windows?

Open Internet Explorer/Tools/Internet Options/Advanced tab, under "Browsing" take the checkmark out of "Automatically check for Internet Explorer Updates", click Apply, click OK.

Another thing to try is to:

- (1) Click Start
- (2) Click Run
- (3) Type in: "MSCONFIG" (without the quotes)
- (4) Click OK.
- (5) Under the Startup tab take the checkmark out of "Critical Updates"
- (6) Click Apply

- (7) Click OK
- (8) Restart your computer.

Top Tip #8:

Got too many icons on your desktop?

Right click on an empty space on your desktop, highlight "Arrange Icons By", then click on Run Desktop Cleanup Wizard

Top Tip #9:

Tired of seeing your pointer as an arrow or an hourglass all the time? Windows XP offers a number of alternative pointer schemes, such as Dinosaur, Ocean and Sports.

Open the Control Panel, double-click Mouse, and select the Pointers tab. (If you start in Category view, select Appearance and Themes, then click Mouse Pointers under "See Also.") Next to Schemes, click the down arrow and select a scheme to preview its pointers. Click OK to apply the scheme to your desktop. Simple as that.

Top Tip #10:

Want to hear your computer talk?

Select Start, Programs, Accessories, Accessibility, Narrator. Or press the Windows key plus the letter "U" to open the Utility Manager. Microsoft Narrator, an accessibility option designed to assist readers who are blind or have impaired vision, starts automatically.

Once you've read through the intro screen (or let the Narrator do it), click OK and you'll see a dialog box of Narrator options. Assuming you want to leave Narrator running, select the desired options, then

minimize its dialog box. And if you've opened the Utility Manager, feel free to close it.

To turn Narrator off, click the Exit button or right-click its taskbar item and select Close.

Hope this has helped you get your WinXP working the way you want it to, and given you a little fun too. For more information like this, I highly recommend that you visit, read through, bookmark and re-visit this site:

<http://www.winxpnews.com/issues.cfm>

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WinXP Routing – Staying Online During Hurricane Wilma

By Darren Miller

Hurricane Wilma Put Me Out Of Business For A While

WinXP Routing – My consulting services business is heavily dependent on Internet access. Without it, I am pretty much dead in the water. Since I cannot afford an enterprise satellite backup link, I came up with a more economical way of keeping my network online in the event of a critical infrastructure failure. We experienced such a failure on October 24th, 2005 courtesy of Category 3 Hurricane Wilma.

Verizon, and other carriers, offer wireless (digital / analog) access pretty much anywhere in the US. Download rates for this type of "mobile" Internet access can burst up to 2Mb/sec but typically float around 768Kbps. This is still a respectable speed if you find yourself without a working wired Internet connection.

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It's one thing to have a laptop with wireless Internet access anywhere, anytime, but quite another to have that same access for your entire home / small business. However, it can be done, and this is exactly how I stayed connected during Hurricane Wilma.

How To Configure A Laptop As A Wireless Internet Access Point

Note: I am making the assumption that you already have a basic understanding of IP routing as well as how to use the Windows registry editor. You will also need to install and configure a proxy package, such as winproxy (I actually used an older version that performs Network Address Translation using the VZAccess Valid Internet IP assigned by Verizon as the hiding address). This allows the computers on your internal network to access the Internet. Optionally, you could install Windows 2000 Prof / Server which can perform Internet connection sharing.

I have a relatively new HP/Compaq laptop running Windows XP SP2. I ordered the VZAccess card (aprox \$149) and the monthly services (aprox \$59.99) from Verizon . The VZAccess card installs in the PCMCIA slot and the laptop already has an integrated 10/100/1000 Ethernet controller. This effectively gives me two Ethernet cards. All routing devices, in this case my laptop, must have at least two Ethernet cards to route between networks, in this case, my home office network and the Internet.

The internal network card, the real Ethernet port integrated into my laptop, was assigned an address such as 192.168.0.254/24 (to be my default gateway for all my internal computers) and the VZAccess card is dynamically assigned an IP address from the carrier.

The real trick is what needs to be done to make WinXP Prof act as a router. In order to do this, you must make a registry change. For those of you with little experience in making registry changes, I must tell you that if you make a serious mistake, you run the chance of really messing your system

up. There are Proxy packages that can take care of this for you, and do not require this routing change.

Configuring Windows XP Professional To Route IP

In order to make Windows XP Prof performing IP routing between network segments, you need to perform some changes to the Windows Registry.

At the Start -> Run command, type regedit and press enter.

"HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINESYSTEMCurrentControlSetServicesTcpip Then navigate to the following Parameters". Selected the "IPEnableRouter" entry, which by default will have the value 0, and change it to 1. Close the registry editor, and reboot your system.

When the system reboots, it will be able to route traffic between your internal network and the Internet

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(Your Wireless card). Of course, you need to adjust your DNS information to point to an appropriate Domain Name Server on the Internet. All of your internal workstations / systems must point to the internal network card / IP on the laptop as the default gateway.

Conclusion

This seems like a pretty easy setup, and it can be if you have a good understanding of routing and network address translation. The goal of this article was to demonstrate that you can configure a pretty inexpensive solution that can keep you connected in the event of a communications / power failure. Of course, there are other things to consider, for instance, we were without power for 7 days, however, we had a gas generator that kept us going. The bottom line is, where there is a will, there is a way. And the way for me was the Poor Mans Wireless Internet!

Darren Miller is an Information Security Consultant with over sixteen years experience. He has written many technology & security articles, some of which have been published in nationally circulated magazines & periodicals. If you would like to contact Darren you can e-mail him at

. If you would like to know more about computer security please visit us

at

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