

# Energize Windows!



**WIN!**  
Submit the best XP tip  
and win an Audigy 2 ZS or  
Radeon 9600XT! See page  
41 for details!



| Ingredients             |         | %Daily Value |
|-------------------------|---------|--------------|
| Speed                   | Page 27 | 14%          |
| Security                | Page 29 | 11%          |
| Gaming                  | Page 30 | 13%          |
| Interface               | Page 34 | 20%          |
| Day-to-day usage        | Page 36 | 19%          |
| Audio                   | Page 40 | 11%          |
| Applications            | Page 41 | 12%          |
| <b>Total Tips:</b>      |         | 30+          |
| <b>Coolness factor:</b> |         | Extreme      |
| <b>BS factor:</b>       |         | Nil          |
| <b>Minutes saved:</b>   |         | 100,000,000  |

# XP

**Maximum PC**  
presents a  
slew of  
expert tips  
that will  
help you  
transform  
Windows XP  
into a  
faster,  
stronger,  
leaner  
operating  
system

## WARNING:

Maximum PC's Windows tips induce more powerful, speedier responses than other magazines' tips. Maximum PC's Windows tips may result in spontaneous bursts of excitement and unprecedented levels of productivity.

The competition always asks us, "How do you come up with so many useful tips?" The answer is *Maximum PC's* top-secret, no-BS, triple-filtering process, which analyzes each tip with constantly changing, proprietary criteria in mind.

This year's criteria: High-end speed, power, and efficiency. Desktop resizing tips? Out! That's so yesterday. Different desktop images on each of your dual displays? In! That's the kind of forward-thinking, *Maximum PC*-type of tip we like.

So kick back and crack open our refreshing, hand-distilled can o' tips.

## **SATISFACTION GUARANTEED!**

# Speed Up Windows

Administer a few tweaks and even the best behaved XP box will move faster

### GET THE LATEST DRIVERS

There's a reason we mention this every time we dole out Windows tips: It should *always* be your starting point. Getting the latest drivers for your hardware can give you a big performance boost and make your PC more stable at the same time. You don't need to update drivers for all the hardware in your machine, just the crucial components. We recommend you update your videocard, motherboard chipset, and soundcard drivers regularly, but drivers for your mouse, keyboard, and other USB devices need to be updated only when you experience problems.

### DISABLE WINDOWS' BELLS AND WHISTLES

Windows XP is the best looking OS from Microsoft to date, but those good looks aren't free. The fancy new UI, drop shadows, and other adornments can negatively impact your PC's performance. Luckily, these features are easy to disable.

► **First, go to System Properties** by pressing the Windows key and Pause/Break. Go to the Advanced tab, and press the Settings button in

the Performance section.

► **On the Visual Effects** tab of the Performance dialog (see image) change the setting to "Adjust for Best Performance." You can also pick and choose your settings by using the Custom option if you prefer. When you're done, press OK, and close System Properties.

► **Now cruise over to Display Properties** by right-clicking an open area of your Desktop and clicking Properties. Go to the Appearance tab, then click Effects. For best performance, make sure all the options here are unchecked.

► **Drawing a bunch of icons** on your Desktop can impact performance, especially if you have a lot of real estate with a multi-monitor display. If you'd rather take a solid kick to the groin than clean up the

unnecessary icons, you can sweep them under the rug simply and easily. Just right-click an open area of your Desktop, go to Arrange Icons, and uncheck "Show Desktop Icons." Voilà, your problem is solved!

### Performance Options

Visual Effects    Advanced

Select the settings you want to use for the appearance and performance of Windows on this computer.

Let Windows choose what's best for my computer

Adjust for best appearance

Adjust for best performance

Custom:

- Animate windows when minimizing and maximizing
- Fade or slide menus into view
- Fade or slide ToolTips into view
- Fade out menu items after clicking
- Show shadows under menus
- Show shadows under mouse pointer
- Show translucent selection rectangle
- Show window contents while dragging
- Slide open combo boxes
- Slide taskbar buttons
- Smooth edges of screen fonts

**The Performance Options dialog provides several options for the performance conscious. You can either disable all the fancy-schmancy interface options that Windows XP added or pick and choose the features you'll sacrifice.**



## TORPEDO SYSTEM TRAY APPS—KEEP EVIL APPS FROM EATING YOUR RESOURCES

Every frickin' application we install lately seems to dump some sort of craptacular applet into our System Tray. We're so sick of it, that we now summarily give these tiny apps the death penalty. Don't worry, it's easy and fun for the whole family!

To kill the apps, you need to root them out at their source. You could visit the Registry, the Startup folder, and the other secret places where software apps hide their auto-starting hellspawn, but it's easier to use the msconfig tool. To start it, go to Start, Run, and then type `msconfig.exe`. When the app opens, go to the Startup tab. The vast majority of your evil Sys tray apps can be disabled from here.

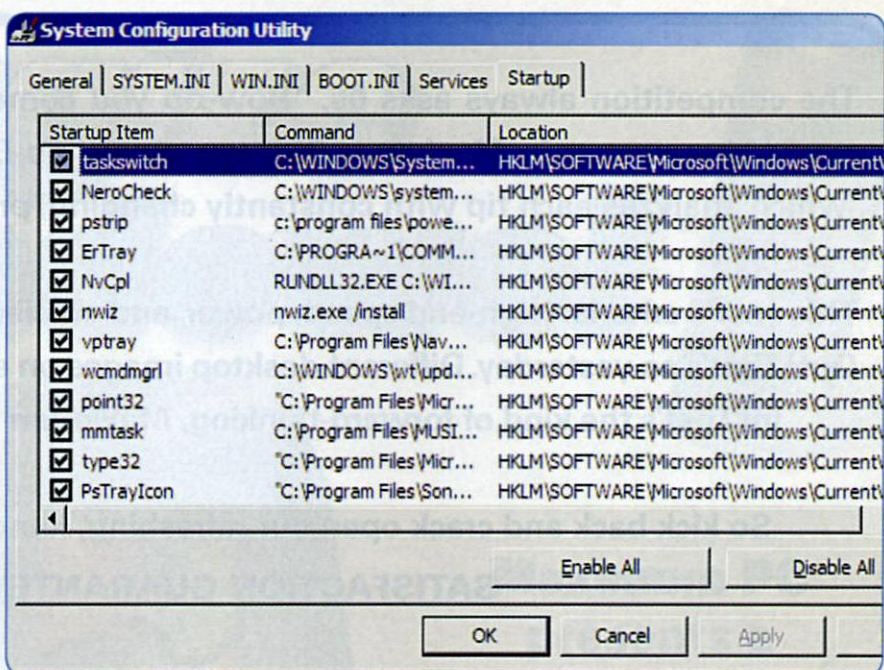
The difficulty lies in figuring out which apps you need, and which you don't. Stretch the command heading far enough to the right so you can see the entire path to the app. Most of the time you'll be able to tell the name or manufacturer of the app by looking at the place where it's saved on your hard drive. If the path to the application doesn't give you a hint, open My Computer and browse down to the program. Right-click it, and select Properties. Click the version tab, and browse through the options there. Look for a company name or product name to tip you off. We recommend leaving alone any apps that use `rundll32` to run; if you mess with those you can disrupt vital Windows processes.

To disable the startup apps, all you need to do is uncheck the box next to each app's name and reboot your PC. It's that simple.

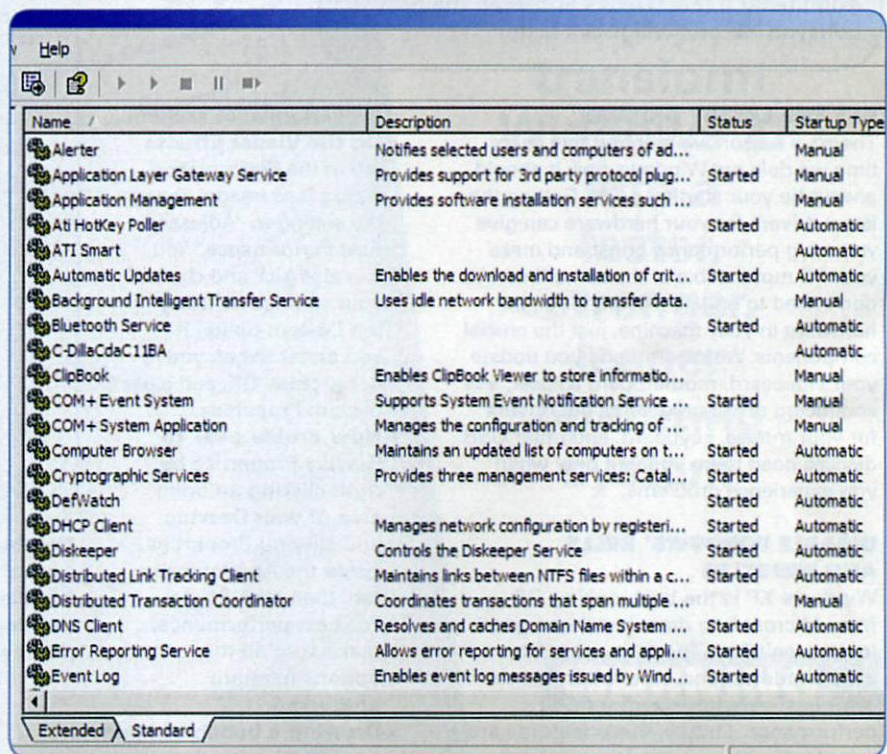
## TURN OFF UNNECESSARY SERVICES IN WINDOWS XP PRO

By default, Windows XP Professional loads more than 20 services that do everything from facilitating easy wireless networking to monitoring your PC's health. Many of the services can be safely disabled by home users, which frees up memory and the occasional CPU cycle. To disable a service, go to the Control Panel, then Administrative Tools, then the Services hotkey. Right-click the service you want to disable and select Properties. Then change the Startup Type to Disabled or Manual. Disabling the wrong service could cause odd things to happen, so keep track of what you're modifying, and if you experience any unexplained PC phenomena, re-enable the services you've turned off. Here's our list of tried and true services that are safe to disable:

► **ClipBook:** This service lets you share



**Msconfig lets you selectively disable startup apps. It's tricky to tell what item goes with what app though, because of the cryptic names. It might be obvious that NeroCheck has something to do with Nero CD burning software, but what's nwiz? The easiest way to find out is to search for the item's name in Google. Nine times out of 10, someone on the net has already tracked it down.**



**A service is nothing more than a fancy application that Windows runs at boot, then monitors to make sure it continues running. Disabling unneeded services can help you conserve your precious system resources.**

## Ask the Doctor



### WILL OVERCLOCKING MY PC MAKE MY WINDOWS APPS RUN FASTER?

Maybe. It depends on the type of overclocking you're talking about. Videocard overclocking gives you absolutely no benefit in 2D Windows apps. In fact, many videocards automatically underclock themselves when they're running in 2D mode.

CPU overclocking, on the other hand, can make a pretty significant impact on some Windows applications. Content creation apps like *Photoshop* can really benefit from a faster CPU, but *MS Office*

staples such as *Word* and *Excel* show little to no performance boost when you upgrade from 2GHz to 3GHz or even higher. More common tasks, such as web browsing or checking e-mail, benefit even less than *Office* apps.

The only real reason to overclock is for faster gaming performance. In many games, cranking up the CPU or videocard clocks gives you a commensurate frame rate boost. If you can squeeze out 10 percent more from your videocard core, you could easily net a 10 percent frame rate boost in your favorite game.

stuff on your clipboard with other people across the network. Kill it.

- ▶ **Application Management:** Not on a network? Don't ever plan on remotely installing an app? That's what this service does, so feel free to kill it.
- ▶ **Distributed Link Tracking Client:** Another network-based service, this automatically updates your shortcuts to files on remote volumes if they're moved. If you don't use a file server, kill this one.
- ▶ **Error Reporting:** Automatic error reporting can get pretty annoying, especially if you're dealing with a misbehaving app. You can kill this service to permanently disable the error report.
- ▶ **TPC/IP NetBIOS Helper:** You only need this service running if you use NetBIOS over TCP/IP. If you don't, feel free to kill it.

## Secure Your PC

Criminal Internet capers are on the rise. Protect yourself from evildoers!

### INSTALL A FIREWALL

This isn't so much a tip as a general guideline. Everyone whose PC is directly connected to the net, whether it's via dial-up or broadband connection, should install firewall software. A firewall moderates your connection to the network. Whenever an app tries to send out data or someone on the Internet tries to connect to your computer, the firewall will ask you if that behavior is allowed. You can then allow or disallow the connection.

Firewall software is freely available for personal use, and protects your PC from most worms and viruses that spread without user intervention. We recommend *ZoneAlarm* ([www.zonealarm.com](http://www.zonealarm.com)) for ease of configuration and use, even for relative newbies.

### INSTALL ANTIVIRUS SOFTWARE

Antivirus software is absolutely vital today, especially if you download e-mail using *Outlook* or *Outlook Express*. Having proper antivirus software installed will stop those pesky viruses that e-mail everyone in your address book a message containing an infectious attachment. If you don't already have an antivirus program, you should purchase one as soon as possible. We're not kidding. We have recommended *Norton Anti-Virus 2003* in the past, but

Don't leave your PC open to exploitation! Protect it with *ZoneAlarm*. It will block port scans, ping attempts, and even intrusion attempts by unsavory Dutch persons.

we haven't had a chance to evaluate the 2004 version yet. If you don't want to wait, download *AVG 7.0 Free Edition* from [www.grisoft.com](http://www.grisoft.com). Look for a full review of both antivirus products in next month's *Maximum PC*.

### DISABLE UNSECURE SERVICES

We've already touched upon a few of the unnecessary services anyone can disable, but there are also some services that are

actual security holes. If you're not sure how to disable services, turn back to the Speed section and check the tip titled "Turn Off Unnecessary Services."

- ▶ **Messenger:** In the last year, spammer scum have realized that they can use Windows' built-in messaging service to send spam to millions of XP users. Disabling the service kills all the incoming spam, and no one uses the Messenger service for actual system



administration messages anymore.

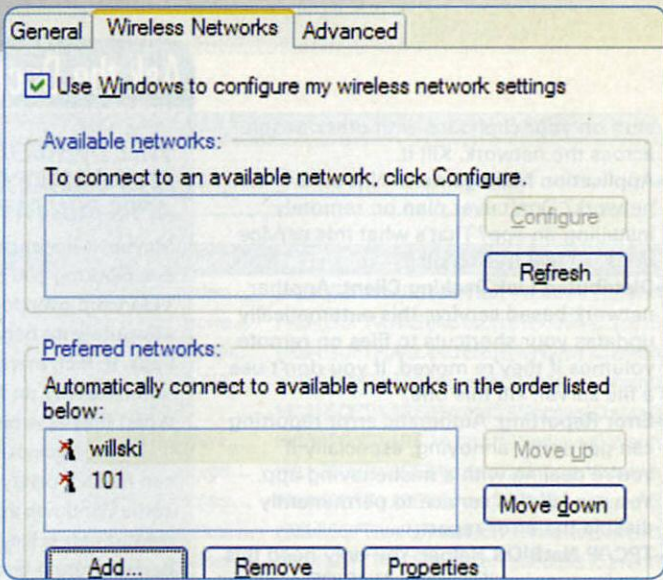
► **Remote Registry:** The only purpose of this service is to give other users access to your Registry. If no one but you should have access to your Registry, disable it.

► **Telnet:** If allowing other people to log on to your computer and do whatever they want seems like a good idea, then by all means go ahead and leave the Telnet service enabled. If you'd rather your PC not be taken over by Croatian haX0rs, you should disable it now.

## DON'T STOP AT WINDOWS—PROTECT YOUR WIRELESS LAN

Once your Windows install is properly secure, turn your eyes to your wireless LAN. Most of the wizard-type access point installations leave your wireless network wide open for any passing

scammer to use. Make absolutely certain that your Wi-Fi LAN uses something other than the manufacturer's default SSID, and always encrypt data moving across your LAN with either WEP encryption or the newer, better WPA encryption. To find out how to change your SSID and enable WEP, you should consult the documentation that came with your access point.



**Windows' integrated Wireless Networks configuration interface is easy to use—a little too easy. Many foolish people fail to adequately secure their network, leaving them open to freeloaders and other more malicious folk.**

## Improve Gaming

Read on to find the perfect balance of frame rate and visual quality in today's demanding 3D games!

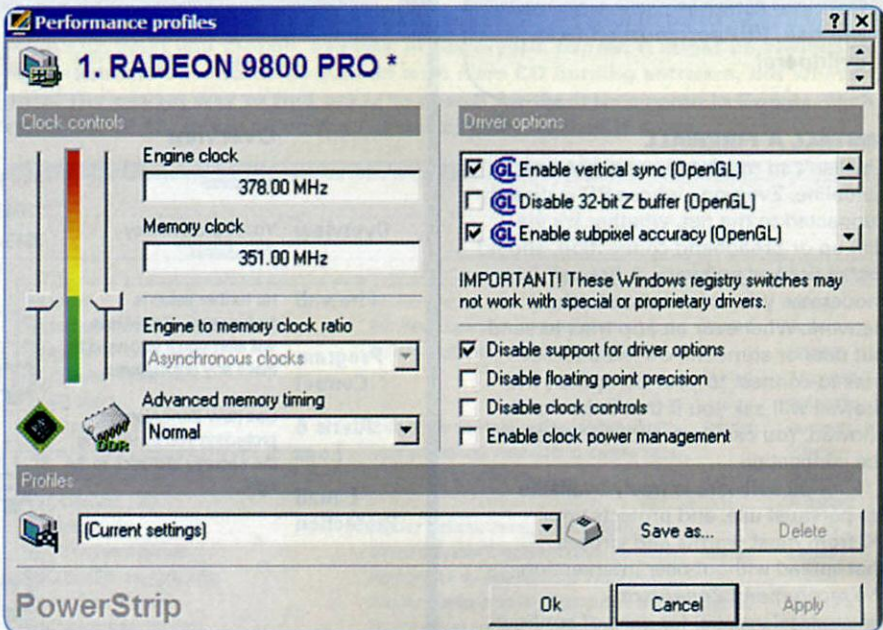
### GET AN EASY, FAST SPEED BUMP, WITHOUT OVERCLOCKING!

This is a trick we picked up from sneaky system vendors who use it to gain a decent performance boost in exchange for image quality degradation.

- Open your Display Properties by right-clicking the Desktop and selecting Properties.
- Go to the Settings tab and click Advanced.
- Go to the Image Quality tab on nVidia cards or the 3D tab for ATI cards. Browse to the custom setting and change the texture quality to the minimum setting. Do the same for the mip-map levels slider. Your image quality will decline drastically, but your frame rates will get much better!

### USE PROFILES TO MAKE SWITCHING FROM MULTIPLAYER SETTINGS TO SINGLE-PLAYER SETTINGS SIMPLE AND FAST

Both ATI and nVidia have a feature in their latest control panel applications that lets you save all vendor-specific videocard settings in a profile. We recommend you set up one profile with high image-quality settings for single-



**Powerstrip is the overclocking gateway drug. It makes overclocking your videocard as easy as moving a pair of sliders, and even protects you from doing something stupid.**

player games, and a low-quality profile for online games in which you want to max out your frame rates.

### OVERCLOCK YOUR VIDEOCARD FOR A FRAME RATE BOOST

Getting a few more frames a second can mean the difference between life and death in a heated online death-match. Most videocards have plenty of headroom, which gives you a perfect

opportunity to crank up the clock speeds and get a little more performance from a struggling system. Remember that overclocking voids your warranty, and just because we've never heard of anyone frying their videocard by overclocking, doesn't mean it's not entirely possible.

Our favorite videocard overclocking app is *Powerstrip*. Download *Powerstrip* at [www.powerstrip.com](http://www.powerstrip.com) and install it on your PC. Once it's running, right-click the



System Tray icon, select Performance, and click Configure. You should see two vertical sliders, one for the engine (aka core) clock, and one for the memory clock. To overclock your card, all you need to do is move the sliders up.

We recommend you take baby steps when you overclock videocards. Start with 5MHz increments for a single clock. Adjust the core clock first, then test your card by playing an intensive game. When

you're playing, watch the screen for any artifacts, static, or deformed polygons. Once you're sure the card is stable at the new clock rate, bump the core clock up another 5MHz. You'll know you've reached your board's limit when you see visual artifacts while testing. When that happens, exit the game and drop the core clock back down 5MHz.

Once you've tested your core clocks, it's time to get started on the memory.

Don't expect to push your videocard's memory as far as you can the core clock. Also, you need to remember that the memory clock reported here is the actual clock speed of your card's double data-rate memory, not the effective clock speed that is written on your product's box. Increase the memory clock in small increments using the slider in *Powerstrip*, then test the changes using stressful games.

## Ask the Doctor



### WHAT DO ANTI-ALIASING AND ANISOTROPIC FILTERING DO? SHOULD I TURN THEM ON?

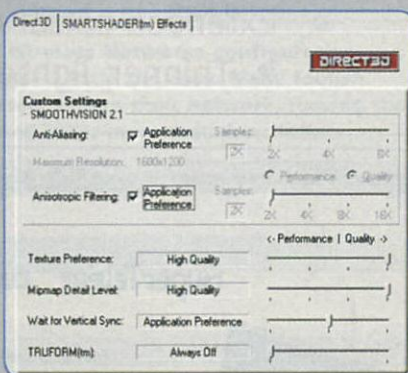
Antialiasing and anisotropic filtering minimize the visual impact of rendering errors in games. Antialiasing smooths the jagged lines that form on the edges of polygons. Modern videocards antialias polygons by rendering a scene in higher detail than is requested, and then blending it down to a lower detail level. The more samples that are rendered, the smoother the edges look, but increasing the number of samples greatly increases the amount of memory bandwidth required.

Anisotropic filtering helps remove the artifacts created when you stretch a flat, square two-dimensional texture over a three-dimensional model. Anisotropic filtering samples several different texture qualities to ensure that textures that stretch from the foreground into the background draw properly. Without

anisotropic filtering, affected textures will lose definition and appear muddy. Like antialiasing, anisotropic filtering is memory bandwidth dependent.

Whether you should turn on antialiasing and anisotropic filtering depends on the type of videocard you have, your PC's speed, and the type of game you're playing. For single-player games like *Knights of the Old Republic* or *Deus Ex: Invisible War* we generally crank up the image quality all the way. As long as the frame rate stays above 30fps we're happy. This means that a person with a fast CPU and videocard can run single-player games with antialiasing at 4x and anisotropic filtering at 8x and experience a great looking game. If your PC won't run your games at this high a setting, try 2x AA and 4x aniso.

On the other hand, in multiplayer games, frame rate equals life. If you're in a deathmatch and your opponent's PC renders the game at 60fps but your PC is chugging along at just 30fps, he gets twice



**You can override your games' antialiasing and anisotropic filtering settings, but it's not always a good idea.**

as many chances as you to aim and shoot. Frame rate is especially important in games like *Planetside*, where 300-person battles aren't uncommon. For multiplayer games, we generally turn down the detail (and the fancy features like antialiasing and anisotropic filtering) all the way, but run at the highest resolution we can while maintaining 60fps.

Most of the games we test today are limited by the available memory bandwidth of the videocard more than anything else. As we see more games that utilize programmable shader technology, we expect that memory bandwidth will become less an issue, and that shader capabilities will become the limiting factor. From early benchmarks, it looks like *Half-Life 2* will be limited by shader performance more than memory bandwidth. If this ends up being the case, you should be able to enable bandwidth intensive features like AA and aniso without any impact on your frame rate at all.



Many newer games let end users set antialiasing and anisotropic filtering in-game instead of forcing on settings in the driver's control panel.



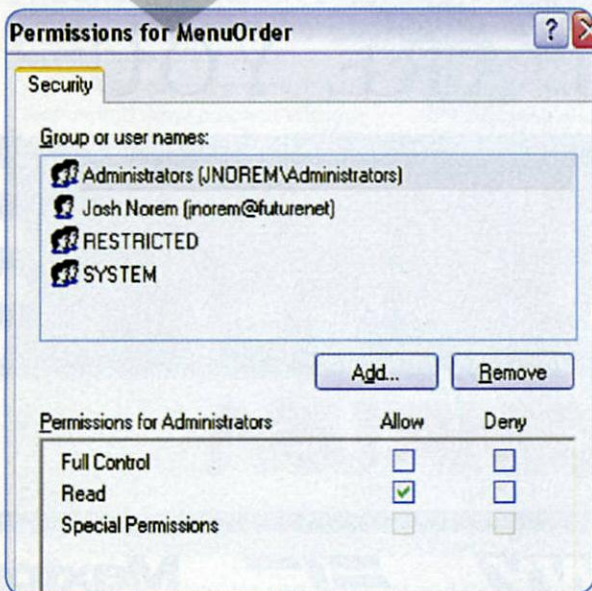
## Customize Your Interface

Turn Windows XP into a more efficient, effective, and attractive OS with these simple, painless steps

### FORCE ALPHABETIC SORTING OF THE PROGRAM MENU

Clicking "Sort by Name" in the All Programs menu makes finding your applications a lot easier, but Windows XP needs constant reminders to sort applications this way. This tweak will permanently sort all your programs alphabetically.

- ▶ Open the Registry and go to HKEY\_Current User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Menu Order.
- ▶ On the Edit menu, select Permissions.
- ▶ In the "Permissions for MenuOrder" dialog box, click Advanced.
- ▶ In the "Advanced Security Settings for MenuOrder" dialog box, clear the "Inherit From Parent" check box.
- ▶ In the security dialog box that appears, click Copy.
- ▶ Click OK to return to the "Permissions for MenuOrder" dialog box, and then clear the "Full Control Access" entry for your own account and for any security groups that you're a member of, leaving the "Read Access Control" entry in place.

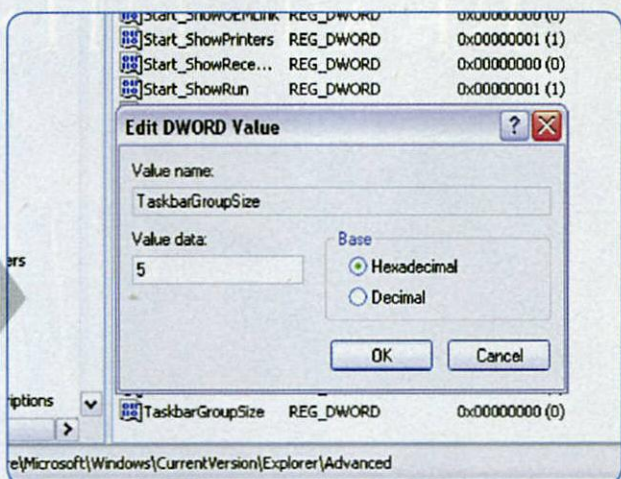


Tired of constantly telling Windows to sort your programs by name? It's time to make the changes stick.

### GROUP YOUR TASKBAR MORE EFFECTIVELY

Windows XP automatically groups applications together when the taskbar fills up, but you can make it group items whenever you'd like.

- ▶ Open the Start Menu, select Run and type Regedit.
- ▶ Go to HKEY\_Current User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced.
- ▶ Click Edit, select New, and then DWORD value.
- ▶ Name this new value: TaskbarGroupSize
- ▶ Once named, right-click it and select Modify.
- ▶ Type in the number of windows that appear before Windows starts grouping them. We like the number five, but use a smaller number if you want an uncluttered taskbar, or a higher number if you like to see each open window.



If you want to avoid Taskbar clutter, pick a low number for this setting to keep multiple windows of the same app grouped together.

shortcut an empty field for a name. Click OK.

- ▶ Right-click the new shortcut and remove the target. Next, click Change Icon and select a blank icon. Now simply drag it onto the start button, and then drag it to the desired location.

### GET RID OF YOUR EBOOKS ONCE AND FOR ALL

It happens to us all: You deleted your My eBooks, My Videos, and My Music only to open up the same folder a few minutes later and find they had in fact not been deleted after all. It's time to get rid of them for good!

- ▶ Go to Start, then Run.
- ▶ Type Regsvr32 /u mydocs.dll and hit Enter.
- ▶ Go into My Documents and delete any of those "My" folders you want—they're not coming back!

### ADD YOUR OWN USER ACCOUNT PICTURES

XP's default account icons are kind of lame. Here's how to add your own images.

### MAKE YOUR START MENU EASIER TO NAVIGATE

Is Start menu clutter chapping your hide? Put a little breathing room between all those apps with this handy hack.

- ▶ Right-click your desktop and make a new shortcut.
- ▶ Select any target for this shortcut (it really doesn't matter which).
- ▶ To give the shortcut a name, erase any text in the Name field and hold down the ALT key while punching 0160 on the number pad, which will give the

- ▶ Resize your .bmp images to 48x48 pixels
- ▶ Copy your images to C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Application Data\Microsoft\User\Account Pictures\Default Pictures. (Application Data is a hidden folder). You can also delete any pictures you don't want.
- ▶ Click the Start button, then click over the account image. This will take you to a new window that tells you to choose another pic for your account.

Find your picture, select it, click Change Picture, and you're done.

### HIDE THE RECYCLE BIN FROM YOUR DESKTOP

Can the trash can via the Registry. Open Regedit and explore HKEY\_Current\_User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\HideDesktopIcons\NewStartPanel. Make a new DWORD value with the name {645FF040-5081-101B-9F08-00AA002F954E}. Set the Modify value to "1".

To restore the Recycle Bin, Modify the same DWORD value to "0".

An even easier way to remove the Recycle Bin is to download *TweakUI*, one of Microsoft's *Windows XP PowerToys*. Once installed, go to the Desktop section, and uncheck Recycle Bin.

### CHANGE THE LOGON BACKGROUND COLOR

Open Regedit and navigate to the following Registry key: HKEY\_Users\Default\Control Panel\Colors. On the right-side details panel, double-click Background String Value. Change this number to a three-digit RGB value, then click OK.

### HIDE SYSTEM TRAY ICONS

Want to make it look like you have no apps running in the background? Or maybe you just need to hide one or two more, um, private apps down in the Systray? Enter Regedit and navigate to HKEY\_Current\_User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Explorer. Add a REG\_DWORD entry titled

"NoTrayItemsDisplay." Open it and assign a hex value of "1" to hide the icons. Close Regedit, reboot the system, and the icons should be gone. If you need to call them up, just bring up the Windows Task Manager.

### REMOVE IMAGE PREVIEW

Open Regedit and delete the following key: HKEY\_Classes\_Root\SystemFileAssociations\Image\ShellEx\ContextMenuHandlers\ShellImagePreview.

### LEARN WINDOWS KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Here's a brief list of some of our favorite time-saving keystrokes:

**Alt + Shift + Tab:** Goes through your apps in reverse order.

**ALT + d:** Moves the cursor in IE to the address bar.

**Shift + insert a CD:** temporarily disables Autoplay.

**Windows key + Pause/Break:** Opens System Properties.

**Windows key + f:** Opens the Search Window.

**Windows key + e:** Opens Windows Explorer.

**Windows key + d:** Minimizes all windows



We love pinning apps to the Start menu, but when the list gets too long, it's time to add one of these separators to make navigation easier.

### ASSIGN KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS TO YOUR FAVORITE APPLICATIONS

Quickly and easily access your favorite applications and files by right-clicking an icon on the desktop or in an open window. Click Properties, then go down to the Shortcut Key field and enter the desired keystrokes.

## Ask the Doctor



### I HAVE DUAL DISPLAYS. HOW CAN I SET UP WINDOWS TO USE A DIFFERENT DESKTOP IMAGE ON EACH MONITOR?

Try this little hack, which allows you to use different desktop wallpaper for each of your displays. As always, be sure to use a high-res image to reduce dithering.

- ▶ Right click your desktop, then select Properties.
- ▶ Under the Desktop section, select Customize Desktop, then select the Web tab.
- ▶ To use an image file located on your hard drive select New and browse to

the file's location. Once you've selected the file you want, click OK and it will appear on your desktop.

- ▶ Now, simply drag the image over to the second desktop and from the image's pull-down menu in the upper left-hand corner select Cover Desktop.
- ▶ Right-click and select Arrange By and "Lock web items on desktop." Now you can select a standard desktop for your primary display and use the web object to cover the standard desktop image on your second desktop with the image of your choice.



Woohoo! I got a big one! Although a JPEG isn't a "web object," it still works as desktop wallpaper.





## Optimize Your Day-to-Day Usage of Windows XP

Improve OS clutter, enhance your overall Windows experience, and automate certain tasks with this collection of handy, obscure, and extremely powerful tricks, hacks, tweaks, and downloads

### MONITOR YOUR CPU USAGE AT ALL TIMES

Ever wonder what your CPU is up to? Keep an eye on it by sticking the CPU monitor from the Task Manager in your System Tray.

- ▶ Go to C:\Windows\System32 and find Taskmgr.exe. Right-click it and select "Send to Desktop." Go to that new shortcut and right-click it, then select Properties.
- ▶ Under the Run command select "Minimized" and click OK.
- ▶ Rename the shortcut "CPU Meter" or something similar, and cut it from your desktop using CTRL + X.
- ▶ Right-click the Start menu, select "Explore All Users," then click on the Programs folder, and the Startup folder. Paste the CPU Meter into the Startup folder.
- ▶ You should see it pop up in your System Tray. If not, open the Task Manager and under Options make sure "Minimize on Use" and "Hide when Minimized" are selected.



**"I'm giving her all she's got, captain!"**  
Keep tabs on your CPU by sticking this handy little CPU monitor in your System Tray.

disks or set it to run automatically via Control Panel>ScheduledTasks>Add New Task.

### SHUT DOWN YOUR PC FASTER

If you're sick of performing multiple clicks to shut down your PC, listen up.

- ▶ Right-click your desktop and create a new shortcut.

- ▶ In the location line, type: `shutdown -s -t 0`
- ▶ Name it and click OK. You might want to give it a different icon, such as the red shut-down icon.
- ▶ Drag this icon onto your quick launch taskbar or leave it on the desktop. Either way, clicking it once will now completely shut down your PC.

To make a similar restart shortcut, the location line needs to read: `shutdown -r -t 0`. (That's a zero at the end, not an "oh.")

### ENDLESS SUPPLY OF NEW FOLDERS

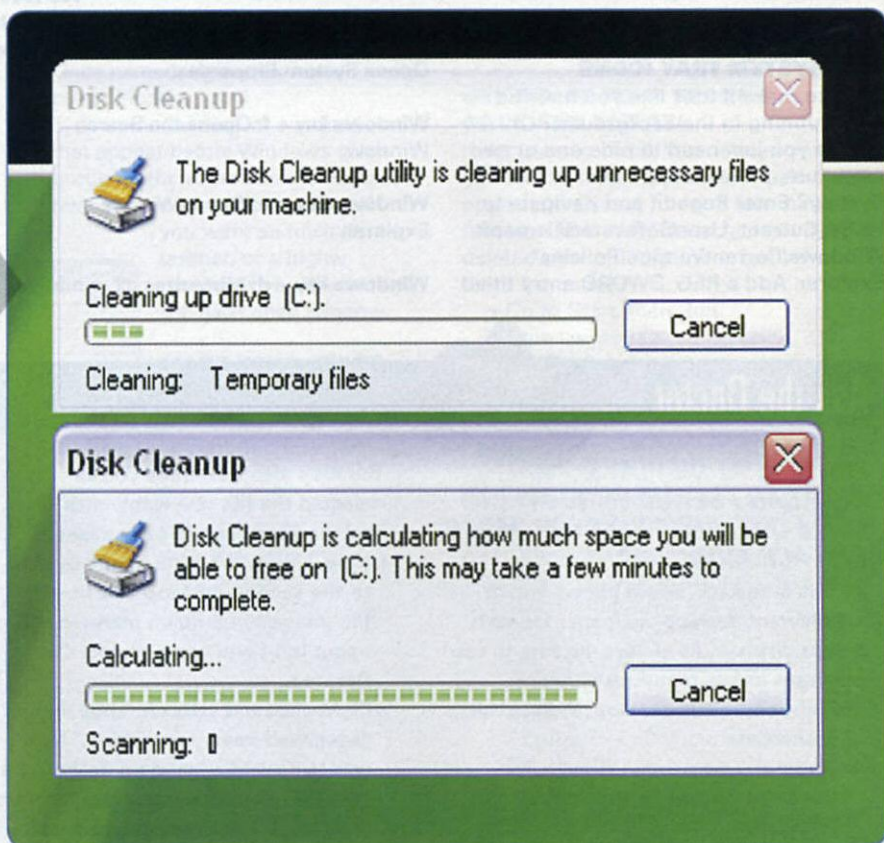
This is an easy way to create new folders. Rather than using the File menu or right-clicking and selecting New and then Folder, you can just use the Quick Launch toolbar instead.

### AUTOMATE HARD DRIVE CLEANING

Want your hard drive to be fresh and ready to roll whenever you sit down to compute? So do we. This little tweak automates the hard drive "cleaning" process and keeps your drive bright-eyed and bushy-sectored.

- ▶ Right-click your desktop and create a new text file. In this file type:
 

```
C:\windows\system32\
cleanmgr.exe /dc /sageset: 1
C:
cd\
cd c:\windows\prefetch
del *.* /q
```
- ▶ Save the file, but change the extension to .bat. Name it whatever you like.
- ▶ Now run the file you just renamed. This opens the *Disk Cleaner* program. Select the items you'd like it to clean for you when it runs unattended, and click OK.
- ▶ Right-click the file you created and select Edit. Change the first line to read: `C:\windows\system32\cleanmgr.exe /dc /sagerun: 1`
- ▶ Save the file. Now you can execute it to automatically clean up your



Set Windows to automatically clean your hard drive by creating a simple .bat file that you can schedule via Control Panel>Schedule Tasks>Add New Tasks.



Boom. One click and your PC turns itself off. Handy, huh?



Drag this little folder out of your Quick Launch toolbar to create a New Folder anywhere, anytime you choose.

- ▶ Surf over to C:\Documents and Settings\Username\Application Data\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Quick Launch.

- ▶ Open the Quick Launch folder and create a new folder within this folder. Leave its name as New Folder. You'll see that a New Folder has appeared in your Quick Launch toolbar. To create a new folder anywhere on your PC, simply hold down the CTRL key and drag the new folder to its location.

### CHOOSE YOUR SEARCH COMPANION

We really hate the XP search companion, so here's a way to toggle back and forth between the OG style and the new doggy style.

- ▶ Go into the Registry and click to HKEY\_Current\_User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explore\CabinetState.
- ▶ Open the CabinetState key, right-click inside the right-side pane and select New and then String Value.
- ▶ Name this new value Use Search Asst, and then press Enter.
- ▶ Right-click this new value and type "No" in the value data field, then close the dialog box. Now, right-click the CabinetState key and select Export.
- ▶ Name the file you are exporting "Disable Search Companion," and make sure the Selected Branch Option button is selected. Close the Registry editor.
- ▶ Open the Disable Search Companion

Registry entry in *Notepad* and find the line "Use Search Asst = no". Change that value to "yes," all in lowercase. Save this entry as "Enable Search Asst."

Now, whenever you click on each of these respective Registry keys they take effect immediately—no reboot required.

### CUSTOMIZE WINDOWS' PRESET FOLDER DISPLAY

Whenever you open a file on your PC, Microsoft lovingly presents you with preset folder options on the left-side of the dialog box. Thanks, Redmond, but we don't open items from our History or Favorites very often. Here's how to put what you want in that list.

- ▶ Go into the Registry and cruise to HKEY\_Current\_User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\comdlg32.
- ▶ Create a new key called Placesbar. Inside this key create a string named Place0 and point it to the folder you want to appear on the Open dialog box, such as C:\CurrentWork for example.
- ▶ Create another string called Places1 and point it to another location on your drive.

An easier way to tackle this tweak is to download *TweakUI* (see accompanying sidebar), which will allow you to similarly customize your menus. Just open Common Dialogs, Places Bar, then select or type the locations of your preferred folders.

### What do you want to search for?

- ▶ Pictures, music, or video
- ▶ Documents (word processing, spreadsheet, etc.)
- ▶ All files and folders
- ▶ Computers or people
- ▶ Information in Help and Support Center

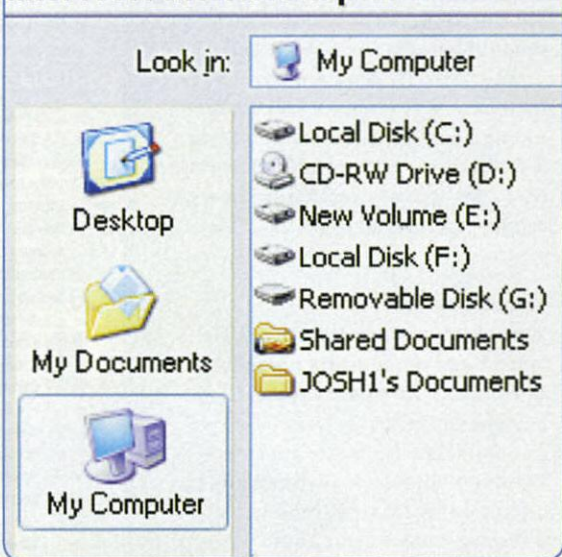
You may also want to...

- ▶ Search the Internet
- ▶ Change preferences
- ▶ Turn off animated character



Don't tell PETA, but we banished the puppy from our search window forever! Luckily, we can coax him into returning with just a few clicks of the mouse.

### Microsoft Internet Explorer



Customizing your "My Places" will allow you to save time opening and saving your files.



## Three Utilities That Make XP Tweaking Easy

Foraging around in the Windows Registry is sort of like defusing a bomb—one wrong move and it's lights out for your OS and your PC. It's also time-consuming to edit keys individually, which is why several utilities exist that allow easy and relatively safe access to myriad Registry hacks.

### TweakUI

The most popular of these utilities is easily Microsoft's very own *TweakUI*. It's a part of Microsoft's *XP PowerToys*, a set of free enhancements for XP that are designed—but not officially supported—by Microsoft. This app is divided into nine major groupings, and offers tweaks for everything from *Internet Explorer* to Windows menus, dialog boxes, mouse movements, and so forth. Although Microsoft doesn't allow this utility to be distributed via our cover-mount disk, we've placed a link to *PowerToys* in the disc's Extra section. Or just go to [www.microsoft.com/power toys](http://www.microsoft.com/power toys).

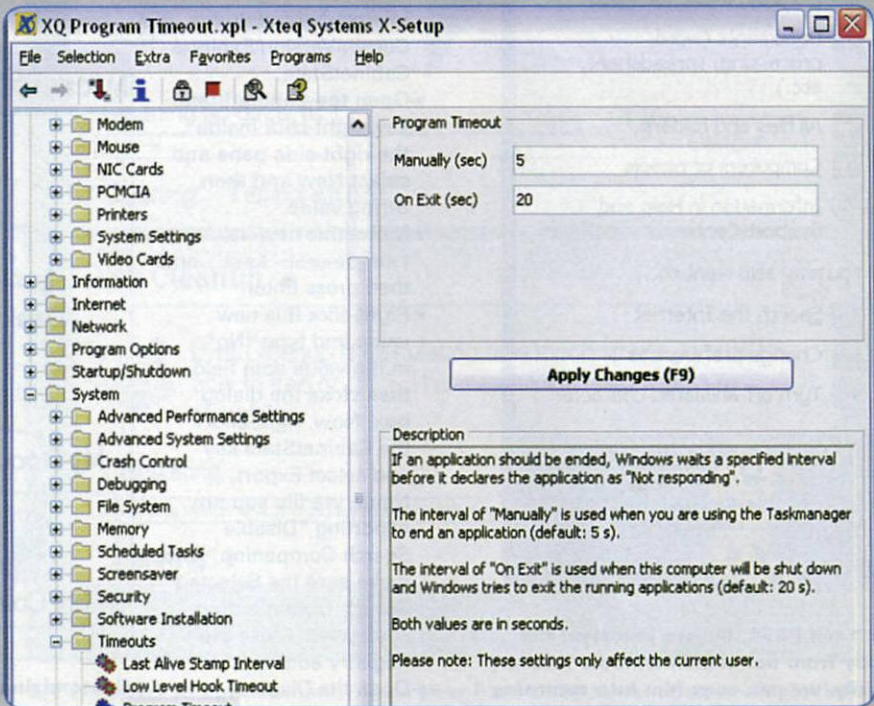
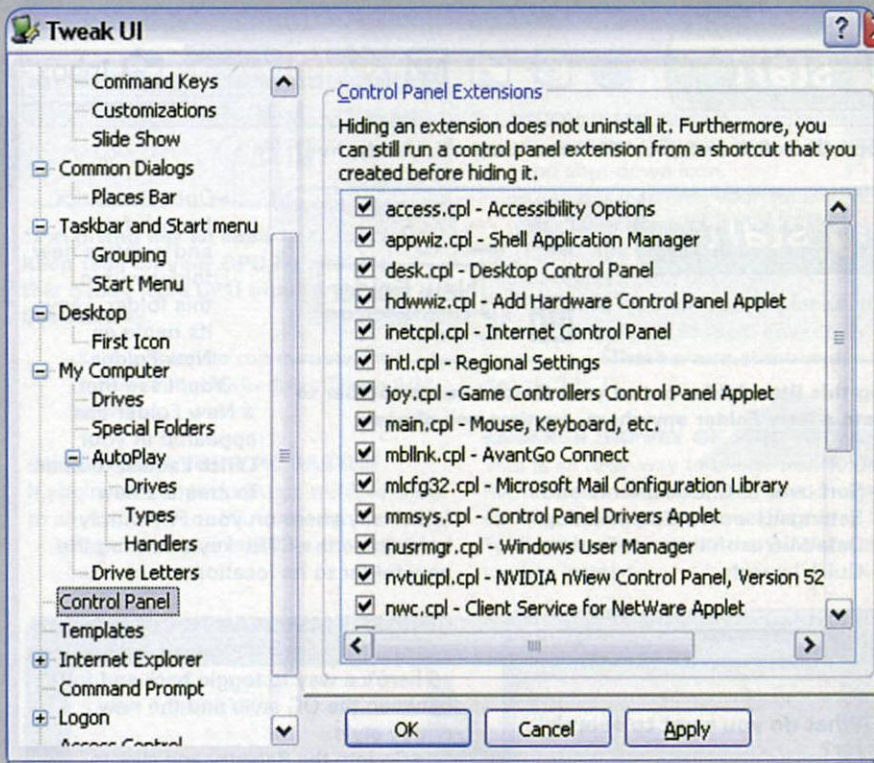
### X-Setup

Another useful tweaking app is *X-Setup* ([www.xteq.com](http://www.xteq.com)) from Xteq Systems. This powerful utility goes above and beyond the settings available in *TweakUI* by delivering a dizzying array of tweaks most people don't even know are possible. It includes mundane tweaks such as disabling your keyboard's Windows keys to advanced tactics like clearing out the XP Prefetch folder to setting timeout lengths for locked programs.

Xteq calls its program the "ultimate tool for black belt system tuning," and it's not whistling Dixie. *X-Setup* is on this month's Maximum CD in the Utilities section, so be sure to give it a whirl.

### TweakXP.com

*TweakXP* ([www.tweakxp.com](http://www.tweakxp.com)) is the largest and most useful repository of Windows XP tweaks we've found anywhere. The site is literally a clearinghouse for every possible Windows XP tweak available and is organized by tip type, function, and difficulty. Bookmark it now!





## Optimize Windows Audio

Tune and perfect Windows XP's audio settings

### SET YOUR SOUND CARD FOR THE TYPE OF OUTPUT YOU'RE USING

If you're like us, you use speakers in the day and switch to headphones when your wife, husband, or roommates go to bed. However, switching to headphones from speakers isn't just a simple matter of jacking in. Modern advanced audio hardware uses complex algorithms to render audio. These algorithms are so precise that playing with headphones when the soundcard is still set to render for desktop speakers will make everything sound a little off and/or distorted.

To optimize your audio for your output device, steer to your soundcard's speaker configuration applet and look for a setting that lets you change it to 7.1, 6.1, 5.1, 2.1, or headphones. In some cases you may have to reboot. If your card doesn't have an applet control for speaker configuration, use the one built into Windows XP. Go to Control Panel>Sounds and Audio Devices, and under Speaker Settings select Advanced. Then pick your poison. In cards like the Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS or onboard audio devices like Analog Devices' SoundMax, setting the application applet will override the Windows XP setting. Keep in mind that some soundcard drivers may need you



**Not setting the applet for the correct output device will cause audio artifacts or incorrect audio rendering.**

to set both the Windows XP control panel and the soundcard applet for the setting to work properly.

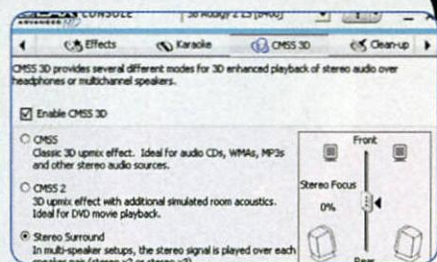
### ENABLE STEREO EXPANSION MODES

If you have a set of 7.1 or 5.1 surround speakers hooked up to your PC and you play mostly MP3 or CD audio, you may have noticed that audio only

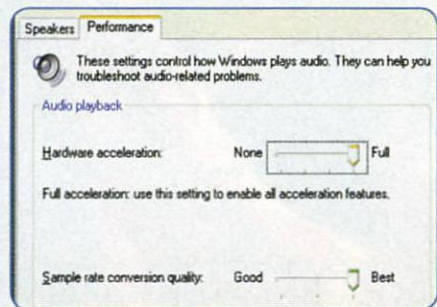
comes out through the front pair of stereo speakers. That's because, unlike video games or DVD movies, the source audio on most MP3s and CD audio is stereo only. Fortunately, most advanced audio hardware today features expansion modes that can filter the audio. In these filtered modes, music and vocals can be shunted to the front speakers while instruments get sent to the rear. Other modes duplicate the front stereo to the rear for a fuller sound. To enable this, poke around in your audio applet and look for an expansion check box. In the popular Creative Labs series of Live!, Audigy, and Audigy 2 cards it's called CMSS or CMSS2. Enabling audio expansion or just turning on Stereo Surround should give those other slacker satellites some work.

### DIRECTSOUND GOOD, WAVE-OUT BAD

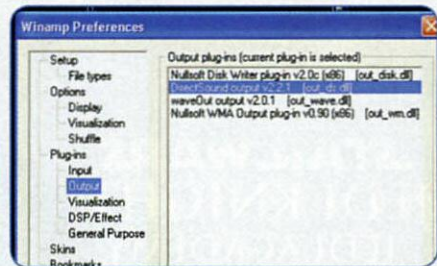
Applications such as the popular *WinAmp* and many soft DVD players default to the wave-out for audio. Unfortunately, using



**Setting the Creative Labs' control panel to Stereo Surround or CMSS lets the soundcard up-mix stereo source material to your surround sound speakers.**



**If hardware acceleration is turned down even a notch, most sound systems will turn off all acceleration.**



**Setting your audio applications to use DirectSound over wave-out will let the hardware acceleration of your soundcard or motherboard do the heavy lifting.**

wave-out does all the mixing in software, thus stealing precious CPU cycles. That may not matter if you're pushing a 3.2GHz P4 or Athlon 64 FX hog, but if you paid extra for an Audigy 2 ZS or nForce2 motherboard with advanced audio, what's the point of rendering it on the CPU? To set your PC to use DirectSound over wave-out, go into the configuration or setup section of your application (in *WinAmp*, hit Ctrl-P and select Plug-ins, Output). Set it to DirectSound for hardware acceleration goodness. In *InterVideo WinDVD 5*, it's under Audio/Advance Audio. Then simply set it to DirectSound.

## Ask the Doctor



**I LOWERED THE HARDWARE ACCELERATION FOR MY SOUND CARD BY A LITTLE BIT, AND NOW MY PC IS CRAWLING. WHAT GIVES?**

Sound vendors tell us that a big complaint from consumers is the performance decrease that results from turning hardware acceleration off. Duh. What we didn't know, however, is that

lowering hardware acceleration even a notch usually disables all hardware audio acceleration. To make sure yours is set correctly, go into Control Panel>Sounds and Audio Devices Properties. Under Speaker Settings, click Advanced and then click the Performance tab. Make sure Hardware Acceleration is all the way to the right. Yes, the other right.

# Accelerate Your Apps!

When it comes to our applications, optimization is next to godliness. Here are our favorite tips for speeding up Microsoft *Outlook*, Microsoft *Word*, and *Windows Media Player*!

## E-MAIL WITHOUT STARTING OUTLOOK

Sometimes you just want to dash off a quick e-mail without having to launch a big-ass app like Microsoft *Outlook*. Well, now you can.

▶ Right-click the desktop and select New, and then Shortcut from the pop-up menu.

▶ A wizard launches; type `mailto:` in the location box (don't forget the colon at the end).

▶ Name your shortcut something illuminating like "New Email."

From now on, whenever you want to dash off an e-mail when *Outlook* isn't open, just double-click this shortcut, state your business, and click Send. This trick will actually work for other e-mail clients as well, as long as the application is the default MAPI e-mail client.

## CUSTOMIZE YOUR MS WORD FILE CABINET

This one is so convenient and fun, we occasionally wonder if it's illegal. You can establish a list of your own frequently used documents directly in Microsoft *Word*'s menu bar. Add templated letters with boilerplate text ("Dear John..."). Create a separate menu for all the documents you're plagiarizing for your term paper.

Go crazy—here's how.

▶ Fire up *Word*.

▶ Go to Tools > Customize.

▶ In the Categories pane (left side), scroll down to Built-In Menus and click it to highlight the selection.

▶ In the Commands pane (right side), scroll down to Work. Click it, drag it to the menu bar, and release the mouse button.

▶ Don't close the Customize window yet! Click your new Work folder to highlight it if it isn't

already highlighted, and in the Customize window, click Modify Selection. A drop-down list will appear, allowing you to change the name of the folder. You can also add an ampersand (&) before a character to create a hotkey so you can access the menu with the Alt-key combo (for example, St&uff will let you access the menu by pressing Alt+u).

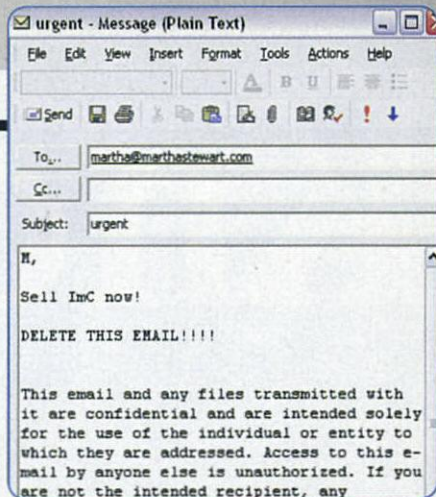
▶ Now click on Close in the Customize window.

To add documents, just open them, click the new menu item, and select Add to Work Menu. Life is good. To remove them—this is a little weird—press Ctrl-Alt-(hyphen). Your I-beam cursor will turn into a thick horizontal bar. Using this cursor, select your menu item, position the cursor over the document you want to delete, and press the trigger. Sayonara!

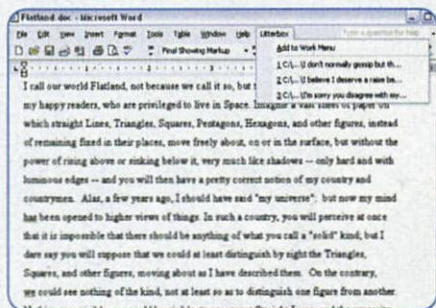
## TWEAK WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER 9

You've had your fun with *TweakUI*, the unsupported set of customization tools released by Microsoft for its operating systems. Now you can experience the rush all over again with *TweakMP*, a bundle of utilities designed to configure Windows Media Player to your taste. Go to [www.wmplugins.com](http://www.wmplugins.com), select Plug-Ins & Skins from the menu bar at the top, select Toys and Utils from the drop-down menu, and then scroll down the list to "TweakMP PowerToy for Windows XP" One of the first things to do is shorten the time it takes the mouse pointer and menu to disappear when you go full screen (as shown in the screenshot).

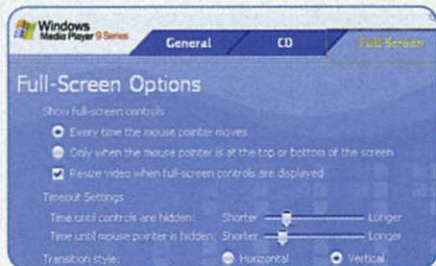
While you're at it, you can download the *Windows Media Bonus Pack* at the same location. Among other things, you'll get a badass plug-in that allows you to export playlists to Microsoft



You can write and send a quick e-mail using *Outlook* without having to launch the whole application.



Put your most often used documents right where you need them—on *Word*'s menu bar.



Microsoft puts you behind the controls of *Windows Media Player 9* with *TweakMP*.

*Excel* for perusal or printing. You can, for example, simply cut the playlist from *Excel* and paste it into an illustration program for creating a CD or DVD sleeve. Get the picture? ■

WIN!

Submit the best tip, win an Audigy 2 ZS or a Radeon 9600 XT!



ATI Radeon 9600 XT

## SUBMIT THE BEST TIP, WIN AN AUDIGY 2 ZS OR A RADEON 9600 XT!

Readers, it's time for you to step up. Submit your finest Windows XP tip to us at [input@maximumpc.com](mailto:input@maximumpc.com). We'll judge the entrants and award a Creative Labs' Audigy 2 ZS to the reader who gives us the best tip and an ATI Radeon 9600 XT to second place!

Submit your tips to: [input@maximumpc.com](mailto:input@maximumpc.com) with the subject heading: Windows XP Tip Contest. See page 8 for contest rules and restrictions.



Creative Labs Audigy 2 ZS