

## Organizing your PC Desktop - Part II

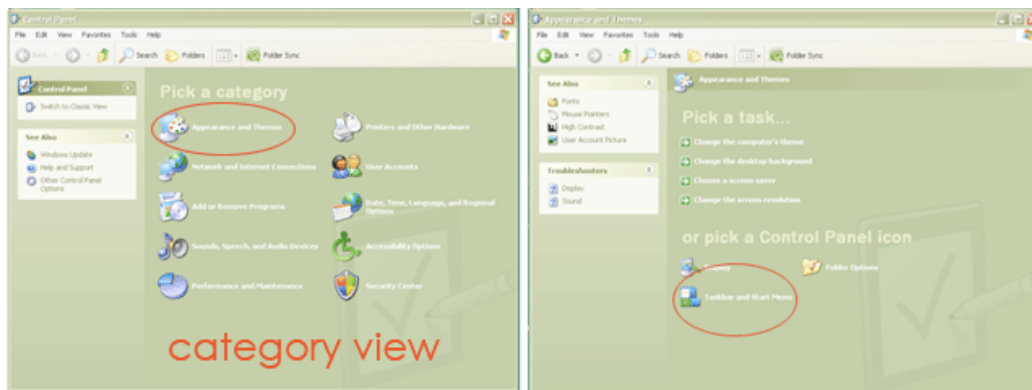
(( This week's Tech Tip is for PC Users only. ))

Last week we talked about organizing your desktop using shortcuts to files and folders. This week, we'll take it a step further and I'll show you how to keep your favorite program shortcuts close by but *off* your desktop!

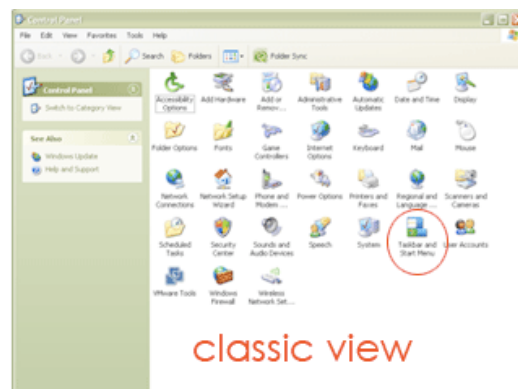
*My screenshots are going to be from Windows XP, since that's what I have, but Windows Vista isn't very different so those of you using Vista should be able to follow along with no problem.*

Let's start with the Start button located in the bottom-left of your screen. When you click this button, you get a pop-up menu with a variety of information. Did you know that you can customize this menu? I find that the default setting is very unappealing to my eye so I always make changes here before doing anything else.

To get started, click 'Control Panel' which should appear in the right-column of this pop-up menu. If your Control Panel is set to display 'Category View,' you'll need to select 'Appearance and Themes,' then 'Taskbar and Start Menu' in that order.



If your Control Panel is set to display 'Classic View,' you'll need to simply select 'Taskbar and Start Menu.'



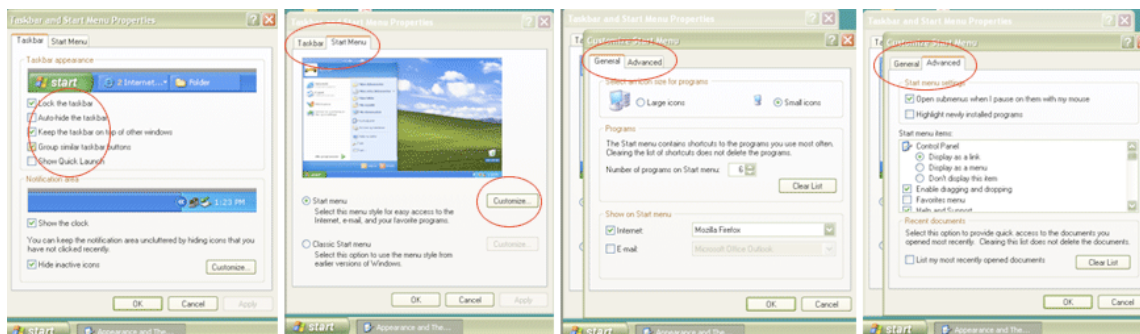
Before moving on, take a look at the options here and customize to your preference. I, personally, prefer displaying the clock and locking the taskbar so that it's always visible. These features are super easy to change so don't be afraid to test them out to find out what works for you.

Once you're satisfied here, click the tab at the top of the panel that reads 'Start Menu.' Making sure that the 'Start Menu' item is selected on this new panel, click the 'Customize' button to open yet another panel. This third panel will open to the 'General' tab where you can choose to make your icons smaller. I prefer this setting because it makes for a cleaner look but you may find it too small for your preference. Again, test it out and don't be afraid to come back and change it again!

The next box gives you the option to choose how many programs you can list on your Start Menu. Remember this location so that you can customize it later once you've decided how many you want there. (We'll talk more about this shortly.)

The next box is a gem! There are two buttons in your Start Menu, by default, that automatically link to the Internet and Email. This is where you can customize which programs these buttons connect to. In most cases, the Internet button will link to Internet Explorer and the Email button will link to either Outlook Express or Outlook. If you don't use an Email Client, like Outlook, deselect this item and it will no longer appear in your Start Menu. If you use an Email Client, but not Outlook, select your preference from the drop-down menu to change the button's link.

Moving on, at the top of this panel, select 'Advanced' for more customization options. Explore this panel as there are quite a few options to consider. The middle section labeled 'Start menu items' will offer you lots of options for what you'd like to see in the right column of your Start Menu like My Documents, My Music, and My Pictures. If you don't use these standard Microsoft folders, deselect them to clean up your Start Menu. If there's something here that makes no sense to you, deselect it as you're unlikely to use it if you don't know what it is! Again, we're trying to organize your desktop and removing unused items is part of that process.

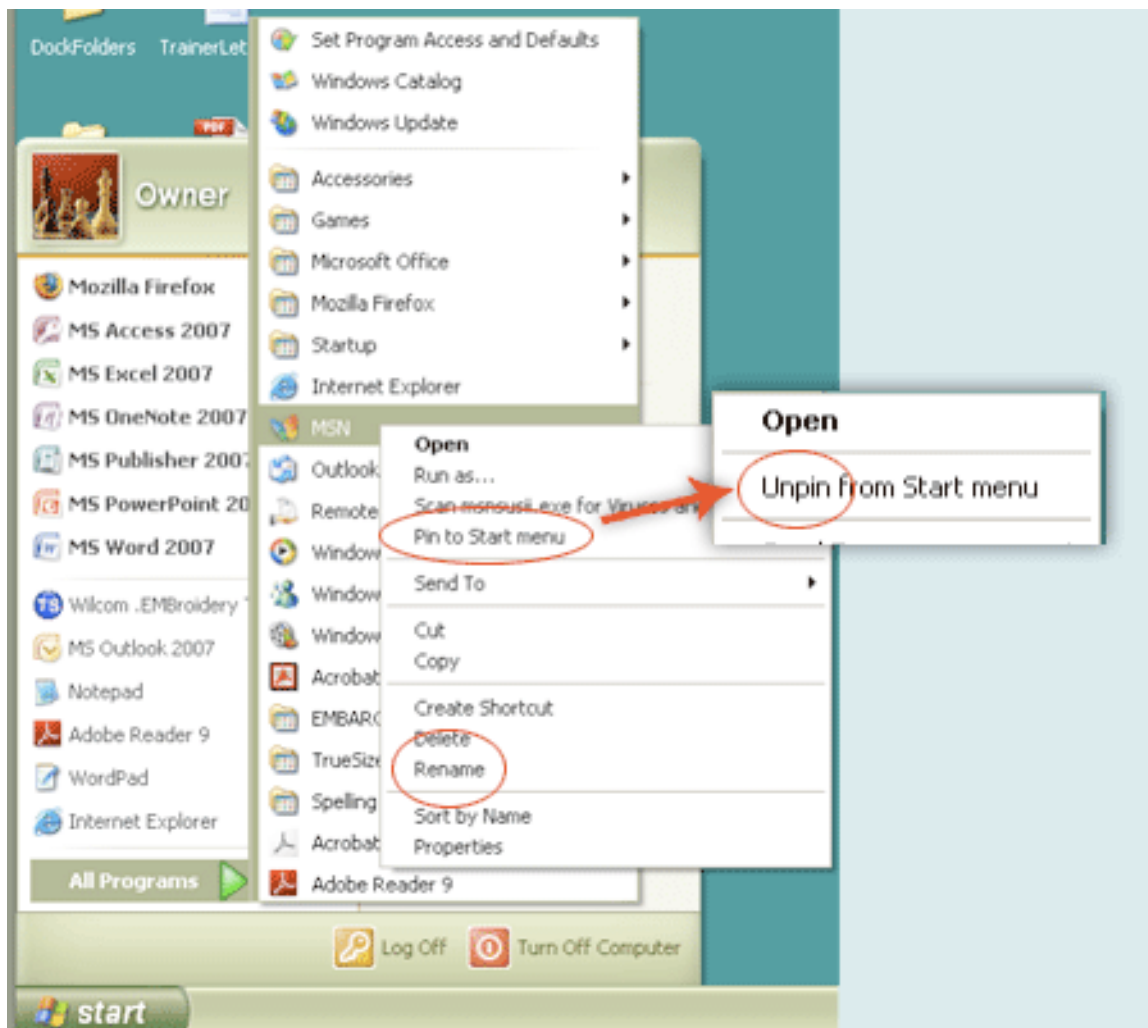


When you're comfortable with all of your selections, click 'OK' and close these panels.

Back to the Start Menu, you may have noticed that it displays buttons for your most recently used programs, but that's only part of what's available here. The left column of the Start Menu displays program buttons separated by a horizontal line. Above this line is where you'll see the Internet and Email buttons we mentioned earlier. Below this line is the list of recently opened programs. Now that we've cleaned up the Start Menu, we can add items to it! Take a few moments to consider your workflow and which programs you want to have ready-access to at any time. We're going to add a button for each of these programs to the Start Menu but these buttons won't go away.

From the 'All Programs' menu, move your mouse cursor to the program you'd like to add to the Start Menu but don't click it! We don't want to open the program; we want to Right-Click it to display a pop-up menu. Scroll down until you see 'Pin to Start menu' and select it. This will add the program button to the Start Menu above the line, which means that it won't go away! Repeat this process for each program you want to add to your Start Menu.

*Removing program buttons is similar in that you Right-Click the button's name and select 'Unpin from Start menu.'*



When I first added my MS Office Suite programs to my Start Menu, each of the programs started with 'Microsoft,' which made the full text larger than the display area. Since several of my programs started this way, it was hard to quickly tell which button pointed to which program. An easy fix is to rename your button by Right-Clicking the program name and selecting 'Rename' from the pop-up menu. In this case, I simply replaced the full word with its abbreviation.

Earlier, when I suggested that you remember 'this' location so that you can change how many programs appear in your Start Menu, this is where you may find that the default number isn't enough to accommodate your needs. Simply return to that panel and choose a new number up to thirty.

So, how does your desktop look now? We have one more installment to this series. Next week, I'll show you another cool shortcut that's one of my favorites. Don't miss it!

For questions or comments, feel free to email Tracy.