

CompuQuickTips



The For the Rest of Us
O'Neal
Solution

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In This Issue...

XP... At First Glance	1
Customizing Pointers	3
Tiny Treasures	4
Gems	4
Mrs. Wizard Quick Tips	5

XP... At First Glance

Some gals get diamonds or flowers for Christmas... Mrs. Wizard got XP Professional with a sweet reaffirmation of Mr. Wizard's long standing affection. Now THAT man REALLY knows how to make a woman HAPPY!

“Wow! It sure beats Windows ME!”

That was Mrs. Wizard's reaction after a nearly seamless upgrade/install on her newest laptop, Dixie. This is not to say there weren't a few hair raising moments, but even those were pleasant surprises in the long run. It also doesn't mean she didn't like ME. While it wasn't quite as stable as Win2K, and she was getting quite a few lockups the last week before she did the dastardly deed and installed XP Professional over ME, it was still quite a step up from Windows 98. Windows just keeps getting better and better, and in spite of the security problems associated with XP, it was a pretty good install and she is quite happy with it. Here are a few notes on the initial installation and the first few weeks of her “shakedown” period.

Little Dixie, the laptop with Windows ME installed from the factory, had been acting up lately. She was locking up periodically and *rude shutdowns* (where you have no choice but to turn the power off) were becoming a bad habit. This was probably due to some crappy software Mrs. Wizard had installed, but since she had installed quite a few little goodies over the last few weeks, there was no telling what the culprit could have been. It was pretty much looking like time for a reformat and a nice fresh start. All her personal files had already been backed up, so the worst that could happen would be that software would need to be re-installed after reformatting and re-installing Windows ME.

Mrs. Wizard decided to take the *upgrade* route, rather than go for a clean install of Windows XP Professional on little Dixie. There was always the option for a clean install if anything went wrong, and she wanted to see how well XP would install taking the option that most *normal* people would use. If doing a normal upgrade was successful, her software (at least most) would still be intact and not need to be re-installed. AND she would be able to see if an upgrade installation would fix any or all of the lockup and system problems that were occurring with the current Windows ME operating system.

The first part of the installation went pretty much according to plan, but when it started scanning the computer for software and compatibility issues (about 1/3 of the way into the installation), it presented a report with several warnings regarding the version of Norton Utilities that were installed, and the CD RW software. Seems both were totally incompatible with XP and the suggestion was to remove them (uninstall) before continuing with the XP installation. Now THAT was an interesting concept ... uninstalling two software applications DURING an operating system installation? WOW! That's exactly what she did... Left the installation window open, clicked *Start*, then *Settings*, then *Control Panel* and chose *Add/Remove Programs*. She removed Norton AND the Adaptec CD RW software... What the heck! She figured she would need to reformat anyway, and she might as well go for the gusto! Then she went back to the Windows installation and finished it up. It was like putting it on hold, doing something else, then getting back to it. Old Mrs. Wizard just KNEW something was going to gum up the works, but Windows just took off from where it was and the installation finished without a hitch.

After the computer restarted a couple of times (during the installation) and Windows XP

Continued on page 2

XP... At First Glance *Continued from page 1*

Professional seemed to be safely installed, it was time to shake it down a bit. The installation report suggested the newest version of Norton Utilities and AntiVirus software would work with XP. It also suggested going to the Roxio website for the newest CD RW software (this was supposed to be compatible with XP also). She decided to skip Norton, at least for several weeks, so she could shake down and experiment with the utilities that are part of the XP operating system. She couldn't do without virus protection though, so opted to download and install a freeware antivirus application named AVG. That proved to be one of the really nice surprises! AVG also ended up as this month's featured Gem!

The CD RW software didn't really need to be reinstalled or upgraded because XP recognized the combination CD RW/DVD drive just fine. Copying files to a rewritable CD was a little different, but no additional software was required for the basic functions. Of course she had to put a DVD movie in to make sure it still worked. It was great! The newest Windows Media Player (comes with XP) did just fine. No extra software needed to be installed for that either.

NOW ... It has been a few weeks since the upgrade, and so far, everything is working fine. The error messages and lockups (from Windows ME) have totally disappeared. Mrs. Wizard had to create a new toolbar from scratch because the old one didn't make the transfer.

Her original toolbar was there, but all the shortcuts had been deleted. It was "Out with the old and in with the new."

Creating a new one was no problem. She created a new folder in the *My Documents* folder, then left clicked on it and dragged it to the right edge of the main screen. Instant Toolbar! Then she right clicked on it and chose *Auto Hide*, and *View/Small Icons*. Auto Hide made it retractable, so it could be out of the way when not in use. Her most often used shortcuts (straight from the Programs area) are just right clicked on and dragged to the desktop (choose Copy). Then they can be right clicked and dragged to the new toolbar (choose Move). Talk about personalizing! This was pretty much the same procedure with Windows 98-2000.

Things are different looking, that's for sure. The similarity is closer to Windows 2000 than Windows ME. Some of the cosmetic changes are supposed to make things easier (friendlier), but it really wasn't that hard to get around before. Clicking *Start* doesn't automatically bring up the *Programs* menu any more. You have to click the words *All Programs* to see the more traditional programs

list. It seems to try to anticipate programs you use often and conveniently places them (with no action on your part) in the main *Start* area. This is nice.

If you are upgrading ...

1. Make sure your computer has the hardware horsepower and resources to properly support XP. This is not something you would want to consider for that old 486 with Windows 95. Use a little common sense and don't ask that oldie but goodie to do the new tricks that XP will require. If you are comfortably running Windows ME, you should have no problem.

2. Back up your personal files. These cannot be replaced if anything goes wrong.

3. Know where your software installation disks or CDs are. Some software may need to be reinstalled. If you don't have the original disks, you are out of luck. If it is software that was downloaded and/or purchased on the Internet, you can at least re-download if you need to.

4. Make sure you have all your registration ducks in a row. If you need to reinstall something and don't have the needed registration information ... well guess what? It won't work!

5. Realize that upgrading your operating system on an existing computer could be risky. Anything can happen. Expect the best, but be prepared for the worst. The only way to insure a problem free installation is to purchase a new computer with the new operating system already installed. It is sickening, but in most instances, the tech support folks of a year old computer will go out of their way to NOT support you if you install a new version of your operating system. You could be politely (and sometimes not so politely) told that you are pretty much on your own.

Next Month ... Xp's built in firewall and why you need to disable the thing and stick with ZoneAlarm.

**Computers
don't whine
unless
they're broken.**



Customizing Pointers...



directn.cur



gop.cur

Iconstructions
Appstart.ani

4lclover.cur

Computer: (n)
see
**Aggravation
Stimulation
Device.**



mnm.CUR



Changing color schemes and Windows themes can give your computer a whole new look. Windows has Pointer schemes to mix and match, and pick and choose from too. You can go from funky to functional, and everything in between, with just a few clicks of your mouse. As long as you are changing the personality of your computer, you might as well go for the gusto!

There can be practical reasons for changing your mouse pointers and color schemes. There are high contrast color schemes with larger type, cursors and pointers to help visually challenged people see the screen more comfortably. If you have difficulty finding the pointer (it does like to hide sometimes), changing to a more colorful or even a 3D pointer set can make all the difference in the world. An animated pointer is even easier to find. You can't miss it when it is waving at you, and if you can have a little fun while you are at it, who is going to complain?

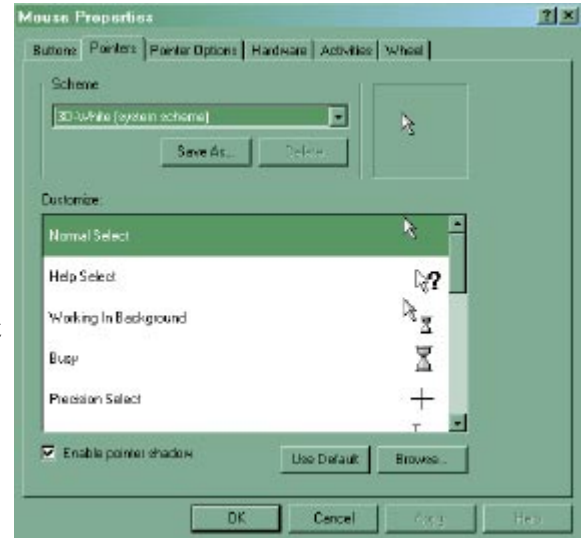
Mouse Properties for Windows 95, 98, ME and 2000 can be found by clicking *Start*, then *Settings*, and *Control Panel*. Then click the *Mouse* icon to open the *Mouse Properties* window. Click once on the *Pointers* tab at the top and you will be where you need to be.

XP users have a straight click to the *Control Panel* by clicking *Start*, then *Control Panel*. Click where it says, "Printers and Other Hardware" to find your mouse area. Click the *Mouse* icon from there. Once you click the *Pointers* tab, you will be where you need to be too. It all looks the same after that.

You will find several different pointer schemes to choose from by clicking the little down arrow to the right of the Scheme box. These are OK, but if you find yourself getting restless and want to mix and match, perhaps just change the pointer, go to the area below and click the pointer you want to change. Click the *Browse* button and find the pointer you want to use. You should be taken to the main cursors directory where you can choose something different. Do this for each pointer you want to change.

If your existing cursors aren't enough and you want to *really* do some coloring "outside the lines," visit some of the web sites I have listed and download additional cursors and pointers. It is amazing what is available with just a few clicks of the mouse! Create a new directory (in your *My Documents* folder) to store your new additions so you will have no trouble finding them when you are ready to use them.

Don't worry about not being happy with any results you



get. You can always return to the *Mouse Properties* area and click the *Use Default* (under the *Pointers* tab) button to put everything back the way it was when your computer was first turned on.

Stay away from web sites that want you to download special software or a plug-in for your browser in order for them to work properly. It will be one more thing in your system tray that can potentially gum up the works. Or you can not listen to me and download the thing anyway and find out for yourself how quickly it can be truly annoying. When it does, go to the *Add/Remove Programs* section of your *Control Panel* and uninstall it.

Here are several web sites with great cursors (animated and otherwise) and pointers that won't slug up your system. Use your imagination and have some fun! If you are connected to the Internet while reading this, just click the links and start browsing immediately.

<http://www.cursors.com/>

<http://www.iconstructions.com/cursors.html>

<http://joescursors.tripod.com/index.html>

<http://www.nemotel.net/~2ezfarm/cursor/index.html>

<http://www.cursorconnection.com/CC/index.html>

<http://debidawn.com/cursors.htm>

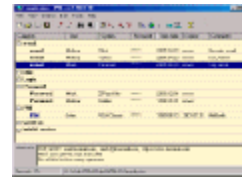
<http://www.coolfunclicks.com/downloads/cursors.htm>

Tiny Treasures ... PINs

From the author ... PINs is a free feature-rich Windows program for safe and comfortable storing of any secure information like passwords, accounts, PINs etc. PINs uses a secure 448 bit Blowfish algorithm to ensure the data are not crackable. The password used for securing access to stored data is not saved anywhere.

PINs does not require installation and does not need any special dlls, drivers or system files which can mess up your system. This means that PINs can run directly from floppy - including data files - without installing anything. This is extremely useful if you wish to easily access your data on other computers as well.

Mrs. Wizard's comments ... This is one SLICK way to protect your sensitive information and have easy access to it at the same time. It has a permanent home here!



Read all about it and download it at:

<http://www.mirekw.com/winfreeware/index.html>

Gems ... AVG Virus Protection

Are you tired of paying for updates for your anti virus software? It's becoming a bit like a subscription isn't it? And (to top it all off) when it's time to upgrade, you have to pay for that too... Interesting huh?

How about a perfectly fine anti virus program, one that can easily compete with the "big boys" when it comes to protecting your computer and email from those nasty cooties? How about if it were FREE? How about if all you need to worry about is keeping it updated often (with a couple of mouse clicks, or set it to automatic and pretty much forget about it)? How about if it doesn't gum up your system like *some* of those fine utility packages do? Heck it even gets along great with Windows XP!

Sound too good to be true? Well it is true!

Old Mrs. Wizard recently installed XP Professional on her newest laptop (little Dixie) and discovered Norton 2002 Professional would need to be removed because of compatibility issues with XP. That's a nice way of saying, "Fork over the bucks and upgrade!"

Well guess what? She didn't feel like dealing with Norton for a while. She wanted to poke around in XP and try out all the new features, unincumbered by all those extra utilities. Norton is great, and old Mr. Wizard was more than willing to spend a few dollars more on his lovely

bride, but she had other things in mind, at least for the time being. She couldn't (and wouldn't) let her computer go unprotected, in any case.

She remembered reading a review of AVG anti virus software on *Lockergnome* a few weeks back and decided to give it a try. She visited the site at <http://www.grisoft.com> chose to download the FREE version. There was a questionnaire form to fill out before being allowed to download the 4.7 Mb installation file, but that was no problem. A serial number was sent via email almost immediately. She installed it without a hitch and within minutes it was fully protecting her system. It even had an option to append a message stating that outgoing and incoming email had been scanned and found safe.

It doesn't just scan file attachments. It scans the entire email. It even caught a virus laden email two days later, discreetly let her know, and disposed of it properly. She didn't have to do a thing.

Bottom line? AVG just found a new home on her computer and old Mrs. Wizard is going to be recommending it to all her clients in the future. It will be a terrific way to demonstrate downloading and give them something useful at the same time!



When the computer asks you are you sure, ponder a moment.



**Computer, this is me!
Whadaya mean
unrecognized
operator?**

**Computer,
you and I
need to have
a little talk.**

Mrs. Wizard QuickTips ...

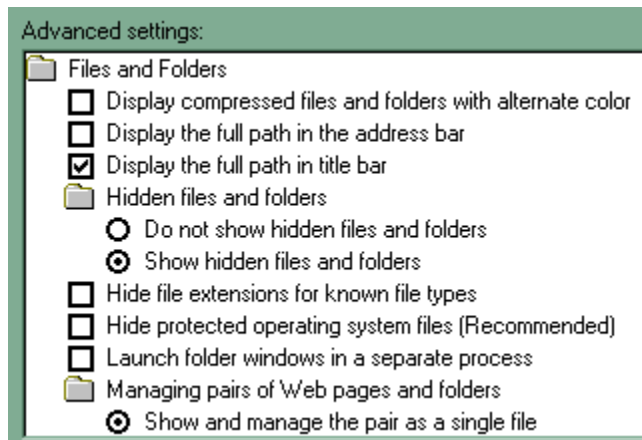


Another reason to have file extension viewing enabled ...

Email virus attachments are usually sent via mass emails using addresses found in the victim's Windows address books and other email addresses found on the system (depending on the virus). The attachments are phony file names that look innocent enough and are usually recognizable by the person receiving the email. The original name of the file is left intact, with an executable extension added to it. For example, .gif, .jpg, and .txt would have .exe (the virus executable) added to the phony file name. If you don't have file extension viewing enabled, you would only see the original extension and might be tricked into believing an executable file is actually a harmless image or text file. And the results of clicking one of these little goodies might not be pretty.

Enable file extension viewing (the adult view) ...

A file extension is nothing more than what comes after the dot at the end of a file name. This is what tells your computer what kind of file it is so it knows what to open when you double click it. Those three little letters to the right of the dot (.) are probably the most important part of a file name. Why Windows installs with these hidden is about the dumbest attempt to idiot proof a computer I have ever seen. If there is any one thing you should educate yourself (on purpose) regarding your computer, it is file extensions and what each program you use produces.



To change your file viewing settings to the adult view, right click on *My Computer* and choose *Explore*. Click the word *Tools*, then *Folder Options*. The next window that appears will have tabs across the top. Click the *View* tab. Make sure there is *not* a check in the box labeled *Hide file extensions for known file types*. Click *OK* to lock in your changes.

Character Map to insert foreign characters ...

When you type words like *resumé* or *voilà*, do you ignore the fact that they have accents because you aren't sure how to add them? Don't think for a moment that no one will notice. Use the Windows Character Map. It is the easy way to find the keyboard combination to add foreign characters to your documents. There are two ways to get to it. Click *Start, Programs, Accessories*, and choose *Character Map*. Or, click *Start*, then *Run*, and type *charmap* in the box that appears and hit the *Enter* key on your keyboard. Once you have it opened, choose the font you are using in your document. All the special characters will appear below the font name. Double click the one you want to use (to add it to the *Characters to copy* box. Then click the *Copy* button. Switch back to your document, place your blinking cursor where you would like the character to appear, and press *CTRL+V* to paste it. It is a little extra work, but worth it if you want a polished look to your documents.

Save a little more time with special characters ...

If you know you are going to be using several special characters in a document, use the *Character Map* to copy and paste the ones you need to a special place in your document. Then you can close your *Character Map* and copy and paste the special characters from the document itself, over and over. When you are finished with the document, delete your little "cheater line" of characters. This way you only need to open the *Character Map* once to get what you might need for your document.

Display Full Path in Title Bar ... When you open any folder window, the name of the current folder appears in the title bar. If you would like a bit more information, make it display the folder's complete path. You can choose the option to *Display the full path in the title bar* while you are setting up your computer for the *adult view*. Having the full path displayed will help you quickly learn where your stuff is. For example:

D:\PMaker\Newsletter\2002\feb02.p65 means that this newsletter file is on my D drive in a folder called PMaker, which has another folder in it named Newsletter, which has another folder in it named 2002. The actual file (feb02.p65) is in the 2002 folder. If you are a detail junkie, you will notice that I always put the complete path to the newsletter files in a small area on this page. I *always* know where my stuff is!

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Editor's Desk

This FREE newsletter is dedicated to taking the mystery out of computers in an entertaining, informative way. If you have any questions or comments, please, drop me a line, give me a call or email me and let me know what you think and would like to see addressed in future issues. I really enjoy hearing from you and am happy to help all I can. You can subscribe to the electronic version of CompuQuickTips by visiting Mrs. Wizard's Web listed below. You will receive a full-color, information-packed subscription delivered straight to your email each month as an Adobe Acrobat PDF file. Download the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader for FREE at <http://www.adobe.com>.

You can help support CompuQuickTips by ordering Mrs. Wizard's CD Essentials when you visit <http://mrswizard.com>. Look in the *Special Offer* section. Due to popular demand, the latest version has *ALL* the past newsletter issues (almost 8 years now), as well as CompuQuickTips (the book). Acrobat Reader (the latest version) is on the CD for you to install with one click of your mouse, as well as lots of Mrs. Wizard's favorite graphic shareware programs. This is a terrific learning tool! Just pop in the CD and have fun!

Sincerely,

Cindy O'Neal



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In March ...

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Internet Tutorials (Surf & Learn)



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