

Introduction to Personal Computing

Academic Computing Services

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Abstract: This document explains the basics of the *Microsoft Windows* operating system. It is intended for users who are either new to personal computing, or are new to the *Windows* environment. Although this document is written specifically for *Windows XP*, there are a lot of commands and features that are the same or slightly different for *Windows 95/98/2000*.

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Introduction

Windows is a computer operating system that provides a graphical interface between you and your computer's hardware and software applications. The graphical interface determines what things look like on screen and in general how you work with your computer.

Objectives

This workshop provides the basics for using the Windows operating system. After today's workshop, participants will be able to:

- Identify desktop objects.
- Select programs with the Start Menu.
- Create shortcuts for programs, files, and folders.
- Identify the parts and types of a window.
- Understand the difference between memory and storage.
- Perform "housekeeping" procedures to find, copy, move, and delete files, folders, and programs.
- Use the Search and Help features.
- Shut down Windows properly.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this class.

Related Training Available from ACS

All ACS workshops are free to KU students, staff, faculty, and [approved affiliates](#). The general public is also welcome to most workshops, but some ACS workshops require a [registration fee](#) for them.

To learn more about or register for workshops, receive automatic announcements of upcoming workshops, and track workshops you've registered for and have attended, visit the ACS Web site at www.ku.edu/acs/train. You can also check our online schedule at www.ku.edu/acs/schedule for a list of class offerings and their availability. For further workshop related questions, please email training@ku.edu.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Windows	<p>An operating system designed by Microsoft with a graphical user interface (GUI).</p> <p>The interface provides a graphical means of working with your computer via a "point and click" interface with the use of a mouse. Previously, all interactions with the computer were accomplished via commands that were typed using the keyboard.</p>

Memory vs. Storage

Term	Definition
Memory	<p>Also known as RAM or Random Access Memory. Your computer uses RAM to temporarily store parts of the operating system, open applications, and any files that you're currently working on. The computer can access data in RAM much faster than data on your hard disk. Having too little RAM can slow down your computer or prevent you from opening applications or completing tasks. Any file that you are working on in RAM is volatile (i.e. it will be lost if your computer loses power). To prevent this from happening, you should move your files into some type of storage. Think of the RAM as your high-tech desktop or workspace.</p>
Storage	<p>Unlike memory, storage is a permanent place for keeping your data (i.e. it will not be lost if your computer loses power). There are several types of storage available to computers including; the computer's hard disk, floppy disks, zip disks, and network drives. To move a file that you are working on from memory into storage, you will need to save it. To save a file you must give the file a name and indicate where you would like to store it. You can identify each drive by its assigned letter. Usually, you can choose C:\ (for the hard disk), A:\ (floppy disk), or U :\ (typically a network drive) depending on what is available to you. Additional drives may be labeled with the letters D:\ (for the CD-Rom drive) or E:\ (Zip drive or CD-Recordable). Anytime you make further changes to a file that has been saved, you need to save it again. You should save files that you are working on frequently so that you do not lose data and time if something should cause you to lose power to your computer. Think of your storage devices as your high-tech file cabinets, where things can be stored and later retrieved.</p>

Many other terms are defined in context throughout the remainder of this document.

An Orientation to the Desktop

Desktop

The desktop is the overall view of your computer and work area; the desktop covers the entire screen and is somewhat analogous to the top of a conventional desk. Items on your desktop can be moved, thrown away, or placed in folders to work with later. The desktop can be arranged to contain the items that you use most frequently. For example, if you work on a weekly report, that document can be accessed easily if you place it directly on your desktop.

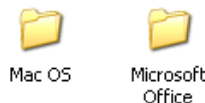
There are many ways that you can organize and personalize your Windows desktop. For instance, you can change the desktop pattern or picture (see Appearance and Themes, page 21) and create shortcuts to files, folders, server volumes, and applications (see Creating Shortcuts, page 9).

Icons

Icons are symbols or pictures that represent items stored on your computer. Examples of items icons represent include folders (directories or groups), documents, programs, and even computer hardware.

Folder icons

Folder icons are used to keep related documents or applications together. Often you have folders within folders.



Two folder icons

Application icons

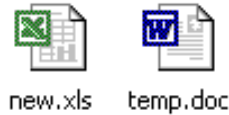
Application (a.k.a. program) icons represent the executable programs (software) available on your computer. For example: *Word*, *PowerPoint*, *Photoshop*, *Excel*, and *Dreamweaver*.



Two application icons

Document icons

Document icons represent the files that you create using software. Generally, document icons resemble the program icon that created the file. For example, a *Word* document has part of the same logo as the *Word* application in which it was created.



Two document icons

Original icons

The icons that typically display when you first access your *Windows* desktop are My Computer, My Network Places, the Recycle Bin, and Internet Explorer.

Taskbar

The Taskbar, located at the bottom of your screen, contains the Start button. When you open a program, document or any other window, a button appears on the Taskbar.

Start button

This button is used to open the start menu, which provides you with access to applications or documents, Help and Support, the Search feature, and the Control Panel settings. Additional information about the Start button is detailed below.

Clock

A clock displays on the right end of your Taskbar. If you simply hold your mouse pointer over the clock, the current date displays.

Start menu

The start menu allows you to access folders, files, or programs quickly through the display of a menu and submenus. It is organized into submenus with recently used programs, commonly accessed folders (such as My Documents, or My Computer) and all available programs (the All Programs menu).

1. To access an item on the start menu, click the Start button located on the Taskbar.
2. Continue to point on folders until the file or program you want to access displays or is highlighted.
3. Click the program or file name.

Organizing the desktop

Adding items to the Program Menu

There are many ways that you can organize and personalize your *Windows* desktop. You can change the look of your desktop, create shortcuts to files, folders, networks, and programs; you can determine which programs start when you turn on your computer; and you can change the list of items in the Start menu.

Any file or shortcut that is placed in a special folder displays within the first level of the Programs list under Start menu. To place an item on the Programs list:

1. Double-click **My Computer**.
2. Double-click the **C:** drive icon.
3. Double-click the **Documents and Settings** folder (directory).
4. Double-click the **All Users** folder (directory).
5. Double-click the **Start Menu** folder.
6. Double-click the **Programs** folder.
7. Move or copy any folder or file to the **Programs** folder or create a shortcut (see below) to any folder or file to have the item appear in the All Programs list on the Start menu.

Creating shortcuts

A *shortcut* is an icon that points to a program, folder, or document's original icon. Double-clicking the shortcut has the same effect as double-clicking the object's original icon. Shortcuts make it possible to place duplicate icons at several locations without duplicating the original program, document, folder, etc.

A shortcut has the same icon as the original, but the icon has a small badge with an arrow (➤) in its lower left corner. The name of the shortcut (which you can change) appears in italics.

Note: When you delete a shortcut, the original is not deleted.

1. To create a shortcut, locate an icon that represents a program, document, folder, or a hardware device such as a floppy drive or a network drive.
2. Once the object is located, use your right mouse button to drag the icon to a new location.
3. When you release your mouse button, a pop-up menu displays. Select **Create Shortcuts here**.

Alternatively: To place a shortcut directly in the Start menu, use your right mouse button to click and drag the object to the **Start** button.

Windows

A window displays your program or document when it is open. You can have several windows open on your desktop at the same time, and you can reposition and resize them. Windows can overlap, creating the appearance of being stacked on top of one another on the desktop, just like papers on a real desktop. New windows are created when disks, folders, programs, and documents are opened; closing a window removes it from the desktop. Generally, *Windows* remembers the size and location of your windows when they are closed. When you open the window again, it displays in the same location and size that it was when you last closed it. There are three major window types: **program**, **document**, and **folder**.

Parts of a window

Since all windows have essentially the same parts, once you learn to work with one window you are able to work with all windows.

- Program windows are those that contain an application that you are running such as *Word*, *Photoshop*, or *Netscape Navigator*.
- Document windows open within a program window. For example, within *Microsoft Excel*, you can have several documents open at the same time.
- A folder window displays the contents of a folder, including program icons, document icons, or other folder icons.

Title Bar

The title bar is at the top of the window. It displays the document, program, or folder name, along with the name of the application that is open (in program windows only). The title bar also tells you which window is “active.” The title bar of the active window on your desktop is highlighted; all other windows will have grayed-out title bars.

Even though you may have more than one window open on your desktop, you can only work with one at a time. The one you are working with is the “active” window. You can make a window “active” by clicking any place on the window.



The Title and Menu Bars for a document in Notepad

Window buttons

The title bar also displays three small buttons on the right of the title bar, which change the display of the window: **minimize**, **maximize/restore**, and **close** buttons.

Minimize button

When you click the **minimize** button (on the left), the window disappears and is represented by a button on the **Taskbar**. When a window is minimized, you display it again by clicking the window button on the **Taskbar**.

Maximize button

When you click the **maximize** button (in the center), the window is enlarged to take up the entire Desktop if it is an application or folder window. When you maximize a document icon, the window takes up the entire application window.

Restore button

When you maximize a window, the **restore** button replaces the **maximize** button. Clicking the **restore** button displays the window in its previous size and location.

Tip: Double-clicking the window's taskbar will maximize or restore the window.

Close button

The **close** button (on the right) closes the window. Click the **close** button once to completely close the document, application, or folder window.

The Menu bar

The **Menu bar** appears just below the **Title bar** and displays additional options when you click the menu name. The commands and features that you access on the menu bar tell *Windows* and the *Windows* programs what actions to carry out.

Note: Besides clicking on the menu name, you can also access menus by holding down the **Alt** key and the underlined letter in the menu's name. For example, in most programs the **File** menu can be accessed by holding down the **Alt** and **F** keys at the same time.

Scroll Bars

Use the *scroll bars* to move around within your a window. Often a window will actually contain more than can be displayed in it at its current size, so that the window only shows part of its contents at any one time. Scrolling the window's display area moves its field of view to reveal other contents. Click the *scroll arrows* in the scroll bars, which are located on the right and bottom edges of the window, to move up, down, left or right.

Each click moves the view through the window contents a little at a time, or you can click and hold to scroll continuously. The *scroll box* moves through the scroll bar as you scroll, indicating the relative location of the view within the total contents of the window; you can also drag this scroll box directly to scroll to another part of the window. Finally, you can click in the gray bar on either side of the scroll box to scroll by the windowful.

Note: When a window is large enough that it displays its entire contents at once—no contents are beyond its borders—its scroll bars are disabled. The horizontal and vertical scroll bars can be enabled and disabled independently.

Resizing a window

Placing your mouse on any window border or corner may alter the window size. When the pointer changes into a double-headed arrow, hold down the left mouse button, and drag the mouse to alter the dimensions of the window.

Note: You cannot resize a window when it is displayed in full screen (maximized).

Moving a window

To change the window placement, place your mouse on the Title Bar and click and drag to reposition the window.

Arranging all open windows

Right-click an empty area on the taskbar and select **Cascade Windows** to see all the open windows at once. Windows that are reduced to taskbar buttons will not be displayed.

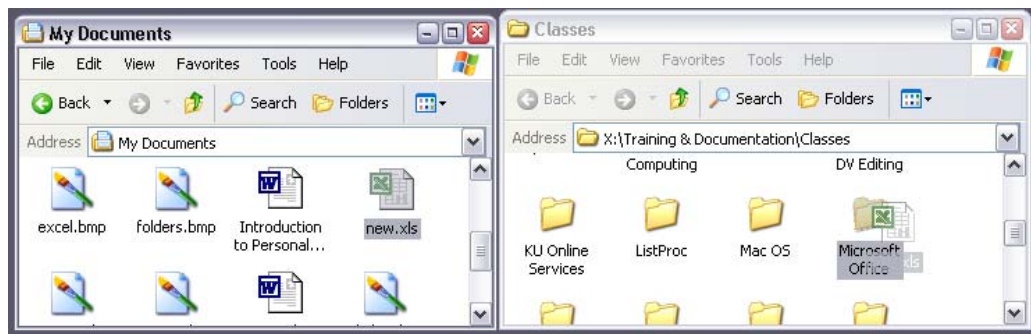
Right-click an empty area on the taskbar and click **Undo Cascade** to change it back.

Creating a new folder

To create a new folder, right-click the mouse in a blank area and from the pop-up menu select **New** and then choose **Folder**. While its name (initially “untitled folder”) is highlighted, type a new name for the folder and press Enter. (If you accidentally deselect the name before changing it, follow the instructions under *Renaming files and folders*, below.) The new folder will be created in the active window (or on the desktop if no window is active).

Moving or coping a file/folder

To move or copy files, you need to display the files or folders to be moved or copied as well as your destination location. In the example below, the windows are aligned to copy the new.xls file from the *My Documents* folder to the *Classes* folder.



Copying by dragging and dropping a file from the My Documents folder to the Microsoft Office folder located in the Classes folder

1. Point your mouse on the file to copy and hold down the mouse button.
2. Drag the icon to its new location and release your mouse button when the destination location becomes highlighted.

Note: The act of point-click-hold-move-release is known as "drag and drop." When you drag a file or folder between two drives, the default behavior is "copy". If you drag a file or folder between locations on the same drive, the default behavior is "move".

You can force a "copy" by holding down the Shift key while you drag with the left mouse button.

You can force a "move" by holding down the Ctrl key while you drag with the left mouse button.

If you drag and drop files or desktop objects with the right mouse button instead of the left, you get a pop-up menu when you drop them on the target destination. The pop-up menu allows you options such as Move Here, Copy Here, and Create Shortcut Here.

Renaming files and folders

If you need to rename a file, folder, or any icon, you can use one of several techniques.

1. Right-click the icon you want to rename and select **Rename**.
2. The name of the icon is highlighted and a cursor is located at the end of the name. If you type a new name, you are replacing the whole name. To edit a few characters, use the left arrow to move the cursor through the text. You can then use simple text editing techniques to make your changes.
3. Click outside the icon name to store the new name.

Alternative: You can slowly double-click to rename the icon. Click the name and then click a second time, making sure that you wait

between clicks. This action highlights the name and then allows you to edit or retype the filename.

Note: If the previous filename extension was associated with a program, for example, .xls, you may get a message about changing the “extension of the file may make it unworkable.” You can choose to rename the file like you wish, but it is recommended that you choose No to this message. Rename the file again but include the extension.

Deleting a file/folder

A file, folder, or any object can be deleted using one of several methods.

- Right-click the object and select **Delete** from the pop-up menu.
 - Drag the object to the **Recycle Bin** icon on the desktop.
 - In some cases, you can select the object and press the **Delete** key.
-

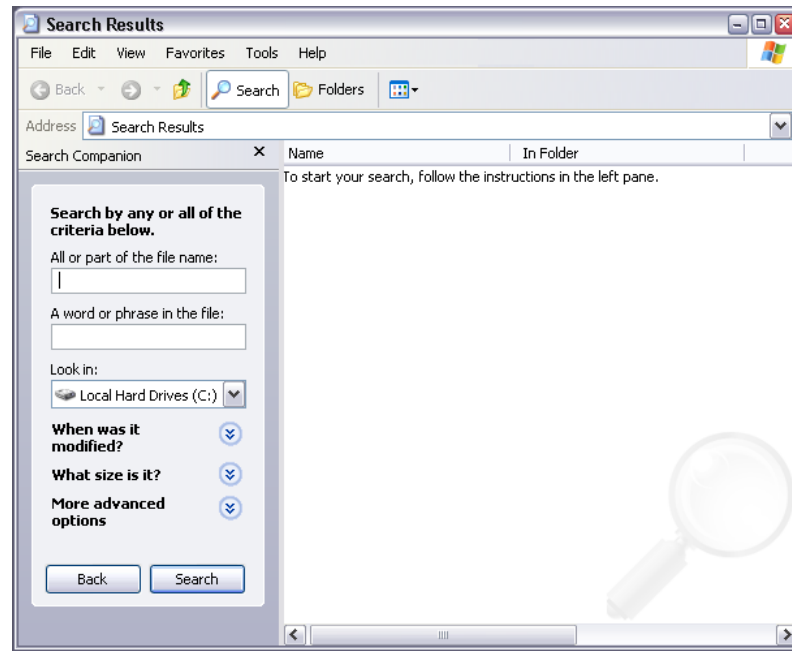
Note: Any deleted file is placed in the Recycle Bin. You must empty the Recycle Bin to permanently delete the file from the hard drive.

To empty the Recycle Bin, place your mouse on the **Recycle Bin** icon and use your right mouse button to click. Select **Empty Recycle Bin** from the pop-up menu.

Searching for objects

The Search command allows you to search any attached drive or location for a file, a folder, or, if you are attached to a network, a computer on the network. The Search command can be accessed through the **Start** menu or in folder windows by clicking on the **View** menu, clicking on **Explorer Bar**, and then selecting **Search**.

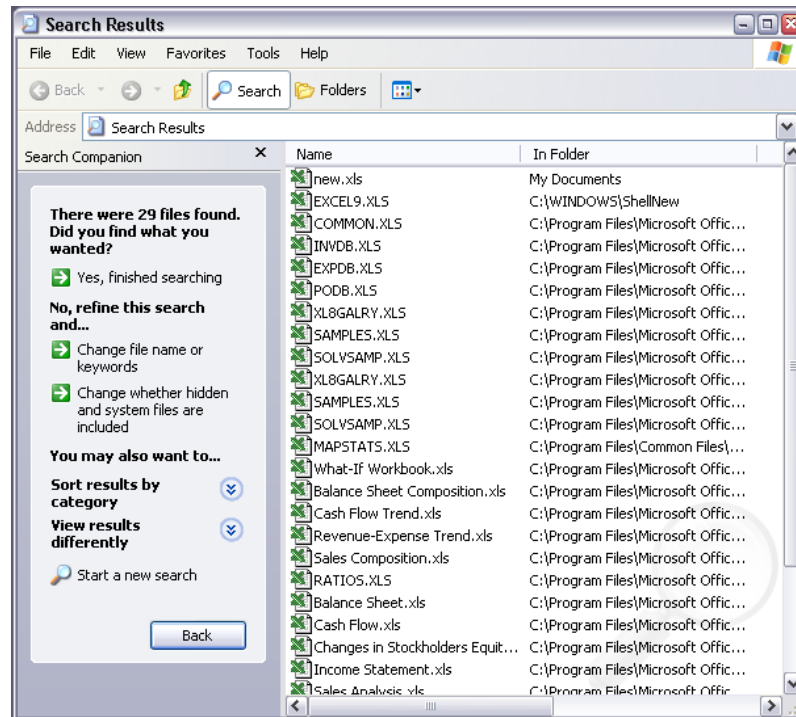
Once you access the Search command, the following window displays:



The Search Window

To search for a file or folder:

1. Type the filename or a substring of the filename in the name section of the search criteria.
2. Identify the location to search. If the drive or directory is not listed correctly in *Look in:*, click the down arrow to get a menu of common drives and folders. If the desired location is still not shown, click **Browse** at the bottom of the menu. This opens a dialog box in which you can select any folder or drive on your computer.
3. For a simple search, click the **Search** button.
4. A list of files or folders that meet your criteria displays.
5. If you searched for a program file (an executable), a file associated with a program, or a folder, you can double-click the icon to open the application and/or window.



The results of searching for files with the .xls extension (Excel files)

The Search command offers several features to search for an item. It allows you to search based on what type of file you are searching for. The most general case is simply searching for files or folders

Using the Start menu to find a file/folder

1. Click the **Start** menu and then click **Search**.
2. Select **All Files and folders** from the menu on the left of the window that comes up.
3. Type the name of the file (or a part of the filename) in the name input area and click **Search**.

Using Explore to find a file/folder

You can also access the Search command through the Start menu when using Explore.

1. Use your right mouse button to click the **Start** button once.
2. Click **Explore**. A split screen displays the file/folder directory tree on the left and a list of sub-items on the right.
3. In the toolbar at the top, click the **Search** button.
4. Select **All Files and folders** from the menu on the left of the window.

5. Type the name of the file (or a part of the filename) in the name input area and click **Search**.
-

Note: You can also access Explore by holding down the **Shift** key while double-clicking **My Computer**, a folder icon, a drive icon, or a network icon.

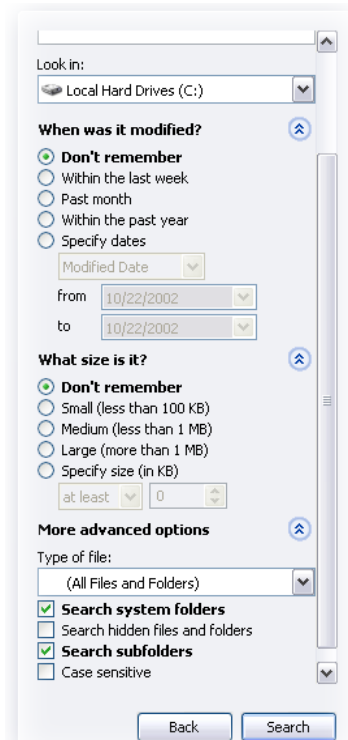
Advanced Searches

You can use the Advanced search to enter additional searching criteria. The advanced search is useful if you are looking for

- a specific file type (i.e., a screen saver, an application, an Excel file, etc.).
- a file that has a specific string of characters or text within the file.
- a file that is within a certain size.

Creating advanced searches

Click on any of the three double down arrows in the Search folder window to show options for more advanced searches.



Advanced searching options

Creating advanced searches based on date

1. Click the down arrows next to “When was it modified?” to reveal options as in the above figure.
2. Fill in the appropriate dates or select from the more general options.
3. Click the down arrow next to the appropriate criterion to enter additional search criteria.
4. When finished entering the criteria for searching, click **Search** to begin the search.

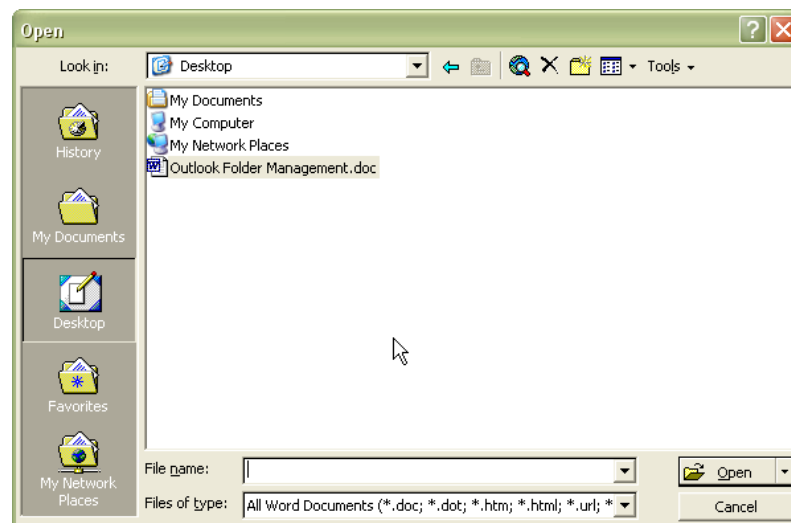
Application Basics

While most application commands and operations will naturally vary from one application to another according to each application’s purpose and design, there are many things that are done in a standard way, and are thus common to the vast majority of *Windows* applications.

Working with document files

Opening a document

If you are working in an application and want to open an existing document in that application, click on the **File** menu and choose **Open**. You will see the Open dialog box:



An Open dialog box in Microsoft Word

This dialog box provides tools for locating and opening files. It shows a particular location, and the files and folders at that location. The current location is indicated by the pop-up menu at the top of the window. The list displays the contents of that location. Both of these are used to locate a file.

To locate an item *inside* a folder that appears in the list, double-click the folder; it will become the current location. If the desired file is in a subfolder, repeat the process until you've reached the folder that directly contains the file.

To locate an item that resides *outside* of the current location, use the pop-up menu at the top of the window. It displays the *parent* folders of the current location, i.e., those that contain it. In other words, for a subfolder location, the item below the subfolder's name is the folder that contains it. The next item down the list is the folder that contains *that* folder, and so on, until you reach the disk that contains the top-level folder, and, finally, the desktop. To move to any ancestor location, choose it from the pop-up menu; it then becomes the current location.

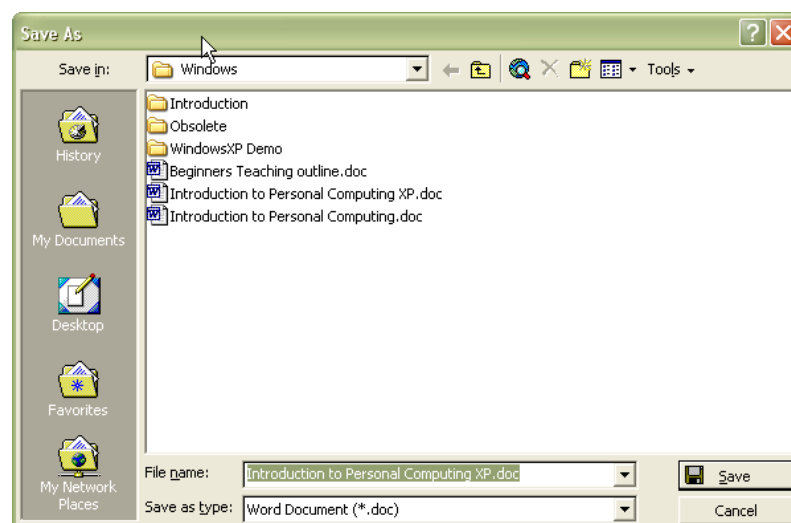
With these two interface elements, you can move to any location on your system. Often both will be required to navigate to a file, as you'll need to move up out of an initial set of folders (using the pop-up menu) so that you can then drill down into another set of folders (using the list).

Once you've located the desired file in the list, double-click it to open it.

Saving a document

To store a document you're working on to disk, you must *save* it. Until and unless you save a document, its contents reside only in memory, and will be lost when the application quits. Saving a document stores it so that you can return to it again, even after the computer has been powered off. To save a file you must give it a name and indicate where you would like to store it.

1. To save a document, click on the **File** menu and choose **Save**. The first time you save a document, you will see the Save As dialog box:



A Save dialog box in Microsoft Word

This dialog box provides tools for specifying the name that the document will have when stored as a file on disk, and the location where it will be stored. Note the similarity to the Open dialog box (see *Opening a document*, above).

2. Determine where you would like to place the new file, using the techniques described in *Opening a document*, above.
3. Enter a name for the file in the **Name** field.
4. Click **Save**. A new file with the given name will be created in the location indicated by the pop-up menu at the top of the window, and the document's contents will be stored in it.

Anytime you make further changes to a file that has been saved, you will need to save it again. When saving a file that has been saved before, the Save dialog box will not appear, since the file's name and location have already been established. You should save files that you are working on frequently so that you do not lose data (and time) if something should cause you to lose power to your computer.

Saving a document with a different name or location

To save a document with a new name or in a different location, choose **Save As** from the **File** menu and specify a new name and/or location as described above. The original file will be left in place, unchanged.

Saving a document in a different file format

Many programs let you save documents in multiple file formats. To save a document in a file format other than the default for the application, choose an option from the **Format** pop-up menu when in the Save dialog box, before clicking the **Save** button.

Editing text

Whenever you're typing or editing text, you will see a blinking line (the *insertion point*), somewhere in the text. The insertion point shows where text will be inserted when you type.

Inserting text

1. Click to place the insertion point where you want the new text to appear.
2. Type the new text.

Deleting text

1. Drag across the text you want to delete. The text changes color to show that it's selected.
2. Press the Delete key on your keyboard.

Changing the size, font, or style of text

1. To change the size, font, or style of text, drag across the text to select it.
2. Choose the size, font, or style you want from the menus. Only the selected text is affected.

Moving and copying document content

Copying and pasting

You can copy text, graphics, pictures, or movies, then paste what you copied in another place in the same document or in a different document—even in a different application.

1. Select the text, graphic, picture, or movie you want to copy.
2. Choose **Copy** from the **Edit** menu, or press Ctrl+C.
3. Select where you want to paste the item.
4. Choose **Paste** from the **Edit** menu, or press Ctrl+V.

To move document content rather than copy it, substitute **Cut** for **Copy** in step two above, or Ctrl+X for Ctrl+C.

Drag and drop

You can also move text, graphics, pictures, and movies by dragging.

1. Select the text, graphic, picture, or movie.
2. Drag it to where you want it to go.

Undo

In many applications, for most actions, you can undo your last action by choosing **Undo** from the **Edit** menu. This is very useful for correcting mistakes!

Customizing Your Computer

The Control Panel allows you to alter settings for or customize your computer. There are a number of individual control panels for all the various types of settings that can be adjusted. All changes made through the Control Panel are stored in the Windows configuration Registry. Some of the Control Panel settings can be altered from other locations. For example, to change your desktop display, you can access the Control Panel, click Appearance and Themes, then click Display and make your changes. Or

you can right-click on your desktop and then select Properties from the pop-up menu. Both of these above actions access the same Display Properties dialog box.

Control Panel icons

You can explore your control panel options by investigating the control panel icons; you can safely view control panels without making changes. Which control panel icons you have on your system depends on what hardware and software you have installed.

There are two views available for the control panel. *Category View* organizes common tasks into groups. For example, changing the theme, screensaver, or background image can all be done by accessing the Appearance and Themes category. The *Classic View* presents all the icons available in much the same way that Windows 95/98 had. Below are descriptions of the categories found in the *Category View*.

Appearance and Themes

This category contains utilities for setting display properties such as resolution, background image, and screensaver (customize the way your desktop, menus, and windows look). It also allows you to apply a theme to change the look of the *Windows* environment.

Network and Internet Connections

This category contains utilities for connecting to the Internet, a local network at your workplace, or a home network.

Add or Remove Programs

This category allows you to add or remove programs, including *Windows*. You can also use this option to create a start-up disk in case *Windows* gets corrupted on your hard drive.

Sound, Speech and Audio Devices

This category has utilities for changing speaker settings, system volume, and text-to-speech readers.

Performance and Maintenance

This category has utilities for getting information on, and changing system settings of, *Windows* and your computer. Included are such things as backing up data, task scheduling, and administrative tools. You can also access this dialog box by right-clicking **My Computer** and selecting **Properties**.

Printers and Other Hardware

This category contains the utilities to install new peripherals such as mice, printers, scanners, and faxes.

User Accounts

This category has utilities for creating and maintaining the accounts of people who use the computer.

Date and Time plus Language and Regional Options

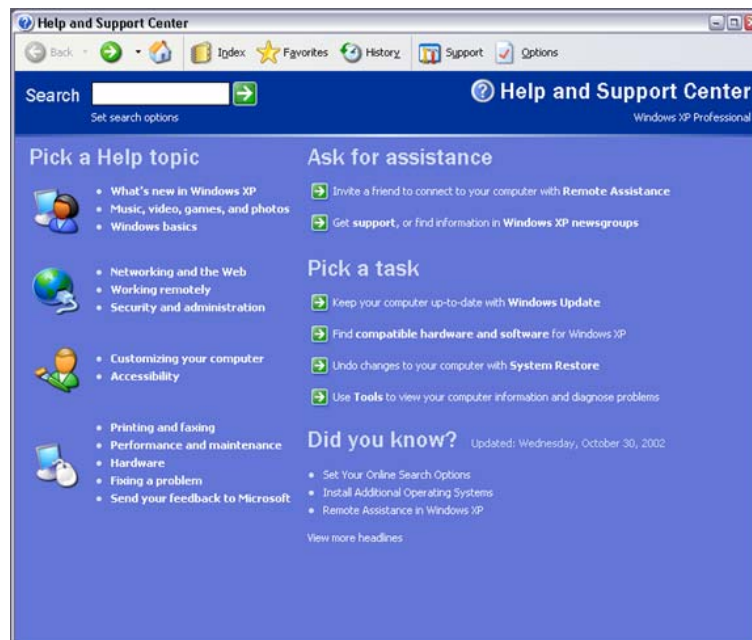
These categories have utilities for setting the system time, default language, and any regionally varying things such as number and currency formatting.

Accessibility Options

Accessibility Options lets you set keyboard, mouse, sound, display and other options that make a *Windows* computer easier to use by the visually, orally, or motor impaired.


Getting Help

There are many ways to access help through *Windows*. Almost all dialog boxes have Help on the menu, but there are several less obvious methods for getting help. The Help feature can be accessed through the Start menu by clicking **Start** and then **Help and Support**.



Windows Help and Support Center

What's This button

The What's This  button is found on the toolbar or in the title of some programs. Clicking the button changes your cursor to a large question mark. When you click an item, information about that command or option displays, generally in an information box.

You can frequently display the same pop-up information about a topic by clicking the right mouse button on an instruction or dialog box input name. A “What's This” information box displays information about the name or instruction.

Shutting Down

It is important to properly shut down Windows when turning off your computer—as opposed to just hitting the power switch. Use the Shut Down command on the Start menu when rebooting or turning off your computer. This allows *Windows* to save your work and make sure that no data is lost.

The following steps should be taken when exiting a *Windows* session.

1. Close any program you are running. In most cases, use the **Exit** command from the **File** menu.
2. Click the **Start** button and click **Shut Down**.
3. Select from the list of options. The number of options varies depending on whether you are connected to a network or not.
4. Wait until you receive a message telling you it is “safe to turn off your computer.”



The Shut Down Windows dialog box.

For More Information

Here are some additional sources of information about the *Windows* operating system:

- <http://www.microsoft.com/windows> - Microsoft's Windows product page. Find information on all versions of *Windows*.
- <http://search.support.microsoft.com> - Microsoft's main support page. Use this page to search for information on specific topics related to *Windows* and other Microsoft products.

Getting Additional Help

Academic Computing Services provides consulting and Q&A help in a variety of ways:

785/864-0200
question@ku.edu
www.ku.edu/acs/help

To evaluate this course online, please visit www.ku.edu/acs/training/evaluation

Last Update: 02/24/2003