

Steve's Tech Resource

The Web Development, Internet, Software, Hardware, and Multimedia Resource

[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[WHAT'S NEW](#)[LOGIN](#)[JOIN](#)[SEARCH](#)[BY DATE](#)[ALL BOARDS](#)

Improving Productivity And Performance In Windows XP By Changing The Default GUI 258KB

For: [Windows XP](#)

Published: 18Aug02 | Last Updated: 13Apr10 | Status: To Be Continued

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. Start Menu: Classic](#)
- [3. Control Panel: Classic View](#)
- [4. Control Panel And My Computer: Window Classic Folders](#)
- [5. Theme: Windows Classic](#)
- [6. Visual Effects: Adjust For Best Performance](#)
- [7. Taskbar: Disable Group Similar Taskbar Buttons](#)
- [8. Taskbar: Show Quick Launch Bar](#)
- [9. Notification Area: Disable Hide Inactive Icons](#)
- [10. Start Menu: Disable Personalized Menus](#)
- [11. Windows Explorer And My Computer: Show Address Bar](#)
- [12. Windows Explorer And My Computer: Show Status Bar](#)
- [13. Search: Turn Off Animated Character](#)
- [14. Search: All Files And Folders](#)
- [15. Endnotes](#)

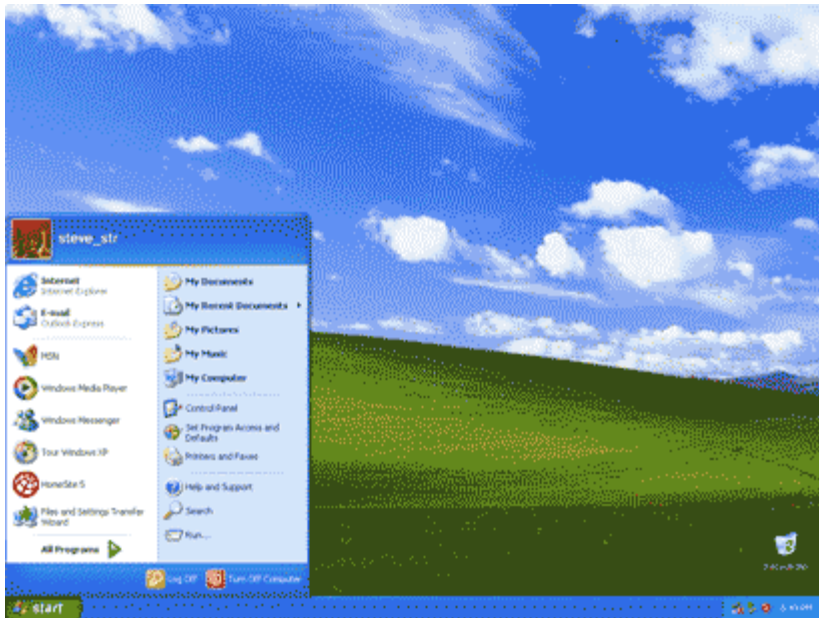
1. Introduction

When Windows XP was released, most Windows 98, Windows ME, and Windows 2000 Professional (Windows 98/ME/2000) users found its colorful graphical user interface (GUI) exciting and stimulating. Windows 98/ME/2000 users more interested in substance over style, however, realized not only that in many respects the Windows XP GUI decreased user productivity (i.e., was distracting and/or required additional operations to accomplish a task), but that in almost every respect the Windows XP GUI decreased computer performance (i.e., decreased available RAM, even if only slightly). In other words, while most were praising the Windows XP GUI, a few were looking for ways to change the Windows XP GUI to something more reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000.

Important Note: The changes to the Windows XP GUI described in this page are applied successively in the order presented. Therefore, it might be necessary to modify this page downward for each change you decide to skip. However, to avoid this, it is recommended that you apply the changes at the top of the page, particularly [Start Menu: Classic \(below\)](#), until you reach the bottom of the page.

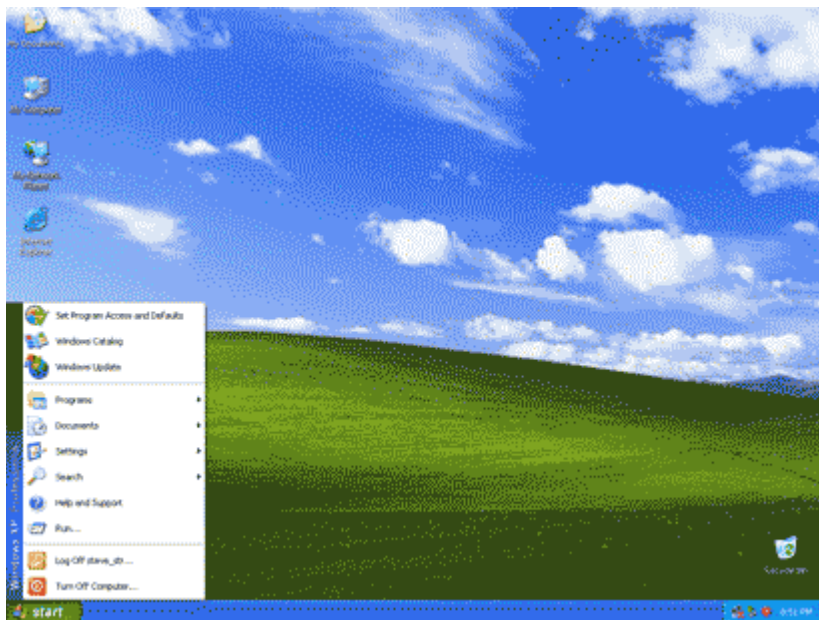
2. Start Menu: Classic

The Windows XP default Start menu is too busy, which decreases productivity and performance:



The Classic Start menu reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000:

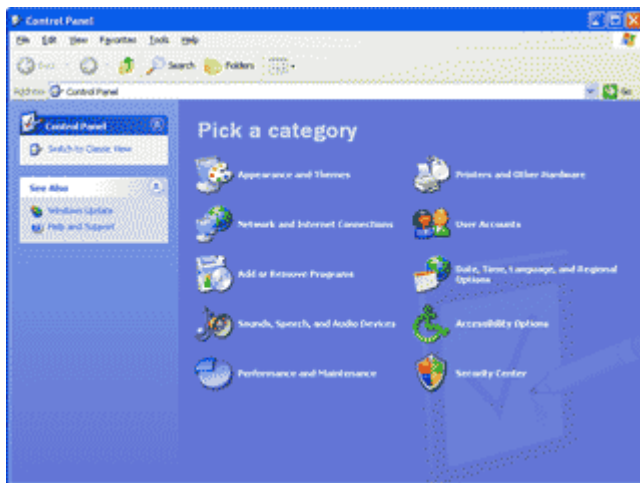
1. Click **Start | Control Panel | Appearance and Themes | Taskbar and Start Menu | Start Menu**. Alternatively, right click **Start** and then click **Properties**.
2. Select **Classic Start menu**.
3. Click **OK**.



Note: Yes, the Windows XP default Start menu immediately displays shortcuts to frequently used programs (e.g., Internet Explorer and Outlook Express) and destinations (e.g., My Documents and Control Panel) both of which are buried in the Classic Start menu. There is, however, a more productive way of accessing frequently used programs and destinations than the Windows XP default Start menu: add the Quick Launch bar to the Windows XP taskbar and place shortcuts to frequently used programs and destinations in the Quick Launch bar. For information on the Quick Launch bar and how to add it to the Windows XP taskbar, see [Taskbar: Show Quick Launch bar \(below\)](#).

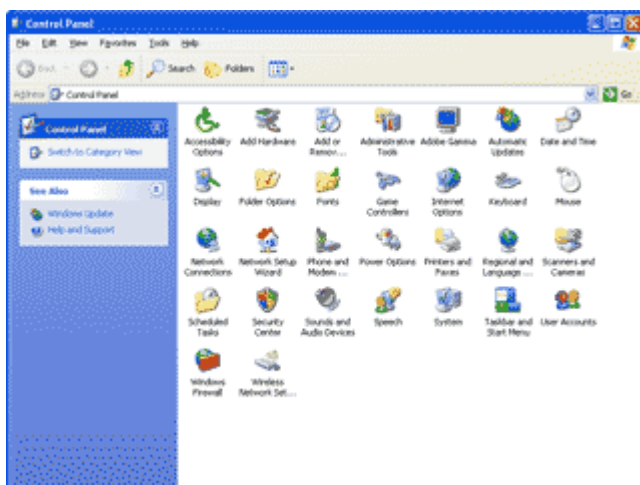
3. Control Panel: Classic View

The Windows XP default Control Panel does not list all of the individual Control Panel objects. Instead, it buries them under Categories, which decreases productivity:



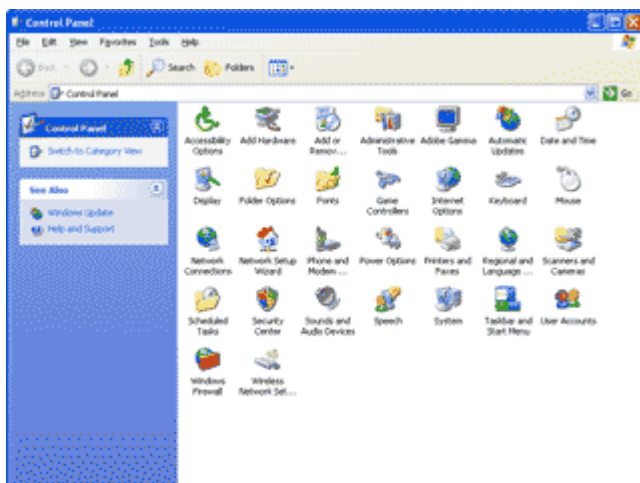
The Classic View Control Panel reminiscent of Windows 98/2000 (1):

1. Click **Start | Settings | Control Panel**.
2. In the left sidebar under Control Panel, click **Switch to Classic View**.



4. Control Panel And My Computer: Windows Classic Folders

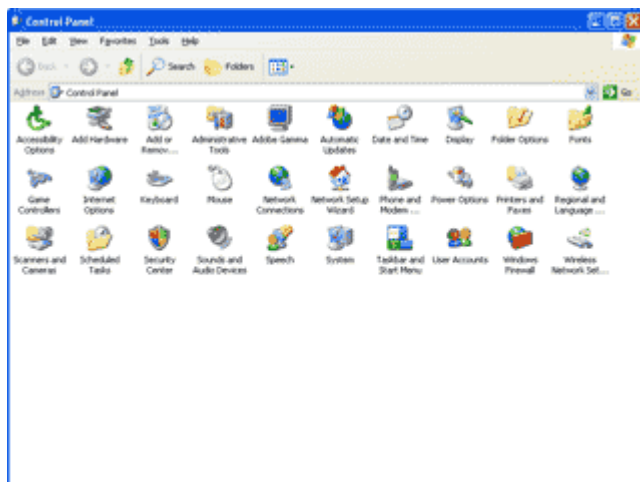
The Windows XP default Control Panel (including some of the individual Control Panel objects) and My Computer includes a left sidebar that contains links known as Common Tasks In Folders. For those new to Windows, Common Tasks In Folders may increase productivity. But for those familiar with Windows, Common Tasks In Folders is too busy, which decreases productivity and performance:



The Control Panel with Windows Classic Folder (2):

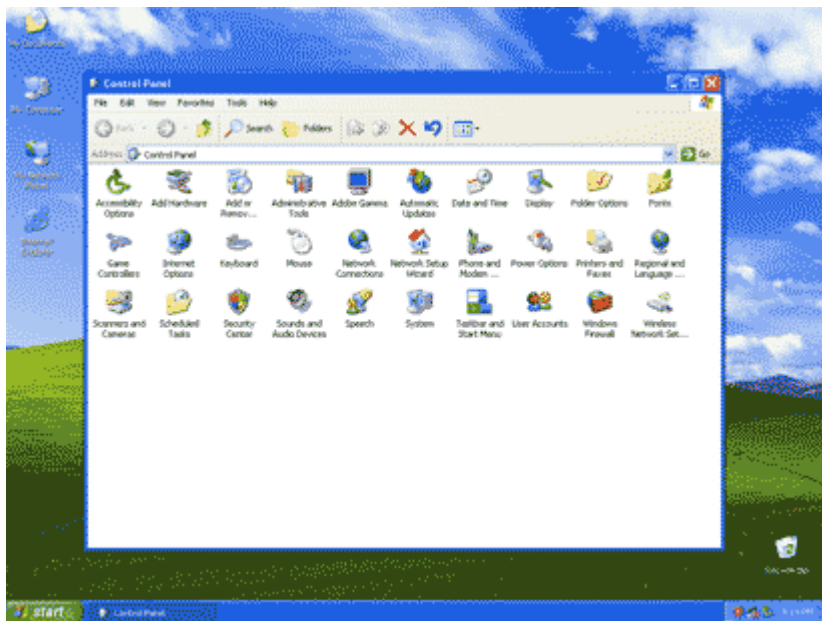
Note: Enabling Windows Classic Folders in Control Panel enables it in My Computer and vice versa.

1. Click **Start | Settings | Control Panel | Tools | Folder Options**.
2. In the Tasks fieldset, select **Use Windows classic folders**.
3. Click **OK**.



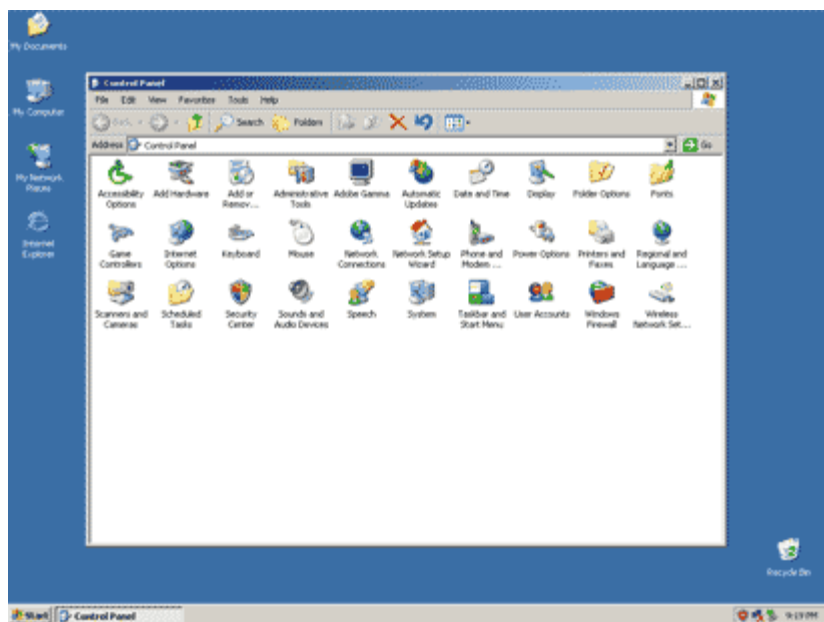
5. Theme: Windows Classic

The Windows XP default theme with its Bliss desktop and brilliant blue title bars and taskbars is ugly, over-bearing, childish looking, and decreases performance:



The Windows Classic theme reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000:

1. Click **Start | Settings | Control Panel | Display**. Alternatively, right click the **desktop** and then click **Properties**.
2. In the Theme dropdown, select **Windows Classic**.
3. Click **OK**.



6. Visual Effects: Adjust For Best Performance

The Windows XP default GUI uses 15+ Visual Effects including animations, fading, shadows, sliding, smoothing, etc. These Visual Effects are superfluous and not only decrease performance, but, in some cases, decrease productivity.

No Visual Effects reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000:

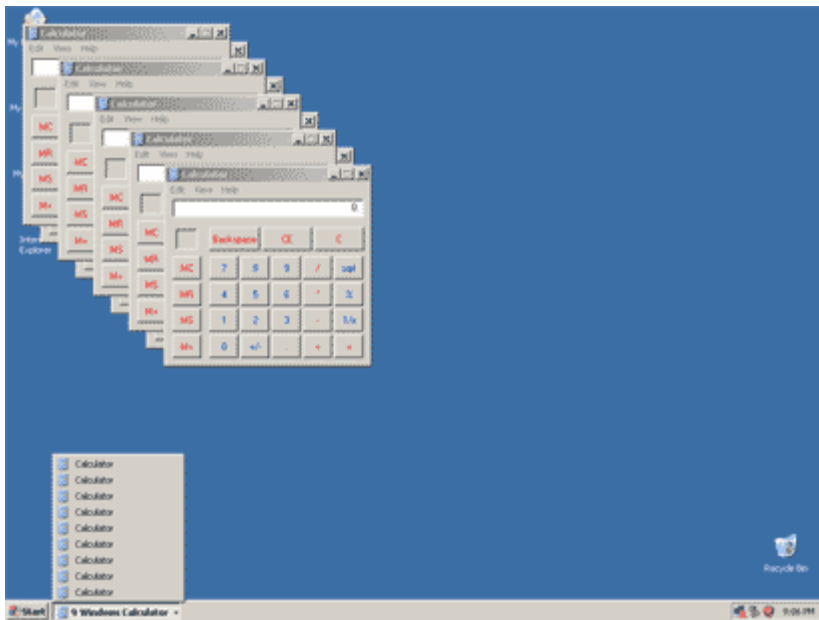
1. Click **Start | Settings | Control Panel | System | Advanced**.
2. In the Performance fieldset, click **Settings**.
3. Select **Adjust for best performance**.
4. Click **OK | OK**.

Note: The following items listed in the Visual Effects tab were already addressed in this page:

- Use common tasks in folders, see [Control Panel And My Computer: Window Classic Folders \(above\)](#).
- Use visual styles on windows and buttons, see [Theme: Windows Classic \(above\)](#).

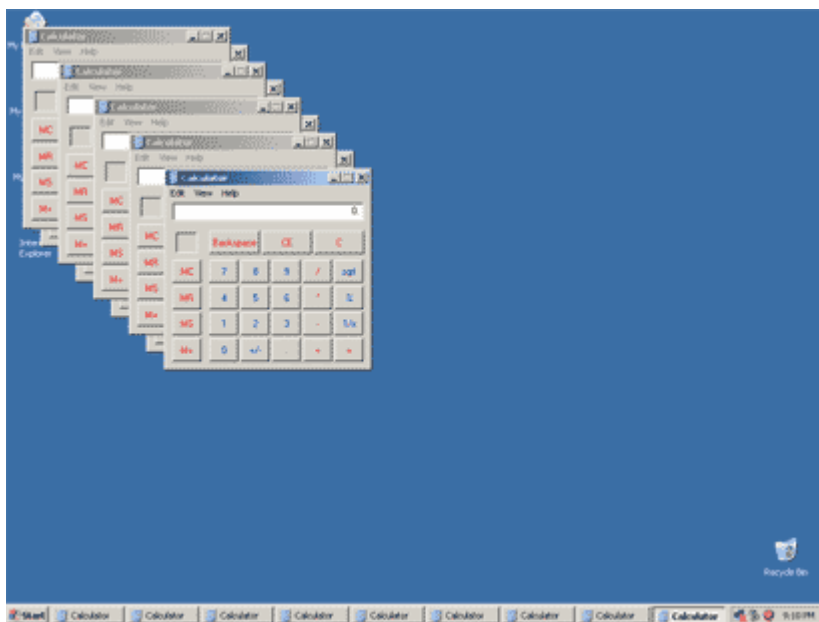
7. Taskbar: Disable Group Similar Taskbar Buttons

The Windows XP default taskbar automatically groups multiple similar taskbar buttons under a single taskbar button in what is known as Group similar taskbar buttons. Although Group similar taskbar buttons cleans up the taskbar, it decreases performance and requires the user to perform a click in order to access the individual taskbar buttons, which decreases productivity:



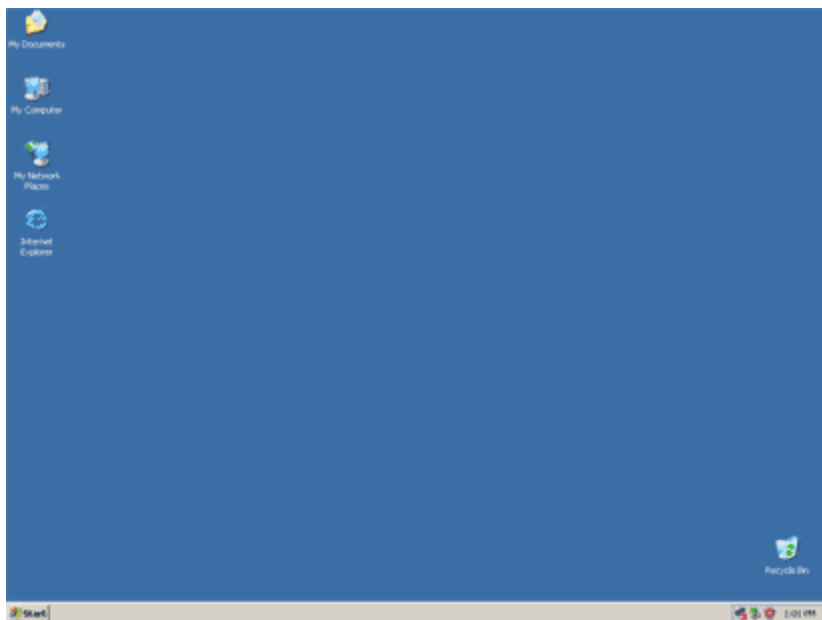
The taskbar without Group similar taskbar buttons reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000:

1. Click **Start | Settings | Control Panel | Taskbar and Start Menu**. Alternatively, right click **Start** and then click **Properties | Taskbar**.
2. In the Taskbar appearance fieldset, uncheck **Group similar taskbar buttons**.
3. Click **OK**.



8. Taskbar: Show Quick Launch Bar

The Quick Launch bar is an area of the taskbar into which shortcuts to programs and destinations can be placed. The utility of the Quick Launch bar is that, by default, it is always visible and, therefore, any shortcuts placed in the Quick Launch bar are always immediately accessible. This is in contrast not only to the shortcuts of the Start menu, which are buried under the Start button, but to the shortcuts on the desktop, which can be buried under opened programs. The Windows XP default taskbar does not show the Quick Launch bar, which decreases productivity:



The taskbar showing the Quick Launch bar reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000:

1. Click **Start | Settings | Control Panel | Taskbar and Start Menu**. Alternatively, right click **Start** and then click **Properties | Taskbar**.
2. In the Taskbar appearance fieldset:
 1. Uncheck **Lock the taskbar**. This allows you to change/manipulate toolbars added to the taskbar.
 2. Check **Show Quick Launch**. This adds the Quick Launch bar to the taskbar.
3. Click **OK**.

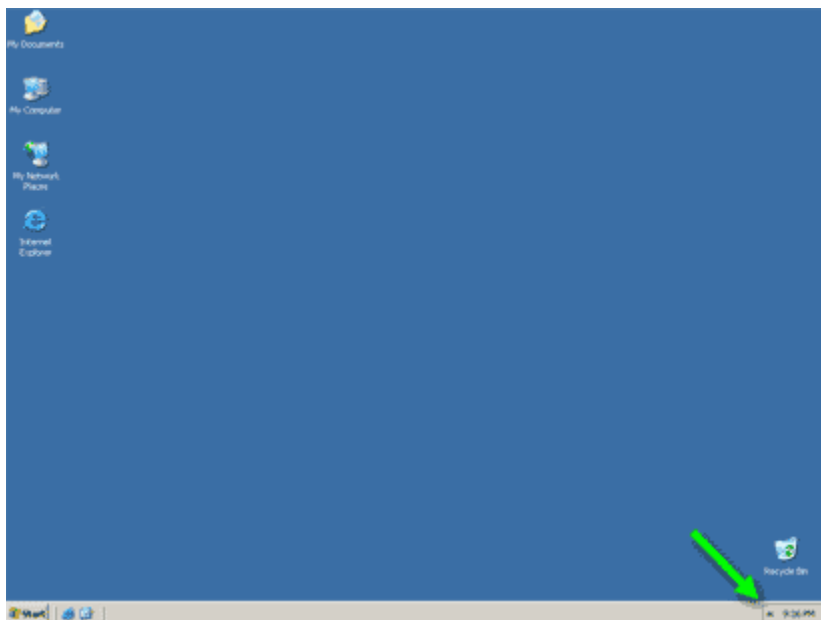


9. Notification Area: Disable Hide Inactive Icons

Note: In Windows 98/ME/2000 the blocked off area at the far right hand side of the taskbar including the clock is known as the system tray. In Windows XP this same area of the taskbar is known as the notification area.

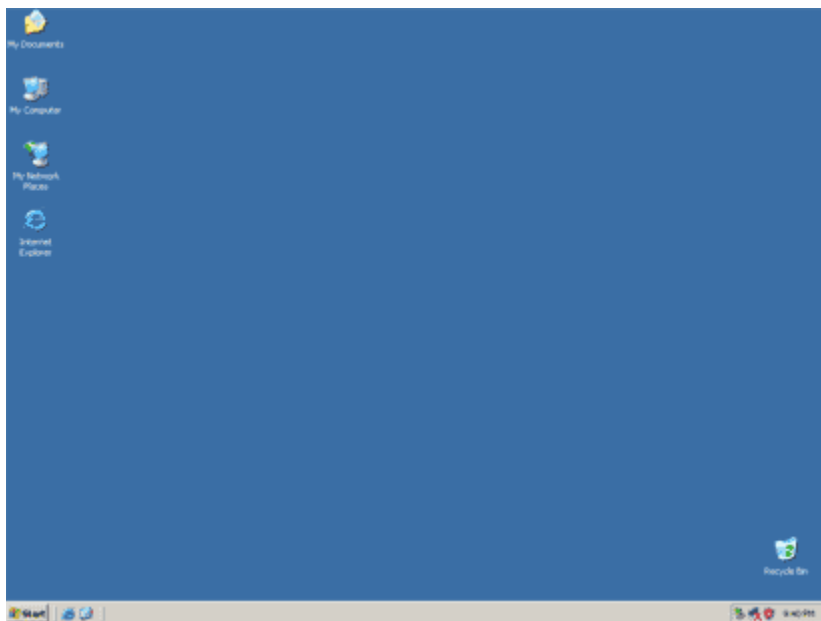
The Windows XP default notification area automatically hides infrequently clicked program icons under an expand arrow in what is known as Hide Inactive Icons. Although Hide Inactive Icons cleans up the notification area, it decreases performance and not only requires the user to perform a click in order to access the hidden icons, but can lead the user into forgetting that such-and-such

programs are installed and loaded on Startup, both of which decrease productivity:



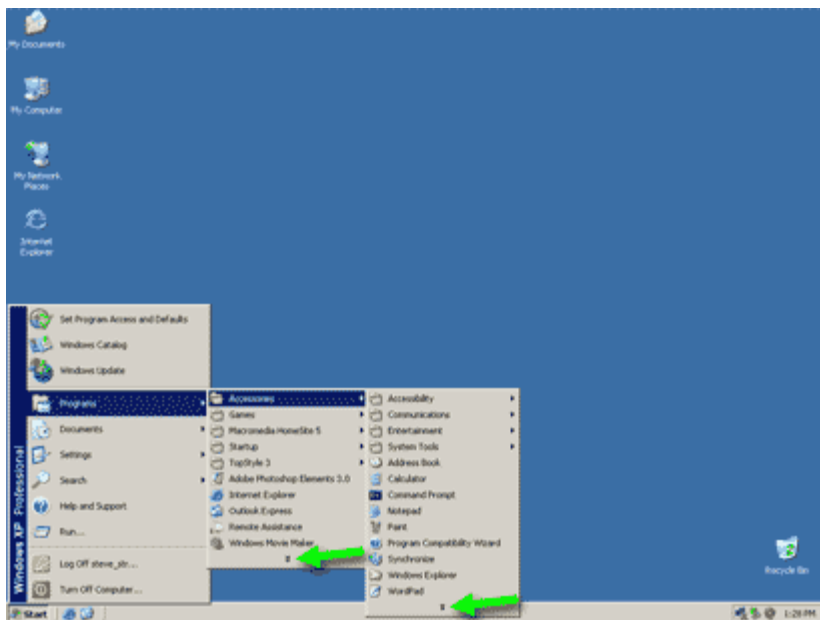
The notification area without Hide Inactive Icons reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000:

1. Click **Start | Settings | Control Panel | Taskbar and Start Menu**. Alternatively, right click **Start** and then click **Properties | Taskbar**.
2. In the Notification area fieldset, uncheck **Hide inactive icons**.
3. Click **OK**.



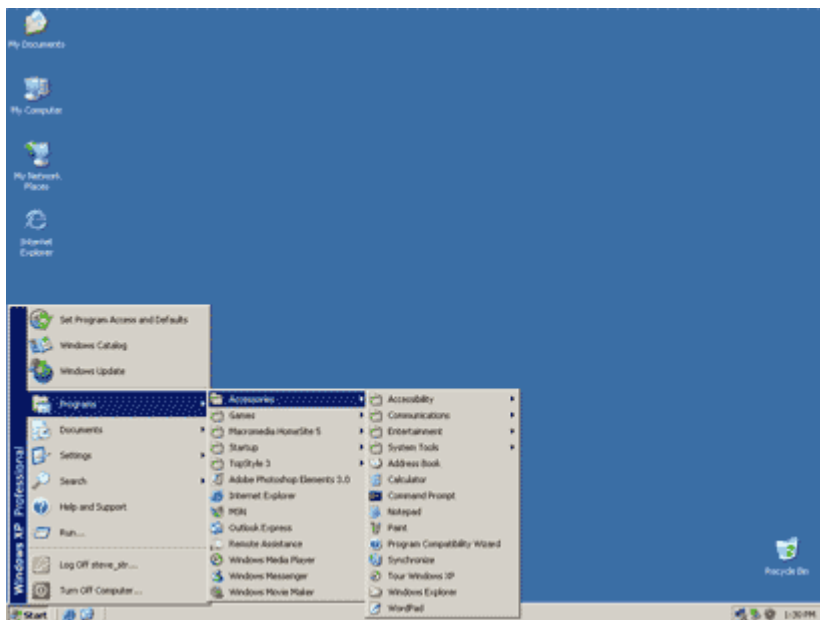
10. Start Menu: Disable Personalized Menus

The Windows XP default Start menu automatically hides infrequently clicked shortcuts under expand arrows in what is known as Personalized Menus. Although Personalized Menus cleans up the Start menu, it decreases performance and not only requires the user to perform a click in order to access the hidden shortcuts, but can lead the user into forgetting that such-and-such programs are installed and available, both of which decrease productivity:



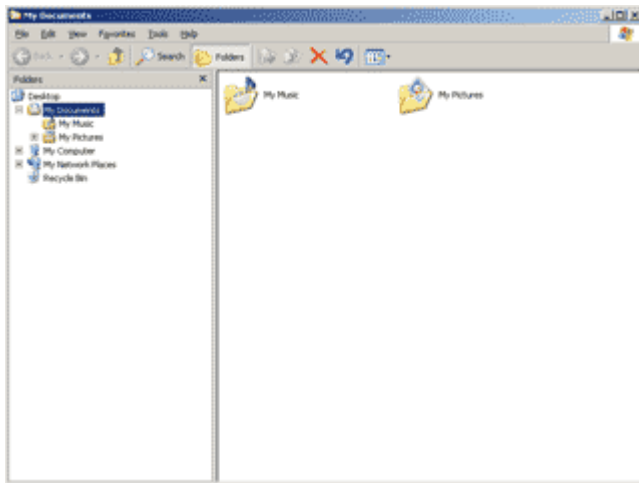
The Start menu without Personalized Menus reminiscent of Windows 98 (3):

1. Click **Start | Settings | Control Panel | Taskbar and Start Menu | Start Menu**. Alternatively, right click **Start** and then click **Properties**.
2. Next to Classic Start menu, click **Customize**.
3. In Advanced Start menu options, uncheck **Use Personalized Menus**.
4. Click **OK | OK**.



11. Windows Explorer And My Computer: Show Address Bar

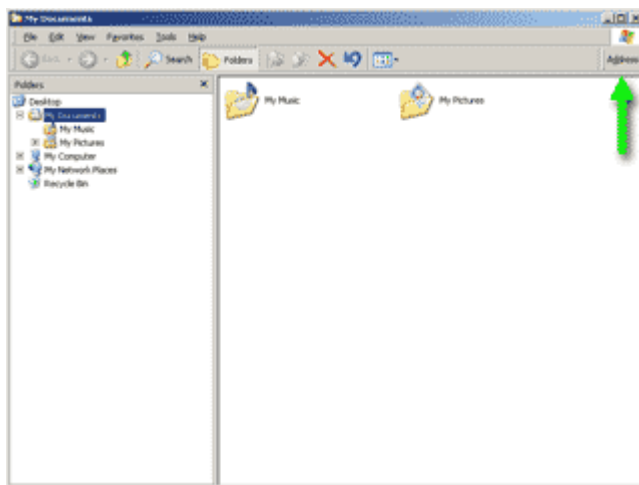
The address bar displays the path to the object selected in Windows Explorer or My Computer. The path to the object selected is useful not only for reference, but can be copied and pasted as needed. The Windows XP Home Edition default Windows Explorer and My Computer do not show the address bar, which decreases productivity:



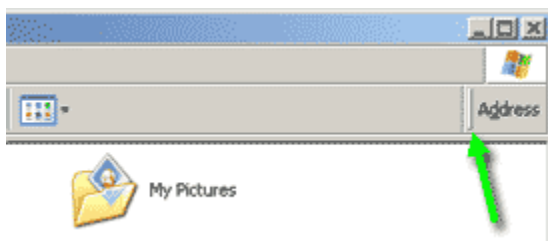
Windows Explorer showing the address bar reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000/XP Pro:

Note: Showing the address bar in Windows Explorer does not show it in My Computer and vice versa. To show the address bar in My Computer, open My Computer, click **View | Toolbars**, and then check **Address Bar**.

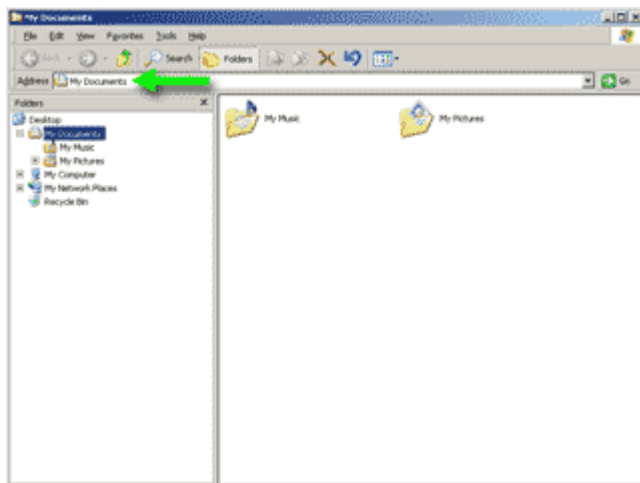
1. Open Windows Explorer.
2. Click **View | Toolbars** and uncheck **Lock the Toolbars**. This allows you to change/manipulate toolbars added to Windows Explorer.
3. Click **View | Toolbars** and check **Address Bar**. This shows the address bar in Windows Explorer:



4. The address bar's address field is not visible. There are two ways to expose the address bar's address field, each involves dragging the raised vertical bar located to the left of the word, Address, which is present only if Lock the Toolbars is uncheck as described above:

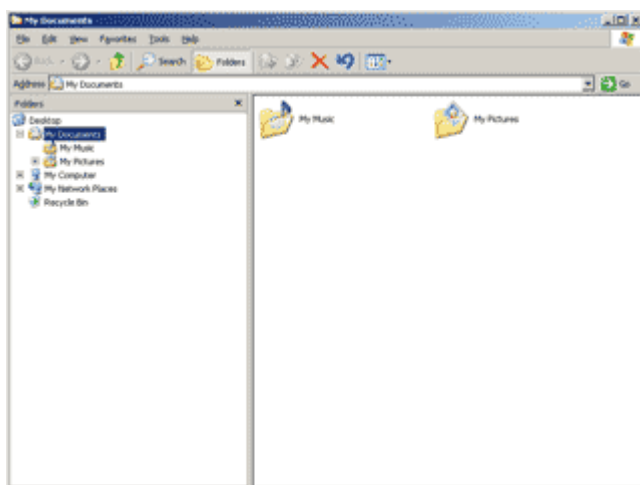


The first is to widen the address bar by dragging the raised vertical bar to the left (not shown). The second is to move the address bar to its own "line" by dragging the raised vertical bar straight down (shown):



12. Windows Explorer And My Computer: Show Status Bar

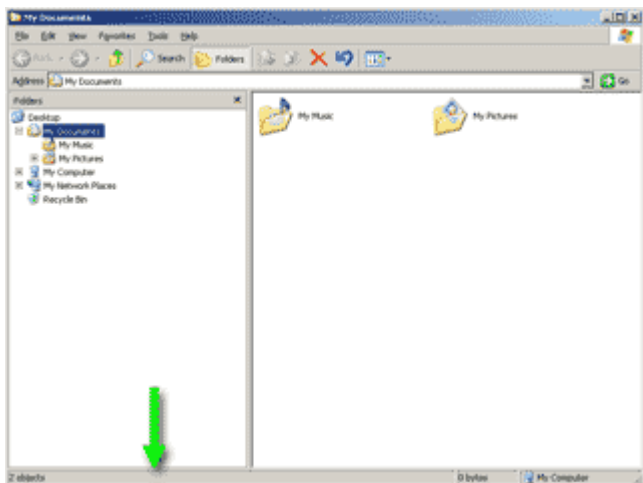
The status bar displays useful information about the object selected in Windows Explorer or My Computer. If a drive or folder is selected, the status bar displays the number of objects (i.e., files and folders) under the selected drive or folder and the amount of disk free space. If a file is selected, the status bar displays the file type, date modified/created, and file size. The Windows XP default Windows Explorer and My Computer do not show the status bar, which decreases productivity:



Windows Explorer showing the status bar reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000:

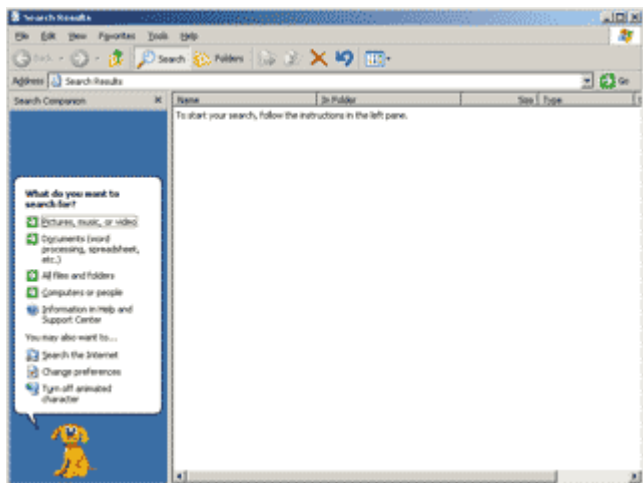
Note: Showing the status bar in Windows Explorer shows it in My Computer and vice versa.

1. Open Windows Explorer.
2. Click **View** and then check **Status Bar**.



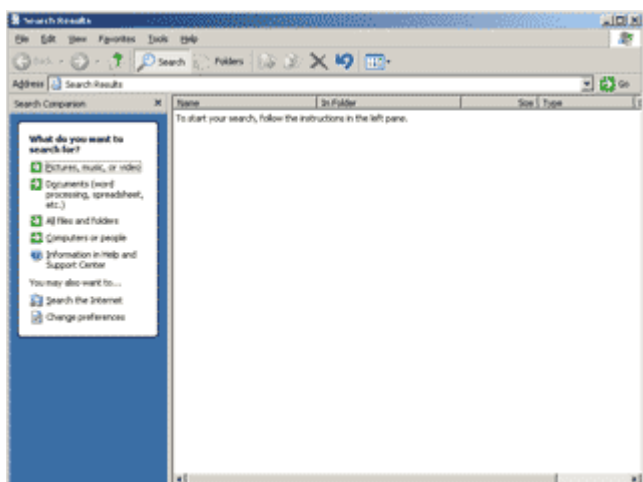
13. Search: Turn Off Animated Character

The Windows XP default Search dialog includes an Animated Character, Rover the dog, which not only decreases performance, but, through the distraction, decreases productivity:



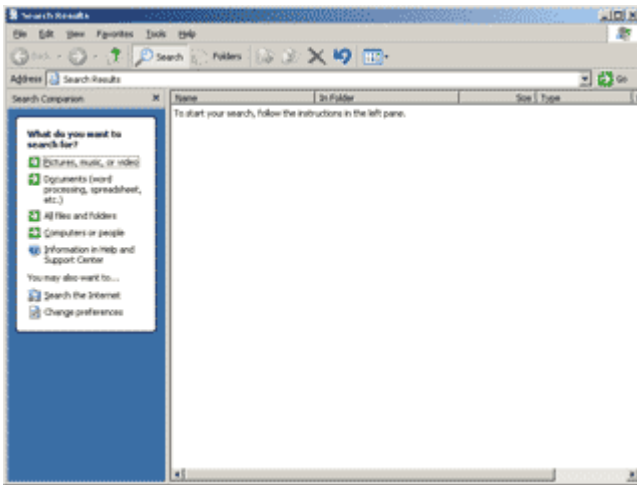
The Search dialog without the Animated Character reminiscent of Windows 2000:

1. Click **Start | Search | For Files or Folders**.
2. In the left pane, click **Turn off animated character**.



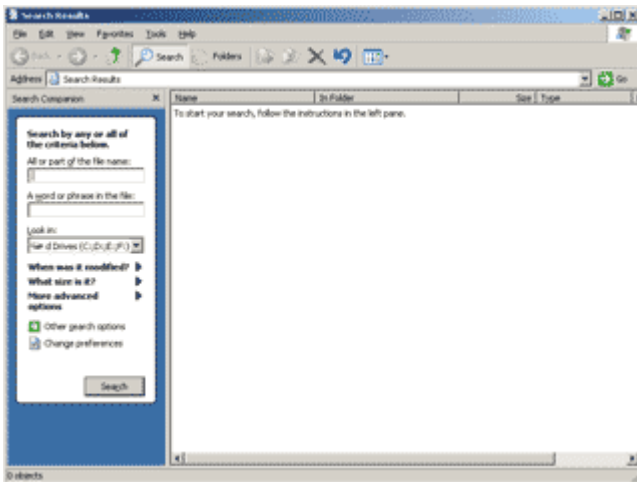
14. Search: All Files And Folders

The Windows XP default Search dialog presents a number of search options, including searching for: 1.) Picture, music, or video; 2.) Documents (word processing, spreadsheet, etc.); 3.) All files and folders; and 4.) Computers or people. For those new to Windows, the search options may increase productivity. But for those familiar with Windows and only interested in searching All Files And Folders, the search options are too busy and require the user to perform a click in order to access the search criteria fields, both of which decrease productivity:



Search All Files And Folders reminiscent of Windows 98/ME/2000:

1. Click **Start | Search | For Files or Folders**.
2. In the left pane, click **Change preferences | Change files and folders search behavior | Advanced | OK**.



15. Endnotes

(1) Like the Windows XP default Control Panel, the Windows ME default Control Panel does not list all of the individual Control Panel objects. Unlike the Windows XP default Control Panel which buries them under Categories, the Windows ME default Control Panel lists only the so called "commonly used" Control Panel objects. To apply the Classic View Control Panel reminiscent of Windows 98/2000 to Windows ME, open Control Panel and in the left sidebar click view all Control Panel options.

(2) Like the Windows XP default Control Panel and My Computer, the Windows 98/ME/2000 default Control Panel and My Computer includes a left sidebar. Unlike Windows XP which refers to the left sidebar as Common Task In Folders, Windows 98/ME/2000 refers to the left sidebar as Web content. To remove Web content from Control Panel and My Computer in Windows 98, open Control Panel or My Computer and click View | Folder Options | Settings. In the View Web content in folders fieldset, select Only for folders where I select "as Web Page" (View menu). The next time Control Panel or My Computer is opened Web content does not appear. To remove Web content from Control Panel and My Computer in Windows ME/2000, open Control Panel or My Computer and click Tools | Folder Options. In the Web View fieldset, select Use Windows classic folders.

(3) Like the Windows XP default Start menu, the Windows ME/2000 default Start menu automatically hides infrequently clicked shortcuts under expand arrows in what is known as Personalized Menus. To disable Personalized Menus in Windows ME/2000,

click Start | Settings | Taskbar and Start Menu | uncheck Use Personalized Menus.

Steve's Tech Resource

The Web Development, Internet, Software, Hardware, and Multimedia Resource



Copyright © 2000-2011 Steve's Tech Resource