

# Part I

## Programs, Junk, and Other Things that Get in the Way

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Cleaning Up the Desktop and Start Menu

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## Chapter 1

# Removing Programs and Unneeded Files



**M**icrosoft Windows XP is a storehouse of programs, information, and data. After all, keeping up with digital information is the reason you have a computer in the first place. However, after a period of time you may end up with too many programs and certainly too many files lurking around your computer. All of these programs and files can slow things down because the more that Windows XP has to keep track of and manage programs and files, the slower the operating system is likely to work. So to speed up Windows XP, you should get in the habit of removing old programs you no longer use and removing old files the system no longer needs. This process is much like cleaning out your closet. The more clutter you can remove, the more quickly Windows XP can find what it needs. This chapter explores how to remove old programs and clean out unneeded files. It also discusses some utilities and automatic settings that can help Windows XP stay trim and fit.

## Removing Old Programs

A program is a collection of computer codes designed to provide you with some feature or complete some task. Most everything you do in Windows XP involves running some kind of program. Programs include internal programs, such as Windows XP Media Player, as well as various programs you might install and use on the computer, such as Microsoft Office, various games and utilities, Internet programs, e-mail programs, and so on. Programs are necessary and important if you want Windows XP to meet your specific computing needs. However, too many programs have a tendency to clutter the system, and poorly written programs and older games can even conflict with each other and cause you problems. Windows XP allows you to use as many programs as your hard drive can hold, but too many programs running at the same time can consume your computer's memory and slow things down.

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### Removing Programs with Add or Remove Programs

If you want Windows XP to work as fast as possible, it's a good idea to remove old programs periodically that you no longer use. My basic philosophy is to keep any program installed on my computer that I find useful. We all have a tendency to “over install” programs, so from time to time it's a good idea to clean out Windows XP's closet of programs and remove old programs you no longer want or need. Windows XP makes removing programs rather easy with Add or Remove Programs in Control Panel. The following steps show you how to remove an old program you no longer want. If you are familiar with using Add or Remove Programs, you can skip this section.

#### Note

Many programs generate files. For example, let's suppose you are using Adobe Photoshop Elements to edit photos. You can save those photos as Photoshop Elements files. However, if you remove Photoshop Elements from your computer, Windows XP will no longer be able to read your photo files. Because Windows XP needs a program to open a file, it will search the system for a suitable program to open a specific file type. If there is no compatible program, the file cannot be opened.

The lesson is simply this: Do not remove programs that produce specific files you will later want to open. If you need to remove the program, first open those files and save them as a different file type that another program on your computer can open.

1. Click Start ⇨ Control Panel.
2. Click Add or Remove Programs.
3. In the Add or Remove Programs dialog box (see Figure 1-1), see the list of programs installed on your computer. Scroll through the list and locate a program that you want to remove and select it. Notice that Windows XP tells you how much disk space the program consumes, how often you use the program, and when you last used it.
4. Click the Change/Remove button.
5. A dialog box appears asking if you are sure you want to delete the program. Click Yes.
6. The program is uninstalled from your computer and the Add or Remove Programs dialog box is updated to reflect the deletion.

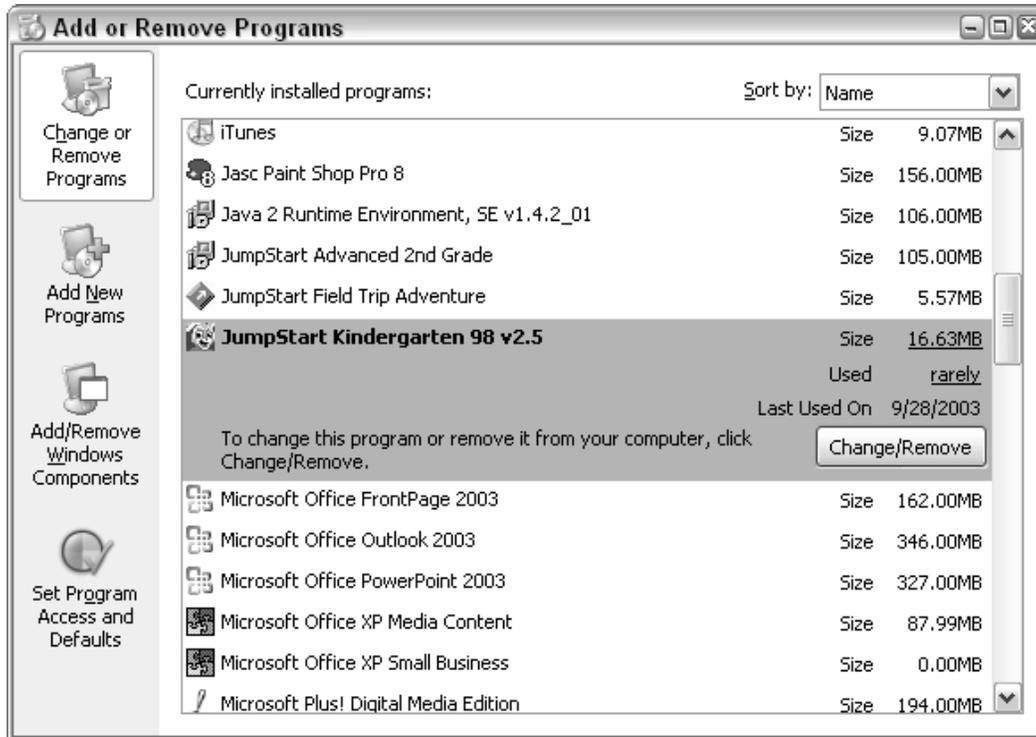


Figure 1-1: Select a program to see usage information about it.

## Tip

If you start to remove a program and you get a message telling you that the program cannot be removed because it is in use, press Ctrl-Alt-Del. This opens the Windows Task Manager. On the Applications tab, select the application you are trying to delete and click End Task. Close the Task Manager. You will now be able to delete the program. If this still doesn't work, you can reboot your computer in Safe Mode (hold down the F8 key at startup). Once in Safe Mode, you should be able to remove the program.

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## Removing Shared Files

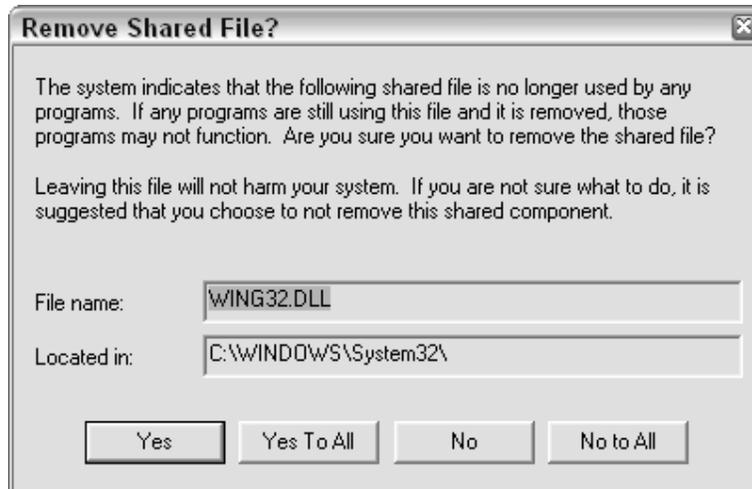
It is not uncommon for various applications to share internal program files among themselves. For example, the Microsoft Office suite is a collection of applications that work together. To save disk space and reduce file redundancy, the programs may share various

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### Removing Shared Files *(Continued)*

resource files. As such, when you choose to delete a program from your computer, you may see a dialog box, such as the one shown in Figure 1-2, telling you that a shared file exists in the program you are deleting. When this happens, what should you do?



**Figure 1-2:** You can safely remove shared files that are no longer in use.

The dialog box gives you a clue about the file's importance. For example, Figure 1-2 tells you that Windows XP has checked the file and determined that it is no longer in use. In this case, it is safe simply to click Yes and remove the file. However, if the dialog box tells you that other programs are using the file, you should click No and keep the file on your computer. There is nothing worse than removing a program only to find out later that the program's removal made other programs stop working correctly. So if you feel safe in removing the file, go ahead; when in doubt, leave the file on your system in case it is needed by another program.

## Manually Removing Programs

Add or Remove Programs gives you an easy way to remove programs you no longer want. However, in some cases, not all programs installed in Windows XP show up in Add or Remove Programs. In fact, only programs that are written for Windows XP appear there. Other programs that may work fine in Windows XP are not necessarily written for that operating system. You frequently see this in games or utilities you download from the



Internet that still use .ini files. In this case, you can remove the program directly using the uninstall feature built into the program.

If you click Start ⇨ All Programs, you can see a listing of programs installed on your computer, including those that may not appear in Add or Remove Programs. If you point to a particular program, you'll often see a context menu appear that also has an uninstall option. Click the uninstall option; the program will walk you through a series of short steps that remove the program from your computer.

In some cases, you may not have an uninstall option. This typically occurs with poorly written programs or specific utilities that you may have download from the Internet. As a last-ditch effort, you can remove the program by simply deleting the program's folder in C:\Program Files. When you delete the program's folder, you remove the core code of the program, but you do not remove any Registry settings and other file configurations, which could spawn error messages and other hiccups from time to time. However, if you can't seem to remove a program in any other way, try the manual deletion method. Click Start ⇨ Run. Then type **c:\program files** and click OK. This opens the Program Files folder where you can locate the folder of the desired application. Right-click the program's folder and click Delete. Keep in mind that this action should be a last-ditch effort.

### Tip

If you install a program that seems to wreak havoc on your system, remember that Windows XP has an excellent restore feature that allows you to return your computer to its previous state before you installed the program. Click Start ⇨ All Programs ⇨ Accessories ⇨ System Tools ⇨ System Restore and follow the simple wizard that appears. The restore feature will not remove any files you have created or delete any e-mail, so your personal items are safe and sound.

In some cases, once you have removed a program, Add or Remove Programs still shows the program as being installed. This occurs when the uninstall process doesn't actually remove the program listing from Windows XP, even though the actual program has been removed. You can remove these bogus entries in two different ways. First, visit [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com) and download the TweakUI utility for Windows XP. This utility helps you remove leftover entries. You can also edit the Registry directly and remove the offending entries. The following steps show you how.

### Caution

Incorrectly editing the Registry can cause serious damage to Windows XP. It is always best to perform actions in Windows XP without editing the Registry unless absolutely necessary. If you

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choose to edit the Registry (which I touch on in various places throughout this book), make sure you work carefully and follow the steps presented exactly.

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1. Click Start ⇨ Run. Type **regedit** in the dialog box and click OK.
2. In the Registry Editor, navigate to the following Registry key: HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\ Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall.
3. After you click the Uninstall key, right-click the Uninstall folder and select Export.
4. In the dialog box that appears, click Desktop in the Save In box, type **delete** in the File Name box, and click Save.
5. Each key under Uninstall represents a program that appears in Add or Remove Programs. To determine which key represents which program, click the key and view the following values, which tell you the display name in Add or Remove Programs.
6. After you locate the desired key that represents the offending program listing, right-click the key and click Delete.
7. After you delete the key, open Add or Remove Programs and verify that the program has been deleted from the list.
8. If the program list is not correct in Add or Remove Programs, you can double-click the delete.reg file on your desktop to restore the original list of programs in the Registry. If the program list is correct in Add or Remove Programs, right-click the delete.reg file on your desktop and select Delete.

## Removing Spyware and Adware

For all the wonderful things the Internet provides, it also offers a lot of junk that can creep into your system without your knowledge. One of those common annoyances is “spyware” or “adware.” Both are programs that run in Windows XP without your knowledge. For instance, you may notice that Internet Explorer keeps popping up ads or the default home page in your browser randomly changes. All of these actions are caused by spyware and adware programs. Essentially, these types of programs contain malicious code that steals personal information about you from your computer and communicates that information to Internet servers or dumps random ads on your computer from the Internet. The end result is that companies end up getting information about you that you do not want to share and a bunch of junk shows up on your computer.



Spyware and adware programs are difficult to track down and uninstall yourself but I wholeheartedly recommend two free utilities that can decisively do the job for you. The first is Spybot, which is available for download from [www.safer-networking.org](http://www.safer-networking.org). Spybot is a small, safe utility recommended by *PC Magazine* that periodically scans your system for personal invasion programs and deletes them from your system. Spybot provides you with a simple interface (see Figure 1-3).



Figure 1-3: Spybot makes removing spyware and adware a cinch.

Another great utility is Ad-Aware. This utility, available for free at [www.lavasoftusa.com](http://www.lavasoftusa.com), essentially performs the same functions as Spybot and features a similar simple-to-use interface. You can scan your system for problems and then choose to fix those problems once the scan completes its job.

Either of these programs will get the job done. I strongly recommend you use one of them.



## Making Programs Start Faster

As humans, we have brains that can easily do several things at one time. As such, we want our computers to keep up with us. One of the frustrating things about computing is waiting for our computer to start an application that we want to use. We hate to wait. We want those applications to start quickly so we can get busy with the task at hand.

Windows XP generally does a good job of starting programs quickly. However, you can help it out, especially if you notice that program startup becomes sluggish. Keep in mind that many programs are complicated, especially advanced processing programs such as Microsoft Excel or Publisher or graphics programs such as Adobe Photoshop. Windows XP has to load a lot of information into memory and start the program's processes before you can use the program. So a little patience is warranted, but there are still some tricks that will help your programs start faster.

### Configuring Prefetch Settings

Windows XP includes a unique feature called “prefetching,” which means it guesses which programs you are likely to use. As you use your computer, Windows XP remembers the programs you use so that when you next boot Windows XP or access programs on it, portions of the program files are copied to the Prefetch folder on your hard drive. The next time you open the program, part of it is already available in the Prefetch folder, making it appear to open more quickly than before. In reality, the prefetching works by caching a small portion of the program paging setup and runtime information to the disk so that the program opens quickly.

In truth, if you use only two or three programs, prefetching works great and makes programs open more quickly. However, if you use a bunch of programs only once or rarely, the Prefetch folder will fill up with junk. Because Windows XP doesn't know your intentions, it keeps a portion of each program you use in the Prefetch folder at all times. Repeating this process over and over with many programs eventually causes the system to run more slowly than if you never used prefetching at all.

Fortunately, you can easily make changes to Windows XP's prefetching process. The following sections show you what to do.

#### Note

There is some controversy about working with the prefetch folder. Many people say it helps performance, while others say it does not. The effect you get on your system will probably vary. The least that cleaning the prefetch folder will do for you is help clear out some junk on your hard



disk. However, after you clean the prefetch folder, you may notice that some applications open more slowly the first time they run.

## CLEANING THE PREFETCH FOLDER

Think of the Prefetch folder as you do the Temp folder on your computer. Naturally, the more programs you use, the bigger the Prefetch folder grows. Over time, prefetching will actually slow things down. To regain some speed, delete the contents of the Prefetch folder about once a month. Remember that prefetching is designed to make programs load more quickly, so don't delete the contents more than once a month; this may actually cause programs to load more slowly because you will be preventing prefetching from doing its job. To delete the contents of the Prefetch folder, follow these steps:

1. Click Start → Run. In the dialog box that appears, type `c:\windows\prefetch`.
2. In the Prefetch folder (see Figure 1-4), click Edit → Select All. Right-click the selected files and click Delete, or just press the Delete key on your keyboard.

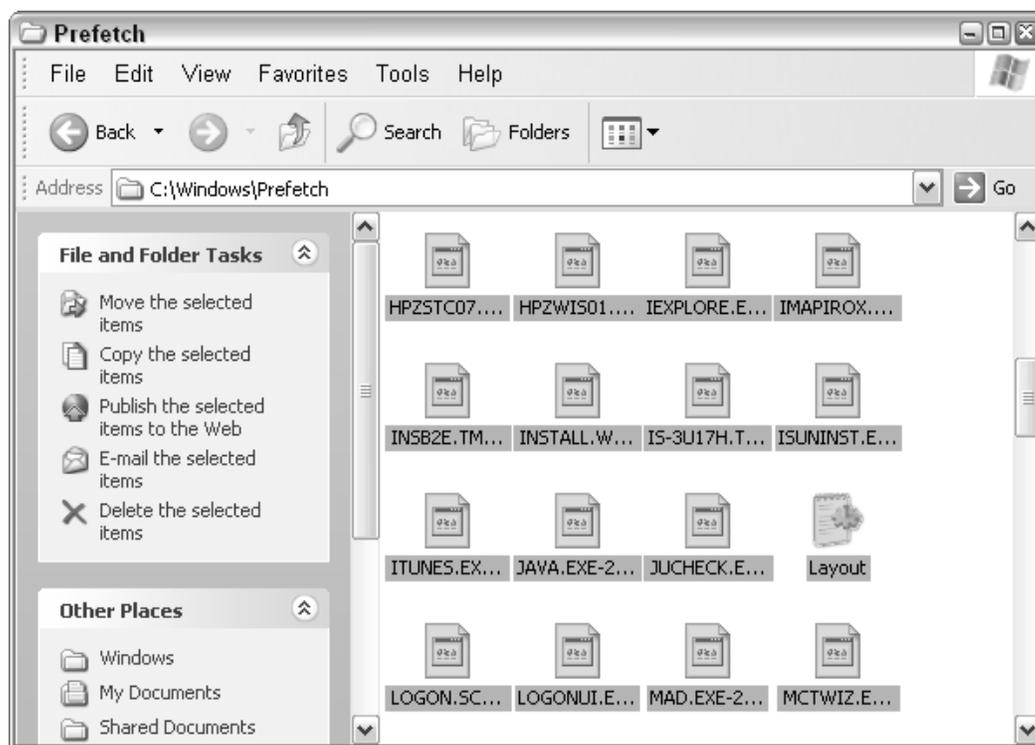


Figure 1-4: Delete all the files in the Prefetch folder.

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### Note

You may notice a `Layout.ini` file, also shown in Figure 1-4. This file is used by the Disk Defragmenter in Windows XP and contains a record of how the tool reorganized information after its most recent run. It is fine to delete this file along with the others.

### ADJUSTING PREFETCH SETTINGS

By editing the Registry, you can adjust how prefetching works in Windows XP. Depending on your system, the prefetching values may already be optimized, but you should check them out anyway. When you access prefetching in the Registry, you can configure the following values for prefetching:

- **0:** Disables prefetching
- **1:** Enables Application Launch Prefetch
- **2:** Enables Boot Prefetch
- **3:** Prefetches everything

If your computer has 512 MB RAM or more, setting 3 is probably best. It gives prefetching the most power; and because you have ample RAM installed, you should take advantage of the feature. However, if your computer has 256 MB RAM or so, you may want to experiment with setting 1 or 2. These give you faster launch times for applications but prevent excessive prefetching.

To examine your system's current configuration and make desired changes, follow these steps:

1. Click Start → Run. Type **regedit** and click OK in the dialog box provided.
2. In the Registry Editor, navigate to `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager\Memory Management\PrefetchParameters` (see Figure 1-5).
3. In the right pane, locate the `EnablePrefetcher` key. Double-click the key to open it.
4. In the key's dialog box, enter the desired value for the Value Data (see Figure 1-6).
5. Click OK and close the Registry Editor.

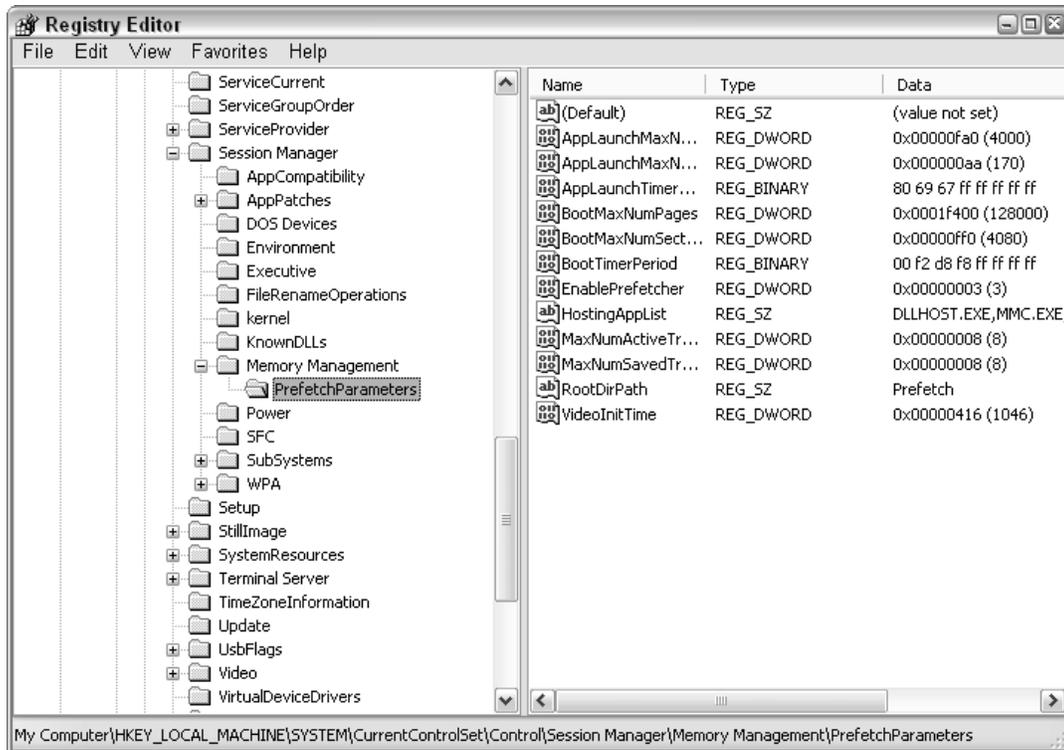


Figure 1-5: Navigate to PrefetchParameters.

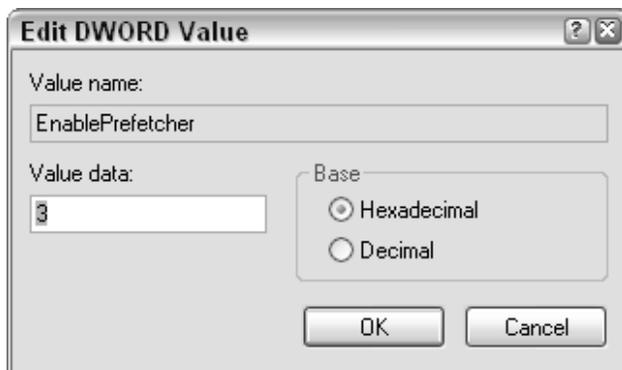


Figure 1-6: Enter a value from 0 to 3 in the Value Data field.

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### Caution

Keep in mind that a setting of 3 decreases overall boot time and makes applications start more quickly. Do not change this setting unless your computer does not have sufficient RAM.

### DISABLING PREFETCH ON SLOW SYSTEMS

If your Windows XP computer has low memory, such as 128 MB RAM or so, your best solution is to disable prefetching. Because you are low on RAM, you want all of the memory resources directed at the task at hand instead of applications that you may not use anyway. To disable prefetching, follow the Registry editing steps shown in the previous section but enter a value of 0 as the data value. This effectively turns off prefetching on your computer.

### Using the Intel Application Accelerator

The Intel Application Accelerator is performance software for Intel-powered computers. This application provides faster delivery of data from the hard drive to the processor and other system-level hardware. The end result is that applications start and run more quickly, boot time is reduced, and there is accelerated input/output for games, graphics applications, disk utilities, and media authoring applications. For all of you digital media lovers, this utility can certainly help speed up your system. The software also functions as a data prefetcher for Intel Pentium 4 processors and supports hard drives up to 137 GB.

Before you decide to use the Intel Application Accelerator, take note of the requirements:

- Windows 98 SE, Windows Me, Windows 2000, Windows NT 4.0, or Windows XP
- Motherboard with a supported chipset (see the next listing for supported chipsets)
- Intel Pentium 4, Intel Pentium III, Intel Pentium II, Intel Celeron, Intel Xeon, Intel Pentium III Xeon, or Intel Pentium II Xeon processor
- Ultra ATA/66 or Ultra ATA/100 compatible logic either on the motherboard or on an Ultra DMA PCI adapter card
- Ultra DMA BIOS
- Ultra ATA/66 or Ultra ATA/100 compatible IDE device (such as a hard drive)
- Intel Chipset Software (discussed later in this section)



You also need a supported chipset:

- Intel 810
- Intel 810E
- Intel 810E2
- Intel 815
- Intel 815E
- Intel 815EP
- Intel 815P
- Intel 820
- Intel 820E
- Intel 840
- Intel 845
- Intel 850
- Intel 860

Check your computer's hardware documentation to verify that it meets these requirements. Once you are sure that your computer meets them, you'll first need to download and install the Intel Chipset Software Installation Utility from [www.intel.com/design/software/drivers/platform/inf.htm](http://www.intel.com/design/software/drivers/platform/inf.htm). Install the software and reboot your computer. After you are done installing the utility, you need to download and install the Intel Application Accelerator, available from [www.intel.com/support/chipsets/IAA](http://www.intel.com/support/chipsets/IAA). Install the accelerator and reboot your computer. You should notice an improvement in the speed of your applications.

## Setting Application Priority

Windows XP enables you to set a priority for the applications that run on your computer. In a nutshell, if you have several applications and processes at work, which you always do because Windows XP runs many internal processes, you can boost a certain application you are using by adjusting the priority of that application. When you change the priority of the application, you make that application the “top dog”; it gets preference for processor cycles over other applications and processes. This feature can be useful when you are working

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on applications such as photo editing and multimedia applications, which demand a great amount of system resources.

You can easily adjust the priority of an application. Make sure you have opened the application; then follow these steps:

1. Press Ctrl-Alt-Del to bring up the Windows Task Manager.
2. Click the Processes tab and locate the process for the application you want to prioritize.
3. Right-click the application process, point to Set Priority, and then choose the desired priority from the pop-up menu (see Figure 1-7). Generally, a setting of AboveNormal or High will give your application a boost. Be careful about the Realtime setting; it prevents Windows from managing multiple processes and could bring your operating system to a standstill.

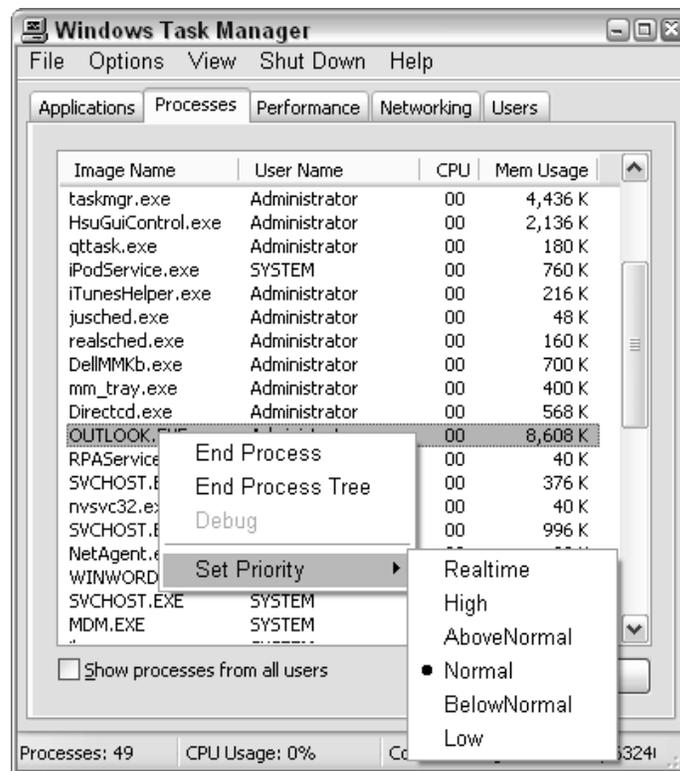


Figure 1-7: Set an application's priority to AboveNormal or High.



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## Antivirus Software and Speed

Antivirus software is a necessary evil in these days of computer viruses. If you have never experienced a computer virus, count yourself lucky. But don't depend on luck to keep you virus-free. Antivirus software is highly important—and a minimal investment for the service you receive. However, antivirus software performs a number of scanning processes that tend to make boot time and some applications, such as e-mail programs, slower.

Unfortunately, the software is working as fast as your computer processor and RAM will allow, and there isn't much you can do to speed up the application. Because antivirus software does a lot of work, you can expect some slowdowns here and there on your system.

Typically, antivirus software slows down the opening and closing of applications and zipped files because the antivirus software scans those files when the operating system accesses them. As a general rule, you may want to study the settings for your antivirus software and make sure it's not over-scanning your system. The software should scan at regular intervals, and it should scan your incoming e-mail because this is one place where you are likely to get a virus. However, the software may not need to scan your system every single day. You'll have to strike a balance between speed and safety. In the case of computer viruses, you should err on the side of caution. It doesn't do any good for your computer to work faster if you end up with lost data or a butchered operating system due to a computer virus. In this case, safety is much better than speed.

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## Cleaning Up Files

Why do files slow down a computer? Think of your computer as a filing cabinet. The more stuff you cram into a filing cabinet, the longer it takes you to locate what you need. The same scenario is true in your computer. The Windows XP file system maintains a master file table that it uses to look up where each file is located on the hard disk. When the master file table gets too big, it starts to fragment, which can cause your system to slow down because Windows XP has more difficulty finding what it needs in the master file table.

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### Cross-Reference

The more files you store, save, and resave, the more fragmentation of those files naturally occurs. Fragmentation can make your computer run more slowly. I cover fragmentation in more detail in Chapter 7.

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## Organizing Your Personal Files

Windows XP provides you with a default folder structure called My Documents to organize different kinds of files you generate. You can use those default folders any way you like. The point is simply this: Organizing your personal data helps you work faster in Windows XP. Storing your personal data in those folders does not speed up Windows XP per se but it greatly speeds up your ability to find what you are looking for.

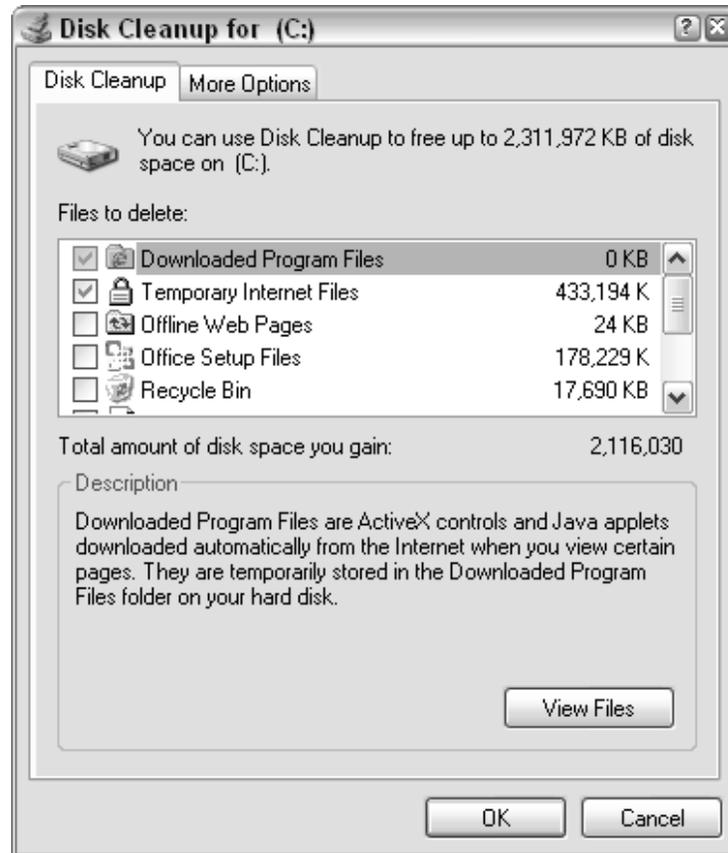
For older data files that you no longer use regularly, consider moving them to removable storage media, such as CDs or DVDs. You can store data on the removable disk and then delete it from your computer to free up disk space and reduce clutter on your computer. You can also store personal files on the Web as an easy way to create redundant copies of your data files for remote storage. Check out Xdrive ([www.xdrive.com](http://www.xdrive.com)) or SwapDrive ([www.swapdrive.com](http://www.swapdrive.com)) to get started.

## Removing Temporary Files

Windows XP uses many temporary files—often created when you use various programs as well as when you look at Web pages. Temporary files are a necessary part of the Windows operating system but, like prefetching, the system can get bogged down as temporary files pile up.

Your first step in cleaning up temporary files and giving your system an extra boost in speed is to run the Disk Cleanup utility. This utility scans your system for temporary files that can be safely removed. Get in the habit of running Disk Cleanup about once a month if you regularly use your computer. Follow these steps:

1. Click Start ⇨ My Computer.
2. Right-click the desired hard drive and click Properties.
3. On the General tab, click the Disk Cleanup button.
4. The utility performs a check on your system and eventually displays a dialog box showing the different categories of temporary files that can be deleted and the amount of disk space you can gain by deleting the files in each category. Review the dialog box and select the check box next to each category you want to clean up (see Figure 1-8).
5. If you click the More Options tab, you can also clean up Windows components you no longer want installed, old programs you no longer want to use, and System Restore point files (see Figure 1-9).



**Figure 1-8:** Choose the desired categories you want to clean up.

6. When you have made your selections, click OK and Yes to the confirmation message that appears. The clean-up process may take some time, depending on the number of files that must be removed.

## **Cleaning Up Internet Explorer Files**

Microsoft Internet Explorer is designed to make your Web surfing experience the best it can be. In the process, Internet Explorer collects temporary Internet files and records a history of Web pages you visit. While these features are useful for your surfing experience, all of those files and information clutter up your system unnecessarily after a period of time. It is



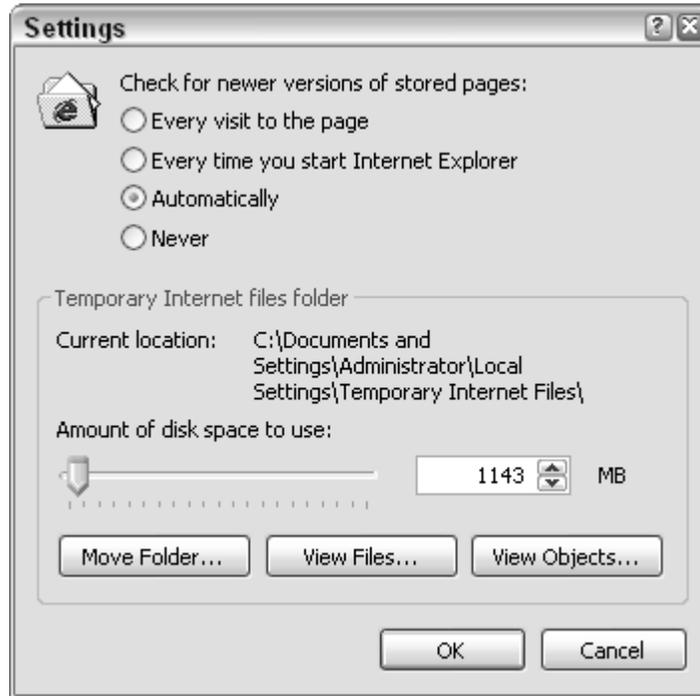
**Figure 1-9:** Clean up additional items on the More Options tab.

always a good idea to check your Internet Explorer settings and make sure these files are not stacking up unduly. Follow these steps:

1. Click Start ⇨ Control Panel ⇨ Internet Options.
2. On the General tab, click the Settings button under Temporary Internet Files.
3. The best setting in the Settings dialog box is for Internet Explorer to check for new pages automatically (see Figure 1-10). Internet Explorer does a good job of checking for updated pages so it's best to use the Automatically setting. For disk space usage, around 1100 MB is a good setting, assuming you have plenty of available disk space. When you near the threshold you have configured, Internet Explorer automatically begins deleting old pages and objects from its Temp



folder. This configuration helps you keep data that is actually useful but removes data that has become old. Click OK when you're done.



**Figure 1-10:** Use the Automatically setting and keep a lower amount of disk space usage, typically around 1 GB.

4. On the General tab under History (see Figure 1-11) notice that the history of pages you have visited is listed and that you can clear the history if you like. History is not critical in terms of wasted space and files but a default setting of 20 days serves you well and won't cause Internet Explorer unnecessarily to store an inordinate amount of history information. Adjust this setting as desired and click OK.

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## Cookies and Your Privacy

Cookies are small files that contain information about you so that you can interact with various Web sites. Cookies are common and necessary, and give you the kind of Web surfing experience you expect. However, cookies can also be a source of privacy invasion.

## Cookies and Your Privacy (Continued)

Internet Explorer attempts to reduce this possibility by enabling you to configure cookie security on the Privacy tab of Internet Options. The tab is self-explanatory. Strive for a setting that gives you a good combination of security and flexibility with your Web surfing. If you want more cookie control, there is a nice utility called Cookie Monitor that lets you see what cookies are being created and allows you to control them. You can get Cookie Monitor from Naturpic Software ([www.naturpic.com/cookie](http://www.naturpic.com/cookie)). To learn more about Internet cookies and blocking them, see also Chapter 12.



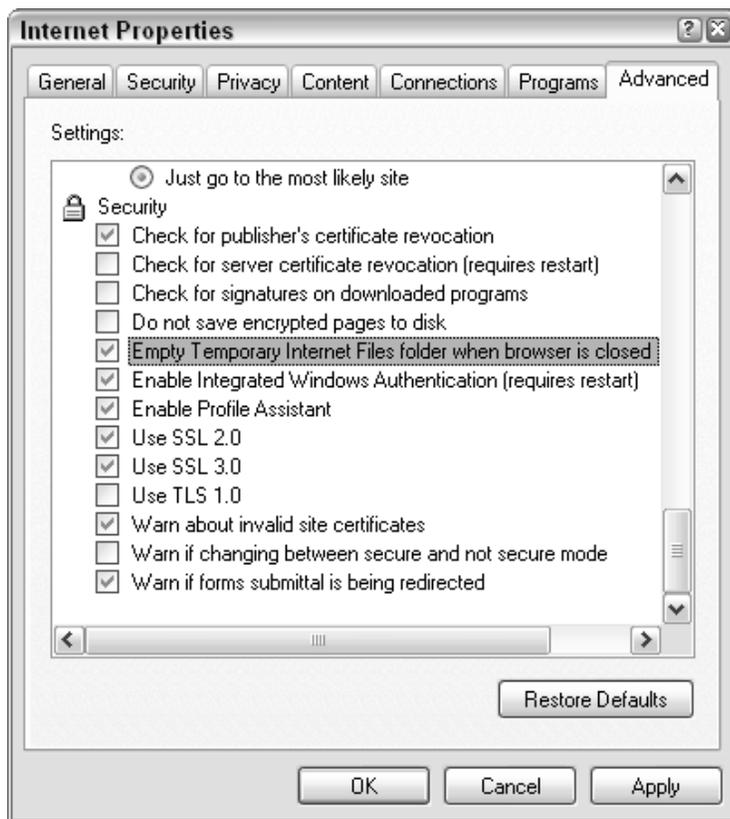
Figure 1-11: Configure the desired History setting.

Along with configuring settings for deleting temporary files, you can also have Internet Explorer automatically delete those files when you close Internet Explorer. This feature keeps Internet file junk to a minimum and prevents anyone from seeing the Internet sites



you have visited, which is particularly helpful if you are viewing private sites and data, such as e-mail, online banking, credit card statements, and so on. Naturally, deleting all temporary files each time you close Internet Explorer means the browser has to download those temporary files every time you use it. However, if you have a broadband connection, you are unlikely to notice much performance difference. To configure Internet Explorer to delete temporary files automatically each time you close it, follow these steps:

1. Click Start ⇨ Control Panel ⇨ Internet Options.
2. Click the Advanced tab.
3. On the Advanced tab, under the Security heading, click the “Empty Temporary Internet Files folder when browser is closed” check box and then click OK (see Figure 1-12).

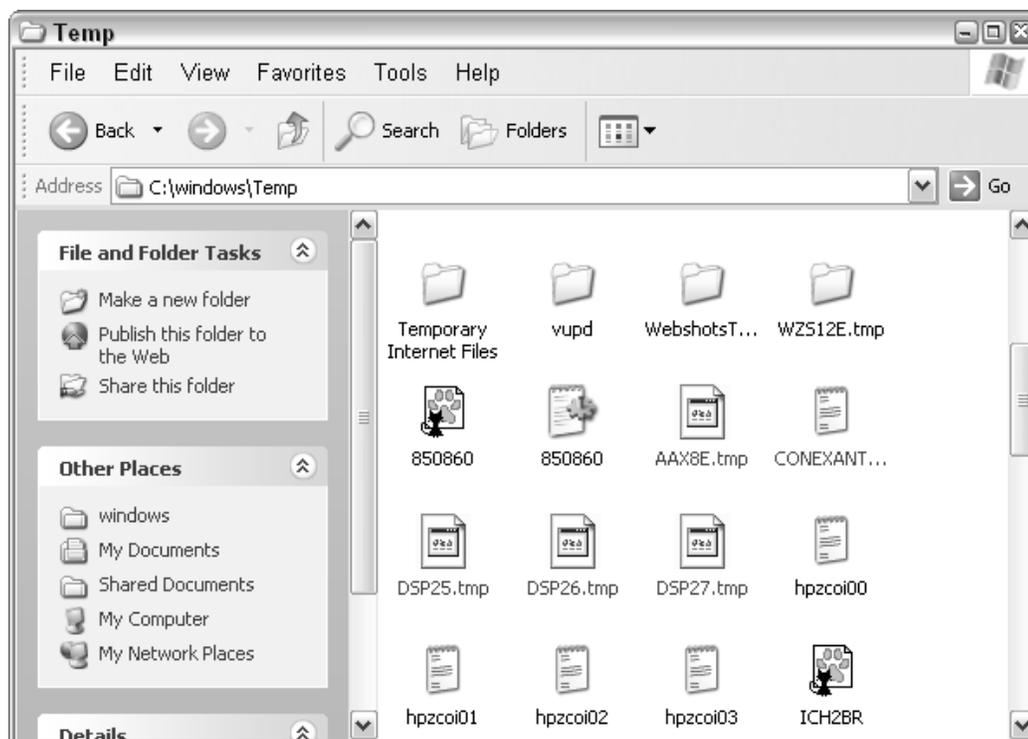


**Figure 1-12:** Choose this setting to have Internet Explorer delete all temporary Internet files whenever you close your browser.

## Manually Cleaning Up Your Temp Folder

Disk Cleanup is a handy tool for removing items from your Temp folder but manually removing them is faster—not to mention easy and safe. Just follow these steps:

1. Click Start ⇨ Run. In the dialog box that appears, type `c:\windows\temp` and click OK.
2. This opens the Temp folder (see Figure 1-13). You can delete everything in the Temp folder, including all subfolders. Click Edit ⇨ Select All and then just press the Delete key on your keyboard.



**Figure 1-13:** You can delete all items and subfolders in the Temp folder.

### Tip

All the items in the Temp folder are moved to the Recycle Bin, so you won't really free up any disk space until you empty the Recycle Bin.



## Automating Temp Folder Cleanup

If you automate the process of keeping the Temp folder cleaned out, you won't have to bother with the issue again.

First, you can use Disk Cleanup and create a Scheduled Task so that the cleanup process runs periodically without your intervention. For example, you could schedule Disk Cleanup to run each Wednesday in the middle of the night. To configure Disk Cleanup to run as a Scheduled Task, click Start ⇨ Control Panel ⇨ Scheduled Tasks. You can then launch the Scheduled Task wizard and follow the easy steps to select Disk Cleanup and configure when you want the utility to run.

In addition to Disk Cleanup, a number of third-party utilities handle Temp folder cleanup automatically. One good example is TempClean ([www.snapfiles.com/get/tempcleaner.html](http://www.snapfiles.com/get/tempcleaner.html)), which allows you to determine the folder that you want to keep clean, such as the Temp folder, Internet cache, Document History, and many others. Once you configure the utility, it does the work without any intervention from you.

There is an important issue to consider when using third-party cleanup tools. Many of these tools clean the Temp folder when you start your computer. This sounds like a good idea but this action can prevent you from installing software. For example, when you install software, temporary files are kept in the Temp folder. The software makes you reboot the computer but the cleanup utility deletes all of the temporary files upon reboot. This results in a failed software installation. So keep in mind that the Temp file is important for many different processes, including software installation. For this reason, I recommend that you use Disk Cleanup and create a Scheduled Task. This action allows you to keep your hard drive free of clutter but does not interfere with software installations or other processes.

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### Speed Up Searching By Avoiding Compressed Files

If you have many zipped (compressed) files on your computer, the Windows XP file-searching feature can become rather sluggish as it wades through all of those compressed files. You can quickly stop the search function from looking through compressed files, which greatly speeds up search results. To enable this feature, click Start ⇨ Run. In the dialog box, type the following:

```
regsvr32 C:\winnt\system32\zipfldr.dll /u
```

If the files are installed in the Windows folder, you can substitute "windows" for "winnt" in the command line. To turn searching back on for zipped files, type the following:

```
regsvr32 C:\winnt\system32\zipfldr.dll
```

Use "windows" for "winnt" if the files are located in the Windows folder.

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