

MC³ OFFICIALS

President : Larry Freeman lpfreeman@hotmail.com
Vice President : Bob Wagner rmwagner@ameritech.net
Secretary : Shirley Teetsov
Treasurer: Lyle Giese Lyle@lcrcomputer.com
Database Manager : Dan Weise
Newsletter Editor : Lucë York info@Mc3ComputerClub.org (for articles & suggestions ONLY)
Past President : John Katkus
Webmaster: Cindi Carrigan
Board Members : Jack Luff ; Dave Lutes ; Jim Bierle ; Bruce Eckersberg

Questions & Answers

Q: Is there an inexpensive CAD program available?

A: I went to <http://freshmeat.net> and searched for 'cad' and then scrolled down to OS and selected Windows. They listed 14 entries. Not all were for full-featured programs: some were add-ons for specific purposes/programs. I am not qualified to further comment on those listings, but there appear to be some free CAD programs listed there.

Q: Can I assign a Drive Letter to a USB external device?

A: Yes, but with two large limitations here. The drive letter cannot already be in use and Windows may change its mind later.

You will get familiar with this procedure<GRIN>. With the external drive plugged in:

- Open Control Panel (classic mode)
- Open Administrative Tools
- Select Computer Management
- Select Disk Management

On the right side, lower half, find your USB External drive. Right click on it. Select "Change Drive letter and Paths." Click on Change. Select desired drive letter in drop down box and then click on OK.

Windows will remember this selection until something else uses that drive letter or it just decides to forget it, whichever comes first. Then just repeat above.

Some may say there is an easier way or a different method to do this. In Windows, there is almost always more than one way to do anything. But in case the drive did not get a drive letter automatically (sometimes happens), this is the easiest way to give it a drive letter. And if you learn/memorize one method, this will almost always work.

Q: Questions about hibernate or power saving modes.

A: Turn them off. They might work sometimes, but I have seen them fail more often than succeed and they are not worth the effort. Don't forget to check the Network card in Network properties and make sure power saving is turned off against the network card.

Q: How can I keep passwords safe and portable?

A: As mentioned at the meeting, use a USB stick and encryption. Truecrypt is good for encrypting a portion of the USB stick for keeping these kinds of things.

Q: I can't get Vista to shut down.

A: Shutdown problems with Windows continues to be one of the hardest things to fix. The reason is that logging has been turned off and the errors that cause this are not logged for review later. Google for 'Vista shutdown problems' and you will get plenty of things to try.

One of the classic issues is a corrupted sound file for the shutdown noise that Windows makes. Next is drivers for hardware (video, motherboard chipset, etc.), and finally a corrupt registry; these are some of the most likely reasons based on my quick scanning of the noted Google search.

The notes with this question indicate it might be related to adding a specific add-on card. I would check for updated drivers for this card and its related software first.

Q: AVG won't update.

A: Easy. Uninstall AVG and re-install. If you can't uninstall or uninstall fails to complete, re-install anyway. AVG is fairly good at handling this condition.

Q: How can a new secure password be created?

A: Use upper/lower case letters and numbers or symbols. I like to make use of an obscure date you can remember or use a method of substituting numbers for letters in a word. Like meow and use m30w instead. Or mike and use M1k3.

A couple of common sense rules for passwords:

You have to be able to remember them. Don't let your computer remember them for you. It will forget someday.

Don't change them too often. You will forget which one you are currently using.

Don't write them on your keyboard or on a post-it stuck to your monitor.

Q: Router passwords.

A: I don't like changing passwords on home routers if you cannot access the admin functions from the Internet. You will forget the password, because you use it like once or twice a year.

With almost all home routers, you have to be connected to the internal home network in order to access the admin functions of the router. Changing the password does little to increase security. But if you insist on changing the default, Adam and I will always write it down and tape it to the bottom of your router (being careful to not cover air vent holes). We won't be back to work on it for at least 6 months, and do you think we will remember that you changed the password to your middle name that we don't know?

But we also know how to do a factory reset on them...

Q: IBM ThinkPad and have lost the password for it.

A: It depends on whether you mean the Windows password or a BIOS password. If Windows, yes. I have CDs for that purpose. If BIOS password, call IBM, they may have a BIOS reset procedure that will work and they usually do not charge for that information.

Q: Is it safe to remove multiple older java updates? Windows updates?

A: Maybe for Java. Once in a while, we run into a program that requires a specific version of Java. Usually, they require a certain version or newer.

Windows Updates? What you see in Add/Remove Programs is a link to removing Windows Updates. You do not want to remove those.

In your [C:\Windows](#) directory, you will find directories called KB12345 (numbers may and will vary). Those are safe to remove. Those contain the code needed to remove specific Windows updates.

When was the last time you had to remove a specific Windows Update? I haven't.

Q: How can I delete temp files left hanging around?

A: Go to the Start menu → Run.

Type in %temp%

Windows Explorer will open up at your temp directory. You can safely delete everything here.

Some files may not delete as some programs may have them open.

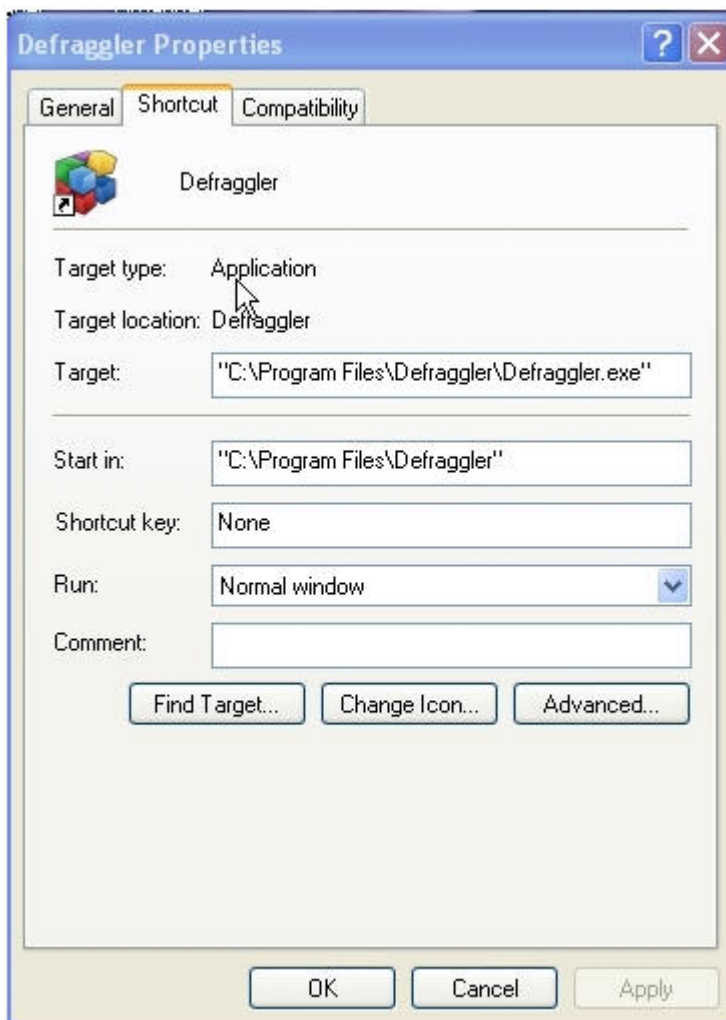
Temp files do not always end with .tmp. Most are now identified by a leading ~ in the file name.



Keyboards at War with One Another

Late one evening, my XP Pro PC started acting up. Data entry from the keyboard was erratic, but it was late, so I turned it off, figured "it's just flakey Windows and it'll probably go away when I start up the next day."

The next morning, Windows launches fine, but when I double clicked any desktop icon, the associated program did NOT launch; instead I got the link's properties box that one would expect by right clicking the mouse and selecting 'properties'.



So I couldn't launch any programs. Right clicking the mouse had no effect whatsoever.

Poking around I discovered the CTRL+ALT+DEL would launch Task Manager and that File > New Task would allow me to browse.



So I browsed to the Anti-Virus program and ran it, thinking maybe I'd gotten a virus. The AntiVirus didn't find any problem.

I had a feeling something was wrong with the mouse or keyboard. I removed the USB keyboard connector from the USB hub and when re-inserted, Windows discovered the keyboard like it should. Same with the USB mouse.

I thought about uninstalling the keyboard and mouse drivers, thinking they were corrupted so I needed access to Control Panel > Device Manager. I poked around until I found out how to launch Control Panel from Task Manager. Some Control Panel apps could be launched, others couldn't, because of the inability to navigate with ordinary mouse clicks or keyboard "enter" or "tab".

After some messing around, I concluded that the problem was keyboard associated when it acted as though the ALT key was stuck: I could cycle between open Control panel programs with just the TAB key, doing what ALT+TAB normally does but without the ALT key being held down.

I decided to plug in the USB keyboard directly to the motherboard, bypassing the USB hub, thinking maybe the USB hub was dicey. When I pulled the PC case out away from the wall to find its USB connector on the back, I noticed that the PS2 mouse connector was open with nothing connected, but that the keyboard PS2 connector had a connector/cable plugged into it. Huh? What's that all about? At the end of the cable I found an older PS2 'ergonomic' split keyboard, one that had gotten flakey in its old age, and which I'd replaced with a new USB split keyboard several months ago. However, when the new USB keyboard arrived, I'd just plugged it into the USB hub and it worked.

Windows XP works fine with 2 keyboards. Any key strike from either keyboard is OK. I'd left the old PS2 keyboard connected, standing off to one side, lying up against the flatbed scanner, to avoid the hassle of pulling the case out and disconnecting it. Apparently, something knocked against the old PS2 keyboard so that one or some of its keys were held down so that it was in conflict with my new USB keyboard. Disconnecting the old PS2 keyboard solved the problem of the inability to navigate or launch programs. The box runs fine.

Moral of the story - disconnect old junk and throw it away.

--Dan Weise