

# XP START MENU CUSTOMIZATIONS

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Where does all the stuff on the "Start" and "All Programs" Menus come from? When you click the Start button, Windows XP merges the following 3 folders to create the "Start" and "All Programs" Menus that you see:

C:\Documents&Settings\All Users\Start Menu\

C:\Documents&Settings\All Users\Start Menu\Programs\

C:\Documents&Settings\

NOTE: The following customizations refer to the "XP" Start menu and not the "Classic Start menu". [Right-click Start > Properties > Start Menu tab > Start menu selected (not Classic Start Menu)]. The "Classic" Start Menu looks like Windows 98. **WARNING: Some of the changes shown below affect all users on the PC.**

1. **ICON SIZE:** You can make the Start Menu Icons Large or Small: [Right-click Start > Properties > Start Menu tab > Customize (not Classic Start menu Customize)]. From there, select Large Icons or small Icons.
2. **FAVORITES:** The upper left hand section of the Start Menu is for Personal Favorites Icons. To add a Program shortcut to the favorites, simply right-click on any desired Program shortcut and click "Pin to Start Menu". To remove an Icon, right-click the Icon and click "Unpin from Start Menu".
3. **RECENT PROGRAMS:** The lower left hand section of the Start Menu contains Icons for the Programs most recently used. This area displays however many program Icons that are set in the Start Menu Properties. To change the number of Icons displayed: (Right-click Start > Properties > Start Menu tab > Customize (not Classic) > Number of programs on Start Menu).
4. **ALL PROGRAMS Menu**
  - a. **FAVORITES.** The first section (upper left-hand) of the All Programs Menu is a place to put more favorites. Icons can be dragged to this section using Click & Drag. (Warning: This affects all Users).
  - b. **SORTING:**
    - i. To sort the Icons & Folders, you must right-click in an "active" area of the "All Programs" menu. If necessary, try right-clicking different areas until you see "Sort by Name" on the list of available actions.
    - ii. If right-clicking does not give you the Context Menu allowing you to sort, try this (Right-click Start > Properties > Customize > Advanced tab). Scroll down to "Enable dragging and dropping" and click the box to check it. OK, OK.
  - c. **MENU TOO WIDE:** Menu is too wide / too big / too many entries to view. If the All Programs text is so wide that the columns run off the right-hand edge of the screen and you cannot see all the Start Icons, try these tips:
    - 1) The width of each Start Menu column depends on the width (text length) of the longest entry on the menu. Here is an easy way to find and shorten the offending entries.
      - Change the Start Menu layout to "Scroll Programs" mode: (Right-click Start button > Properties > Customize button > Advanced tab). Scroll down the list of Start Menu Items and check the box called " Scroll Programs". Click OK, OK to exit.
      - Open the Start Menu > All Programs and see that it is now in one long column. You can easily find the longest names for the folders and shortcuts. Rename the longest entries to make them shorter (Right-click the item > Rename). **WARNING: These changes will affect ALL USERS. NOTE: Changing folder names can create duplicate All Programs Menu entries if you remove and reinstall the program that created the Folder.**
        - Then turn "Scroll Programs" mode back off by un-checking its box. The "All Programs" columns should now all be narrower and fit better onto the screen.

- 2) Change the Menu text to a narrower font: Go to: (*Control Panel > Display > Appearance Tab > Advanced > Menu item*). Try changing the "Menu" Font to Arial Narrow (I like to make it bold by clicking the "B") . *WARNING: This affects the Menu text on all windows on the system in your user account.*
  - 3) If available for your Theme, you can make the default Font size smaller or larger. (*Right-click on the Desktop > Appearance tab > Font size box*). Note: Many themes only allow "Normal" Font size.
  - 4) Put the Display into a higher screen resolution. This makes all text smaller. You can then make the desired text items larger using the options in my IMPROVE DISPLAY READABILITY XP" sheet. *WARNING: This affects all kinds of visual items. Be careful.*
  - 5) Last resort, make the Display DPI smaller. *WARNING: This affects everything.* (*Control Panel > Display > Settings Tab > Advanced > General tab > select "Custom setting", then click & drag the ruler*).
- d. CUSTOM FOLDERS FOR THE "ALL PROGRAMS" MENU: You can simplify and clean-up your "All Programs" menu by creating custom folders and then dragging closely related Program items into those folders.
- 1) Before starting this project, consider the following concepts.
    - ✓ The "All Programs" Menu is a compilation of Icons from two folders. An "All Users" Programs folder and your "Username" Programs folder.  
*C:\Documents&Settings\All Users\Start Menu\Programs\.*  
*C:\Documents&Settings\<Your User Name>\Start Menu\Programs\*
    - ✓ When new Programs are installed on your PC, the installer usually puts the program start Icons in the "All Users" Program folder so that they show up for all users, therefore all custom folders are best put in the "All Users" Program folder.
    - ✓ I do not recommend using your "Username" (Start Menu) Programs folder for custom folders, because dragging Icons from the "All Users" Program menu into personal folders creates unintended consequences.
    - ✓ Never try to drag items into a folder on the actual Start > "All Programs" menu. Use the folder view in the path shown next.
  - 2) To add a new custom folder to the Start, "All Programs" menu, first go to: (*C:\ProgramData\Microsoft\Windows\Start Menu\Programs\*). *NOTE: Any changes to this folder will affect all users. In this example, I then create a folder called "UTILITY Programs". This is where I put all my General Purpose & Antispyware Programs, etc.*
  - 3) Click "New folder" and create your custom folder. Now as a test, click the "Start" Icon and look in the "All Programs" menu. Your new folder should be there.
  - 4) Go back to the new folder in the path of step "2", and drag any desired program Icons that are shown in that folder into your new folder. This will reduce the number of individual items shown on the "All Programs" menu.
  - 5) *NOTE: This new folder will appear on the "All Programs" Menu for each User Account on the PC.*
  - 6) *WARNING: Moving or removing any "All Programs" menu entries will affect all users.*
5. **HIGHLIGHT NEWLY INSTALLED PROGRAMS:** This is an annoyance that is on by default. To stop the highlighting of newly installed programs in the Start menu: (*Right-click the Start*

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*Icon > Properties > Start Menu tab > Customize*). Un-check the box near the top for:  
" Highlight newly installed programs".

6. **For** more details and graphic images on this topic, just Google: XP Start Menu Customize.