BIG BOOK OF Hacks

Windows Hacks

Tips & Tools for unlocking the power of your Windows PC

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BIG BOOK OF
Windows Hacks
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HACK 16: A Grab Bag of Great Vista Interface Hacks

Want more ways to mold Windows Vista’s interface to your wishes? There’s plenty for you here.

Windows Vista’s interface is just begging you to hack it. Whether you want to change ClearType settings, remove desktop icons or more, there’s something here you’ll like.

Hack ClearType

There’s one universal truth you can say about ClearType—most people either hate it or love it. With Windows Vista, this font-smoothing technology, designed primarily for laptops and LCDs, is turned on by default. Some people complain that ClearType makes text hard to read and fuzzy; others say it makes text far easier on the eyes.

You can, however, turn off ClearType. To do it through the GUI, right-click the desktop and select Personalize→Windows Color and Appearance→Open classic appearance properties for more color...
Figure 2-4.
Tuning ClearType on Windows Vista

options→Effects. The screen shown in Figure 2-4 appears. In the drop-down box, select Standard, and click OK and OK again. ClearType is now turned off.

You can also turn off ClearType using the Registry. Launch the Registry Editor by typing `regedit` at the Start Search box or a command prompt (see Chapter 13 for details). Go to `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop`. Set the `FontSmoothing` value to 1, and set the `FontSmoothingType` to 1. Exit the Registry and reboot.

If you want to use ClearType, but would like to fine-tune the way it displays type, go to the ClearType Tuner at [www.microsoft.com/typography/ClearType/tuner/tune.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/typography/ClearType/tuner/tune.aspx). You’ll be walked through a series of screens like the one shown in Figure 2-5. In each screen, you’ll have a choice of which type looks best. Choose it and click Next until the last screen, where you’ll click Finish.

When you visit the ClearType Tuner web site, you’ll be prompted to install an ActiveX control for tuning ClearType. Even if you don’t install the ActiveX control, you’ll be able to tune ClearType straight from the web site, without the control.

If you prefer the Registry approach, you can hack the Registry to tune ClearType as well. To do it this way, launch the Registry Editor by typing `regedit` at the Start Search box or a command prompt (see Chapter 13 for details). Go to `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop`. Set the `FontSmoothingOrientation` value to 0 if you have a CRT monitor, 1 if you have an LCD monitor, or 2 if you have a BGR monitor (which is extremely rare). Unless you know you have a BGR monitor, don’t use 2. The `FontSmoothingGamma` value sets the brightness. You can set it to anything between 1000 and 2000. (Higher is brighter.) Exit the Registry. You might need to reboot for the

### QUICK HACK

#### REMOVE SHORTCUT ARROWS FROM DESKTOP ICONS

If you don’t like the annoying arrows that appear on icons on your Windows Vista desktop, it’s easy to get rid of them. Download the free Vista Shortcut Overlay Remover ([www.frameworkx.com/Frameworkx/solution.aspx?id=632](http://www.frameworkx.com/Frameworkx/solution.aspx?id=632)). It will let you reduce or remove the arrows that appear on shortcuts on your Windows Vista Desktop. Run the program, then select whether you want a small, light arrow or no arrow at all for shortcuts, and click Apply. Then log off and log back on again, and your changes will take effect. Run the program again and select the normal-sized arrow if you want the default shortcut arrows back.
changes to take effect. For the FontSmoothingGamma value, you may need to experiment until you have the right brightness for your system.

This Registry-editing technique works on Windows XP as well as Windows Vista.

Remove the Text from Desktop Icons
Don’t like the presence of text beneath the icons on your desktop? It’s easy to remove them. Right-click an icon and select Rename. Then, while holding down the Alt key, type 255 on the keypad, then click the icon. The text will disappear from your desktop. If you’re using a laptop, you’ll need to turn on numlock, and use the K key for the letter 2, and the I key for the letter 5, to enter 255. Figures 2-6 and 2-7 show the original and result.

This hack works on Windows XP as well as Windows Vista.

Use Checkboxes to Select Items in Windows Explorer
If you often use Windows Explorer to perform actions on multiple files at once, such as copying or deleting, you’ll appreciate a different way to select multiple files—via check boxes rather than having to hold down Ctrl while you select each.

To turn on the feature, in Windows Explorer select Organize→Folder and Search Options→View. Scroll to the bottom of the screen, and check the box next to “Use check boxes to select items.” Click OK. From now on, as you move your cursor in Windows Explorer, a check box shows up next to each file. To select the file, check the box. Select as many files as you’d like, and then perform an operation on multiple files as you would normally. Figure 2-8 shows the hack in action.

Kill the File Deletion Confirmation Box
When you’re using User Account Control (UAC) and you want to delete a file, you have to run the metaphorical gauntlet before you can actually delete the file. First the delete confirmation box...
appears, and then after that the UAC authorization box appears. If you’d like, you can eliminate the delete confirmation box.

Right-click the Recycle Bin, select Properties, and uncheck the box next to “Display delete confirmation dialog” (see Figure 2-9). Then click OK. From now on, no boxes will appear when you delete a file—any file, not just system files. So be careful before making this change. You could, of course, use the Recycle Bin to restore any files you accidentally deleted.

If you turn off the delete confirmation dialog box, make sure that you don’t also select “Do not move files to the Recycle Bin.” If you do that, when you delete a file accidentally, you won’t be able to restore it from the Recycle Bin.

Get Back Your Favorite Desktop Icons

Windows Vista does away with a number of familiar desktop icons from previous versions of Windows, such as My Documents, My Computer, and My Network. (In Windows Vista, there is no “My” in from of them—they’re Documents, Computer, and Network.) If you feel nostalgic for them, it’s easy to get them back. Right-click the desktop and select Personalize. On the lefthand side of the screen, select Change Desktop Icons. The screen shown in Figure 2-10 appears. Check the boxes next to the icons you want to appear, and click OK.

CHANGE THE REGISTRATION NAME AND COMPANY NAME IN WINDOWS

Your copy of Windows includes a registration name (your name), and your company name, if Windows was installed by your company. You’ll see them if you right-click My Computer (in Windows XP), or Computer (in Windows Vista) and select Properties. You can change them both with a Registry hack. Launch the Registry Editor by typing regedit at the Start Search box or a command prompt (see Chapter 13 for details). Go to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion. Edit the RegisteredOwner string and type the name you want to be for the registered owner. Then do the same for the RegisteredOrganization string. Exit the Registry, and the changes will take effect.
**Speed Up Windows Flip 3D**

Windows Flip 3D is one of Windows Vista’s coolest new features, but if your hardware isn’t up to snuff, its operation can be jagged and sluggish. You can speed it up and smooth its animations by limiting the number of windows it displays in 3D.

Launch the Registry Editor by typing `regedit` at the Start Search box or a command prompt (see Chapter 13 for details). Go to `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\DWM`. Create a new DWORD and name it `Max3Dwindows`. Set the value to the maximum number of windows you want displayed. If you have severe performance problems, set it at 4; you can always increase the number later. Exit the Registry Editor. You’ll need to restart Vista’s Desktop Windows Manager (DWM) for the change to take effect. Launch an elevated command prompt by typing `cmd` in the search box and pressing Ctrl-Shift-Enter. Type `net stop uxsms` and press Enter. Then type `net start uxsms` and press Enter. You can also instead restart your PC.

With the new settings in effect, Windows Flip 3D will displays only the number of windows you’ve told it to. If you have more windows open than the maximum, as you scroll through your windows, new will replace the old. For example, if you have six windows open, only four will be displayed. As you scroll through them, new ones replace the ones that scroll off.

**See Also**

- “Hack Your Way Through Windows Vista’s Aero Interface” [Hack #15]

**QUICK HACK**

**TELL WINDOWS TO WARN YOU WHEN YOU HIT CAPS LOCK**

One of the more annoying experiences in Windows is accidentally hitting the Caps Lock key, and accidentally typing all capital letters. There’s a simple way that you can have Windows beep at you when you’ve accidentally hit it. In Windows XP, select Control Panel→Accessibility Options→Accessibility Options, and at the bottom of the screen, check the box next to Use Toggle Keys and click OK. In Windows Vista, select Control Panel→Ease of Access→Change how your keyboard works. Then check the box next to Use Toggle Keys and click Save.