

THE DESKTOP

This week we will talk about the Desktop. This is the main screen that you look at when the computer starts up and is waiting for you to do something. There are icons on it, and it usually has some kind of nice looking background to look at. The icons can be of several different kinds. First, they can be system icons, like My Computer, My Documents, Network Neighbourhood and the Recycle Bin. These are not deletable, but they can be turned off and on, depending on your version of Windows.

Next, the icons can be user data, like a song or your resume. It is better to keep such data in My Documents. If you keep all of your user data in My Documents, it makes it much easier for you to do backups. Regular backups are crucial because you could get a virus that destroys your data, or your hard drive may pack in at any time. It is important to remember that Windows can always be reloaded but your user documents can never be replaced, they represent the time you spent making them in the first place.

Some of the icons on your desktop can be shortcuts, these have a little white arrow in the bottom left corner. These shortcuts are not actual data, they *lead* to the data, or the program, or the website or some other windows location. If you delete the shortcut, you are not deleting the program or the data. You can delete such things by either right-clicking and selecting delete, or by dragging the icon to the Recycle Bin.

Across the bottom of the Desktop (usually) is the Taskbar. On the left side of the Taskbar is the Start Button, which leads to all the programs and other Windows features. It is almost completely made up of shortcuts, which can be moved or deleted at whim.

Next to the Start Button you may have a Quick Launch toolbar. This is supposed to have your most frequently used programs in it, so that you can just launch the program with one quick click. This thing is frequently overpopulated because many install programs will put their shortcuts in there. It is a good idea to remove any of these you don't want, just right-click and delete. Do NOT delete the Show Desktop icon; it is great for instantly minimizing all of your windows at once to show the desktop.

On the right side of the Taskbar is the System Tray. It will have the clock and a speaker icon for volume control. As a general rule, the more stuff in the System Tray, the slower your PC is probably running.

It is a good idea to keep your desktop relatively uncluttered, simply because it will be easier for you to keep track of things. A cluttered desktop does not slow down your Windows very much; it's just messy. If you use a particular document on a regular basis, you could put a shortcut to it on the desktop so that you wouldn't have to go into My Documents to open it. Same with particular bookmarks, if you have a favourite website that you go to regularly, you can put the shortcut right on your desktop for easy access.

If you have question or comments, I can always be reached via email sean@intrex.ca or join our forums at <http://intrex.ca> for more in-depth conversations.