

Intermediate Windows XP

Lesson 3

Lesson 3 — Files & Folders	1
Introduction.....	1
The File Specification.....	2
Exercise 3 — Working With Files & Folders.....	3
Managing Files.....	4
Selecting.....	4
Creating, Copying, Moving and Deleting Files.....	4
Customizing Your Toolbars.....	6
Homework.....	6
Appendix	7
File Organization.....	7

Lesson 3 — Files & Folders

Introduction

Computers, like some offices, have a highly structured filing system for storing all of the files that may be present on hard drives, floppy drives, CD drives and any other storage device connected to the computer. Most computers running Windows XP will have in excess of 80,000 files already on the hard drive before you add any of your own! They are required to run the XP operating system. Fortunately, you won't have to deal with the great bulk of such files in your normal day to day operations. This lesson concentrates those file operations that you commonly use. For the curious, you can find a more detailed explanation of the computer's overall file structure in the Appendix.

Fortunately for us users the computer keeps track of all our files and it provides shortcuts so we can locate our files rapidly. For example, you may have noticed a "My Documents" icon on your desktop. Clicking on that icon will bring up a display of the "My Documents" folder and its contents. It's a good place to start with your own filing system.

The File Specification

File names that you see on your computer screen are actually only one part of the entire “file specification” or “filespec” because the computer normally hides the complete description and only shows you the file name. Internally all files are identified with the entire filespec. Here are some examples.

The filespec for a My First File.rtf document stored on a floppy disk is:

A:\My First File.rtf

Where A: is the floppy drive letter. It is followed by a backslash\ and then the file name with its extension. In this case the extension tells the computer that this file is in the Rich Text Format (.rtf).

The same file located in the My Documents folder on the Student hard drive is identified as follows.

C:\Documents & Settings\Student\My Documents\My First File.rtf

Where C: is the hard disk drive, Documents & Settings is a folder on disk C:, Student is a folder within the Documents & Settings folder, and My Documents is a folder within the Student folder. Finally, the document called My First File.rtf resides within the My Documents folder.

Thus, as you can see, the structure of a filespec (that is, the entire file name) has the general format:

Drive Letter:\Folder\Sub-Folder\Sub-Folder\etc.\filename.ext

But most of the time you only see the filename and extension. Internally the computer always uses the entire filespec because that is the only way it can keep track of where everything is stored.

The backslashes set apart the various folder names, and that’s the reason you cannot use backslashes as part of a filename. File names should start with a letter or a number and should not contain any of the following characters:

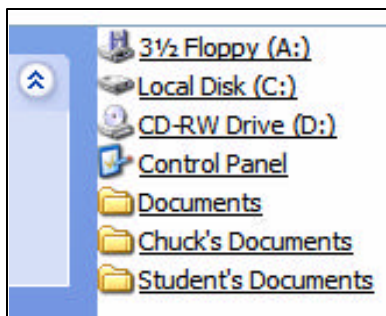
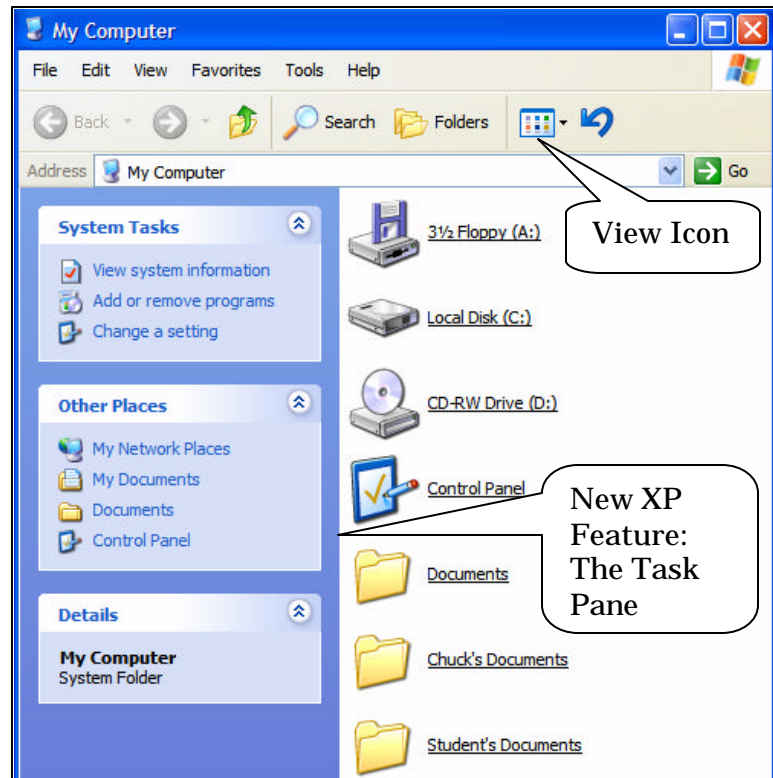
. " / \ [] : ; | = , * ?

Exercise 3 — Working With Files & Folders

You may already be familiar with file managing techniques from older Windows versions, and they will not be repeated here. We will be covering new features unique to Windows XP.

Click on My Computer to open a window similar to that shown here. The right pane in this illustration has its view set to Tiles. Other Views such as List or Details are selectable from the Views menu or View Icon.

For example, below is the same information, but shown in the compact List format. Experiment with different views by clicking on View or the View Icon and selecting the several different options: Thumbnails, Tiles, Icons, List and Details.



The Task Pane is a new feature in XP, and it appears on the left side of a folder window. Actually there are usually several small **context sensitive** panes in that area, and they may change depending on what's displayed or selected in the right pane in order to facilitate operations on items in the right pane.

You can use the task panes to quickly navigate to other places on the computer such as System Information, My Documents, etc. Click on My Documents and note a similar display of the contents of the My Documents folder. Click on the Back button at the left end of the toolbar to return to the My Computer window. Click on the Fwd button to return to the My Documents folder.

Managing Files

In the course of using your computer you will be creating, modifying, copying, moving, and deleting files and folders. However, you need to be aware of the way computers conflict with English grammar! For example, in English we would say “delete” file X. With the computer we must reverse the order, i.e. first you identify the object (file or folder) you want the computer to act on, and then you tell it what action to take. In other words, you would say “file X” “delete.” This involves the process of **selecting** or **highlighting** an object such as a file or folder before acting on it.

Selecting

There are several ways to select folders or files prior to taking action with them. (NOTE: The following explanations assume that the double-click option is in effect.)

Single Selection -- With My Documents open, click on one of the folders or files. Notice that it takes on a blue background, i.e. it has been “selected.” Click in the open space next to the folder to remove the selection.

Multiple Selection – There are at least three ways to select more than one item at a time.

1. Click on an item near the top of the list, then hold the Shift key down and click on an item below it. Note that this works only on contiguous or adjacent items. All items from the “click” to the “shift-click” will be selected. Click in the open space to deselect.
2. For non-contiguous (non-adjacent) items, click on one item, then hold the Ctrl key down and click on several others. They need not be adjacent. Deselect the items.
3. Use the drag and drop technique to draw a box around the items to be selected. Deselect the items.

Creating, Copying, Moving and Deleting Files

Creating a Folder -- Let’s start by creating a new folder. With the My Documents window open, Click on “Make a new folder” in the task pane. Notice that a folder appears in the right pane with the name New Folder selected. Type the word “Practice” and notice that it replaces the selected text. Press Enter. You have just created a new folder named Practice.

Copying – Select one or more of the files in the My Documents folder.

Notice that the task pane expands and adds options to Rename, Move, Copy, Print and Delete the selected file.

Click on Copy and a “Copy Items” box will appear. Click on the + next to My Documents to expand it. Click on the Practice folder to highlight it, then click on Copy. Double click on Practice to open the Practice folder, and you will see that a copy of the file(s) is there.¹ While there, select the file you just copied, then click on Delete in the task pane and accept the delete.



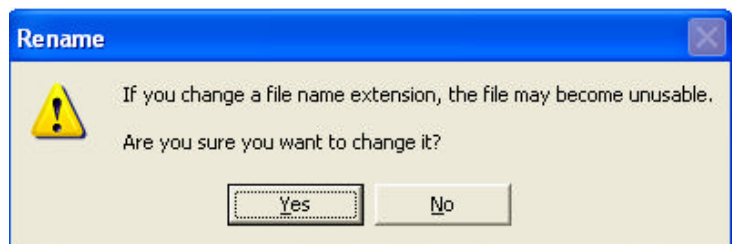
Moving – Return to My Documents and repeat the above except use the Move function. Notice that the file disappears. Open Practice and verify that the file is there. Click on the file and move it back to My Documents.

The above techniques work just as well if you were to copy or move a file or folder to/from the floppy disk or any other storage device listed in the Copy Items or Move Items boxes. However, most CDs are “read only” and you can only copy from the CD to another device.

Renaming – Click on My Documents and then select the Practice folder. A context sensitive menu will appear. Click on Rename and “Practice” will be highlighted. Type a new name and press Enter. This technique works on both folders and files.

CAUTION – When renaming a file, be sure to maintain the same file extension. If you omit the extension the following popup will appear.

It is suggested that you answer No and apply the original extension to the file name.




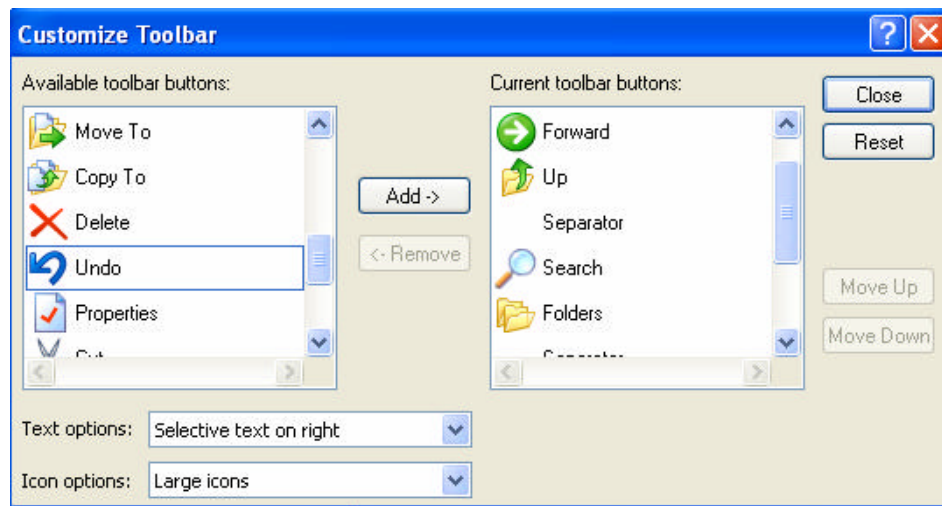
¹ Notice that the original file remains in the My Document folder and a copy is made in the Practice folder. If you use the drag and drop method onto the Practice folder, it would be moved rather than copied.

Deleting – In the Other Places task pane click on Desktop and then click on Recycle Bin. As with earlier versions of Windows, deleting a file actually only sends it to the Recycle Bin on the desktop for possible recovery. Refer to the task pane and note that you can Restore all items to their original locations, or Empty the Recycle Bin entirely (permanently deleting items). Select one or more of the deleted files and notice that the task pane wording changes to Restore this item (or selected items). For this lesson, please Empty the bin.

Undo – If you mistakenly delete, move or copy a file, you can undo the last such operation by clicking on Edit | Undo, or click on the Undo icon on the toolbar.

Customizing Your Toolbars

If in the above exercise you did not find the Undo icon  on the toolbar, you can add it. Right-click in the empty toolbar area to bring up the toolbar menu. Select Customize, and the following window will appear. Select the Undo (or any desired) icon in the left pane and click on Add. This will add it to the toolbar. To remove an icon, use the right pane and click on Remove.



Homework

- ÿ Review Lesson 3 and apply what you learned.
- ÿ Read through Lesson 4.

Appendix

File Organization

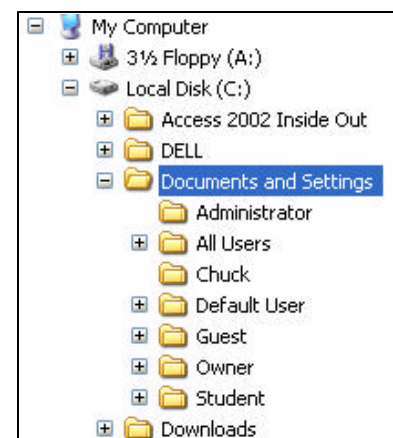
Organizing and keeping track of thousands of files would be impossible without some way of breaking them down into an efficient filing system. You are probably familiar with the traditional system for maintaining paper files in an office through the use of file cabinets, hanging file folders, manila folders inside the hanging folders, and documents inside the manila folders. Thus, to find a paper file one would go to the file cabinet, open one of the drawers, find the appropriate hanging (Pendaflex) folder, and locate the proper manila folder with the desired document inside.

Computers use a similar technique to organize their files. You might think of the computer as an office, and inside the computer are several “file cabinets” — in this case they are storage devices. For example, the computer’s hard drive serves as a very large file cabinet with lots of drawers (although the “drawers” are referred to as “folders”), and the drawers (folders) may contain more folders (sub-folders), and the sub-folders can contain even more sub-folders, etc. Thus, the filing structure is a hierarchy of folders within folders. And finally, one can find individual documents (files) in any of the folders or sub-folders.

This illustration (taken from the Microsoft “Explore” window) shows the organization of a typical Personal Computer in its most compressed form. You can readily see that this computer (My Computer) is fitted with a floppy disk drive (drive A:), a hard drive termed Local Disk (drive C:), and a compact read/write disk (drive D:). In this display they are all indented underneath which indicates that they belong to My Computer.



In the next illustration we have expanded the C: drive to show its contents which are indented under Local Disk (C:). (With Explore we do this by clicking on the plus sign (+) next to the drive name.) It is illustrating only the first four folders under Disk C: -- “Access ...”, “Dell”, “Documents and Settings”, and “Downloads” (there are actually several more beneath Downloads). The Documents and Settings folder has been expanded to show several sub-folders starting with “Administrator.” In this case, each folder stores files



unique to each user on the system (remember, XP is a multi-user system, so each user can have their own set of files).

The next illustration shows the entire Explore window with the “Student” folder and the student’s “My Documents” sub-folder expanded. Indented under “My Documents” we find four more sub-folders.

Notice that My Documents is highlighted (blue) and the full contents of this

folder are displayed in the right-hand pane. We can see that My Documents contains not only the four sub-folders (My Music, etc.) but also two files that are Word documents (Letter ... and Recipe ...).

The left-hand pane in the Explore window is intended to show the structure of folders on the computer, files within a folder are shown in the right pane when the corresponding folder in the left pane has been highlighted.

