

Hugh's Windows 7 Fixes

This is a checklist of changes I make after installing Windows 7 from scratch or acquiring a new computer with a pre-installed system.

I suppose it's a bit presumptuous to call these "fixes". Perhaps "regressions" would be a better term.

Preparation

If you have a machine with a pre-installed version of Windows 7, you may have to deal with removing Value-Subtracted Software "VSS"(tm) and/or obnoxious non-default configuration settings. That work is beyond the scope of this document. It takes a lot of experience to know what can be safely removed, but the rewards are great.

If your new machine isn't a laptop, erasing the disc and starting over with a real Microsoft Windows 7 installation disc is probably worth the price. You'll spend more time fooling around removing craplets than it would take to earn the price of an official installation disc by bagging groceries.

If your new machine is a laptop, matters are more complex: laptops often have customized track pads, video, audio, or WiFi cards. Starting with an erased disc may force you to visit the the laptop manufacturer's support site and download some drivers. Sometimes the drivers must be installed in a particular order. This procedure is not for Mom and Dad, but again, the rewards are great. Laptop manufacturers love to load their machines up with Craplets.

UPDATE 2012:

Microsoft is opening stores in malls around the country to compete with Apple stores. One of the features they offer is "decrapulating" any new computer you buy in the store. I've heard that they will decrapulate machines you bring in for a fee. Considering the effort involved, that would have to be expensive.

By some means, before you proceed, clean up your system as best you can and install all available updates and service packs. The reason for being picky about this point is that some service packs will undo some of the changes and you'll have to do them again.

Windows 7 Service Pack 1

If you have trouble installing SP1 on a well-used Windows 7 system, you may be experiencing the dreaded "0x80004005" error. If you see this number in the dialog that reports the failure, you'll need to take some radical steps:

First, you may want to surf all over the web and try some of the suggested fixes for 0x80004005. When you're tired of that, proceed as follows:

Insert your official Microsoft Windows 7 distribution disk (you bought one, right?) and run "setup.exe". (It will auto-run on most systems.)

After the language prompt, you will be asked about doing an Upgrade or a Clean install. Choose "Upgrade" and allow the process to complete. It will not damage your installed software. A few GUI settings may revert to their defaults. After the upgrade has completed, you should run the previously downloaded SP1 installer. In a Just Universe, it will now succeed. At this point, you'll have to install the whole collection of Microsoft updates again, but now they'll be correctly layered on top of SP1.

Changes that don't require registry editing

These are the easy little things that can be done with the GUI. Going though this list takes about an hour and has no risks.

Fixing the Start Menu

I used to have a list of settings here, but the Windows 7 start menu is hoarked beyond any simple configuration change. It is, in my opinion, *hoarked at the conceptual level*. I strongly recommend the free open-source program [Classic Shell](#). It gives you the XP (or my favorite, Windows 2000) look. It also adds an UP button to Explorer and many other little things taken away by Vista and Windows 7 to avoid confusing the unwashed.

Classic Shell has "Skins". My favorite is "Classic Skin" with caption and small icons. In the preferences, enable all the "menu" (vs "link") choices for the sub-menus and hide everything you don't use. You won't be disappointed. (Did I mention that this program is really GREAT?)

Appearance Settings

Control Panel -> Appearance -> Personalization -> Desktop Icons

CHECK:

- Computer
- User's Files (Your name)
- Network
- Recycle Bin

UNCHECK:

- Allow themes to change desktop icons.

After creating my account shortcut on the desktop by selecting "User's Files" above, I prefer to create another shortcut on the desktop to my Documents folder. Then I hide the profile directory by doing an UNCHECK on "User's Files" in the previous step. Once you have Classic Shell installed, you can quickly go up one level to see the files and folder at the profile level. I find that I don't need to do that very often and don't like having to open two folders to get to my Documents.

Control Panel -> Appearance -> Personalization -> Change the Theme

Select the "Windows Classic" Theme.

Control Panel -> Appearance -> Personalization -> Desktop Background

Click on the "Solid Background" icon and choose "Morbid Gray".

Control Panel -> Appearance -> Personalization -> Taskbar and Start Menu

Taskbar tab:

- UNCHECK: Lock the taskbar
- CHECK: Use small icons
- Taskbar location: Top (Yes Bill, Apple had it right.)
- Taskbar buttons: Never combine
- Notification area: Customize:
- CHECK: Always show all icons on the taskbar.

Start Menu tab:

No need to get wild here because we're going to replace the whole start menu with a 3rd party solution. But it will pick up these changes:

- UNCHECK: Store and display recently opened programs.
- UNCHECK: Store and display recently opened items.
- Customize Button:

- CHECK: Network
- CHECK: Run Command

UNCHECK: Use large icons
 System administrative tools:
 SELECT: Display on All Programs menu.

Desktop

Right click -> View -> CHECK: Small Icons.
 Right click -> View -> UNCHECK: Align icons to grid.

Explorer Window (The file browser)

Bring up the "Computer" window, which is the top level view.

Organize - Layout

There are three toggles here.
 Turn off all three to get a plain window.

CHECK: Menu bar.

Menubar - View

CHECK: Status bar
 SELECT: Details
 SORT BY: Name, Ascending
 GROUP BY: (none)

Organize -> Layout -> UNCHECK: Menu bar.
 Organize -> Folder and search options -> View tab

These change are not merely aesthetic: they materially
 improve performance when browsing and listing directories.

CHECK - Always show icons, never thumbnails.
 UNCHECK - Hide extensions for know file types.
 UNCHECK - Display file size information in folder tips
 UNCHECK - Hide extensions for known file types
 UNCHECK - Show encrypted or compressed NTFS files in color
 UNCHECK - Show pop-up description for folder and desktop items
 PRESS - Apply to folders (Makes them all like this one.)

Even though you pressed "Apply to folders", you may have to
 do these steps again starting in your toplevel user folder.

Disable user account control

I've tried to live with this... Without success.

Start menu -> Settings -> Control Panel -> Action Center ->
 Change User Account Control Settings.

Turn it off: drag the vertical scroll know all the way to
 the bottom - "Never Notify".
 You must be punished: Reboot.

Prevent windows from being Trans-Urpulated™

When you are dragging a desktop window, it becomes
 trans-urpulated when the mouse cursor touches the edge
 of the screen. (Who thinks up this stuff at Microsoft?)
 To get rid of this behavior:

Control Panel -> Ease of Access Center -> Make the mouse easier to use

Scroll down to see:

CHECK - Prevent windows from being automatically arranged
 when moved to the edge of the screen.

Restore "Quick Launch" to the task bar

In XP, you could put a shortcut to any document or program on the Quick Launch section of the taskbar. Windows 7 has replaced this with a much restricted version: you can only "Pin" shortcuts to programs on the taskbar.

The fix is easy:

First, "unpin" any items you already have in the "Pseudo Quicklaunch" area. Next, close all programs and open windows to clear the task bar.

Right click on the taskbar and select:

Toolbars -> New Toolbar

Now copy and paste in this address:

%AppData%\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Quick Launch

And press "Select Folder"

At this point, you see a new launching area over on the far right side of the task bar. It will have a text name showing "Quick Launch".

Don't panic!

Drag this over to the far left. It's hard to do this and you may have to try several times. It will get stuck against the vertical bar that marked the boundary of the old dysfunctional quick launch. To fix that, drag the old vertical bar (on the left) over the new vertical bar on the right. Persist until you have the new quick launch all the way to the left.

You will notice a bunch of crap already in the new quick launch bar such as "Quick Launch" "Launch Internet Explorer", "Show Desktop" and the odious "Switch between windows". Again, don't panic.

Right-click inside the new quick launch near the left-most vertical bar (not on top of any of the craplets) Choose:

UNCHECK: Show titles
UNCHECK: Show text

An extra vertical bar will remain on the right side of your icons. You may need to move this bar further right to show all your items.

You can now right-click on the little craplet icons to remove any that you don't want. To add your own shortcuts, first create a desktop shortcut and drag it to the quick launch bar. You can delete the shortcut you created for this purpose: the one on the quick launch bar is a duplicate. You can also drag shortcuts out of the start menu folders and put them in the quick launch bar.

You now have a traditional quick launch where you can drag shortcuts to programs or documents. Put a shortcut to Internet Explorer there and you can remove it from the desktop. I keep my mail client shortcut on the taskbar too. I usually remove the icons for "Show Desktop" and "Switch between windows".

In Internet Explorer, "Send page by email" and "Send link by email" don't work

First you have to install an email client. I recommend Mozilla Thunderbird, but Windows Live Mail is tolerable. It is also possible to install the old WinMail program - it's already on your system, but hidden! (See below)

You might think that using the "Default Programs" control panel followed by "Set your default programs" would fix this. There are several web sites that recommend this as a solution, but they are wrong. Here's what works:

Control Panel -> Default Programs -> Set program access and computer defaults

SELECT: Custom

Pull down the menu on the right side of the window next to the Custom button.
In the "Choose a default email program", select your email client.
Now press OK and back out.

Disable indexing and Windows Search

Should you do this?

I could write an essay about this topic, but the short answer is that Windows Search doesn't search inside all your files when you search for content: Since you can't trust the damn thing, it's better to remove it entirely and substitute an alternative utility.

Essay:

Windows Search was invented to enable you to look for content inside some-but-not-all binary documents. This capability is mainly there so you can search inside Microsoft Office documents. If you're a good Microsoft Do-Bee and mostly create and use documents created by Microsoft Office, that's a fine thing.

The price you pay for this feature is that special "content searchers" must be invoked for each file type. The file types are determined by the file extensions. Programmers and web developers use lots of plain text files with weird file extensions. Windows search won't search the contents of these files unless you reconfigure Windows Search each time you introduce a new file type and tell it the file contains plain text. This is a PITA and it's easy to forget-- especially if you bring in directory trees full of stuff you didn't write. Since you can't trust Windows Search, you can only have peace of mind by installing a reliable search tool that really looks into every file. I like "Agent Ransack". (See entry in the Software section below.)

As for indexing, it uses a lots of CPU and causes lots of disk activity -- often as not when you're trying to do something else with the computer. It's there to "speed up" the doubtful Windows Search. If you decide to keep Windows Search, indexing will speed up searches for files by name. If you're the kind of person who has no freaking idea (NFI) where your files are located, indexing might be good for you. Otherwise there's no reason to put up with the overhead.

Finally, consider that you could have both: Keep Windows Search with Indexing and use Agent Ransack when appropriate. Since I seldom use Office for anything, I prefer to reduce the overhead and get rid of it altogether:

Remove indexing:

UNCHECK: Index this drive for faster searching.
Choose "Apply changes to drive C:" ONLY.
If you select "All files and folders" instead, you will be a sad panda.
Repeat this for other local hard drives.

Remove the software:

Start Menu -> Settings -> Control Panel -> Programs and Features
-> Turn Windows features on or off:

UNCHECK: Indexing Service (Should already be unchecked)
UNCHECK: Windows Search (Microsoft will try to terrify you.)

Microsoft will punish you for this. You'll have to reboot and endure a disk check. It's worth it.

Speed up the boot process

The most beneficial thing you can do here is minimize the number of startup applications...

TBD.

If you have a multi-core CPU, you can speed up the boot process by enabling them during the boot process:

```
RUN: msconfig
SELECT: Boot tab.
PRESS: Advanced Options
CHECK: Number of processors
        Choose 2, 4, or whatever you've got.
CHECK: Maximum memory
        Enter the amount in megs, e.g. 2048 for 2G.
```

Prevent warning dialog "These files might be harmful to your computer"

This warning will pop up every time you move a web shortcut or "active" file to or from a remote (smb) directory on your local LAN.

```
Go to: Start Menu -> Settings ->
Control Panel -> Internet -> Security Tab
Select the zone: "Local Intranet".
Turn the Security Level slider down to Low.
Press "Sites" button, then "Advanced".
Use the dialog to add the IP number of each host on your LAN.
-> I'm not sure if using the ip name or netbios name will work.
```

Disable "Suggested Sites" from appearing in Internet Explorer 9's link bar.

Like some zombie, it just keeps on coming back...

You have probably already discovered that unchecking this box has no effect:

```
Tools->Internet Options->Advanced->Browsing
        ->Enable Suggested Sites
```

Nevertheless, make sure that it is, in fact, UNCHECKED.

Next, delete the "Suggested Sites" shortcut (again!)

Next, go to the window:

```
Tools->Manage Add-ons->Search Providers
```

```
For each search provider you have with a status of Enabled,
right-click on the provider and select "Disable Suggestions".
(If it's already disabled, the option will read "Enable Suggestions",
so don't select that!)
```

Next:

```
Start Menu -> Run
Enter: gpedit.msc
Follow:
        Local Computer Policy -> User Configuration ->
        Administrative Templates -> Windows Component -> Internet Explorer
```

```
On the right-hand pane, scroll down to find "Turn on Suggested Sites".
Double click on this to open a configuration window.
Select the "Disable" radio button.
Apply -> Ok.
```

It hasn't come back for the past 12 months. We shall see...

Create the "God Mode" panel:

This procedure creates a single folder that contains every control panel for every feature in Windows. It basically "Unstupidifies" Windows. If you're not the drooling nincompoop Windows 7 was designed for, you'll like this feature quite a lot.

Create a folder. ("Take a card. Any card...")

Rename the folder with this exact string:

```
God Mode.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}
```

The big long string with curly braces is called a GUID: "Globally Unique Identifier". They are used for all sorts of things in the software world where it wouldn't be annoying enough to use a meaningful name or phrase.

The name will magically change to simple "God Mode" and you'll find that it contains shortcuts to nearly every Windows configuration feature.

You can put this folder in the Start Menu, but it looks nicer if you double-click on it rather than letting it open like a menu with the left-arrow trigger.

Create "Demi-god" panels:

It turns out that there are many other keys to open Windows configuration panels. They're simply shortcuts to panels you could eventually find buried in the Windows 7 GUI.

Here's the complete list documented by Microsoft as "Canonical Names of Control Panel Items":

<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ee330741%28VS.85%29.aspx>

To use one of them, create a folder as described for the "God Mode" panel, but use the name and GUID found in the Canonical Names table.

You can also simply drag items from the God Mode window to any other folder. This will copy the shortcut.

So what good are these? Well, you could create a folder called "My Panels" and just put in the ones you frequently use. That saves time because you don't have to dig through the huge God Mode list or slog through the regular Control Panel interface.

Here's an example of the shortcuts I keep at the top level of my Start Menu, organized in a way that makes sense to me:

[My Panels](#)

This is only a starting point. You'll probably want to organize things differently. You can even change the names of the shortcuts so they're more concise. If you keep the "My Panels" folder in the Start Menu, you can reorder the items by simply dragging them.

Get rid of "Simple File Sharing"

Control Panel -> Folder Options -> View tab

Scroll to the bottom and uncheck:

```
"Use Sharing Wizard"
```

To share a folder and eliminate the prompt for credentials on the remote host:

```
Right-click on the folder -> Share With -> Advanced Sharing
Press the "Advanced Sharing" button.
```

```
CHECK: Share the folder.
Share name: Give it the name remote clients will use.
```

```
Press "Permissions"  
Select "Everyone"  
CHECK: Full Control
```

Note: If a folder was already shared the wrong way, you have to first uncheck the "Share the folder" box, apply the change, then repeat the procedure outlined above.

Changes that require registry edits

There are free programs that do these changes, but you never know for sure what's inside a free .exe file you download from the internet. I prefer simple regedit patch files. The following changes all have install and remove scripts. They are plain text files you can examine by dropping them on Notepad. If you're the suspicious type, you can prove that the "undo" scripts put the registry back the way it was by looking at the key with regedit before you run the "install" script and comparing it to the change applied by the "remove" script. I use all these changes and I've never had problems.

Rather than linking to each of the registry files, you can download the whole collection and install the ones you like:

[Windows 7 Fixes - Registry Files](#)

To apply one of the changes, right click on the installer and select "Merge". To remove the change, right-click on the remover and select "Merge". A few of the changes require restarting Explorer or rebooting as noted in the following sections:

Disable IE9 "Pinned Sites"

Internet Explorer 9 has a new feature that might conceivably be useful: When you create a shortcut by dragging the url from the address bar to the desktop, you create a special kind of url shortcut that can be placed on the taskbar and then opened with one click. These are called "pinned sites". Other things are possible: the site can interact with the pinned link if it contains Microsoft-only webapp features.

If you want to create the old-fashioned plain link like those made by IE8 and all previous browsers, you have to hold down the shift key when you drag a url to the desktop.

So why not live with this new feature and make all shortcuts "pinnable"? It turns out that whenever you create a pinned link, the browser reloads the page in the browser. This is Strike One.

Frequently (but not always) the session context the page had with the remote server will be lost when a page gets reloaded. (Or perhaps your credit card will be charged again.) In some cases, it erases your entire browsing history, i.e. you can't back up to the previous page. This is Strike Two.

When you drag a pinned link back onto the browser window to load the site, it doesn't simply go there, instead the browser throws up a dialog and asks you if you *Really Want to Go There*. This is Strike Three.

If you prefer to simply drag urls to the desktop and have a regular link created just like IE 8 and all previous browsers you will want this fix:

```
Disable pinned sites - Install.reg
```

If you decide you'd rather go back to being annoyed:

```
Disable pinned sites - Remove.reg
```

This fix doesn't really disable pinned sites:
You can still create a pinned link by holding down the

shift key. In other words, it reverses the default behavior by making pinned links the special ones and the old simple links the default. This is really how it should have worked in the first place.

Change folder icons so they look like folders

Who the hell uses or even recognizes file folders tilted up on their sides? Right now, go take a folder out of your filing cabinet and balance it on edge. In a few seconds, it will flop over. If it was already full, the papers inside will spill out all over your desk making a big mess. This is a metaphor for what's going on at Microsoft.

The human factors people at Microsoft are truly berserk. This is what committees achieve: Everyone feels they have to contribute something, no matter how absurd.

So the new diversity-hire from tribal Mongolia on the Windows 7 design team speaks up (after 3 weeks of silence) and says she thinks it might be nice to rotate the folder icons up on edge. In her yurt, she explains, there are no filing cabinets. Instead, file folders and papers are punched through at their top edges using a bone awl. Then a leather thong is used to hang them from the wicker bracing that holds up the hide walls. They hang vertically. She's comfortable with that. And you Western Civilization bastards had better become more culturally sensitive. After she throws a menacing glare around the table, the fix is in.

From the registry fixes archive, copy these files to the C:\Windows folder:

```
XP_ClosedFolder.ico
XP_OpenFolder.ico
```

I don't normally like to put things in system folders, but things can go wrong if they aren't in a folder with the proper permissions.

You will find scripts to install and remove:

```
Windows xp folder icons - Install.reg
Windows xp Folder icons - Remove.reg
```

You must restart Explorer (or reboot) to see the change.

There are a few special folder shortcuts that won't be changed even if you recreate them. To deal with these (only one or two in most cases) you need to assign them a new folder icon by hand. Here's an example:

I like to keep a shortcut on the desktop called "Documents". This points to:

```
c:\users\myname\My Documents
```

This shortcut will show up as vertical even if you create it after doing the patch. The fix is simple: Right-click on the shortcut and press the Change Icon... button. Then navigate to c:\windows\XP_3_ClosedFolders.ico

There are one or two other cases where you need to do this, but then you're done. I haven't had to look at a vertical folder for over a year.

Open a command window in a selected directory

The old "Commmmand Window Here" was available as a shell extension installed by a Windows XP PowerToy. It gave you a context menu selection to open a command window with the default directory set

to the selected directory.

It turns out this is built into Win7: Hold the shift key down when you right-click on a folder. A selection for "Open Command Window Here" will appear in the context menu.

But having to hold down the shift key is obviously an intolerable annoyance: Here's a quick registry fix that will make it visible all the time as it was in XP:

```
Open command window here - Install.reg
Open command window here - Remove.reg
```

The change is instant. No need to restart Explorer.

Open a command window in the explorer window context

Adds "Open command window here" to the context menu that appears when you right-click in an EMPTY area of an Explorer window. The default directory in the command window will be the same as the Explorer window.

```
Open command window explorer - Install.reg
Open command window explorer - Remove.reg
```

The change is instant. No need to restart Explorer. I find this more useful than the regular "Open command window here".

Disable "Full row select"

This fix removes an immense annoyance, but it's a little bit tricky to explain: When you have a folder open in Explorer and the view is one of the non-icon modes such as "Details", it's nearly impossible to move a file into that folder by dragging and dropping. Instead, when you drag the file icon over the prospective destination window, the whole line under the mouse clear across the window is "active": when you drop the file, it will launch some program or cause you to drop the file into the wrong folder. There is no "safe" area where you can drop the file to move it into the folder open in the window. In XP, only the file name was active, so you could drop a file anywhere else in the open window and it would simply move.

Microsoft was proud of this annoyance. They gave it a marketing name: The "Full Row Select" feature. Pretty Cool, eh?

Use:

```
Disable full row select - Install.reg
Disable full row select - Remove.reg
```

After installing the fix, you have to restart Explorer.

If you are still unclear about what this does and why you need have this fix, check out the follow-up comments in this article:

[How to disable full-row select?"](#)

Remove shortcut text

When you create a shortcut, the text "- shortcut" gets appended to the file name. The gigantic arrow that appears on the icon is sufficient for most people, but "Cletus" on the Microsoft Human Factors Study Team, found it confusing. If you're of normal intelligence, you can remove the "- Shortcut" suffix:

```
Remove shortcut suffix - Install.reg
```

```
Remove shortcut suffix - Remove.reg
```

Use a small shortcut arrow

The arrow on Win7 shortcuts is too big. It obscures the icon and looks obtrusive. This restores the XP-style small arrow:

```
Small shortcut arrow - Install.reg  
Small shortcut arrow - Remove.reg
```

Disable the caps lock key

Not a Windows 7-specific annoyance. But still an annoyance.

You know the drill:

```
Disable caps lock - Install.reg  
Disable caps lock - Remove.reg
```

Must reboot for this change to take effect.

Add "Take Ownership" to the Explorer context menu

Permission problems are common with Vista and Win7. This script provides an Explorer context menu (right-click) to "Take Ownership" of a selected file or directory.

Scripts:

```
Take ownership - Install.reg  
Take ownership - Remove.reg
```

Even if you don't see an immediate need for this, you should install it if you intended to restore WinMail (see below)

Enable routing

If you don't know what this means, you don't need it.

Scripts:

```
Enable routing - Install.reg  
Enable routing - Remove.reg
```

Create .txt files instead of .TXT files with Explorer context menu.

When you use the Explorer context menu to create a new text document, Windows 7 will create the file:

```
New Text Document.TXT
```

The upper case file extension looks gauche - it would be nicer to see this instead:

```
New Text Document.txt
```

Scripts:

```
Lower case txt - Install.reg  
Lower case txt - Remove.reg
```

You'll need to restart Explorer to see the change.

Disable unwanted system services

If you're a fan of the "Windows 2000 Look", you have an alternative to some of the settings I've presented earlier: Simply disable these two system services:

```
Themes  
Desktop Window Manager Session Manager
```

This will cure all sort of obnoxious behavior and save lots of memory as well.

These Themes services can be disabled on Windows XP with similar benefits.

Changes that require special software

I don't like to do things this way, but sometimes there's no alternative. We've already discussed [Classic Shell](#) which is the best of the best. This section describes a few others.

Disable taskbar always on top

This useful feature was part of Windows XP and Vista. Win7 removed it so that now the task bar is always on top. You can select the option to "auto hide" the task bar, but it will always reappear if you mouse over the area. Personally, I like to look up at the clock now and then and prefer to have the taskbar visible unless I've decided to cover it up with other windows.

Microsoft removed this option because they found some substantial number of cretins who went into blind staggering foam-at-the-mouth fits when they couldn't find the taskbar. Microsoft, you must understand, does all their human factors research using denizens of homes for myopic imbeciles.

Scene from Microsoft Human Factors Research Lab, Seattle. The camera pans and then zooms down into "The Pit" where diaper-clad adults crowd around sticky computer monitors.

Cletus:
"SAY CLEM, WHERE'S MA GAH-DAM TASKBAR?!!! THIS HAR COM-POOTER'S GOT ME SHEET-STOMPIN MAD!!!"

MS Engineer, observing through a one-way window:
"Well, Mr. Gates. I guess we'll just have to change that before we release Windows 7."

Bill Gates:
"Yes, the task bar must always be visible. Glad we found the problem first before the release. I'll inform the board about the delay immediately."

There have been several efforts to restore this function, but I found serious defects in all of them. Finally, having tried everything else, I decided to write one myself. You can get it here:

[Windows 7 Taskbar Masher](#)

Changes that require stealing

Just a joke of course. You do have old copies of Windows XP and Vista around don't you?

Run Windows XP's Paint on Windows 7

I just can't stand the GUI on the new Win 7 paint program. It may have more features, but the butt-ugly way of doing things with the "Ribbon" is a constant annoyance.

The fix is easy: From a nearby Windows XP box, collect these files from the c:\Windows folder:

system32\mspaint.exe

Help\mspaint.chm

```
Help\mspaint.chw
Help\mspaint.hlp
Help\ntart.chm
Help\ntdef.chm
```

Create a folder on your Win 7 system:

```
C:\Program Files\Windows XP Paint
```

Add all the files you gathered from the XP system:
They all go here at the top level, don't recreated
any subfolders:

```
mspaint.exe
mspaint.chm
mspaint.chw
mspaint.hlp
ntart.chm
ntdef.chm
```

Create a shortcut to mspaint.exe for your Start Menu such
"XP Paint" or whatever you prefer.

QED.

Run Windows XP's Wordpad on Windows 7

The new Wordpad in Windows 7 not only has the dreadful ribbon, it also seems to be creating some sort of web page. You can't, for example, create single-spaced text with line breaks where you want them. Instead, the program creates a paragraph whenever you press <Enter>, leaving a big gap between the lines.

The whole ribbon thing, IMHO, is senseless, hateful, ugly, and takes up too much space on a laptop or netbook display. If users are too illiterate to deal with menus, what the hell are they doing with a word processor?

The same sort of procedure described above for Paint can be used to acquire WordPad from XP. Create a folder:

```
C:\Program Files\Windows XP Wordpad
```

Collect these files from an XP system and put them inside:

```
msword6.wpc
msword8.wpc
wordpad.chm
wordpad.exe
wordpad.hlp
wordpad.inf
wordpad.PNF
write.pwc
```

Create a shortcut to the wordpad.exe file and store it somewhere in your Start Menu. I call mine "XP Wordpad".

Enable Windows Mail

Many of us reprobates would prefer to run Outlook Express on Windows 7, but that choice isn't available, right?

Mwoo HA HA HA! WRONG. It's there right now, just hidden away by the order of some demented marketing goob at Microsoft.

The following procedure is slightly more involved than the other changes documented here, but IMHO, it's one of the best changes you can make to Windows 7. Be sure to read though the whole section before you start.

Before we go on, I should remark that Mozilla Thunderbird, the free, open-source email client from the Firefox browser people, looks and acts almost exactly like Outlook Express and has better support for remote directories (LDAP). So if doing the following dreadful hack puts you off, give Thunderbird a try.

You may recall that *Windows Vista* (Pause to hear the "Frau Blucher" effect from Young Frankenstein) - had an email program, "Windows Mail", which was pretty much Outlook Express with some minor "improvements."

It turns out that Windows 7 already comes with Windows Mail, but the "Windows Live" creatures at Microsoft hid it because they wanted to force you into trying their piece-of-stuff "Windows Live" program. Sorry for the foul language. This thing really gets my dander up.

The invisible files are on your computer in:

```
c:\Program Files\Windows Mail
```

If you've already installed Windows Live Mail, uninstall it first.

If you've been using Windows Live Mail for a while, you may want to export your address book first. If you don't use IMAP, you may want to preserve all your archived mail. Doing this stuff is beyond the scope of this article.

1) Right-click and Merge the registry settings in:

```
Enable windows mail - Install.reg
```

This is a fairly large regedit file, but nearly all the changes are additions, not modifications. Unfortunately, I was too lazy to work up a "remove" script. If you don't like it, just stop using it. Re-installing Windows Live Mail, or better, Thunderbird, will fix all the changes that integrate mail with other parts of the operating system.

2) Execute this command line to make WinMail.exe visible:

```
attrib -s -h "c:\Program Files\Windows Mail\WinMail.exe"
```

3) Navigate an Explorer window into the folder:

```
c:\Program Files\Windows Mail
```

4) If you haven't already done so, install the "Take Ownership" context menu function documented in a previous section.

5) Right-click and select "Take Ownership" on the file:

```
msoe.dll
```

6) Rename that file to something like msoe.dll.original

7) Now it's time to go hunting. You need a file from a working Windows Vista machine. The file is called "msoe.dll". It is different for 32 and 64 bit systems, so the copy of Vista you use to get the file must agree with your Windows 7 system. Put the vista version of msoe.dll in your Windows Mail folder. If it's too much trouble to find msoe.dll on your old Vista machine, you might find it somewhere on the web ;-). Be sure to get the 32 or 64 bit version to match your Windows 7 installation.

8) Create a shortcut to WinMail.exe on your desktop or wherever you prefer.

9) Run the program and configure your account as usual.

QED!

If you use IMAP, don't forget to change the folder synchronization

settings on all your folders to "Headers Only" or you'll be downloading mail for a month or two.

Note: When you install a new service pack, you may find that Windows Mail has disappeared. Not to worry: All you have to do is run the "attrib" command again and copy in the replacement msoe.dll. After that, the mail program will be available and all your accounts and settings will be in place as they were before.

Enabling the old Windows Mail on Windows 7 really hoarks off the "Windows Live" team at Microsoft. (But don't worry, soon they'll all be looking for jobs elsewhere.)

UPDATE 2012: Microsoft appears to be "soft playing" Windows Live. I can see the handwriting on the wall.

What about Microsoft Office?

Office has also been given "The Treatment" including a ribbon GUI and entombment of features deemed "too hard" for modern college graduates.

If you haven't looked into these open-source projects recently, I strongly suggest you give one or both a try:

- [OpenOffice](#) - Now supported by the Apache foundation.
- [LibreOffice](#)

If you need help choosing, here is a comparative review: [OpenOffice vs LibreOffice vs The World](#).

Webapps have become so powerful, it's possible to manage without installing software at all. Cloud-based office tools let you run applications in your browser. A nice review of these methods along with other free office alternatives can be found at: [Gizmo's Freeware - Best Free Office Suite](#)

Changes that are too scary for me

It is possible to remove the obnoxious large bar in Explorer that has the utterly useless icons for "Organize" "Open" "Print" "Burn" "New Folder" etc. It's called "Explorer Tool Bar" and has been the subject of much heated discussion on the web. Although everybody hates it, (except Microsoft Sheeple), it's rather hard to remove. A simplified method exists, but it depends on running mystery code with a dodgy reputation. For now, I've put off dealing with this because I don't have time to investigate the matter. To carry forward the work yourself, start with this search phrase:

Removing the Windows 7 Explorer Toolbar

Changes beyond the power of the human mind

Consider these challenges!

Remove the Show Desktop button

This button appears to the right of the clock. Obviously, it must be destroyed, but no one knows how! There's a utility that makes it disappear, but it leaves an unsightly space next to the clock. For the time being, fixing this annoyance remains beyond the reach of our civilization: just like the seatbelt retractor in your car.

Save Microsoft from self-destruction

I see Microsoft got rid of the Windows 8 GUI guy. That's progress.

It's interesting that MacOS, Windows 8, and Gnome 3 (Linux) are all getting disfunctional GUIs at the same time. It must be a generational

thing. It will be remembered, I believe, as "iPhone Derangement Syndrome" (IDS)- using a mobile phone interface paradigm in an inappropriate context. Think about what these people are doing in bed. Yuck.

Handy tips

Task Manager access

The old standby Control-Alt-Delete no longer displays the task manager, but rather a large screen-filling vomit-splash of useless information. The new combination to open the task manager is:

Control-Shift-Escape

You can also access the task manager from the right-click menu popup on the task bar. (And this is very nice because you can choose the remote Task Damager when using a Remote Desktop Connection.)

Compensate for the missing address bar in Explorer

In XP, you could see the path to the current folder in the address bar. Win7 shows a sequence of menus instead. To get the old view, left click in an empty part of the address bar. You will see the file path XP-style. If you just want to copy the path to the clipboard, right-click on an empty area of the address bar and select: "Copy address as text"

Accessing WebDAV shares

WebDAV has always been a challenge even in the XP days. And now nothing that worked on XP will work on Vista or Win7. Microsoft must really feel threatened by the WebDAV protocol.

At least it no longer requires registry hacks and patches.

To mount a webdav share:
Right click on Computer and select "Map Network Drive..."
Enter the URL in this form:

`https://someserver.someplace.com/somefolder`

If you need alternative credentials, check the box and it will prompt for a username and password. Note that the protocol is https so the remote server MUST have an SSL certificate installed and working. Plain http will NOT work.

If setting up an SSL certificate on the remote machine is inconvenient for you, there is a way around it: Changing one number in the registry will enable non-ssl webdav connections from your machine:

Enable Basic WebDAV - Install.reg

To put things back the way they were:

Enable Basic WebDAV - Remove.reg

Using the built-in screen clipping tool

Imagine - A non-annoying feature was added to Windows 7!

Win7 comes with an Accessory to clip rectangular areas of the screen. This is nice for documenting applications. (You can still do CTL-ALT-PrintScreen to clip the entire window.)

To start the Snipping Tool, select it from:

Start Menu - Programs - Accessories - Snipping tool

You can now click and drag a selection rectangle to capture any part of the screen to the clipboard.

Change meaningless network interface names

Most people put up with names like "Local Area Connection", but when you have several network cards, it becomes difficult to remember where they are connected.

You can rename "Local Area Connection" to "OfficeLAN", and so on with your other interfaces. For example I often have a second card called "ControllerLAN". Just right-click on the name you see on the network control panel and select Rename.

Allow remote desktop connections

Right-click on Computer - Properties - Advanced System Settings Remote Tab:

SELECT - Allow connections from computers running any version of Remote Desktop.

Dealing with videos

If you're into collecting and watching videos of many types, you've probably encountered "Codec Packs" that claim to enable near every format. I urge you to forebear: These things cause irreversible changes to your system.

Microsoft has eased off a bit from their Pan-ignoramic™ attempt to take over the world with DRM-infested video files. Windows Media Player on Win7 will even play some h.264 vidoes. (H.264 WILL take over the world, BTW.) But Windows Media Player won't deal with some very popular container formats and codecs, so you do need something extra.

Fortunately, the open-source community has found some answers that are both safe and reversible:

1) Install the Video LAN Project's "VLC" player - It will let you watch nearly anything, including DVDs.

2) Install FFDSHOW - It will let you watch nearly anything using the built-in Windows Media Player by supplying the proper codecs.

I usually do both.

Opening .chm help files

These are the little help files that were used to document programs in earlier versions of windows. Many software packages used them. In a gesture almost too perverted to imagine, Microsoft has disabled support for displaying these files. The fix is easy:

To view a chm file, right-click on the file, select Properties, go to the General tab and press the Unblock button near the bottom. This must be done for each chm file you want to read by double-clicking.

Install and use the FTP server

Why did Windows 7 have to hose this simple thing up?
As Sir Edmond Hillary said: "Because it was there."

Control Panel - Programs and Features - Turn Windows features on or off

FTP Server - CHECK: FTP Service
Web Management Tools - CHECK: IIS Management Console

To start the server:

Administrative Tools - Services

Select the "Microsoft FTP Service"
Change the startup type to "Automatic"
Press the "Start" button.

To adjust the settings:

Control Panel - Administrative Tools - Internet Information Services Manager

Authorization Rules - (Right click to add a rule)

Allow - Anonymous Users - Read/Write

Connections (Left column) - Sites - (Right click to add a site)

FTP site name:
Controller (Or whatever you like.)

Binding and SSL settings:

CHECK: No SSL
CHECK: Anonymous

Now right-click on the site you added and select:

Manage FTP Site -> Start

Finally, whatever your target ftp home directory will be must have appropriate permissions:

Right click on the ftp site in the left column and select "Edit Permissions". On the Security tab under "Group or user names", press the "Edit" button. Press the "Add" button and enter "Everyone". Use the check boxes to enable the desired access, at least Read & Execute. Back out with OK, etc.

Import your Outlook Express address book

On Windows XP and earlier, the contacts data base was kept in a single file of type ".wab"
On XP this location depends on your username:

C:\Documents and Settings\
Application Data\
Microsoft\
Address Book\
.wab

In Vista and Windows 7, each contact is kept in a single xml file stored in the directory:

C:\Users\\Documents\Contacts

It's very easy to import the contacts from your old .wab file: Just double-click on the file and a dialog will appear offering to convert them to the new format and add them to your Contacts folder.

Telnet shortcuts

Create a regular shortcut with this command line:

%comspec% /k "Telnet.exe host.ip.com"

The "%comspec% /k" part keeps the window open if the connection fails. That way you can read the error message.

Change network connection policies

When Windows discovers a new network connection, it ask you about

how you want to protect yourself and control visibility. The choices are "Public" or "Private". To change this later and adjust other obscure network settings, you run the Security Policy Editor:

Run secpol.msc

Internet connection sharing with an existing LAN

When you configure windows to be a router for internet connection sharing (ICS), you may be disappointed to discover that you have to let ICS assign DHCP addresses to all the machines on your LAN. There was no way to choose the range of addresses assigned or to use fixed existing addresses.

HOWTO change the DHCP scope for Windows 7 ICS

1. Stop ICS services.
2. Edit the registry
[HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\services\SharedAccess\Parameters
3. Replace IP address in "ScopeAddress", "ScopeAddressBackup" to what you want.
4. Change the IP Address in the TCP IP Setting Tab in the second NIC to the first IP Address of that subnet and the first NIC connected to the internet.
5. Restart the ICS services.
6. Update the DHCP leases on the clients:

```
ipconfig /renew
```
7. Sometimes you have to reboot...

Other resources

David Karp's fabulous "Windows 7 Annoyances" has finally been released! Published a year late in twelve volumes, it's well worth the price.

[Windows 7 Annoyances](#)

See also:

[Windows 7 Annoyances Discussion Forum](#)

This forum is a constant source of new discoveries about ways to undo Microsoft "improvements." In a few more years, we'll have Windows 7 looking and working as well as Windows 2000!

Update after service pack installation

After installing Windows 7 SP1, I had to re-do a few of the registry edits: The Windows XP folder icons and the shortcut suffix removal had to be re-installed. I had to recreate some of my regular desktop shortcuts that pointed to folders so they would show up as XP horizontal folders.

Windows 8 is on the way!

I have the developer's evaluation copy installed and I'm working on a new write-up. Unfortunately, I'm only allowed to work on this an hour a day, right after I take my new meds. On the day I first ran Windows 8, the neighbors had to call 911. Some nice men came and took everything sharp out of my house. But when I remember to take my pill, the doctors say I'm almost normal...