



Computer Basics - Reference Manual

Updated October 2009

CONTENT SOURCES NOTED BY SECTION – SEE FOOTNOTES

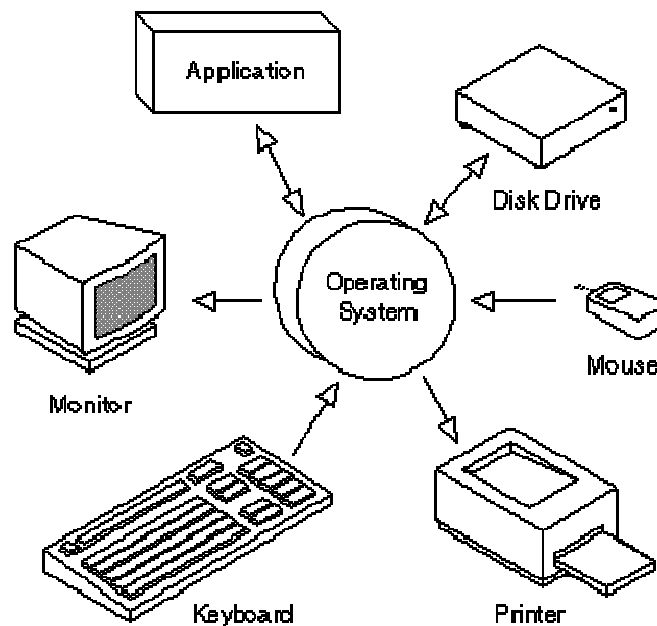
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Computer Basics

*The Operating System*¹

The operating system is the most important program that runs on a computer. Every general-purpose computer must have an operating system to run other programs. Operating systems perform basic tasks such as recognizing inputs from the keyboard, sending outputs to the display screen, keeping track of files and directories on the disk, and controlling peripheral devices such as disk drives and printers.




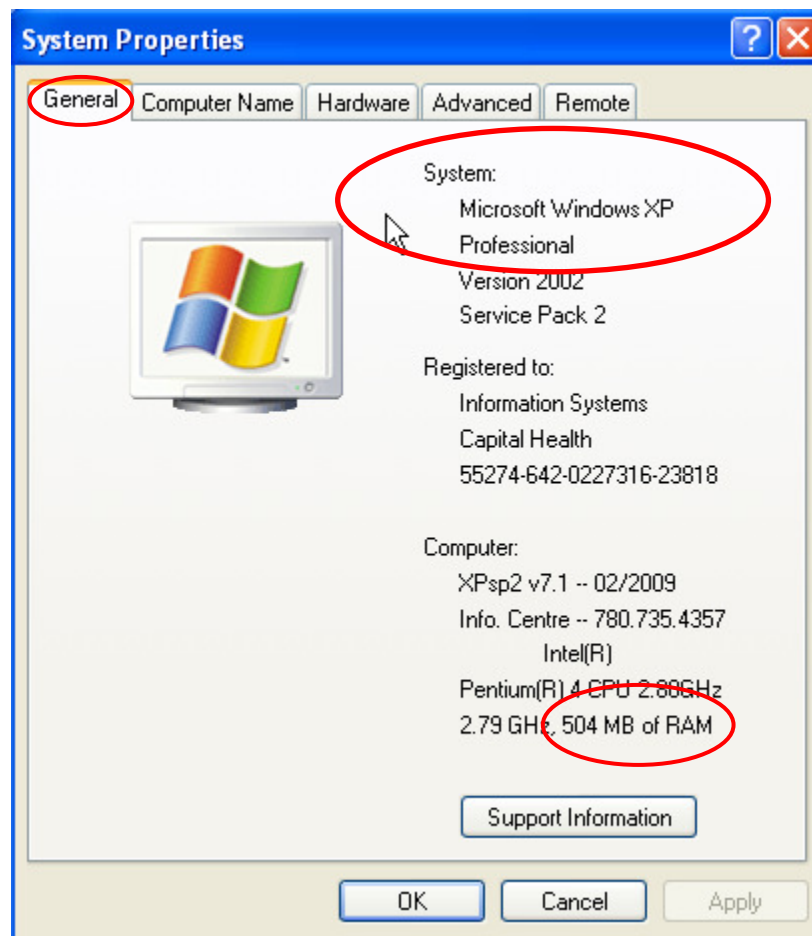
For large systems, the operating system has even greater responsibilities and powers. It is like a traffic cop – it makes sure programs and users running at the same time do not interfere with each other. The operating system is also responsible for security, ensuring that unauthorized users do not access the system.

Operating systems provide a software platform on top of which other programs, called application programs, can run. The application programs must be written to run on top of a particular operating system. Your choice of operating system, therefore, determines to a great extent the applications you can run. For PCs, the most popular operating system is Windows, but others are available, such as Linux. For Macintosh, there is only one operating system, the Macintosh operating system.

¹ **The Operating System** section above - used with permission from Grant MacEwan University (<http://stats.macewan.ca/learn/students/tutorial/glossary/index.htm#o>); the remaining content of this section - developed by Kylie Kidd Wagner

- To determine which Operating System you're using:

1. Click on the  button in the bottom left hand corner of the screen
2. Select Control Panel
3. Under Control Panel select System
4. Under the General tab within the System Properties window that appears, note the Operating System
5. Click the Cancel button to close the System Properties window



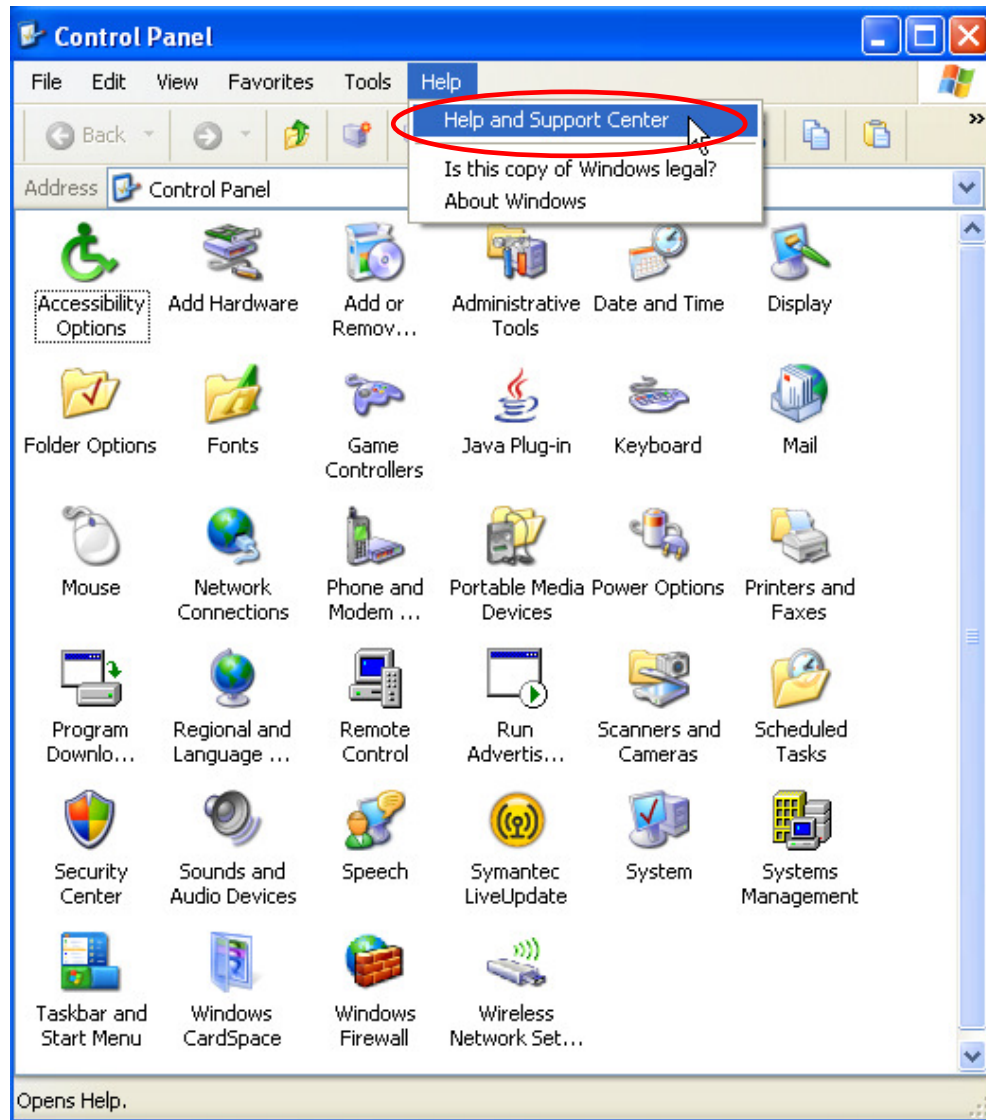
- To determine how much RAM your computer has :

1. Follow steps 1-3 listed above which outline how to determine which Operating System you're using
2. Under the General tab within the System Properties window that appears, note the amount of RAM your computer has
3. Click the Cancel button to close the System Properties window

The Control Panel²

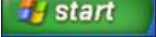
The Control Panel is full of specialized tools that are used to change the way your computer looks and functions.

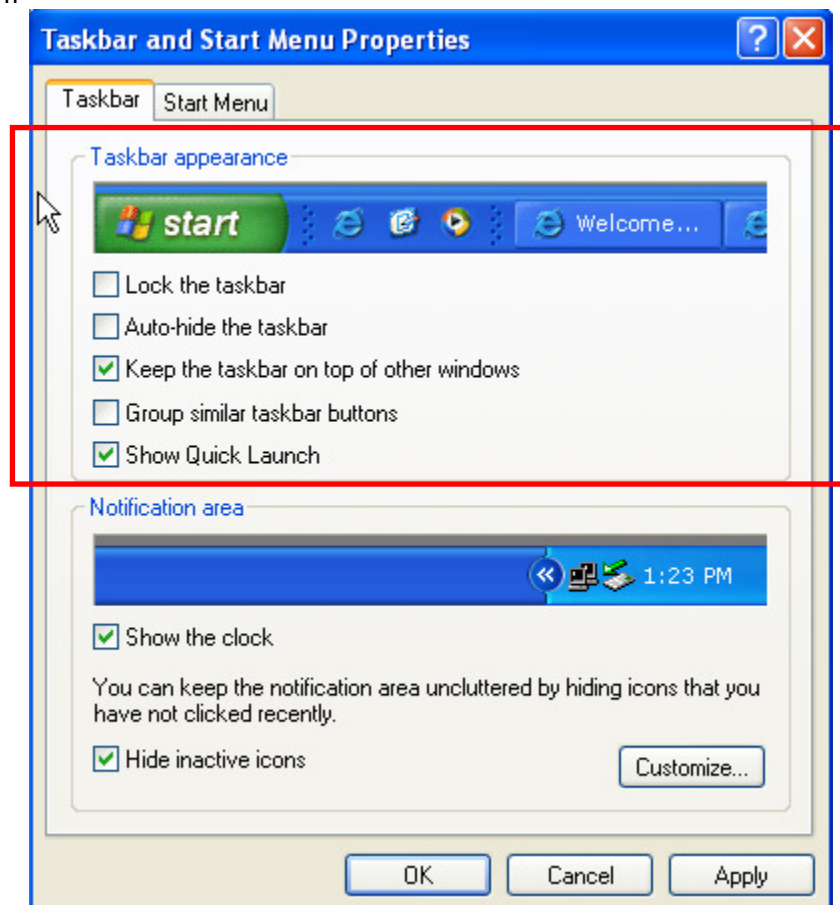
Consult the Help and Support Center under the Help Menu within the Control Panel Window for more details about the various settings and tools available to you.



² The Control Panel Section – adapted from http://www.microsoft.com/resources/documentation/windows/xp/all/proddocs/en-us/cpanel_overview.msp?mfr=true

- To Change your Taskbar Settings:

1. Click on the  button in the bottom left hand corner of the screen
2. Select Control Panel
3. Within the Control Panel window select the Taskbar and Start Menu option
4. Explore!!



Not sure about a function? – try right clicking on the option of interest for the “What’s this?” pop up help

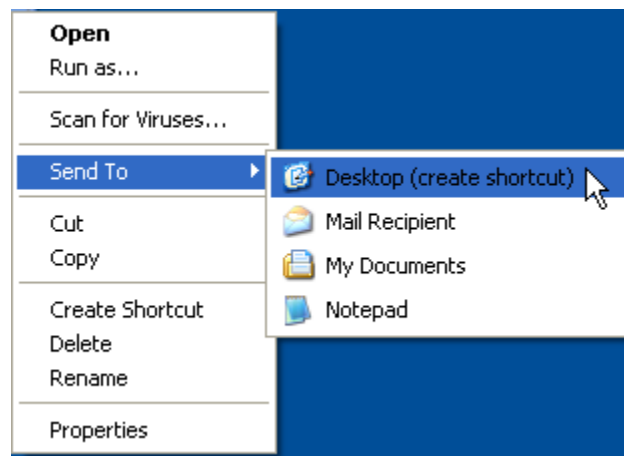


5. Once you’ve selected the taskbar function settings you think are useful – select the Apply button to implement your changes

Customizing Your Desktop – Creating Shortcuts³

Shortcuts can be made for easy access to applications, drives, folders etc... which are commonly employed by the user.

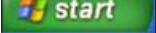
- To create a Shortcut (icon) on your Desktop, take the following steps:
 1. Right click on the application/drive/folder of interest
 2. Select the Send to option, then the Desktop (create shortcut) option from the Menu that appears

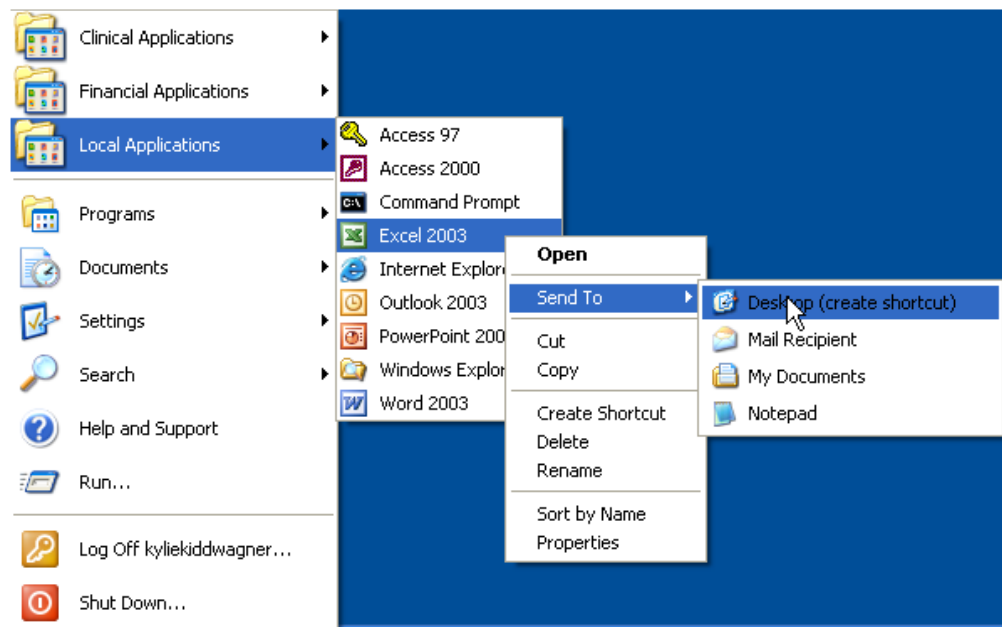


³ Customizing your Desktop – Creating Shortcuts Section – developed by Kylie Kidd Wagner

- To create an Excel 2003 shortcut:

Option 1

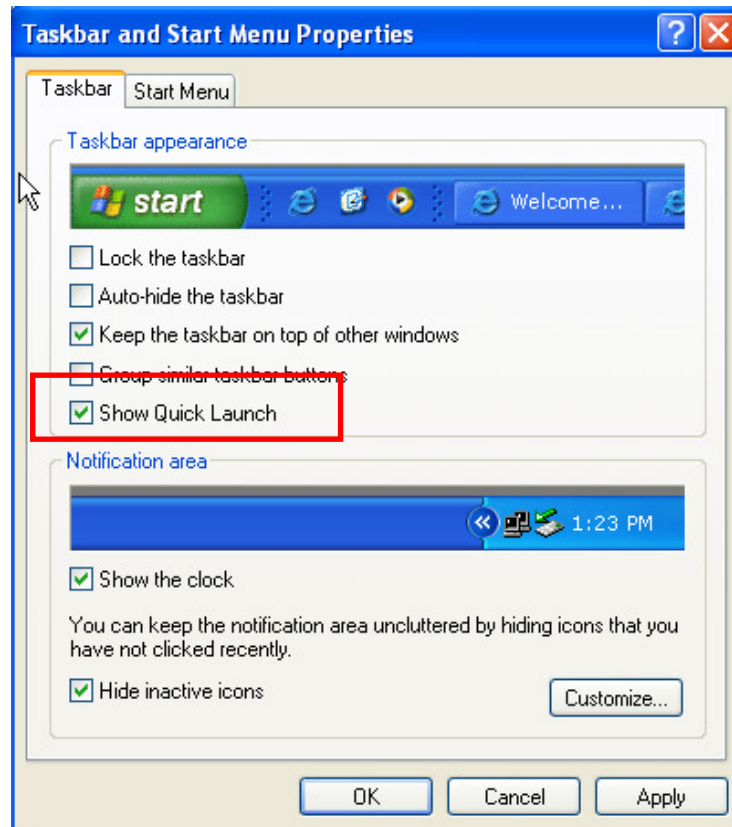
1. Click on the  button in the bottom left hand corner of the screen
2. Find the Excel 2003 application within the Start Menu options
3. Right click on the Excel 2003 option
4. Select the Send to option, then the Desktop (create shortcut) option from the Menu that appears
5. Check the Desktop to see if the Excel 2003 icon has appeared



To create an Excel 2003 shortcut continued...

Option 2

1. Use the steps outlined in the To Change your Taskbar settings section of this manual to get to the window below
2. Select (check) the Show Quick Launch option
3. Click the Apply button
4. Click the OK button

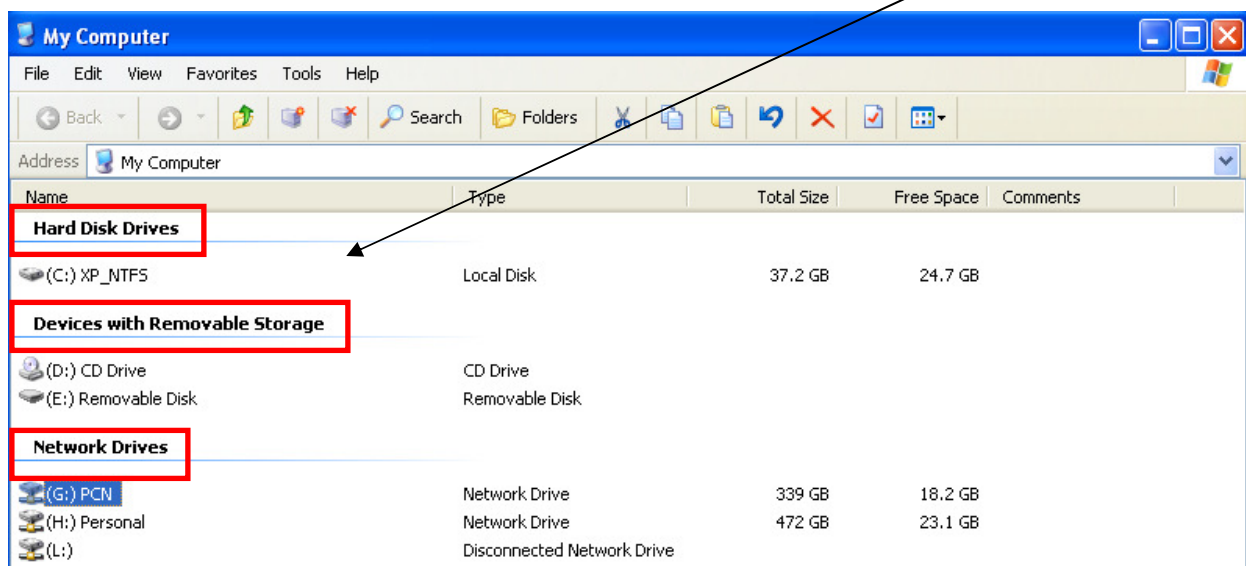


5. Drag the Excel Desktop icon (you created using Option 1) and drop it onto your Quick Launch Taskbar

My Computer⁴



In addition to other important functions, your computer acts as a file management system – much like a big filing cabinet which holds various files (e.g. individuals by last name) within designated folders (e.g. A-K, L-Z) where the different drawers act like the various 'Drives' (e.g. your C:\ drive) available to you.

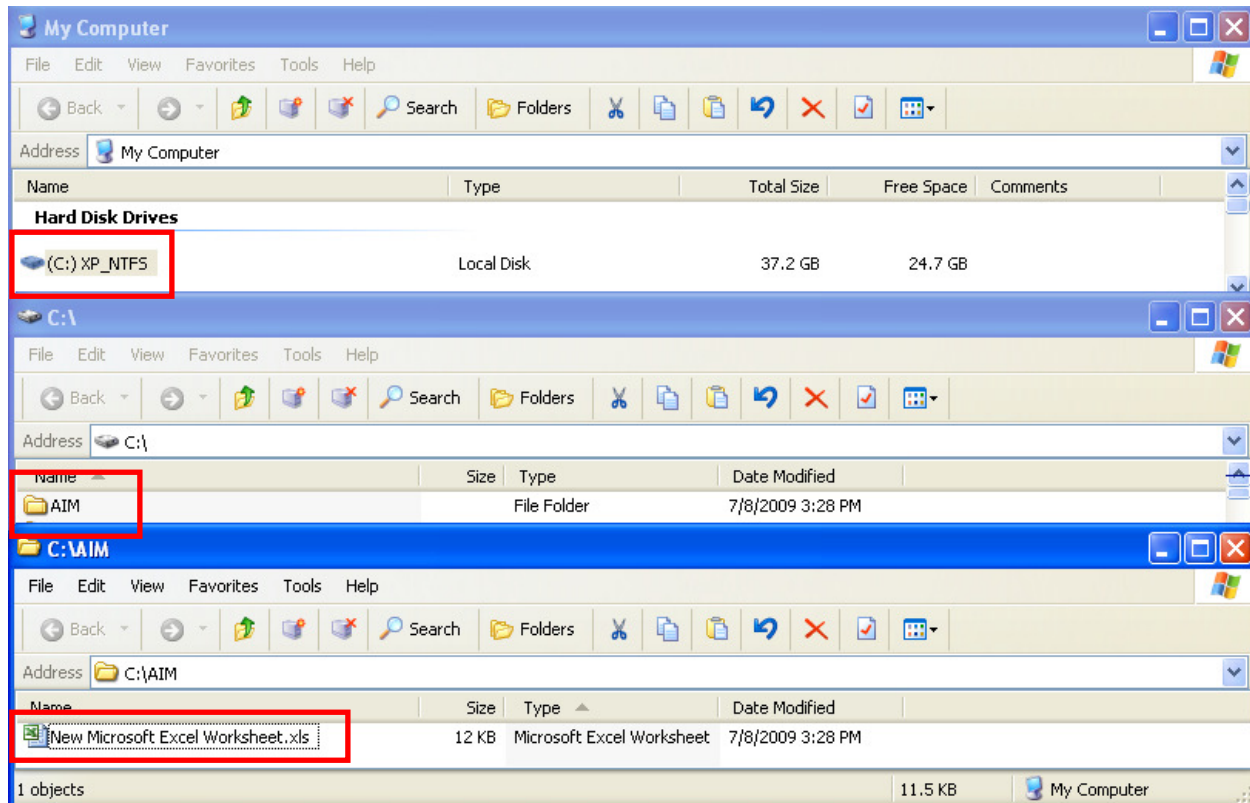


⁴ My Computer Section – developed by Kylie Kidd Wagner

Hierarchy of File Management – Drive → Folders → Files⁵

This is the hierarchy of the file management system on a computer – Drives contain Folders (a.k.a. Directories) which contain individual files.

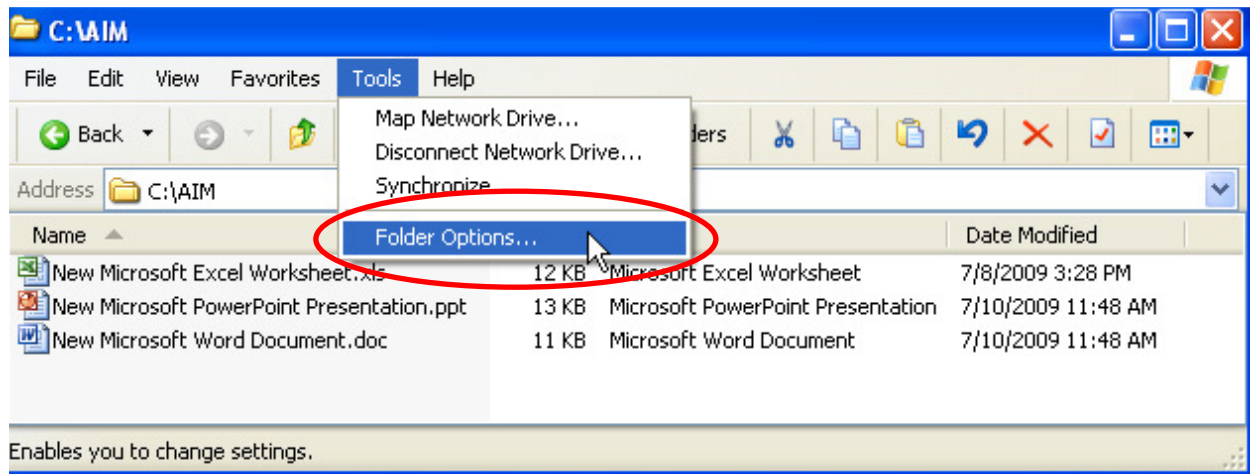
Example – the C:\ Drive contains the AIM Folder which contains the New Microsoft Excel Worksheet.xls file.



⁵ Hierarchy of File Management – Drive □ Folders □ Files Section – developed by Kylie Kidd Wagner

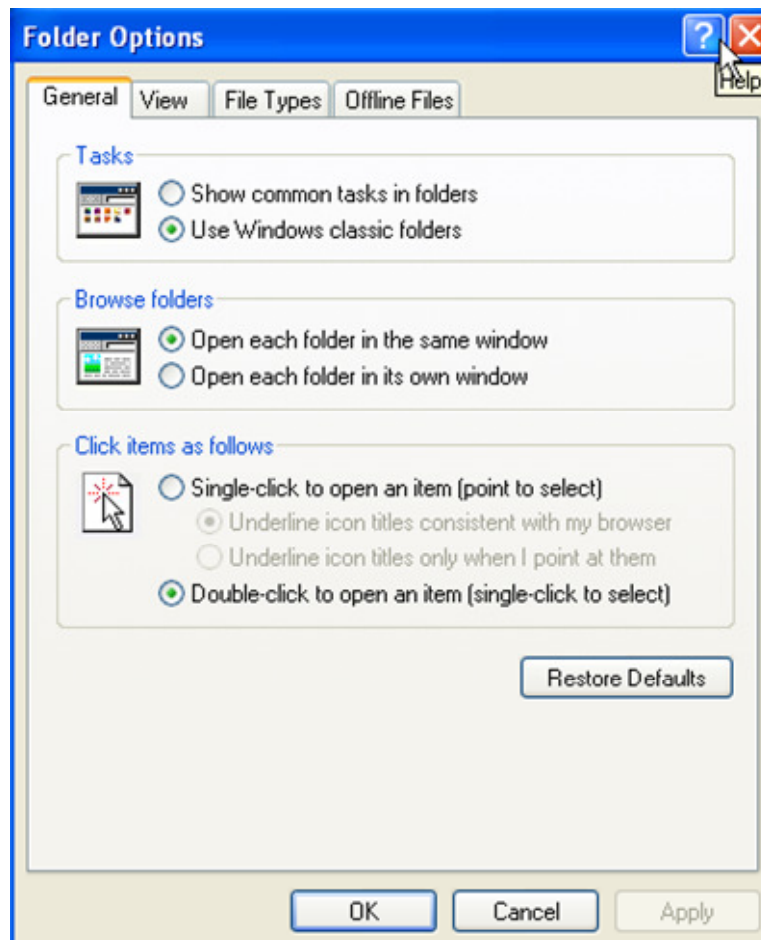
Folder Options⁶

The organization of files within a folder can be customized to suit the user through Folder Options.



⁶ **Folder Options Section** – developed by Kylie Kidd Wagner

- To customize your Folder Options:
 1. Under the Tools Menu – select Folder Options
 2. Within the Folder Option Window that appears – explore the various tabs – try it and apply it !!



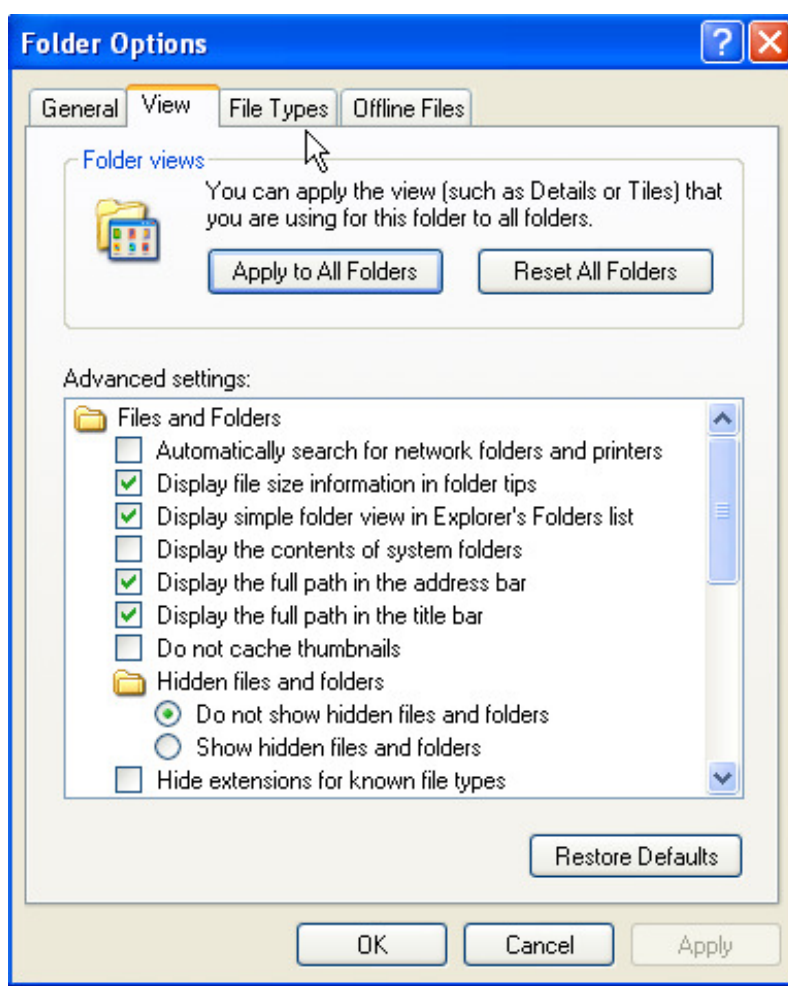
** Not sure about a function? – try right clicking on the option of interest for the “What’s this?” pop up help



To customize your Folder Options continued...

The View tab

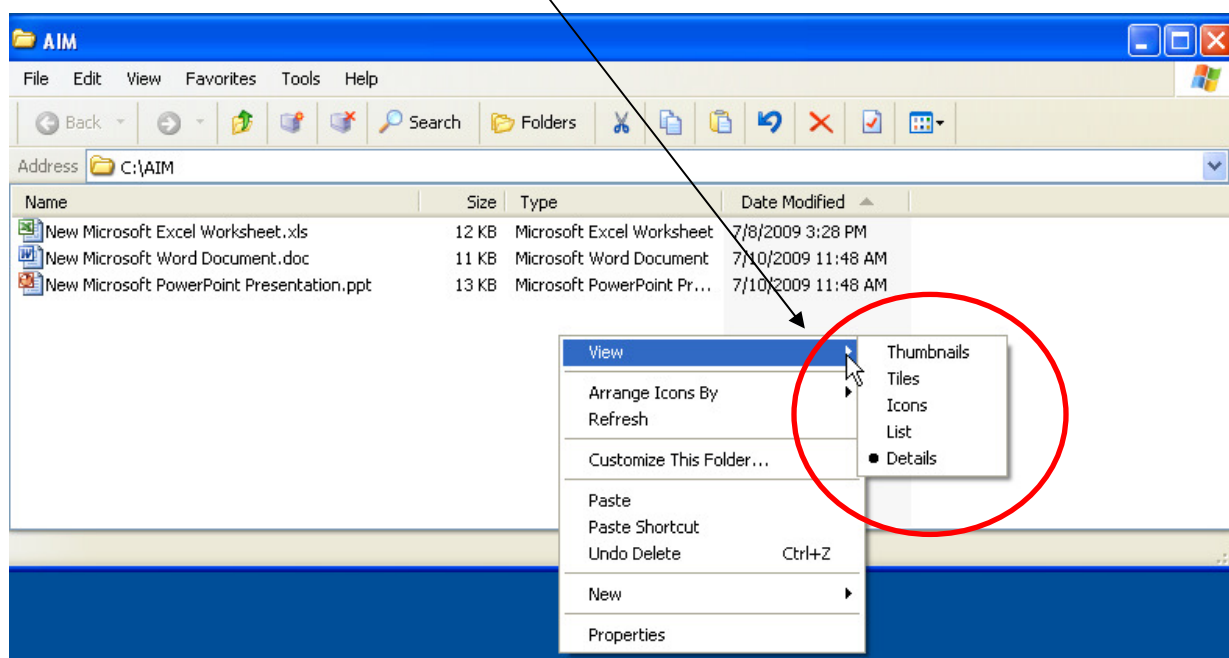
1. Select the Restore to Default button to observe the default settings
2. Next, customize how files within your folders will be viewed
3. Pay attention to:
 - a. Hide extensions for file types
 - b. Remember each folders view settings
 - c. Show pop-up description for folder and desktop items
4. Once you've selected the settings of interest – click the Apply button to implement your changes in the folder of interest OR click the Apply to All Folders button to have the changes implemented in all folders



Customizing the View for Files within a Specific Folder⁷

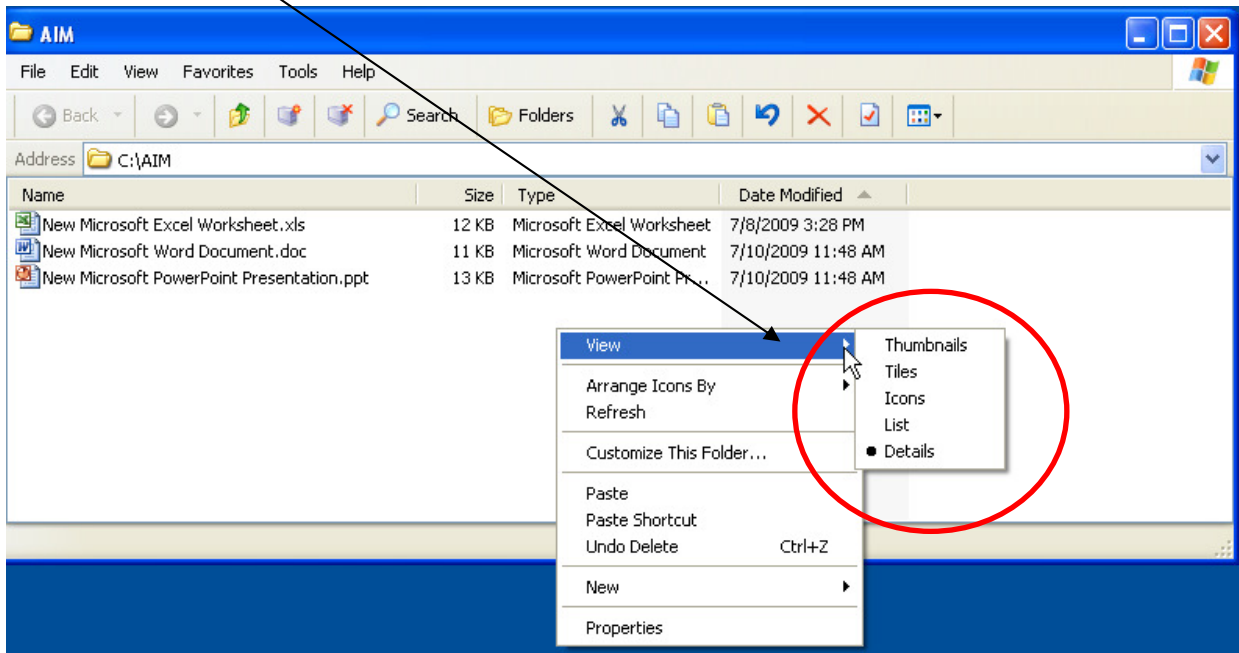
Within the View tab of the Folder Options (see previous section), there is the option to ☒ **Remember each folder's view settings**, which allows the user to customize the view of files within a specific folder.

This option preserves the most recent view setting specific to the folder of interest.

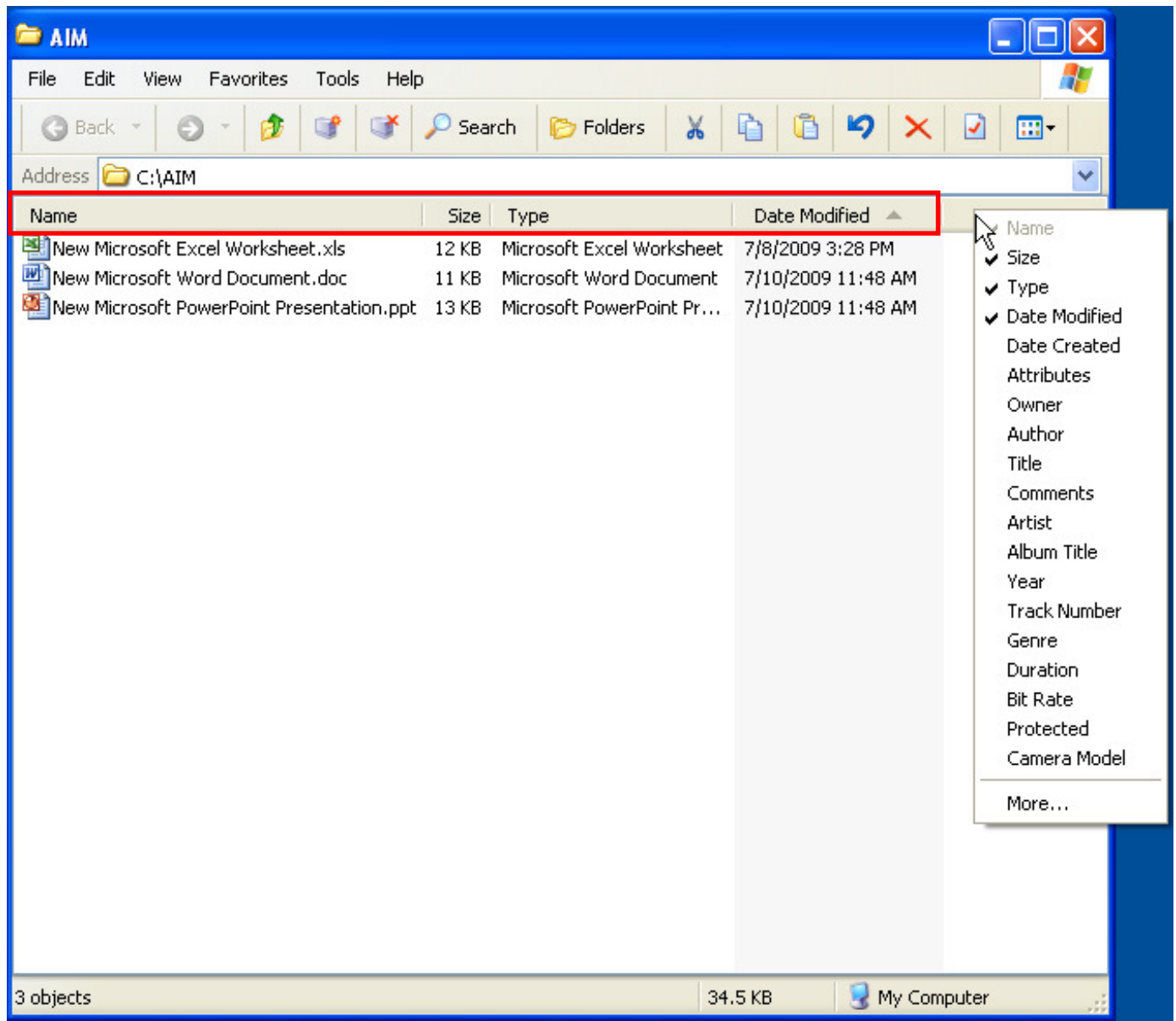


⁷ Customizing the View for Files within a Specific Folder Section – developed by Kylie Kidd Wagner

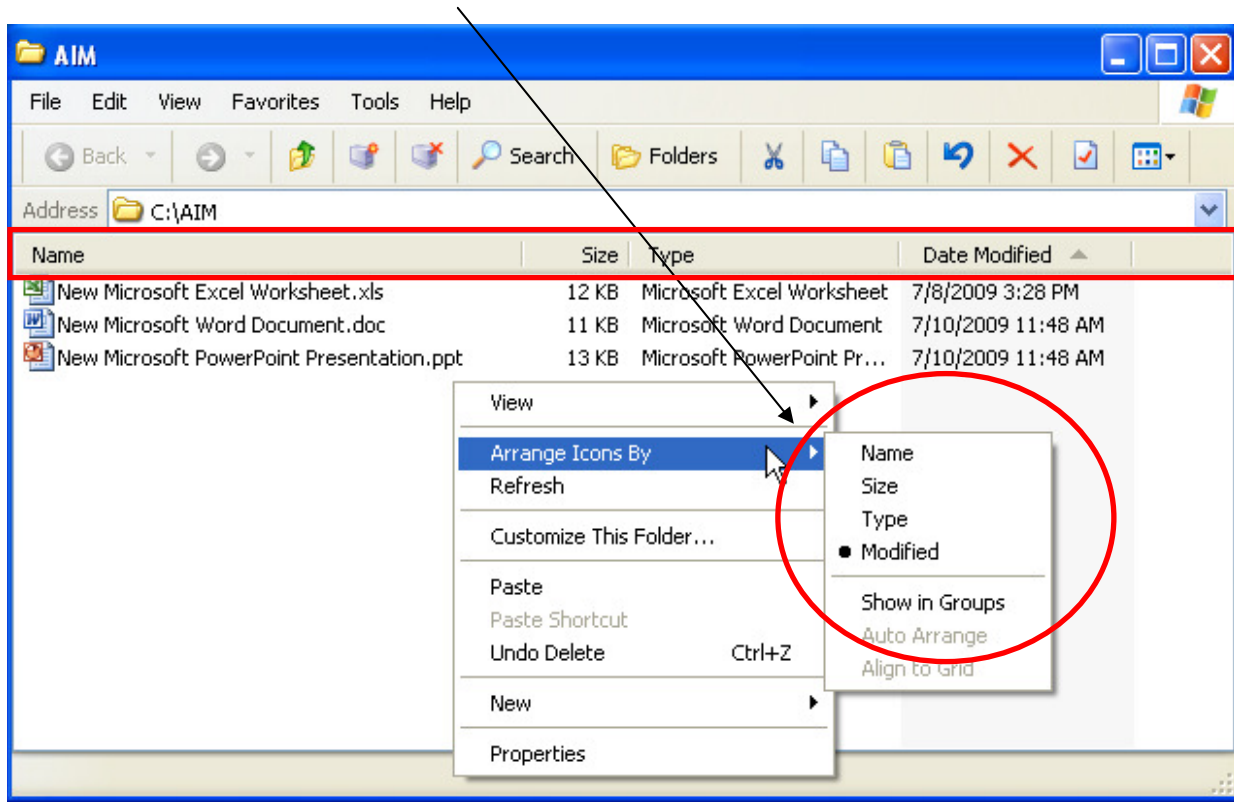
- To change the View settings in a folder:
 1. Within the Folder Window, right click in the white space where the files are listed and select the view of interest from the Menu that appears



NOTE: within the Details View option, you can select the “details” you would like displayed by right clicking on the title bar and checking the ones you



- To change how files are arranged within a folder:
 1. Follow the steps list above, but this time select the Arrange Icons by option from the Menu list that appears
 2. Try out the different arrangement options



3. Alternatively, if you have the Details View selected, you can arrange your files by the detail titles – simply click on the title bar descriptor of interest and the files will be arranged in order (e.g. alphabetical order)