

Organizing your PC Desktop - Part I

((Sorry Mac Girls, this week is for PC users although with minor adjustments, these tips can be applied to an Apple computer.))

What does your PC Desktop look like? Is it sleek and clean or is it crowded with wall-to-wall shortcut icons? I've found that there are a full variety of preferences when it comes to how users utilize their desktop space and these users are quite passionate about their preferences. I, for one, lean to the sleek and clean side of the house. When my workspace is cluttered, my mind is cluttered. When my mind is cluttered, I am substantially less productive. Here are some tips to organizing your desktop that I hope will appeal to all users, regardless of preference.

The first step to organizing anything is to determine how it is used. In the case of desktop icons, what I hear most is that users need easy access to the programs and files they use most. Trouble walks in, however, when they end up with a desktop crowded with a hundred or more icons. That's when it becomes the textbook page covered in yellow highlighter ink. When **everything** is highlighted, effectively **nothing** is highlighted!

This week we will talk about how to organize files and folders directly on your desktop. Next week, we'll talk about how to move some of those shortcuts off your desktop but keep them a single click away.

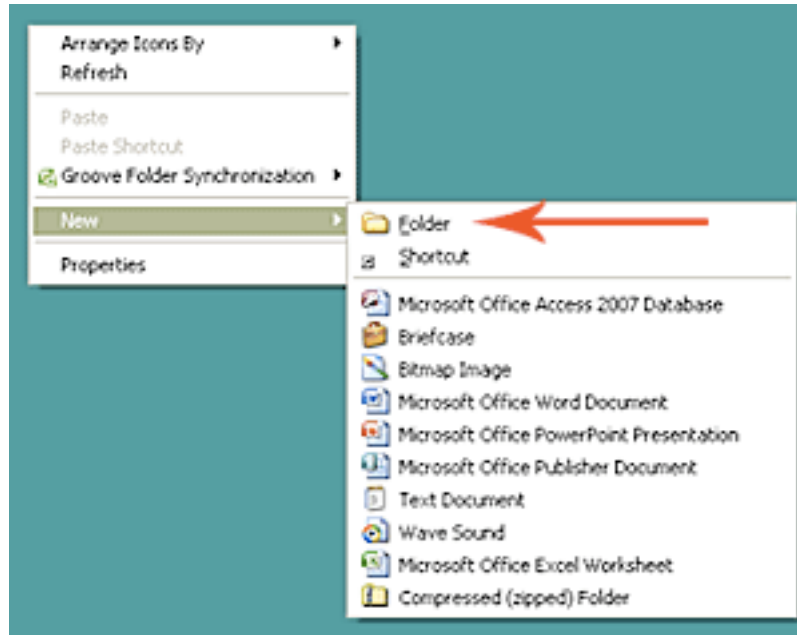
There was a time when having too many files on your desktop slowed down your boot process but with today's speedy processors, that's not really a problem anymore. These tips are not so much for speeding up your computer as they are for speeding up the computer's user...that's you!

First off, there's a rule in paper management among organization experts: *touch it once*. When you touch a piece of paper, go ahead and put it where it will ultimately belong so that you won't have to come back to it. I'm going to morph that rule a little to work for computer file management. That is, have one copy of the file and work on it from **that** location...and that location should *not* be the desktop. Desktop locations are too vulnerable so I recommend avoiding that as a file's resting place. Organize your 'My Documents' folder to your work style and file your work there. Not only will this make your files more secure, it will simplify *finding* files later. For ideas on organizing your 'My Documents' folder, mimic the categories I describe next.

Evaluate your computer time in terms of categories. My categories might be like this: PWOC-International, PWOC-Southeast, Homeschooling, Battalion, Kids, etc. These would be the categories that **most** of your computer time is spent in. Less frequently used categories, like Christmas Card List, would not need a desktop location since it's only visited during one season. However, you could add a shortcut

during that season if you find that you visit the list often to update it. At the end of the season, don't forget to delete the shortcut to stay organized!

Once you've determined your key categories, go to your desktop and create a folder for each of your categories. In a 'blank' area of your desktop, right-click and select New > Folder.

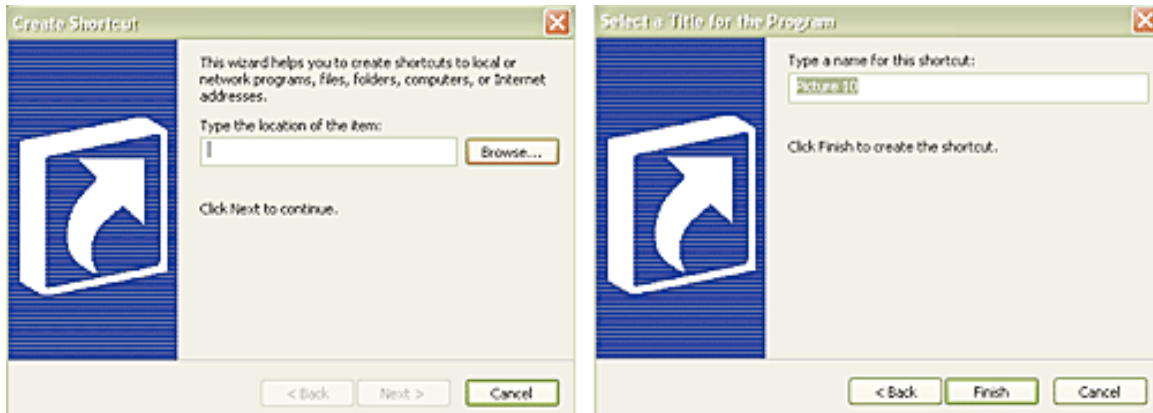


Name each folder according to the categories you created above.

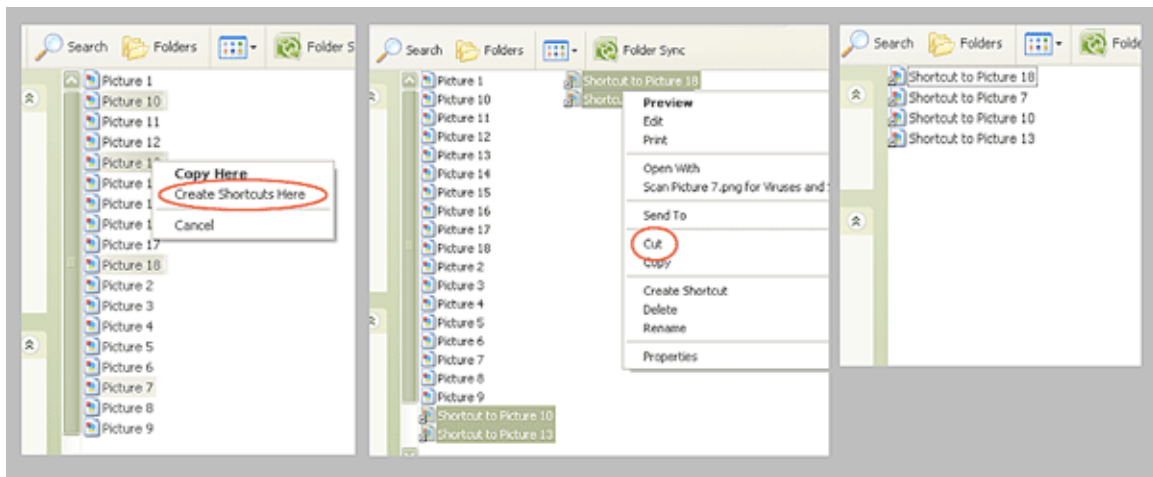
The next step is to determine which files you use the most and therefore need the **most ready access** to and create a Shortcut to each file. Remember, these files are in their respective folders in your 'My Documents' folder now, **not your desktop**.

From here you have two options.

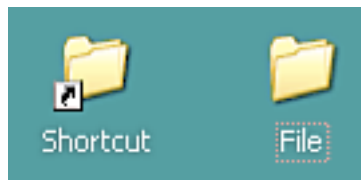
1. The first option is to open the desktop folder. From within the folder, right-click and choose New > Shortcut. You will get a dialog box that asks for the file for which you want to create a shortcut. Even if you know the name of the file, I suggest that you still click 'Browse' and find the file anyway. This process will eliminate potential trouble later. Once you've located the file, follow the prompts to add the shortcut. You will be given the opportunity to name the shortcut or to simply use the filename. This is an opportunity to give your file a more logical description than perhaps the filename gives it. Repeat this process for each file.



2. The second option is to navigate to the folder within 'My Documents' and Ctrl-click each file for which you want to create a shortcut. (Control-click allows you to select multiple *non*-consecutive files, whereas Shift-click will select only *consecutive* files.) Once you have all of the files selected, right-click and select Create Shortcuts Here. A list of shortcut icons will appear at the bottom of the folder's list of files. From here, simply Shift-click this group of files, Right-click, select Cut. Then open your desktop folder, right-click, and select Paste. Once pasted, a **slow** double-click will give you the opportunity to rename your shortcut, if desired.



[How can I tell the difference between a **file** and a **shortcut**? A Shortcut has an arrow added to its file icon.

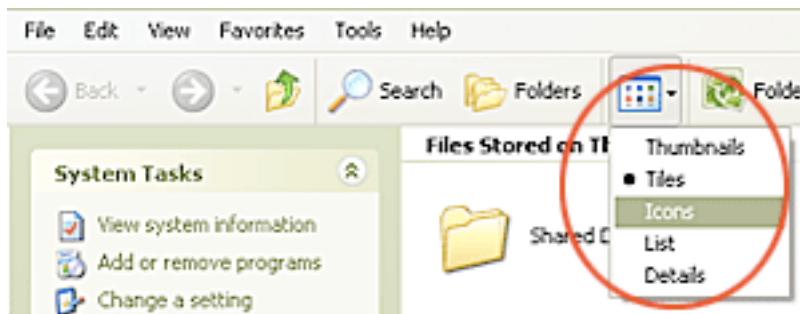


Can I delete a shortcut without deleting the file it points to? The shortcut and the file are **different files**. Deleting the shortcut has **no affect** on the file it points to.]

I keep using the term 'files' but this process also works for Folders. If, rather than creating a list of shortcuts to files, you would prefer a *folder* shortcut, then follow the same process selecting folders rather than files. You can also create shortcuts to programs but we'll talk more about that next week.

One last tip, when looking through a folder for a file, do you find it difficult to scroll through a long list of icons? I've found that a lot of folks don't know they can customize their file view. Here's how you change it:

From within your folder, select the Folder View button in the toolbar. I like List View and Details View as both are alphabetical text lists and easy on the eyes. List View will give you just the filename while Details View will add file type, size and date information.



Next week, we'll take this a step further and include shortcuts to the programs you use most often. Don't miss it!

Has this week's tip helped you? Please send your comments or suggestions for future Tech Tuesday topics to Tracy.