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Community Newsletter: Q&A: 2/25/05 How to reformat your hard drive

by Lee Koo (ADMIN) **M** - 2/24/05 3:25 PM

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2/25/05 How to reformat your hard drive   Post 1 of 77
by Lee Koo (ADMIN) **M** - 2/24/05 3:25 PM

Thanks you Dana and everyone who participated in this week topic. I encourage all of you who have more suggestions, methods, or questions regarding the hard drive reformatting procedures to post below. The more information that we share, the more we can all learn from each other as a community.

Thanks again everyone!

-Lee Koo
CNET Community

Question:

I'm currently running Windows XP Pro. Can you please give me step-by-step instructions on how to reformat my hard drive and start fresh? I have many peripherals attached: a printer, a Webcam, a 64MB video card, a video capture card with TV and FM, and an external modem. Thank you.

Submitted by: Ricardo R.

Answer:

Ricardo,

Let me start by saying that a complete reformat and reinstallation of your operating system is something that is often required when a computer system has just become too damaged to continue attempting repair. Over time, viruses, spyware, installing and uninstalling programs, and errors that compound themselves can eventually bring even the fastest computer to a grinding halt. Many avid computer users plan a complete restore once every year or two just to keep things running smoothly. Having said this, there are a number of steps you should take before reformatting, as well as things you can do to help speed up the process the next time.

First, keep in mind that reformatting and reinstalling Windows brings your computer back to the first day that you used it. You will lose everything that you installed and saved to your hard drive since that first day. This includes any online updates. It is extremely important that you have backed up all the data that you want to bring back to your computer. Word documents, photographs, music, address books, and e-mail are just a few examples of the things you might want to save. Don't assume your backups are good. Double-check backups by reading the files or restoring a few of them back to your computer and viewing them. Don't forget to run a complete virus scan on your saved data to prevent bringing back viruses that you may have had.

A few notes on backup: There are a number of methods and programs available for backing up data. Check each of the programs that you use for a built-in backup routine. Programs such as Quicken and Act! have their own backup routines (usually under the file menu). If you use outlook for email you can down load a backup routine from Microsoft to save your emails and address books. Windows XP Pro also has its own backup program under Programs-Accessories-System Tools. XP Home does not come with a backup program by default, but is available on the original installation CD.

Second: Check to make sure that you have all the installation disks for the hardware that you mentioned as well as any software that you originally installed. Download and save to CD all updated drivers and software for your Video Card, printers, scanners and any other hardware that you plan to use. If you have downloaded any programs, you will need all your Key codes for them

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you have downloaded any programs, you will need all your Key codes for them as well.

Ok, let's get started on the reformat and restore process. You did not mention the make or model of your computer, so there is one of four possible methods available to you.

A. Built in Restore – Many newer computers come with a built-in restore process saved to a second partition on the hard drive. This can usually be accesses by pressing a key during the boot process. For Example: Pressing F10 during boot on HP computers will bring you to a restore menu. Check your computers manual or online to see if you have this option.

B. Restore CD's – Some computers come packaged with a set of Restore or Recovery disks. The first disk is a bootable CD and is inserted into the CD drive during boot-up.

C. Original Windows XP Disk – If you don't have either of the above, then you will have to use your original Windows XP disk (you will need your Installation Key Code). If your XP CD is an upgrade version, then you will need an old Windows 95, 98, ME disk as well.

D. No CD's and No Restore Partition – If you have lost your Restore CD's or never received any and your computer does not have a restore partition, you can usually order a set of Restore CD's from the manufacturer of your computer for a minimal charge of about $20.

STEP-BY-STEP

A. You Have Built in Restore

1. Backup All Data.
2. Unplug all USB devices like printers, scanners and palm pilots. If you have several internal cards that you added after you purchased the computer, you may need to remove these.
3. Check Manual for proper key to press for restore or it may show up on the opening screen.
4. Enter restore mode.
5. Follow onscreen instructions. (takes about 30 min)
6. Install Drivers for special hardware (hardware that did not come with computer)
7. Check Device Manager for any Yellow Exclamation Points indicating missing drivers or errors. Click START-CONTROL PANEL-SYSTEM-HARDWARE-DEVICE MANAGER. (Select Classic View) If you have any Yellow Exclamation Points, you will probably need to install drivers for these devices from your CD for that piece of hardware.
8. At this point you have a fairly clean installation and it is time to Update windows. Download and install all Windows updates, especially Service Pack 2 (if not already at SP2).
9. Install and setup any additional external hardware like printers, scanners, Palm pilots, etc. Install each one at a time and reboot and test before installing the next item.
10. Install additional software that you have on CD like Office, Quicken and Photoshop, except Antivirus software. Again install one at a time, reboot and test before going on to the next.
11. Once you have all the hardware and software installed and running, it is now time to install any security products that you may have like antivirus software, Software Firewalls and Spyware/popup blockers. (you don't want to have too many redundant programs running)
12. With Antivirus software up and running and updated online with the latest virus definitions installed, you can now go online and look for updates for other software or download programs that you want to reinstall.
13. Using whatever method you used to backup your data, you can now restore your data back to your computer. Don't do this until you have antivirus software running. You don't want to bring back viruses that may have caused your original problems.
14. You can now go in and tweak your settings to what ever you like, add screen savers and set things up the way you want.
15. Now that everything is up and running just the way you like it, it is time to backup your settings. I prefer to use something like Norton Ghost to make a disk image of this state. If you want to reformat and restore your computer again in the future, you can restore it back to this point instead of all the way back to the beginning, saving a huge amount of time. You could also use Windows XP Pro Backup to make a recovery set. I also recommend using Windows Restore to save a Restore Point at this point. Some people like to set a restore point after each of the steps above in the event that something goes wrong along the way.

B. You have Restore/Recovery CD's

1. Backup All Data.
2. Unplug all USB devices like printers, scanners and palm pilots. If you have several internal cards that you added after you purchased the computer, you may need to remove these as well.
3. With computer running, insert Recovery CD in drive and restart computer. Note: Make sure your CD's are clean of any finger prints and smudges by wiping them from the center out. If recovery window does not come up you may have to go into your bios and change your boot order to boot from CD first. (Check your manual for exact key sequence to enter the bios settings)
4. Enter restore mode.
5. Follow onscreen instructions. (takes about 30 min)

Follow Steps 5 thru 15 above

C. Using Windows XP Disk
1. Backup all data.
2. Unplug all USB devices like printers, scanners and palm pilots. If you have several internal cards that you added after you purchased the computer, you may need to remove these as well.
3. With computer running, insert Windows XP Installation CD in drive, ignore the installation screen and restart computer with the CD in the drive. Note: Make sure your CD's are clean of any finger prints and smudges by wiping them from the center out. A short message will display "Press Any Key to boot from CD" Press key quickly. .If your computer will not boot from the CD, you may have to go into your bios and change your boot order to boot from CD first. (Check your manual for exact key sequence to enter the bios settings)
4. Windows will now load some setup files and if you need some 3rd party disk drivers such as those required for some SATA drives you will have only a moment to press F6 to do this. Otherwise wait until you see the Welcome to Setup screen. This screen will display your current disk partitions. I would suggest using the "D" key to delete the current windows partition and then use the "C" key to recreate the partition. NOTE: If you have a fairly large hard drive I would suggest creating 2 partitions. One for the windows operating system and another for your data. This way if you want to reinstall windows again in the future, you data will be safe on the 2nd partition.
4a. Once you have created the partition or decided to keep the original partitions, Windows will format and start to install windows as well as prompt you for your Code Key for the CD case. This should take about 30 to 60 minutes.

Follow Steps 5 thru 15 above

Sorry about the length of this, but you asked for step-by-step and did not supply enough information to narrow down the response.

Good Luck!

Dana H.
Wayland Computers
http://www.waylandcomputers.com

Submitted by: Dana H. of Wayland, Massachusetts

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Honorable mentions   Post 2 of 77
by Lee Koo (ADMIN) **M** - 2/24/05 3:59 PM In reply to: 2/25/05 How to reformat your hard drive by Lee Koo (ADMIN) **M**

****Honorable mentions****

Answer:

Ricardo,

Well, there are many steps in reformatting your hard drive properly. Many things you will want to consider before you do:

1) Do you have all of your original program/driver discs that came with my computer?
2) How are you going to back-up your data? DVD-RW, CD-R, Tape Drive, Second hard drive? Remember, although Windows has many drivers built-in for compatibility reasons, some methods are better than others for backing up. I prefer to send all of my data across the network at my house to another computer.
3) Have you written down all the things that you will need to remember? Passwords for programs, phone numbers (for dial-up users), internet favorites. Also, many programs, such as Musicmatch, require you to type a "key" to activate the full version of the software. If you bought the key off of the internet, make sure you have it written down somewhere. Many companies offer a "lost key retriever" service, but it's a pain and takes more time than to just write it down.
4) Back up all of your regularly used files. Documents, pictures, videos, music, whatever you want to keep. Remember, you can always just not use some of the things you backed-up, but once you re-format, you can never get it back. If you are a game player, you need to find out how each game saves it's files. Usually, you can find the game save files in the folder that the game is located. Look for the name of your game, and write down the location of the file, i.e. C:\Program Files\LucasArts\X-Wing Alliance\. When you reinstall everything onto your computer, just move the file back into the same location. If you use outlook or equivalent for your e-mail, remember to export your all of your used folders. i.e. Your inbox, sent items, contacts, calendar and such.
5) Is it an opportune time to reformat? Do you have a big project coming up for work/school that you need to finish? Taking the time to backup/reformat/reinstall/re-customize a system can take a long time. Do you have the time to do it, or should you wait until later?

Alright, now for what you asked for:

1) Make sure you have everything that you need off of your computer and onto a reliable medium. (See above step 2)
2) Insert your Windows XP Pro CD and reboot your machine.
3) Hit any key to boot off the CD. This may take a while depending on your machine. Be patient.
4) The next screen will have a few options for you. It will say something to the effect of "Install Windows XP".
5) If a screen comes up and gives you the option to repair your drive, use that option, if not, proceed to step 6.
6) The next screen should come up quickly and allow you to view the different partitions that were created on your drive.
7) Go to the primary partition and follow the instructions on how to delete it. It is usually 'd' to delete, then 'L' or 'F8' To confirm.
8) All your information is now gone. Now you need to make space, or get the hard drive ready, to receive the new Operating System.
9) You should see the partition screen again, now, instead of "Partitioned Space" there should be something that says "Unpartioned space". Go to that and follow the directions for creating a new partition. Usually 'C', 'Enter' – to set at maximum size, or you can use the keypad to change the value, and sometimes you can name the partition. I always use the default name.
10) You should once again see the screen that you saw in step 6, now, go to the partition that you just created, and follow the directions there for installing Windows onto it. Usually 'Enter'.
11) After this, it's pretty much smooth sailing. Windows will take over, and there should be no more DOS-like commands.
12) Once you reinstall, re-customize everything, you're set to go.

Submitted by: Brenton H.

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Answer:

Ricardo R.

I have found the best way to resolve problems with WindowsXP installations is to return the hard drive to the state it was in when it came from the manufacturer. To do this you will need a DOS system boot disk that has a copy of "FDISK" on it. I keep a version 6.2 DOS system disk handy for this very purpose.

First make sure your BIOS is set to allow you to boot from a floppy drive. With the DOS disk inserted into floppy drive boot up your computer. While booting your monitor will display "Starting MS-DOS...".
The boot process will stop with the message "Current date is (giving the days date) Enter new date (mm-dd-yy): " displayed on the screen. Simply press the enter key to continue. This will then cause the message (Current time is (giving the time set on your computer) Enter new time.
Again press the enter key to finish the boot. Your screen will then display the message Microsoft (R) MS-DOS (R) Version (version number)
(C) Copyright Microsoft Corp 1981-1993. Below this A:\> will be displayed with a blinking cursor.

Next you will type FDISK (the command in not case sensitive) and hit the enter key. Assuming you have only one hard drive you will see current fixed disk drive, you will then be presented with four options. 1. Create DOS partition or Logical Dos Drive. 2. Set active DOS partition.
3. Delete partition or logical DOS Drive. 4. Display partition information. Entering 4 will display the number of disk drives and the partitions on each. Make a note of all of the partitions listed, along with the type of partition it is. Press ESC to return to the main menu. Start the deletion process by entering 3 in the Enter choice box.

This will bring you to another menu with four options 1. Delete Primary DOS Partition. 2. Delete Extended DOS Partition. 3. Delete Logical DOS
Drive(s) in the extended DOS Partition. 4. Delete Non-DOS Partition.
Start the deletion process by entering your choice at the "Enter Choice" box. Be sure you start with option 4 working your way to option 1 for the partitions that are on your disk drive. Keep following the on screen prompts to complete the deletion process.

This process will have to be followed for each disk drive in your system. Once it is completed your system will not recognize that you have any disk drives installed. This is what you want as any problem you are now encountering will be removed from the system.

To finish the installation process, simply make sure your BIOS will allow you to boot from a CD Drive. Place your Windows CD in the drive, boot your system to begin the re-installation process of your system.

Power Quest has a program called Drive Image 7 that will keep you from ever again having to strip your hard drive. It accomplishes this by backing up your hard drive on another media, such as CDs, another disk drive, or tape media. I keep mine backed up on an external disk drive.
You will need to make sure you have your drive backed up before you make any changes to your system, such as installing a new peripheral, or even a new program. If your system begins to give you problems after the installation, simply restore your previous back up and your system is restored to the state in was in before the installation. If however, your new installation does work make a new back up of the system encase future problems crop up.

Drive Image has been bought by Symantec. If you like Norton, then get the latest copy of Norton Ghost. However, if you would rather not be plagued with Norton, search the web for Drive Image 7 which is the last version Power Quest came out with before selling to Norton. There are still a few venders that have Power Quest 7, as I purchased another copy a few weeks ago off of the web.

Submitted by: James S.

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Answer:

My Procedure is to:

1) Make a backup to another hard drive, DVD or CDs (I have a spare 80GB hard drive that I install temproarily just for that purpose). Things you will want after you are done that you may not think of now: Passwords (we forget them when Windows remembers them for us), addresses, favorite URLs etc, images, settings you like for both XP and software.

2) Get drivers for your main board (this is important), all cards and peripherals and put them on a CD, DVD or a spare Hard Drive. If you can't find the original installation CDs for your peripherals, www.driverguide.com is free and very helpful, if you have make and model numbers. You may have to get the main board drivers from the manufacturer.

3) Get a Windows 98 startup disk.

4)Boot from the Win 98 startup floppy (You may have to change your BIOS settings to make the floppy boot before the hard drive), run fdisk from DOS on the hard drive to delete all partitions. At this point everything on your old hard drive is gone, gone, gone.

5)Boot from the XP installation disk (may require another BIOS setting change, but probably not since there is no operating system on your hard drive and no floppy in the slot). Follow instructions to partition and format your hard drive and install the XP Operating System. Then set the BIOS like it was originally.

6)Install the main board drivers (this is important) first, and then the drivers for the functions built into the main board (usually sound, USB ports, maybe video, LAN, RAID, SCSI etc).

7) install all peripheral and add-on card drivers. This is time consuming, but necessary. In fact, getting and installing these drivers will probably be the most difficult part of the job.

8)connect to the internet and get any available updates for XP. Your ISP will usually help you get connected.

9) Install applications.

10)Retrieve any important files from the backup made in step 1. (Do Not try to Restore anything from the backup, just copy the files you want. Any Restore operation is likely to move the problem you were trying to solve in the first place to your new installation)

Cordially

Cordially,

Submitted by: John H.

****

Answer:

First, Plan your move!!
(Assuming you're not a newbie).

- Save all your data files and documents on CD or on a different hard drive/partition.
some examples are: My Documents, address book, Playlists, album art, and any other files you saved under Other personal directories.
- You can also save your emails if you chose to by moving your email application's storage folder to another drive/partition.

Now the most important steps...
- Make sure you save all your drivers, again, on a different drive/partition.
If you need a simple way to do this (or even if you want to learn more), go to
http://msn.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,119266,pg,6,00.asp
This is one of the easiest ways to do it.
- If you're using a non-IDE hard drive (SATA or SCSI...) as your boot drive, make sure you have the necessary files (probably on a floppy disk) that you will use for the "F6 install" of WinXP.

Now is the time to...

- Check for newer drivers for your hardware and your mainboard (chipset), download and save them, one more time, on a different drive/partition. (You don't want to install drivers, then update them a few days later).
- Decide whether you want to replace or add hardware.
- Plan the way you want to partition your hard drive. Remember, do NOT play with the partition that has all your above-saved files.

- If your computer came with a system restore CD, check to see if it really IS bootable on this PC.
(Many older models come with CDs that are either non-bootable, or that simply will not boot on the machine it came with). If this is the case, It is time to dig out those floppies that came with your computer and you carelessly stashed away (one of them maybe your boot diskette). If that fails, make a bootable floppy disk with drivers for your CD-Rom drive (and test it to see if it works and that you can use your restore CD).

Now that you're ready...

1- If it is a system restore CD, and it is bootable, Put it in your CD drive and restart your PC.
Follow the prompts to restore your computer...
It normally will restore your PC to the state it was in when you purchased it.
-You might be offered two choices:

** Restore without formatting (In this case your data files are not erased, but your new system could inherit bugs from the old one you just replaced, and you will have to re-install all the applications that did not come with your PC anyway). Go to
http://msn.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,119266,pg,3,00.asp
for more help on that.

** Restore with format (My favorite). Let's face it, if someone decides to go through all that trouble, he must have a pretty good reason for it in the first place (system problems, bugs, spyware, etc...) Bottom line, if I do it, this is the way to go. The only way to make sure none of the problems pop up again after the restore.

2- If it is a Windows XP CD, just put it in the drive, restart your PC, follow the prompts with the assurance that you have a plan, and that you're ready. Win XP is a decent system, it should do most of the work.

- Optional: You will be presented with a choice to press F6 to install SCSI drivers for non-IDE hard drives. If your system drive is SCSI or SATA, this is where to tell your PC about it.
Note that it takes a while after you press F6 for the PC to stop and ask you for the floppy disk, don't panic, it will happen.

-You probably do not want to repair Windows, so choose a new installation.

-for the location of the installation, choose the drive/partition that you know has your old windows, and DELETE the partition (involves pressing D and L etc...), then, re-create the partition and choose to install windows on it.

-Format your partition.
If you're experienced, NTFS is the way to go.
If you're not, then FAT32 is OK.

After that, it should be smooth sailing...
Windows will install most of the drivers, and the ones it cannot install, it will prompt you to do so, and all you will have to do is point it to where you had saved your drivers.

If You have SP2 (service pack 2), install it right after windows.

Important Notes about drivers:

-Most USB Peripherals like to have their drivers installed before they are connected to the PC.
-If you have new mainboard/chipset Inf files, install them first.
-Remember that "First things first" and try to be logical about the order of installation of the drivers. Although it should not make a difference, if you have doubts, use logic... (Mainboard first, then display etc..). It is always better to have your display card working well before installing a TV card, right?

Most Important of all...
Do not connect to the internet before you have installed your Firewall, your anti-virus, and maybe even an anti-spy program.

and remember, if, before the installation, you had changed you email storage folder to another drive/partition, point your email program to that location...

Submitted by: Khaled S.

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Answer:

Before you can even start thinking of Formatting your hard drive you must first find out if you have the install cd´s that came with the webcam, Video card, printer … .If you don't have them I suggest you go to http:www.drivergide.com and download the correct drivers for each device. When you have these drivers you must write it on a cd for future use. Make sure you back up every thing you want to save on cd'd or so.

Now your steps on formatting you pc:

1) Insert the window XP cd and start your computer up. (Make sure your first boot device are set in Stuffy; cd rom then HD)
2) It will prompt you to "boot from cd rom pres any button" Just pres any button like spacebar or enter.
3) When it is finish configurating your pc to start up it will as you to setup or repair windows. You use "to setup win xp"
4) It will then inform you that there is an existing window on it. Pres Esc to install a fresh copy of windows
5) Use the same directory and same partition of the current operating system. Just pres enter.

Now it should prompt you to ask if you want to format this partition using NTFS.Say yes. I prefer NTFS above FAT32. You can decide.

It should start formatting now and after format the setup should start automatically.

During the setup you will be prompt to insert your Serial Key and also date and time line. When it come to network settings you can just say next to auto configure it.

Let it run thru and just follow it as it install. It is very user friendly and whala you have a fresh win xp on your pc.

Please note you can also repair a current instillation. You do the same as above to start but where it prompt you to repair a windows instillation you can use that one and it will reconfigure your windows.

Thank you

Submitted by: JJ B. of South Africa

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Answer:

I know if I was on a service call to someone's home or business and they just wanted me to reformat their hard drive with XP Pro with a clean boot, first thing I would ask is if they do not have their product disk do they at least have their PRODUCT KEY CODE. if you have least that any bootable disk will work. If not they will need to repurchase a new Key Code or request a replacement from Microsoft.

As far as their peripherals and drivers needed I usually try to get a list of information before going to the site as to what they have models, serial numbers, etc and download the drivers for them before hand and creating a bootable disk with a good back up program I like to use that has saved many recalls from happening in the future. Using a method called "Slip Streaming", I create a bootable disk first with the OS with all current SP updates, with standard drivers they will need as well at the same time. This will reduce time in the long run, and these disks can be left with them afterwards of they ever get into trouble later.

Once there I can verify that all the information they gave me on their products match what I downloaded drivers for, do not want to make matters worse by uploading the wrong drivers for their equipment.

First thing I verify is to make sure their CD-ROM is currently a designated bootable device in the system Bio's. Once that is done then I would make sure ALL internet connections have been physically disconnected from the machine. Once all of that is done, then insert Bootable XP disk and from the instructions I will see it will give me options to either "REPAIR An existing partition", "DELTE EXSISTING PARTITION", or a "RAW INSTALL". So I know I have other places to be I opt to delete the existing partitions by following the instructions given, and allowing XP to do it all for me within a few clicks. Once it is done, restarting itself I then insert the bootable drivers disk for their system peripherals. Last but not least I then add an Antivirus and firewall, and reconnecting the internet connection. Afterwards any additional software they may have for their system.

A bootable XP disk will repair, delete, reformat, and or install itself depending on what you want, just by inserting the disk and booting the machine to the disk when prompted to do so. There is a lot more that can be done than just reformatting. Reformatting is and should always be looked at as the last means not the end means. Registry back up disks, can be used to clean a system, and a repair done to an existing install may all that be needed. Question is how much time do you want to spend and how fast do you want to be back up and running. And that back up program I use for most clients, and they rave about it, is TECH IN A BOX. Once you have all the OS and all standard software needed loaded then it will create a DISE back up partition for you just by clicking on CREATE a backup all automatically you just sit back and let it do it's thing. Then if ever in trouble again, Open TECH IN THE BOX look for "Restore to Factory Conditions" and let it do it's thing and you will be back to where you started when you created the initial backup. NOTE* all data will be lost from the back up date to the present if such data is not backed up prior to Factory set up.

I like it because it is a failsafe restore point Manager and creator all in one for the End User.

And if you want to learn step by step on how to "slip stream" and create a bootable disk of your own, go to tomshardware.com and look down the page to "Tom's Guides" in the left column and choose the "PC How To" and read all about the right way to do it. (SLIP STREAMING NOTE* for XP users only) Hopes this helps...

Always and Sincerely yours...
"In the wind...." John 3:8
~Bear~

Submitted by: Barry B.

****

Answer:

Hi Ricardo,

You didn't say how long you have been running WinXP Pro. Have you been running it for a while and you want to clean it up to make it run faster? Or did you upgrade? You didn't really say. Reformatting and re-installing is a long days work. It doesn't guarantee that everything is going to work properly either. If you don't have a major start up Problem it might be better to just clean out all the sludge. It is the easier and safer way to go. It takes less time and if everything is working properly. You won't have to worry about something not working properly.

You would be amazed at how many programs automatically load at windows boot up. Not all of the icons that start up will show up on your system tray. all these start up programs use up memory and resources which may cause some conflicts. I will give you help on both options and you decide what way you would like to go.

This will take a couple of hours to do like I said earlier. First off, I would do a back up for safety just in case something doesn't go right and you can't get everything to work properly. There are many programs that you can use to make a back up of everything on your hard

drive. You can use Norton's ghost or pay out $50.00 US. to pick up Acronis True Image and back up your important data. Second. Make sure you have all of your program disks ready for re-installing all your hardware drivers and programs.

To format your hard drive. click on your My computer Icon on your desktop. Right click on your hard drive and you will see Format in the drop down list. If you don't have My Computer on your desk top. Click on the Start then My Computer again Right click the hard drive and you will see the format in the drop down menus. Then get your windows Installation cd or your Restore CD that came with your computer. If you are using a factory restore cd and it didn't come with the a Cd then there should be a restore on your hard drive. If this is the case. You might not want to do a reformat unless you have done a full back up.

If you have downloaded and use a bunch of shareware or freeware programs that you want to use. You will have to make sure you save them to reinstall after you reinstall windows. You will have to make sure that you have all the registration codes for them to work to turn of the free trial into a fully functional unlimited version.

With any luck. You won't need the CD that came with your hardware, which are neither easy to access or are up-to-date. After you reinstall windows. You will need to go to update all the critical updates to make sure you have all the security bug fixes. Once you install all your hardware you will have to update all the drivers as well. It is a good idea to check to make sure all your hardware is working properly by going to control panel and checking in Device Manager to make sure there are no yellow check marks or explanation marks beside any of your hardware.

Now if you just want to clean out all the cobwebs that have built up and slowing down your computer. Here is the directions on how to do this.

First thing you want to look for is what starts up when you boot up your computer. with WinXP you only need a few icons at start up. One is windows messenger. Even if you don't need or use it. The reason is that if you don't use it at start up. It can cause problems with Outlook, Internet Explorer and other Microsoft programs. And your firewall and antivirus programs. The other stuff just eats up memory and you don't really need them on startup.

To clear out all the unneeded start up programs click on START the RUN. in the pop up box. try in MSCONFIG, and press enter to open the system start up configuration utilities. Click the start up tab and uncheck any item that you don't want or need to start up when you boot your computer. This will help make your computer run faster as there isn't as much stuff hogging your memory. If there is stuff in the start up config that you don't know what they are you can read what they are in the command column. If there isn't anything in there you can check on goggle or your favorite search engine to see what they are and what programs they run.

You can also check for spyware that slows your computer down. I would go with two spyware programs because one will miss things that the other will find. Lavasoft's Ad Aware and Spybots Search and Destroy are the best 2 programs that are free. Once you clear out your start up files and run your spyware your computer should run as if it is a new computer

Either way you go good luck with you choice and hope that it all goes well if you decide to reformat, or have to format because you just installed WinXP Pro.

Submitted by: Ron T.

****

Answer:

Hello there,

It is a very simple to reformat your hard disk. And don't worry about peripherals it is of least concern.

The first thing what you should do is to BACKUP YOUR DATA!

If you have two or more partitions then you can copy your data to another partition.
If you have only one partition or want to repartition your drive then you will need to backup data on CD or external drive.

After backup restart your computer & set it to boot from CD. (don't forget to put in your WinXP CD) Also it is a good idea to remove all USB peripherals.
Then follow on screen instructions from setup.

After Windows is installed then first install motherboard drivers. After that INSTALL WINXP SP2 or HOTFIXES. Then install DirectX & then proceed to graphics drive & then go to others.

It is always advisable to install security updates before going online.

Hope that helps

Submitted by: Aditya R.

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Win XP Home Edition

by tholmes - 3/20/05 11:27 AM In reply to: Honorable mentions by Lee Koo (ADMIN) **M**

Hi, will this info work for win xp home edition as well or just the pro version? I really need to restore my machine the way it was when I got it from the store..
I don't care about saving the info on it, that is not a problem at all..
I use my computer mostly for work and I have very little on it except the basics and a few games, anti virus, and a firewall, oh I also have my internet connection stuff like aol and shaw, but I have the disks for that so no biggie.. I have been running win xp for about 1 year and a bit..
Thanks...

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how do i open my pc?

by leeacab - 6/2/07 1:19 AM In reply to: Win XP Home Edition by tholmes

i forgot the password of my PC and i can not open it now because of the password in the desk top.please help me how to open it.do i need to reformat my pc? if so, please give me the step by step process on how to reformat my PC.

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Removing the password - *New!*

by zerone_tec - 8/22/09 4:09 AM In reply to: how do i open my pc? by leeacab

just open you pc. look for the small button like battery. Remove the battery from the slot. Connect (short) both positive and negative terminal of the battery slot on motherboard and power on the PC. This will remove your CMOS password.

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Other suggestions from our members

by Lee Koo (ADMIN) M - 2/24/05 4:35 PM In reply to: 2/25/05 How to reformat your hard drive by Lee Koo (ADMIN) M

****Other suggestions from our members****

Answer:

Ricardo
1. First make sure you have a complete backup of your Data.
2. Just stick the Windows XP Pro CD in the CD ROM drive and boot to the CD.
3. When it prompts you to repair – Select do not repair.
4. It will then prompt you for the hard drive if you have more then one in the machine.
5. Select the Primary Drive on the Primary IDE port
6. Then select the windows partition shown.
7. It will then prompt you on what to do with the partition
8. Select Format partition using full format to get a clean fresh install of Windows XP
9. Follow the steps from there to finish the install of Windows XP.
10. Windows XP will probably not find the TV card or the Web Cam so you will have to load the drivers for that once Windows XP is installed.
11. Then finish setting up XP the way you want it and install your applications you use.

Submitted by: Sam M.

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Answer:

If you do not have a restore CD from the computer manufacturer, and are going to install XP from a Windows XP disk do the following:

First of all, before reformatting, make sure that you ahve all the drivers for your hardware that you will need before reformatting. Your best bet is to go to the internet sites of all the vendors whom you bought hardware from and download the drivers. Don't forget the motherboard drivers as well. Burn them to s CD. Then make sure that you have backed up any data files that you want to save. Then simply place the XP CD in the CD drive, reboot the computer, when it shows "Boot from CD:?" Hit the enter key. Follow the onscreen instructions for installing XP. It will give you the option to reformat. Best be is to reformat in NTFS if you want to take advantage of the file security feature in XP. After reformatting, the system will go on to install XP. The once XP is loaded, reload/install the drivers you saved to CD, then copy back th data files that you saved as well.

If you are using an OEM Restore disk, follow all the instructions above, for the downloading and saving of drivers and data files. Boot from the CD and select the destructive restore. This will reformat the drive and reinstall all software that came with the computer including XP. Then relaod the drivers you downloaded, transfer the saved data files and you are done.

Submitted by: Stuart

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Answer:

First i would check to see if your computer came with a system restoration cds. if they didn't make sure that you have the drivers cds that came with the computer .. if not you could download the drivers from the manufactor website ...

To reformat the drive and start fresh.. the first option is to use the Windows XP cd .. and just a precaution i would unplug all your periferals .. like the printer and external modem and anything else .. then put in the cd and restart the cd and then press any cd to boot from cd and then follow the instructions .. there is an option to reload windows over top of itself.. but you want to start clean i would chose the option to do a clean install .. and XP will do everything itself

The second option is the system recovery cds.. depending on your system .. you have the put the first cd in and restart the computer and it will boot from the cd and then followed the instructions..but with either options i would unplug everything but the keyboard and mouse and monitor

Submitted by: James M.

****

Answer:

have been doing reformating for 20 years.Been writing for 1 year. First make sure you want to reformat, when the select screen cames up you should select windows so you computer does not go into booting up XP. From that point when the screen dispays its dos screen try typing in fdisk and see what happens. I usualy use a Floppy or a boot cd to get to the dos screen. Some manufactures use a recover CD to do all this for you. But older machines you have too do it on your own. In the Fdisk mode (if you get there) you want to select DELETE prinary dos function first. (3) Then after the machine checks the integraty of the hard drive it will ask you if you want to use the whole disk. Pressing (y) will get you by this as you watch the puter check out the size of the disk. It will select (1) install a primary partition you must press the right key (enter) then it will do it on its own. You must shut of the puter and start it up in dos or start it up with your XP CD. If you have a 98se floppy and are using it to restart the puter with the start-up floppy and select format when it is done, (its slow) If you have a XP Pro CD all of the above is not necessary,just drop the CD into the CD playler and run the new install. When the screen comes up do you want to reformat the drive it gives you two choices - NTFS or FAT32. I choose NTFS but it is ok to pick FAT32. It is to long a story why I pick NTFS but it will format your drive and install XP the way you want. All computers are different but this way usually

work for me.

I also have a 98 start-up floppy and I use that to start the puter in the dos screen so I can do fdisk and format of the hard drive. With so many puters coming with no FLOPPY drive I did not give a blow by blow on formatting with a floppy. I now use a boot CD that does the job.

Submitted by: Richard M.

****

Answer:

1) Does your computer have a System Disk (I.E. A manufecturers disk to reset the system)
2) Do you have this CD?

If you have your system disk, save all your important Files (Documents, Presentations and the such), MP3's (Yeah those are important too) and all the important things you wish to keep, save them in a CD or another storage, not your main disk. Put your system disk into the CD rom drive and follow the instructions.. is that simple.

PCs that have the System Disk, usually bring all their drivers in it, so check that too, if you dont have the drivers it would be better if you saved the drivers u have, or download them BEFORE formating your hard drive.

Now, if you dont have that ownderful Self reseting disk, you need to take some steps:

1) Save all your needed files, this is TRULY the most important step, you dont wanna loose all those downloads, installers, MP3's (yeah, you hacker you..) and important files.
2) Get a Windows XP disk, get your license, and all the stuff you will need to re-install your PC (All the drivers you need for your PC should be avalieable. or if you were a smart guy, you kept all the CD's that your equip. brought and just need to look them up)
3) Make a startup disk, just in case.
4) Brace yourself.. Kansas is going bye bye.

Once you are ready to delete all yoor files, enter the PC by DOS mode, (push F8 at the startup to be able to use the operating system you want. Then, type:

C> Format C: /q/s <--- those options will do a quick format, and you will still have the system to boot up your PC.

Be smart, in your BIOS, set up the PC to use the CD rom as your MAIN Boot device, is you are able to do this, you dont need the whole format C: thingy... XP does it for you.

From then on.. you are on your own my friend.. I just hope i could help.

Take care!

Submitted by: Miguel P.]]]]]]]]

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▸ **Slipstreaming service pack 2 to a new win xp install CD**　　　　　Post 7 of 77
by JBengell - 2/25/05 1:52 AM In reply to: Other suggestions from our members by Lee Koo (ADMIN) M

If a person is adventerous enough to try this.I had made a new windows install disk with drivers etc just for my machine and it has service pack 2 integrated in the windows installation. I got the info on how to do it by this site:
http://www.winsupersite.com/showcase/windowsxp_sp2_slipstream.asp
*You need a CD burner
*Win xp service pack 2 network install at Microsoft's site
*ISO Buster(freeware)or a program like that of your choice
*NERO or Easy CD Creator.

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▸ **Slipstreaming service pack 2 to a new win xp install CD**　　　　　Post 8 of 77
by ahuguely - 2/25/05 2:18 PM In reply to: Slipstreaming service pack 2 to a new win xp install CD by JBengell

The slipstreaming process is in my opinion, a rock solid mechanism for OS and hardware recovery for a specific configuration. The process is not for the average user, but is worth considering. Call that geek in your friendship circle and than take them for a great meal. Well worth the effort.

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▸ **Downloading SP2 to CD**　　　　　Post 9 of 77
by tday - 3/12/05 11:49 AM In reply to: Slipstreaming service pack 2 to a new win xp install CD by JBengell

I was hoping I could download SP2 service pack to a CD for installation off line. When I tried to burn it to a CD I get a message that a file attached to it might be lost, continue? What is this file? Do I need it? I am using Windows Explorer to burn a data CD.
Thanks
Terry Day

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▸ **Forget Something?**　　　　　Post 10 of 77
by compusolver - 2/25/05 6:29 AM In reply to: Other suggestions from our members by Lee Koo (ADMIN) M

Everyone seems to be overlooking one "sort of important" factor - the Programs!

We wouldn't even need computers except for the programs we install and run. Some of the above posts remind people to gather their hardware drivers - but you can usually do this online to get the latest drivers.

What you cannot do is get your installable programs online, at least, not in most cases.

So to all the above suggestions, may I add some more?

1. Make sure you still have installable disks for all your programs.
2. Make sure those disks still work. Even tiny scratches, can sometimes render a CD or DVD useless. I've seen some that will work up to a point where the scratch has gone into the data, then the installation just stops dead.

I make two copies of all my original software and keep two sets of CD album-type holders to store them.

Oh yeah, one last thought - before going to the trouble of reformatting, try cleaning out your Windows Registry. I've run on the same harddrive image, without ever reformatting, for a decade!

I used disk imaging software to move the system from older drives to newer as I'd upgrade.

I finally reformatted it a few months ago when I gave the computer (which via motherboard & cpu updates, etc. was by now a 1GHz) to a friend. In case you're wondering, I'm a software developer and that drive probably had sixty or more programs and was a real workhorse.

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Working in the registry
by IrisRose - 2/25/05 9:59 AM In reply to: Forget Something? by compusolver

Could you post some specifics about working in the registry. I have gone in there a little bit to delete programs, but am very very cautious. I do know to back up the registry before I start in case I mess something up (haven't yet) but I would really appreciate some more help in what in the registry can be changed, etc. I'd guess that the answer is much much longer than can be posted here, but perhaps you could give some guidelines and suggest a resource.
Thanks.

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After formatting
by siscosoftware - 2/25/05 7:32 AM In reply to: Other suggestions from our members by Lee Koo (ADMIN) M

When you reformat your computer and reinstalled all possible software, drivers, games and utilities, and everything is working perfect, you have to create an image of your hard drive, so the next time you'll be ready to work in 15 minutes.

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Slipping Toward Ignorance
by Dzhonz - 3/2/05 3:18 PM In reply to: Other suggestions from our members by Lee Koo (ADMIN) M

My little binary buddy has been suffering for a few years, and I have kept him going with chewing gum and duct tape, but, alas, the time has come for major surgery. After having tried almost everything, I was at the point of giving up when -- POW! BAM! -- I get this E-mail from Lee Koo, the Manager, CNET Community and the administrator of this forum. Yes, that's the ticket, I emoted -- a reformat! It's something that I have kept in the back of my sullied grey matter all along but had no clear idea of how to accomplish it. So, I read the E-mail and followed the link to this forum where I read with relative understanding how to effect a reformat. Then came the flood of follow-up inputs, and the thread grew exponentially and my understanding shrank concomitantly. I am now wary of trying such a remedy, and my questions are now legion.

Is anybody out there in this forum able to apply his/her knowledge to my individual case? Which person's input applies most closely with my situation?

I am somewhat knowledgeable, but my experience is limited by the few years of my computer literacy. For what it's worth, here is where my situation lies: This a Compaq Presario desktop (5WV260). It came with Windows Me installed. I later (after much trouble with Me) installed XP Pro and all went well for a year or so, which leads me to where we are now.

The only internal stuff that I installed is one PCI Adapter. Also, I removed the 64 MB memory card (chip?) and installed two 128 MB memory cards (chips?).

Question: if I ever get to the point where I reformat, do I have to remove these items and reinstall the 64 MB thingy? I gleaned enough from my reading to know to unplug all external hardwares. I have been in the process of backing up all of my data as well as getting rid of extraneous data. A Reformat would take care of all the housecleaning.

My cyber companion came with a Compaq Recovery CD. However the label on this CD reads: FOR USE WITH QuickRestore if Windows will not start or to make an Emergency Diskette 191441-001.

To keep the questions to a minimum: might this Recovery CD have the necessary drivers for my baby? If not, I can get the necessary drivers from the Compaq/HP website, but how and when do I install them?

I suppose that the last question is: what next or where do I go from here? Post or mail me, puhlease!

On behalf of my electronically impulsive 'putin pet, Thanks. John

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Hi John, have tried posting your specific situation in the
by Lee Koo (ADMIN) M - 3/3/05 12:20 PM In reply to: Slipping Toward Ignorance by Dzhonz

in a specific forum?

While this answer is from the newsletter and specific to the situation from our submitter Ricardo R., the community forums offers much more dynamic solution for your questions because you can interact and follow up with active members of the community. Your question here will get buried.

You may want to post your issue in the Computer Help forum: http://reviews.cnet.com/5204-6122-0.html?forumID=44 or any of these forums which best fits your needs: http://reviews.cnet.com/4520-7600_7-5565323-1.html

We have many resident experts, members, and moderators who are always willing to offer a helping hand. Give it a try. But be specific about your issue like you have done above and post the specs on your system, this way members can get a good grasp on how to solve your issue.

Good luck!
-Lee

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WORK AROUND WINDOWS PRODUCT ACTIVATION

by PoorJohnn - 2/25/05 2:55 AM In reply to: 2/25/05 How to reformat your hard drive by Lee Koo (ADMIN) M

Have you ever wanted to reinstall Windows XP on a particular computer but chose not to because you weren't sure what you'd encounter when it came to Windows Product Activation (WPA)?

Well, there's no need to be concerned because information about the current activation is stored in an encrypted database file named Wpa.dbl, which you can back up and then restore once you've reinstalled XP. Keep in mind that this technique allows you only to reinstall XP on the same computer—it isn't a hack to pirate the OS.

Here's how to back up the Wpa.dbl file:

1. Insert a blank, formatted disk into the floppy disk drive.

2. Using Windows Explorer, navigate to the C:\Windows\System32 folder.

3. Right-click the Wpa.dbl file and select Send To | 3-1/2 Floppy.

You can then reformat the hard disk and reinstall XP. Once the installation procedure is complete, follow these steps to restore the Wpa.dbl file:

1. Restart the computer.

2. Press [F8] when you see the message Please Select The Operating System To Start.

3. From the Windows Advanced Options Menu, select Safe Mode.

4. Using Windows Explorer, navigate to the C:\Windows\System32 folder.

5. Rename the new Wpa.dbl to Wpa.new.

6. Insert the disk that contains the backup into the floppy disk drive.

7. Copy the Wpa.dbl file from the floppy disk to the C:\Windows\System32 folder.

8. Restart the computer.

Since you're using the exact copy of XP that was previously installed, the original Wpa.dbl file will be accepted, and you won't have to go through all the hassle of reactivation.
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