

Control Central

Let's take a look at a couple of the options available in Control Panel. This will be a brief look. When you start making changes in control panel, you may need information which is beyond the scope of this book.

Be careful when making any changes in this areas if you are not sure what the outcome will be. Seek professional help if necessary. Use technical assistance which might be available with purchased software. As a last resort, READ THE MANUALS. I have listed a couple of books at the end of this chapter which are very technical in nature but can help newbie's who take the time to read carefully.

Remember, as you look around in these areas that you can use the CANCEL option to leave a screen without making any changes. No changes will be made unless you click OK or APPLY.

Accessibility Options.

This option may not be loaded on your computer. It is not loaded by default when Windows is initially loaded from the CDROM. Several special needs are addressed under the headings of Keyboard, Sound, Display, Mouse, and General.

Add New Hardware.

A couple words of wisdom here that could save you a lot of trouble later. If you are replacing existing hardware - Use the remove option from the Control Panels System screen to remove old hardware before installing new hardware. See the SYSTEM discussion near the end of this chapter.

If you are adding new hardware or replacing hardware which you just removed, you will be lead through a series of screens.

The first warning you are given is to close all running programs. This included virus protection programs. Remember to reenale the virus protection after completing the hardware installation.

Next the system will search around your computer for any new "plug and play" hardware. Plug and Play compatible hardware is encoded by the manufacturer with information that Windows needs to know to properly install the hardware.

If new hardware is found, you will be prompted to load an existing Windows driver or load drivers from the manufacturer. A driver is software which tells the operating system how to use and communicate with the hardware. Installation programs may also include software which allows operators to alter the way a device functions.

Drivers are constantly being upgraded by the manufacturers. Even though you may have recently purchased a piece of hardware doesn't mean that it was recently produced. You may have purchased old stock which had a reduced price. Even if the manufactured date is quite recent, the manufacturer may have an upgrade available to

fix a bug or compatibility problem. It is always a good idea to check the manufacturers web site and search for new drivers.

If the new hardware isn't recognized by the operating system, you will be prompted to select the device from a list or supply additional information from the manufacturer supplied on floppy disk or CDROM.

A screen will display various hardware types. Select something from this list and click NEXT. A screen with two panels will appear. The left panel shows manufacturers. After selecting a manufacturer, the right panel will display all the devices by that manufacturer. This list includes all the models which are know by the operating system.

New models are constantly being released. If the model is newer than the operating system, chances are that the operating system won't know about that model. This doesn't mean that your hardware won't work. It simply means that you will have to supply additional information.

THE LAST STEP WILL BE TO REBOOT THE COMPUTER. Often changes are not integrated into the operating system until the computer is rebooted.

Add Remove Program

This option is broken into three sub sections. Click on a tab to view the options.

Install/Uninstall

The top of this screen allows you to install new software from a Floppy disk or CDROM. Click on the Install button to start the process. If Windows cannot find a startup or install program, you will be given the option to BROWSE for the program. From this point on you will have to follow the 'on screen' instructions.

Windows Setup. From this screen you can change the options pertaining to which features and options were loaded when Windows was installed.

Startup Disk. If you do not have an emergency start up disk for your computer, MAKE ONE NOW. The process is simple. Place a blank floppy disk in drive A: and click 'Create Disk'.

If your computer fails to boot, this disk may be the only way to bring your system back to life without paying large repair bills. Your Startup disk is a bootable disk. Inserting the disk before you power up the computer will allow you to boot the system. The disk will supply the computer with the necessary start up instructions. Note that you will not be in Windows when the computer comes to life. You will be in MSDOS. There will not be fancy graphical interfaces. All you will have is a black screen with the prompt 'A:\>' From this point on, you will have to type in all commands you want the computer to follow.

(See Crash Recovery) One last point which must be verified. Can you read the CDROM? Read the screens during the boot up process. One of the screens should reference loading the CDROM and indicate which drive letter was assigned to the CDROM. Insert your Windows CDROM and use the MSDOS directory command to read the contents of the drive. If you can read the CDROM, all went well. If you can't

read the CDROM, you could be in for big trouble. Windows is distributed on CDROM. In order to reload your system you must be able to read the CDROM.

Start up disks made on another computer might not work on your computer. Different hardware configurations can create different Start-up disks.

The importance of these next steps can't be overly stressed.

Test your new disk now! Shut your computer down properly. Insert the startup disk in the floppy drive. Turn on the computer's power. Note the location assigned to the CDROM. If all goes well, you should come to a black screen with the prompt `A:\>` Next, test to see if you can read the CDROM. Enter the drive letter you saw during the boot-up process followed by a ':' (colon) and press ENTER. [Typically the CDROM is the D: drive] See if you can read the CDROM by entering the command `DIR d:` and press ENTER. (The lowercase 'd:' means that you must supply the correct drive identification letter.)

From the black MSDOS window you can safely shut down your computer by turning off the power. Remove the Floppy and restart your system by turning on the power. Since this was only a test to see if the system would boot and you could read the CDROM, the system should reboot to Windows.

If your computer will not boot to the floppy disk, you need to change the boot order in CMOS. (See Crash Recovery)

Date and Time

You have seen this screen before when you double-clicked on time in the task bar.

Display

Options available here depend on the installed graphics card.

Fonts

Fonts are a family of characteristics which define how characters appear on paper or on the display screen. You are allowed by Windows to load and use 1000 fonts simultaneously. DON'T. Unnecessary fonts hog system resources. You can eliminate fonts which you will never use.

FONT WHICH MUST REMAIN. These are fonts which are used by the operating system and should not be removed. `VGASYS.FON`, `VGAOEM.FON`, `VGAFIX.FON`, `8514SYS.FON`, `8514OEM.FON`, `8514FIX.FON`, `VGA850.FON`.

Some applications load custom fonts. Without these fonts, applications might not display properly and need reloading.

Several font packages can be purchased to add custom fonts for printing. New fonts can be added by selecting 'Install New Font...' from the File menu drop down menu in the Font Screen.

Viewing the fonts - double-click on the font's name. You can also print the font example from this screen.

List by similarity - Click View | List by similarity. Use View | Detail to again view all the fonts.

Fonts must be placed in the C:\Windows\Font folder to be available to Windows.

Keyboards

Language Tab - There are several keyboard configurations available for use in Windows which address the needs of languages other than English. Windows 95 might require that you load a keyboard interpreter program. Windows 98 has a large selection of built-in keyboard language choices. Loading alternate keyboards will change the function of the keyboard's keys.

Speed Tab - Repeat delay, repeat rate and cursor blink rates can be changed from this tab.

Delay refers to how long the computer waits until it assumes that the operator holding down a key is a request to repeat displaying the same character. Does your computer seem to 'double type' some characters as you type? Increasing the delay should cure the problem.

Repeat refers to how fast the computer displays the repeated character.

Cursor blink rate changes the frequency that the cursor blinks.

All these options are changed by clicking and dragging the slide bar sideways.

Modems

Options in this area were set when you installed your modem. You can use this area to verify the modems set up.

Two additional areas might be of interest.

If your modem has a speaker, the volume can be set under the General tab by clicking the Properties button.

If you have call-waiting, your modem needs to be informed of this option or it will not work properly. From the General tab, click on the Dialing Properties button. Place a check in "To disable call waiting, dial" and select the proper code from the drop down box. Call waiting will be disabled each time you use your modem to place a call. Call waiting will automatically return when you end the modem connection.

Mouse

This option has three sub menus: buttons, pointers and motions

The Buttons tab allows you to switch the function of the left and right buttons. The bottom of the screen allows you to change the double-click rate. Does the computer seem to ignore your double-clicks? Try slowing down the rate by adjusting the slide bar. Test the new setting by double-clicking on the purple box. [Take note: If you set the rate too fast and click OK, you might now be able to "double-click" your way back to this screen. Remember that you can always Right-click and select Open to achieve the

same results as a double-click.]

Pointers: Windows 98 allows you to change the appearance of the cursor. Animated Hourglass is a fun option.

Motion: This area is especially important to lap top users. The LCD displays often makes the cursor hard to locate. Selecting mouse trails may help you to find the mouse's position. If the cursor seems to be jerky on its movements, try slowing down the pointer speed. [Note this option works in conjunction with the System | Graphic acceleration which will be explained in the SYSTEM discussion below.]

Multimedia

Options available here depend on installed hardware and software

Network

Settings in this area effect computers which are hooked to a network and how the computer connects to the Internet.

Passwords

Here you can change a user's password. Passwords can be used to set up customized desktops and Start menu features.

Printers

Use this area if you are adding or changing printers. Printers cannot be setup in Add/Remove hardware.

Note: the menu option available from the File drop down menu change depending on the icon item selected. You must first select a printer by clicking on the printer's icon before you can change the printer's option. Right-click on the printer's icon to select available options.

Selecting OPEN from the menu selection allows you to view any documents on the printer's spool. The spool is an area which holds documents which have been sent to the printer but not yet printed. From this menu you can pause or delete spooled items which have not yet printed.

The default printer is denoted by a check mark above the printer's icon. The default printer is the printer which is used after you issue the PRINT command from an application. If your computer has more than one printer, you can also change which printer is used from your application. A list of installed printers is available in a drop-down box located on the first print screen the application displays.

Regional settings

Using this option you can change the way numbers, currency, time and date are displayed. These are settings which should be changed when the computer is new. Changing settings after applications have begun storing data might result in data corruption.

Sounds

Using this option you can change sounds that correspond to events in the computer. (See Sounds)

System

This option has four sub headings.

General displays information of the installed operating system (Windows 95 or 98) and the software version loaded. Windows 95 released versions through D. If you are using Windows 95 and do not show a version of B or higher, you should obtain a service pack update from Microsoft. It is available on the Internet for free and on CDROM from Microsoft for a small fee.

Also listed on this screen is the Registered user of the operating system and the serial number.

Finally the processor is listed along with the amount of system RAM.

Under the **Device Manager** tab many options are available. A complete list of functions is beyond the scope of this book.

There are a couple options available here of which you should be aware. Devices which might be malfunctioning will display a yellow exclamation point or a red X. The red X means that there is a big problem. Windows is having a problem with the loaded device. The yellow exclamation point may indicate a device which was installed but is temporarily removed like a Zip or Jazz drive or a removable CDROM.

Have you ever powered up your computer and then remembered that you forgot to turn on your printer, scanner or other external device? These devices are ignored by Windows if you turned on these devices after starting the computer. By ignored, I mean that you will get an error message if you try to access them.

Here is the problem and a solution. When you first power up your computer, the operating system polls or attempts to communicate with all devices which are supposed to be attached to the computer. If the device does not respond by answering back to the operating system, an assumption is made that the device isn't there. Any attempts to communicate with the device while running an application are blocked by the operating system and an error message results.

The most common solution to this problem is not the best solution. The most common solution is to shut down the computer and start over. Here is a much faster alternative. All you need to do is run the section of the boot-up process which polls the devices. The REFRESH button at the bottom of the Device manager window was designed to fill this need. Click on REFRESH. After a brief pause the hourglass will disappear and control of the computer is restored. Try letting the application communicate with the device again. Although accessing this window takes several steps, it is much faster than re-booting.

Changing hardware? Before installing new hardware delete the old hardware. Select the item in the Device Manages screen and click the DELETE button.

All devices installed in the computer use some of the systems resources. They may occupy ports or use system interrupts. By removing the old hardware before installing new hardware you release the system resources.

Performance There are three sub-headings: File systems, Graphics and Virtual Memory. Unless instructed by technical support, refrain from making any changes in File systems.

Graphics - These settings control how Windows uses your graphics card. They can help you trouble shoot display related problems.

There four settings:

Full: All accelerator functions: Use this setting if your computer has no problems (Recommended).

Level 3 gives you most accelerator functions: Use this setting to correct problems with the mouse pointer. This is the setting to use if you notice that your mouse has a jerky response.

Level 2 applies basic accelerator functions: Use this setting to correct more severe problems, such as unexpected errors in programs.

None: No acceleration functions: Use this setting only if your computer frequently stops responding or has other severe problems.

Virtual Memory

Changes in this screen can greatly improve system performance. Use the "let me specify..." settings. If you have multiple hard drives, or you have partitioned your hard drive, select the fastest drive or the one with the most room. This is hard drive space which will be used by the operating system as temporary storage if it needs additional RAM memory.

Set the Min and Max to 2.5 times your RAM. Remember the amount of system RAM was displayed on the opening SYSTEM screen of Control Panel.

Example: For 64MB RAM, set this value to $64 \times 2.5 = 180$. For 32MB used 60
You will have to reboot after making this change.

Users

Here you can add additional users and set options such as what appears on their start menu and allowing individual desktops.

Resources:

Que - Windows 9x Installation Configuration handbook - Rob Tidrow

Que - Upgrading PC's - Meuller

Que - Using and upgrading PC's - Kraynak

Que - Using Windows 9x - Bott and Person

Microsoft Press - Windows 9x Resource kit

