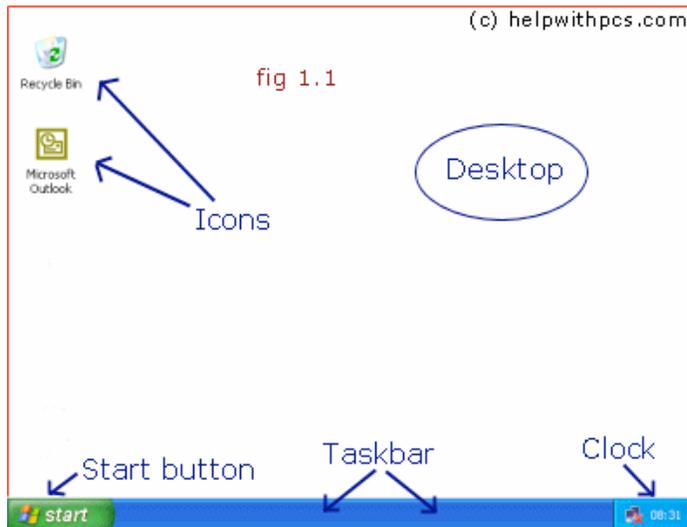


1 - The Windows XP Desktop



Above in fig 1.1 you can see an example of the Windows XP desktop, when you first switch on your machine and Windows XP loads it usually looks similar to that shown in our example, although Windows XP by default has a picture for the desktop background.

Desktop refers to the main background area (in our example the white area), you can customise your desktop by adding background pictures, changing the background colour, changing the size of the icons, and more.

Introduction to Icons

Icons are small graphical images that can represent your computer's programs, files, folders and printers amongst other things (see fig 1.1).

To activate the program/file/folder that an icon represents you simply double click (two clicks in quick succession) on it with the left mouse button, this will activate the icon and either start a program or open a file/folder.

The icons on your desktop can be renamed by right clicking on them and selecting rename, similarly they can be deleted by right clicking and selecting delete.

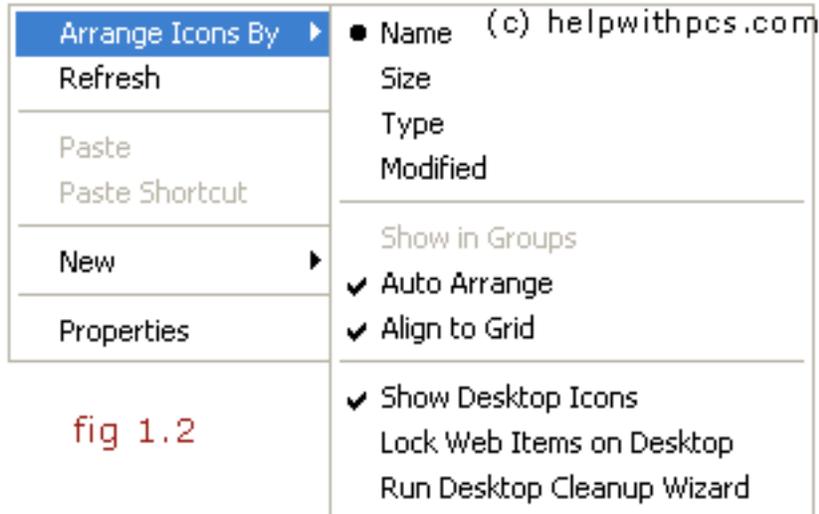
In our example we have two icons, the outlook icon is for example purposes only, by default you will usually just have the recycle bin icon which is explained below:

Recycle Bin

When you delete a file, Windows XP will place the file into the recycle bin instead of deleting it altogether, this allows you to restore the file in case you deleted it by mistake. For example say you deleted a file by accident you could double click on the recycle bin icon to see its contents, and then restore the file back to where you deleted it from by right clicking on it and then selecting restore from the menu that appears.

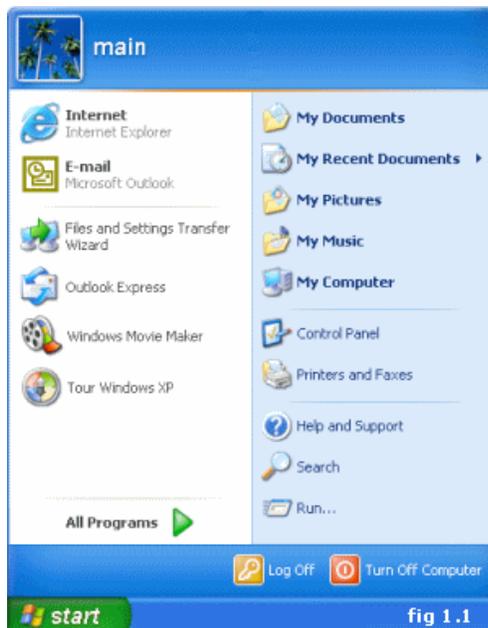
Keeping the Desktop tidy

The more you use Windows XP the more your desktop may start to fill up with icons, either because you install more software or you create your own icons.



Windows XP can automatically align and sort your desktop icons to keep the desktop tidy, to achieve this click the right mouse button anywhere on the desktop and a menu will appear (similar to that shown in fig 1.2), hover the mouse pointer over Arrange Icons By and a submenu will appear, from here you can sort your desktop icons by name, size, type and last modified date. Selecting the Auto Arrange option will automatically align your desktop icons every time you add one to the desktop.

2 - The Start Menu Overview



Here is an overview of the different options:

Log off - Log off the current user.

Turn Off Computer - shutdown, restart and standby.

All Programs - Access to installed programs.

Run - Used to manually start executable files

Search - Search your PC for pictures, music, documents, files and folders.

Help and Support - Opens the built-in Windows help including various help topics, windows updates and also allows you to request remote assistance from a friend/colleague via the internet or network.

Printers and Faxes - Access to your printers and faxes folder, allows you to add and configure printers/faxes.

Control Panel - The control panel is used to configure various Windows XP settings, we will be looking at the Win XP control panel in detail later in the tutorial.

My Computer - Gives you access to your computer's disk drives and files, we will be looking more closely at

the My Computer function later in the tutorial.

My Music - Links to a folder created by Windows XP which is used (by default) to store any music files on your hard drive.

My Pictures - Links to a folder (again created by Windows XP) used (by default) to store any pictures/images on your hard drive.

My Recent Documents - This folder contains any recently viewed documents.

My Documents - Gives access to a folder created by Windows XP which is used (by default) to store any documents on your hard drive.

Tour Windows XP - Starts the built-in tour of Windows XP's features.

Windows Movie Maker - Opens Windows XP's movie editing software.

Outlook Express - Opens the Outlook Express mail program.

Files and Settings Transfer Wizard - Allows you to import or export your files and settings from or to a different installation of Windows XP.

Turn off computer

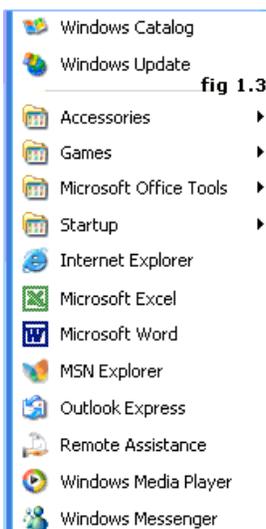


If you click on the **Turn Off Computer** option on the start menu you will see a dialogue box like that shown in fig 1.2, below is a summary of the options available:

Standby - This will put your computer into standby mode, basically it will power down components like the monitor and hard drive to preserve energy.

Turn Off - Shuts down the PC, always use this option to turn off your PC.

Restart - this will restart the computer.



The All Programs Menu

When you hover the mouse over **All Programs** you will see a menu appear similar to that shown in fig 1.3, from this menu you can access the programs currently installed on your PC.

Your menu will be different from our example as you will have different programs installed on your PC.

To open a program simply left click on it, some options have a small black arrow to the right hand side, this indicates that it contains another sub-menu. For example, **the accessories folder** has a sub-menu, if you wanted to open a program from within the sub-menu, then you would hover the mouse pointer over accessories (for example) and then click on the program you want from the sub-menu.

You can **rename** any program on the menu by right clicking on it and selecting rename from the menu that appears.

After installing new software it will (normally) appear on the programs menu, to remove any program just from the **All Programs** menu simply right click on it and select **delete**, if you want to **uninstall** a program then use the control panel (covered later in the Win XP tutorial) to uninstall it, simply deleting it from the programs menu will not uninstall the software.

It's possible to create a desktop shortcut for any of the programs, see related pages at top of this page.

3 - The Windows XP Taskbar Overview

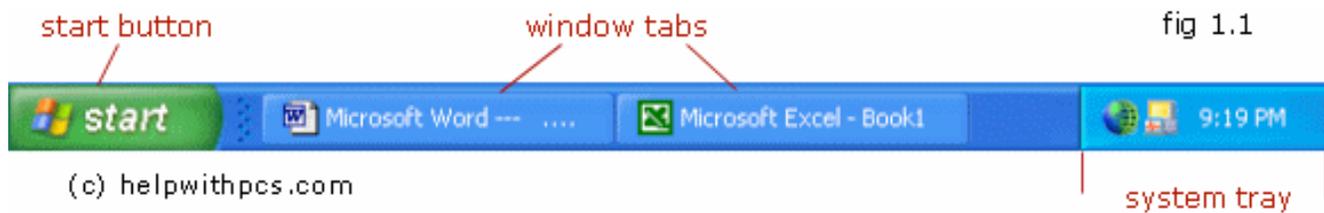


fig 1.1

In fig 1.1 shows a typical Windows XP Taskbar.

We have pointed out the areas of interest, these are explained below:

Start Button - The Start Button is used to access the Windows XP start menu (covered in part 2 of our windows xp tutorial).

Window Tabs - The Windows tabs are used to switch between any open windows (programs, folders, documents, etc), in our example we have 2 windows open (word and excel). You can switch between the windows by simply clicking on the corresponding window tab, clicking a second time on the same tab will minimise the window.

Grouping Window Tabs - A nice feature of Windows XP is that unlike previous versions of windows when the taskbar fills up with window tabs it can consolidate all files/windows within a program into just one window tab, in other words, if you have 2 documents open in Word you will only have one tab on the taskbar (instead of 2), you can then access each document by left clicking on the tab and selecting the file/window you want from the menu that appears. This feature can be switched off by right clicking on the taskbar, clicking on properties and then unchecking the box next to **Group similar taskbar buttons**.

System Tray - The system tray displays icons for programs that are loaded into memory, although not all programs place an icon in this tray. We will cover the system tray in detail later in this section.

The Quick Launch Bar

By default, Windows XP has the quick launch bar hidden, if you want to use the quick launch bar you need to activate it, to do this simply right click on the taskbar, hover the mouse pointer over toolbars and then put a tick in the box next to Quick Launch.

The Windows XP quick launch bar (see fig 1.2) provides direct access to your programs, files or folders with just one click and is visible (by default) even when you have a window open.



fig 1.2

When you first enable the quick launch bar there are normally a couple of icons visible:



- **Show Desktop Icon**, this icon is used to minimise all open windows to show the windows xp desktop, clicking again will restore the windows to their previous state.



- **Internet Explorer Icon**, this icon will open Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser.

Adding icons

It is very straight forward to add icons to the quick launch bar, simply drag the icon of the program/file/folder over the quick launch bar and drop it (release the mouse button).

If you add or delete icons you can increase or decrease the size of the quick launch bar by moving the divider (see fig 1.2) left or right.

Deleting icons

It is also very easy to delete icons from the quick launch bar, simply right click on the icon you want to delete and then select **delete** from the menu that appears.

note: - removing the icon will not uninstall the associated program/file/folder from your PC.

The System Tray

In the system tray you will find icons belonging to some of the programs that are currently running, as well as the clock.



fig 1.3

There are normally a couple of icons residing in the system tray, in our example (fig 1.3) we have 2 icons, your icons will depend on what programs you have running on your PC.

Some typical programs would be your firewall (if you have one),