

Using the Files and Settings Transfer Wizard in Windows XP

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Like many other people, I want my computer set up just so. I know what I want on my desktop and I know just where I want each icon located. I have a combination of colors, fonts, and wallpaper that is mine alone. Not to mention a motley collection of programs and utilities that includes personal and professional financial records dating back to 1990! My own special arrangement takes a while to configure and develops over time, so I'm reluctant to start over even when a new computer beckons.

But even the best computer becomes old news in a couple of years and it's time to move on. Facing this unpleasant chore, I was pleased to find that my new Windows XP-based computer includes a Files and Settings Transfer Wizard that even this skeptic finds truly wizard. In just a few steps you can move all your precious files and even-more-precious settings from one machine to another.

Even if you don't have a new computer, use the Files and Settings Transfer Wizard to create a backup copy of your files and settings, which can then be used to restore your detailed configuration data, if you ever need to reinstall Windows XP.

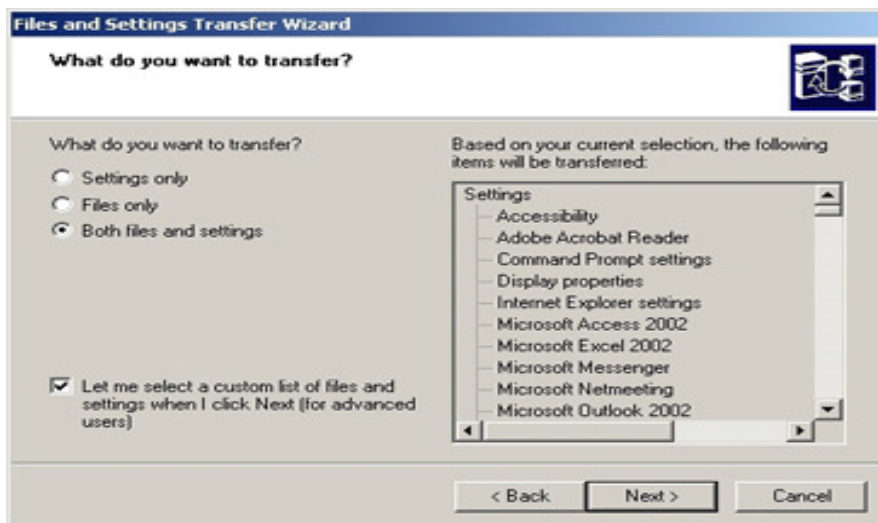
We have a home network, so I first added the new machine to the network. If you're not networked, you can use a **null modem serial cable**, available at electronic stores or stores that carry computer supplies. The cable plugs into a serial port (also called a COM port) on each computer. Most computers will have nine-pin serial ports so be sure to get a nine-pin cable and one long enough to reach both computers. The wizard uses auto detection to configure ports for the cable, so you don't need to go through any complicated setup procedures there. After the two computers are connected, through a network or by a serial cable, you can start the Files and Settings Transfer Wizard by clicking **Start** on the computer running Windows XP, pointing to All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, and then clicking **Files and Settings Transfer Wizard**. (If both computers are running XP, you can start with either one.)

Note The old computer can be running any Microsoft operating system from Windows 95 onward, but this does *not* include Server products.

On my new computer, I chose to use the wizard from the Windows XP CD, though I could just as easily make a wizard disk on a USB Flash drive if my CD hadn't been handy.



Next, I followed the instructions, went to the old computer, and used the Windows XP CD to start the Files and Settings Transfer Wizard. The next important step is to select which files and settings to transfer. The default is to transfer settings for applications and Windows such as taskbar options and Outlook Express, specific folders such as Desktop, Fonts, My Documents, and My Pictures, and file type associations (what files open with what programs). To add or remove settings, select the **Let me select a custom of files and settings** check box, and then click **Next**.



The wizard picks up just about everything you need, but if you have programs that were installed in folders other than Programs or other odd bits, select them. Leave behind programs you don't want, and documents that can be easily moved later.

All your programs must be reinstalled on the new computer, because actual programs are not migrated by the Files and Settings Transfer Wizard. Moreover, some programs have to be installed before their settings are transferred. In my case, the wizard announced that I needed to install WinZip, Adobe Acrobat Reader, and Quicken first. Your list will undoubtedly vary. Of these three, Quicken is the only one with settings that are extensive and crucial, so I installed it on the new machine while the next step was being performed on the old machine.

Click **Next** and the wizard begins collecting the files and settings from the old computer. This can take anywhere from a while to a *long* while so use the time to do something useful—floss your teeth, wash the dog, or vice versa. Don't wander too far away because the collection process occasionally turns up a file that can't be transferred, such as a **.dat file**, and asks how to proceed. Just click **Ignore**. After the collection process is complete, you'll get a list of those files. If there are a bunch of them, highlight and copy the list into Notepad and save it.

Go to the new computer and start the Files and Settings Transfer wizard again. After telling the wizard that this is the new computer, select the last option, **I don't need the Wizard Disk. I have already collected my files and settings from my old computer.**



Then all you have to do is tell the wizard where to look for the collected items. After the transfer is complete, you can copy over files that you want but the wizard couldn't transfer. Now your new computer is ready to go, and you didn't have to repeat the same configuration chores you performed to setup the old one.

Sharon Crawford is a former editor now engaged in writing books and magazine articles. Since 1993, she has written or co-written two dozen books on computer topics. Her books include Windows 2000 Pro: The Missing Manual, Windows 98: No Experience Required, and Windows 2000 Professional for Dummies (with Andy Rathbone).

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