

### **Problem Steps Recorder**

As the local PC guru you're probably very used to friends and family asking for help with their computer problems, yet having no idea how to clearly describe what's going on. It's frustrating, but Microsoft feels your pain, and Windows 7 will include an excellent new solution in the Problem Steps Recorder.

When any app starts misbehaving under Windows 7 then all your friends need do is click Start, type PSR and press Enter, then click Start Record. If they then work through whatever they're doing then the Problem Steps Recorder will record every click and keypress, take screen grabs, and package everything up into a single zipped MHTML file when they're finished, ready for emailing to you. It's quick, easy and effective, and will save you hours of troubleshooting time.

### **Troubleshoot problems**

If some part of Windows 7 is behaving strangely, and you don't know why, then click Control Panel > Find and fix problems (or 'Troubleshooting') to access the new troubleshooting packs. These are simple wizards that will resolve common problems, check your settings, clean up your system and more.

### **Take control**

Tired of the kids installing dubious software or running applications you'd rather they left alone? AppLocker is a new Windows 7 feature that ensures users can only run the programs you specify. Don't worry, that's easier to set up than it sounds: you can create a rule to allow everything signed by a particular publisher, so choose Microsoft, say, and that one rule will let you run all signed Microsoft applications. Launch GPEDIT.MSC and go to Computer Configuration > Windows Settings > Security Settings > Application Control Policies > AppLocker to get a feel for how this works.

### **Calculate more**

At first glance the Windows 7 calculator looks just like Vista's version, but explore the Mode menu and you'll see powerful new Statistics and Programmer views. And if you're clueless about bitwise manipulation, then try the Options menu instead. This offers many different unit conversions (length, weight, volume and more), date calculations (how many days between two dates?), and spreadsheet-type templates to help you calculate vehicle mileage, mortgage rates and more.

Don't take any Windows 7 applet at face value, then - there are some very powerful new features hidden in the background. Be sure to explore every option in all Windows applets to ensure you don't miss anything important.

### **Recover locked-up apps**

If an application locks up under a previous version of Windows then there was nothing you could do about it. A new Windows 7 option, however, can not only explain the problem, but may get your program working again without any loss of data.

When the lockup occurs, click Start, type RESMON and click the RESMON.EXE link to launch the Resource Monitor.

Find your frozen process in the CPU pane (it should be highlighted in red), right-click it and select Analyze Wait Chain.

If you see at least two processes in the list, then the lowest, at the end of the tree, is the one holding up your program. If it's not a vital Windows component, or anything else critical, then save any work in other open applications, check the box next to this process, click End Process, and your locked-up program will often spring back to life.

### **Recover screen space**

The new Windows 7 taskbar acts as one big quick launch toolbar that can hold whatever program shortcuts you like (just right-click one and select Pin To Taskbar). And that's fine, except it does consume a little more screen real estate than we'd like. Shrink it to a more manageable size by right-clicking the Start orb, then Properties > Taskbar > Use small icons > OK.

### **Protect your data**

USB flash drives are convenient, portable, and very easy to lose. Which is a problem, especially if they're carrying sensitive data? Fortunately Windows 7 has the solution: encrypt your documents with an extension of Microsoft's BitLocker technology, and only someone with the password will be able to access it. Right-click your USB flash drive, select Turn on BitLocker and follow the instructions to protect your private files.

### **Protect your data**

If you have confidential files in a particular folder or two, and would like to keep them away from other network users, then right-click the folder, select Share With > Nobody, and they'll be made private, for your eyes only (or your user account, anyway).

### **Run As**

Hold down Shift, right-click any program shortcut, and you'll see an option to run the program as a different user, handy if you're logged in to the kids' limited account and need to run something with higher privileges. This isn't really a new feature - Windows XP had a Run As option that did the same thing - but Microsoft stripped it out of Vista, so it's good to see it's had a change of heart.

### **Repair your PC**

If Windows 7 won't start, you may not need an installation or repair disc any more, as the repair environment is now usually installed on your hard drive. Press [F8] as your PC starts, and if you see a "Repair Your Computer" option, choose that to see the full range of Windows 7 recovery tools.

### **Faster program launches**

If you've launched one instance of a program but want to start another, then don't work your way back through the Start menu. It's much quicker to just hold down Shift and click on the program's icon (or middle-click it), and Windows 7 will start a new instance for you.

### **An Alt+Tab alternative**

You want to access one of the five Explorer windows you have open, but there are so many other programs running that Alt+Tab makes it hard to pick out what you need. The solution? Hold down the Ctrl key while you click on the Explorer icon. Windows 7 will then cycle through the Explorer windows only, a much quicker way to locate the right one. And of course this works with any application that has multiple windows open.

### **Fix Explorer**

The Windows 7 Explorer has a couple of potential annoyances. Launching Computer will no longer display system folders like Control Panel or Recycle Bin, for instance. And if you're drilling down through a complicated folder structure in the right-hand pane of Explorer, the left-hand tree won't always expand to follow what you're doing, which can make it more difficult to see exactly where you are. Fortunately there's a quick fix: click Organize > Folder and Search Options, check "Show all folders" and "Automatically expand to current folder", and click OK.

### **Faster file handing**

If you hold down Shift while right-clicking a file in Explorer, then you'll find the Send To file now includes all your main user folders: Contacts, Documents, Downloads, Music and more. Choose any of these and your file will be moved there immediately.

### **Search file contents**

There's no obvious way in the Windows interface to search the contents of files that haven't been indexed, but all you need to do is start your search with the "content:" search filter. So entering content:Microsoft, for instance, will find all documents (whether they're actually indexed or not) that contain the word Microsoft.

### **Close in a click**

Hover your mouse cursor over a Windows taskbar button will display a preview thumbnail of that application window. You don't need that app anymore? Then middle-click the thumbnail to close it down.