Manage your shortcuts to make things easy

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The computer desktop is an easy and visual way to access computer programs, files and documents, but it can get cluttered.

Documents, pictures, downloaded items, program icons and other data can make it difficult to determine what's what.

It is important to determine what you really need to have on your desktop and then to organize that data for access through shortcuts and toolbars.

Shortcuts provide one-click access to documents, folders or programs. They are a type of file that acts like an Internet hyperlink to point to another file, document or program. It is not the original file or a copy, but if you double-click on a shortcut you open the original file from its original location.

Shortcuts are usually placed on the desktop to quickly find programs, documents or files without the need to drill down in a file structure to locate the original file or program.

To discover what icons are shortcuts on your PC desktop open Windows Explorer and click on the top icon that says "Desktop." Click on "View." Choose "Details" from the list of options. In the detailed view you will see a column marked "Type." In this column you will see a description of what type of file each icon is associated with.

Only files marked as shortcut types are indeed shortcuts. You can choose to right-click the icon and select "Properties." Shortcuts are listed in the "General" tab's "Type of File" box.

Your desktop files should include shortcuts to frequently used programs, working documents and files you access frequently. It is best not to save the original document or file to your desktop for two reasons:

- Data is fragmented from the primary file system.

- The desktop usually is not backed up because it is located on the hard drive, and most company data only backs up shared network drives.

It is best to keep all your data consolidated in the proper file and location under "My Documents" and to create shortcuts to your desktop. When you

are done working with that particular file or document you can merely delete the shortcut and not worry about filing that document or file. Remember that deleting shortcuts does not delete the original file.

Organize the shortcuts on your desktop to fit your visual needs. You might want to move all your program shortcut icons to one side of the screen and your document file and folder icons to a different area on the screen. You might want to have a certain area that is designated for working documents.

If you right-click on a PC desktop you will have an automatic option to "Arrange Icons" from the pop-up menu. You can arrange by type, size, date modified, groups, auto arrange, etc. You can also easily move the icons on your desktop with PC and Mac systems - merely click and drag them to any location on your desktop. If you no longer want the shortcut just highlight the icon, and select "Delete" on your keyboard.

With PC systems you have the option to add toolbars to your desktop or your "Start" toolbar. This is another option to have quick and easy access to your files and programs from your desktop view. This toolbar is located at the bottom or the side of your desktop. To add toolbars right-click in this toolbar and select "Toolbars," and click the toolbar you want to add.

Our day-to-day activities bring us a wealth of important information. Unfortunately none of this information is useful if we can't access it quickly and easily. Use your desktop in a manner so you can access data easily.

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