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Keeping your desktop tidy and files organized

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is the fourth of seven columns by Steve Kellman, our newsroom computer wonk, on what to do with that new computer the Big Elf dragged down your chimney. It assumes that the reader is a first-time computer owner who has a PC loaded with Windows 95, word processing and other basic software, a printer, modem and CD-ROM player.*

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Just like your own desk, a computer desktop can be a clean or cluttered place to work. Here are a few tips to keep that desktop tidy and organize your virtual office.

Think of Windows as the ultimate electronic filing cabinet, with folders inside folders inside folders. The computer actually treats the desktop as another folder, one inside a folder called Windows, which is inside another folder that represents your computer and everything on it.

Got it?

The only time you really need to worry about this is when saving files because your computer programs also treat the desktop like a folder. When saving a document or file, especially if you choose the Save As ... option, you should get a dialog box that lets you name (or rename) the document and direct what folder or "directory" it goes into. Usually a program will automatically send all the files created with it to one folder, which may or may not be helpful.

If you just can't find a pesky file, go to the Find item under the desktop's Start menu and jump to the Find File option. That will bring up a dialog box allowing you to enter the file name.

Just make sure that you're searching the entire computer rather than one area, by clicking on the down arrow underneath the Search option and choosing My Computer from the menu that appears.

Searching for the item will open up another window in which the item (hopefully) will be listed.

You say you don't like the taskbar along the bottom of the desktop? Go to the Settings menu item in the Start menu and choose Taskbar to change the way it operates.

One nifty feature is Auto Hide, which makes the taskbar disappear until you drag the cursor to the bottom of the screen. By also choosing the Always on Top option, you can use the taskbar to jump back and forth between open programs without getting in the way while you're working (or playing).