

THE COMPUTER CORNER

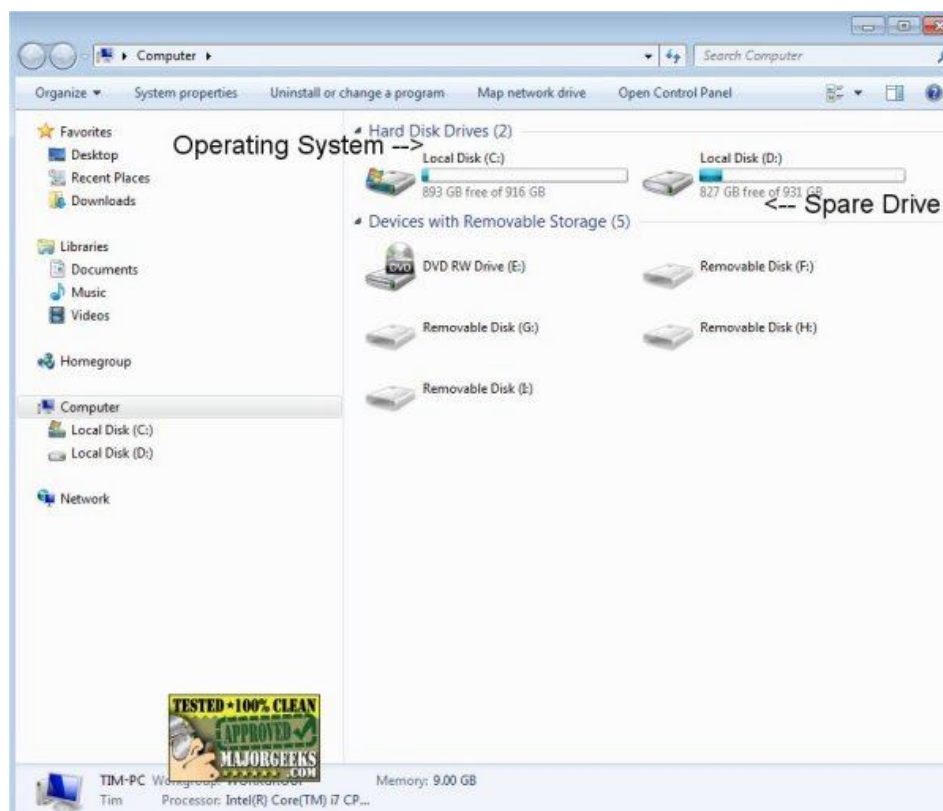
No. 155. How to Format and Reinstall Windows

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EDITOR'S NOTE: "Major Attitude", the pen name a co-owner of Major Geeks, wrote this article and recently updated it. As I have written before, this site (www.majorgeeks.com) is the best and safest source in the world for software – both shareware and freeware. It should be in everyone's Favorites or Bookmarks. The article is reprinted with the kind permission of Major Geeks.

Be prepared: Can you boot from CD/DVD? If your CD does not boot into the XP install, you need to enter your BIOS to make sure the CD drive is the first boot device. To do this, reboot and watch your screen for a message similar to "hit delete to enter setup". Hit whichever key is tells you to (usually delete, f1, f10, etc.) and when in setup, browse around for boot sequence. It is in different places for different bios', so take your time. Nothing can be hurt as long you don't make silly changes and select save when exiting. How you make BIOS changes differs from board to board, sometimes you select what you want to change and hit enter, other times you use the + or - keys. The bottom of the screen will explain how in any bios setup. Save your change.

What drive is your operating system installed to? Go to Windows Explorer or Start, Computer. Your hard disk drives should show separately from everything else (DVD, CD or memory card readers are usually known as "Removable Disk"). Right click on your C: drive if that is where your operating system is installed and select "rename" and change the name to whatever you want. It's that simple.



Note that my drives are not named, which might confuse you later when you need to select the correct drive to install to. If you are not sure, expand the drive and you should see certain folders that alert you that Windows is installed here. The most obvious would be "Windows" but you should see other folders common to most operating systems including "Program Files", "Users" or "Documents". If you are not sure, ask someone or back everything up. We will be completely wiping this drive and there is no going back. **Note:** All computers have an additional partition that you normally do not see but you will see it when you reinstall. Rename the correct drive; you will thank me later.

Still here? Let's roll: Formatting with newer operating systems (Windows XP and up) is simpler than ever. Insert your restore or Windows CD/DVD into the drive and reboot. Press enter to load from CD/DVD when you get the prompt. Windows will begin loading. After everything loads, you will be notified you that an operating system is already installed. Continue with the install and you will be asked if you want to format the drive. Remember we discussed this above? Format the operating system drive and install will automatically continue. With new operating systems like Windows 7, you can walk away for the next 20 minutes or so.

If you have a restore CD/DVD from the manufacturer: If your computer (typically brand names like Dell, Toshiba, HP) came with a restore CD/DVD, simply insert the recovery CD/DVD and follow the instructions. These tend to eliminate some of the basic steps outlined above (formatting the drive) if you are reinstalling with an official Microsoft Windows CD/DVD.

Older Operating Systems (Windows 98, ME):

You shouldn't be installing these operating systems. They are unsupported and insecure. But, if you have a really old computer, you may have no choice.

You should be able to boot from the CD from Windows 98SE or newer, though I have seen Windows 98SE CD's that will not boot. This could be because of the CD drive, older BIOS or the CD itself. In case you can't boot from CD, here's what to do. Boot from the Windows startup floppy disk. If you do not have one, go to Start, Settings, Control Panel, Add/Remove Programs, Add/Remove Windows Components, Startup Disk, and create one.

Before you continue, you should make sure that you can see your CD drive so that you will be able to install Windows when it comes time. Type "d:" and press enter (without quotes, assuming your CD drive is d: ... it may be e: or f:). You can then type "dir" (without the quotes) and press enter, and it should list the contents of the CDROM and you should see the CD drive light up.

Now that you know you can install Windows when ready, we can continue. At the A: prompt type "format c:" (without the quotes), press enter and you will be given a warning that all data will be deleted. Answer yes (y) and hit enter. Your drive is now formatting. When done, it will ask you a name for your drive. You can hit enter for no name, or select a name for your hard drive (Windows, Jim, C Drive for example). Your drive is now formatted and you can install Windows by typing "D:\setup" (without the quotes and assuming d: is your CD drive, as mentioned above) and your Windows setup will begin when you press enter.

Worth a mention: A final suggestion (if you have a CD burner or a spare hard drive) would be to create an image of your hard drive after you get all the Windows updates along with your favorite programs and settings installed. This will allow you to return to a clean format in minutes next time. It's exactly like creating your own customized version of a restore program like Compaq or Dell provides with new computers. A few programs do this very well but I have used Acronis True Image for well over 10 years. You can find it in our software store at a discount:

http://store.majorgeeks.com/p13006-acronis_true_image_home_2011

While it might cost you 30 bucks, I think you will agree the hours and frustration it can save is well worth it.

Good luck and make a new post in the software forum:

<http://forums.majorgeeks.com/forumdisplay.php?f=21>

if you have any questions!