Windows ME: Automate System Tasks
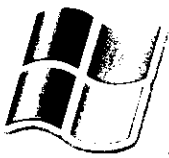
WinMe includes a utility that lets you run system maintenance tasks at regular scheduled intervals, so you don't have to think about running them. Click Start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Maintenance Wizard, and the Maintenance Wizard opens. You can choose the Express version, which includes Disk Defragmenter, ScanDisk, and Disk Cleanup; or you can select Custom and choose the programs you want to run. For this example, choose Express and click Next to continue. Select the time period during which you'd like the Maintenance tasks to run. If you want to run the tasks at a time not listed here, you need to click Back and select the Custom option. Click Next to view the programs you wish to run regularly. If you chose Express, the three Express programs are listed. Click Finish to initiate the schedule. ▲

Windows XP: Get Protected

The first thing you should do after you install WinXP is make sure your antivirus software is working. If you installed WinXP as an upgrade over a previous version of Windows, any existing antivirus software you were using may continue to work normally. If you installed WinXP as a new installation, even if you kept old application data on your hard drive, you will definitely need to reinstall the antivirus software (as well as most of your other applications). In some cases, you may find your existing software is not compatible with WinXP. If this is the case, you will have to upgrade your antivirus software and install the newer version as soon as possible. If you don't currently use antivirus software, we recommend you seriously consider doing so, particularly if you download a lot of data from the Internet. ▲

Digital Images

Save often and always work with a high-quality copy. With image editing, the best results come from trial and error. To avoid destroying your original as you experiment, select Save As from the File menu to save a copy you can safely work on. Also make sure you save the copy as a TIFF (Tagged Image File Format) and continue to save as a TIFF while you do your editing.

Unlike the JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) format, which uses lossy compression that throws pixels away, the TIFF format retains the full quality of the image. You can always reduce the quality later, but there's no way to regain the quality JPEGs throw away. ▲

Video Editing

If you have a DV (digital video) camcorder with analog inputs and a PC with a IEEE 1394 connection, you can use the camcorder as an analog capture device for your PC. Connect the analog video source, such as a VCR, to the camcorder using composite audio-video cables. Connect the DV camcorder to the PC using the IEEE 1394 cable. Press the Play button on the VCR and start your video capture software. The DV camcorder will convert the analog video signal into a digital signal and send the digital signal to your PC. ▲

Palm OS & Palm Desktop

When you delete a note, task, or other item from a Palm organizer, it's gone for good. Well, almost. When you delete an item, your Palm asks if you want to archive a copy to your PC. If you choose to do so, the item will be placed in an archive on the desktop PC when you synchronize. To retrieve the item, open the Palm Desktop on your PC and select the appropriate application (Date Book, Address, To Do, or Memos). Select Open Archive from the File pull-down menu. Select the appropriate archive to view the information. ▲

USB Ports

Some computers' motherboards can handle more USB (Universal Serial Bus) ports than the PC came with, without filling a PCI (Peripheral Component Interconnect) slot with a USB adapter card. You can buy two extra ports with cables for about $12. Connect them carefully according to the motherboard manufacturer's directions and then enable them in your computer's setup after a reboot and/or by moving jumpers on the motherboard. Some new USB ports come mounted on an expansion port plate, which may still block an expansion slot from other uses. You can unscrew the ports from the plate, though, if your computer case has USB-sized holes elsewhere. ▲