

Take the Leap Into Windows NT

ONCE YOU GET your hands on the new Windows NT CD-ROM, your first inclination might be to drag your feet. Installing the first general release of a brand-new operating system can present



problems, to put it mildly. But if you just take the leap, you'll find that the installation goes smoothly. The CD does away with the drudgery of endless diskette swapping, and the interface is easy to work with. And if you follow these tips on installing and customizing NT, you'll be off to a running start. I've installed both the old October beta version and the new March beta; the latter still has some problems. These should be cleared up in the general release, but just in case they're not, I offer you some work-arounds.

First you'll need to decide which installation option to choose. NT's default, the express installation, does a pretty good job of deciding where to install things, what devices you have and so on. And even the "hard" way—

NT's custom installation—is fairly simple. The program displays the default choices for disk partition, directories and devices, but you can make different selections simply by typing them in.

How does your system operate?

If you currently have DOS on your system, the NT installation will give you a dual-boot system. This means that when you power up, you'll get to choose whether you want to run your previous operating system or NT. If you don't make a selection, the installation times out and loads the default, which is initially set as NT. You don't have to worry about NT messing up your CONFIG.SYS, AUTOEXEC.BAT or .INI files: NT uses its own versions of these files, which it maintains in its own directory.

If you're installing NT on top of Windows, the program will suggest that you merge NT into the same directory structure as Windows 3.x. In addition to the SYSTEM subdirectory for your 3.x files, you'll get a second subdirectory, SYSTEM32, for NT. The installation will automatically migrate your 3.x Program Manager groups, so when you boot up NT you'll see familiar Windows.

Installing the March beta over the October one might leave you with a mix of old and new files. If this problem isn't fixed in the shipped version, here's the solution: Delete the entire existing WINNT directory tree before you install the new one. Or if you can't do that (for example, if you have a RISC machine and booting up DOS to do the deletion isn't an option), install NT into a new directory, then delete the old directory later.

You might run into some compatibility problems if you want to boot back and forth between OS/2 and NT. If this hap-

pens, you should follow these steps:

1. Use the OS/2 FDISK program to remove the Boot Manager partition entirely, leaving it just as free space.

2. Assign as C: the partition on which you want to install NT's loader. (Remember that NT doesn't have to go on the same partition as its loader.)

3. After you install NT, reboot from the OS/2 installation disks, press the Esc key at the first opportunity and rerun OS/2 FDISK to reinstall OS/2 Boot Manager.

Fun with reformatting

During the installation, you'll get a chance to request that your disk be reformatted for NTFS, the new NT file system. NTFS is similar to the OS/2 HPFS (High-Performance File System) in that it offers higher performance, freedom from the fragmentation problems of a FAT file system and support for long filenames. But NTFS is designed to be much easier to repair than HPFS if you lose power or crash

the machine and corrupt the file system. Under HPFS, CHKDSK might typically run for several minutes; NTFS makes repairs in seconds. Despite the benefits, you won't want to choose NTFS for any partition that you also want to access from DOS or Windows, because DOS doesn't recognize NTFS.

If you do want to reformat your disk for NTFS, you can choose either to discard everything on the partition or to save all the data; most likely you'll want to save your data. You don't have to decide once and for all when you do the installation whether you'd like to use NTFS. You can add it later by using the convert program; simply type CONVERT/? at the NT command line for instructions. For example, to convert your D: drive you'd type:

```
CONVERT D: /FS:NTFS
```

The convert program needs to lock the drive for its exclusive use during the reformatting. If that's not possible (because you've asked to convert the drive that

holds NT itself, for example), you'll be asked if you'd like that drive scheduled for conversion the next time you boot up.

Depending on other choices you've made, you may get the option during installation of scanning your system for existing DOS or Windows applications and installing them into NT's Program Manager. You'll be able to restrict the search to just those directories that you choose and to accept or reject any particular application NT finds. This is a nice feature, but it is not 100% reliable in the March beta.

Giving NT an identity

After you've completed the initial installation, you'll need to set up user accounts and customize NT to suit your preferences. If you're switching over from Win 3.x, Program Manager and other groups look just the same. But there are important new features:

• **The notion of logging in.** By logging in as Administrator NT (or into any account that's a member of the Administrators group), you can set up accounts for different users and give each one just the access he or she needs. In Program Manager, open the Administrative Tools group and start up User Manager. Pull down the User submenu to create new users or highlight an existing user's name and press Enter to change the user's properties.

• **Bigger, better Control Panel.** The Date/Time applet lets you specify your time zone and whether or not you are on daylight saving time. The Printers applet makes better use of NT's full printpooling services. The new System applet lets you set up your environment variables and, through the Virtual Memory option, create several swap files on different drives if a given drive is short on space. Finally, using the Tasking option, you can decide how to prioritize foreground versus background activities.

Once you get NT going, you'll find that the on-line help is pretty good throughout the whole system. So you'll still have a hand to hold after you take the leap. ■

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