

## Operating Systems

**FreeRAM XP Pro** Monitor how programs use memory, and try to make the most efficient use of the memory you have.

<http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,26709-order,3-page,1-c,utilities/description.html>

**Motherboard Monitor** Find out if your PC is overheating with this free utility. <http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,7309-order,3-page,1-c,systemresourcestuneup/description.html>

**RAMBooster** Avoid system sluggishness and freeze ups with this free utility.

<http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,6624-order,3-page,1-c,systemresourcestuneup/description.html>

**Restoration** Recover deleted files--or delete them for good--with this small program.

<http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,23108-order,3-page,1-c,filemanagement/description.html>

**Startup Control Panel** Automatically launch programs when your system starts up, with this free utility.

<http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,7976-order,3-page,1-c,desktop/description.html>

**Filemon** Get a real-time view of every running program -- and what it's doing.

<http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,22271-order,3-page,1-c,systemresourcestuneup/description.html>

**BartPE** Create a bootable CD or DVD in case your PC crashes and won't reboot.

<http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,63901-order,3-page,1-c,harddisk/description.html>

**PowerMenu** Make your application windows transparent--to the degree you specify—with this freebie.

<http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,63881-order,3-page,1-c,utilities/description.html>

**TaskSwitchXP** Multitaskers can save time by seeing a thumbnail preview of open programs. <http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,63854-order,3-page,1-c,utilities/description.html>

**Deskloops Beta** Navigate open windows in an easy-to-follow roundabout pattern. <http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,63839-order,3-page,1-c,desktop/description.html>

WinKey: Few folks remember to use the Windows key, probably because it can perform only a limited number of tricks: Windows-E for opening Explorer, Windows-D for showing or hiding the desktop, and a few others. WinKey lets you program the key to do the stuff you actually do every day. Why not program Windows-B to launch [scsc.com/bkk](http://www.pcworld.com/bkk)? The sky's the limit. <http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,5506-order,1-page,1-c,alldownloads/description.html>

TaskSwitchXP. Similar to Microsoft's Alt-Tab Replacement Power Toy, this utility provides a thumbnail preview of the program you're switching to. It also makes it easy to close windows individually or in application groups. [http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file\\_description/0,fid,63854,tk,nl\\_hsxdown,00.asp](http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,63854,tk,nl_hsxdown,00.asp)

Alt-Tab Thingy. If you're tired of guessing which Alt-Tab window you want to jump to, try this freebie, which presents you with a thumbnail of the selected window, as well as a list of all open windows. You can show your open windows as icons, or as text links. Switching between tasks has never been faster!

[http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file\\_description/0,fid,63879,tk,nl\\_hsxdown,00.asp](http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,63879,tk,nl_hsxdown,00.asp)

SnapFolders 2005. Though making shortcuts to folders is certainly not difficult, the shortcut function has changed little since the days of Windows 95. SnapFolders helps you create faster, more powerful shortcuts. Instead of forcing all shortcuts to open the target folder in a folder window, this program gives you the choice of having shortcuts open Explorer windows with the target folder either selected or as the root folder. SnapFolders' shortcuts automatically appear on the Start menu; from there, you can copy, move, rename, or delete them.

[http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file\\_description/0,fid,24158,tk,hsxdown,00.asp](http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,24158,tk,hsxdown,00.asp)

Vista's new Aeroglass interface isn't just window dressing; it also helps you find data faster and move more quickly between open windows. But you can add many of Vista's shiny, bright interface elements to XP. For example,

Vista will list a file's properties and other metadata in a pane at the bottom of Explorer windows. The freeware utility InfoTip Extension lets you beef up the pop-up info tips you see when you hover over a file icon, customizing the information that appears, and even displaying the contents of a text file. Unfortunately, this utility was designed for older versions of Windows, and a few of its features don't work in XP. Also, it provides no extra information for MP3, WMA, WMV, and other music and video files (which arguably already have pretty good info tips). But hey, it's still more convenient than opening a file's Properties dialog box.

[http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file\\_description/0,fid,63139,tk,srxdown,00.asp](http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,63139,tk,srxdown,00.asp)

Vista will show you a thumbnail preview of open files and applications when you hold the pointer over each one's taskbar button. Microsoft's Alt-Tab Replacement PowerToy already gives you the keyboard equivalent: After you download and install the program, simply hold the Alt key and press Tab, as you normally would to switch between running apps, and you'll see a thumbnail preview of each app in succession. You won't see a preview if the app is minimized, however. Alt-Tab Replacement PowerToy is part of Microsoft's free PowerToys for Windows XP suite, available from us:

[http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file\\_description/0,fid,18220,tk,srxdown,00.asp](http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,18220,tk,srxdown,00.asp)

You can obtain Desktop Sidebar, a free version of Vista's sidebar feature that displays weather information, stock quotes, RSS feeds, and other timely information. Go to the developer's site for the latest version:

<http://desktopsidebar.com/download.html>

**Bootable Emergency CD Disk:** This free tool lets you create a bootable emergency disc customized for your PC. Short for Bart's Preinstalled Environment, BartPE copies the Windows files from your hard drive or Windows Installation CD and creates a bootable CD or DVD that you can then use to boot into Windows if your installation of Windows gets trashed. It installs a number of basic drivers, so your mouse, keyboard and many network adapters will work. With a little technical knowledge, you can add other drivers to the bootable CD. BartPE also comes with a number of useful plugin programs for tasks such as virus scanning and CD burning. The latter feature lets you boot into Windows and copy files to a CD. It won't help if

you haven't built the boot disc before your system fails because the program that builds the bootable CD runs in Windows. The best advice is to run it now before your PC fails and store the disc it builds in a safe place.

<http://tinyurl.com/he24m>

Transparent Window. If you want to make only your application windows transparent, this free program not only handles that task but also makes windows stay on top of all others, minimizes them to the taskbar with a single click, and changes their processing priority to suit your preferences.

<http://tinyurl.com/zeqfz>