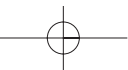
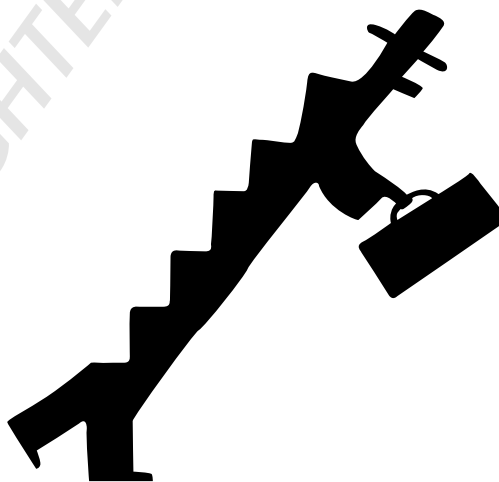


# PART 1

Windows XP from  
Desktop to bottom

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# Who Could Believe That There's a Harder Way to Log Into Windows?

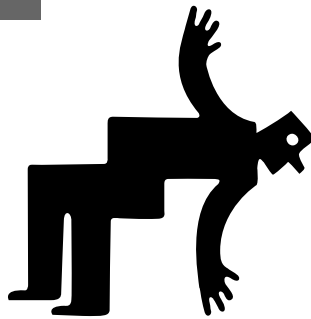
I'll bet you didn't know that there are *two* welcome screens in Windows. Two of them! I'd rather have four, but two is all they gave us. They are "Simple and Way Too Cute" and "Serious beyond All Grim Reality."

I'd like to see two other logon screens. The first would be "Terrify You out of Your Wits," where an evil guardian (which you can select between Turn-You-to-Stone Gorgon, Three-Headed Snake, or Mother-in-Law in the Users part of the Control Panel) taunts you for your password. That I would enjoy. And, of course, the fourth option would be—HELLO!—no welcome screen at all, thank you very much.

Unfortunately, Windows XP gives us the options we're stuck with. You must log in because the computer really, *really* needs to know who you are. And you have only the two options to choose from, which I'll review in this chapter, along with the various settings and other whatnot about logging in that you probably don't already know.

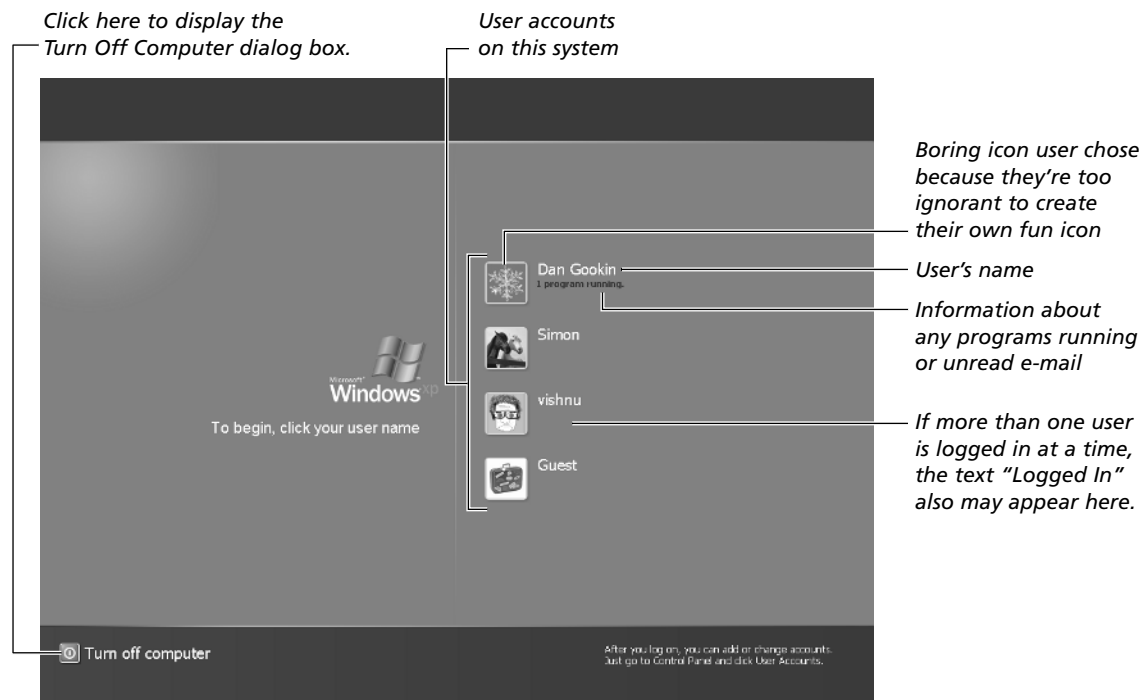
## Secrets Hidden and Mysteries Unraveled:

-  Welcome screen tour, passwords, and other basic stuff
-  Info on recovering from a forgotten password
-  Quickly locking the computer
-  Locking the computer after a given period of inactivity
-  Using the rude logon screen
-  Determining just how many accounts you need



## The Cheap-Ass Tour of the Traditional, Silly Welcome Screen

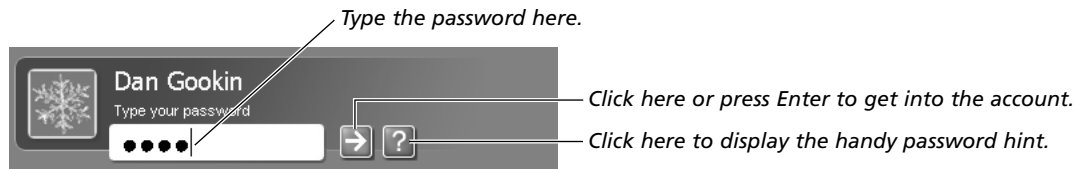
Figure 1.1 illustrates the traditional silly welcome screen, which Windows XP starts up with unless you tell it otherwise. You should already know these things referred to in the figure.



**Figure 1.1** The ever-familiar and lackluster Welcome screen

## The User Was Smart Enough to Apply a Password

Passwords on accounts are optional things, but only the dopiest user wouldn't have one. When you open a password-protected account, you get the login bubble, shown in Figure 1.2. Again, this is simple stuff you know or can figure out:



**Figure 1.2** Typing your password is more fun when it's in a graphical bubble.

## CHAPTER 1 Who Could Believe That There's a Harder Way to Log Into Windows?

### I Was Dumb and Didn't Create a Password

It's easier not to have a password. If so, then you can log in simply by clicking your name on the Welcome screen. To hell with security! In addition living on the edge security-wise, in such a state Windows won't "remember" your Internet password or other passwords used on your computer; you'll be denied access to features like the Task Scheduler and other unpleasant things that Windows won't let password-less users do. Better slap a password on your account:







1. Open the Control Panel.
2. Choose "User Accounts."
3. Choose the "Create a Password" item.
4. Follow the Instructions on the "Create a Password for Your Account" screen.  
Be sure to type the password hint! That's your clue to getting the password back should you forget it. (See Figure 1.2.)
5. Click the Create Password button to slap that password down on your account.
6. Do not forget the password!



*With your password fresh in your memory, now would be a good time to create a Forgotten Password Disk. See the next section.*



### Don't Be Dumb! Password Hints

-  *Keep your passwords short and memorable, like your first kiss.*
-  *Use a combination of numbers and letters.*
-  *I recommend typing the password all lowercase. The Windows help system recommends mixing upper- and lowercase, but that can be confusing and frustrating. Mixing up letters and numbers is generally good enough.*
-  *Use the hint, but ensure that it's accurate enough for you to understand which password to use, but not for other people to do so.  
As an example, a good password might be "bmw2056" which is the make of your car and the last four digits on the tag. A good hint would be "auto" which will remind you of your car password but is still vague enough to mislead others. A bad hint would be "my car and its tag number." Bad, bad, bad.*
-  *Don't use the same password over and over. Use different passwords for different computers, websites, and so on.*
-  *Change your password frequently, especially if you're in a high-security environment, such as a day care center.*

## I Fear That One Day I Shall Forget My Password. Is There Anything I Can Do?

Of course! Windows recognizes that people forget passwords. After all, people forget physical objects like car keys, eyeglasses, and plutonium. Passwords are no different.

Rather than give yourself a silly, easy password and pray you don't forget it, follow these steps:

1. Open the Control Panel.
2. Choose "User Accounts."
3. Click to select your account.
4. Under "Related Tasks," choose "Prevent a Forgotten Password."

Behold! It's the Forgotten Password Wizard! A program that creates a disk (floppy or Zip) you can use to start the computer when you forget your password. How handy. (I'd put a picture of it in here, but you've seen one Wizard and you've seen them all.)

5. Mind the Wizard, working through its steps. The end result is a disk (floppy or Zip) that you can use when you forget your password.



*Yes, you must already know your account's password to make the disk. If you don't know the password, then you're just really screwed.*

When the Wizard is done, remove the floppy disk (or Zip disk, if you used one of them instead) from the drive, label it, and *store it in a safe place*. If you forget where you put the disk, then consider removing the password from your account (see the next section).

To use the disk from the Welcome screen (Figure 1.1), follow these steps:

1. With the password field blank, click the green arrow.
2. Click "Use Your Password Reset Disk."
3. Insert your password disk.
4. Follow the steps for Password Reset Wizard.
5. Eventually you'll be asked to enter a new password, confirm that new password and, optionally, type a hint—just as when you first set up your account. (Or just as you were *supposed* to do when you first set up your account.)  
The disk basically says, "It's okay to change this fool's password." It does not automatically enter the password for you.
6. After entering the new password (and hint), click the wizard's Finish button.
7. *Now* enter your password to get into Windows.
8. Remember to remove the disk from the floppy (or Zip) drive and store it back in its safe place.

## CHAPTER 1 Who Could Believe That There's a Harder Way to Log Into Windows?






### KEYBOARD MASTER

#### Getting to the Control Panel's Users Accounts Window

You'll often be visiting the Users icon in the Control Panel for various tasks in this chapter. Here's your keyboard master trick to get to the Control Panel > Users icon quickly:

##### **Win+E, F4, "control panel\user accounts"**

-  Pressing Win+E brings up a Windows Explorer window.
-  F4 activates the Address Bar
-  Typing `control panel\user accounts` displays the User Accounts window from the Control Panel.

#### Passwords Are a Waste of Time!

No you don't really need to specify a password. But read the earlier section "I Was Dumb and Didn't Create a Password" before you commit to getting rid of it. Then comply with these steps:

1. Open the Control Panel.
2. Choose "User Accounts."
3. Click to select your account.
4. Choose "Remove My Password" from the list of choices under "What Do You Want to Change about Your Account."

That's it. Go ahead and log off and try logging in again. You'll find that you can do so simply by choosing your name from the list. It's a lot faster. Well, granted it's not secure. Any random wino off the street can now access your account and look up your sensitive financial data and find out where you put your filthy Internet pictures. But I suppose you want to live dangerously.

## The Fastest Way to Lock the Computer and Hide What You're Doing

If you need to break away from your computer for a moment, but want to ensure no one else peeks in and sees what you're doing, press Win+L. (That's the Windows key plus the L key.) That instantly pops up the Welcome screen. Ta-da! The computer is locked and only the users listed on the Welcome screen can unlock it—providing that they have a proper password.



*The Win+L key command is easy to remember because L stands for lock.*

## Is Locking the Same as Logging Out?

No, you don't log yourself off by locking the computer. In fact, any programs you've been running continue to run while the computer is locked; open windows stay open and—unfortunately—any files you haven't saved to disk remain unsaved. In effect, it's just as if you walked away from the keyboard, but more secure.

Note that others can log in while the computer is locked. This doesn't affect your programs or data, which is securely password-protected from access by others—unless they elect to disconnect you. See the section about how to rudely log other people off in Chapter 27. (For that reason, it's a good idea to save your stuff before you lock the computer—unless you're the only one who has an account on that computer.)

## What's the Difference between Locking and Switching Users?

One is slower than the other. To lock you press Win+L. At that point you can switch users by clicking on another account and logging in as that user. The slower way is to choose “Log Off” from the Start menu then click the Switch User button in the Log Off Windows dialog box. That's essentially the same thing as pressing Win+L, but it takes more time. And, of course, it also ensures that you don't have any programs running that may be interrupted should another user elect to turn off the computer.

## I Can't Switch Users! There Is No Option

Switching users (or the fast way to get to the Welcome screen) is an option. When it's turned off, the Switch User commands don't appear and Win+L does something different. To turn the option on, do this:

1. Open the Control Panel.
2. Choose “User Accounts.”
3. Choose “Change the Way Users Log On or Off.”
4. Remove the check mark by “Use Fast User Switching.”

Note that “Use the Welcome Screen” must also be checked for this option to be available. (More on un-checking that option in the later section, “Is There a More Serious Way to Log into Windows?”)

5. Click the Apply Options button and you're set.

Now when you click the Start menu's Log Off button, the dialog box just says “Are You Sure You Want to Log Off?” No more user switching. Boring. But you asked for it.

By the way, Win+L still works here; pressing Win+L locks the computer all nice and tight. But what you see is the boring logon Window, as shown in Figure 1.4 later on.

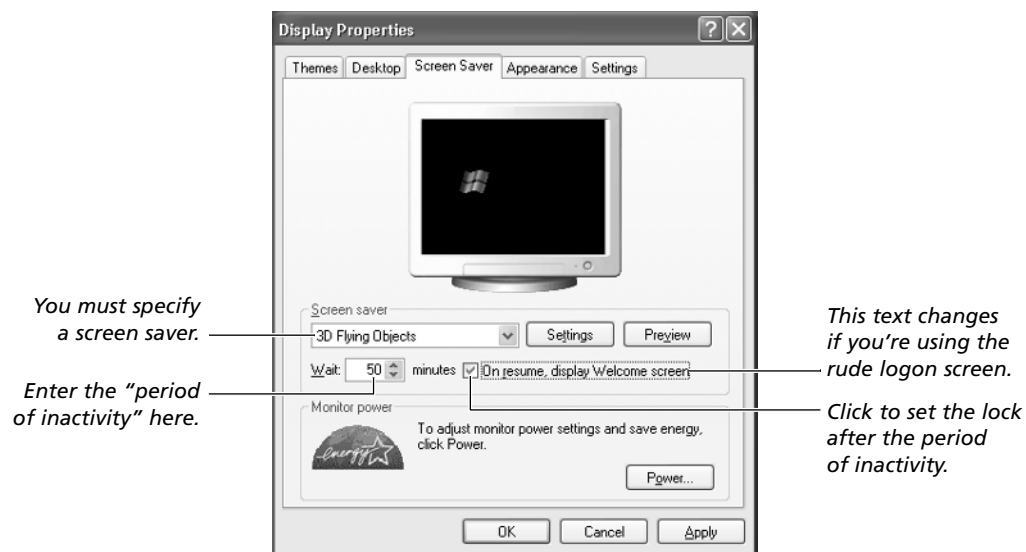
## CHAPTER 1 Who Could Believe That There's a Harder Way to Log Into Windows?

But, okay, say that you're a wise guy and you're thinking, "Golly! I can still type Win+L to lock the computer and get to the Logon window, so what's to stop me from entering another user's name and logging on with them!" Ha! Nice try. But it won't work: Windows will log off the original user, causing them to lose any unsaved data. No, Smarty Pants, if you want to use Fast User Switching, then enable it by putting the check mark back in Step 4 above.

### Can I Lock the Computer after a Period of Inactivity?

Certainly! Use the screen saver for that.

1. Open the Display Properties dialog box.  
(Right-click the Desktop and choose Properties from the shortcut menu.)
2. Click the Screen Saver tab. Figure 1.3 illustrates this, (mostly because it's been a while since I've put an illustration in this chapter and I'm running short of space.)  
You must first select a screen saver from the drop-down list if one isn't already selected (otherwise the next two options are dimmed and unavailable).
3. Enter your desired period of inactivity in the "Wait" box.
4. Put a check mark in the "On Resume, Display Welcome Screen." Or if you have the rude startup screen, it says, "On Resume, Password Protect." Same thing, basically. (See the next section for more information on the rude logon screen.)
5. Click OK, and the inactivity lock-up is set.



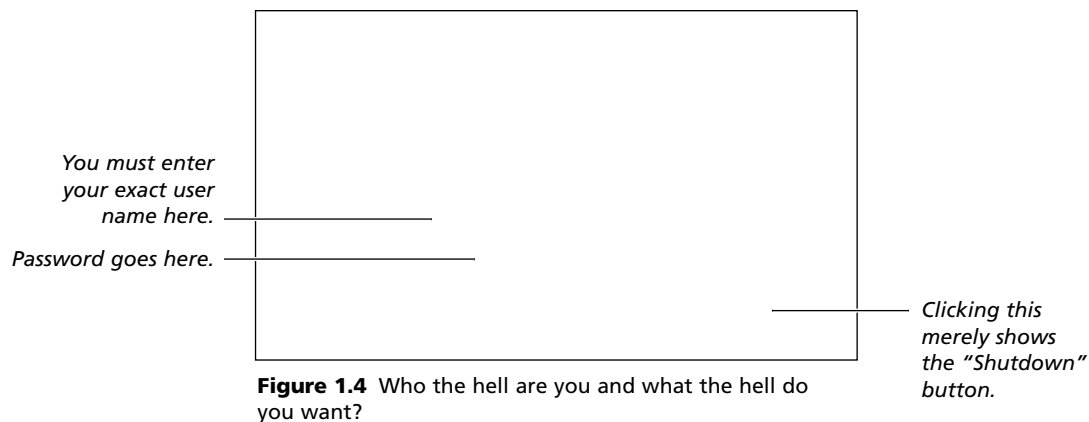
**Figure 1.3** Locking the computer via the screen saver.

## Is There a More Serious Way to Log into Windows?

The Welcome screen may just be too graphical, fun, and reminiscent of preschool for you. That's understandable. Why would you want such a thing when you're a *serious* computer user? No, you demand cold respect from your computer's operating system. You want the serious logon screen, the rude one former Windows NT and Windows 2000 users will feel comfortable with. Pursue these steps:

1. Open the Control Panel.
2. Choose "User Accounts."
3. Choose "Change the Way Users Log On or Off."
4. Remove the check mark by "Use the Welcome Screen."
5. Click the Apply Options button.

Now log out. The new, serious logon screen appears in Figure 1.4. You'll notice that the figure is blank. That's because I haven't figured out how to "capture" the serious logon screen. (Yes, it's that boorish!) However, if you haven't seen it, then just imagine one of the most horrible dialog boxes you've ever seen in the space provided.



*You may not be able to change to the serious logon screen if other users are logged into your computer. See Chapter 27 for information on logging those users off.*

## CHAPTER 1 Who Could Believe That There's a Harder Way to Log Into Windows?

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### How Do I Know Who the Users Are with the Serious Logon Window?

You don't! Providing you haven't deleted the Guest account, you can still log in using it. I recommend keeping the Guest password set to nothing so that you can get onto the computer that way. But because the Guest account is typically a "Limited" account, there's not much you can do there (such as, you can't check to see which other accounts exist on the computer).

Indeed, the serious logon window is ideal for higher security, where guessing account names could be a liability. After all, serious computer users don't guess. Mr. Spock would never guess. He'd estimate.

### How Will Using the Serious Logon Window Affect Things?

There are a few subtle differences the serious logon window option presents over using the Welcome screen. For example, pressing Ctrl+Alt+Delete brings up the Windows Security dialog box when you use the serious logon. If you have the Welcome screen logon selected instead, then pressing Ctrl+Atl+Delete brings up the Task Manager window. A minor detail, but important if you were expecting one and not the other.

This book was written assuming that the friendly, happy, bubbly, graphical, madness that is the Welcome window is the one you use. That's the way Windows XP is configured by Microsoft out of the box, so that's the option I chose for this book.

Be aware that other books, manuals, and references may also assume the Welcome screen is being used and not the serious logon screen. (This book does note the differences between the two, but other references may not.)

## Hey! I'm Just One Person! Do I Really Need All These Accounts?

No, you don't. There must be one "Owner" account for the computer, which needs to be an Administrator-type of account. You can delete all the rest, but that one account has to stay. No way around it.

I do recommend, however, keeping the Guest account. You never know when someone else will need to use your computer. For example, I had a friend visit who *just had* to check his AOL mail while he was away from home. Having him use the Guest account was great; he had no way to venture off into my stuff while he was (supposedly) reading his e-mail. Now I had never anticipated anyone else using my Windows XP system, but I was thankful that I kept the Guest account "just in case."

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## HEY! I'M JUST ONE PERSON! DO I REALLY NEED ALL THESE ACCOUNTS?

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For a household where you have several people using one computer (whether they've been told not to or not), then obviously making up individual accounts for everyone is a blessing. Nothing is more relaxing than knowing your 6-year-old is using his own account and, God bless him, he just loves changing the Desktop colors to hot-pink-on-green. But that's his account and you'll never have to see your Desktop look that way.

For individuals, there really isn't any point in having more than two accounts, the "Owner" and a guest. I originally thought, "Hey! I can have one account for all my graphics work, then another for when I do web publishing," and so on, but that never worked out; it's too much of a pain to "share" the files as opposed to having access to them all from the same account.

Also, because there are only two account security levels, Administrator and Limited, there isn't any point in being anything other than an Administrator if you're the only user on the computer. Had Windows an account type between the two, then there might be an argument for using that account most of the time and only using Administrator for system chores. But there isn't, so there.