How to Format a Hard Drive with Windows XP by Shally

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If you want to format a hard drive while using or installing Windows XP, you've come to the right place. This can be very useful for clearing everything off a secondary drive or when installing a fresh copy of Windows. Formatting a computer hard drive is simple and can help eliminate viruses, storage issues and other hard-to-resolve problems.

Instructions

1. When you format a computer hard drive you will lose everything that is on the drive. Therefore, it is very important to back up anything you might want later. Additionally, if you are going to be formatting and installing XP you need to make sure you have the discs for any applications or third party hardware you use since you will need to re-install your programs and drivers after re-installing Windows.

2. Take a moment to think of anything that you have on the computer that you wouldn't want to lose. Generally, you probably want everything in your My Documents folder, and you also want to save things like your favorites or bookmarks from your Web browser. Remember that each user on the computer has his or her own My Documents folder, Desktop items and Favorites/Bookmarks.

3. Save everything to a CD, DVD or a hard drive that you won't be formatting.

Formatting a Secondary Hard Drive

1.Right-Click on the "My Computer" icon either on your desktop or in the Start Menu and select "Manage."

2.A new window titled "Computer Management" comes up. Select "Storage" from the left hand side by clicking it once, then select "Disk Management(local)" from the right side by double-clicking it.

3.Now in the lower part of the main frame (right side) of the window you should see a nice visual of all your hard drives. Each line is a different drive. Each box on a line (with a colored bar at the top and a size displayed in MB or GB) is a partition on the drive. Partitions are separations of space on a drive. Unless you are doing something specific that requires multiple partitions, you only want one partition per drive.

4. First you must delete any existing partitions on the drive you are going to format. Do this by right-clicking on the partition's box and selecting "Delete Partition..." Since you already know that you will be deleting everything on the drive, and have already backed everything up, you can safely say yes to any warning the computer presents you with.

5.If there are multiple partitions make sure you have saved everything off them since they might each have different drive letters (i.e. "D:" or "F:"). Then repeat the above step for each of them. If you only want to format one partition that is OK and you can continue to the next step without deleting the other partitions.

6. The box for the drive to be formatted should now have a black bar at the top of it and should say "Unallocated" under its size . Right click on it and select "New Partition..." The New Partition Wizard comes up.

7.In the New Partition Wizard click next. On the next page make sure "Primary Partition" is selected and click next. Now make the size equal to the maximum (it should already be set to it), and click next again. On the next page the computer will automatically choose the first available drive letter for the new drive. However, if you like you can choose another drive letter from the drop-down menu, and then click next.

8. Finally the New Partition Wizard asks if you would like to format the new partition and if so what format. Choose "NTFS" as it is faster and more secure. Leave the "Allocation unit size" as "Default." In the "Volume label" field enter whatever name you want the drive to have. Simple is better. Avoid using spaces. Lastly, if the drive is brand new and has never been used before check the "Perform a quick format" box. If the drive has been used before leave this box unchecked. Leave the "Enable file and folder compression" box unchecked and click next. Then on the next page click finish.

9. The wizard will now spend a little while formatting the drive. On old or large drives this may take a while. Do not close the "Computer Management" window until it finishes. You will know it is done when the word under the size of the drive changes from "Formatting" to "Healthy" and the name and drive letter you chose for the new drive show up. After it is finished you can proceed to use your newly formatted drive.

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