

LESSON 130

UNDERSTANDING WINDOWS FILE ASSOCIATIONS

A unique feature in Windows 95, 98, and Windows Nt is the way that Windows works with file associations. For example, open Explorer (right-click on My Computer and then left-click on Explore) and double-click on My Documents. Double-click on any Microsoft Word document. Windows will launch Word and open the document. Word documents, with file names that end with a .doc extension, are associated with the Microsoft word program. How does Windows know about these associations?

Programs use unique file name extensions. When you install a program, that program places commands in the Windows registry that tell Windows how to act when we select a file with that particular extension.

To illustrate this, let's look at the registry. Click on Start and then on Run. Type REGEDIT and click OK. Now double-click on HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT. Scroll down to and then double-click on .doc, and then you'll see that the .doc extension is associated with the Microsoft Word program. Click on the X at the top right corner of your screen to close REGEDIT.

You can change the default file associations for file types by opening explorer (see above) and clicking on View. Now click on Folder Options and select the File Types tab. Let's change the Windows default association for text documents from Notepad.exe to Wordpad.exe. It's simple.

Scroll down to Text Document in the "Registered file types:" window. Double-click on Text Document and then select Edit. Now click on the Edit button below the "Actions:" window. In the "Application used to perform action:" box you'll see "\windows\notepad". Click on the Browse button and then click in the "Look in:" box. Double-click on Program Files and then on Accessories. Select Wordpad.exe and then double-click. Click on OK. Now click on Close at the bottom of the "Edit File Type" box. Click on Close to close the "Folder Options windows". Click on the X at the top right corner of the Explorer window. Now, whenever you open a file with a .txt extension in Explorer, Windows will open the file with WordPad instead of Notepad.

