

Let the Microsoft Office 95 Shortcut Bar — and Keyboard Macros — Turn You Into a Windows 95 Power User

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The Shortcut Bar that ships with Office for Windows 95 is a terrific productivity tool—and not just for Microsoft applications. The numerous shortcut icons you've placed all over your Windows 95 desktop are often hidden behind open windows and are therefore inaccessible. Instead, placing the shortcuts on the Office Shortcut Bar—which is always visible—makes each shortcut instantly available with a single click. For us, the first step to real Windows 95 productivity is to create a custom Shortcut Bar on which to place shortcuts to applications, utilities, and frequently-accessed files.

You might not agree with our positive evaluation of the Shortcut Bar if you're using its default settings and don't know how to get past some of its nuances. For example, you may have already tried drag and dropping items onto the Shortcut Bar, only to discover that making them appear exactly the way you want can sometimes be maddening!

Take Control Panel, for example, listed in your Windows 95 folder as either Control or Control.exe. Thinking you'll gain instant access to this frequently-used utility collection, you right-click and drag the file from Explorer and drop it on the Shortcut Bar, only to discover the latter isn't capable of making an intelligent icon assignment for your new shortcut. The link to the "real" Control Panel icon doesn't exist at this point, so Windows 95 substitutes a generic, "unknown" icon in its place (see Figure A). This happens all too often, leaving you with an identical icon assigned to multiple shortcuts. So much for Windows being visually intuitive!

Making matters worse, the Shortcut Bar labels the new icon as either Control or Control.exe, when you really want it to read "Control Panel."

Figure A



This is because when you drag and drop an item onto the Shortcut Bar, the resulting shortcut icon's Tooltip always displays the DOS name of the file. Instead of an intelligent Tooltip which might read, *MagiCDisc*, you get *magicd32.exe*, and so forth.

If you've done some exploration on your own, you've learned the Shortcut Bar lacks provisions to rename Tooltips or to reassign button icons. On its own, the Shortcut Bar offers no provisions to fix these oversights, unlike the complete flexibility available when you create custom Toolbar icons within individual Office 95 applications.

Overcome Shortcut Bar limitations—and clean up your desktop!

The balance of this article demonstrates a technique that lets you fully customize the Shortcut Bar the way *you* want it to appear, circumventing its inherent limitations. Control Panel is labeled Control Panel, is assigned a visually-unique icon, on so on. The trick will be to first create corresponding Windows 95 shortcuts for the items in a Start Menu subfolder, then manipulate the shortcuts in Explorer prior to creating a Shortcut Bar from the folder.

When you're done, you'll be able to eliminate much of the clutter that may now appear on your Windows 95 desktop—yet have even faster, one-button access to those applications, utilities, folders, and files you use most often. Better still, your shortcuts will always be visible and immediately accessible. As a bonus, you'll also be able to instantly launch your favorite applications, files, and utilities directly from the keyboard using keystroke assignments you've picked. Along the way, we'll also show you some other Windows 95 features of which you may not have been previously aware.

Auto-load the Shortcut Bar with a Windows 95 StartUp shortcut

If the Shortcut Bar is already running, great—skip this next set of steps. Otherwise, you'll want to set it up to automatically load every time you boot Windows 95. To do so:

Right-click the Start button, then choose Open. In succession, double-click the Programs folder, then double-click the StartUp folder. Choose File|New, Shortcut from the StartUp folder menu. Now click the Browse button in the Create Shortcut dialog box. In succession, double-click the MSOffice folder in the Browse dialog box, double-click the

Office subfolder, then double-click Msoffice (this file may appear as Msoffice.exe). Click the Next button in the Create Shortcut dialog box, then click the Finish button (see Figure B).

The Office Shortcut Bar will now automatically load every time you start Windows 95. So you won't have to be bothered restarting Windows 95 right now,

double-click the Shortcut Bar icon you just created (labeled Shortcut to MSOffice.exe) to launch it for this session. To easily close all three windows you just opened, hold [Shift] as you click the Close button in the StartUp window.

(Note: Should you accidentally close the Shortcut Bar at any time after implementing these steps, right-click the Start button and choose Open. In succession, double-click the Programs folder, double-click the StartUp folder, then double-click the Shortcut to Msoffice.exe icon. The Shortcut Bar loads.)

Keep the Shortcut Bar visible

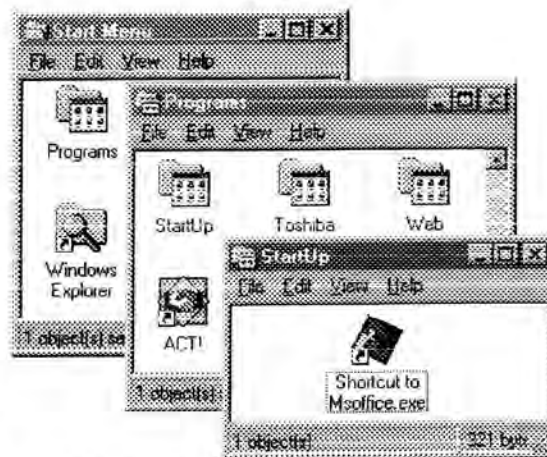
You'll want the Shortcut Bar visible during this entire exercise so, as a preliminary step, click its four-color logo once (it appears in its title bar area at the top or end of the Shortcut Bar, depending on its orientation), then make sure the Auto Hide option is disengaged (i.e., no check mark). You may reengage the option later at your discretion. You'll also want Explorer to be running at this point, so choose Start|Programs, Windows Explorer.

Create shortcut folders in Explorer

We're going to create a custom Shortcut Bar named, "CoolBar." Simply follow these next few steps for each additional Shortcut Bar you would like to create.

Right-click the Start button and choose Explore from the pop-up menu. Now in Explorer, click once to select the Windows\Start Menu\Programs subfolder that appears in

Figure B



Explorer's left window pane. Now choose File|New, Folder from Explorer's menu, type Shortcut Bars for the subfolder name, then press [Enter]. Double-click the new Shortcut Bars folder to give it the focus, then choose File|New, Folder a second time (see figure C). This time, type CoolBar for the subfolder name and press [Enter].

You may create multiple Shortcut Bars at any time, each set up for a different user or having a specific function (i.e., "Utilities"). As they're displayed on screen, multiple Shortcut Bars are stacked one on top of another so display space isn't wasted; a single click of its respective button brings any desired Shortcut Bar to the forefront.

For each additional Shortcut Bar you want to create, click once on the Shortcut Bars subfolder to select it in Explorer, choose File|New, Folder from the menu, give it an appropriate name and press [Enter]. Creating each individual Shortcut Bar as a subfolder under the master Shortcut Bars folder will help keep your hard disk (and yourself) organized.

Send To option makes it easy to create CoolBar shortcuts

You'll want to create several shortcuts in the CoolBar folder, perhaps spread out over multiple sessions, so here's an Explorer tip to make this task really easy. First, right-click the CoolBar folder and choose Copy. Next, click the Windows\Send

Figure C

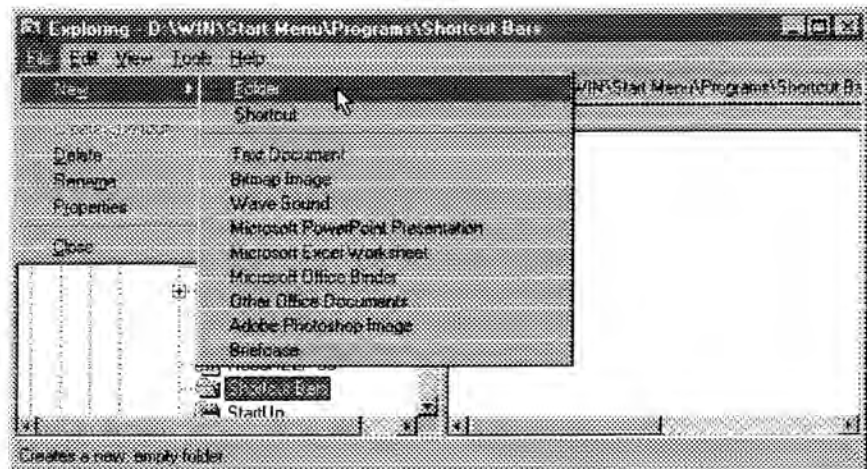
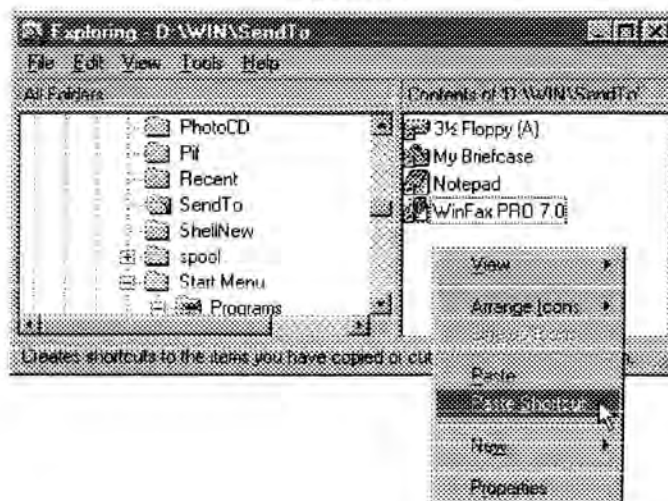


Figure D1

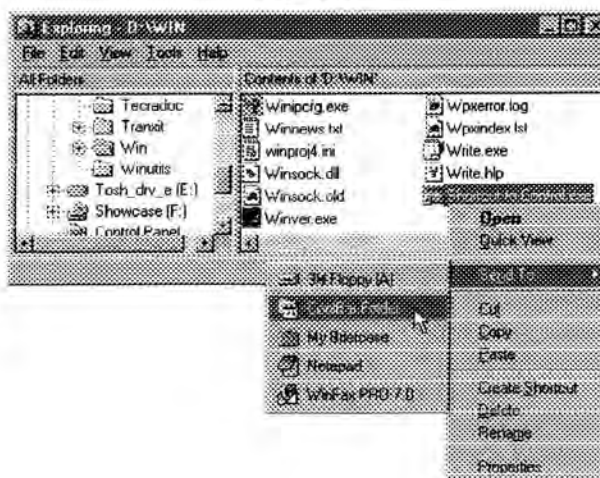


To folder in Explorer's left pane to display its contents. Place your mouse pointer in a blank area in the right pane, right-click, and choose Paste Shortcut (see Figure D1). Now right-click the Shortcut to CoolBar file and rename it CoolBar folder. From now on, CoolBar folder will be listed whenever you right-click other items in Explorer and choose the Send To option.

Figure D2

Create your first CoolBar shortcut

Now let's go ahead and create the first shortcut. Click the Windows folder in Explorer's left pane to display its contents. In the right pane, locate Control Panel's executable file, displayed as either Control or Control.exe. Right-click the file and choose Create Shortcut. Explorer



instantly responds by creating and selecting the new file, Shortcut to Control. Now right-click this file, choose Send To, then select CoolBar folder from the pop-up list (see Figure D2).

Repeat these steps for any items, such as Notepad, that you would like to add to your CoolBar. Dependent upon your choice, all items may or may not be located in the Windows folder. For example, the executable file for Word for Windows, Winword (or Winword.exe), is typically located in the MSOffice\Winword folder.

Fine-tune shortcuts—and become a power user!

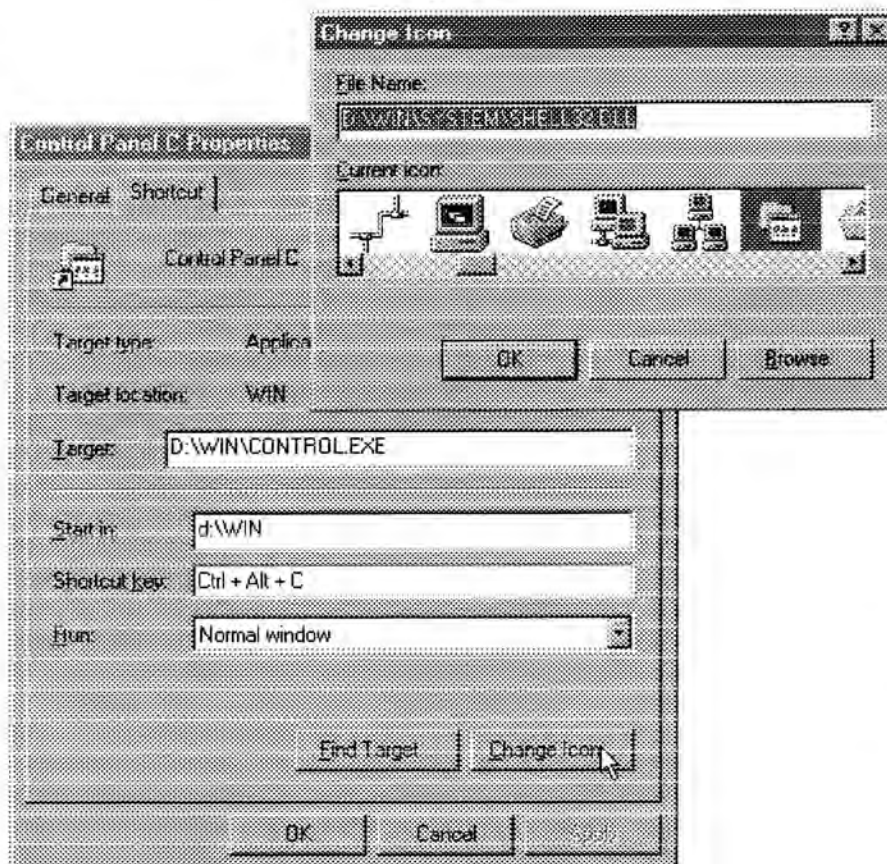
Once you've created one or more shortcuts, the next step is to modify each one to better suit your needs. To begin this step, click once on the CoolBar subfolder in Explorer's left pane. In the right pane, right-click Shortcut to Control.exe, the shortcut you just created. Choose Rename from the pop-up menu, then type a name of your own choosing. For this example, we suggest clarifying the purpose of the shortcut by changing its name to Control Panel.

It would be handy to be able to launch Control Panel, as well as other frequently-used items, from either a Shortcut Bar button or a unique series of keystrokes, referred to as a keyboard macro. Macro assignments should be easy to remember (mnemonic) and relatively few in number; you soon forget those that aren't used all the time. Here are a few we find most useful:

Ctrl+Alt+A	Calculator (Add)	Ctrl+Alt+N	Notepad
Ctrl+Alt+C	Control Panel	Ctrl+Alt+P	Printers
Ctrl+Alt+D	DOS Window	Ctrl+Alt+T	Tasks
Ctrl+Alt+E	Explorer	Ctrl+Alt+W	Word for Windows
Ctrl+Alt+M	Character Map		

To make the shortcut even more useful, right-click the Control Panel shortcut file once again, then choose Properties. Click the Shortcut tab within the Properties dialog box, click once in the Shortcut key field, then press [C]. Windows 95 assigns Ctrl+Alt+C as the Control Panel macro (see Figure E). You have to simultaneously press all three keys, such

Figure E



as Ctrl+Shift+C or Alt+Shift+C, if you prefer to assign a different combination. Note that your macros won't become active until the next time you restart Windows 95.

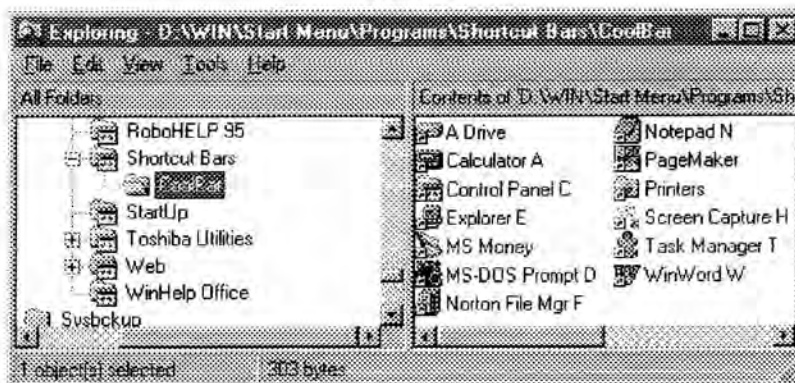
While you have the Properties dialog box open to

the Shortcuts tab, you'll also want to assign an icon to the shortcut to give it a unique visual identity. Click the [Change Icon] button, then click the [Browse] button. Windows notifies you that Control.exe doesn't contain any embedded icons, so click [OK] to gain access to SYSTEMSHELL32.DLL, one of several icon collections shipping with Windows 95 (other icons may be chosen from PROGMAN.EXE, EXPLORER.EXE, MORICONS.DLL, and SYSTEM\PIFMGR.DLL). Scroll to the twentieth icon from the left (or whichever icon strikes your fancy) and click [OK]. Click [OK] a second time to close the Control Panel shortcut's Properties dialog box.

Repeat the shortcut creation process for each application, utility, or frequently-accessed document you want to

add to your CoolBar (see Figure F). If you prefer, you may wait until later to create additional shortcuts; their respective icons will automatically appear on the CoolBar or other Office Shortcut Bar

Figure F



as you add them to the respective subfolder in Explorer. You won't need to go to the trouble of reassigning icons for most items, but you'll usually want to rename the shortcut.

Instantly create a Shortcut Bar from a folder

After you've used Explorer to create and modify as many CoolBar shortcuts as you want for now, right-click the Office Shortcut Bar. Choose Customize, click the Toolbars tab, then choose Add Toolbar. Click the [Browse] button in the Add Toolbar window (see Figure G). Now navigate to CoolBar (\Windows\Start Menu\Programs\Shortcut Bars\CoolBar), click its subfolder once to select it (don't double-click it), then choose Add. Click OK to close the Add Toolbar window. Your new CoolBar is now displayed (see Figure H)!

Cosmetic details

If you have created more than one shortcut in the CoolBar subfolder, you can now arrange the order in which the items are displayed on the Shortcut Bar by choosing the Buttons tab within the Customize window. Simply click any item to select it, then use the arrow buttons to reposition

it. Optionally, click the Add Space button to create a logical division between icon groups, such as between applications and utilities. Finally, you can assign a different color to

CoolBar from within the Views tab. When you're happy with the results, click OK to close the Customize window.

Conclusion

Like a new racing car right off the trailer, Microsoft built a lot of horsepower into both Windows 95 and the Office Shortcut Bar. The documentation then leaves us high and dry regarding ways to fully integrate and tune everything we have at our fingertips. If you take a few minutes to tweak the components before you, you'll quickly find yourself accelerating from a virtual standstill in the pit to the high groove on the track, putting your Win 95 machine "on rails."

Figure G

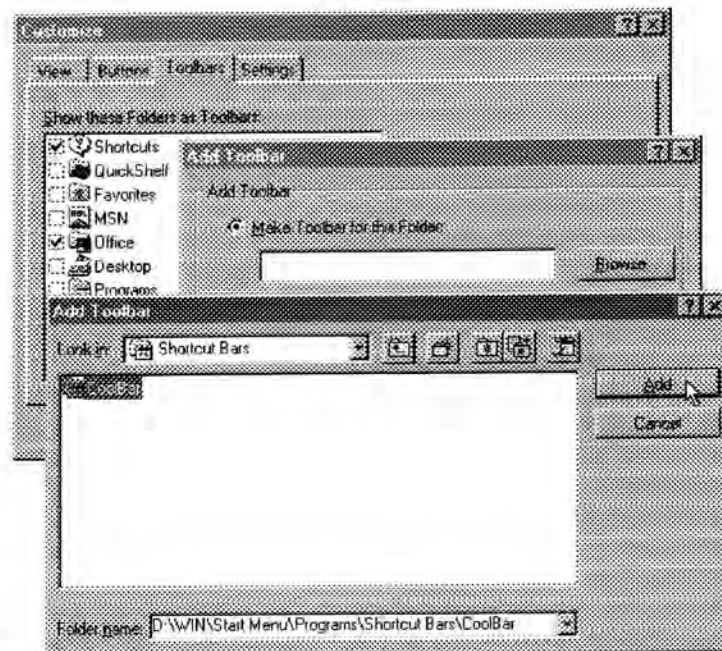


Figure H