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# WINDOWS XP HACKS



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HACK  
#21

## Generating Folder and File Listings for Printing or Editing

Longtime PC users and former Mac users alike are often shocked when they realize that there's no easy, built-in option to print a list of files in a folder. This hack creates a context-menu right-click option to create such a list, which you can then edit, copy, paste, and—most usefully—print.

How many times have you been browsing through directories in Windows Explorer and wished you could generate a text file or printout listing the files and folders? It seems like such a simple request that it's amazing the option isn't available. You don't believe me? Right-click on a folder and see for yourself if there is an option to list or print the structure. There isn't, but there is a workaround that doesn't require any third-party software. Here's how to create a [context menu item](#) [Hack #29] that, when clicked, generates a printable (and editable) text-file listing of the selected directory.

To create the entry in the context menu it's necessary to first create a *batch file*. A batch file is a text file that contains a sequence of commands for a computer operating system and uses the *.bat* extension. The format for the *.bat* file is:

```
dir /a /-p /o:gen >filelisting.txt
```

The name of the *.txt* file can be whatever you like. In this example, I've used *filelisting.txt*, but it could just as easily be *filelist*, *listoffiles*, *namedfiles*, or even *Wally* if you enjoy the bizarre in your filenames schemes. Once you've decided on the filename, create the file in Notepad, as shown in [Figure 3-1](#).

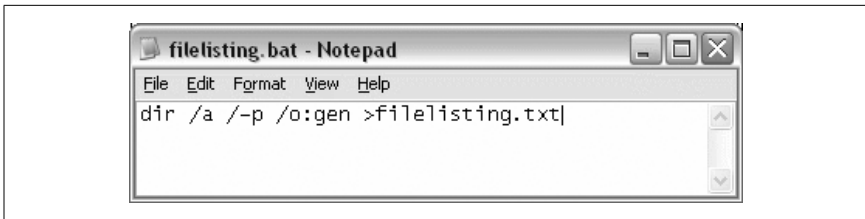


Figure 3-1. Creating a batch file in Notepad

Save the file in your *WINDOWS* folder as shown in [Figure 3-2](#), making sure to use the *.bat* extension and not the default *.txt* extension. It's important to set "Save as type" to All Files and "Encoding:" to ANSI.

Now that we have the *.bat* file created, the next step is to make it functional and easily accessible by integrating it into the context menu that opens when a right click is executed. Open Windows Explorer and choose Tools

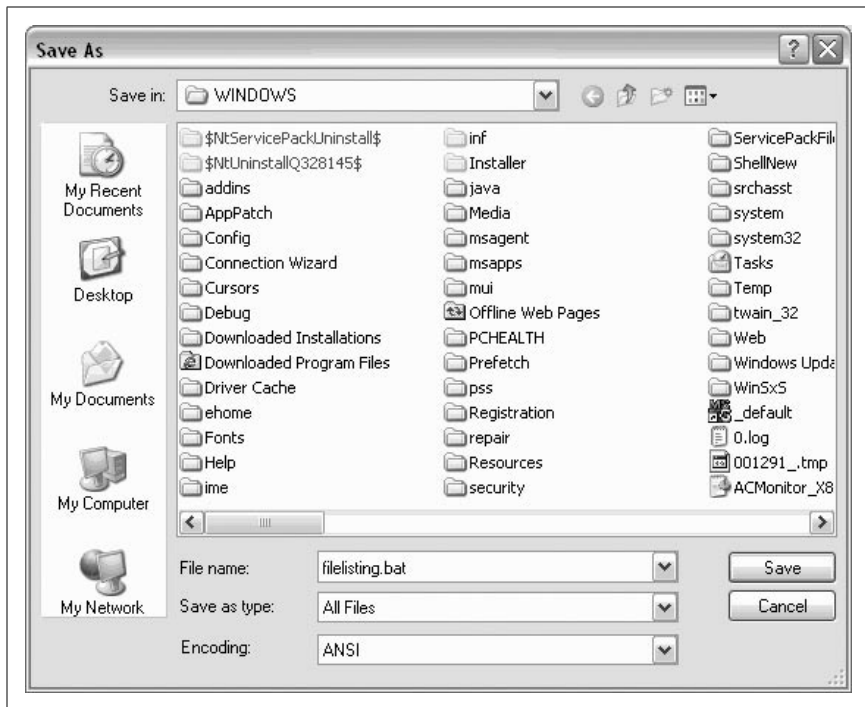


Figure 3-2. Saving file listing.bat

→ Folder Options → File Types tab → Folder → Advanced → New, to open the New Action box shown in Figure 3-3.

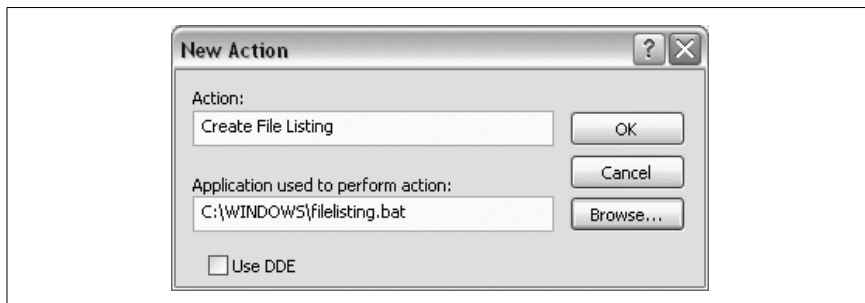


Figure 3-3. Creating a new action for the context menus

In the Action box, type the name that you want to appear in the context menu. Once again, you have wide latitude in choices; something like Create File Listing will probably be most useful, but you can name yours something more confusing if you like. Browse to the location of the .bat file you created, and select it in the box labeled “Application used to perform action.”

Click OK, and you'll see that Create File Listing (or whatever you chose as an action name) has been added as one of the Actions in the Edit File Type window, as shown in Figure 3-4. Do the standard Windows dance of clicking OK again to close all the open windows.



Figure 3-4. The revised Edit File Type box with your new action

That's it! Congratulations. You've created a new item on the context menu that's ready to go to work. So, now that's it there, what can you do with it?

Open up Windows Explorer. Navigate to whatever folder you want to use as the basis for the file list, and right-click to open the context menu. Click on the Create File Listing item (see Figure 3-5), and the list will be generated and displayed at the bottom of the open Notepad window as *filelisting.txt*. Figure 3-6 shows the file listing generated from the Sample Music folder shown in Figure 3-5. Since it is a text file, it can be fully edited, copied, pasted, printed, and so on for any purpose.

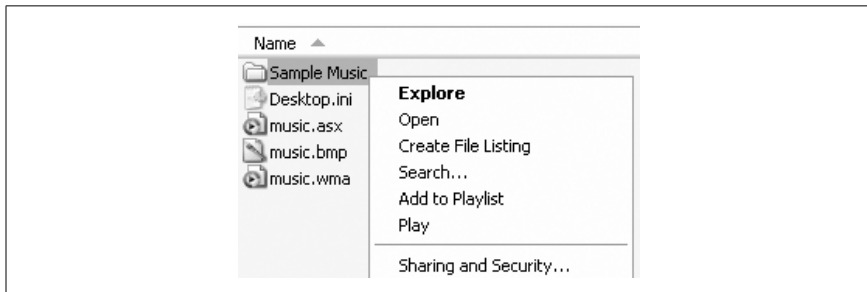


Figure 3-5. Your new context-menu action: Create File Listing

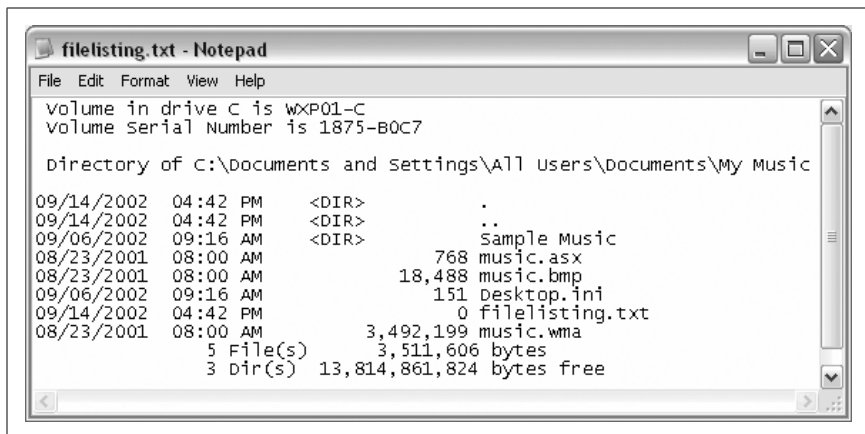


Figure 3-6. The generated file listing, all ready for editing and printing



If for any reason you want to remove the Create File Listing entry from the context menu, you must edit the Registry [Hack #68]. Navigate to HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\Folder\shell\Create\_File\_Listing and delete the Create\_File\_Listing key in the left pane. Close regedit and reboot to complete removal.

### Alternative Method for Users of Outlook XP

If you happen to be a user of Outlook XP, there is another method available for printing directory listings that requires no system modifications. Using the Outlook Bar, you can generate a nicely formatted listing with a few mouse clicks:

1. Open Microsoft Outlook.
2. Choose View → Outlook Bar → Other Shortcuts.
3. The three default selections listed are My Computer, My Documents, and Favorites. Select one and navigate the tree until the directory is displayed in the right pane.
4. When the display matches what you'd like to print, click the printer icon on the Outlook toolbar.

—Jim Foley