

No. 100. A Better Way to Install Windows 98

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Wow! This is monthly article number 64h (h = hexadecimal), or 1100100 (binary), or 100 in our plain old decimal system. A nice, round number that represents 8 years and 4 months worth of articles. I should put a candle on my breakfast bagel tomorrow morning! I hope you have found the series useful. This month's subject is a tip that can make your life easier. You can use this tip to:

1. Install Win98 on a hard drive for the first time. This way is actually easier than the standard way, and has the added benefit of storing the important contents of the installation CD-ROM on your hard drive. If Windows needs additional files in the future (as, for example, when you add a new hardware device), it won't even ask you for the CD-ROM. It will just automatically go get the needed files from the copy on your hard drive! Win98 can do this because it knows that it was installed from the hard drive, rather than from a CD-ROM, and that the installation files (including drivers) are still there.
2. Put a second copy of all installation files on a hard drive that already has Win98 installed. As above, when adding new hardware in the future, you will not need the CD-ROM. Just point Windows to the folder where the installation files are located, and it will happily slurp up the ones it needs for your new hardware. This works for restoring damaged or corrupt files, too.
3. You can even use this method to put Win98 on a machine that has no CD-ROM drive. I have done this many times, by first copying the files to a parallel port external hard drive (using a machine that did have a CD-ROM drive), then using the external hard drive to copy to the machine without a CD-ROM drive. This will work with an external tape drive, as well.

Now, be aware that this method is used to transfer "installation files", which are the source files that are used to install the operating system. The installation files are compressed, just like zip files, though Microsoft calls them .cab files (cab = cabinet). These compressed files are decompressed during the installation process to create the actual files that make up the operating system. They have to be decompressed in a specific sequence, and some of them are run (executed) during the installation process. Windows takes care of all this itself.

Let us begin with the first situation, above. We will assume you have a new hard drive installed, and that it is properly partitioned and formatted, but has no software on it. You want to install Windows 98 and you possess a Win98 CD-ROM.

1. Boot with a Win98 Startup Disk (I have told you in previous columns that you really MUST have one of these). This floppy will give you access to your C: drive, and it will also set up the CD-ROM drive so you can read data from it. After booting, you will have an A:\ command prompt.
2. Change to the C: drive by typing **C:** and pressing the Enter key (hereafter, pressing the Enter key will be shown like this: **<Enter>**). Now make a directory (folder) on the C: drive called W98FLAT. To do this, simply type **MD_W98FLAT <Enter>**. Don't type the

underscore after MD (Make Directory). I put it there just to clearly indicate that there must be a space between the D and the W. Now move to that new folder by typing **CD_W98FLAT <Enter>**. Again, don't type the underscore after CD (Change to Directory); make it a space.

3. Next, copy the important contents of the installation CD-ROM to your new folder. Give the command: **COPY_D:\WIN98*_*_C:\W98FLAT <Enter>**. Again, the underscores are spaces. The D: in COPY_D: above refers to your CD-ROM drive. If it is some other letter, substitute that letter for D:. Now go have a cup of coffee while around 120 megabytes (actually 127,104,759 bytes, to be exact) of data is copied to your hard drive.
4. The hard work is done. Remove the CD-ROM and put it away in a safe place. You are still in the W98FLAT subdirectory (folder). Type **SETUP <Enter>** to start installation of Windows 98.
5. Note 1: You will need the CD Key (the long string of letters and numbers) that is probably on a sticker on the CD-ROM case. However, you will only need it this one time. When you use W98FLAT in the future for installing new drivers or replacing corrupt files, Windows will not ask for it again. A nice bonus!
6. Note 2: If your CD-ROM is the Win98 Upgrade disk, the installation program will want proof that it really is an upgrade. Find an old set of Windows 3.1 installation floppies to satisfy it. The installation program will only ask to read the first 3 or 4 (it varies!) of the 6 Win 3.1 disks. The floppies are a quick, easy solution. Alternatively, feed it a Win95 CD-ROM, or even Win 95 installation floppies if you have a set.

That is pretty much it. If you already have Win98 installed (situation 2), just do everything except booting with a Startup Disk. Go to an MSDOS Prompt, make a new folder as outlined above, copy the installation files into it as outlined, and you are done. Whenever you need to replace corrupt files or add new drivers, point the requesting program to your W98FLAT folder instead of to the CD-ROM. Windows will be happy, and that makes for Happy computing!