

Taming Your Computer

No. 1 (May 2008)

a series of stress-busting exercises



In my travels I frequently get asked to help brothers and sometimes sisters with computer problems. I thought it might be helpful to write a series of simple articles which might perhaps relieve some of the stress associated with things on computers. Forgive me if I seem to write about things you already manage well, but they are things that perhaps cause untold grief (or at least hours of time wasted) for others.

This series will be approximately monthly. I will e-mail it to each house and officer directly. Each article will also be available online on Edna : that's www.gensec-ssf.org.

To kick off:

Topic One is on **folders and file names**.

Most people if they use a filing cabinet for documents use folders to separate different sorts of documents. For example you might have a folder for personal correspondence, another for chapter minutes, another for your sermons, etc.

Well – computers can do exactly the same thing. It's not hard and it saves spending lots of time shuffling round in the "My Documents" folder in your computer, scrolling up and down pages in search of that retreat address you know is there somewhere.

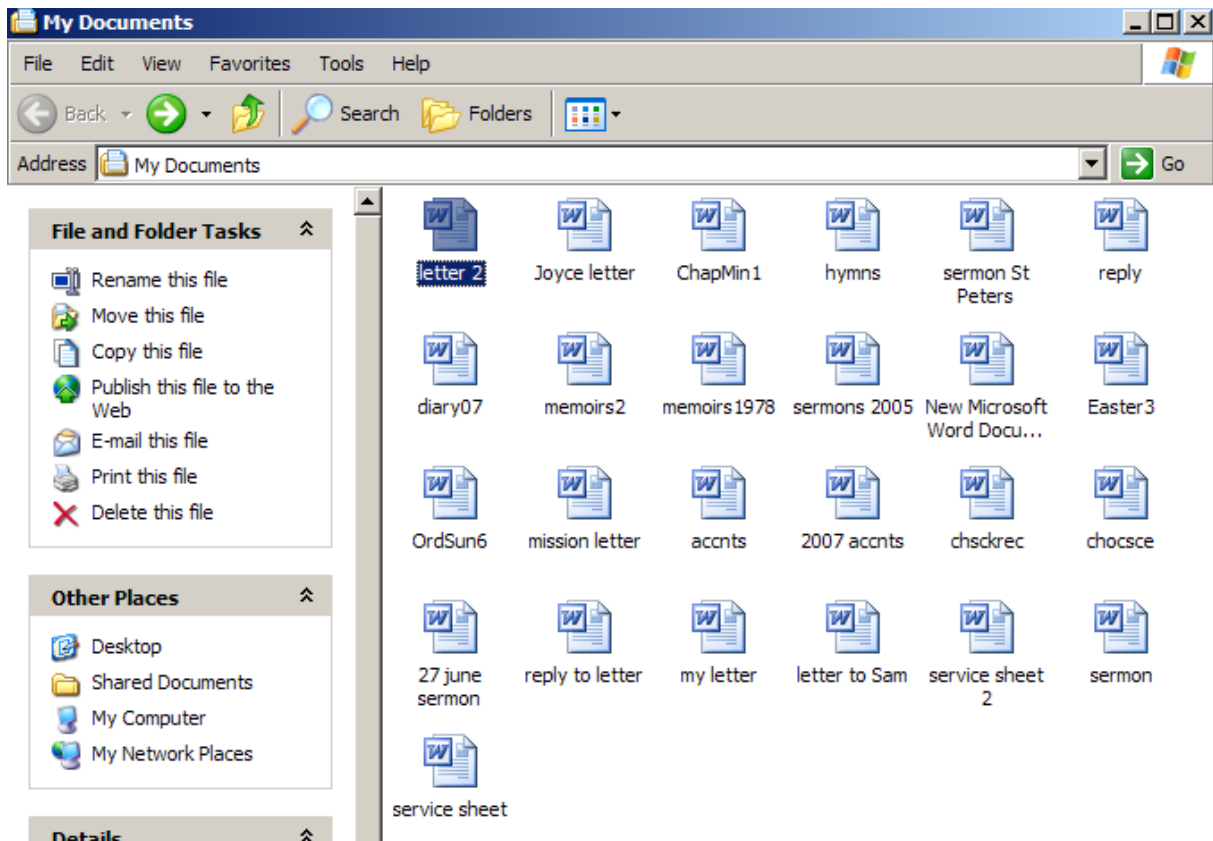
I'm writing specifically about Windows XP but the same general techniques work in other systems as well.

Here's how to start making a new folder.

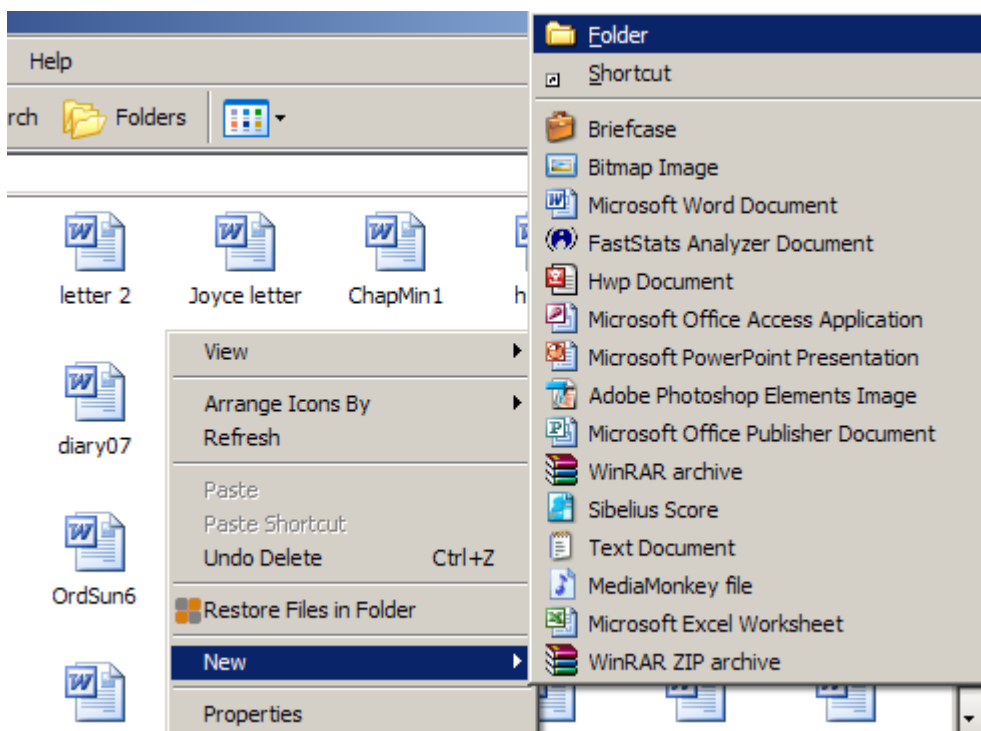
Open your "My Documents" folder. I've created an example here with perhaps the sort of jumble of files you might find in a real "My Documents". Note also the fairly unhelpful names some of the files have.

If your folder doesn't have small icons like these then you can change the view in that folder. Click on the icon in the tool bar to the right of the one labelled "folders". It's the one with a small arrow pointing down. You can then select the view you want. Experiment with the different options, such as "Tiles", "Icons", "List", etc. to see what you prefer.

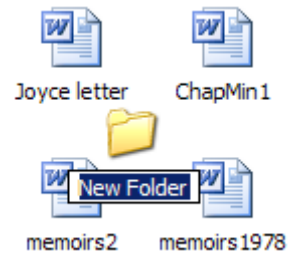
* If you're the sort of person who already has their folders organised, then you can skip the rest of this article as far as the chocolate sauce recipe. But perhaps you could help someone else in your house with their folders as a work of supererogation.



The first step is to make some new folders. An easy way of doing this is to *right-click* with your mouse pointing on any of the white bits between the icons in the "My Documents" folder. Select "New" and then slide your mouse pointer horizontally across to the pop-out menu. Then, keeping the mouse pointer in that menu, *left click* on "Folder".

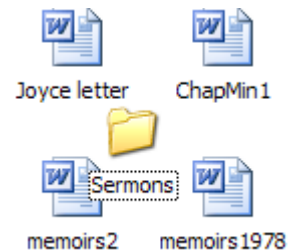


Once the mouse button lifts up you will have a new folder, called "New Folder", sitting in the middle of your other files. (If the mouse pointer goes off the right place and the list vanishes, just start again.)

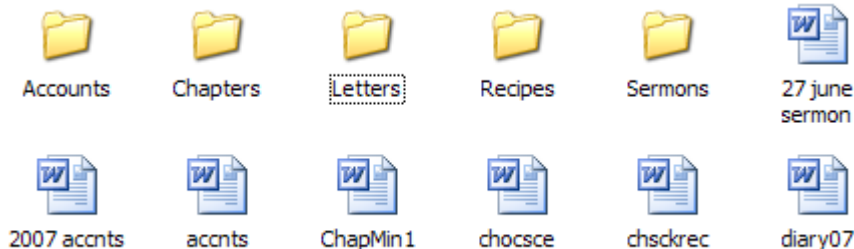


It's good to rename this folder to something memorable. There are several different ways of skinning a cat, and in Windows there are also several different ways of doing anything. It doesn't matter what way you choose.

Here's my easy suggestion. Single click **in** the folder name (not on the icon) until it looks like the example above. As you can see the folder name is selected, but the folder isn't. That means we can directly rename the folder. (Another way of skinning the cat is to *right-click* in the folder name and select "rename".) So when the folder name is looking like the above example you can just type a new name. Let's call it "sermons". Click anywhere else to set the new name in the folder and there you are. One skinned cat. (see example to the right).

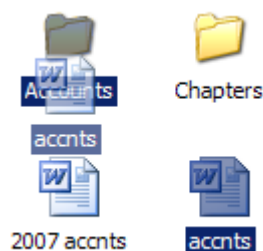


Go ahead and create as many folders as you want. In my example I will create them for "Letters", "Accounts", "Chapters" and "Recipes". By now your folder is probably looking like a mess. Go ahead and let your computer tidy it up. Right click on the white space between the icons and select "Arrange icons by ..." then select "Name" on the pop out menu. My example looks like the following:

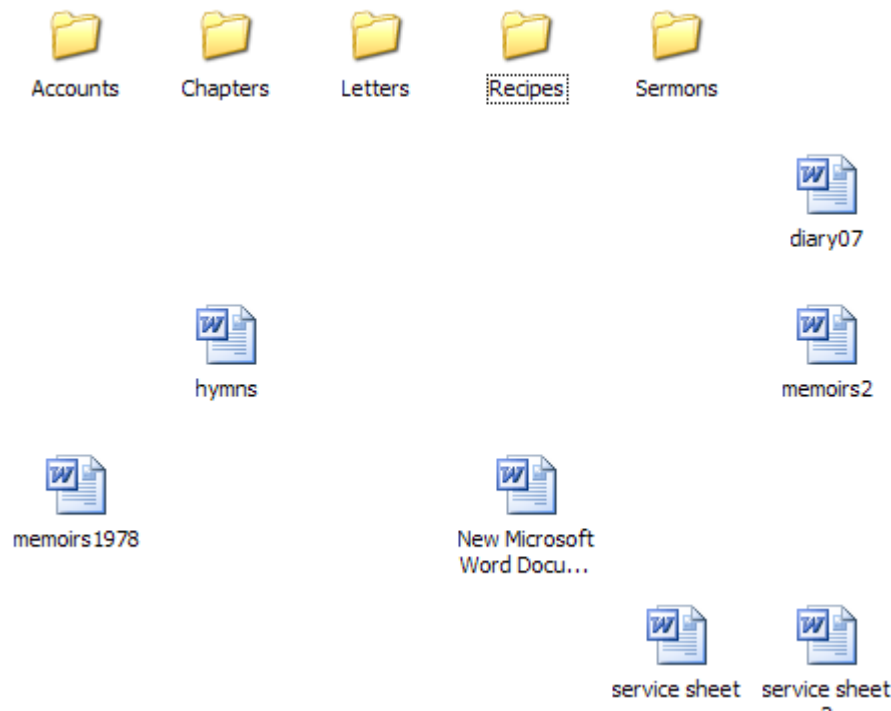


The next step is easy – just *drag and drop* the files into the appropriate folders. (*left mouse button* on the file name, and keep the button pressed as you drag the file across to the folder you want to drop it into. When it's above the folder icon, just let go of the mouse button and the file will drop in the folder.)

The example here shows the file "accnts" nearly completely "dragged and dropped" onto the "accounts" folder.



The final result is something like the following:



Which is a bit of mess. Use the “arrange icons by name” trick (see above). Actually if you prefer why not select the “auto arrange” option in the same pop-out menu. Then the computer will keep them arranged for you. Perhaps we missed out on a couple more folders. So we can add two more – the same method as above – for “Memoirs” and “Service sheets”. And opening the file called “New Microsoft Word Document” shows it to be our favourite tiramisu recipe so we rename it accordingly and drag and drop it to “recipes”.

The final result is:



With all the files in the appropriate folders.

Well done!

The next step is to go through each folder and rename files to give more useful names. For example “chocsce” I could rename to “Chocolate sauce”. Perhaps my sermons could be renamed in some sort of consistent way. “2008 Lent 5 – St Peters”, “2008 Easter 2 – St Mildreds”. It makes it easier when looking the list of files to see which is which.

The days of file names needing to be a maximum of 8 characters long have well and truly passed unless you are still operating steam-powered computers. Go ahead – upgrade! Join the 20th century - get the gas-powered model.

And the chocolate sauce recipe? It's a family favourite I'd like to share with my "religious family". Everyone calls it my mother's recipe but she, Pat, modestly passes the credit to her sister, Myra (also known as Mick). So here is

Mick's Chocolate Sauce

2 cups sugar
1 cup milk
2 tablespoons cocoa
2 tablespoons butter

Boil for 3 minutes

Serve over ice cream. Warm or cold it's delicious either way. It will keep in the fridge but usually the fridge mice will get to it when no one's around.

Go ahead and enjoy it after your computer-taming labours.