

Adding Switches to Applications

Some applications allow switches to be added to the application executable that forces different options for that program. I recently added a switch to the Discreet 3dsMax program that would force it to open in OpenGL mode. I wanted this switch to be activated if the user runs the application through that start menu or double-clicks their '.max' file. Two changes needed to be made for this to happen.

Change 1. Adding a Switch to Application Shortcut.

Find the shortcut for the application. 3dsMax was located at: C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Start Menu\Programs\Applications\discreet\3ds max 5. Right click on the application Shortcut and then click Properties as shown in Figure 1.

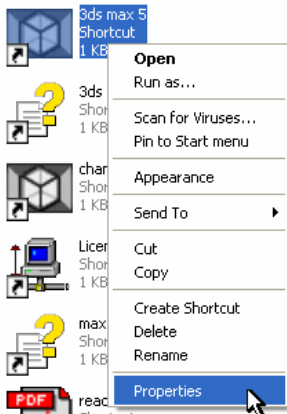


Figure 1. Accessing Properties for an Application.

Once the properties window is open, click on the 'Shortcut' Tab. Your properties should be similar to the one in Figure 2.

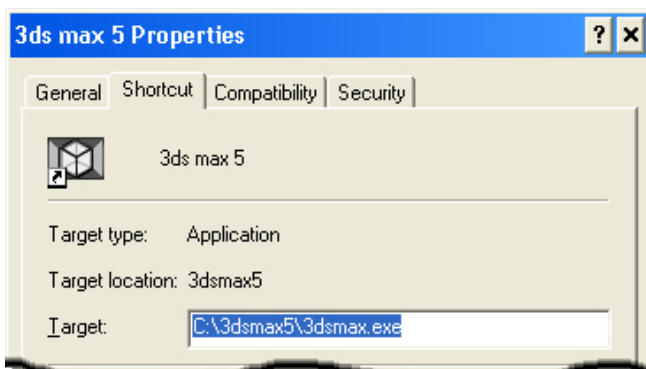


Figure 2. 3ds max 5 Properties window. (Partial View)

We want to make the change to the target. For 3dsMax I wanted to add a `-vo` switch after the program name. Add a space and then the switch. The Apply button will become active as shown in Figure 3.

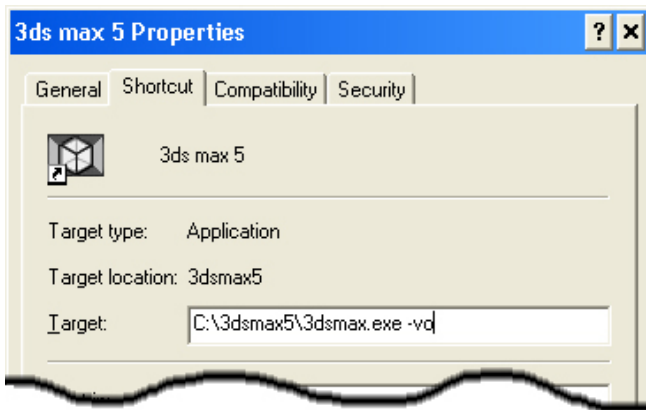


Figure 3. 3ds max 5 Properties after change. (Partial View)

Click Apply and then OK. This completes Change 1.

Change 2. Adding a Switch to the File Extension.

Change 1 only applies if the user ran the application through the Windows Start Menu. What if the user double-clicks the application file? The application is opened normally without switches. This is not what I want to happen. In order to correct this I had to do some searching in the registry.

Start the registry editor by click on Start, Run, typing 'Regedit' and then click OK. I started my hunt by looking for the .max file extension. This led me not to the application shortcut like I expected, but to basically another shortcut called: '3DStudio.MAX'. I found this later in the registry. It contained the necessary information including the link to the 3dsmax application. Click on all '+' symbols to open entries below as shown in Figure 4.

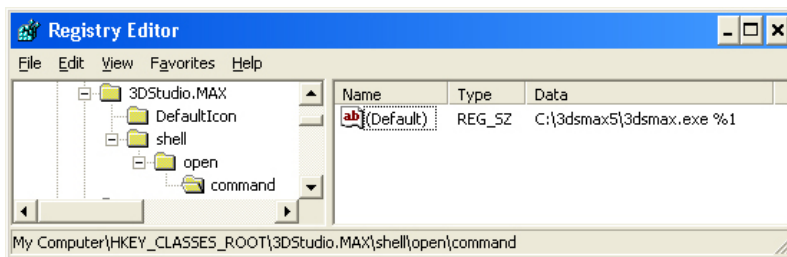


Figure 4. 3DStudio.MAX registry entry.

To make the change to the program data, double-click the (Default) icon or text. This will bring up the Edit String option as show in Figure 5 on the next page.

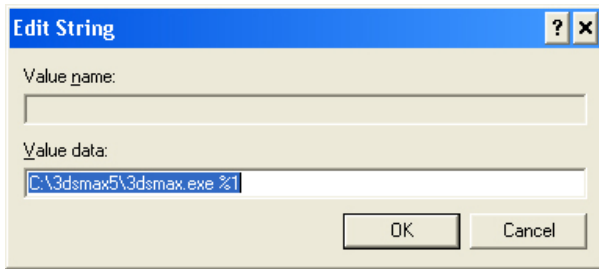


Figure 5. Edit the Value data for 3DStudio Max.

This is where we want to add the switch. The %1 is a program option and merely communicates to the program that the file the user double-clicked is the file that they want to open. Insert the switch after the program name and before the %1 switch as shown in Figure 6.

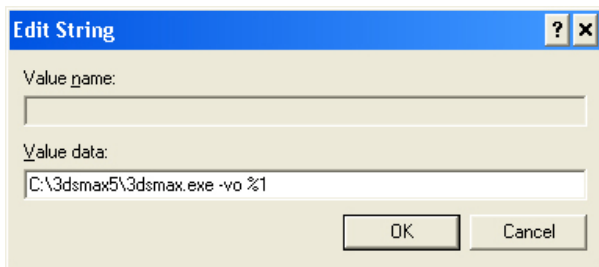


Figure 6. Value data after adding the -vo switch.

Click 'OK' and exit Registry Editor. Change 2 is now complete. The program should now be forced to apply the switch no matter if the user runs the application normally through the Start Menu, or double-clicks their .max file.

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Date: June 11, 2004