

## Where is that Darn File?: Inside Microsoft's Search/Find File Feature.

There are times when I need to search for a file or files on my PC. I often do development and my files can be scattered around my hard drive. I like to keep my project files away from the installation folders just for easier backup. But, if you go with the Software Manufacturer's basic folder structure, your files could be in many subfolders under subfolders, in other words, very hard to find in a hurry. Let's turn to a friend in Windows that has been around for sometime; the Find (NT) / Search (Win2000) Files command. Some of you may not fully understand the benefits of this command.

### Step 1. Shortcuts, the Quickest Way?

I'm going to use a keyboard shortcut to start the Find Files or Folders Command. No mouse needed! I am planning a future tutorial on keyboard commands for Windows. Type [**Ctrl + Esc**] to bring up the Start Menu. The Start Menu should be showing as in Figure 1 (Win NT 4) and in Figure 2 (Win 2000 Professional).

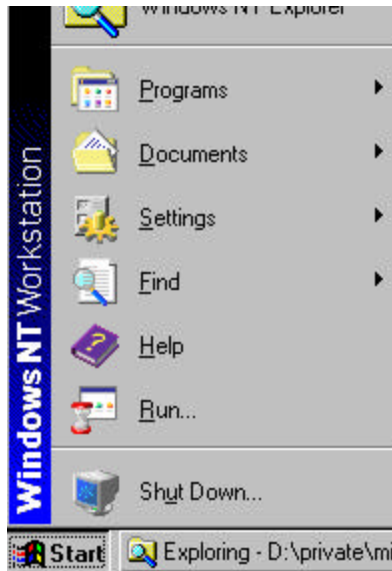


Figure 1. Win NT 4 Start Menu

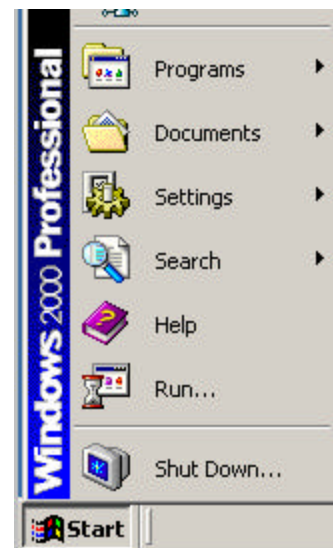
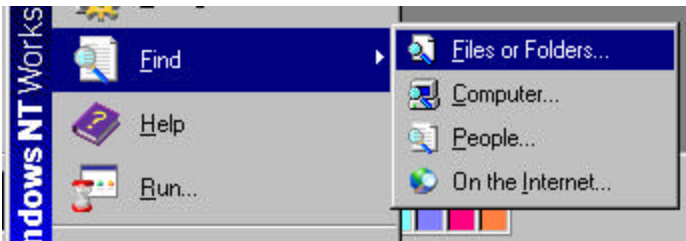


Figure 2. Win 2000 Start Menu

There are slight differences between the Win NT 4 Start Menu and the Win 2000 Start Menu. For one, the command in Windows 2000 Professional has been renamed to Search instead of Find as it is in Windows NT 4. Also notice that the first letters are underlined in Figure 1. This means that we can type one of these letters to run the chosen command. But, in this case, we are going to type [**F**] for Find files. What do we type if we are using Win 2000? Surprisingly, the answer is the same. The letter [**F**]. Yes, even though this is not a designated letter to type to bring up the Search option, it works.

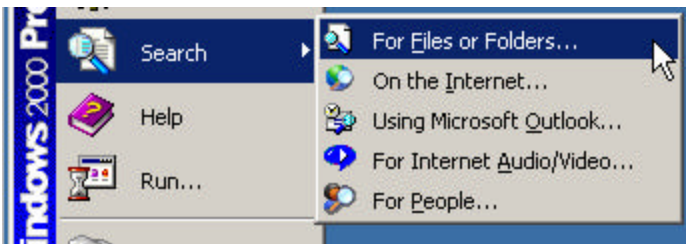
Thanks to Microsoft, from all users like myself, that still use keyboard shortcuts to move around Windows.

After typing [**F**] on the keyboard NT 4 users should see the following:



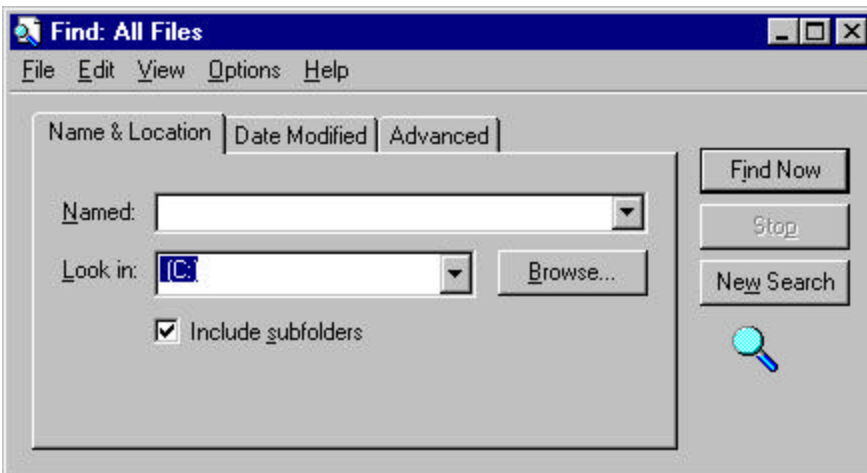
**Figure 3. NT 4 Find Files or Folders...**

And Windows 2000 Professional users should see what is in Figure 4.

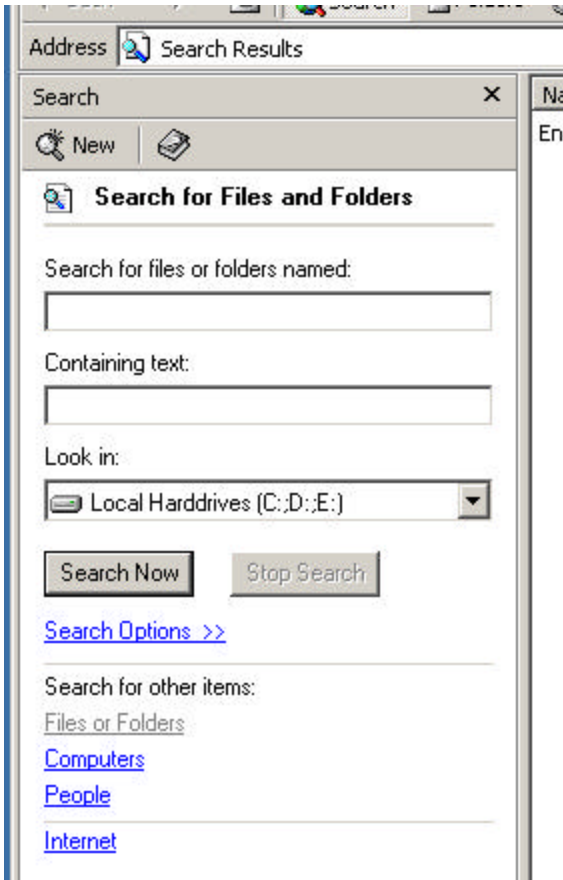


**Figure 4. Windows 2000 Professional Search For Files or Folders...**

Notice now in both figures that the letter [**F**] can be used to complete our journey to the Search Files window. Type the letter [**F**] to continue. Just a recap of the commands, we have used. From the Start Menu, chose [**Ctrl + Esc**], then [**F**], then [**F**] again. This should bring up the following windows, as shown in the following two figures (Figure 5 and 6).



**Figure 5. Windows NT 4 Find: All Files window.**

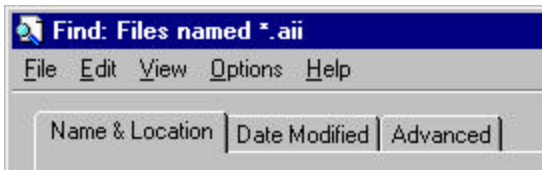


**Figure 6. Windows 2000 Search Results window (partial screen).**

Even though these two windows look different, they act very similar. If you are searching for files in Windows 2000, skip Step 2 and continue with Step 3. Continue with Step 2 if you are using Windows NT 4.

## Step 2. Finding Files in NT 4.

The Windows NT 4 Find: All Files window has three tabs, *Name & Location*, *Date Modified*, *Advanced* as shown in Figure 7.



**Figure 7. Tabs available in Windows NT 4.**

### *Name & Location*

I use only the *Name & Location* for general file searching.

## *Date Modified*

*Date Modified* can be used to search for files created or modified during specific periods or within the last few days or months.

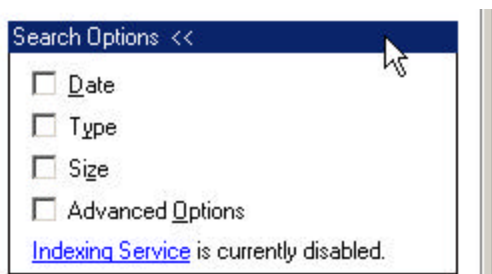
## *Advanced*

*Advanced* tab allows you to search based on size or what the file contains. Let's say for example, we need to find all Illustrator 8.0 files that we have saved within the last few days. We could really do this several ways. One way is, type **.ai** in the named box. The asterisk (\*) character is an old DOS wildcard character meaning all files. The extension of Illustrator files on PC is **ai**. The Look in: box should contain the drive that we are interested in searching. If you click on the down arrow, you should have more options, like searching more than one drive at a time. Click on the *Date Modified* tab, which will give you several options. All files is the default. Leave here to find all files without any kind of date restrictions. Click on the *Advanced* tab, and type '**Creator: Adobe Illustrator(R) 8.0**' in the Containing text: box. Often software manufacturers embed code specific to their program. This also means that it is searchable. For example, Illustrator 9.0 files would have a slightly different embedded tag included in those files. Leave include subfolders checked to search not only the current folder, but all subfolders. Click *Find Now* to start your search.

You have just completed a basic search in Windows NT 4. Feel free to read Step 3 if you are interested in learning how to complete the same task in Windows 2000 Professional, otherwise skip to Step 4.

## Step 3. Finding Files in Windows 2000 Professional.

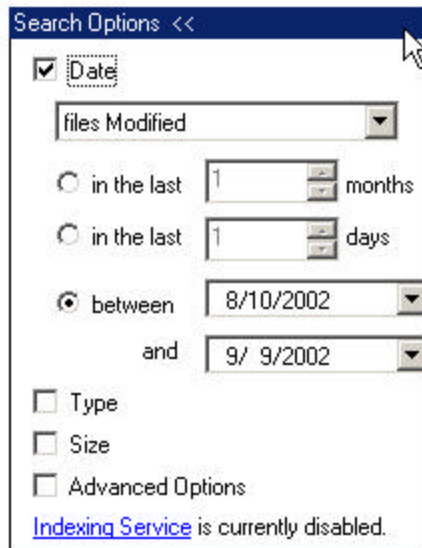
In Windows 2000 Professional, the interface has been updated. The tabs have been removed and there are now clickable Search Options. If you click on *Search Options >>*, you will see four check boxes: *Date*, *Type*, *Size*, and *Advanced Options*. See Figure 8.



**Figure 8. Search Options in Windows 2000 Professional**

Clicking on these options will give you even more options, and will narrow down your search to a few files, if desired.

***The Date Checkbox:***

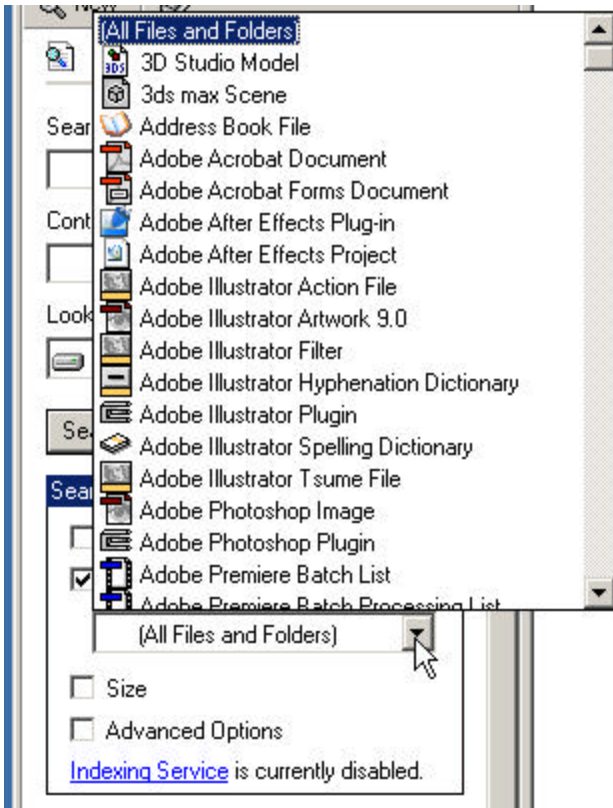


**Figure 9. The Date modified checkbox.**

*Date* option can be used to search for files created or modified during specific periods or within the last few days or months.

***The Type Checkbox:***

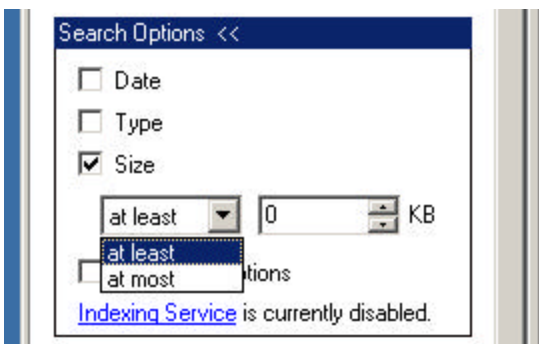
(Figure on next page)



**Figure 10. The Type modified checkbox with partial list showing.**

*Type* option can be used to search for files based on the type of file. Figure 10 shows the Type option checked and the partial list of applications or types of files. This information is queried from the Windows registry database.

***The Size checkbox:***



**Figure 11. Size option chosen.**

The Size option, as shown in Figure 11, allows you to limit your search based on file size. If you know that the file you are looking for is under 10 megs for example, you could choose the 'at most' option and use the spin button to increase the value from 0 to

10.

***The Advanced Options checkbox:***



**Figure 12. Advanced Options with further options.**

The Advanced Options checkbox breaks down to three options: *Search Subfolders*, *Case sensitive*, and *Search slow files*. *Search Subfolders* will search in the parent directory and the folders under this folder. *Case sensitive* option, if checked, will match your query only if the case is the same. *Search slow files* option is used when searching removable media, such as Zips and backup tapes.

After all of these options have been selected and the folder or file name has been entered in the Search box, click *Search Now*.

You have completed your search and are ready to view the results. Continue to Step 4.

**Step 4. What can I do now that I have searched for these file(s)?**

Not only can you double click the file here and open the application associated with that file, but you can delete, drag to another application such as CD burning software, rename, and other miscellaneous operations.

Once your search has completed, you can sort these files in order based on the following criteria: Name, In Folder, Size, Type, Modified, and with Windows 2000 comes Relevance (similar to web searching). Just click on the tab and this temporary list will be sorted. I often use the Modified dates to find the latest file, for example. You can also select certain or all the files, right click, and many more options are available. Deleting files from here is probably the most used option I use from this menu.

If the paths or any search results that include the ellipse symbol (...) as shown in Figure 13,

	Size
Files\Bo...	30KB
ownload...	26KB
rogramm...	2KB
rogramm...	1KB
rogramm...	3KB
rogramm...	1KB

**Figure 13. The complete paths are obscured.**

just move the mouse between the column headings

	S
\Bo...	30
oad...	26
amm...	2

**Figure 14. Where to put your cursor to double click.**

and double click when your cursor changes to a double arrow as shown in Figure 15.



**Figure 15. Double click now to see full path or information.**

This will open that column to the largest field, allowing all the column data to be shown.

I hope this helps in your daily Microsoft endeavors.

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