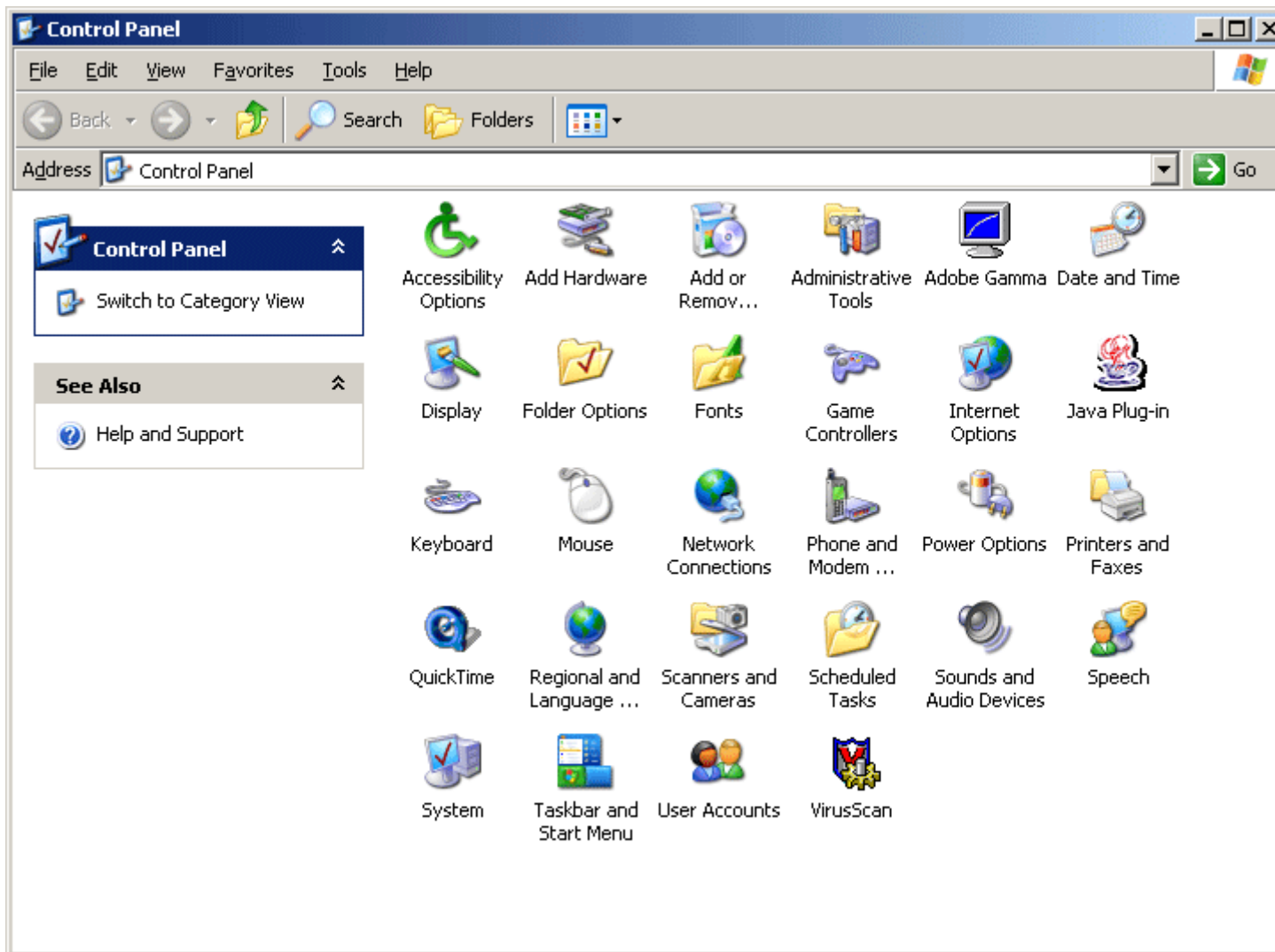# The Windows Control Panel

The *Control Panel* is <u>the</u> place to come to change the behavior of your system or to troubleshoot a problem. Just like the *Start Menu* there are two different themes for the *Control Panel*: a Classic and a XP version.

Classic Control Panel

The icons pictured below represent programs that can change system settings, and are often themselves referred to as "Control Panels". These programs are all there is that Windows gives the user to change settings.

Control Panel

File   Edit   View   Favorites   Tools   Help

← Back ▾   → ▾   ⬆   🔍 Search   📁 Folders   ▦ ▾

Address 🗎 Control Panel   ▾   → Go

Control Panel ⌃

🗹 Switch to Category View

See Also ⌃

❓ Help and Support

♿ Accessibility Options	📚 Add Hardware	💿 Add or Remov...	🗂 Administrative Tools	🖥 Adobe Gamma	🕐 Date and Time
🖥 Display	📁 Folder Options	📁 Fonts	🎮 Game Controllers	🌐 Internet Options	☕ Java Plug-in
⌨ Keyboard	🖱 Mouse	🌐 Network Connections	📱 Phone and Modem ...	🔌 Power Options	🖨 Printers and Faxes
Ⓠ QuickTime	🌐 Regional and Language ...	📷 Scanners and Cameras	🗂 Scheduled Tasks	🔊 Sounds and Audio Devices	👤 Speech
🖥 System	🖥 Taskbar and Start Menu	👥 User Accounts	🛡 VirusScan		

An example of browsing the *Control Panel* in the Classic mode

The titles of these programs are pretty self-explanatory so I will not be covering any of them in great detail, but will go over a few of the key concepts of the important ones, and as I go I will try and mention shortcuts that one can use to access them.

Add Hardware - This icon will allow you to add new hardware that the windows operating system does not recognize on it's own (which isn't much). This control panel takes the form of a wizard, so there is little to explain. This would be used to add excessively old hardware, or hardware on an old computer.

Add or Remove Programs - It is vital that any Windows user be familiar with this control panel which is used primarily for removing unwanted programs or adding/removing windows components (games, system tools, etc.). There are three types of programs that you can install/use on Windows. The first is a standalone executable, these are executables that simply launch a program; they never have to be installed. The second are programs that you must install, but do not make any registry entries or add any Dynamic Link Libraries in the Windows Operating System. The third are programs that you have to install, and that do make alterations to the system they are installed on. If a program makes changes to the operating system it is very highly recommended that you use either this program, or the program's *Uninstaller* to remove the program; do not just simply delete the directory you installed to program in. You can never make a mistake by following these steps when deleting a program:

1. Try this control panel.
2. Check the Start Menu for an *Uninstaller* for that program.
3. Check the directory that the program resides for an executable that has a name similar to "uninstall".
4. Finally, if none of these options work, it is safe to simply delete the program.

Date and Time - This control panel is for just what it says, changing the date, time, and/or time zone on your computer. There is, however, one feature in this control panel that I highly recommend that anyone, who is connected to a network, leave on at all times: Internet Time. This feature synchronizes your computers clock with those on the internet, either Microsoft's or the government's, on a regular basis so that your clock will not be out of sync.

Display - This control panel has all of the user specific visual customization for Windows. Here you can switch backgrounds, alter environment colors, set font sizes, set screen savers, adjust resolution and color depth, etc. Aside, you can alter you desktop drastically by changing the "theme". Windows comes with two default themes, Classic, and XP, but you can find many more online

Folder Options - This control panel is mostly used to customize your experience while using *Explorer* to browse through your systems files, but many of these settings have side effects in other programs such as *Internet Explorer* since the programs are so tightly linked. Other things that you can accomplish here are changing your file sharing mechanism to or from "Simple File Sharing," and altering file types and their associated programs.

Internet Options - These options control your default internet browser. Options you may want to adjust in here are your homepage, cache size, history size, security preferences, and Internet applications such as html editor or newsgroup reader.

Network Connections - If you are having problems with your network connection then you should come here and take a look at your settings. When you first open up this control panel you will see a listing of network connections that you computer has configured. You may see several features on these icons; a grayed-out icon means that connection is not active, and a red X on a connection means that you do not have a valid connection. If the connection is active, does not have a red X, and you are still having problems, you can click on the connection and repair the connection in the "Support" tab. Advanced users can enter the properties and configure their network connection.

Printers and Faxes - This control panel is where you manage your printers. In this control panel you can: add a printer (network or local), share your printer, and troubleshoot your printer. The control panel accomplishes this primarily through the use of wizards.

System - This is, by far, the most important group of settings in the Control Panel. This Control Panel controls such things as: General System Properties, Network ID, System Restore, Remote Desktop, Automatic Updates, System Visual Settings, Virtual Memory, and Hardware Profiles. This is the best place to come when trying to troubleshoot your workstation.

Taskbar and Start Menu - This control panel alters the settings for your taskbar and Start Menu. I highly advise any user to take a look through these options since there are so manu ways to significantly alter your Windows experience by changing a few of them. All of the changes discussed on the previous two pages can be done here.
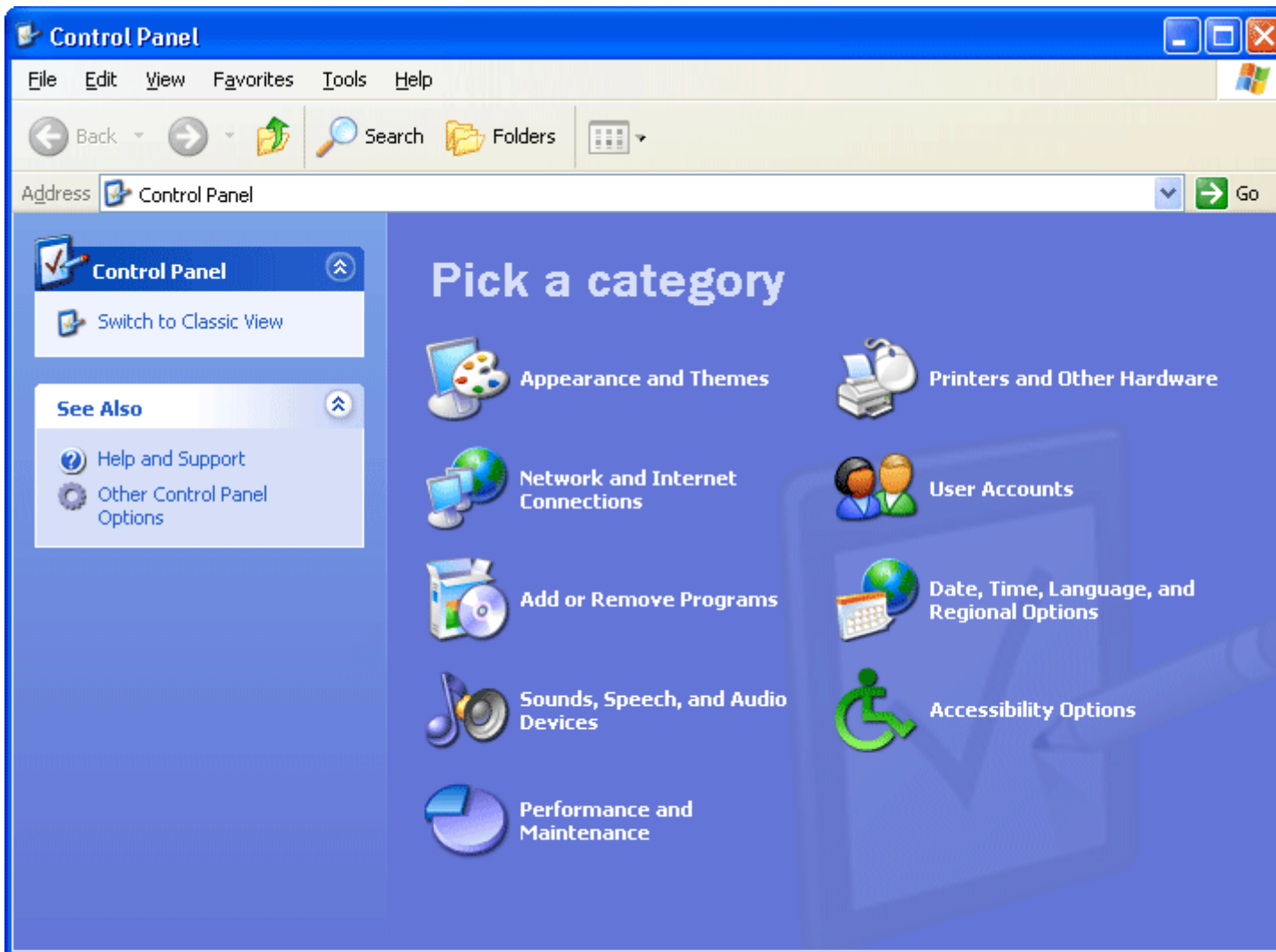
User Accounts - This is where you would come to create/delete users, change passwords, change user icons, etc. If you are not an Administrator on your computer then you will can only change your settings, and then only a limited group of them (whatever your Administrator allows). If you need another settings altered you would need to consult your Administrator.

XP Control Panel

The XP theme is more appropriately called the "Category" view in the Windows Operating System, and unlike the XP *Start Menu*, which flattens the layers, the XP *Control Panel* creates a deep hierarchy for the various system settings. This *Control Panel* groups all of the settings into groups. When these groups are clicked on you are given a choice of common tasks that you can accomplish. Clicking on one of these tasks will take you to the exact spot where you can complete that task. There are also some suggested topics which are under "See Also" and troubleshooting wizards on the left. If what you want to accomplish is not in present the Control Panel Icons that fit in the category are below for you to enter and alter settings manually. Using these Icons is a task for advanced users; **do not** haphazardly alter settings in your environment unless you know what they do.

Note: You can access the 3rd party settings by clicking on "Other Control Panel Options" located on the left of the main category view.

An example of browsing the *Control Panel* in the XP mode