TROUBLESHOOTER

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Create and manage System Restore points

Rosemary Hattersley and Preston Gralla explain how to roll back your PC to a 'happier' time

e often hear about reader computing problems where the easiest and most effective response would be to restore the PC to an earlier state. In the first of a series of articles looking at how to troubleshoot everyday computing issues, we look at the ins and outs of cleaning up your system by reverting to a happier point in your computer's recent history.

What is a System Restore point?

A System Restore point is a sort of bookmark that's created whenever you make a significant change to your PC. Windows Updates create restore points, as does the installation of many software programs. Your PC will probably also be set to create such points at given intervals - once a week or once a fortnight, perhaps - regardless of anything else going on with your PC.

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If something goes wrong, you can revert to an earlier point without losing your files and folders. Note that you'll need to reinstall any programs that were installed after the date to which your PC has been restored. Software installations are the chief reason PC users ever have cause to use System Restore in the first place.

Setting a System Restore point

You can view your existing System Restore points by going to Start, Control Panel in Windows XP or Computer, Control Panel in Vista and Windows 7. Click 'Performance and Maintenance' and choose System Restore from the list on the lefthand side. Choose 'Create Restore point' to manually create a point. You can give this point a name - as we have done in the example below - making it easier to identify later.

Restoring your PC

To restore the PC to an earlier point, choose 'Restore my computer to an earlier time'. A reboot will be required.

Note that some antivirus programs can prevent a successful restoration as a precaution against malware changes. To force the process, reboot into Safe mode - press F8 just before the Windows splash screen appears - and choose System Restore from there. Run a full system scan using your antivirus program following a restore.

Changing preferences

If you're short of RAM to run your programs, limiting the amount of space devoted to restore points or deleting old ones can help. See Clearing out restore points, opposite. Note, however, that it's unwise to switch

off System Restore on your primary hard



drive, and that 10 percent of your drive

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Just as you can restore your PC to an earlier state, so you can undo the restoration process and jump forward again in time should the issue you hoped to resolve not be fixed. In the example **below**, we've undone the restoration of our Sample restore point.

Clearing out restore points

Occasionally deleting old System Restore points can be a good idea, but doing so also poses considerable risks. Should you decide tomorrow that you need to restore Windows to where it was the day before yesterday, you'll be out of luck.

you can't get to Wednesday's.

If System Restore is failing to restore your system, starting from scratch may be your best option. This way, you can at least It's also a good idea to delete old points after cleaning up a malware infection. Any

be sure that future restore points will work. restore points recorded during your PC's time of ill health will carry the infection.





You can't delete individual restore points because no single one is a self-contained whole. To save disk space, System Restore saves only the changes made since the previous restore point was created. If Windows creates a new restore point every day, and you tell it on Friday to restore back to Monday, it must successfully restore the points from Thursday, Wednesday and Tuesday before it can reach Monday's. If Thursday's Restore Point is corrupt,

To refresh System Restore in XP, click Start, Run, type sysdm.cpl and press Enter. Click the System Restore tab. Select 'Turn off System Restore' and click Apply, then Yes. Now re-enter this dialog box, deselect 'Turn off System Restore' and click Ok.

In Vista, click Start, type sysdm.cpl and press Enter. Choose the System Protection tab. Remove the ticks next to all the available disks and confirm you want to 'Turn System Restore Off'. Click Apply, then tick the box next to C: and click Apply again.

In Windows 7, click Start, type sysdm.cpl and press Enter. Choose the System Protection tab. Select your C: drive and click Configure. Select 'Turn off System Protection' and click Apply. After Windows finishes processing this command, select 'Restore system settings and previous versions of files' and click Ok. \boxtimes

ystem Restore	
Confirm Restoration Undo	O title
System Restore will undo the following restoration: 30 March 2010 13343 Restore Operation	If rolling back the PC to an earlier time doesn't solve your problem, undo that restoration
This process does not cause you to lose recent work, such as saved documents or e-mail, and is completely reversible.	
During the restoration, System Restore alkuls down Windows. After the restoration is complete, Windows restarts using the settings from the date and time listed above.	
Important: Before continuing, save your changes and clo	se any open programs.
System Restore may take a moment to collect information about th down your computer.	e selected restore point before shutting
To undo this restoration, dick Next.	< Back THert > Cancel
sertan Dartan	
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New restore point: 18 May 2010	
TO THE PARTY IS OF FOUR	Once you've created a new restore point, click Close
To perform another task, ddk Home.	Hous CRE