

Academic Computing Services

# Quick Study

◆ HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE RENSSELAER COMPUTING COMMUNITY ◆

---

Quick Study #10

March 2001

## Enabling File and Print Sharing in Windows 9x and ME

Most computer vendors ship their computers with file and print sharing disabled, but if you do decide to enable sharing, you may use the following steps to do so. (Important note: These steps assume a workgroup environment that does not depend on Internet naming conventions and resolution (DNS) to find a particular computer on the network. Name resolution relies solely on Microsoft methods, namely the Windows Internet Name Service (WINS) and broadcast.)

1. Open the **Start** menu and select the **Settings** option, select the **Control Panel** option, and then double-click the **Network** folder in the window that appears.
2. Click on the **File and Print Sharing...** button, and select either the file sharing and/or the print sharing option(s) in the File and Print Sharing window that appears, then click **OK**. (Please note that this step does *not* actually share any resources on your laptop; it simply loads and configures the necessary software to *allow* sharing.)
3. To share files, use the Windows Explorer to select the folder you wish to share. To do this, highlight the folder by left-clicking once on the folder, then right-clicking once and selecting the **Sharing...** option from the pull-down menu that appears.
4. Select the Shared As: radio button and provide a sharename in the **Share Name** field. (Note that this sharename does not have to be the same name as the folder being shared; this allows you to use a trailing dollar sign (\$), which will be explained later.) By default, "Read-Only" access is enabled as shown by the selected radio button.

IT IS IMPORTANT that you DO NOT select **Apply** or **OK** at this point. If you do this without supplying a password, the share will be open to everyone, since you haven't specified a required password.

5. Select **Read Only**, **Full**, or **Depends on Password**, and supply a password. The system will prompt you to confirm your password selection. Please note that the **Depends on Password** option allows you to share the folder with both Read-Only AND Full access; the type of access given is based on the password supplied.

Once you have enabled sharing, your machine will be known on the network by the workgroup and computer names previously specified. To find these, open the **Start menu**, select the **Settings** and **Control Panel** options, double-click on the **Network** icon in the window that appears, and then click on the **Identification** tab.

**Protecting Your Shares.** First and foremost, you need to protect all your shares by setting an actual password; if you leave the required password blank, any anonymous user can gain access to your files.

Second, take special care when providing full access to shares, for not only can users having such access alter or delete your files, they can also use all of your available disk space, since there is no way of restricting disk usage. As a result, we generally recommend that you do not give full access to shares using share level access. And when you *are* required to provide full access, it should be for a specific reason, and also for a short period of time, so as to reduce exposure.

You may also find it advantageous to make use of a sharing feature that allows hidden shares. To do this, use a dollar sign (\$) as the last character in the sharename when you name a share; doing this will prevent the share from being displayed when other users are browsing the network neighborhood. If another user wishes to access the share, he or she needs to explicitly map it using the “Map Network Drive” option by right-clicking on the My Computer icon on their desktop, selecting the **Map Network Drive...** option, and then providing the appropriate sharename in the path field, which has a format of `\\computername\sharename`. You *may* include the dollar sign as part of the sharename if you wish.

In conclusion, we’d like to stress that, while share level access has been available and used for years, you should take great care to ensure that you grant access *only* to your intended users.