

From the TechnoManor

Ever had one of those moments with your computer where you know things worked just fine...two days ago? The computer behaved smoothly until you installed that fix...or that program...or that driver...or that widget...or that...whatever.

And you wish you could turn the clock back two days and undo that “whatever.”

Well with Windows computers, you can.

There's a feature in Windows XP and Vista called *System Restore*. It allows you to restore the state of Windows to a prior point in time. When you use System Restore, programs, fixes, and drivers that were installed after that magic point in time, disappear. Windows is restored to the state just before those things were installed. It's as if nothing had happened.

Any data files you created, letters you wrote, email sent are all untouched by this feature.

A caution here: System Restore isn't a file backup utility. So, if you deleted a file, System Restore won't bring it back.

System Restore consists of two parts: creating restore points, and rolling back Windows to those restore points.

Restore points are created automatically (behind the scenes) every few days. They are also created when most new programs are installed. You can manually create restore points to protect yourself before you do something questionable, too.

Below, I'll list the steps to:

- Create a restore point
- Roll back Windows to a restore point.

Before we go there, let's think about this for a moment. Do you remember approximately when the “whatever” occurred? This is important. Fetch your calendar and jog your memory! This date and time is important because you want to locate a restore point at or before it. If you guess too soon, Windows will look (and behave) the same. If you go back too far, you may remove extra stuff.

So, when System Restore presents you with your choice of restore points, look carefully at the list. Match the available choices to the date and time that you can remember. Your choices will look like either of the following:

System Restore

Select a Restore Point

The following calendar displays in bold all of the dates that have restore points available. The list displays the restore points that are available for the selected date.

Possible types of restore points are: system checkpoints (scheduled restore points created by your computer), manual restore points (restore points created by you), and installation restore points (automatic restore points created when certain programs are installed).

Windows XP

1. On this calendar, click a bold date. 2. On this list, click a restore point.

September, 2008						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Saturday, September 20, 2008	
7:39:14 AM	Spybot-S&D Spyware removal
6:56:10 AM	System Checkpoint

1) Pick a date (Bold ones have restore points).

2) Pick a time

Make sure 1) and 2) are at or before the "whatever."

System Restore

Choose a restore point

System Restore will not change or delete any of your documents and the process is reversible.

Click the restore point that you want to use and then click Next. [How do I choose a restore point?](#)

Current time zone: Central Daylight Time

2) Pick the entry with the date and time at or before the "whatever."

Date and Time	Description
9/22/2008 1:13:03 PM	Manual: Test for Article
9/22/2008 1:05:07 PM	Install: Windows Update
9/12/2008 9:12:19 AM	Install: Windows Update
9/7/2008 7:04:31 PM	System: Scheduled Checkpoint
9/5/2008 11:01:41 AM	Install: Windows Update
8/31/2008 9:54:57 AM	Install: Windows Update
8/22/2008 4:06:21 PM	Install: Windows Vista Service Pack 1

Windows Vista

Show restore points older than 5 days

1) Check to see everything.

< Back Next > Cancel

Create a restore point

Follow these steps to create a restore point. You might do this if you're planning to install something and want to protect yourself.

In Windows XP:

- Click **Start**.
- Select (All) **Programs**.
- Select **Accessories**.
- Select **System Tools**.
- Click **System Restore**.

- Click **Create a restore point**.

- Click **Next**.

- Type a description in the Create a Restore Point dialog box, for example: **Before Odd Software**.
- Click **Create**.
- A short time passes

- Click **Close** when you see the Restore Point Created dialog box.

In Windows Vista:

- Click Start circle.
- Right click **Computer**.
- Select **Properties**.
- Click **System protection**.
- Click **Continue**, or enter an Administrator password, if a User Access Control dialog appears, telling you that Windows Need Your Permission to Continue.
- Click **Create** to create a new restore point.
- Type a description in the Create a Restore Point dialog box, for example: **Before Odd Software**.
- Click **Create**.

- A short time passes
- Click **OK** when you see the dialog box: "The restore point was created successfully."
- Click **OK** to close System Properties.
- Click **X** to close the page.

Roll back Windows to a restore point.

Follow these steps if you want to roll back Windows to a prior point in time. Doing this will remove programs, fixes, and other internal stuff installed after that point in time.

In Windows XP:

- Click **Start**.
- Select (All) **Programs**.
- Select **Accessories**.
- Select **System Tools**.
- Click **System Restore**.

In Windows Vista:

- Click Start circle.
- Right click **Computer**.
- Select **Properties**.
- Click **System protection**.
- Click **Continue**, or enter an Administrator password, if a User Access Control dialog appears,

- Click **Restore my computer to an earlier time**.
 - Click **Next**.
 - Select a restore point. Choose one with a date and time before the point when you think the problem began.
 - Click **Next**.
 - Save any files you're working on and close all open programs.
 - Click **Next**.
 - System Restore begins. It will run for a few minutes. During this time, you will be logged off Windows. You will see messages related to System Restore.
 - Windows restarts.
 - When you see the welcome screen, you can use the computer.
 - Logon to Windows.
 - Click **OK** to the Restoration Complete dialog box.
 - Use the computer as before. It has been restored to the point before your problem began or undesired program installed.
- telling you that Windows Need Your Permission to Continue.
- Click **System Restore**.
 - Click **Choose a different restore point**.
 - Click **Next**.
 - Click **show restore points older than 5 days** (near bottom). This allows you to see all the available restore points.
 - Select a restore point. Choose one with a date and time before the point when you think the problem began.
 - Click **Next**.
 - Save any files you're working on and close all open programs.
 - Click **Finish**.
 - Click **Yes**.
 - System Restore begins. It will run for about a minute or so. During this time, you will be logged off Windows. You will see messages related to System Restore.
 - Windows restarts.
 - When you see the logon screen, you can use the computer.
 - Logon to Windows.
 - Click **Close** to the System Restore completed successfully dialog box.
 - Use the computer as before. It has been restored to the point before your problem began or undesired program installed.

I use System Restore about once every six months. I typically use it to remove some new driver I'm testing (or has gone "wonky" on me). It's also a useful tool in my toolbox to help fix slow computers. See my last two *From the TechnoManor* columns for more about fixing slow computers. You would use System Restore if you can remember when a "bad citizen" program snuck in.

A note to my Mac readers: As far as I can tell, there is no equivalent to System Restore in Mac OS X. Time Machine allows you to restore files, but doesn't appear to give you the ability to roll back the state of OS X to a specific point in the past.

That wraps it up for this week. I'll be shaking my Inbox to clean out the cobwebs, hoping someone will send a question to:

frenchygrey@gmail.com

If I find something, I'll answer it in *The Link*. Otherwise, I'll have to make something up. Hmm, I wonder what that should be...

Dave Gillen