

Knowledge Base

## Cannot Move or Rename the Documents and Settings Folder

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The information in this article applies to:

- Microsoft Windows Server 2003, Standard Edition
  - Microsoft Windows Server 2003, Datacenter Edition
  - Microsoft Windows Server 2003, Enterprise Edition
  - Microsoft Windows 2000 Server
  - Microsoft Windows 2000 Advanced Server
  - Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional
  - Microsoft Windows 2000 Datacenter Server
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**IMPORTANT:** This article contains information about modifying the registry. Before you modify the registry, make sure to back it up and make sure that you understand how to restore the registry if a problem occurs. For information about how to back up, restore, and edit the registry, click the following article number to view the article in the Microsoft Knowledge Base:

[256986](#) Description of the Microsoft Windows Registry

### SYMPTOMS

If you try to move or rename the "Documents and Settings" folder in Windows, you receive the following error message: "Documents and Settings is a Windows system folder and is required for Windows to run properly. It cannot be moved or renamed."

### CAUSE

This behavior is by design.

### RESOLUTION

To specify a different folder for the "Documents and Settings" folder during installation, follow these steps:

1. Use the /UNATTEND switch with Winnt.exe or Winnt32.exe and insert the following entry into the Unattend.txt file, where *z:\foldername* is the path and folder name you want:

```
[GuiUNattended]
ProfilesDir = z:\foldername
```

2. Install Windows. The path you included in the Unattend.txt file is used instead of the default "Documents and Settings" folder.

For additional information about unattended setup of Windows 2000, click the article number below to view the article in the Microsoft Knowledge Base:

[183245](#) Windows 2000 Unattended Setup Parameters

### MORE INFORMATION

**NOTE:** The following section provides information about a configuration that Microsoft does not support. We provide this information for informational purposes only; Microsoft makes no guarantee that this configuration functions properly.

**WARNING:** Microsoft strongly recommends against renaming any system folder. Catastrophic system failure or an unstable computer could result if you rename system folders. If implemented, a backup should be made of the system before attempting this procedure.

To rename or move the "Documents and Settings" folder, use the appropriate method.

#### User-specific

**WARNING:** If you use Registry Editor incorrectly, you may cause serious problems that may require you to reinstall your operating system. Microsoft cannot guarantee that you can solve problems that result from using Registry Editor incorrectly. Use Registry Editor at your own risk.

**NOTE:** This method does not relocate key Windows components. Use this method if you require only user-specific data to be moved.

To specify a different folder for the "Documents and Settings" folder after you install Windows for a particular user, follow these steps:

1. Identify the user's profile path. There are two methods to identify the profile path. Either by user path settings or user SID. The user SID method is preferred.
  - o User SID method
    - a. Use the GETSID tool from the Windows Server Resource Kit to obtain the SID. Use syntax similar to the following example:  
GETSID \\SERVER1 UserName \\SERVER1 UserName
    - b. Once you obtain the SID, use Regedit.exe or Regedt32.exe to select the user's SID under the following registry key:  
HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\ProfileList
  - o User path setting
    - a. Log on to the computer as the user, and then type SET at a command prompt. Note the setting for USERPROFILE, and then close the command prompt window.
    - b. Log on as an administrator of the computer.
    - c. Use Registry Editor to add the USERPROFILE setting to the following registry key:  
HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\ProfileList
    - d. Click the registry key, and then click **Find** on the **Edit** menu.
    - e. In the **Find** box, type the value of the USERPROFILE setting, and then click **Find Next**.

2. Change the ProfileImagePath value to use the new path you want in the HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\ProfileList registry key.
3. Close Registry Editor, and then log on as the user. Type SET at the command prompt to verify the path has changed.

**Entire Folder**

**NOTE:** This method relocates key Windows components. Use this method only if you require the "Documents and Settings" folder to be moved or renamed and you cannot use the Unattend.txt file to change the name during installation.

To specify a different folder for the entire "Documents and Settings" folder, including key system components, follow these steps:

1. Log on to the computer as an administrator.
2. Create a new folder.
3. Open the current "Documents and Settings" folder.
4. On the **Tools** menu, click **Folder Options**, and then click the **View** tab.
5. Under **Advanced settings** click **Show hidden files and folders**, and then click to clear the **Hide file extensions for known file types** and **Hide protected operating system files** check boxes.
6. Click **OK**.
7. Click and drag to copy all the folders to the new folder, except for the currently logged on users folder.
8. In Control Panel, double-click **System**, and then click the **User Profiles** tab.
9. Copy the current user's profile to the new folder.
10. Click **OK**, close Control Panel, and then log off and log on to the computer as an administrator again.
11. In Registry Editor, click **Find** on the **Edit** menu.
12. Type `documents and settings`, and then click **Find**.
13. Replace the value data or rename the value or registry key to the new path for each and every registry key and value that contains the original path. **NOTE:** You must complete this change for every instance in the registry or your computer may not start. It is imperative that you update all registry keys and values with the new path.
14. Restart the computer.
15. You can now safely remove the original "Documents and Settings" folder.

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