Knowledge Base

HOW TO: How to Modify the Default Group Policy Refresh Interval

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The information in this article applies to:

- 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

SUMMARY

This article describes how to modify the default group policy refresh interval. **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.
A group policy is applied when you start a computer and when a user logs on to Windows 2000. After a group policy is applied, Windows 2000 determines which group policy should be applied the next time a user logs on. By querying specific registry values, an administrator can specify whether a group policy should be refreshed in the background, and if so, at what intervals.

The interval at which a group policy is refreshed is defined by a refresh interval value and an offset interval value. The refresh interval is an amount of time between 0 (zero) and 64800 minutes (45 days), which is used to determine when the group policy should be applied next. By default, if the administrator does not modify the default setting, Windows 2000-based computers use 90-minute intervals. For domain controllers, the default is 5 minutes. This default for domain controllers is used because when a change to domain policy or rights is made, this reduces the latency in applying the change to domain controllers as replication occurs. If 0 (zero) is specified for the refresh interval, the refresh occurs in 7-second intervals.

To avoid the performance degradation that can occur if many Windows 2000-based computers request a group policy refresh from domain controllers at one time, a random offset interval is added to the refresh interval to determine the total amount of time between group policy application cycles. The valid range for the offset interval can be 0 (zero) to 1,440 minutes (24 hours). The default for Windows 2000-based computers is 30 minutes, while the default for domain controllers is 0 (zero) minutes.

The interval at which the background refresh of a group policy occurs for the computer and the user are maintained separately. The administrator has the option of modifying these default values or disabling the ability to refresh a group policy in the background.

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Modifying the Refresh and Offset Intervals on a Specific Computer

1. Log on to the Windows 2000-based computer as an administrator.
2. Click **Start**, point to **Settings**, and then click **Control Panel**.
3. Double-click **Administrative Tools**.
4. Double-click **Computer Management**.
5. Double-click **System Tools**, double-click **Group Policy**, double-click **Computer Configuration**, and then double-click **Administrative Templates**.
6. Double-click **System**, and then double-click **Group Policy** to display the group policy behavior policies.
7. Depending on the type of computer from which you making this change, double-click **Group Policy refresh interval for computers** to make this change for workstations or member servers, or double-click **Group Policy refresh interval for domain controllers**.
8. Click to select the **Group Policy refresh interval for computers** check box so that you are able to modify the refresh and offset intervals settings on the Policy tab. Optionally, the administrator can click to select the **Disable background refresh of group policy** check box in the **Disable background refresh of group policy** behavior policy.
9. Click **OK**, and then quit the Computer Management snap-in.

NOTE: These changes may be overridden by a policy set up by an administrator in Group Policy Objects (GPO) in Active Directory.

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Changing the Behavior By Modifying the Registry

Use Registry Editor to make one or more of the following modifications:

- To change the refresh interval for computers:
  Registry key: HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\ System

Name: GroupPolicyRefreshTime
Type: REG_DWORD
Valid range for data (in minutes): 0 to 64800

- To change the offset interval for computers:
Registry key: HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\ System
Name: GroupPolicyRefreshTimeOffset
Type: REG_DWORD
Valid range for data (in minutes): 0 to 1440

- To change the refresh interval for domain controllers:
Registry key: HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\ System
Name: GroupPolicyRefreshTimeDC
Type: REG_DWORD
Valid range for data (in minutes): 0 to 64800

- To change the offset interval for domain controllers:
Registry key: HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\ System
Name: GroupPolicyRefreshTimeOffsetDC
Type: REG_DWORD
Valid range for data (in minutes): 0 to 1440

- To change the refresh interval for users:
Registry key: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\ System
Name: GroupPolicyRefreshTime
Type: REG_DWORD
Valid range for data (in minutes): 0 to 64800

- To change the offset interval for users:
Registry key: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\ System
Name: GroupPolicyRefreshTimeOffset
Type: REG_DWORD
Valid range for data (in minutes): 0 to 1440

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Using a Group Policy Object (GPO) to Change the Behavior of Multiple Computers

1. Log on to the Windows 2000-based computer as an administrator.
2. Click **Start**, point to **Settings**, and then click **Control Panel**.
3. Double-click **Administrative Tools**.
4. Double-click **Directory Management** to modify this at the domain or organizational unit levels, or double-click **Active Directory Sites** and **Services Manager** to modify this at a site level.
5. Edit the GPO on the container where the GPO resides.
6. Double-click **Computer Configuration**, double-click **Administrative Templates**, double-click **System**, and then double-click **Group Policy** to display the group policy behavior policies.
7. The **Group Policy refresh interval for computers** and the **Group Policy refresh interval for domain controllers** policies exists for modifying the intervals for Windows 2000-based computers and domain controllers. When a group policy is applied, the appropriate settings are used for the type of computer on which the policy is being applied.
8. Double-click the appropriate policy
9. Click to select the **Group Policy refresh interval for computers** check box so that you are able to modify the refresh and offset intervals settings on the Policy tab. Optionally, the administrator can click to select the **Disable background refresh of group policy** check box in the **Disable background refresh of group policy** behavior policy.
10. Click **OK**, and then quit the Group Policy Editor snap-in.

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