

Playing with Your Win95 Interface

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When I became editor of FoxTalk, I had to give up my monthly Cool Tool column. Another instance of trying to fit six gallons of paint into a five-gallon pail, I guess. But it's always been something I've wanted to continue, either myself, or with a new columnist. Now that we're able to overflow articles into electronic versions, it's time to get the Cool Tool going again.

This month, I'm going to kick things off with a number of fun little utilities. A couple of these have shown up on my desk via friends; and a bunch of others are available through the Windows95 Annoyances home page.

First on my list are the Windows95 Powertoys. Written by Microsoft employees in their spare time, these aren't officially supported by Microsoft, but I've found several to be invaluable. A hint: Read the documentation on installing these guys – the process isn't standard. **powertoy.zip**

Second is WinEyes. Running this little utility displays a pair of oval eyeballs in the corner of your screen, and the eyes themselves follow the mouse pointer around the screen. Whimsical? Yes. Silly? Yes. Useless? Probably. But, to quote Ferris Bueller, so is high school. **weye20e.exe**

The next is TopCat. Similar to WinEyes, TopCat follows the mouse around the screen. However, the mechanism that does the following is an outline of a fat little cat, much like the Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland. The cat will chase the mouse (get it? <g>) all over the screen, and once the mouse is caught, well, you'll see. The best use of this tool is to find a co-worker who is a cat lover (or, alternatively, a cat-hater <g>) and place the EXE in their Startup program group. The next time Windows is started, TopCat will automatically run, but the unsuspecting user won't see that it's installed until they move their mouse. I suggest you do this the day before you leave on a two-week vacation. I did this to a friend's home computer and about three weeks later, they finally said to me, "You see that thing? It just showed up one day and I have no idea what happened, or how to get rid of it." **topcat.exe**

Out of the zillions of utilities that can be found at the Windows95 Annoyances home page, I like HideIt the best. You know how you can end up with eight or ten or fifteen icons in the task bar if you're running a lot of programs? And while the Win95 interface is a lot better than 3.1 at handling these through the task bar, it can still be a pain. Hide-It allows you to remove (well, actually, "hide") running applications from both the Task Bar and the Alt-Tab task switcher window. (You can get them back at any time by right-clicking on the Hide-It icon in the Task Bar tray.) You can also remove all of the desk top icons, which can be very disconcerting to another user (but you won't get any ideas, now, will you?), and also very handy if you're using one of those applications that has a "see-through" IDE. **hideit.zip**

If you've got a favorite utility that you can't live without, let me know (whil@hentzenwerke.com), and I'll mention it in a future column.