

[PC Club: Fixing broken desktop shortcuts](#)

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Stump the PC Club

Welcome to the revamped **Stump the PC Club**. We've redesigned the logo based on today's question and have created a [special page](#) just for PC Club fans (available at gadgetress.freedomblogging.com/pcclub.) Please check out the new page and the [archive](#). Enjoy!

And as with every column... the **North Orange County Computer Club** helps [The Gadgetress](#) tackle the multitude of readers' cries for help. NOCCC group has experts in Windows, Word and all sorts of computer topics. The club, which meets monthly on various topics, has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at noccc.org. To get this answer delivered to your computer automatically, sign up for [the e-mail update HERE](#).

QUESTION: Suddenly, some of my desktop shortcuts do not work. We are using Windows XP Pro. Some of these shortcuts are answers.com, ask.com and about.com. Clicking the shortcut brings up a dialog box asking to choose a program to open the file. None of the options work. How does one find the file? ~Henry



Stump the PC Club **PC Club:** Desktops can be the home for various items including shortcuts, actual files or even folders. Usually, shortcuts have a tiny black arrow in a white background in the lower-left corner of the icon. Also, your Desktop can be set up to respond to single or double clicks on these icons to open an item. You can change this option by opening My Computer, selecting Tools and then Folder Options. With the General tab selected you can elect to use single or double clicks to open the item.

If any icons are white in color, this is a clue that the shortcut points to a non-existent item. If the icon is white in color with 3 dots in the center, this is a clue that the icon points to a file type that Windows doesn't understand. Both of these types of icons are referred to as Broken or Orphaned shortcuts.

There can also be icons on your Desktop that are shortcuts but they do not have arrows. These are special Windows XP icons such as My Computer, My Documents, etc. and should not be deleted. They can be turned on or off, however, by right-clicking your Desktop and selecting Properties. With the Desktop tab selected, click the Customize Desktop button to choose which icons to display.

In summary, your Desktop can contain Windows built-in shortcuts, file or folder shortcuts, web address shortcuts, program shortcuts and even broken shortcuts.



Now, back to your problem. For shortcuts that are broken, the easiest fix is to delete them and then recreate them. To delete any shortcut, you can right-click it with your mouse and choose Delete.

Sometimes people store actual files or folders on their Desktop; these will not have the little arrows on them. These should not be deleted unless you have another copy of the file or folder tucked away in a safe place.



To recreate these shortcuts to Web sites such as “ask.com” here are several methods:

1. Open your browser and enter a Web address such as www.ask.com into the address bar and hit the Enter key.
2. Next, select all of the text in the address bar. You can tell that it is selected if it all turns blue in color.
3. Right click the selected text in the address bar and click Copy with the left mouse button.
4. Minimize the browser window so you can see your Desktop.
5. Right click your Desktop and select New Shortcut with your left mouse button.
6. When the New Shortcut wizard opens, right click in the empty text box and select Paste.
7. Click Next and replace the text in the box with your own name such as Ask Site.
8. Click Finish.

Another way to create a shortcut to a web address is as follows:

1. Open your browser and go to the site

2. Bookmark the site by clicking Favorites, Add to Favorites.
3. Click the Favorites menu in your browser and look for the recently created Favorite
4. Right-click it and select Send To and choose the Desktop. The Favorite will remain where it was in the browser Favorites but it will also be on the Desktop.

You now have created a new shortcut on your Desktop to a Web site.

After tidying up your Desktop you may want to arrange your icons in an orderly fashion. To do this, right-click the Desktop and you will see the Arrange Icons By menu item. I usually use By Type but there are several other options that you can try. – *Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member and PC Instructor. View his blog at edwardns.blogspot.com.*