

COM Explorer 1.0

[Overview](#)

[Exploring COM Files](#)

[Common Operations](#)

[ActiveX Controls / DLL Servers](#)

[EXE Servers \(Out-Proc Servers\)](#)

[Working from Windows Explorer](#)

[Registry Editing](#)

[Customizing COM Explorer](#)

[Generating Reports](#)

[COM Explorer Support](#)

[Order Information](#)

COM Explorer Overview

COM Explorer is a unique tool specifically designed to help developers and system administrators to explore, manage and fix ActiveX Controls, EXE Servers (Out-Proc) and DLL Servers (In-Proc). An Explorer like GUI allows developers to browse registered COM objects and view information such as CLSID, TypeLib, Version information, File information and more.

Misbehaved objects such as objects with missing files left as junk in the registry are clearly marked.

A Registry editor is fully integrated allowing to view and edit COM settings. COM Explorer is integrated into Windows Explorer enabling to quickly register, unregister and view COM Controls using a pop-up menu.

One of the most powerful features is an inventory report generator. HTML or comma delimited text reports are easily generated. These reports include a list of the COM objects installed. Strong filtering and customization capabilities are provided as well.

COM Explorer substantially reduces the complexity of identifying COM related problems developers and system administrators face every day.

To start using COM Explorer see the "[Exploring COM Files](#)" section.

Exploring COM Files

COM Explorer has an explorer like GUI. On the left side a tree view displays a list of COM objects (Object View). These objects belong to one of the following categories:

- ActiveX Controls
- DLL Servers (also called In-Proc Servers)
- EXE Servers (also called Out-Proc Servers)

On top of the Object View there is a tab strip which allows selection of one of the above object types. Selecting an object type will refresh the tree with the list of COM objects belonging to that category. Objects are always sorted alphabetically. By default the “ProgID” attribute of each object is displayed in the tree. You can change that by going into the “COM Explorer Option” dialog. Misbehaved objects (objects with missing files) are marked using a special icon.

When an object is selected in the tree its attributes are displayed in a list located to the right. This list is called the “Object Information View”. It contains attributes of the object itself, the file that contains it and the version information stored in the file. Each attribute type is marked with a different icon. Attributes include CLSID, TypeLib, ProgID, Version and many other. Below the “Object Information View” is a small registry editor which displays the registry settings for the selected object. (See “Registry Editing” for details).

A Toolbar, Menu and pop-up menu are provided to control both the objects in the “Object View” and the “Object Information View”. A Status bar provides information about the number of objects viewed and the state of some of the keys (NUM Lock, etc.)

For a detailed description of the common operations supported by COM Explorer see the “Common Operations” section.

Common Operations

Registering a Control/DLL Server

Unregistering a Control/DLL Server

Removing an object from the registry

Comparing between two COM files

Browsing to a file location

Copying values to the clipboard

Registering a Control/DLL Server

To register a new OCX or DLL file press the “Register Control/DLL” button located on the Toolbar or choose the “File\Register Control/DLL” menu item. This will open a dialog box allowing you to select the control to be registered. The file should be a COM related file (OCX, DLL server etc.). After selecting the file hit OK. A confirmation message should appear informing you if the operation was successful or not. COM Explorer also provides a quick way to register ActiveX Controls and DLL Servers. In Windows Explorer double click an OCX or DLL file. This will instantly register that control. You can also select an OCX or DLL file and then click the right mouse button. A pop-up menu allows you to register, unregister, view and compare the control (See “Working from Windows Explorer”)

Unregistering a Control/DLL Server

To unregister an OCX or DLL file select the control in the “Object View” (The tree view that displays the list of objects) and press the “Unregister Control/DLL” button located on the top toolbar. You can also select the “Edit\Unregister Control/DLL” menu item to perform the same operation. After unregistering the Control/DLL a dialog box will pop-up asking you if you wish to keep the file on disk or to delete it. COM Explorer also provides a quick way to unregister ActiveX Controls and DLL Servers. In Windows Explorer select an OCX or DLL file and then click the right mouse button. A pop-up menu allows you to unregister the control (See “Working from Windows Explorer”)

Removing an object from the registry

COM Explorer marks misbehaved objects with a special icon. These objects are found in the system registry but point to a file which no longer exists on the file system. To remove such an object from the registry you need to select it and then click the “Remove from Registry” button in the toolbar. You can also perform the same operation using the “Edit\Remove from Registry” menu item. COM Explorer enables you to remove well behaved objects too. This is not recommended as it is better to unregister them instead.

Comparing between two COM files.

One common problem developers or system administrators encounter is DLL/OCX mismatch. COM Explorer provides a way to compare between two OCX, DLL or EXE files and quickly see if there is a version mismatch. To compare between two COM files select a COM object in the "Object View" and press the "Compare" button in the top toolbar. You can also perform the same operation using the "Edit\Comapre With..." menu item. A dialog box will open prompting you for a second file. Using the browse button select COM file. After selecting the second file COM Explorer will list the different attributes of both files and mark which ones are different and which are identical. COM Explorer also provides a quick way to compare COM files from Windows Explorer. In Windows Explorer select an OCX or DLL file and then click the right mouse button. A pop-up menu allows you to "Compare With..." another COM file (See "Working from Windows Explorer")

Browsing to a file location

When you select a COM object in the “Object View” (Tree view with list of objects) it is possible to launch Windows Explorer to go to the directory where this COM file is located. This feature allows fast access to file system resources. To browse to the directory where the COM file is located click the “Goto File Location” in the top toolbar. You can also perform the same operation using the “Edit\Goto File Location” menu item.

Copying values to the Clipboard

COM Explorer allows you to copy values displayed in the “Object Information View” and the “Registry View” to the system Clipboard. To copy a value select it from the list and click the right mouse button. A pop-up menu will appear allowing you to copy the value into the Clipboard. This feature is useful when you want to copy a CLSID, TypeLib or any other information into your source code, registry file etc.

ActiveX Controls / DLL Servers

COM Explorer displays ActiveX Controls, DLL Servers and EXE Servers into three separate lists. Most of the operations that can be performed on an ActiveX Control can also be performed on a DLL Server. These operations include register, unregister, remove from registry and others (See [“Common Operations”](#) for details). There is one operation that can be performed only on ActiveX Controls and that is “View in Internet Explorer”. This operation launches Internet Explorer to display an HTML page that contains the selected ActiveX Control. This feature is useful if you want to see how an ActiveX Control looks on a web page. You can later save this HTML page and use it as a starting point for a Intranet/Internet based application.

When a Control/DLL is selected all its attributes are displayed on the right side in the “Object Information View”. Important attributes are: CLSID, TypeLib, ProgID, File Path, File version etc. It is possible to copy to the Clipboard each one of the attribute values using a pop-up menu. Below the “Object Information View” is a “Registry View” which displays the main registry keys belonging to the selected COM object. The “Registry View” allows for simple editing of string value (REG_SZ). You can edit values by double clicking them or use a pop-up menu. You can also copy registry values to the Clipboard.

To refresh the list of COM objects click the “Refresh” button, select it from the “Edit” menu or simply hit the F5 key.

EXE Servers

COM Explorer displays EXE Servers much in the same way as it displays ActiveX Controls & DLL Servers. (See "[ActiveX Controls & DLL Servers](#)"). There are some operations that can not be performed on an EXE Server like: "View in IE" or "Unregister" (The -regserver convention for registering and unregistering servers is not standard practice). EXE Server can also be launched by clicking the "Run EXE Server" button in the toolbar or then "Edit\Run EXE Server" menu item. In the "Registry View" and additional "ApplID" key is displayed if it exists for the selected server.

Working from Windows Explorer

COM Explorer is integrated into Windows Explorer allowing the user to perform common operations from the file system saving time (REGSVR32 is not the fastest tool around). These operations include:

- Register Control/DLL
- Unregister Control/DLL
- View Details of Control/DLL
- Compare two Controls/DLLs

All operations are performed using a pop-up menu which is displayed using the right mouse button. For a full description of each of the above operations see the "[Common Operations](#)" section.

Registry Editing

A small registry editor is provided to display and edit the registry settings of each selected COM object. This simplifies any access to the registry as you don't need to search for the proper entry in REGEDIT anymore. As soon as an object is selected in the "Object View" its registry settings are displayed and can be modified. The "Registry View" looks the same as the REGEDIT tool and provides viewing, editing of string values (REG_SZ) and copying to clipboard capabilities. These operations are performed using a pop-up menu (right click a value to activate).

Customizing COM Explorer

To customize COM Explorer click the “Options” button located on the top toolbar. This will pop-up a dialog which allows the user to determine what COM Explorer displays and how. The user can specify which types of COM objects are displayed in the “Object View” (Misbehaved Objects vs. Well behaved). In addition it is possible to specify which attribute is going to be used in the “Object View”. There are four attributes to choose from:

- ProgID (Default)
- CLSID
- File Location
- TypeLib Name

This can be helpful if you want for example to locate a specific COM file (You switch the displayed attribute to “File Location” and can quickly identify the file).

Changing which types of objects are displayed can be a great help when trying to locate misbehaved OCX or DLLs. By switching of well behaved objects you are left with only the misbehaved ones.

Generating Reports

COM Explorer allows the user to generate reports that list the inventory of COM files on a specific machine. These reports are fully customizable and can include any number of object attributes. It is also possible to filter out misbehaved or well behaved object much in the same way as the "Option" dialog provides.

Two report formats are supported:

HTML Report - Use this type of report if you want to print a nice looking inventory report. The report is displayed by your default web browser.

Text (Comma delimited) Report - Use this type of report if you want to later process it using some database tool. The report is displayed by your default text editor (Notepad by default).

COM Explorer Support

Customer Support : support@4developers.com

e-mail our customer support people any time with technical questions, bug reports or any other question or suggestion you have.

Visit us on the web at: <http://www.4developers.com/com>
for FAQ and further technical support.

Order COM Explorer

COM Explorer can be registered in the following ways:

1. Online Registration (via the Web)
2. Registration by Phone or Fax
3. Registration via Mail

To register online or by Phone/FAX visit:

<http://www.4developers.com/com/register.htm>

Questions about pricing, licenses or any other sales related information should be directed to:
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