

Desktop Launcher V2.0

A flexible application launcher for Microsoft Windows

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General purpose and features of the program

Desktop Launcher is (as the name suggests) a program to launch files. In the current version it is not intended to be the shell though. This might be an option in future versions.

There are quite a few similar programs already available but Desktop Launcher has some additional features you might have been missing at other programs.

The most important features of Desktop Launcher are:

- A double-click at a Launcher icon starts the attached application.
- Single Launcher icons can be placed and moved anywhere at the screen or be grouped in a "Launcher window"
- You can have a Launcher window and single Launcher icons at the same time.
- You can drag and drop applications from the file manager to create a new Launcher icon.
- You can drag and drop files from the file manager onto a Launcher icon to start the attached application and load the dropped file, regardless of the file extension.
- Sophisticated hide/show window feature to substitute the minimize function.
- Built in resource monitor for free memory, free disk space and free system resources.
- Built in digital and analog clock and date.
- Advanced task manager

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Software requirements

In order to use Desktop Launchers drag and drop features you need Microsoft Windows 3.1 (or higher).

The file BWCC.DLL must be in your \windows\system directory. This is a file needed by programs that use the Borland Custom Controls. If you don't have it, you can probably get a copy from the same place you got Desktop Launcher.

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The Task Manager




the task manager

Click on each field of the box to get a description.

Notes

You can access Desktop Launcher's Task Manager launching the desk.exe program, so you can install an icon associated to desk.exe to access the task manager (a desktop

icon is included )

You can install Desktop Launcher's Task Manager as the Windows default task manager. To do that you add the following line (or edit if exist) to your system.ini file, [boot] section:

taskman.exe=c:\desk_path\desk.exe

changing c:\desk_path for the drive and path where you has desktop launcher.

You must restart Windows to this changes take effect.

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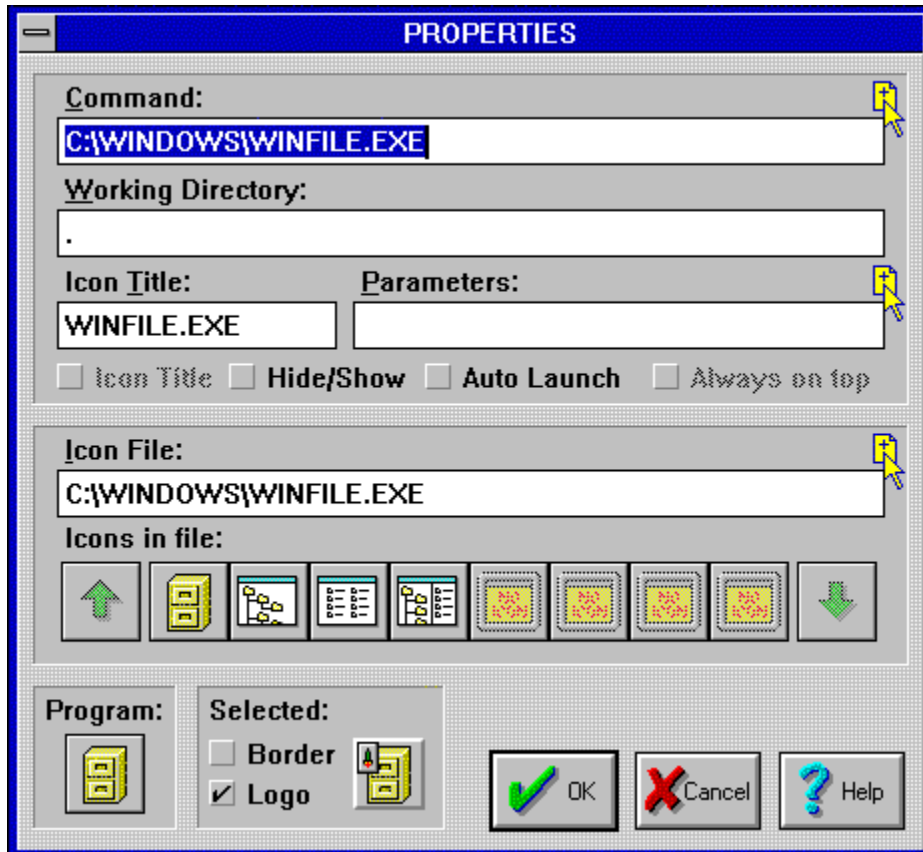
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The PROPERTIES dialog box

With this dialog box we can set all the data to run a program.



the properties dialog box

Click on each field of the box to get a description.

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Creating a new Launcher icon

You simply create a new Launcher icon by dragging the respective application from the file manager to some place inside the Launcher window.



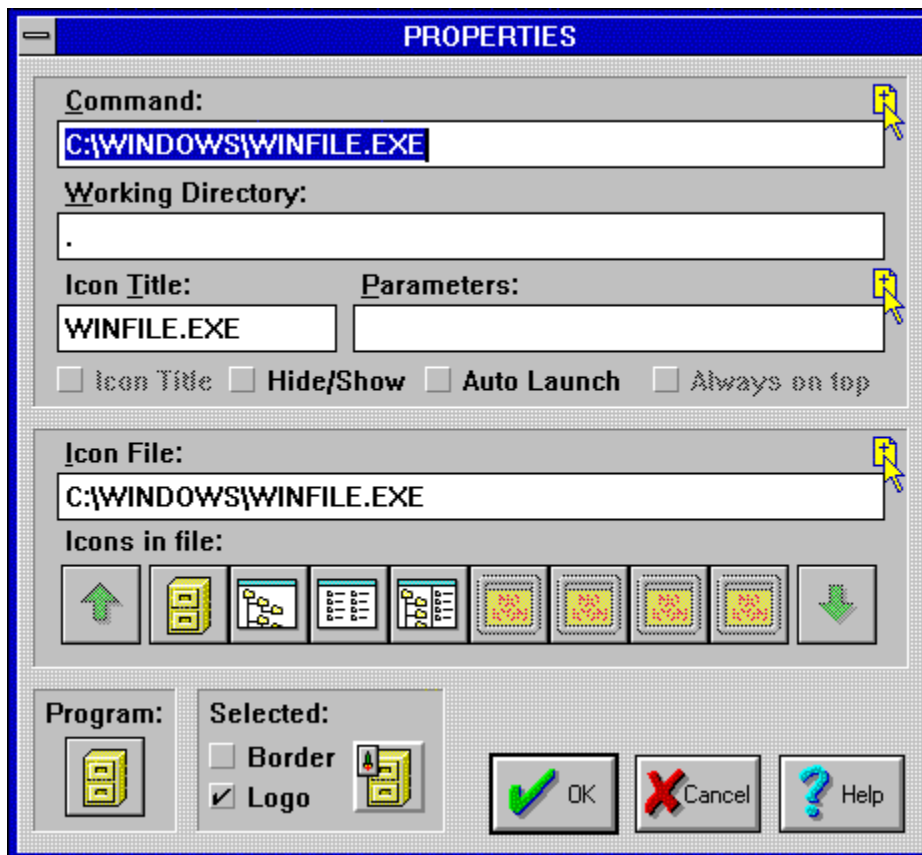
the Launcher window with the Desktop Launcher icon

Note that if you drag the application into the Launcher icon you create a "single icon" outside the Launcher window.

Let's suppose you have dragged and dropped the file "winfile.exe" (the file manager itself) into the Desktop Launcher window. This serves only as example. Of course it works with any other program as well.

A dialog box will then pop up:

The properties dialog box



the properties dialog box

Click on each field of the box to get a description.

Desktop Launcher is able to fill in most properties itself, but you are of course able to change them to fit your needs.

File name of the application

Desktop Launcher recognized that the dropped file was C:\WINDOWS\WINFILE.EXE which is the name and path of the file manager at my system.

If you want to enter a different name and path you can enter it in the respective field or you can drag and drop it from the file manager.

Assigning a working directory

You can assign a working directory for the application, which is the default directory which will appear when you load a file from the launched application. The default value is "." which means "no working directory selected".

Entering an icon title

You can enter an icon title for the Launcher icon. The respective option box is grey, which means you cannot select it now. We will therefore talk about this option later. You can forget about it now.

The parameter field

You can assign parameters to the application. For instance if you start WinWord with the parameter "/N" it will start without an empty file already open. The parameter field is the place for such additional parameters.

The hide/show option

The hide/show option is one of Desktop Launchers greatest "goodies". If you check this option you will be able not only to launch an application but also to hide the window of this application if you double-click at the icon a second time.

The idea of this option is this: If you launch an application with an icon oriented Launcher (like Desktop Launcher) and then minimize the application in order to get more screen space for other applications you end up with two icons: One icon of the launching program and one "minimize icon". This unnecessarily clutters your screen.

Instead of minimizing a program you want to get out of the way temporarily (without exiting it) you double-click again at the launch icon of this application. The window of the application will vanish but instead of a "minimize icon" that tells you that the application is minimized but still running, the shape of the launching icon changes.

A small blue triangle in the upper left corner of the icon tells you that file manager is running but invisible



a "normal" launching icon for the file manager



a launching icon with the file manager "hidden"

If you want to access an application you have hidden, you simply double-click its icon again. The windows will be visible again and the launching icon will look "normal" again.

Please note that Desktop Launcher can only hide and show programs that have been launched by it. If you launch a program any other way, Desktop Launcher will not be able to provide this feature.

Keeping the icon on top

This option is also not available now. It will be discussed below.

Selecting an icon

You don't need to use the default icon of the application. Desktop Launcher though assumes you want to. If you want to change the icon you can select one (if there are others) or you can choose a entirely different file and select one of its icons.

Border and Logo

With these two options you can select a border to be drawn around the icon and a small logo to be added to the icon.



launching icon without logo

The latter feature is intended to be an aid to distinguish between Launcher Icons and Windows "minimize icons" in case you don't use the hide/show feature.



launching icon with logo

Changing properties of an icon

You can change all properties you once have set by clicking once at the icon. A menu for this icon will pop up. If you choose "Properties", the properties box will pop up again.

Moving the icon inside the Launcher window

After you have set the properties of the Launcher window you can drag and drop the Launcher icon anywhere inside the window.

You can resize the Launcher window like any other application by pointing at the frame and drag while pressing the left mouse button.

If you have dragged and dropped a file from file manager into the Launcher window and have set the properties but then cannot see the new launching icon it might be that the Launcher window was already "full" and your new icon has been moved to a place that is currently not visible. It is not "lost" though. You can look for it by resizing the Launcher window.

As you can resize the Launcher window you can use it as a NeXT-like application pad with a vertical row of icons at the left or right side of the screen, but you can size the Launcher window to any other rectangular size.

The advantage of the Launcher window compared to the option of having single icons (as will be described below) is that you can move the whole window with all its icons with a single drag to the place you like.

Moving the icon outside the Launcher window to become a "single icon".

You don't have to keep all you launching icons inside the Launcher window. If you drag a launching icon outside the window it will become a "single icon". You can place this single icon at any place on the screen you like. If you move it back into the Launcher window it becomes part of the window again.

If you have dragged and dropped a "single icon" into the Launcher window but then cannot see the new launching icon it might be that the Launcher window was already "full" and your new icon has been moved to a place that is currently not visible. It is not "lost" though. You can look for it by resizing the Launcher window.

The advantage of dragging icons outside the window to become single icons is mainly that you are not restricted to assemble the icons in a rectangular way. In addition to this you can attach an icon title to a single icon.

When you decide to have a single icon, you have several additional options. You can access them by clicking once at a single icon.

Properties

If you choose "properties" the properties box pops up. Now the items "icon title" and "always on top" are accessible. They only work with single icons. You can change all other entries as well.

Restore Position

Move the single icon to its default location.

Save position

Save the current location of the icon as its default location.

Delete

Delete the icon.

Task List

Another "goodie" of Desktop Launcher is that it comes with its own improved task manager. You can run it with this option.

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Command

You can enter (or drop) a program name or a document name (if the file suffix has an application attached) with its full path here. You can specify the path name as well relatively to the working directory.

Working Directory

Default directory which will appear when you load a file from the launched application. The default value is "." which means "no working directory selected".

Icon Title

This title is displayed if you have checked the Icon Title option box and your icon is a "single icon" (i.e. an icon outside the Launcher window").

Icon Title check box

Show/hide the icon title with this button.

Parameters

You can assign parameters to the application. For instance if you start WinWord with the parameter "/N" it will start without an empty file already open. The parameter field is the place for such additional parameters.


NOTE: If you execute a program via drag&drop (see launching programs), this field is ignored.

Hide/Show

If you check this option you will be able not only to launch an application but also to hide the window of this application if you double-click at the icon a second time.

Instead of minimizing a program you want to get out of the way temporarily (without exiting it) you double-click again at the launch icon of this application. The window of the application will vanish but instead of a "minimize icon" that tells you that the application is minimized but still running, the shape of the launching icon changes.



A small blue triangle in the upper left corner of the icon  tells you that application is running but invisible.

If you want to access an application you have hidden, you simply double-click its icon again. The windows will be visible again and the launching icon will look "normal" again.

Please note that Desktop Launcher can only hide and show programs that have been launched by it. If you launch a program any other way, Desktop Launcher will not be able to provide this feature.

Selected

Here is the icon selected in the final form.



Border:

If this button is checked a 3D border around the icon is drawn. You can use this option to mark the programs that can accept files as parameters.



Logo:

Draws a small rocket (the logo) in the top left corner of the icon. You can use this feature to avoid confusions between "launch" icons and minimized programs.

Auto Launch

Mark the program to be automatically executed when Desktop Launcher is started.

Always in on top

If this option is checked, the icon is always visible. Only valid for single icons.

Icon File

You can extract an icon from a different program or file if you want to. Drop the file on this field from the file manager or write down its name.

Icons in file

There are 8 buttons that can have up to 8 icons. Selecting one button you select the icon. If the file has more than 8 icons, you can use the up and down arrows buttons to access 8 other icons each time.

Up arrow


You can use this button to access previous icons in the icon file.


Down arrow

You can use this button to access more icons in the icon file.

Program

This is the default icon and we can select it at any time using this button.

NOTE: if the displayed icon is , the command line or the working directory are incorrect. In this case you cannot select any icon.

If the icon is , then the program has no icon.

OK

Accept the field values, and close the dialog box.

CANCEL

Ignore the changes, and close the dialog box.

HELP

Run this help file.

Drag&drop indicator

The fields that have the "drag&drop" indicator  can be modified using this method. They are "Command", "Parameters" and "Icon File". If you don't drop a file onto one specific field but somewhere outside the dropped file is used for the "icons in file" field.

Launcher options

The Desktop Launcher icon will always be in the upper left corner of the Launcher window. If you click at it once a menu will pop up.

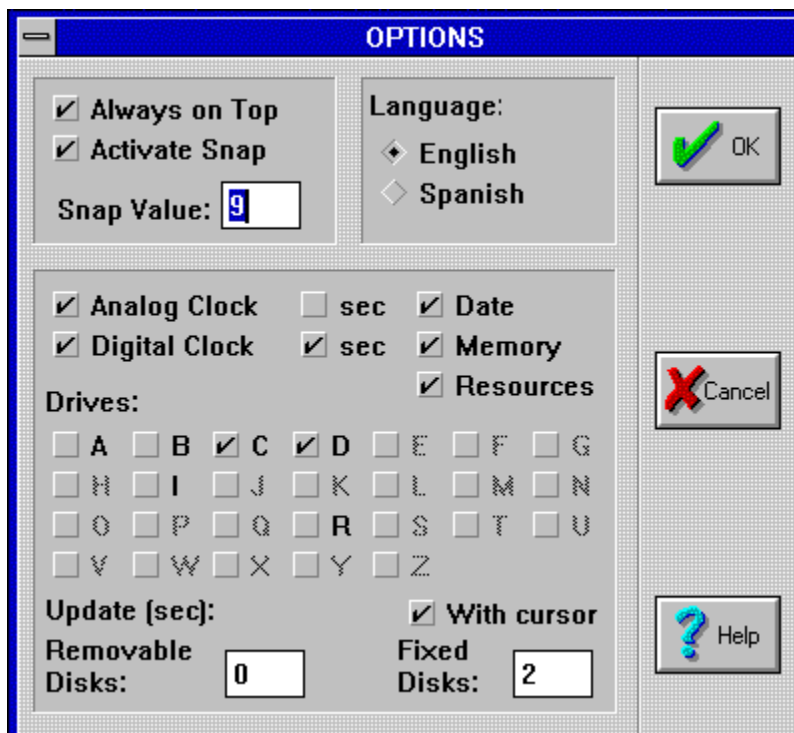


the Desktop Launcher icon

The options dialog box

If you choose "Options" from the menu or double-click at the Desktop Launcher icon, the options dialog box will pop up.

Please note that this dialog box is not identical with the property dialog box. The property dialog box sets the properties of a single icon whereas the option box contains options for the Launcher window.



the options dialog box

Click on each field of the box to get a description.

Always on Top

If you select always on top other windows will not obscure Desktop Launcher.

Activate Snap

If you check this option the icons will snap to a grid. This is a very nice feature if you want to arrange icons as single icons on the desktop or inside the Launcher window. You can set the Snap Value to any value but we suggest a snap value of 9 which works very well.

Language

You can choose if the dialog boxes should be in English or Spanish.

Built-in information icons: clock, date, memory, resources

There is a wide range of additional information available via Desktop Launcher.

You can select an analog and/or digital clock with or without the display of seconds.

You can display the year, date and day name.

You can turn on an icon displaying the total and the free memory size.

You can turn on an icon telling you about your system resources.

You can select drives to be displayed as icons, telling you about the total and free disk size. You can set the update time (which is the interval in which the disk information is updated) separately for built-in (hard) and removable (floppy) drives.

The option "with cursor" updates the information as well if your cursor points at the respective drive.

If you have a look at the properties box of a program icon you will find the option to draw a small frame around the icon. This feature is available for the information icons (clock, memory etc.) as well and even more sophisticated. If you click at an information icon, a menu will pop up. You can choose for each border (left, right, top, bottom) if you want to switch the border on or off. Thus you can emphasize that these icons are close related to each other and different from the "normal" icons (that launch programs) by switching off the borders.

Note that this "border feature" to individually switch on/off each border of an icon separately only works with information icons and not with icons that launch programs.



the "border feature" of the information icons

New Icon

If you select "new icon" from the Launcher options menu the properties dialog box will pop up. You can enter the appropriate strings there to create a new icon. This is another way of creating a new icon. It is easier though to drag and drop a file from the file manager.

Frame Border

You can turn on/off the window frame of the Launcher window with this command. Note that the Launcher window is only resizable if the frame is turned on.

Restore/Save Positions

Use this menu item to save the current position of the Launcher window and the single icons or restore the position to those you have already saved.

Exit

Exits Desktop Launcher.

Help

Runs (this) help file.

About

Displays the name of the program, of its author and his email address.

Task List

Turns on Desktop Launchers own **Task Manager**



the task manager

Click on each field of the box to get a description.

You may ask yourself why Desktop Launcher comes with its own task manager. There are several reasons for this:

A major reason is, that you are not able to access windows you have hidden with the hide/show feature with the standard task manager.

Another reason is that Desktop Launchers task manager offers easy access to some features. They will be described now:

Desktop Launchers Task Manager displays up to 12 running applications simultaneously.

show invisible

If you switch on the "show invisible box" you will be told if the application is invisible with the "invisibility blue triangle".

switch to

Pushing this button brings the attached application to front and restores the window if it has been minimized. If the window is currently hidden, it is made visible.

hide

Pushing this button is equivalent to double-clicking the icon of a currently running program with the hide/show feature turned on.

minimize

You can turn the application into an icon. This works as well if the program is hidden.

create icon

Another simple way of creating a new icon to launch applications is this button. The information of the selected application is used in creating the icon.

end task

You can exit any running application by pushing this button.

(not) on top

You can turn on/off the "on top" feature of the selected application with this button.

kill task

A rather rude way to get rid of a misbehaving application. Only use it if you can not shut it down any other way. The system might be unstable afterwards.

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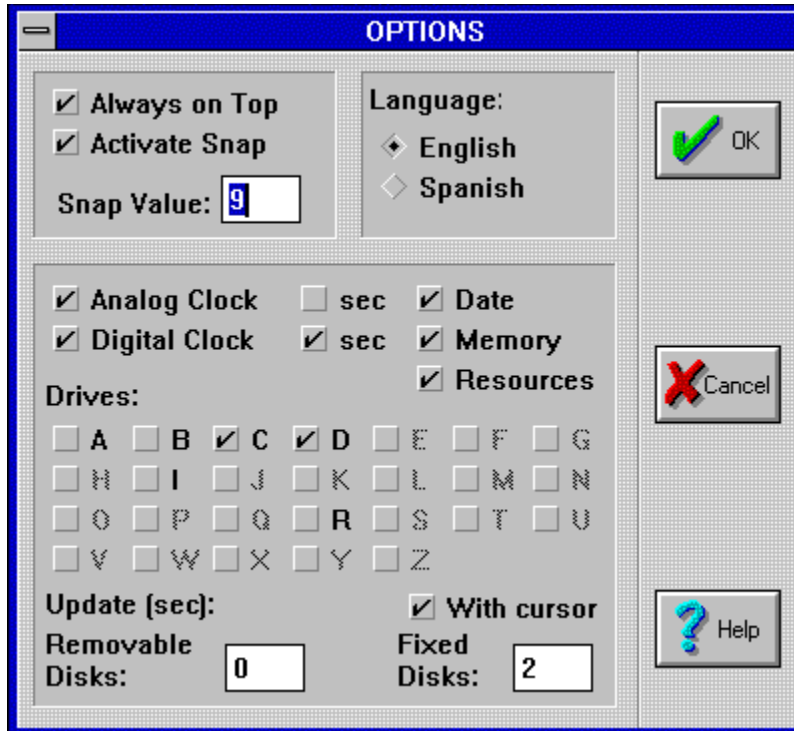
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The OPTIONS dialog box



the options dialog box

Click on each field of the box to get a description.

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Launching Programs

You can launch the application that is attached to an icon by clicking at it once (which will display a menu) and choosing "Launch" or double-click the icon.

Execute files via drag and drop

Desktop Launcher supports the drag and drop feature of Windows 3.1. This means you can select a file in the file manager, drag it onto an Launcher window Icon (or a Single Icon) and drop it there. The application that is attached to the icon will be executed and the file that has been dropped will be loaded by this application. This works regardless of the extension of the dropped file. Thus you can drop a ".txt" file at WinWord or a ".doc" file at notepad or anything else. Of course this "crossdropping" does not always make sense. Think of dropping a ".txt" file onto the "control.exe" icon. Not all applications accept dropped files. They will start without loading the file.

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Other options

If you click with the right mouse button inside the Launcher window, all single icons will be put on top of any windows obscuring them.

If you press the right mouse button in the caption bar of ANY application for one second, the window of this application will be send to the bottom. It will be obscured by any other window in this area.

If you run Windows in standard mode the scale used in the memory info icon is 16Mb by default. You can change this to adding the following line in your desk.ini file in the [gen] section:

```
m_scale=VALUE
```

where VALUE is the scale value in Mb. Note that this is the only field you must modify manually, and it is only necessary if you work in standard mode. If you work in 386 enhanced mode this field is ignored.

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Questions and answers

Desktop Launcher will not start, telling me there are files missing. What happened?

You have to make sure that BWCC.DLL is on your hard disk and in the path. A good place for this file is the Windows directory itself. If you don't have this file have a look at the place you got Desktop Launcher from. It is probably called BWCC.ZIP.

What is the difference between the Launcher window and a Single Icon?

Desktop Launcher offers two kinds of application launching icons. You can either assemble icons in a separate window (Launcher window) or you can place any icon at any place on the desktop (Single Icon).

What is this distinction good for?

The implementation of the Launcher window plus Single Icons makes Desktop Launcher very flexible. The advantage of the Launcher window is that you can move all icons in the window by moving the window itself. The Launcher window has a disadvantage though: It has to be rectangular like all windows. If you want to arrange your icons say at all four borders of your screen this would not be possible with a single window. In this case you might want to use Single Icons that you can place anywhere. Of course if you want to move a group of Single Icons you will have to move them one by one.

Can I change a Launcher window Icon into a Single Icon (vice versa)

You can change any Launcher window Icon into a Single Icon (vice versa) by dragging the icon to the place you want it to be. If you drag a Single Icon into the Launcher window it becomes part of it. If you drag an icon out of the Launcher window it becomes a single icon. Please note that the properties and options are preserved but not the information if the program was running at the time you changed the type of icon.

I try to hide a program, but it will not work. What is wrong?

If Desktop Launcher does not hide programs as it is supposed to do, there are several possible reasons.

- a) You did not check the hide/show option in the properties dialog.
- b) You did not start the application you want to hide with Desktop Launcher
- c) You started the application with Desktop Launcher but exited and restarted the Launcher meanwhile.
- d) You moved the respective icon from inside the Launcher window outside (vice versa). If you drag an icon in or out of the window, the Launcher creates a "new" icon and deletes the old one automatically. The information, that the program is already running is not preserved.

I'm dragging a file onto a notepad icon, but the file will not be loaded. Why?

If you are dragging a file without extension (like ".txt" or ".doc") onto a notepad icon this will not work. This is a "feature" of notepad though. It doesn't accept files without extension.

Can Desktop Launcher be used as shell?

Desktop Launcher is (at least in this version) not intended to be the Windows shell. As more or less any program "can" be used as shell (even Word for Windows) you of course "can" enter it in the shell= line in system.ini. A problem I observed was that the "run=" and "load=" lines in win.ini were not executed with Desktop Launcher as shell..

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Program License

Program : Desktop Launcher
Version : 2.0 BBS
Language : C
Compiler : Turbo C++ 3.1
Date : Oct. 4, 1993
Author : Julio Pons Terol

Desktop Launcher is distributed as-is. The author disclaims all warranties, expressed or implied. The author will assume no liability for damages either from the direct use of this product or as a consequence of the use of this product.

Desktop Launcher may be used by any private individual or non-commercial organization for any purpose, if all the terms of this license are accepted.

This version of Desktop Launcher can be distributed only through BBSs and Anonymous FTP sites. Including all the files without modification.

The files that must be included are:

readme.txt	Presentation file (English)
leeme.txt	Presentation file (Spanish)
desk.exe	The executable program
desk.hlp	English Help
desksp.hlp	Spanish Help

If you find this program useful, you must register the program, sending to me your name and address by e-mail or regular mail. It isn't necessary to pay a fee, but I would appreciate a donation.

Comments and suggestions also can help me.

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Future Options

These are some options suggested by users to include in future versions.

- auto launch with auto hide.
- locking the window horizontally or vertically and: move the window in the unlocked dimension with a right mouse still down.
- group windows (independent windows with launch icons)
- association of wave files to actions
- alarms
- detailed system information.
- ability to save the window location and size of a program.
- and more

Acknowledgments

First I want to acknowledge to my wife, Josean, for her support.

To my friends for test the program and to the registered users for their comments and suggestions.

And special thanks to Olaf Winkelhake, who wrote this manual, and who tested the program and suggested me some nice features as the hide/show option.

To every one, thanks,

Julio Pons

Glossary

Auto Launch

This is a property of a launching icon. If it is turned on the program will be started automatically every time you start DESK.EXE, the Desktop Launcher.

Border

This is the name of a property for launching icons. You can draw a frame around the icon.

Border Options

You can turn on/off all four borders of any information icon by clicking once at it. See also "Information Icons" and "Frame Border"

Desktop Launcher Icon

This is the "logo"-icon of desktop launcher and is always visible when Desktop Launcher is running. Also see "Launcher Icon"

Frame Border

You can turn on/off the frame border of the Launcher Window with this command. Note that you can only resize the Launcher Window if the Frame Border is turned on. See also "border options"

Hide/Show feature

Instead of minimizing a program you can hide the window. This will not leave an additional icon. You can recognize a hidden window by a small blue triangle added to the launching icon of the program.

Information Icons

Desktop Launcher offers some icons that do not launch programs but contain informations about your system like date and time, memory and resources.

Launching Icon

The main purpose of the program is to launch programs by double-clicking an icon. These icons are referred to as "launching icons".

Launcher Window

You can arrange your launching icons in an own window so you can move them altogether over the screen. This window contains at least the Launcher icon.

Logo

This is a property for launching icons. To distinguish launching icons from "normal" windows icons you can add the logo (a small rocket) to the launching icon.

Options

Features concerning the entire program or information icons. Also see "Properties"

Properties

Features and settings concerning a launcher icon.

Single launcher icon

Instead of assembling your icons in the launcher window, you can drop them at any place on the screen. Thus the placement of the icons is more flexible than with the Launcher Window. But note that if you want to move a group of Single Launcher Icons you will have to move them one by one.

With Cursor

This is an option for information icons that display the free disk space of a drive. If you point at the respective information icon this information will be updated. If you turn it off this information will be updated regularly but not at your mouse pointing.

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CANCEL

Close the task manager without actions.

Create Icon

Create a new Launcher icon based on the information of the running application. This option work only with one application at a time.

ON TOP / NO ON TOP buttons

This buttons allows to set or remove the attribute "always on top" of any window(s).

TASK LIST

Show the tasks running on the system. The list show up to 12 tasks simultaneously, if there are more, a horizontal bar is displayed.

You can do multiple selection on this list, and execute a command on the selected application(s).

DESK LAUNCH BUTTON

Switch to the Launcher window

SHOW INVISIBLE Check Box

You can use this check box to include/exclude in the task list the tasks with invisible windows.

Invisible tasks are displayed with a blue triangle (same as launch icons with hidden windows)

Switch to

Switch to the selected task(s). This includes:

- Restore minimized windows
- Show invisible windows
- Bring to front selected windows

End Task

Close the window(s) associated with the selected task(s). This is similar to select the window and select the close option in the system menu.

Kill Task

This button terminate (kill) the selected application(s).

WARNING:

The termination of an application using this method can leave the system unstable. Use this button only if you can't close the application by any other method.

Minimize

Minimize (and show if hidden) the selected window(s).

HIDE

Hide the selected window(s).

You can show windows with the **Switch to** button.

Always on Top

If you select always on top other windows will not obscure Desktop Launcher.

Activate Snap/Snap Value

If you check this option the icons will snap to a grid. This is a very nice feature if you want to arrange icons as single icons on the desktop or inside the Launcher window. You can set the **Snap Value** to any value but we suggest a snap value of 9 which works very well (The dimensions of an icon are 36x36 pixels).

Language

You can choose if the dialog boxes, menus and help files should be in English or Spanish.

Analog Clock

You can select an analog clock with or without the display of seconds.

Digital Clock

You can select a digital clock with or without the display of seconds.

Date

You can display the year, date and day name.

Memory

You can turn on an icon displaying the total (Mb) and the free (Kb) memory size.

NOTE:

The value of total memory is only valid if you run Windows in 386 enhanced mode. If you run windows in standard mode, this value is 16Mb by default, and is used to draw the scale. For more information see [Other options](#).

Resources

You can turn on an icon telling you about your system resources (% free).

Drives

You can select drives to be displayed as icons, telling you about the total and free disk size.

Update

You can set the update time (which is the interval in which the disk information is updated) separately for built-in (hard) and removable (floppy) drives.

The option "**with cursor**" updates the information as well if your cursor points at the respective drive.

