

System Restore on Windows Vista and XP

This document contains the following sections:

- [What is System Restore?](#)
- [Turning Restore On or Off](#)

For information related to this topic refer to:

- [Securing Your Windows Computer](#)
(<http://www.cmu.edu/computing/doc/security/win-xp/index.html>)
- [Cleaning Your Windows Computer](#)
(<http://www.cmu.edu/computing/doc/security/clean-win/index.html>)

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What is System Restore?

The System Restore feature is used to restore the system files on your computer in case they become damaged. Windows XP System Restore automatically creates restore points daily and any time a significant system event occurs (e.g., application or driver installations). Restore points can also be manually created at your discretion.

If a virus, worm, or Trojan infects a computer, System Restore may back up that virus, worm, or Trojan. Windows XP does not allow outside programs (including anti-virus utilities) to alter files in the System Restore folder. Therefore, virus removal tools cannot remove security threats found within this folder. An infected file within the System Restore folder could potentially be restored onto your computer. Also, virus scans may detect these infected files even after you have removed the threat from your machine.

For these reasons, when applying a virus removal tool, Windows XP users should temporarily turn off the System Restore feature. This will allow the removal tool to delete any infected files in the System Restore folder as well. Instructions are provided below.

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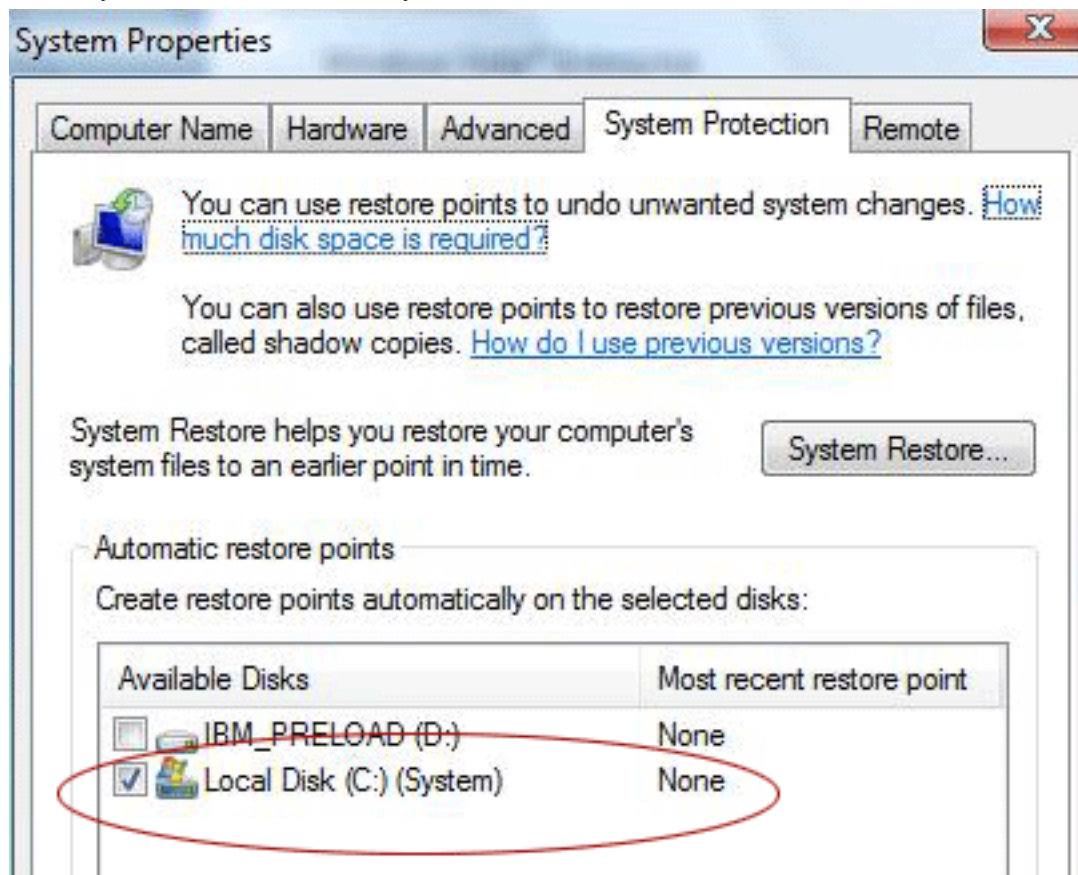
Turning System Restore Off or On

When you turn off the System Restore feature, you will not remove or delete any personal files from your computer. Only those files that were created by System Restore are removed. Likewise, if you use the System Restore feature to "restore" back to a previous state, personal files in your My Documents folder are not affected.

Note: You must be logged in as an Administrator. If not, the System Restore tab will not display.

Vista: To turn off System Restore:

1. Click **Start**, and then right-click on **My Computer**. Select **Properties** from the drop-down menu.
2. On the left side, select **System Protection**, and then click **Continue**.
3. The System Properties dialog box appears. **Deselect** the checkbox for the drive on which you want to turn off System Restore.



4. You'll be prompted, "Are you sure you want to turn System Restore off?" Click **Turn System Restore Off** to continue turning off System Restore. Click OK to close the open dialog box.

Vista: To turn on System Restore

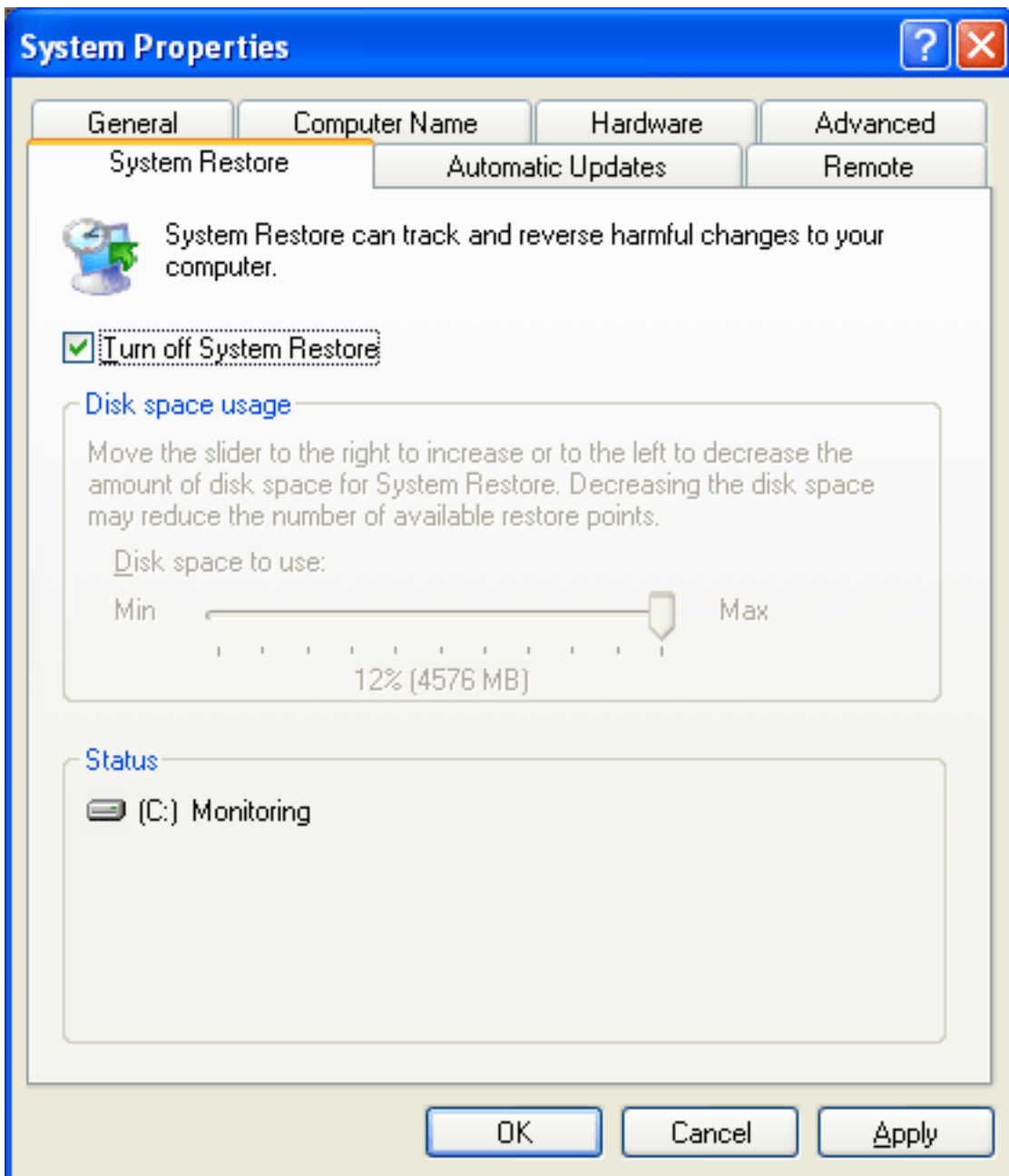
1. Click **Start**, and then right-click on **My Computer**. Select **Properties** from the drop-down menu.
2. On the left side, select **System Protection**, and then click **Continue**.

3. The System Properties dialog box appears. **Select** the checkbox for the drive on which you want to turn on System Restore. Click **OK**.

Windows XP: To turn off System Restore:

1. Click **Start > All Programs > Accessories > Windows Explorer**.
2. Right-click **My Computer** and select **Properties**.
3. Select the **System Restore** tab.
4. Select (check) the **Turn off System Restore** option.

You can choose to exclude any non-system partition or drive so that System Restore does not monitor or restore it. Changes made on an excluded partition or drive are not restored during a System Restore.



5. Click **Apply**.

6. A message displays asking your to confirm that System Restore should be disabled. As noted in the message, all existing restore points will be deleted. Click **Yes**.
7. Click **OK**.
8. Continue with the task that prompted disabling the System Restore feature (e.g., virus removal).
9. When finished, restart your machine and follow the instructions to turn on the System Restore feature.

Windows XP: To turn on System Restore

1. Click **Start > All Programs > Accessories > Windows Explorer**.
2. Right-click **My Computer** and select **Properties**.
3. Select the **System Restore** tab.
4. Deselect (uncheck) the **Turn off System Restore** option.
Note: If you have a non-system drive or partition, you can exclude it from the System Restore. See the Windows XP online help for further instructions.
5. Click **Apply**, and then click **OK**.

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