

It's not hard to customize Vista

January 21 2009, By Anne Krishnan

Q. I purchased a new PC with Vista Home Premium installed. Windows Photo Gallery came preinstalled with a bundle of programs. Previously I used Picasa2, which I prefer now that I have tried Photo Gallery. The problem is that I can neither disable nor uninstall the Windows program. I have searched for a solution but am unable to find one. Help! (M.C., Raleigh, N.C.)

A. Luckily, Vista has a couple of features that allow you to easily customize your program settings and make Picasa2 your default photo program.

One approach has you start with Picasa2 (or any other program) and pick which file types you want it to automatically open.

Click on the start menu at the bottom left of your screen and type "default" in the search box. Choose the link for "Default Programs." (You'll start at this point for the second approach, too.)

Click on "Set your default programs." A list of all of the programs you can configure will come up.

Click on Picasa2. If you want it to be the default program for every file type, protocol or extension it can open, click on the "Set this program as default" button. Then click OK.

If you want to be more selective, click on Picasa2 and then the "Choose defaults for this program" link. You can now see all of the files,

protocols or extensions that you can open in Picasa2.

If you want Picasa2 to be the default for a specific extension or protocol, check the box next to it. After you have made your selections, click on "Save" and then "OK."

You also can approach this from the perspective of a certain type of file.

Go back to the Default Programs window and click "Associate a file type or protocol with a program." This time, choose the file type you're interested in. Common photo file types are .jpg, .bmp, .tif and .gif. (To be sure you don't miss any files that default to Windows Photo Gallery, you can click on the "Current Default" bar to sort the file types by their default associations.)

Highlight the file type and click the gray button for "Change program ...". Select Picasa2 and click "OK."

By the way, the Default Programs feature in Vista also allows you to choose the program you want to launch when you insert a DVD, USB flash drive or other device/media. Just go back to the main Default Programs menu and choose "Change AutoPlay settings."

Americans' wallets may be tight, but a recent report predicts that won't affect our spending on gadgets in 2009. According to a survey by the Consumer Electronics Association, we'll spend about \$171 billion on electronics this year (from Blu-ray players to "smartphones"), the same as in 2009.

And we'll have plenty to choose from -- the CEA's CES trade show this month featured 20,000 new products.

(Think you can stump the geeks? Send your high-tech question to

stumpthegeeks at newsobserver.com. Please include your name, address and daytime phone number. Individual replies are not given.)

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Citation: It's not hard to customize Vista (2009, January 21) retrieved 7 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-01-hard-customize-vista.html>

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