

## Accessing your Desktop Remotely

An old and well-used adage says 'Home is where the Heart is'. In today's time, when the distinction between leisure and work hours can get so blurred, it might be accurate to say 'the office is where information is'. And by information, I wouldn't limit it to just data and its storage, but rather the entire work environment that we create on our office computers – the various programs and utilities, the background, the layout, and the many minute aspects that give the computer your singular touch. Understandably, duplicating that kind of data, program installation and personalization isn't a trivial task. Frankly, it would be nice, not to mention incredibly efficient, to have the flexibility to work on one's office computer from any remote location, for e.g., from the comfort of one's home. With that view, I'd like to give a brief introduction of the Windows Remote Desktop facility and how the ITC helps you leverage this tool towards not only higher productivity but also flexibility.

To drive my point home, imagine you're finally home after a long tiring day at the office – you spend due time with the family, but before going to bed, you would want to work a bit more on that certain research proposal or check up on a simulation you've been running on an office machine. Instead of having to drive back to the actual location, you could simply establish a Remote Desktop connection to the target machine from the leisure of your home. It would be identical to working on that machine itself – you would have complete access to the same desktop, as well as use any tools and applications you might have installed there. Everything would be just the way it would be if you were sitting right in front of the computer at your office desk. Imagine how much time one would save on commuting between home and office(s)! I'm sure you can think of many other advantages for such a mobility-enhancing tool. For example, you can directly connect to your office desktop from any of the smart classrooms. No carrying out your data on CDs or flash drives, and you can very easily display simulations, flash animations and any dynamic data stored on your computer.

Using this Remote Desktop feature of Window XP is easy and comfortable mainly because of the robust network and bandwidth that ITC provides for the university community. To experience this feature at its best performance, I'd urge you to apply for an ADSL connection at home that would get your computer on the university high-speed intranet. Now let's go into the procedure and details of using this tool.

## Enabling Remote Desktop Connections

You have to first determine the name of the target or base computer and set it to accept Remote Desktop Connections.



Simply Right Click on **My Computer** on the desktop and choose **Properties** in the menu. In the **System Properties** dialog box that appears, click on the **Computer Name** tab for the machine's name. Then, continuing in the same dialog box, enable remote connectivity by clicking on the **Remote** tab and checking the box against **Allow users to connect remotely to this computer**. Remember, this base machine has to be running Windows XP.

## Establishing Remote Desktop Connections

Now, to connect from any remote location, navigate as follows from the **Start Menu: All Programs → Accessories → Communications → Remote Desktop Connection**.



A window will pop up asking for the address of the target machine. Enter the name that you had noted down earlier. There will be a prompt for the user-name and password, which is what you regularly use for logging into your office machine. Enter the credentials and enjoy the benefits of comprehensive remote connectivity.

You can always return to your actual computer by minimizing the Remote Desktop from the panel available at the top of the screen. You can also store the password or save the settings as a desktop shortcut for your ease of use. To disconnect, simply go to the **Start Menu** and click on **Disconnect**. This will shut down the remote connection without disturbing any open files or programs that might be running on the base computer. Further, if you so desire, you can also log off or even shutdown the remote computer. Once you try this, you might want to even connect to your ADSL enabled home PC from your office or to your office PC from another office.

One limitation of this Remote Desktop feature is that unfortunately, you cannot use it to drop and drag files from one computer to the other. However, to achieve simple and reliable file transfer, ITC provides another fantastic service, which I'll discuss in the coming weeks. Keep reading this section in future editions.

In case of any questions or suggestions, please contact 3019 or email [sadiq@kfupm.edu.sa](mailto:sadiq@kfupm.edu.sa)



**Dr. Sadiq M. Sait, Director, ITC**