

Sharing a Home Computer

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Even in households and home offices that have multiple computers (the reason you are setting up your wireless network), it's not uncommon to share a computer with another user or users. This chapter takes a look at sharing a computer with another person and focuses on creating and managing Windows user accounts. We also take a look at the process of logging on and off your Windows system and switching users.

10 About Sharing a Windows XP Computer

✓ BEFORE YOU BEGIN

5 Use the Control Panel

When you install Windows XP on a computer (or start a new computer for the first time, with Windows XP pre-installed), you are walked through the process of creating a user account. This first user account is the **Computer Administrator** account for the computer. The initial account has administrative abilities such as the ability to create new users (or delete users) and maintain the Windows operating system, including making changes to the system settings and adding and removing software and hardware.

▶ NOTE

Because the subject of this book is creating a home wireless network, the steps and figures shown have been created for users of Windows XP Home edition. In almost all cases, however, the material is also appropriate for Windows XP Professional edition users.

When only one account exists on a Windows XP computer (the initial account created immediately after the installation of the Windows operating system), you are taken directly to the Windows desktop after the boot process. This behavior is also attributed to the fact that the initial account is created without a password. So, your system isn't really secure because it boots automatically to your one and only user account, which happens to have administrative capabilities. You specify the name for the account the first time you use Windows and walk through the process of adding at least one user account and activating Windows over the Internet. This means that the administrative account (the one you named) isn't protected by a password. It makes sense to create a password for your administrative user account to provide some basic security for the computer in terms of who can log on to your system. If other users need access, you should create user accounts for them.

▶ TIP

If you go to the trouble of creating a password for your computer's administrator account, don't give your password to other users of the computer. Create an account for each user (which I suggest should be a limited account, which "limits" the user in terms of installing software and changing settings for other users). Each user can then decide if she wants to password protect her own account. Even limited accounts can create and change their own passwords.

Because the initial user account on the Windows system is created with administrative abilities, it falls to this user (you) to create any additional user accounts. If more than one person is using a computer, it makes sense for each user to have his own account. There are benefits to each user having his own account, without even factoring in security. For example, each user can personalize the Windows desktop including fonts, desktop background, and desktop icons.

▶ NOTE

A **Guest** account is also created when you install Windows XP on your computer. The **Guest** account is turned off by default. It is designed to give a user temporary access to a computer as a "guest" user. The **Guest** account can be turned on and off by a user who has a **Computer Administrator** user account. When the **Guest** account is turned on, the **Guest** icon appears on the Windows **Welcome** screen, and a guest can log on to the system without a password.

There are two types of user accounts you can create. You can create user accounts that are designated *computer administrator* (as your initial account is) or you can create accounts that are limited. *Limited user* accounts cannot add, delete, or edit user accounts. A limited user also cannot change systemwide settings or install software and hardware. You determine the type of user account when you create the account, and you do have the ability to change an existing account from computer administrator to limited if required.

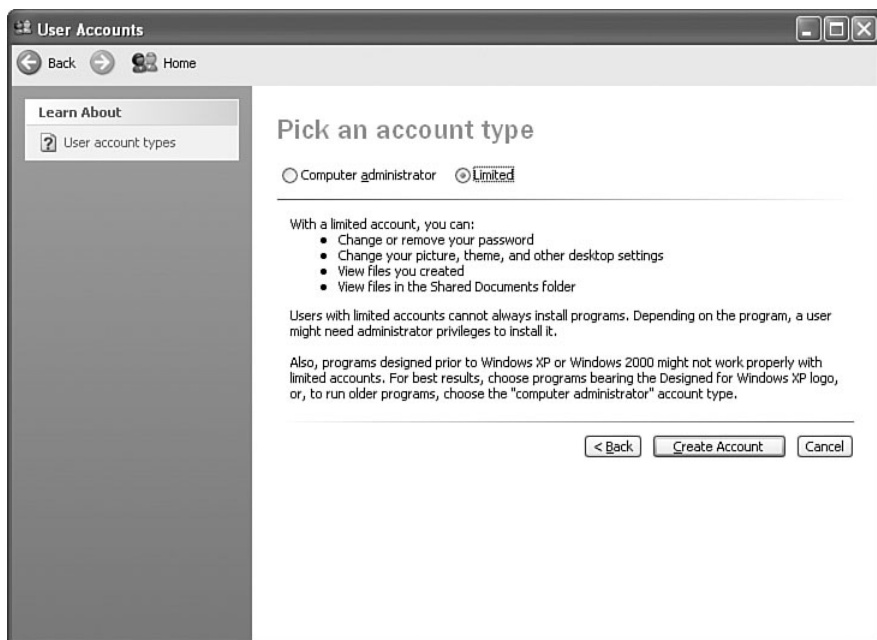
▶ KEY TERMS

Computer administrator—A Windows user account that can change system settings, add and remove software and hardware, and create and edit other user accounts.

Limited user—A user account without administrative abilities. This user can change desktop settings and change her password and user account picture.

▶ NOTE

Hopefully, you can see where I am going with this discussion. I suggest that you have only one account on the system with administrative abilities. Additional user accounts can be limited accounts. This arrangement provides the greatest amount of control over the system and also protects the Windows operating system from a user inadvertently changing a system setting or deleting a user account or important software. I'm certainly not advocating that you be a computer control freak, but having one user in "charge" of the system will cut down on potential problems related to user error.



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User accounts can be designated as computer administrators or as limited.

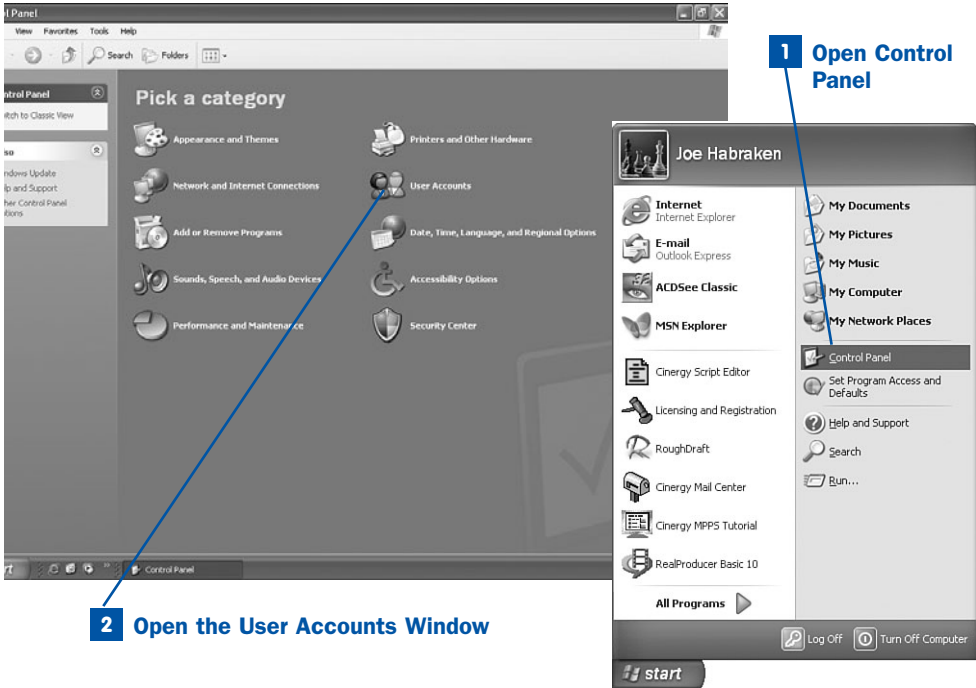
If you are using the administrative account and create new user accounts, you must supply the name for those accounts (see **11 Create a User Account**).

11 Create a User Account

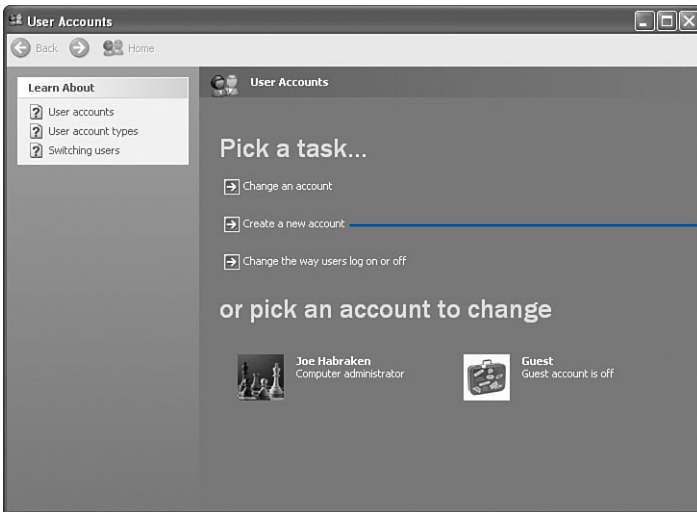
✓ BEFORE YOU BEGIN

10 About Sharing a Windows XP Computer

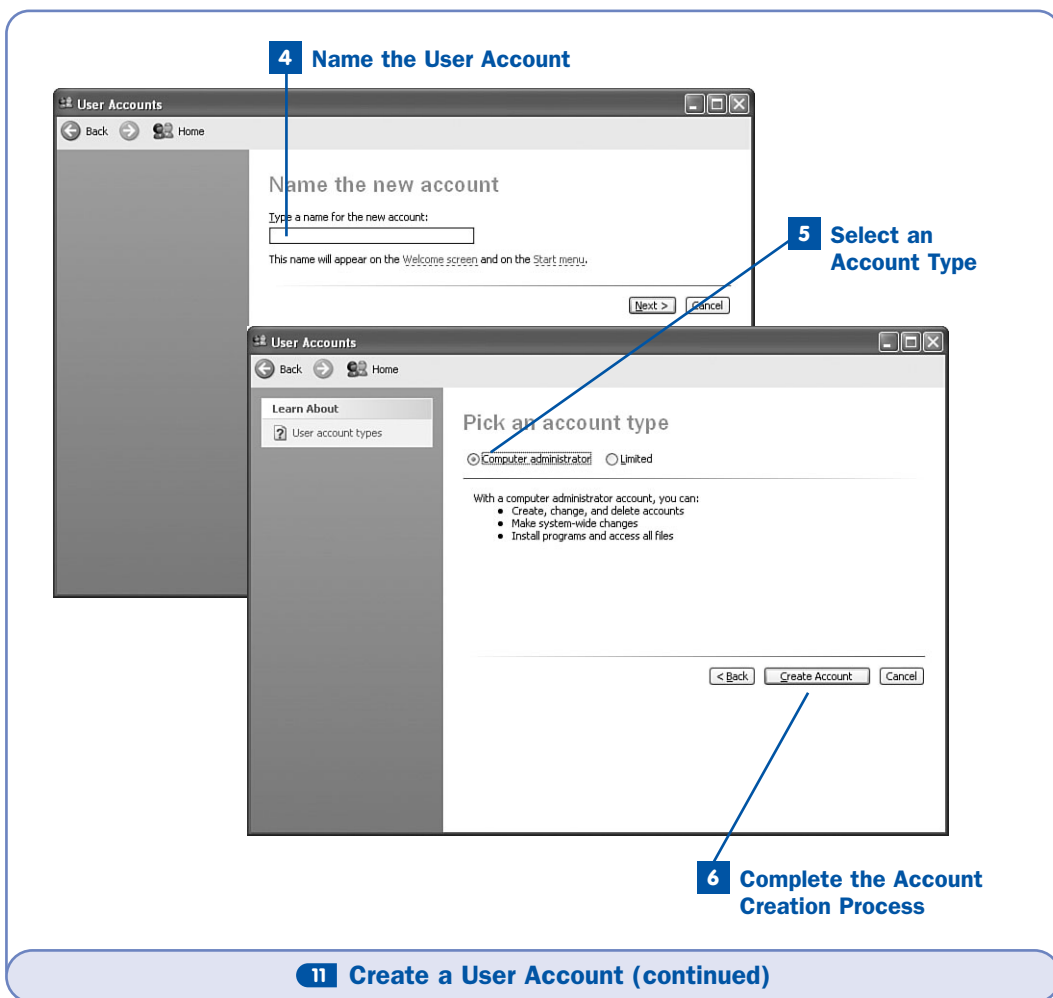
Windows XP provides the **User Accounts** window (accessed from the **Control Panel**), which allows you to create, edit, and delete user accounts. User accounts are managed using the administrative account created when Windows is initially installed on your system. To work through this task, make sure that you log on to Windows using the account name designated for the first user account on the computer.



2 Open the User Accounts Window



3 Create a New Account



TIP

When you buy a new computer that has Windows XP installed, or when you install Windows XP Home Edition on a computer you already own, you are required to establish at least one user account on the computer the first time Windows XP boots up. You are also required to activate and optionally register Windows with Microsoft. In some rare cases, the process of naming the first user account might be bypassed (for example, if someone turned off the computer when you were working through the steps of naming a user account). A user account called **Owner** is created automatically. This is the administrative account. You can change the name of this account (if you want) in the **User Accounts** window. Because **Owner** is the only account on the computer, you log on as **Owner** until you create other accounts or change the name of the **Owner** account.

1 Open Control Panel

Click the **Start** menu and then choose **Control Panel**.

2 Open the User Accounts Window

In the **Control Panel**, click the **User Accounts** icon. The **User Accounts** window opens; it provides you with the tools to create, edit, and delete user accounts. You can pick a task to access a particular tool or edit an existing account by clicking the icon for that account.

3 Create a New Account

In the **User Accounts** window, select the **Create a new account** task. A series of screens like a wizard will walk you through the process of creating the new accounts.

4 Name the User Account

In the first screen, type a name for the user account. The user account name can consist of 20 characters (uppercase, lowercase, or a combination including spaces). You cannot use these special characters:

“ / \ [] : ; | = , + * ? < >

After typing the account name click **Next**.

5 Select an Account Type

On the next screen, select an account type: **Computer administrator** or **Limited**. **Computer administrator** accounts have full control over the computer's settings. **Limited** accounts have limited abilities to change settings and install software. Select the account type based on how much structure you believe the user for whom you are creating the account needs.

▶ TIP

If every account you create for Windows XP is a **Computer administrator**, you are setting up a computing environment that will be extremely rich in anarchy and chaos. Consider having only one **Computer administrator** account (your own account) and then create all other accounts as **Limited**.

6 Complete the Account Creation Process

To finish the new account process and create the account, click **Create Account**. You return to the **User Accounts** window. A new icon appears on that screen, representing the newly created account.

12 Change the Account Picture

✓ BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- 10 About Sharing a Windows XP Computer
- 11 Create a User Account

After a user account has been created, you can edit its various attributes, such as the account type and the account picture. The *account picture* is the picture used to represent the account on the Windows **Welcome** screen. The picture of the currently logged on user also appears on **Start** menu and in the **User Accounts** window.

A default picture (the chess pieces) is automatically selected when you create a new account. You can change the account picture to any of a number of pictures provided by Windows XP. You can also use your own digital pictures (from a digital camera or scanner) or any pictures you copy or download from the Web.

A user can change his user account picture whether the account is an administrative or limited account. Users with administrative accounts can also change the pictures for other user accounts (another good reason to only have one administrator account).

1 Select a User Account

Assuming that you are using a **Computer administrator's** account: In the **User Accounts** window (select **User Accounts** in the **Control Panel** to access this window), click the user account for which you want to change the picture. The task list for the selected account opens.

► NOTE

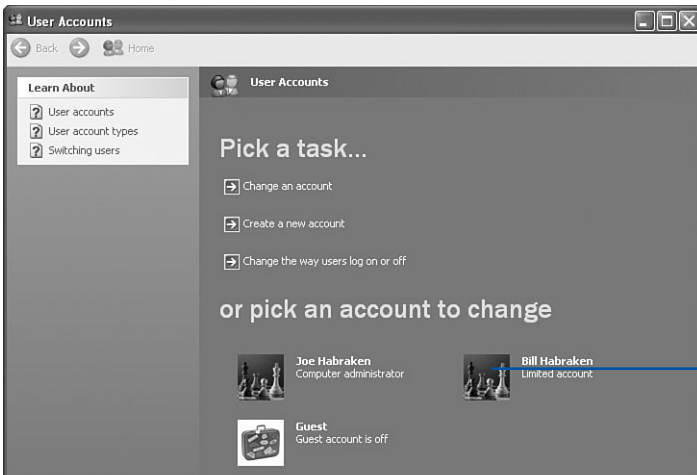
Users with **Limited** accounts do not see the other user accounts installed on the computer when they click **User Accounts** in the **Control Panel**. Users with **Limited** accounts are taken directly to a specific user account task screen, which provides the user with the ability to create a password (or change the password) or change the account picture.

2 Select Change the Picture

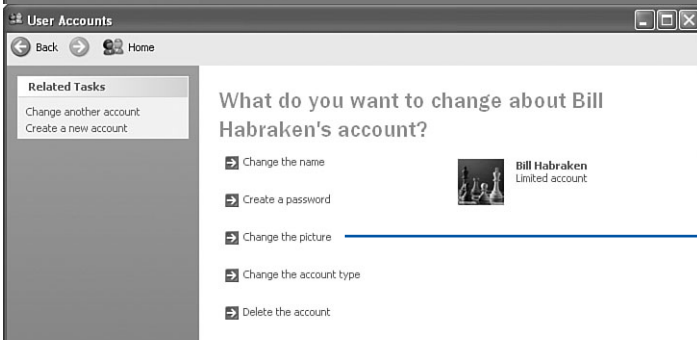
Select the **Change the picture** task. A picture box opens, showing available pictures.

3 Select a New Picture

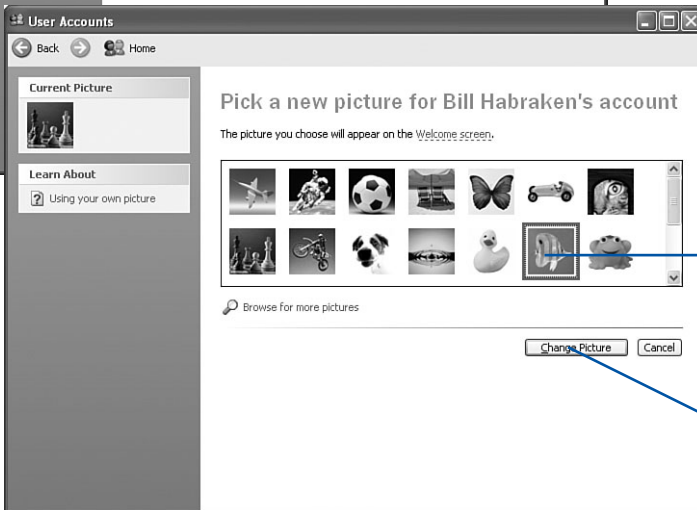
Scroll through the pictures in the list box. Click the picture you want to use for the currently selected account.



1 Select a User Account



2 Select Change the Picture



3 Select a New Picture

4 Change the Picture

TIP

To use a digital picture that you have created with a digital camera or scanner or copied from the Web, click the **Browse for more pictures** option below the picture box. The **Open** dialog box appears. Browse to find the picture file on your computer's hard disk. When you have located the picture, select it and click the **Open** button. You are returned to the account's task list, and the new picture is shown as the account's picture.

4 Change the Picture

After selecting the picture you want to use, click the **Change Picture** button. You are returned to the account's task list, and the account picture is changed to your selection.

13 Password Protect a User Account**✓ BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

- 11** Create a User Account
- 12** Change the Account Picture

12

Windows XP user accounts can be assigned a password. This means that for a user to log on using an account, she must know the password. A user with an administrative account can assign passwords to other user accounts. Each user (whether she has administrative or limited privileges) can also create and change her account password as needed.

1 Select a User Account

In the **User Accounts** window (select **User Accounts** in the **Control Panel** to open this window), select the user account for which you want to create a password (your own account or any account if you are a computer administrator).

2 Select Create a Password

Select the **Create a password** task to create a password for the selected user. The **Create a password** window opens. If you are changing an existing password (a password that you set previously), the link appears as **Change the password** instead of **Create a password**.

The image displays three sequential screenshots of the Windows User Accounts control panel, illustrating the process of password protecting a user account. The screenshots are annotated with numbered callouts:

- 1 Select a User Account:** The first screenshot shows the 'User Accounts' window with the 'Pick a task...' section. The 'or pick an account to change' section lists three accounts: Joe Habraken (Computer administrator), Bill Habraken (Limited account), and Guest (Guest account is off). A blue arrow points from the callout to the 'Bill Habraken' account.
- 2 Select Create a Password:** The second screenshot shows the 'User Accounts' window with the 'What do you want to change about Bill Habraken's account?' section. The 'Create a password' option is selected. A blue arrow points from the callout to the 'Create a password' option.
- 3 Enter a Password:** The third screenshot shows the 'Create a password for Bill Habraken's account' window. The 'Type a new password:' field is highlighted. A blue arrow points from the callout to this field.
- 4 Create the Password:** The 'Create Password' button is highlighted. A blue arrow points from the callout to this button.

TIP

It is suggested that you create “strong” passwords if you are serious about using passwords as a protection strategy for your computer (and the various user accounts). Strong passwords use a combination of alphabetic and numeric characters, use both uppercase and lowercase characters, and also use special characters such as @, #, and so on. A password can be up to 127 characters in length; however, Microsoft suggests that the strongest passwords are 7 or 14 characters long. If you are using user accounts merely as a convenience so that different family members can share a computer, you don’t need to overdo the passwords. If a user can’t remember a password because it is too complex, it really doesn’t do anyone any good. If a user does forget his account password, a user with an administrative account can change the password without knowing the original password. The user can then log on using the new password specified by the administrator.

3 Enter a Password

In the first text box, type a password for the account. Then retype the password as required in the second text box. You can also enter an optional hint for the password. The hint is shown on the Windows **Welcome** screen and is designed to help you remember your password.

TIP

If you use a password hint, remember that all the users of the computer can see the hint at the **Welcome** screen. The hint should not be a total giveaway in terms of allowing other users to guess your password.

4 Create the Password

After you have entered and then re-entered the password (and the optional hint), click the **Create Password** button. The account is now password protected. The password must be provided when you (or the account owner, if you are setting the password for another user) log on to the system.

14 Change the Account Type**✓ BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

- 12** Change the Account Picture
- 13** Password Protect a User Account

A computer administrator account can change the type of account assigned to other accounts on the system. For example, a computer administrator account can be changed to a limited account or vice versa. Because any computer administrator account can change the account type for all other accounts, computer

administrator accounts are not protected, meaning that one administrator can demote another administrator to a limited account.

► NOTE

It really makes sense and is definitely a best practice (I think you would agree) to have just one computer administrator account on a computer. All the other accounts can then be limited. Allow multiple computer administrator accounts only in an environment where you are sure that the various administrator users aren't going to mess around with the other users' settings, particularly the account type.

1 Select a User Account

In the **User Accounts** window (select **User Accounts** in the **Control Panel** to display this window), select the user account for which you want to modify the account type.

► NOTE

When you are changing the settings for *your own* user account, the tasks associated with the account are labeled **Change my name**, **Change my picture**, and so on. When you are changing the settings for another account (which only a computer administrator can do), the tasks are listed as **Change the name**, **Change the picture**, and so on.

2 Select Change the Account Type

In the account's task window, select the **Change the account type** task. The account type screen opens.

3 Choose an Account Type

Select the new account type for the account (if the account is currently **Computer administrator**, the only option is **Limited** and vice versa).

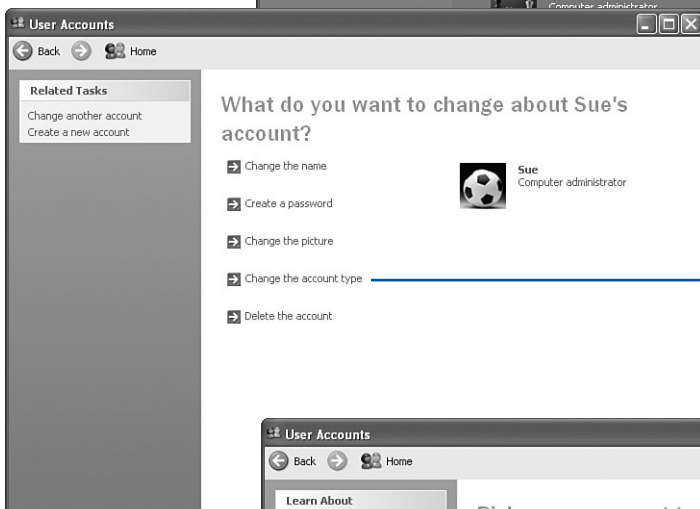
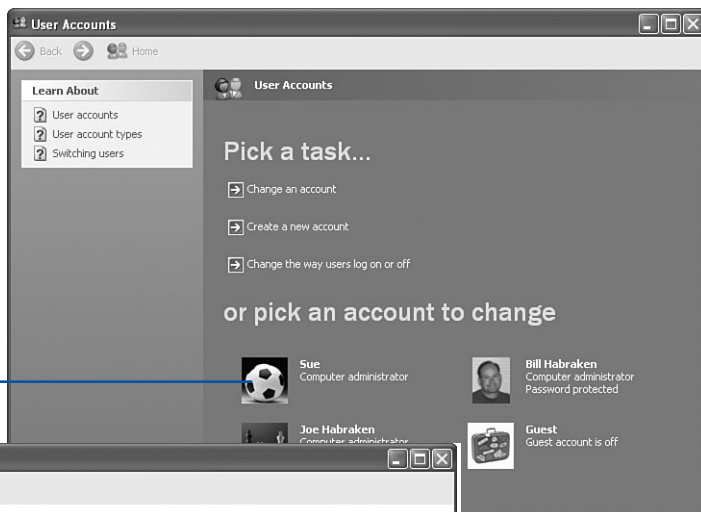
4 Set the Account Type

After selecting the account type, click the **Change Account Type** button to confirm the account type change.

► NOTE

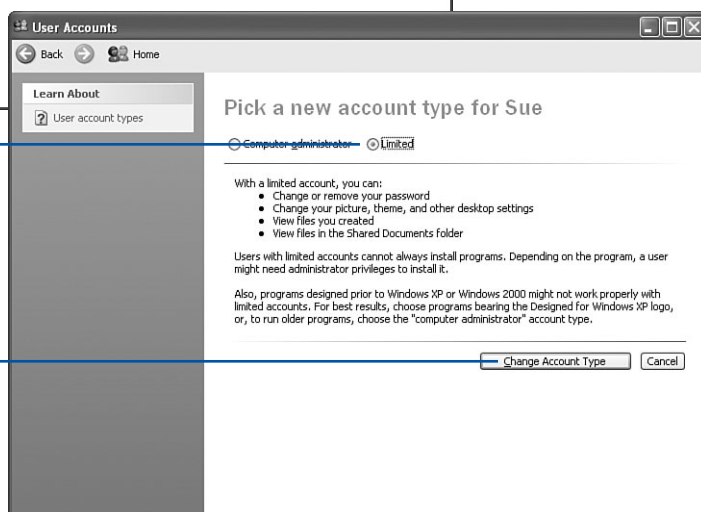
Windows XP Home is really designed for there to be one administrative account on the computer with all additional accounts existing as **Limited** accounts. This recommendation exists because administrative accounts can change the account type for any existing account, including other administrative accounts. For example, one administrator could demote another administrator to a **Limited** account. So, consider the whole account structure for any computer that is shared by multiple users. If one administrative account demotes another administrative account to a **Limited** account, there are no repercussions on the system other than that the former administrator can no longer change other users' account settings or change administrative settings on the computer.

1 Select a User Account



2 Select Change the Account Type Task

3 Choose an Account Type



4 Set the Account Type

14 Change the Account Type

15 Configure a .NET Passport for a User Account

✓ BEFORE YOU BEGIN

11 Create a User Account

Each user account on a computer running Windows XP can be associated with a Microsoft *.NET Passport*. The purpose of the passport is to identify the user when he accesses certain Microsoft content on the Web, including personalized web pages and other tools such as Microsoft's Instant Messaging service. The .NET Passport settings must be configured by each individual user (even an administrator cannot configure the passport for another user). Both **Computer administrator** and **Limited** accounts can be associated with a .NET Passport.

▶ KEY TERM

.NET Passport—A user account that provides access to personalized and special Microsoft web content. The Passport is really just an email account with Microsoft; anyone who signs up for a Microsoft Hotmail account (www.hotmail.com) automatically has a .NET Passport (which uses the email address and password established for the Hotmail account).

▶ TIP

You sign up for a .NET Passport by registering for a Microsoft Hotmail email account. Although you can sign up for the account during the process of associating the passport with your Windows user account, you might want to register for the Hotmail account before you begin the process of creating a .NET Passport (it just makes things easier). Go to <http://www.hotmail.com> to sign up. You will establish an email account name and account password during the signup process.

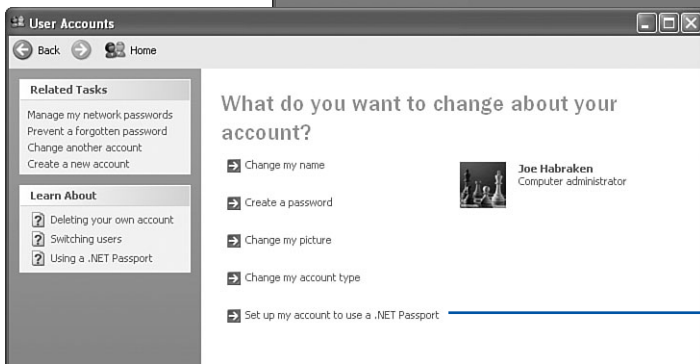
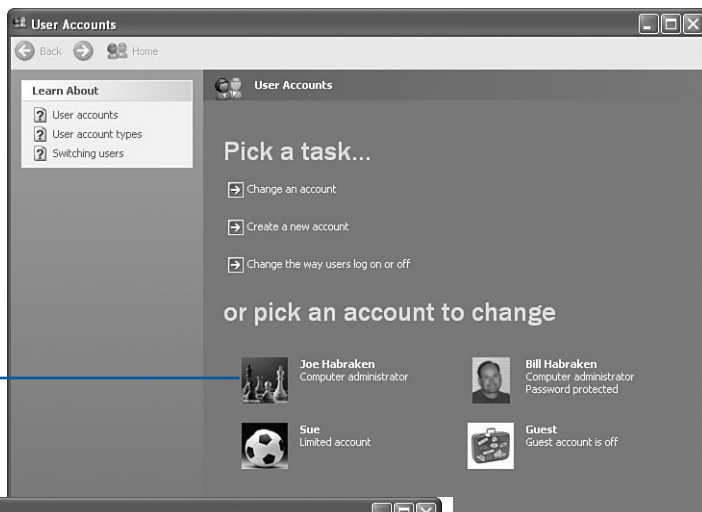
Select Your User Account

In the **User Accounts** window (select **User Accounts** in the **Control Panel** to open this window), select your user account. You must select your own account; you cannot configure a .NET Passport for an account other than your own.

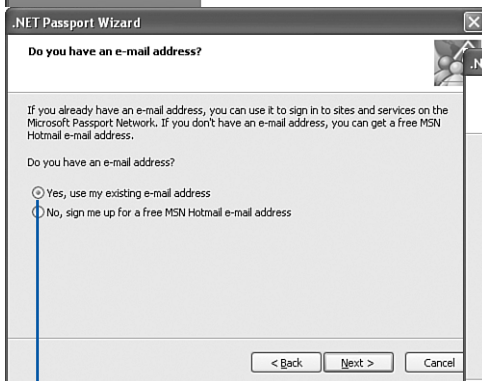
▶ NOTE

When a **Limited** user accesses the **User Accounts** window, the only options available apply to that user. For the user to associate a .NET Passport with his user account, the user selects the **Set up my account to use a .NET Passport** task after opening the **User Accounts** window.

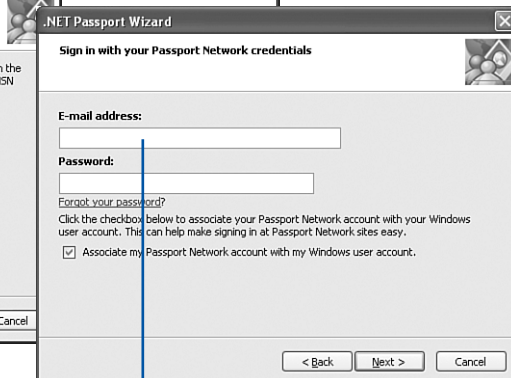
1 Select Your User Account



2 Select Set Up My Account to Use a .NET Passport



3 Choose the Use My Existing Email Address Option



4 Sign In with .NET Credentials

2 Select Set Up My Account to Use a .NET Passport

In the task list for the selected user account (your own account), select the **Set up my account to use a .NET Passport** task. The **.NET Passport Wizard** opens. Click **Next** to bypass the initial wizard screen.

3 Choose the Use My Existing Email Account Option

Assuming that you have already signed up for a Hotmail email account as suggested earlier, on the next wizard screen, make sure that the **Yes, use my existing email address option is selected**. Then click **Next**. The next screen verifies that you will sign in with your .NET credentials. Click **Next** to continue.

4 Sign In with .NET Credentials

Enter your Hotmail email account address and then enter your Hotmail account password. Click **Next** to continue. The final wizard screen appears. Click **Finish**. Now when you log on to the system, your .NET Passport will automatically be activated. As already mentioned, a .NET Passport allows access to special Microsoft web content such as My MSN (www.msn.com). The .NET Passport can also be associated with subscriptions you have purchased from Microsoft, such as the paid subscription for the Microsoft Developers Network (MSDN). To use the MSDN subscription and log on to the MSDN site, you must have a .NET Passport to associate with the subscription.

16 Log On to Windows

✓ BEFORE YOU BEGIN

11 Create a User Account

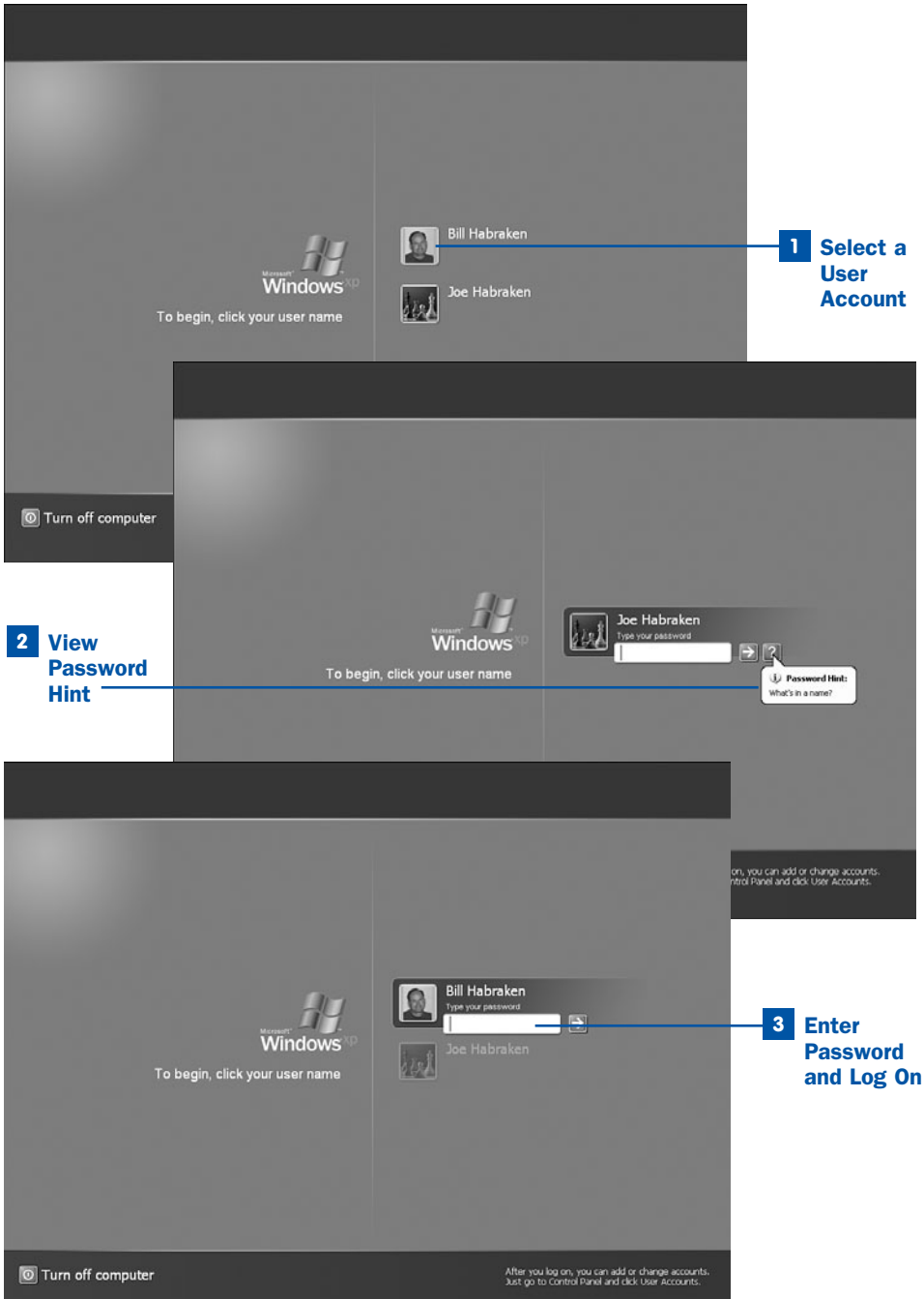
When you have multiple user accounts on a Windows system, a **Welcome** screen appears after the system boots. Select a user account picture to log that user on to the system. If the account is password protected, the user must enter the password for that account to complete the logon process.

1 Select a User Account

Boot your system. At the **Welcome** screen, click the picture of the account you want to log on to.

► NOTE

When a user logs off the system by selecting **Log Off** on the **Start** menu, the **Welcome** screen appears. A new user can then log on without rebooting the system.



2 View Password Hint

If the selected account has an associated password and you want to view the password hint for the password, click the user account picture. Then click the question-mark icon to the right of the password text box. The hint for your password appears.

3 Enter Password and Log On

Type the password for the user account in the password text box and press **Enter**. Windows verifies the password and then logs you on to the system.

17 Switch Users

✓ BEFORE YOU BEGIN

16 Log On to Windows

Logging off the system (using the **Start** menu) makes the system ready for the next user to log on. However, you don't *have* to log off for another user to sign on. In fact, you can leave your applications running (you are, in effect, "parking" your account) and use the **Switch User** feature to allow another user to log on and use the system. This ability to switch users allows multiple users to get on the system without rebooting or shutting down running applications by logging off.

1 Open Log Off Windows Dialog Box

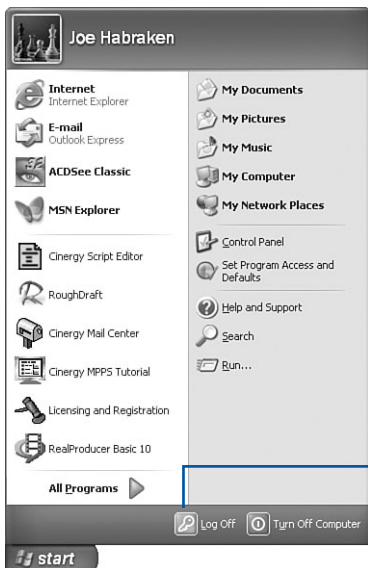
Click the **Start** button and select **Log Off** from the **Start** menu.

2 Select Switch User

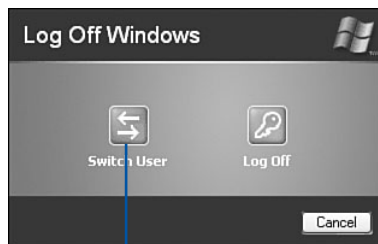
In the **Log Off Windows** dialog box that opens, click **Switch User**. The **Logon** screen appears.

► TIP

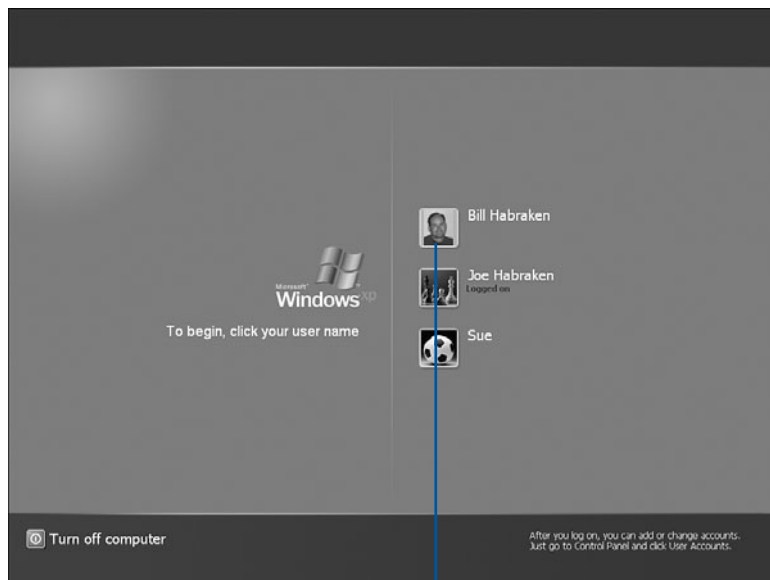
Although switching users is a quick way for someone to access the computer without forcing you to close down your applications, having multiple users logged on with multiple applications running does require system resources, meaning that the system will run slower. If you are finished working on the computer and another user wants to use it, log off rather than just switching users.



1 Open Log Off Windows Dialog Box



2 Select Switch User



3 Log On As a Different User

3 Log On As a Different User

The user you are switching to can now log on from the **Logon** screen. He can select an account, enter the appropriate password if necessary, and begin a user session as if he were the only user on the computer. All the applications, files, and settings you left in your account are unaffected by the actions of the second user in the new account.

When you need to switch back to your account, have the second user either log off or choose **Switch User** so that you can log back on to your account and your desktop. Note that, when you do log back on to your account, any applications you left running are still running, any files you left open are still open, and all other aspects of your desktop and system (such as items on the clipboard) are as you left them. In the case of multimedia applications such as Windows Media Player, the application will pause because the control of the computer is switched to the new user.

18 Delete a User Account

✓ BEFORE YOU BEGIN

12 Change the Account Picture

13 Password Protect a User Account

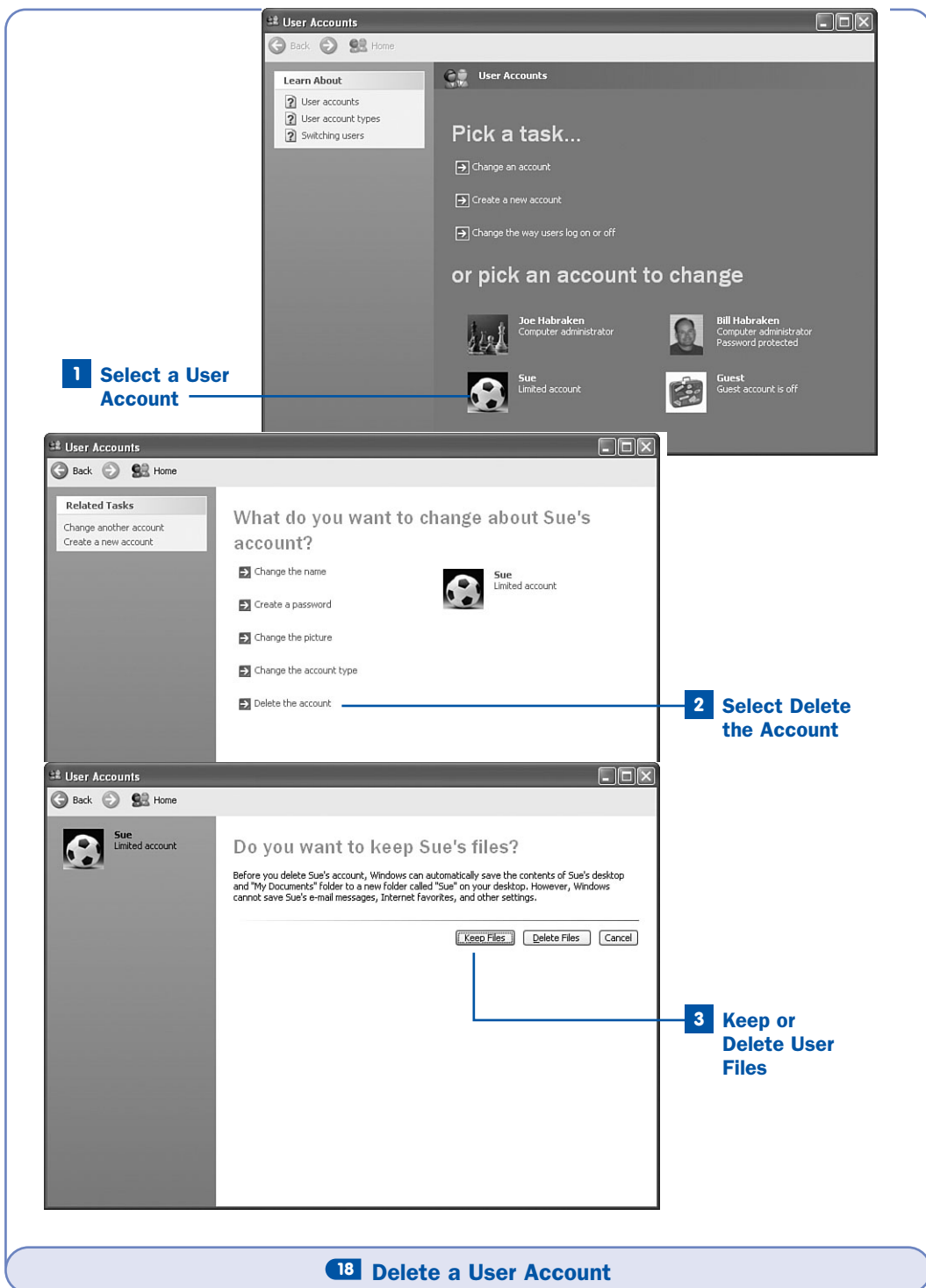
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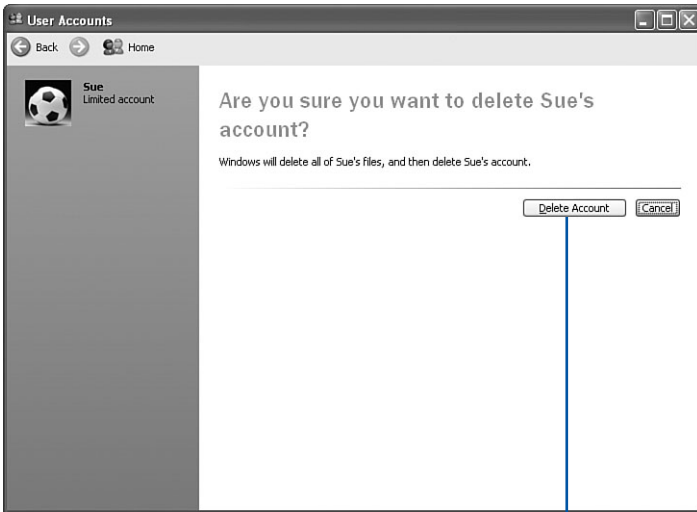
You might find it necessary to delete user accounts from the system. Users who have **Computer administrator** accounts can delete any other user account from the computer. Deleting an account removes that user from the system. You can also choose to delete files that were associated with that user account (such as files in the **My Documents** or **My Pictures** folder) or you can choose to have these files remain on the computer (they can be accessed by any of the remaining users on the computer). If you choose to delete the files associated with the user account you are deleting, you cannot recover the files (they are not placed in the **Recycle Bin** as a regular deletion is).

▶ TIP

Because administrative accounts can delete other administrative accounts, you might want only one administrative account on the computer in the first place, because then you don't end up with a situation where administrative users start deleting each others' accounts. It really is a "best practice" to have only one administrative account with all other accounts on the computer as limited.

If the computer has only one account (period, no other accounts have been created), there is no option to delete the account. There must be at least one account on the computer (which is why you must set up an account the first time you boot up a Windows XP installation).



**4 Delete the Account****18 Delete a User Account (continued)****1 Select a User Account**

In the **User Accounts** window (select **User Accounts** in the **Control Panel** to open this window), select the user account you want to delete from the list of accounts at the bottom of the window.

2 Select Delete the Account

From the task list for the selected user account, select the **Delete the account** task.

3 Keep or Delete User Files

When you delete an account, you have the option of either saving the files that are on the user's desktop and in the **My Documents** folder (the files are moved to a folder that is given the same name as the user's account name) or deleting all the account's files when you delete the user account. Click either the **Keep Files** or **Delete Files** button according to your preference.

3 Delete the Account

On the next screen, click **Delete Account**. The selected user account is deleted.

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