

Tips and Tricks for FS2004

Part XXIV

Compiled by David “Opa” Marshall

November 2006

Disclaimer: These ideas may or may not work for you – they do work well on my FS2004 setup. All recommendations are my personal preferences – I find them to be very useful – you may disagree. This is in no way meant to be a comprehensive listing – just a few tips, tricks and recommendations that I have come across. Hopefully you will find something of use, be you a newbie or a long time simmer.

This is Part XXIV (24) – see “[T and T info.txt](#)” (enclosed in the zip file) for a listing of the previous files. They all may be found at **Avsim.com** **Flightsim.com** and in .doc format at **Com-Central.net**.

Final Issue

Almost two years ago I compiled the first issue of Tips and Tricks as a way of giving back a little something to the Flight Sim community which has been so good to me. I had no idea the concept would be so well received. What started out as a “one time thing” sort of got out of hand and here we are at issue number 24.

We have tried to discuss most of the undocumented features in FS2004 and share some ideas which I found useful. If nothing else, I hope you feel a bit more comfortable tweaking your FS setup and exploring our vast FS world.

To all who have sent suggestions and tips, I offer my sincere thanks. Although we may never meet face to face, I consider the many regular correspondents to be my good friends. Amongst those, John Burford, who lives in Australia, deserves special mention. John offered his services when I was seeking someone to create an index for the series. An avid simmer, John has been an invaluable source of information as well as a friend.

But it is time to put Tips and Tricks for FS2004 to bed one last time. FSX will not run on my modest computer and I cannot afford a new one so FS2004 will serve my flying needs for some time to come.

I expect to explore more of the FS world, enhance a few scenery areas and further explore the use of AI vehicles – other than aircraft – in scenery, perhaps even putting a tutorial together on the subject. As always, I am happy to try to assist anyone who has a FS2004 related problem. If I don't have the answer, I may be able to direct you to someone who does,

It has been a great ride – thanks for coming along as passengers!

A Special Gaming Boot

I thought I was aware of most of the tweaks for XP but only recently discovered a built in “special boot up” for gamers.

This will allow you to start up your system with a minimum of extra services and applications being loaded so more computer resources are available to run your game more efficiently.

Following the link below will provide complete details plus a list of games which this idea applies to. There is also a video which demonstrates the usage of this clean boot procedure.

<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?kbid=331796>

I suggest you save this web page and print out the relevant portions.

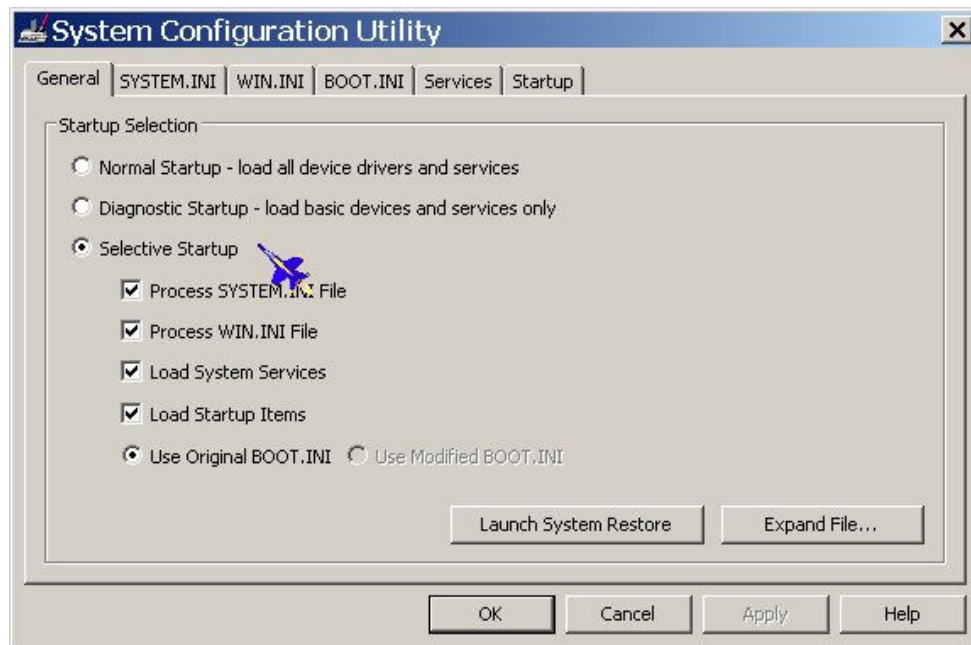
I use this idea quite often so I made a shortcut on my desktop to the msconfig utility (which MS hid rather well) rather than using the Start/Run procedure outlined in the above link.

If you wish to create such a shortcut, the path to msconfig.exe is:

C:\WINDOWS\PCHEALTH\HELPCTR\Binaries\msconfig.exe

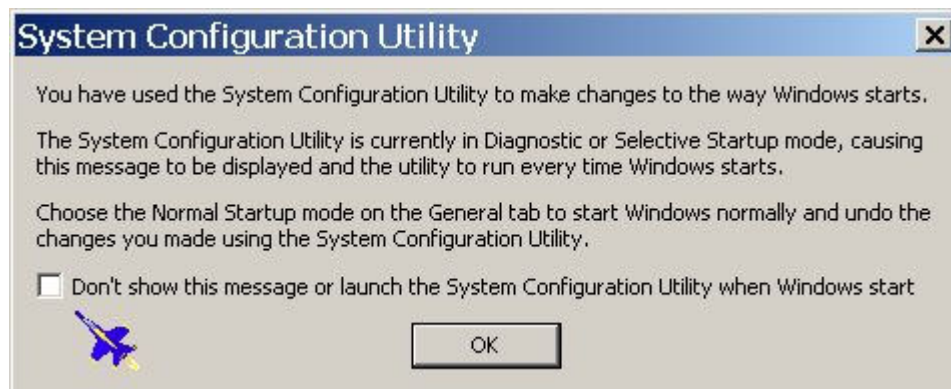
Copy and Paste that into your shortcut in the box that asks for the location of the item.

This is the screen which you will see when you access the msconfig utility



You will be selecting the “Selective Startup” option.

After making the necessary changes as described in the instructions, you reboot your computer. When your desktop comes up again you will see the following warning displayed.



That warning message is simply advising that you have made changes to the way Windows starts. You can elect not to see this screen by putting a mark in the checkbox. If you do not check that box, you will be taken to the msconfig screen again in case you wish to make changes. Just close the dialogue to proceed.

To restore your system to its normal boot sequence, simply access msconfig again and check the “normal startup” box.

Note: You must be logged on as Administrator in order to make changes via msconfig and be aware that security programs such as your anti-virus program will **not** be loaded when in the Selective Startup mode. This is not normally a problem if all you are doing is playing a game – just remember to revert back to your normal boot before accessing the internet. You can always disable your internet connection (manually or physically) if lack of anti-virus security is an issue.

The following is a brief recap of the procedures required to create the clean boot on the XP operating system.

1. Click Start, click Run, type msconfig in the Open box, and then click OK.
OR use the shortcut method described above.
2. On the General tab, click Selective Startup.
3. Under Selective Startup, click to **clear** the following check boxes:
 - Process SYSTEM.INI File
 - Process WIN.INI File
 - Load Startup Items
4. On the Services tab, click to select the Hide All Microsoft Services check box, and then click Disable All.
5. Click OK, and then click Restart your computer.

I am told that power users couple this clean boot idea with Ken Salter’s fine FSAutoStart program which I reviewed in Tips and Tricks number 12 to achieve the maximum benefits.

FS2004 runs noticeably smoother on my machine when I have executed the clean boot first.

Humor Only a Pilot Would Understand



Too Much Power?

For some reason I have never been able to fly (land) the default Lear 45 with any consistent degree of success. Perhaps the aircraft simply has more power than I can successfully manage.

I was therefore very pleased to discover a similar aircraft, the GROB SPn, which I found easy to fly and land.

The excellent model by **Andreas Koerner** is available from **Avsim.com** – the filename is “**spn.zip**”

In 2005 at the Paris air show, GROB introduced the prototype of its utility jet G 180. GROB claims to be the creator of a new class of "Utility Jet" aircraft. The GROB SPn Utility Jet offers STOL- characteristics, exceptional cabin volume and a superior range payload capability. The fuselage is totally made from carbon composite and the jet features an enhanced Apex cockpit, provided by Honeywell.



One of the interesting features of this model is the unusual engine starting sequence. The aircraft will always load with the engines off (I am not sure how the author accomplished that) and a very specific sequence is required to get them spinning.

Andreas provides complete instructions and a diagram in his documentation but rather than refer to it each time I wish to fly this aircraft, I created a pop-up window with the diagram which displays when the aircraft is loaded. After starting the engines I simply retire that window (Shift plus 5).

For your convenience, I am including that pop up window and instructions for its installation in the Bonus Files folder which is a part of this edition of Tips and Tricks.

The following is a screenshot of the panel with the startup sequence instructions displayed. As you click on the switches indicated by the yellow path, the instruments will come to life.



I hope you enjoy flying this aircraft as much as I do.

Looking For Something New To Do?

If you are like me, from time to time I want to try my hand at something new relating to FS2004.

Try this: Go to **Avsim.com** (or any other site which has a good search engine) and type in **Tutorial** as your search criteria. Limit your search to FS2004 related files.

You will be amazed at the wide variety of tutorials available which such a search will display – everything from the very simple to the more complex.

My thanks to all the authors who have taken the time to share their knowledge by means of tutorials.

More Humor

Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

Stewardess - A pretty gal who asks you what you want, then straps you in so you can't get it.

A student became lost during a solo cross-country flight. While attempting to locate the aircraft on radar, ATC asked, "What was your last known position?"

Student: "When I was number one for takeoff".

Cessna: "Jones tower, Cessna 12345, student pilot, I am out of fuel."

Tower: "Roger Cessna 12345, reduce airspeed to best glide!! Do you have the airfield in sight?!?!?"

Cessna: "Uh...tower, I am on the south ramp; I just want to know where the fuel truck is."

From the E-Mail Bag Department

Several recent e-mails asked if I had any ideas to share regarding "creating" more disk space.



No matter how large a disk drive is, it seems to fill up very fast with new aircraft and "must have" sceneries – a common ailment most of us share.

This is especially true for those of us who do not have a computer dedicated to gaming and must use it for such mundane things as word-processing, spreadsheets, music and video editing and the wife's cookbook.

Here are several ideas which I use to free up more space on my hard drive.

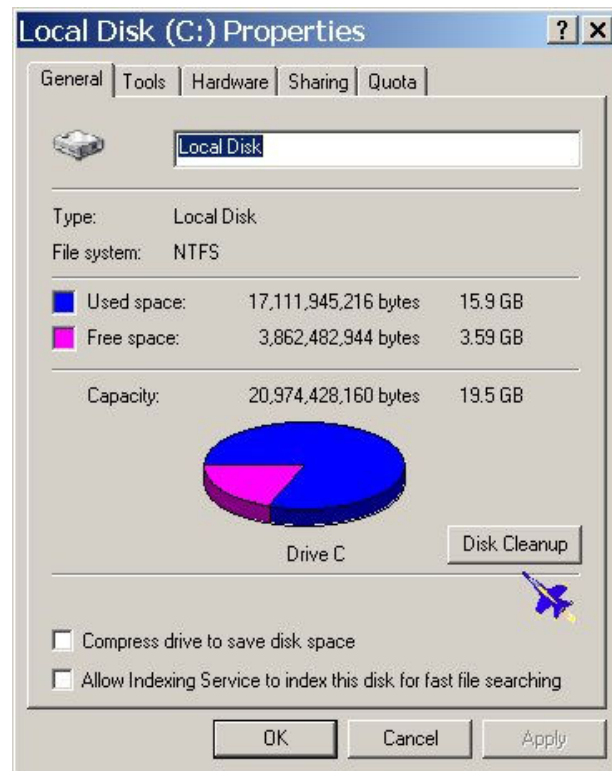
The first is the built-in utility (in XP) named appropriately enough, “disk cleanup”.

You see this screen, or one similar to it, when you go to My Computer and right click on your hard drive and select Properties.

If you click on Disk Cleanup, XP will take a few minutes to calculate what it can do and offer to compress old files and delete some unnecessary files etc.

I run this utility on a regular basis and it does a fair job of cleanup.

There is an excellent, free utility which I recently discovered that takes this cleanup procedure one step further.



It is called **dclean**. You can get your copy at <http://find.pcworld.com/54310>

The first time I used it, dclean found files which had been left behind when I un-installed an alternative web browser a year or so ago – recovering almost ½ a gig of space! You are always given a list of potential items to remove before anything happens so you can select only those which can be safely removed. I **highly recommend** this utility.

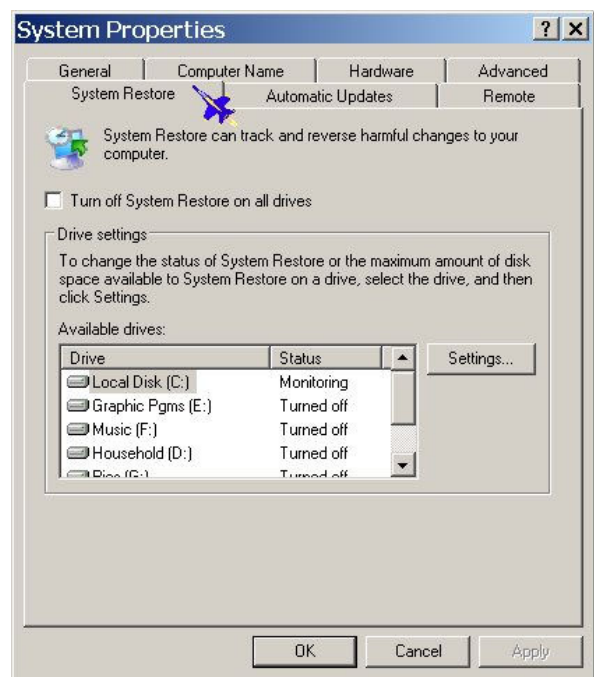
Another way to free up disk space is to adjust the XP Restore settings. The Restore function in XP takes up considerable space as it saves a record of your various files and settings periodically and/or when you create a new restore point. In many cases it can use a gig or more of space!

I do **not** recommend turning off the Restore function completely, although that will instantly provide considerably more free disk space, but you can limit the amount of space reserved for it. After all, do you really need to keep 20 or 30 old restore points? I have adjusted my reserved space so only the most recent five or six restore points are saved

To make such adjustments, go to Start/Settings/Control Panel and scroll down to System. Click on the System Restore tab. From here you can either shut off system restore completely, or turn down the amount of hard disk space that it will consume.

To stop system restore completely, check the box that says "Turn off System Restore on all drives". This will give you no restore points unless you set them manually.

To just lower the disk space it will use, you can click a "Settings" button if you have multiple hard drives (or partitions which are seen as additional drives), or there will be a slider in the main window. Simply move the bar until you have the amount of memory that you want reserved. I recommend around 1000 MB, but a bit less is usually enough (some of the restore points can be rather large).



After you are finished, click "Apply" and "OK".

Using the above adjustments and cleanups, I recently reclaimed well over two gigs of hard drive space!

And finally you can have XP compress all or portions of any disk drive. This saves a significant amount of space and is easily reversible. This idea was discussed in Tips and Tricks Number 10. I have most of my FS2004 setup compressed and see no degrading of performance.

Tooting My Own Horn (one last time)

Now that you have some extra disk space, may I suggest you download and install [Opa's Campground](#) – my most recent scenery enhancement.

You can find it at [Avsim.com](#) as “[opas_campground.zip](#)” or at [Flightsim.com](#) as “[opacgrnd.zip](#)”.

This is a fictitious campground located on the shores of beautiful Lake Texoma on the Texas-Oklahoma border. Created with the EZ and RWY12 Object placing programs, the scenery is packed with eye candy and some unusual features including AI Helicopter rides, an AI Windsurfer and AI boats moving about the lake plus fireworks on the 4th of July.



If you are seeking a great place to "get away" for some fun, this is it.

A Great Site

Certainly one of most comprehensive and useful websites relating to Aviation is “The Pilot’s Friend”. In my humble opinion, this should be in everyone’s Favorites list.

<http://www.pilotfriend.com/>

Check it out – if they don’t have it you probably don’t need it.

Patience Pays Off

In Tips and Tricks Number 4, I recommended several California Missions by **Ron Ezra** and noted that he was working on a remake of Furnace Creek in Death Valley.

It has been a long time coming, but I think you will find the wait was worthwhile. The project includes Furnace Creek Inn and Furnace Creek Ranch plus a few other surprises.



To get your copy of this beautiful, incredibly detailed scenery, go to either **Flightsim.com** or **Avsim.com** and download “**furnckv6.zip**”.

This is exceptionally nice work which I highly recommend.

Prolific Is Putting It Mildly

I doubt if there is anyone who collects add-on scenery enhancements who does not have at least several projects created by John B. Loney, Jr. installed on their system. He is surely one of the most prolific contributors to our hobby with 31 projects for FS2002 and over 115 (and counting) for FS2004! He has also created a number of aircraft for FS2004.

We often take the work of such authors for granted so I asked John to provide some information about his background and how he became so involved in scenery design. Here is his response:



Quoting from John –

“Ever since I was a young boy, I've been fascinated with flight. Starting with paper airplanes, I got involved with balsa wood gliders, static aircraft models and control line gas models. For some reason I never got to radio controlled aircraft. After college and a four year hitch in the army during the Vietnam era, I put model aircraft aside to raise a family and pursue a career as a radiology technologist and later a cardiac technologist.

During my allied health career, I got very interested in computers and thus I found that path led to flight simulation. I got my first experience in flight simulation with Microsoft's Flight Simulator, Version 3. I've been flying the simulation ever since. It wasn't until early 2002 that I got into scenery design, but it was for my own pleasure. With the encouragement of family and friends and some of the designers I had corresponded with, I published my first design in December 2002.

Now that I am retired, I spend my time working occasionally as a cardiac technologist, traveling (mostly by car nowadays) and generally enjoying life; and oh yes, designing scenery for Microsoft's Flight Simulator. My earliest aircraft was released on 12/3/04 to my web site. I found scenery is much, much easier than aircraft. Also, it's been fun, fun, fun all the way”.

End of quote.

John is 65 years young and currently live in Hillside, NJ. as a semi-retired cardiovascular technologist. You can visit his website at www.lfssd.net and/or find his work at **Flightsim.com** and **Avsim.com**. Hardly a week goes by without a new offering for your consideration.

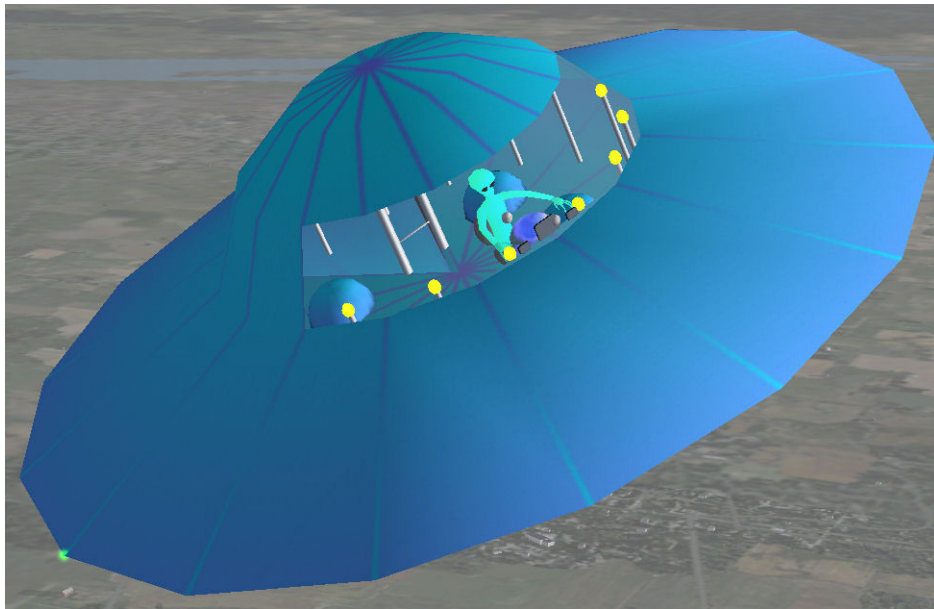
Perhaps my favorite scenery from John is “**spokane4.zip**” which you can find at **Avsim.com**. The three major airports around Spokane, Washington - Spokane International Airport (KGEG), Fairchild Air Force Base (KSKA) and Felts Field, (KSFF) are all included in the package. This single package will do much to bring the Spokane area alive.

Thanks from all of us, John – keep em’ coming.

Holiday Fun – For Kids of All Ages

Once again the holidays are just around the corner and that often means having visiting kids who want to fly something on your computer.

The creative mind of **Andy Johnston** has provided a rendition of a UFO (unidentified flying object) which may just fit this circumstance.



I particularly like the spindly “legs” which deploy when you lower the landing gear.

This is available at **Flightsim.com** - get for “**ufoaj.zip**” and “**ufofxaj.zip**” which is a small update.

From the description file:

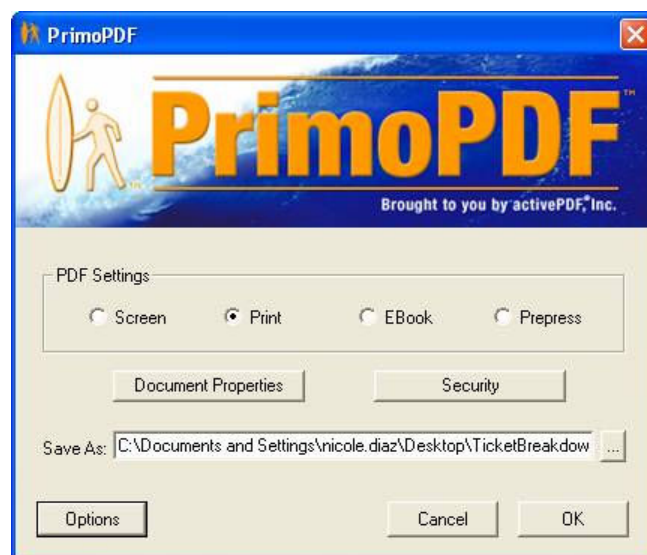
“The planned alien invasion of Earth is less than a year and a half away. In preparation, a scout ship has arrived. The surface on their world is very different, and they misjudged the way their craft will react on Earth, giving the ship some strange ground handling”.

Great fun – for **any** age.

Making Your Own PDF Files

There are times when most of us would like to be able to create a PDF file for business use or for a FS related project. However, the last time I checked, the program of choice to do this, Adobe Acrobat (Professional Version), was priced upwards of \$150.00, which is out of reach for many.

A fellow simmer recently called my attention to an excellent, **free** program which will convert virtually any printable file type such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint and just plain text files into PDF files.



The program is called PrimoPDF and you can download your **free** copy – no nag screens, no gimmicks, no catches – from www.primopdf.com.

Although it does not have all the “bells and whistles” the Adobe Acrobat program has, such as including bookmarks (which allow the user to jump to a pre-determined location in a document), PrimoPDF will fill the needs of most users. It **does** process included pictures and this makes it especially useful when creating tutorials and installation documentation.

I use it all the time now when creating documentation for scenery projects. [The pdf version of this issue of Tips and Tricks was created using this tool.](#)

The process is amazingly simple. Create your document using a word processor such as Word. Include pictures as needed. When you are finished, just “print” your document – not to your regular printer, but to a new option which will appear in your printer list – [PrimoPDF](#). The program will prompt you for a file name and in mere moments the PDF file will be created at the location you specified.

Give it a try - I am sure you will find it very useful and very easy to use.

Men and Their Toys



This 1/9th scale radio-controlled C-17 model was built in the United Kingdom . To date it has about 20 flights. It was built as the centerpiece of a 15 program television series produced in the U.K. for the Home and Leisure satellite TV channel.

It took 1 year to build and is powered with 4 Jetcat P-120 turbines with a total thrust of 108 lbs. The models weighs over 250 lbs fuelled, and carries 12.5 liters (3.3 US gallons) of 95% kerosene and 5% turbine oil fuel. Other details include 5 Futaba PCM receivers, 16 battery packs (93 cells), 20 Futaba servos, on board air compressor, electro/pneumatic retracts, etc.

Wingspan is 20 feet 8 inches, and the top of the fin is 74 inches (6 feet 2 inches) above the ground. Takeoff weight is 264 lbs. The rear cargo doors open and they drop an r/c jeep on a pallet, as well as 2 freefall r/c parachutists.

The model also has smoke systems both of the inboard turbines, and uses 2.4 GHz data link to provide real-time data to a laptop computer on the ground while in flight, this data includes airspeed, turbine RPM, EGT, fuel consumption, etc. It is covered in fiberglass and epoxy resin. Built mainly from balsa and ply, with many glass and carbon fiber moldings to reduce weight. This C-17 Globemaster III is one of the largest jet models in the world today! It is complete with retractable landing gear and pneumatically operated flaps.

If you really get “bored” with FS, perhaps something like this is a good alternative!

An Impressive Formation

In Tips and Tricks Number 23, I called your attention to a fine re-creation of Randolph Air Force Base near San Antonio, Texas.

Here is a great photo of an Air Force training squadron flying in a never-done-before "USA" formation over the control tower "Taj Mahal" (HQ building) of Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.



Now that takes some planning and a great deal of skill!

Just For Fun

As everyone must know by now, FedEx operates one of the world's largest package delivery services. In the U.S., they run everything into Memphis, Tennessee for sorting after 11:00. This short movie clip illustrates the fun they have when trying to get everything (aircraft) on the ground to avoid a cold front which is fast approaching.

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6886880938991195179>

Enjoy.

Crowded Parking

I don't think I want to visit this GA airport if their parking area is so crowded that pilots need to park in this manner!



It gives new meaning to the phrase “double parked”.

Getting Lined Up

When learning to land aircraft it is often difficult to properly line up your aircraft with a runway as you approach an airport. Finding the right “rivet” or gauge on the panel to use as a reference point is not always easy.

To solve that problem, many simmers add a “fly speck” on the windshield. However I recommend logging onto the following site for an even better idea.

http://www.desktopaviator.com/Articles/Alignment_Bar/index.htm

The instructions at the site will show you how to easily place a small, vertical blue line on the windshield which makes it very easy to position your aircraft in line with the runway.



Unfortunately I have misplaced the name of the reader who sent me this tip several months ago so cannot credit him properly. He also included the following adjustment to the basic instructions which he uses on aircraft. His changes to the suggested parameters are highlighted in Red.

```
[Window05]
// VERTICAL BLUE LINE
Background_color=41,200,253
size_mm=512
window_size_ratio=1.00
position=0
visible=0
ident=Target
window_size= 0.003, 0.300
window_pos= 0.507, 0.05 // Position left, Position Up-Down
// Increase this Number '.505' Line goes RIGHT Lower this number '0.07' - Line goes UP
```

Once you have reviewed the information from the link, the above “window” data will make sense. Happy landings!

Recommended But Not Tested

Several readers have recommended the following two programs to me but I have simply not had the time to install them to verify their enthusiasm.

1. The program named [Traffic Changer](#) by **Jeff Bobicki**.

Traffic changer is a tool to simplify AI for FS9. The user can make flight plans, compile BGL files (using included Traffic Tools) and place the final plans into FS9 using a "group" concept. This is ideal for managing fleets of AI aircraft or for users wanting to easily change AI traffic at a single airport. It installs with the 59 default AI aircraft available that are already in FS9, 5,500 of the most common airports and a sample flight plan. A tour makes it very easy to get started.

It is available from **Avsim.com** as “**tc622a.zip**”.

2. The program named [Enviro! 3.2](#) by the **BUSI CAT DESIGNS** team.

This is a program which allows you to manage virtually all audio aspects of the FS2004 environment.

It is available at Avsim.com also as “enviro!32setup.zip”.

Complete details can be found at their official website:

<http://www.avsim.com/hangar/utils/enviro/>

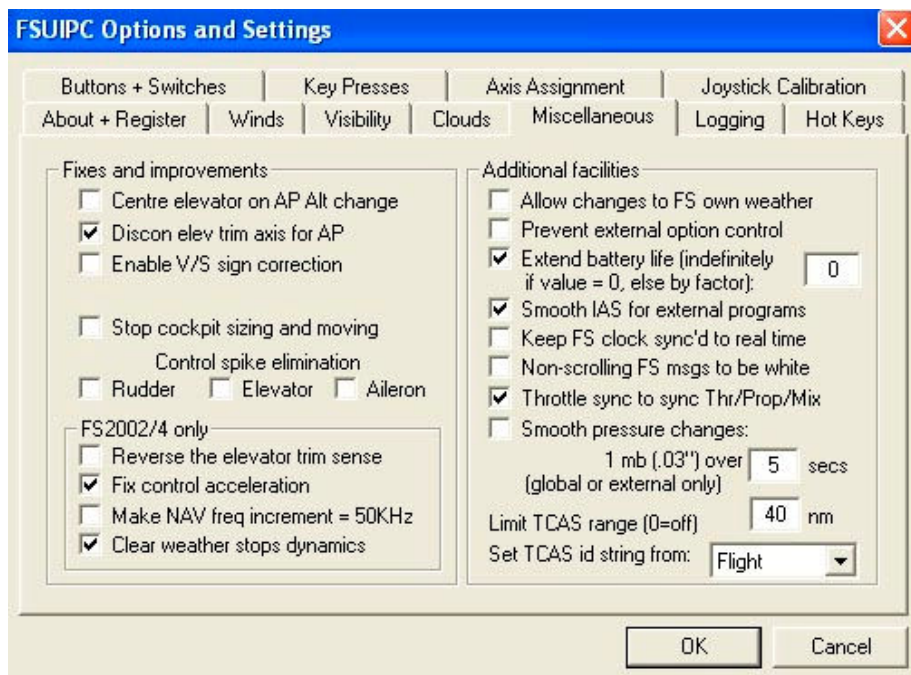
Both programs appear to offer some really fine features. I hope you take the time to audition both and see if they are useful in your situation.

Need More Juice?

There are times when it is enjoyable just to sit back and watch AI aircraft arrive and depart from a large airport. It can be even more enjoyable to listen to the ATC communications between the ground and the planes during such a session. But having the radio **on** with the engines and everything else **off** can result in a “dead battery” in a fairly short time.

Here are a couple of tips which will provide “more juice” for your battery – no matter what the circumstance.

1. If you have a registered copy of FSUIPC, there is an option to have unlimited battery life as seen in the following screenshot.



Note: That is a “universal” change which will provide unlimited battery life to all aircraft you may fly.

2. If you have not registered your copy of FSUIPC and/or wish to apply an unlimited battery life option to a specific aircraft only, try the following.

Using Notepad, open the aircraft.cfg file for the airplane in question and scroll down the label named [\[electrical\]](#).

Add the following line –

[max_battery_voltage=0](#)

Save your work and exit Notepad.

Whichever aircraft you configured in that manner should now have unlimited battery life.

Radio Controlled Aircraft

Since most of us probably will never be able to afford a radio controlled model such as was described in the earlier segment named “Men and Their Toys”, you may wish to explore this alternative.

Slim Tanner has written a simple tutorial which shows how to use FS2004 aircraft as a simulation of RC (radio controlled) models.

Basically you fly slow moving GA aircraft, such as a bi-wing, from the Tower View rather than the Cockpit View. This is a most interesting concept which I found to be challenging and a [great deal of fun](#).

You can download his short tutorial on the subject from **Flightsim.com** as “**rcsimul.zip**”.



An Alternative to FS ?

I may get drummed out of the FS2004 simming community for including the following information but I think it is important to let everyone (especially developers) know there is a **free**, “open source” alternative to FS available.

To find out more about this rather fascinating concept, log on to:

<http://www.flightgear.org/>

Open source means that all of the programming code required to operate the simulation, including scenery and aircraft, is freely available for developers to use and enhance. This is the same concept used by the alternative web browsers and other “open” applications which have become so popular. Of course the best part, for fliers like you and me, is that all of this is free!

Currently I do not have the disk space available to audition this simulation alternative, so cannot vouch for it, but the descriptions and screenshots at the above site certainly do look intriguing!

If you have the time and disk space, you may want to look into this.

I Won't Be Offended

If you have found this series useful and happen to have a crisp, new \$1 bill lying around (**or even an old one**) please consider mailing it to me to add to “Opa’s New Computer Fund”.



Just drop me an e-mail and I will send you my mailing address.

I promise that I won't be offended by your generosity.

Thanks

Thanks once again to all the readers who have sent suggestions for items to be included in this series. You know who you are if I have failed to mention you by name.

Link to My Uploads

To see a complete listing of projects I have uploaded to Avsim.com, just follow this link.

<http://library.avsim.net/eseach.php?CatID=fs2004&Name=&FileName=&Author=David+Marshall&DLID=&Sort=Added&ScanMode=0&Go=Change+View>

Final Thought:

If you find a particularly fine aircraft, airport or any other useful addition, take the time to drop the author an e-mail and let them know that you appreciate their work. Countless hours are involved in the creation of these additions and an encouraging word now and then is always welcomed.

Questions and/or Constructive Comments regarding “Tips and Tricks” may be directed to:

opaflightsimaddict@verizon.net

opaflightsimaddict@verizon.net

It's not a hobby -- it's a bloody addiction!



Flightsim Award Winner