

When advanced users outsmart themselves: The device removal notification icon

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A customer submitted a suggestion to the user interface team about the device removal notification icon.

The device removal notification icon is far too hard to use. When I click on it, I get a menu that says **Safely Remove Hardware**, and when I click on that menu item, I get a dialog box that lists all the removable devices, with vague names like *USB Mass Storage Device* and propeller-beanie details like *Connected on Port 0006, Hub 0004*. When I click the *Display device components* check box, I'm presented with a tree view of hardware devices that only a geek could love.

This is far too complicated. When I click on the device removal notification icon, I expected to get a simple menu that listed the devices that could be removed in an easy-to-identify manner, such as *USB Mass Storage Device on Drive E:*. Please consider making this improvement in the next version of Windows.

Um, actually, that menu you are describing is already there, on *the left click menu*. Because, according to the traditional rules for notification icons (and the device removal icon was written back in Windows 95, when the traditional rules were operative), left clicking gives you the simple menu and right clicking gives you the advanced menu. This customer was so accustomed to right-clicking on notification icons that the idea of left-clicking never even occurred to him.

When I tell this story to other advanced users, I often get the same reaction: "What? You can left-click on that thing and it does something different from right clicking? Dude, why didn't anybody tell me this? I've been doing it the hard way all this time!"

I find this story interesting for a few reasons. First, it shows that differentiating the left click from the right click on notification icons as a way to determine whether to show the simple menu or the advanced menu is now obsolete. Just show the same menu for either click, because users (and these are advanced users, mind you, not just novices) don't even realize that a left click and a right click are different operations at all! And second, it highlights the

ineffectiveness of having an *Expert* mode. These were all advanced users. If there were an *Expert* setting, they would have set it. And then they not only would have found themselves having to micro-manage the process of removing hardware devices, but also *would have asked for a feature that was the same as restoring the novice UI*.

Update: Remember, this is part three of a series. Don't forget to read the other two parts.

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