

Environment Variables – Path Address Code Words

What

Use Environment Variables and create your own Environment Variables.

Why

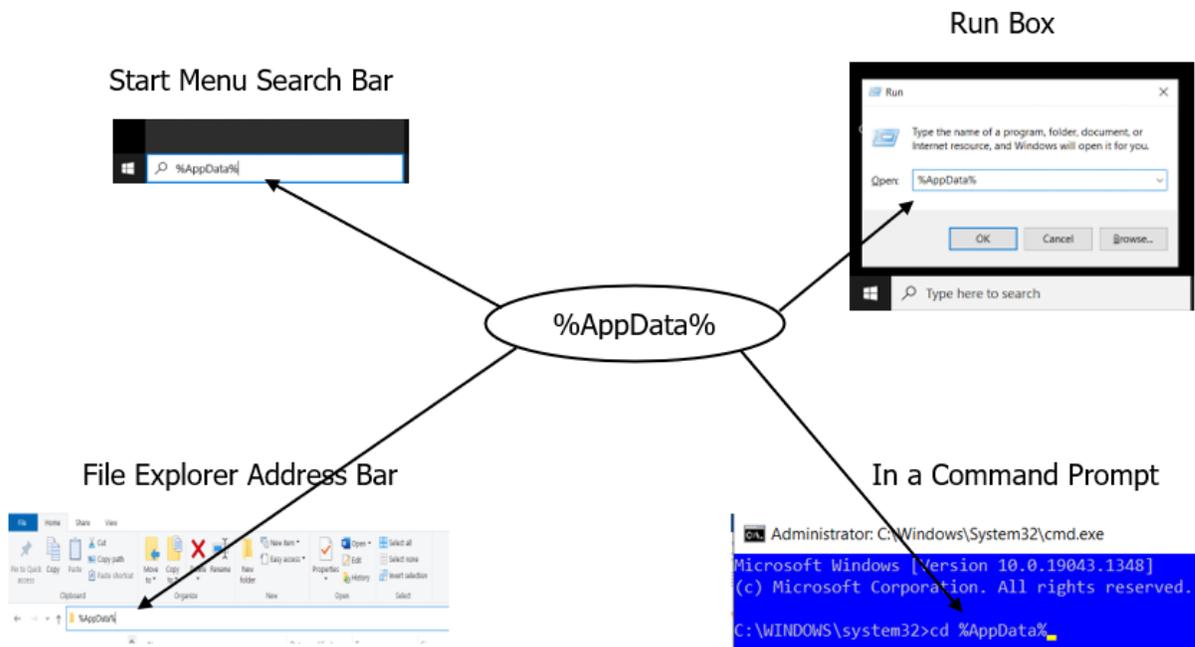
Entering a “code word” (Environment variable) for a long Path address is easier and less error prone than entering the long Path address. Also, Environment Variables locate folders you have forgotten the exact Path address to.

How

Using Environment Variables

Step 1

Environment variables (code words) are entered anywhere a Path address is entered and Windows will replace the exact Path address for that “code word” when executing the command for that Path address. Examples of some places a Path address is entered are in the example below. In order for Windows to know that an Environment Variable has been entered, the “code word” must be enclosed in percent (%) signs (except in PowerShell where \$env: is used to identify the Environment variable). Environmental variables can be used alone or as part of a longer Path address. In the example below I use the default Environment variable APPDATA which is the Path address C:\Users\UserName\AppData\Roaming folder where *UserName* is your account name.



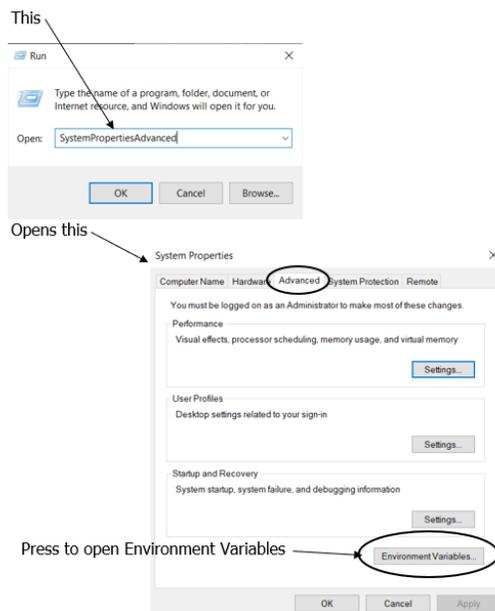
Step 2

In order to use Environment variables you need to know what Environment Variables you have on your PC. To see a list of all your Environment variables: Open a Command Prompt (type **cmd** in Start Menu Search box and press *Enter* key). At the prompt type **set** and press the *Enter* key. A list of all Environment Variables and each's corresponding Path address will display. To make a copy of the list: Press **Ctrl + A** to highlight all text in the Command Prompt, press **Ctrl + C** to copy the highlighted text, and **Paste** into a blank document of your text editor.

Create Your Own Environment Variables

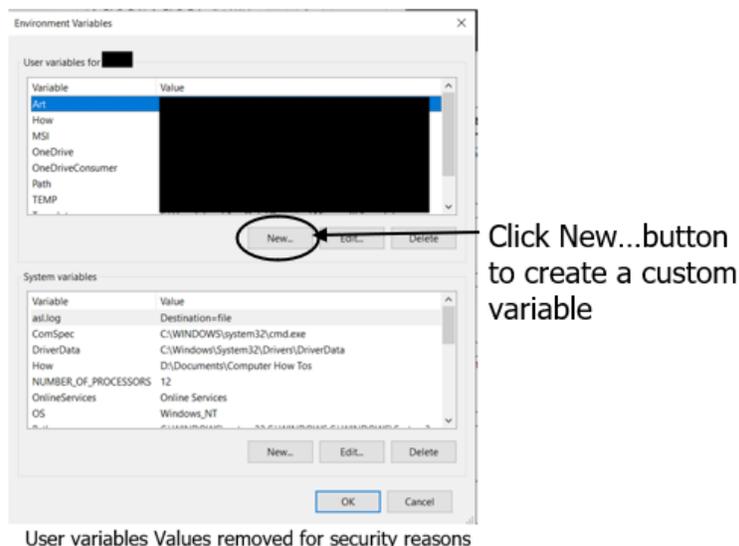
Step 1

Open a *Run* box (*WinKey + R*) and type in **SystemPropertiesAdvanced** and press the *Enter* key. This will open the System Properties window to the Advanced tab as shown below:



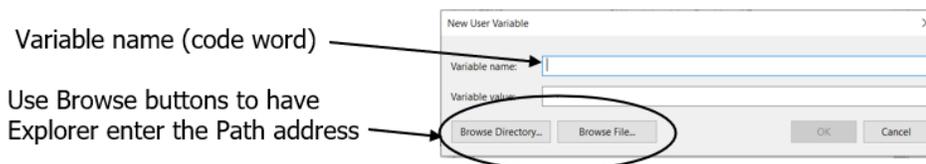
Step 2

Press the **Environment Variables** button to open the Environment Variables window as shown below:



Step 3

Press the **New..** button under the *User variables* box to open the New User Variable window as shown below.



Step 4

Enter a name (code word) for your custom variable. The name should remind you what Path address it represents and should be a short name so there will be less to type each time you use it. Example: *Art* for a custom environment variable to a folder on an external drive that contains all photo, video, and graphic files...easy to remember and easy to use. Use the *Browse* buttons to use File Explorer to locate the *Directory* (drive or folder) or *File* you want so File Explorer can enter the correct Path address for you. Press *OK* to close the window. Press *OK* to close the Environment Variables window. Press *OK* to close the System Properties window and save your changes. You must reboot to activate your new Environment variable.

Comments

Custom Environment Variables and the Start Menu Search bar creates "shortcuts" to specific folders without cluttering the Desktop with shortcut icons.