

Reusing an Old PC as a Server

Using Free Software and
Equipment that you Already Own



Nourish Your Mind

How to Download TV Shows from the Internet

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Reusing an Old PC as a Server

So let's say you hit the technology jackpot and score yourself a shiny new super computer. (OK, maybe just a plain old new computer.) Congratulations! Now, after you get over the initial euphoria of setting up your new workhorse, you might start wondering what to do with your faithful old friend. (OK, annoying old dinosaur.)

Should you.....

- Throw it out? - *NO*
- Give it away? – *Come on*
- Donate it to charity? – *Even poor kids don't want that thing*
- Take it out to a field and give it an [Office Space style beatdown like Peter, Michael Bolton, and Samir](#) did to that printer. (Fun, but we can do better.)

Let's take that doddering old codger and breathe some new life into it.

Goal: Provide instructions to turn an old computer into a server that you can control remotely and use for various handy purposes.

Assumptions: You have, or can an old computer that is no longer used and a basic router for your home network.

What You Will Need

You can achieve this setup using equipment that you already own and a simple FREE software download.

Here are the parts that you will need:

- Computer that will be used as your Primary "Desktop"
- Old computer that runs Windows
- Monitor
- Keyboard
- Mouse
- Basic Home Network Router (Click here to purchase.)
- Three Network Cables (Click here to purchase.)

Optional: A New Large Hard Drive (Click here to purchase.) Depending on how old your "Old" pc is, it may have a very small hard drive. If you want to store a lot of files and information on the server, you may want to buy a large enough drive to hold everything. You can get a very large drive cheaply now days. Also, a Wi-Fi card so that

Setting Up the Old PC (Server)

Start by hooking up the old computer. Plug in the keyboard, monitor, mouse, and network cable and power it up.

Next we'll need to get the software that will turn the old computer into a server that can be remote controlled by another computer on the network.

We are going to use VNC software on both computers. VNC is free software that allows you to see and interact with another computer's desktop applications across a network.

There are several versions of VNC software available. I use [TightVNC](#), because it is pretty simple to use and I have had good results using it. Feel free to experiment with other versions.

Downloading the Software

Go to the [TightVNC Download Site](#) to download the software. There are a couple different formats that you can download. They each allow you to use a different method to install and configure the software. Click the **tightvnc-setup.exe** version. This is definitely the easiest one to install. Later on when we set up the new computer you will do the exact same thing.

Installing the Software on the Old PC

Now that you have the software downloaded to your computer, you are ready to begin installation.

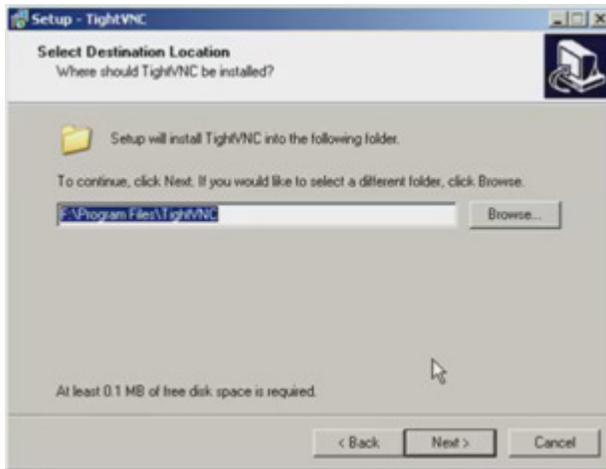
Double click the **tightvnc-setup.exe** file to launch the Installation Wizard.



Click the **NEXT** button on the first two screens of the wizard.

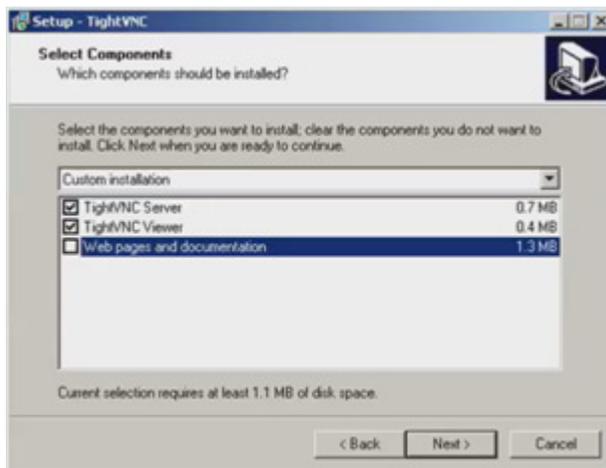
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Determine where you want to install the software and click the **NEXT** button.



Click the **NEXT** button.

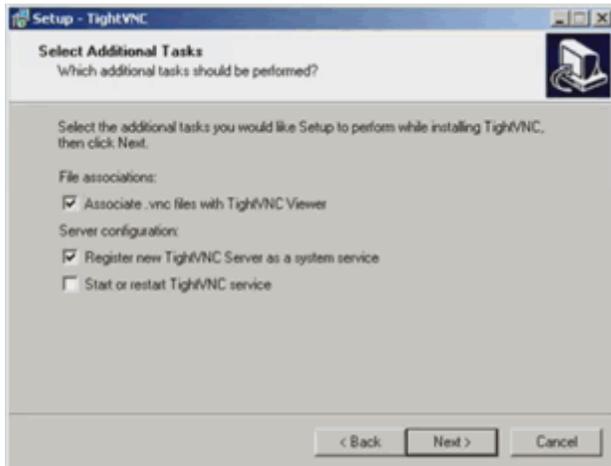
Select the components that you want to install



All of the components will be checked by default. Uncheck the **Web Pages and Documentation** checkbox and click the **Next** button.

You want the server software to run automatically when the server computer starts.

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Check the **Register TightVNC Server as a system service** and click the **Next** button.

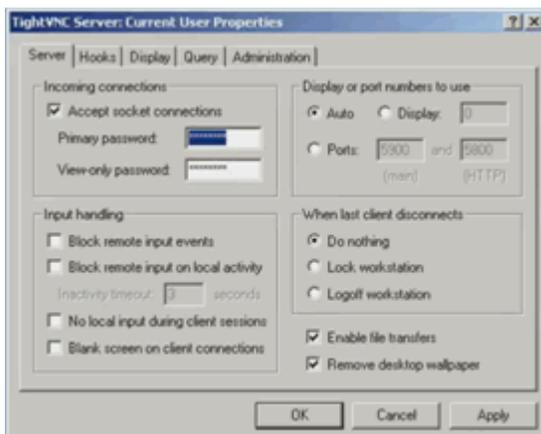
This make the server run as soon as the computer starts and allow you to control it from another computer.

Finish the installation.

Configuring the Software on the Old PC

Now that the VNC software is installed, you need to configure a few options. Start the software by clicking **Start> Programs> TightVNC> TightVNC Server**.

This will open the TightVNC application.

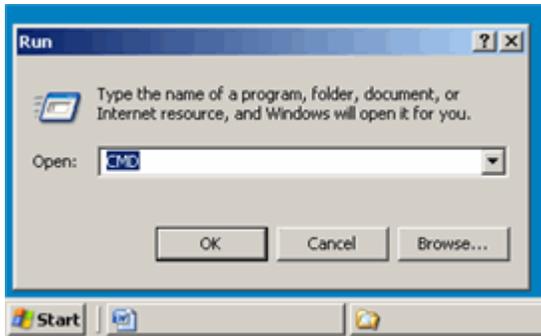


Set a password for this server by typing a password into both **Password** fields and clicking the **OK** button.

Finding Your IP Address

Each computer that is on a network has its own IP Address. This is like the phone number for the computer. You need to use the server's IP Address to connect and control it from another computer.

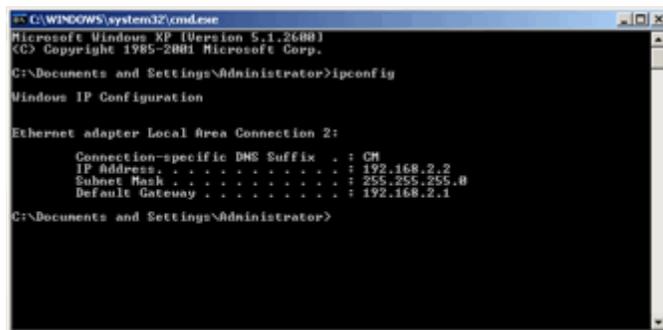
Click **Start**> **Run** to open the **Run** dialog.



Type **CMD** in the **Open** field and press the **OK** button to open the Command Prompt window.

Type **IPCONFIG** at the Command Prompt and press **Enter** at the command prompt.

You will see a group of numbers.



The **fourth** line (**Default Gateway**) is the address of your router.

Write this number down on a piece of paper and label it "**Router**"

The second line (**IP Address**) is your IP Address on the network.

Write this number down on a piece of paper and label it "**Server**"

You are done with the server for now. Shut down the server and unplug the Keyboard, Mouse, and Monitor. Leave the network cable plugged in (you will still need it.)

Setting Up the New PC (Desktop)

Now that the server is configured, you are ready to set up the Primary Desktop computer. This process is going to be very similar to the server computer, however you are going to use this computer as the “Viewer”. This means that you will only install the “Viewer” component of the VNC software.

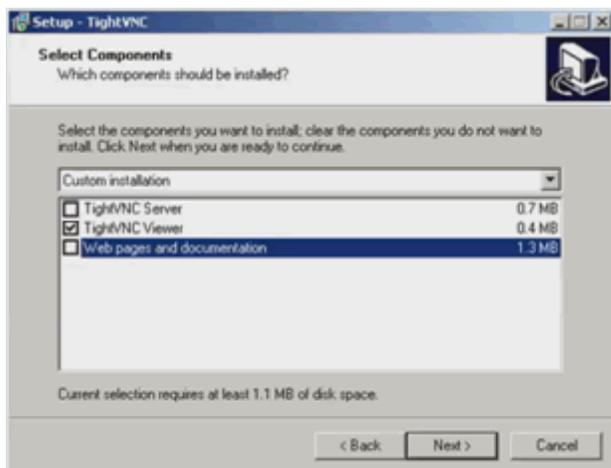
Hook up the Keyboard, Mouse, Monitor, and Network cable to the new computer and start it up.

Installing the Software on the New PC (Desktop)

When the new computer is started, go back to the [TightVNC Download Site](#) to download the software as you did on the server.

Double click the **tightvnc-setup.exe** file and begin installing the software.

Uncheck the Server and Documents options.



Connecting to the Server Remotely

Now that you have all of the software installed, you are ready to connect to and control the server.

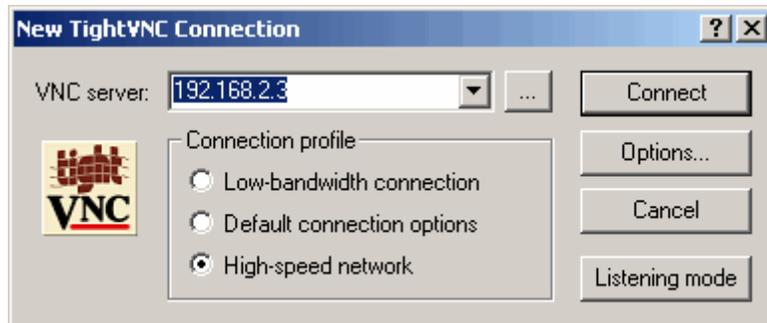
First, press the power button to start the server. Don't worry about hooking up the keyboard, mouse, and monitor. You won't need them any more, because you will be controlling this computer using the “Viewer” or Primary computer.

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Give the old computer about a minute or so to start up.

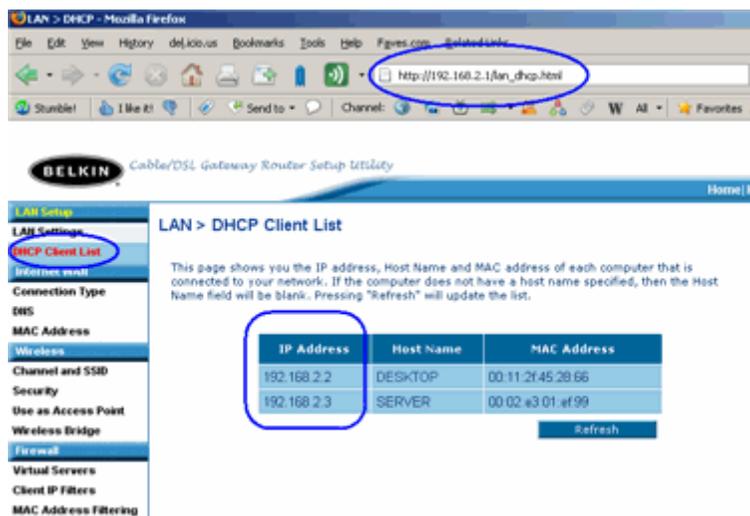
Start the TightVNC Viewer software on the new computer.
Click **Start> Programs> TightVNC> TightVNC Viewer**

When the VNC software opens, you will need to enter the IP Address of the server. Enter the Server IP Address that you wrote down earlier.



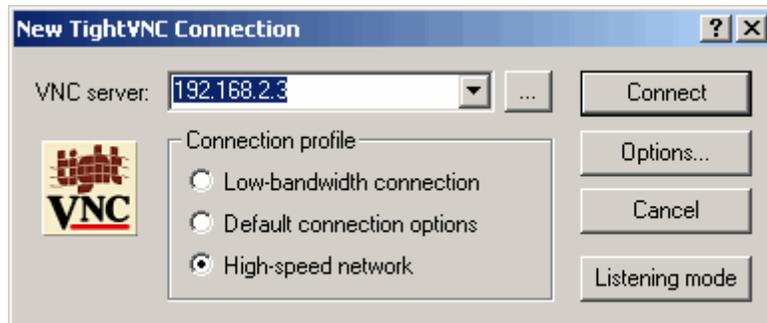
TIP: If you need to find the IP Address of the Server (or any other computer on the network) you can find this information from your router's menu. Type in the IP Address for the Router that you wrote down earlier into the **Address** field of your browser. Typically this address is 192.168.2.1.

This will open your router's menu. All routers have a slightly different menu, but you can look for a link that says "DHCP Clients" or something along those lines. This will tell you all of the computers connected to the router and their IP Addresses.



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Select the type of view that you want to use. Experiment with all three and see which one works best for you.



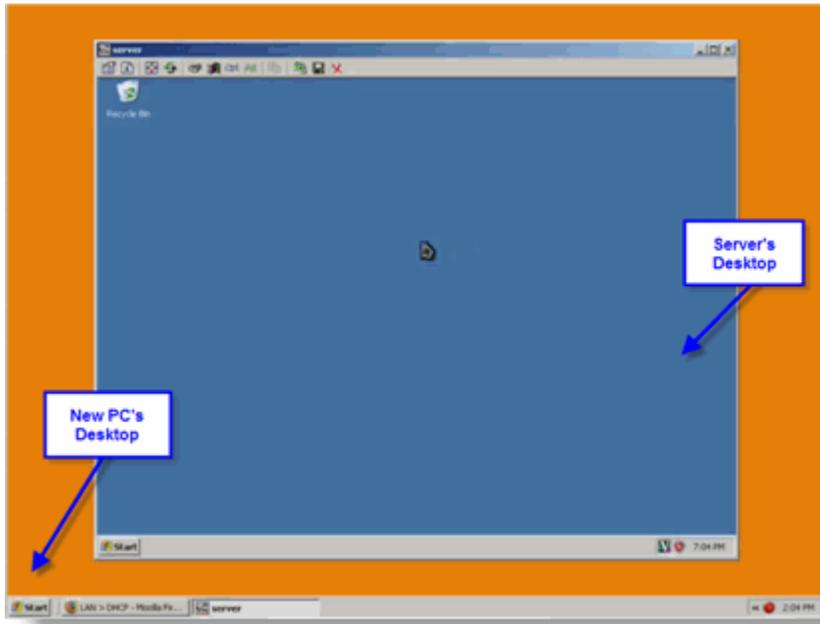
Enter the password that you set up on the Server earlier and press the **Connect** button.

This will open the **Password** dialog.



Enter the **Server** password that you set up earlier and click the **OK** button.

This will open a window that shows you what would be on the monitor of the Server computer. You may need to enter that computer's password to log all of the way into that computer. Enter the password to log in and view that computer's desktop.



Now, you can run any software that you like on that computer as if you were actually typing directly into that machine. (Because you really are!)

You can do anything that you normally would do on this machine. In the next article, I'm going to show you some useful things that you can do using this set up.

Shutting Down the Server

When you are done using the Server, you can shut it down. Just click **Start> Shut Down** to turn the machine off.

Additional Tips

There are a few other things you can do to make this new server even more convenient. Let's say you're like me and you don't want that new server cluttering up your tiny office. Well, you can locate it somewhere else easily.

Using Wireless Networking to Locate Your Server in Another Room

If you want to keep your server in a less conspicuous location, you can install a wireless card. Then, you can put the server in an out of the way area of your house. Here is a video showing you [how to install wireless networking on your server](#).

Turning Your New Server On from Another Room

OK, so now that you know how to hook up a Wi-Fi card and relocate the server to your basement, attic, or closet, I'll bet you're saying, "Wait a minute, then I have to go into the other room every time I want to turn it on!"

Not so fast, you can do a few minor adjustments to the settings on your new server that will allow you to turn it on from your desktop computer. That's right, just turn it off and leave it alone. Then, remotely start it from your primary computer. [Lifehacker](#) has [a great tutorial that walks you through the process](#). It looks pretty simple and convenient.

Coming Up in the Next Article

In the next article, I'll cover a few things that you can do with your fancy new server including:

- Running a Thorough Backup of Your Important Files (Just like the Pros do.)
- Using the Server as a Shared Storage System for all of the Computers in your House
- Setting Your Computer up as a Dedicated Bit Torrent Downloader
- And Maybe a Few Other Fun Things

So Stay Tuned!

