

Windows XP Automated System Recovery (ASR)

By Mark E. Donaldson

INTRODUCTION

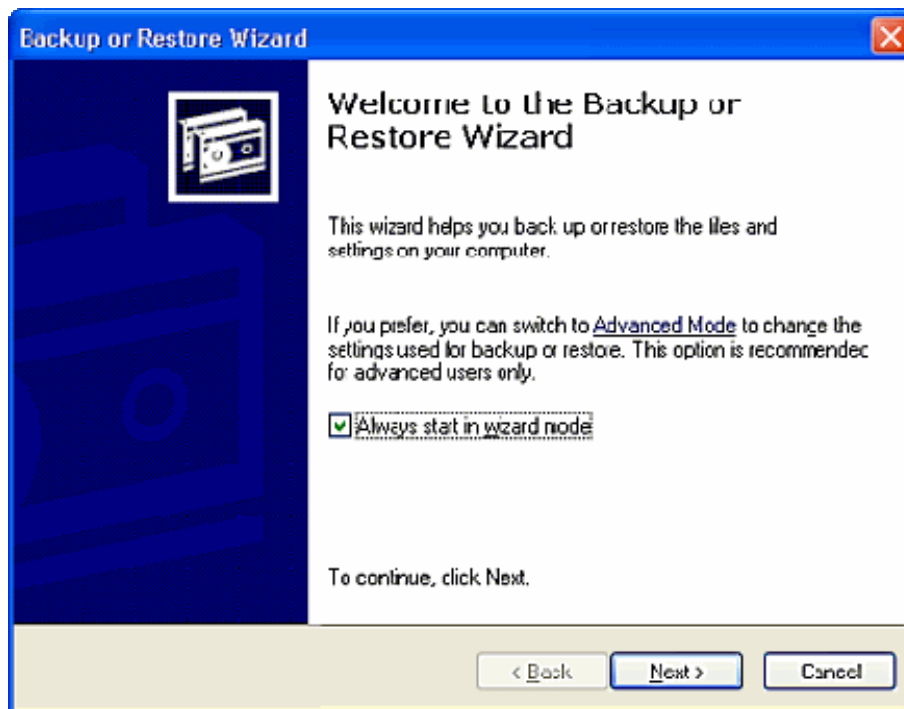
Windows XP's Automated System Recovery (ASR) is an extension to the conventional backup-and-restore. It provides a framework for saving and recovering the Windows [XP](#) operating state, in the event of a catastrophic system or hardware failure. Windows XP ASR recovers the target system in a two-step process. The first step, termed the boot recovery process, requires a new copy of Windows XP to be temporarily installed on the target system using the original distribution media. The second step, called the OS restore process, restores the files of a previously saved Windows XP installation using a backup-and-restore application (this will delete/overwrite some of the files installed by the boot recovery process).

Note: ASR is only functional in Windows XP Professional.

ASR BACKUP

The backup portion of ASR is accomplished through the ASR Wizard located in Backup. The wizard backs up the system state, system services, and all disks associated with the operating system components. It also creates a file containing information about the backup, the disk configurations (including basic and dynamic volumes) and how to accomplish a restore.

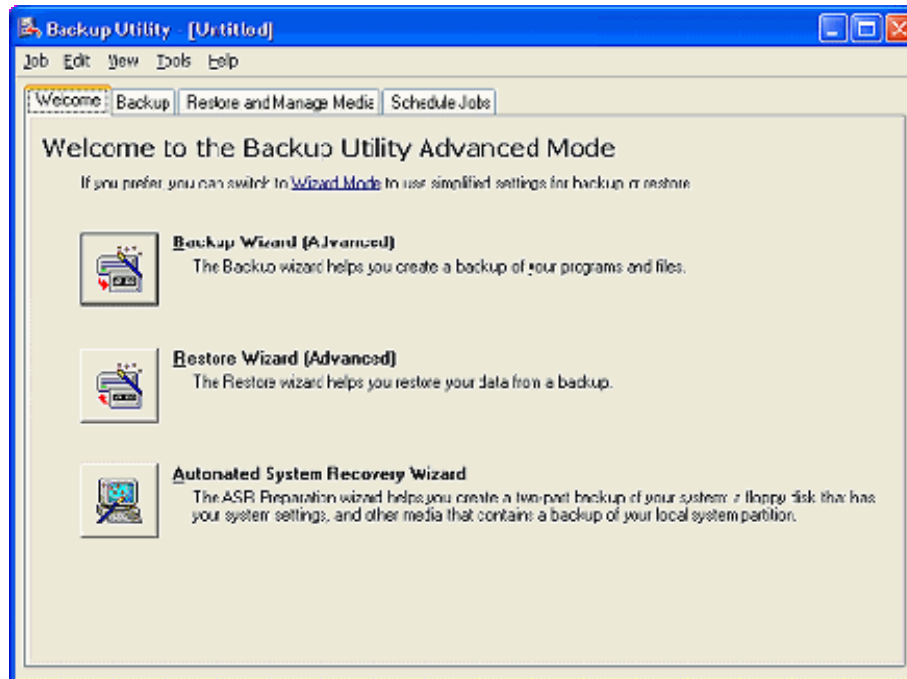
To start the process, click **Backup** under **All Programs > Accessories > System Tools**.



By default, backup will start in **Wizard** mode. In this case it's easier to start in the **Advanced Mode**. To do this, click the link [Advanced Mode](#).

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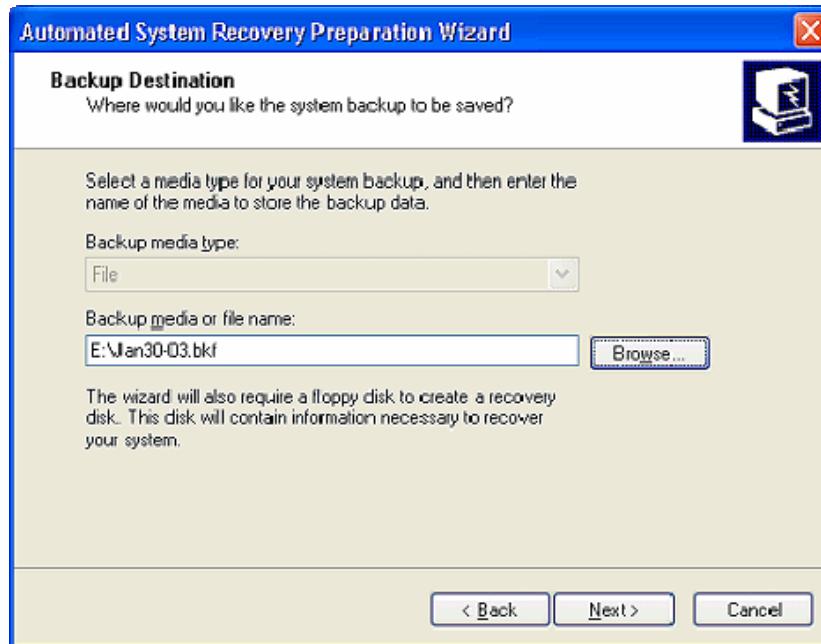
On the **Welcome** tab, click **Automated System Recovery Wizard**. This will start the Automated System Recovery Preparation Wizard.



The wizard will prompt you for a location and name for the media to store the backup file.

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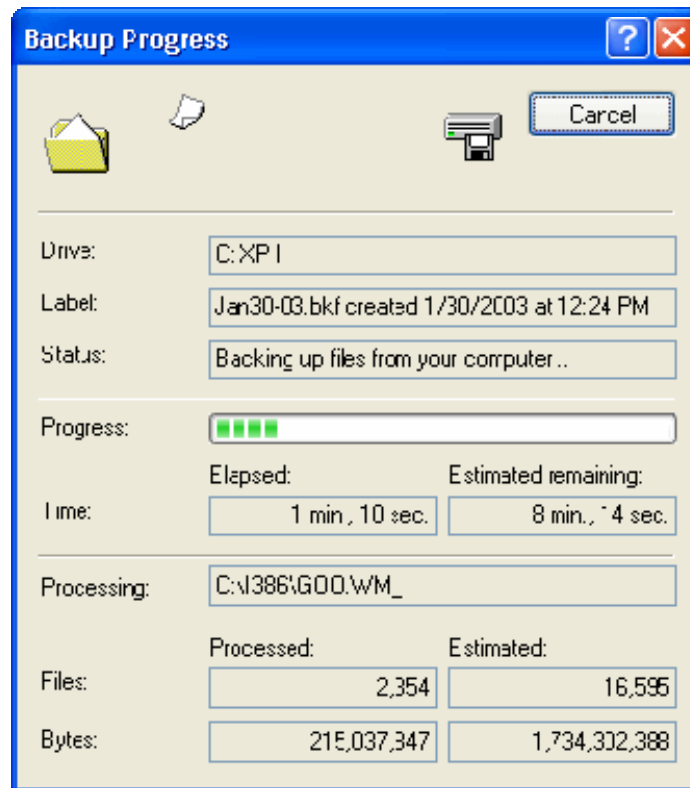
By default drive A:\ will be selected, but for obvious reasons this isn't a good choice. You want to change the location to another disk-location. The backup will typically be around 1.5-2.0GB (but could be more, depending on the amount of software installed), and since Microsoft's backup won't "span" a backup across multiple CDs, you'd have to find another media to store this backup on. You could use anything from ZIP or Jazz drives, to a second hard disk drive, either internal or external. Please note: you can't save the backup to the system drive (usually drive C:\), since this drive will be formatted when you do an ASR restore.



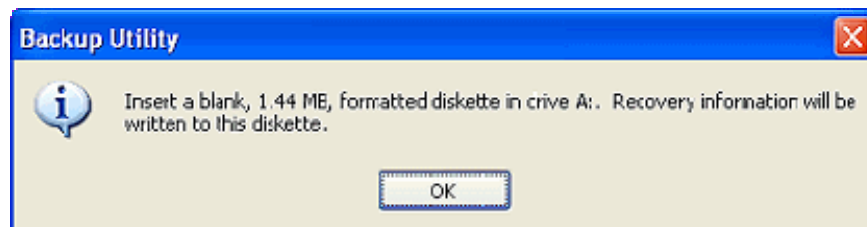
After selecting the location and name for the backup, press **Finish** to end the Automated System Recovery Preparation Wizard. When you do this, backup will create a list of all the files to backup, and then continue with the backup process

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ASR only makes a backup of your files on your **System** drive (usually drive C:). If you use other hard drives, you will need to make a separate backup of your documents & files to make a complete "recovery" after disaster!



Once the disk-backup is done, ASR will prompt you for a blank, 1.44MB, formatted floppy disk to store some recovery data.



When ready, label the diskette. Pressing **OK** ends the backup portion of ASR

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You will need to keep your ASR backup up-to-date. If you make any changes to your OS, you'll need to make a new ASR backup. When installing updates from Microsoft, most will prompt you to make a new ASR backup after installing the update.

ASR RESTORE

ASR will read the disk configurations from the file that it saved on the ASR diskette and restore all of the disk signatures, volumes and partitions on, at a minimum, the disks required to start the computer (It will attempt to restore all of the disk configurations, but under some circumstances, it might not be able to).

To use Automated System Recovery to recover after a system failure, you need to have the following items before you begin the procedure:

- Your Automated System Recovery floppy disk
- Your previously created backup
- Your original operating system CD

You should only use the ASR backup to restore your system if all other methods to start your Windows XP system have failed. Your system drive (usually drive C:\) will be formatted and you will lose any information that was not backed up recently!

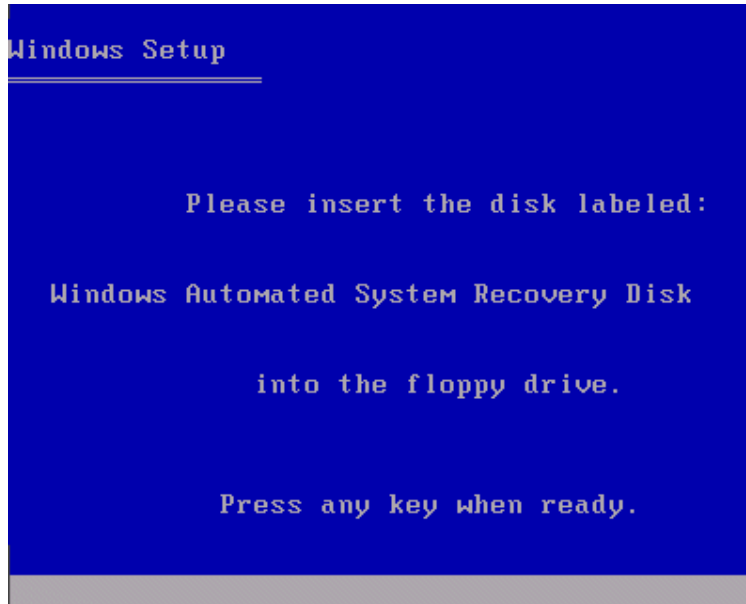
To start the restore process, insert the original Windows XP CD in your system's CD-ROM drive, and reboot your computer (make sure that the option is set in your computer's BIOS to boot from CD-ROM. Check your computer's or motherboard's manual on how to do this). Usually you'll get a message to **Press any key to boot from CD...**



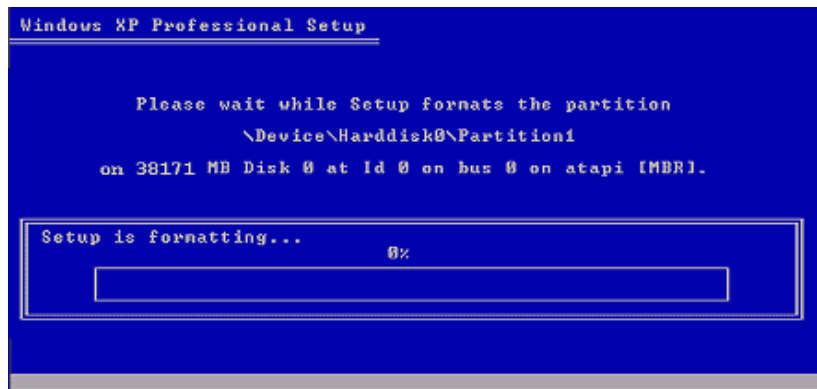
Once Windows Setup starts, you'll be prompted with the following text at the bottom of the screen: **Press F2 to run Automated System Recovery (ASR)...** so be prepared to hit **F2** as soon as you see this.

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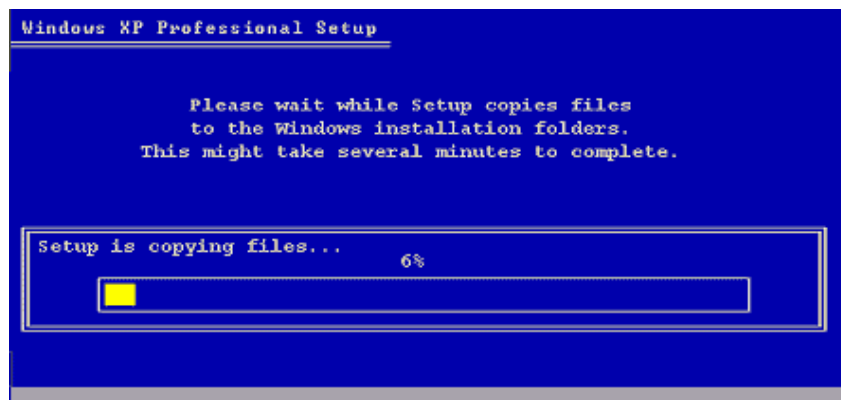
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Next you will be prompted to insert the Windows Automated System Recovery Disk into the floppy drive. Insert the disk, and press any key.

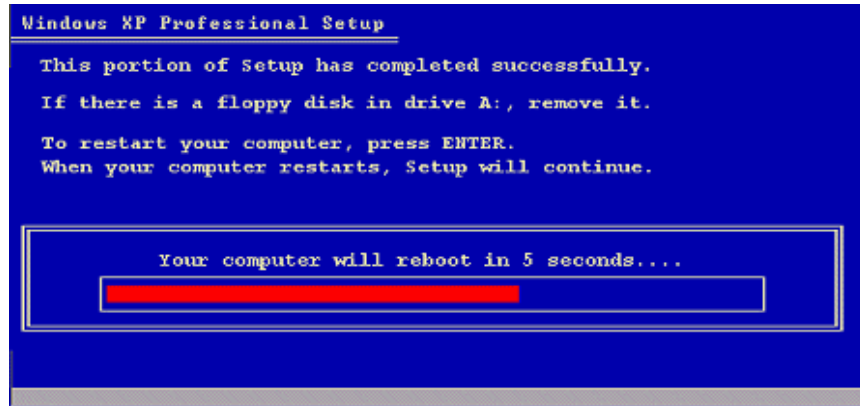


The ASR process will be started, and without any further prompts, your system drive will be formatted, after which setup will start copying its files to the hard disk.

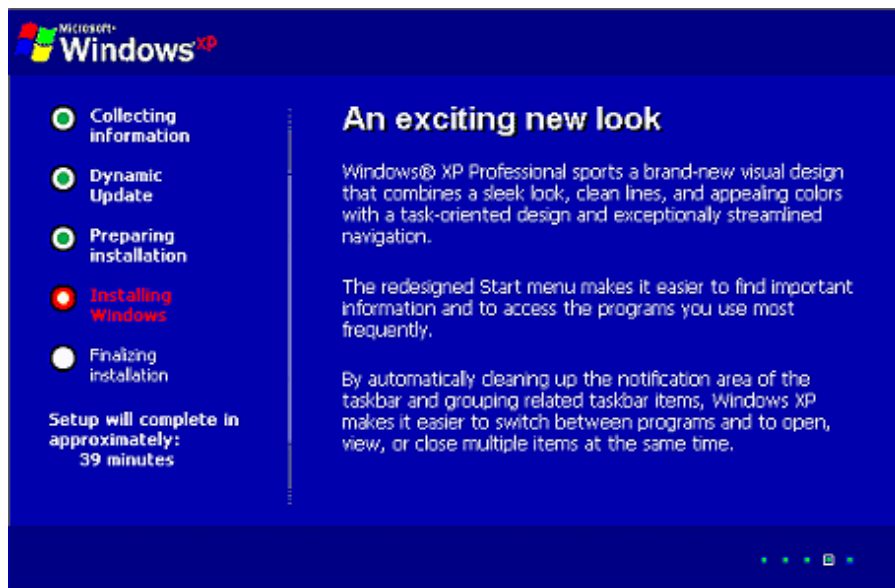


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When ready, the system will prompt you to remove any floppy from the floppy drive, and will reboot the system automatically (this time do not press any key to boot from the CD-ROM!).



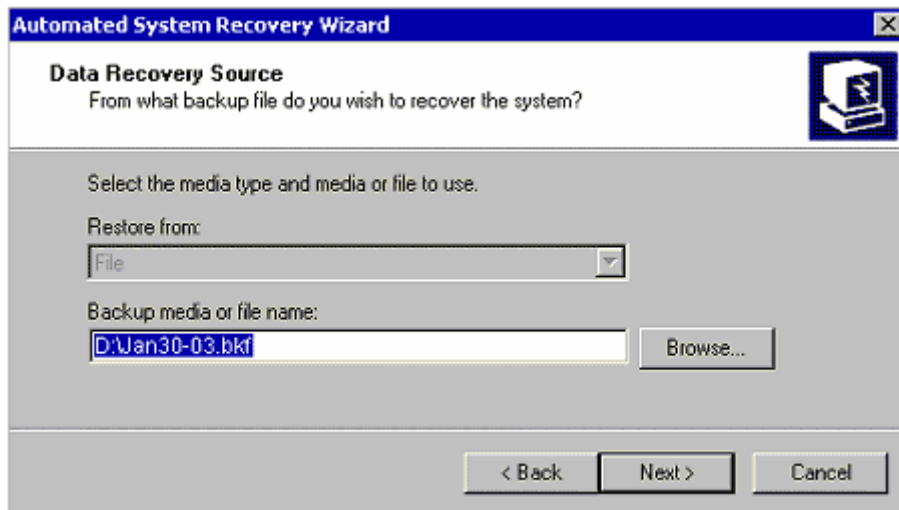
Windows setup will now continue much like a normal Windows setup would, but it will not do a complete installation.

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After a few minutes, the Automated System Recovery Wizard will start. After 90 seconds it will automatically continue, if you want to speed this up, just press the **Next** button.



Next the ASR wizard will ask you for the location of your backup file. By default it will list the location you saved the backup to previously, but if you since moved it to a different drive, you can use the **Browse** button to point to the new location.

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This will close the ASR wizard, after which backup is used to restore the previous backup of your system drive. After the restore phase is completed, your system will be rebooted, and you'll have it back in the same state as of the time when you created the ASR backup.