

HOW TO FIND OUT WHAT COMM PORT(S) YOUR COMPUTER HAS?

By: Carolyn Donner, N8ST

In order to use any digital program you will need to tell the program what **COMM** or **SERIAL** port you are using. You do this by going to the **setup** or **options** menu in the particular program you choose to use. Many people do not know how to find out what comm or serial port their computer has. This article should help you figure out your computer's ports.

I am using Windows XP Pro for this article. If you are using a different operating system (Windows 98 or Windows Vista), this may have to be adapted a little for your particular computer system.

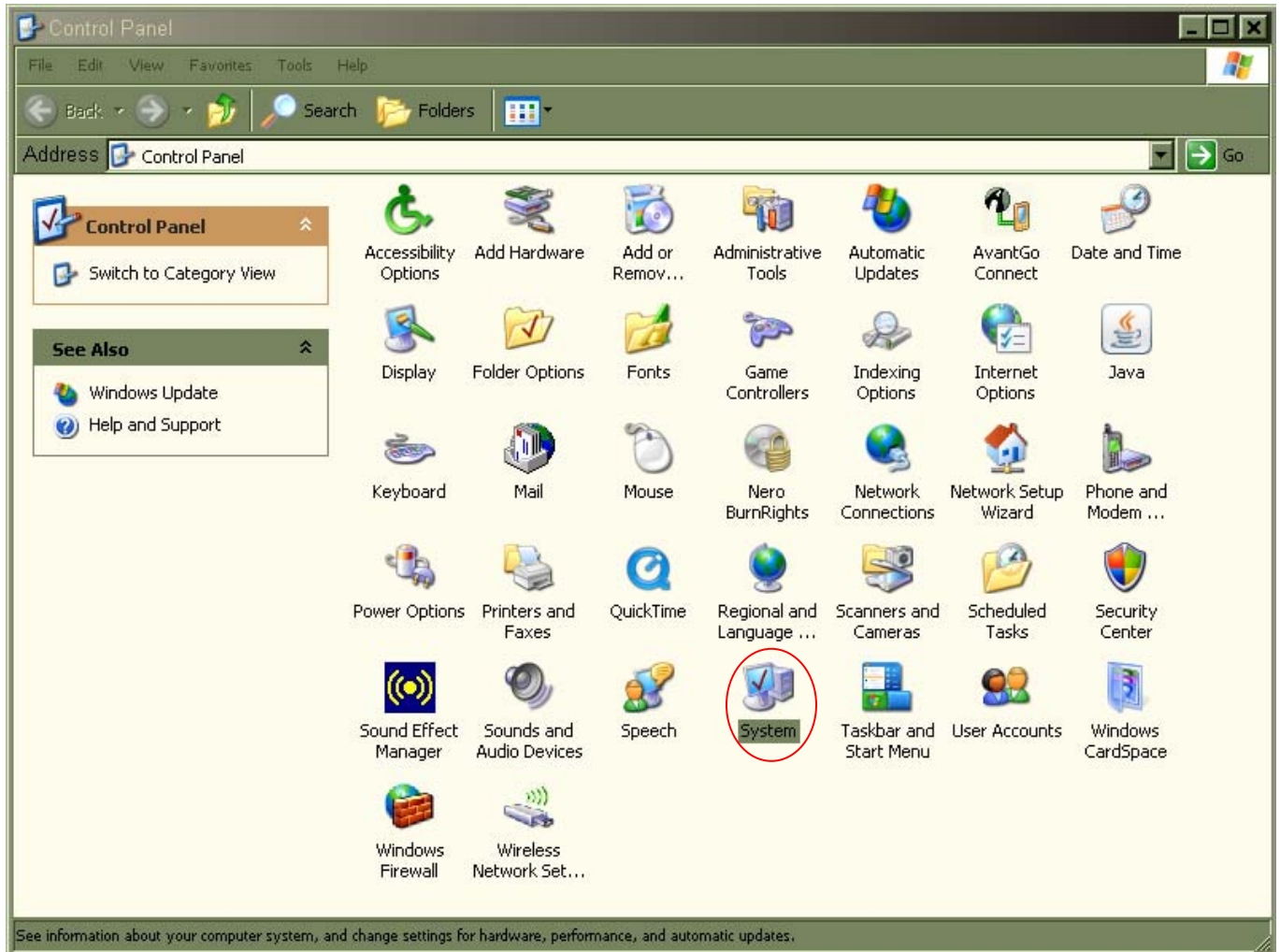
From the Windows STARTUP menu (found on the lower left side of the desktop ... labeled **START**), choose **CONTROL PANEL**.

[NOTE: You may also have an icon on your desktop for the CONTROL PANEL, or you may see it when you click on MY COMPUTER. Getting to the CONTROL PANEL from any of these links is fine. They all take you to the same CONTROL PANEL.]

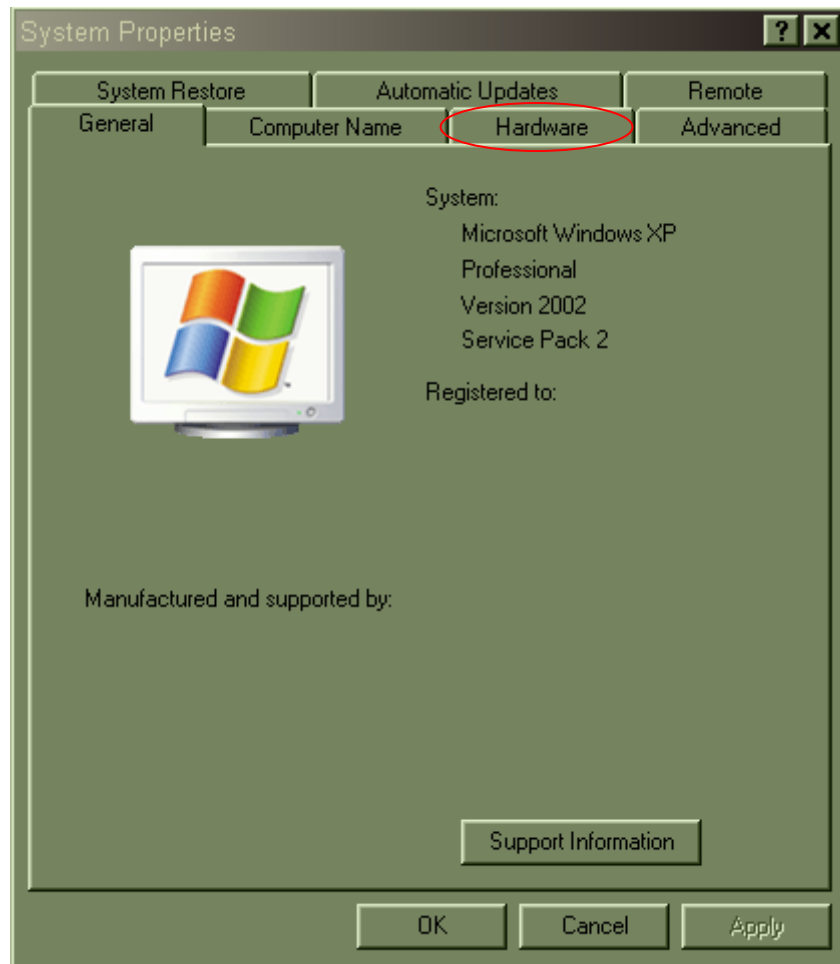


If you are in the regular Windows XP mode your Control Panel will look something like this. Go to the upper left side and click on **SWITCH TO CLASSIC VIEW**. It is circled by red with the head of an arrow pointing to it in the picture above. It won't be circled on your computer. This will bring up the Classic View as seen below.

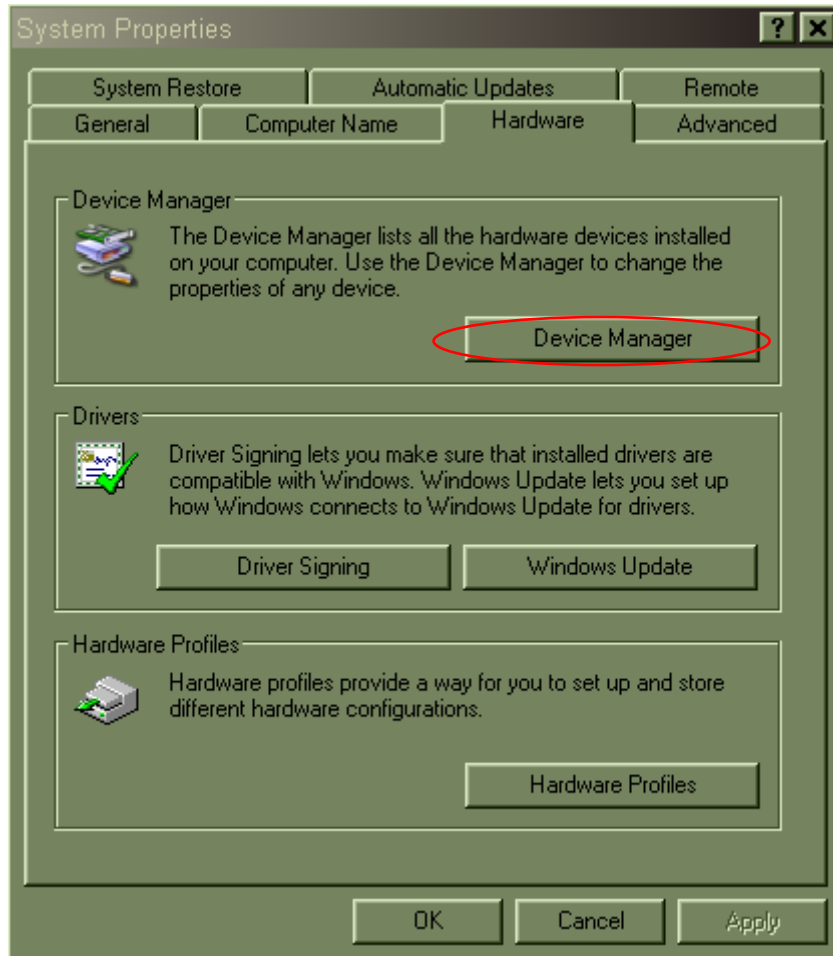
[NOTE: You may have less or more icons on your Control Panel than are shown here. They very depending on what features your particular computer has, but some icons are common to all Windows computers.]



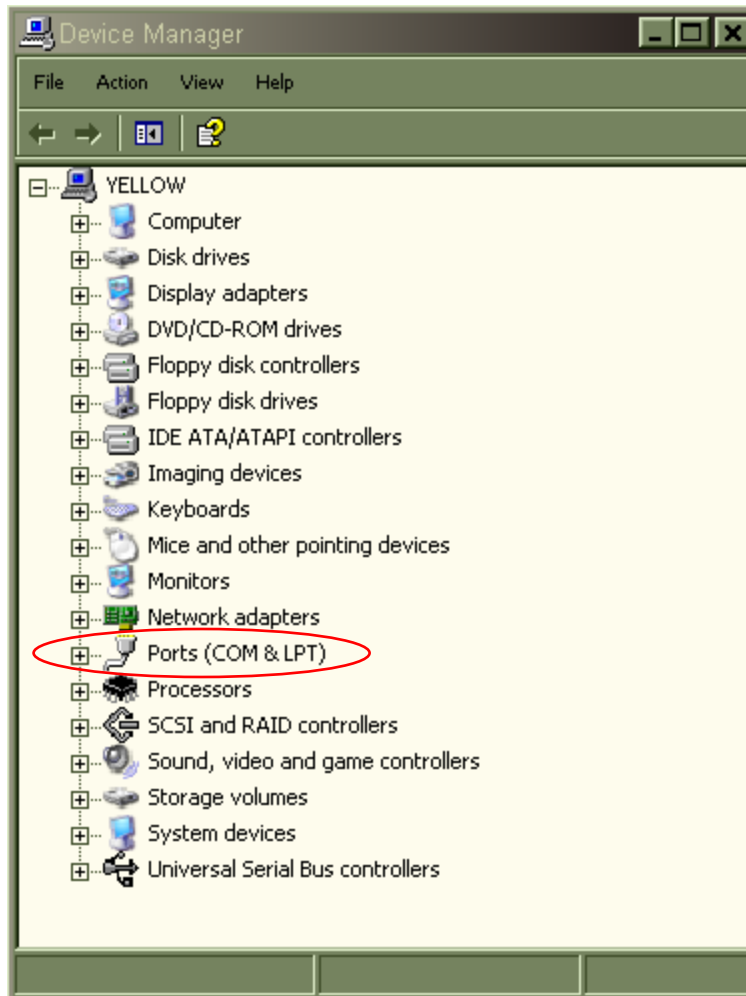
Next double click on the **SYSTEM** icon. It is shown on the picture above highlighted in green. Yours won't be highlighted until you click on it. That will bring up the **SYSTEM PROPERTIES** box as shown below ...



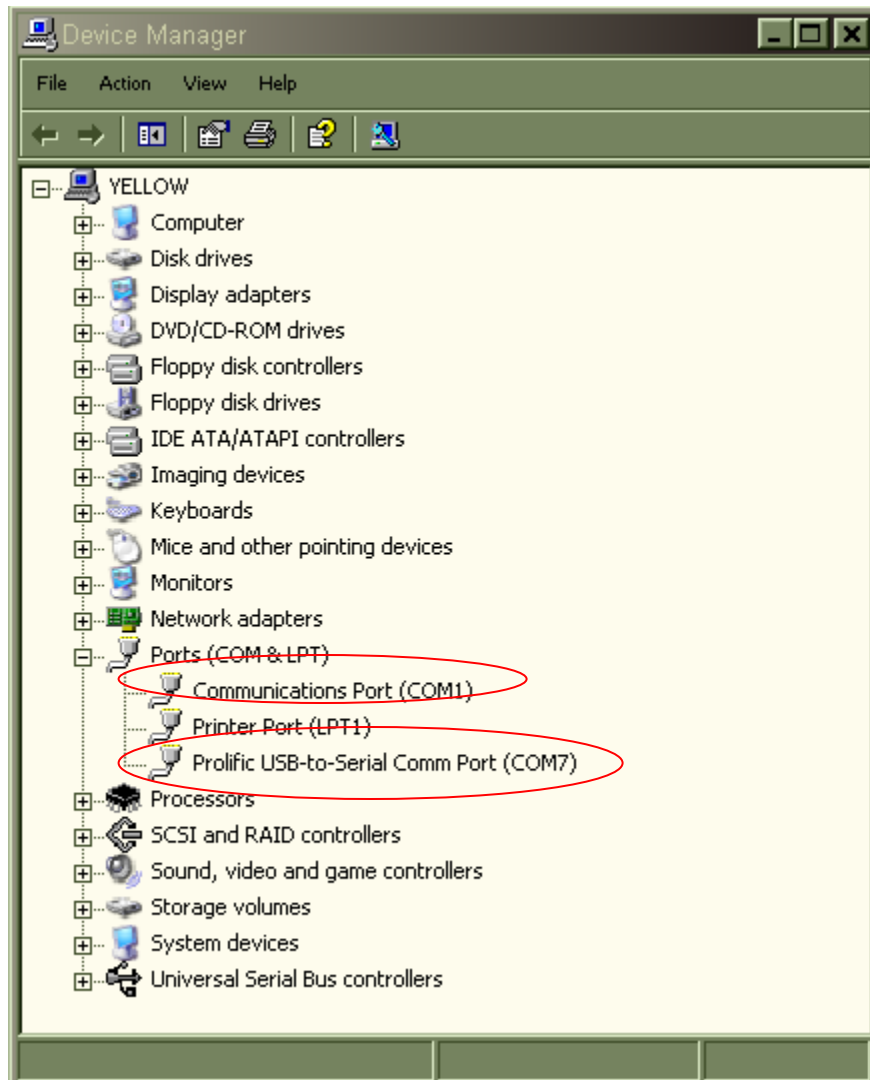
Note that the box says **SYSTEM PROPERTIES** in the upper left hand corner. Your system may have different things written on it. That is fine, we are concerned with the tabs at the top of the box. Click on the **HARDWARE** tab and you will see another box like this ...



Now click on the **DEVICE MANAGER** button. [If you have Windows 98 the DEVICE MANAGER may be in the center of this box, or if you have VISTA it might be in another location.] Clicking on the DEVICE MANAGER button will take you to a different box that looks like this ...



Note that it says **DEVICE MANAGER** in the upper left hand corner. Again, remember your items on this list may vary from mine, because your computer has different things, but some things will be on all computers. Look down the list until you see **PORTS (COM & LPT)**. See the little **+ sign** in front of it? Click on the **+ sign** and you will see the following ...



Actually you'll see something like this. You may have more or less ports than are showing here. Note where it says "(COM1)" after the **COMMUNICATIONS PORT**. That means the COMM port number on this computer is "one". If you have more than one Communications Ports, you'll see that each has been assigned a number.

Don't assume that your computer will have Comm 1 and Comm 2 just because your computer has two serial/comm ports on it. Operating systems assign COMM port numbers based on IRQ settings that are not being used by anything else, so COMM 2 might not be available for assigning and the computer will then go to the next available IRQ setting and assign the second port based on that setting to three or four.

If you are using a USB to Serial port adapter that will be shown here as well. You can see in the example above that I have a "Prolific USB-to-Serial Comm Port". That is a USB to Serial port adapter, and it is assigned Comm number 7 [Note the (COM7) after it]. USB to Serial port adapters are commonly assigned a high number like 5 or 7 or just about anything, so be sure to check. If you are using a USB to Serial port adapter and it doesn't show up here, or looks something like this ...



in your list, then you don't have it installed correctly. Make sure you have installed the driver that came with the adapter and followed all instructions for installing it. The question mark "?" in front of the "USB-Serial Controller" shows that your computer can't figure out what exactly it is, or what to do with it. The driver answers these questions for your computer system, so be sure to install that driver.

Once you know what comm port number(s) your computer has, you are ready to setup the digital software you choose to use. If you have more than one communications port on your computer and aren't sure which you have your interface plugged into ... start with the first one. If that doesn't work, try the next one, until you find the correct one.

[NOTE: With the Donner's Digital Interface connected to your computer and radio, turn your computer off. Make sure your radio is on. Turn your computer on. Windows will automatically test all your attached ports as it boots up. If the radio suddenly goes into transmit and then back to receive, that means Windows tested the port your interface is connected to and the interface is working properly. This will only take a fraction of a second, so you'll need to be watching your radio as your computer boots up.

If your radio does not go into transmit that could mean your comm port on your computer isn't working, or the port on your radio isn't working. Some radios may need to have the accessory or data port turned on in a menu on the radio. Check your radio's manual to see if this is needed and how to do it.]