

Prepare the Way

By default, your palettes are called from your hard drive. If this is the case, you are free to customize your palettes at will. Companies that have created standard palettes will often call them from a read-only network path, preventing you from altering them. To find out where your palettes are being called from, open the Options dialog box by typing Options on the Command line. In the Files tab, look for Tool Palettes File Locations (figure 1).

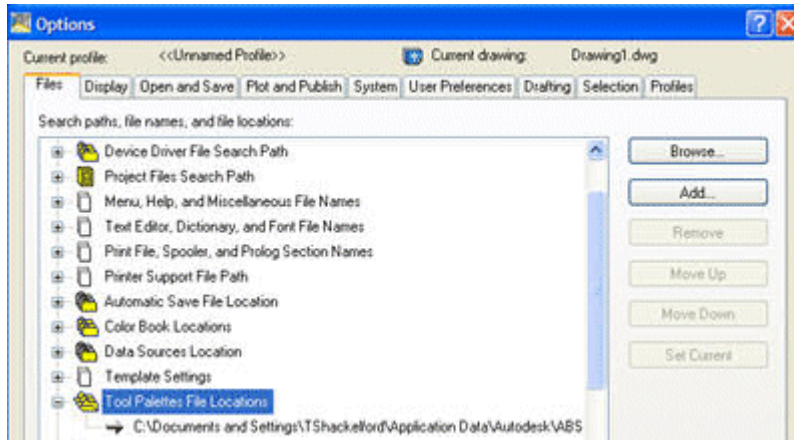


Figure 1. AutoCAD's Options dialog box will lead you to the location of your tool palette.

Leave the Options dialog box open. Use Windows Explorer to create a folder on your hard drive for your personal palette. For this example I created a folder named C:\My CAD Documents. If you have access to a network drive, this is a better place for your palette information because it is usually backed up for you and is not constrained to a single PC. The My CAD Documents folder is also a great place to store your profile(s), PGP file and custom dictionary. Return to the Options dialog box, highlight Tool Palettes File Locations and click the Add button on the right. Browse to the My CAD Documents folder to add it to the list of places AutoCAD will look for palettes.

Copy the Goods

Now let's copy a palette from its default location -- C:\Documents and Settings\[User Login Name]\Application Data\Autodesk\AutoCAD 2005\R16.1\enu\Support\ToolPalette\Palettes\Command Tools_[a lot of numbers and letters here].atc -- to the My CAD Documents folder. Return to the Options dialog box, and under Tool Palettes File Locations, highlight My CAD Documents and click the Move Up button on the right to make the My CAD Documents folder first in the list and the default for editing. This puts your new palette on your hard drive, where you most likely have the rights to make changes. Click Apply and close Options.

Let the Customization Begin

Your palette should not look any different than it did before, but there is a critical difference behind the scene: The Command Tools palette tab is being called from your hard drive. Right-click on the Command Tools palette tab and select Rename Palette (figure 2). Rename it My CAD Tools. You are now free to customize this palette tab as you see fit. To bring back the original Command Tools palette tab from your network drive, simply move the My CAD Documents folder below the default in the Files Tab of Options and apply it.

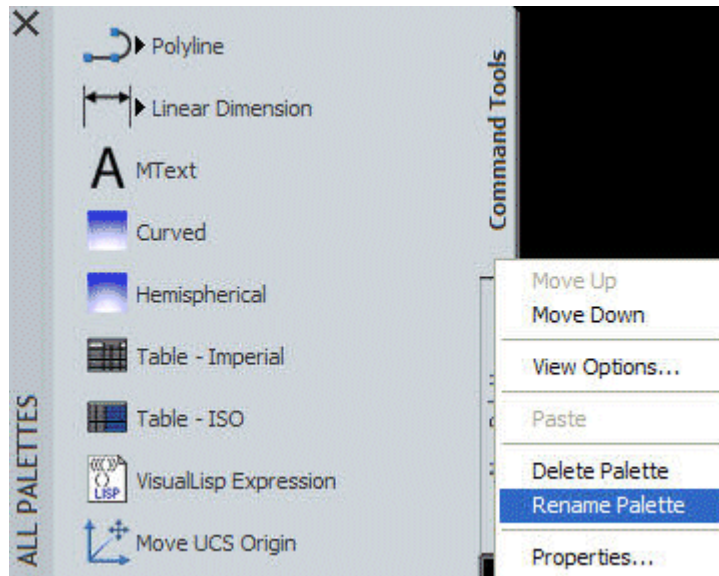


Figure 2. Rename your new tool palette before you begin to customize it.

AutoCAD's Help feature does a great job of explaining tool palette customization. I encourage you to experiment and have fun, but use caution if you choose to delete a palette. Once a palette is deleted, you cannot get it back without reloading AutoCAD.