

SKINNINGZONE

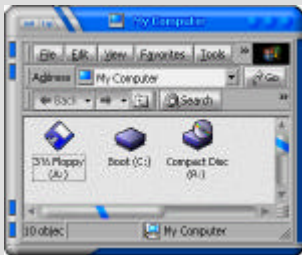
USER INTERFACES

Trying on a new skin

This year a new trend in user interface design has caught on at a rapid pace -- skinning. For years the computer industry has moved towards having consistent user interfaces. Now with millions of seasoned PC users, companies are beginning to let their customers choose the look and feel of their programs or even the OS itself.



Yahoo Player the latest in an increasing set of skinnable programs and utilities...



My Computer skinned



A fully skinned system...

Program	What it does
WindowBlinds	(www.stardock.com). This program doesn't mess around with just one program, it can skin any program or window you would like it to.
MS Media Player	(www.microsoft.com). Microsoft's entry in the skinning arena. The new version of Media Player supports skins.
Winamp	(www.winamp.com). Nullsoft's popular Mp3 player arguably helped start the whole skinning phenomenon. Now owned by AOL.
Netscape 6	(www.netscape.com). Netscape 6 has jumped into the skinning craze with both feet with its next generation web browser fully skinnable.
MSN	(www.microsoft.com). To better compete with AOL, the upcoming version of MSN will be completely skinnable.
Yahoo Player	(www.yahoo.com). Not content to stay on the sidelines, Yahoo recently introduced its own Skinnable media player.

The Shell Game

Tired of your plain old desktop? A growing number of people are abandoning Explorer (the default Windows shell) for alternatives. The best known shell is Litestep (www.litestep.net). Not only does it replace Explorer but it provides "theming" capabilities such that a user can totally tweak the way it looks and acts. Not quite ready to abandon Explorer? Stardock's DesktopX "object framework" gives users easy flexibility like that found on Litestep without replacing the shell.

Skinning Facts

How popular is skinning? According to Netscape, Skinz.org, WindowBlinds.net and Customize.org are all in the top 10,000 websites worldwide. Or in other words, in the top 1% of websites total and all these websites do is serve skimmers. This is about on par with how popular many of the dedicated MP3 websites are doing. WindowBlinds has over 3 million users all by itself. Skinz.org hosts over 10,000 skins receiving millions of downloads per month. Bear in mind, a year ago, few of these programs and sites existed. How many dot-com's can claim that kind of growth?

Skinning on the Web

- www.skinz.org
- www.windowblinds.net
- www.deskmod.com
- www.customize.org
- www.efront.com
- www.dtop.org