Remote Desktop in Windows

Introduction

Built into Windows XP Pro and later is Remote Desktop, a descendant of the Terminal Services software from NT/2000 that uses a protocol called RDP, is encrypted, operates on port 3389 and allows sharing of local resources such as drives and printers to the remote Windows machine; see: Microsoft.

Basically you can remote control your computer running XP or later from a variety of different remote computers in a fairly secure fashion.

Server

Enabling the server (from the GUI)

- Go to Control Panels > System and pick the Remote tab.
- Check the box next to Allow users to connect remotely to this computer.
- Click the button labeled Select Remote Users... and add those users (and only those users) who need to connect remotely.
  - Administrators automatically inherit the right to connectly remotely if RDP is enabled.

Enabling the server remotely from command line

- using regedit and psexec: http://thebackroomtech.com/2007/05/18/how-to-enable-remote-desktop-on-a-windows-xp-machine-remotely/
  http://www.mydigitallife.info/2008/06/25/freeware-to-turn-on-and-enable-remote-desktop-on-another-computer-remotely/
  from another windows machine with administrative rights

  psexec \remotecomputername reg add "hklm\system\currentcontrolset\control\terminal server" /f
  /v fDenyTSConnections /t REG_DWORD /d 0
  psexec \remotecomputername netsh firewall set service remotedesktop enable

Security

Firewalls

It is recommended, for security reasons, that all computers on the Brandeis network that run Remote Desktop should have a firewall enabled that limits access to specific IP address. For help configuring the firewall, see the LTS RDC Support page.

Connecting through the VPN

With the firewall configured properly, you can get to your Remote Desktop via the Brandeis VPN

SSH Tunneling your RDC connection

An equally effective, but somewhat more tedious to configure, method for getting through the firewall is to use an SSH tunnel. See for example: RemoteDesktopTunnel.

Client Software

Windows XP

go to Start > All Programs > Accessories > Communication > Remote Desktop Connection

Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000
get the client software from http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/downloads/rdclientdl.asp
tested on Win2k, seems to work.

**Mac OS X**

see also RDC Mac To PC

get the client software from Microsoft:
- older Microsoft Remote Desktop Connection client
- newer Microsoft Remote Desktop (probably the preferred client, necessary to connect to Win 10)

I have used these extensively, it works well. Customize your connection by exploring "Options" (click the triangle to expand) before you actually hit connect. You might want to modify the defaults for the right-click mapping, or allow your Mac drives to be accessible to the Windows machine if you want to transfer files.

**Linux**

- http://www.rdesktop.org/

I've used this from home several times by now, it seems to work.

-- KarelSF - 27 Jul 2007 (added wormhole links)