Desktop experience Server 2016

Server 2016 installation with GUI is the Microsoft installation of Desktop Experience. This is a guide for customizing the desktop.

Note – This document is provided as guidance for System Administrator to "lockdown" the user Desktops. We make no assurance that this will provide you with an exact environment that you are looking for, but some instructions to provide guidance as a step in the right direction. We advise you to have a backup of you environment as incorrect application of these steps could cause you to lock yourself out as administrator or change Group Policy that may not be in compliance with your organizational policy.

The below steps are technically advanced, they require knowledge of Active Directory and Group Policy administration. You should be comfortable with the use of the tools listed below before taking these steps.

Start Screen Layout

Specifies the Start screen layout for users.

This setting lets you specify the Start screen layout for users and prevents them from changing its configuration. The Start screen layout you specify must be stored in an XML file that was generated by the Export-StartLayout PowerShell cmdlet.

To use this setting, you must first manually configure a device's Start screen layout to the desired look and feel. Once you are done, run the Export-StartLayout PowerShell cmdlet on that same device. The cmdlet will generate an XML file representing the layout you configured.

Once the XML file is generated and moved to the desired file path, type the fully qualified path and name of the XML file. You can type a local path, such as C:\StartLayouts\myLayout.xml or a UNC path, such as \\Server\Share\Layout.xml. If the specified file is not available when the user logs on, the layout won't be changed. USERS CANNOT CUSTOMIZE THEIR START SCREEN WHILE THIS SETTING IS ENABLED.

If you disable this setting or do not configure it, the Start screen layout won't be changed and users will be able to customize it.

Creating a Start Layout file

This is one method to use in creating a Start Layout xml file that can be used in Group Policy to provide a template Desktop lay for your users.

References -- https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/dn467928.aspx

https://community.spiceworks.com/how_to/120169-so-you-need-to-lock-down-your-2012-r2-rds-server

Customize the Start screen on your test computer

To prepare a Start screen layout for export, you simply customize the Start screen on a test computer.

To prepare a test computer

- 1. Set up a test computer on which to customize the Start screen. Your test computer should have the operating system that is installed on the users' computers. Install all apps and services that the Start screen should display.
- 2. Create a new user account that you will use to customize the Start screen layout.

To customize the Start screen

- 1. Sign in to your test computer with the user account that you created.
- 2. Customize the Start screen as you want users to see it by using the following techniques:
 - Pin apps to the Start screen. From the Start screen, type the name of the app. When the app appears in the search results, right-click the app, and then click Pin to Start.
 - To view all apps, click the Down arrow in the bottom-left corner of the Start screen. Right-click any app, and pin or unpin it from the Start screen. When you finish, click the arrow again to display the default Start screen.
 - Unpin apps that you don't want to display. To unpin an app, right-click the app, and then click Unpin from Start.

- Drag tiles on the Start screen to reorder or group apps.
- Create your own app groups. Drag the apps to an empty area. To name a group, rightclick a tile. Then type the name over the **Name group** label in the gray bar that appears above the group.

For more information, see <u>Personalize the Start Screen</u>.

To export the Start screen layout to an .xml file

- 1. From the Start screen, open **Windows PowerShell**.
- 2. At the Windows PowerShell command prompt, enter the following command:
 - Below is a sample and is dependent on the version of Power Shell on you
 Operating System

```
export-startlayout -path <path><file name>.xml -as xml
```

I used Power shell command export-startlayout c:\logs\testfile.xml

In the previous command:

 -path is a required parameter that specifies the path and file name for the export file. You can specify a local path or a UNC path (for example, \\FileServer01\StartLayouts\StartLayoutMarketing.xml).

The file must be accessible on the local computer when a user signs in (the user must have Read-only access). If the file is not available, the Start screen layout is not deployed during that session, and the user can make changes to the Start screen.

If you plan to deploy a GPO that customizes Start screen layouts for domain users, store the .xml file in shared network storage that all of the users can access.

Use a file name of your choice—for example, StartLayoutMarketing.xml. Include the .xml file name extension. The **Export-StartLayout** cmdlet does not append the file name extension, and the policy settings require one.

o -as xml saves the layout in the .xml file format that the **Start Screen Layout** policy settings require.

To Import the Start screen layout

Customize Windows 8.1 Start Screens by Using Group Policy

Published: October 3, 2013

Updated: October 18, 2013

Applies To: Windows 8.1

In Windows 8.1 Enterprise, you can use a Group Policy Object (GPO) to deploy a customized Start screen layout to users in a domain. No reimaging is required, and the Start screen layout can be updated simply by overwriting the .xml file that contains the layout. This enables you to customize Start screen layouts for different departments or organizations, with minimal management overhead.

This topic describes how to customize the Start screen, export the Start screen layout, and update Group Policy settings to display the new layout when the users sign in. By creating a domain-based GPO with these settings, you can deploy a customized Start screen layout to users in a domain. When a default Start screen layout is imported with this method, the users cannot pin, unpin, or uninstall apps from the Start screen. Users can view and open all apps in the **All Apps** view, but they cannot pin any apps to the Start screen.

Operating system requirements

Start screen control is supported in the Windows 8.1 Enterprise operating system, the Windows RT 8.1 operating system with sideloading enabled, and in all editions of the Windows Server 2012 R2 operating system. Start screen control is not supported in the Windows 8.1 Pro operating system and the Windows 8.1 operating system.

In Windows RT 8.1, you can use local policy settings, but only if you turn on the Group Policy Client service. For more information, see <u>Local Group Policy support for Windows RT</u>. If the service is not enabled, you must set the corresponding registry values directly.

The GPO can be configured from any computer on which the necessary ADMX and ADML files (StartMenu.admx and StartMenu.adml) for Windows 8.1 and Windows Server 2012 R2 are installed. In Group Policy, ADMX files are used to define Registry-based policy settings in the Administrative Templates category. To find out how to create a central store for Administrative Templates files, see article 929841 in the Microsoft Knowledge Base.

How Start screen control works

Two new features enable Start screen control:

- The new **Export-StartLayout** cmdlet in Windows PowerShell exports a description of the current Start screen layout in .xml or .bin file format.
- In Group Policy, you can use the new **Start Screen Layout** settings for the **Start Menu and Taskbar** administrative template to import a Start screen layout from an .xml file when the users sign in.

Two registry values (for either the current user or the computer) are set when the policy settings are enabled. Procedures in this topic set the registry values for the current user, on the following path:

- HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\Explorer\LockedStartLayout
- HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\Explorer\StartLayoutFile

Tasks described in this topic

This topic describes how to perform the following tasks:

- Customize the Start screen on your test computer
- Export the Start screen layout
- Use Group Policy to import a customized Start screen layout on the local computer
- Use Group Policy to deploy a customized Start screen layout in a domain
- Update a customized Start screen layout

Note

To find out how customize the Start screen to include your line-of-business apps when you deploy Windows 8.1, Windows 8 Enterprise, Windows 8 Pro (on a domain-joined computer), Windows Server 2012 R2, or Windows Server 2012, see <u>Customize the Start Screen</u>.

Customize the Start screen on your test computer

To prepare a Start screen layout for export, you simply customize the Start screen on a test computer.

To prepare a test computer

- 1. Set up a test computer on which to customize the Start screen. Your test computer should have the operating system that is installed on the users' computers (Windows 8.1 Enterprise, Windows RT 8.1, or Windows Server 2012 R2). Install all apps and services that the Start screen should display.
- 2. Create a new user account that you will use to customize the Start screen layout.

To customize the Start screen

- 1. Sign in to your test computer with the user account that you created.
- 2. Customize the Start screen as you want users to see it by using the following techniques:
 - Pin apps to the Start screen. From the Start screen, type the name of the app. When the app appears in the search results, right-click the app, and then click **Pin to Start**.
 - To view all apps, click the Down arrow in the bottom-left corner of the Start screen. Right-click any app, and pin or unpin it from the Start screen. When you finish, click the arrow again to display the default Start screen.
 - Unpin apps that you don't want to display. To unpin an app, right-click the app, and then click Unpin from Start.
 - o Drag tiles on the Start screen to reorder or group apps.
 - Create your own app groups. Drag the apps to an empty area. To name a group, rightclick a tile. Then type the name over the **Name group** label in the gray bar that appears above the group.

For more information, see <u>Personalize the Start Screen</u>.

Export the Start screen layout

When you have the Start screen layout that you want your users to see, use the **Export-StartLayout** cmdlet in Windows PowerShell to export the Start screen to an .xml file.

To export the Start screen layout to an .xml file

- 1. From the Start screen, open Windows PowerShell.
- 2. At the Windows PowerShell command prompt, enter the following command:

```
export-startlayout -path <path><file name>.xml -as xml
```

In the previous command:

 -path is a required parameter that specifies the path and file name for the export file.
 You can specify a local path or a UNC path (for example, \FileServer01\StartLayouts\StartLayoutMarketing.xml).

The file must be accessible on the local computer when a user signs in (the user must have Read-only access). If the file is not available, the Start screen layout is not deployed during that session, and the user can make changes to the Start screen.

If you plan to deploy a GPO that customizes Start screen layouts for domain users, store the .xml file in shared network storage that all of the users can access.

Use a file name of your choice—for example, StartLayoutMarketing.xml. Include the .xml file name extension. The **Export-StartLayout** cmdlet does not append the file name extension, and the policy settings require one.

o -as xml saves the layout in the .xml file format that the **Start Screen Layout** policy settings require.

Use Group Policy to import a customized Start screen layout on the local computer

You can use the Local Group Policy Editor to provide a customized Start screen layout for any user who signs in on the local computer. To display the customized Start screen for any user who

signs in, update the user configuration, configuring **Start Screen Layout** policy settings for the **Start Menu and Taskbar** administrative template.

To use local policy settings in Windows RT 8.1, you must turn on the Group Policy Client service. For more information, see <u>Local Group Policy support for Windows RT</u>. If the service is not enabled, you must set the corresponding registry values (discussed earlier, in <u>How Start screen control works</u>).

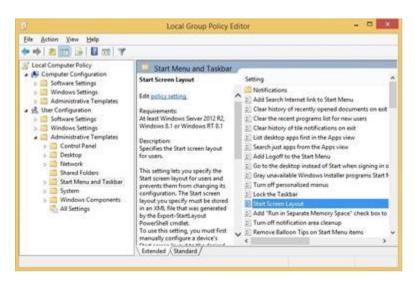
Note

Note:

This procedure applies the policy settings on the local computer only. For information about deploying the Start screen layout to users in a domain, see <u>Use Group Policy to deploy a customized Start screen layout in a domain</u>, later in this topic.

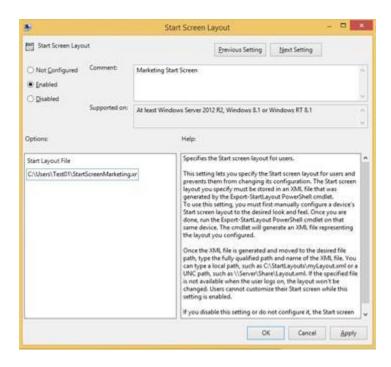
To configure Start Screen Layout policy settings in Local Group Policy Editor

- 1. On the test computer, open Local Group Policy Editor. To do this, open a command prompt from the Start screen, and type **gpedit**.
- 2. To display the **Start Menu and Taskbar** administrative template, in the console tree, under **User Configuration**, expand **Administrative Templates**, and then click **Start Menu and Taskbar**. The following graphic shows this menu.



3. Right-click **Start Screen Layout** in the right pane, and click **Edit**.

This opens the **Start Screen Layout** policy settings, which are shown in the following graphic.



- 4. To enable the customized Start screen layout on the computer, enter the following settings, and then click **OK**:
 - 1. Select the **Enabled** option.
 - 2. Under **Options**, specify the path to the .xml file that contains the Start screen layout. For example, type **C:\Users\Test01\StartScreenMarketing.xml**.
 - 3. Optionally, enter a comment to identify the Start screen layout.

Important

If you disable Start Screen Layout policy settings that have been in effect, you must update the Last Modified date on the .xml file before you can enable the policy settings. This is a known issue in Windows 8.1 Enterprise. In Windows PowerShell, you can update the date on a file by running the following command:

```
(ls <path>).LastWriteTime = Get-Date
```

This procedure adds the customized Start screen layout to the user configuration, which overrides any Start screen layout settings in the local computer configuration when a user signs in on the computer.

Use Group Policy to deploy a customized Start screen layout in a domain

To deploy the Start screen layout to users in a domain, use the Group Policy Management Console (GPMC) to configure a domain-based Group Policy Object (GPO) that sets **Start Screen Layout** policy settings in the **Start Menu and Taskbar** administrative template for users in a domain. The GPO deploys the Start screen layout at the next user sign-in.

The GPO can be configured from any computer on which the necessary ADMX and ADML files (StartMenu.admx and StartMenu.adml) for Windows 8.1 and Windows Server 2012 R2 are installed.

The .xml file with the Start screen layout must be located on shared network storage that is available to the users' computers when they sign in (the users must have Read-only access to the file). If the file is not available at sign-in, the Start screen is not customized during the session, and the user can make changes to the Start screen.

For information about deploying GPOs in a domain, see Working with Group Policy Objects.

Update a customized Start screen layout

After you use Group Policy to import a customized Start screen layout on a computer or in a domain, you can update the layout simply by replacing the .xml file that is specified in the Start Screen Layout policy settings.

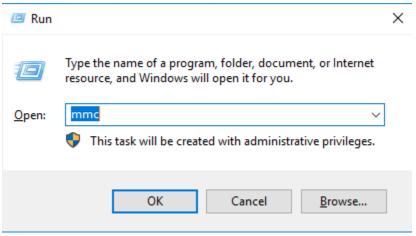
To change the Start screen layout imported by Start Screen Layout policy settings

- 1. Customize the Start screen on your test computer the way that you want it to look for users.
- 2. Run the **Export-StartLayout** cmdlet, with the following format, to export the new Start screen layout to an .xml file that overwrites the original file:export-startlayout path path <file name>.xml -as xml

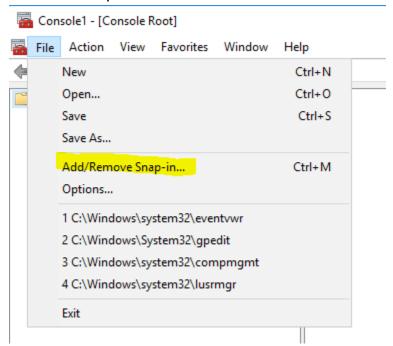
That's all you need to do. The next time the users sign in to their computers, the GPO will import the new Start screen layout.

Editing Group Policy for Lockdown

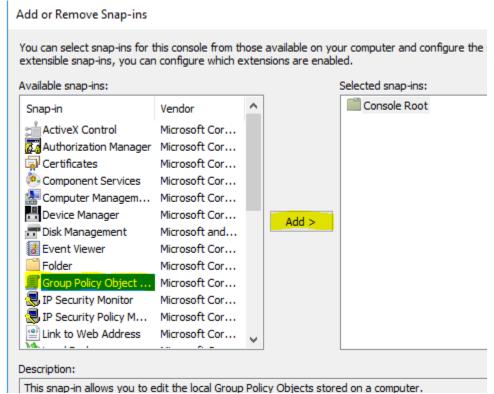
1. Hold down the Windows Key and tap the "R" key. This will open the Run dialogue box. Type MMC and press Enter



2. In MMC the – Click File then Add \Remove Snap-in this will bring up a list of available Snap in's.



3. Scroll down the list until you see Group Policy Object... and click that then hit the Add button in the middle. This will launch the wizard to allow you to choose the local groups you want the policy to apply too



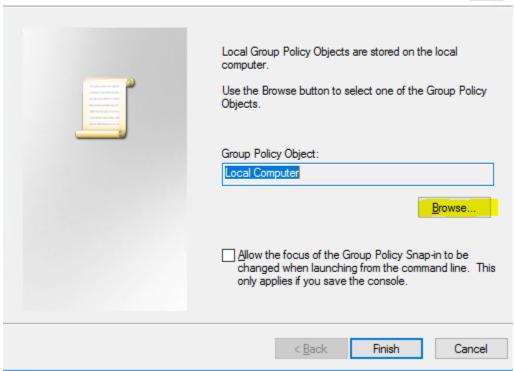
4. Click the browse button under Local Computer. Click the tab for Users and then you will see your local users and two groups.

Select Group Policy Object

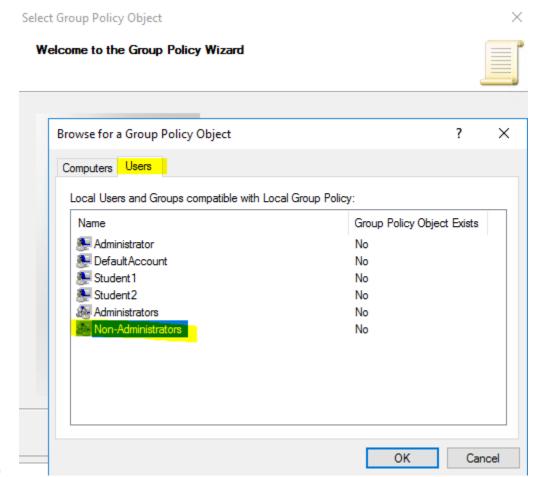
Welcome to the Group Policy Wizard



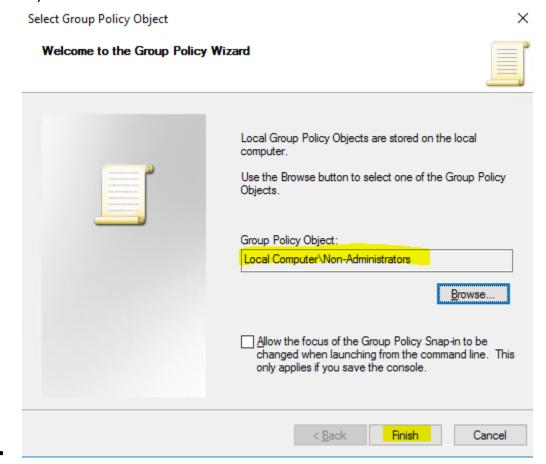
X



5. On the Browse for a Group Policy Object, Select the Users Tab and select Non-Administrators and Ok



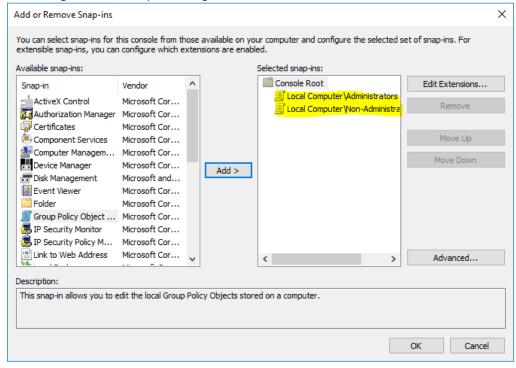
6. With Group Policy Object Local Computer\Non-Administrators selected, click finish



7. Repeat the steps 4, 5 and 6 to add Administrators

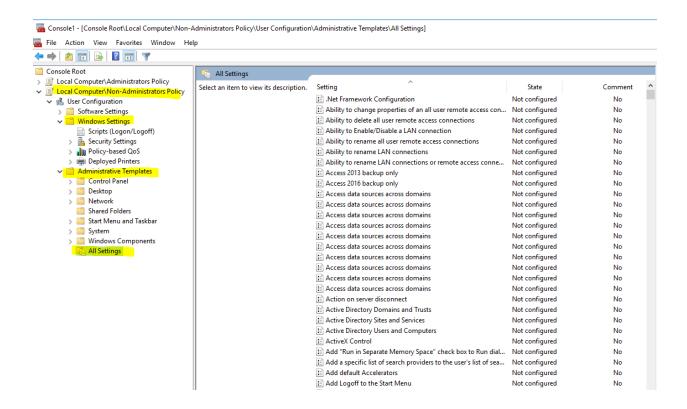
 What you will do is add a Group Policy Object for each group... one for Administrators and one for Non-Administrators. We do this by just repeating the steps above for both groups and you will end up with two Group Policy Objects under Console Root in the Selected Snap-In's Pane on the right side.

Then we can get to setting the various options to get the lock down we want.



Now you need to step through each of those settings under Administrative Templates for the Non-Administrators and Administrators Group Policy Object; and set either enabled or disabled there is a sample CSV file copied from https://community.spiceworks.com/how_to/120169-so-you-need-to-lock-down-your-2012-r2-rds-server that is available at INSERT CSV LINK HERE. The list is also at the end of this document.

For the Start menu XML settings you can store that file anywhere, on the domain under SysVol, on the local drive or on a network share. I usually put it in the Windows folder and just call the path C:\Windows\Startmenu.xml in the GPO. Seems to work faster for load times with lots of users when it is local.



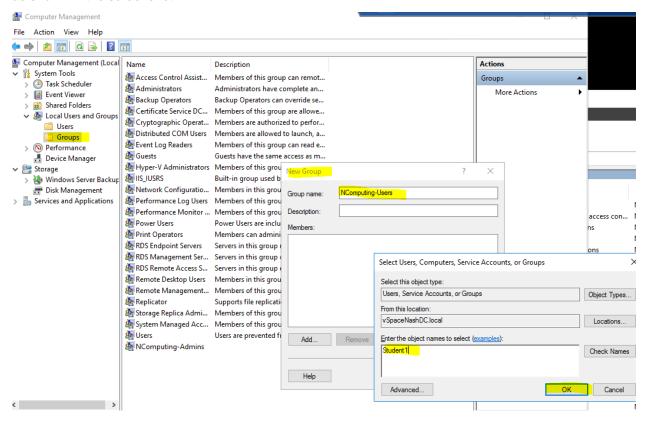
You will need to switch over to Server Administrator User Groups for this step

You can use the default Domain Admins and Domain Users groups to apply these settings but most deployments require a narrower focus. So creating two Universal Security Groups, One for the Admins of the vSpace server and one for the Users might be better. For the purpose of this guide NComputing-Admins and NComputing-Users as the group names. This can be whatever you want it to be just make it obvious in the name what it is for.

Open Computer Management from the Administrative Tools in Control Panel to get to the local group list as shown in the screenshot.

Then add the appropriate users to each group then add those universal groups I just created to the appropriate Local Security group on the vSpace server. Add NComputing-Admins to the Local Administrators Group and NComputing-Users to the Local Users Group.

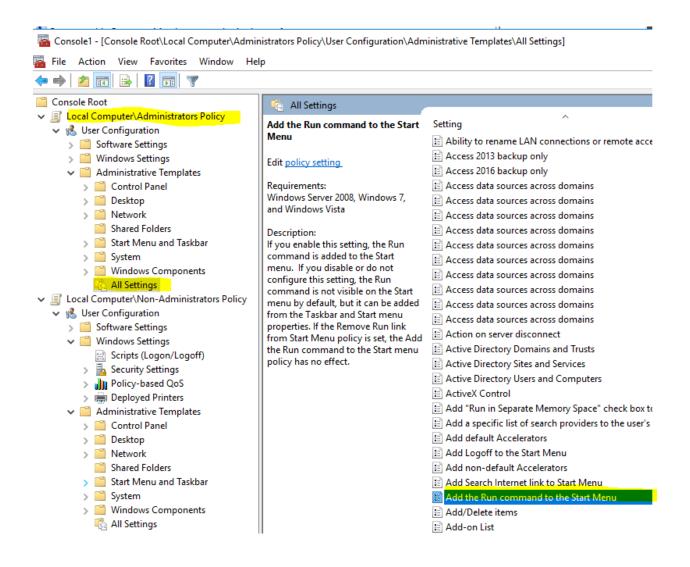
Open Computer Management from the Administrative Tools in Control Panel to get to the local group list as shown in the screenshot.



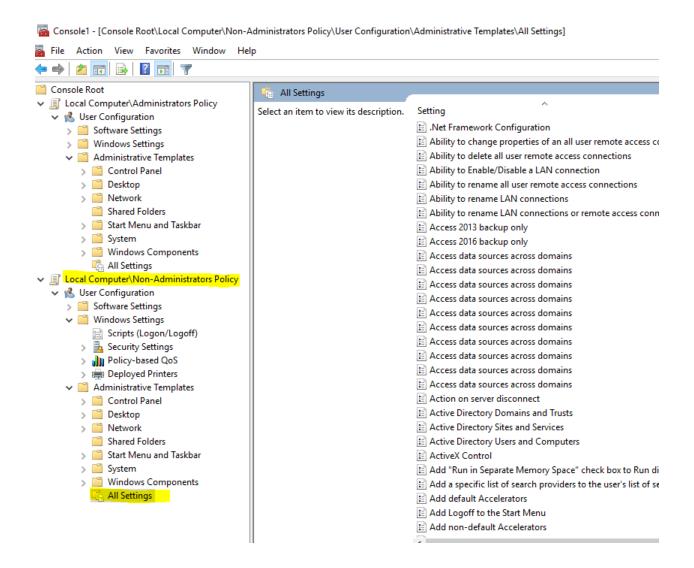
Set the Administrators Group Policy Object settings

Switch back to Group Policy Template editor

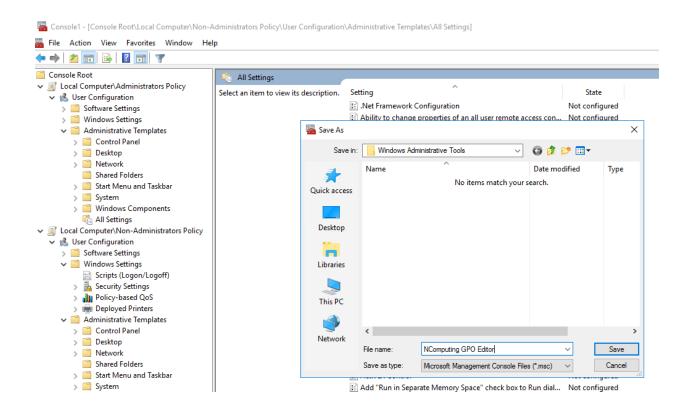
only add settings like adding Run to the Start menu, etc... Basically leave everything Not Configured. This seems to work fine for Admins in most deployments



Set the Group Policy setting for Non-Administrators as desired using the built in Template. Guide at bottom of document as a sample



When completed, On the MMC Window Select File, Save As, and save the MMC Snapin as NComputing GPO Editor to enable quick access to these settings as you will likely change it many times until you get it the way you would like



Sample Settings

<u>Path</u>	<u>Setting</u>	<u>State</u>
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Add Logoff to the Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Add Search Internet link to Start Menu	Disabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Add the Run command to the Start Menu	Disabled
\System\Removable Storage Access	All Removable Storage classes: Deny all access	Enabled
\Control Panel	Always open All Control Panel Items when opening Control Panel	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Clear history of recently opened documents on exit	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Clear history of tile notifications on exit	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Clear the recent programs list for new users	Enabled
\Windows Components\Internet		
Explorer	Disable changing connection settings	Enabled
\Windows Components\Internet		
Explorer\Internet Control Panel	Disable the Connections page	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Do not allow pinning programs to the Taskbar	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Do not allow pinning Store app to the Taskbar	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Do not display any custom toolbars in the taskbar	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Do not display or track items in Jump Lists from remote locations	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Do not keep history of recently opened documents	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Do not search communications	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Do not search Internet	Enabled
	Do not use the search-based method when resolving shell	
\Start Menu and Taskbar	shortcuts	Enabled
\Control Panel\Personalization	Enable screen saver	Disabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Go to the desktop instead of Start when signing in	Enabled
\Control Panel\Programs	Hide "Get Programs" page	Enabled
\Control Panel\Programs	Hide "Installed Updates" page	Enabled
\Control Panel\Programs	Hide "Programs and Features" page	Enabled
\Control Panel\Programs	Hide "Set Program Access and Computer Defaults" page	Enabled
\Control Panel\Programs	Hide "Windows Features"	Enabled
\Control Panel\Programs	Hide "Windows Marketplace"	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Hide the notification area	Enabled
\Control Panel\Programs	Hide the Programs Control Panel	Enabled
\System\User Profiles	Limit profile size	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Lock all taskbar settings	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Lock the Taskbar	Enabled
\Control Panel\Printers	Point and Print Restrictions	Disabled
\Control Panel\Personalization	Prevent changing color and appearance	Enabled
\Control Panel\Personalization	Prevent changing color scheme	Enabled

\Control Panel\Personalization	Prevent changing desktop background	Enabled
\Control Panel\Personalization	Prevent changing mouse pointers	Enabled
\Control Panel\Personalization	Prevent changing screen saver	Enabled
\Control Panel\Personalization	Prevent changing sounds	Enabled
\Control Panel\Personalization	Prevent changing theme	Enabled
\Control Panel\Personalization	Prevent changing visual style for windows and buttons	Enabled
\Windows		
Components\NetMeeting\Application		
Sharing	Prevent Desktop Sharing	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Prevent users from adding or removing toolbars	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Prevent users from moving taskbar to another screen dock location	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Prevent users from rearranging toolbars	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Prevent users from resizing the taskbar	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Prevent users from uninstalling applications from Start	Enabled
\Control Panel\Personalization	Prohibit selection of visual style font size	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove access to the context menus for the taskbar	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove All Programs list from the Start menu	Enabled
	Remove and prevent access to the Shut Down, Restart, Sleep, and	
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Hibernate commands	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Balloon Tips on Start Menu items	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Default Programs link from the Start menu.	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Downloads link from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Favorites menu from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove frequent programs list from the Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Games link from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Help menu from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Homegroup link from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove links and access to Windows Update	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Music icon from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Network Connections from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Network icon from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Pictures icon from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove pinned programs from the Taskbar	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Recent Items menu from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Recorded TV link from Start Menu	Enabled
\Desktop	Remove Recycle Bin icon from desktop	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Run menu from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Search Computer link	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Search link from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove See More Results / Search Everywhere link	Enabled
\System\Ctrl+Alt+Del Options	Remove Task Manager	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove the "Undock PC" button from the Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove the Action Center icon	Enabled

\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove the battery meter	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove the networking icon	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove the volume control icon	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Remove Videos link from Start Menu	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Show "Run as different user" command on Start	Enabled
\Control Panel	Show only specified Control Panel items	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Show QuickLaunch on Taskbar	Disabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Show Windows Store apps on the taskbar	Disabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Start Screen Layout	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Turn off all balloon notifications	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Turn off automatic promotion of notification icons to the taskbar	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Turn off feature advertisement balloon notifications	Enabled
\Start Menu and Taskbar	Turn off notification area cleanup	Enabled