

Why are dialog boxes initially created hidden?

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You may not have noticed it until you looked closely, but dialog boxes are actually created hidden initially, even if you specify `WS_VISIBLE` in the template. The reason for this is historical. Rewind back to the old days (we're talking Windows 1.0), graphics cards are slow and CPUs are slow and memory is slow. You can pick a menu option that displays a dialog and wait a second or two for the dialog to get loaded off the floppy disk. (Hard drives are for the rich kids.) And then you have to wait for the dialog box to paint. To save valuable seconds, dialog boxes are created initially hidden and all typeahead is processed while the dialog stays hidden. Only after the typeahead is finished is the dialog box finally shown. And if you typed far ahead enough and hit Enter, you might even have been able to finish the entire dialog box without it ever being shown! Now that's efficiency. Of course, nowadays, programs are stored on hard drives and you can't (normally) out-type a hard drive, so this optimization is largely wasted, but the behavior remains for compatibility reasons.

Actually this behavior still serves a useful purpose: If the dialog were initially created visible, then the user would be able to see all the controls being created into it, and watch as `WM_INITDIALOG` ran (changing default values, hiding and showing controls, moving controls around...) This is both ugly and distracting. ("How come the box comes up checked, then suddenly unchecks itself before I can click on it?")

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