

Why does SHCOLUMNINFO have unusually tight packing?

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Alternate title: *News flash: Sometimes things happen by mistake*

rbirkby asks [why the SHCOLUMNINFO structure has 1-byte packing](#). “Was the expectation that there would be so many columns in a details view that the saving would be worthwhile?”

Hardly anything that clever or ingenious. It’s just the consequence of a mistake.

When the `SHCOLUMNINFO` structure was added to the header file in the Windows 2000 timeframe, it was added with no specific packing directive. But it turns out that there *was* a specific packing directive; it just wasn’t obvious. Near the top of the `shlobj.h` header file was the following:

```
#include <pshpack1.h> /* Assume byte packing throughout */
```

(There was of course a matching `#include <poppack.h>` at the bottom.) This set the default packing for the entire header file to byte packing instead of natural alignment.

By the time this mistake was identified, it was too late. Windows 2000 had already shipped, byte packing and all. And once the code ships, it’s done. You’re stuck with it.

Sorry.

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