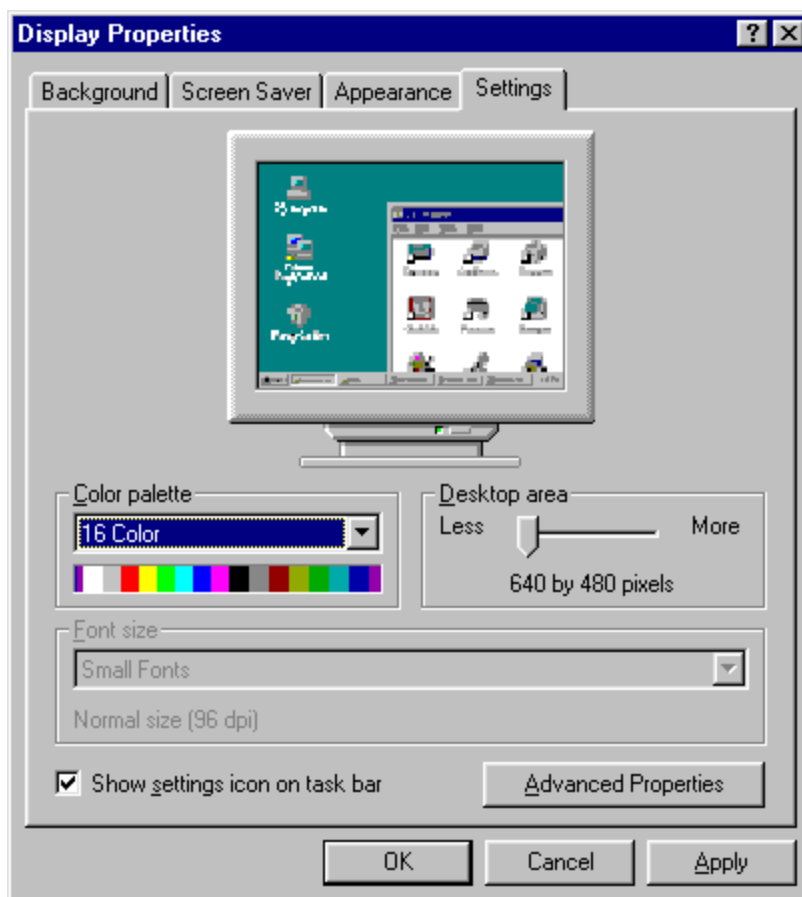# What's the difference between Display size and Screen size in the Windows 95 display control panel?
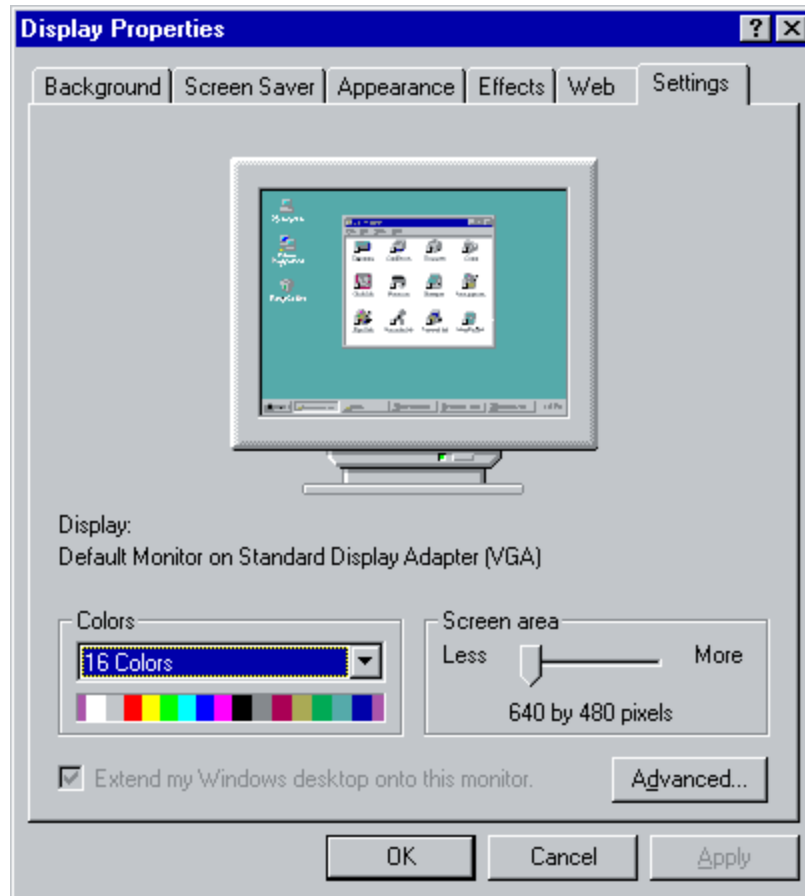
**devblogs.microsoft.com**/oldnewthing/20241105-00

November 5, 2024

In the Windows 95 display control panel, there was an option called "Desktop area".



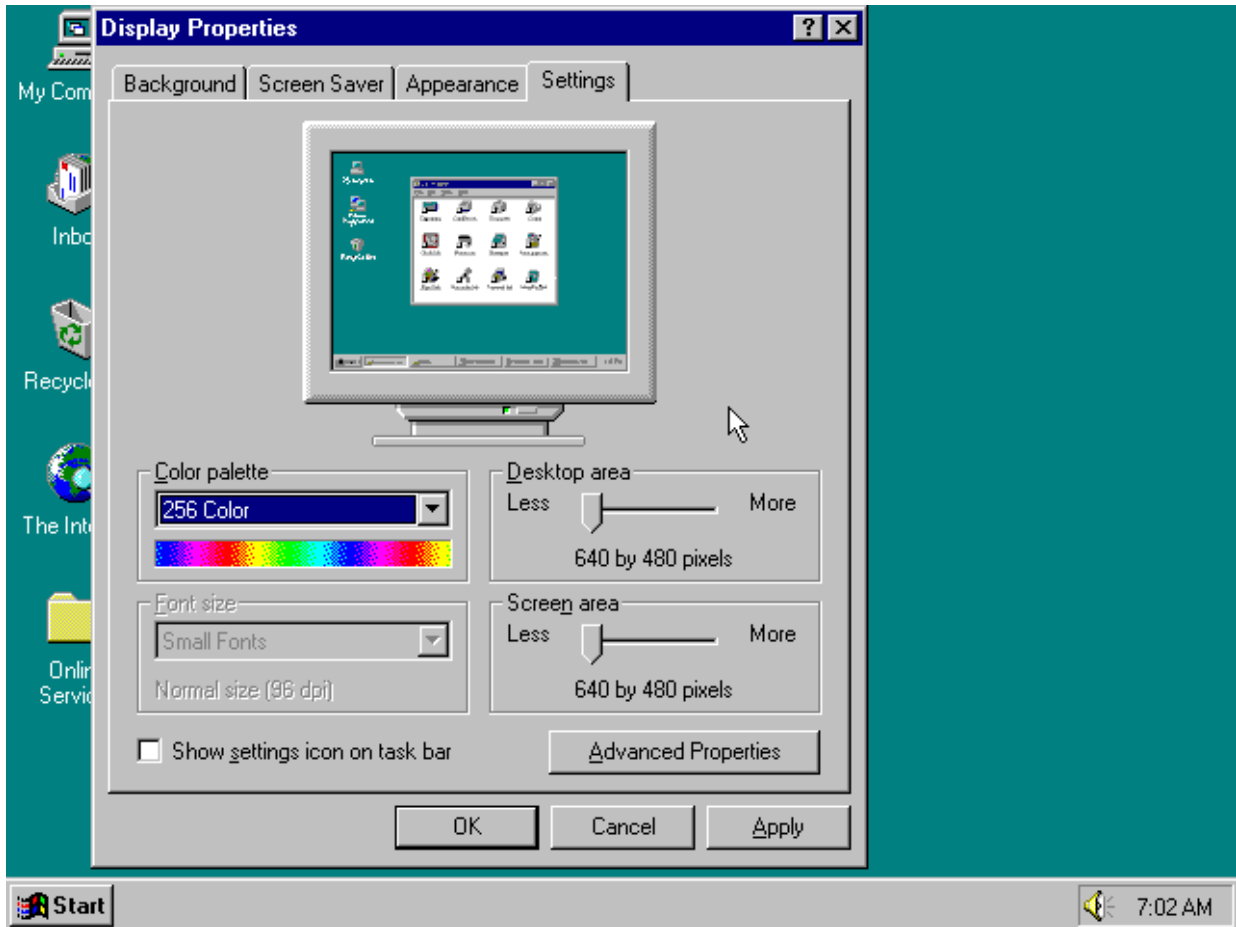In the Windows 98 display control panel, there was an option called "Screen area".

What's the difference beteween "desktop area" and "screen area"?

There's no difference. They both control the monitor resolution.

I suspect the name of the option changed because Windows 98 added support for multiple monitors. The desktop spans all monitors, but this setting controls a single monitor. This wasn't a problem on Windows 95, which supported only a single monitor anyway, but it became incorrect when Windows 98 introduced support for multiple monitors.

But wait, what about this?

What's the difference between Desktop area and Screen area?



— Bob Pony (@TheBobPony) July 5, 2024

This is a screen shot of Windows 95 with *both* "Desktop area" and "Screen area". What's going on here?

What we're seeing here is a third party display driver injecting itself into the standard control panel. Rather than doing the documented thing and adding a tab to the Desktop control panel called, say, "Virtual screen", they decided that it would be cooler to ~~hack into~~ integrate into[1] the "Settings" page.[2]

All of these unsupported hacks created problems in Windows 98 when the team tried to add multi-monitor support, since the Windows 98 multi-monitor display control panel looked nothing like the Windows 95 one, and the attempt by the display driver to patch the Settings page failed catastrophically.

If you are still interested, you can read about how the Windows 98 team had to do extra work to keep these rogue display control panel hackers from messing up the new display control panel.

[1] This is an unauthorized and unsupported integration point, but the marketing team is not dissuaded by annoying engineering jargon like "unsupported". "Look, our job as marketing is to come up with ideas. It is not your job as engineering to tell me that it can't be done. Your job is to *find a way to do it*."

[2] In this case, the third party display driver made "Display area" represent the size of the virtual screen and the "Screen area" be the size of the physical screen.