



The Portal People
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SUBST vs NET USE Mapping Drive Letters Made Simple



Knowledge
Series

SUBST vs NET USE Mapping Drive Letters Made Simple

If you've ever worked with shared drives or folders, you've probably had to "map" a drive. It's like giving a shortcut to a folder so you can access it quickly. In Windows, two common commands to do this are SUBST and NET USE. But when should you use one over the other? Let's break it down in non-techy terms.

What's SUBST?

SUBST is a command that lets you assign a drive letter to a folder on your own computer. Think of it as creating a personal shortcut to a specific folder.

Example:

Let's say you have a folder called C:\Projects\Website. Every time you want to access it, you have to go through several clicks. With SUBST, you can make that folder behave like a new drive letter.

Command:

```
subst X: C:\Projects\Website
```

Now, when you open X: in File Explorer, it'll take you straight to C:\Projects\Website. Handy, right?

What's NET USE?

NET USE is for mapping network drives—folders that live on another computer (like a server or shared drive). You can access these shared folders as if they were local drives.

Example:

Let's say there's a shared folder on your company's server, and you want quick access to it. You'd use NET USE to map it.

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Command:

```
net use Z: \\ServerName\SharedFolder
```

Now, drive Z: will give you direct access to the folder on the server.

So, What's the Difference?

SUBST works with local folders on your computer.

NET USE connects to shared folders on other computers (on your network).

Pros and Cons

SUBST Pros

- Quick and easy for local folders.
- No network needed—just your own computer.
- Great for developers who need shortcuts to deep folder paths.

SUBST Cons

- It's only for local folders, so you can't use it for network shares.
- The mapped drives don't always stick after a restart (unless you manually set it up to do so).

NET USE Pros

- Perfect for network drives—lets you work as if remote folders are local.
- Works great in offices with shared resources.
- Mapped drives usually stick after a restart, especially if you set it up to reconnect automatically.

NET USE Cons

- Requires a network connection, obviously. If the server's down or you're offline, no access.
- Can be a bit slower since it's connecting over a network.

When Should You Use Each?

Use SUBST if you're working with your own folders and need quick access without messing around with a lot of clicks.

Use NET USE if you need to access folders on other computers or servers, like shared resources in your office.

In a Nutshell

SUBST = Shortcut to local folders.

NET USE = Map shared network drives.

Both are handy, depending on your needs. Now that you've got the basics, go forth and map those drives like a pro!



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