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Windows Vista



David Pogue

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Windows Vista: The Missing Manual
by David Pogue

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The Missing Credits

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—David Pogue

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Aero or Not

But there's certain to be someone, somewhere, who doesn't care for the new look—and Microsoft rarely takes a step forward without offering a step back to those who want it. You can not only change Vista's color scheme, you can also completely turn off



Figure 4-1: *Most people with fast enough computers use the Aero Glass look of Windows Vista—and that's why the illustrations in this book show Aero Glass. But your computer may look different, especially if you've deliberately turned on one of the other styles.*

Your choices are: Vista Basic (middle), which looks a lot like Aero—the window edges are still rounded, and the Start menu still has the new two-tone design, but the window edges aren't transparent. You lose taskbar thumbnails (page 94) and Flip 3D, too (page 90).

With Windows Standard (bottom) and the slightly darker Windows Classic, you lose all semblance of 3-D window elements; windows have sharp, square corners, and the Start menu is solidly gray. You're in a weird cross between Windows Vista and Windows Me.

the Aero look and features, if you so desire. You can substitute any of the three looks depicted in Figure 4-1.

Tip: Aero Glass uses up some of your PC's horsepower, 24 hours a day. Changing your scheme from Aero to Basic (or simply turning off transparency) can give your computer a speed boost, because it no longer has to compute and draw fuzzy images of whatever is behind your window title bars.

Microsoft figures that's not something you'll want to do often, so the controls are a bit buried. But here they are, just in case you're a believer in opaque window edges:

1. **Right-click a blank spot on the desktop. From the shortcut menu, choose Personalize.**

   The Personalization control panel opens.

2. **Click the first link, "Window Color and Appearance."**

   If you've been using the Aero design, you now arrive at the dialog box shown in Figure 4-2. Here's where you can choose a different accent color for your windows, or adjust (or turn off) the degree of window-edge transparency, which will make your PC slightly faster.

   If you've been using one of the other themes, you go directly to the dialog box shown in Figure 4-3; skip to step 4.

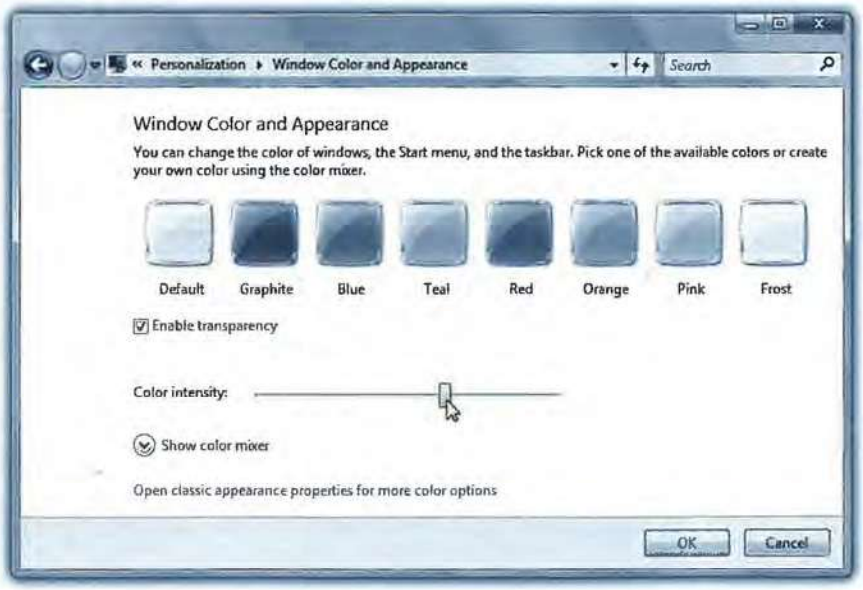


Figure 4-2: *This dialog box, new in Vista, is offered only if Windows deems your computer worthy to run the Aero cosmetic scheme (page 22). Here's where you can adjust the color tint, change (or turn off) the transparency effect, or open the Appearance Settings dialog box (Figure 4-3).*

3. **Click "Open classic appearance properties..." at the bottom of the window.**

   The Appearance Settings dialog box opens.

4. In the Color Scheme list, click the Windows design look you prefer: Windows Vista Aero, Windows Vista Basic, Windows Standard, or Windows Classic.

   With each click, you see a sample at the top of the dialog box. (Figure 4-3 shows the samples more clearly.)

5. Once you find a design you like, click OK.

   The screen flickers, thunder rolls somewhere, and your screen changes.

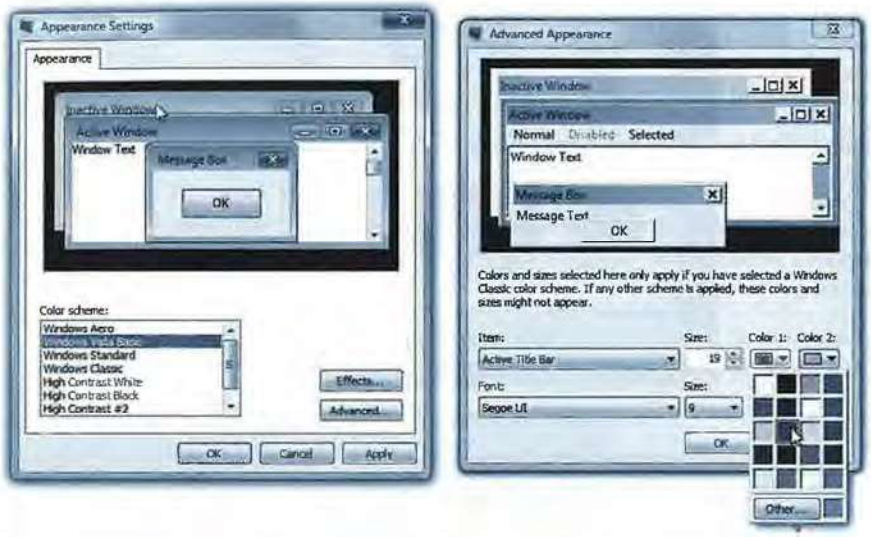


Figure 4-3: *Left: This box lists canned designs, but for real fun, click Advanced.*

Right: Click a part of the view pane (Desktop, Scrollbar, and so on). Then use the menus to choose colors and type sizes for the chosen interface element.

Dialing Up Your Own Look

All Versions

As you know from Figure 4-1, Windows includes a number of *color schemes*: predesigned accent-color sets that affect the look of all the windows you open. These color-coordinated design schemes affect the colors and shapes of your window edges, title bars, window fonts, desktop background, and so on.

Turns out, however, that you have far more control than just switching wholesale from one scheme to another. You can actually tweak *individual elements* of a theme: change the font, change the title-bar color, change the icon spacing, and so on.

To begin this adventure, you have to get yourself to the Appearance Settings dialog box:

- **If your computer runs Aero:** Right-click the desktop. From the shortcut menu, choose Personalize. In the control panel that appears, click "Window Color and Appearance," and then click the link that says "Open classic appearance properties for more color options." (You can see this link in Figure 4-2.)

- If your computer doesn't run Aero: Right-click the desktop. From the shortcut menu, choose Personalize. When you click "Window Color and Appearance," you get the classic Appearance Settings dialog box right away (Figure 4-3, left), without ever seeing the box in Figure 4-2.

See the "Color scheme" list (Figure 4-3, left)? If you see Windows Aero in this list, great. You can get the full Vista experience, complete with animations, see-through window edges, Flip 3D (page 90), and so on.

If you see only Windows Vista Basic, then you probably have a lower-powered PC (or, rather, a lower-powered graphics card), or you're using the Home Basic edition of Vista. That's not so bad, though. You still get the clean, modern look of Vista windows and buttons, a rounded black glass look for the taskbar and start menu, and so on.

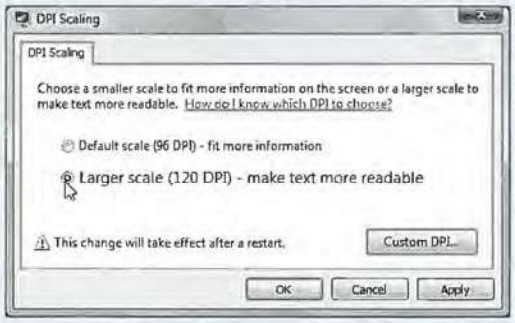
And finally, by choosing Windows Standard or Windows Classic styles from the "Windows and buttons" drop-down list (Figure 4-3, left), you return your PC to the visual look of Windows 2003/Windows 2000. (Strangely, there's no way to restore the nostalgic color scheme of Windows XP.)

Note: The "High Contrast" schemes in the list are designed to help out people with limited vision, who require greater differences in color between window elements. High-contrast schemes do not use any of the Aero features and more closely resemble the squared-off windows and dialog boxes of Windows 2000.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

The Solution to Tiny Type

OK, fine–I can adjust things like the standard Windows type size, but only if I choose the old Windows Classic design scheme. Look, I'm over 40, my new laptop has tiny, tiny pixels, and I want to bump up the point size! Isn't there anything I can do without having to give up the new Vista look?



The people have spoken, and they've said, "We want our screens to show more!" The manufacturers have responded, and they've said, "OK, fine–we'll just make the pixels smaller." These days, text on PC screens (especially laptops) is practically unreadable for over-40 eyes.

Yes, there *is* a way to bump up the standard Windows point size. Right-click the desktop; from the shortcut menu, choose Personalize. Then click the "Adjust font size dpi" link at the left side of the dialog box.

After you authenticate yourself (page 191), you arrive at the DPI Scaling dialog box, where you can scale up the size of the text, at least in programs (like Windows itself) that are modern enough to respond to this control. (The dialog box offers only two choices: default size, or one size bigger. To choose something larger, click the Custom DPI button.)

You, the Interior Designer

The real fun, however, awaits when you choose one of the canned schemes, like Windows Classic (Figure 4-3, left), and *then* click the Advanced button. Now you find yourself in a dialog box that lets you change every single aspect of this scheme independently (Figure 4-3, right).

Note: Microsoft put a lot of work into the new look of Vista, and doesn't especially want people diluting it with their own random changes. "If you want the Vista look," the company is saying, "it's all or nothing." If Windows Vista Basic (or Windows Vista Aero) is selected in the "Windows and buttons" list (Figure 4-3, left), the changes you make in the Advanced box (Figure 4-3, right) may have no effect.

Proceed with your interior-decoration crusade in either of two ways:

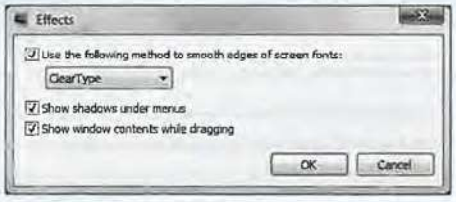
- Change the elements of the scheme one at a time. Start by choosing from the Item drop-down list (or by clicking a piece of the illustration at the top half of the dialog box, like a title bar or a button). Then use the Size, Color 1, and Color 2 drop-down lists to tailor the chosen element—such as Desktop or Scrollbar—to suit your artistic urges.

GEM IN THE ROUGH

Effects: The Tiniest Speed Tweaks

If you peer closely at the dialog box shown at left in Figure 4-3, you'll see a button called Effects. It takes you to a dialog box that lets you control what Microsoft calls *special effects* in Vista.

Now, these aren't exactly the kind of special effects they make at Industrial Light and Magic for use in *Star Wars* movies. In fact, they're so subtle, they're practically invisible—and there are far fewer effects in Vista than there were in XP.



Use the following method to smooth edges of screen fonts. When fonts are enlarged, they become ragged on the curves. But when you turn on this option, Windows Vista softens the curves, making all text look more professional (or slightly blurrier, depending on your point of view).

Using the drop-down list, you can choose a smoothing technology called ClearType. It's designed especially for flat-panel screens, as on laptops. It simulates smoother edges on the typed characters by using clever color changes on the pixels at the edges of certain letters. *Factory setting:* On, ClearType.

Show shadows under menus. Take a look: In Windows Vista, open menus actually seem to cast faint, light gray drop shadows, as though the menu is floating an eighth of an inch above the surface of the window behind it. It's a cool, but utterly superfluous special effect that saps a tiny bit of speed from the proceedings. This checkbox is the on/off switch. *Factory setting:* On.

Show window contents while dragging. If this option is off, when you drag a window, a faint outline of its border is visible; you don't see all the items *in* the window coming along for the ride. As soon as you stop dragging, the contents reappear. If it's on, however, as you drag a window across your screen, you see all its contents, too—which can slow the dragging process on slower machines. *Factory setting:* On.

- Some of the screen elements named in the Item drop-down list have text associated with them: Icon, Inactive Title Bar, Menu, Message Box, ToolTip, and so on. When you choose one of these text items, the Font drop-down list at the bottom of the dialog box comes to life. Using this menu, you can change the typeface (font, color, and size) used for any of these screen elements. If you have trouble reading the type in dialog boxes (because you have a high-resolution, tiny-type screen), or you wish your icon names showed up a little more boldly, or you'd prefer a more graceful font in your menus, these controls offer the solution.

Tip: If you create an attractive combination of colors and type sizes, remember that you can preserve it for future generations. Click OK to return to the Appearance Settings box. Then return to the Personalization control panel. (For example, right-click the desktop, and then, from the shortcut menu, choose Personalize.)

Now, click the Theme link; in the Theme Settings dialog box, click Save As and name your creation. Thereafter, you'll see its name listed alongside the "official" Microsoft themes.

(A Theme, by the way, isn't the same as a color scheme. A Theme includes much more than visual elements; it also includes sounds, icons, and so on.)

Desktop Background (Wallpaper)

All Versions

Vista has a whole new host of desktop pictures, patterns, and colors for your viewing pleasure. You want widescreen images for your new flat-panel monitor? No problem, Vista's got 'em. Want something gritty, artsy, in black and white? They're there, too. And you can still use any picture you'd like as your background as well.

To change yours, right-click the desktop. From the shortcut menu, choose Personalize. In the Personalization dialog box, click Desktop Background.

Use a Microsoft Photo

Now you're looking at the box shown in Figure 4-4. It starts you off examining the Microsoft-supplied photos that come with Vista. They're organized into categories like Black and White, Light Auras, Paintings, Textures (which take well to being *tiled*—more on that in a moment), Vistas (panoramic nature shots—yes, there had to be some), and Widescreen (designed to fit especially wide monitors).

Tip: If you'd rather have a plain, solid-colored background, choose Solid Colors from the Picture Location pop-up menu. You'll have your choice of a full palette of shades. It's not a bad idea, actually; you'll gain a little bit of speed, and it'll be a little easier to find your icons if they're not lost among the weeds and mountain bushes of a nature photo.

If you see something you like, click it to slap it across the entire background of your desktop. Click OK.

Use Your Photo

It's much more fun, of course, to use one of your *own* pictures on the desktop. That might be an adorable baby photo of your niece, or it might be Britney Spears with half her clothes off; the choice is yours.

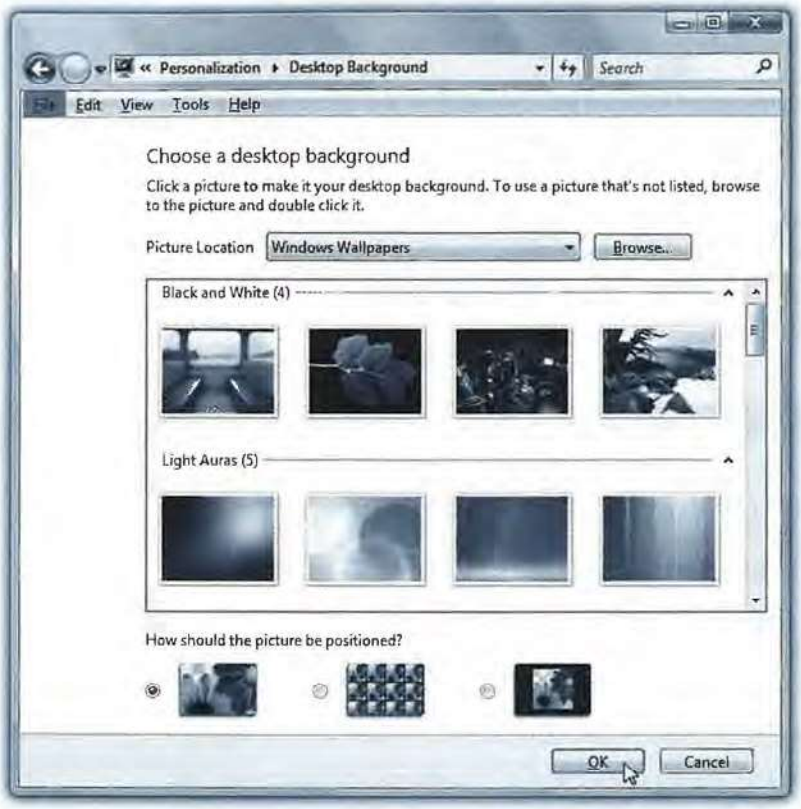


Figure 4-4: *Desktop Backgrounds have come a long way since Windows 3.1. Because of Windows Vista's name, most of the desktop images Desktop Backgrounds points to are, well, vistas–beautiful, expansive, nature images. There are many more to choose from, so feel free to look around.*

At the top of the Desktop Background dialog box is a Picture Location pop-up menu. It lists several folders that are likely to contain photos on your PC:

- **Pictures** points to your Pictures folder, so it conveniently shows you all of the pictures saved there—up for grabs for your desktop.
- **Sample Pictures** contains even more great pictures for the desktop. They've been supplied by Microsoft so that, immediately upon installing Vista, you'll have some pix to fool around with.
- **Public Pictures** is a subfolder of the Public folder (page 730). It's expected to be the place you share your pictures with others who have access to your computer. (Ironically, the Public Pictures folder *contains* the Sample Pictures folder.)

Tip: If you store pictures in a folder other than Pictures, you can still use them. That's what the Browse button is for. Click it to select the folder and make its contents appear as thumbnail wallpaper candidates.

Beneath the thumbnails, by the way, Microsoft asks a very good question: "How should the picture be positioned?" What it means, actually, is, "How should the picture be positioned *if* it's too small to fill your screen?"

Your choices are (as represented by the mini-pictures):

- **Fit to screen.** Stretch the picture to fit the desktop, even if distortion may result.
- **Tile.** Place the picture in the upper-left corner of the desktop, and repeat it over and over until the entire desktop is covered.
- **Center.** Plop the picture in the middle of the desktop. If the picture is smaller than the desktop, a colored border fills in the gaps. (You can change the border color by clicking the little "Change background color" link that appears when you choose the Center option.)

Once you have chosen your desktop picture, and the way it will be positioned, apply your new desktop by clicking OK.

Screen Savers

All Versions

You don't technically *need* a screen saver to protect your monitor from burn-in. Today's energy-efficient monitors wouldn't burn an image into the screen unless you left them on continuously, unused, for at least two years, according to the people who design and build them.

No, screen savers are mostly about entertainment, pure and simple—and Windows Vista's built-in screen saver is certainly entertaining.

GEM IN THE ROUGH

Webby Wallpaper

If there's a graphic on the Web that strikes your fancy, *it* can become wallpaper, too. Right-click the image—right there in your Web browser—and choose Set as Background (or Set as Wallpaper) from the shortcut menu. The graphic moves immediately to the middle of your desktop. (You'll probably have to close or minimize your browser window to see it.)

Windows Vista saves the file in an invisible folder (your Personal→AppData→Roaming→Microsoft→Internet Explorer folder, if you must know). Windows names it *Internet Explorer Wallpaper.bmp*. (If you use a Firefox browser, the file is called *Firefox Wallpaper.bmp* and lands in the Mozilla→Firefox folder instead of the Microsoft→Internet Explorer folder.) If you find another Web graphic you like and want to repeat the steps to turn it into wallpaper, be aware that Windows Vista saves the new file with the same name, *replacing* the original file. To have access to both files, change the name of the previous wallpaper file before grabbing a new image.

The idea is simple: A few minutes after you leave your computer, whatever work you were doing is hidden behind the screen saver; passers-by can't see what's on the screen. To exit the screen saver, move the mouse, click a mouse button, or press a key.

Tip: Moving the mouse is the best way to get rid of a screen saver. A mouse click or a key press could trigger an action you didn't intend—such as clicking some button in one of your programs or typing the letter whose key you pressed.

Choosing a Screen Saver

To choose a Windows Vista screen saver, right-click the desktop. From the shortcut menu, choose Personalize. In the resulting window, click Screen Saver.

Now use the Screen Saver drop-down list. A miniature preview appears in the preview monitor on the dialog box (see Figure 4-5).

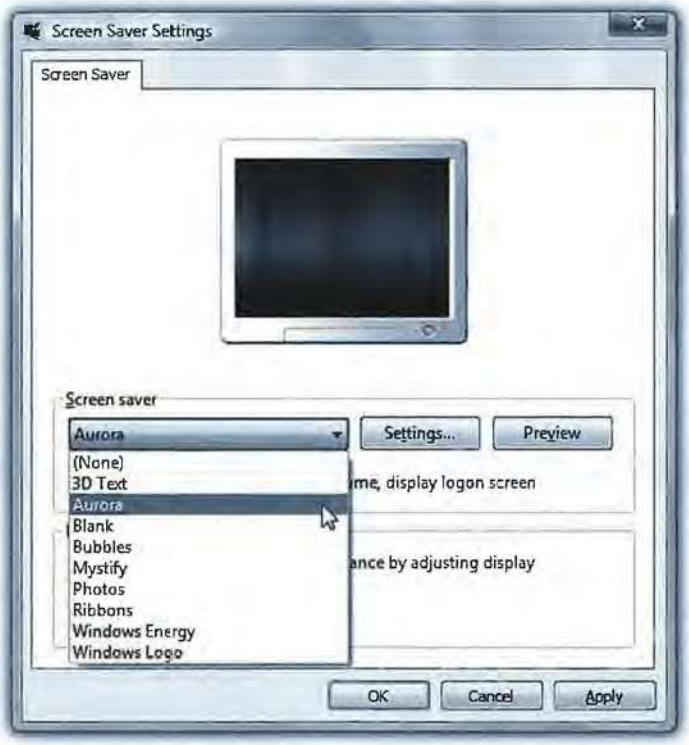


Figure 4-5:
Some screen savers don't work unless you have an Aero-capable PC (page 22): Windows Energy, Ribbons, Mystify, Bubbles, Aurora, and 3D Text. If you don't have an Aero machine, you're left with slim pickings. Of course, the photo sample pictures are nice. (If you have an Aero-capable PC but you've turned off the Aero look, the fancy screen savers are still available.)

To see a *full-screen* preview, click the Preview button. The screen saver display fills your screen and remains there until you move your mouse, click a mouse button, or press a key.

The Wait box determines how long the screen saver waits before kicking in, after the last time you move the mouse or type. Click the Settings button to play with the chosen screen saver module's look and behavior. For example, you may be able to change its colors, texture, or animation style.

At the bottom of this tab, click "Change power settings" to open the Power Options Window described on page 298.

Tip: If you keep graphics files in your Pictures folder, try selecting the Photos screen saver. Then click the Settings button and choose the pictures you want to see. When the screen saver kicks in, Vista puts on a spectacular slide show of your photos, bringing each to the screen with a special effect (flying in from the side, fading in, and so on).

Sounds

All Versions

Windows plays beeps and bloops to celebrate various occasions: closing a program, yanking out a USB drive, logging in or out, getting a new fax, and so on. You can turn these sounds on or off, or choose new sounds for these events; see page 308.

Mouse Makeover

All Versions

If your fondness for the standard Windows arrow cursor begins to wane, you can assert your individuality by choosing a different pointer shape. For starters, you might want to choose a *bigger* arrow cursor—a great solution on today's tinier-pixel, shrunken-cursor monitors.

Begin by right-clicking the desktop and, from the shortcut menu, choosing Personalize. In the dialog box, click Mouse Pointers. You arrive at the dialog box shown in Figure 4-6.

At this point, you can proceed in any of three ways:

POWER USERS' CLINIC

Password-Protecting Screen Savers

If you work in an office, password-protecting your screen saver is a great idea. It means that if you wander away to get coffee, and your screen saver kicks in, your snoopy co-workers can't stop by your desk and wiggle the mouse to see what you were working on.

To set this up, turn on the "On resume, logon screen" checkbox. Now, the act of "awakening" the PC by clicking the mouse or pressing a key merely produces the standard logon screen. Until somebody types the correct password, the data that's currently on your screen is safe from prying eyes.

If you *don't* work in a public place, however, and you're actually *annoyed* that you have to re-log on every time your screen saver kicks in, now you know the solution. Turn *off* the checkbox.

- **Scheme.** Windows has many more cursors than the arrow pointer. At various times, you may also see the spinning circular cursor (which means, "Wait; I'm thinking," or "Wait; I've crashed"), the I-beam cursor (which appears when you're editing text), the little pointing-finger hand made famous by Microsoft's advertising (which appears when you point to a Web page link), and so on.

  All of these cursors come prepackaged into design-coordinated sets called *schemes*. To look over the cursor shapes in a different scheme, use the Scheme drop-down list; the corresponding pointer collection appears in the Customize list box. Some are cute: Dinosaur, for example, displays an animated marching cartoon dinosaur instead of the hourglass cursor. Some are functional: the ones whose names include "large" offer jumbo, magnified cursors ideal for very large screens or failing eyesight. When you find one that seems like an improvement over the Windows Aero (system scheme) set, click OK.

- **Select individual pointers.** You don't have to change to a completely different scheme; you can also replace just one cursor. To do so, click the pointer you want to change, and then click the Browse button. You're shown the vast array of cursor-replacement icons (which are in the Local Disk (C:)→Windows→Cursors folder). Click one to see what it looks like; double-click to select it.

- **Create your own pointer scheme.** Once you've replaced a cursor shape, you've also changed the scheme to which it belongs. At this point, either click OK to activate

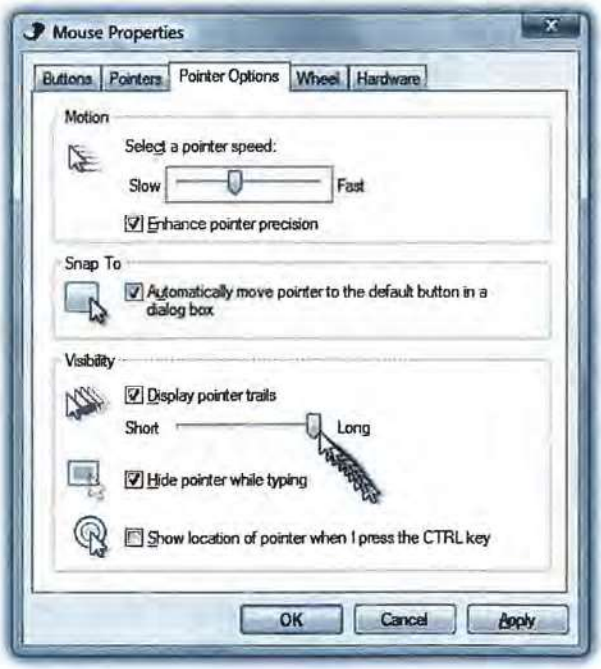


Figure 4-6:
Ever lose your mouse pointer while working on a laptop with a dim screen? Maybe pointer trails could help. Or have you ever worked on a desktop computer with a mouse pointer that seems to take forever to move across the desktop? Try increasing the pointer speed.

your change and get back to work, or save the new, improved scheme under its own name, so you can switch back to the original when nostalgia calls. To do so, click the Save As button, name the scheme, and then click OK.

Tip: The "Enable pointer shadow" checkbox at the bottom of this tab is pretty neat. It casts a shadow on whatever's beneath the cursor, as though it's skimming just above the surface of your screen.

Pointer Options

Clicking the Pointer Options tab offers a few more random cursor-related functions (see Figure 4-6).

- **Pointer speed.** It comes as a surprise to many people that the cursor doesn't move five inches when the mouse moves five inches on the desk. Instead, you can set things up so that moving the mouse one *millimeter* moves the pointer one full *inch*—or vice versa—using the Pointer speed slider.

  It may come as even greater surprise that the cursor doesn't generally move *proportionally* to the mouse's movement, regardless of your "Pointer speed" setting. Instead, the cursor moves farther when you move the mouse faster. How *much* farther depends on how you set the "Select a pointer speed" slider.

  The Fast setting is nice if you have an enormous monitor, since it prevents you from needing an equally large mouse pad to get from one corner to another. The Slow setting, on the other hand, can be frustrating, since it forces you to constantly pick up and put down the mouse as you scoot across the screen. (You can also turn off the disproportionate-movement feature completely by turning off "Enhance pointer precision.")

- **Snap To.** A hefty percentage of the times when you reach for the mouse, it's to click a button in a dialog box. If you, like millions of people before you, usually click the *default* (outlined) button—such as OK, Next, or Yes—the Snap To feature can save you the effort of positioning the cursor before clicking.

  When you turn on Snap To, every time a dialog box appears, your mouse pointer jumps automatically to the default button, so that all you need to do is click. (And to click a different button, such as Cancel, you have to move the mouse only slightly to reach it.)

- **Display pointer trails.** The options available for enhancing pointer visibility (or invisibility) are mildly useful under certain circumstances, but mostly, they're just for show.

  If you turn on "Display pointer trails," for example, you get ghost images that trail behind the cursor like a bunch of little ducklings following their mother. In general, this stuttering-cursor effect is irritating. On rare occasions, however, you may find that it helps locate the cursor if you're making a presentation on a low-contrast LCD projector.

- **Hide pointer while typing** is useful if you find that the cursor sometimes gets in the way of the words on your screen. As soon as you use the keyboard, the pointer disappears; just move the mouse to make the pointer reappear.
- **Show location of pointer when I press the CTRL key.** If you've managed to lose the cursor on an LCD projector or a laptop with an inferior screen, this feature helps gain your bearings. When you press and release the Ctrl key after turning on this checkbox, Windows displays an animated concentric ring each subsequent time you press the Ctrl key to pinpoint the cursor's location.

Tip: You can also fatten up the insertion point–the cursor that appears when you're editing text. See page 269.

Change Your Theme

All Versions

You know about color *schemes* from the beginning of this chapter. Now meet the bigger picture: Themes.

A *Theme* is a design scheme that incorporates much more than your color scheme. It also involves the background picture for your desktop, sounds, and even the mouse pointer shape.



Figure 4-7:
You may notice, after specifically applying a theme, that the theme you seem to be using is "Modified Theme." This happens whenever you apply a theme, then change anything, any single component of a theme, including changing your desktop background. Vista takes note and reports the theme you are using as modified.

Theme options let you radically change the look and emotional tenor of your entire PC with a single click (Figure 4-7).

There are only two themes to choose from out of the box: Windows Vista and Windows Classic. Windows Classic theme is the unsnazzy look of Windows 2000; the Windows Vista theme, of course, is what you've been looking at all along.

It's easy enough to design a new Theme of your own, however. Just make any of the other changes described in this chapter. Fiddle with your wallpaper, window fonts, icons, and so on. Then return to the Themes dialog box and click Save As. Finally, give your new theme a name, so you can call it up whenever you like.

Monitor Settings

All Versions

You wouldn't get much work done without a screen on your computer. It follows, then, that you can get *more* work done if you tinker with your screen's settings to make it more appropriate to your tastes and workload. And boy, are there a lot of settings to tinker with.

You can find them by right-clicking the desktop; from the shortcut menu, choose Personalize. In the resulting dialog box, click Display Settings. The window shown in Figure 4-8 appears.

Resolution

The Resolution slider snaps to the various possible *resolution* settings that your monitor's software driver makes available: 800 x 600, 1024 x 768, 1280 x 800, and so on.

When using a low-resolution setting, such as 640 x 480, the size of the pixels (dots) that constitute your screen image increase, thus enlarging the picture—but showing a smaller slice of the page. This setting is ideal, for example, when playing some small-window Web movie, making it fill more of the screen.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

Blurry Flat-Panel Screens

Yucko! I tried the 800 x 600 setting on my laptop, and everything got all blurry and fuzzy! How do I fix it?

On any flat-panel screen—not just laptop screens—only one resolution setting looks really great: the maximum one. That's what geeks call the *native* resolution of that screen.

At lower resolutions, the PC does what it can to blur together adjacent pixels, but the effect is fuzzy and unsatisfying. (On a traditional bulky monitor, the electron gun can actually make the pixels larger or smaller, but on flat-panel screens, every pixel is a fixed size.)

At higher resolutions (such as 800 x 600 or 1024 x 768), the pixels decrease, reducing the size of your windows and icons, but showing more overall area. Use this kind of setting when you want to see as much screen area as possible: when working on two-page spreads in a page-layout program, for example.

Colors

Today's monitors offer different *color depth* settings, each of which permits the screen to display a different number of colors simultaneously. This pop-up menu varies by video driver, but generally offers settings such as Medium (16-bit), which was called High Color in previous versions of Windows; High (24-bit), once known as True Color; and Highest (32-bit).

In the early days of computing, higher color settings required a sacrifice in speed. Today, however, there's very little downside to leaving your screen at its highest setting. Photos, in particular, look best when you set your monitor to higher-quality settings.

The Low (8-bit) option—if you even have it—makes photos look blotchy. It displays only 256 colors on the screen, and is therefore useful only for certain computer games that, having been designed to run on ancient PCs, require the lower color setting. (In that case, you shouldn't set your whole system to 256 colors just to run these older games. Instead, you should use the new compatibility mode described on page 236.)

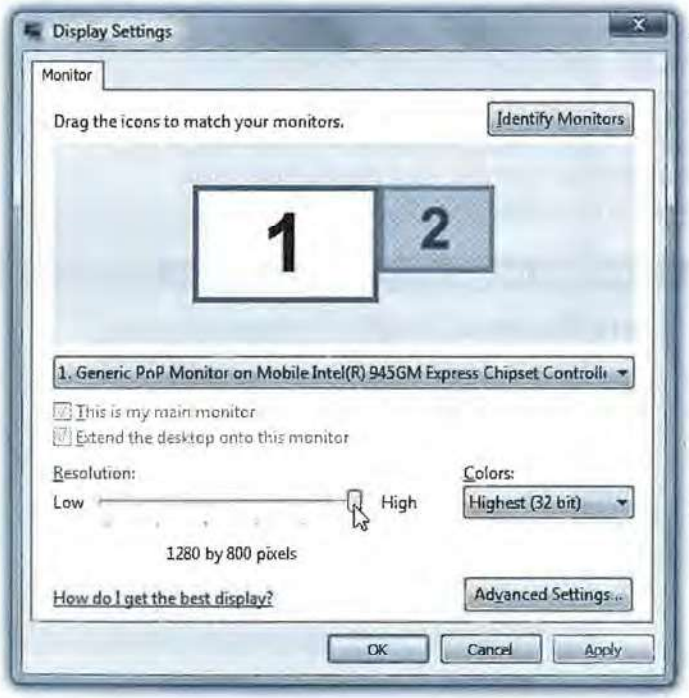


Figure 4-8:
All desktop screens today, and even most laptop screens, can make the screen picture larger or smaller, thus accommodating different kinds of work. Conducting this magnification or reduction entails switching among different resolutions *(the number of dots that compose the screen).*

- **Send it.** The little envelope button on the editing-window toolbar automatically prepares an outgoing email message with your graphic already pasted in (or, if your email program is set to send plain, unformatted text messages only, as an attachment).
- **Save it.** If your intention is to save the capture as a file, click the Save (floppy-disk) icon, or choose File→Save, or press Ctrl+S. When the Save As dialog box appears, type a name for your graphic, choose a file format for it (from the "Save as type" pop-up menu), specify a folder location, and then click Save.

Tip: If you capture the screen of a Web page and save it in HTML format, Snipping Tool helpfully prints the original URL (Web address) at the bottom of the image, so you'll know where it came from. You can turn off this "subtitling" feature in the Options dialog box of Snipping Tool.

Sound Recorder

Windows comes with a generous assortment of sound files that you can use as error beeps, as described in Chapter 8. But no error beep is as delightful as one that you've made yourself—of your 2-year-old saying, "Nope!" for example, or your own voice saying, "Dang it!"

Using Sound Recorder (Figure 7-12) requires a sound card, speakers, and a microphone. If your PC is appropriately equipped, you can use this little program to record various snippets of your life, which can serve a number of purposes, including error beeps.

Recording a new sound

Here's how to do it:

POWER USERS' CLINIC

May I Please See a Menu?

Snipping Tool, as you've already seen, is a heck of a lot better than the old PrntScrn keystroke. But at first glance, you might assume that it still can't take a picture of a menu or a shortcut menu. After all, the instant you try to drag to highlight the menu, the menu closes!

Actually, you can capture menus–if you know the secret.

Open Snipping Tool, and then *minimize* it, which hides its window but keeps it running.

Now open the menu you want to capture, using the mouse or keyboard. Once the menu is open, press this all-new Vista keystroke: Ctrl+Print Screen (that is, the PrntScrn key). That's all it takes; Snipping Tool is smart enough to know that you intend to capture just the menu.

That's workable, but still a bit complicated. That's why, if you're *actually* going to write a computer book or manual, you'll probably want a proper screen-capture program like SnagIt (*www.techsmith.com*). It offers far more flexibility than any of Vista's own screenshot features. For example, you have a greater choice of file formats and capture options, you can dress up the results with arrows or captions, and (with its companion program, Camtasia) you can even capture *movies* of screen activity.

1. Choose Start→All Programs→Accessories→Sound Recorder.

   The window shown in Figure 7-12 appears.

2. **Click Start Recording. Make the sound, and then click Stop Recording as soon as possible thereafter.**

   If you see the green animated bar dance in the Sound Recorder window, great; that's your VU (sound level) meter. It tells you that the PC is hearing you. If you don't see this graphic, however, then the sound isn't getting through. Most likely, the problem is that your PC control panel isn't set to record the appropriate sound source. Visit the Control Panel and open the Sound panel to investigate.

   As soon as you click Stop Recording, the Save As box appears.



Figure 7-12:
Sound Recorder has been lobotomized since the Windows XP version, but it does the job.

UP TO SPEED

Text-Selection Fundamentals

Before doing almost anything to text in a word processor, like making it bold, changing its typeface, or moving it to a new spot in your document, you have to *highlight* the text you want to affect. For millions of people, this entails dragging the cursor extremely carefully, perfectly horizontally, across the desired text. And if they want to capture an entire paragraph or section, they click at the beginning, drag diagonally, and release the mouse button when they reach the end of the passage.

That's all an enormous waste of time. Selecting text is the cornerstone of every editing operation in a word processor, so there are faster and more precise ways of going about it.

For example, double-clicking a word highlights it, instantly and neatly. In fact, by keeping the mouse button pressed on the second click, you can now drag horizontally to highlight text in crisp one-word chunks—a great way to highlight text faster and more precisely. These tricks work anywhere you can type.

In most programs, including Microsoft's, additional shortcuts await. For example, *triple*-clicking anywhere within a paragraph highlights the entire paragraph. (Once again, if you *keep* the button pressed at the end of this maneuver, you can then drag to highlight your document in one-paragraph increments.)

In many programs, including Word and WordPad, you can highlight exactly one sentence by clicking within it while pressing Ctrl.

Finally, here's a universal trick that lets you highlight a large blob of text, even one that's too big to fit on the current screen. Start by clicking to position the insertion point cursor at the very beginning of the text you want to capture. Now scroll, if necessary, so the ending point of the passage is visible. Shift-click there. Windows instantly highlights everything that was in between your click and your Shift-click.

3. Type a name for your sound file in the "File name" text box, choose a folder for it, and then click the Save button.

   You've just created a .wma file, a standard kind of Windows sound file.

What to do with sounds

When you double-click a .wma file, the file opens in Windows Media Player and plays back immediately. (Press Esc to halt playback.) Sound files are ideal for emailing to other people, posting on Web sites, transferring over the network, and so on. Many a Bart Simpson sound clip proliferates via the Internet in exactly this way.

Sync Center

You're supposed to use this program in conjunction with Windows Mobile cellphones and palmtops. It's also the terminal for the Vista's offline files feature. (This feature is great for laptop owners who want to take work home from the office network, or network domain members who want to keep working on documents even if the server that houses them goes down.) See page 587 for Sync Center details.

Windows Explorer

See page 60 for details on this navigational tool.

Windows Mobility Center

The Mobility Center gives you a single, centralized dashboard for managing laptop features. Here, in one window, you can turn wireless networking on and off, change display settings to suit the environment, change the display orientation, and even sync your palmtop or phone with your PC. Page 572 has the full rundown.

Windows Sidebar

Chapter 6 describes this handy, gadget-filled strip of your screen.

WordPad

WordPad is a very basic word processor (see Figure 7-13). Tragically, the Vista version can no longer create or open Microsoft Word files; Microsoft executives must have thought that WordPad was letting people get away without buying Microsoft Office.

(Little did they know that you can just use Google's online word processor at *http://docs.google.com*, which *can* open and create Word files.)

WordPad is now limited to opening and creating plain text files, Rich Text Format (RTF) documents, and Microsoft Write documents.

Using WordPad

When WordPad first opens, you see an empty sheet of electronic typing paper. Just above the ruler, you'll find drop-down menus and buttons that affect the formatting of your text, as shown in Figure 7-14. As in any word processor, you can apply these formats (like bold, italic, or color) to two kinds of text:

CHAPTER
11

Internet Explorer 7

Microsoft has gone to great lengths to integrate the Internet into every nook and cranny of Windows. Links and buttons that take you online are everywhere: on the Help screens, in the Windows freebie programs, and even in the "Send error report to Microsoft?" dialog boxes that appear after a program crashes. Once you've got your Internet connection working (Chapter 9), you may find that it's easier to go online than it is *not* to.

Internet Explorer (or IE, as it's often abbreviated) is the most famous Web browser on earth, thanks to several years of Justice-department scrutiny and newspaper headlines.

The greatly revamped version 7 offers boatloads of new features. A *huge* number of them are related to security, since most bugs and viruses enter your PC from the Internet: the new phishing filter, pop-up blocker, download blocker, Windows Defender, cookies manager, ActiveX blocking, Protected Mode, parental controls, and so on.

There's so much of this stuff, in fact, that they'd weigh this chapter down with all their negative energy. They've been offloaded to Chapter 10.

There are lots of great new productivity features, too, though: an RSS reader, tabbed browsing, a new Search bar, a new interface design, and so on. *This* chapter is all about using Internet Explorer to surf the Web.

(Hey, it could happen.)

IE7: The Grand Tour

All Versions

You can open Internet Explorer in a number of ways:

- Choose its name from the Start menu.
- Click its shortcut on the Quick Launch toolbar.
- Type a Web address—its *URL* (Uniform Resource Locator)—into a window's Address bar. A Web page URL usually begins with the prefix *http://*, but you can leave that part off when typing into the Address bar.
- Click a blue, underlined link on a Windows Help screen.

... and so on.

As you can see in Figure 11-1, the Internet Explorer window is filled with tools that are designed to facilitate a smooth trip around the World Wide Web.



Figure 11-1: *The Internet Explorer window offers tools and features that let you navigate the Web almost effortlessly; these various toolbars and status indicators are described in this chapter. Chief among them: the Address bar, which displays the address (URL) of the Web page you're currently seeing, and the standard buttons, which let you control the Web-page loading process.*

A link (or hyperlink) is a bit of text, or a little graphic, that's been programmed to serve as a button. When you click a link, you're transported from one Web page to another. One may be the home page of General Motors; another might have baby pictures posted by a parent in Omaha. About a billion pages await your visit.

Tip: Text links aren't always blue and underlined. In fact, modern Web designers sometimes make it very difficult to tell which text is clickable, and which is just text. When in doubt, move your cursor over some text. If the arrow changes to a pointing-finger cursor, you've found yourself a link.

Actually, you can choose to hide *all* underlines, a trick that makes Web pages look cleaner and more attractive. Underlines appear only when you point to a link (and wait a moment). If that arrangement appeals to you, open Internet Explorer. Choose Tools→Internet Options, click the Advanced tab, scroll down to "Underline links," select the Hover option, then click OK.

Menus and Gizmos

Internet Explorer 7 no longer has a traditional menu bar (although you can make the old one come back if you press Alt or F10). Instead, it offers five tiny menu *icons* at the upper-right corner. Each little ▾ is, in fact, a menu.

Here's a look at the other basic controls—the doodads that surround your browser window.

The Address Bar

When you type a new Web page address (URL) into this strip and press Enter, the corresponding Web site appears. (If only an error message results, then you may have mistyped the address, or the Web page may have been moved or dismantled—a relatively frequent occurrence.)

Because typing out Internet addresses is so central to the Internet experience and such a typo-prone hassle, the Address bar is rich with features that minimize keystrokes. For example:

- You don't have to click in the Address bar before typing; just press Alt+D.

GEM IN THE ROUGH

Let AutoFill Do the Typing

Internet Explorer can remember the user names and passwords you type into those "please sign in" Web sites.

You can't miss this feature; each time you type a password into a Web page, this dialog box appears.



It's a great time- and brain-saver, even though it doesn't work on all Web sites. (Of course, use it with caution if you share an account on your PC with other people.)

When you want IE to "forget" your passwords—for security reasons, for example—choose Tools→Options. Click the Content tab, click Settings, and click OK.

Here in this dialog box, you'll also find checkboxes that control *what* Internet Explorer memorizes: Web addresses (autocomplete in the Address bar), forms (your name, address, and so on), and user names and passwords.

- You don't have to type out the whole Internet address. You can omit the *http://www* and *.com* portions if you press Ctrl+Enter after typing the name; Internet Explorer fills in those standard address bits for you.

  To visit Amazon.com, for example, a speed freak might press Alt+D to highlight the Address bar, type *amazon*, and then press Ctrl+Enter.

- Even without the Ctrl+Enter trick, you can still omit the *http://* from any Web address. (Most of the time, you can omit the *www.*, too.) To jump to today's Dilbert cartoon, type *dilbert.com* and then press Enter.

- When you begin to type into the Address bar, the AutoComplete feature compares what you're typing against a list of Web sites you've recently visited. IE displays a drop-down list of Web addresses that seem to match what you're typing. To spare yourself the tedium of typing out the whole thing, just click the correct complete address with your mouse, or use the down arrow key to reach the desired listing and then press Enter. The complete address you selected then pops into the Address bar.

  (To make AutoComplete *forget* the Web sites you've visited recently—so that nobody will see what you've been up to—delete your History list, as described on page 352.)

- Press F4 (or click the ▾ inside the right end of the Address bar) to view a list of URLs you've visited recently—your History list, in other words. Once again, you can click the one you want—or press the up or down arrow keys to highlight one, and the Enter key to select it.

Topside Doodads

Around the Address bar, you'll find several important buttons. Some of them lack text labels, but all offer *tooltip* labels:

- **Back button, Forward button.** Click the Back button to revisit the page you were just on. (*Keyboard shortcut:* Backspace and Shift+Backspace, or Alt+left arrow and Alt+right arrow.)

Tip: Pressing Shift as you turn your mouse's scroll wheel up or down also navigates forward and back. Cool.

  Once you've clicked Back, you can then click the Forward button (or press Alt+right arrow) to return to the page you were on *before* you clicked the Back button. Click the ▾ button for a drop-down list of all the Web pages you've visited during this online session (that is, within this browser window, as opposed to your long-term History list).

- **Refresh button.** Click this double-arrow button (just to the right of the Address bar) if a page doesn't look or work quite right, or if you want to see the updated version of a Web page (such as a stock ticker) that changes constantly. This button

forces Internet Explorer to redownload the Web page and reinterpret its text and graphics.

- **Stop (X) button.** Click this button, at the far right end of the Address bar, to interrupt the downloading of a Web page you've just requested (by mistake, for example). (*Keyboard shortcut:* Esc.)

- **Search bar.** There's no tidy card catalog of every Web page. Because Web pages appear and disappear hourly by the hundreds of thousands, such an exercise would be futile.

  The best you can do is to use a search engine, a Web site that searches *other* Web sites. You might have heard of the little engine called Google, for example.

  But why waste your time plugging in *www.google.com*? Here's one of Internet Explorer's most profoundly useful features—a Search box that accesses Google automatically—or any other search page you like. Type something you're looking for into this box—*electric drapes*, say—and then press Enter. You go straight to the Google results page.

  Actually, the factory setting is Microsoft's own search page, Live.com, not Google. It takes a moment to reprogram the Search box so that it uses Google or another search service, but it's worth the effort. From the ▾ button to the right of the magnifying glass icon, choose Find More Providers. See Figure 11-2 for the next steps.

Tip: Truth is, it's often faster to type your search phrase into the *Address bar itself*, if for no other reason than you have a keyboard shortcut to get your cursor in there (Alt+D). When you press Enter, IE does a Web search for that term, using the same search service you've set up for the Search box.

Window Controls

These last items wrap up your grand tour of Internet Explorer's window gizmos:

- **Scroll bars.** Use the scroll bar, or the scroll wheel on your mouse, to move up and down the page—or to save mousing, press the Space bar each time you want to see more. Press Shift+Space bar to scroll *up*. (The Space bar has its traditional, space-making function only when the insertion point is blinking in a text box or the Address bar.)

  You can also press your up and down arrow keys to scroll. Page Up and Page Down scroll in full-screen increments, while Home and End whisk you to the top or bottom of the current Web page.

- **Home button.** Click to bring up the Web page you've designated as your home page—your starter page.

  And which page is that? Whichever one you designate. Open a good startup page (Google, NYTimes.com, Dilbert.com, whatever), and then choose Add or Change Home Page from this icon's pop-up menu.

- **Status bar.** The status bar at the bottom of the window tells you what Internet Explorer is doing (such as "Opening page..." or "Done"). When you point to a link without clicking, the status bar also tells you which URL will open if you click it.



Figure 11-2: *Top: To add search services to this pop-up menu, start by choosing Find More Providers.*

Middle: This page lists lots of popular search services, including Google, Yahoo, Ask.com, and more specialized pages: Amazon for books, ESPN for sports, and so on. You can even add new ones using the Create Your Own section.

Bottom: When you click a search service's name, you're asked to confirm—and you're given the chance to make it your default search, the one that IE always uses. Click Add Provider.

And when you're opening a new page, a graph appears here, showing that your PC is still downloading (receiving) the information and graphics on the Web page. In other words, you're not seeing everything yet.

If you consult all this information only rarely, you may prefer to hide this bar, thus increasing the amount of space actually devoted to showing you Web pages. To do so, choose View→Status Bar from the Classic menu bar (press Alt). The checkmark disappears from the bar's name in the View menu to indicate that the status bar is hidden.

Tabbed Browsing

All Versions

Beloved by hard-core surfers the world over, *tabbed browsing* is a way to keep a bunch of Web pages open simultaneously—in a single, neat window, without cluttering up your taskbar with a million buttons.

Figure 11-3 illustrates.

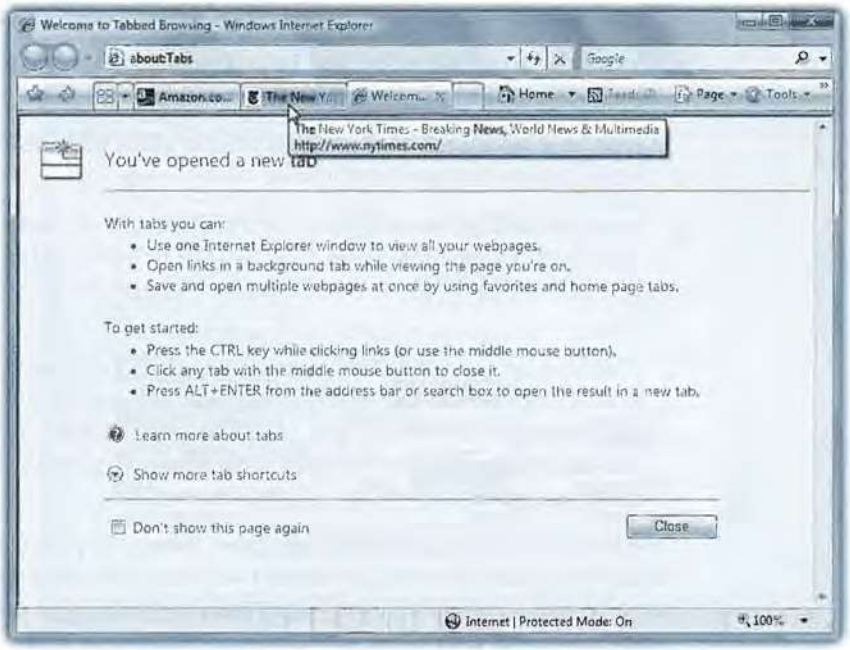


Figure 11-3: *When you Ctrl+Shift-click a link, or type an address and press Alt+Enter or ⌘-Enter, you open a new tab, not a new window as you ordinarily would. You can now pop from one open page to another by clicking the tabs above the window, or close one by clicking its X button (or pressing Ctrl+W).*

Shortcut-O-Rama

Turning on tabbed browsing unlocks a whole raft of Internet Explorer shortcuts and tricks, which are just the sort of thing power surfers gulp down like Gatorade:

- **To open a new, empty tab** in front of all others, press Ctrl+T (for tab), or click the New Tab stub identified in Figure 11-3, or double-click anywhere in the empty area of the tab row. From the empty tab that appears, you can navigate to any site you want.
- **To open a link into a new tab,** Ctrl-click it. Or click it with your mouse wheel.

  Or, if you're especially slow, right-click it and, from the shortcut menu, choose Open in New Tab.

Note: Ctrl-clicking a link opens that page in a tab *behind* the one you're reading. That's a fantastic trick when you're reading a Web page and see a reference you want to set aside for reading next, but you don't want to interrupt whatever you're reading.

But if you want the new tab to appear in *front*, add the Shift key.

- **To close a tab,** either click the X on it, press Ctrl+W, press Alt+F4, or click the tab with your mouse wheel or middle mouse button, if you have one.

Tip: If you press Ctrl+Alt+4, you close all tabs *except* the one that's in front.

- **Switch from one tab to the next** by pressing Ctrl+Tab. Add the Shift key to move backwards through them.
- **Jump to a specific tab** by pressing its number along with the Ctrl key. For example, Ctrl+3 brings the third tab forward.
- **Save a tab configuration.** If there's a certain set of Web sites you like to visit daily, open them all into tabs. Then click the Add to Favorites button; from its menu, choose Add Tab Group to Favorites. Type a name for the group, and then click Add.

  Later, you can recreate your current setup—with all of them in a tabbed window—by selecting the resulting listing in the Favorites menu and then clicking the blue right-arrow button beside its name. The beauty of this arrangement is that you can start reading the first Web page while all of the others load into their own tabs in the background.

One more note to tab fans: When you close Internet Explorer, a dialog box appears asking if you really want to close *all* the tabs. If you click Show Options at this point, you're offered an opportunity to "Open these the next time I use Internet Explorer." Turn that on and click Close Tabs; the next time you go a-browsing, you'll pick up right from the tabs where you left off.

Note: If you find all this tabby business confusing and unnecessary, you can turn off the whole feature. In Internet Explorer, choose Tools→Internet Options. Click the General tab; under Tabs, click Settings. Turn off Enable Tabbed Browsing, and then click OK twice.

Quick Tabs (Thumbnails)

Once you've got a bunch of tabs open, you may face a horizontal screen-space crunch. How much, exactly, of the text "Welcome to Bass World—The Internet's Global Resource for Bass Fisherfolk" can you see on a half-inch tab?

Not much. But how, then, are you supposed to tell your tabs apart?

By using another new Internet Explorer feature called Quick Tabs. Figure 11-4 shows all.

Tip: You can *close* a tab directly from the Quick Tabs screen, too—just click the X button in the upper-right corner of the thumbnail.

Tab Settings

People get really, *really* obsessive over tabs for some reason. They want tabs to behave *just* the way they expect, or it's back to Firefox they go.

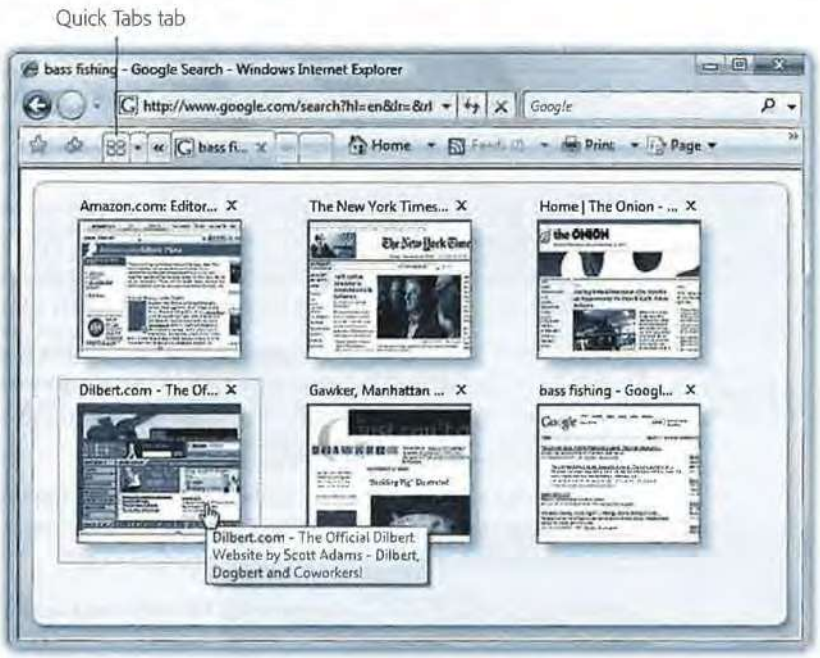


Figure 11-4: *Quick Tabs shows you thumbnails of all the Web pages you've opened into tabs, making it simple to tell them apart. One click on a thumbnail returns it to full size, with that tab in front of the others. All you have to learn is the Quick Tabs keystroke, which is Ctrl+Q—or the location of the Quick Tabs button, shown here. (Repeat the trigger to exit the Quick Tabs view without changing anything.)*

No worries—Internet Explorer lets you customize tabs' behavior to within an inch of their lives. Start by choosing Tools→Internet Options→General; in the Tabs section of the dialog box, click Settings. Here's the most useful of what you'll find:

- **Enable Tabbed Browsing.** This is the on/off switch for the whole tab feature.
- **Warn me when closing multiple tabs.** If tabs are open when you close Internet Explorer, a confirmation box appears: "Do you want to close all tabs?" It's semi-annoying but semi-useful, because you may not realize that you're about to close all your tabs.

  You can turn on "Do not show me this dialog again" right in that box, or you can turn off this checkbox.
- **Always switch to new tabs when they are created.** Makes every new tab appear in front of the others, even if you Ctrl-click a link rather than Ctrl+Shift-click it.

(Even if you leave this option off, though, Ctrl+Shift-clicking a link still opens the tab in front.)

- **Enable Quick Tabs.** This is the on/off switch for the feature shown in Figure 11-4.
- **Open new tabs next to the current tab.** Ordinarily, IE creates a new tab right next to the one you're on, thus shoving all the other tabs off to the right. If you turn off this checkbox, new tabs appear to the right of all open tabs.
- **Load only the first home page when Internet Explorer starts.** Got a tab group set as your home page (page 384)? Turn on this box if you want only the first tab to open when IE starts, rather than the whole tab group.
- **Open home page for new tabs instead of a blank page.** When you click the New Tab tab, a blank page normally opens. If you instead want the new tab to appear with your home page on it, turn on this box.
- **When a pop-up is encountered.** When a "good" pop-up window opens, should it open in a new window or a new tab? Or should Internet Explorer try to figure out which would be most helpful? (If the Web programmer has specified a specific size for the pop-up, it appears in a window; otherwise, in a new tab.)
- **Open links from other programs in....** If you click a link in an email message, should the resulting Web page open in a new window or a new tab? Or should it replace whatever's currently in the frontmost window or tab? Only you can decide.

Actually, there's one more useful tabbed-browsing setting that's *not* here—for some reason, Microsoft stuck it on the Tools→Internet Options→Advanced tab. It's "Use most recent order when switching tabs with Ctrl+Tab."

Ordinarily, pressing Ctrl+Tab moves you through your tabs from left to right; adding Shift moves you backward.

But if you turn this option on, Ctrl+Tab jumps through the tabs you've visited in *reverse chronological order.* It's just the way Alt+Tab works when you're switching between Windows programs. This arrangement makes it very easy to compare two Web pages, because pressing Ctrl+Tab bounces you back and forth between the last two you've visited.

Note: This option also affects what happens when you hit Ctrl+W repeatedly to *close* tabs. They close in reverse chronological order.

Favorites (Bookmarks)

All Versions

When you find a Web page you might like to visit again, press Ctrl+D. That's the keyboard shortcut for the Add to Favorites command. (The long way is to click the Add to Favorites button identified in Figure 11-5.) Type a shorter or more memorable name, if you like, and click Add.

The Web page's name appears instantly in the "Favorites center," which is the menu indicated by the yellow star (Figure 11-5). The next time you want to visit that page, open this menu—or press Alt+C—and click the Web site's name in the list.

Tip: You can send your list of Favorites to or from other browsers or other PCs, which can save you a lot of time.

To do that, open the Add to Favorites menu (Figure 11-5); choose Import and Export. The Import/Export wizard appears to guide you through the process. Consider saving them onto, for example, a flash drive, for ease in transporting to another location or computer.



Figure 11-5:
Top: When you want to flag a Web page for visiting later, using this menu is one way to do it.

Bottom: Internet Explorer offers to add this Web page's name (or a shorter name that you specify for it) either to the Favorites menu itself, or to a "folder" (category) within that menu. The next time you want to visit that page, just select its name from the star-shaped menu at the top left of the window.

You can rearrange the commands in your Favorites menu easily enough. Open the Favorites center (Figure 11-6), and then drag the bookmarks up and down in the list.

Or, for more elaborate organizing tasks—creating and deleting folders, renaming sites, and so on—click the Add to Favorites button (Figure 11-5) and, from the shortcut menu, choose Organize Favorites. You get a little dialog box that makes all of those tasks easy.

Tip: If you *Shift*-click the Organize Favorites command, you open a standard Explorer window that lists your favorites as though they're standard computer files (which they are). Technically, you're now inside your Personal→Favorites folder. Now you can use standard Windows techniques to delete, rename, copy, paste, and otherwise manipulate your Favorites. You can even back them up, copy them to a flash drive, and so on.



Figure 11-6: *When the Favorites menu opens, you can drag names up or down to rearrange the list, as shown. Or right-click one to access the commands that rename, delete, or file a favorite into a folder. (Unfortunately, the Favorites menu covers up part of the Web page you're reading. It hides itself soon enough, but you might also want to freeze the Favorites Center open so that it doesn't cover the page. To do that, click the Pin the Favorites Center button shown here.)*

The Links Toolbar

The Favorites pane is one way to maintain a list of Web sites you visit frequently. But opening a Web page in that pane requires *two mouse clicks*—an exorbitant expenditure of energy. The Links toolbar, on the other hand, lets you summon a few, very select, *very* favorite Web pages with only *one* click.

You make the Links toolbar appear by choosing Tools→Toolbars→Links. Figure 11-7 illustrates how to add buttons to, and remove them from, this toolbar. Once they're there, you can rearrange these buttons simply by dragging them horizontally.

Tip: As shown in Figure 11-7, you can drag a link from a Web page onto your Links toolbar. But you can also drag it directly to the desktop, where it turns into a special Internet shortcut icon. To launch your browser and visit the associated Web page, just double-click this icon whenever you like.

Better yet, stash a few of these icons in your Start menu or Quick Launch toolbar for even easier access. (Moreover, if you open your Computer→C: drive→Users→ [Your Name]→Favorites folder, you'll see these shortcut icons for *all* your favorite links. Feel free to drag them to the desktop, Quick Launch toolbar, Links toolbar, or wherever you like.)

History List

All Versions

This *history* is a list of the Web sites you've visited. It's the heart of three IE features: AutoComplete, described at the beginning of this chapter; the drop-down list at the right side of the Address bar; and the History list itself.



Figure 11-7: *Once you've got a juicy Web page on the screen, you can turn it into a Link by dragging the tiny page icon directly to the Links bar, as shown here. (You can also drag any link from a Web page onto the toolbar.) If you right-click a link, you can choose Rename (to pick a shorter name that fits better).*

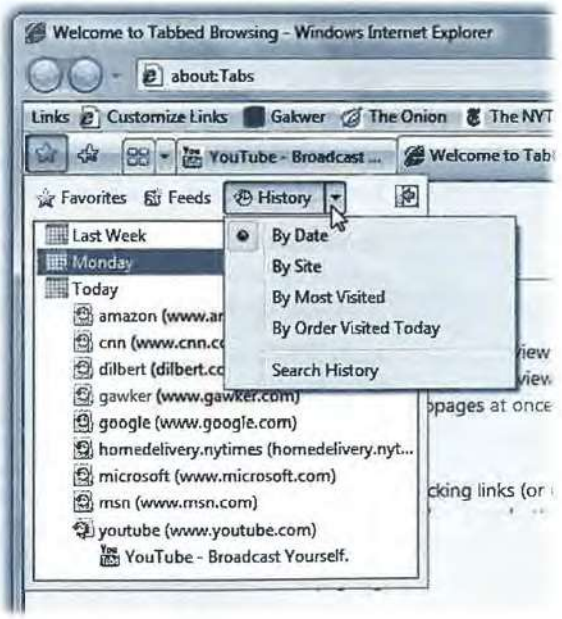


Figure 11-8: *If you click the little ▾ button next to the word History, you'll see that you can view the list sorted by Web site, date, frequency of visits–or you can see only the sites you've visited* today, *in order. The same little pop-up menu offers a command called Search History, so that you can search for text in the History list–not the actual text* on *those pages, but text within the page addresses and descriptions.*

That's the pane that appears when you click the Favorites (star) button and then click History—or just press Ctrl+H. Figure 11-8 presents the world's shortest History class.

The History pane lists the Web sites you've visited in the last week or so, neatly organized into subfolders like "Today" and "Last Week." These are great features if you can't recall the URL for a Web site that you remember having visited recently.

Click one of the time-period icons to see the Web sites you visited during that era. Click the name of a Web site to view a list of each visited page *within* that site—and click an actual URL to reopen that Web page in the main window.

You can configure the number of days for which you want your Web visits tracked. To do so, choose Tools→Internet Options→General; where it says "Browsing history," click Settings. At the bottom of the dialog box, you'll see the "Days to keep pages in history" control.

For details on *erasing* your History list for security purposes, see page 352.

Tip: The more days IE tracks, the easier it is for you to refer to those addresses quickly. On the other hand, the more days you keep, the longer the list becomes, which may make it harder to use the list easily and efficiently.

Oh, and if you set "Days to keep pages in history" to 0, Internet Explorer won't track your movements at all. (You know who you are.)

RSS: The Missing Manual

All Versions

In the beginning, the Internet was an informational Garden of Eden. There were no banner ads, pop-ups, flashy animations, or spam messages. People thought the Internet was just the greatest.

Those days, unfortunately, are long gone. Web browsing now entails a constant battle against intrusive advertising and annoying animations. And with the proliferation of Web sites and blogs, just reading your favorite sites can become a full-time job.

Enter RSS, a technology that lets you subscribe to *feeds*—summary blurbs provided by thousands of sources around the world, from Reuters to Microsoft to your nerdy next-door neighbor. News and blog sites usually publish RSS feeds, but RSS can also bring you podcasts (recorded audio broadcasts), photos, and even videos.

You used to need a special RSS *reader* program to tune into them—but no longer. Internet Explorer 7 can "subscribe" to updates from such feeds, so you can read any new articles or postings at your leisure.

The result? You spare yourself the tedium of checking for updates manually, plus you get to read short summaries of new articles without ads and blinking animations. And if you want to read a full article, you can click its link in the RSS feed to jump straight to the main Web site.

Note: RSS either stands for Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication. Each abbreviation explains one aspect of RSS—either its summarizing talent or its simplicity. (Web feeds and XML feeds are the same thing.)

Viewing an RSS Feed

So how do you sign up for these free, automatic RSS "broadcasts"? Watch your tab bar as you're surfing the Web. When Internet Explorer's Feeds button (Figure 11-9) turns orange, IE is telling you, "This site has an RSS feed available."

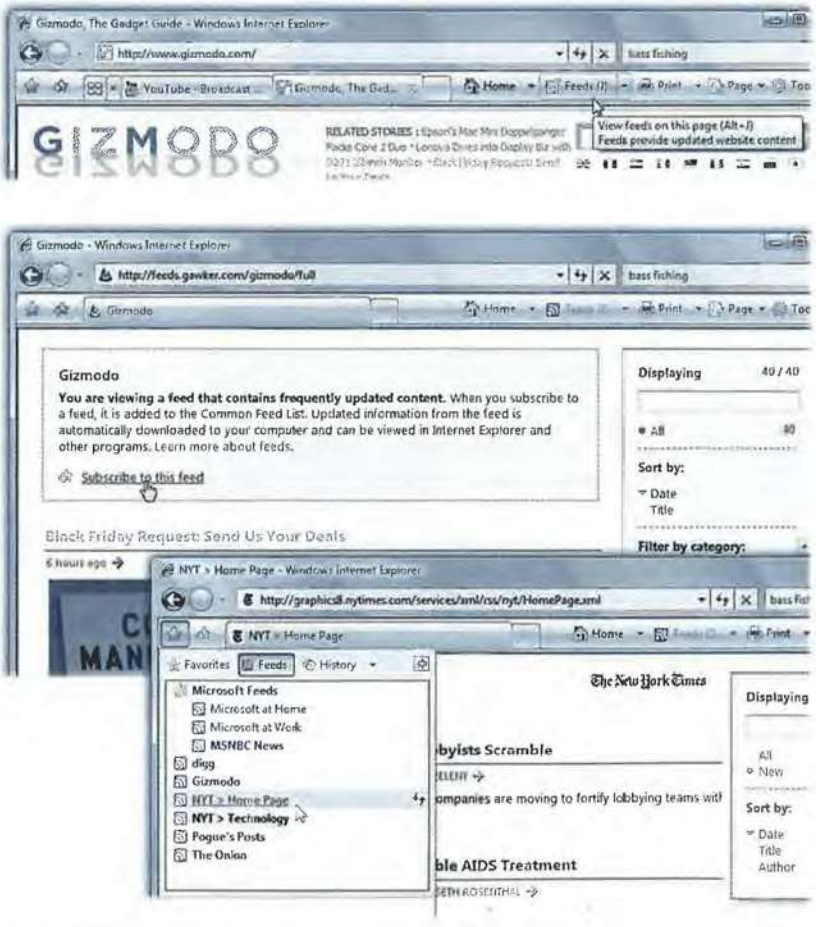


Figure 11-9: *Top: When the Feeds button changes color, you've got yourself a live one: a Web site that publishes a feed. Click the Feeds button.*

Middle: Now you get a sneak peek at what the feed looks like. If you like, subscribe, as shown here.

Bottom: To read your feed, click the Favorites button (the star) and, at the top of the pane, click Feeds. Click the one you want to read.

(Sometimes, in fact, the site has *multiple* feeds available—for example, in different formats—in which case you can choose among them using the ▾ menu next to the RSS icon.)

Tip: To find more RSS feeds, visit a site like *www.feedster.com* or *www.syndic8.com*.

By the way, Internet Explorer isn't the only RSS reader. If you catch the RSS bug, you might want to try out a more powerful RSS reader. Visit *www.downloads.com*, for example, and search for *RSS readers*, or try a Web-based one like *www.reader.google.com*.

To see what the fuss is all about, click that button. Internet Explorer switches into RSS-viewing mode, as shown in Figure 11-9.

At this point, you have three choices:

- **Subscribe.** Click the Add to Favorites button, and then click Subscribe to This Feed. From now on, you'll be able to see whether the RSS feed has had any new articles posted—without actually having to visit the site. Figure 11-9 has the details.

Note: Once you've subscribed to a feed, Internet Explorer checks the originating Web site once a day for updates.

You can make it check a bit more obsessively, if you like (as often as every 15 minutes), or cool its jets (once a week). To adjust the schedule, choose Tools→Internet Options→Content; click Settings at the bottom of the dialog box. Use the "Every:" pop-up menu to specify the frequency.

While you're here, turn on "Play a sound" if you want a little sonic heads-up, too, when IE finds that a Web page you've just opened has an available RSS feed.

- **Massage the feed.** Once you're looking at the feed, you can sort the headline items by date, title, and author, or use the Search box to find text among all the articles.
- **Close the RSS feed altogether.** To do so, just click the Feeds button again. You're left back where you started, at whatever Web page you were visiting.

Tip: Once you've subscribed to some feeds, you don't actually have to fire up Internet Explorer just to see what's new in your world. Remember the Sidebar? The Gadgets described in Chapter 7?

One of them, you may recall, is called Feed Headlines. Yes, right there on your desktop, you'll see headlines from your subscribed Web sites, updating themselves as the news breaks. Click a headline to open a mini-preview window; double-click to open Internet Explorer and view the actual Web page.

Tips for Better Surfing

All Versions

Internet Explorer is filled with shortcuts and tricks for better speed and more pleasant surfing. For example:

Full-Screen Browsing

IE7's toolbars and other screen doodads take up less space in the Vista version than in previous versions, but they still eat up screen space. The Web is supposed to be a *visual* experience; this encroachment of your monitor's real estate isn't necessarily a good thing.

But if you press F11 (or choose View→Full Screen from the Classic menus), all is forgiven. The browser window explodes to the very borders of your monitor, hiding the Explorer bar, toolbars, and all. The Web page you're viewing fills your screen, edge to edge—a glorious, liberating experience.

You can return to the usual crowded, toolbar-mad arrangement by pressing F11 again—but you'll be tempted never to do so.

Picking a Home Page

The first Web site you encounter when IE connects to the Internet is a Microsoft Web site—or Dell, or EarthLink; the point is, *you* didn't choose it. This site is your factory-set *home page*.

Unless you actually work for Microsoft, Dell, or EarthLink, however, you'll probably find Web browsing more fun if you specify your *own* favorite Web page as your startup page.



Figure 11-10:
Top: Start by visiting the page you want to designate as your home page. Then, from the Home menu identified here, choose Add or Change Home Page.

Bottom: In this dialog box, choose "Use this webpage as your only home page," and click Yes.

The easiest way to go about it is to follow the instructions shown in Figure 11-10.

Google makes a nice home page; so does a news site. But here are a couple of possibilities that might not have occurred to you:

- **A blank page.** If you can't decide on a home page, or your mood changes from day to day, set up a blank—empty—home page. This setup makes IE load very quickly when you first launch it. Once this window opens, *then* you can tell the browser where you want to go today.

  To set this up, open the Home menu (Figure 11-10) and choose Remove→Remove All; in the confirmation box, click Yes.

- **Multiple home page tabs.** This is a cool one. Now that Internet Explorer can display tabs, you can designate a bunch of them to open all at once each time you fire up Internet Explorer. It's a great way to avoid wasting time by calling up one site after another, because they'll all be loading in the background as you read the first one.

Note: Choose "Tab settings" on page 375; a few settings there pertain exclusively to home page tab groups.

The quickest way to set up a Home tab set: Open all the Web sites into their own tabs, just the way you'll want IE to do automatically in the future. Then, from the Home menu, choose Add or Change Home Page. Next, in the dialog box (Figure 11-10, bottom), select "Use the current tab set as your home page," and click Yes.

Thereafter, you can always add additional tabs to this starter set by choosing "Add this webpage to your home page tabs," the bottom option shown in Figure 11-10.

UP TO SPEED

Faster Browsing Without Graphics

Sure, sure, graphics are part of what makes the Web so compelling. But they're also responsible for making Web pages take so long to arrive on the screen. Without them, Web pages appear almost instantaneously. You still get fully laid-out Web pages; you still see all the text and headlines. But wherever a picture would normally be, you see an empty rectangle containing a generic "graphic goes here" logo, usually with a caption explaining what that graphic would have been.

To turn off graphics, choose Tools→Internet Options, which opens the Internet Options dialog box. Click the Advanced tab, scroll down halfway into the list of checkboxes, and turn off "Show pictures" (in the Multimedia category of checkboxes).

Now try visiting a few Web pages. You'll feel a substantial speed boost, especially if you're connected by dial-up modem.

And if you wind up on a Web page that's nothing without its pictures, you can choose to summon an individual picture. Just right-click its box and choose Show Picture from the shortcut menu.

Note: Although it's a little more effort, you can also edit your home page (or home page tab sets) manually in a dialog box, rather than opening them up first.

Choose Tools→Internet Options→General. In the "Home page" text box, type each address, complete with *http://* and so on. If you want to create a home page tab set, type each address on its own line. (Leave the box empty for a blank home page.) Click OK, OK?

Bigger Text, Smaller Text

When your eyes are tired, you might like to make the text bigger. When you visit a site designed for Macintosh computers (whose text tends to look too large on PC screens), you might want a smaller size. You can adjust the point size of a Web page's text using the Page→Text Size commands.

Zooming In and Out

So much for magnifying the *text;* what about the whole Web page?

There are plenty of ways to zoom in or out of the whole affair:

- If you have a scroll-wheel mouse, press the Ctrl key as you turn the mouse's wheel. (This works in Microsoft Office programs, too.)
- Press Ctlr+plus or Ctrl+minus on your keyboard.
- Use the pop-up menu in the lower-right corner of the window (where it probably says "100%" at the moment). Just clicking the digits repeatedly cycles the page among 100, 125, and 150 percent of actual size. Alternatively, you can use its ≥ menu to choose any degree of zoom from 50 to 400 percent—or choose Custom to type anything in between.

Online Photos

Internet Explorer is loaded with features for handling graphics online. Right-clicking an image on a Web page, for example, produces a shortcut menu that offers commands like Save Picture As, E-mail Picture, Print Picture, and Set as Background (that is, wallpaper).

Tip: To turn off IE's picture-shrinking feature, choose Tools→Internet Options. Click the Advanced tab, scroll down to the Multimedia heading, and turn off "Enable Automatic Image Resizing." Click OK.

By the way, when you see a picture you'd like to keep, right-click it and choose Save Picture As from the shortcut menu. After you name the picture and then click the Save button, the result is a new graphics file on your hard drive containing the picture you saved. (You can also choose Set as Background, which makes the picture part of your desktop image itself.)

Saving Pages

You can make Internet Explorer *store* a certain Web page on your hard drive so that you can peruse it later—on your laptop during your commute, for example.

The short way is to choose Page→Save As. For greatest simplicity, choose "Web Archive, single file (*.mht)" from the "Save as type" drop-down list. (The other options here save the Web page as multiple files on your hard drive—a handy feature if you intend to edit them, but less convenient if you just want to read them later.) Name the file and click the Save button. You've just preserved the Web page as a file on your hard drive, which you can open later by double-clicking it.

Sending Pages

Internet Explorer provides two different ways of telling a friend about the page you're looking at. You might find that useful when you come across a particularly interesting news story, op-ed piece, or burrito recipe.

- **The send-the-whole-page method.** While looking at a page, choose Page→Send Page by E-Mail to open a new Mail message with a copy of the actual Web page in the body. Address the message and click Send.

  Not all recipients, however, will be able to see the message; some email programs can't display HTML messages like this one. (Such programs show only plain-text messages.)

- **The send-a-link method.** To send just a link to the page you're looking at, choose Page→Send Link by E-mail. Then proceed as usual, addressing the message and clicking Send. All your recipients have to do is click the link to open it in their Web browsers.

Tip: The Page menu also offers the curious Edit with Notepad command. It opens the raw, underlying HTML coding of the page in Notepad, so that you can inspect and make changes to it—a great way to make emergency changes to the text of your own Web page when you're on the road and have no other editing tools on hand.

Printing Pages

Printing has been *vastly* improved in Internet Explorer 7. The decade of chopped-off printouts is over.

Now, when you choose Print (the little printer icon) *all* of the Web page's text is auto-shrunk to fit within the page.

Tip: You can print only *part* of a page, too. Drag through the portion you want, press Ctrl+P, click Selection, and then click Print.

Better yet, if you choose Print→Print Preview, you get a handsome preview of the end result. The icons in the Print Preview window include buttons like these:

- **Portrait, Landscape** (Alt-O, Alt+P) controls the page orientation: upright or sideways.

- **Turn headers and footers on or off** (Alt+E) hides or shows the header (the text at the top of the printout, which usually identifies the name of the Web site you're

printing and the number of pages) and the footer (the URL of the Web page, and the date).

- **View Full Width** (Alt+W) blows up the preview to fill your screen, even if it means you'll have to scroll down to see the whole page. (This option has no effect on the printout itself.)
- **View Full Page** (Alt+1) restores the original view, where the entire printout preview is shrunk down to fit your screen.
- **1 Page View pop-up menu** governs how many pages fit in the preview window at a time.
- **Change Print Size** pop-up menu affects the size of the image on the printed pages. Shrink to Fit adjusts the printout so that it won't be chopped off, but you can manually magnify or reduce the printed image by choosing the other percentage options in this menu.

Tip: Lots of Web sites have their own "Print this Page" buttons. When they're available, use them instead of Internet Explorer's own Print command. The Web site's Print feature not only makes sure the printout won't be chopped off, but it also eliminates ads, includes the entire article (even if it's split across multiple Web pages), and so on.

Turn Off Animations

If blinking ads make it tough to concentrate as you read a Web-based article, choose Tools→Internet Options→Advanced tab, and then scroll down to the Multimedia heading (Figure 11-11). Turn off "Play animations in web pages" to stifle most animated ads. Alas, it doesn't stop *all* animations; the jerks of the ad-design world have grown too clever for this option.

Take a moment, too, to look over the other annoying Web page elements that you can turn off, including sounds.

Internet Options

Internet Explorer's Options dialog box offers roughly 68,000 tabs, buttons, and nested dialog boxes. Most of the useful options have been described, in this chapter, with their appropriate topics (like Tabbed Browsing). Still, by spending a few minutes adjusting Internet Explorer's settings, you can make it more fun (or less annoying) to use.

To open this cornucopia of options, choose Tools→Internet Options (Figure 11-11).

The Keyboard Shortcut Master List

All Versions

Before you set off into the Internet Explorer sunset, it's worth admitting that surfing the Web is one of the things most people do *most* with their PCs. And as long as you're

going to spend so much time in this single program, it's worth mastering its keyboard shortcuts. Once you've learned a few, you save yourself time and fumbling.

Here it is, then: the complete master list of every Internet Explorer keyboard shortcut known to Microsoft. Clip and save.

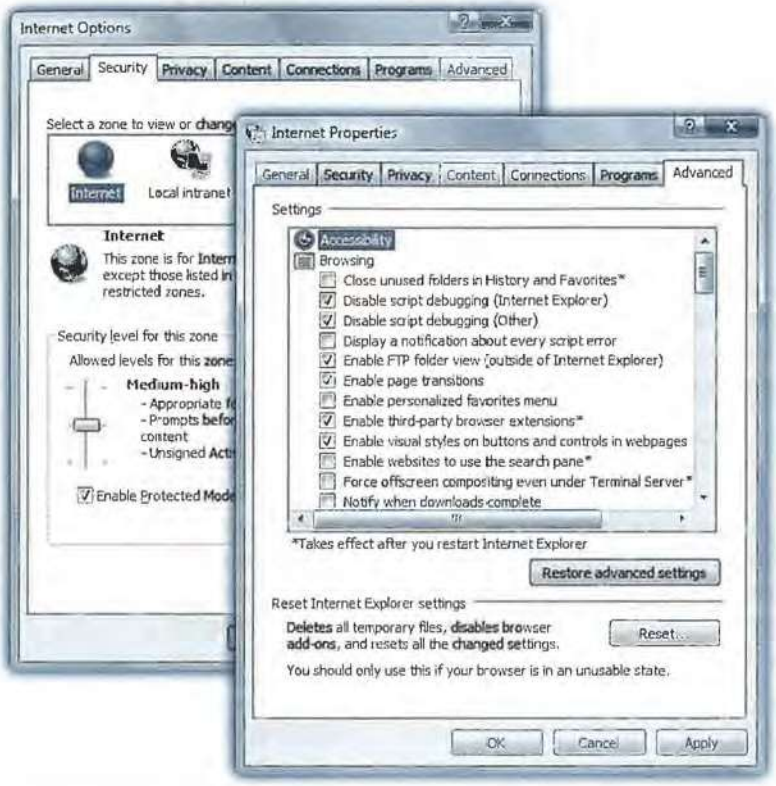


Figure 11-11: *Choosing Tools→Internet Options opens this dialog box, the identical twin of the Internet Options program in the Control Panel. Two of its tabs are shown here. Double-click one of the headings (like "Accessibility") to collapse all of its checkboxes. Your sanity is the winner here.*

Viewing

Full Screen mode (on/off)	F11
Cycle through links on a page	Tab
Search the text on a page	Ctrl+F
Open the current page in a new window	Ctrl+N
Print this page	Ctrl+P
Select all items on the page	Ctrl+A
Zoom in/out by 10 percent	Ctrl+plus, Ctrl+minus
Zoom to 100%	Ctrl+0
Override pop-up blocker	Ctrl+Alt
Shut up this Web page's background sounds	Esc

Bars and Menus

Highlight the Address bar	Alt+D
Add *http://www.* and *.com* to the text in Address Bar	Ctrl+Enter
Add *http://www.* and *.net* or *.org* to the text in Address Bar	Ctrl+Shift+Enter
Open URL in the Address Bar in new tab	Alt+Enter
View previously typed addresses	F4
Highlight the Information bar	Alt+N
Open Home menu	Alt+M
Open Feeds menu	Alt+J
Open Print menu	Alt+R
Open Page menu	Alt+P
Open Tools menu	Alt+O
Open Help menu	Alt+L
Open Favorites menu	Alt+C, Ctrl+I
Open Favorites in pinned mode (won't auto-close)	Ctrl+Shift+I
Organize Favorites dialog box	Ctrl+B
Open Feeds list	Ctrl+J
Open Feeds in pinned mode	Ctrl+Shift+J
Open History	Ctrl+H
Open History in pinned mode	Ctrl+Shift+H

Navigation

Scroll down a screenful	Space bar (or Page Down)
Scroll up a screenful	Shift+Space bar (or Page Up)
Go to home page	Alt+Home
Go back a page	Alt+left
Go forward a page	Alt+right
Refresh page	F5
Super refresh (ignore any cached elements)	Ctrl+F5
Stop downloading this page	ESC
Open link in a new window	Shift-click
Add current page to Favorites	Ctrl+D
"Right-click" any highlighted item	Shift+F10
Search bar	
Highlight the Search Bar	Ctrl+E
Open list of search services	Ctrl+down
Open search results in new tab	Alt+Enter

Tabbed Browsing

Open link in new background tab	Ctrl-click*
Open link in new foreground tab	Ctrl+Shift-click (left or middle button)
Close tab (closes window if only one tab is open)	Ctrl+W, Ctrl+F4*
Quick Tab view	Ctrl+Q
Open new empty tab	Ctrl+T

View list of open tabs	Ctrl+Shift+Q
Switch to next tab	Ctrl+Tab
Switch to previous tab	Ctrl+Shift+Tab
Switch to tab #1, #2, etc.	Ctrl+1, Ctrl+2, etc.
Switch to last tab	Ctrl+9

* or scroll wheel-click, or middle button-click

CHAPTER
12

Windows Mail

Email is a fast, cheap, convenient communication medium; these days, it's almost embarrassing to admit that you don't have an email address. To spare you that humiliation, Windows Vista includes Windows Mail 7, a renamed, revamped version of Outlook Express. It lets you receive and send email and read *newsgroups* (Internet bulletin boards).

If you do have an email address, or several, Mail can help you manage your email accounts, messages, and contacts better than ever.

To use Mail, you need several technical pieces of information: an email address, an email server address, and an Internet address for sending email. Your Internet

UP TO SPEED

What's New, Besides the Name

Let's face it: Windows Mail is really Outlook Express in a new outfit.

Microsoft says that it changed the name because so many people got Outlook Express (the free program) confused with Outlook (the expensive one).

It's not exactly the same, though. Mail has much better junk-mail filtering, as described later in this chapter. Messages are now stored on the hard drive as individual files, rather than a single, big, seething database of them, which makes possible the lightning-fast searching described in Chapter 3.

One Outlook Express feature that's *missing* from Mail, however, is the ability to check free Hotmail accounts online; Microsoft mutters something about making it too easy for spammers.

But that's life. Microsoft giveth, and Microsoft taketh away.

service provider or your network administrator is supposed to provide all of these ingredients.

Setting Up Windows Mail

All Versions

The first time you use Mail (Start→All Programs→Windows Mail), you're prompted to plug in the necessary Internet addresses and codes that tell the program where to find your email. The first thing you'll see is shown in Figure 12-1.

Note: If you used the Easy Transfer Wizard (page 783) to bring over your files and settings from an older PC, Windows Mail is probably already set up quite nicely. If that's the case, skip to the next section.



Figure 12-1: *To set up an email account in Windows Mail, start by filling in the Display Name. This is the name people will see when you send them email, in the "From:" field. It does not have to be the same as your email address; it can be your full name, a nickname, or anything you like. When you're done, click Next to continue.*

Click Next to step through the wizard's interview process, during which you'll provide the following information:

- **Display Name.** The name that should appear in the "From:" field of the email you send.
- **Email Address.** The email address you chose when you signed up for Internet services, such as *billg@microsoft.com.*
- **Mail Servers.** Enter the information your ISP provided about its mail servers: the type of server, the name of the incoming mail server, and the name of the outgoing mail server. Most of the time, the incoming server is a *POP3 server* and its name is connected to the name of your ISP. It might be *popmail.mindspring.com,* for example, or *mail.comcast.net.*

  The outgoing mail server (the *SMTP server*) usually looks something like *mail.mindspring.com* or *smpt.comcast.net.*

- **Logon Name and Password.** Enter the name and password provided by your ISP. This is generally your full email address and the password you already created.

  If you wish, turn on "Remember password," so that you won't have to enter it each time you want to collect mail. (Turn on Secure Password Authentication [SPA] only if instructed by your ISP or network administrator.)

Click Finish to close the wizard and open Windows Mail.

Tip: If you want to add a second email account, choose Tools→Accounts in Windows Mail. In the resulting dialog box, click Add; the wizard you worked through previously reappears.

Sending Email

When you finally arrive at the main Mail screen, you've already got mail; the Inbox contains a message for you (Figure 12-2). The message is a welcome from Microsoft, but it wasn't actually transmitted over the Internet; it's a starter message just to tease you. Fortunately, all your future mail will come via the Internet.

In order to receive and send new mail, you must use the Send & Receive command. You can trigger it in any of several ways:

UP TO SPEED

POP, IMAP, and Web-based Mail

When it comes to email, there are three flavors of accounts (not counting America Online mail, which is a mutant breed and not something that Windows Mail can talk to): POP (also known as POP3), IMAP (also known as IMAP4), and Web-based. Each has its own distinct feeling, with different strengths and weaknesses.

POP accounts are the most common. A POP server transfers your incoming mail to your hard drive before you read it, and then deletes the original copies on the Internet. From now on, those messages live on your computer, and it's up to you to save them, back them up, or delete them. (You can configure Windows Mail not to delete the messages from the server, but most ISPs don't give you much disk space. If your mailbox gets too full, the server may begin rejecting your incoming messages.)

IMAP servers are newer than, and have more features than, POP servers, but as a result, they don't enjoy as much popularity or support. IMAP servers are Internet computers that store all of your mail for you, rather than making you download it each time you connect. The benefit? You can access the same mail regardless of which computer you use. IMAP servers remember which messages you've read and sent, too.

One downside to this approach, of course, is that you can't work with your email except when you're online, because all your mail is on an Internet server, not on your hard drive. And if you don't conscientiously delete mail manually after you've read it, your online mailbox eventually overflows. Sooner or later, the system starts bouncing fresh messages back to their senders, annoying your friends and depriving you of the chance to read what they have to say.

Free, Web-based servers like Hotmail also store your mail on the Internet. You can use a Web browser on any computer to read and send messages; then again, most POP accounts these days offer that feature, too. Web email is slower and more cumbersome to use than "regular" email accounts

- Click the Send/Receive button on the toolbar. (It's shown in Figure 12-3, which also shows how you can specify *which* account you want to check.)
- Choose Tools→Send and Receive→Send and Receive All.
- Press Ctrl+M (for Mail).

Tip: You can set up Mail to check your email accounts automatically according to a schedule. Just choose Tools→Options. On the General tab, you'll see the "Check for new messages every ___ minutes" checkbox, which you can change to your liking.



Figure 12-2: *Meet Windows Mail. You should see a Welcome to Windows Mail email that looks similar to this one. The email contains information about Windows Mail, its features, and how to use it.*

GEM IN THE ROUGH

Checking a Specific Email Account

You don't have to check *all* of your email accounts whenever you want to get mail. Suppose, for example, that you want to send a message to *yourself*–from your work account to your home account. In that case, you'd want to send/receive mail only from your office account. (If, in the same pass, Windows Mail also downloaded messages *from* your home account, you'd wind up with the same message in your office PC's copy of Mail, defeating the whole purpose of the exercise.)

Excluding an account (or several accounts) from the "Send and Receive All" routine is easy enough. Open the Accounts window (Tools→Accounts), select the account to turn off, and then click Properties. Turn off "Include this account when receiving Mail or synchronizing," click OK, and, finally, close the Accounts window.

Now suppose you *usually* want to check all accounts, but *occasionally* want to check only one of them. On such an occasion, click the ▾ beside the Send/Receive button and choose that account's name from the pop-up menu. (Alternatively, choose the account name from the Tools→Send and Receive submenu.)

Now Windows Mail contacts the mail servers listed in the account list, retrieving new messages and downloading any files attached to those messages. It also sends any outgoing messages and their attachments.



Figure 12-3: *The Send and Receive button is located on the toolbar in Windows Mail. The arrow beside it lets you choose which mail you'd like to get, if you don't want to check all of your accounts.*

In the list on the right side of your screen, the names of new messages show up in bold type; folders containing new messages show up in bold type, too (in the Folders list at the left side of the screen). The bold number in parentheses after the word "Inbox" represents how many messages you haven't read yet.

Finally, after messages are downloaded, Windows Mail applies its *mail filters*—what it calls *rules*—to all new messages (to screen out junk mail, for example). More on rules on page 407.

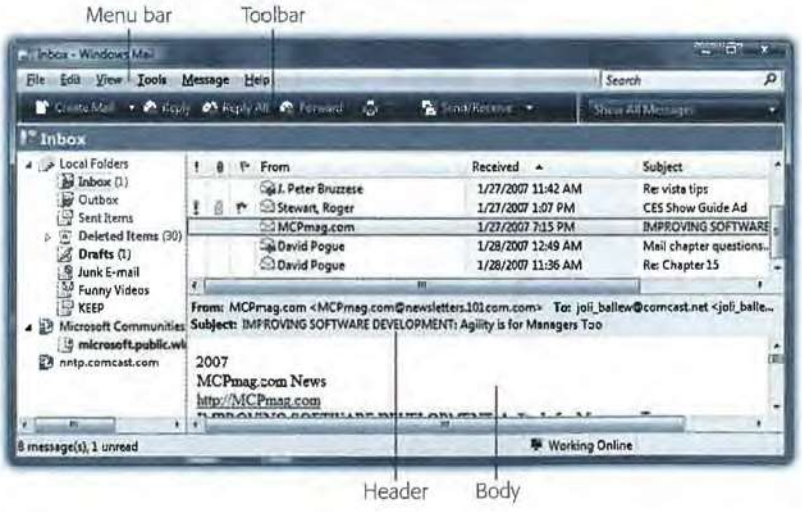


Figure 12-4: *A message has two sections: the* header, *which holds information about the message, and the* body, *which contains the message itself. The menu bar and a toolbar harbor other useful features for composing and sending messages.*

Mail folders in Windows Mail

At the left side of the screen, Windows Mail organizes your email into *folders*. To see what's in a folder, click it once:

- **Inbox** holds mail you've received.
- **Outbox** holds mail you've written but haven't sent yet.
- **Sent Items** holds copies of messages you've sent.
- **Deleted Items** holds mail you've deleted. It works a lot like the Recycle Bin, in that messages placed there don't actually disappear. Instead, they remain in the Deleted Items folder, awaiting rescue if you opt to retrieve them. To empty this folder, right-click it and then choose "Empty 'Deleted Items' Folder" from the shortcut menu (or simply choose Edit→Empty 'Deleted Items' Folder).

Tip: To make the folder empty itself every time you exit Mail, choose Tools→Options, click the Advanced tab, and then click the Maintenance button. From the Maintenance dialog box, turn on "Empty messages from the 'Deleted Items' folder on exit."

POWER USERS' CLINIC

The Mighty Morphing Interface

You don't have to be content with the factory-installed design of the Windows Mail screen; you can control which panes are visible, how big they are, and which columns show up in list views.

To change the size of a pane, drag its border to make it larger or smaller, as shown here. You can also hide or show the toolbar, folder list, status bar, search bar, or preview pane using the View→Layout command; in the dialog box, turn off the checkboxes for the window elements you could do without.



The View→Layout command also lets you control where the preview pane appears: under the message list, as usual, or to its right—a great arrangement if you have a very wide screen.

Mail lets you decide what columns are displayed in the list pane. For example, if you don't particularly care about seeing the Flag column, you can hide it, leaving more space for the Subject and Received columns. To switch columns on or off, choose from the list in the View→Columns dialog box.

You can also *rearrange* the columns, which can be handy if you'd rather see the Subject column first instead of the sender, for example. Just drag the column's name header horizontally; release when the vertical dotted line is where you want the column to wind up. To make a column wider or narrower, drag the short black divider line between column names horizontally, much the way you'd resize a folder window list-view column.

- **Drafts** holds messages you've started but haven't finished—and don't want to send just yet.
- **Junk E-Mail** holds messages deemed as junk (spam) by Mail's Junk E-Mail Protection. (More about that later.)

You can also add to this list, creating folders for your own organizational pleasure—Family Mail, Work Mail, or whatever. See page 405.

Composing and sending messages

To send a message, click Create Mail on the toolbar (or press Ctrl+N, or choose Message→New Message). The New Message form opens (Figure 12-5).

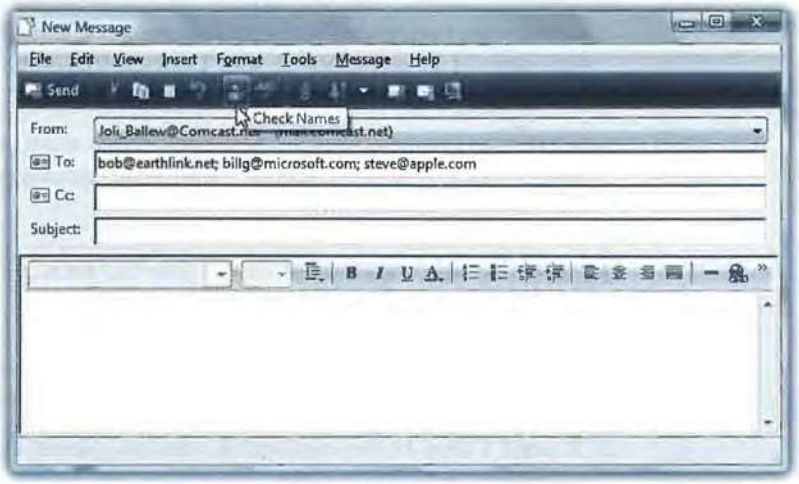


Figure 12-5: *In the New Message window, type the name of the recipients, separated by semicolons, in the "To:" field. If Windows Mail doesn't automatically complete the name for you (by consulting your address book and recent recipients list), click Check Names.*

GEM IN THE ROUGH

The Quick Contacts Gadget

To get to your contacts quickly, add the Contacts gadget to the Sidebar.

Thereafter, when you want to send an email message, call up the lucky recipient's name by typing a few letters of his name into the gadget; it



appears in the Contacts gadget list, as shown here.

Now, to send an email to that person, click the email address shown on the right. A new message opens, preaddressed and ready to write and send.

Tip: You can also start writing a message by clicking Contacts in the toolbar. In the Contacts window (page 250), click the person's name, and then click E-Mail on the toolbar. A blank, outgoing piece of mail appears, already addressed to the person whose name you clicked.

Come to think of it, it's faster to hit Ctrl+N.

Composing the message requires several steps:

1. **Type the email address of the recipient into the "To:" field.**

   If you want to send a message to more than one person, separate their email addresses using semicolons, like this: *bob@earthlink.net; billg@microsoft.com; steve@apple.com.*

   There's no need to type out all those complicated email addresses, either. As you begin typing the person's plain-English name, the program attempts to guess who you mean (if it's somebody in your Contacts list)—and fills in the email address automatically.

   If it guesses the correct name, great; press Tab to move on to the next text box. If it guesses wrong, just keep typing. The program quickly retracts its suggestion and watches what you type next.

Tip: You can also click the tiny envelope icon next to the "To:" box to open your Contacts list; double-click a name to address your message.

   As in most Windows dialog boxes, you can jump from blank to blank in this window (from the "To:" field to the "CC:" field, for example) by pressing the Tab key.

2. **To send a copy of the message to other recipients, enter the additional email address(es) in the "CC:" field.**

   CC stands for *carbon copy.* There's very little difference between putting all your addressees on the "To:" line (separated by semicolons) and putting them on the "CC:" line. The only difference is that using the "CC:" line implies, "I sent you a copy because I thought you'd want to know about this correspondence, but I'm not expecting you to reply."

   Press Tab when you're finished.

3. **Type the topic of the message in the "Subject:" field.**

   Some people get bombarded with email. That's why it's courteous to put some thought into the Subject line. (For example, use "Change in plans for next week" instead of "Hi.")

   Press the Tab key to move your cursor into the message area.

4. **Choose a format (HTML or plain text), if you like.**

   When it comes to formatting a message's body text, you have two choices: *plain text* or *HTML* (Hypertext Markup Language).

Plain text means that you can't format your text with bold type, color, specified font sizes, and so on. HTML, on the other hand, is the language used to create Web pages, and it lets you use formatting commands (such as font sizes, colors, and bold or italic text).

But there's a catch: a handful of older email programs can't read HTML-formatted email. Also, HTML mail is much larger, and therefore slower to download, than plain-text messages.

So which should you choose? Plain text tends to feel more professional, never irritates anybody—and you're guaranteed that the recipient will see exactly what was sent.

If you send an HTML message to someone whose email program can't handle HTML, all is not lost—your message appears in a friendly, plain-text format that anyone can read. Still, certain Internetters remain fairly hostile toward heavily formatted email.

To specify which format Windows Mail *proposes* for all new messages (plain text or HTML), choose Tools→Options. Click the Send tab. Next, in the section labeled Mail Sending Format, choose either the HTML or Plain Text button, and then click OK.

No matter which setting you specify there, however, you can always switch a *particular* message to the opposite format. Just choose Format→Rich Text (HTML), or Format→Plain Text, in the New Message window.

If you choose the HTML option, clicking in the message area activates the HTML toolbar, whose various buttons control the formatting, font, size, color, paragraph indentation, line spacing, and other word processor–like formatting controls (Figure 12-6).

Just remember: less is more. If you go hog-wild formatting your email, the message may be difficult to read, especially if you apply stationery (a background).

5. **Enter the message in the message box (the bottom half of the message window).**

   You can use all standard editing techniques, including Cut, Copy, and Paste, to rearrange the text as you write it.

Tip: If Microsoft Word is installed on your PC, you can also spell check your outgoing mail. Just choose Tools→Spelling (or press F7) in the new message window.

---

6. **Add a signature, if you wish.**

   Signatures are bits of text that get stamped at the bottom of outgoing email messages. They typically contain a name, a mailing address, or a Star Trek quote.

   To create a signature, choose Tools→Options, click the Signatures tab, and then click the New button. The easiest way to compose your signature is to type it into

the Edit Signatures text box at the bottom of the window. (If you poke around long enough in this box, you'll realize that you can actually create multiple signatures—and even assign each one to a different outgoing email account.)



Figure 12-6: *When you're composing an email using the HTML format, the New Message window gives you options for choosing fonts, formatting options like Bold, Italic, and Underline, and colors (from a handy color palette).*

UP TO SPEED

Blind Carbon Copies

A *blind carbon copy* is a secret copy. This feature lets you send a copy of a message to somebody secretly, without any of the other recipients knowing. The names in the "To:" and "CC:" fields appear at the top of the message for all recipients to see, but nobody can see the names you typed into the "BCC:" box. To view this box, choose View→All Headers in the New Message window.

You can use the "BCC:" field to quietly signal a third party that a message has been sent. For example, if you send your co-worker a message that says, "Chris, it bothers me that you've been cheating the customers," you could BCC your boss or supervisor to clue her in without getting into trouble with Chris.

The BCC box is useful in other ways, too. Many people send email messages (containing jokes, for example) to a long list of recipients. You, the recipient, must scroll through a very long list of names the sender placed in the "To:" or "CC:" field.

But if the sender uses the "BCC:" field to hold all the recipients' email addresses, you, the recipient, won't see any names but your own at the top of the email. (Unfortunately, spammers–the miserable cretins who send you junk mail–have also learned this trick.)

Once you've created a signature (or several), you can tack it onto your outgoing mail for all messages (by turning on "Add signatures to all outgoing messages" at the top of this box) or on a message-by-message basis (by choosing Insert→Signature in the New Message window).

7. Click the Send button.

   Alternatively, press Alt+S, or choose File→Send Message. Your PC connects to the Internet and sends the message.

Tip: If you seem to be able to receive mail but can't send it, your Internet service provider might require Mail to log into its server before sending email. To try that approach, first click Tools→Accounts. From there, click your account's name, and then the Properties→Servers tab. Turn on "My server requires authentication." Click OK, and then Close.

If you're working offline, you might prefer Mail to place each message you write in the Outbox folder, saving them up until you click the Send/Receive button on the toolbar; see "Send tab," on page 415.

The Contacts list

Accumulating names in a Contacts list—the same one described on page 250—eliminates the need to enter complete email addresses whenever you want to send a message. Click the Contacts button on the toolbar; then, to begin adding names and email addresses, click New Contact.

Tip: Windows Mail offers a convenient timesaving feature: the Tools→Add Sender to Contacts command. Whenever you choose it, Mail automatically stores the email address of the person whose message is on the screen. (Alternatively, you can right-click an email address in the message and choose "Add Sender to Contacts" from the shortcut menu.)

Attaching files to messages

Sending little text messages is fine, but it's not much help when you want to send somebody a photograph, a sound recording, a Word or Excel document, and so on. Fortunately, attaching such files to email messages is one of the world's most popular email features.

To attach a file to a message, use either of two methods:

- **The long way.** Click the Attach button (the paper-clip icon) on the New Message dialog box toolbar. Alternatively, you could select Insert→File Attachment. When the Open dialog box appears, locate the file and select it. (In the resulting navigation window, Ctrl-click multiple files to attach them all at once.)

  Now the name of the attached file appears in the message, in the Attach text box. When you send the message, the file tags along.

Note: If you have a high-speed connection like a cable modem, have pity on your recipients if they don't. A big picture or movie file might take you only seconds to send, but tie up your correspondent's modem for hours.

- **The short way.** If you can see the icon of the file you want to attach—in its folder window behind the Mail window, on the Desktop, or wherever—then attach it by *dragging* its icon directly into the message window. That's a handy technique when you're attaching many different files.

Tip: To remove a file from an outgoing message before you've sent it, click it and then press the Delete key.

Reading Email

All Versions

Just seeing a list of the *names* of new messages in Mail is like getting wrapped presents—the best part's yet to come. There are two ways to read a message: using the preview pane, and opening the message into its own window.

To preview a message, click its name in the list pane; the body of the message appears in the preview pane below. Don't forget that you can adjust the relative sizes of the list and preview panes by dragging the gray border between them up or down.

To open a message into a window of its own, double-click its name in the list pane. An open message has its own toolbar, along with Previous and Next message buttons (which look like upward- and downward-pointing arrows).

Once you've read a message, you can view the next one in the list either by pressing Ctrl +U (for the next *unread* message), or by clicking its name in the list pane. (If you're using preview mode, and haven't opened a message into its own window, you can also press the up or down arrow key to move from one message to the next.)

Tip: To mark a message that you've read as an *unread* message, so that its name remains bolded, right-click its name in the list pane and then choose Mark as Unread from the shortcut menu.

Here's another timesaver: To hide all the messages you've already read, just choose View→Current View→Hide Read Messages. Now, only unread messages are visible in the selected folder. To bring the hidden messages back, choose View→Current View→Show All Messages.

When Pictures are Part of the Message

Sending pictures in email is a globally popular activity—but Mail doesn't want you to see them.

Mail comes set up to block images, because these images sometimes serve as "bugs" that silently report back to the sender whether you received and opened the message. At that point, the spammers know that they've found a live, working email address—and,

better yet, a sucker who opens mail from strangers. And presto, you're on their "safe senders" list, and the spam flood *really* begins.

You'll know if pictures were meant to appear in the body of a message; see the strip that appears at the top in Figure 12-7.

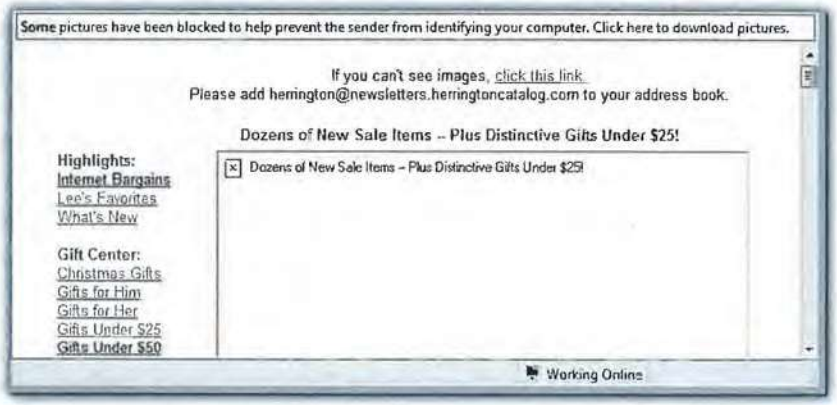


Figure 12-7: *To view blocked images in a message, click the warning itself (top). Or, to make Mail quit blocking pictures altogether, choose Tools→Options→Security; next, turn off "Block images and other external content in HTML messages."*

How to Process a Message

Once you've read a message and savored the feeling of awe brought on by the miracle of instantaneous electronic communication, you can handle the message in any of several ways.

Deleting messages

Sometimes it's junk mail, sometimes you're just done with it; either way, it's a snap to delete a message. Click the Delete button on the toolbar, press the Delete key, or choose Edit→Delete. (You can also delete a batch of selected messages simultaneously.)

UP TO SPEED

Selecting Messages

In order to process a group of messages simultaneously–to delete, move, or forward them, for example–you must first master the art of multiple message selection.

To select two or more messages that appear consecutively in your message list, click the first message, then Shift-click the last. Known as a *contiguous selection*, this trick selects every message between the two that you clicked.

To select two or more messages that *aren't* adjacent in the list (that is, skipping a few messages between selected ones), Ctrl-click the messages you want. Only the messages you click get selected–no filling in of messages in between, this time.

After using either technique, you can also *deselect* messages you've managed to highlight–just Ctrl-click them again.

The messages don't actually disappear. Instead, they move to the Deleted Items folder. If you like, click this folder to view a list of the messages you've deleted. You can even rescue some simply by dragging them into another folder (even right back into the Inbox).

Mail doesn't truly vaporize messages in the Deleted Items folder until you "empty the trash." You can empty it in any of several ways:

- Right-click the Deleted Items folder. Choose "Empty 'Deleted Items' Folder" from the shortcut menu.
- Click a message, or a folder, within the Deleted Items Folder list and then click the Delete button on the toolbar (or press the Delete key). You're asked to confirm its permanent deletion.
- Set up Mail to delete messages automatically when you quit the program. To do so, choose Tools→Options→Advanced. Click the Maintenance button, and then turn on "Empty messages from the 'Deleted Items' folder on exit." Click OK.

Replying to Messages

To reply to a message, click the Reply button in the toolbar, or choose Message→Reply to Sender, or press Ctrl+R. Mail creates a new, outgoing email message, preaddressed to the sender's return address. (If the message was sent to you *and* a few other people, and you'd like to reply to all of them at once, click Reply All in the toolbar.)

To save additional time, Mail pastes the entire original message at the bottom of your reply (either indented, if it's HTML mail, or marked with the > brackets that serve as Internet quoting marks); that's to help your correspondent figure out what you're talking about.

Note: To turn off this feature, choose Tools→Options, click the Send tab, and then turn off "Include message in reply."

Mail even tacks *Re:* ("regarding") onto the front of the subject line.

UP TO SPEED

About Mailing Lists

During your email experiments, you're likely to come across something called a mailing list—a discussion group conducted via email. By searching Yahoo.com or other Web directories, you can find mailing lists covering just about every conceivable topic.

You can send a message to all members of such a group by sending a message to a single address—the list's address. The list is actually maintained on a special mail server. Everything sent to the list gets sent to the server, which forwards the message to all of the individual list members.

That's why you have to be careful if you're actually trying to reply to *one person* in the discussion group; if you reply to the list and not to a specific person, you'll send your reply to every address on the list—sometimes with disastrous consequences.

Your insertion point appears at the top of the message box. Now, just begin typing your reply. You can also add recipients, remove recipients, edit the subject line or the message, and so on.

Tip: Use the Enter key to create blank lines within the bracketed original message in order to place your own text within it. Using this method, you can splice your own comments into the paragraphs of the original message, replying point by point. The brackets preceding each line of the original message help your correspondent keep straight what's yours and what's hers. Also, if you're using HTML formatting for the message, you can format what you've written in bold, italic, underlined, or even in another color for easier reading.

Forwarding Messages

Instead of replying to the person who sent you a message, you may sometimes want to *forward* the message—pass it on—to a third person.

To do so, click Forward in the toolbar, choose Message→Forward, or press Ctrl+F. A new message opens, looking a lot like the one that appears when you reply. Once again, before forwarding the message, you have the option of editing the subject or the message. (For example, you may wish to precede the original message with a comment of your own, along the lines of: "Frank: I thought you'd be interested in this joke about Congress.")

All that remains is for you to specify who receives the forwarded message. Just address it as you would any outgoing piece of mail.

Printing Messages

Sometimes there's no substitute for a printout of an email message—an area where Mail shines. Click Print in the toolbar, choose File→Print, or press Ctrl+P. The standard Windows Print dialog box pops up, so that you can specify how many copies you want, what range of pages, and so on. Make your selections, and then click Print.

Filing Messages

Mail lets you create new folders in the Folders list; by dragging messages from your Inbox onto one of these folder icons, you can file away your messages into appropriate cubbies. You might create one folder for important messages, another for order confirmations from shopping on the Web, still another for friends and family, and so on. In fact, you can even create folders *inside* these folders, a feature beloved by the hopelessly organized.

To create a new folder, see Figure 12-8.

Tip: To rename an existing folder, right-click it and choose Rename from the shortcut menu.

To move a message into a folder, proceed like this:

- Drag it out of the list pane and onto the folder icon. You can use any part of a message's "row" in the list as a handle. You can also drag messages en masse onto a folder after selecting them.



Figure 12-8:
To create a new folder, choose File→Folder→New, or right-click the Local Folders icon (in the folder list), and choose New Folder from the shortcut menu. Either way, this window appears. Name the folder and then, by clicking, indicate which folder you want this one to appear in. Usually, you'll want to click Local Folders (that is, not inside any other folder).

- Right-click a message (or one of several that you've highlighted). From the shortcut menu, choose Move to Folder. In a dialog box, the folder list appears; select the one you want, and then press Enter or click OK.

Tip: When you click a arrow in the Folder list, you see all folders contained within that folder, exactly like in Windows Explorer. You can drag folders inside other folders, nesting them to create a nice hierarchical folder structure. (To drag a nested folder back into the list of "main" folders, just drag it to the Local Folders icon.)

You can also drag messages between folders; just drag one from the message list onto the desired folder at the left side of the screen.

This can be a useful trick when you apply it to a message in your Outbox. If you decide to postpone sending it, drag it into any other folder. Windows Mail won't send it until you drag it *back* into the Outbox.

Flagging Messages

Sometimes, you'll receive an email message that prompts you to some sort of action, but you may not have the time or the fortitude to face the task at the moment. ("Hi there...it's me, your accountant. Would you mind rounding up your expenses for 1993 through 2001 and sending me a list by email?")

That's why Mail lets you *flag* a message, positioning a small, red flag in the corresponding column next to a message's name. These little flags are visual indicators that mean whatever you want them to mean. You can bring all flagged messages to the top of the list by choosing View→Sort By→Flag.

To flag a message in this way, select the message (or several messages) and choose Message→Flag Message. (Use the same command again to clear a flag from a message.)

Opening Attachments

Just as you can attach files to a message, people can send files to you. You know when a message has an attachment because a paper-clip icon appears next to its name in the Inbox.

To free an attached file from its message, releasing it to the wilds of your hard drive, use one of the following methods:

- Click the attachment icon, select Save Attachments from the shortcut menu, and then specify the folder in which you want the file saved (Figure 12-9).



Figure 12-9:
One way to rescue an attachment from an email message is to click the paper-clip icon and choose Save Attachments. You can also drag an attachment's icon onto your desktop. Either way, you take the file out of the Mail world and into your standard Windows world, where you can file it, trash it, open it, or manipulate it as you would any file.

- Click the attachment icon, and select the attachment to open. Choose the name of the attachment in order to open the file directly (in Word, Excel, or whatever).
- If you've double-clicked the message so it appears in its own window, drag the attachment icon out of the message window and onto any visible portion of your desktop.
- Again, if you've opened the message into its own window, you can double-click the attachment's icon in the message. Once again, you're asked whether you want to open the file or save it to the disk.

Message Rules

Once you know how to create folders, the next step in managing your email is to set up *message rules*. These are filters that can file, answer, or delete an incoming message *automatically* based on its subject, address, or size.

Message rules require you to think like the distant relative of a programmer, but the mental effort can reward you many times over. In fact, message rules can turn Mail into a surprisingly smart and efficient secretary.

Setting up message rules

Now that you're thoroughly intrigued about the magic of message rules, here's how to set one up:

1. **Choose Tools→Message Rules→Mail.**

   If you've never created a message rule, you'll see what's shown in Figure 12-10.

   If you *have* created message rules before, you see the Message Rules window first. Click New to open the New Mail Rule window shown in Figure 12-10.

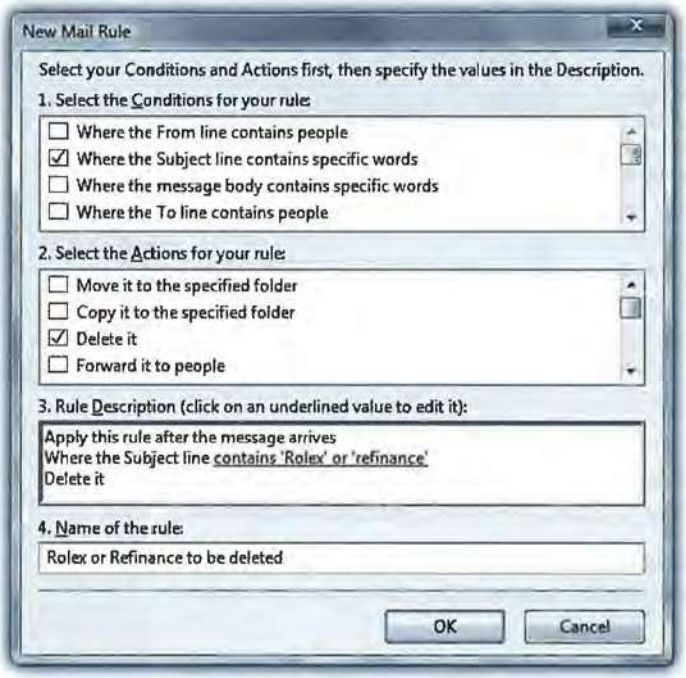


Figure 12-10: *Building a message rule entails specifying which messages you want Mail to look for—and what to do with them. By adding the underlined words, as shown here, you specify what criteria you're looking for. Here, any email with the word Rolex or Refinance in the Subject line is automatically deleted.*

2. **Use the top options to specify how Mail should select messages to process.**

   For example, if you'd like Mail to watch out for messages from a particular person, you would choose, "Where the From line contains people."

   To flag messages containing *loan*, *$$$$*, *XXXX*, *!!!!*, and so on (favorites of spammers), choose, "Where the Subject line contains specific words."

If you turn on more than one checkbox, you can set up another condition for your message rule. For example, you can set up the first criterion to find messages *from* your uncle, and a second that watches for subject lines that contain "joke." Now, only jokes sent by your uncle get placed in, say, Deleted Items. Figure 12-11 shows the word "and," plus a few other items you'll learn about shortly.



Figure 12-11: *If you've set up more than one criterion, you'll see the underlined word* and *at the bottom of the dialog box. It indicates that the message rule should apply only if all of the conditions are true. Click the* and *to produce a little dialog box, where you have the option to apply the rule if any of the conditions are met.*

3. **Using the second set of checkboxes, specify what you want to happen to messages that match the criteria.**

   If, in step 2, you told your rule to watch for messages from your uncle containing the word "joke" somewhere in the message body, here's where you can tell Mail to delete or move the message into, say, a Spam folder.

   With a little imagination, you'll see how these checkboxes can perform absolutely amazing functions with your incoming email. Windows Mail can delete, move, or print messages; forward or redirect them to somebody; automatically reply to certain messages; and even avoid downloading files bigger than a certain number of kilobytes (ideal for laptop lovers on slow hotel room connections).

4. **Specify *which* words or people you want the message rule to watch out for.**

In the bottom of the dialog box, you can click any of the underlined phrases to specify which people, which specific words, which file sizes you want Mail to watch out for—a person's name, or *XXX*, in the previous examples.

If you click "contains people," for example, a dialog box appears that lets you open your Contacts list to select certain individuals whose messages you want handled by this rule. If you click "contains specific words," you can type in the words you want a certain rule to watch out for. And so on.

5. **In the very bottom text box, name your mail rule. Click OK.**

Now the Message Rules dialog box appears (Figure 12-12).

Tip: Windows Mail applies rules as they appear—from top to bottom—in the Message Rules window. If a rule doesn't seem to be working properly, it may be that an earlier rule is intercepting and processing the message before the "broken" rule even sees it. To fix this, try moving the rule up or down in the list by selecting it and then clicking the Move Up or Move Down buttons.



Figure 12-12:
Once a rule is created, it lands in the Message Rules window under the Mail tab. Here, you can manage the rules you've created, choose a sequence for them (those at the top get applied first), and apply them to existing messages (by clicking Apply Now).

Two sneaky message-rule tricks

You can use message rules for many different purposes. But here are two of the best:

- **File mail from specific people.** For instance, if you have a few friends who constantly forward their idea of funny messages, create a rule that sends any email from them to a specific folder automatically. At the end of the day, look through the folder just to make sure you haven't missed anything, and if you have time, read the "most excellent funny emails in the whole wide world."
- **The email answering machine.** If you're going on vacation, turn on "For all messages" in step 2, and then "Reply with message" in step 3. In other words, you can turn Windows Mail into an email answering machine that automatically sends a canned "I'm away until the 15th" message to everyone who writes you.

Tip: Unsubscribe from, or turn off, any email mailing lists before you turn on "For all messages." Otherwise, you'll incur the wrath of the other list members by littering their email discussion groups with copies of your autoreply message.

Junk Email

All Versions

Windows Mail now offers Junk E-Mail Options, a feature that was glaringly absent in Outlook Express.

The Junk filter automatically channels what it believes to be spam into the Junk E-Mail folder in the folder list. Its factory setting is Low, meaning that only the most obvious spam gets sent to the Junk E-Mail folder. You'll probably still get a ton of spam, but at least almost no legitimate mail will get mistakenly classified as spam.



Figure 12-13: *To visit this dialog box, choose Tools→Junk E-Mail Options. Choose No Automatic Filtering, Low, High, or Safe List Only. You can also opt to permanently delete suspected spam instead of moving it to the Junk E-Mail folder. No matter what setting you choose, though, always go through the Junk E-Mail folder every few days to make sure you haven't missed any important messages that were flagged as spam incorrectly.*

You can configure the level of security you want in the Junk E-Mail Options window, shown in Figure 12-13.

Junk E-Mail Options

Junk E-Mail options offers five tabs. The Options tab is shown in Figure 12-13. The other tabs are:

- **Safe Senders.** Messages from any contacts, email addresses, or domain names that you add to this list are never treated as junk email. (A domain name is what comes after the @ sign in an email address, as in bob@*herbalviagra.com*.) Click Add to begin.

Tip: The two checkboxes below the list are also useful in preventing "false positives." The first, "Also trust e-mail from my Windows Contacts," means that anyone in your own address book is not a spammer. The second, "Automatically add people I e-mail to the Safe Sender's list," means that if you send mail *to* somebody, it's someone you don't consider a spammer.

- **Blocked Senders.** This one's the flip side of Safe Senders: it's a list of contacts, email addresses, and domain names that you always want flagged as spam.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

Canning Spam

Help! I'm awash in junk email! How do I get out of this mess?

Spam is a much-hated form of advertising that involves sending unsolicited emails to thousands of people. While there's no instant cure for spam, you can take certain steps to protect yourself from it.

1. Use one email account for online shopping, Web site and software registration, and newsgroup posting; use a second one for person-to-person email.

   Spammers have automated software robots that scour every public Internet message and Web page, automatically locating and recording email addresses they find. These are the primary sources of spam, so at least you're now restricting the junk mail to one secondary mail account.

2. Whenever you receive a piece of junk mail, choose Message→Junk E-Mail→Add Sender to Blocked Senders List. Windows Mail no longer accepts email from that sender.
3. When filling out forms or registering products online, look for checkboxes requesting permission for the company to send you email or share your email address with its "partners." Just say no.
4. When posting messages in a newsgroup, insert the letters NOSPAM, SPAMISBAD, or something similar somewhere into the email address you've specified in the News Account dialog box (page 420). Anyone replying to you via email must manually remove it from your email address, which, while a hassle, keeps your email address away from the spammer's robots. (They're getting smarter every day, though; a trickier insert may be required, along the lines of REMOVETOEMAIL or SPAMMERSARESCUM.)
5. Create *message rules* to filter out messages containing typical advertising words such as *casino, Rolex, herbal,* and so forth. (You'll find instructions in this chapter.)
6. Buy an antispam program like SpamAssassin.

- **International.** You can also block email in foreign languages, or that originate overseas. (A huge percentage of spam originates overseas, since U.S. antispam laws have no jurisdiction there.) See Figure 12-14.



Figure 12-14: *If you find you're getting email from specific countries or domains, you can select the top-level domains (.ca for Canadian mail, .uk for British mail, and so on) for those countries. All email from those domains now gets treated as junk email.*

- **Phishing.** For a complete description of phishing scams, see page 346. In brief, phishing email is designed to look like it came from your bank, eBay, or PayPal—but it's a trick to get you to surrender your account information so the bad guys can steal your identity.

  Windows Mail keeps phishing email out of your Inbox unless you turn off this feature on this tab.

When the Junk Filter Goes Wrong

Windows Mail doesn't always get it right. It labels some good messages as junk, and some spam messages as OK.

Over time, though, it's supposed to get better—*if* you patiently help it along. Every time you see a good piece of email in the Junk E-Mail folder, click it, and then click Not Junk on the Toolbar.

Better yet, use the Message→Junk E-Mail submenu to choose one of these two options:

- **Add Sender to Safe Senders List.** No future mail from this person will be misfiled.

- **Add Sender's Domain to Safe Senders List.** No future mail from this person's entire company or ISP will be marked as spam.

The news isn't so good if you find a piece of spam in your Inbox; incredibly, there's no This is Junk button on the toolbar, or even a similar command in the Message menu.

You can use the Message→Junk E-Mail→Add Sender (or Sender's Domain) to Blocked Senders List, of course. But since spammers rarely use the same address or domain twice, it's probably faster just to hit the Delete key.

Note: Microsoft intends to continue improving the quality of its spam filter through regular Windows Update updates (page 614).

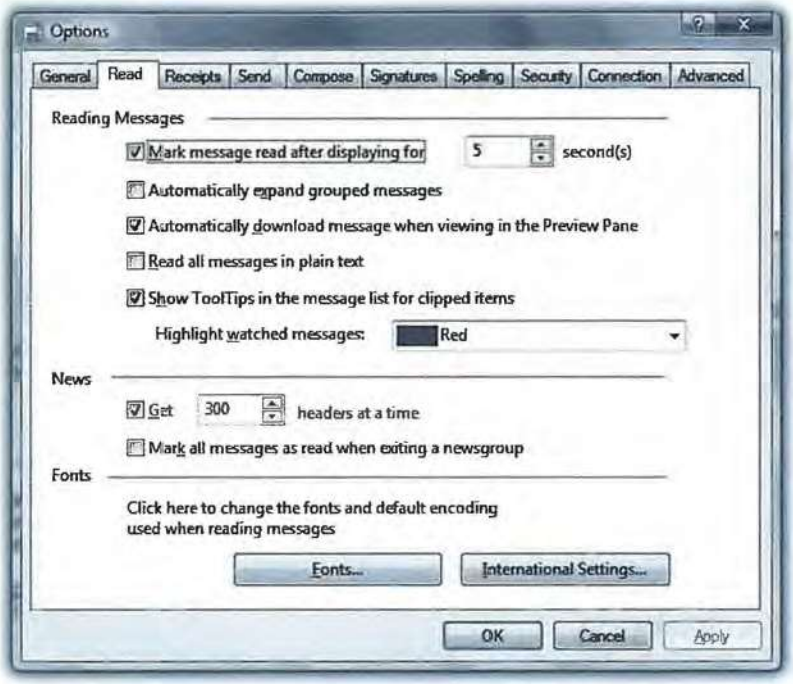


Figure 12-15: *The Options dialog box has ten tabs, each loaded with options. Most tabs have buttons that open additional dialog boxes. Coming in 2008:* Windows Mail Options: The Missing Manual.

Configuring Windows Mail

All Versions

Mail has enough features and configuration options to fill a very thick book. You can see them for yourself by choosing Tools→Options. Here's a brief overview of some of the most useful options (Figure 12-15).

General Tab

Most of the controls here govern what Mail does when you first open the program. Take note of the options to connect automatically; you can opt to have Mail check for messages every few minutes, and then use the drop-down list to say how, and whether, to connect at that time if you're not already online.

Read Tab

Use these options to establish how the program handles messages in the Inbox. One of these options marks a message as having been read—changing its typeface from bold to non-bold—if you leave it highlighted in the list for five seconds or more, even without opening it. That's one option you may want to consider turning off. (This tab is also where you choose the font you want to use for the messages you're reading, which is an important consideration.)

Receipts tab

You can add a *return receipt* to messages you send. When the recipient reads your message, a notification message (receipt) is emailed back to you under two conditions: *if* the recipient agrees to send a return receipt to you, and *if* the recipient's email program offers a similar feature. (Windows Mail, Outlook, and Eudora all do.)

Send Tab

The options here govern outgoing messages. One option to consider turning *off* here is the factory-set option, "Send messages immediately." That's because as soon as you click the Send button, Mail sends messages immediately, even if you haven't fully had time to consider the consequences of the rant inside it—aimed at an ex, a boss, or a co-worker—which could land you in hot water.

It's also a good choice if you're on a dial-up connection. All of this dialing—and *waiting* for the dialing—drives some people crazy, especially in households with only one phone line.

If you turn this option off, clicking the Send button simply places a newly written message into the Outbox. As you reply to messages and compose new ones, the Outbox collects them. They're not sent until you click the Send/Receive button, or press Ctrl+M. Only at that point does Mail send your email. If you're on dial-up, it sends all the waiting outgoing mail at once.

Tip: To see the messages waiting in your Outbox, click the Outbox icon at the left side of the screen. At this point, you can click a message's name (in the upper-right pane of the screen) to view the message itself in the *lower*-right pane, exactly as with messages in your Inbox.

Don't bother to try *editing* an outgoing message in this way, however; Mail won't let you do so. Only by double-clicking a message's name (in the upper-right pane), thus opening it into a separate window, can you make changes to a piece of outgoing mail.

The Send tab also includes features for configuring replies. For example, you can disable the function that includes the message in the reply.

Finally, the "Automatically put people I reply to in my Contacts list" option can be a real timesaver. Each time you reply to somebody, his email address is automatically saved in your Contacts list. The next time you want to write him a note, you won't need to look up the address—just type the first few letters of it in the "To:" box.

Compose Tab

Here's where you specify the font you want to use when writing messages and newsgroup messages.

This is also the control center for *stationery* (custom-designed templates, complete with fonts, colors, backgrounds, borders, and other formatting elements that you can use for all outgoing email). Needless to say, sending a message formatted with stationery means that you're using HTML formatting, as described earlier, complete with its potential downsides.

To choose a stationery style for all outgoing messages, turn on the Mail checkbox, and then click the Select button. You're offered a folder full of Microsoft stationery templates; click one to see its preview. You can also click the Create New button, which launches a wizard that walks you through the process of creating your own background design.

Tip: You don't have to use one particular stationery style for all outgoing messages. When sending a message, instead of clicking the Create Mail button on the Mail toolbar, just click the ▾ *next* to it. Doing so opens a window that lists several stationery styles, letting you choose one on a message-by-message basis.

Signatures Tab

As noted earlier in this chapter, you use this tab to design a *signature* for your messages. By clicking the New button and entering more signature material in the text box, you can create several *different* signatures: one for business messages, one for your buddies, and so on.

To insert a signature into an outgoing message, choose Insert→Signature, and then choose the one you want from the list that appears.

Spelling Tab

The Spelling tab offers configuration options for the Mail spell-checking feature (which requires that you have Microsoft Word). You can even force the spell checker to correct errors in the *original* message when you send a reply, although your correspondent may not appreciate it.

Security Tab

This tab contains options for sending secure mail, using digital IDs, and encryption. If you're using Mail in a business that requires secure email, the system administrator will provide instructions. Otherwise, you'll find that most of these settings have no effect.

A few settings worth exploring appear under "Virus Protection" and "Download Images," shown in Figure 12-16.

Tip: One of these options is very useful in the modern age: "Warn me when other applications try to send mail as me." That's a thinly veiled reference to viruses that, behind the scenes, send out hundreds of infected emails to everybody in your Contacts list. This option ensures that if some software—not you—tries to send messages, you'll know about it.

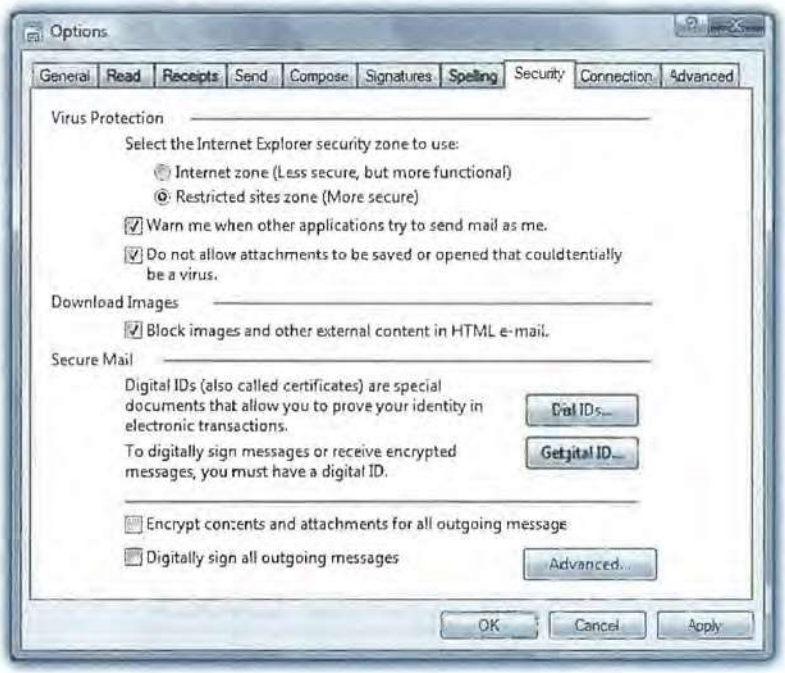


Figure 12-16: *The factory settings shown here may be too restrictive. Under Virus Protection, consider choosing Internet Zone (less secure, but more functional). If you find that you have trouble opening attachments from people you know and trust, turn off "Do not allow attachments to be saved or opened that could potentially be a virus."*

Connection Tab

Here, you can tell Mail to hang up automatically after sending and receiving messages (and reconnect the next time you want to perform the same tasks). As noted in the dialog box, though, Mail otherwise uses the same Internet settings described in Chapter 9.

Advanced Tab

This tab is your housekeeping and settings center for Mail. You can configure what you want Mail to do with your contact's vCards (virtual business cards), if you want to compose your replies at the bottom of emails instead of the top, and whether or not you want to mark message threads in newsgroups as "watched."

Don't miss the Maintenance button. It lets you clear out old deleted messages, clean up downloads, purge newsgroup messages, and so on.

Newsgroups

All Versions

Newsgroups have nothing to do with news; in fact, they're Internet bulletin boards. There are hundreds of thousands of them, on every conceivable topic: pop culture, computers, politics, and every other special (and *very* special) interest; in fact, there are thousands just about Windows. You can use Mail to read and reply to these messages almost exactly as though they were email messages.

Subscribing to a Microsoft Newsgroup

Subscribing to your first newsgroup can be quite an experience, simply because there are just so many newsgroups to choose from. Mail has a link to the Microsoft Communities newsgroups built right in—a good way, though nerdy, to get started with newsgroups.

To join a Microsoft Community newsgroup:

1. **Click Microsoft Communities in the folder list.**

   A "Subscribe to newsgroups" dialog box appears.

2. **Click "Show available newsgroups and turn on communities."**

   Mail downloads a list of the available newsgroups, which may take a while.

3. **Click a newsgroup's name.**

   Consider Microsoft.public.windows.vista.general, for example; here, you can post questions and get answers for Vista-related questions.

Tip: You can select more than one newsgroup by Control-clicking their names.

4. **Click Subscribe.**

   Click OK. The newsgroup(s) you subscribed to are now available in Mail, under Microsoft Communities.

UP TO SPEED

Newsgroups Explained

Newsgroups (often called *Usenet*) started out as a way for people to conduct discussions via a bulletin-board-like system, in which a message is posted for all to see and reply to. These public discussions are divided into categories called newsgroups, which cover the gamut from miscellaneous photographic techniques to naval aviation.

These days, Usenet has a certain seedy reputation as a place to exchange pornography, pirated software, and MP3 files with doubtful copyright pedigrees. Even so, there are tens of thousands of interesting, informative discussions going on, and newsgroups are great places to get help with troubleshooting, exchange recipes, or just to see what's on the minds of your fellow Usenet fans.

Reading Messages

Once you've subscribed to a newsgroup, the next time you connect to the Internet and select the newsgroup from the newsgroup list, Mail downloads all of the message summaries in the discussions to which you've subscribed. (There may be just a few messages, or several hundred; they may go back only a few days or a couple of weeks, depending on the amount of "traffic" in each discussion and the storage space on the news server.)

To read the messages in a newsgroup, either click an entry in the list of messages to download the contents of the message and display it in the preview window (Figure 12-17), or double-click an entry to open the list of messages in a new window.

Tip: You can set up message rules for newsgroups to screen out messages from certain people, messages with certain phrases in their Subject lines, and so on. It works exactly like the message rules for email, as described earlier in this chapter. Just go to Tools→Message Rules→News.



Figure 12-17: *If you've been using Mail for email, the newsgroup interface should look familiar. The Folders pane lists news servers to which you've subscribed, the top-right pane lists the names of messages in a selected newsgroup, and the bottom-right pane displays the actual text of the message you've highlighted in the message list.*

Replying, Composing, and Forwarding Messages

Working with newsgroup messages is very similar to working with email messages, except that you must be conscious of whether you're replying to the individual sender of a message or to the entire group. Otherwise, you can reply to messages, forward them, or compose them exactly as described earlier in this chapter. As with email, you can use plain text or (if you don't mind annoying the other Internet citizens) HTML formatting. You can include file attachments, too, by, for example, using the Attach toolbar button.

Tip: Aside from posting ads and HTML-formatted messages, the best way to irritate everyone on a newsgroup is to ask a question that has already been answered recently on the newsgroup. Before asking a question, spend five minutes reading the recent newsgroup messages to see whether someone has already answered your question. Also consider visiting the Groups tab at *www.google.com*, a Web site that lets you search all newsgroups for particular topics.

Subscribing to Other Newsgroups

What if you don't want to subscribe to a Microsoft computer-geek-filled newsgroup, but would rather subscribe to a newsgroup about cats?

To find a newsgroup on a specific topic, choose Tools→Accounts; click Microsoft Communities (default), and then click the Add button. On the next screen, click Newsgroup Account. Now a wizard steps you through the process of creating a news account in Mail. You're asked for your name, your email address, and—this may be the hard part—the address of your news server. You have to get that tidbit from whatever company provides your Internet connection.

Download the List of Newsgroups

When you're finished with the wizard, Mail invites you to download a list of newsgroups available on your server. Click the Yes button, and then wait patiently for a few minutes. Windows Mail goes to work downloading the list, which can be quite long—tens of thousands of entries—and take a long time. Fortunately, it's a one-time deal.

Now you're ready to find yourself some good online discussions; see Figure 12-18.

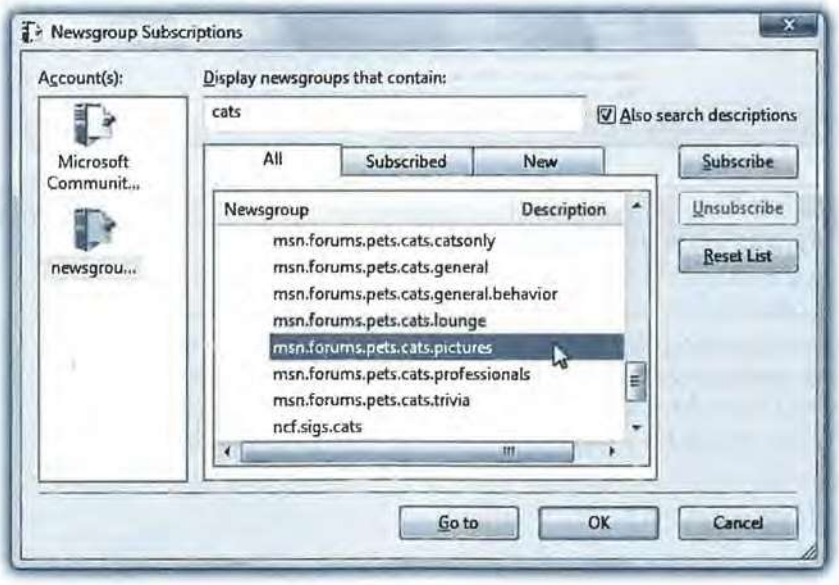


Figure 12-18: *In the box at the top, type the term you're hoping to find in a newsgroup's title (such as* kittensandcats*–in cyberspace, nobody can hear you use the Space bar). If you turn up a good-sounding topic in the gigantic list beneath, click its name and click Subscribe to* subscribe *to it. Now, each time you connect, Mail will download the latest messages on that topic.*

CHAPTER
14

Windows Media Player

In the beginning, Windows Media Player was the headquarters for music and video on your PC. It was the Grand Central Terminal for things like music CDs (you could play 'em, copy songs off 'em, and burn 'em); MP3 files and other digital songs (you could sort 'em, buy 'em online, and file 'em into playlists); pocket music players of the non-iPod variety (fill 'em up, manage their playlists); Internet radio stations; DVD movies (watch 'em); and so on.

Media Player still does all that, and more. But it's no longer clear that this is the program you'll use for these activities. Gradually, the Media Player audience is splintering. Nowadays, a certain percentage of people is using alternative programs like:

- **iTunes.** If you have an iPod, you use Apple's iTunes software to do your music and video organizing.
- **Zune software.** If you have a Zune music player, you have to use yet *another* jukebox program—the software that came with it—for loading up and organizing your player.
- **Media Center.** As noted in Chapter 14, many of Media Player's functions are now duplicated in Windows Media *Center*, the vast playback engine described in Chapter 16.

Still, most of the Windows world continues to use Windows Media Player as their music-file database. It's worth getting to know.

Note: In its insatiable quest to dominate the world of digital music and video, Microsoft keeps updating Windows Media Player, usually redesigning it beyond recognition with each update. For example, this chapter describes Media Player version 11, included with Windows Vista out of the gate. But sure as shootin', version 12 will be coming your way within a year or so. (Vista's automatic-update feature will let you know when version 12 is fully baked and ready to download.)

The Lay of the Land

All Versions

The modern Media Player looks quite a bit different from its predecessors. In fact, if you've perused the previous chapter, you'll realize that Media Player and Photo Gallery share a very similar design.

Down the left side of the window is a Navigation tree—a list of the music, videos, and playlists in your collection. The flippy triangles next to the major headings make it easy to collapse sections of the list. Under the Library headings, you can click Artist, Album, Songs, Genre, or whatever, to see your entire music library sorted by that criterion (Figure 14-1). (The Navigation tree isn't visible in some views—more on this in a moment.)

Media Player's top edge, as you may have noticed, offers several primary tabs, which cover the essential functions of Media Player. They're described in more detail in the following pages, but here's a quick overview:

- **Now Playing.** Click this tab while music or video is playing from any source. This is where you can see a list of songs on the CD, a graphic equalizer, and a wild, psychedelic screen saver that pulses in time to the music. Here, too, is where you change the volume and other audio settings.

Tip: To start playing a song, album, playlist, or whatever, just double-click its name. You can use the Space bar to pause or resume playback.

UP TO SPEED

Custom Express

The first time you open Media Player, a welcome message appears. It offers you two choices:

Express Settings. This option is "Recommended" because it makes Media Player the main music and video player for your PC; sends Microsoft anonymous details about what you buy and listen to; and downloads track lists and other details from the Internet when you insert a CD or DVD.

Custom Settings. If you'd rather be a little less free with your private information, or you'd like Media Player not to do quite such a big land grab of your multimedia playback rights, choose this option. You're taken to settings screens where you can tone down Media Player's ambitions.

- **Library.** This screen lists every piece of music or video your copy of Media Player "knows about" on your hard drive; use the Navigation tree to sort and group the lists. This is also where you can sort your songs into subsets called *playlists*.



Figure 14-1: *When you click a label at left, the main portion of the window changes to show you your music collection, using the actual album-cover artwork as their icons. It's very visual, but not especially stingy with screen space. Fortunately, you also have a more compact list view available—choose Details from the View Options pop-up menu identified here.*

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Returning to the Classic Menus

In an attempt to make Media Player less intimidating, Microsoft gave it a makeover in version 11. It basically went through the menus and hid a lot of the commands that it felt people didn't use much. The remaining commands still appear as menus that pop out of the six main tabs (Now Playing, Library, and so on).

Unfortunately, some really nice features got completely hidden in the process—like Skins.

In this chapter, you'll read several references to the Classic menus. That's where you'll find the *complete* list of Media Player functions.



To make the old menu bar return, press the Alt key. The Classic menu bar returns for the moment, although in a vertical orientation at the left side of the screen.

If you'd rather bring the Classic menu back for good, click the little icon shown here; from the shortcut menu, choose Show Classic Menus.

Now the old menu bar is back—in its former horizontal orientation, just as in the good old days.

- **Rip.** Use this screen to copy songs from one of your music CDs onto your hard drive, as described later in this chapter.
- **Burn.** After transferring some songs to your hard drive—from the Internet or your own music CD collection—you can then burn your own CDs. This screen is the loading dock.
- **Sync.** Here's where you line up music or video that you'd like transferred to a portable music or video player, if you have one that Media Player understands.
- **Urge.** This page is a rabbit hole into Alice in Marketingland. It's the gateway to online music stores—MTV's Urge store is, obviously, the featured one—where you can buy songs for $1 each, or download all you want for $15 a month, with the understanding that you're just renting them; when you stop paying, you lose them all.

Playing Music CDs

For its first trick, Media Player can simulate a $25 CD player. To fire it up, just insert an audio CD into your computer's CD or DVD drive.

If this is the first time you've ever taken this dramatic action, you see the dialog box shown in Figure 14-2. It asks how you want Windows to handle inserted CDs. Do you want it to *play* them? Or *rip* them (start copying their songs to your hard drive)? And if you said "play," do you want to use Media Player or Media *Center*, if you have it?

For now, click "Play audio CD using Windows Media Player."

Media Player opens and the CD begins to play automatically. The screen even fills with a shimmering, laser-light show (called a *visualization*) that pulses along with the music. Ta-da!

Tip: If all the fancy dancy graphics are slowing down your machine as you try to work in other programs, you can always turn them off. Click the tiny ▾ button under the words Now Playing to open the Now Playing menu. Choose Visualizations→No Visualization.

Fun with Media Player

When your everyday work leaves you uninspired, here are a few of the experiments you can conduct on the Media Player screen design:

- **Switch visualizations.** To try a different visualization, Ctrl-click the window (to see the next style) or Shift+Ctrl-click (for the previous one).

  And if you tire of the displays built into Windows, simply download more of them from the Internet by choosing Now Playing→ Visualizations→ Download Visualizations.

Tip: One of the most interesting choices is Album Art, which displays a picture of the album cover for whichever song is now playing.

- **Shrink the window to show some skin.** If the Media Player window is taking up too much screen space, making it harder for you to work on that crucial business plan as you listen to Eminem, press Ctrl+2 to shrink the window (Figure 14-4), or choose View→Skin Mode from the Classic menu (page 465).

  Press Ctrl+1 to return the Media Player window to its full-sized glory.





Figure 14-2: *Top: Windows may ask what you want it to do with a music CD. If you accept the "Play Audio CD using Windows Media Player" option by clicking OK or pressing Enter, Media Player opens automatically and begins to play the songs on your CD.*

Bottom: Most of the menu commands you'll need are hiding under the names of the main tabs (Now Playing, Library, and so on); click the tiny ▾ buttons to open the menus. There is, however, a proper menu bar—it's just hidden. Tap the Alt key to make it appear. Or, if you ache for the comfort of the traditional menu bar, press Ctrl+M.

Tip: Of course, you can also just minimize Media Player, as you would any window. In fact, the first time you do so, Vista offers to turn on the Media Player *toolbar*, shown in Figure 14-3.



Figure 14-3:
When the Media Player toolbar is on your screen, you have a very tiny set of playback controls available at all times, no matter what program you're using.



Figure 14-4:
In Skin Mode, Media Player takes up less space on your screen and can use radical new design schemes. To return to the full-size window, press Ctrl+1, or hunt through the buttons on your skin until you find the Return to Full Mode button.

To change the skin, choose View→Skin Chooser from the Classic menu (page 465). A directory of available skins appears; it's empty at the outset. Click More Skins; Windows sends you online to Microsoft's grisly-sounding Skin Gallery.

Not all skins are, shall we say, masterpieces of intuitive design; it may take you several minutes just to find the Stop button. When you find a skin you like, click Apply Skin (above the list).

- **Expand the window.** On the other hand, if your PC is briefly serving as a glorified stereo system at a cocktail party, double-click the visualization display itself (or press Alt+Enter). The screen saver effect now fills the entire screen, hiding all text, buttons, and controls. If you have an available laptop and a coffee table to put it on, you've got yourself a great atmospheric effect. (When the party's over, just double-click again, or press Alt+Enter again, to make the standard controls reappear.)
- **Change the skin.** In hopes of riding the world's craze for MP3 files, Microsoft has helped itself to one of WinAmp's most interesting features: *skins*. Definitions: An MP3 file (MPEG Audio Layer-3) is a compact, downloadable, CD-quality sound file format. WinAmp is a popular MP3-playing program. And a skin is a design scheme that completely changes the look of Windows Media Player, as shown in Figure 14-4.

GEM IN THE ROUGH

Playing Across the Network

If you've taken the trouble to set up a home network, you can share songs and playlists with other networked Windows Vista computers. You could, for example, tap into your roommates' jazz collection without getting up from your desk, and they can sample the zydeco and tejano tunes from your world beat playlist. The music you decide to share is streamed over the network to the other computer—or even an XBox 360. Even store-bought, copy-protected songs are OK to share.



You can't share music across the Internet, only within your own home or office network. (Technically speaking, the computers must be on the same *subnet*. And you must have designated your network as *private* [page 359].)

To make your music available to others, choose Library→ Media Sharing. In the dialog box, turn on "Share my media." When you click OK, your buddies will find your Media Player collection listed in their Navigation trees, ready to play. (That's *if* they have turned on "Find media that others are sharing" in the same dialog box.)

If you don't want to share with *everyone*, re-choose the Library→ Media Sharing command. This time, you'll see icons that represent the individual PCs on your network. Click a PC's icon and then click either Allow or Deny.

While you're fooling around with the settings, click Settings. You'll see options that let you limit the *kind* of stuff you share (music, photos, videos); restrict the sharing to stuff with a certain star rating or parental rating; or confirm sharing on a PC-by-PC basis. (To set up the last, turn off "Allow new devices and computers automatically."

Happy sharing!

To choose a new skin, choose View→Skin Chooser from the Classic menu (page 465). Then click each of the available skins, listed down the left side, to see a preview of its appearance. When you click the Apply Skin button (at the top-left corner of the window), your player takes on the look of the skin you chose *and* shrinks down into the compact Skin mode, as described in the previous tip.

- **Fool around with the playback sequence.** You can make the songs on the CD play back in a random order, just as though you'd pushed the Shuffle button on a CD player. To do this, click the Shuffle button or press Ctrl+H. And if you love a particular CD so much that you'd like to hear it over and over again (instead of stopping at the end), press Ctrl+T—the shortcut for Repeat.

Tip: These tricks work for whatever playlist you've currently selected—not just an audio CD. (Playlists are described later in this chapter.)

- **Fool around with the sound.** Don't miss the graphic equalizer, a little row of sliders that lets you adjust the bass, treble, and other frequencies to suit your particular

GEM IN THE ROUGH

Filling in Track Names

Precious few audio CDs come programmed to know their own names (and song titles). Every day, millions of people insert music CDs into their computers and see the songs listed as nothing more than "Track 1," "Track 2," and so on—and the album itself goes by the catchy name Unknown Album.

Fix #1. If your PC is online when you insert a certain music CD—you lucky thing—you'll bypass that entire situation. Windows takes a quick glance at your CD, sends a query to *www.allmusic.com* (a massive database on the Web containing information on over 200,000 CDs), and downloads the track list and a picture of the album cover for your particular disc.

Fix #2. If *allmusic.com* draws a blank, as it often does for classical recordings, no big deal. Media Player makes it easy to search the Web for this information at a later time. On the Library tab, right-click an album cover, and then, from the shortcut menu, choose Find Album Info. (Alternatively, you can highlight the names of the *tracks* with missing information; right-click one and then choose Find Album Info.)

Fix #3. You can also type in the names of your songs manually. Once again, begin on the Library tab. Select the tracks you want to edit. (By Shift-clicking or Ctrl-clicking, you can add information to multiple tracks simultaneously—for example, if they all came from the same album.)

Now right-click the *specific column* you want to edit—Artist, Album, or whatever. See the box on page 74 for details on hiding or showing columns, and remember that you may have to scroll horizontally to see them all. From the shortcut menu, choose Edit. A little text box opens so that you can type in the track information manually.

Fix #4. This is pretty cool: In the Navigation tree (Library tab), click the criterion that's missing, like Artist or Album. Now you can *drag* an incorrectly labeled track or album *onto* one with the correct labeling—and marvel as Media Player copies the correct info onto the dragged item.

No matter how the track names and album art get onto your PC, Windows saves this information in your music library (see "Ripping CDs to Your Hard Drive" earlier in this chapter). Therefore, the next time you insert this CD, the Media Player will recognize it and display the track names and album information automatically.

speakers and your particular ears. Choose Now Playing→Enhancements→Graphic Equalizer.

The same submenu offers a number of other audio effects, including Quiet Mode (smoothes out the highs and the lows so that sudden blasts don't wake up the kids) and something called SRS WOW, which simulates a 3-D sound experience through nothing more than stereo speakers or headphones.

- **Fool around with the speed.** If you're in a hurry to get through an album, or just think the tempo's too slow, right-click the Play/Pause button below the screen. You're offered commands that speed up or slow down your music—a weird and wonderful feature. (This shortcut menu also lets you know that there are keyboard shortcuts for these commands, like Ctrl+Shift+G for faster playback.)

Ripping CDs to Your Hard Drive

You can copy an album, or selected tracks, to your hard drive in the form of standalone music files that play when double-clicked. The process is called *ripping*, much to the consternation of sleepless record executives who think that it's short for *ripping off*.

Having CD songs on your hard drive is handy because:

- You can listen to your songs without having to hunt for the CDs they came from.
- You can listen to music even if you're using the CD-ROM drive for something else (like a CD-based game).
- You can build your own *playlists* (sets of favorite songs) consisting of tracks from different albums.
- You can compress the file in the process, so that each song takes up much less disk space.
- You can transfer the songs to a portable player or burn them onto a homemade CD.

If you're sold on the idea, open the Rip tab's pop-up menu. Inspect your settings. For example, unless you intervene by clicking the Change button near the top, Windows copies your song files into your Personal→Music folder.

Note, too, that Microsoft has designed Windows Media Player to generate files in the company's own format, called Windows Media Audio (.wma) format. But many people prefer, and even require, MP3 files. For example, most recent CD players and portable music players (including the iPod) can play back MP3 files—but won't know what to do with WMA files.

If you'd prefer the more universally compatible MP3 files, Rip→Format→MP3 (Figure 14-5).

Tip: If you have a stack of CDs to rip, don't miss the two commands in the Rip menu: "Rip CD Automatically When Inserted→Always" and "Eject CD After Ripping." Together, they turn your PC into an automated ripping machine, leaving nothing for you to do but feed it CDs and watch TV.

Finally, the Rip→Bit Rate submenu controls the tradeoff, in the resulting sound files, between audio quality and file size. At 128 kbps, for example, a three-minute MP3 file



Figure 14-5: *Using this submenu, tell Windows how much to compress the song files (and sacrifice sound quality). If you don't need MP3 compatibility, Windows Media Audio (Variable Bit Rate) maximizes quality and minimizes file size by continuously adjusting the data rate along the song's length.*

might consume about 2.8 megabytes. At 192 kbps, the same file sounds much better, but it eats up about 4.2 MB. And at a full 320 kbps, the file's roughly 7 MB.

These are important considerations if you're ripping for a portable MP3 player, like the iPod. For instance, if your music player contains a 20 GB hard drive, it can hold 142 hours of music you've ripped at 320 kbps, or 357 hours at 128 kbps.

For MP3 files, most people find the 192 Kbps setting (on the "Audio quality" slider) to produce great-sounding, relatively compact files. For WMA, 128 Kbps might be a good starting point. Needless to say, let your ears (and the capacity of your portable music player) be your guide.

Here's how you rip:

1. **Insert the music CD. Click the Rip tab in Media Player.**

   The list of songs on the CD appears.

2. **Turn on the checkboxes of the tracks you want to copy.**

   You've waited all your life for this: at last, you have the power to eliminate any annoying songs and keep only the good ones.

3. **Click Start Rip.**

   You'll find this button at the lower-right corner of the window.

   Windows begins to copy the songs onto your hard drive. The Start Rip button changes to Stop Rip, which you can click to interrupt the process.

Organizing Your Music Library

Every CD transferred to your hard drive winds up with an entry on the Library tab, visible in Figure 14-6. You can sort your collection by performer, album, year released, or whatever, just by clicking the corresponding icons in the Navigation tree. Whenever you want to play back some music, just double-click its name in this list—there's no need to hunt around in your shoeboxes for the original CD the songs came from.

But that's just the beginning of Media Player's organizational tools; see Figure 14-6.



Figure 14-6: *On the Library tab, the Navigation tree (left) lists your playlists. Under the Library heading, you see various ways to sort your collection. To build a playlist, drag songs or CD names into the right panel. Don't miss the Search box at the top, which searches all text related to your songs and videos as you type, hiding all entries that don't match.*

Transferring CD songs to your hard drive isn't the only way to log your files in the Media Player database. You can also add sound and video files to this master list using any of these methods:

- Use the Library→Add to Library command (or press F3). Media Player helps you choose more folders to be "watched folders"—that is, folders whose contents will always be reflected in Media Player's lists.

Note: Any song, video, or photo that you ever play in Media Player gets automatically added to its Library—*if* it's on your hard drive or the Internet. If it's on another PC on the network, or on a removable disk like a CD, Media Player doesn't bother adding it, because it probably won't be there the next time you want it.

- Drag sound or video files directly from your desktop or folder windows into the Media Player window.
- The Internet is crawling with online music stores that sell music that you can download straight into Media Player. Page 520 has the details.

Playlists

Microsoft recognizes that you may not want to listen to *all* your songs every time you need some tunes. That's why Media Player lets you create *playlists*—folders in the Navigation list that contain only certain songs. In effect, you can devise your own albums, mixing and matching songs from different albums for different purposes: one called Downer Tunes, another called Makeout Music, and so on.

To create a new playlist, start on the Library tab. The Playlist pane, at the right side of your screen, is empty. It says, "Drag items here to create a playlist." Well, hey—it's worth a try. See Figure 14-7.

Once you've created a playlist, click Save Playlist at the bottom of the pane. Type a name for your playlist, and thrill to the appearance of a new icon in My Playlists "category" of the Navigation tree.

Note: To create another playlist right away, close the first one by clicking the red X beside its name.



Figure 14-7: *To create a playlist, just start dragging tracks or whole albums to the Playlist pane. Switch views, or use the Search box, as necessary to find the tracks you want. Drag songs up and down in the Playlist pane to reorder them. Use the pop-up menu (where it now says Untitled Playlist) to scramble, sort, rename, or save the playlist.*

Deleting things

Whenever you want to delete a selected song, playlist, or almost anything else, press the Delete key. Media Player generally asks if you want it deleted only from the library, or if you really want it gone from your computer.

Burning Your Own CDs

All Versions

The beauty of a CD burner is that it frees you from the stifling restrictions put on your musical tastes by the record companies. You can create your own "best of" CDs that play in any CD player—and that contain only your favorite songs in your favorite order. The procedure goes like this:

1. **Click the Burn tab. Insert a blank CD.**

   On the right side of the screen, the Burn pane appears. If your PC has more than one disc burner, click Next Drive until Media Player identifies the correct one.

Note: If you've inserted a rewriteable disc like a CD-RW, and you've burned it before, right-click its icon in the Navigation tree, and then, from the shortcut menu, choose "Erase disc" before you proceed.

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2. **Specify which songs you want to burn by dragging them into the Burn List (where it says "Drag items here" in the Burn pane).**

   You can add music to your CD-to-be in just about any kind of chunk: individual songs, whole albums, playlists, random audio files on your hard drive, and so on; see Figure 14-8.



Figure 14-8: *Use the Navigation tree to pull up the display you want. For example, to see a complete list of your songs or albums, click Songs or Albums, and then drag individual songs or albums directly into the Burn list. To add a playlist to the Burn List, drag the name of the playlist right across the screen from the Navigation tree. To add a file that's not already in Media Player, drag it out of its Explorer window directly into the Burn List.*

As you go, keep an eye on the "time remaining" readout at the top of the Burn List. It lets you know how much more your CD can hold. If you go over the limit, Media Player will burn additional CDs as necessary.

Tip: Media Player adds two seconds of silence between each song, which might explain why you may not be able to fit that one last song onto the disc even though it seems like it should fit.

3. **Click Start Burn.**

   It takes a while to burn a CD. To wind up with the fewest "coasters" (mis-burned CDs that you have to throw away), allow your PC's full attention to focus on the task. Don't play music, for example.

Copying Music or Video to a Portable Player

If you have a pocket gizmo that's capable of playing music (like a SanDisk Sansa or a Pocket PC) or even videos (like a Portable Media Center), the process for loading your favorite material onto it is very similar to burning your own CD. The only difference in the procedure is that you do your work on the Sync tab instead of the Burn tab.

If you attach a player with a capacity greater than 4 gigabytes, Media Player automatically copies your entire collection onto it (assuming it will fit). If it's smaller, or if your whole library won't fit, Media Player switches into manual-sync mode, in which you hand-pick what gets copied.

POWER USERS' CLINIC

CD and DVD Format Fun

Most of the time, you'll probably want to burn a regular audio CD, of the type that plays in the world's 687 quintillion CD players. But you can also use the Burn tab to make a *data* CD or DVD—a disc designed to play in *computers*. That's a good way, for example, to make a backup of your tunes.

Actually, some modern CD players can also play *MP3 CDs*, which are basically data CDs filled with MP3 files. That's a great feature, because a single MP3 CD can hold 100 songs or more. (A few can even play *WMA CDs*, meaning CDs containing files in Microsoft's own audio format.)

You specify what kind of disc you intend to burn by choosing its name from the Burn menu (top of the screen).

If you're ever in doubt about how you burned a certain CD (audio or data?), here's a trick: insert it into your PC, open its window, and examine its contents. If you see files with the suffix .cda, you've got yourself an audio CD; if it's full of other kinds of files, like .mp3, .wma, or even .jpg and .doc, it's a data CD.

And now, some other notes about burning discs:

CD-RW. Erasable discs like CD-RW are super-handy, but not all CD players can play them when you've burned them as audio CDs. Test and beware.

DVD. Remember that there are, annoyingly, two different kinds of blank DVD, called DVD+R and DVD-R. Buy the kind that matches your PC's burner, or you'll be making a trip back to the store with your receipt.

Tip: Media Player can play videos with the extensions .wmv, .wvx, .avi, .mpeg, .mpg, .mpe, .m1v, .mp2, .mpa, and .ivf.

As you may have noticed, this list doesn't recognize two of the most popular video-file formats, QuickTime and RealVideo. To play these files, you'll need the free QuickTime Player (available from *www.apple.com/quicktime*) or RealPlayer (from *www.real.com*).

Automatic sync

Connect the player. Media Player announces that it will perform an automatic sync. Click Finish. Smile. Wait.

From now on, just connecting the player to Media Player brings it up-to-date with whatever songs you've added or deleted on your PC. As your library grows, shrinks, or gets edited, you can sleep soundly, knowing that your portable gadget's contents will be updated automatically the next time you hook it up to your PC's USB port.

Manual sync

Connect the player. Read the dialog box. Click Finish.

In Media Player, click the Sync tab. Drag songs, videos, playlists, or albums into the List pane, exactly as you would do when preparing to burn a CD (something like Figure 14-8). Click Start Sync.

Tip: If you'd like to surrender to the serendipity of Shuffle mode, you can let Media Player choose the songs you get. From the Sync menu, choose the name of your player; from the submenu, choose Shuffle. Each time you sync, you'll get a different random selection from your collection.

Online Music Stores

All Versions

Right from within Media Player, you can search or browse for millions of pop songs, classical pieces, and even comedy excerpts—and then buy them or rent them. (You can pay $1 per song to own it, or about $15 per month to download as many songs as you want, with the understanding that they'll all go *poof!* if you ever stop paying the fee.)

At first, the Online Store tab features Urge, which is MTV's music store. But with a little effort, you can also access Napster, eMusic, XM Satellite Radio, and other music and movie stores.

Note: Two stores you *can't* get to from here are iTunes and Zune Marketplace. You have to get to those using the software that came with your iPod or Zune, as noted at the beginning of this chapter.

To look over your options, open the Urge menu and then choose Browse All Online Stores. Now Media Player window ducks into a phone booth and becomes a Web browser, filled with company logos. Anything you buy gets gulped right into your

Library, ready for burning to a CD or syncing with an audio player, if the store's copy-protection scheme allows it.

The stores fall into three categories:

- **Deliciously integrated.** Some of the online stores, like Urge, are well integrated with Media Player. Once you sign up, the store gets its own icon in the Navigation tree. You can drag songs right out of its lists into a playlist or a Burn list, and you can use Media Player's Search box to search the entire store.
- **Web-page-type stores.** Other stores, like Music Giants, show up as Web sites right within Media Player's main window. They're not built into the Navigation tree, but at least you don't need to switch to a Web browser to see them.
- **Not-at-all integrated stores.** A few stores, like Napster, require you to download and install a separate program.



Figure 14-9: *Top: In the list at the right side of Media Guide, click Internet Radio.*

Bottom: Click through the music genres to find what you're up for. Click a station that looks interesting, and then click the little Play button beneath its listing. (The higher the number in the Speed column, the better the sound quality. Note, though, that 128 Kbps is generally too rich for dial-up modems, and may sputter.) Wait for your PC to connect to the Internet site, and then let the music begin!

Tip: If you think you'll be visiting a store again, open its tab menu (click the ▾ button where it once said Urge) and then choose "Add current service to menu." Next time, you'll be able to jump to it without having to choose "Browse all Online Stores" first.

Restrictions

Songs from most online stores are copy-protected—gently. For example, the $1-a-song sites generally permit you to play the songs on up to five computers at once, and to burn a playlist containing the songs 10 times.

The $15-a-month rental (subscription) plans generally don't let you burn CDs at all.

Internet Radio

The 21st century's twist on listening to the radio as you work is listening *without* a radio. Media Player itself can tune in to hundreds of Internet-based radio stations all over the world, which may turn out to be the most convenient music source of all. They're free, they play 24 hours a day, and their music collections make yours look like a drop in the bucket.

For radio, use the rightmost tab (the Online Stores tab). Click the ▾ button; from the menu, choose Media Guide.

Media Guide is a window onto *www.windowsmedia.com*. It's a sort of promotional/news site that plugs new movies, songs, and videos, displays movie trailers and music videos, and so on.

And it lists radio stations. See Figure 14-9 for details.

Note: Unfortunately, there's no easy way to capture Internet broadcasts or save them onto your hard drive.

DVD Movies

All Versions

If your PC has a drive that's capable of playing DVDs, you're in for a treat. Media Player can play rented or purchased Hollywood movies on DVD as though it was born for the job. (If you have the Home Premium or Ultimate editions of Windows Vista, of course, you may prefer Windows Media *Center* for this task; see Chapter 16.)

You can even play *high-definition* DVDs (HD-DVD or Blu-Ray format), provided your PC has the right kind of DVD drive *and* accompanying software (drivers, decoder software, and player software).

Note: If your PC came with a DVD drive built in, then the manufacturer probably did you the courtesy of installing DVD *decoding software* too. If not, or if you've installed your own DVD drive, you'll have to spring a few bucks for DVD decoding software like DVD XPack (*www.intervideo.com*, $15), NVidia DVD Decoder (*www.nvidia.com*, $20), or PowerDVD (*www.gocyberlink.com*, $15).

Watching movies on your screen couldn't be simpler. Just insert the DVD. Windows automatically detects that it's a video DVD—as opposed to, say, one that's just filled with files.

The dialog box shown in Figure 14-10 appears, or at least it does the very first time you insert a DVD. Click "Play DVD movie using Windows Media Player"—if, indeed, that's the program you want to play the DVD. You may have other programs that can play DVDs, with their own buttons in this dialog box.



Figure 14-10: *Once the DVD is playing, you control the playback using the standard Media Player controls (bottom edge of the window). To switch to a different "chapter," click the ⏭ button. To change language or parental-control options, right-click the screen; from the shortcut menu, choose Audio and Language Tracks. When you're playing the movie full-screen, the playback controls reappear when you move the mouse a bit.*

Now Media Player opens, and your movie begins playing, full-screen. Most of the time, there's nothing for you to do now but watch. But if you're the interactive sort, you can also take action like this:

- **Switch between full-screen mode and window mode** by pressing Alt+Enter. In window mode, the movie plays within the Media Player window, surrounded by the usual controls. The pane at the right side of the window lists the DVD chapters (scenes), which is handy if you want to jump around in the DVD.
- **Pause, skip, adjust the volume** by wiggling your mouse. Playback controls appear for a few seconds at the bottom of the screen, permitting you to pause, adjust the volume, or skip backward or forward, and then fade away so as not to obscure Arnold Schwarzenegger's face.

  Alternatively, you can right-click anywhere on the "movie screen" itself to reveal a menu of disc-navigation features.

Tip: For real fun, turn on *English* subtitles but switch the *soundtrack* to a foreign language. No matter how trashy the movie, you'll gain respect from your friends when you say you're watching a foreign film.

Ditching the remote control

When the remote control is hidden, you can always return it to the screen just by moving your mouse. But the true DVD master would never bother with such a sissy technique. The secret keystrokes of Media Player are all you really need to know:

Function	Keystroke
play	Ctrl+P
stop	Ctrl+S
fast forward, rewind	Ctrl+Shift+F, Ctrl+Shift+B
quieter, louder	F9, F10
slower, faster	Ctrl+Shift+S, Ctrl+Shift+G
normal speed	Ctrl+Shift+N
mute	F8
next/previous "chapter"	Ctrl+F, Ctrl+B
full-screen mode	Alt+Enter
eject	Ctrl+E

Of course, watching a movie while sitting in front of your PC is not exactly the great American movie-watching dream. To enhance your viewing experience, you can always connect the video-output jacks of your DVD-equipped PC (most models) to your TV. Details are in Chapter 16.



Figure 14-11: *In Pictures mode, you see thumbnails of your photo collection. The Navigation tree offers one-click grouping mechanisms like Keywords (tags), Rating, Date Taken, and Folder. Double-click a photo to open it and begin a slideshow of it and its neighbors.*

Pictures and Videos

Microsoft may like to think that music, photos, and videos are all equally important in Media Player. Truth is, though, Media Player is really all about music—those other file types are just gravy.

Nonetheless, Media Player does indeed help you manage your pictures and videos. There's not a whole lot of point to it, considering the fact that Windows Photo Gallery (Chapter 13) is infinitely better suited to the task; for example, you can't edit photos or apply tags within Media Player.

Nevertheless, here's the rundown.

Start by clicking the tiny "Select a category" icon shown in Figure 14-11; from the pop-up menu, choose Pictures or Videos. The screen changes to something that closely resembles Photo Gallery.

Here's what you can do in Pictures or Videos mode:

- **See a photo or video at full size** by double-clicking it. The video plays, or a slideshow begins automatically, showing that photo and the others in its group.
- **Rate a photo or video** by right-clicking it and, from the shortcut menu, choosing Rate→4 Stars (or whatever).

Tip: In Tiles view, it's easier to rate pictures and videos, because a row of stars appears next to each thumbnail. You just click the third star (for example). Use the View Options pop-up menu (Figure 14-11) to switch to Tiles view.

- **Create a playlist** by dragging thumbnails into the List pane at right (on the Library tab). In the context of photos or videos, a playlist basically means a slideshow or sequence of self-playing videos. Click the Play button at the bottom of the screen to see it.
- **Delete a photo or video** by clicking its thumbnail and then pressing the Delete key. Media Player asks if you want it removed only from the library, or from your computer altogether.

Each setting is illustrated with a cute little icon—but don't be fooled. It's so much more than an icon! It's also a *button* that, when double-clicked, opens up a Control Panel applet or configuration page.

Tip: You can also open one of these icons entirely from the keyboard. See the underlined letter beneath each panel, such as Battery Status or Wireless Network? Press Alt+that letter to highlight the icon, and then press Enter.

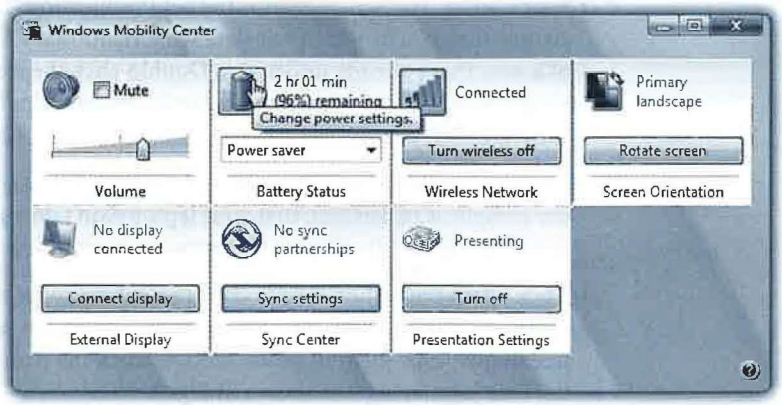


Figure 19-2: *Each tile of this strange new hybrid program/control panel displays the status of a different laptop component: volume, network, battery charge, and so on. Double-click the icon on a tile to open the settings page for that component.*

Here's the complete list of tiles that might appear in your Mobility Center. (You may not have all of them, depending on what kind of computer you're using and what components it has.)

- **Brightness.** The slider dims your screen for this work session only, which can save enormous amounts of battery power. Double-click the icon to open the Power Options control panel, where you can make brightness changes that are always in effect.
- **Volume.** Change your speakers' volume, or mute them entirely. Double-click the icon to open the Sound control panel (page 307).
- **Battery Status.** This is your battery's "fuel gauge." The pop-up menu lets you choose a canned setting like "High performance" (your PC doesn't go to sleep, but uses up battery power faster) or "Power saver" (the laptop goes to sleep sooner to conserve juice). Double-click the icon to open the Power Options control panel, where you can change the battery-plan settings for good.
- **Wireless Network.** Turns your WiFi circuitry on or off (which saves power and makes flight attendants happy), and shows how many bars of signal you have. Double-click the icon to open the "Connect to a network" dialog box, which lists all wireless networks within your range.

Some of the old features, meanwhile, are still useful:

- **Numbers and symbols.** The Input panel displays buttons for Bksp (Backspace), Del (Delete), Tab, Enter, Space, and left and right arrow keys. For ease in entering numbers and symbols, special number and symbol pads are available, too (tap Num or Sym).
- **Add words to the Handwriting Dictionary.** To add a word to the Handwriting Dictionary, write the word neatly in the Writing Pad, and correct it if necessary. Tap the button at the bottom edge that represents Vista's transcription. In the correction panel, tap the tiny dictionary icon; select "Add to dictionary." Consider adding your own name, acronyms, and other information you use often.
- **Calibrating.** Calibration involves fine-tuning how accurately your tablet detects the pen's location. If you feel as though your Tablet could benefit from calibration, choose Start→Control Panel; open Tablet PC Settings, and then Calibrate The Screen.

Tip: Windows Help is full of tips and tricks for getting better handwriting recognition. You've just read some of them (add words to the dictionary, recalibrate your screen, use the pads of shortcuts for numbers, symbols, and Web address bits). It also advises lefties to open the Tablet PC Settings applet of the Control Panel to inform the machine by choosing Left-Handed.

Windows Journal

Among programs that work well with handwriting, few can top Windows Journal. It's a program for taking notes, keeping a journal, or recording info-tidbits as you come across them during the work day. It's a great tool for students, since it does away with the usual note-taking tools (notebooks, pens, and paper).

When you choose Start→All Programs→Windows Journal, you're presented with a blank page of what looks like the lined paper of an old spiral notebook.

So why not just make your scribbles, doodles, and math equations in a program like Word? Because Word doesn't accept handwriting—only typed text *converted* from handwriting. Windows Journal, on the other hand, stores the actual graphic representation of anything you write (Figure 19-11).

As you write along, keep in mind that your notes and sketches aren't locked in Journal forever. For example:

- Mail it. Choose Mail→Send to Mail Recipient to send a page by email. The result is very cool. It looks like someone scribbled a handwritten note to you right in the body of the message.

  Of course, there are a couple of problems with this approach. Some people's email programs don't display graphics at all, meaning that they'll see nothing but a big, empty window. And a fully graphic email message is one that can't be searched, annotated, or edited.

Fortunately, you can also select a swath of handwriting and choose Action→Convert Select to E-Mail. Journal does its best to convert the handwriting to text, which it then pastes into an open outgoing email message.

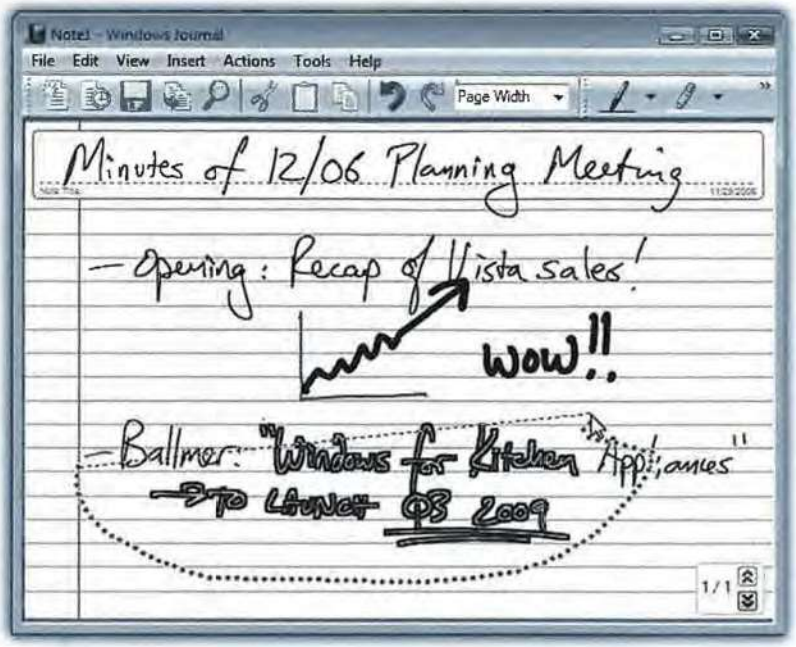


Figure 19-11: *Windows Journal stores your handwriting as digital ink, without attempting to convert everything to typed text. Still, it's not stupid. You can, for example, search your reams of notes for a certain word or phrase. You can also use the Selection tool (looks like a rope lasso) to select text to move, transcribe, or format.*

- Export it to a Web archive or a TIFF graphics file (File→Export As).
- Convert parts of it to text. See Figure 19-12.

Tip: Pressing the button on the side of your stylus automatically puts it into Selection mode, saving you a trip to the toolbar or Edit menu.

- Change your "pen." Choose Edit→Format Ink to the thickness, color, and other attributes of the ink style.

Flicks

Pen Flicks, new in Vista, let you navigate documents and manipulate data using your stylus alone. With a flick of the wrist, you can scroll a page at a time, copy, paste, delete, undo, and so on. You have a total of eight pen flicks available to you: up, down, left, right, and the four diagonals.

(So what's the difference between a *flick* and a *gesture?* Very little, except that to make a flick, you draw an invisible line across your *document,* rather than in the input panel.)

To turn on this feature, choose Start→Control Panel. Click Mobile PC, then "Change tablet pen settings" (under the heading Pen and Input Devices). Once the dialog box opens, click the Flicks tab.

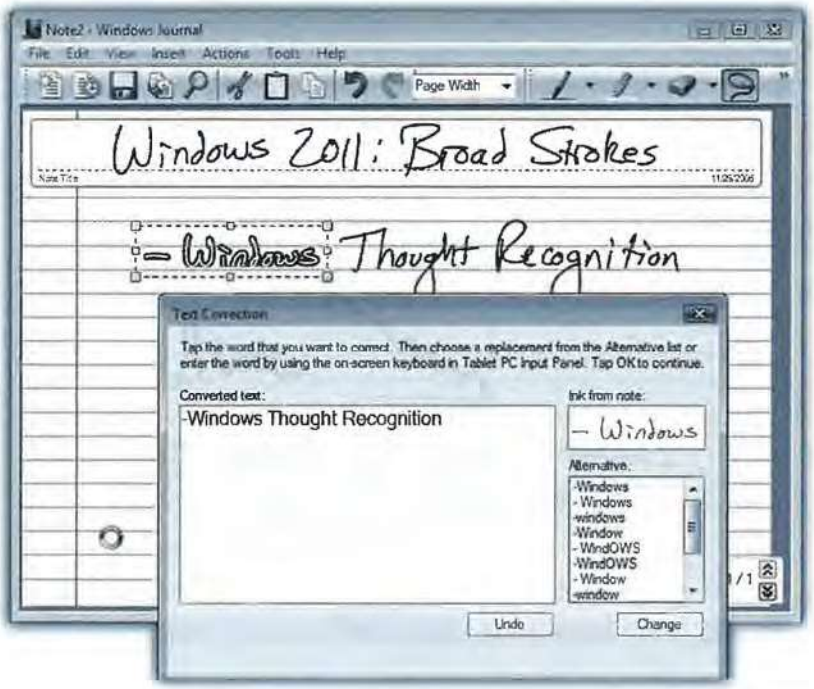


Figure 19-12: *Use the Selection tool (the rope lasso icon on the toolbar) to select any text you've written (by dragging a circle or oval around it); at that point, you can choose Action→Convert Handwriting to Text to turn the writing into typed text, suitable for pasting into another program or depositing right there on the Journal page.*

The Flicks tab opens. Turn on "Use flicks..." at the top of the dialog box. At this point, you get only four flicks: up and down (for scrolling) and left and right (for Back and Forward). If you turn on "Navigational flicks and editing flicks," however, you add the diagonal options, making flicks even more useful.

At the bottom, click "Practice using flicks." The Pen Flicks Training dialog box opens, probably startling you with the sudden appearance of an actual *video* that shows someone scrolling with the pen.

When you click Next, you're offered the opportunity to practice the flicking technique. It suggests that you draw short lines "as though you were brushing something off the screen with the tip of the pen," which is well put.

Figure 19-13 shows the built-in flick movements for Page Up and Down, Forward and Back, Delete, Copy, Paste, and Undo. You can change these assignments if you'd prefer, either rearranging the flick directions or assigning entirely different functions to them: Save, Open, Print, press the Alt key (or Ctrl, Shift, or ⊞), and so on. Figure 19-13 shows how.

Tablet settings

If you get into flicking, you should know that, since Microsoft is Microsoft, you have a long list of customizations and tweaks available to you.

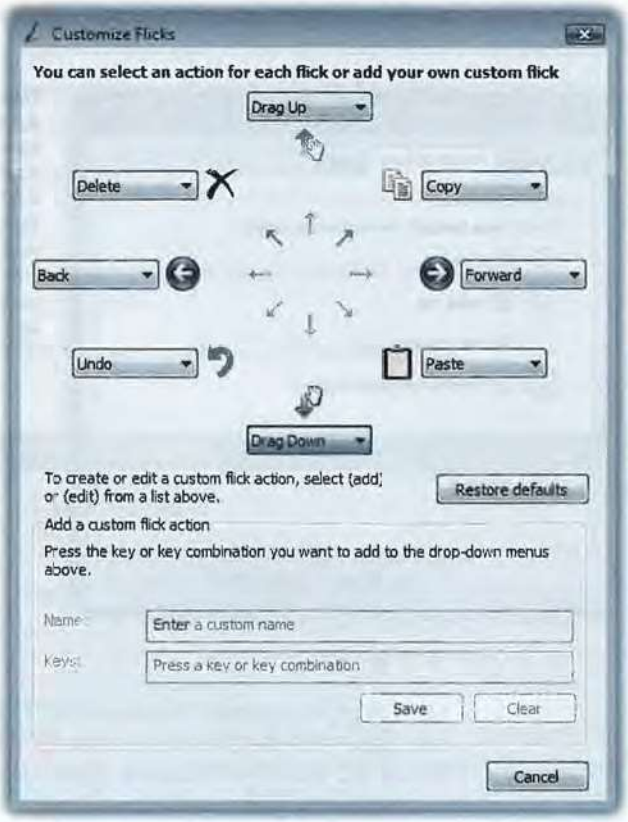


Figure 19-13: *In Control Panel→Mobile PC→Pen and Input Devices→Flicks, click Customize. You get this dialog box, where you can remap the flick directions so that they perform other functions. If you choose Add from one of the little pop-up menus, in fact, the controls at the bottom actually let you map a keystroke to a flick, so that an upward flick triggers, for example, Alt+F4.*

Open the Mobile PC control panel (page 575), and, under "Pen and Input Devices," click "Change tablet pen settings." The tabs of the resulting dialog box offers options like these:

- What happens when you double-tap the screen or hold down the pen on the screen (which ordinarily means a right-click). On the Pen Options tab, click one of the pen actions and then click Settings.
- What you see on the screen at the spot where you tap it (Figure 19-14). Make these changes on the Pointer Options tab.

Windows Mobile Devices

All Versions

Windows Mobile isn't really Windows. It's a much smaller, simpler series of operating systems designed for cellphones, palmtops, ultra-mobile PCs and portable Media Centers (handheld music/video/photo players).

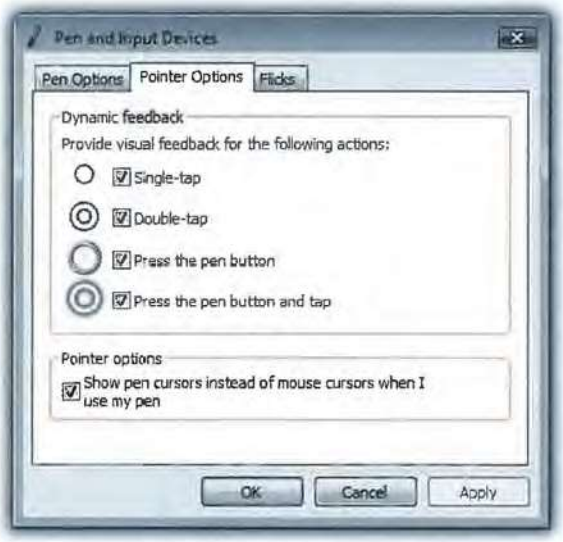


Figure 19-14:
Before Vista came along, it was often difficult to know what you were doing when you tapped the screen with the pen on a Tablet PC. Vista makes that a lot easier with visual cues. Here on the Pointer Options tab, you can see the visual feedback for a single tap, a double tap, pressing the pen button, and pressing the pen button and tapping at the same time. If you'd rather not see these visual cues, turn them off.

All of them have certain Windows-esque interface elements—a Start menu is a common one—but they are not, in fact, all the same. For instance, a Windows Mobile Pocket PC palmtop includes stripped-down versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Internet Explorer; you can manage folders and subfolders, create files, and play, download, and manage music and video. A Windows cellphone, on the other hand, has far fewer features.

Vista's new Sync Center is designed to keep Windows Mobile gadgets up to date with the latest info on your Vista PC, including your email, address book, and calendar. (More information about the Sync Center follows.) It's probably not as full-featured as the software that came with your device. It's primarily designed to:

- Sync up a gadget with Microsoft Outlook, and
- Sync up a laptop with a network server's files, in a feature called offline files.

The Sync Center

All Versions

Syncing is the process of keeping files that are stored in two places matched up with each other. If you add some paragraphs to your novel manuscript on your office PC, you're going to want the copy on your home PC to reflect those changes. You'll want the two computers synced.

Same thing on mobile devices. If you add a new person to your Pocket PC's address book, syncing can copy it into your Outlook address book on your desktop PC.

That's what the Sync Center is designed to handle.

Sync Partnerships

Before you can synchronize your device with Vista's Sync Center, you need to set up a sync partnership for it. The procedure goes like this:

1. **Connect your Windows Mobile cellphone, or your Pocket PC, to your computer. Install the software that came with it.**

NOSTALGIA CORNER

The Briefcase

The trouble with progress is that it entails change—and when you change things, somebody, somewhere is going to be upset. Just ask Microsoft's Windows division.

Anyway, Windows Vista may have the Sync Center, but it also still has the Briefcase, which is something like its predecessor. Microsoft plays it *way* down, to the point of invisibility. But it still does one thing that the Sync Center can't do. It keeps your files straight between *two PCs* (as opposed to one PC and a network server). That's handy when you transport files from desktop to laptop, or from home to work. If you learn to use the Briefcase, you'll be less likely to lose track of which copies of your documents are the most current.

To use the Briefcase, start by adding a briefcase icon on your desktop. To do so, right-click any spot on the desktop; from the shortcut menu, choose New→Briefcase. A new icon appears, called New Briefcase. (If you're feeling inspired, rename it as you would any folder.)

Now round up the icons of the documents you'll work on when away from your main PC. Drag them onto the Briefcase icon. Windows copies the files into this special temporary holding tank.

Now connect your laptop to the desktop PC, if you haven't already. (See Chapter 24 for tips on connecting machines.) Or, if you plan to take your files with you on a USB flash drive, insert it. Drag the Briefcase icon onto the laptop or the flash drive.

You're ready to leave your office. When you get to wherever you're going, open and edit the documents in the copied Briefcase "folder" icon. Whatever you do, don't move those files. (For example, work on the documents right on the flash drive.)

If the copied Briefcase is actually on the laptop's hard drive (not a flash drive), Windows can keep track of changes made to the documents on *both* computers, the original and the copy.

When you return to your main PC, reconnect the laptop or reinsert the flash drive. Now all of your careful step-following is about to pay off.

Right-click the briefcase icon; from the shortcut menu, choose Update All. Windows copies the edited files back to their original folders on your desktop-PC hard drive, automatically replacing the older, original copies.

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Answers found here!

Windows Vista: The Missing Manual. Microsoft spent five years on Vista, trying to make it beautiful, efficient, and infinitely more resistant to viruses, spam, and spyware. But the result is so different, you may barely recognize it—and it still comes without a single page of printed instructions. That's where the Missing Manual comes in. It's a complete, authoritative, entertaining guide to everything Vista.



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Security. Protect your PC from viruses, spyware, spam, phishing scams, sick hard drives, and kids.

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David Pogue is a *New York Times* technology columnist, bestselling author, and creator of the Missing Manual series.

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