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Windows Vista

THE MISSING MANUAL®



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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

About the Author



David Pogue is the weekly tech columnist for the *New York Times*, an Emmy-winning correspondent for *CBS News Sunday Morning*, 2006 winner of the Online News Association's award for online commentary, and the creator of the Missing Manual series. He's the author or co-author of 40 books, including 17 in this series and six in the "For Dummies" line (including *Macs, Magic, Opera*, and *Classical Music*). In his other life, David is a former Broadway show conductor, a magician, and a pianist. News, photos, links to his columns and weekly videos await at *www.davidpogue.com*. He welcomes feedback about his books by email at *david@pogueman.com*.



Joli Ballew (Tablet PC and Media Center chapters) is an author, Microsoft columnist, media expert, consultant, teacher, and technical writer. She holds several certifications, including MCSE, A+, and MCDST, and has written almost two dozen books on operating systems, image editing, home organization, and more. Her book *Degunking Windows* won the 2004 Independent Publisher Book Award for best computer book, and was a *Parade Magazine* "Best Bet." Email: *Joli@JoliBallew.com*.



C.A. Callahan (Control Panel chapter) is a ten-year veteran of the IT industry, a Microsoft Certified Trainer, and owner of her own training/technical writing company. She's a frequent presenter at tech conferences and expos, including TechEd Boston, Windows Connections, and LinuxWorld/NetworkWorld Expo, and has co-authored several books, including the best selling technical reference *Mastering Windows Server 2003*. Her new book, due in June 2007, is *Mastering Windows SharePoint Services 3.0*. Email: *callahan@callahantech.com*.



Preston Gralla (security, backup and maintenance chapters) has used every version of Windows since even before Windows 3.1. He's the author of over 35 books, including *Windows Vista in a Nutshell* and the *Windows Vista Pocket Reference*. His articles have appeared in *USA Today*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *PC Magazine*, *PC World*, and many other newspapers and magazines. Email: *preston@gralla.com*.



Brian Jepson (domain, remote-control, installation chapters; tech editor) is an O'Reilly editor, programmer, and co-author of *Mac OS X Panther for Unix Geeks* and *Learning Unix for Mac OS X Panther*. He's also a volunteer system administrator and all-around geek for AS220, a non-profit arts center in Providence, Rhode Island. AS220 gives Rhode Island artists uncensored and unjuried galleries, performance space, and publications for their work. Brian sees to it that technology, especially free software, supports that mission. Email: *bjepson@oreilly.com*.

About the Creative Team

Teresa Noelle Roberts (copy editor) is a freelance copy editor and proofreader, as well as a published fiction writer and poet. When she can tear herself away from the computer, she may be found gardening, belly dancing, or enjoying the beautiful beaches of New England.

On this edition, she was joined in her editorial duties by Missing Manuals editorial veteran John Cacciatore.

Rose Cassano (cover illustration) has worked as an independent designer and illustrator for 20 years. Assignments have spanned everything from the non-profit sector to corporate clientele. She lives in beautiful southern Oregon, grateful for the miracles of modern technology that make living and working there a reality. Email: *cassano@highstream.net*. Web: *www.rosecassano.com*.

Lesa Snider King (production editor and graphics goddess) assists David Pogue on many projects. As Chief Evangelist for iStockphoto.com and a veteran writer for international graphics publications, Lesa is on a mission to teach the world how to create beautiful graphics. You can see more of her work at *TheGraphicReporter.com*, and catch her live at many conferences. Email: *lesa@graphicreporter.com*.

Shawn King (graphics assistance and beta reader) is the host of a popular Internet broadcast called Your Mac Life, and has been using computers since several years B.D. (Before DOS). Having grabbed a PC mouse and literally followed every single step on every single page of this book to test for accuracy, he can safely say that he now knows more about Windows Vista than he ever hoped to know. Email: *shawn@yourmaclife.com*.

Phil Simpson (design and layout) works out of his office in Southbury, Connecticut, where he has had his graphic design business since 1982. He is experienced in many facets of graphic design, including corporate identity/branding, publication design, and corporate and medical communications. Email: *pmsimpson@earthlink.net*.

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—David Pogue

The Missing Manual Series

Missing Manual books are superbly written guides to computer products that don't come with printed manuals (which is just about all of them). Each book features a handcrafted index; cross-references to specific page numbers (not just "See Chapter 14"); and RepKover, a detached-spine binding that lets the book lie perfectly flat without the assistance of weights or cinder blocks. Recent and upcoming titles include:

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Introduction

Let's face it: in the last few years, all the fun went out of using a PC. Viruses, spyware, spam, pop-ups, and other Web nastiness had turned us all into cowering novice system administrators, spending far too much time trying to shore up our computers rather than using them to get things done.

Why on earth didn't Microsoft do something?

Of course, now we know: Microsoft *was* doing something. It just took five years to finish doing it.

That something was Windows Vista, a new version (well, OK, five or seven versions) that came with every porthole sealed, every backdoor nailed shut, and every design flaw reworked by a newly security-conscious squad of Microsofties.

Microsoft won't go as far as saying that Vista is invulnerable; nothing with 50 million lines of code could possibly be bulletproof. The bad guys are certainly going to do their best.

But it's certainly safe to say that Vista is by far the most secure Windows yet, and that the sociopaths of the Internet will have a much, much harder time.

That's not all Microsoft accomplished in writing Vista, though. As you'll notice within the first 5 seconds, the company also gave the operating system a total overhaul, both in its capabilities and its look. Vista is the best-looking version of Windows ever.

What's New in Windows Vista

The real question is, what *isn't* new?

Windows Vista is a *huge* overhaul. Both the guts and the window dressing have been completely renovated. Here's a top-level executive summary.

Security

For five years, through multiple restarts and reshufflings of the Vista project, Microsoft became obsessed with making Windows more secure—and there are few who'd say that its obsession was misplaced.

You could fill several books with nothing but information about the security features—a lot of them are so technical, they'd make your eyes glaze over—but here's a sampling.

- **User Account Control** may look to you like a completely unnecessary annoyance: a dialog box that pops up whenever you try to install a program or adjust a PC-wide setting, requesting that you type your password. Over, and over, and over.

  In fact, UAC is one of Vista's most important new protection features, modeled on something similar in Mac OS X and Unix. It means that *viruses* can no longer make changes to your system without your knowing about it. You'll see one of these dialog boxes, and if *you* aren't the one trying to make the change, you'll click Cancel instead of Continue.

- **The Security Center** offers one-stop shopping for several important security features: the firewall (protects your PC from incoming signals from hackers), Automatic Updates (bug fixes and security patches beamed to you from Microsoft), virus and spyware protection, Internet security settings, and User Account Control.

- **Windows Defender** is a new program that protects your PC from *spyware* (downloads from the Internet that, unbeknownst to you, send information back to their creators or hijack your Web browser).

- **Protected Mode** is a new feature of Internet Explorer that keeps hackers from attacking it.

- **A phishing filter** alerts you when you're about to visit a fake bank or eBay Web page to "update your account settings." In fact, you're probably being scammed. You've been sent a bogus alert email that, in fact, is a trap set by scammers hoping to steal your account and credit-card information.

- **Service Hardening** prevents invisible background programs from tampering with the system files, the Registry, or the network.

- **Corporate features** let network administrators exert a lot more control over what the worker bees are doing. Your company's network geeks, for example, can institute a *group policy* (a corporate network "rule") that bans the use of USB flash drives, to prevent viruses from coming in or important documents from going out. They

can also prevent any "unsafe" PC (one whose Microsoft patches and virus program aren't up to date) from even connecting to the network.

- **Parental Controls** lets you, the wise parent, restrict children's use of the PC. You can dictate what Web sites they can visit, which people they correspond with online, and even what times of day they can use the machine.
- **BitLocker Drive Encryption** encrypts your *entire hard drive,* so that even if determined hackers steal your laptop and extract the drive, they'll get no useful information off it.
- **A new backup program** offers two modes: backup by file type (all your photos, music, and Office files, for example) or *complete* PC backup (all your programs, system files, the works).

  And remember System Restore, the life-saving troubleshooting tool that lets you rewind your PC to a time when it was working properly? A sister feature, Shadow Copy, offers the same safety net to individual documents.
- **Address-space randomization** moves system files around in memory randomly. The idea here is to make it extremely difficult to write a virus that will work the same way on every PC.

A Cosmetic Overhaul

As you've probably discovered already, Windows Vista looks much more modern and colorful (and, frankly, Mac-like) than its cosmetically challenged predecessors. Thanks to a new design scheme called Aero, Window edges are translucent; menus and windows fade away when closed; the taskbar shows actual thumbnail images of the open documents, not just their names; all the icons have been redesigned with a clean, 3-D look and greater resolution; and so on.

Note: Not everyone gets to enjoy these features, by the way. Some PCs are too slow to handle all this graphics processing; on those machines, Vista will look shiny and new, but won't have these transparency and taskbar features.

Part of what makes Vista look so much better and more modern stems from a very small tweak: a new system font, called Sergoe UI. New designs for dialog boxes and wizards also give the whole affair a fresher, easier to use personality.

The Start menu is a better-organized, two-column affair; that awful XP business of superimposing the All Programs menu *on top* of the two other columns is long gone.

By the way, if you don't care for the Vista cosmetic changes, you can turn them off selectively, which makes your desktop look and work just as it did in previous versions of Windows. (You'll find instructions throughout this book in special boxes labeled "Nostalgia Corner.") You can also turn off the various animations, drop shadows, and other special effects for a measurable speed boost on slower PCs (see page 612).

Merged OSes

There are no longer separate Windows Media Center and Tablet PC Editions; these features are now built right into certain versions of Vista.

New Programs and Features

Lots of new or upgraded software programs come with Vista (or at least some editions of it). For example;

- **Photo Gallery.** A tidy little digital shoebox, suitable for touching up, organizing, and sharing your digital photos.
- **Instant Search.** With one keystroke (the ⊞ key), you open the Start menu's new Search box. It searches your entire PC for the search phrase you type—even *inside* files that have different names. It's the ultimate efficiency booster—and, by the way, a fantastic way to open programs without ever taking your hands off the keyboard.
- **Windows Calendar.** A very simple calendar for planning your life.
- **Windows Mail.** OK, it's really just Outlook Express with a new name, but it does have a spam filter now.
- **Windows DVD Maker.** Burns video DVDs, complete with a scene menu and background music.
- **Windows Meeting Space.** A Vista-only replacement for NetMeeting. It lets you and your colleagues see each other's screens and pass around notes or documents across the network or the Internet.
- **Snipping Tool** lets you capture rectangular or irregular patches of the screen as graphics, for use in illustrating computer books.
- **Windows Fax and Scan** offers one-stop shopping for scanning, and for sending and receiving faxes.
- **Internet Explorer 7** has been beefed up. It now has tabbed browsing, RSS news feeds, and about 65,000 new security features.
- **Windows Media Player 11** has yet another new look. It can share your music and photos across the network with another Vista PC (or an XBox 360), too.
- **Speech Recognition** isn't as accurate as, say, Dragon NaturallySpeaking. But it's light-years better than Windows' old speech-recognition feature. If you have a headset, you should try it out; you can dictate email and documents, and even control Windows itself, all by voice.
- **Laptop goodies** including folder synchronization with another computer, more powerful battery-control settings, and a central Mobility Center that governs all laptop features in one place. The ingenious Presentation Mode prevents dialog boxes, screen savers, alerts, or sounds from going off when you're in the middle of a presentation.

- **SuperFetch** speeds up your PC by analyzing *when* you tend to use certain programs, so they'll be ready and waiting when you are. **ReadyBoost** lets you use the RAM on a flash drive as extra memory for greater speed. (Cool!)
- **The Sidebar.** This feature offers a floating panel filled with tiny, single-purpose programs called gadgets: a stock ticker, weather reporter, address book lookup, and so on.

Note: The Sidebar's resemblance to the Dashboard in Mac OS X is unmistakable. Then again, any number of Vista features can be said to have predecessors on the Mac: Windows Calendar, Photo Gallery, 3-D Chess, instant Search, Personal and Users folders, flippy triangles in folder lists, the Folder List itself, window drop shadows, Flip 3D, rounded window corners, and so on.

Windows fans, though, may well argue, "So what?" You can't copyright an idea—and there's little doubt that these enhancements make Windows better.

New Explorer Window Features

At the desktop, the Explorer windows, where you view the icons of your files and programs, are bristling with new features.

- **New panes.** Explorer windows can now have information panels and controls on *all four* edges, including the new Navigation pane (left); task toolbar (top); Preview pane (right); and Details pane (bottom). You can edit those details (that is, properties) right in the window, even adding tags (keywords) for fast, easy rounding-up later.
- **Stacking, filtering, and grouping.** Every Explorer window offers three new methods of slicing, dicing, finding, and categorizing the files inside.
- **Document preview.** Now you can see what's in a document without having to open it first. Its icon actually *is* the first page of what's inside. That's an especially handy feature when it comes to photos. You can also play movies and music files right at the desktop, without having to fire up a program first.
- **Address bar.** The new Address bar, which displays the path you've taken to burrow into the folder you're now inspecting, is loaded with doodads and clickable spots that make navigation far easier.

Version Hell

You thought Windows XP was bad, with its two different versions (Home and Pro)?

Windows Vista comes in *five* different versions: Home Basic, Home Premium, Business, Enterprise, and Ultimate. And that's not even counting the Starter edition, sold exclusively in poor countries outside North America, or the two "N" versions (like Home Basic N), which are sold in Europe to comply with a different set of antitrust laws.

Microsoft says that each version is perfectly attuned to a different kind of customer, as though each edition had been somehow conceived differently. In fact, though, the main thing that distinguishes the editions is the suite of programs that comes with each one.

Feature	Home Basic	Home Premium	Business	Enterprise	Ultimate
Aero (snazzy new cosmetic design)		•	•	•	•
Attach a second monitor		•	•	•	•
Automated backups		•	•	•	•
Back up to another PC on the network		•	•	•	•
BitLocker drive encryption				•	•
Complete PC backups (disk images)			•	•	•
Domain-network joining			•	•	•
DVD Maker		•			•
Encrypting File System			•	•	•
Fax and Scan program			•	•	•
Group Policy support (system administrators can set company-wide settings)			•	•	•
Media Center		•			•
Mobility Center		•	•	•	•
Movie Maker	•	•			•
Network Access Protection (PCs without virus protection can't join the network)			•	•	•
Network projectors		•	•	•	•
Offline files and folders (auto-sync with network files and folders after being away)			•	•	•
Parental Controls	•	•			•
Remote Desktop	Partial	Partial	•	•	•
Shadow Copy (creates automatic daily backups of files, so you can "rewind" to an earlier version)			•	•	•
Tablet PC features		•	•	•	•
Windows Anytime Upgrade (online upgrade to a higher-priced Vista version)	•	•	•		
Windows Meeting Space (collaboration over networks)	Can view meet-ings only	•	•	•	•

Tip: Vista Enterprise is not sold in any store. It's sold directly to corporations for mass installation by highly paid network geeks. It's otherwise identical to the Business edition, except that it adds three specialized features: a subsystem for UNIX-based programs, Windows BitLocker Drive Encryption (page 637), and the inclusion of 35 language packs (page 304).

A huge table, showing what's in each version, appears on the facing page. But to save you from having to keep flipping back to this page, each main heading in this book bears a handy cheat sheet, like this:

Home Premium • Business • Enterprise • Ultimate

This lets you know at a glance whether or not that feature discussion applies to you.

UP TO SPEED

32-bit vs. 64-bit Vista

You could say that Windows Vista comes in five editions. You could say that it comes in eight (if you count the overseas versions).

You could also multiply all that, because most Vista versions are *also* available in either 32-bit or 64-bit editions. (Vista Ultimate comes with both versions in the box; the Business or Home versions come with the 32-bit version, with a toll-free number that lets you order the 64-bit version at no charge.)

Which leaves only one question: What does it all mean? Aren't more bits always better?

Not necessarily.

In theory, there are two advantages to a 64-bit computer running a 64-bit operating system. First, you can install a *lot* more memory. The most memory you can install on a 32-bit computer is 4 gigabytes of RAM; on a 64-bit computer, the maximum shoots up to 128 gigabytes. (That's for the Business, Enterprise, and Ultimate editions of Vista; it's 8 GB for Home Basic, and 16 GB for Home Premium.)

Second, certain people in certain rarefied professions—say, Photoshop, digital video, and rocket-science hounds—rely on specialized 64-bit *programs* to get their work done faster. And 64-bit programs require 64-bit computers and operating systems to match.

OK, suppose that you do, in fact, have a computer with a 64-bit *processor*, like an Intel Core 2 Duo or AMD Athlon 64 FX. Even then, you might not want to run the 64-bit version of Vista.

First of all, the 32-bit version runs just great on 64-bit computers; there's no performance penalty.

Second, 64-bit is uncharted territory for most people. 64-bit processors and operating systems have long been used for database servers and other machines that must move large amounts of data quickly. But 64-bit Windows hasn't had much experience running day-to-day productivity programs or video games. If you decide to use 64-bit Vista as your desktop operating system, you're becoming a volunteer tester to give the whole 64-bit Windows notion a shake-down.

Plenty of people say they've gone 64-bit for months with no problems, but an equal number say they have trouble finding stable device drivers for 64-bit Windows. That kind of split is usually a sign that your mileage may vary.

So if you're curious and brave, give the 64-bit version a try. But be prepared to spend some time in the Microsoft Communities Web sites finding answers to issues that come up—and paving the way for the rest of the world to run 64-bit Vista without incident.

Meanwhile, if a description of this or that feature makes you salivate, fear not. Microsoft is only too happy to let you upgrade your copy of Windows Vista to a more expensive edition, essentially "unlocking" features for a fee. See page 273 for details.

About This Book

Despite the many improvements in Windows over the years, one feature hasn't improved a bit: Microsoft's documentation. In fact, Windows Vista comes with no printed user guide at all. To learn about the thousands of pieces of software that make up this operating system, you're expected to read the online help screens.

Unfortunately, as you'll quickly discover, these help screens are tersely written, offer very little technical depth, and lack examples. You can't even mark your place, underline, or read them in the bathroom. Some of the help screens are actually on Microsoft's Web site; you can't see them without an Internet connection. Too bad if you're on a plane somewhere with your laptop.

The purpose of this book, then, is to serve as the manual that should have accompanied Windows Vista. In these pages, you'll find step-by-step instructions for using almost every Windows feature, including those you may not even have understood, let alone mastered.

System Requirements for Your Brain

Windows Vista: The Missing Manual is designed to accommodate readers at every technical level (except system administrators, who will be happier with a very different sort of book).

The primary discussions are written for advanced-beginner or intermediate PC users. But if you're a first-time Windows user, special sidebar articles called "Up To Speed" provide the introductory information you need to understand the topic at hand. If you're an advanced PC user, on the other hand, keep your eye out for similar shaded boxes called "Power Users' Clinic." They offer more technical tips, tricks, and shortcuts for the veteran PC fan.

About the Outline

This book is divided into seven parts, each containing several chapters:

- Part 1, **The Vista Desktop**, covers everything you see on the screen when you turn on a Windows Vista computer: icons, windows, menus, scroll bars, the Recycle Bin, shortcuts, the Start menu, shortcut menus, and so on. It also covers the juicy new system-wide, instantaneous Search feature.
- Part 2, **Vista Software**, is dedicated to the proposition that an operating system is little more than a launch pad for *programs*. Chapter 6 describes how to work with applications and documents in Windows—launch them, switch among them, swap data between them, use them to create and open files, and so on—and how to use the new micro-programs called *gadgets*.

This part also offers an item-by-item discussion of the individual software nuggets that make up this operating system. These include not just the items in your Control Panel, but also the long list of free programs that Microsoft threw in: Windows Media Player, Movie Maker, WordPad, Speech Recognition, and so on.

- Part 3, **Vista Online,** covers all the special Internet-related features of Windows, including setting up your Internet account, Windows Mail (for email), Internet Explorer 7 (for Web browsing), and so on. The massive Chapter 10 also covers Vista's dozens of Internet fortification features: the firewall, anti-spyware software, parental controls, and on and on.
- Part 4, **Pictures, Movies, and Music,** takes you into multimedia land. Here are chapters that cover the new Photo Gallery picture editing and organizing program; Media Player 11 (music playback); Media Center (TV recording and playback); Movie Maker (video editing); and DVD Maker (burn your own video DVDs).
- Part 5, **Hardware and Peripherals,** describes the operating system's relationship with equipment you can attach to your PC—scanners, cameras, disks, printers, and so on. Special chapters describe faxing, fonts, laptops, and Tablet PC touch-screen machines.
- Part 6, **PC Health,** explores Vista's greatly beefed-up backup and troubleshooting tools. It also describes some advanced hard drive formatting tricks and offers tips for making your PC run faster and better.
- Part 7, **The Vista Network,** is for the millions of households and offices that contain more than one PC. If you work at home or in a small office, these chapters show you how to build your own network; if you work in a corporation where some highly paid professional network geek is on hand to do the troubleshooting, these chapters show you how to exploit Vista's considerable networking prowess. File sharing, accounts and passwords, and the new remote-control collaboration program called Windows Meeting Space are here, too.

At the end of the book, three appendixes provide a guide to installing this operating system, an introduction to editing the Registry, and the "Where'd It Go?" Dictionary, which lists every feature Microsoft moved or deleted on the way to Windows Vista.

About→These→Arrows

Throughout this book, and throughout the Missing Manual series, you'll find sentences like this: "Open the Start→Computer→Local Disk (C:)→Windows folder." That's shorthand for a much longer instruction that directs you to open three nested icons in sequence, like this: "Click the Start menu to open it. Click Computer in the Start menu. Inside the Computer window is a disk icon labeled Local Disk (C:); double-click it to open it. Inside *that* window is yet *another* icon called Windows. Double-click to open it, too."

Similarly, this kind of arrow shorthand helps to simplify the business of choosing commands in menus, as shown in Figure I-1.

About MissingManuals.com

You're invited and encouraged to submit corrections and updates to this book's Web page at *www.missingmanuals.com*. (Click the book's name, and then click the Errata link.) In an effort to keep the book as up-to-date and accurate as possible, each time we print more copies of this book, we'll make any corrections you've suggested.

Even if you have nothing to report, you should check that Errata page now and then. That's where we'll post a list of the corrections and updates we've made, so that you can mark important corrections into your own copy of the book, if you like.

In the meantime, we'd love to hear your suggestions for new books in the Missing Manual line. There's a place for that on the Web site, too, as well as a place to sign up for free email notification of new titles in the series.



Figure I-1: *In this book, arrow notations help to simplify folder and menu instructions. For example, "Choose Start→ Control Panel→ AutoPlay" is a more compact way of saying, "Click the Start button. When the Start menu opens, point to Control Panel; without clicking, now slide to the right onto AutoPlay," as shown here.*

The Very Basics

To get the most out of Windows with the least frustration, it helps to be familiar with the following concepts and terms. If you're new to Windows, be prepared to encounter these words and phrases over and over again—in the built-in Windows help, in computer magazines, and in this book.

Windows Defined

Windows is an *operating system*, the software that controls your computer. It's designed to serve you in several ways:

- **It's a launching bay.** At its heart, Windows is a home base, a remote-control clicker that lets you call up the various software programs (applications) you use to do work or kill time. When you get right down to it, applications are the real reason you bought a PC.

  Windows Vista is a well-stocked software pantry unto itself; for example, it comes with such basic programs as a Web browser, email program, simple word processor, and calculator. Vista comes with a suite of games, too. (Chapter 7 covers all of these freebie programs.)

  If you were stranded on a desert island, the built-in Windows programs could suffice for everyday operations. But if you're like most people, sooner or later, you'll buy and install more software. That's one of the luxuries of using Windows: you can choose from a staggering number of add-on programs. Whether you're a left-handed beekeeper or a German-speaking nun, some company somewhere is selling Windows software designed just for you, its target audience.

- **It's a file cabinet.** Every application on your machine, as well as every document you create, is represented on the screen by an *icon*, a little picture that symbolizes the underlying file or container. You can organize these icons into onscreen file folders. You can make backups (safety copies) by dragging file icons onto a floppy disk or blank CD, or send files to people by email. You can also trash icons you longer need by dragging them onto the Recycle Bin icon.

- **It's your equipment headquarters.** What you can actually see of Windows is only the tip of the iceberg. An enormous chunk of Windows is behind-the-scenes plumbing that controls the various functions of your computer—its modem, screen, keyboard, printer, and so on.

The Right Mouse Button is King

One of the most important features of Windows isn't on the screen—it's under your hand. The standard mouse has two mouse buttons. You use the left one to click buttons, highlight text, and drag things around on the screen.

When you click the right button, however, a *shortcut menu* appears onscreen, like the one shown at left in Figure I-3. Get into the habit of *right-clicking* things—icons, folders, disks, text inside a paragraph, buttons on your menu bar, pictures on a Web page,

and so on. The commands that appear on the shortcut menu will make you much more productive and lead you to discover handy functions you never knew existed.

This is a big deal: Microsoft's research suggests that nearly 75 percent of Windows users don't use the right mouse button, and therefore miss hundreds of timesaving shortcuts. Part of the rationale behind Windows Vista's redesign is putting these functions out in the open. Even so, many more shortcuts remain hidden under your right mouse button.

Tip: Microsoft doesn't discriminate against left-handers...much. You can swap the functions of the right and left mouse buttons easily enough.

Choose Start→Control Panel. Click "Classic view." Open the Mouse icon. When the Mouse Properties dialog box opens, click the Buttons tab, and then turn on "Switch primary and secondary buttons." Then click OK. Windows now assumes that you want to use the *left* mouse button as the one that produces shortcut menus.

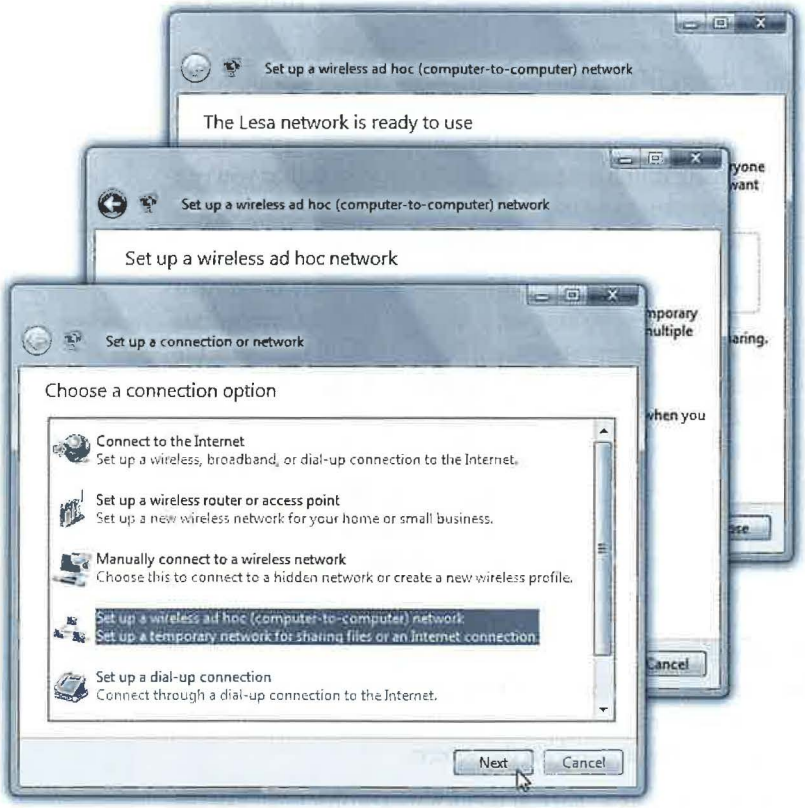


Figure I-2: *Wizards (interview screens) are everywhere in Windows. On each of the screens, you're supposed to answer a question about your computer or your preferences, and then click a Next button. When you click the Finish button on the final screen, Windows whirls into action, automatically completing the installation or setup.*

Wizards = Interviews

A *wizard* is a series of screens that walks you through the task you're trying to complete. Wizards make configuration and installation tasks easier by breaking them down into smaller, more easily digested steps. Figure I-2 offers an example.

There's More Than One Way to Do Everything

No matter what setting you want to adjust, no matter what program you want to open, Microsoft has provided five or six different ways to do it. For example, here are the various ways to delete a file: press the Delete key; choose File→Delete; drag the file icon onto the Recycle Bin; or right-click the file name, and then choose Delete from the shortcut menu.

Pessimists grumble that there are too many paths to every destination, making it much more difficult to learn Windows. Optimists point out that this abundance of approaches means that almost everyone will find, and settle on, a satisfying method for each task. Whenever you find a task irksome, remember you have other options.

You Can Use the Keyboard for Everything

In earlier versions of Windows, underlined letters appeared in the names of menus and dialog boxes. These underlines were clues for people who found it faster to do something by pressing keys than by using the mouse.

The underlines are hidden in Windows Vista, at least in disk and folder windows. (They may still appear in your individual software programs.) If you miss them, you can make

UP TO SPEED

Scrolling: The Missing Manual

These days, PC monitors are bigger than ever—but so are the Web pages and documents that they display.

Scroll bars, of course, are the strips that may appear at the right side and/or bottom of a window. The scroll bar signals you that the window isn't big enough to reveal all of its contents.

Click the arrows at each end of a scroll bar to move slowly through the window, or drag the rectangular handle (the *thumb*) to move faster. (The position of the thumb in the scroll bar reflects your relative position in the entire window or document.) You can quickly move to a specific part of the window by holding the mouse button down on the scroll bar where you want the thumb to be. The scroll bar rapidly scrolls to the desired location and then stops.

Scrolling is such a frequently needed skill, though, that all kinds of other scrolling gadgets have cropped up.

Your mouse probably has a little wheel on the top. You can scroll in most programs just by turning the wheel with your finger, even if your cursor is nowhere near the scroll bar. You can turbo-scroll by dragging the mouse upward or downward while keeping the wheel pressed down inside the window.

Laptops often have some kind of scrolling gizmo, too. Maybe you have an actual roller, or maybe the trackpad offers drag-here-to-scroll strips on the right side and across the bottom.

Of course, keyboard addicts should note that you can scroll without using the mouse at all. Press the Page Up or Page Down keys to scroll the window by one window-full, or use the up and down arrow keys to scroll one line at a time.

them reappear by pressing the Alt key, Tab key, or an arrow key whenever the menu bar is visible. (When you're operating menus, you can release the Alt key immediately after pressing it.) In this book, in help screens, and computer magazines, you'll see key combinations indicated like this: Alt+S (or Alt+ whatever the letter key is).

Note: In some Vista programs, in fact, the entire *menu bar* is gone until you press Alt (or F10). That includes everyday Explorer windows.

Once the underlines are visible, you can open a menu by pressing the underlined letter (F for the File menu, for example). Once the menu is open, press the underlined letter key that corresponds to the menu command you want. Or press Esc to close the menu without doing anything. (In Windows, the Esc key always means *cancel* or *stop.*)

If choosing a menu command opens a dialog box, you can trigger its options by pressing Alt along with the underlined letters. (Within dialog boxes, you can't press and release Alt; you have to hold it down while typing the underlined letter.)

About Shift-Clicking

Here's another bit of shorthand you'll find in this book (and others): instructions to *Shift-click* something. That means you should hold down the Shift key, and then click before releasing the key. If you understand that much, the meaning of instructions like "Ctrl-click" and "Alt-click" should be clear.

You Could Spend a Lifetime Changing Properties

You can't write an operating system that's all things to all people, but Microsoft has certainly tried. You can change almost every aspect of the way Windows looks and works. You can replace the gray backdrop of the screen (the *wallpaper*) with your favorite photograph, change the typeface used for the names of your icons, or set up a particular program to launch automatically every time you turn on the PC.

When you want to change some *general* behavior of your PC, like how it connects to the Internet, how soon the screen goes black to save power, or how quickly a letter repeats when you hold down a key, you use the Control Panel window (described in Chapter 8).

Many other times, however, you may want to adjust the settings of only one particular element of the machine, such as the hard drive, the Recycle Bin, or a particular application. In those cases, simply right-click the corresponding icon. In the resulting shortcut menu, you'll often find a command called Properties. When you click it, a dialog box appears, containing settings or information about that object, as shown in Figure I-3.

Tip: As a shortcut to the Properties command, just highlight an icon and then press Alt+Enter.

It's also worth getting to know how to operate *tabbed dialog boxes,* like the one shown in Figure I-3. These are windows that contain so many options, Microsoft has had to split them up into separate panels, or *tabs.* To reveal a new set of options, just click a

different tab (called General, Tools, Hardware, Sharing, Security, and Quota in Figure I-3). These tabs are designed to resemble the tabs at the top of file folders.

Tip: You can switch tabs without using the mouse by pressing Ctrl+Tab (to "click" the next tab to the right) or Ctrl+Shift+Tab (for the previous tab).

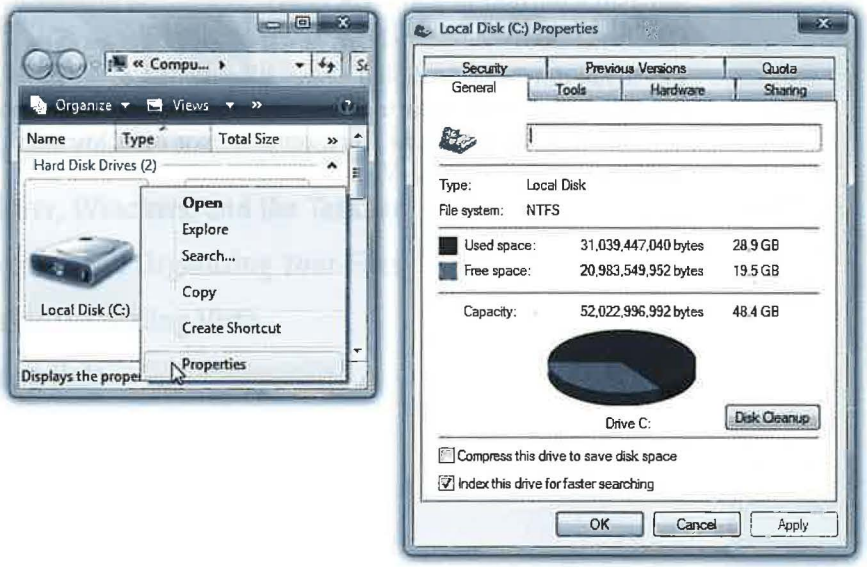


Figure I-3: *One quick way to find out how much space is left on your hard drive is to right-click the corresponding icon, and then choose the Properties command (left). The Properties dialog box appears (right), featuring a handy disk-space graph.*

Every Piece of Hardware Requires Software

When computer geeks talk about their *drivers,* they're not talking about their chauffeurs (unless they're Bill Gates); they're talking about the controlling software required by every hardware component of a PC.

The driver is the translator between your PC's brain and the equipment attached to it: mouse, keyboard, screen, DVD drive, scanner, digital camera, palmtop, and so on. Without the correct driver software, the corresponding piece of equipment doesn't work at all.

When you buy one of these gadgets, you receive a CD containing the driver software. If the included driver software works fine, then you're all set. If your gadget acts up, however, remember that equipment manufacturers regularly release improved (read: less buggy) versions of these software chunks. (You generally find such updates on the manufacturers' Web sites.)

Fortunately, Windows Vista comes with drivers for over 12,000 components, saving you the trouble of scavenging for them on a disk or on the Internet. This gigantic library is the heart of Microsoft's Plug and Play feature, which lets you connect a new gadget to your PC without even thinking about the driver software (Chapter 18).

It's Not Meant to Be Overwhelming

Windows has an absolutely staggering array of features. You can burrow six levels down, dialog box through dialog box, and never come to the end of it. There are enough programs, commands, and help screens to keep you studying the rest of your life.

It's crucial to remember that Microsoft's programmers created Windows in modules—the digital-photography team here, the networking team there—with different audiences in mind. The idea, of course, was to make sure that no subset of potential customers would find a feature lacking.

But if *you* don't have a digital camera, a network, or whatever, there's absolutely nothing wrong with ignoring everything you encounter on the screen that isn't relevant to your setup and work routine. Not even Microsoft's CEO uses every single feature of Windows Vista.

The Vista Desktop–Now with Aero!

Home Premium • Business • Enterprise • Ultimate

Once you've recovered from the excitement of the Welcome Center, you get your first glimpse of the full Vista desktop.

All of the usual Windows landmarks are here—the Start menu, taskbar, and Recycle Bin—but they've been given a drastic cosmetic overhaul.

If you're into this kind of thing, here's the complete list of what makes Aero Aero:

- The edges of windows are thicker (for easier targeting with your mouse). Parts of the Start menu and window edges are transparent. Windows and dialog boxes cast subtle shadows on the background, as though they're floating.
- A new, bigger, more modern font is used for menus and labels.
- When you point to a window button without clicking, the button "lights up." The Minimize and Maximize buttons glow blue; the close button glows red.
- The *default* button in a dialog box—the one Microsoft thinks you really want, like Save or Print—pulses gently, using fading color intensity to draw your eye.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Restoring the Desktop Icons

The Vista desktop, like the XP desktop before it, is a victim of Microsoft's clean-freak tendencies. It's awfully pretty–but awfully barren. Windows veterans may miss the handy desktop icons that once provided quick access to important locations on your PC, like My Computer, My Documents, My Network Places, and Internet Explorer.

You can still get to these locations–they're listed in your Start menu–but opening them requires two mouse clicks (including one to open the Start menu)–an egregious expenditure of caloric effort.

However, if you miss the older arrangement, it's easy enough to put these icons back on the desktop. To do so, right-click a blank spot on the desktop; from the shortcut menu, choose Personalize.



Now the Personalization dialog box appears. In the Tasks pane on the left side, click "Change desktop icons."

As shown here, checkboxes for the common desktop icons await your summons: Computer, Network, Internet Explorer, Control Panel, and User's Files (that is, your Personal folder–see page 38).

Turn on the ones you'd like to install onto the desktop and then click OK. Your old favorite icons are now back where they once belonged.

- Little animations liven up the works, especially when you minimize, maximize, or close a window.

Aero isn't just looks, either—it also includes a couple of features, like Flip 3D and live taskbar icons. You can read about these two useful features in Chapter 2.

Tip: Windows Vista also includes all-new sounds, too—the little blips and bleeps you hear when you wake up or shut down the PC, get an error message, and so on.

Microsoft wishes you to know, in particular, that the new Windows startup sound "has two parallel melodies, played in an intentional 'Win-dows Vis-ta' rhythm; consists of four chords, one for each color in the Windows flag; is 4 seconds long, end to end; and is a collaboration between contributors Robert Fripp (primary melody), Tucker Martine (rhythm), and Steve Ball (harmony and final orchestration)." Any questions?



Figure 1-2: *There's a new desktop picture in Vista—Microsoft evidently endured one* Teletubbies *joke too many during the Windows XP era—and a glowing, more modern look called Aero. The only truly new element is the Sidebar, the stack of small floating windows that appears at the right side of the screen. (Chapter 6 covers the Sidebar in detail.)*

What you're seeing is the new face of Windows, known to fans as *Aero.* (It supposedly stands for Authentic, Energetic, Reflective, and Open, but you can't help suspecting that somebody at Microsoft retrofitted those words to fit the initials.)

The Aero design may not actually be Authentic or whatever, but it does look clean and modern. You'll see it, however, *only* if you have a fairly fast, modern PC. Basically, you

- **Left side (white).** At the top, above the thin divider line, is the *pinned items list*, which is yours to modify; it lists programs, folders, documents, and anything else you want to open quickly. This list never changes unless you change it.

  Below that is the standard Windows *most frequently used programs list.* This list is computed automatically by Windows and may change from day to day.

Tip: You can, if you wish, ask Vista *not* to display a list of the programs you've used most recently. You might want to do that if, for example, it would be best if your boss or your spouse didn't know what you've been up to.

If that's your situation (or your boss), right-click the Start button itself; from the shortcut menu, choose Properties. In the resulting dialog box, turn off "Store and display a list of recently opened programs." Click OK.

When you next inspect the Start menu, you'll be surprised—but happy—to see that the lower-left quadrant, where the recently used programs are usually listed, is startlingly blank.

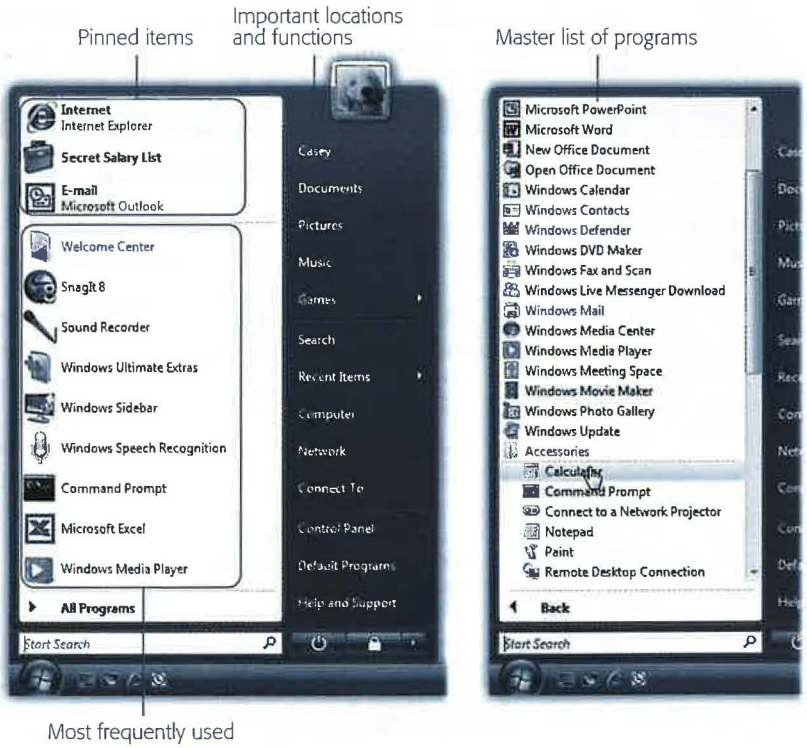


Figure 1-3:
Left: The Start menu's top-left section is yours to play with. You can "pin" whatever programs you want here, in whatever order you like. The lower-left section lists programs you use most often. (You can delete individual items here–see page 52–but you can't add things manually or rearrange them.) The right-hand column links to important Windows features and folder locations.

Right: The All Programs menu replaces the left column of the Start menu, listing almost every piece of software you've got. You can rearrange, add to, or delete items from this list.

- **Right side (dark).** In general, the right side of the open Start menu is devoted to listing important *places* on the computer: folders like Documents, Pictures, and Music, or special windows like Network, Control Panel, and Computer.

Tip: Submenus, also known as cascading menus, have been largely eliminated from the Start menu. Instead, when you open something that contains *other* things–like a folder listed in the Start menu–you see its contents listed beneath, indented slightly, as shown in Figure 1-5. Click the folder name again to collapse the sublisting.

Keyboard freaks should note that you can also open a highlighted folder in the list by pressing the Enter key (or the right arrow key). Close the folder by pressing Enter again (or the left arrow key).

Program-group folders

Another set of folders is designed to trim down the Programs menu by consolidating related programs, like Games, Accessories (little single-purpose programs), and Extras and Upgrades. Everything in these folders is described in Chapter 7.

The Startup folder

This folder contains programs that load automatically every time you start Windows Vista. This can be a very useful feature. For instance, if you check your email every morning, you may as well save yourself a few mouse clicks by putting your email program into the Startup folder. If you spend all day long word processing, you may as well put Microsoft Word in there.

In fact, although few PC users suspect it, what you put into the Startup folder doesn't have to be an application. It can just as well be a *document* you consult every day. It can even be a folder or disk icon whose window you'd like to find open and waiting each time you turn on the PC. (The Documents folder is a natural example.)

Of course, you may be interested in the Startup folder for a different reason: to *stop* some program from launching itself. This is a particularly common syndrome if somebody else set up your PC. Some program seems to launch itself, unbidden, every time you turn the machine on.

Tip: All kinds of programs dump components into this folder. Over time, they can begin to slow down your computer. If you're having trouble determining the purpose of one startup program or another, visit this Web page, which provides a comprehensive list of every startup software nugget known, with instructions for turning off each one: *http://www.sysinfo.org/startupinfo.html.*

Fortunately, it's easy to either add or remove items from the Startup folder:

- **Deleting something.** With the Startup folder's listing visible in the All Programs menu, right-click whatever you want to delete. From the shortcut menu, choose Delete. Click Yes to send the icon to the Recycle Bin.

  Enjoy your newfound freedom from self-launching software.

- **Adding something.** With the All Programs list open, right-click the Startup folder and, from the shortcut menu, choose Open. You've just opened the Startup folder itself.

Start→⏻ (Sleep)

A few people knew about Standby mode and used that instead. This special state of PC consciousness reduced the amount of electricity the computer used, putting it in suspended animation until you used the mouse or keyboard to begin working again. Whatever programs or documents you were working on remained in memory.

When using a laptop on battery power, Standby was a real boon. When the flight attendant handed over your microwaved chicken teriyaki, you could take a break without closing all your programs or shutting down the computer.

Unfortunately, there were two big problems with Standby, especially for laptops:

- The PC still drew a trickle of power this way. If you didn't use your laptop for a few days, the battery would silently go dead—and everything you had open and unsaved would be lost forever.
- Drivers or programs sometimes interfered with Standby, so your laptop remained on even though it was closed inside your carrying case. Your plane would land on the opposite coast, you'd pull out the laptop for the big meeting, and you'd discover that (a) the thing was roasting hot, and (b) the battery was dead.

In Windows Vista, Microsoft has fixed Standby. Now it's called Sleep, and now it doesn't present those problems.

First, drivers and applications are no longer allowed to interrupt the Sleep process. No more Hot Laptop Syndrome.

Second, the instant you put the computer to sleep, Vista quietly transfers a copy of everything in memory into an invisible file on the hard drive. But at the same time, it still keeps everything alive in memory—the battery provides a tiny trickle of power—in case you return to the laptop (or desktop) and want to dive back into work.

If you do return soon (within 18 hours, although this period varies by laptop model), the next startup is lightning-fast. Everything reappears on the screen faster than you can say, "Redmond, Washington." After you've enjoyed the speed of a power-up from Sleep mode, the normal startup seems unbearably slow.

But now suppose you *don't* return after 18 hours (or the battery dies while providing the trickle of juice). In that case, Vista cuts power, abandoning what it had memorized in RAM. Now your computer is using no power at all. The laptop battery isn't slowly running down; the desktop isn't contributing to global warming.

Fortunately, Windows still has the hard drive copy of your work environment. So *now* when you tap a key to wake the computer, you might have to wait 30 seconds or so—not as fast as two seconds, but certainly better than the five minutes it would take to start up, reopen all your programs, reposition your document windows, and so on.

So here's the bottom line: when you're done working for the moment—or for the day—put your computer to Sleep instead of shutting it down. You save power, you save time, and you risk no data loss.

You can send a laptop to Sleep just by closing the lid. On any kind of computer, you can trigger Sleep by choosing Start→⏻.

- **Restart.** This command quits all open programs, then quits and restarts Windows again automatically. The computer doesn't actually turn off. (You might do this to "refresh" your computer when you notice that it's responding sluggishly, for example.)
- **Sleep.** You can read about Sleep on page 30.
- **Hibernate.** Hibernate mode is a lot like Sleep, except that it *doesn't* offer a 15-minute period during which the computer will wake up instantly (because it's keeping your open files and programs alive in RAM). Hibernate equals the *second* phase of Sleep mode, in which your working world is saved to the hard drive. Waking the computer from Hibernate takes about 30 seconds—not as fast as waking from the first 18 hours of Sleep, but much faster than starting from Off and having to reopen all your programs.

Tip: You can configure your computer to sleep or hibernate automatically after a period of inactivity, or to require a password to bring it out of hibernation. See page 300 for details.

- **Shut Down.** This is what most people would call "really, really off." When you shut down your PC, Windows quits all open programs, offers you the opportunity to save any unsaved documents, exits Windows, and turns off the computer.

Tip: Once again, it's worth noting that you can trigger any of these commands entirely from the keyboard; save your mouse for Photoshop.

Hit the ⊞ key to open the Start menu. Then hit the right arrow key three times to open the menu shown in Figure 1-6. At this point, you can type the underlined letter of the command you want: L for Log Off, U for Shut Down, and so on.

Start→Help and Support

All Versions

Choosing Start→Help and Support opens the new, improved Windows Help and Support Center window, which is described in Chapter 5.

Tip: Once again, speed fans have an alternative to using the mouse–just press the F1 key to open the Help window. (If that doesn't work, some other program may have Vista's focus. Try it again after clicking the desktop.)

Start→Default Programs

All Versions

This command is just a shortcut to the Default Programs control panel.

If you're a PC veteran, your head probably teems with neat Run commands you've picked up over the years. If you're new to this idea, however, the following are a few of the useful and timesaving functions you can perform with the Run dialog box.

Open a Program

For example, you can use the Run command as a program launcher. Just type any program's *program file name* in the Open text box and then press Enter. That's a useful shortcut for both pros and novices alike, because it's frequently faster to launch a program this way than to click the Start→All Programs menu with the mouse.

Unfortunately, the program file name isn't the same as its plain-English name; it's a cryptic, abbreviated version. For example, if you want to open Microsoft Word, you must type *winword.* That's the actual name of the Word program icon as it sits in your Computer→Local Disk (C:)→Program Files→Microsoft Office→Office folder. Some other common program file names are shown here:

Program's real name	Program's familiar name
iexplore	Internet Explorer
explorer	Windows Explorer
write	WordPad
msworks	Microsoft Works
msimn	Mail
wmplayer	Windows Media Player
palm	Palm Desktop
sol	Solitaire
winmine	Minesweeper
control	Classic Control Panel
regedit	Registry Editor
cleanmgr	Disk Cleanup
defrag	Disk Defragmenter
calc	Calculator

UP TO SPEED

The Path to Enlightenment about Paths

Windows is too busy to think of a particular file as "that family album program in the Program Files folder, which is in the Programs folder on the C drive." Instead, it uses shorthand to specify each icon's location on your hard drive—a series of disk and folder names separated by backslashes, like this: *C:\program files\pbsoftware\beekeeperpro.exe.*

This kind of location code is that icon's *path.* (Capitalization doesn't matter, even though you may see capital letters in Microsoft's examples.)

You'll encounter file paths when using several important Windows features. The Run dialog box described in this section is one. The Address bar at the top of every Explorer window is another, although Microsoft has made addresses easier to read by displaying triangle separators in the Address bar instead of slashes. (That is, you now see Users ▸ Casey instead of Users\Casey.)

- **Local Disk (C:)→Users→[your name]→AppData→Roaming→Microsoft→Windows→Start Menu→Programs folder.** This invisible folder stashes shortcuts for the programs that you have added to the Start menu—and they appear only when you have logged into the machine.

Therefore, instead of the fancy icon-adding wizards and drag-and-drop schemes described above, you may prefer to fine-tune your Start menu the low-tech way. Just open the relevant Start Menu folder—and you don't have to do any burrowing into invisible folders, either. See Figure 1-13.

Removing Icons from the Start Menu

When it comes time to prune an overgrown Start menu, there are three different sets of instructions, depending on which section of the Start menu needs purging.

- **The left-side column and All Programs list.** Right-click the item you've targeted for extinction, and then, from the shortcut menu, choose either "Remove from this list" or "Delete."

  In both cases, you're only deleting the *shortcut* that appears on the menu. Deleting items from the Start menu doesn't actually uninstall any software.

- **The right-side column.** Open the Properties→Customize dialog box for the Start menu (page 44), and then turn off the checkboxes for the items you want expunged.

Tip: You can spawn instant shortcuts (page 145) of anything in the left-hand column of the Start menu by *dragging* them off the menu–onto the desktop, for example. That's a handy tactic if you want a desktop icon for something you use often, so you don't even have to open the Start menu to get at it.

Renaming Start-Menu Items

Although few people realize it, you can rename anything in the Start menu's left side. Click the Start menu to open it, right-click the command you want to rename, and choose Rename from the shortcut menu. The name of the command sprouts a little editing box. Type the new name and then press Enter.

Reorganizing the Start Menu

To change the order of listings in the "free" portions of the Start menu, including the All Programs list, just drag the commands up and down the lists as you see fit. As you drag an item, a black line appears to show you the resulting location of your dragging action. Release the mouse when the black line is where you want the relocated icon to appear.

Tip: If you change your mind while you're dragging, press the Esc key to leave everything as it was.

You can drag program names from the lower-left section of the Start menu, too—but only into one of the "free" areas.

Tip: A reminder: If you can't seem to drag program names around in the All Programs list, it's probably because you've told Vista to auto-alphabetize this list (page 48).

Add folders to hold submenus

As noted earlier, some of the items in the All Programs list are actually folders. For example, clicking Games reveals a submenu that lists all the games that come with Windows (see Figure 1-14).

In past Windows versions, clicking such folders made them sprout *submenus*, some of which had submenus of their own, and on and on. In Vista, folders no longer expand horizontally that way—they expand vertically, as shown in Figure 1-14.



Figure 1-14: *Some Programs-menu items have submenu folders and sub-submenu folders. As you move through the layers, you're performing an action known as "drilling down." You'll see this phrase often in manuals and computer books–for example, "Drill down to the Calculator to crunch a few quick numbers."*

It's worthwhile to know that you can create Programs-menu folders of your own and stock them with whatever icons you like. For instance, you may want to create a folder for CD-ROM–based games, eliminating those long lists from the All Programs menu.

CHAPTER
2

Explorer, Windows, and the Taskbar

Windows got its name from the rectangles on the screen—the windows—where every computer activity takes place. You look at a Web page in a window, type into a window, read email in a window, and look at lists of files in a window. But as you create more files, stash them in more folders, and open more programs, it's easy to wind up paralyzed before a screen awash with cluttered, overlapping rectangles.

Fortunately, Windows has always offered icons, buttons, and other inventions to help you keep these windows under control—and Windows Vista positively crawls with them.

Universal Window Controls

All Versions

There are two categories of windows in Windows:

- **Explorer windows.** *Windows Explorer* is Microsoft's name for the desktop world of folders and icons. It's the home-base program that greets you when you first turn on the PC. When you double-click a folder or disk icon on your desktop, what opens is an Explorer window. This is where you organize your files and programs.
- **Application windows.** These are the windows where you do your work—in Word or Internet Explorer, for example.

All of these windows have certain parts in common, but as Figure 2-1 shows, a lot has changed since the last version of Windows you probably used. If you're feeling disoriented, firmly grasp a nearby stationary object and read the following breakdown.

Universal Window Controls

Here are the controls that appear on almost every window, whether in an application or Explorer:

- **Title bar.** It's really not much of a title bar anymore, since the window's *title* no longer appears here (Figure 2-1). But this big fat top strip is still a giant handle that you can use to drag a window around.

Tip: If you double-click the title bar area, you *maximize* the window, making it expand to fill your entire screen exactly as though you had clicked the Maximize button described below. Double-click the title bar again to restore the window to its original size.

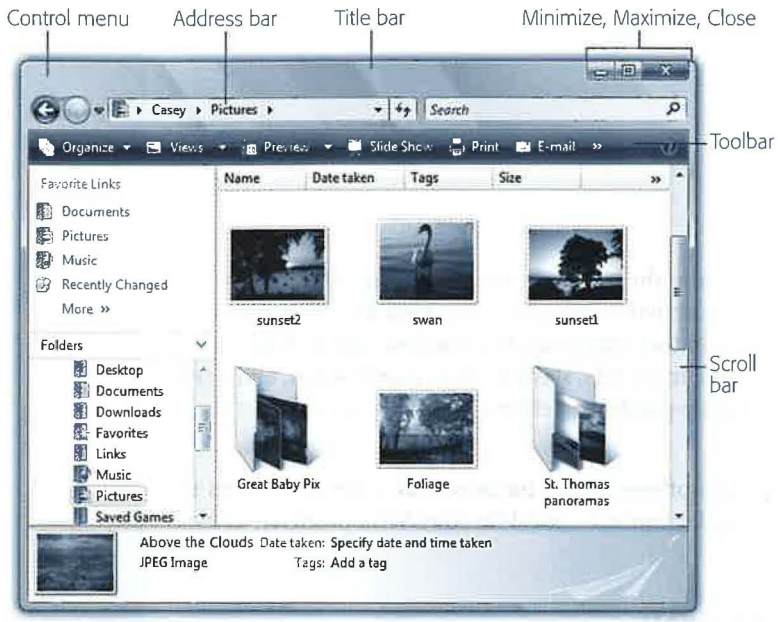


Figure 2-1: *All windows have the same basic ingredients, making it easy to become an expert in window manipulation. This figure shows an Explorer (desktop) window—a disk or folder—but you'll encounter the same elements in application windows.*

- **Window edges.** Now they're fatter, making them easier to grab with your mouse. And on most computers, window edges are also transparent, revealing a slightly blurry image of what's underneath. (That's the Aero cosmetic overhaul at work; see page 22.)

  Truth to tell, being able to see what's underneath the edges of your window (sort of) doesn't really offer any particular productivity advantage. Sure does look cool, though.

  In any case, you can change the size of a window by dragging any edge except the top. Position your cursor over any border until it turns into a double-headed arrow. Then drag inward or outward to reshape the window. (To resize a full-screen window, click the Restore Down button first.)

Tip: You can resize a window in both dimensions at once just by dragging one of its corners. Sometimes diagonally striped ribs appear at the lower-right corner, sometimes not; in either case, all *four* corners work the same way.

- **Minimize, Maximize, [Restore Down].** These three window-control buttons, which appear at the top of every Windows window, are much bigger in Vista than before, which is supposed to make them easier to click. These buttons cycle a window among its three modes—minimized, maximized, and restored—as described on page 86.
- **Close button.** Click the X button to close the window. *Keyboard shortcut:* Press Alt+F4.

Tip: Isn't it cool how the Minimize, Maximize, and Close buttons "light up" when your cursor passes over them?

Actually, that's not just a gimmick; it's a cue that lets you know when the button is clickable. You might not otherwise realize, for example, that you can close, minimize, or maximize a *background* window without first bringing it forward. But when the background window's Close box beams bright red, you'll know.

- **Scroll bar.** A scroll bar appears on the right side or bottom of the window if the window isn't large enough to show all its contents (as described in the box on page 13).
- **Control menu.** Until Windows Vista came along, there was a tiny icon in the upper-left corner of every Explorer window (Figure 2-1). It was actually a menu containing commands for sizing, moving, and closing the window.

  There are three super-weird nuggets of wisdom to impart about the Control icon in Vista. First, *it's invisible.* There's no icon to let you know it's there. But if you click where it's supposed to be, the menu opens. It's clearly intended for use only by the initiated who pass on the secret from generation to generation.

  Second, one of the Control menu's commands is Move. It turns your cursor into a four-headed arrow; at this point, you can move the window by dragging *any* part of it, even the middle. (And why bother, since you can always just drag the top edge of a window to move it? Because sometimes, windows get dragged *past* the top of your screen. You can hit Alt+Space to open the Control menu, type M to trigger the Move command, and then drag *any* visible part of the window back onto the screen.)

  Finally, it's worth noting that you can open the identical menu by right-clicking *anywhere* on the title bar.

Tip: You can double-click the Control menu to close a window.

Explorer Window Controls

All Versions

When you're working at the desktop—that is, opening Explorer windows—you'll find a few additional controls dotting the edges. Again, they're quite a bit different from the controls of Windows XP and its predecessors.

Address Bar

In a Web browser, the Address bar is where you type the addresses of the Web sites you want to visit. In an Explorer window, the Address bar is more of a "breadcrumbs bar" (a shout out to Hansel and Gretel fans). That is, it now shows the path you've taken—folders you burrowed through—to arrive where you are now (Figure 2-2).

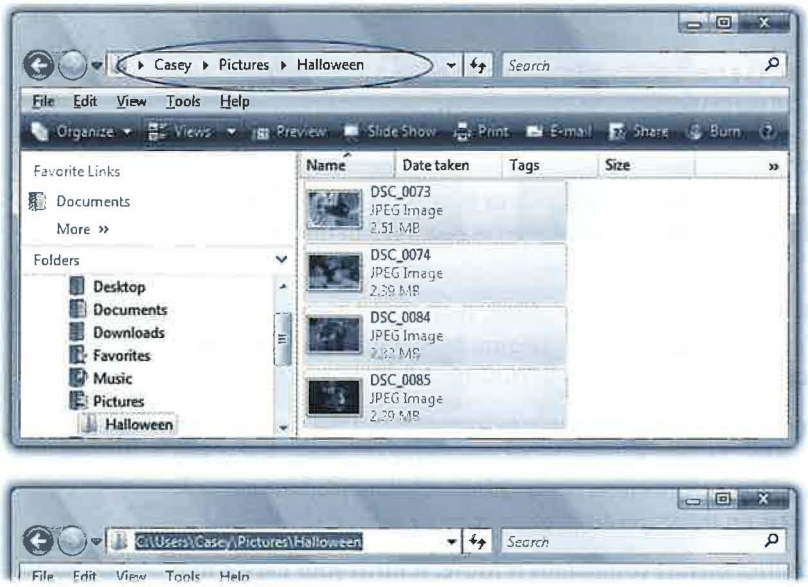


Figure 2-2: *Top: The notation in the Address bar, Casey ▸ Pictures ▸ Halloween, indicates that you, Casey, opened your Personal folder (page 38); then opened the Pictures folder inside; and finally opened the Halloween folder inside that.*

Bottom: If you press Alt+D, the Address bar restores the slash notation of Windows versions gone by, so that you can type in a different address.

There are three especially cool things about the new Vista Address bar:

- **It's much easier to read.** Those ▸ little ▸ triangles are clearer separators of folder names than the older\slash\notation. And instead of drive letters like C:, you see the drive *names*.

Tip: If the succession of nested folders' names is too long to fit the window, then a tiny << icon appears at the left end of the address. Click it to reveal a pop-up menu showing, from last to first, the other folders you've had to burrow through to get here.

(The pop-up menu items that are *supposed* to be here–the list of recent places–appears in the same list, below a divider line.)

- **It's clickable.** You can click any breadcrumb to open the corresponding folder. For example, if you're viewing the Casey ▸ Pictures ▸ Halloween, you can click the *word* Pictures to backtrack to the Pictures folder.

- **You can still edit it.** The Address bar of old was still a powerful tool, because you could type in a folder address directly (using the slash notation).

  Actually, you still can. You can "open" the Address bar for editing in any of five different ways. (1) Press Alt+D. (2) Click the tiny icon to the left of the address. (3) Click any blank spot. (4) Right-click anywhere in the address; (5) From the shortcut menu, choose Edit Address.

  In each case, the Address bar changes to reveal the old-style slash notation, ready for editing (Figure 2-2, bottom).

Tip: After you've had a good look, press Esc to restore the ▸ notation.

Components of the Address bar

On top of all that, the Address bar houses a few additional doodads that make it easy for you to jump around on your hard drive (Figure 2-3):

- **Back, Forward.** Just as in a Web browser, the Back button opens whatever window you opened just before this one. Once you've used the Back button, you can then use the Forward button to return to the window where you started. *Keyboard shortcuts:* Alt+left arrow, Alt+right arrow.

- **Recent pages list.** Click the ▾ (to the left of the address box) to see a list of folders you've had open recently; it's like a multilevel Back button.

- **Recent folders list.** Click the ▾ at the *right* end of the address box to see a pop-up menu listing addresses you've recently typed.

- **Contents list.** This one takes some explaining, but for efficiency nuts, it's a gift from the gods.

  It turns out that the little ▸ next to each breadcrumb (folder name) is actually a pop-up menu. Click it to see what's *in* the folder name to its left.

  How is this useful? Suppose you're viewing the contents of the USA ▸ Florida ▸ Miami folder, but you decide that the folder you're looking for is actually in the USA ▸ California folder. Do you have to click the Back button, retracing your steps to the USA folder, only to then walk back down a different branch of the folder tree? No, you don't. You just click the ▸ that's next to the USA folder's name and choose California from the list.

- **Refresh (double swirling arrows button).** If you suspect that the window contents aren't up to date (for example, that maybe somebody has just dropped something new into it from across the network), click this button, or press F5, to make Vista update the display.

- **Search box.** Type a search phrase into this box to find what you're looking for *within this window.* Page 119 has the details.

What to type into the Address bar

When you click the tiny folder icon at the left end of the Address bar (or press Alt+D), the triangle ▸ notation changes to the slash\notation, meaning that you can edit the address. At this point, the Address bar is like the little opening that lets you speak to the driver of a New York City taxi; you tell it where you want to go. Here's what you can type there (press Enter afterward):

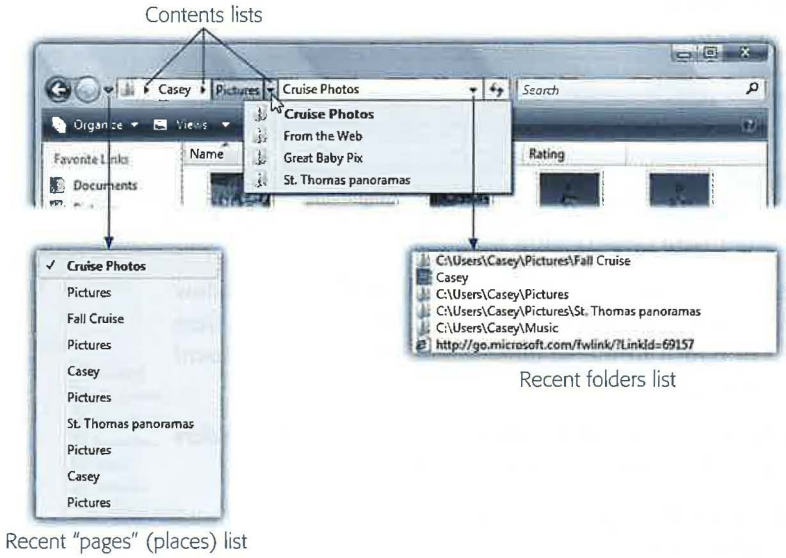


Figure 2-3: *The new Address bar is crawling with useful controls and clickable doodads. It may take you awhile to appreciate the difference between the little ▾ to the left of the Address bar and the one to its right, though. The left-side one shows a list of folders you've had open recently; the right-side one shows addresses you've explicitly typed (and not passed through by clicking).*

- **A Web address.** You can leave off the *http://* portion. Just type the body of the Web address, such as *www.sony.com,* into this strip. When you press Enter (or click the → button, called the Go button), Internet Explorer opens to the Web page you specified.

Tip: If you press Ctrl+Enter instead of just Enter, you can surround whatever you've just typed into the Address bar with *http://www.* and *.com.* See Chapter 11 for even more address shortcuts along these lines.

- **A search phrase.** If you type some text into this strip that isn't obviously a Web address, Windows assumes that you're telling it, "Go online and search for this phrase." From here, it works exactly as though you've used the Internet search feature described on page 371.
- **A folder name.** You can also type one of several important folder names into this strip, such as *Computer, Documents, Music,* and so on. When you press Enter, that particular folder window opens.

Search Pane

As shown in Figure 2-1, the Search pane appears across the top of the window, just below the Address bar. Of course, the Search *box* already appears in every Explorer window, next to the Address bar—so why do you need a Search *pane* as well?



Figure 2-4: *Windows Vista has you surrounded—or at least your Explorer windows.*

Use the Organize menu to summon or dismiss each of the optional panes that can line a window. A subtle outline appears around the icon for each pane you've summoned. Choose the name of a pane once to make it appear, and a second time to hide it.

Because the pane gives you a lot more control. It lets you specify more elaborate search criteria, including *where* you want Windows to look. Details are on page 120.

Details Pane

This strip appears at the *bottom* of the window, and it can be extremely useful. It reveals all kinds of information about whatever icon you've clicked in the main part of the window: its size, date, type, and so on.

Anyway, the Preview pane can be handy when you're examining pictures, text files, Office documents, PDF files, sounds, and movies. As you click each icon, you see a magnified thumbnail version of what's actually *in* that document. As Figure 2-5 demonstrates, a controller lets you play sounds and movies right there in the Explorer window, without having to fire up Windows Media Player. (Cool.)

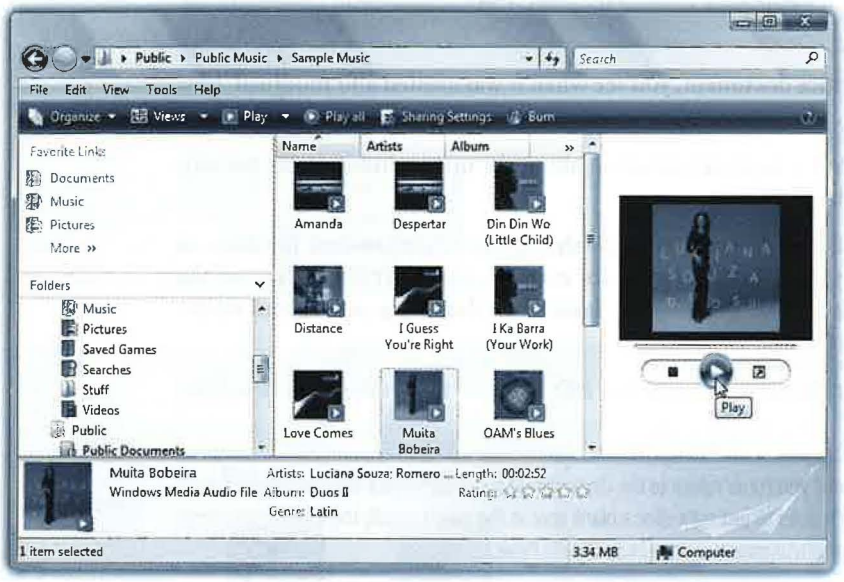


Figure 2-5: *In many windows, the Preview pane can get in the way, because it shrinks the useful window space without giving you much useful information. But when you're browsing movies or sound files, it's awesome; it lets you play the music or the movie right in place, right in the window, without having to open up a playback program.*

Navigation Pane

The Navigation pane has two halves: Favorite Links (the top part) and Folders (the bottom part).

Favorite Links list

The primary purpose of this area is to list *places* to which you want quick access. Since this pane will be waiting in every Explorer window you open, listing your favorite folders here can save you a lot of repetitive folder-burrowing. One click on a folder name opens the corresponding window. For example, click the Pictures icon to view the contents of your Pictures folder in the main part of the window (Figure 2-6).

This list also offers icons for Recently Changed and Searches. These links refer to *saved searches*. You can read more about what they are and how they were created on page 123. For now, it's enough to know that Recently Changed summons a quick list of everything on your hard drive that you've modified in the last 30 days, and Searches brings up a window filled with similar canned searches: Recent Documents, Recent E-mail, Shared By Me, and so on.

The beauty of this parking lot for containers is that it's so easy to set up with *your* favorite places. For example:

ratings for music or pictures; in the row of five stars, click the rating star you want. Click the third star to give a song a 3, for example.

Most usefully of all, you can edit the Tags box for *any* kind of icon. A tag is just a keyword. It can be anything you want: McDuffy Proposal, Old Junk, Back Me Up—anything. Later, you'll be able to round up everything on your computer with a certain tag, all in a single window, even though they physically reside in different folders.

You'll encounter tags in plenty of other places in Vista—and in this book, especially when it comes to searching photos, and music.

Note: Weirdly, you can't add tags or ratings to BMP, PNG, AVI, or MPG files.

Many of the boxes here offer autocompletion, meaning Vista proposes (in a pop-up menu) finishing a name or text tidbit for you if it recognizes what you've started to type.

Tip: You can tag a bunch of icons at once. Just highlight them all (page 136) and then change the corresponding detail in the Details pane *once*. This is a great trick for applying a tag or star rating to a mass of files quickly.

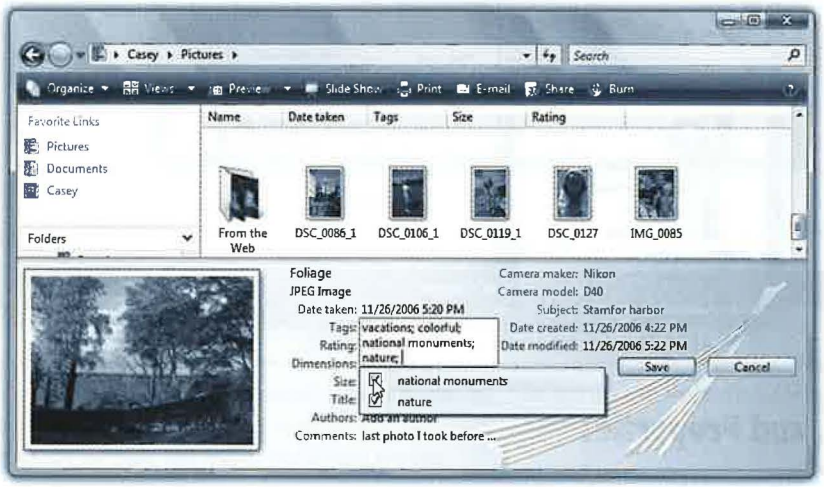


Figure 2-9: *You can edit a lot of the background information that Windows stores about each icon on your PC. Click the information you want to change; if a text-editing box appears, you've hit pay dirt. Type away, and then press Enter (or click the Save button at the lower-right corner of the dialog box).*

Properties

The Details pane shows some of the most important details about a file. But believe it or not, Windows actually stores even *more* behind-the-scenes metadata about every icon. If you really want to see the entire dossier for an icon, open its Properties dialog box using one of these tactics:

and bytes, is the cornerstone of the entire Windows religion. (Maybe that's why it's called an icon.)

What's especially cool is that if you make your icons big enough, *folder* icons appear turned 90 degrees. Now, in real life, setting filing folders onto a desk that way would be idiotic; everything inside would tumble out in a chaotic mess. But in Windows-land, the icons within a folder remain exactly where they are. Better yet, they peek out just enough so that you can see them. In the Music folder, for example, a singer's folder shows the first album cover within; a folder full of PowerPoint presentations shows the first slide or two; and so on. (You can see the effect in Figure 2-11.)

Note: Because you can now view icons at any size you like, Microsoft has done away with the Thumbnails and Filmstrip views.

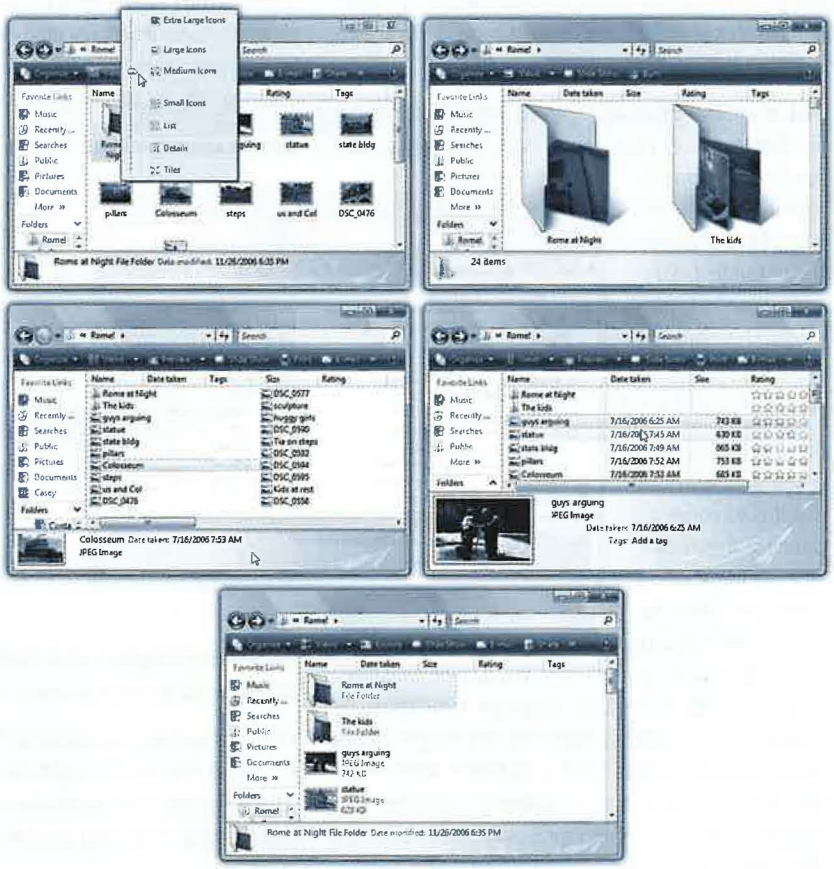


Figure 2-11: *The Views pop-up menu is a little weird; it actually has two columns. At right, it displays the preset view options for the files and folders in a window. At left, a slider adjusts icon sizes to any incremental degree of scaling—at least until it reaches the bottom part of its track.*

In any case, here's a survey of the window views in Vista. From top left: Icon view (small), Icon view (large), List view, Details view, and Tiles view. List and Details views are great for windows with lots of files.

Uni-Window vs. Multi-Window

All Versions

When you double-click a folder, Windows can react in one of two ways:

- **It can open a new window.** Now you've got two windows on the screen, one overlapping the other. Moving or copying an icon from one into the other is a piece of cake. Trouble is, if your double-clicking craze continues much longer, your screen will eventually be overrun with windows, which you must now painstakingly close again.



Figure 2-16: *Top: There are actually hundreds of photos in this folder. So where are they all? They've been filtered out (hidden). You've asked Windows to show you only your five-star photos.*

Bottom: The filtering options may be very few or extensive.

earth-shattering isn't the adjective that springs to mind. Still, you may find one or two of them useful.

Note: The changes you make in the Folder Options settings are global; they affect *all* Explorer windows.

Here are the functions of the various checkboxes:

- **Always show icons, never thumbnails.** Vista takes great pride in displaying your document icons *as* documents. That is, each icon appears as a miniature, a thumbnail, of the document itself—a feature that's especially useful in folders full of photos.

  On a slowish PC, this feature can really make your processor gasp for breath. If you notice that the icons are taking forever to appear, consider turning this checkbox on.

- **Always show menus.** This checkbox forces the traditional Windows menu bar (File, Edit, View, and so on) to appear in every Explorer window, without your having to tap the Alt key.

- **Display file icon on thumbnails.** Ordinarily, you can identify documents (think Word, Excel, PowerPoint) because their icons display the corresponding logo (a big W for Word, and so on). But in Vista's icon views (Medium size and larger), you see the *actual document* on the icon—the actual image of the document's first page. So does that mean you can no longer tell at a glance what *kind* of document it is?

  Don't be silly. This option superimposes, on each thumbnail icon, a tiny "badge," a sub-icon, that identifies what kind of file it is. (It works on only some kinds of documents, however.)

- **Display file size information in folder tips.** A *folder tip* is a rectangular balloon that appears when you point to a folder—a little yellow box that tells you what's in that folder and how big it is on the disk. (It appears only if you've turned on the "Show pop-up description" checkbox described below.) Talk about tweaky! You turn off *this* checkbox if you want to see only the description, but not the size.

- **Display simple folder view in Navigation pane.** You know how Vista indents each more deeply nested folder in the Folders list, so more buried folders appear farther and farther to the right? Turn off this checkbox if you'd like to see vertical dotted lines to designate each level of folder indenting, as in older versions of Windows.

Note: The lines don't appear or disappear until the *next* time you open a window.

- **Display the full path in the title bar (Classic folders only).** Suppose you've rejected the millions of dollars and years of manpower Microsoft put into Vista's new cosmetic design. You've opted instead for the clunky old Classic theme (page 26). In that case, when this option is on, Windows reveals the exact location of the current

- **When typing into list view.** When you've got an Explorer window, teeming with a list of files, what do you want to happen when you start typing?

  In the olden days, that'd be an easy one: "Highlight an icon, of course!" That is, if you type *piz*, you'll highlight the file called Pizza with Casey.jpg. And indeed, that's what the factory setting means: "Select the typed item within the view."

  But Vista is a whole new ball game, and it has a whole new feature in every window: the Search box (page 119). If you turn on "Automatically type into the Search Box," then each letter you type arrives in that box, performing a real-time, letter-by-letter search of all the icons in the window. Your savings: one mouse click.

Sizing, Moving, and Closing Windows

All Versions

Any Windows window can cycle among three altered states:

- **Maximized** means that the window fills the screen; its edges are glued to the boundaries of your monitor, and you can't see anything behind it. It gets that way when you click its Maximize button (see Figure 2-1)—an ideal arrangement when you're surfing the Web or working on a document for hours at a stretch, since the largest possible window means the least possible scrolling. *Keyboard shortcut:* Press Alt+Space bar, then X.

  At this point, the Maximize button has changed into a Restore Down button (whose icon shows two overlapping squares); click this to return the window to its previous size. *Keyboard shortcut:* Press Alt+Space bar, then R.

Tip: Double-clicking the title bar–the big, fat top edge of a window–alternates a window between its maximized (full-screen) and restored conditions.

- When you click a window's **Minimize** button (Figure 2-1), the window gets out of your way. It shrinks down into the form of a button on your taskbar, at the bottom of the screen. Minimizing a window is a great tactic when you want to see what's in the window behind it.

  You can bring the window back by clicking this taskbar button, which bears the window's name. On Aero machines, this button also displays a handy thumbnail miniature when you point to it without clicking, to remind you of what was in the original window.

  Keyboard shortcut: Press Alt+Space bar, then N.

- A **restored** window is neither maximized nor minimized; it's a loose cannon, floating around on your screen as an independent rectangle. Because its edges aren't attached to the walls of your monitor, you can make it any size you like by dragging its borders.

- Its Close button glows red. (Background windows' Close buttons are transparent.)

As you would assume, clicking a background window brings it to the front.

Tip: And pressing Alt+Esc sends it to the *back*. Bet you didn't know that one!

And what if it's so far back that you can't even see it? That's where Vista's window-management tools come in; read on.

Tip: For quick access to the desktop, clear the screen by clicking the Desktop button on the Quick Launch toolbar—its icon looks like an old desk blotter—or just press ⊞+D. Pressing that keystroke again brings all the windows back to the screen exactly as they were.

Windows Flip (Alt+Tab)

All Versions

In its day, the concept of overlapping windows on the screen was brilliant, innovative, and extremely effective. In that era before digital cameras, MP3 files, and the Web, managing your windows was easy this way; after all, you had only about three of them.

These days, however, managing all the open windows in all your open programs can be like herding cats. Off you go, burrowing through the microscopic pop-up menus of your taskbar buttons, trying to find the window you want. And heaven help you if you need to duck back to the desktop—to find a newly downloaded file, for example, or eject a disk. You'll have to fight your way through 50,000 other windows on your way to the bottom of the "deck."

In Windows Vista, the same window-shuffling tricks are available that were available in previous editions:

- **Use the Taskbar.** Clicking a button on the taskbar (page 92) makes the corresponding program pop to the front, along with any of its floating toolbars, palettes, and so on.
- **Click the window.** You can also bring any window forward by clicking any visible part of it.
- **Alt+Tab.** For years, this keyboard shortcut has offered a quick way to bring a different window to the front without using the mouse. If you press Tab while holding down the Alt key, a floating palette displays the icons of all running programs, as shown at the top in Figure 2-19. Each time you press Tab again (still keeping the Alt key down), you highlight the next icon; when you release the keys, the highlighted program jumps to the front, as though in a high-tech game of duck-duck-goose.

  This feature has been gorgeous-ized in Windows Vista, as shown in Figure 2-19. It's been renamed, too; it's now called Windows Flip.

Tip: If you just *tap* Alt+Tab without *holding down* the Alt key, you get an effect that's often even more useful: you jump back and forth between the *last two* windows you've had open. It's great when, for example, you're copying sections of a Web page into a Word document.



Figure 2-19: *Alt+Tab highlights successive icons; add Shift to move* backward. *(Add the Ctrl key to lock the display, so you don't have to keep Alt down. Tab to the icon you want, then press Space or Enter.)*

Windows Flip 3D

Home Premium • Business • Enterprise • Ultimate

If your PC is capable of running Aero (page 22), Microsoft has something much slicker for this purpose: Flip 3D, a sort of holographic alternative to the Alt+Tab trick.

The concept is delicious. With the press of a keystroke, Vista shrinks *all windows in all programs* so that they all fit on the screen (Figure 2-20), stacked like the exploded view of a deck of cards. You flip through them to find the one you want, and you're there. It's fast, efficient, animated, and a lot of fun.

Tip: You even see, among the other 3D "cards," a picture of the desktop itself. If you choose it, Vista minimizes all open windows and takes you to the desktop for quick access to whatever is there.

Here's how you use it, in slow motion. First, press ⊞+Tab. If you keep your thumb on the ⊞ key, you see something like Figure 2-20.

Keep your thumb on the ⊞ key. At this point, you can shuffle through the "deck" of windows using any of these techniques:

- Tap the Tab key repeatedly. (Add the Shift key to move backward through the stack.)
- Press the down arrow key or the right arrow key. (Use the up or left arrow key to move backward.)

- Turn your mouse's scroll wheel toward you. (Roll it away to move backward.)

When the window you want is in front, release the key. The 3-D stack vanishes, and the lucky window appears before you at full size.

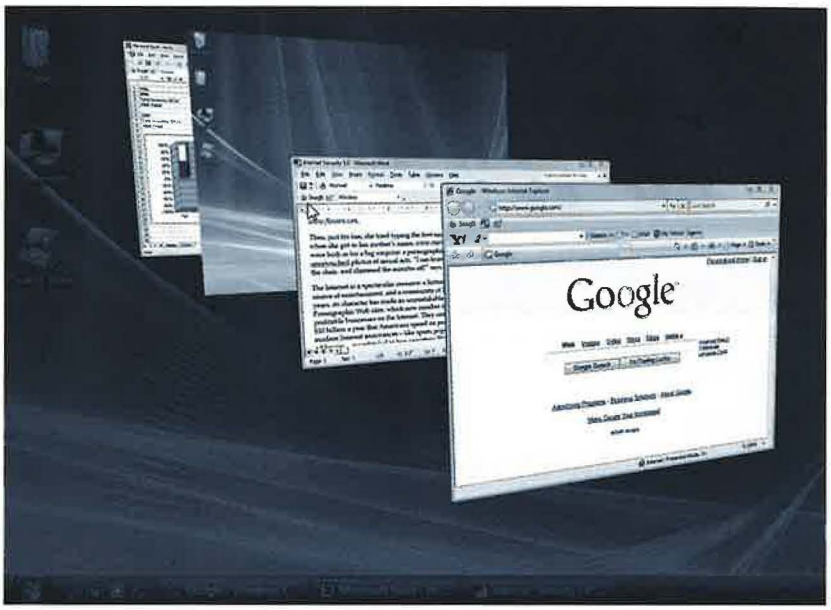


Figure 2-20: *These window miniatures aren't snapshots; they're "live." That is, if anything is changing inside a window (a movie is playing, for example), you'll see it right on the 3D miniature.*

By the way: Don't miss the cool slow-mo trick described in Appendix B.

Flip 3D Without Holding Down Keys

That Flip 3D thing is very cool, but do you really want to exhaust yourself by keeping your thumb pressed on that ⊞ key? Surely that's an invitation to getting the painful condition known as Nerd's Thumb.

Fortunately, you can also use Flip 3D without holding down keys. You can trigger it using any of these three methods:

- The Quick Launch toolbar (page 101) comes preinstalled with a tiny icon that, when you point to it, identifies itself as "Switch between windows." Click it.
- Add the Ctrl key to the usual keystroke. That is, press ⊞ +Ctrl+Tab. This time, you don't have to *keep* any keys pressed.
- Press the Flip 3D *key* on your keyboard, if it has one.

Any of these tactics triggers the 3-D floating-windows effect shown in Figure 2-20. At this point, you can use the arrow keys or your mouse's scroll wheel to flip through the open windows *without* having to hold down any keys. When you see the one you want, press the Esc key to choose it and bring it to the front.

- To minimize all the windows in one fell swoop, right-click a blank spot on the taskbar and choose Show the Desktop from the shortcut menu—or just press ⊞+D.

Tip: When the taskbar is crowded with buttons, it may not be easy to find a blank spot to click. Usually there's a little gap near the right end; you can make it easier to find some blank space by *enlarging* the taskbar, as described on page 98.

- If you change your mind, the taskbar shortcut menu always includes an Undo command for the last taskbar command you invoked. (Its wording changes to reflect your most recent action—"Undo Minimize All," for example.)

The Quick Launch Toolbar

At the left end of the taskbar—that is, just to the right of the Start button—is a handful of tiny, unlabeled icons. This is the Quick Launch toolbar, one of the most useful features in Windows. For details on this toolbar and the others in Windows Vista, see page 98.

Customizing the Taskbar

You're not stuck with the taskbar exactly as it came from Microsoft. You can resize it, move it, or hide it completely. Most people don't bother, but it's always good to know what options you have.

Moving the taskbar

You can move the taskbar to the top of your monitor, or, if you're a true rebel, to either side.

To do so, first ensure that the toolbar isn't *locked* (which means that you can't move or resize the taskbar—or any of its toolbars, for that matter). Right-click a blank spot on the taskbar to produce the shortcut menu. If "Lock the taskbar" is checked, select it to make the checkmark disappear.

Now you can drag the taskbar to any edge of the screen, using any blank spot in the central section as a handle. Release the mouse when the taskbar leaps to the edge you've indicated with the cursor.

When the taskbar is on the left or right edge of the screen, Windows Vista widens it automatically so that you can read the button names, which remain horizontal. In truth, this isn't a bad idea, considering your screen probably has more unused space horizontally than vertically. (Ergonomic studies have indicated that keeping your neck bent at a 90 degree angle to read vertical buttons isn't so hot for your spine.)

Tip: No matter which edge of the screen holds your taskbar, your programs are generally smart enough to adjust their own windows as necessary. In other words, your Word document will shift sideways so that it doesn't overlap the taskbar that you've dragged to the side of the screen.

help group for people who spend entirely too much time fiddling with this kind of thing.)

To make a toolbar appear or disappear, right-click a blank spot on the taskbar and choose from the Toolbars submenu that appears (Figure 2-26). The ones with checkmarks are the ones you're seeing now; choose one with a checkmark to make the toolbar disappear.

Here's a rundown of the ready-made taskbar toolbars at your disposal.

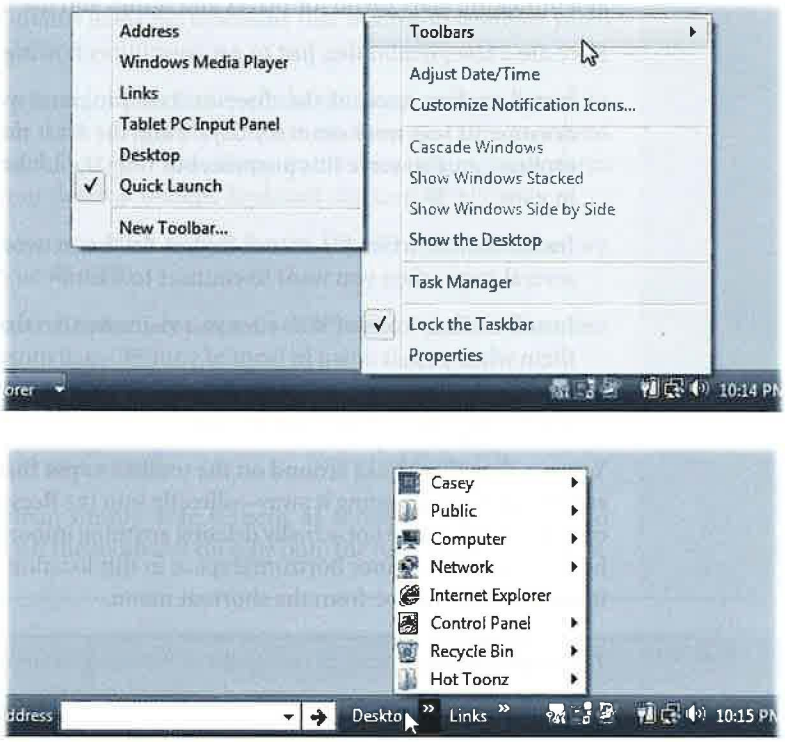


Figure 2-26:
Top: Make toolbars appear by right-clicking a blank area on the taskbar, if you can find one.

Bottom: Toolbars eat into your taskbar space, so use them sparingly. If you've added too many icons to the toolbar, a >> button appears at its right end. Click it to expose a list of the commands or icons that didn't fit.

Address Toolbar

This toolbar offers a duplicate copy of the Address bar that appears in every Explorer window, complete with a Recent Addresses pop-up menu—except that it appears in the taskbar at all times. That way, it's always available, even if no Explorer window happens to be open.

Windows Media Player Toolbar

You may be a bit baffled when you choose this one's name from the Toolbars list—and *nothing happens.*

That's because this toolbar only deigns to make itself visible when (a) you're actually *running* Windows Media Player (Chapter 14), and (b) you've then *minimized* it. Only then do you see the full glory of the Windows Media Player Toolbar.

Links Toolbar

From its name alone, you might assume that the purpose of this toolbar is to provide links to your favorite Web sites. And sure enough, that's one thing it's good for.

But in fact, you can drag *any icon at all* onto the toolbar—files, folders, disks, programs, or whatever—to turn them into one-click buttons. In short, think of the Links toolbar as a miniature Start menu for places and things you use most often.

Here are a few possibilities, just to get your juices flowing:

- Install toolbar icons of the three or four programs you use the most (or a few documents you work on every day). Sure, the Start menu and the Quick Launch toolbar can also serve this purpose, but only the Links toolbar keeps their names in view.
- Install toolbar icons for shared folders on the network. This arrangement saves several steps when you want to connect to them.
- Install toolbar icons of Web sites you visit often, so that you can jump directly to them when you sit down in front of your PC each morning. (In Internet Explorer, you can drag the tiny icon at the left end of the Address bar directly onto the Links toolbar to install a Web page there.)

You can drag these links around on the toolbar to put them into a different order, or remove a link by dragging it away—directly into the Recycle Bin, if you like. (They're only shortcuts; you're not actually deleting anything important.) To rename something here—a good idea, since horizontal space in this location is so precious—right-click it and choose Rename from the shortcut menu.

Tip: Dragging a Web link from the Links toolbar to the desktop or an Explorer window creates an *Internet shortcut file*. When double-clicked, this special document connects to the Internet and opens the specified Web page.

Tablet PC Input Panel

This toolbar is useful only if you're working on a Tablet PC, which has a touch screen and stylus. It provides quick access to Vista's handwriting-recognition software. Chapter 19 has the details.

Desktop Toolbar

The Desktop toolbar (Figure 2-26, bottom) offers quick access to whichever icons are sitting on your desktop—the Recycle Bin, for example, and whatever else you've put there. As a convenience, it also lists a few frequently-used places that *aren't* on the desktop, including Internet Explorer and the Control Panel (complete with a pop-up menu that lists the *individual* Control Panel applets for even faster access).

Chances are that you don't speak *all* of the world's useful languages, though. So the idea here is to install the software necessary only for the languages and layouts you *do* use (see the box on the facing page). After that, you can use the Language bar to switch among them with a quick click.

Redesigning Your Toolbars

To change the look of a toolbar, right-click any blank spot within it.

Tip: How much horizontal taskbar space a toolbar consumes is up to you. Drag the border at the left edge of a toolbar to make it wider or narrower. That's a good point to remember if, in fact, you can't *find* a blank spot to right-click.

The resulting shortcut menu offers these choices, which appear *above* the usual taskbar shortcut menu choices:

- **View** lets you change the size of the icons on the toolbar.
- **Open Folder** works only with the Quick Launch and Links toolbars.

  It turns out that the icons on these toolbars reflect the contents of corresponding *folders* on your PC. To see one, right-click a blank spot on the toolbar itself; from the shortcut menu, choose Open Folder.

  Why is that useful? Because it means that you can add, rename, or delete icons en masse, by working in the folder instead of on the toolbar itself. Of course, you can also delete or rename any icon on these toolbars by right-clicking it and choosing Delete or Rename from the shortcut menu. But a window isn't nearly as claustrophobic as the toolbar itself.
- **Show Text** identifies each toolbar icon with a text label.
- **Show Title** makes the toolbar's name (such as "Quick Launch" or "Desktop") appear on the toolbar.
- **Close Toolbar** makes the toolbar disappear.

Build Your Own Toolbars

The Quick Launch area of the taskbar is such a delight that you may actually develop a syndrome called Quick Launch Envy—you'll find that having only one isn't enough. You might wish to create several *different* Quick Launch toolbars, each stocked with the icons for a different project or person. One could contain icons for all the chapters of a book you're writing; another could list only your games.

Fortunately, it's easy to create as many different custom toolbars as you like, each of which behaves exactly like the Quick Launch toolbar.

Windows creates toolbars from *folders;* so before creating a toolbar of your own, you must create a folder and fill it with the stuff you want to toolbarize.

Meet Vista Search

All Versions

Every computer offers a way to find files. And every system offers several different ways to open them. But Search, a star feature of Vista, combines these two functions in a way that's so fast, so efficient, and so spectacular, it reduces much of what you've read in the previous chapters to irrelevance. It works like Google Desktop (or Spotlight on the Macintosh), in that it finds files *as you type* what you're looking for—not like Windows XP, which doesn't start searching until you're finished typing, and takes a very long time to find things at that.

It's important to note, though, that you can search for files on your PC using the superfast Search box in two different places:

- **The Start menu.** The Start Search box at the bottom of the Start menu searches *everywhere* on your computer.
- **Explorer windows.** The Search box at the top of every desktop window searches only *that window* (including folders within it). You can expand it, too, into something called the Search *pane*—a way to limit the scope of your search to certain file types or date ranges, for example.

Search boxes also appear in the Control Panel window, Internet Explorer, Windows Mail, Windows Media Player, and other spots where it's useful to perform small-time, limited searches. The following pages, however, cover the two main Search boxes, the ones that hunt down files and folders.

Search from the Start Menu

All Versions

Start by opening the Start menu, either by using the mouse or by pressing the ⊞ key.

The Start Search text box appears at the bottom of the Start menu; you can immediately begin typing to identify what you want to find and open (Figure 3-1). For example, if you're trying to find a file called "Pokémon Fantasy League.doc," typing just *pok* or *leag* will probably work.

Tip: This one's for you, power users. You can also type command-line prompts into the Search box, like *control date/time* to open your Date & Time control panel or *ping nytimes.com* to see if your machine can reach the outside world. See page 255 for more on the command prompt.

As you type, the familiar Start menu items disappear, and are soon replaced by search results (Figure 3-1, bottom). This is a live, interactive search; that is, Vista modifies the menu of search results as you type—you do *not* have to press Enter after entering your search phrase.

The results menu lists every file, folder, program, email message, address book entry, calendar appointment, picture, movie, PDF document, music file, Web bookmark,

an outgoing email message, a presentation, or a Web page you're designing. (In a page-layout program, for example, use the Insert command, and then use the Search box that appears at the top of the Open dialog box.)

- If you point to an item in the results menu without clicking, a little tooltip box appears. It tells you the item's actual name and its folder path (that is, where it is on your hard drive).

  You can also jump to a search result's actual icon, sitting there in its actual window, instead of opening it. To do that, right-click its name, and, from the shortcut menu, choose Open File Location.

- At the bottom of the results menu, the "Search the Internet," of course, opens up your Web browser and searches the *Web* for your search term, using Google or whatever search site you've designated as your favorite.

Tip: If, for some inconceivable reason, you don't actually *like* having the mind-blowing ability to find anything on your PC in seconds, right from the Start menu, without ever taking your hands from the keyboard–surely there's *someone* who doesn't–you can get rid of the Start Search box. Right-click the Start menu; from the shortcut menu, choose Properties. Click Customize and, in the resulting dialog box, turn off "Search box." Click OK twice.

What Vista Knows

The beauty of Vista's Search is that it doesn't just find files whose names match what you've typed. That would be *so* 2004!

No, Vista actually looks *inside* the files. It can actually read and search the contents of text files, email, Windows Contacts, Windows Calendar, RTF and PDF documents, and documents from Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint).

But that's only the beginning. Vista searches files not only for the text inside them, but also over 115 other bits of text—a staggering collection of informational tidbits including the names of the layers in a Photoshop document, the tempo of an MP3 file, the shutter speed of a digital-camera photo, a movie's copyright holder, a document's page size, and on and on.

Technically, this sort of secondary information is called *metadata*. It's usually invisible, although a lot of it shows up in the Details pane described in Chapter 2.

You might think that typing something into the Search box triggers a search. But to be technically correct, Vista has already done its searching. In the first 15 to 30 minutes after you install Vista—or in the minutes after you attach a new hard drive—Vista invisibly collects information about everything on your hard drive. Like a kid cramming for an exam, it reads, takes notes on, and memorizes the contents of all of your files.

It stores all of this information in an invisible, multimegabyte file called, creatively enough, the *index*. (If your primary hard drive is creaking full, you can specify that you want the index stored on some other drive; see page 118.)

Once it has indexed your hard drive in this way, Vista can produce search results in seconds. It doesn't have to search your entire hard drive—only that single card-catalog index file.

After the initial indexing process, Vista continues to monitor what's on your hard drive, indexing new and changed files in the background, in the microseconds between your keystrokes and clicks.

Where Vista Looks

Start-menu searches don't actually scrounge through every last file on your computer. Searching inside Windows's own operating-system files and your software applications, for example, would be pointless to anyone but programmers, so Vista doesn't bother.

What it *does* index is everything in your Personal folder (page 38): email, pictures and music, videos, program names, entries in your address book and calendar, Office documents, and so on. It also searches *offline files* that belong to you, even though they're stored somewhere else on the network (page 589). Finally, it searches the Start menu. You can, if you wish, add other folders to the list of indexed locations (page 117).

In an effort to keep searches fast (and hold down the size of the invisible index file), Vista doesn't index Windows system files and application support files. It indexes all the drives connected to your PC, but not other hard drives on the network.

It does index the Personal folders of everyone else with an account on your machine (Chapter 23), but you're not allowed to search them from the Start menu. So if you were hoping to search your spouse's email for phrases like "meet you at midnight," forget it.

If you try to search anywhere that Windows *hasn't* incorporated into its index—in a Windows system folder, for example, or a hard drive elsewhere on the network—a message appears. It lets you know that because you're working beyond the index's wisdom, the search is going to be slow, and the search will include file names only—not file *contents* or metadata.

Furthermore, this kind of outside-the-index searching does *not* find things as you type. This time, you really do have to press Enter after typing the name (or partial name) of what you want to find.

The Results Window

As you may have noticed, the Vista menu doesn't list *every* match on your hard drive. Unless you own one of those extremely rare 60-inch Skyscraper Displays, there just isn't room.

Instead, Vista uses some fancy behind-the-scenes analysis to calculate and display the 20 *most likely* matches for what you typed. But at the bottom of the menu, a link called "See all results" is a reminder that there may be many other candidates. Click it to open the results *window*, shown in Figure 3-2.

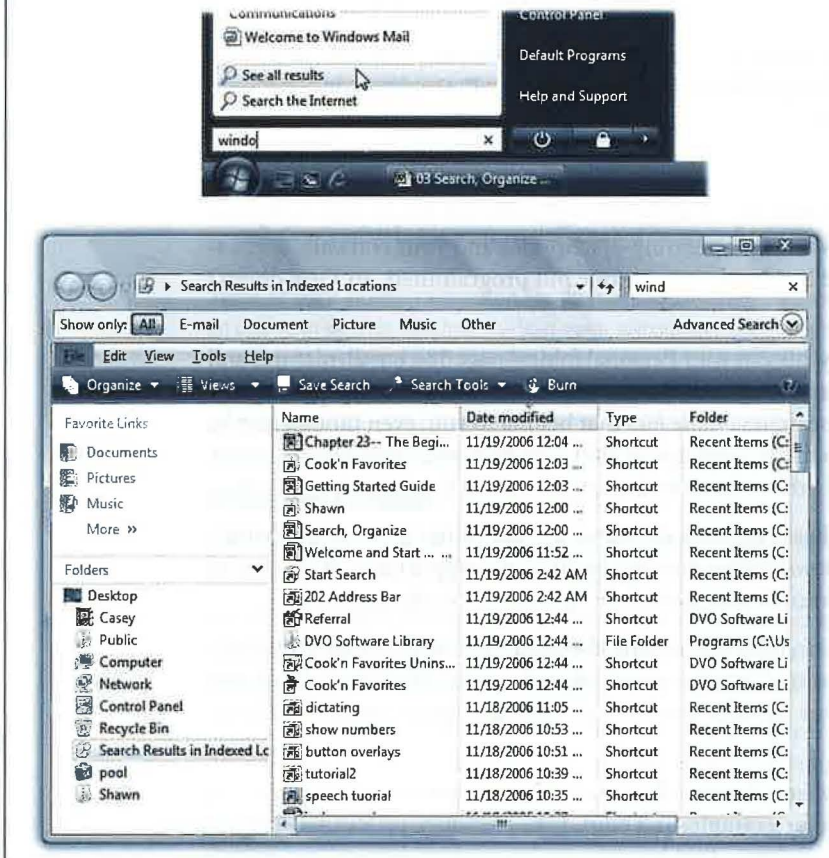


Figure 3-2: *You can open this window (bottom) by clicking a link called "See all results" in the Start menu's results list (top). (If Vista found no matches for your search, you don't get a "See all results" link–instead, you get a "Search Everywhere" link that expands the scope of your search.)*

Now you have access to the *complete* list of matches, listed in typical Explorer-window format. You can sort this list, group, stack, or filter it exactly as described in Chapter 2.

The only difference is that the task toolbar (Organize, Views, and so on) offers a few useful buttons that don't usually adorn standard folder windows, like Save Search and Search Tools. Details on these buttons appear later in this chapter.

searches *your entire computer.* The Search box in an Explorer window searches *only this window* (and folders within it).

As you type, the window changes to show search results *as* you type into the Search box, much the way the Start menu changes. As described on pages 109–110, a whole range of power tips is available to you, including file-type searches, AND searches, OR searches, and so on.

Once the results appear, you can sort, filter, group, and stack them just like the icons in any other Explorer window.

The Search Pane

As described in Chapter 2, you can adorn every Explorer window with up to four different *panes*—inch-wide strips at the left, right, top, and bottom of a window. One of them is the Search pane.

You can get to it in several ways:

- Press ⊞+F, which is the keyboard shortcut for the Search window (for *find*, get it?).
- When the Computer window is open (Start→Computer), choose Organize→ Layout→Search pane (Figure 3-6, top).
- After a regular Explorer-window search, open the Search Tools menu that now appears in the task toolbar. Choose Search Pane.
- After a regular Explorer-window search, click Advanced Search at the bottom of the results list (Figure 3-6).

In the first three cases, you see only the *top* of the Advanced Search pane—the "Show only:" toolbar described below. To see the full range of options, click Advanced Search at the right end of the "Show only:" toolbar.

As you can see in Figure 3-6, the Search pane lets you fine-tune the search by adding controls like these:

- **Show only:** Vista is ordinarily an extremely passionate little fetcher. It shows you every file of every type it knows when you do a search. Often, though, it displays too much information. If you know what you're looking for is an email message, document, picture, or music file, click the corresponding button. Your search will reveal only the kind of file you asked for. For example, when you're trying to free up some space on your drive, you could round up all your gigantic photo files. ("Other," here, means everything *except* email, documents, pictures, or music.)
- **Location.** The choices in this pop-up menu—Everywhere, Indexed Locations, Computer, Local Hard Drives, and so on—affect the scope of your search. Remember: Ordinarily, searching in an Explorer window finds icons *only* within the open window, including what's in its subfolders. But using this pop-up menu, you can make an Explorer-window search do what a Start-menu search always

does: search your *entire* computer. Or only your main hard drive. Or all hard drives. Whatever.

In fact, if you choose "Choose search locations" from this pop-up menu, you get a collapsible, flippy-triangle list of *every* disk and folder associated with your PC (Figure 3-7). Checkboxes give you complete freedom to specify any crazy, mixed-up assortment of random folders you'd like to search at once.

Tip: This option is especially useful when you want to search other hard drives on your network.

At the bottom of this pop-up menu, by the way, is a list of folders you've recently searched, for your déjà vu pleasure.

- **Date modified/created.** When you choose one of these options from the first pop-up menu, the second and third pop-up menus let you isolate files, programs, and folders according to the last time you changed them or when they were created.

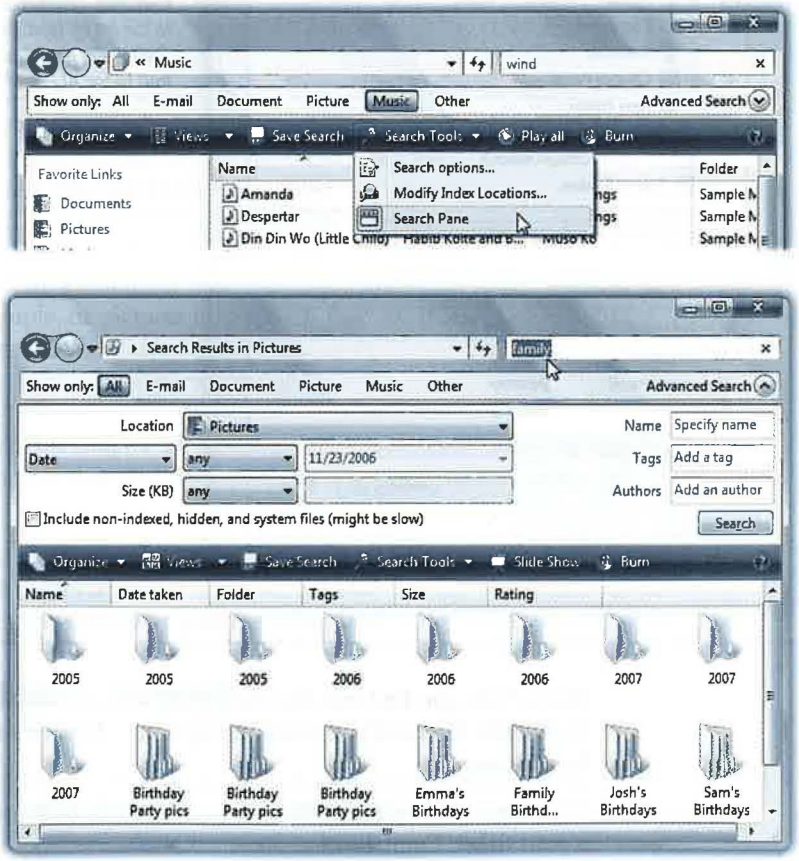


Figure 3-6: *You can gain much more control over the search process using the Search pane.*

Top: One way to make it appear is to choose "Search pane" from the Search Tools menu, which appears after you perform a regular Explorer-window search.

Bottom: At that point, you can click Advanced to open a much more powerful, expanded version of the Search strip.

Higgins proposal, and burn them onto a CD. A search folder can do the rounding-up part with a single click.

So you open an Explorer window, open its Advanced Search pane, and set up the Authors text box with an OR search (page 110). Type *Higgins* into the Tags box. (Of course, you've been painstakingly tagging your documents with tags and author names, in readiness for this glorious moment.) You click Save Search. You name the search folder something like Our Higgins Files, and save it to your hard drive (Figure 3-9).

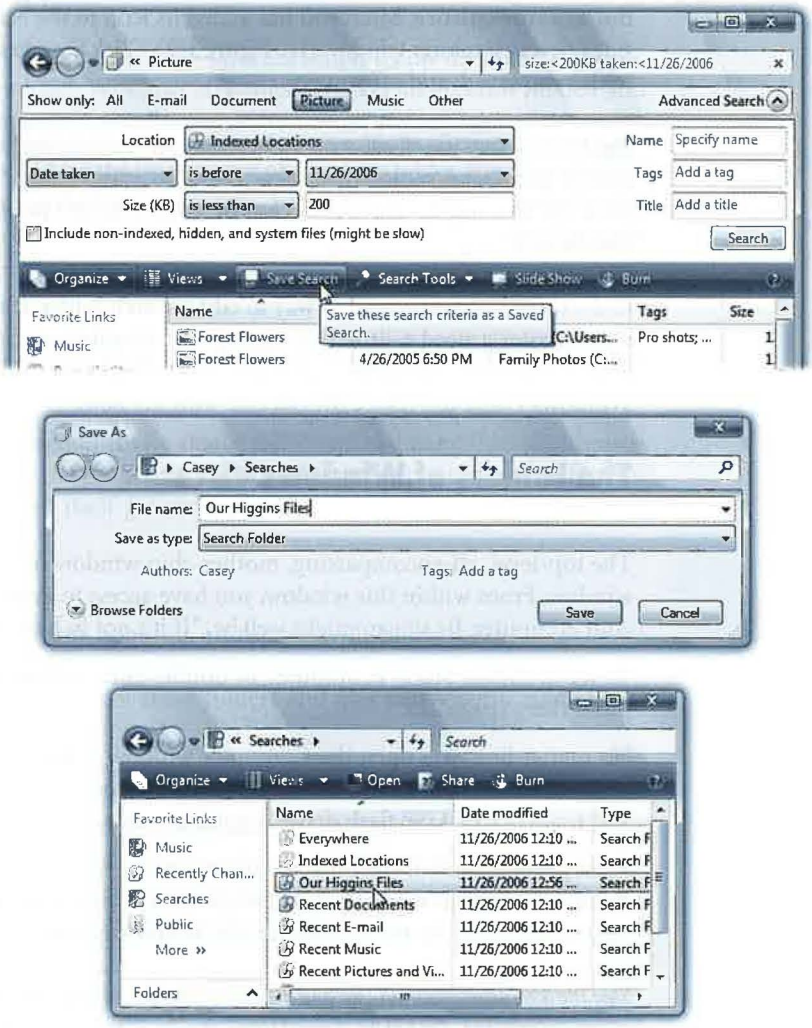


Figure 3-9: *Vista can preserve your search as a search folder, a saved search that does its duties instantly every time you "open" the folder.*

Top: First, set up the search using the usual controls. Click the Save Search button shown here.

Middle: Save the search folder wherever you like, but it'll be easy to find it if you stash it in the Searches folder, as Windows is suggesting here.

Bottom: Your search folder is ready to use! It's right here in the Searches folder, whose icon appears in the Favorite Links list at the left side of every window.

From now on, whenever you open that search folder, it opens to reveal all of the files you've worked on that were tagged with Higgins and written by you or your partner.

Dragging icons into the Navigation pane

You may find it easier to copy or move icons using the Navigation pane (page 66), since the two-pane display format makes it easier to see where your files are and where they're going.



Figure 3-13: *Thanks to this shortcut menu, right-dragging icons is much easier and safer than left-dragging when you want to move or copy something. New in Vista: the handy numeric "badge" on your cursor, which reminds you how many things you're about to move or copy.*

Just expand the flippy triangles of the Navigation pane until you can see the destination folder. Then locate the icon you want to move in the right pane and drag it to the appropriate folder in the left pane (Figure 3-14). Windows copies the icon.

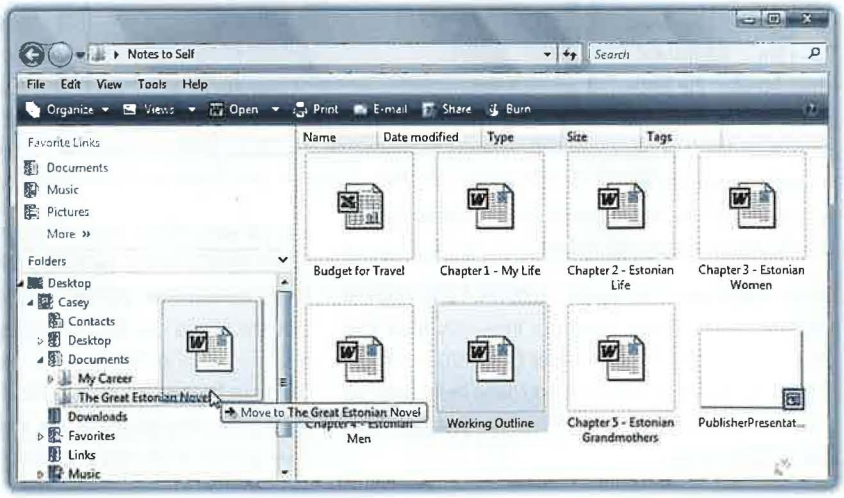


Figure 3-14: *The file Working Outline is being dragged to the folder named The Great Estonian Novel (in the Documents folder). As the cursor passes each folder in the left pane, the folder's name darkens. Release the mouse when it's pointing to the correct folder or disk.*

their icons onto the Start button or the Quick Launch toolbar. In fact, everything listed in the Start→All Programs menu *is* a shortcut. So is every link in the top part of your Navigation pane.

Tip: Don't confuse the term *shortcut,* which refers to one of these duplicate-icon pointers, with *shortcut menu,* the context-sensitive menu that appears when you right-click almost anything in Windows. The shortcut *menu* has nothing to do with the shortcut icons feature; maybe that's why it's sometimes called the *context* menu.

Creating and Deleting Shortcuts

To create a shortcut, right-drag an icon from its current location to the desktop. When you release the mouse button, choose Create Shortcuts Here from the menu that appears.

Tip: If you're not in the mood for using a shortcut menu, just left-drag an icon while pressing Alt. A shortcut appears instantly. (And if your keyboard lacks an Alt key—yeah, right—drag while pressing Ctrl+Shift instead.)

You can delete a shortcut the same as any icon, as described in the Recycle Bin discussion earlier in this chapter. (Of course, deleting a shortcut *doesn't* delete the file it points to.)

Unveiling a Shortcut's True Identity

To locate the original icon from which a shortcut was made, right-click the shortcut icon and choose Properties from the shortcut menu. As shown in Figure 3-17, the resulting box shows you where to find the "real" icon. It also offers you a quick way to jump to it, in the form of the Find Target button.

Shortcut Keyboard Triggers

Even after reading all of this gushing prose about the virtues of shortcuts, efficiency experts may still remain skeptical. Sure, shortcuts let you put favored icons everywhere you want to be, such as your Start menu, Quick Launch toolbar, the desktop, and so on. But they still require clicking to open, which means taking your hands off the keyboard—and that, in the grand scheme of things, means slowing down.

Lurking within the Shortcut Properties dialog box is another feature with intriguing ramifications: the Shortcut Key box. By clicking here and then pressing a key combination, you can assign a personalized keystroke for the shortcut. Thereafter, by pressing that keystroke, you can summon the corresponding file, program, folder, printer, networked computer, or disk window to your screen (no matter what you're doing on the PC).

Three rules apply when choosing keystrokes to open your favorite icons:

- The keystrokes work only on shortcuts stored *on your desktop or in the Start menu.* If you stash the icon in any other folder, the keystroke stops working.

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).

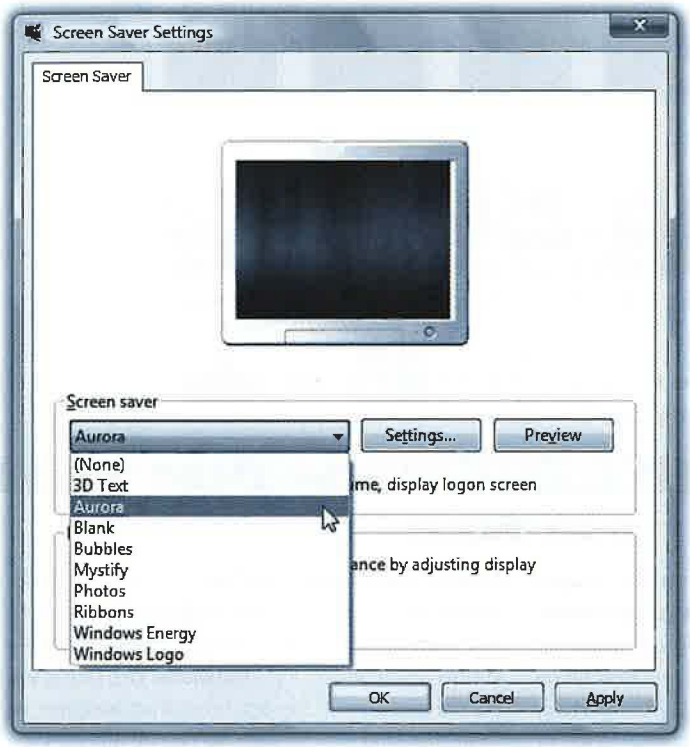


Figure 4-5:
Some screen savers don't work unless you have an Aero-capable PC (page 22): Windows Energy, Ribbons, Mystify, Bubbles, Aurora, and 3D Text. If you don't have an Aero machine, you're left with slim pickings. Of course, the photo sample pictures are nice. (If you have an Aero-capable PC but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

- Beginning any utterance with "How do I" opens up Windows Help; the next part of your sentence goes into the Search box.
- "Computer" forces the interpretation of your next utterance as a command; "Insert" forces it to be transcribed.
- Out of the box, Speech Recognition puts two spaces after every period—a very 1980s thing to do. Nowadays, that kind of gap looks a little amateurish. Fortunately, you can tell Speech Recognition to use only one space.

  Making this change requires you to visit the little-known Advanced Speech Options dialog box. Choose Start→Control Panel. In Classic view, open Speech Recognition Options. In the task pane at left, click "Advanced speech options" (Figure 6-9).

The Sidebar

All Versions

As you know, the essence of using Windows is running *programs*, which often produce *documents*. In Vista, however, there's a third category: a set of weird hybrid entities that Microsoft calls *gadgets*. They appear, all at once, floating in front of your other windows, at the right side of the screen. They're there when you first fire up Vista, or whenever you press ⊞+Space bar. (You can also open them by choosing Start→All Programs→Accessories→Windows Sidebar.)

Welcome to the new world of the Sidebar (Figure 6-10).

What are these weird hybrid entities, anyway? They're not really programs, because they don't create documents or have listings in the All Programs menu. They're certainly not documents, because you can't name or save them. What they *most* resemble, actually, is little Web pages. They're meant to display information, much of it from the Internet, and they're written using Web programming languages like DHTML, Javascript, VBScript, and XML.

Note: They're generally distributed as .zip files that, when decompressed, have the filename extension *.gadget*.

Vista's starter gadgets include a calculator, current weather reporter, stock ticker, clock, and so on. Mastering the basics of Sidebar won't take you long at all:

- **To move a gadget,** drag it around the screen. It doesn't have to stay in the Sidebar area.

  In fact, you can drag *all* of the gadgets off the Sidebar, if you like, and park them anywhere on the screen. You could even close the now-empty Sidebar—right-click a blank spot and, from the shortcut menu, choose Close Sidebar—and leave the gadgets themselves stranded, floating in place. (If they look too lonely, you can reopen the Sidebar by right-clicking the tiny Windows Sidebar icon in your notification area and, from the shortcut menu, choosing Open.)

Tip: If the gadget doesn't seem to want to move when you drag it, you're probably grabbing it by a clickable portion. Try to find a purely graphical spot—the spiral binding of the calendar, for example.

And if all else fails, right-click the gadget. From the shortcut menu, choose Detach from Sidebar.

- **To close a gadget,** point to it. You'll see the square X button appear at the gadget's top-left corner; click it. (You can also right-click a gadget and choose Close Gadget from its shortcut menu.)
- **To add a gadget to the Sidebar,** click the + button at the top of the screen (Figure 6-10), or right-click any gadget (or the Sidebar notification-area icon) and choose Add Gadget from the Sidebar.

  You've just opened the Gadget Gallery, a semi-transparent catalog of all your gadgets, even the ones that aren't currently on the screen (Figure 6-11). Open one by double-clicking its icon, or by dragging it to a blank spot on your Sidebar.



Figure 6-10:
When you summon the Sidebar, you get a fleet of floating miniprograms that convey or convert all kinds of useful information. They appear and disappear all at once, on a tinted translucent sheet.

If you add more gadgets than can fit on the Sidebar, a tiny ▶ appears at the top of the Sidebar. Click it to bring the next "page" full of gadgets into view.

- **To rearrange your gadgets within the Sidebar,** just drag them up or down, using any blank spot as a handle. The other gadgets slide out of the way.

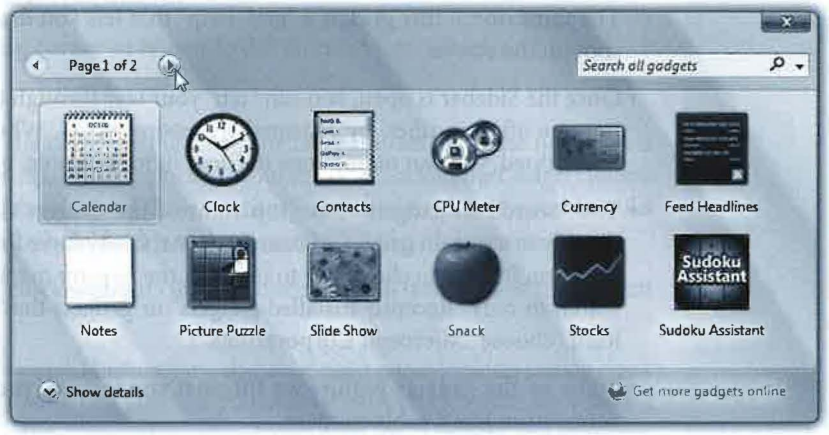


Figure 6-11: *You may have to scroll the Gadget Gallery to see all the gadgets, by clicking the Page arrows at the top left of the window. When you're finished opening new gadgets, close the Gadget Gallery by clicking its X button.*

Losing the Sidebar

To get rid of the Sidebar, you have several options.

- **Hide it** by right-clicking a blank spot on the Sidebar. From the shortcut menu, choose Close Sidebar.

  This technique just hides the actual Sidebar rectangle. It doesn't close any gadgets that you've moved onto your screen, and it's still technically running, using memory.

- **Quit it completely,** so it's not using up memory or distracting you, by right-clicking the Windows Sidebar notification-area icon. From the shortcut menu, choose Exit.

- **Make it stop auto-starting** along with Windows by opening the Windows Sidebar Properties control panel. (Quickest way: Right-click the Windows Sidebar icon in your notification area. From the shortcut menu, choose Properties.) Turn off "Start Sidebar when Windows starts." Click OK.

Sidebar Tips

Like most new Vista features, Sidebar is crawling with tips and tricks. Here are a few of the biggies:

- You can open more than one copy of the same gadget. Just double-click its icon more than once in the Gadget Bar. You wind up with multiple copies of it on your screen: three Clocks, two Weather trackers, or whatever. That's a useful trick when,

to the MSN Money Web site, already opened to a details page about that currency and its history.

- **Convert more currencies** at once by clicking the + button (lower-right of the gadget). That is, you can see $20 represented as dinar, baht, and shekels simultaneously.
- **Find out where the data comes from** by clicking the words Data Providers.

Note: This gadget actually does its homework. It goes online to download up-to-the-minute currency rates to ensure that the conversion is accurate.

Feed Headlines

An *RSS feed* is a newfangled Internet feature, in which the headlines from various Web sites are sent to you automatically (see page 380 for details). Internet Explorer 7 can accept RSS feeds, of course—but you don't have to fire it up every time you want to know the news of the world. Just take a look at this little gadget.

Actually, don't look yet; out of the box, this gadget doesn't show much at all. But if you click its "View headlines" link, you get to see 100 recent headlines, all from Microsoft sources: Microsoft news, Microsoft tips, Microsoft articles, and so on.

- **Substitute your own feeds.** This gadget is much more attractive when you fill it with your own favorite feeds—the *New York Times*, sports-score sites, favorite online columnists, and so on. Fortunately, the gadget inherits its list of feeds from those you've subscribed to in Internet Explorer, as described on page 380.

  Once you've subscribed to a feed there, click this gadget's Options (wrench) button. Use the "Display this feed" list to choose the feed you want displayed.

Tip: You can choose only *one* item from the "Display this feed" pop-up menu. Fortunately, that doesn't mean only one feed. If you take the effort to create a *folder* for your favorite feeds when storing them in Internet Explorer, you can choose that *folder's* name in this gadget, thereby getting a rotating list of *multiple* favorite feeds.

- **Scroll the list** by clicking the the ▲ or ▼ buttons.
- **See more of each headline** by dragging this gadget off the sidebar, if you've got the room.

Notes

Notes is a virtual Post-it note that lets you type out random scraps of text—a phone number, a Web address, a grocery list, or whatever.

- **Edit the note** by typing away. Right-click to access Cut, Copy, and Paste commands.
- **Add another page** by clicking the + button (lower right); delete the current page by clicking the X button (lower left). Once you have more than a single page, use the ◄ or ► buttons to move among them.

- **Change the paper color, font, or size** by clicking the Options button (tiny wrench) at the right side of the gadget. Font and Size controls appear there; click the ◂ or ▸ buttons to see the different pastel paper colors available.

Stocks

Hey, day traders, this one's for you. This gadget lets you build a stock portfolio and watch it rise and fall throughout the day.

It contains your list of stocks, their current prices (well, current as of 20 minutes ago), and the amount they've changed—green if they're up, red if they're down. Click a stock's name to see its chart and other details in a Web page.

To set up your portfolio, proceed like this:

- **Add a stock** by clicking the + button below the list, typing its name or stock abbreviation into the box at the top, and pressing Enter. If there's only one possible match—Microsoft, for example—the gadget adds it to the list instantly. If there's some question about what you typed, or several possible matches, you'll see a pop-up menu listing the alternatives, so you can click the one you want.

  Collapse the "Add a stock" dialog box by clicking the + button again, or simply by clicking anywhere else on your screen.

- **Scroll the list** by clicking the ▲ or ▼ buttons.

- **Remove a stock from the list** by clicking the little X button that appears when you point to its name.

- **See company names instead of abbreviations** by clicking the Options (wrench) button and then turning on "Display company name in place of symbol."

Tip: Ordinarily, the gadget displays the ups and downs of each stock as a dollar amount ("+.92" means up 92 cents, for example). But if you turn on "Show change as a percentage"–which also appears when you click the Options button–you'll see these changes represented as percentages of their previous values.

Picture Puzzle

For generations, Microsoft Windows fans had their Solitaire game—and only occasionally looked over the backyard fence to see the Tile Game that their Macintosh friends were playing. The idea, of course, is to click the tiles of the puzzle, using logic to rearrange them back into the original sequence, so that they eventually slide together into the put-together photograph.

- **Change the photo** by clicking the Options (wrench) button.

- **Pause the timer** (upper-left corner) by clicking the tiny clock.

- **See the finished photo,** so you know what the goal is, by holding the cursor down on the little ? button.

- **Give up** by clicking the double-arrow button in the upper-right corner of the puzzle window. (The same button rescrambles the puzzle.)

Weather

This gadget shows a handy current-conditions display for your city (or any other city), and, at your option, even offers a three-day forecast.

Before you get started, the most important step is to click the Options (wrench) button. In the Options dialog box, you'll see where you can specify your city and state or Zip code. Type it in and press Enter; the gadget goes online to retrieve the latest Weather.com info. You can also specify whether you prefer degrees Celsius or degrees Fahrenheit. Click OK.

Now the front of the gadget displays the name of your town, general conditions, and current temperature.

- **See more details** by dragging the gadget out of the Sidebar. Now you see today's predicted high and low, the sky situation (like "Clear"), the current temperature, and the three-day forecast.
- **See the complete weather report** by clicking the underlined location (such as "Central Park, NY") to open your Web browser and call up the full-blown Weather.com page for that location.

Slide Show

So you've got a digital camera and a hard drive crammed with JPEGs. What are you gonna do with 'em all?

Slide Show offers an ingenious way to savor your handiwork all day long. It's just what it says: a small slideshow that presents one photo at a time for a few seconds each. Think of it as an electronic version of the little spouse 'n' kids photo that cubicle dwellers prop up on their desks—except that the picture changes every 15 seconds.

The buttons in the tiny translucent control bar at the bottom of picture correspond to Previous Photo, Pause/Resume, Next Photo, and View (which opens up the picture—much larger now—in Windows Photo Gallery).

- **Substitute your own photos.** When you first install Vista, this gadget presents Microsoft's favorite nature photos. But where's the fun in that? Once you're sick of them, click the Options (wrench) button. In the dialog box, use the Folder controls to choose a folder full of your own pictures.
- **Set up the show timing.** Fifteen seconds is an awfully long time to stare at one photo, of course. Then again, if the pix change too often, they'll be distracting, and you won't get any work done. Nonetheless, the Options dialog box lets you keep each slide on the screen for as little as 5 seconds or as long as 5 minutes.

The Options box also lets you create a crossfade effect as one slide morphs into the next. And the Shuffle checkbox, of course, makes Slide Show present your pix in a random order, rather than their alphabetical order in the folder.

Tip: If you drag this gadget off the Sidebar itself, you get to see your photos at a larger, more pleasant size.

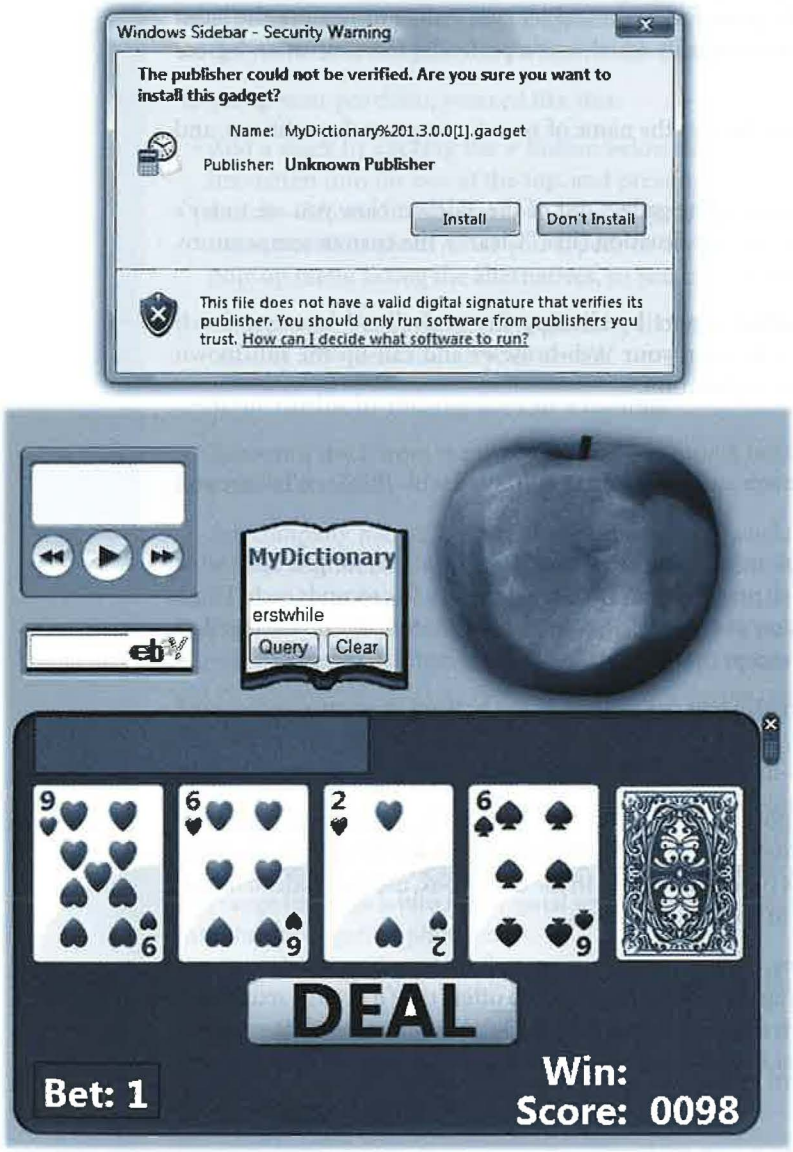


Figure 6-12: *Top: After downloading the new gadget (you'll have to click a couple of confirmation buttons along the way), you see this display. Click Install to install it (or Don't Install, if you think it's evil).*

Bottom: Not all good things come from Microsoft. Here's a handful of neat gadgets written by other people.

More Gadgets

The gadgets that come with Vista are meant to be only examples—a starter collection. The real beauty of gadgets is that people can write their own new ones for the whole world to enjoy: gadgets that show your local movie listings, regional gas prices, your email Inbox, upcoming Outlook appointments, and so on (Figure 6-12, bottom).

To see the current list of goodies that have been vetted by Microsoft, click "Get more gadgets online" in the Gadget Gallery described above. That takes you to the Microsoft Gadgets Gallery downloads page. (Alternatively, go straight to *http://gallery.microsoft.com*.)

You should have no problem finding gadgets that tell you local traffic conditions, let you know if your flight will be on time, help you track FedEx packages, provide a word (or joke, or comic strip) of the day, and so on.

Installing a gadget

Downloading and installing a gadget isn't hard, but there are a number of steps. Here's what you'll see if you use Internet Explorer, for example:

- A warning that you're installing software not written by Microsoft (click OK).
- The File Download dialog box (click Save).
- The Save As dialog box, asking where to store the download (click Save).

Unless you interfered, Internet Explorer drops the new gadget into your Personal→ Downloads folder. Open that folder, and then double-click the new gadget to install it. Figure 6-12 illustrates the process.

Uninstalling a gadget

If you decide you don't want a gadget, you can just close it (right-click it; from the shortcut menu, choose Close Gadget). That leaves it on your PC, but dormant.

If, on the other hand, you really doubt you'll ever need it again, open your Gadget Gallery. Right-click the offending gadget; from the shortcut menu, choose Uninstall. Now it's really, truly gone.

Filename Extensions and File Associations

All Versions

Every operating system needs a mechanism to associate documents with the applications that created them. When you double-click a Microsoft Word document icon, for example, Word launches and opens the document.

In Windows, every document comes complete with a normally invisible *filename extension* (or just *file extension*)—a period followed by a suffix that's usually three letters long.

Here are some common examples:

When you double-click this icon...	...this program opens it
Fishing trip.**doc**	Microsoft Word
Quarterly results.**xls**	Microsoft Excel
Home page.**htm**	Internet Explorer
Agenda.**wpd**	Corel WordPerfect
A home movie.**avi**	Windows Media Player
Sudoku.**gadget**	Sidebar gadget
Animation.**dir**	Macromedia Director

Tip: For an exhaustive list of every file extension on the planet, visit *www.whatis.com*; click the link for "Every File Format in the World."

Behind the scenes, Windows maintains a massive table that lists every extension and the program that "owns" it. More on this in a moment.

Displaying Filename Extensions

It's possible to live a long and happy life without knowing much about these extensions. Because file extensions don't feel very user-friendly, Microsoft designed Windows to *hide* the suffixes on most icons (Figure 6-13). If you're new to Windows, you may never have even seen them.

Some people appreciate the way Windows hides the extensions, because the screen becomes less cluttered and less technical-looking. Others make a good argument for the Windows 3.1 days, when every icon appeared with its suffix.

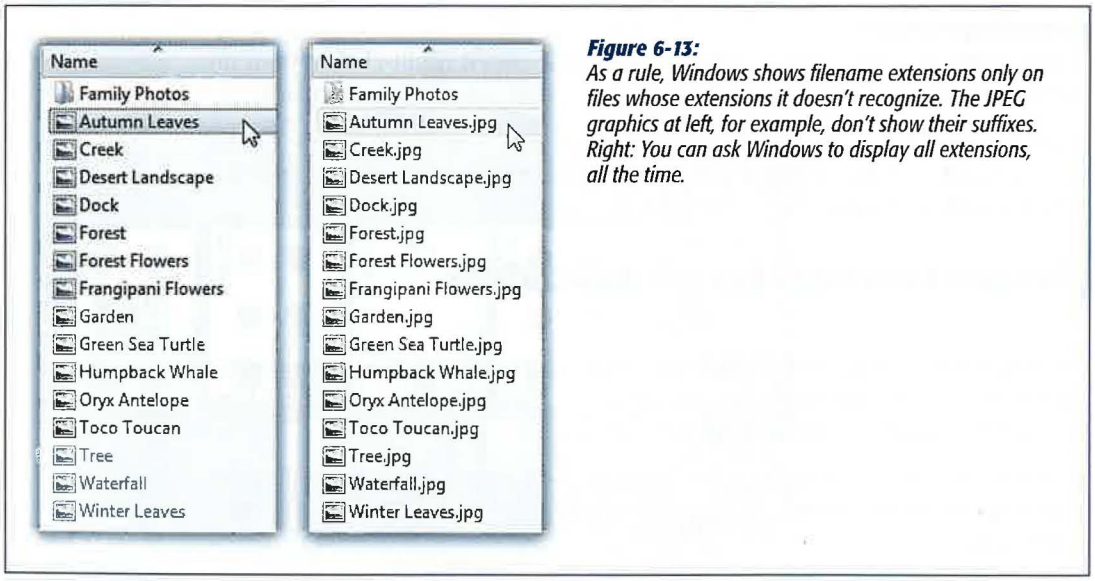


Figure 6-13:
As a rule, Windows shows filename extensions only on files whose extensions it doesn't recognize. The JPEG graphics at left, for example, don't show their suffixes. Right: You can ask Windows to display all extensions, all the time.

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.

this command. It opens a fresh, virginal copy of Internet Explorer, with all of your add-on junk stripped away—a copy that, in theory, should perform as smoothly as the day it was born.

Tablet PC

These links take you to three programs that are especially (or exclusively) useful to people who use PCs with touch screens—Tablet PCs, as they're known. All three—Sticky Notes, Tablet PC Input Panel, and Windows Journal—are described in Chapter 19.

Extras and Upgrades

All Versions

This little grab bag offers a few links to Microsoft-run online stores and storehouses of information:

- **Windows Anytime Upgrade.** As you're probably aware, Windows Vista comes in a number of different editions: Home Premium, Business, Enterprise, and so on. (Details are in the Introduction.)

  But what if you buy, say, the Home Basic version, but you later decide that you really wanted the cool looks and video-editing features of Home Premium? Or maybe you bought Business, but you really crave the backup and encryption features of Ultimate?

  Not to worry; Microsoft has made sure that you'll be taken care of. Using this command, you can *upgrade* your version of Vista to a higher version; all you need is a valid credit-card number and a few bucks in your account.

  When you choose this command, you go online to the Windows Anytime Upgrade Web page. This site detects which Vista version you have now, and offers to show you what kind of happiness awaits when you upgrade to one of the higher-priced versions.

  If you decide to move ahead with the upgrade, you're asked to find your original Windows Vista installation DVD. (Little did you know that it actually includes *all* versions of Vista—but holds back certain features that you haven't paid for.)

  The upgrade process doesn't disturb any of your programs, settings, or documents. Everything remains exactly where it was (although Microsoft does recommend that you make a backup before upgrading, just in case).

- **Windows Marketplace** is Microsoft's online catalog. It's always there when your credit card is feeling under-exercised. (One useful link here: Windows Tested Products. It's a list of programs that Microsoft has certified to be Vista-compatible.)

- **Windows Ultimate Extras** appears only if you're using the Ultimate edition of Windows Vista. One of the perks of Ultimate ownership is, of course, all the bonus goodies that Microsoft intends to offer just for you—and the Ultimate Extras Web site is where you'll find 'em.

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.** *Pointer trails* are ghost images of your mouse pointer that trail behind the pointer like ducklings following their mother. In general, this stuttering-cursor effect is irritating.
- **Hide pointer while typing.** Hiding the mouse pointer while you're typing is useful if you find that it 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 you 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.

Wheel tab

The scroll wheel on the top of your mouse may be the greatest mouse enhancement since they got rid of the dust-collecting ball on the bottom. It lets you zoom through Web pages, email lists, and documents with a twitch of your index finger.

Use these controls to specify just how *much* each wheel notch scrolls. (You may not see this tab at all if your mouse doesn't have a wheel.)

Hardware tab

The Mouse program provides this tab exclusively for its Properties buttons, which takes you to the Device Manager's device properties dialog box. Useful if you have to troubleshoot a bad driver.

Network and Sharing Center

This network command center is an important step forward in Vista. It offers, among other things, a handy map that shows exactly how your PC is connected to the Internet. It also contains a tidy list of all networking-related features (file sharing, printer sharing, and so on), complete with on/off switches. See Chapter 26 for details.

Offline Files

The Offline Files applet opens into a dialog box where you can manage your offline file folders and access the Sync Center. See Chapter 19.

Parental Controls

This applet lets you, the wise parent, control what your inexperienced or out-of-control loved one (usually a child, but sometimes a spouse) can and cannot do on (or with) the computer. For more information, see Chapter 10.

System

This advanced control panel window is the same one that appears when you right-click your Computer icon and choose Properties from the shortcut menu (or press ⊞+Break key). It's been revamped for Windows Vista, but still contains the various settings that identify every shred of circuitry and equipment inside, or attached to, your PC.

When you open the System icon in Control Panel, you're taken to the System window (Figure 8-16). Here you can find out:

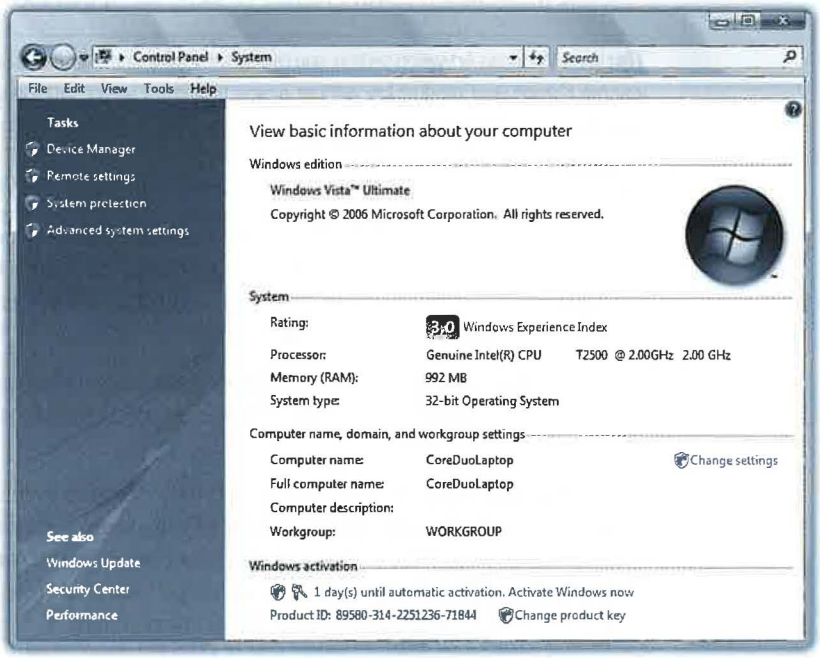


Figure 8-16: *The System window is a one-stop shop for all things computer-related. From your hardware (and what Vista thinks of it) to your product ID key, System's got you covered.*

- **What edition of Vista is installed on your computer.** As you know, Vista comes in several editions. Not all editions are made equal; if you're flailing to find some feature that you could have sworn is supposed to be in Vista, it's good to check here. You might find out that the feature you want is available only on higher-priced versions.
- **Your PC's performance rating.** See page 20.
- **The model name and speed of your PC's processor chip** (such as Pentium 4, 2.6 GHz).
- **How much memory your PC has.** That's a very helpful number to know, particularly if you need to improve your computer's speed.

Tablet PC Settings

This applet is all about managing a Tablet PC, one of those touchscreen laptop thingies. Here, you'll find settings that focus on tablet display orientation and calibration, handwriting recognition, and configuring pen input. If you don't have a Tablet PC, this dialog box is not for you. Otherwise, flip to Chapter 19.

Taskbar and Start Menu

This program controls every conceivable behavior of the taskbar and Start menu. You can read all about these options—the same ones that appear when you right-click the taskbar or the Start button and choose Properties from the shortcut menu—in Chapters 1 and 2.

Text to Speech

Text to Speech opens the Speech Properties dialog box. (You can also get here from the Speech Recognition applet.)

Here's where you configure the voice of Windows—the robotic voice, called Microsoft Anna—that you hear any time Windows reads text aloud.

The catch, of course, is that Windows never *does* read text aloud, except when you're using Narrator (page 269)—and Narrator has its own set of voice-selection controls. Microsoft Word *can* read text to you, however, and for that reason, you may be happy to know that you can specify Anna's rate of speaking (or that of the other Vista voice options) using this dialog box.

User Accounts

This control panel is the master switch and control center for the user-accounts feature described in Chapter 23. If you're the only one who uses your PC, you can (and should) ignore it.

Welcome Center

The Welcome Center, a new Vista feature, is the window that welcomes you every single time you log in (until you turn off the "Run at startup" checkbox). This window conveniently displays how to get started with Vista and pay Microsoft for more products and services. For a more detailed look at this window and its offerings, see Chapter 1.

(Why is this even in the Control Panel? Well, let's not be nit-picky.)

Windows CardSpace

Ever have to fill out a form on the Internet—name, address, email address—only to go to a different site that requests exactly the same information?

Of course you have. Everyone has, and it's annoying as heck.

CardSpace is Microsoft's attempt to solve that duplication-of-effort problem. You're supposed to create a profile containing this kind of information, like a digital ID

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.

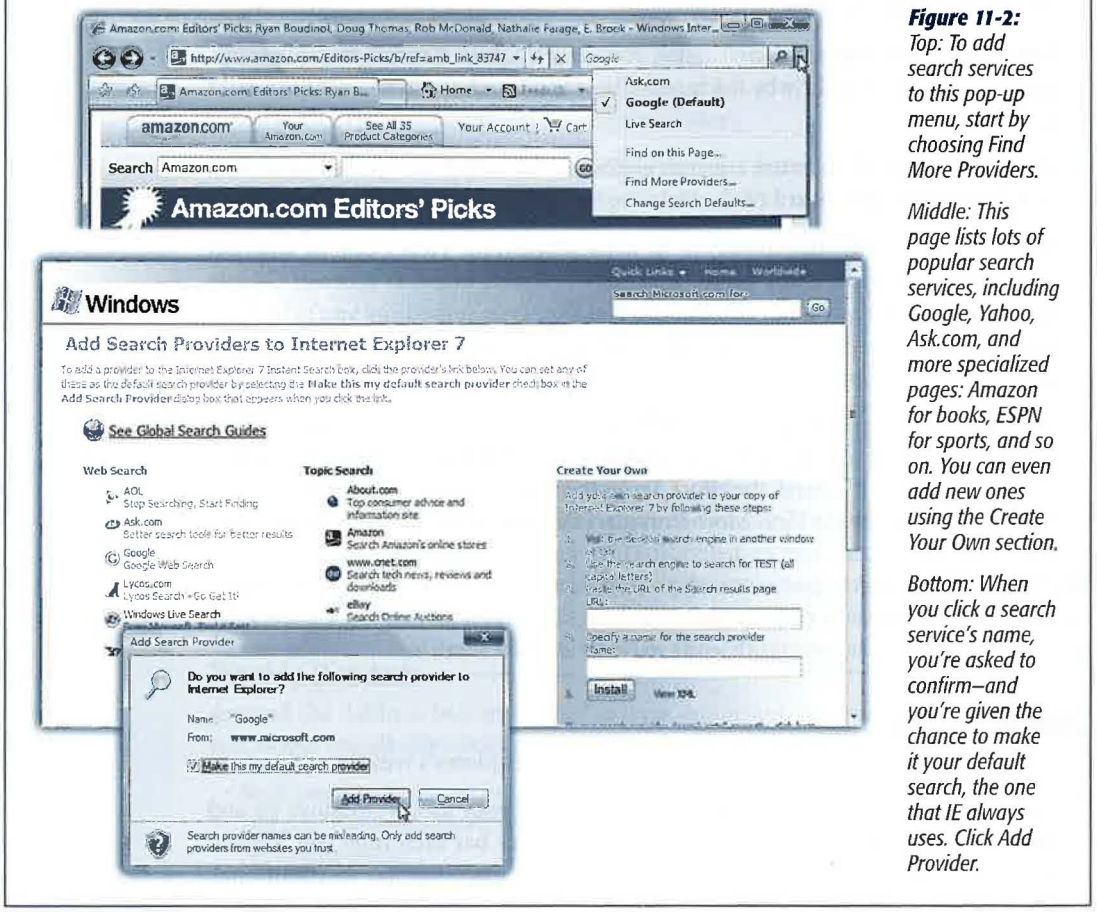


Figure 11-2: *Top: To add search services to this pop-up menu, start by choosing Find More Providers.*

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.

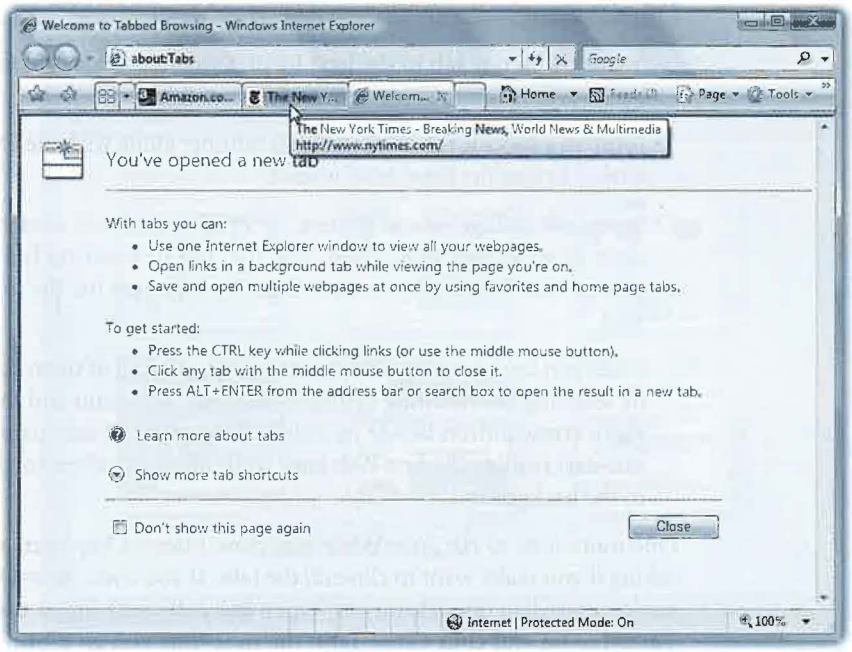


Figure 11-3: *When you Ctrl+Shift-click a link, or type an address and press Alt+Enter or ⌘-Enter, you open a new tab, not a new window as you ordinarily would. You can now pop from one open page to another by clicking the tabs above the window, or close one by clicking its X button (or pressing Ctrl+W).*

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.

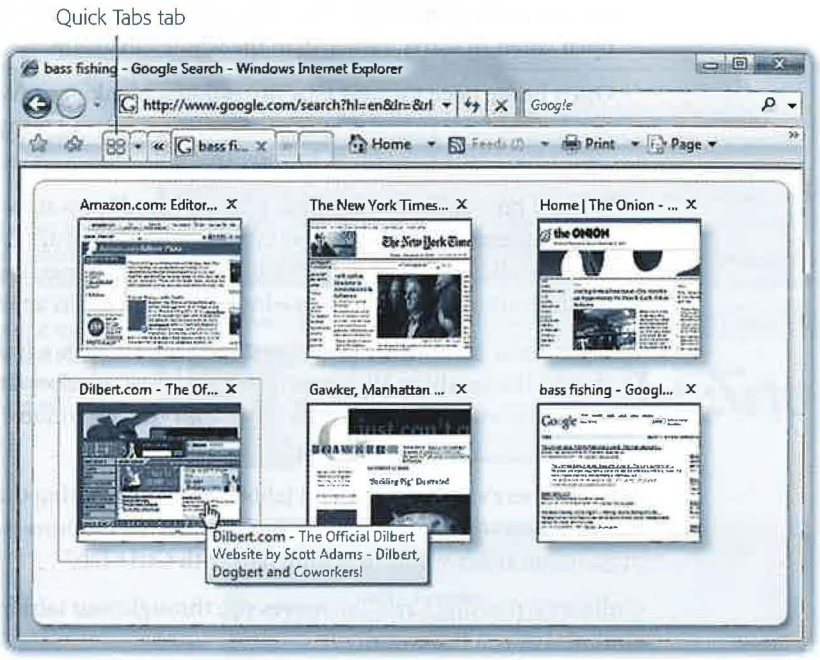


Figure 11-4: *Quick Tabs shows you thumbnails of all the Web pages you've opened into tabs, making it simple to tell them apart. One click on a thumbnail returns it to full size, with that tab in front of the others. All you have to learn is the Quick Tabs keystroke, which is Ctrl+Q–or the location of 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.

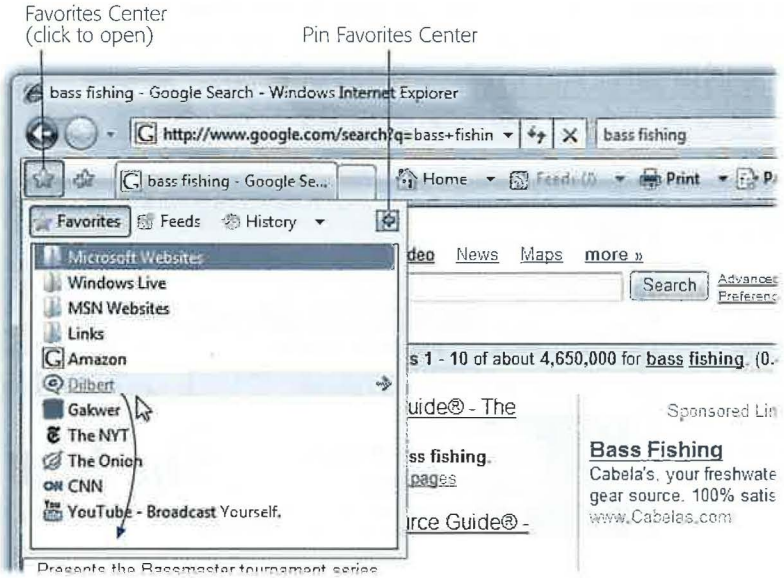


Figure 11-6: *When the Favorites menu opens, you can drag names up or down to rearrange the list, as shown. Or right-click one to access the commands that rename, delete, or file a favorite into a folder. (Unfortunately, the Favorites menu covers up part of the Web page you're reading. It hides itself 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.

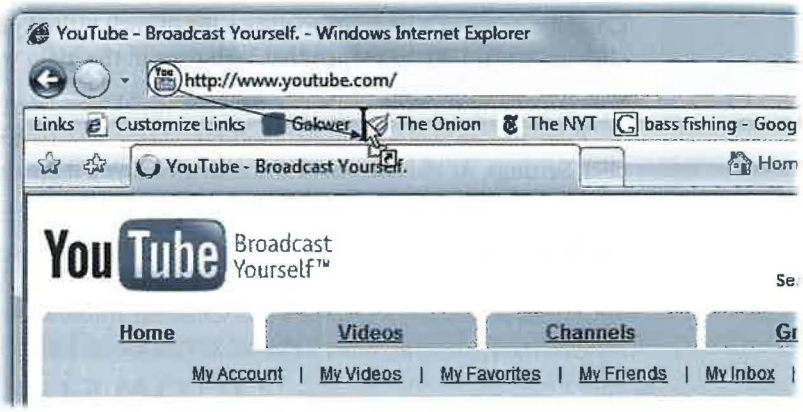


Figure 11-7: *Once you've got a juicy Web page on the screen, you can turn it into a Link by dragging the tiny page icon directly to the Links bar, as shown here. (You can also drag any link from a Web page onto the toolbar.) If you right-click a link, you can choose Rename (to pick a shorter name that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

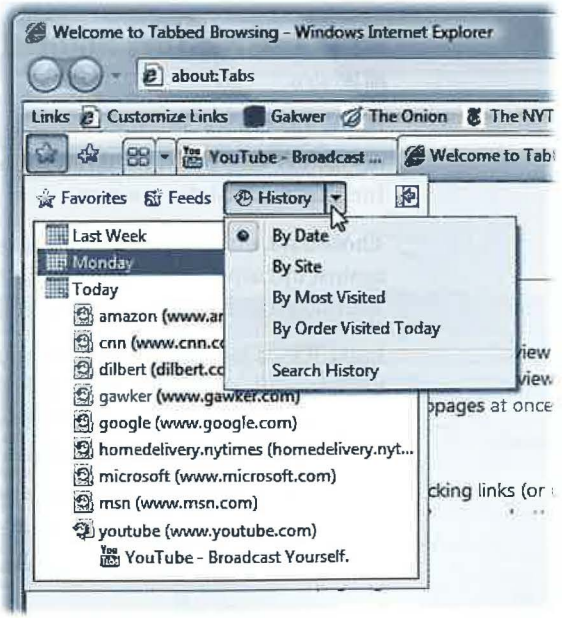


Figure 11-8: *If you click the little ▾ button next to the word History, you'll see that you can view the list sorted by Web site, date, frequency of visits–or you can see only the sites you've visited* today, *in order. The same little pop-up menu offers a command called Search History, so that you 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."

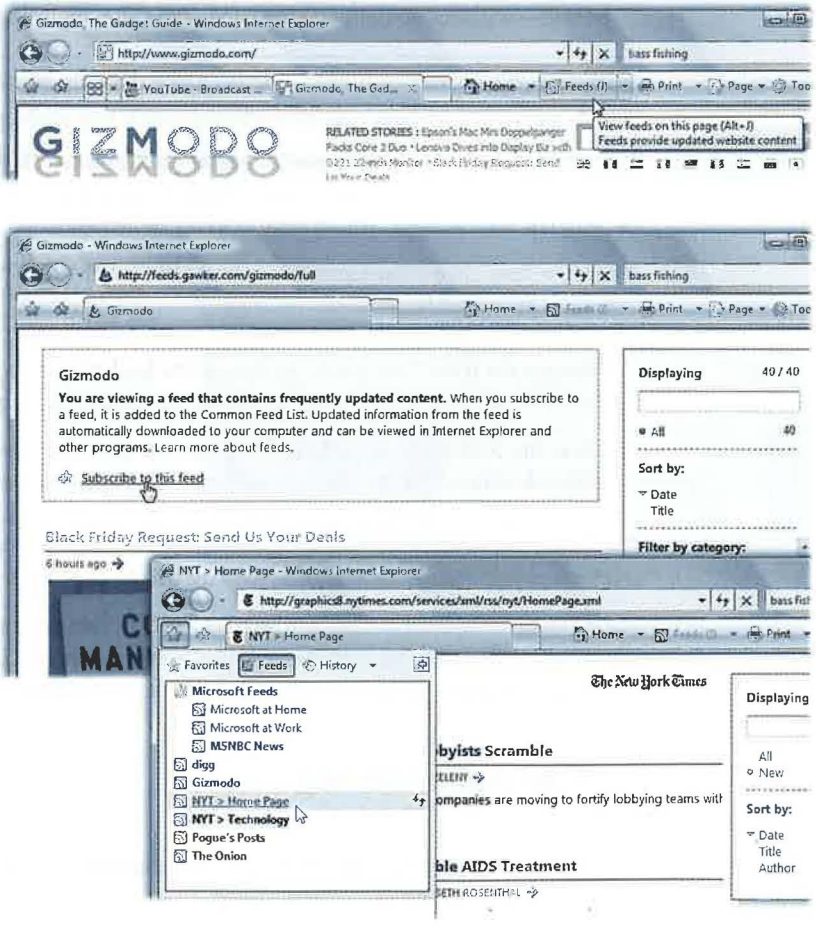


Figure 11-9: *Top: When the Feeds button changes color, you've got yourself a live one: a Web site that publishes a feed. Click the Feeds button.*

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: