Full-Screen Browsing

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

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

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

Picking a Home Page

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UP TO SPEED

Faster Browsing Without Graphics

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bigger Text, Smaller Text

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

Zooming In and Out

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

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

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

Online Photos

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

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

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

Saving Pages

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

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

Sending Pages

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

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

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

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

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

Printing Pages

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Turn Off Animations

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

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

Internet Options

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

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

The Keyboard Shortcut Master List

All Versions

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

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

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

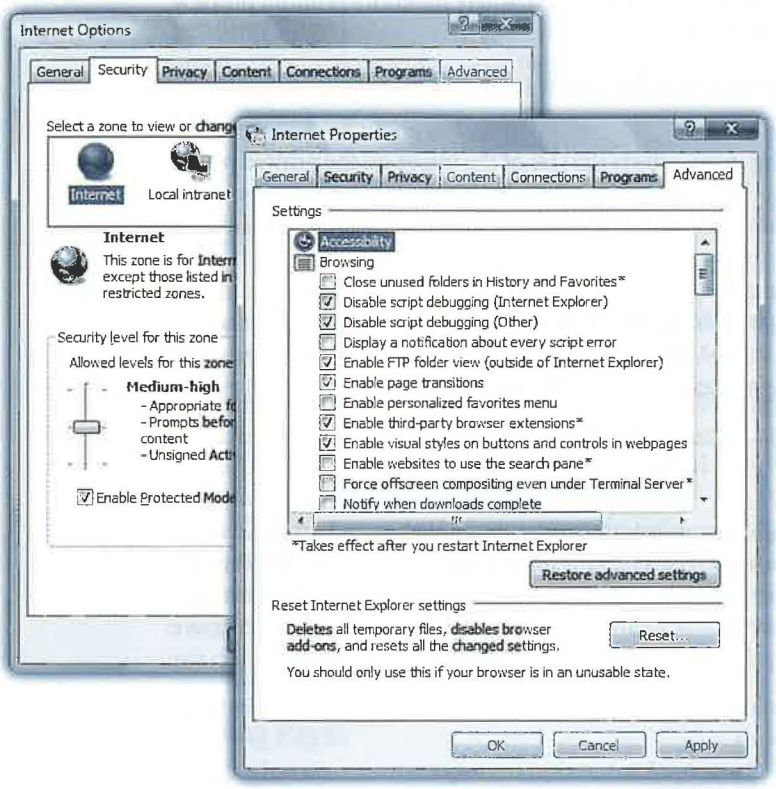


Figure 11-11: *Choosing Tools→Internet Options opens this dialog box, the identical twin of the Internet Options program in the Control Panel. Two of its tabs are shown here. Double-click one of the headings (like "Accessibility") to collapse all of its check-boxes. Your sanity is the winner here.*

Viewing

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

Bars and Menus

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

Navigation

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

Tabbed Browsing

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

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

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

CHAPTER
12

Windows Mail

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

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

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

UP TO SPEED

What's New, Besides the Name

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER
13

Windows Photo Gallery

Your digital camera is brimming with photos. You've snapped the perfect graduation portrait, captured that jaw-dropping sunset over the Pacific, or compiled an unforgettable photo essay of your 2-year-old attempting to eat a bowl of spaghetti. It's time to use your PC to gather, organize, and tweak all these photos so you can share them with the rest of the world.

Until Vista came along, all Windows offered for digital photos was Paint. That's right, Paint—a feeble holdover from 1985 that sat in your Programs→Accessories folder and opened one picture at a time. Barely.

Microsoft has addressed photo organizing/editing with a vengeance in Vista. Pathetic little Paint is still there, for the benefit of change-phobic Windows veterans. But now there's also Windows Photo Gallery, a beautiful, full-blown digital camera companion that has nothing to be ashamed of.

Photo Gallery: The Application

All Versions

Photo Gallery approaches digital photo management as a four-step process: importing the photos to your Pictures folder; organizing, tagging, and rating them; editing them; and sharing them (via prints, onscreen slideshows, design DVD slideshows, email, screen saver, and so on).

To open Photo Gallery, choose its name from the Start→Programs menu, or double-click a photo in your Pictures folder. You arrive at the program's main window, the basic elements of which are shown in Figure 13-1.

Getting Pictures into Photo Gallery

All Versions

You're probably most interested in getting fresh photos off your digital camera. But if you've been taking digital photos for some time, you may also have photo files already crammed into folders on your hard drive or on CDs. If you shoot pictures with a traditional film camera and use a scanner to digitize them, you've probably got piles of JPEG or TIFF images stashed away on disk already.



Figure 13-1: *Here's what Photo Gallery looks like when you first open it. The large photo-viewing area is where thumbnails of your imported photos appear. The icons at the top of the window represent all the stuff you can do with your photos. To adjust the size of the photo thumbnails (miniatures), click the magnifying-glass icon. Don't release the mouse button yet. Instead, drag the vertical slider up or down. All the thumbnails expand or contract simultaneously. Cool!*

This section explains how to transfer files from each of these sources into Photo Gallery itself.

Photos from Your PC

The very first time you open it, Photo Gallery displays all the digital photos it can find in your Pictures folder (Start→Pictures).

This is important: you're looking at the *actual files* on your hard drive. If you delete a picture from Photo Gallery, you've just deleted it from your PC. (Well, OK, you've actually moved it to your Recycle Bin. But still, that's a step closer to oblivion.)

If you store your photos in other folders, you can make Photo Gallery aware of those, too. You can go about this task in either of two ways:

- **The menu way.** Choose File→Add Folder to Gallery; navigate to and select the additional folder, and then click OK. (You'll see the additional folder listed in the Folders category of the left-side master list.)
- **The draggy way.** Find the folder on your desktop or in any Explorer folder. Drag the folder itself directly onto the word Folders in the left-side list, as shown in Figure 13-2.

Note: Don't add your whole hard drive or Windows folder to Photo Gallery's list. You'll wind up adding literally *thousands* of little graphics–not actual photos, but bits of Web pages, button images, and other random visual detritus that Windows uses to display your programs and windows. Photo Gallery will grind to a halt.



Figure 13-2: *You can add a "watched folder" to Photo Gallery by dragging it off the desktop (or any folder window) right onto the Folders heading, as shown here. The cursor changes to a + symbol to let you know that Photo Gallery understands your intention.*

You can also drag individual photo or video files directly into Photo Gallery's window (from the desktop or an Explorer window, for example). Windows not only makes it appear in Photo Gallery, but also copies it to your Pictures folder for safekeeping.

Note: This trick works only with JPEG files. Graphics in other formats, and, in fact, anything else other than videos, wind up getting copied to your Pictures folder but don't show up in Photo Gallery.

Photos from a Digital Camera

Every modern camera comes with a USB cable that connects to your PC. That's handy, because it makes the photo-transfer process happen practically by itself.

- **PNG** files are also used in Web design, though not nearly as often as JPEG and GIF. They often display more complex graphic elements. Photo Gallery can show you PNG files, but can't edit them.
- **BMP** was once a popular graphics file format in Windows. Its files are big and bloated by today's standards, though, so Microsoft is trying to dissociate itself from them. Photo Gallery can't open or fix them.
- **WPD** is a new Microsoft graphics protocol intended for cellphones and palmtops. (Actually, only the technology is called WPD; the images are still labeled .jpg.)
- **Photoshop** refers to Adobe Photoshop, the world's most popular image-editing and photo-retouching program. Photo Gallery can't recognize, open, or fix Photoshop files.

Movies

In addition to still photos, most consumer digital cameras these days can also capture cute little digital movies. Some are jittery, silent affairs the size of a Wheat Thin; others are full-blown, 30-frames-per-second, fill-your-screen movies (that eat up a memory card plenty fast). Either way, Photo Gallery can import and organize them, as long as they're in .wmv, .asf, .mpeg, or .avi format. (Unfortunately, that list doesn't include .mov, a common movie format of digital cameras.)

You don't have to do anything special to import movies; they get slurped in automatically. To play one of these movies once they're in Photo Gallery, see Figure 13-4.



Figure 13-4:
The first frame of each video clip shows up as though it's a photo in your library. Your only clues that it's a movie and not a photo are the film sprocket holes along the sides and the tooltip that identifies the movie's running time. If you double-click one, it opens up and begins to play immediately.

RAW format

Most digital cameras work like this: when you squeeze the shutter button, the camera studies the data picked up by its sensors. The circuitry then makes decisions about sharpening level, contrast, saturation, white balance, and so on—and then saves the processed image as a compressed JPEG file on your memory card.

To begin the slideshow, specify which pictures you want to see. For example:

- To see the pictures you most recently imported, click Recently Imported.
- Click a folder, tag, rating row, or another heading in the Navigation tree at the left side of the screen.
- If "All Pictures and Videos" (your whole library) is selected, click one of the photo-batch headings in the main window—for example, "2007—35 items."

Now click the unlabeled Play button at the bottom of the window (see Figure 13-5)—or just hit F11. Photo Gallery fades out of view, and a big, brilliant, full-screen slideshow of the new photos—and even self-playing videos—begins.

What's really useful is the slideshow control bar shown in Figure 13-5. You make it appear by wiggling your mouse as the show begins.

Click Exit, or press any key, to end the slideshow.

Note: Photo Gallery can't play music with your slides. (Bummer.) Microsoft cheerfully suggests that if you want music, you can first pop into another program (like Windows Media Player) to start playback, then return to Photo Gallery to start the slides. If that's what's going on, you can always click the Mute command in the gear pop-up menu.

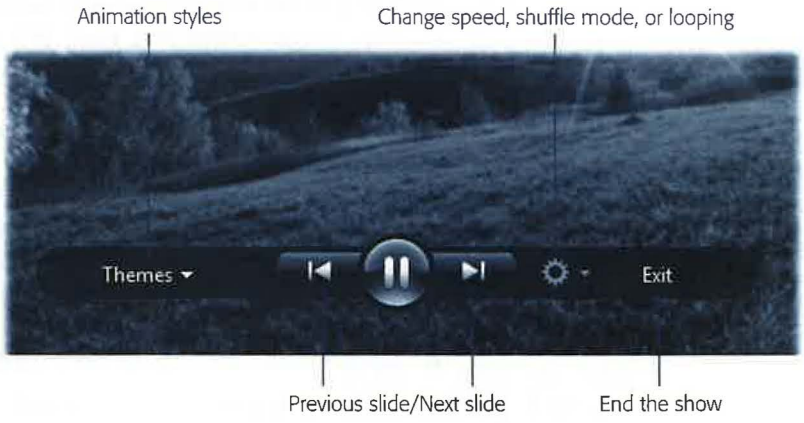


Figure 13-5: *As the slideshow progresses, you can pause the show, go backward, rotate a photo, or change the transition effects, all courtesy of this control bar.*

Slideshow Themes

If you wiggle the mouse during a slideshow to make the control bar appear, you'll see an odd little button called Themes at the left side.

A Theme is a canned special-effect set for a slideshow. On a powerful PC, you can call up slideshows with multiple photos parading into and out of view, with special backdrops filling in the gaps. (How do you know your PC is fast enough? The Experience Index score for your graphics card has to be 3.0 or better. See page 20 for your Experience Index score.)

If your PC doesn't have the horsepower for such elaborate effects, your Themes menu is much shorter. You can give the show an old-tyme, mottled brown or monochrome look by choosing "Sepia" or "Black and white" from the Themes menu.

Choosing "Pan and Zoom" instead makes the pictures smoothly cross-fade, panning and zooming as they go, as in a Ken Burns documentary on PBS. Your other choices include "Fade," meaning a crossfade, and "Classic," meaning Windows XP style: no transition effect at all.

The Digital Shoebox

All Versions

If you've imported your photos into Photo Gallery using any of the methods described above, you should now see a neatly arranged grid of thumbnails in Photo Gallery's main photo-viewing area. This is, presumably, your entire photo collection, including every last picture you've ever imported—the digital equivalent of that old shoebox you've had stuffed in the closet for the last 10 years.

Your journey out of chaos has begun. From here, you can sort your photos, give them titles, group them into smaller sub-collections (called *albums*), and tag them with keywords so you can find them quickly.

The Bigger Picture

If you point to a photo thumbnail without clicking, Photo Gallery is kind enough to display, at your cursor tip, a larger version of it. Think of it as a digital version of the magnifying loupe that art experts use to inspect gemstones and paintings.

Tip: If this feature gets on your nerves, choose File→Options, and then turn off "Show picture and video previews in tooltips."

You can also make *all* the thumbnails in Photo Gallery grow or shrink using the Size Control slider—click the blue magnifying-glass pop-up menu at the bottom of the Photo Gallery window. Drag the slider all the way down, and you get micro-thumbnails so small that you can fit 200 or more of them in the window. If you drag it all the way up, you end up with such large thumbnails that only a few fit the screen at a time.

For the biggest view of all, though, double-click a thumbnail. It opens all the way, filling the window. At this point, you can edit the picture, too, as described below.

The Navigation Tree

Even before you start naming your photos, assigning them keywords, or organizing them into albums, Photo Gallery imposes an order of its own on your digital shoebox.

The key to understanding it is the *Navigation tree* at the left side of the Photo Gallery window. This list grows as you import more pictures and organize them—but right off the bat, you'll find icons like these:

- **All Pictures and Videos.** The first icon in the Navigation tree is a very reassuring little icon, because no matter how confused you may get in working with subsets of photos later in your Photo Gallery life, clicking this icon returns you to your entire picture collection. It makes *all* of your photos and videos appear in the viewing area.

  Click the Pictures or Videos subhead to filter out the thumbnails so that *only* photos or *only* videos are visible.

- **Recently imported.** Most of the time, you'll probably work with the photos that you just downloaded from your camera. Conveniently, Photo Gallery always tracks your most recently added batch, so you can view its contents without much scrolling.

- **Tags.** As you work with your photos, you'll soon discover the convenience of adding *tags* (keywords) to them, like Family, Trips, or Baby Pix. Then, with one click on one of the tag labels in this list, you can see *only* the photos in your collection that match that keyword.

Tip: You can Ctrl-click several items in the Tags list at once. For example, if you want to see both Family photos *and* Vacation photos, click Family, then Ctrl-click Vacation.

This trick also works to select multiple months, years, star-rating categories, or folders (described below).

- **Date Taken.** Photo Gallery's navigation tree also offers miniature calendar icons named for the years (2005, 2006, 2007, and so on).



Figure 13-6: *The year and month icons are very helpful when you're creating a slideshow or trying to pinpoint one certain photo. After all, you usually can remember what year you took a vacation or when someone's birthday was. These icons help you narrow down your search without requiring that you scroll through your entire library.*

When you import photos, the program files each photo by the date you took it. You can click, say, the 2005 icon to see just the ones you took during that year.

By clicking the flippy triangle next to a year's name, furthermore, you expand the list to reveal the individual *months* in that year; click a month's flippy triangle to see the individual *dates* within that month. Photo Gallery shows *only* the months and dates in which you actually took pictures; that's why 2006, for example, may show only April, July, and October (Figure 13-6).

- **Ratings.** As you'll read in a moment, you can give your pictures star ratings: one star (or none) for the turkeys, five stars for the really great ones that are shoo-ins for your Web page or annual year-end calendar.

  These little rows of stars make it easy to sort your entire collection by rating. Click the row of five stars, for example, to see *only* your five-starrers.

- **Folders.** At the bottom of the list, you'll see a collapsible list of the actual folders, sitting out there on your hard drive, that hold your photos and video clips. At the outset, you'll see only your Pictures and Videos folders (and maybe the Public versions of those, for use on a network). But as you add "watched folders" as described on page 425, this list will grow.

Working with Your Photos

All right: Enough touring Photo Gallery's main window. Now it's time to start *using* it.

Browsing, selecting, and opening photos is straightforward. Here's everything you need to know:

- Use the vertical scroll bar, or your mouse's scroll wheel, to navigate through your thumbnails.
- To create the most expansive photo-viewing area possible, you can temporarily hide the details pane at the right side of the window. To do so, click the tiny X button at its top—just *under* the ? button. (The red X *above* the Help button closes Photo Gallery.) Bring the Info pane back by clicking Info in the toolbar.

Category Groupings

Each time you import a new set of photos into Photo Gallery—whether from your hard drive, a camera, or a memory card—it appears with its own heading in Photo Gallery. Each batch is like one film roll you've had developed. Photo Gallery starts out sorting your Photo Library chronologically, meaning that the most recently imported photos appear at the top of the window.

Tip: If you'd prefer that the most recent items appear at the *bottom* of the Photo Gallery window instead of the top, open the Thumbnail View pop-up menu (Figure 13-7). From the pop-up menu, choose Sort By→Descending.

More tips:

- To find photos that match multiple keywords, Ctrl-click additional tag labels. For example, if you click Travel, and then Ctrl-click Holidays, Photo Gallery reveals all the pictures that have *either* of those keywords. (There's no way to perform an "and" keyword roundup—that is, to find pictures that have *both* Travel *and* Holidays tags.)
- You can also Ctrl-click *unrelated branches* of the Navigation tree. For example, you can click the Casey tag, and then Ctrl-click the five-star rating row, to find only the very best pictures of Casey. You could then even Ctrl-click "2006" in the Navigation tree to further restrict the photos you're seeing.

  But why stop there? Ctrl-click Videos at the top of the Navigation tree, and now you're seeing only the five-star *videos* of Casey in 2006.
- If you click tag heading (like "Trips"), Photo Gallery automatically selects all of the subheading tags ("Vermont," "Hawaii"). If you don't want to select the sub-tags, *right*-click the top-level tag; from the shortcut menu, choose "Select top-level tag."
- You can drag tags up or down in the Navigation tree (to rearrange them) or even left and right (to turn them into sub-headings within a main tag). As the tag list grows, remember that you can collapse any branch of the tree by clicking its flippy triangle.



Figure 13-14: *As you type into the Search box, Photo Gallery hides all pictures except the ones that have your typed phrase somewhere in their names, captions, file names, or folder paths. (To cancel your search and reveal all the pictures again, click the tiny X at the right end of the Search box.)*

Searching for Photos by Text

The tag mechanism described above is an adequate way to add textual descriptions to your pictures, but there are other ways. The name you give a picture might be

This is the critical moment. The "Picture size" pop-up menu in the Attach Files dialog box offers four choices. **Small** and **Smaller** yield a file that will fill a nice chunk of your recipient's screen, with plenty of detail. It's even enough data to produce a small print. Even so, the file size (and download time) remains reasonable.

Use **Medium** and **Large** options sparingly. Save them for friends who have a cable modem or DSL. Even then, these big files may still overflow their email boxes.

Despite all the cautions above, there may be times when a photo is worth sending at **Original Size**, like when you're submitting a photo for printing or publication—and you both have high-speed Internet connections.

No matter which you choose, keep an eye on the "Total estimated size" readout in the dialog box. Most email systems can't accept attachments greater than 5 MB.

4. Click **Attach**.

   At this point, Photo Gallery processes your photos—converting them to JPEG format and, if you requested it, resizing them. It then launches your email program, creates a new message, and attaches your photos to it.

5. **Type your recipient's email address into the "To:" box, and then click Send.**

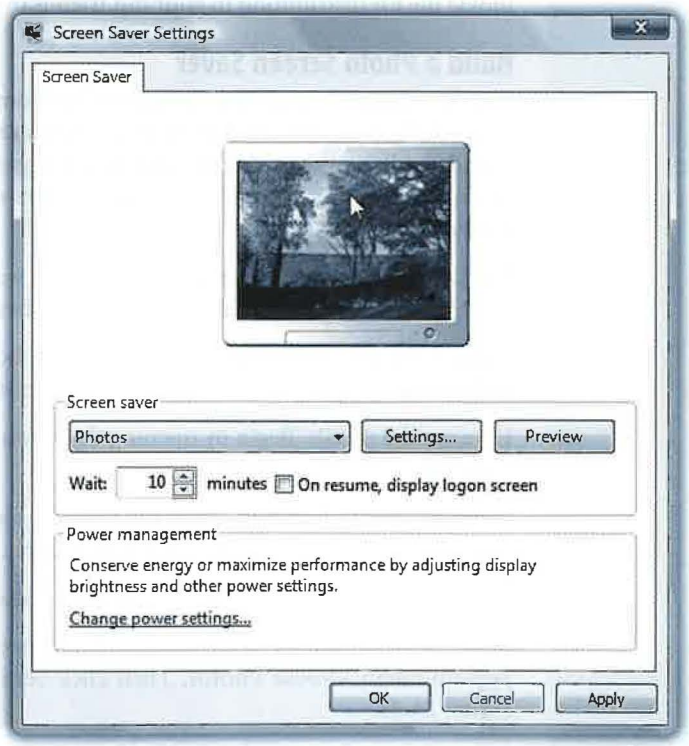


Figure 13-23: *Below the horizontal line, you'll find three options that govern screen saver special effects, speed, and randomness. Click Save when it all looks good.*

Your photos are on their merry way.

Burn to a Disc

If you highlight some photo thumbnails, and then click Burn (in the Photo Gallery toolbar), the pop-up menu offers you two choices:

- **Data disc.** If you now insert a blank CD or DVD, Photo Gallery makes a *backup* of the selected photos. That is, it turns the disc into a data disc that works only in computers. It's a great way to back up or archive your pictures and movies.
- **Video DVD.** This option hands off the photos to DVD Maker for burning to a DVD, so you can share your masterpieces on your friends' TV sets. (Of course, this option is available only if your Vista edition came with DVD Maker, which means Home Premium or Ultimate.) Chapter 15 has step-by-step instructions for rearranging and mastering your DVD slideshow.

Make a Slideshow Movie

If you highlight some photo thumbnails and then click Make a Movie in the toolbar, Vista automatically hands them off to Windows Movie Maker (Chapter 15) and lays them out in the timeline as a slideshow, all ready to go.

All you have left to do is rearrange them, add music and credits, and save as a digital movie file for distribution to your hip friends or publishing online.

Build a Photo Screen Saver

This feature's really nice. You can turn any random batch of photos into your PC's very own screen saver. After half an hour (or whatever) of inactivity, the screen darkens, thunder rolls, and your friends and family begin to appear, gracefully panning and zooming and cross-fading, as your co-workers spill their coffee in admiration and amazement.

The hard part is specifying *which* pictures you want to be part of the show; you can't just highlight a bunch of them and say, "Use these."

Instead, you have to isolate your screen saver–bound shots, either by giving them a certain tag, applying a certain rating, or confining them to a certain folder.

Here are the details. Begin by opening the Screen Saver applet in the Control Panel, using one of these tactics:

- Right-click the desktop. From the shortcut menu, choose Personalize. In the Personalization control panel, click Screen Saver.
- From within Photo Gallery, choose File→Screen Saver Settings.

Either way, the Screen Saver Settings dialog box appears. From the "Screen saver" pop-up menu, choose Photos. Then click Settings to view the options shown in Figure 13-23.

Now you can choose how you want your photos selected for their big moment in the spotlight.

- **Show everything.** If you turn on "Use all pictures and videos from Photo Gallery," then, by golly, everything in Photo Gallery is fair game.
- **By tag.** If you've tagged your screen saver–bound pictures, turn on "Use all pictures and videos from Photo Gallery" and then, in the "With this tag" box, type the tag you want. (Vista autocompletes whatever you start to type.)

Tip: If it's easier to say which photos you *don't* want to see, turn on "Don't show items tagged," and then specify which tags you want to keep out.

- **By rating.** You can also use the "With this rating or higher" to limit the photos by star rating—whether or not you also limited the selection by tag.
- **By folder.** If you keep your screen saver–worthy pix in a folder by themselves, turn on "Use pictures and videos from," and then click Browse to find the folder.

When you've finished setting up the slideshow—that is, screen saver—click Save. When you return to the Screen Saver Settings dialog box, you can either click Preview to manually trigger the screen saver for your inspection, or click OK and wait 20 minutes for the screen saver to kick in by itself.

CHAPTER
14

Windows Media Player

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

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

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

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

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

The Lay of the Land

All Versions

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

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

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

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

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

UP TO SPEED

Custom Express

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

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

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

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



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

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Returning to the Classic Menus

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Playing Music CDs

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

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

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

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

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

Fun with Media Player

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

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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



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



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

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

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

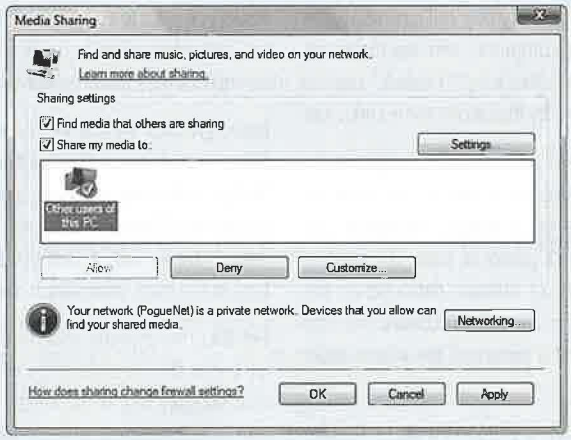
- **Expand the window.** On the other hand, if your PC is briefly serving as a glorified stereo system at a cocktail party, double-click the visualization display itself (or press Alt+Enter). The screen saver effect now fills the entire screen, hiding all text, buttons, and controls. If you have an available laptop and a coffee table to put it on, you've got yourself a great atmospheric effect. (When the party's over, just double-click again, or press Alt+Enter again, to make the standard controls reappear.)

- **Change the skin.** In hopes of riding the world's craze for MP3 files, Microsoft has helped itself to one of WinAmp's most interesting features: *skins*. Definitions: An MP3 file (MPEG Audio Layer-3) is a compact, downloadable, CD-quality sound file format. WinAmp is a popular MP3-playing program. And a skin is a design scheme that completely changes the look of Windows Media Player, as shown in Figure 14-4.

GEM IN THE ROUGH

Playing Across the Network

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



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

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

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

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

Happy sharing!

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

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

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

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

GEM IN THE ROUGH

Filling in Track Names

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ripping CDs to Your Hard Drive

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

Having CD songs on your hard drive is handy because:

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

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

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

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

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

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

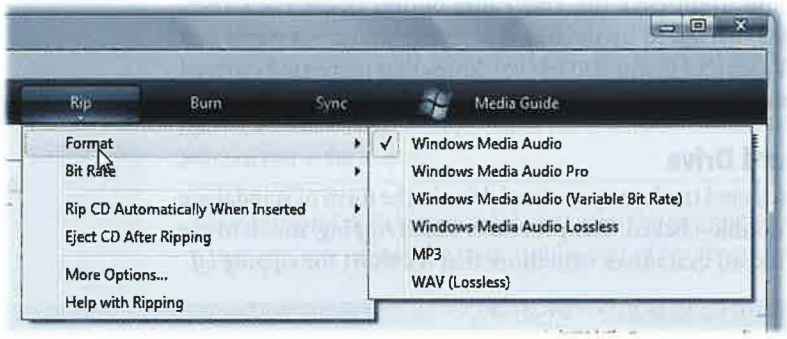


Figure 14-5: *Using this submenu, tell Windows how much to compress the song files (and sacrifice sound quality). If you don't need MP3 compatibility, Windows Media Audio (Variable Bit Rate) maximizes quality and minimizes file size by continuously adjusting the data rate along the song's length.*

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

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

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

Here's how you rip:

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

   The list of songs on the CD appears.

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

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

3. **Click Start Rip.**

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

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

Organizing Your Music Library

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Playlists

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

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

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

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



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

Deleting things

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

Burning Your Own CDs

All Versions

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

3. **Click Start Burn.**

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

Copying Music or Video to a Portable Player

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

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

POWER USERS' CLINIC

CD and DVD Format Fun

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

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

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

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

And now, some other notes about burning discs:

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

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

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

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

Automatic sync

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

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

Manual sync

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

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

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

Online Music Stores

All Versions

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

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

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

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

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

The stores fall into three categories:

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



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

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

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

Restrictions

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

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

Internet Radio

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

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

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

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

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

DVD Movies

All Versions

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Ditching the remote control

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

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

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



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

Pictures and Videos

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

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

Nevertheless, here's the rundown.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER
16

Media Center

Talk about a digital hub: Media Center is digital-hubbier than any other computer you can buy. This Vista program is the master storage and viewing center for all of your pictures, home movies, music, and TV shows (recorded or downloaded). Better still, it turns your PC into a full-blown digital video recorder, like a TiVo. It lets you watch TV, pause it, rewind and then fast-forward it, record it, and even burn the result to a DVD.

In fact, if you exploit Media Center to its extreme potential, you could ultimately sell every piece of entertainment hardware you own, including DVD players, televisions, and stereos, as well as your membership to the neighborhood movie rental store. With the right version of Vista, always-on Internet, and a well-endowed media center PC, you can simplify and organize your life, and unclutter your home at the same time—all with a single piece of equipment.

The good news is that you no longer need a special "Media Center Edition PC" to get all of this multimedia power; any PC can do this stuff, as long as it's running the *Home Premium or Ultimate* versions of Vista (see Figure 16-1). (The other editions don't include Media Center. Sorry, cubicle dwellers.)

Your Gear List

Home Premium • Ultimate

Even though Media Center works on the lowliest Vista PC, it reserves its best tricks for people whose computers have these high-end luxuries:

- **A TV tuner and cable connection.** You'll need these extras if you want to watch and record live TV on your PC. If your PC didn't come with a TV tuner, you can add one, either in the form of an external USB box or as an expansion card, for under $100.

  Even without a TV tuner, you can use all of Media Center's other features. Media Center works with TV shows you download from the Internet, your home videos, your pictures, and your music.

- **A DVD burner.** It's really great to be able to burn your recorded or downloaded TV shows to a DVD so you can watch them away from home.

- **A connection to your TV.** You can always curl up at your desk to watch TV and movies, but a lot of people find that setup a bit too geeky for their tastes. In a perfect world, you'd connect the PC to your television.

  The easiest way to do that is to run an S-video cable from the PC to the TV, although there are various other ways to do the job.

- **A remote control.** If you're going to connect your PC to a TV, you don't want to have to scramble across the room every time you want to make an adjustment. That's why some computers come with remote controls, so you can run the whole show from your couch. (A wireless keyboard and mouse are useful, too.)

Setup

Premium • Ultimate

Open Media Center by choosing its name from the Start→All Programs menu. You can also just type "Media" into the Start Menu; Windows then shows you all programs on your computer with "Media" in their name. If Media Center offers a little hello that says "Welcome!" and "Select Next to begin," then you've never opened the

POWER USERS' CLINIC

Media Center Extender

Q: What could possibly be better than running a cable from your PC to a TV, bringing all your Media Center videos and slideshows to the big screen?

A: *Not* running a cable.

That's right: you can connect the PC to the TV wirelessly—*if* you have an XBox 360, Microsoft's game console. The XBox has something called Media Center Extender technology built right in.

And if buying an XBox isn't in your future, companies like HP and Linksys offer dedicated Media Center devices.They connect to your home network either wirelessly, using WiFi, or, um, *wirefully,* using Ethernet.

To add a Media Center Extender to your PC, open Media Center, scroll down to Tasks, then scroll across to Add Extender. The Extender Setup walks you through the process of setting up the Extender.

Along the way, you'll be asked to enter the Media Center Extender's 8-digit serial number on your PC. That's a security measure that ties *your* Extender to *your* PC. (You wouldn't want your next-door neighbor enjoying your pictures and TV shows without your knowledge, would you?)

program before, and you'll have to set it up. That's what this section is about. (If you don't get the "Click next to begin" greeting, Media Player is already set up. Skip to the next section.)

Tip: You can always repeat the setup process later if necessary. Open Media Center. Then, from the main menu (in the middle of the screen, not the top), choose Tasks→Settings→General→Windows Media Center Setup→Run Media Center Setup Again.



Figure 16-1: *This is what you see once Media Center is set up. You can now buy music online and organize your existing music library, burn a CD of your favorite pictures, pause and rewind live TV, or schedule a program to record weekly.*

As you go, you'll notice that the Media Center *looks* nothing like normal Windows programs. There are no standard windows or menus. And the fonts are *huge*—they look like they've been designed to be read by someone 10 feet away.

In fact, they have. The Media Center interface is designed to be operated from a couch across the room from the TV; normal-size Windows text would be too small to read.

UP TO SPEED

Media Center vs. Media Center PCs

Don't confuse Vista's Media Center software with a "media center PC."

Media center PCs are usually high-dollar investments. They almost always come with TV tuners, high-end video cards, speaker systems, DVD burners, and large monitors. Their TV tuners may even be HDTV capable and accept input from other sources, like video cameras and old VCR players. You can connect a media center PC to a television in your family room.

Media Center, on the other hand, is just a program. It runs on any PC that has the Home Premium or Ultimate edition of Vista. You could even run Media Center *on* a "media center PC" and then connect it to a TV and other external devices—a dreamy setup indeed for the high-end couch potato.

Along the way, you may be asked to make a few additional decisions. For example, if you have an Internet connection, you'll need to decide if you want to use the online TV guide for your program listings. If so, you'll be prompted to input your Zip code. The Guide will show you everything that's going to be on TV in the next two weeks, making it simple for you to record stuff.

You may also be prompted to select your TV signal provider—Time Warner Cable or Comcast, for example. If you have a remote control, you'll be asked to configure it as well.

Figure 16-4 shows a best-case scenario.

Optional Display Setup

After you've completed the setup for the TV tuner, signal, and Guide, the Optional Setup page reappears. It offers three additional branches to the setup labyrinth.

Optimize how Windows Media Center looks on your display

During this setup cycle, you can specify how you want video to look on your PC monitor or a connected television. After all, even if you're already happy with how data looks on your computer screen, watching TV and movies is a whole different ballgame.

This setup step is a lot more fun than most, thanks to the professionally produced *video* that walks you through the steps. When you click Watch Video, a roomful of thin, 30-something models sit around an IKEA-furnished apartment and demonstrate various concepts relating to black levels, color cast, and so on.

Tip: Don't click the X in the top-right corner when the video is playing to stop it. If you do, the entire Media Center Setup closes and you'll have to start over!

During the display setup, you're asked to specify:

- **Which screen you want to use for Media Center's display, if you have more than one.** Choose the highest quality one. You'll get a great picture if you have your PC connected to a real television via an S-video cable, or, better yet, a DVI or HDMI cable (for HDTV sets).
- **What type of monitor you have.** You wouldn't want to tell Media Center you're using a CRT (tube) monitor when you actually have a high-end flat screen.
- **The type of connection that you use to connect your computer to your display.** This step appears only if you've connected an external screen to your PC; it tells Media Center how that TV or monitor is connected to the computer.

  Your choices are Composite or S-video; DVI, VGA, or HDMI; or Component (YpbPr).

  If you don't already know what kind of cable you've used, you may have to get on your hands and knees and peek behind your PC. Choose the connector that offers the best video quality. (See the box on page 508.)

(What's even more fun is taping *Jeopardy!*, watching it to learn the answers, and then playing it again "for the first time" when your spouse gets home.)

If you've equipped your PC with a TV tuner card (or tuner box), that's exactly what Media Center offers. And after you've tasted life with a DVR (digital video recorder), you'll find the commercials, rehashes, and previews of *live* TV to be excruciating.

Explore TV Features

The TV + Movies section of Media Center has lots of options. Open Media Center, select TV + Movies from the main menu, and browse away:

- **More TV.** Select an option (like Showcase, TV & Movies, Music & Radio, News & Sports, Games, and Lifestyle) to view subcategories of online and television shows. Showcase brings up TV channels, including Comedy Central and ABC Family, while TV & Movies offers ABC Enhanced TV, TitanTV, and shows like *American Chopper*. There's nothing like watching *American Chopper* any time you want!
- **Recorded TV.** This delicious category is the home of every TV show you've scheduled Media Center to record automatically, as described below.

  If you haven't recorded anything, you can at least play around with the short movie ads that Microsoft has provided for your experimentation pleasure.
- **Live TV.** This option says, "I just want to watch TV. I don't care about all of this other stuff." (See "Tricks with Live TV" on the facing page.)
- **Guide.** Here's the TV listing for your Zip code, specific to your cable or satellite company. The guide is downloaded automatically (if that's the way you configured it). Figure 16-5 shows an example.



Figure 16-5: *Use your remote control, mouse, or keyboard to navigate through the guide. Type a number into the remote's keypad to change channels. Click Skip (or something similar) to move forward in the Guide. Run the mouse over a show's title to read a short synopsis of the show. Right-click any show title (or use the remote's Info button) to get more program info, record the program, or record the series.*

recent 60 minutes or so. (You can see how full this *buffer* of temporarily recorded TV has become, as shown in Figure 16-13.)

Once it's cached, you can rewind what you've already watched (or what has been cached), and fast-forward through what you don't want to see, like commercials. If you hit the Pause button, your PC freezes the frame. Behind the scenes, it's still recording, saving up what's coming in live, so that you can fast-forward again when you're back from the bathroom or answering the door.

Note: You can't fast-forward into a live TV show until after you've paused or rewound it. Even Microsoft hasn't figured out a way to let you fast-forward into part of a TV show that hasn't yet been broadcast.

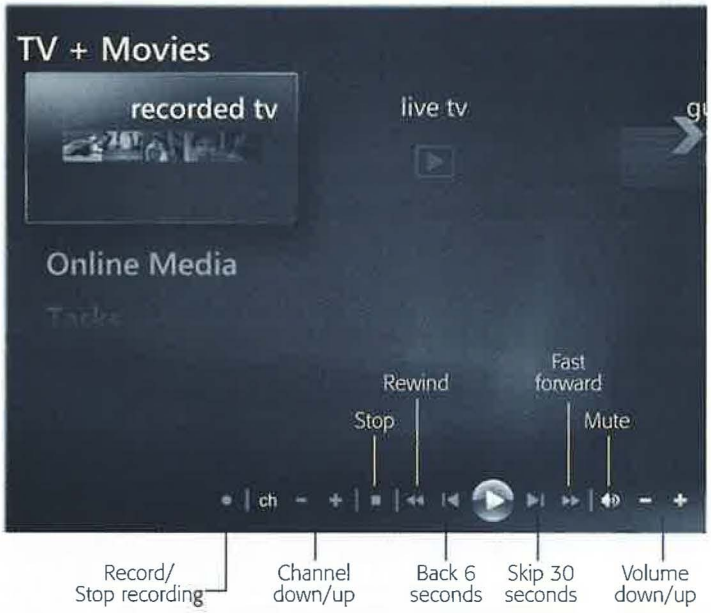


Figure 16-6:
If you're remoteless, move your mouse to the lower-right corner of the screen to summon these TV controls–everything you need for your DVR (digital video recorder) enjoyment. If course, if you have a remote control, you can use it instead.

Either way, the controls here all pertain to a show that's on the air right now.

A typical Media Center maven learns to harness this caching business in order to skip the ads. For example, you might turn on *Judge Judy* at 4 p.m., pause it, and then come back around 4:12, start it from the beginning and fast-forward through all the commercials when they appear. You'll be done by 4:30 and you can watch something else. (Or watch a trivia show like *Ben Stein's Money* for 30 minutes, rewind it to the beginning, and then watch it with someone you want to impress!)

Record a Show or a Season of Shows

To program your PC to record a show, you need a TV with a tuner, as described earlier. Then, do a little browsing for the show you want:

1. **Choose Start→Windows Media Center. Scroll to TV+Movies; choose Guide.**

   Your TV listings appear on the screen.

2. **Locate the show to record.**

   Use your remote control, the mouse, or the keyboard to locate the show you want. Position your mouse in the lower-right corner of the screen to summon the mouse-clickable controls, or use the arrow keys on the remote or keyboard to move through the programs.

Tip: Some special Media Center remote controls and keyboards offer a button that lets you scroll a day at a time; with the mouse, you're pretty much stuck scrolling hour by hour.

3. **Record the show.**

   Once you've found the show to record, click it once with the mouse, hit Return or Enter on the keyboard, or click OK on the remote control. The Program Info screen appears (Figure 16-7).

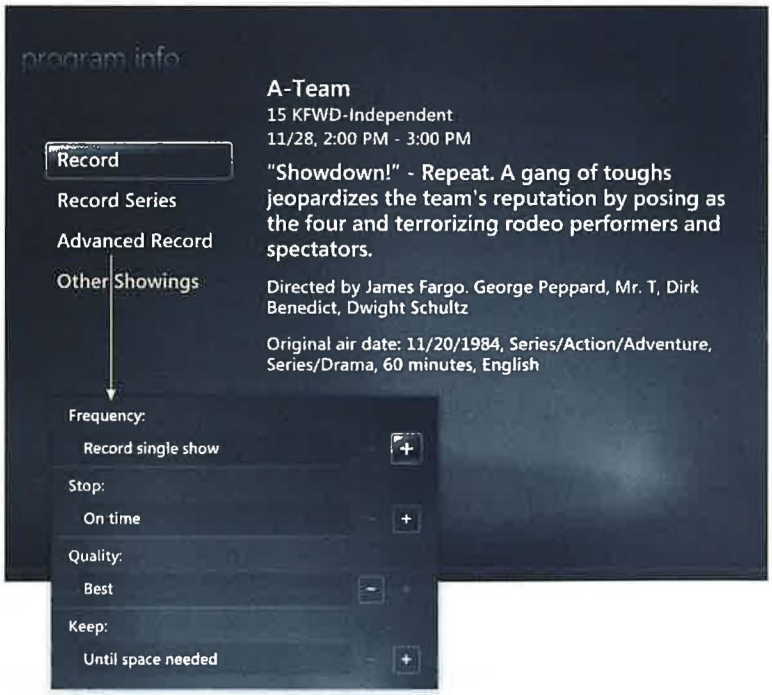


Figure 16-7: *Record means, "record this episode." Record Series makes your PC record every episode of the selected show—a significant advance from the VCR days.*

And then there's Advanced Record, which opens up some very useful settings for recording, like Frequency, quality, and adjustments to the start and stop time (to compensate for irregular broadcast times, also known as network audience-retention tactics).

From here, you can choose **Advanced Record**, which contains not-at-all advanced settings for recording, like Frequency (just this show, or the whole series?); Stop time (lets you end the recording between 5 minutes and 3 hours after it's scheduled

you can choose Delete, Restart, Keep Until, or Burn CD/DVD. You may see other options too, like Cast and More, or Extras.

Save a Show onto a DVD

If you've found something you really like and want to burn it to a DVD (suggestion: the movie *Time Bandits*)—assuming your PC *has* a DVD burner—follow these directions:

1. **Open Media Center. Insert a blank DVD. Go to Tasks→"Burn CD/DVD."**

   You're offered several DVD formats to burn, like Data DVD, Video DVD, or DVD Slide Show. To make a *backup* of your TV shows, for example (for use in a PC), you'd opt for the Data DVD. To save a TV show or movie onto a regular old DVD for playback in a DVD player, you want the regular Video DVD format.

2. **Select Video DVD. Click Next.**

   Now you're asked to name the DVD. If you have a remote control that has only number keys, you can use the clever little cellphone-like dialing pad to tap out alphabet letters. For example, to enter *Shrek,* you'd tap 7777 (for the letter S), 44, 777, 33, 55.

3. **Type out a name, and then click Next.**

   Now you're asked to choose *what* you want to burn onto your DVD. You can choose either Recorded TV or Video Library (which means any video files on your hard drive that *didn't* come from your TV tuner—your camcorder imports, for example).

4. **Click Recorded TV, and then click Next.**

   Media Center displays what's in your Recorded TV Library. Each show appears as a giant thumbnail image, complete with a checkbox in the lower-right corner.

5. **Turn on the checkboxes of the shows you want to transfer to DVD.**

   You can also use the Select All, Clear All, "by name," and "by date" controls for help in selecting or sorting the videos.

6. **Click Next.**

   You're offered one final chance to review and edit the list of shows. Here, you can click the up or down arrow buttons to rearrange their sequence on the DVD, rename a show, and so on.

7. **Click Burn DVD.**

   The burning process can take quite a while, depending on how much data you've added and how fast your CD/DVD burner is. Once the burn is finished, eject the disc and reinsert it to make sure it works.

Overall, though, this is a great way to get that must-see television show from your computer to the living room, or even those scintillating vacation pictures of Mexico, if you don't have a Media Center Extender!

Tip: You can follow these same steps to burn a slideshow onto a DVD, except, of course, that you should choose DVD Slide Show in step 2.

In fact, you can also insert a regular blank *CD,* although your options in that case are limited to making data discs or burning music CDs.

Renting and Buying Online Movies

Sure, you could drive to the video store, rent a movie (or even buy one), drive back home, and then try to bring the family together to watch it (because it's due back in a couple of days). But if you don't mind a little loss of picture quality, a smaller movie selection, few DVD extras, and a slightly shorter deadline, your Media Center can get you movies without the two trips to the video store. That's because Media Center is tied into MovieLink and CinemaNow, two online downloadable-movie companies.

To get started, you have to register. Open Media Center, select Online Media, select What's New, select TV & Movies, and then select the movie-download store you want. Once you sign up, log in, click Browse All Movies, and find a movie worth watching, you can finally click Rent Now to begin downloading it.

Note: Some movies, on some online stores, can be bought instead of rented. Buying a movie costs four or five times as much as renting it, but at least you can burn it to a DVD for permanence.

You have to wait for the download to finish before you can watch the movie; that's 10 or 20 minutes with high-speed cable. To watch a rented video, you have to install special CinemaNow or MovieLink software.

After the movie has downloaded, you can watch it by clicking Watch Movie. Then, click Play Download.

TROUBLESHOOTING MOMENT

Figure Out What's Not Working

Every month or so, it's a good idea to take inventory, to see how the Media Center TV recording empire is going. Perhaps you thought *American Idol* was a good program to record, but it turns out that everyone in your family watches it live, and nobody deletes the recorded episodes. Perhaps you thought you'd watch *Survivor,* but decided after a few shows that you just weren't into it. Every now and then, in other words, you should revisit your automatic recording schedule.

One way to take inventory is to see what's not being deleted (because it's not being watched). If you have 10 episodes of *Pimp My Ride,* for example, it may be because your kids are watching it at someone else's house; get it off of the Recorded TV list.

To cancel any recording, navigate to Recorded TV. Right-click the show you no longer want to record. Click Program Info, then Series Info, then Cancel Series.

Music: Your PC as Jukebox

Home Premium • Ultimate

You'll probably be listening to a lot of music in Media Center. If you'd rather use Windows Media Player, that's fine, but you can do a lot more with music in Media Center—like using a remote control.

Tip: Media Center music–any music, actually–sounds best on good speakers. To get the most out of your sound system, though, you'll need to connect them correctly, take the room's size and layout into consideration, and consider equalization options. If you'd like some guidance, you can download a free bonus appendix to this chapter that describes how to set up a surround-sound system step by step. It's called Surround Sound Setup.pdf, and it's available on this book's "Missing CD" at *www.missingmanuals.com.*

Use the arrow keys (on the keyboard or remote) to scroll through the main Media Center menu (Music, TV+Movies, and so on). Select Music to get started, and then, from the Music options, select Music Library. (The Music Library is, wildly enough, where your music is stored.) If Media Center asks you to set up the Music library automatically, select OK.

Once setup is complete, you're ready to rock and roll!

Your Music Library

Sooner or later, it will occur to you that your copy of Windows Vista actually comes with *two* massive music- and video-playing programs: Windows Media Center and Windows Media Player. Inevitably, there's quite a bit of duplication.

Fortunately, your PC has only *one* video and music library, which serves up the same music and movies to *both* Media Center and Media Player. If you've already added music to Media Player (Chapter 14), then it shows up in Media Center, too.

Ripping CDs

To *rip* a CD means to copy its songs onto your computer. You now have two different programs that can do the ripping—Media Center and Media Player.

Truth is, Media Player is the better program to use for ripping CDs. For one thing, it lets you rip only *some* of the songs from a CD. For another, you can configure Media Player to start ripping automatically whenever you insert a CD into your drive. And you're not wasting any effort, since all CD music winds up in the same central PC music library, whether Media Player or Media Center does the work.

Still, Media Center *can* rip CDs if you're so inclined. Here's how it works:

1. **Open Media Center and insert a CD.**

   The CD starts playing. If you want to listen to the CD, that's fine; it can keep playing while you rip the tunes. If you don't want to listen to the CD, move the mouse to the lower right of the screen and click the Pause button.

2. Click Copy CD. When asked if you're sure, click Yes.

   Ripping an entire CD (that is, copying it to your hard drive) takes about 5 minutes. Once the ripping process is done, nothing happens at all; you see only a little note that the ripping process is complete. To rip another CD, eject the first one and insert another.

After all the ripping is finished, click the Back button (top-left corner of Media Center). You arrive at the main Music screen (Figure 16-8). Here, you can view the song list, view the queue, and select Visualize to listen to the music with wild, laser-light-show graphics.



Figure 16-8: *When you insert a CD while Media Center is on, the CD plays automatically. Several choices are then displayed on the left side: Copy CD, View Queue, Visualize, Play Slide Show, Shuffle, Repeat, and Buy Music. To rip the CD to your PC, select Copy CD.*

To return to the Music Library, click Back *again*; select Music, and then Music Library. (Media Center remote controls usually have a Music button that shortens those steps.)

Tip: You can edit album or song information from the queue list as detailed in the previous section, or you can edit them directly from the Music Library. To edit a song, album, or album artist, locate the item to edit in the library, right-click that item, and select Edit. You can change the album title, artist name, and genre. This is particularly helpful for songs that are listed in the wrong genre or for a remake or live version of a song you already have on your hard drive.

Playing Music

The first thing you'll notice when you open the Music part of Media Center is that there are songs in there—but not all of them are yours! In fact, if you've never worked with music before, you may have a dozen or so songs in there you've never heard of.

Consider them a little gift from Microsoft, presumably so that you can start fooling around with the Media Center even if you've never downloaded or ripped a single song in your life. Figure 16-9 shows you how.

Tip: Figure 16-9 shows that you can return to the Artists list by repeatedly clicking the Back button. Depending on your PC model, though, there might be a more efficient way.

Your keyboard or remote control may offer a button for Music or Music Library. If so, clicking it takes you back to the main Music Library menu page.

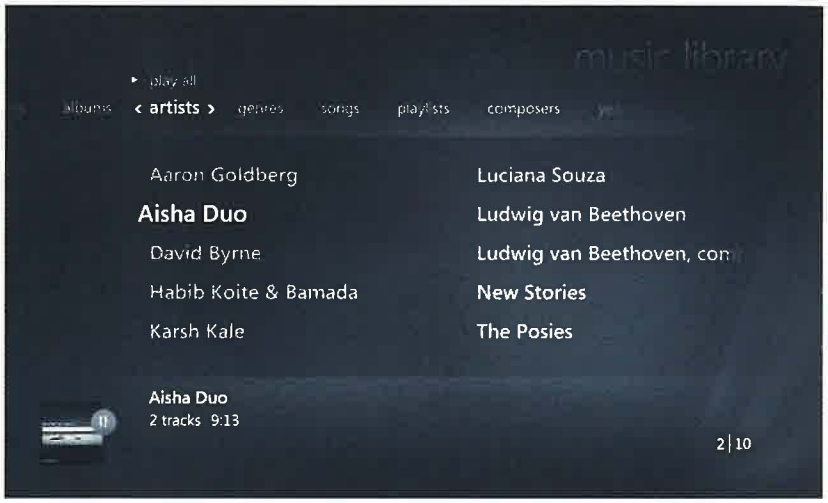


Figure 16-9: *Use the arrow keys to highlight the sort criterion you want (albums, artists…), and then use the down arrow to browse your collection. You can then play the entire album or one song, burn the album to a CD, delete a song from the list, add the song to a queue, and more. Return to the Artists list by repeatedly clicking the Back button.*

Music you've ripped shows up in the list illustrated in Figure 16-9, too. You can burrow to it through any of the criteria headings: Artist, Genre, whatever.

When you've drilled all the way down to a song's name, you'll see a list of options at the left side of the screen:

- **Play Song (or Play Album).** If you have a special media-control keyboard, or a remote control, you can use it to skip songs, pause and play, control the volume, and so on. If not, position the mouse at the bottom-right corner of the screen, and use the playback controls that pop up there.
- **Add to Queue.** This option presumes that some other song is already playing; it means, "line up this song to play next."

- **Buy Music.** Takes you online so you can pay for more tunes. (As you'll discover, the music store is not designed to be operated from across the room. You'll have to move close to the screen and use the keyboard and mouse.)
- **Edit Info.** Change the song's title, rating, and so on. (The cellphone-like number pad at the right side is intended to help you input text using only your remote control. It ain't pretty, but it works.)
- **Delete.** In other words, you've had quite enough of this song.

Buy or "Rent" Music Online

Ripping music from your CD collection is one legal way to build up your library. Buying it online is another (see Figure 16-10).

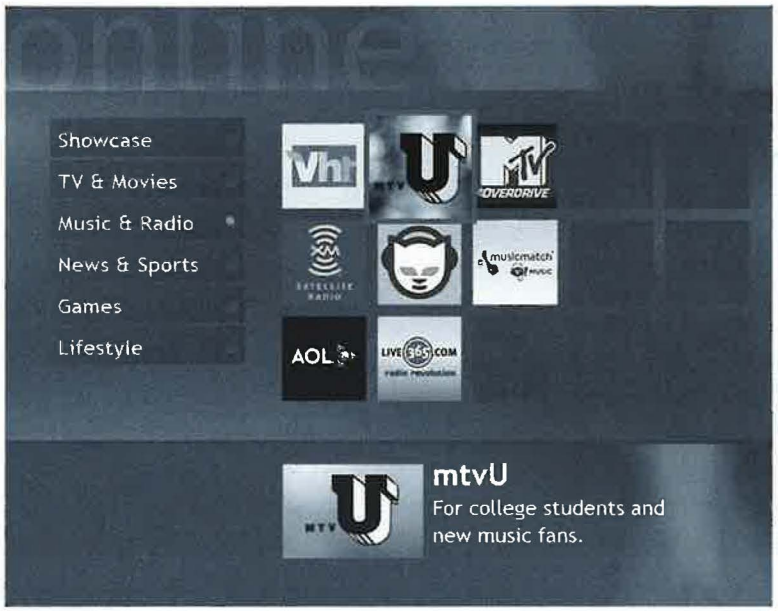


Figure 16-10: *To see what's available in the way of online media, open Media Center, select Music, and select More Music. Now choose Music & Radio. There are lots of choices, including VH1, MTV Overdrive, XM Satellite Radio, Napster, Musicmatch, AOL Music, and Live365.com. To obtain music from any of them, click the one you like best and work through the subscription process. Once you've done that, follow the directions from the media's Web site to select and download music. Many of these music services also give you access to Internet radio.*

You'll soon discover that the online music-store racket has evolved into two different business models:

- **Buy the songs for $1 each.** These songs are copy-protected, but you can copy them to up to four other PCs, burn them to CD, or download them to a pocket music player. Usually.
- **Rent the songs.** You pay $10 or $15 a month for the right to download all the music you want—flat fee, baby. The only downside is that when you stop paying the fee, all your music self-destructs. You're left with nothing but memories.

Managing the queue

The queue begins to play the minute you add something to it. If you want to edit, clear, or get info on it, select "Now Playing and Queue" in Media Center's main menu. Select Music→View Queue.

Tip: While a song is playing, you can also view and edit the queue by clicking once on the album's icon in the bottom-left corner of the screen.

At this point, you can delve in using three different methods:

- **Edit the queue.** From the Queue page, select Edit Queue. You can now delete any song from the list by clicking the X, or change the order of the queue by clicking the up and down arrows next to any song. When you're finished, click Done.
- **Scramble the queue.** From the Queue page, select Shuffle. The songs in the list now play in random order.
- **Empty the queue.** From the Queue page, select Clear Queue. (No songs are actually deleted from your hard drive or library.)
- **Manage the queue.** Right-click any song in the queue list (or click the More Info button on your remote) and select View Details. Choose Play Song to play the song now. Choose Delete to permanently delete the song from the computer. Click Edit to change details about the song, like the song name, artist name, and rating.

Photos and Video

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Just above Music in Media Center's blue-toned main menu is the intriguing entry, Pictures+Videos. Here you'll find a list of all the digital photos and video clips that Media Center found when you first showed it which folders you wanted it to watch.

UP TO SPEED

Videos

Media Center can also handle video clips, like the masterpieces you make with Movie Maker (Chapter 15). A Videos category is also listed in the Pictures+Videos mode. As it turns out, you navigate your Videos and Pictures folders in exactly the same way:

Find a video by drilling down to it.

Sort the videos by clicking a heading above them: Folders, Date Taken, Tags, and so on. (Tags are keywords that you make up; see Chapter 13.)

Play a video by highlighting its icon and pressing Enter or Play.

Control playback using your remote control, if you have one. If not, use the buttons that appear when your mouse approaches the lower-right corner of the screen.

After a video plays, you're offered a Finished screen with three choices: Done, Restart (meaning play again), and Delete. The fourth option—Back—appears only when you mouse your way to the top-left corner of the screen.

Once again, Microsoft starts you off with some basic pictures and vids, so that, at the very least, you can practice navigating the system.

To view some photos, select Pictures+Videos, and open Picture Library. From here, you can view sample photos, as shown in Figure 16-11.



Figure 16-11: *To navigate the Picture Library, run your mouse across the titles in the Picture Library and highlight Folders. Once highlighted, move your mouse to the area underneath Folders, and hover your mouse over Sample Pictures, shown here.*

Once again, you work this mode by drilling down. Highlight a folder (Sample Pictures, say) and then press Enter. If you then highlight an individual photo, clicking Enter makes it fill your screen.

Tip: To close the picture, click the Back button. (Don't click the X button at the top right of the screen—you'll shut down the entire Media Center!)

Slideshows

Alternatively, click "Play slide show" at the top of the screen to trigger a magnificent full-screen display. To control its playback using a remote control, use its buttons; if you're using the mouse, move the cursor to the bottom-right corner of the screen to make the playback controls appear. You can also manually move from one image to another using the Fast-forward and Rewind buttons.

Click the Back button in the top-left corner to close the slideshow.

Adding music

Of course, just about any slideshow is more compelling if there's music playing in the background. In Media Center, that's an easy effect:

1. **Start the music playing.**

   In Media Center, click Music→Music Library. Select an album, playlist, or other music grouping, and then click Play.

2. **Return to the Pictures+Videos screen.**

   To do that, click the Back button enough times to return to Media Center's main menu, and then select Pictures+Videos.

3. **Select Picture Library, select a photos folder, and then hit Play Slideshow.**

   The music you started continues as the slideshow proceeds.

Slideshow settings

Unless you change the settings, the standard slideshow presents your pix in random order, a new photo every 12 seconds, with a standard crossfade (transition) effect.

Frankly, however, 12 seconds per photo is an *eternity* if you're anyone but the subject of the photo (or you're in love with that subject). Fortunately, you can change the settings easily enough; see page 529.

Editing Pictures

If you really want to edit your photos, of course, Microsoft has a specialized new Vista tool just for you: Photo Gallery (Chapter 13).

But sometimes you spot a misrotated photo, a picture that needs cropping, or some red-eye in a portrait that you just want to fix quickly without exiting Media Center. Sure enough, you can actually perform basic photo editing from the comfort of your own living room couch.

Start at the thumbnails page. Right-click the problem photo; next, from the shortcut menu, choose Picture Details.

Now you arrive at a new screen that lists tasks at the left side. You can click Rotate to rotate the photo 90 degrees clockwise—a great way to fix a photo that you took with your camera turned vertically.

The real fun, though, awaits when you click Touch Up. On this new screen, these more powerful editing options beckon:

- **Red Eye** is a fully automatic tool. Click the words Red Eye to trigger Vista's "Do your best to remove the reddish retinal reflection from the subject of this flash photo so my loved one doesn't look so much like the spawn of Satan" function.
- **Contrast** is another fully automated feature. One click makes Media Center attempt to improve the tonal range of the photo—the brights and darks.

- Crop places a smaller rectangle within the larger frame of your photo, indicating which part of the photo it plans to keep. Everything in the dimmed, foggy outer margins will shortly be hacked away. Click the directional arrow buttons to position the crop box, the magnifying glass buttons to shrink or enlarge the cropping rectangle, or the far-right button to rotate the cropping rectangle by 90 degrees. The actual crop doesn't take place until you click Save (described next).

When you're finished, click Save. You're asked if you want to replace the original; click Yes. There is no other option for saving.

Tip: Click Next and Previous to edit additional pictures.

Burn a CD of Pictures or Videos

Burning photos or videos to a CD or DVD is a handy way to make a backup of them, and it's also a convenient way of taking them with you to a friend's house or a party.

Note: You're not actually creating a music CD that will play in a CD player, or a video DVD that plays in a DVD player. You're basically creating backup discs that hold a lot of computer files–and that are designed to go into another *computer.*

If you want to burn a music CD or video DVD, see Chapters 14 and 15.

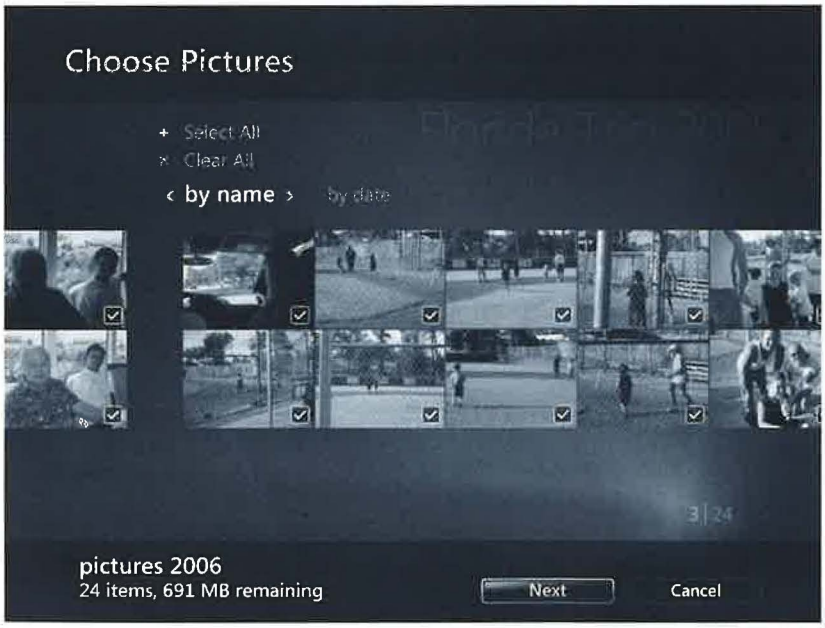


Figure 16-12: *Drill down into the Picture Library subfolders to select pictures you want to add. You can select entire folders or single images. Once you've selected a picture, a folder of pictures, or a mish-mash of pictures in any one subfolder, click Next.*

Start on the Media Center main menu. Choose Tasks→Burn CD/DVD.

Vista asks you to insert a blank CD or DVD, if you haven't done so already. (What it *actually* says is, "Insert media," but it means a blank disc; nobody expects you to insert *CBS News* or the *New York Times.*)

Insert a blank disc and then click Retry; choose the CD or DVD type (Data CD or Audio CD); type a name; choose the photos folder or music album you want to back up (Figure 16-12); and then click Burn CD (or Burn DVD).

Tip: During the Burn CD/DVD process, Vista invites you to click OK if you want to do other work while the disc is being burned. Light background work like typing or Web surfing should be no problem. Heavy work (Photoshop, video editing) can interfere with the burning, however, resulting in a half-burned, failed disc—yet another Frisbee for the yard!

Advanced Settings

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Once you've had a little experience with Media Center, the elaborate preferences screens will make a lot more sense. To access the advanced settings, select Tasks on the main Media Center menu, and then select Settings. Here, you'll find all sorts of ways to personalize Media Center.

Most are self-explanatory, but here are a few items worthy of special note:

General

On the General options screen, you can change the following:

- **Startup and Windows Behavior.** Should Media Center always stay on top of other windows, start up automatically when Windows starts, or allow alert messages to appear?
- **Parental Controls.** You can set up a four-digit password that stands between your kids and TV, movies, and DVDs that you consider too violent or racy for them.
- **Optimization.** Schedule a time to run these hard drive tune-up tasks, and they'll run automatically. You should configure this for a time when you won't be using the Media Center, but when the computer is also on and idle.

TV

From the TV options page, you can change the following:

- **Recorder.** You can specify what drive your PC saves TV shows onto, the maximum TV limit, and recording quality. Figure 16-13 shows an example.

  There are plenty of options under Recording Defaults on this page. The ones you'll likely be most interested in are how to record TV series (do you want to record reruns or not?), how many shows you want to keep for a series before writing

Pictures

In Tasks→Pictures, you'll find options like these:

- **Show pictures in random order, Show pictures in subfolders, Show caption.** The only option that needs explanation here is "Show caption." It makes each photo's filename and date taken appear in the slideshow along with the picture.
- **Show song information at the beginning or end of a song, Always, Never.** That is, when you've added background music, do you want the name of the currently playing song (and the performer, album, and so on) to appear on the screen during the slideshow?
- **Transition type.** You have a couple of options for the way one photo fades into the next.
- **Transition time** can be between 2 seconds and a minute. Two or 3 seconds per photo is usually plenty.
- **Slideshow background color** can be black, white, or 50 percent gray. (If the photo fills the screen, of course, you don't see this background color. It appears only when the photo is, for example, an upright shot that leaves empty space on either side of your wide screen.)

Music

From the Music options, you have only two choices:

- **Visualizations.** If you like to trip with the daisies while listening to music, check all of the visualizations (music-driven screen savers) here.
- **Visualization Options.** Make visualizations play every time music plays. Show song information at the beginning and end of a song, always, or never.

DVD

From the DVD options, you can change the following:

- **DVD Language.** If you're into foreign films or want to learn a new language, change these options. Leave subtitles enabled or disable them, change the audio track to another language, and change the DVD menus to another language. For kicks, change the Menu language to Albanian.
- **Closed Captioning.** Again, easy enough. Turn on closed captioning when the media is muted, turn it off completely, or turn it on so it's on all the time.
- **Remote Control Options.** Change the Skip and Replay buttons to skip chapters, skip forward and back, or to change angles.

Library Setup

On this screen, you can tell Media Center to "watch" a new folder (that is, to add the video, photo, or music contents of a folder on your hard drive to its listings automatically) or to stop watching one.

CHAPTER
19

Laptops, Tablets, and Palmtops

In Windows Vista, Microsoft makes its biggest nod yet to a raging trend in computing: portability. Laptop sales are trouncing desktop PC sales. In some industries, palmtops or touch-screen PCs are even replacing laptops. And for millions of people, the computing platform of choice isn't a computer at all—it's a cellphone.

That's why Vista is crammed with special features for the peripatetic PC. For example, it has new features for laptops, including a way to change your power-consumption configuration with a quick click on the battery icon in the Notification Area, and a new Mobility Center that lets you switch quickly among networks and workplaces.

Working with a Tablet PC (a touch-screen laptop or slate) is now easier than ever, too, thanks to new or beefed-up features like pen control, digital ink text input, handwriting recognition, and more. (This stuff used to be available only in a special Tablet PC edition of Windows; for the first time, it's part of the basic operating system.)

And finally, if you're a fan of Pocket PC palmtops, Windows Mobile smartphones, or Ultra-Mobile PCs, Vista offers the new Sync Center. It keeps your address book, to-do lists, and email synchronized with your main PC.

Laptops

All Versions

As you can read on page 298, Vista has a full-blown control panel that's dedicated to managing battery power. You can control the screen brightness, wireless antenna strength, and other features, all in the name of saving juice.

That's not the only gift to laptoppers in Vista, however. Read on for all the good stuff.

Battery Meter

The notification area (system tray) has always displayed a little battery meter that shows how your laptop's battery charge is doing. Its icon looks like a battery with a plug beside it when it's plugged into a power outlet, or a battery alone when it's not.

If you point to this icon without clicking, a tooltip displays the status of your laptop's battery, including the current battery charge and what power plan (page 298) you're using. There's more to it than that, though, as you can see in Figure 19-1.

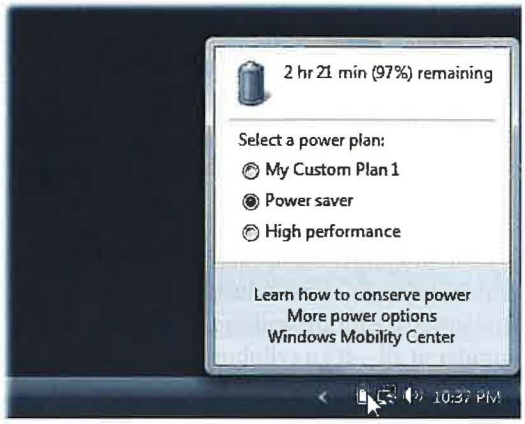


Figure 19-1:
To change the power configuration plan on the fly, click the Battery Meter icon once, and click again on the power plan you'd like to use.

If you click the battery meter icon, you can choose these options from the pop-up menu:

- **Learn how to conserve power.** Opens Windows Help and Support to the "Conserving battery power" page, where you can read how to get the most out of your laptop's battery.
- **More power options.** Opens Power Options window (in the Control Panel), where you can change the plan on the Battery Meter and change plan settings.
- **Windows Mobility Center.** Opens the new Mobility Center, described next.

Mobility Center

This new Vista program appears in your Start→All Programs→Accessories menu no matter what kind of computer you have, but it's intended primarily for laptops. It's a handy, centralized hub for everything that makes a laptop a laptop (Figure 19-2): battery, wireless networking, external projector connection, and so on.

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

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

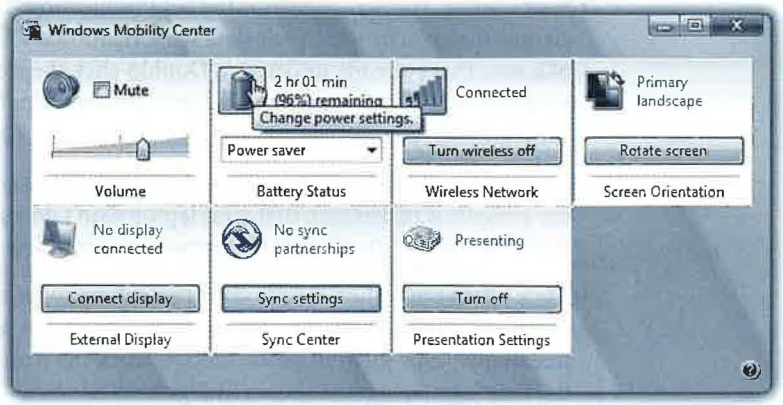


Figure 19-2: *Each tile of this strange new hybrid program/control panel displays the status of a different laptop component: volume, network, battery charge, and so on. Double-click the icon on a tile to open the settings page for that component.*

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

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

- **Screen Rotation.** This one shows up only on Tablet PCs. It lets you turn the screen image 90 degrees. Double-click the icon to open the Display Settings control panel for additional screen settings.
- **External Display.** Have you hooked up a second monitor? If so, click "Connect display" to make Vista aware of its new responsibilities. This tile also reveals whether or not Vista "sees" the second screen. Double-click the icon to open the Display Settings control panel, where you can configure the resolution and other settings of the second monitor.
- **Sync Center.** The Sync Center is the communications hub for palmtops and other gizmos that synchronize their data with Windows. This tile shows you the status of a sync that's already under way. Double-click the icon to open the Sync Center program, where you can set up new sync "partnerships" between your PC and your extra gizmos (page 587).
- **Presentation Settings.** This feature is the answer to a million PowerPoint pitchers' prayers: it makes sure that your laptop won't do anything embarrassing while you're in the middle of your boardroom presentation.

  Click "Turn on." When the tile says "Presenting," your laptop won't go to sleep. No alarms or reminder dialog boxes appear. The screen saver doesn't kick in. You're free to give your pitch in peace. Double-click the icon to open the new Presentation Settings dialog box shown in Figure 19-3.

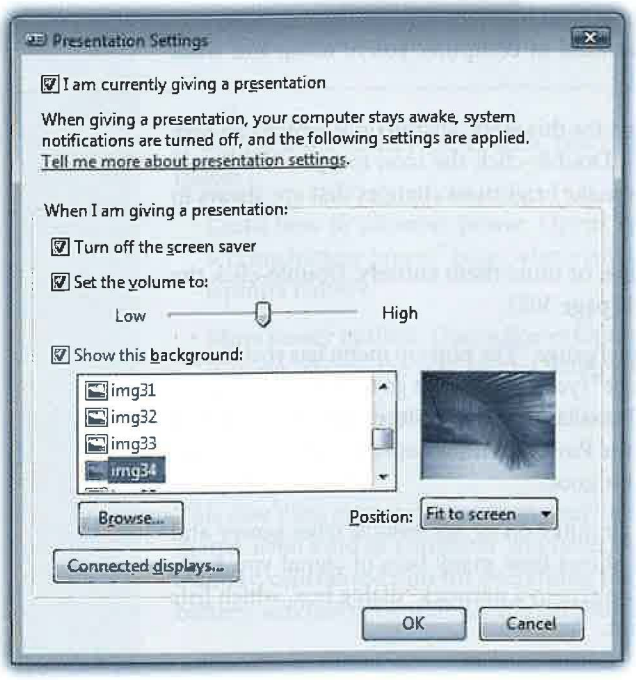


Figure 19-3:
When you're in presentation mode, your screen saver and system notifications won't appear, and your laptop won't go to sleep. You might also want to specify a piece of uncontroversial artwork for your desktop wallpaper, so your bosses and potential employers won't accidentally spot the HotBikiniBabes.com JPEG that you usually use.

Note: You also enter presentation mode when you hook up a network projector (page 256), or when you connect an external monitor. (A New Display Detected dialog box appears, complete with an option to turn on presentation mode.)

Tablet PCs

Home Premium • Business • Enterprise • Ultimate

A Tablet PC is like a laptop with a key difference—it has a touch screen. In theory, that design means that a Tablet PC can be thinner and lighter than a laptop, because it can do without a keyboard.

When Microsoft unveiled its concept for the Tablet PC in 2002, it was convinced that the tablet was the future. "Within five years, I predict it will be the most popular form of PC sold in America," Bill Gates told the crowd at a keynote speech.

Clearly, that never happened. The Tablet PC isn't exactly dead, but its popularity centers on fairly rarefied circles: health care, insurance, and so on.

Maybe Vista will give the whole thing a boost. For the first time, the Tablet PC's features are right there in the main version of Windows (it used to require a specialized version): pen features, touch-screen features, digital ink, handwriting recognition, and so on.

The Mobile PC Control Panel

Almost all of the goodies waiting for you, the tablet fan, are available in the Mobile PC applet of the Control Panel.

If you have a tablet, you can make life easier for yourself by adding the Mobile PC control panel to the top of your Start menu, where it's easy to get to. Figure 19-4 shows the result you're after.

Handwriting Recognition

The accuracy and convenience of Vista's handwriting recognition have come a very long way—which is fortunate indeed, since some Tablet PCs don't have keyboards (or have keyboards that you can detach). You can tell Vista if you're left- or right-handed, use the Handwriting Recognizer to help Vista recognize your handwriting nuances, and turn on Automatic Learning, so Vista learns about you as you learn about it. Hey, if Tablet PCs can decipher doctors' handwriting, surely you can get your Tablet PC to recognize yours.

Using a pop-up transcription window called the Input panel, you can enter text anywhere you can type: Word, email programs, your Web browser, and so on. Vista also comes with a special program called Windows Journal that's a note-taking module designed expressly for tablets.

Teaching Vista how you write

The Handwriting Recognizer increases the chances that Vista will recognize your handwriting correctly. You provide samples of your handwriting, and Vista studies your style. Figure 19-6 shows you how to start the process.



Figure 19-4: *Click Start→Control Panel. Drag Mobile PC–either the little laptop icon itself or the words "Mobile PC"–to the Start button. Without releasing the mouse, wait for the Start menu to open, and then drop the Mobile PC icon at the top-right corner of the Start menu. You can now get to the settings quickly.*

You're offered the chance to write either sentences or numbers, symbols, and letters; for best accuracy, you should work through both. More than once, in fact. (They're not brief exercises—the Sentences option involves about 50 screens—but the effort's for a good cause.) Write just the way you would on paper—in cursive, printing, or a mixture of both.

After working through the Handwriting Recognizer, you can start using handwriting recognition.

Tip: If you turn on Automatic Learning, Vista learns more and more about your handwriting the more you use it. To do that, open the Mobile PC control panel. Click Tablet PC Settings→Enable or Disable Handwriting Personalization→Handwriting Recognition tab. Turn on Use Automatic Learning (Recommended).

Handwriting anywhere

To make Vista recognize your handwriting, open any program where you would otherwise type—a word processor, for example.

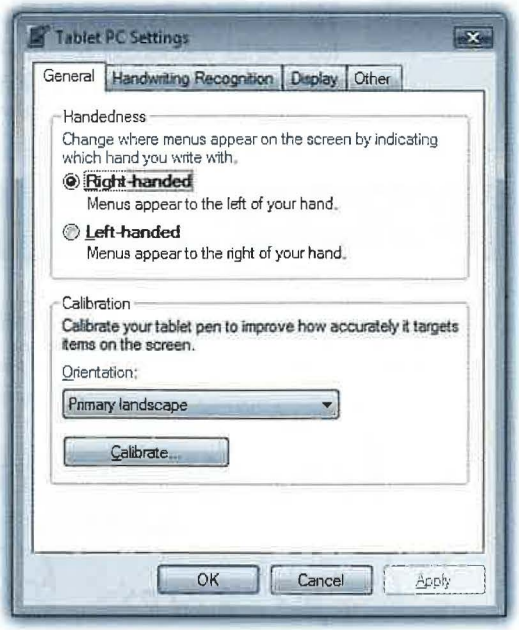


Figure 19-5:
In Tablet PC Settings, you can tell Vista if you're left- or right-handed, calibrate the screen, and select an orientation. Landscape is the "long way," larger on the horizontal side, and Portrait is the "tall way," larger on the vertical side. Calibrating the screen guides you through tapping a crosshair until the screen is fully aligned.

Now open the Input panel, which is a floating handwriting window that automatically converts anything you write into typed text (Figure 19-7). You can summon the Input panel in several ways:

- Tap to put the insertion point in a text-entry area—an empty word processor document or email message, for example, or the Address bar of a Web browser. A tiny Input panel *icon* appears right by the insertion point (Figure 19-7, top); tap it.
- Tap the Input panel *tab*, which peeks out from the left edge of the screen (Figure 19-7, middle).

Tip: If you're left-handed, you'll probably want to move the panel to the *right* side of the screen, which you can do by dragging its outer edge.

- Use the Input panel *gesture*. Most gestures (page 578) involve quick strokes on the tablet's surface; this one, however, is a quick, side-to-side movement of your pen *just above* the surface of, but not touching, the screen.

To turn on this option, open the Mobile PC control panel (page 575), and, under "Pen and Input Devices," click "Change tablet pen settings." On the Pen Options tab, click Start Tablet PC Input panel, click Settings, and turn on "Enable start Input panel gesture." Click OK.

Tip: Even after you've turned on this option, summoning the Input panel with a gesture can be tricky. Try four to six fast, diagonal, four-inch motions of the pen, just above the surface of the screen. Experiment with speed and distance, and keep in mind that the panel won't open if it's already open. (Duh!)

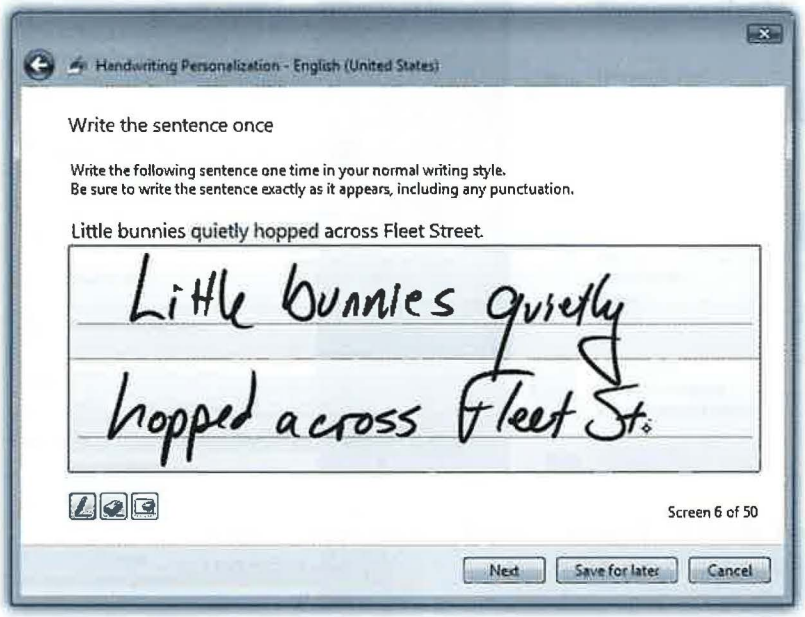


Figure 19-6: *To find the Handwriting Recognizer tool, tap Start, and in the Search window, type Hand. The results in the Start menu include "Personalize handwriting recognition." (Or, if you're a mouser, choose Start→All Programs→Tablet PC→Tablet PC→"Personalize handwriting recognition.") Select it. From the options, choose "Teach the recognizer your handwriting style."*

Once the Input panel is open, the buttons in the top-left corner offer three ways to enter text. (Point without clicking to see their names, or consult Figure 19-8.

The Writing pad is by far the most convenient method. To use it, just start writing on the line. Use your normal writing style.

At first, the "digital ink" just sits there where you wrote it. The input panel expands, adding new lines as necessary, as you write. But when you tap the little Insert button, the ink vanishes—and the converted, typed text appears in your document or dialog box.

Gestures

In the pen-computing world, a *gesture* is a quick pen movement that lets you "type" a Space (a long, quick line to the right), a Backspace (long and quick to the left), a press of the Enter key, or a Tab (Figure 19-9).

To try out a gesture or two, make sure the input panel is *completely empty.* You're going to draw one of these special shapes in the input panel, but you'll see its *effect* in whatever Windows program you're using. You don't have to tap Insert or wait, as you do when writing; Vista recognizes the gestures instantly.

You can also scratch out text in the input pad *before* it gets transcribed. Just scribble it out, just as you'd scratch out handwriting on a real piece of paper (Figure 19-7). You can draw a straight line through what you've written, scribble out with an M or W motion, draw looping scribbles, and so on. The text disappears from the pad.

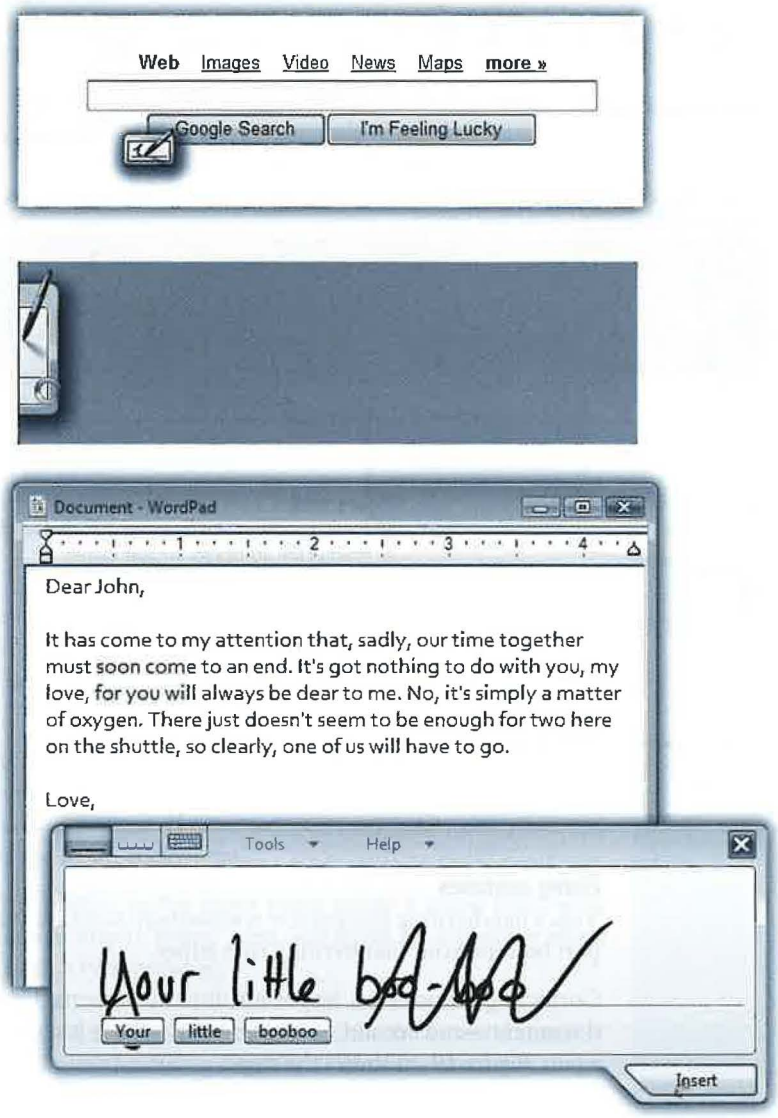


Figure 19-7:
Top: You can open the Input panel by tapping the Input panel icon that appears next to any selected text box.

Middle: You can also tap the tiny tab that hugs the edge of the screen.

Bottom: Once the Input panel is open, you can use it to enter text into any program at all. If you make an error before hitting the Insert button, you can just scribble it out to make it disappear. (Hint: You can customize the heck out of the Input panel—ink thickness, tab appearance, and so on—by choosing Tools→Options within the panel.)

Tip: In Windows XP Tablet Edition, there was only one scratch-out gesture: a Z-shaped scratch-out. If you'd like to return to those halcyon days, choose Tools→Options in the Input panel. From the Gestures tab, select "Only the Z-shaped scratch-out gesture that was available in Microsoft Windows XP Tablet Edition" (Figure 19-9).



Figure 19-8: *The three tiny buttons here offer three text-input methods. Figure 19-7 shows the Writing pad. Shown here at top: the Character pad, where you write letters one by one, and wait as they're recognized individually.*

Bottom: The On-Screen keyboard. Use your pen to tap letters on the graphical keyboard one by one. It's a slow, painful, arduous way of inputting data.

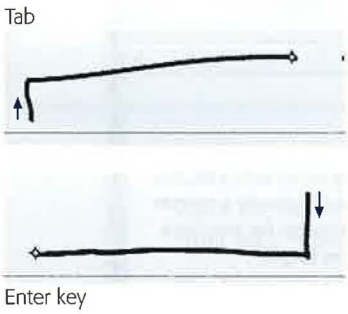


Figure 19-9: *Mastering gestures can be tricky. If it's not working for you, try writing faster, or making the horizontal strokes longer.*

Fixing mistakes

Vista's handwriting recognition is amazingly accurate. It is not, however, perfect—in part because your handwriting isn't either.

Correcting a mistake is important for two reasons. First, it fixes the error in your document—and second, it *teaches* Vista so that it's less likely to make that mistake again. Figure 19-10 shows the steps.

The finer points of handwriting recognition

The handwriting recognition feature in Vista is considerably better than it was on the old Windows XP Tablet Edition. Here are a few reasons why:

- **AutoComplete.** As you write in the Input panel, AutoComplete attempts to save you time by guessing what you're going for. If it's right, tap the guess and enjoy how Windows finishes your word.



Figure 19-10: *Top: The first step in correcting a mistranscribed word is to tap it (that is, Vista's version—not your handwriting), as shown here.*

Bottom: Windows offers a selection of other possible readings of your scrawl. Tap the one you wanted. If it's not there, you'll have to correct it one letter at a time; just write directly over the wrong letter, or use the drop-down alphabet menu beneath it.

- **Scratch-out gestures.** As mentioned earlier, scratch-out gestures let you use your pen to erase anything you've handwritten by scratching it out with the pen. You can customize Scratch-Out Gestures from the Input panel's Tools→Options→Gestures tab.
- **Back-of-pen erase.** Some tablet pens have an "eraser end" that lets you erase text you've written. To find out if your pen is so equipped, flip it upside-down and drag across something you've written. If an eraser icon appears—and your text disappears—then you're one of the lucky ones.
- **Web quick keys.** The Web button in the Input panel opens a panel filled with one-tap bits of Web addresses: http://, www., .com, and so on. It's a lifesaver when you're using your tablet with a Web browser.

Note: Anything you tap on the Num, Sym, or Web panels gets deposited directly into your document. It doesn't first appear in the Input panel, like your handwriting does. After all, Windows is already *sure* of what you intended to type; there's no need for you to approve or correct it.

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

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

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

Windows Journal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

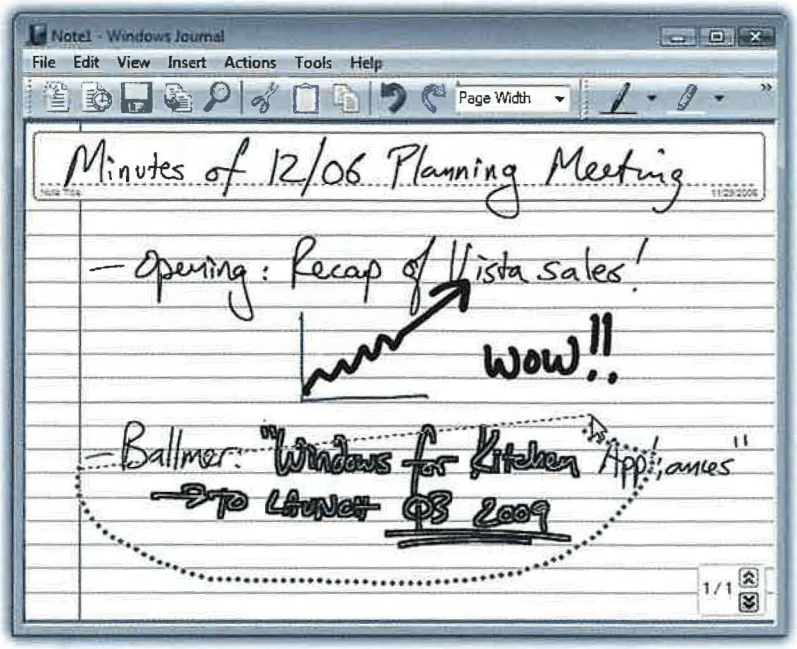


Figure 19-11: *Windows Journal stores your handwriting as digital ink, without attempting to convert everything to typed text. Still, it's not stupid. You can, for example, search your reams of notes for a certain word or phrase. You can also use the Selection tool (looks like a rope lasso) to select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

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

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

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

Flicks

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

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

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

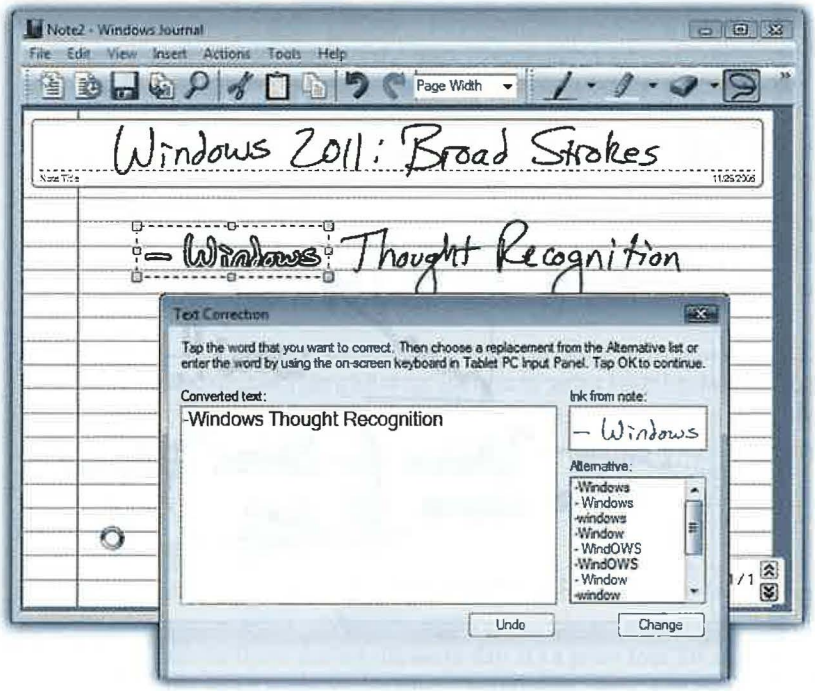


Figure 19-12: *Use the Selection tool (the rope lasso icon on the toolbar) to select any text you've written (by dragging a circle or oval around it); at that point, you can choose Action→Convert Handwriting to Text to turn the writing into typed text, suitable for pasting into another program or depositing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

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

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

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

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

Tablet settings

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

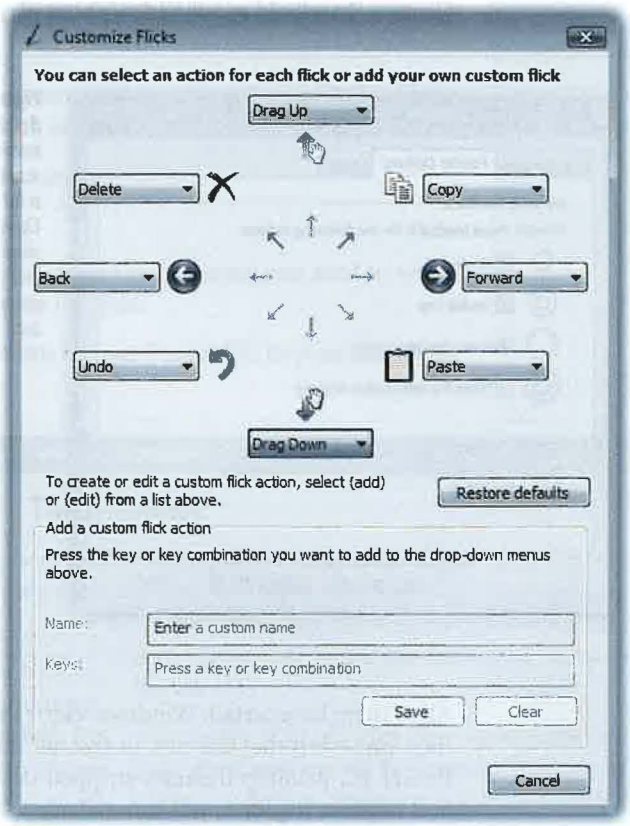


Figure 19-13: *In Control Panel→Mobile PC→Pen and Input Devices→Flicks, click Customize. You get this dialog box, where you can remap the flick directions so that they perform other functions. If you choose Add from one of the little pop-up menus, in fact, the controls at the bottom actually let you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

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

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

Windows Mobile Devices

All Versions

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

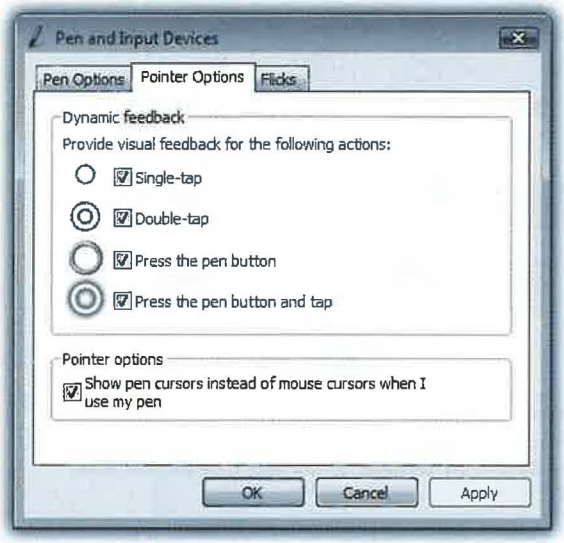


Figure 19-14:
Before Vista came along, it was often difficult to know what you were doing when you tapped the screen with the pen on a Tablet PC. Vista makes that a lot easier with visual cues. Here on the Pointer Options tab, you can see the visual feedback for a single tap, a double tap, pressing the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

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

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

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

The Sync Center

All Versions

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

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

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

Sync Partnerships

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

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

NOSTALGIA CORNER

The Briefcase

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is generally an easy task; all recent Windows Mobile devices are Vista-compatible. Some even connect to your PC wirelessly; consult the manual.

Unfortunately, it's not a sure bet by any means that Vista will recognize the gadget you've just connected. If Vista doesn't report that it found a driver for your device and installed it properly, you probably won't see the device in Sync Center. That doesn't mean you can't sync the gadget with Vista, only that you can't use Sync Center to do it. You'll have to use the software that came with the device.

If Vista does announce that it's found a driver and installed it correctly, then you can proceed.

2. **Open Sync Center. In the left pane, click "Set up new sync partnerships."**

   The main window lists whatever Sync Center–compatible gadgets Vista can see.

3. **Click the device you want to synchronize. Click Set Up.**

   Figure 19-15 shows what you'll see at this stage.

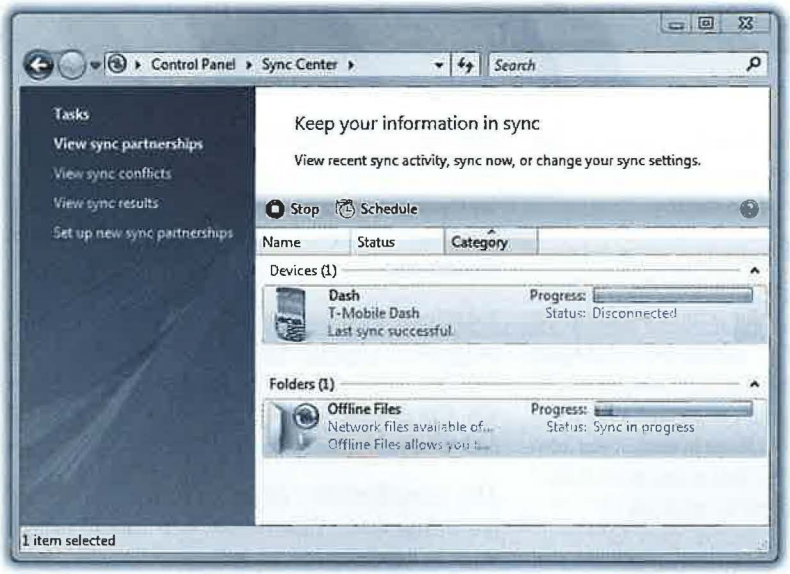


Figure 19-15: *Sync Center doesn't work with all kinds of pocket gadgets, but it's a start. It's also the home base for the Offline Files feature described in the following pages.*

4. **Select the settings and schedule to specify how and when your device should sync.**

   For example, you might indicate that you want the synchronization to take place every time the device is connected to the PC.

5. **Click Sync to start a manual sync.**

Vista uses its best artificial intelligence to determine what to copy where. For example, if a file has been created on Machine A since your last sync, it gets copied to Machine B. If a file has been deleted, it's deleted on the other machine. And if a file has been changed on *both* machines since the last sync, a dialog box presents you with the decision about which file "wins." (These examples assume that you've set up a *two-way* sync. A one-way sync is much simpler: everything on Machine A always replaces what's on Machine B.)

Offline Files

Business • Enterprise • Ultimate

The *offline files* feature is designed primarily for laptop lovers. It lets you carry off files that generally live on your office network, so you can get some work done while you're away.

Then, when you return and connect your laptop to the office network, Windows automatically copies your edited, updated documents back to their original locations on the network, intelligently keeping straight which copies are the most recent. (And vice versa—if people changed the network copies while you were away, Windows copies them onto your laptop.)

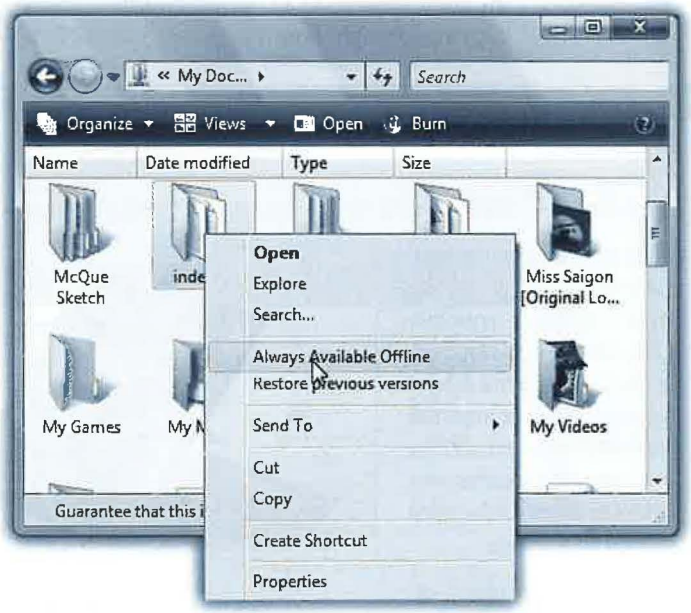


Figure 19-16: *Right-click the icon of a file or folder that's on another computer on the network. From the shortcut menu, choose Always Available Offline. (A checkmark appears. To stop making this file or folder available offline, choose the same command again.) Your PC takes a quick moment to copy the files onto your own hard drive (that is, on the client machine—your laptop).*

It's a great feature for corporate workers, which explains why it's not available in the Home Basic and Home Premium versions of Vista. And it's been greatly simplified since the Windows XP version. For example, reconnecting to the network now triggers

an automatic, seamless, invisible synchronization of the files you worked on while you were away—there's no more alert balloon, no need to shut down all programs and manually trigger the sync, and so on.

Note: Although Microsoft developed Offline Files primarily for laptops that sometimes leave the network, it can also be a useful feature for *desktop* computers that belong to a network that isn't always up and running. Even so, this chapter refers to your computer as "the laptop," to avoid having to repeat "the laptop or desktop computer that isn't always on the network" 50 million times.

Preparing to Leave the Network

To tell Windows which files and folders you want to take away with you on the laptop, find them on the network. Proceed as shown in Figure 19-13.

Note: If you can't seem to make this work, it may be because the Offline Files master switch has been turned off. To see it, choose Start→Control Panel. In Classic view, double-click Offline Files. On the General tab of the resulting dialog box, you'll see the Enable Offline Files checkbox.

Normally, Windows copies the selected files and folders to your laptop rather slowly. It works in the background, between your mouse clicks and keystrokes.

If you're about to catch a flight, however, and you're nervous that you might not have the latest versions of all the network files you need, you can force Vista to do the entire copying job *right now.* To do that, choose Start→All Programs→Accessories→Sync

GEM IN THE ROUGH

Windows SideShow

Laptop lovers, take note—the best is yet to come.

SideShow, a new Vista feature, is a tiny screen built right into the lids or undersides of certain new laptop, tablet, and palmtop models. The cool thing is that it shows you certain kinds of important information—your calendar, new email, the time or weather, your address book—even if the laptop is turned off or asleep.



This external screen uses practically no battery power; it's like having a little PalmPilot built into the laptop. When SideShow machines arrive on the market, you'll be able to specify which gadget (mini-program) you want to see. It can serve as an alarm that notifies you about an imminent meeting, play songs from your Media Player collection, check a flight time, and so on—without ever having to open the laptop lid.

Will Microsoft's master SideShow plan find acceptance in the marketplace? Let's meet back on this page in two years and discuss.

CHAPTER
23

Accounts (and Logging On)

For years, teachers, parents, tech directors, and computer lab instructors struggled to answer two difficult questions. How do you rig one PC so that several different people can use it throughout the day, without interfering with each other's files and settings? And how do you protect a PC from getting fouled up by mischievous (or bumbling) students and employees?

Introducing User Accounts

All Versions

Windows Vista was designed from the ground up to be a multiple-user operating system. Anyone who uses the computer must *log on*—click (or type) your name and type in a password—when the computer turns on. Upon doing so, you discover the Windows universe just as you left it, including these elements:

- **Desktop.** Each person sees his own shortcut icons, folder icons, and other stuff left out on the desktop.
- **Start menu.** If you reorganize the Start menu, as described in Chapter 1, you won't confuse anybody else who uses the machine. No one else can even *see* the changes you make.
- **Documents folder.** Each person sees only her own stuff in the Documents folder.
- **Email.** Windows maintains a separate stash of email messages for each account holder—along with separate Web bookmarks, a Windows Messenger contact list, and other online details.

Windows Vista/Operating Systems

Answers found here!

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



The important stuff you need to know

The basics. Master the new taskbar, Start menu, and instant global search.

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

The network. You won't find any clearer instructions on building and using a network–and even connecting from the road.

The software. These pages burst with tips and tricks for each of Vista's new programs: Photo Gallery, Internet Explorer 7, Mail, Media Center, DVD Maker, the Sidebar, speech recognition, games, Windows Meeting Space, and more.

This book is not for system administrators or programmers; it's for the novice or budding power user who just wants to master the machine and get down to work. *Windows Vista: The Missing Manual* is the crystal-clear, jargon-free book that should have been in the box.



Why I started the Missing Manual series.

People learn best when information is engaging, clearly written, and funny. Unfortunately, most computer books read like dry catalogs. That's why I created the Missing Manuals. They're entertaining, unafraid to state when a feature is useless or doesn't work right, and—oh, by the way—written by actual *writers*. And on every page, we answer the simple question: "What's this feature *for*?"

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

US $34.99 **CAN $45.99**
ISBN-10: 0-596-52827-2
ISBN-13: 978-0-596-52827-0



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