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Windows Vista

THE MISSING MANUAL[®]



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David Pogue

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Windows Vista: The Missing Manual

by David Pogue

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Meet Vista Search

All Versions

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

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

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

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

Search from the Start Menu

All Versions

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

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

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

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

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

and Microsoft Office document (Word, PowerPoint, and Excel) that contains what you typed, regardless of its name or folder location.

Vista isn't just searching icon *names*. It's also searching their contents—the words inside your documents—as well as all your files' *metadata*. (That's descriptive text information about what's in a file, like its height, width, size, creator, copyright holder, title, editor, created date, and last modification date. Page 69 has the details.)

Note: Vista is constantly updating its invisible index (page 112) in real time. You can prove it to yourself like this: Open a text document (in WordPad, for example). Type an unusual word, like *wombat*. Save the document using a different name—say, "Fun Pets." Now *immediately* do a search. Hit the  key and type *wom*, for example. You'll see that Vista finds "Fun Pets" even though it's only moments old. That's a far cry from, for example, the old Windows Indexing Service, which updated its index only once a day, in the middle of the night!

Figure 3-1:

Press , or click the Start-menu icon, to see the Search box. As you type, Vista builds the list of every match it can find, neatly arranged in four categories: Programs, Favorites and History, Files, and Communications (which means email and chat transcripts).

You don't have to type an entire word. Typing *kumq* will find documents containing the word "kumquat." However, it's worth noting that Vista recognizes only the beginnings of words. Typing *umquat* won't find a document containing—or even named—Kumquat.

Press the up/down arrow keys to walk through the list one item at a time.

