Windows Vista™

FOR DUMMIES®

Here's how to make Vista behave and work for you

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Andy Rathbone
Bestselling author of all previous editions of Windows® For Dummies

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About the Author

Andy Rathbone started geeking around with computers in 1985 when he bought a 26-pound portable CP/M Kaypro 2X. Like other nerds of the day, he soon began plying with null-modem adapters, dialing computer bulletin boards, and working part-time at Radio Shack.

He wrote articles for various techie publications before moving to computer books in 1992. He's written the *Windows For Dummies* series, *Upgrading and Fixing PCs For Dummies, TiVo For Dummies, PCs: The Missing Manual,* and many other computer books.

Today, he has more than 15 million copies of his books in print, and they've been translated into more than 30 languages. You can reach Andy at his Web site, `www.andyrathbone.com`.

Author's Acknowledgments

Contents at a Glance

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Introduction

Welcome to *Windows Vista For Dummies,* the world's best-selling book about Windows Vista!

This book's popularity probably boils down to this simple fact: Some people want to be Windows whizzes. They love interacting with dialog boxes. Some randomly press keys in the hope of discovering hidden, undocumented features. A few memorize long strings of computer commands while washing their hair.

And you? Well, you're no dummy, that's for sure. But when it comes to Windows and computers, the fascination just isn't there. You want to get your work done, stop, and move on to something more important. You have no intention of changing, and there's nothing wrong with that.

That's where this book comes in handy. Instead of making you a whiz at Windows, it merely dishes out chunks of useful computing information when you need them. Instead of becoming a Windows Vista expert, you'll know just enough to get by quickly, cleanly, and with a minimum of pain so that you can move on to the more pleasant things in life.

About This Book

Don't try to read this book in one sitting; there's no need. Instead, treat this book like a dictionary or an encyclopedia. Turn to the page with the information you need and say, "Ah, so that's what they're talking about." Then put down the book and move on.

Don't bother trying to memorize all the Windows Vista jargon, such as Select the Menu Item from the Drop-Down List Box. Leave that stuff for the computer enthusiasts. In fact, if anything technical comes up in a chapter, a road sign warns you well in advance. Depending on your mood, you can either slow down to read it or speed on around it.

Instead of fancy computer jargon, this book covers subjects like these, all discussed in plain English:

- ✔ Keeping your computer safe and secure
- ✔ Finding, starting, and closing programs
- ✔ Locating the file you saved or downloaded yesterday
- ✔ Setting up a computer for the whole family to use
- ✔ Copying information to and from a CD or DVD
- ✔ Working with your digital camera's photos and making slide shows
- ✔ Scanning and printing your work
- ✔ Creating a network between PCs to share an Internet connection or printer
- ✔ Fixing Windows Vista when it's misbehaving

There's nothing to memorize and nothing to learn. Just turn to the right page, read the brief explanation, and get back to work. Unlike other books, this one enables you to bypass the technical hoopla and still get your work done.

How to Use This Book

Something in Windows Vista will eventually leave you scratching your head. No other program brings so many buttons, bars, and babble to the screen. When something in Windows Vista leaves you stumped, use this book as a reference. Look for the troublesome topic in this book's table of contents or index. The table of contents lists chapter and section titles and page numbers. The index lists topics and page numbers. Page through the table of contents or index to the spot that deals with that particular bit of computer obscurity, read only what you have to, close the book, and apply what you've read.

If you're feeling spunky and want to find out more, read a little further in the bulleted items below each section. You can find a few completely voluntary extra details, tips, or cross-references to check out. There's no pressure, though. You aren't forced to discover anything that you don't want to or that you simply don't have time for.

If you have to type something into the computer, you'll see easy-to-follow bold text like this:

Type **Media Player** into the Search box.

In the preceding example, you type the words *Media Player* and then press the keyboard's Enter key. Typing words into a computer can be confusing, so a description follows that explains what you should be seeing on the screen.

Whenever I describe a message or information that you see on-screen or a Web address, I present it this way:

```
www.andyrathbone.com
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This book doesn't wimp out by saying, "For further information, consult your manual." Windows Vista doesn't even *come* with a manual. This book also doesn't contain information about running specific Windows software packages, such as Microsoft Office. Windows Vista is complicated enough on its own! Luckily, other *For Dummies* books mercifully explain most popular software packages.

Don't feel abandoned, though. This book covers Windows in plenty of detail for you to get the job done. Plus, if you have questions or comments about *Windows Vista For Dummies,* feel free to drop me a line on my Web site at www.andyrathbone.com.

Finally, keep in mind that this book is a *reference.* It's not designed to teach you how to use Windows Vista like an expert, heaven forbid. Instead, this book dishes out enough bite-sized chunks of information so that you don't *have* to learn Windows.

And What about You?

Chances are you already own Windows Vista or are thinking about upgrading. You know what *you* want to do with your computer. The problem lies in making the *computer* do what you want it to do. You've gotten by one way or another, hopefully with the help of a computer guru — either a friend at the office, somebody down the street, or your fourth-grader.

But when your computer guru isn't around, this book can be a substitute during your times of need. (Keep a doughnut or Pokémon card nearby in case you need a quick bribe.)

How This Book Is Organized

The information in this book has been well sifted. This book contains seven parts, and I divide each part into chapters relating to the part's theme. With an even finer knife, I divide each chapter into short sections to help you figure out a bit of Windows Vista's weirdness. Sometimes, you may find what you're looking for in a small, boxed sidebar. Other times, you may need to cruise through an entire section or chapter. It's up to you and the particular task at hand.

Here are the categories (the envelope, please).

Part I: Windows Vista Stuff Everybody Thinks You Already Know

This part dissects Windows Vista's backbone: its opening screen and user-name buttons, the mammoth Start button menu that hides all your important stuff, and your computer's desktop — the background where all your programs live. It explains how to move windows around, for example, and click the right buttons at the right time. It explains the Windows Vista stuff that everybody thinks that you already know.

Part II: Working with Programs and Files

Windows Vista comes with bunches of free programs. Finding and starting the programs, however, often proves to be a chore. This part of the book shows how to prod programs into action. If an important file or program has vanished from the radar, you discover how to make Windows Vista dredge your computer's crowded cupboards and bring it back.

Part III: Getting Things Done on the Internet

Turn here for a crash course in today's computing playground, the Internet. This part explains how to send e-mail and globetrot across Web sites. Best yet, an entire chapter explains how to do it all safely, without viruses, spyware, and annoying pop-up ads.

A section explains Internet Explorer's security toolbar. The toolbar stops evil phishing sites from tricking you and keeps Web parasites from attaching themselves to your board as you Web surf.

Part IV: Customizing and Upgrading Windows Vista

When Windows Vista needs a jolt, fix it by flipping one of the switches hidden in its Control Panel, described here. Another chapter explains computer maintenance you can easily perform yourself, reducing your repair bills. You discover how to share your computer with several people in a family

or shared apartment — without letting anybody peek into anybody else's information.

And when you're ready to add a second computer, head to the networking chapter for quick instructions on linking computers to share an Internet connection, files, and a printer, as well.

Part V: Music, Movies, Memories (and Photos, Too)

Turn here for information on playing music CDs, DVDs, digital music, and movies. Buy some cheap CDs and create your own greatest hits CDs from your favorite tunes. (Or just copy a CD so that your favorite one doesn't get scratched in the car.)

Digital camera owners should visit the chapter on transferring pictures from your camera to your computer, organizing the pictures, and e-mailing them to friends. Bought a camcorder? Head to the section that explains how to edit out the dopey parts and save your completed masterwork onto a DVD the relatives will *enjoy* for a change.

Part VI: Help!

Although glass doesn't shatter when Windows crashes, it still hurts. In this part, you find some soothing salves for the most painful irritations. Plus, you find ways to unleash the Windows Vista program's team of troubleshooters.

Stuck with the problem of moving your files from an old computer to a new one? You can find help here, as well. (If you're ready to upgrade your Windows XP computer to Windows Vista, check out the Appendix, too, which holds complete instructions.)

Part VII: The Part of Tens

Everybody loves lists (except during tax time). This part contains lists of Windows-related trivia, such as ten aggravating things about Windows Vista (and how to fix them). As a bonus for the laptoppers, I've collected Windows Vista's most useful laptop tools and placed them into one chapter, complete with step-by-step instructions for most laptopping tasks.

Icons Used in This Book

It just takes a glance at Windows Vista to notice its *icons,* which are little push-button pictures for starting various programs. The icons in this book fit right in. They're even a little easier to figure out:

Watch out! This signpost warns you that pointless technical information is coming around the bend. Swerve away from this icon to stay safe from awful technical drivel.

This icon alerts you about juicy information that makes computing easier: A tried-and-true method for keeping the cat from sleeping on top of the monitor, for example.

Don't forget to remember these important points. (Or at least dog-ear the pages so that you can look them up again a few days later.)

The computer won't explode while you're performing the delicate operations associated with this icon. Still, wearing gloves and proceeding with caution is a good idea.

Are you moving to Windows Vista from Windows XP? This icon alerts you to places where Vista works significantly differently from Windows XP.

Where to Go from Here

Now, you're ready for action. Give the pages a quick flip and scan a section or two that you know you'll need later. Please remember, this is *your* book — your weapon against the computer nerds who've inflicted this whole complicated computer concept on you. Please circle any paragraphs you find useful, highlight key concepts, add your own sticky notes, and doodle in the margins next to the complicated stuff.

The more you mark up your book, the easier it will be for you to find all the good stuff again.

Part I

Windows Vista Stuff Everybody Thinks You Already Know

The 5th Wave   By Rich Tennant

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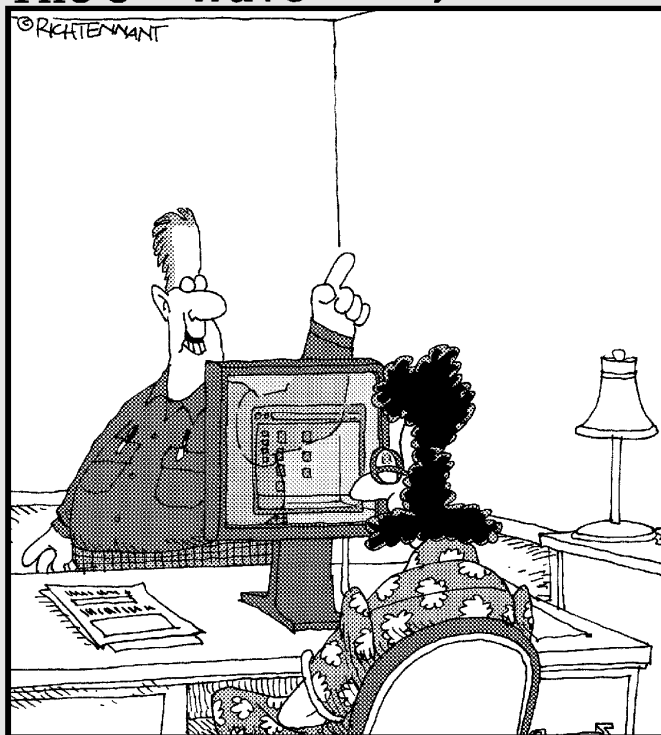
"How do you like that Aero glass interface on Vista? Nice, huh?"

In this part . . .

Most people are dragged into Windows Vista without a choice. Their new computers probably came with Windows Vista already installed. Or maybe the office switched to Windows Vista, where everyone has to learn it except for the boss, who doesn't have a computer. Or maybe Microsoft's marketing hype pushed you into it.

Whatever your situation, this part gives a refresher on Windows Vista basics and buzzwords like dragging and dropping, cutting and pasting, and tugging at vanishing toolbars.

It explains how Vista's changed Windows for the better, and it warns you when Vista's messed things up completely.

Chapter 1

What Is Windows Vista?

*C*hances are, you've probably heard about Windows: the boxes and windows and mouse pointer that greet you whenever you turn on your computer. In fact, millions of people all over the world are puzzling over it as you read this book. Almost every new computer sold today comes with a copy of Windows preinstalled — cheerfully greeting you when first turned on.

This chapter helps you understand why Windows lives inside your computer and introduces Microsoft's latest Windows version, called *Windows Vista.* It explains how Windows Vista differs from previous Windows versions, whether you should upgrade to Vista, and how well your faithful old PC will weather the upgrade.

What Is Windows Vista, and Why Are You Using It?

Created and sold by a company called Microsoft, Windows isn't like your usual software that lets you write term papers or send angry e-mails to mail-order companies. No, Windows is an *operating system,* meaning it controls the way you work with your computer. It's been around for more than 20 years, and the latest whiz-bang version is called *Windows Vista.*

Windows gets its name from all the cute little windows it places on your monitor. Each window shows information, such as a picture, a program that you're running, or a baffling technical reprimand. You can put several windows on-screen at the same time and jump from window to window, visiting different programs. You can also enlarge a window to fill the entire screen.

Like the mother with the whistle in the lunch court, Windows controls every window and each part of your computer. When you turn on your computer, Windows jumps onto the screen and supervises any running programs. Throughout all this action, Windows keeps things running smoothly, even if the programs start throwing food at each other.

In addition to controlling your computer and bossing around your programs, Windows Vista comes with a bunch of free programs. Although your computer can run without these programs, they're nice to have. These programs let you do different things, like write and print letters, browse the Internet, play music, and even whittle down your camcorder's vacation footage into a three-minute short — automatically.

And why are you using Windows Vista? If you're like most people, you didn't have much choice. Nearly every computer sold since early 2007 comes with Windows Vista preinstalled. A few people escaped Windows by buying Apple computers (those nicer-looking computers that cost more). But chances are, you, your neighbors, your boss, your kids at school, and millions of other people around the world are using Windows.

- ✔ Microsoft took pains (and several years of work) to make Windows Vista the most secure version of Windows yet. (Just ask people who upgraded from previous versions.)

- ✔ Windows makes it easy for several people to share a single computer. Each person receives his or her own user account. When users click their name at the Windows opening screen, they see their *own* work — just the way they left it. Vista adds new controls for parents to limit how their kids use the PC, as well as how much of the Internet they can view.

- ✔ A new, automated version of Backup makes it easier to do what you should have been doing all along: Make copies of your important files every night. (Vista Home includes the Backup program, but it's not automatic: You must remember to run the program each night.)

- ✔ Finally, Vista's powerful new search program means that you can forget about where you stored your files. Just click the Start menu and type what that file contained: a few words in a document, the name of the band singing the song, or even the date you took that picture of Kelly at the office party.

Yes, Microsoft is sneaky

Microsoft may tout Windows as your helpful computing companion, always keeping your best interests in mind, but that's not really true. Windows always keeps *Microsoft's* interests in mind. You'll find that out as soon as you call Microsoft for help on making Windows work right. Your first two questions are free if you pick up the long distance charges to Redmond, Washington. The third call (and all the rest) cost $35 a piece, but prices may change at any time.

Microsoft also uses Windows to plug its own products and services. Sometimes you click a menu item that touts something helpful, but Windows simply leads you to a Web site where you can purchase additional items from Microsoft or its business partners. For example, the Start menu, normally your launch pad for programs, sports an entry for Windows Marketplace. The Order Prints option in Windows Photo Gallery doesn't let you enter your own favorite print shop; it just lists printers who've partnered with Microsoft.

Simply put, Windows not only controls your computer, but also serves as a huge Microsoft advertising vehicle. Take Microsoft's advertising flyers with the traditional grain of salt.

Should I Bother Switching to Windows Vista?

WINDOWS XP
XP

Microsoft releases a new version of Windows every few years. If you bought your PC between 2001 and 2006, you've probably grown accustomed to the mechanics of Windows XP. That leaves the nagging question, why bother upgrading to Windows Vista when Windows XP works just fine?

Actually, if Windows XP's running just fine, then you probably won't need Windows Vista. But Microsoft hopes the following improvements in Vista will push your hand toward your credit card.

Improved security

Windows Vista's tougher new exterior helps make it more difficult for evil programs to louse up your PC. For example, Vista's built-in Windows Defender program constantly searches your PC for any *spyware* — small programs that spy on your activities, often showing you pop-up ads and slowing down your PC in the process. Microsoft constantly trains Windows

Defender, shown in Figure 1-1, to recognize and squash the newest breeds
of spyware.
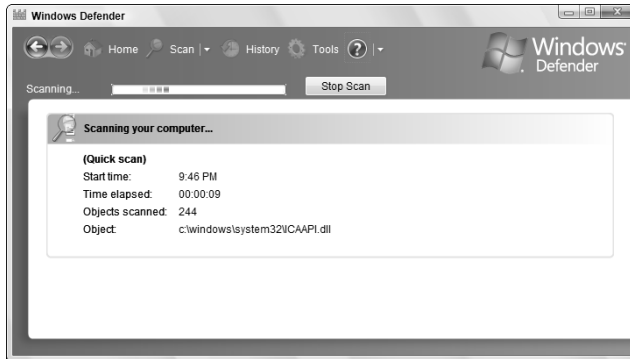
The other parts of Vista's security regime aren't as simple, unfortunately. See,
PCs recognize programs as mere strings of numbers, and they can't tell a
good string — a word processor, for example — from a bad string, such as a
virus. To solve the identification problem, Vista simply dumps the decision
onto *your* shoulders: Whenever a particularly powerful program tries to run
on your PC, Vista states, "Windows needs your permission to run this pro-
gram." Then it leaves you with two choices: Allow or Cancel.

To ease you through this admittedly difficult new responsibility, I cover
Vista's new security features in Chapter 10.

And although Windows Defender keeps you covered from spyware, Vista
doesn't include a free antivirus program. Instead, Microsoft invites you to
subscribe to its new Live OneCare antivirus program (`www.windowsonecare.
com`) for $49 dollars a year.

New Internet Explorer version

Vista's new Internet Explorer 7 (which I cover in Chapter 8) lets you surf the
Web more easily and securely with the following new features:

✔ **Tabbed browsing:** In the past, keeping two Web sites open on-screen meant running *two* copies of Internet Explorer. With Vista, Internet Explorer displays several Web sites simultaneously, each running in a separate page with a clickable tab at the top for easy switching. That tab makes it easier to compare prices from several different shopping sites, for example, or read one Web site while others load in the background. You can even save a group of Web sites as your home page: Whenever you load Internet Explorer, your favorite sites will already be waiting for you, each living in its own tab.

✔ **Phishing filter:** An evil new industry called *phishing* sends e-mails that pretend to be from finance-related companies, such as banks, PayPal, eBay, and others. The realistic-looking e-mails pretend to alert you to some security problem as they try to trick you into entering your name and precious password. Internet Explorer's new Phishing Filter, shown in Figure 1-2, sniffs out the phishing Web sites before you enter your information, keeping your name and password safe.

✔ **Built-in Search box:** Tired of racing off to Google to find a Web site? The top of Internet Explorer 7 sports a tiny Search box for on-the-fly searches. Although it's programmed to search on Microsoft's own MSN search, Chapter 8 shows you how to make it search Google, instead.

✔ **RSS feeds:** Short for Really Simple Syndication, this feature lets you see headlines from your favorite Web sites in a short drop-down box. By ogling the RSS box, you can catch up on the latest news headlines, for example, without stopping to visit your favorite news site. RSS feeds also let you know if your favorite sites have any new articles, sparing you a wasted visit. RSS feeds speed up your browsing and, conveniently, leave out the ads.

Figure 1-2:
Internet Explorer's new Phishing Filter alerts you to fake Web sites that try to trick you into entering your name, password, or credit-card information.
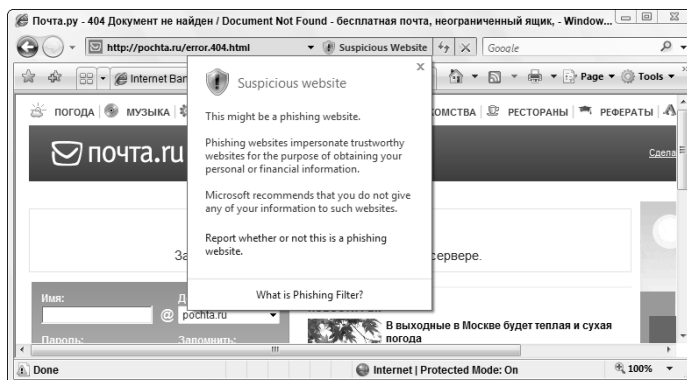
New Media Player and Media Center

Vista's new version of Media Player sports streamlined, easier-to-use controls. The big star, however, is Vista's Media Center, which not only plays DVDs and music but lets you watch TV on your PC and even record shows onto your hard drive for later viewing.

Recording TV shows requires two important things, however: a TV tuner in your PC and the proper version of Vista. (Vista comes in a startling *five* versions, all described at this chapter's end.) Installing a TV tuner can be as simple as plugging a box into your PC's USB port or sliding a card inside your PC. I describe both tasks in one of my other books, *Upgrading and Fixing PCs For Dummies,* published by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

DVD burning

More than five years after DVD burners hit the market, Windows can finally take advantage of them without third-party software. Windows Vista lets you copy files and movies to DVDs as well as CDs.

In fact, Vista's updated version of Movie Maker (described in Chapter 16) lets you turn your camcorder footage into DVDs that play back on a normal DVD player and TV. Mail them to your friends and prepare for a deluge of incoming vacation DVDs, as well.

Calendar

For the first time, Windows now sports a calendar, shown in Figure 1-3, for keeping track of your appointments. You can even publish your calendar to other PCs or Web sites, keeping your appointments synchronized with the calendars of your friends and coworkers.

Easier searching for files

Windows XP really drags its feet when searching for files. Searching for a filename takes several minutes on a crowded hard drive, and if you're searching your files for a particular word or phrase, you're in for a long weekend. Vista, by contrast, spends its idle time fine-tuning an index of every word on your hard drive.

The built-in Calendar program in Vista tracks your tasks and appointments, as well as synchronizes your calendar with others to coordinate meetings.
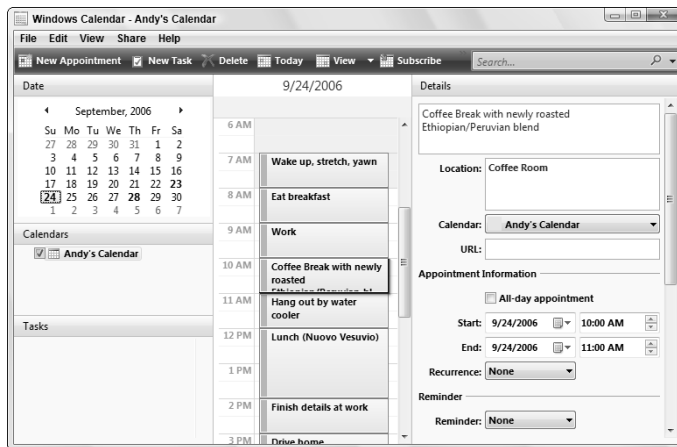
Instead of sending you on a constant search for your files, Vista automatically remembers your files' locations. For example, search for every document mentioning "Celery," and Vista instantly lists those files' names, ready for opening with a double-click. Whenever you create new documents mentioning "Celery," Vista automatically remembers their locations, too, making for quick and easy retrieval.

Vista places a Search box on the Start menu, atop every folder, in the Help and Support window, and in a few other key spots. The handy Search box and Vista's up-to-date index make it faster than ever to find the files and programs you want.

Vista even updates its index with words on Web sites you've visited recently, letting you quickly reread that headline you scrolled through last week.

I explain how to put the Search box to work in Chapter 6.

Vista looks prettier

Microsoft spent some time decorating Vista with a three-dimensional look, a treat available only to PCs with powerful graphics capabilities. When you can't find an open window, for example, press the Windows and Tab keys: All the windows appear on your PC in a Flip 3D view, shown in Figure 1-4.

Figure 1-4:
To see a 3D view of your currently open windows, press Tab while holding down the Windows key. Press Tab or spin your mouse's scroll wheel to flip through the windows and then let go of the Windows key when your window is on top.
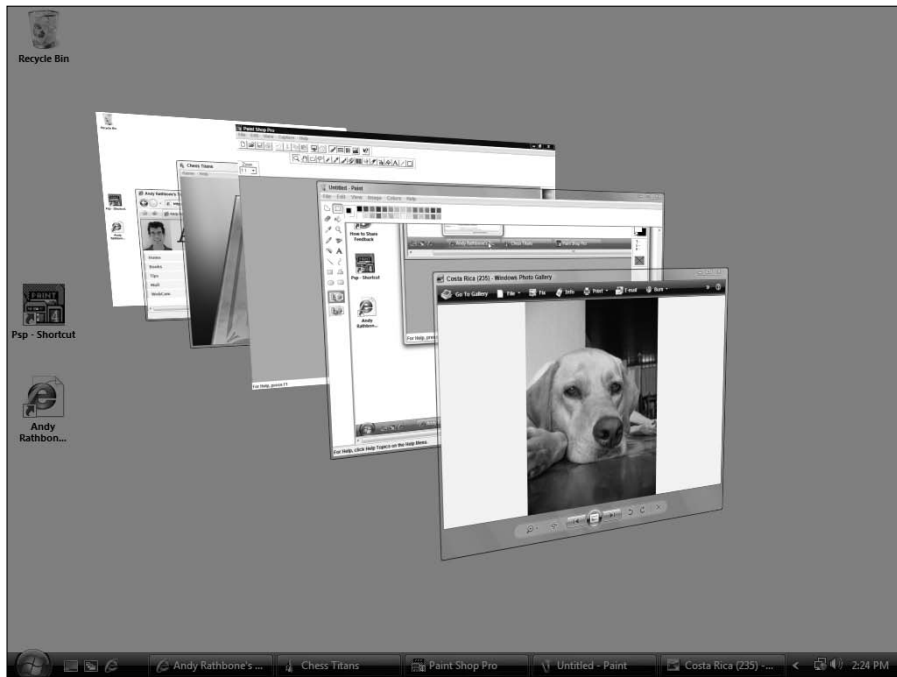
Hover your mouse pointer over any name listed on your desktop's taskbar, and Vista displays a thumbnail picture of that window's current contents, making your window much easier to retrieve from the sea of programs.

Can My PC Still Run Vista?

If your PC already runs Windows XP well, it will probably run Vista, but not at its best. However, upgrading your PC with a few things will help Vista run better, a job I tackle in *Upgrading and Fixing PCs For Dummies,* 7th edition. Here's the shopping list:

✔ **Video:** Vista requires powerful graphics for its fanciest 3D features, such as Flip 3D (see Figure 1-4). Upgraded video cards can cost more than $100, and they're not available for laptops. But if your PC's video lacks the muscle and your wallet lacks the cash, don't despair. Vista simply slips into more casual clothes, letting your PC run without the 3D views.

> ✔ **Memory:** Vista loves memory. For best results, your PC should have 1GB of memory or more. Memory's easy to install and relatively cheap, so don't skimp here.
>
> ✔ **DVD drive:** Unlike Windows XP, which comes on a CD, Windows Vista comes on a *DVD.* That means your PC needs a working DVD drive to install it. That probably won't rule out many PCs these days, but it may rule out some older laptops.

Windows Vista should be able to run most of your current programs without problems. Some, however, won't work, including most security-based programs, such as antivirus, firewall, and security programs. You'll need to contact the program's manufacturer to see whether it'll give you a free upgrade.

TIP

Shopping for a new PC to run Vista? Visit any store, and you'll find plenty of PCs running Vista. To see how well a particular PC handles Vista, click the Start button, choose Control Panel, and open the System and Maintenance category. There, select Performance Information and Tools. Vista displays that particular PC's Windows Experience Index, which ranges from 1 (dismal) to 5 (excellent).

TECHNICAL STUFF

Not sure what version of Windows your PC has? Right-click Computer from the Start menu and choose Properties. That screen states your Windows version.

Can I Make Windows Vista Look and Feel Like Windows XP?

WINDOWS XP

Some people crave Vista's new interface; others feel like they're looking at a rental car's unfamiliar dashboard. Follow these steps to make Vista look *almost* like Windows XP:

1. **Start by changing the Start menu: Right-click the Start button, choose Properties, select Classic Start Menu, and click OK.**

2. **Next, bring back the desktop: Right-click a blank part of the desktop and choose Personalize. Choose Theme and then choose Windows Classic from the Theme pull-down menu. Click OK.**

3. **Finally, put the menus back on top of each folder: Open your Documents folder from the Start menu. Then click the Organize button, choose Folder and Search Options, and choose Use Windows Classic Folders. Click OK.**

These steps not only bring back the look of previous Windows versions, but speed up an older PC that's struggling to keep up with Vista's fancy layers of graphics.

The Five Flavors of Vista

Windows XP came in two easy-to-understand versions: One for home, and one for business. Microsoft confuses things in Vista by splitting it into five different versions, each with a different price tag.

Luckily, only three versions are aimed at consumers, and most people will probably choose Windows Vista Home Premium. Still, to clear up the confusion, I describe all five versions in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: The Five Flavors of Windows Vista

The Version of Vista	What It Does
Windows Vista Home Basic	Reminiscent of Windows XP Home Edition, this version leaves out Vista's fancier media features, such as DVD burning, HDTV, TV recording, and other similar features.
Windows Vista Home Premium	This version is Windows Vista Home Basic, but with the media features tossed back in. It targets people who watch TV on their PC or who want to create DVDs from their camcorder footage.
Windows Vista Business	Just as with its brethren, Windows XP Professional, this aims at the business market. It includes a fax program, for example, but lacks the media-related features found in Vista Home Premium.
Windows Vista Enterprise	This business market version contains even more tools, such as support for additional languages and larger networks.
Windows Vista Ultimate	A combination of the Home and Business versions, this version aims at the wallets of hard-core PC users, such as gamers, people in the video industry, and similar people who spend their lives in front of their keyboards.

Although five versions may seem complicated, choosing the one you need isn't that difficult. And because Microsoft stuffed all the versions on your Vista DVD, you can upgrade at any time simply by whipping out the credit card and unlocking the features in a different version. Here are some guidelines for choosing the version you need:

✔ If your PC can't display or record TV shows, and you don't want to make DVDs from your camcorder footage, then save a few bucks by sticking with **Windows Vista Home.** It's fine for word processing, e-mail, and the Internet.

✔ If you want to burn DVDs and/or record TV shows on your PC, then pony up the cash for **Windows Vista Premium.**

✔ People who run Web servers on their PCs — and you'll know if you're doing it — will want **Windows Vista Business.**

✔ Dedicated gamers and computer industry professionals will want **Windows Vista Ultimate** because it includes *everything* found in the other versions.

✔ Computer techies who work for businesses will argue with their bosses over whether they need **Windows Business** or **Windows Enterprise** versions. They'll make their decision based on whether they're a small company (Windows Business) or a large company (Windows Enterprise).

That inexpensive **Vista Starter** version you may have heard about isn't sold in the United States. It's sold at reduced prices in developing nations like Malaysia. (It's not really a goodwill gesture as much as it's an attempt to reduce software piracy.)

Chapter 2

The Desktop, Start Menu, and Other Windows Vista Mysteries

*T*his chapter provides a drive-by tour of Windows Vista. You'll turn on your computer, start Windows, and spend a few minutes gawking at Vista's various neighborhoods: the desktop, the taskbar, the Start menu, and the environmentally correct (and compassionate) Recycle Bin.

The programs you're using hang out on the Windows *desktop* (a fancy word for the Windows background). The taskbar serves as a head turner, letting you move from one program to another. To invite yet more programs onto the desktop, drop by the Start menu: It's full of push buttons that let you add other programs to the mix.

Want to get rid of something? Dump it into the Recycle Bin, where it either fades away or, if necessary, can be safely revived.

Being Welcomed to the World of Windows Vista

Starting Windows Vista is as easy as turning on your computer — Windows Vista leaps onto the screen automatically with a futuristic flourish. But before you can start working, Windows Vista may throw you a fastball with its first screen: Windows wants you to *log on,* as shown in Figure 2-1, by clicking your name.

I've customized my Welcome screen. Yours will look different. If you don't see a username listed for you on the Welcome screen, then you have three options:

- **If you just bought the computer, use the account named Administrator.** Designed to give the owner full power over the computer, the Administrator account user can set up new accounts for new users, install programs, burn CDs, start an Internet connection, and access all the files on the computer — even those of other users. Windows Vista needs at least one person to act as administrator, even if your computer isn't connected to other computers. Hit Chapter 13 if you care about this stuff.

- **Use the Guest account.** Designed for household visitors, this account lets guests, such as the babysitter or visiting relatives, use the computer temporarily. (It's turned on or off in the Add or Remove User Accounts area, described in Chapter 13.)

- **No Guest account *and* no user?** Then find out who owns the computer and beg that person to set up a username for you. (If they don't know how, show them Chapter 13, where I explain how to set up a user account.)

Don't *want* to log on at the Welcome screen? These hidden Welcome screen buttons control other options:

- The little blue button in the screen's bottom-left corner, seen in Figure 2-1 and the margin, customizes Windows Vista for people with physical challenges in hearing, sight, or manual dexterity, all covered in Chapter 11. If you push this button by mistake, press Cancel to remove the option menu from your screen without changing any settings.

- To turn off your PC from this sparse opening screen, click the little red button in the screen's bottom-right corner, seen in Figure 2-1. (If you've accidentally clicked it and turned off your PC, don't panic. Press your PC's power button, and your PC will return to this screen.)

- Click the little arrow next to the red button, and Vista will end your session by either going to sleep, turning off your PC, or restarting — options all explained at this chapter's end.

Figure 2-1:
Windows Vista wants all users to log on so that it knows who's using the computer at all times.

Windows Vista dashes back to this Welcome screen whenever you haven't touched your PC for ten minutes. To stop this scurrying, right-click on the desktop and choose Personalize. Choose Screen Saver and remove the check mark next to the On Resume, Display Logon Screen option. Then you'll have to log on only when you start up Windows — not throughout the day.

Fiddling around with user accounts

Windows Vista allows several people to work on the same computer, yet it keeps everybody's work separate. To do that, it needs to know who's currently sitting in front of the keyboard. When you *log on* — introduce yourself — by clicking your *username,* as shown in Figure 2-1, Windows Vista presents your personalized desktop, ready for you to make your own personalized mess.

When you're through working or just feel like taking a break, log off (explained at this chapter's end) so that somebody else can use the computer. Later, when you log back on, your messy desktop will be waiting for you.

Running Windows Vista for the first time

If you've just installed Windows Vista or you're turning on your computer for the first time, you're treated to a few extra Windows Vista spectacles. The Welcome Center leaves you with the following buttons customized to your particular PC:

- **View Computer Details:** The Welcome Center starts at this page, which lists (yawn) technical details about your PC: its particular version of Vista, as well as your PC's processor, memory, and video adapter, and other arcana.

- **Transfer Files and Settings:** Just turned on your *new* Vista PC? This helpful area lets you lug all your old PC's files to your new one, a chore I walk you through in Chapter 19.

- **Add New Users:** Ignore this one unless other people will be sharing your PC. If that's the case, click here to introduce those people to Windows. This area also lets you control what your kids (or roommates) can do on your PC, covered in Chapter 13.

- **Connect to the Internet:** Ready to surf and check e-mail? This feature introduces Vista to your Internet connection, a process I describe in Chapter 8.

- **Windows Ultimate Extras:** Owners of Vista's Ultimate version find downloadable add-ons here.

- **Windows Anytime Upgrade:** Owners of any other Windows versions can click here to upgrade to a more powerful version.

- **What's New in Windows Vista:** Handy for Windows XP upgraders, this button introduces you to the new features in your particular version of Vista.

- **Personalize Windows:** Head here to splash a new screen across your desktop, change Vista's colors, or tweak your monitor (all covered in Chapter 11).

- **Register Windows Online:** Head here to, uh, sign up for Microsoft's e-mail marketing blurbs.

- **Windows Media Center:** This button starts you on the process of revving up Windows Media Center to record TV shows, covered in Chapter 15.

- **Windows Basics:** Designed for owners of their first PC, this tutorial explains how to use the mouse and keyboard, as well as files and folders.

- **Ease of Access Center:** People with physical challenges will enjoy Vista's variety of accessibility tools, described in Chapter 11.

- **Back Up and Restore Center:** I describe how to back up your files in Chapter 10.

- **Windows Vista Demos:** These little movies in Vista's Help program, covered in Chapter 20, help you with different Vista tasks.

- **Control Panel:** The nerve center of your PC, the Control Panel lets you tweak how Vista interacts with your PC, covered in Chapter 11.

Vista initially shows only a few buttons, but to see them all, click Show All 14 Items along the Welcome Center's bottom.

To see more information about any of these tasks, click the button once. Or double-click a button to move directly to that particular chore. To make the Welcome Center stop welcoming you every time you turn on your PC, remove the check mark from the window's Run at Startup box. Missing it already? Retrieve it by clicking the Start button, choosing All Programs, clicking Accessories, and clicking Welcome Center.

REMEMBER

Although you may turn your desktop into a mess, it's your *own* mess. When you return to the computer, your letters will be just as you saved them. Jerry hasn't accidentally deleted your files or folders while playing Widget Squash. Tina's desktop contains links to her favorite Web sites. And all of Jim's John Coltrane MP3s stay in his own personalized Music folder.

TIP

Of course, the first big question boils down to this: How do you customize the picture next to your username, like my face in Figure 2-1? After you've logged on, open the Start menu and click the little picture at the top of the Start menu. Windows conveniently opens a menu where you can choose Change Your Picture. (For ideas, click Browse for More Pictures and look through the digital photos you've saved in your Pictures folder. I explain how to crop photos to the appropriate square size in Chapter 16.)

Keeping your account private with a password

Because Windows Vista lets bunches of people use the same computer, how do you stop Rob from reading Diane's love letters to Henry Rollins? How can Josh keep Grace from deleting his *Star Wars* movie trailers? Windows Vista's optional *password* solves some of those problems.

By typing a secret password when logging on, as shown in Figure 2-2, you enable your computer to recognize *you* and nobody else. If you protect your username with a password, nobody can access your files (except for the computer's administrator, who can peek anywhere — and even delete your account).

Figure 2-2: With a password, nobody else can access your files.

Andy

To set up or change your password, follow these steps:

1. **Click the Start button, click Control Panel, click User Accounts and Family Safety, and then choose Change Your Windows Password.**

   If your Control Panel shows the "Classic View," choose the User Accounts icon and choose "Create a Password for your account."

2. **Choose Create a Password for Your Account or Change Your Password.**

   The wording changes depending on whether you're creating a new password or changing an old one.

3. **Type a password that will be easy for you — and nobody else — to remember.**

   Keep your password short and sweet: the name of your favorite vegetable, for example, or your dental floss brand.

4. **In the last box, type a hint that reminds you — and only you — of your password.**

5. **Click the Create Password button.**

6. **When the User Accounts screen returns, choose Create a Password Reset Disk from along the screen's left side.**

   Vista walks you through the process of creating a Password Reset Disk from a floppy, CD, DVD, memory card, or USB thumbdrive, a process I describe fully in Chapter 17.

Make Windows stop asking me for a password!

Windows asks for your name and password only when it needs to know who's tapping on its keys. And it needs that information for any of these three reasons:

✔ Your computer is part of a network, and your identity determines what goodies you can access.

✔ The computer's owner wants to limit what you can do on the computer.

✔ You share your computer with other people and want to keep others from logging on with your name and changing your files and settings.

If these concerns don't apply to you, purge the password by following the first two steps in the section "Keeping your account private with a password," but choose Remove Your Password instead of Change Your Password.

Without that password, anybody can now log on using your user account and view (or destroy) your files. If you're working in an office setting, this setup can be serious trouble. If you've been assigned a password, it's better to simply get used to it.

Windows Vista begins asking for your password whenever you log on.

✔ Passwords are *case-sensitive. Caviar* and *caviar* are considered two different passwords.

✔ Forgotten your password *already*? When you type a password that doesn't work, Vista automatically displays your "hint," hopefully reminding you of your password. Careful, though — anybody can read your hint, so make sure that it's something that makes sense only to you. As a last resort, insert your Password Reset Disk, a job I cover in Chapter 17.

I explain lots more about user accounts in Chapter 13.

Working on the Desktop

Normally, people want their desktops to be horizontal, not vertical. Keeping pencils from rolling off a normal desk is hard enough. But in Windows Vista, your monitor's screen is known as the Windows *desktop,* and that's where all your work takes place. You can create files and folders right on your new electronic desktop and arrange them all across the screen. Each program runs in its own little *window* on top of the desktop.

Windows Vista starts with a freshly scrubbed, empty desktop. After you've been working for a while, your desktop will fill up with *icons* — little push buttons that load your files with a quick double-click of the mouse. Some people leave their desktops strewn with icons for easy access. Others organize their work: When they finish working on something, they store it a *folder,* a task covered in Chapter 4.

The desktop boasts four main parts, shown in Figure 2-3.

Taskbar: Resting lazily along the desktop's bottom edge, the taskbar lists the programs and files you're currently working on. (Point at any program's name on the taskbar to see a name or thumbnail photo of that program, shown in Figure 2-3.)

Start menu: Seen at the taskbar's left edge, the Start menu works like the restaurant's waiter: It presents menus at your bidding, letting you choose what program to run.

Sidebar: Windows Vista's desktop newcomer, the *Sidebar,* clings along the right edge, offering a plethora of customized gadgets such as weather forecasters, search boxes, and Sudoku games.

Recycle Bin: The desktop's *Recycle Bin,* that little wastebasket-shaped icon, stores your recently deleted files for easy retrieval. Whew!

✔ You can start new projects directly from your desktop: Right-click the desktop, choose New, and select the project of your dreams from the pop-up menu, be it adding a new Contact or loading a favorite program. (The menu lists most of your computer's programs for quick 'n' easy access.)

✔ Are you befuddled about some object's reason for being? Timidly rest the pointer over the mysterious doodad, and Windows will pop up a little box explaining what that thing is or does. Right-click the object, and ever helpful Windows Vista usually tosses up a menu listing nearly everything you can do with that particular object. This trick works on most icons found on your desktop and throughout your programs.

✔ All the icons on your desktop may suddenly disappear, leaving it completely empty. Chances are, Windows Vista hid them in a misguided attempt to be helpful. To bring your work back to life, right-click on your empty desktop and choose View from the pop-up menu. Finally, make sure Show Desktop Icons has a check mark so everything stays visible.

The Recycle Bin   Taskbar   Sidebar
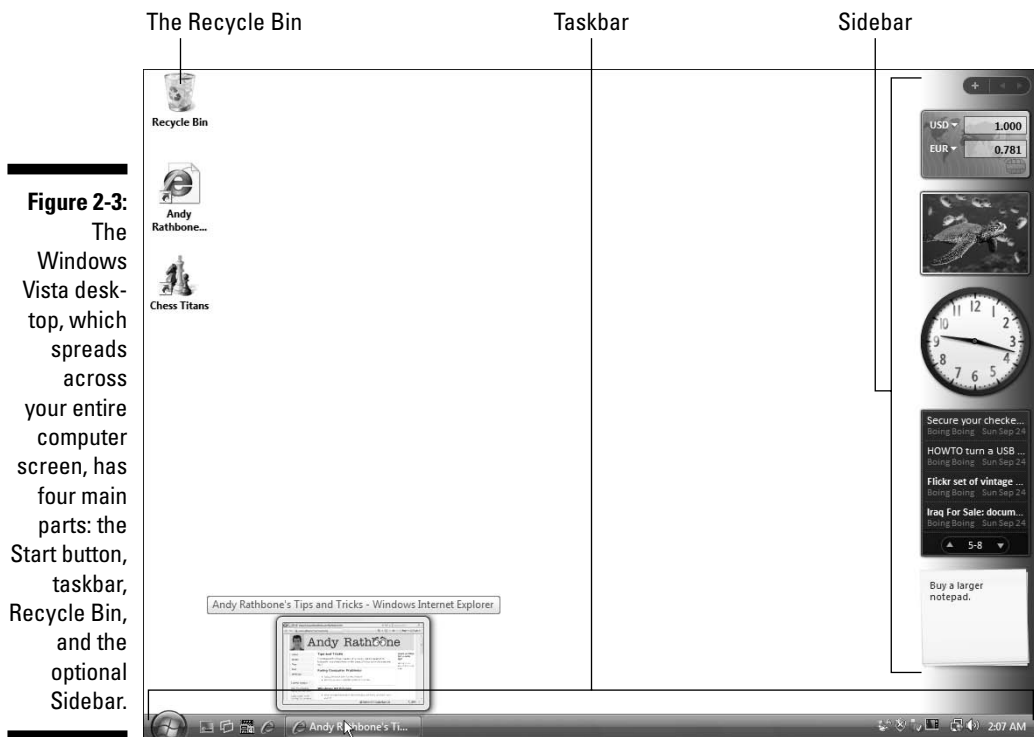
Figure 2-3:
The Windows Vista desktop, which spreads across your entire computer screen, has four main parts: the Start button, taskbar, Recycle Bin, and the optional Sidebar.

Click here to open the Start menu

Cleaning up a messy desktop

When icons cover your desktop like a year's worth of sticky notes, Windows Vista offers several ways to clean up the mess. If you just want your desktop clutter to look more organized, right-click the desktop, choose Sort By from the pop-up menu, and choose any of these choices:

- ✔ **Name:** Arrange all icons in alphabetical order using neat, vertical rows.
- ✔ **Size:** Arrange icons according to their size, placing the smallest ones at the top of the rows.
- ✔ **Type:** This lines up icons by their *type.* All Word files are grouped together, for example, as are all links to Web sites.
- ✔ **Date Modified:** Arrange icons by the date you or your PC last changed them.

Right-clicking the desktop and choosing the View option lets you change the icons' size, as well as play with these desk-organizing options:

- ✔ **Auto Arrange:** Automatically arrange everything in vertical rows — even newly positioned icons are swept into tidy rows.
- ✔ **Align to Grid:** This option places an invisible grid on the screen and aligns all icons to the grid to keep them nice and tidy — no matter how hard you try to mess them up.
- ✔ **Show Desktop Icons:** Always keep this option turned on. When turned off, Windows hides every icon on your desktop. If you can remember in your frustration, click this option again to toggle your icons back on.

Most View options are also available for any of your folders by clicking the folder's Views menu.

Jazzing up the desktop's background

To jazz up your desktop, Windows Vista covers it with pretty pictures known as a *background.* (Most people refer to the background as *wallpaper.*)

When you tire of the Vista's normal scenic garb, choose your own picture — any picture stored on your computer:

1. **Right-click a blank part of the desktop, choose Personalize, and click the Desktop Background option.**

2. **Click any of the pictures, shown in Figure 2-4, and Vista quickly places it onto your desktop's background.**

Found a keeper? Click the Save button to keep it on your desktop. Click the Picture Location menu to see more pictures. Or, if you're still searching, move to the next step.

3. **Click the Browse button and click a file from inside your Pictures folder.**

Most people store their digital photos in their Pictures folder. (I explain browsing folders in Chapter 4.)
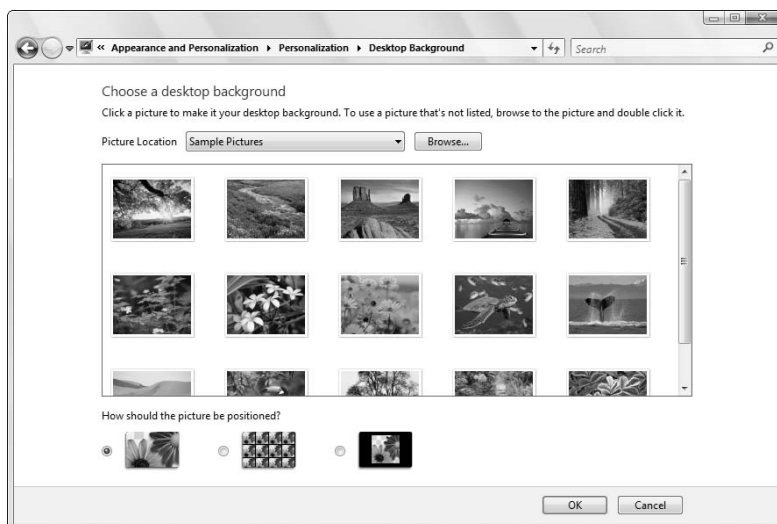
Figure 2-4:
Try different backgrounds by clicking them; click the Browse button to see pictures from different folders.

4. **Found a good picture?**

Exit the program, and your chosen photo stays stuck to your desktop as the background.

Here are some tips for sprucing up your desktop:

✔ As you browse through different pictures, Windows Vista automatically decides whether the image should be *tiled* repeatedly across the screen, *centered* directly in the middle, or *stretched* to fill the entire screen. To override Windows' automatic choice, select your own preference from the How Should the Picture Be Positioned? area along the window's bottom. Feel free to experiment to see each effect.

✔ You can easily borrow any picture on the Internet for a background. Right-click on the Web site's picture and select Set as Background from the pop-up menu. Microsoft sneakily copies the image onto your

desktop as its new background. (You can also right-click any photo in your Pictures folder and choose Set as Background — handy for quick background changes.)

✔ To change Windows Vista's entire *look,* right-click on the desktop, choose Personalize, and choose Theme. Aimed at heavy-duty procrastinators, different themes splash different colors across Windows' various buttons, borders, and boxes. I explain more about Themes in Chapter 11. (If you download any Themes offered on the Internet, check them with antivirus software, covered in Chapter 10.)

Dumpster diving in the Recycle Bin

The Recycle Bin, that little wastebasket icon in the corner of your desktop, works much like a *real* recycle bin. Shown in the margin, it lets you retrieve Sunday's paper when somebody has pitched the comics section before you had a chance to read it.

You can dump something — a file or folder, for example — into the Windows Vista Recycle Bin in one of two ways:

✔ Simply right-click on it and choose Delete from the menu. Windows Vista asks cautiously if you're *sure* that you want to delete the item. Click Yes, and Windows Vista dumps it into the Recycle Bin, just as if you'd dragged it there. Whoosh!

✔ For the ultimate deletion rush, click the unwanted object and poke your keyboard's Delete key.

Want something back? Double-click the Recycle Bin icon to see your deleted items. Right-click the item you want and choose Restore. The handy little Recycle Bin returns your precious item to the same spot where you deleted it. (You can also resuscitate deleted items by dragging them to your desktop or any other folder; drag 'em back to delete them.)

The Recycle Bin can get pretty crowded. If you're searching frantically for a recently deleted file, tell the Recycle Bin to sort everything by the date and time you deleted it: Click the words Date Deleted from the Recycle Bin's top menu. (Click the downward pointing arrow by the word Views and choose Details to see the deletion dates.)

To delete something *permanently,* just delete it from inside the Recycle Bin: Click it and press the Del key. To delete *everything* in the Recycle Bin, right-click on the Recycle Bin and choose Empty Recycle Bin.

TIP

To bypass the Recycle Bin completely when deleting files, hold down Shift while pressing Delete. Poof! The deleted object disappears, ne'er to be seen again — a handy trick when dealing with sensitive items, such as credit-card numbers.

✔ The Recycle Bin icon changes from an empty wastepaper basket to a full one as soon as it's holding a deleted file.

✔ How long does the Recycle Bin hold onto deleted files? It waits until the garbage consumes about 10 percent of your hard drive space. Then it begins purging your oldest deleted files to make room for the new. If you're low on hard drive space, shrink the bin's size by right-clicking on the Recycle Bin and choosing Properties. Decrease the Custom Size number to automatically delete files more quickly; increase the number, and the Recycle Bin hangs onto them a little longer.

WARNING!

✔ The Recycle Bin only saves items deleted from your own computer's hard drive. That means it won't save anything deleted from a floppy, CD, memory card, MP3 player, or digital camera.

WARNING!

✔ If you delete something from somebody else's computer over a network, it can't be retrieved. The Recycle Bin only holds items deleted from your *own* computer, not somebody else's computer. (For some awful reason, the Recycle Bin on the other person's computer doesn't save the item, either.) Be careful.

The Start Button's Reason to Live

The bright-blue Start button lives in the bottom-left corner of the desktop, where it's always ready for action. By clicking the Start button, you can start programs, adjust Windows Vista's settings, find help for sticky situations, or, thankfully, shut down Windows Vista and get away from the computer for a while.

Click the Start button once, and the first layer of menus pops out, as shown in Figure 2-5.

Your Start menu will change as you add more programs to your computer. That's why the Start menu on your friend's computer is probably arranged differently than the Start menu on your computer.

REMEMBER

✔ Your Documents, Pictures, and Music folders are always one click away on the Start menu. These folders are specially designed for their contents. The Pictures folder, for example, displays little thumbnails of your digital photos. The biggest perk to these three folders? Keeping your files in these folders helps you remember where you stored them. I cover file organization in Chapter 4.

✔ Windows thoughtfully places your most frequently used programs along the left side of the Start menu for easy point 'n' click action.

✔ See the words *All Programs* near the Start menu's bottom left? Click there, and yet another menu opens to offer more options. (That new menu covers up the first, though; to bring back the first, click the word Back.)

TIP

✔ Spot something confusing on the Start menu? Hover your mouse pointer over the mysterious icon. Windows responds with a helpful explanatory message.

✔ Strangely enough, you also click the Start button when you want to *stop* using Windows. (You click one of the Off buttons along the Start menu's bottom right, a decision-wrought process described at this chapter's end.)
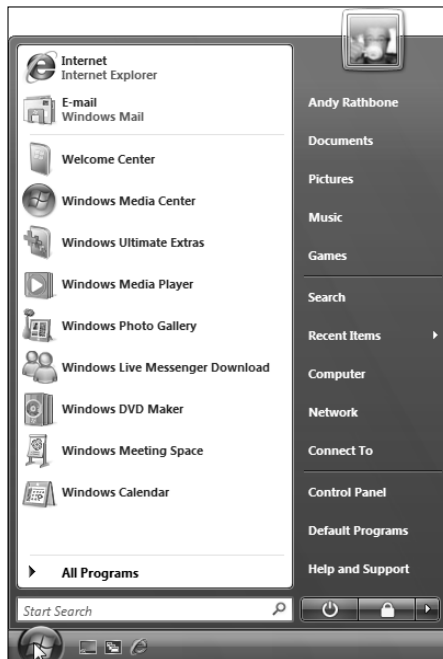
Figure 2-5:
The Start button in Windows Vista hides dozens of menus for starting programs.

The Start menu's prime real estate

When the Start menu pops up (refer to Figure 2-5), it always shows you the items listed in the upcoming list, from top to bottom. You'll use these things constantly in Windows, so if you're already bored with this Start button section, please feign interest through the following explanations.

If you find Start menus exciting, you'll love the upcoming "Customizing the Start menu" section, which explains how to rearrange your entire Start menu.

Internet Explorer: This option lets you visit the Internet, covered in Chapter 8.

E-mail: Choose this command to send or receive e-mail with Vista's new Windows Mail program, covered in Chapter 9.

Recently Used Programs: The Start menu's left side constantly updates to list your most frequently used programs' icons for quick launches.

Search box: Conveniently placed directly above the Start button, this area lets you find files by typing a bit of their contents — a few words in an e-mail, a document, a band name, a program's name, or anything else. Press Enter, and Vista quickly dredges it up for you. I cover Search more thoroughly in Chapter 6.

Username: The name of your user account appears at the Start menu's top-right corner. Click here to see a folder containing all your files, as well as your Documents, Pictures, and Music folders.

Documents: This command quickly opens your Documents folder, making it more imperative than ever to always store your work here.

Pictures: Keep your digital pictures in this folder. Each picture's icon is a tiny thumbnail image of your photo.

Music: Store your digital music in here so that Media Player can find and play it more easily.

Games: Windows Vista offers several new games, including a decent chess game. Finally!

Search: The word Search on the Start menu lets you search for files in precise terms — say, all files created in the last two months containing the word "oyster." Stick with the Search box, along the Start menu's bottom, when making more general searches.

Recent Items: Viewed a file within the past few hours? Chances are, it will appear here for quick access.

Computer: This option displays your computer's storage areas: folders, disk drives, CD drives, digital cameras, and other attached goodies.

Network: If your computer connects with other computers through a network, click here to visit them.

Connect To: This area lets you connect to different networks, which I cover in Chapter 14. It's a quick way for laptoppers to connect to a wireless network, for example, as well as a one-click Internet entrance for people with dialup Internet connections.

Control Panel: This area lets you adjust your computer's oodles of confusing settings, all described in Chapter 11.

Default programs: Click here to control which program steps in when you open a file. Here's where you tell Windows to let iTunes handle your music instead of Media Player, for example.

Help and Support: Befuddled? Click here for an answer. (Chapter 20 explains the stoic Windows Help system.)

Sleep/Power: Clicking here either puts your PC to sleep or turns it off, options explained in this chapter's last section.

Lock: This command locks your user account, letting other people log on without accessing your files.

I explain how to assign different tasks to the Sleep button, including making it simply turn off your PC, in Chapter 11.

Starting a program from the Start menu

This task's easy. Click the Start button, and the Start menu pops out of the button's head. If you see an icon for your desired program, click it, and Windows loads the program.

If your program isn't listed, though, click All Programs, near the bottom of the Start menu. Yet another menu pops up, this one listing the names of programs and folders full of programs. Spot your program? Click the name, and Windows kicks that program to the front of the screen.

If you *still* don't see your program listed, try pointing at the tiny folders listed on the All Programs menu. The menu fills with that folder's programs. Don't spot it? Click a different folder and watch as its contents spill out onto the Start menu.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Making Windows start programs automatically

Many people sit down at a computer, turn it on, and go through the same mechanical process of loading their oft-used programs. Believe it or not, Windows Vista can automate this task. The solution is the Startup folder, found lurking in the Start button's All Programs menu. When Windows Vista wakes up, it peeks inside that Startup folder. If it finds a program lurking inside, it immediately tosses that program onto the screen.

To make your favorite programs wake up along with Windows Vista, follow these steps:

1. **Click the Start button and choose All Programs.**

2. **Right-click the Start menu's Startup icon and choose Open.**

   The Startup icon, which lives in the Start menu's All Programs area, opens as a folder.

3. **Drag and drop any of your favorite programs or files into the Startup folder.**

   Windows Vista automatically places shortcuts to those programs inside the Startup folder.

4. **Close the Startup folder.**

   Now, whenever you turn on your PC and log onto your user account, Vista automatically loads those programs or files so that they'll be waiting for you.

When you finally spot your program's name, just click it. That program hops onto the desktop in a window, ready for action.

- ✔ Still don't see your program listed by name? Then head for Chapter 6 and find the section on finding lost files and folders. Windows Vista can track down your missing program.

- ✔ There's another way to load a lost program — if you can find something you created or edited with that program. For example, if you wrote letters to the tax collector using Microsoft Word, double-click one of your tax letters to bring Microsoft Word to the screen from its hiding place.

- ✔ If you don't spot a program listed, type the program's name into the Start menu's Search box. Type **Windows Mail**, for example, press Enter, and Windows Mail pops to the screen, ready to send e-mail.

- ✔ If you don't know how to navigate through your folders, visit Chapter 4. That chapter helps you move gracefully from folder to folder, decreasing the time it takes to stumble across your file.

Customizing the Start menu

The Windows Vista Start menu works great — until you're hankering for something that's not listed on the menu, or something you rarely use is just getting in the way.

✔ **To add a favorite program's icon to the Start button's menu,** right-click on the program's icon and choose Pin to Start Menu from the pop-up menu. Windows copies that icon to your Start menu's left column. (From there, you may drag it to the All Programs area, if you want.)

✔ **To purge unwanted icons from the Start menu's left column,** right-click on them and choose either Unpin from Start Menu or Remove from This List. (Removing an icon from the Start menu doesn't remove the actual program from your computer; it just removes one of many push buttons that launch it.)

When you install a program, as described in Chapter 11, the program almost always adds itself to the Start menu *automatically.* Then the program boldly announces its presence, as shown in Figure 2-6, by displaying its name with a different background color.

You can customize the Start menu even more by changing its properties. To start playing, right-click the Start button, choose Properties, and click the Start menu's Customize button. Place a check mark by the options you want or remove check marks to remove the options. Messed up your Start menu somehow? Click the Use Default Settings button, click OK, and click OK again to start from scratch.

Figure 2-6: The newly installed NoteTab Light program announces its presence by showing up in a different background color.
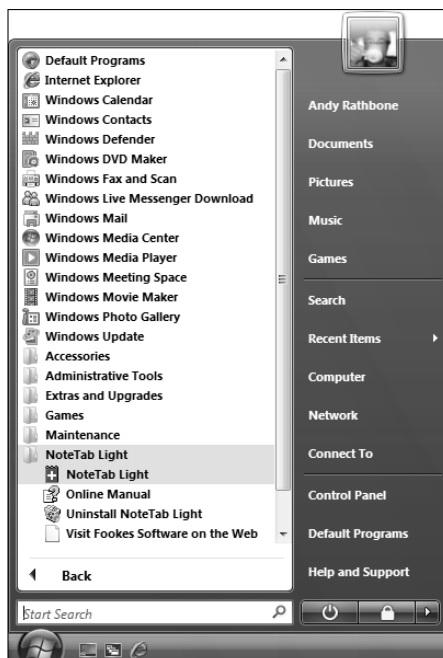
Bellying Up to the Taskbar

This section introduces one of Windows Vista's handiest tricks, so pull in your chair a little closer. Whenever you run more than one window on the desktop, there's a big problem: Programs and windows tend to cover up each other, making them difficult to locate.

Windows Vista's solution is the *taskbar* — a special area that keeps track of all your open programs. Shown in Figure 2-7, the taskbar normally lives along the bottom of your screen, although you can move it to any edge you want. (***Hint:*** Just drag it from edge to edge. If it doesn't move, right-click on the taskbar and click Lock the Taskbar to remove the check mark by its name.)

Figure 2-7:
Click buttons for currently running programs on the taskbar.

Rest your mouse pointer over any of the taskbar's programs to see a thumbnail image of that program, shown in Figure 2-7, even if that program's currently covered by other windows on your desktop. (This trick only works if your PC has powerful enough graphics.)

See how the button for Paint Shop Pro looks darker than the other taskbar buttons in Figure 2-7? That's because Paint Shop Pro is the currently *active* window on the desktop: It's the program currently waiting for you to start working. One of your taskbar's buttons always look darker unless you close or minimize all the windows on your desktop.

From the taskbar, you can perform powerful magic on your open windows, as described in the following list:

✔ To play with a program listed on the taskbar, click its name. The window rises to the surface and rests atop any other open windows, ready for action.

✔ To close a window listed on the taskbar, *right-click* on its name and choose Close from the pop-up menu. The program quits, just as if you'd

chosen its Exit command from within its own window. (The departing program gives you a chance to save your work before it quits and walks off the screen.)

✔ If the taskbar keeps hiding below the screen's bottom edge, point the mouse at the screen's bottom edge until the taskbar surfaces. Then right-click the taskbar, choose Properties, and remove the check mark from Auto-hide the Taskbar.

Shrinking windows to the taskbar and retrieving them

Windows spawn windows. You start with one window to write a letter of praise to the local opera house. You open another window to check an address, for example, and then yet another to see whether you've forgotten any upcoming shows. Before you know it, four more windows are crowded across the desktop.

To combat the clutter, Windows Vista provides a simple means of window control: You can transform a window from a screen-cluttering square into a tiny button on the *taskbar,* which sits along the bottom of the screen. The solution is the Minimize button.

See the three buttons lurking in just about every window's top-right corner? Click the *Minimize button* — the button with the little line in it, as shown in the margin. Whoosh! The window disappears, represented by its little button on the taskbar at your screen's bottom.

To make a minimized program on the taskbar revert into a regular, on-screen window, just click its name on the taskbar. Pretty simple, huh?

✔ Each taskbar button shows the name of the program it represents. And if you hover your mouse pointer over the taskbar button, Vista displays a thumbnail photo of that program. (If your PC's graphics aren't up to snuff, Vista displays only the program's name.)

✔ When you minimize a window, you neither destroy its contents nor close the program. And when you click the window's name on the taskbar, it reopens to the same size you left it, showing its same contents.

✔ Whenever you load a program, its name automatically appears on the taskbar. If one of your open windows ever gets lost on your desktop, click its name on the taskbar to bring it to the forefront.

Clicking the taskbar's sensitive areas

Like a crafty card player, the taskbar comes with a few tips and tricks. For example, here's the lowdown on the icons near the taskbar's right edge, shown in Figure 2-8, known as the *notification area:*

Figure 2-8:
These taskbar icons help with specific tasks.

- ✔ **Clock:** Hold the mouse pointer over the clock, and Windows Vista shows the current day and date. Click the clock to see a handy monthly calendar. If you want to change the time, date, or even add a second time zone, click the clock and choose Change Date and Time Settings, a task I cover in Chapter 11.

- ✔ **Arrow:** Sometimes the taskbar hides things. Click the little arrow on the far left (shown in Figure 2-8), and a few hidden icons may slide out. (Check out the "Customizing the taskbar" section, later in this chapter, for tips and tricks affecting these icons.)

- ✔ **Speaker:** Click the little speaker to adjust the sound card's volume, as shown in Figure 2-9. Or double-click the word Mixer to bring up a mixing panel. *Mixers* let you adjust separate volume levels for each program, letting you keep Media Player's volume louder than your other program's annoying beeps.

- ✔ **Other icons:** These often appear next to the clock, depending on what Windows Vista is up to. When you print, for example, a little printer icon appears. Laptops often show a battery-power-level gauge, and a network icon shows when you're connected to the Internet. As with all the other icons down there, if you double-click the printer or battery gauge, Windows Vista brings up information about the printer's or battery's status.

- ✔ **Blank part:** The empty portions of the taskbar also hide a menu. Want to minimize all your desktop's open windows in a hurry? Right-click on a blank part of the taskbar and choose Show the Desktop from the pop-up menu.

To organize your open windows, right-click on a blank part of the taskbar and choose one of the tile commands. Windows Vista scoops up all your open windows and lays them back down in neat, orderly squares. (I cover tiling in more detail in Chapter 3.)

Figure 2-9:
Slide the
lever to
adjust the
volume.
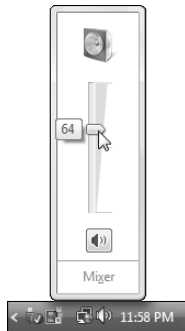
Customizing the taskbar

Windows Vista brings a whirlwind of options for the lowly taskbar, letting you play with it in more ways than a strand of spaghetti and a fork. Right-click on the Start button, choose the Properties option, and click the Taskbar tab to start playing. Table 2-1 explains the options, as well as my recommendations for them. (You need to remove the check mark by Lock the Taskbar before some of these options will work.)

Table 2-1	Customizing the Taskbar
Setting	*My Recommendations*
Lock the Taskbar	Clicking here makes Windows Vista lock the taskbar in place, keeping you from changing its appearance. You can't drag it upward to make it larger, for example. Lock it, but only after the taskbar is set up the way you like.
Auto-Hide the Taskbar	Selecting this option makes the taskbar *automatically* hide itself when you're not near it. (Point at the taskbar to bring it back up.) I leave this option unchecked to keep the taskbar always in view.
Keep the Taskbar on Top of Other Windows	This option keeps the taskbar always visible, covering up any windows that may be low on the screen. I leave this checked.
Group Similar Taskbar Buttons	When you open lots of windows and programs, Windows accommodates the crowd by grouping similar windows under one button: All open documents in Microsoft Word stack on one Microsoft Word button, for example. This option protects the taskbar from overcrowding, so keep it checked.

(continued)

Table 17-1 *(continued)*	
Setting	*My Recommendations*
Show Quick Launch	This setting shows your Quick Launch toolbar, that collection of handy icons hanging out by your Start button. (I cover it and other toolbars later in this chapter.)
Show Windows Previews (Thumbnails)	This option tells the taskbar to show a thumbnail photo of a program when you hover your mouse pointer over the program's taskbar button. Leave this option turned on to make it easier to locate misplaced windows. (This option remains unavailable unless your PC packs powerful graphics.)

Feel free to experiment with the taskbar until it looks right for you. It won't break. After you set it up just the way you want, select the Lock the Taskbar check box described in Table 2-1.

The taskbar's crazy toolbars

Your taskbar won't always be a steadfast, unchanging friend. Microsoft lets you customize it even further, often beyond the point of recognition. Some people enjoy this toolbar gadgetry, sculpting extra buttons and bars onto their taskbars. Others accidentally turn on a toolbar and can't figure out how to get rid of the darn thing.

To turn a toolbar on or off, right-click on a blank part of the taskbar (even the clock will do) and choose Toolbars from the pop-up menu. A menu leaps out, offering the toolbars described in the following list:

✔ **Address:** Choose this toolbar, and part of your taskbar becomes a place for typing Web sites to visit. It's convenient, but so is Internet Explorer, which does the same thing.

✔ **Windows Media Player:** When turned on, this toolbar in Figure 2-10 turns into a handy button panel for controlling your minimized Windows Media Player.

✔ **Links:** This toolbar adds quick access to your favorite Web sites. Click it to visit any Web site listed in Internet Explorer's Favorites menu.

✔ **Desktop:** Techies who find the Start menu burdensome add this toolbar for quick access to all their PC's resources. It lets you browse through files, network locations, and Control Panel menus by snaking your way through all the menus.

✔ **Quick Launch:** The only toolbar Vista displays when first installed, this places a handful of handy icons, as shown earlier in Figure 2-6, next to your Start button: the Shrink Everything from the Desktop icon,

shown in the margin, and the Flip 3D icon, which helps you track down missing windows. (Add your own icons to this toolbar by dragging and dropping them.)

✓ **New Toolbar:** Click here to choose *any* folder to add as a toolbar. For example, choose your Documents folder for quick browsable access to all its files and folders.

Figure 2-10:
The Windows Media Player toolbar.

Toolbars fall into the love 'em or hate 'em category. Some people find toolbars to be timesavers; others feel they consume too much real estate to be worth the effort. And some toolbars, like the Tablet PC Input Panel, only work when you attach an expensive, touch-sensitive pad to your PC. Feel free to experiment until you decide which camp you fall into.

TIP

Toolbars are *supposed* to be dragged around with the mouse. When the taskbar is unlocked, grab the toolbar by its *handle,* a vertical line by the toolbar's name. Drag the handle to the left or right to change a toolbar's size.

The taskbar's two sides

Like boys and girls at a school dance, the taskbar's two groups of icons hang out on opposite ends. On the left lives the Quick Launch toolbar; on the right, you'll find the taskbar's Notification Area. What's the difference between the two?

The Quick Launch toolbar is simply a group of shortcuts to frequently used programs. They're no different from shortcuts that live in your folders or your desktops. They don't represent running programs; they're mere push buttons that call programs into action.

The Notification Area, on the other hand, represents *currently running* programs that don't live inside open windows. You'll spot an icon for

Windows Defender, for example, as it runs in the background, constantly scanning for spyware. Another controls Vista's sound, and yet another may show the status of your Internet connection or your printer. You may see one for Apple's iTunes and other third-party programs.

Who cares? Well, because the icons in the Notification Area represent *running* programs, they can bog down your PC if that area grows too crowded. If you spot an unused program's icon in the Notification Area, speed up your PC a bit by firing up the Control Panel and uninstalling that unused program. Or, for a quick, temporary close to a Notification Area program, right-click its icon and choose Exit.

The Sidebar

People who can afford enormous monitors love Vista's new Sidebar, that gadget-packed strip along the desktop's right edge. People with small monitors find it a bothersome waste of space.

If your Sidebar doesn't grace your desktop, fire it up: Right-click the little icon (shown in the margin) in the taskbar's Notification Area — that icon-packed area next to the desktop's clock — and choose Show Sidebar. The Sidebar springs to life, shown in Figure 2-11.

Figure 2-11:
The Sidebar
displays
Gadgets,
minuscule
programs
that snap on
and off their
panel.

To see Windows Vista's collection of built-in *Gadgets* (minuscule programs that snap on and off their panel), click the little plus sign near the Sidebar's top. A window pops up offering a calendar and stock ticker, among others. Click Get More Gadgets Online to visit Gadget nirvana: A Web site packed with Gadgets, ready for the picking.

✔ Prefer your Sudoku game gadget on top? Drag it up there. You can even drag Gadgets off the Sidebar and onto the desktop — if you have a huge enough monitor to sacrifice the space.

✔ To change a Gadget's settings — choose which photos appear in your slide show, for example — point at the Gadget and click the tiny wrench icon that appears. To remove a Gadget completely, click the little X, instead.

Logging Off from Windows

Ah! The most pleasant thing you'll do with Windows Vista all day could very well be to stop using it. And you do that the same way you started: by using the Start button, that friendly little helper you've been using all along. (And if the Start menu is hiding, hold down Ctrl and press Esc to bring it back from behind the trees.) You want the one of the two buttons resting at the bottom of the Start menu:

✔ **Sleep/Power:** Sleep mode (margin, top) comes in handy when you won't be using your PC for several hours but want to start up where you left off. Designed for impatient desktoppers, this option memorizes your currently open windows, and then turns off your PC. When you turn on your PC, your open programs and documents appear on the desktop where you left them. On laptops, this option is a Power button (margin, bottom) that simply turns off your PC.

✔ **Lock:** Meant for short trips to the water cooler, this option locks your PC and places your user account picture on the screen. When you return, type your password, and Vista instantly displays your desktop, just as you left it. This option appears on both laptops and desktop PCs.

Windows Vista offers several other ways to close your session. Look closely at the arrow to the right of the Lock button. Click the arrow to see up to seven options, shown in Figure 2-12.

✔ **Switch User:** If somebody else just wants to borrow the computer for a few minutes, choose Switch User. The Welcome screen appears, but Windows keeps your open programs waiting in the background. When you switch back, everything's just as you left it.

✔ **Log Off:** Choose this option when you're through working at the PC and somebody else wants a go at it. Windows saves your work and your settings and returns to the Welcome screen, ready for the next user.

✔ **Lock:** For some reason, Microsoft offers the Lock option again, described earlier in the main section.

✔ **Restart:** Only choose this option when Windows Vista screwed something up: Several programs crashed, or Windows seems to be acting awfully weird. Windows Vista turns off and reloads itself, hopefully feeling refreshed.

- ✔ **Sleep:** New to Vista, this option saves a copy of your work in your PC's memory *and* its hard drive and then slumbers in a low power state. When you turn your PC back on, Vista presents your desktop, programs, and windows as if you'd never left. (On a laptop, Sleep saves your work only to memory; should the battery life grow threateningly low, Sleep dumps it onto the hard drive and turns off your laptop.)

- ✔ **Hibernate:** Found on some laptops, this option copies your work to your hard drive and then turns off your PC — a process requiring more battery power than Sleep mode.

- ✔ **Shut Down:** Choose this option when nobody else will be using the computer until the next morning. Windows Vista saves everything and turns off your computer.

Figure 2-12:
Click the little arrow to see more options for wrapping up work on your PC.
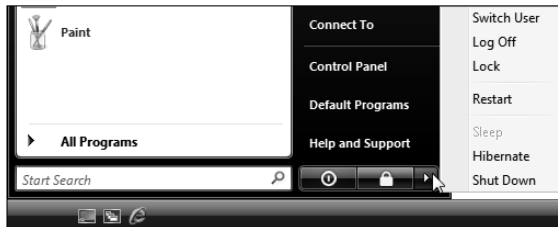
When you tell Windows Vista that you want to quit, it searches through all your open windows to see whether you've saved all your work. If it finds any work you've forgotten to save, it lets you know so that you can click the OK button to save it. Whew!

REMEMBER

You don't *have* to shut down Windows Vista. In fact, some people leave their computers turned on all the time, saying it's better for their computer's health. Others say that their computers are healthier if they're turned off each day. Still others say Vista's new Sleep mode gives them the best of both worlds. However, *everybody* says to turn off your monitor when you're done working. Monitors definitely enjoy cooling down when not in use.

WARNING!

Don't just press your PC's Off button to turn off your PC. Instead, be sure to shut down Windows Vista through one of its official Off options: Sleep, Hibernate, or Shut Down. Otherwise, Windows Vista can't properly prepare your computer for the dramatic event, leading to future troubles.

Chapter 3

Basic Windows Mechanics

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*T*his chapter is for curious Windows anatomy students. You know who you are — you're the ones who see all those buttons, borders, and balloons scattered throughout Windows Vista and wonder what would happen if you just clicked that little thing over there.

This rather gruesome chapter tosses an ordinary window (your oft-used Documents folder, to be precise) onto the dissection table. I've yanked out each part for thorough labeling and explanation. You'll find the theory behind each one and required procedures for making each piece do your bidding.

A standard field guide follows, identifying and explaining the buttons, boxes, windows, bars, lists, and other oddities you may encounter when you're trying to make Windows Vista do something useful.

Feel free to don any protective gear you may have lying about, use the margins to scribble notes, and tread forcefully into the world of Windows.

Dissecting a Typical Window

Figure 3-1 places a typical window on the slab, with all its parts labeled. You might recognize the window as your Documents folder, that storage tank for most of your work.

Toolbar

Maximize

Address bar

Minimize | Close

Title bar

Search box

Help

Figure 3-1:
Here's how
the ever-
precise
computer
nerds
address the
different
parts of a
window.

Switch to Folders view

Vertical scroll bar

Preview pane

Scroll box

Navigation pane

Scroll arrow
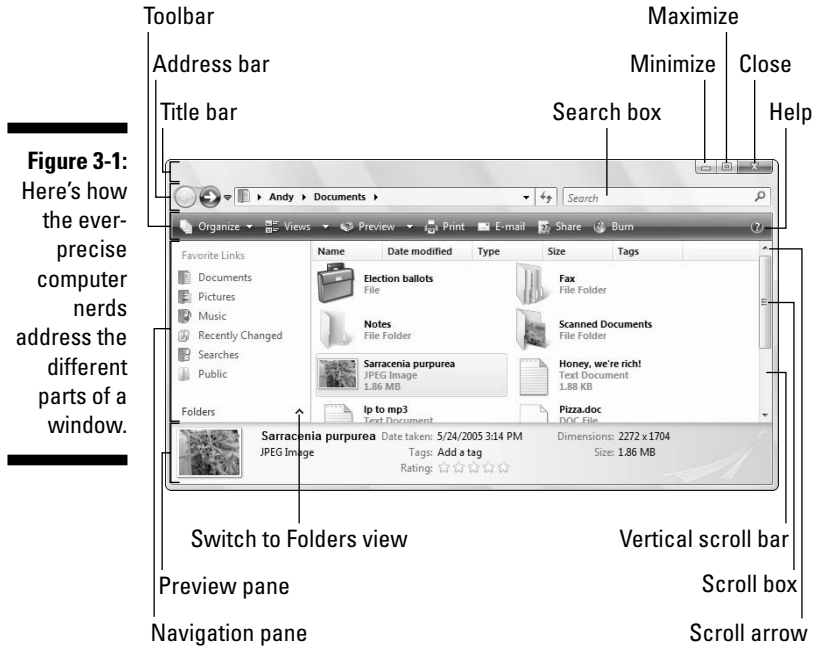
Just as boxers grimace differently depending on where they've been punched, windows behave differently depending on where they've been clicked. The next few sections describe the main parts of the Documents folder's window in Figure 3-1, how to click them, and how Windows jerks in response.

WINDOWS XP

XP

✔ Windows XP veterans remember their My Documents folder, that stash for all their files. Vista drops the word My to create the Documents folder. (You're still supposed to stash your files inside it.) Other My hatchet jobs include the Pictures and Music folders.

✔ Windows Vista is full of little weird-shaped buttons, borders, and boxes. You don't need to remember all their names, although it would give you a leg up on figuring out Windows' scholarly Help menus. When you spot an odd portion of a window, just return to this chapter, look up its name in Figure 3-1, and read its explanation.

✔ You can deal with most things in Windows by simply clicking, double-clicking, or right-clicking, a decision explained in the nearby sidebar, "Clicking, double-clicking, and right-clicking strategies." (Spoiler: *When in doubt, always right-click.*)

✔ After you click a few windows a few times, you realize how easy it is to boss them around. The hard part is finding the right controls for the *first* time, like figuring out the buttons on that new cell phone.

Tugging on a window's title bar

Found atop nearly every window (see examples in Figure 3-2), the title bar usually lists the program name and the file it's currently working on. For example, Figure 3-2 shows the title bars from Windows Vista's WordPad (top) and Notepad (bottom) programs. The WordPad title bar lists the file's name as Document because you haven't had a chance to save and name the file yet. (It may be full of notes you've jotted down from an energetic phone conversation with Ed McMahon.)

Figure 3-2:
A title bar
from
WordPad
(top) and
Notepad
(bottom).
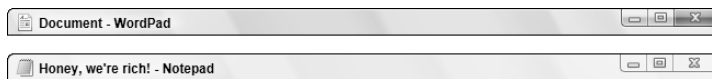
Clicking, double-clicking, and right-clicking strategies

Clicking or double-clicking your mouse controls nearly everything in Windows, yet Microsoft seems befuddled when defining the difference between the two finger actions. Microsoft says to click when *selecting* something, and double-click when *choosing* something. Huh?

You're *selecting* something when you're highlighting it. For example, you click in a box, on a window, or on a filename to *select* it. That click usually *highlights* the item, preparing it for further action.

Choosing something, by contrast, is much more decisive. An authoritative double-click on a file convinces Windows to open it for you immediately.

Microsoft's theoretical hierarchies bore me, so I almost always take the third option and *right-click* on things. Right-click on nearly anything to see a little menu listing everything it can do. I click the option I want, and Windows does my bidding.

The moral? *When in doubt, right-click.*

Although mild-mannered, the mundane title bar holds hidden powers, described in the following tips:

✔ Title bars make convenient handles for moving windows around your desktop. Point at the title bar, hold down the mouse button, and move the mouse around: The window follows along as you move your mouse. Found the right location? Let go of the mouse button, and the window sets up camp in its new spot.

✔ Double-click the title bar, and the window leaps to fill the entire screen. Double-click it again, and the window retreats to its original size.

✔ In Windows XP, every title bar carried a, uh, title of what you were viewing. Vista, however, leaves its folders' names *off* their title bars, preferring an empty strip (refer to Figure 3-1). But although many of Vista's title bars lack titles, they work like regular title bars: Feel free to drag them around your desktop, just as you did in Windows XP.

✔ The right end of the title bar contains three square buttons. From left to right, they let you Minimize, Restore (or Maximize), or Close a window, topics all covered in this chapter's "Maneuvering Windows Around the desktop" section.

✔ In Windows XP, the window you're currently working with always sports a *highlighted* title bar — it's a different color from the title bars of any other open windows. Vista's title bars, by contrast, are much the same color. To find the window you're currently working on, look for a red Close button in its top, right corner (Figure 3-2, top). That distinguishes it from windows you *aren't* working on (Figure 3-2, bottom). By glancing at the corner of all the title bars on the screen, you can tell which window is awake and accepting anything you type.

Dragging, dropping, and running

Although the term *drag and drop* sounds as if it's straight out of a *Sopranos* episode, it's really a nonviolent mouse trick used throughout Windows. Dragging and dropping is a way of moving something — say, an icon on your desktop — from one place to another.

To *drag,* put the mouse pointer over the icon and *hold down* the left or right mouse button. (I prefer the right mouse button.) As you move the mouse across your desk, the pointer drags the icon across the screen. Place the pointer/icon where you want it and release the mouse button. The icon *drops,* unharmed.

Holding down the *right* mouse button while dragging and dropping makes Windows Vista toss up a helpful little menu, asking whether you want to *copy* or *move* the icon.

Helpful Tip Department: Started dragging something and realized midstream that you're dragging the wrong item? Don't let go of the mouse button — instead, press Esc to cancel the action. Whew! (If you've dragged with your right mouse button and already let go of the button, there's another exit: Choose Cancel from the pop-up menu.)

Typing in a Window's Address Bar

Directly beneath every folder's title bar lives the *Address Bar,* shown atop the Documents folder in Figure 3-3. Internet veterans will experience déjà vu: Vista's Address Bar is lifted straight from the top of Internet Explorer and glued atop every folder.

Figure 3-3:
Each folder sports an Address Bar, much like the one in Internet Explorer.
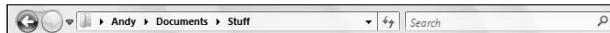
The Address Bar's three main parts, described from left to right in the following list, perform three different duties:

✔ **Backward and Forward buttons:** These two arrows keep track as you forage through your PC's folders. The Backward button backtracks to the folder you just visited. The Forward arrow brings you back. (Click the miniscule arrow to the right of the Forward arrow to see a list of places you've visited previously; click any entry to zoom right there.)

✔ **Address Bar:** Just as Internet Explorer's Address Bar lists a Web site's address, Vista's Address Bar displays your current folder's address — its location inside your PC. For example, the Address Bar shown in Figure 3-3 shows three words: *Andy, Documents,* and *Stuff.* Those words tell you that you're looking inside the *Stuff* folder inside the *Documents* folder of *Andy's* User account. Yes, folder addresses are complicated enough to warrant an entire chapter: Chapter 4.

Feel free to type a Web site's address — something like `www.andy rathbone.com` — into any folder's Address Bar. Your folder will summon Internet Explorer, which opens to that particular site.

✔ **Search box:** In another rip-off from Internet Explorer, every Vista folder sports a Search box. Instead of searching the Internet, though, it rummages through your folder's contents. For example, type the word **carrot** into a folder's Search box: Vista digs through that folder's contents and retrieves every file mentioning *carrot.*

To expand your search beyond that particular folder, click the arrow next to the Search box's magnifying glass icon. A drop-down menu lets you route your search to your entire PC or even the Internet. I cover Vista's new search features in Chapter 6.

Several other areas of the Address Bar deserve mention:

TIP

✔ In the Address Bar, notice the little arrows between the words Andy, Documents, and Stuff? The arrows offer quick trips to other folders. Click any arrow — the one to the right of the word Documents, for example. A little menu drops down from the arrow, letting you jump to any other folder inside your Documents folder.

✔ When sending a search to the Internet, the Search box normally routes entries off to Microsoft's *own* Search Provider. (That arrangement lets Microsoft get kickbacks from the ads.) To send the search to Google or any other search engine, fire up Internet Explorer, click the little arrow next to the Search box's magnifying glass, and choose Find More Providers, a task I detail in Chapter 8.

Finding Vista's hidden menu bar

Windows Vista has more menu items than an Asian restaurant. To keep everybody's minds on computer commands instead of seaweed salad, Windows hides its menus inside the *menu bar* (see Figure 3-4).

WINDOWS XP
XP

In fact, Vista even hides every folder's menu bar. To bring them back, press Alt, and they drop into place. To keep the menu bars permanently affixed there, follow these steps:
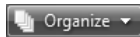
▐▌ Organize ▾

1. **Click the Organize button (shown in the margin), then choose Folder and Search Options from the menu.**

   The Folder options dialog box appears, opened to the General tab.

2. **In the Tasks section, select Use Windows Classic Folders.**

3. **Click OK.**

Figure 3-4:
The menu
bar.

File   Edit   View   Tools   Help

The menu bar sports a different menu for each word. To reveal the secret options, click any word — Edit, for example. A menu tumbles down, as shown in Figure 3-5, presenting options related to editing a file.

Just as restaurants sometimes run out of specials, a window sometimes isn't capable of offering all its menu items. Any unavailable options are *grayed out,* like the Cut, Copy, Paste, Delete, and Go To options in Figure 3-5.

Figure 3-5:
Click any
menu to
see its
associated
commands.

TIP
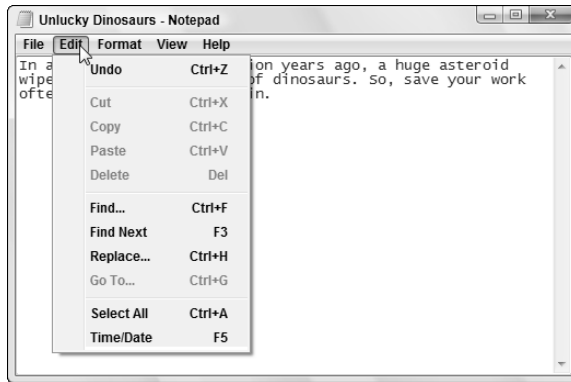
If you accidentally click the wrong word in a menu bar, causing the wrong menu to jump down, simply click the word you *really* wanted. A forgiving soul, Windows retracts the mistaken menu and displays your newly chosen one.

To back out of Menu Land completely, click the mouse pointer back down on your work in the window's *workspace* — the area where you're supposed to be working.

TECHNICAL STUFF

For the convenience of keyboard lovers, Vista underlines one letter on every menu item. (Press Alt to see them.) Mouse haters can press the Alt key followed by an underlined letter — the *F* in File, for example — to make Windows display the File menu. (Pressing Alt, then F, and then X closes a window.)

Choosing the Right Button for the Job

WINDOWS XP

Many Windows XP veterans fondly remember their folders' *task pane,* a handy strip along a folder's left side that displayed handy buttons for common chores. Vista no longer sports a task pane. Instead, those common chores are relegated to a thin strip of buttons called the *toolbar.* The Computer folder's toolbar, for example, appears in Figure 3-6.

Figure 3-6:
The
Computer
folder's
toolbar.

You don't need to know much about the toolbar, because Vista automatically places the right buttons atop the folder that needs them. Open your Music folder, for example, and the toolbar quickly sprouts a Play All button for marathon listening sessions. Open the Pictures folder, and the friendly toolbar serves up a Slide Show button.

If a button's meaning isn't immediately obvious, hover your mouse over it; a little message explains the button's *raison d'être.* My own translations for the most common buttons are in the following list:
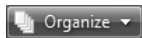
- ✔ **Organize:** Found on every folder's toolbar, the Organize button lets you change a folder's layout by toggling those thick informational strips along the window's edges. You can turn on or off the *Navigation Pane,* that strip of shortcuts along the left edge, for example. You can also turn off the *Preview Pane,* that strip along every folder's bottom that displays information about the selected file.

- ✔ **Views:** The second button to live atop every folder window, the Views button may be the most useful: It makes the window display your files in different ways. Keep clicking it to cycle through different icon sizes; stop clicking when one looks good. To jump to a favorite view, click the button's adjacent arrow to see a list of every available view. Choose Details, for example, to view everything you want to know about a file: its size, creation date, and other minutia. (Photos look best when shown in Large or Extra Large Icons view.)

  Are your folder's icons too big or small? Hold down the Ctrl key and spin your mouse wheel. Spin one direction to enlarge them and the reverse direction to shrink them.

- ✔ **Share:** Click here to share the selected file or files with somebody on another computer, provided they already have a User account and password on your PC. You won't see or need this button until you set up a network (which I describe in Chapter 14) to link this PC with others.

- ✔ **Burn:** Click here to copy your selected items to a blank CD or DVD. If you haven't yet clicked on anything in the folder, this copies the entire folder's contents to your CD — a handy way to make quick backups.

- ✔ **Help:** Click the little blue question mark icon in any folder's top-right corner for help with whatever you happen to be viewing at the time.

Quick shortcuts with the Windows Vista Navigation Pane

Look at most "real" desktops, and you'll see the most-used items sitting within arm's reach: The Inbox, the stapler, and perhaps a few crumbs from the coffee room snacks. Similarly, Vista gathers up your PC's most frequently used items and places them in the new Navigation Pane, shown in Figure 3-7.

Figure 3-7: The Navigation Pane's top half (right) offers shortcuts to folders you visit frequently; click the word Folders to see your folders in a branching tree view (left).
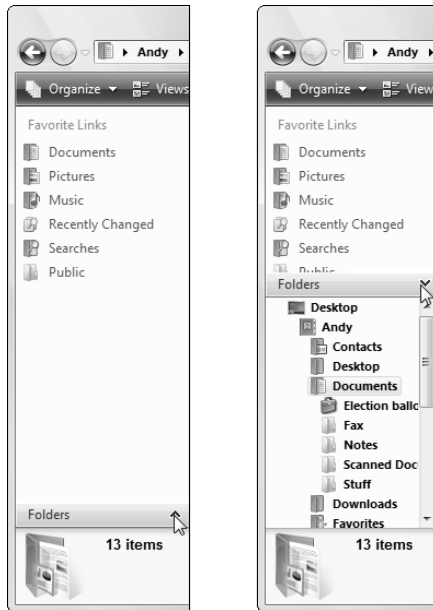
Found along the left edge of every folder, the Navigation Pane contains two main parts. The top half contains a list of words called the Favorite Links section; beneath them awaits a mysterious door called Folders. Here's a more detailed description of both halves of the Navigation Pane:

✔ **Favorite Links:** Not to be confused with the Favorite links in Internet Explorer (Chapter 8), the Favorite Links in the Navigation Pane are words serving as clickable shortcuts to your most frequently accessed folders *inside* your PC:

• **Documents:** Click this shortcut to return straight to the mother of all folders, your Documents folder.

• **Recently Changed:** You guessed it: Clicking this shortcut lists every file that's changed in the past 30 days. They're sorted by date, with the most recent file at the top, making it a handy way to locate your latest work.

• **Pictures:** This shortcut opens your Pictures folder, living quarters to all your digital photos.

• **Music:** Yep, this shortcut jumps straight to your Music folder, where a double-click on a song starts it playing through your PC's speaker.

• **Searches:** Click this shortcut to see Vista's collection of *Saved Searches:* Things you've searched for in the past. Several handy searches already live here: every piece of e-mail you've received in the last seven days, for example.

• **Public:** Drop a file in here to share it with everybody using your PC.

✔ **Folders:** The Navigation Pane's hidden door hides behind a single word called Folders. See the word Folders at the bottom of the Navigation Pane? Click anywhere on that folder bar, and the Navigation Pane displays a "branching tree" view of your folders, covered in Chapter 4. It's an easy way to jump to any folder or drive on your computer.

The following tips let you wring the most value from the Navigation Pane:

✔ Feel free to customize your Navigation Pane by dragging and dropping folders or shortcuts onto it. That setup keeps them within reach of any folder you happen to be working in. To remove an item, right-click it and choose Remove Link.

✔ If you accidentally delete some of the Favorite Links in your Navigation Pane, tell Vista to repair the damage. Right-click anywhere inside the Navigation Pane and choose Restore Default Favorite Links.

Working with the Details pane

Vista's new *Details pane,* shown in Figure 3-8, hovers like a low-lying cloud along the bottom of every folder. Just as the Details pane's name implies, the little strip lists arcane details about the item you're currently viewing, a treat drooled over by techies.

Figure 3-8:
The Details pane lists details about the folder or file you've just clicked.

01 - **Swing To Bop** Artists: Charlie Christian, Dizzy ... Length: 00:08:55		
MP3 Format Sound Album: **After Hours** Rating: ☆☆☆☆☆		
Genre: **Jazz**		

Open a folder, for example, and its Details pane dutifully lists the number of files that folder contains. It even says whether the files live on your own PC, or through a network.

The real information comes when you click a file. For example, click a music file, and the Details pane shows a thumbnail of the album cover, the song's title, artist, length, size, and even any rating you've given it through Vista's Media Player. Click a photo file to see a thumbnail preview, the date you pressed your camera's shutter button, and the photo's size.

✔ The Details pane knows more than it first reveals. Because it's resizable, drag its top border up a bit. As the Details pane grows larger, it starts to reveal more information about your highlighted file: its size, creation date, the date it was last changed, and similar tidbits. A quick upward tug offers a quick peek at information; drag it back down when you're through.

✔ If you think the Details pane consumes too much screen space, drag its top border down a bit. Or, turn it off: Click the Organize button on the toolbar's leftmost corner, click Layout from the drop-down menu, and click Details Pane. (Reverse those steps to revive a missing Details pane.)

✔ While editing a file's properties, feel free to add a *tag* — a keyword that lets you relocate that particular file more quickly. (I cover tags in Chapter 6.)

Moving inside a window with its scroll bar

The scroll bar, which resembles a cutaway of an elevator shaft (see Figure 3-9), rests along the edge of all overstuffed windows. Inside the shaft, a little elevator (technically, the *scroll box*) rides up and down as you page through your work. In fact, by glancing at the elevator's position in the shaft, you can tell whether you're viewing the top, middle, or bottom of a window's contents.

Figure 3-9:
A scroll bar.

You can watch the little box travel up or down as you press the PgUp or PgDn key. (Yes, it's easy to get distracted in Windows Vista.) But nudging the elevator around with the mouse is more fun. By clicking in various places on the scroll bar, you can quickly move around inside a document. Here's the dirt:

✔ Clicking in the shaft *above* the elevator shifts your view up one page, just as if you'd pressed the PgUp key. Similarly, clicking *below* the elevator shifts the view down one page. The larger your monitor, the more information you can see on each page.

✔ To move up your view line by line, click the little arrow (the *scroll arrow*) at the top of the scroll bar. Similarly, clicking the little arrow at the bottom moves your view down one line with each click.

✔ Scroll bars occasionally hang out along a window's bottom edge. Handy for viewing spreadsheets and other wide documents, scroll bars let you move your view sideways for peeking at the totals in the spreadsheet's last column.

✔ No little scroll box in the bar? Then you're already seeing all that the window has to offer.

✔ To move around in a hurry, drag the scroll box up or down the bar. As you drag, you see the window's contents race past. When you see the spot you want, let go of the mouse button to stay at that viewing position.

✔ Using a mouse that has a little wheel embedded in the poor critter's back? Spin the wheel, and the list moves up or down, just as if you were playing with the scroll bar.

Boring borders

A *border* is that thin edge surrounding a window. Compared with a bar, it's really tiny.

To change a window's size, drag the border in or out. (Dragging by the corner gives the best results.)

Some windows, oddly enough, don't have borders. Stuck in limbo, their size can't be changed — even if they're an awkward size.

Except for tugging on them with the mouse, you won't be using borders much.

Filling Out Bothersome Dialog Boxes
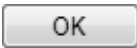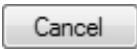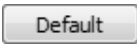
Sooner or later, Windows Vista will lapse into surly clerk mode, forcing you to fill out a bothersome form before carrying out your request. To handle this computerized paperwork, Windows Vista uses a *dialog box*.

A dialog box is a window displaying a little form or checklist for you to fill out. These forms can have bunches of different parts, all discussed in the following sections. Don't bother trying to remember each part's name. It's much more important to remember how they work.

Poking the correct command button

Command buttons may be the simplest part of a form to figure out — Microsoft labeled them! Command buttons usually require poking after you've filled out a form. Based on the command button you click, Windows either carries out your bidding (rare) or sends you to another form (most likely).

Although Vista eliminated most forms, Table 3-1 identifies the command buttons you'll still come across.

Table 3-1	Common Windows Vista Command Buttons
Command Button	*Description*
OK	A click on the OK button says, "I've finished the form, and I'm ready to move on." Windows Vista reads what you've typed and processes your request.
Cancel	If you've somehow loused things up when filling out a form, click the Cancel button. Windows whisks away the form, and everything returns to normal. Whew! (***Tip:*** The little red X in a window's top corner makes pesky windows go away, as well.)
Next	Click the Next button to move to the next question. (Change your mind on the last question? Back up by clicking the Back arrow near the window's top left.)
Browse...	If you encounter a button with dots (...) after the word, brace yourself: Clicking that button brings yet *another* form to the screen. From there, you must choose even more settings, options, or toppings.
Default	When you change a setting that louses things up, click the Default (or Restore Defaults) button with full force. That brings back Vista's freshly installed look.

✔ The OK button usually has a slightly darker border than the others, meaning it's *highlighted.* Just pressing Enter automatically chooses the form's highlighted button, sparing you the inconvenience of clicking it. (I usually click it anyway, just to make sure.)

✔ If you've clicked the wrong button but *haven't yet lifted your finger from the mouse button,* stop! Command buttons don't take effect until you release your finger from the mouse button. Keep holding down the mouse, but scoot the pointer away from the wrong button. Move safely away and then lift your finger.

✔ Did you stumble across a box that contains a confusing option? Click the question mark in the box's upper-right corner (it will look like the one in the margin). Then click the confusing command button to see a short explanation of that button's function in life. Sometimes merely resting your mouse pointer over a confusing button makes Windows take pity, sending a helpful caption to explain matters.

Choosing between option buttons

Sometimes, Windows Vista gets ornery and forces you to select a single option. For example, you can play some games at either a beginner or intermediate level. You can't do *both,* so Windows Vista doesn't let you select both of the options.

Windows Vista handles this situation with an *option button.* When you select one option, the little dot hops over to it. Select the other option, and the little dot hops over to it instead. You find option buttons in many dialog boxes, such as the one in Figure 3-10.

Figure 3-10: Select an option.
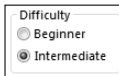
If you *can* select more than one option, Windows Vista won't present you with option buttons. Instead, it offers the more liberal *check boxes,* which are described in the "Check boxes" section, later in this chapter.

Some programs refer to option buttons as *radio buttons,* after those push buttons on old car radios that switch from station to station, one station at a time.

Typing into text boxes

A *text box* works like a fill-in-the-blanks test in history class. You can type anything you want into a text box — words, numbers, passwords, or epithets. For example, Figure 3-11 shows a dialog box that pops up when you want to search for words or characters in some programs. The text box is where you type the words you want to search for.

✔ When a text box is *active* (that is, ready for you to start typing stuff into it), either the box's current information is highlighted or a cursor is blinking inside it.

✔ If the text box *isn't* highlighted or there *isn't* a blinking cursor inside it, it's not ready for you to start typing. To announce your presence, click inside it before typing.

✔ If you need to use a text box that already contains words, delete any text you don't want before you start typing new information. (Or you can double-click the old information to highlight it; that way, the incoming text automatically replaces the old text.)

✔ Yes, text boxes have way too many rules.

Figure 3-11:
This dialog
box contains
a text box.
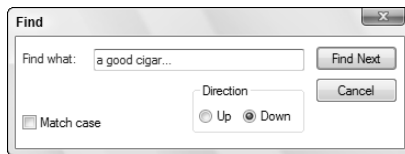
Choosing options from list boxes

Some boxes don't let you type *anything* into them. They simply display lists of things, letting you pluck the items you want. Boxes of lists are called, appropriately enough, *list boxes.* For example, some word processors bring up a list box if you're inspired enough to want to change the *font* — the style of the letters (see Figure 3-12).

✔ See how the Comic Sans MS font is highlighted in Figure 3-12? It's the currently selected item in the list box. Press Enter (or click the OK button), and your program begins using that font when you start typing.

✔ See the scroll bar along the side of the list box? It works just as it does anywhere else: Click the little scroll arrows (or press the up or down arrow) to move the list up or down, and you can see any names that don't fit in the box.

✔ Some list boxes have a text box above them. When you click a name in the list box, that name hops into the text box. Sure, you could type the name into the text box yourself, but it wouldn't be nearly as much fun.

✔ When confronted with zillions of names in a list box or folder, type the first letter of the name you're after. Windows Vista immediately hops down the list to the first name beginning with that letter.

Figure 3-12:
Select a font
from the
list box.
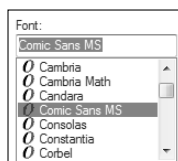
When one just isn't enough

Because Windows Vista can display only one background on your desktop at a time, you can select only one file from the list box of available backgrounds. Other list boxes, like those in Windows Explorer, let you select a bunch of names simultaneously. Here's how:

✔ To select more than one item, hold down the Ctrl key and click each item you want. Each item stays highlighted.

✔ To select a bunch of adjacent items from a list box, click the first item you want. Then hold down Shift and click the last item you want. Windows Vista immediately highlights the first item, last item, and every item in between. Pretty sneaky, huh? (To weed out a few unwanted items from the middle, hold down Ctrl and click them; Windows unhighlights them, leaving the rest highlighted.)

✔ Finally, when grabbing bunches of items, try using the "lasso" trick: Point at an area of the screen next to one item, and, while holding down the mouse button, move the mouse until you've drawn a lasso around all the items. After you've highlighted the items you want, let go of the mouse button, and they remain highlighted.

Drop-down list boxes

List boxes are convenient, but they take up a great deal of room. So, Windows Vista sometimes hides list boxes, just as it hides pull-down menus. When you click in the right place, the list box appears, ready for your perusal.

So, where's the right place? It's that downward-pointing arrow button, just like the one shown next to the box beside the Alignment option in Figure 3-13. (The mouse pointer is pointing to it.)

Figure 3-13:
Click the arrow next to the Alignment box to make a drop-down list box display available alignments.
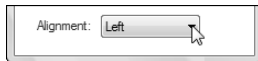
Figure 3-14 shows the drop-down list box after it's been clicked by the mouse. To make your choice, click the option you want from the drop-down list.

Figure 3-14:
A list box drops down to display the available alignments.
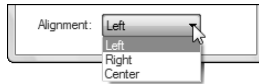
✔ To scoot around quickly in a long drop-down list box, press the first letter of the item you're after. The first item beginning with that letter is instantly highlighted. You can press the up- or down-arrow key to see nearby words and phrases.

✔ Another way to scoot around quickly in a drop-down list box is to click the scroll bar to its right. (I cover scroll bars earlier in this chapter, if you need a refresher.)

✔ You can choose only *one* item from the list in a drop-down list box.

Check boxes

Sometimes you can choose several options in a dialog box simply by clicking in the little square boxes next to their names. For example, the check boxes shown in Figure 3-15 let you pick and choose options in the game FreeCell.

Clicking in an empty square chooses that option. If the square already has a check mark inside, a click turns off that option, removing the check mark.

You can click next to as many check boxes as you want. Option buttons (those similar-looking but round buttons) restrict you to one option from the pack.

Figure 3-15:
Click to check a box.
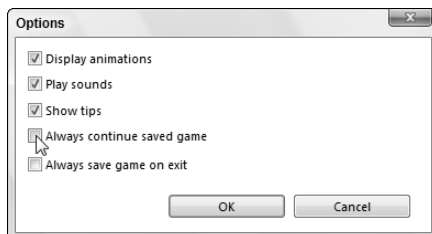
Sliding controls

Rich Microsoft programmers, impressed by track lights and sliding light switches in their luxurious new homes, use sliding controls in Windows Vista. These virtual light switches are easy to use and don't wear out nearly as quickly as the real ones do.

Some levers slide to the left and right; others move up and down. None of them move diagonally — yet. To slide a control in Windows Vista — to adjust the volume level, for example — just drag and drop the sliding lever, like the one shown in Figure 3-16.
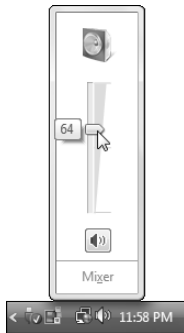
Figure 3-16:
A sliding
lever.

Sliding works like this: Point at the lever with the mouse and, while holding down the mouse button, move the mouse in the direction you want the sliding lever to move. As you move the mouse, the lever moves, too. When you've moved the lever to a comfortable spot, let go of the mouse button, and Windows Vista leaves the lever at its new position.

Maneuvering Windows Around the Desktop

A terrible dealer at the poker table, Windows Vista tosses windows around your desktop in a seemingly random way. Programs cover each other or sometimes dangle off the desktop. This section shows you how to gather all your windows into a neat pile, placing your favorite window on the top of the stack. If you prefer, lay them all down like a poker hand. As an added bonus, you can change their size, making them open to any size you want, automatically.

Moving a window to the top of the pile

Windows Vista says the window at the top of the pile getting all the attention is called the *active* window. I won't argue. The active window is also the one that receives any keystrokes you or your cat happen to type.

You can move a window to the top of the pile so that it's active in one of two ways:

- ✔ Sometimes you can recognize a tiny portion of the window you're after. If so, you're in luck. Move the mouse pointer until it hovers over any portion of the desired window and click the mouse button. Windows Vista immediately makes the clicked-on window active.

- ✔ On the taskbar, click the button for the window you want. Chapter 2 explains what the taskbar can do in more detail.

Repeat the process when necessary to bring other windows to the front. (And if you want to put two windows on the screen at the same time, read the "Placing two windows next to each other" section, later in this chapter.)

Moving a window from here to there

Sometimes you want to move a window to a different place on the desktop. Perhaps part of the window hangs off the edge, and you want it centered. Or maybe you want one window closer to another.

In either case, you can move a window by dragging and dropping its *title bar,* that thick bar along its top. (If you're not sure how dragging and dropping works, see the sidebar "Dragging, dropping, and running," earlier in this chapter.) When you *drop* the window in place, the window not only remains where you've dragged and dropped it, but also stays on top of the pile.

Making a window fill the whole screen

Sooner or later, you'll grow tired of all this multiwindow mumbo jumbo. Why can't you just put one huge window on-screen? Well, you can.

To make any window grow as big as it can get, double-click its *title bar,* that topmost bar along the window's top edge. The window leaps up to fill the screen, covering up all the other windows.

The Alt+Tab and ⊞+Tab tricks

Sometimes your desktop becomes so cluttered with windows that you lose track of a particular window. To cycle through every open window, hold down the Alt key while pressing Tab: A little window appears in the middle of the screen, listing every open window by name. Keep holding down Alt and pressing Tab until you see the name of the window you're after. Found it?

Release both keys, and Windows brings the currently listed window to the forefront.

When run on PCs with powerful graphics (I explain the requirements in Chapter 1), Vista can show a three-dimensional view of the windows: Hold down the ⊞ (the key with the Windows logo) and press Tab to see the full-blown graphics shown in Chapter 1's Figure 1-4.

To bring the pumped-up window back to its former size, double-click its title bar once again. The window quickly shrinks to its former size, and you can see things that it covered.

✔ If you're morally opposed to double-clicking a window's title bar to expand it, you can click the little Maximize button. Shown in the margin, it's the middle of the three buttons in the upper-right corner of every window.

✔ When a window is maximized to fill the screen, the Maximize button turns into a Restore button, shown in the margin. Click the Restore button, and the window returns to its smaller size.

Closing a window

When you're through working in a window, close it: Click the little X in its upper, right corner. Zap: You're back to an empty desktop.

If you try to close your window before finishing your work, be it a game of Solitaire or a report for the boss, Windows cautiously asks whether you'd like to save your work. Take it up on its offer by clicking Yes and, if necessary, choosing a name so that you can find your work later.

Making a window bigger or smaller

Like big, lazy dogs, windows tend to flop on top of one another. To space your windows more evenly, you can resize them by *dragging and dropping* their edges inward or outward. It works like this:

1. **Point at any corner with the mouse arrow. When the arrow turns into a two-headed arrow, pointing in the two directions, you can hold down the mouse button and drag the corner in or out to change the window's size.**

2. **When you're done yanking and the window looks about the right size, let go of the mouse button.**

   As the yoga master says, the window assumes the new position.

Placing two windows next to each other

The longer you use Windows, the more likely you are to want to see two windows side by side. For example, you may want to copy and paste text from one document into another document. By spending a few hours with the mouse, you can drag and drop the windows' corners until they're in perfect juxtaposition.

Or you can simply right-click on a blank part of the taskbar (even the clock will do) and choose Show Windows Side by Side to place the windows next to each other, like pillars. Choose Show Windows Stacked to align them in horizontal rows. (If you have more than three open windows, Show Windows Stacked tiles them across your screen, handy for seeing just a bit of each one.)

If you have more than two windows open, minimize the ones you *don't* want tiled. Then use the Show Windows Side by Side command to align the two remaining windows.

Making windows open to the same darn size

Sometimes a window opens to a small square; other times, it opens to fill the entire screen. But windows rarely open to the exact size you want. Until you discover this trick, that is: When you *manually* adjust the size and placement of a window, Windows memorizes that size and always reopens the window to that same size. Follow these three steps to see how it works:

1. **Open your window.**

   The window opens to its usual, unwanted size.

2. **Drag the window's corners until the window is the exact size and in the exact location you want. Let go of the mouse to drop the corner into its new position.**

   Be sure to resize the window *manually* by dragging its corners or edges with the mouse. Simply clicking the Maximize button won't work.

3. **Immediately close the window.**

   Windows memorizes the size and placement of a window at the time it was last closed. When you open that window again, it should open to the same size you last left it. But the changes you make apply only to the program you made them in. For example, changes made to the Internet Explorer window will only be remembered for *Internet Explorer,* not other programs you open.

Most windows follow these sizing rules, but a few renegades from other programs may misbehave. Feel free to complain to the manufacturers.

Chapter 4

Flipping Through Files, Folders, Floppies, and CDs

*T*he Computer program is where people wake up from Windows' easy-to-use computing dream, clutching a pillow in horror. These people bought a computer to simplify their work — to banish that awful filing cabinet with squeaky drawers.

But click the little Computer icon from the Start menu, start poking around inside your new PC, and that old filing cabinet reappears. Folders, with even more folders stuffed inside of them, still rule the world. And unless you grasp Windows' folder metaphor, you may not find your information very easily.

This chapter explains how to use Vista's filing program, called *Computer*. (Windows XP called the program My Computer.) Along the way, you ingest a big enough dose of Windows file management for you to get your work done. Windows may bring back your dreaded file cabinet, but at least the drawers don't squeak, and files never fall behind the cabinet.

Browsing Your Computer's File Cabinets

To keep your programs and files neatly arranged, Windows cleaned up the convenient file cabinet metaphor with light and airy Windows icons. You can see your new, computerized file cabinets in the Start menu's Computer program. Computer displays all the storage areas inside your computer, allowing you to copy, move, rename, or delete your files before the investigators arrive.

To see your own computer's file cabinets — called *drives* or *disks,* in computer lingo — click the Start menu and click the word Computer. Although your PC's Computer window will look slightly different from the one shown in Figure 4-1, it has the same basic sections, each described in the upcoming list.

Figure 4-1:
The Computer window displays your computer's storage areas, which you can open to see your files.
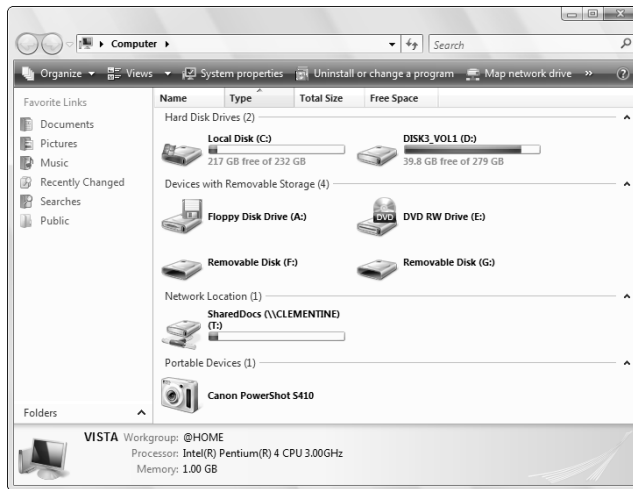
Windows can display its Computer window in many ways. To make your Computer window look more like the one in Figure 4-1, click the little arrow to the right of the Views button from the menu bar (shown in the margin). Then choose Tiles from the menu that squirts out. Finally, right-click a blank part of the Computer window, choose Group By, and select Type.

These are the basic sections of the Computer window:

✔ **Navigation Pane:** That strip along the left side of most windows, the handy Navigation Pane lists shortcuts to folders carrying your most valuable computerized possessions: your Documents, Pictures, and Music folders. (It tosses in a few other convenient items, covered in Chapter 3.)

✔ **Hard Disk Drives:** Shown in Figure 4-1, this area lists your PC's *hard drives* — your biggest storage areas. Every computer has at least one hard drive, and this PC has two. You may also see a *USB thumbdrive* here — those little sticks that plug into a USB drive to provide portable storage. Double-clicking a hard drive icon displays its files and folders, but you'll rarely find much useful information. Instead of probing your hard drive, open your Start menu to find and start programs.

✔ Notice the hard drive bearing the little Windows icon (shown in the margin)? That means Windows lives on that drive.

✔ **Devices with Removable Storage:** This area shows detachable storage gadgetry attached to your computer. Here are some of the more common ones:

✔ **Floppy Drive:** A dying breed, these drives still appear on some older PCs. But because these 20-year-old disks are too small to hold many files, most people now store files on CDs or DVDs instead.

✔ **CD and DVD drives:** As seen in Figure 4-1, Vista places a short description after each drive's icon to say whether it can only *read* discs or *write* to discs, as well. For example, a DVD burner (shown in the margin) is labeled *DVD-RW,* meaning that it can both *R*ead and *W*rite to DVDs, as well as to CDs. A drive that can burn CDs but not DVDs is labeled *CD-RW.*

Writing information to a CD or DVD is called *burning.*

✔ **Memory card reader:** Memory card readers add a little slot to your PC for inserting memory cards from your camera, MP3 player, or similar gadget. Their icons, shown in the margin, look like an empty slot — even after you insert the card to see your files.

✔ **MP3 players:** Although Vista displays a nice icon like this for a few MP3 players, it coughs up a generic thumbdrive or hard drive icon for the ultra-popular iPod. (I cover MP3 players in Chapter 15.)

✔ **Cameras:** Digital cameras usually appear as icons in the Computer window. Be sure to turn on the camera and set it to View Photos mode rather than Take Photos. To grab the camera's pictures, double-click the camera's icon. After Vista walks you through the process of extracting the images (Chapter 16), it places the photos in your Pictures folder.

✔ **Network Location:** This icon in the margin, seen only by people who've linked groups of PCs into a *network* (see Chapter 14), represents a folder living on another PC.

If you plug a digital camcorder, cell phone, or other gadget into your PC, the Computer window will sprout a new icon representing your gadget. Double-click the new icon to see the contents of your gadget; right-click the icon to see what Vista allows you to do with that gadget. No icon? Then you need to install a *driver* for your gadget, a journey detailed in Chapter 12.

TIP

Click almost any icon in Computer, and the Preview Pane along the screen's bottom automatically displays information about that object, ranging from its size or the date it was created, for example, or how much space a folder or drive can hold. To see even more information, enlarge the Preview Pane by dragging its top edge upward. The more room you give the pane, the more info it dishes out.

Getting the Lowdown on Folders

This stuff is dreadfully boring, but if you don't read it, you'll be just as lost as your files.

A *folder* is a storage area on a drive, just like a real folder in a file cabinet. Windows Vista divides your computer's hard drives into many folders to separate your many projects. For example, you store all your music in your Music folder and your pictures in your Pictures folder. That lets both you and your programs find them easily.

Any type of drive can have folders, but hard drives need folders the most because they contain *thousands* of files. By dividing a hard drive into little folder compartments, you can more easily see where everything sits.

Windows' Computer program lets you probe into different folders and peek at the files stuffed inside each one. To see the folders Vista created for *you* to play with, click your user account's name at the top of the Start menu, covered in Chapter 2. The following folders, shown in Figure 4-2, appear:

Figure 4-2:
Vista provides every person with these same folders, but keeps everybody's folders separate.
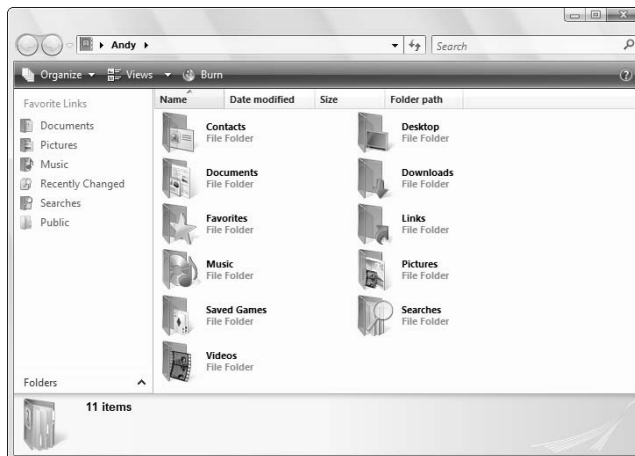
✔ **Your Account Name:** A click on your user account's name at the top of the Start menu opens your User Account folder, shown in Figure 4-2. Your home base, this folder holds all the files you create, all sorted into several important folders.

In Windows XP, your My Documents folder contained everything in your user account, including your My Music and My Pictures folders. In Vista, however, your User Account folder — the one you see when you click your name on the Start menu — now holds all your folders, including your Documents, Music, and Pictures folders, and these new ones:

✔ **Contacts:** Have you sent e-mail to somebody with Vista's built-in Mail program? (I cover Mail in Chapter 9.) Vista automatically places that person's name in the Contacts folder, listed on a little business card that opens with a double-click. Right-click a contact's name, choose Action, and select Send E-mail to open a preaddressed e-mail, ready for your message. Right-clicking is often a quicker way to send an e-mail while you *remember,* as opposed to opening Mail and then getting lost in your Inbox deluge.

✔ **Desktop:** Here's a secret: Vista considers your desktop to be one large folder, and everything you place on your desktop really lives inside this folder. Because your desktop's a larger target for pointing and clicking, you probably won't use this folder much.

✔ **Documents:** Please, *please* store all your work inside this folder, and for several reasons. By keeping everything in one place, you can find your files easier. Plus, it's something only *you* can find; other people using the computer can't fiddle with it. Create as many new folders inside here as you want.

✔ **Downloads:** Downloaded something from the Internet? Internet Explorer stashes most downloaded files in this folder, making it easier than ever to find.

✔ **Favorites:** Internet Explorer lets you save your favorite Web sites as, er, *Favorites.* That places them all on the program's Favorites menu for easy, one-click access. Those favorite sites also appear in this folder, where a double-click on a site's icon launches Internet Explorer and brings the site to your screen.

✔ **Links:** This folder lists all the places listed on Vista's Navigation Pane, which appears along the left side of most folders. Dragging and dropping icons here also adds them to your Navigation Pane.

✔ **Music:** When you copy music from CDs to your PC with Media Player, the songs end up in here, stored in a folder named after the CD's title.

✔ **Pictures:** Store all your pictures in here, whether they're photos from a digital camera, images from a scanner, or images filched from a Web site. Covered in Chapter 16, the Pictures folder displays thumbnails of your photos, and lets you grab pictures from an attached camera, create slide shows, and engage in more Foto Fun.

✔ **Saved Games:** Ever saved a game of Chess, FreeCell, or any of Vista's many other games? Those saved games live in here, waiting for your boss to leave. You may spot saved games from other game manufacturers, as well.

✔ **Searches:** Any searches you save appear here. (You can also find your saved searches by clicking the word Search in the Navigation Pane.) I cover searches and how to save them in Chapter 6.

✔ **Videos:** Videos downloaded from camcorders and the Internet should stay here. It's the first place some video programs like Vista's Movie Maker (Chapter 16) look for them.

Keep these folder facts in mind when shuffling files in Vista:

✔ You can ignore folders and dump all your files onto the Windows Vista desktop. But that's like tossing everything into the back seat of the car and pawing around to find your tissue box a month later. Organized stuff is much easier to find.

✔ If you're eager to create a folder or two (and it's pretty easy), page ahead to this chapter's "Creating a New Folder" section.

✔ Computer folders use a *tree metaphor* as they branch out from one main folder (a disk drive) to smaller folders (see Figure 4-3), to more folders stuffed inside those folders.

✔ Folders used to be called *directories* and *subdirectories.* But some people were getting used to that, so the industry switched to the term *folders.*

Figure 4-3:
Windows'
folders use
a treelike
structure,
with main
folders
branching
out to
smaller
folders.
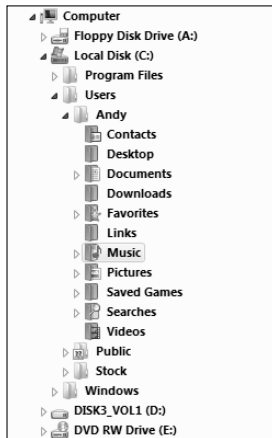
Peering into Your Drives and Folders

Knowing all this folder stuff not only impresses computer store employees, but also helps you find the files you want. (See the preceding section for a lowdown on which folder holds what.) Put on your hard hat, go spelunking among your computer's drives and folders, and use this section as your guide.

Seeing the files on a disk drive

Like everything else in Windows Vista, disk drives are represented by buttons, or icons. Computer also shows information stored in other areas, such as MP3 players, digital cameras, or scanners. (I explain these icons in the section "Browsing Your Computer's File Cabinets," earlier in this chapter.)

Opening these icons usually lets you access their contents and move files back and forth, just as with any other folders in Windows Vista.

When you double-click an icon in Computer, Vista guesses what you want to do with that icon and takes action. Double-click on a hard drive, for example, and Vista promptly opens the drive to show you the folders packed inside.

Double-click your CD drive after inserting a music CD, by contrast, and Vista doesn't always open it to show the files. Instead, it usually loads Media Player and begins playing the music. To change Vista's guesswork as to how Vista treats an inserted CD, DVD, or USB drive, right-click that inserted item's icon and open AutoPlay. Vista lists everything it can do with that drive, and asks you to plot the course.

Adjusting the AutoPlay settings comes in particularly handy for USB thumb-drives. If your thumbdrive carries a few songs, Vista wants to call up Media Center to play them, slowing your access to your thumbdrive's other files.

REMEMBER

- ✔ When in doubt as to what you can do with an icon in Computer, right-click on it. Windows Vista presents a menu of all the things you can do to that object. (You can choose Open, for example, to see the files on a CD that Vista wants to play in Media Player.)

- ✔ If you click an icon for a CD, DVD, or floppy drive when no disk is in the drive, Windows Vista stops you, gently suggesting that you insert a disk before proceeding further.

- ✔ Spot an icon under the heading Network Location? That's a little doorway for peering into other computers linked to your computer — if there are any. You find more network stuff in Chapter 14.

What's all this path stuff?

A *path* is merely the file's address, similar to your own. When mailed to your house, for example, a letter travels to your country, state, city, street, and finally, hopefully, your apartment or house number. A computer path does the same thing. It starts with the letter of the disk drive and ends with the file's name. In between, the path lists all the folders the computer must travel through to reach the file.

For example, look at the Music folder in Figure 4-3. For Windows Vista to find a file stored there, it starts from the computer's C: hard drive, travels through the Users folder, and then goes through the Andy folder. From there, it goes into the Andy folder's Music folder.

Take a deep breath. Exhale slowly. Now add in the computer's ugly grammar: In a path, a disk drive letter is referred to as **C:**. The disk drive letter and colon make up the first part of the path. All the other folders are inside the big C: folder, so they're listed after the C: part. Windows separates these nested folders with something called a *backslash,* or \ The file's name — *Rivers of Babylon,* for example — comes last.

Put it all together, and you get `C:\Users\Andy\Music\Rivers of Babylon`. That's your computer's official path to the Rivers of Babylon file in Andy's Music folder.

This stuff can be tricky, so here it is again: The letter for the drive comes first, followed by a colon and a backslash. Then come the names of all the folders leading to the file, separated by backslashes. Last comes the name of the file itself.

Windows Vista automatically puts together the path for you when you click folders. Thankfully. But whenever you click the Browse button to look for a file, you're navigating through folders and traversing along the path leading to the file.

Seeing what's inside folders

Because folders are really little storage compartments, Windows Vista uses a picture of a little folder to represent a place for storing files.

To see what's inside a folder, either in Computer or on Vista's desktop, just double-click that folder's picture. A new window pops up, showing that folder's contents. Spot another folder inside that folder? Double-click that one to see what's inside. Keep clicking until you find what you want or reach a dead end.

Reached a dead end? If you mistakenly end up in the wrong folder, back your way out as if you're browsing the Web. Click the Back arrow at the window's top-left corner. (It's the same arrow that appears in the margin.) That closes

the wrong folder and shows you the folder you just left. If you keep clicking the Back arrow, you end up right where you started.

The Address Bar provides another quick way to jump to different places in your PC. As you move from folder to folder, the folder's Address Bar — that little word-filled box at the folder's top — constantly keeps track of your trek. For example, Figure 4-4 shows the Address Bar as you peruse a folder in your Music folder. Notice the little arrows between each word, like between Andy and Music?

Figure 4-4:
The little arrows between folder names provide jumping off places to other folders.

Those little arrows provide quick shortcuts to other folders and windows. Try clicking any of the arrows; menus appear, listing the places you can jump to from that point. For example, click the arrow after Computer, shown in Figure 4-5, to jump quickly to your CD drive.

Figure 4-5:
Here, a click on the little arrow after Computer lets you jump to any place that appears in the Computer folder.
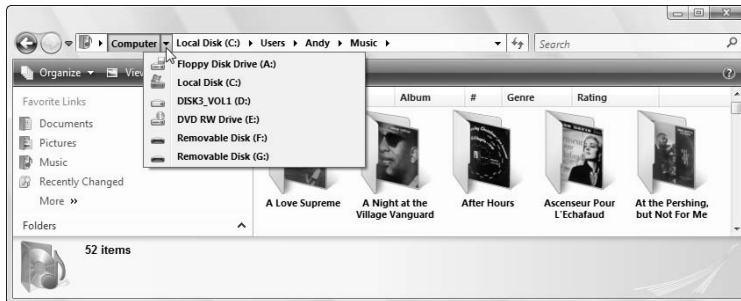
Here are some more tips for finding your way in and out of folders:

✔ Sometimes, a folder contains too many files or folders to fit in the window. To see more files, click that window's scroll bars. What's a scroll bar? Time to whip out your field guide, Chapter 3.

✔ While burrowing deeply into folders, the Forward arrow provides yet another quick way to jump immediately to any folder you've plowed through: Click the little downward-pointing arrow (shown in the margin) next to the Forward arrow in the window's top-left corner. A menu drops down, listing the folders you've plowed through on your journey. Click any name to jump quickly to that folder.

✔ Can't find a particular file or folder? Instead of aimlessly rummaging through folders, check out the Start button's Search command, which I describe in Chapter 6. Windows can automatically find your lost files and folders.

✔ When faced with a long list of alphabetically sorted files, click anywhere on the list. Then quickly type the first letter or two of the file's name. Windows immediately jumps up or down the list to the first name beginning with those letters.

Creating a New Folder

To store new information in a file cabinet, you grab a manila folder, scrawl a name across the top, and start stuffing it with information. To store new information in Windows Vista — a new batch of letters to the hospital's billing department, for example — you create a new folder, think up a name for the new folder, and start stuffing it with files.

To create a new folder quickly, click Organize from the folder's toolbar buttons and choose New Folder when the little menu drops down. If you don't spot a toolbar, here's a quick and foolproof method:

1. **Right-click inside your folder and choose New.**

   The all-powerful right-click shoots a menu out the side.

2. **Select Folder.**

   Choose Folder, as shown in Figure 4-6, and a new folder appears in the folder, waiting for you to type a new name.

Figure 4-6: Right-click where you want a new folder to appear, choose New, and select Folder from the menu.
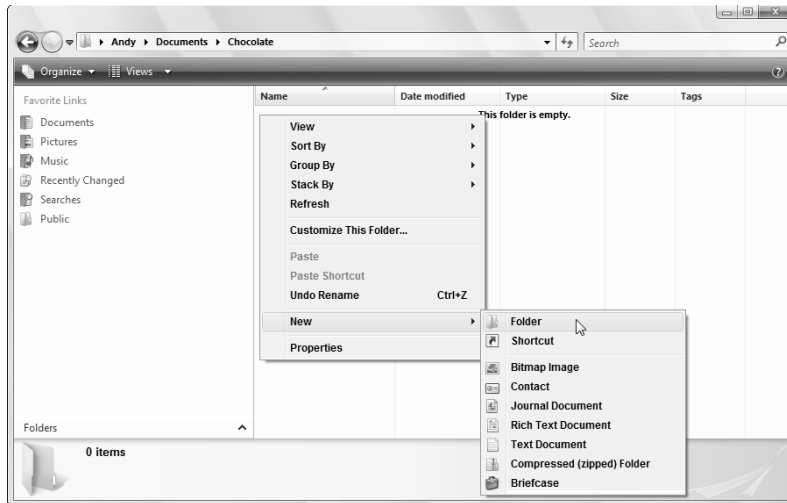
3. **Type a new name for the folder.**

   A newly created folder bears the boring name of New Folder. When you begin typing, Windows Vista quickly erases the old name and fills in your new name. Done? Save the new name by either pressing Enter or clicking somewhere away from the name you've just typed.

   If you mess up the name and want to try again, right-click on the folder, choose Rename, and start over.

✔ Certain symbols are banned from folder (and file) names. The "Using legal folder names and filenames" sidebar spells out the details, but you never have trouble when using plain old letters and numbers for names.

✔ Shrewd observers noticed that in Figure 4-6 Windows offers to create many more things than just a folder when you click the New button. Right-click inside a folder anytime you want to create a new shortcut or other common items.

✔ Confused observers may remark that their right-click menu looks different than the one shown in Figure 4-6. There's nothing wrong; installed programs often add their own items to the right-click list, making the list look different on different PCs.

Using legal folder names and filenames

Windows is pretty picky about what you can and can't name a file or folder. If you stick to plain old letters and numbers, you're fine. But don't try to stick any of the following characters in there:

```
: / \ * | < > ? "
```

If you try to use any of those characters, Windows Vista bounces an error message to the screen, and you have to try again. Here are some illegal filenames:

```
1/2 of my Homework
JOB:2
ONE<TWO
He's no "Gentleman"
```

These names are legal:

```
Half of my Term Paper
JOB=2
Two is Bigger than One
A #@$%) Scoundrel
```

Renaming a File or Folder

Sick of a file or folder's name? Then change it. Just right-click on the offending icon and choose Rename from the menu that pops up.

Windows highlights the file's old name, which disappears as you begin typing the new one. Press Enter or click the desktop when you're through, and you're off.

Or you can click the file or folder's name to select it, wait a second, and click the file's name again to change it. Some people click the name and press F2; Windows automatically lets you rename the file or folder.

✔ When you rename a file, only its name changes. The contents are still the same, it's still the same size, and it's still in the same place.

✔ To rename large groups of files simultaneously, select them all, right-click on the first one, and choose Rename. Type in the new name and press Enter; Windows Vista renames that file. However, it also renames all your *other* selected files to the new name, adding a number as it goes: cat, cat (2), cat (3), cat (4), and so on.

✔ Renaming some folders confuses Windows, especially if those folders contain programs. And please don't rename these folders: Documents, Pictures, or Music.

✔ Windows won't let you rename a file or folder if one of your programs currently uses it. Sometimes closing the program fixes the problem, if you know which one is hanging onto that file or folder. One surefire cure is to restart your PC to release that program's clutches and try again to rename it.

Selecting Bunches of Files or Folders

Although selecting a file, folder, or other object may seem particularly boring, it swings the doors wide open for further action: deleting, renaming, moving, copying, and doing other goodies discussed in the rest of this chapter.

To select a single item, just click it. To select several files and folders, hold down the Ctrl key when you click the names or icons. Each name or icon stays highlighted when you click the next one.

To gather several files or folders sitting next to each other in a list, click the first one. Then hold down the Shift key as you click the last one. Those two items are highlighted, along with every file and folder sitting between them.

Windows Vista lets you *lasso* files and folders as well. Point slightly above the first file or folder you want; then, while holding down the mouse button, point at the last file or folder. The mouse creates a colored lasso to surround your files. Let go of the mouse button, and the lasso disappears, leaving all the surrounded files highlighted.

✔ You can drag and drop armfuls of files in the same way that you drag a single file.

✔ You can also simultaneously cut or copy and paste these armfuls into new locations using any of the methods described in the "Copying or Moving Files and Folders" section, later in this chapter.

✔ You can delete these armfuls of goods, too, with a press of the Del key.

✔ To quickly select all the files in a folder, choose Select All from the folder's Edit menu. (No menu? Then press Ctrl+A.) Here's another nifty trick: To grab all but a few files, press Ctrl+A and, while still holding down Ctrl, click the ones you don't want.

Getting Rid of a File or Folder

Sooner or later, you'll want to delete a file that's not important anymore — yesterday's lottery picks, for example, or a particularly embarrassing digital photo. To delete a file or folder, right-click on its name. Then choose Delete from the pop-up menu. This surprisingly simple trick works for files, folders, shortcuts, and just about anything else in Windows.

To delete in a hurry, click the offending object and press the Delete key. Dragging and dropping a file or folder to the Recycle Bin does the same thing.

The Delete option deletes entire folders, including any files or folders stuffed inside those folders. Make sure that you select the correct folder before you choose Delete.

- After you choose Delete, Windows tosses a box in your face, asking whether you're *sure.* If you're sure, click Yes. If you're tired of Windows' cautious questioning, right-click on the Recycle Bin, choose Properties, and remove the check mark next to Display Delete Confirmation Dialog. Windows now deletes any highlighted items whenever you — or an inadvertent brush of your shirt cuff — press the Delete key.

- Be extra sure that you know what you're doing when deleting any file that has pictures of little gears in its icon. These files are usually sensitive hidden files, and the computer wants you to leave them alone. (Other than that, they're not particularly exciting, despite the action-oriented gears.)

- Icons with little arrows in their corner (like the one in the margin) are *shortcuts* — push buttons that merely load files. (I cover shortcuts in Chapter 5.) Deleting shortcuts deletes only a *button* that loads a file or program. The file or program itself remains undamaged and still lives inside your computer.

- As soon as you find out how to delete files, trot off to Chapter 2, which explains several ways to *un*delete them. (***Hint for the desperate:*** Open the Recycle Bin, right-click your file's name, and choose Restore.)

Don't bother reading this hidden technical stuff

You're not the only one creating files on your computer. Programs often store their own information in a *data file.* They may need to store information about the way the computer is set up, for example. To keep people from confusing the files for trash and deleting them, Windows hides them.

You can view the names of these hidden files and folders, however, if you want to play voyeur:

1. **Open any folder, click the Organize button, and choose Folder and Search Options.**

   The Folder Options dialog box appears.

2. **Select the View tab from along the dialog box's top, find the Hidden Files and Folders line in the Advanced Settings section, and click the Show Hidden Files and Folders button.**

3. **Click the OK button.**

The formerly hidden files appear alongside the other filenames. Be sure not to delete them, however: The programs that created them will gag, possibly damaging them or Windows itself. In fact, please click the View tab's Restore Defaults button to hide that stuff again, and click Apply to return the settings to normal.

Copying or Moving Files and Folders

To copy or move files to different folders on your hard drive, it's sometimes easiest to use your mouse to *drag* them there. For example, here's how to move a file to a different folder on your desktop. In this case, I'm moving the Traveler file from the House folder to the Morocco folder.

1. **Aim the mouse pointer at the file or folder you want to move.**

   In this case, point at the Traveler file.

2. **While holding down the right mouse button, move the mouse until it points at the destination folder.**

   As you see in Figure 4-7, the Traveler file is being dragged from the House folder to the Morocco folder. (I describe how to make windows sit neatly next to each other in Chapter 3.)

Figure 4-7: To move a file or folder from one window to another, drag it there.
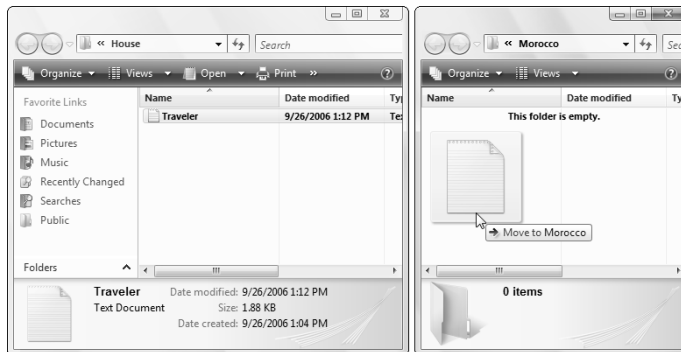
Moving the mouse drags the file along with it, and Vista explains that you're moving the file, shown in Figure 4-7. (Be sure to hold down the right mouse button the entire time.)

REMEMBER

Always drag icons while holding down the *right* mouse button. Windows Vista is then gracious enough to give you a menu of options when you position the icon, and you can choose to copy, move, or create a short-cut. If you hold down the *left* mouse button, Windows Vista sometimes doesn't know whether you want to copy or move.

3. **Release the mouse button and choose Copy Here, Move Here, or Create Shortcuts Here from the pop-up menu.**

Moving a file or folder by dragging it is pretty easy, actually. The hard part is placing both the file and its destination on-screen, especially when one folder is buried deep within your computer.

When dragging and dropping takes too much work, Windows offers a few other ways to copy or move files. Depending on your screen's current layout, some of the following on-screen tools may work more easily:

- ✔ **Right-click menus:** Right-click on a file or folder and choose Cut or Copy, depending on whether you want to move or copy it. Then right-click on your destination folder and choose Paste. It's simple, it always works, and you needn't place the item and its destination on-screen simultaneously.

- ✔ **Menu bar commands:** Click your file and then press Alt to reveal the folder's hidden menus. Click Edit from the menu and choose Copy to Folder or Move to Folder. A new window appears, listing all your computer's drives. Click through the drive and folders to reach the destination folder, and Windows carries out the Copy or Move command. A bit cumbersome, this method works if you know the exact location of the destination folder.

- ✔ **Navigation Pane's Folder view:** Described in the Navigation Pane section of Chapter 3, the Folder button displays a list of your folders along the bottom of the Navigation Pane. That lets you drag a file into a folder inside the Navigation Pane, sparing you the hassle of opening a destination folder.

WARNING!

After you install a program on your computer, don't ever move that program's folder. Programs wedge themselves into Windows. Moving the program may break it, and you'll have to reinstall it. Feel free to move the program's shortcut, though, if it has one.

Seeing More Information about Files and Folders

Whenever you create a file or folder, Windows Vista scrawls a bunch of secret hidden information on it: the date you created it, its size, and even more trivial stuff. Sometimes it even lets you add your own secret information: lyrics and reviews for your music files and folders, or thumbnail pictures for any of your folders.

You can safely ignore most of the information. Other times, tweaking that information is the only way to solve a problem.

To see what Windows Vista is calling your files and folders behind your back, right-click on the item and choose Properties from the pop-up menu.

Choosing Properties on a Jimi Hendrix song, for example, brings up bunches of details, as shown in Figure 4-8. Here's what each tab means:

TIP

✔ **General:** This first tab (shown on the left of Figure 4-8) shows the file's *type* (an MP3 file of the song "Hey Joe"), its *size* (3.27 MB), the program that *opens* it (in this case, Windows Media Player), and the file's *location*.

Does the wrong program open your file? Right-click the file, choose Properties, and click the Change button on the General tab. There, you can choose your preferred program from a list.

✔ **Security:** On this tab, you control *permissions:* who can access the file, and what they can do with it — details that only become a chore when Vista won't let your friend (or even you) open the file. If this problem develops, copy the folder to your Public folder, which I cover in Chapter 14. That folder provides a haven where everybody can access the file.

✔ **Details:** True to its name, this tab reveals minute details about a file. On digital photos, for example, this tab lists EXIF (Exchangeable Image File Format) data: the camera model, F-stop, aperture, focal length, and other items photographers love. On songs, this tab displays the song's *ID3 tag* (*ID*entify MP*3*): the artist, album title, year, track number, genre, length, and similar information. (I cover ID3 Tags in Chapter 15.)

✔ **Previous Versions:** An obsessive collector, Vista constantly saves previous versions of your files. Made some terrible changes to today's spreadsheet? Take a deep breath, head here, and grab *yesterday's* copy of the spreadsheet. Vista's Previous Versions feature works in tandem with Windows XP's trusty System Restore. I cover both of these lifesavers in Chapter 17.

Figure 4-8:
A file's Properties page shows which program automatically opens it, the file's size, and other details.
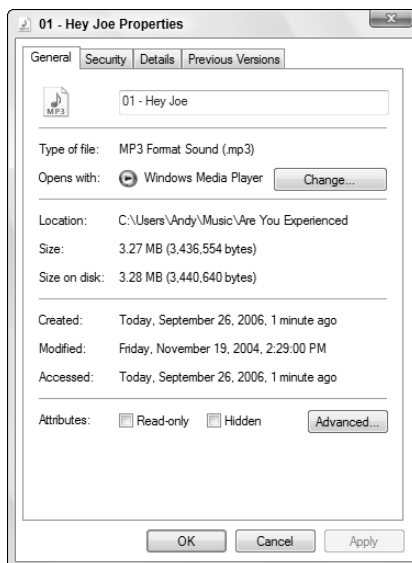
Normally, all these details remain hidden unless you right-click a file and choose Properties. But a folder can display the details of *all* your files simultaneously, handy for quick searches. To choose which details appear — the word count in your Microsoft Word documents, for example — right-click any word listed at the top of a column, as shown in Figure 4-9. (Click More, at the list's bottom, to see dozens more details, including word count.)

Figure 4-9: Right-click any word along the column's top; a window lets you select which file details to display in the folder.
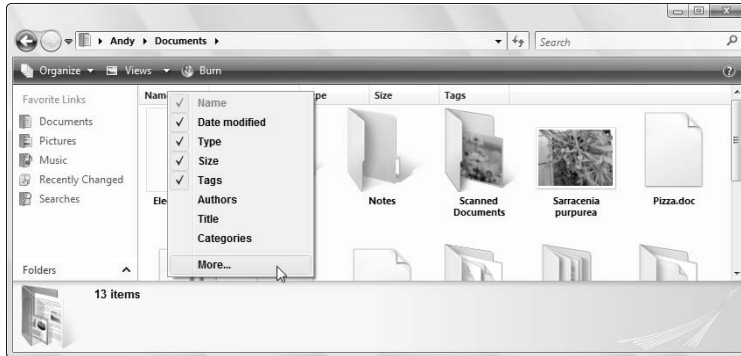
✔ To change the way a folder displays your files, click the arrow by the Views button on the toolbar (shown in the margin.) A menu appears, listing the seven ways a folder can display your files: Extra Large Icons, Large Icons, Medium Icons, Small Icons, List, Details, and Tiles. Try them all to see which view you prefer. (Vista remembers which views you prefer for different folders.)

✔ If you can't remember what a folder's toolbar buttons do, rest your mouse pointer over a button. Windows Vista displays a helpful box summing up the button's mission.

✔ Although some of the additional file information is handy, it can consume a lot of space, limiting the number of files you can see in the window. Displaying only the filename is often a better idea. Then, if you want to see more information about a file or folder, try the following tip.

✔ Folders usually display files sorted alphabetically. To sort them differently, right-click a blank spot inside the folder and choose Sort By. A pop-up menu lets you choose to sort items by size, name, type, and other details. Click More at the bottom of that pop-up menu's list to be astounded by the 250 ways you can sort files.

✔ When the excitement of the Sort By menu wears off, try clicking the words at the top of each sorted column. Click Size, for example, to quickly place the largest files at the list's top. Click Date Modified to quickly sort by the date of their last change, instead.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Flipping a file's secret switches

Windows Vista gives each file special switches called *attributes.* The computer looks at the way those switches are set before it fiddles with the file. To view a file's attributes, right-click on the file and choose Properties. Here's what you'll probably find at the window's bottom:

✔ **Read Only:** Choosing this attribute allows the file to be read, but not deleted or changed in any way.

✔ **Hidden:** Setting this attribute makes the file invisible during normal operations.

By clicking the Advanced button, Windows Vista presents more switches:

✔ **File Is Ready for Archiving:** Some backup programs look at this one to see whether they've backed up that file. When backed up, this attribute changes to reflect its new status.

✔ **Index This File For Faster Searching:** Normally set to On, this setting tells Windows to let its Indexing Service take note of the file and its contents for faster searching.

✔ **Compress Contents to Save Disk Space:** Available on most modern computers, this setting lets Windows Vista squish the file to save space. Be careful, though, as it sometimes makes the files load more slowly.

✔ **Encrypt Contents to Secure Data:** This switch brings up a much-too-complicated way to password-protect your file. Ignore it.

The Properties box makes it easy — perhaps too easy — to change these attributes. In most cases, you should leave them alone. I just mention them here so that you'll know what computer nerds mean when they tell cranky people, "Boy, somebody must have set your attribute wrong when you got out of bed this morning."

Writing to CDs and DVDs

Most computers today can write information to a CD and DVD using a flameless approach known as *burning.* To see whether you're stuck with an older drive that can't burn the discs, remove any discs from inside the drive; then open Computer from the Start menu and look at the icon for your CD or DVD drive. You want to see the letters *RW* in the drive icon's name.

DVD/CD-RW — If the drive says `DVD/CD-RW`, like the one in the margin, it can play *and* write to CDs and play but *not* write to DVDs. (I explain how to play DVDs in Chapter 15.)

DVD-RW — If your drive says `DVD-RW Drive`, like the one in the margin, you've hit the jackpot: Your drive can both read and write to CDs *and* DVDs.

WINDOWS XP — Vista is the first version of Windows that knows how to write to DVDs, something Windows XP couldn't do without the help of a third-party program.

TECHNICAL STUFF

If your PC has two CD or DVD burners, tell Vista which drive you want to handle the burning chore: Right-click the drive, choose Properties, and click the Recording tab. Then choose your favorite drive in the top box.

Buying the right kind of blank CDs and DVDs for burning

Stores sell two types of CDs: CD-R (short for CD-Recordable) and CD-RW (short for CD-ReWritable). Here's the difference:

- **CD-R:** Most people buy CD-R discs because they're very cheap, and they work fine for storing music or files. You can write to them until they fill up; then you can't write to them anymore. But that's no problem, because most people don't want to erase their CDs and start over. They want to stash their burned CD for a backup.

- **CD-RW:** Techies sometimes buy CD-RW discs for making temporary backups of data. You can write information to them, just like CD-Rs. But when a CD-RW disc fills up, you can erase it and start over with a clean slate — something not possible with a CD-R. However, CD-RWs cost more money, so most people stick with the cheaper and faster CD-Rs.

DVDs come in both R and RW formats, just like CDs, so the preceding R and RW rules apply to them, as well. Beyond that, it's chaos: The manufacturers fought over which storage format to use, confusing things for everybody. To buy the right blank DVD, check your DVD burner to see what formats it uses: DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD+R, DVD+RW, and/or DVD-RAM. (Most new DVD burners support *all* of the first four formats, making your choice much easier.)

- The disc's "x" speed refers to the speed at which it can accept information. Your drive can write information onto a 40x CD five times faster than onto an 8x CD. Buy CDs with as fast an x rating as your burner can handle.

- You'll often find your CD or DVD burner's format and speed listings printed directly on the drive's face. If the information isn't there, check the receipt for your computer. If you still have no clue, buy reasonably fast discs. Slow burners can still write to speedy discs, but not as quickly as faster burners.

- Blank CDs are cheap; borrow one from a neighbor's kid to see whether it works in your drive. If it works fine, buy some of the same type. Blank DVDs, by contrast, are more expensive. Most neighbors' kids won't let you have one. Ask the store whether you can return them if your DVD drive doesn't like them.

✔ For some odd reason, Compact Discs and Digital Video Discs are spelled as "discs," not "disks." Be prepared for the agape mouths of shocked proofreaders.

✔ Although Windows Vista can handle simple CD-burning tasks, it's extra-ordinarily awkward at *copying* music CDs. Most people give up quickly and buy third-party CD burning software from Roxio or Nero. I explain how Windows Vista creates music CDs in Chapter 15.

✔ It's currently illegal to make duplicates of movie DVDs in the United States — even to make a backup copy in case your kids scratch up your new Disney DVD. Vista certainly can't do it, but some programs on Web sites from other countries can. (Don't ask me where to get them, as I don't know.)

Copying files from or to a CD or DVD

CDs and DVDs once hailed from the school of simplicity: You simply slid them into your CD player or DVD player. But as soon as those discs graduated to PCs, the problems intensified. When you create a CD or DVD, you need to tell your PC *what* you're copying, and *where* you intend to play it: Music for a CD player? Movies for a DVD player? Or simply files for your computer? If you choose the wrong answer, the disc won't work.

Here are the Disc Creation rules:

✔ **Music:** To create a CD that plays music in your CD player or car stereo, flip ahead to Chapter 15. You need to fire up Vista's Media Player program.

✔ **Movies and photo slide shows:** To create a DVD with movies or slide shows that play on a DVD player, jump to Chapter 16. You want Vista's new DVD Maker program.

But if you just want to copy *files* to a CD or DVD, perhaps to save as a backup or give to a friend, stick around.

Follow these steps to write files to a new, blank CD or DVD. (If you're writing files to a CD or DVD that you've written to before, jump ahead to Step 4.)

Note: If your PC has a third-party disc-burning program, that program may automatically take charge as soon as you insert the disc, bypassing these steps completely. If want Vista or a different program to burn the disc instead, close the third-party program. Then right-click the drive's icon and choose Open AutoPlay. There, you can tell how Vista to react to an inserted blank disc.

1. **Insert the blank disc into your disc burner and choose Burn Files to Disc.**

   Vista reacts slightly differently depending on whether you've inserted a CD or DVD, shown in Figure 4-10.

Figure 4-10:
Inserting a blank CD (left) or DVD (right) brings up one of these boxes; choose Burn Files to Disc to copy files to the disc.
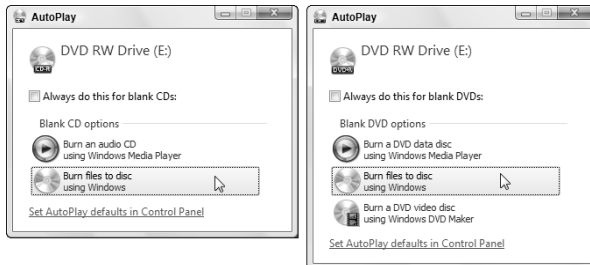
CD: Vista offers two options:

- **Burn an audio CD:** Choosing this option fetches Media Player to create an audio CD that plays music in most CD players. (I describe how to do this task in Chapter 15.)

- **Burn Files to Disc:** Choose this option to copy files to the CD.

DVD: Vista offers three options:

- **Burn a DVD Data Disc:** Choosing this option fetches Media Player (Chapter 15), letting you select music files from your library and copy them to a DVD for backup. (If your DVD player supports MP3 or WMA files, it *might* be able to play the music.)

- **Burn Files to a Disc:** Choose this option to copy files to the DVD.

- **Burn a DVD Video Disc:** Choosing this option starts Vista's DVD Maker program to create a movie or photo slide show, chores I cover in Chapter 16.

2. **Enter a name for the disc and click Next.**

   After you insert the disc and choose Burn Files to a Disc in Step 1, Vista displays a Burn a Disc dialog box and asks you to create a title for the disc.

   Unfortunately, Vista limits your CD or DVD's title to 16 characters. Instead of typing **Family Picnic atop Orizaba in 2006**, stick to the facts: **Orizaba, 2006**. Or, just click Next to use Vista's default name for the disc: the current date.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Curious folks will spot the Show Formatting Options option in the Burn a Disc box. If you succumb to the clicking urge, you'll see that Vista offers two choices for storing information on your disc: Live File System or Mastered. Stick with Live File System except under two conditions: You're using CD-RW or DVD-RW discs or you're worried about compatibility with older PCs and Apple computers. Under those conditions, choose Mastered instead of Vista's usual Live File System format.

Armed with the disc's name, Vista prepares the disc for incoming files, leaving you with the disc's empty window on-screen, waiting for incoming files.

3. **Tell Vista which files to write to disc.**

   Now that your disc is ready to accept the files, tell Vista what information to send its way. You can do this any of several ways:

   - Right-click the item you want to copy, be it a single file, folder, or selected files and folders. When the pop-up menu appears, choose Send To and select your disc burner from the menu.

   - Drag and drop files and/or folders into the disc burner's open window, or on top of the burner's icon in Computer.

   - Choose the Burn button from the toolbar of any folder in your Music folder. This button copies all of that folder's music (or the music files you've selected) to the disc as *files,* readable by some newer car and home stereos that can read WMA or MP3 files.

   - Choose the Burn button from the toolbar of any folder in your Picture folder. This copies all that folder's pictures (or the pictures you've highlighted) to the disc for backup or giving to others.

   - Choose the Burn button from the toolbar of any folder in your Documents folder. This copies all that folder's files to the disc.

   - Tell your current program to save the information to the disc rather than your hard drive.
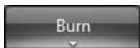
   No matter which method you choose, Vista dutifully looks over the information and copies it to the disc you inserted in the first step.

4. **Close your disc burning session by ejecting the disc.**

   When you're through copying files to the disc, tell Vista you're finished by closing the Computer window: Double-click the little red X in the window's upper-right corner.

   Then push your drive's Eject button (or right-click the drive's icon in Computer and choose Eject), and Vista closes the session, adding a finishing touch to the disc that lets it be read in other PCs.

Duplicating a CD or DVD

Windows Vista doesn't have a command to duplicate a CD or DVD. It can't even make a copy of a music CD. (That's why so many people buy CD burning programs.)

But it can copy all of a CD or DVD's files to a blank disc using this two-step process:

1. **Copy the files and folders from the CD or DVD to a folder on your PC.**

2. **Copy those same files and folders back to a blank CD or DVD.**

That gives you a duplicate CD or DVD, handy when you need a second copy of an essential backup disc.

You can try this process on a music CD or DVD movie, but it doesn't work. (I tried.) It only works when duplicating a disc containing programs or data files.

You can keep writing more and more files to the same disc until Windows complains that the disc is full. Then you need to close your current disc, explained in Step 4, insert another blank disc, and start over at Step 1.

TIP
If you try to copy a large batch of files to a disc — more than will fit — Windows Vista complains immediately. Copy fewer files at a time, perhaps spacing them out over two discs.

TIP
Most programs let you save files directly to disc. Choose Save from the File menu and select your CD burner. Put a disc (preferably one that's not already filled) into your disc drive to start the process.

Working with Floppy Disks and Memory Cards

Digital camera owners eventually become acquainted with *memory cards* — those little plastic squares that replaced those awkward rolls of film. Vista can read digital photos directly from the camera, once you find its cable and plug it into your PC. But Vista can also grab photos straight off the memory card, a method praised by those who've lost their camera's special cables.

The secret is a *memory card reader:* a little slot-filled box that stays plugged into your PC. Slide your memory card into the slot, and your PC can read the card's files, just like reading files from any other folder.

Most office supply and electronics stores sell memory card readers that accept most popular memory card formats: Compact Flash, SecureDigital, Mini-Secure Digital, Memory Sticks, and others.

The beauty of card readers is that there's nothing new to figure out: Windows Vista treats your inserted card or floppy just like an ordinary folder. Insert your card, and a folder appears on your screen to show your digital camera photos. The same "drag and drop" and "cut and paste" rules covered earlier in this chapter still apply, letting you move the pictures or other files off the card and into a folder in your Pictures folder.

✔ First, the warning: Formatting a card or disk wipes out all its information. Never format a card or disk unless you don't care about the information it currently holds.

✔ Now, the procedure: If Windows complains that a newly inserted card or floppy isn't formatted, right-click on its drive and choose Format. (This problem happens most often with damaged cards or floppies.) Sometimes formatting also helps one gadget use a card designed for a different gadget — your digital camera may be able to use your MP3 player's card, for example.

✔ Floppy drives, those disk readers from days gone by, still appear on a few older PCs. They work just like memory cards or CDs: Insert the floppy disk into the floppy drive and double-click the floppy drive's icon in Computer to start playing with its files.

✔ Press the F5 key whenever you stick in a different floppy disk and want to see what files are stored on it. Windows Vista then updates the screen to show that *new* disk's files, not the files from the first one. (You only have to do this step when working with floppy disks.)

Part II

Working with Programs and Files

In this part . . .

The first part of the book explains how to manipulate Vista by poking and prodding its sensitive parts with the mouse.

This part of the book finally lets you get some work done. For example, here's where you find out how to run programs, open existing files, create and save your own files, and print your work when you're through. A primer details Windows' essentials: Copying information from one window or program and pasting it into another.

And when some of your files wander (it's unavoidable), Chapter 6 explains how to unleash Windows' new robotic search hounds to track them down and bring them within reach.

Chapter 5

Playing with Programs and Documents

*I*n Windows, *programs* are your tools: They let you add numbers, arrange words, and shoot spaceships. *Documents,* by contrast, are the things you create with programs: tax forms, heartfelt apologies, and high scores.

This chapter starts with the basics of opening programs, creating shortcuts, and cutting and pasting information between documents. Along the way, it throws in a few tricks — how to add things like © to your documents, for example. Finally, it ends with a tour of Windows Vista's free programs, showing how to write a letter, create an appointment book, or take notes that you spice up with special characters and symbols.

Starting a Program

Clicking the Start button presents the Start menu, the launching pad for your programs. The Start menu is strangely intuitive. For example, if it notices you've been making lots of DVDs, the Start menu automatically moves Windows DVD Maker program's icon to its front page for easy access, as shown in Figure 5-1.

Don't see your favorite program on the Start menu's front page? Click All Programs near the bottom of the Start menu. The Start menu covers up its previously displayed icons with an even *larger* list of programs and category-stuffed folders. Still don't spot your program? Click some of the folders to unveil even *more* programs stuffed inside.

Figure 5-1: Click the Start button and then click the program you want to open.
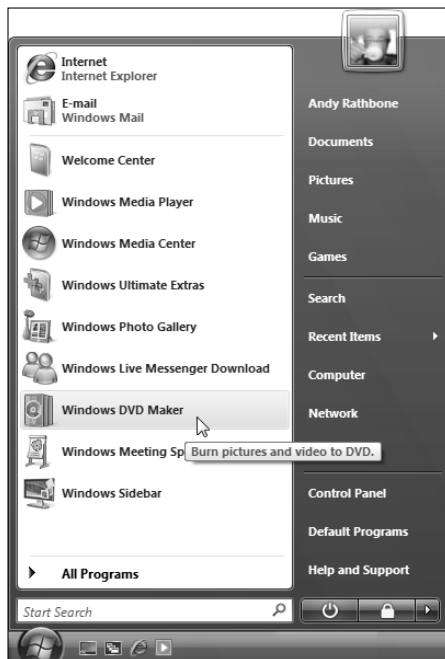
When you spot your program, click its name. The program opens onto the desktop, ready for work.

If your program doesn't seem to be living on the Start menu, Windows Vista offers plenty of other ways to open a program, including the following:

- ✔ Open the Documents folder from the Start menu and double-click the file you want to work on. The correct program automatically opens, with that file in tow.

- ✔ Double-click a *shortcut* to the program. Shortcuts, which often sit on your desktop, are handy, disposable push buttons for launching files and folders. (I explain more about shortcuts in this chapter's "Taking the Lazy Way with a Shortcut" section.)

✔ If you spot the program's icon on the Windows' Quick Launch toolbar — a small, handy strip of icons that resides next to the Start button — click it. The program leaps into action. (I cover the Quick Launch toolbar, including how to add and remove it, in Chapter 2.)

✔ Right-click on your desktop, choose New, and select the type of document you want to create. Windows Vista loads the right program for the job.

✔ Type the program's name in the Search box at the bottom of the Start menu and press Enter.

Windows offers other ways to open a program, but these methods usually get the job done. I cover the Start menu more extensively in Chapter 2.

TECHNICAL STUFF

On its front page, the Start menu places *shortcuts* — push buttons — for your most-used programs. Those shortcuts constantly change to reflect the programs you use the most. Don't want the boss to know you play FreeCell? Right-click on FreeCell's icon and choose Remove from This List. The shortcut disappears, yet FreeCell's "real" icon remains in its normal spot in the Start menu's Games folder (in the All Programs folder).

Opening a Document

Like Tupperware, Windows Vista is a big fan of standardization. All Windows programs load their documents — often called *files* — exactly the same way:

1. **Click the word File on any program's *menu bar,* that row of staid words along the program's top.**

   No menu bar? Press Alt to reveal it.

2. **When the File menu drops down, click Open.**

   Windows gives you a sense of déjà vu with the Open box, shown in Figure 5-2: It looks (and works) just like your Documents folder, which I cover in Chapter 4.

   There's one big difference, however: This time, your folder displays only files that your program knows how to open — it filters out all the others.

3. **See the list of documents inside the Open dialog box in Figure 5-2? Point at your desired document, click the mouse, and click the Open button.**

   The program opens the file and displays it on the screen.

TECHNICAL STUFF

When programmers fight over file types

When not fighting over fast food, programmers fight over *formats* — ways to pack information into a file. To accommodate the format wars, some programs have a special feature that lets you open files stored in several different types of formats.

For example, look at the drop-down list box in the bottom-right corner of Figure 5-2. It currently lists Text Documents (*.txt) format, the format used by Notepad. So, the Open box displays only files stored in Notepad. To see files stored in *other* formats, click in that box and choose a different format. The Open box quickly updates its list to show files from that new format, instead.

And how can you see a list of *all* your folder's files in that menu, regardless of their content? Choose All Files from the drop-down list box. You'll see all your files, but your program probably won't be able to open all of them and will choke if it tries.

Notepad lists digital photos in its All Files menu, for example. But if you try to open a photo, Notepad dutifully displays the photo as obscure coding symbols. (If you ever mistakenly open a photo in a program and *don't* see the photo, don't try to save what you've opened. If the program is like Notepad, it will ruin it. Simply turn tail and exit immediately to find a program that will oblige your request.)

Opening a file works this way in *any* Windows program, whether written by Microsoft, its corporate partners, or the teenager down the street.

TIP

✔ To speed things up, double-click a desired file's name; that opens it immediately, automatically closing the Open box.

✔ If your file isn't listed by name, start browsing by clicking the buttons shown along the left side of Figure 5-2. Click the Documents folder, for example, to see files stored in that folder. Click Recently Changed to see files you've saved recently; if you spot the one you want, pluck it from the list with a double-click.

✔ Puny humans store things in the garage, but computers store their files in neatly labeled compartments called *folders.* (Double-click a folder to see what's stored inside.) If browsing folders gives you trouble, Chapter 4's folders section offers a refresher.

✔ Whenever you open a file and change it, even by accidentally pressing the spacebar, Windows Vista assumes that you've changed the file for the better. If you try to close the file, Windows Vista cautiously asks whether you want to save your changes. If you changed the file with masterful wit, click Yes. If you made a mess or opened the wrong file, click No or Cancel.

TIP

✔ Confused about any icons or commands along the Open box's top or left side? Rest your mouse pointer over the icons, and a little box announces their occupations.

Figure 5-2:
Double-click
the filename
you want
to open.
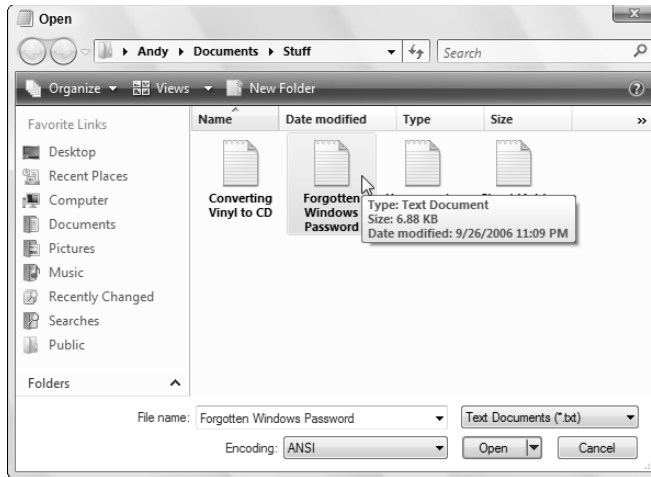
Saving a Document

Saving means to send the work you've just created to a disk or hard drive for safekeeping. Unless you specifically save your work, your computer thinks that you've just been fiddling around for the past four hours. You must specifically tell the computer to save your work before it will safely store it.

Thanks to Microsoft's snapping leather whips, the same Save command appears in all Windows Vista programs, no matter what programmer wrote them. Click File from the top menu, choose Save, and save your document in your Documents folder or to your desktop for easy retrieval later.

What's the difference between Save and Save As?

Huh? Save as *what?* A chemical compound? Naw, the Save As command just gives you a chance to save your work with a different name and in a different location.

Suppose that you open the *Ode to Tina* file in your Documents folder and change a few sentences. You want to save your new changes, but you don't want to lose the original words, either. Preserve *both* versions by selecting *Save As* and typing the new name, *Tentative Additions to Odes to Tina.*

When you're saving something for the *first* time, the Save and Save As commands are identical: Both make you choose a fresh name and location for your work.

If you're saving something for the first time, Windows Vista asks you to think up a name for your document. Type something descriptive using only letters, numbers, and spaces between the words. (If you try to use one of the illegal characters I describe in Chapter 4, the Windows Police step in, politely requesting that you use a different name.)

✐ Choose descriptive filenames for your work. Windows Vista gives you 255 characters to work with, so a file named *June Report on Squeegee Sales* is easier to locate than one named *Stuff.*

✐ You can save files to any folder, CD, or even a memory card. But files are much easier to find down the road when they stay in the Documents folder. (Feel free to save a *second* copy onto your CD as a backup.)

✐ Most programs can save files directly to a CD. Choose Save from the File menu and choose your CD burner. Put a CD (preferably one that's not already filled) into your CD-writing drive to start the process.

✐ If you're working on something important (and most things are), choose the program's Save command every few minutes. Or use the Ctrl+S keyboard shortcut (while holding down the Ctrl key, press the S key). Programs make you choose a name and location for a file when you *first* save it; subsequent saves are much speedier.

Choosing Which Program Opens a File

Most of the time, Windows Vista automatically knows which program should open which file. Double-click any file, and Windows tells the correct program to jump in and let you view its contents. But when Windows Vista gets confused, the problem lands in *your* lap.

The next two sections explain what to do when the wrong program opens your file or, even worse, *no* program offers to do the job.

If somebody says something about "file associations," feel free to browse the technical sidebar section, which explains that awful subject.

The wrong program loads my file!

Double-clicking a document usually brings up the correct program, usually the same program you used to create that document. But sometimes the wrong program keeps jumping in, hijacking one of your documents. (Different brands of media players constantly fight over the right to play your music or videos, for example.)

TECHNICAL STUFF

The awkward world of file associations

Every Windows program slaps a secret code known as a *file extension* onto the name of every file it creates. The file extension works like a cattle brand: When you double-click the file, Windows Vista eyeballs the extension and automatically summons the proper program to open the file. Notepad, for example, tacks on the three-letter extension `.txt` to every file it creates. So the `.txt` extension is associated with Notepad.

Windows Vista normally doesn't display these extensions, isolating users from Windows' inner mechanisms for safety reasons. If somebody accidentally changes or removes an extension, Windows won't know how to open that file.

If you're curious as to what an extension looks like, sneak a peek by following these steps:

1. **Click the Organize button from inside any folder and choose Folder and Search Options from the drop-down menu.**

The Folder Options dialog box appears.

2. **Click the View tab and then click the Hide Extensions for Known File Types box to remove the check mark.**

3. **Click the OK button.**

The files all reveal their extensions.

Notice that if you open two different files with the same extension, these files open in the same program. Now that you've peeked, hide the extensions again by repeating the steps, but putting a check mark back in the Hide Extensions for Known File Types box.

The moral? Don't *ever* change a file's extension unless you know exactly what you're doing; Windows Vista will forget what program to use for opening the file, leaving you holding an empty bag.

When the wrong program suddenly begins opening your document, here's how to make the *right* program open it instead:

1. **Right-click your problematic file and select Open With from the pop-up menu.**

As shown in Figure 5-3, Windows names a few programs you've used to open that file in the past.

Don't see the Open With option on the menu? Then choose Open. Vista jumps straight to the Open With window shown in Figure 5-4, described in the next section.

2. **Click Choose Default Program and select the program you want to open the file.**

The Open With window, shown in Figure 5-4, lists many more programs. If you spot your favorite program, you *could* double-click it to open your file immediately. But that wouldn't prevent the same problem from recurring. The *next* step tackles that challenge.
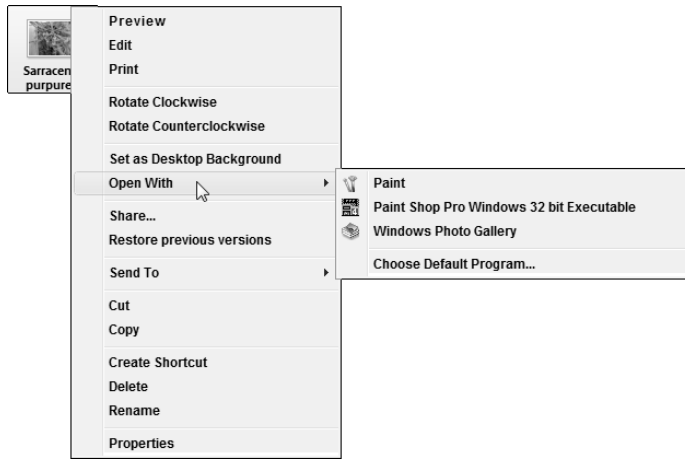
Figure 5-3:
Click the
program you
want to
open the file.

TIP

If Windows doesn't list your favorite program anywhere on its list, you
have to look for it. Choose Default Programs, click the Browse button, and
navigate to the folder containing the program you want. (***Hint:*** Hover
your mouse pointer over the folders to see some of the files and pro-
grams inside.)

3. **Click the Always Use the Selected Program to Open This Kind of File
   check box and click OK.**

   That box makes Windows return top-billing status to your selected pro-
   gram. For example, choosing Paint Shop Pro (and checking the Always
   box) tells Windows to summon Paint Shop Pro every time you double-
   click that type of file.
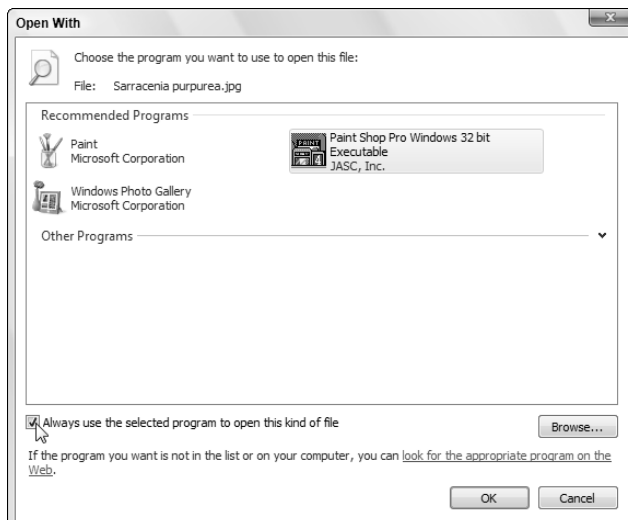
Figure 5-4:
Choose the
program
you want
and click
the box at
the bottom.

TIP

✔ Sometimes you'll want to alternate between two programs when working on the same document. To do so, right-click on the document, choose Open With, and select the program you need at that time.

✔ Sometimes you can't make your favorite program open a particular file because it simply doesn't know how. For example, Windows Media Player can usually play videos, *except* when they're stored in QuickTime, a format used by Microsoft's competition. Your only solution is to install QuickTime (`www.apple.com/quicktime`) and use it to open that particular video.

✔ Can't find *any* program to open your file? Then you're primed for the very next section.

No program will open my file!

It's frustrating when several programs fight to open your file. But it's even worse when *no program* ponies up to the task. Double-clicking your file merely summons the cryptic error message shown in Figure 5-5.
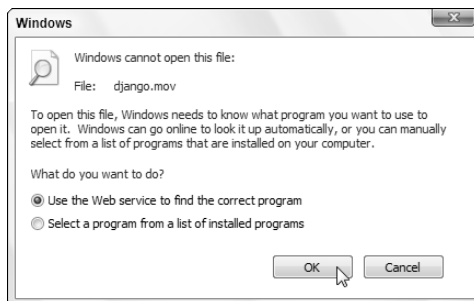
Figure 5-5:
Sometimes Windows refuses to open a file.

If you already know the program needed to open your file, choose the second option: Select a Program from a List of Installed Programs. That summons the familiar window from Figure 5-4, letting you choose your program and click OK to open the file.

But if you have no idea which program should open your mystery file, choose the Use the Web Service to Find the Correct Program option and click OK. Windows dashes off to the Internet in search of the right program. If you're lucky, Internet Explorer displays a Microsoft Web site. There, Microsoft identifies your file, describes its contents, and suggests a Web site for downloading a capable program. Visit the Web site Microsoft suggests, download and install the program (after scanning it with a virus-checking program described in Chapter 10), and you've solved the problem.

Sometimes Microsoft routes you directly to a Web site, shown in Figure 5-6, where you can download a program that opens the file.

Figure 5-6:
Windows sometimes helps you find a program for opening an orphaned file.
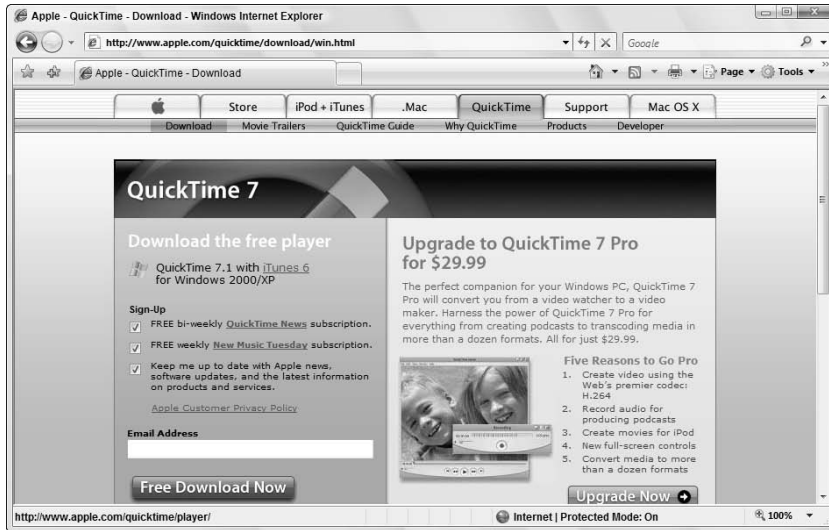
✔ In Figure 5-6, Microsoft identified a *QuickTime video* file. (Microsoft's rival, Apple, created that format to store movies, but Windows Media Player won't open it.) Luckily, Microsoft sends you to Apple's QuickTime Web site, where you can download and install Apple's QuickTime Movie Viewer program.

✔ When you visit a Web site to download a suggested program like the QuickTime and RealPlayer movie players, you often find *two* versions: Free and Professional (expensive). The free version often works fine, so try it first.

✔ If you can't find *any* program that lets you open your file, you're simply stuck. You must contact the people who gave you that file and ask them what program you need to open it. Then, unfortunately, you'll probably have to buy that program.

Taking the Lazy Way with a Shortcut

Some items are buried *way* too deeply inside of your computer. If you're tired of meandering through the woods to find your favorite program, folder, disk drive, document, or even a Web site, create a *shortcut* — an icon push button that takes you directly to the object of your desires.

Because a shortcut is a mere push button that launches something else, you can move, delete, and copy shortcuts without harming the original. They're safe, convenient, and easy to create. And they're easy to tell apart from the original, because they have a little arrow lodged in their bottom-left corner, such as the FreeCell shortcut shown in the margin.

Follow these instructions to create shortcuts to these popular Windows doodads:

- ✔ **Folders or Documents:** Right-click on the folder or document, choose Send To, and select the Desktop (Create Shortcut) option. When the shortcut appears on your desktop, drag and drop it to a handy corner.

- ✔ **Web sites:** See the little icon in front of the Web site's address in Internet Explorer's Address Bar? Drag and drop that little icon to your desktop — or anyplace else. (It helps to drag one of Internet Explorer's window edges inward so that you can see part of your desktop.) You can also add Web sites to Internet Explorer's handy list of Favorites, which I describe in Chapter 8.

- ✔ **Anything on your Start menu:** Right-click on the Start menu icon and choose Copy. Then right-click where you want the shortcut to appear and choose Paste Shortcut.

- ✔ **Nearly anything:** Drag and drop the object to a new place while holding down your right mouse button. When you let go of the mouse button, choose Create Shortcuts Here, and the shortcut appears.

- ✔ **Control Panel:** Found a particularly helpful setting in Control Panel, Windows Vista's built-in switch box? Drag the helpful icon onto your desktop, the Navigation Pane along a folder's side, or any other handy spot. The icon turns into a shortcut for easy access.

- ✔ **Disk drives:** Open Computer from the Start menu, right-click on the drive you want, and choose Create Shortcut. Windows immediately places a shortcut to that drive on your desktop.

Here are some more tips for shortcuts:

- ✔ For quick CD burning, put a shortcut to your CD burner on your desktop. Burning files to CD becomes as simple as dragging and dropping them onto the CD burner's new shortcut. (Insert a blank disc into the CD burner's tray, confirm the settings, and begin burning.)

- ✔ Feel free to move shortcuts from place to place but *don't* move the items they launch. If you do, the shortcut won't be able to find the item, causing Windows to panic, searching (usually vainly) for the moved goods.

- ✔ Want to see what program a shortcut will launch? Right-click on the shortcut, and click Open File Location (if available). The shortcut quickly takes you to its leader.

The Absolutely Essential Guide to Cutting, Copying, and Pasting

Windows Vista took a tip from the kindergartners and made *cut and paste* an integral part of life. You can electronically *cut* or *copy* and then *paste* just about anything somewhere else with little fuss and even less mess.

Windows programs are designed to work together and share information, making it fairly easy to put a scanned map onto your party invitation fliers. You can move files by cutting or copying them from one place and pasting them into another. And you can easily cut and paste paragraphs to different locations within a program.

The beauty of Windows Vista is that, with all those windows on-screen at the same time, you can easily grab bits and pieces from any of them and paste all the parts into a brand new window.

Don't overlook copying and pasting for the small stuff. Copying a name and address from your Contacts program is much quicker than typing it into your letter by hand. Or, when somebody e-mails you a Web address, copy and paste it directly into Internet Explorer's Address Bar. It's easy to copy most items displayed on Web sites, too (much to the dismay of many professional photographers).

The quick 'n' dirty guide to cut 'n' paste

In compliance with the Don't Bore Me with Details Department, here's a quick guide to the three basic steps used for cutting, copying, and pasting:

1. **Select the item to cut or copy: a few words, a file, a Web address, or any other item.**

2. **Right-click on your selection and choose Cut or Copy from the menu, depending on your needs.**

   Use *Cut* when you want to *move* something. Use *Copy* when you want to duplicate something, leaving the original intact.

   Keyboard shortcut: Hold down Ctrl and press X to cut or C to copy.

3. **Right-click on the item's destination and choose Paste.**

   You can right-click inside a document, folder, or nearly any other place.

   Keyboard shortcut: Hold down Ctrl and press V to paste.

The next three sections explain each of these three steps in more detail.

Selecting things to cut or copy

Before you can shuttle pieces of information to new places, you have to tell Windows Vista exactly what you want to grab. The easiest way to tell it is to *select* the information with a mouse. In most cases, selecting involves one swift trick with the mouse, which then highlights whatever you've selected.

✔ **To select text in a document, Web site, or spreadsheet:** Put the mouse arrow or cursor at the beginning of the information you want and hold down the mouse button. Then move the mouse to the end of the information and release the button. That's it! That selects all the stuff lying between where you clicked and released, as shown in Figure 5-7.

Be careful after you highlight a bunch of text. If you accidentally press the letter *k,* for example, the program replaces your highlighted text with the letter *k.* To reverse that calamity, choose Undo from the program's Edit menu (or press Ctrl+Z, which is the keyboard shortcut for Undo).

✔ **To select any files or folders:** Simply click a file or folder to select it. To select *several* items, try these tricks:

• **If all the files are in a row:** Click the first item in the bunch, hold down the Shift key, and then select the last item. Windows highlights the first and last items, as well as everything in between.

• **If the files *aren't* in a row:** Hold down the Ctrl key while clicking each file or folder you want to select.

Figure 5-7: Windows highlights the selected text, changing its color for easy visibility.

TIP
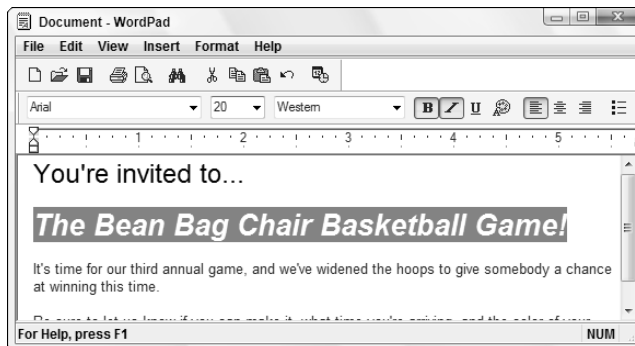
Selecting individual letters, words, paragraphs, and more

When dealing with words in Windows Vista, these shortcuts help you quickly select information:

✔ To select an individual *letter or character,* click in front of the character. Then while holding down the Shift key, press your → key. Keep holding down these two keys to keep selecting text in a line.

✔ To select a single *word,* point at it with the mouse and double-click. The word changes color, meaning it's highlighted. (In most word processors, you can hold down the button on its second click, and then by moving the mouse around, you can quickly highlight additional text word by word.)

✔ To select a single *line* of text, click next to it in the left margin. Keep holding down the mouse button and move the mouse up or down to highlight additional text line by line. You can also keep selecting additional lines by holding down the Shift key and pressing the ↓ key or the ↑ key.

✔ To select a *paragraph,* double-click next to it in the left margin. Keep holding down the mouse button on the second click and move the mouse to highlight additional text paragraph by paragraph.

✔ To select an entire *document,* hold down Ctrl and press A. (Or choose Select All from the Edit menu.)

Now that you've selected the item, the next section explains how to cut or copy it.

REMEMBER

✔ After you've selected something, cut it or copy it *immediately.* If you absentmindedly click the mouse someplace else, your highlighted text or file reverts to its boring self, and you're forced to start over.

✔ To delete any selected item, be it a file, paragraph, or picture, press the Delete key.

Cutting or copying your selected goods

After you select some information (which I describe in the preceding section, in case you just arrived), you're ready to start playing with it. You can cut it or copy it. (Or just press Delete to delete it.)

REMEMBER

This bears repeating. After selecting something, right-click on it. When the menu pops up, choose Cut or Copy, depending on your needs, as shown in Figure 5-8. Then right-click your destination and choose Paste.
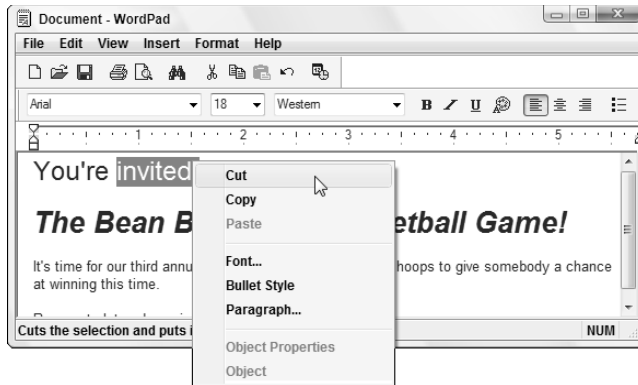
The Cut and Copy options differ drastically. How do you know which one to choose?

✔ **Choose Cut to move information.** *Cutting* wipes the selected information off the screen, but you haven't lost anything: Windows stores the cut information in a hidden Windows Vista storage tank called the *Clipboard,* waiting for you to paste it.

Feel free to cut and paste entire files to different folders. When you cut a file from a folder, the icon dims until you paste it. (Making the icon disappear would be too scary.) Changed your mind in mid-cut? Press Esc to cancel the cut, and the icon reverts to normal.

✔ **Choose Copy to make a copy of the information.** Compared with cutting, *copying* information is quite anticlimactic. Whereas cutting removes the item from view, copying the selected item leaves it in the window, seemingly untouched. Copied information also goes to the Clipboard until you paste it.

To copy a picture of your entire Windows Vista desktop (the *whole screen*) to the Clipboard, press the Print Screen key, which is sometimes labeled PrtScrn or something similar. (And, no, the Print Screen key doesn't send anything to your printer.) You can then paste the picture into Windows Vista's Paint program and print it from there.

Pasting information to another place

After you cut or copy information to Windows Vista's Clipboard, it's ready for travel. You can *paste* that information nearly anyplace else.

Undoing what you've just done

Windows Vista offers a zillion different ways for you to do the same thing. Here are four ways to access the Undo option, which unspills your spilled milk:

✔ Hold down the Ctrl key and press the Z key. The last mistake you made is reversed, sparing you from further shame. (Pressing a program's Undo button, if you can find one, does the same thing.)

✔ Hold down the Alt key and press the Back-space key. Vista goes back and retrieves what you deleted.

✔ Click Edit and then click Undo from the menu that falls down. The last command

you made is undone, saving you from any damage.

✔ Press and release the Alt key, press the letter E (from Edit), and then press the letter U (from Undo). Your last bungle is unbun-gled, reversing any grievous penalties.

Don't bother learning all four methods. For example, if you can remember the Ctrl+Z key combination, you can forget about the others. Best yet, just write Ctrl+Z on the cover of the book. (The publisher's marketing people wouldn't let me put it there — or my picture, but that's another story.)

Pasting is relatively straightforward:

1. **Open the destination window and move the mouse pointer or cursor to the spot where you want the stuff to appear.**

2. **Right-click the mouse and choose Paste from the pop-up menu.**

   Presto! The item you just cut or copied immediately leaps into its new spot.

Or, if you want to paste a file onto the desktop, right-click on the desktop and choose Paste. The cut or copied file appears where you've right-clicked.

✔ The Paste command inserts a *copy* of the information that's sitting on the Clipboard. The information stays on the Clipboard, so you can keep pasting the same thing into other places if you want.

✔ Some programs have toolbars along their tops, offering one-click access to Cut, Copy, and Paste, as shown in Figure 5-9.

Figure 5-9:
Cut, Copy, and Paste buttons.
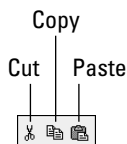
Windows Vista's Free Programs!

Windows Vista, the fanciest Windows version yet, comes with oodles of free programs, such as Media Player and Mail. These freebies make customers happy and make the European Antitrade Commission flap their long black robes.

I cover the larger free programs in other chapters. (Media Player, for example, gets its due in Chapter 15; Mail lives in Chapter 9.) This chapter merely focuses on Windows Vista's most useful freebies: its WordPad word processor, the Calendar scheduling program, and Character Map.

Writing letters with WordPad

WordPad is nowhere near as fancy as some of the more expensive word processors on the market. It can't create tables or multiple columns, like the ones in newspapers or newsletters, nor can you double-space your reports. Forget the spell checker, too.

WordPad is great for quick letters, simple reports, and other basic stuff. You can change the fonts, too. And because all Windows users have WordPad on their computers, most computer owners can read anything you create in WordPad.

To give WordPad a whirl, choose All Programs from the Start menu, choose Accessories, and click WordPad.

If you've just ditched your typewriter for Windows, remember this: On an electric typewriter, you have to press the Return key at the end of each line, or else you start typing off the edge of the paper. Computers avoid that. They automatically drop down a line and continue the sentence. (Tech Hipsters call this phenomenon *word wrap*.)

✔ To change fonts in WordPad, select the words you'd like to change (or select the entire document by choosing Select All from the Edit menu). Then choose Font from the Format menu. Click the name of the font you want; the Sample box offers a preview. Click the OK button, and WordPad displays your changes.

✔ Quickly insert the current day, date, or time into your document by choosing Date and Time from the Insert menu. Choose the style of date or time you want, and WordPad inserts it into your document.

Keeping appointments with Calendar

WINDOWS XP

Vista tosses in a new program not found in Windows XP: Windows Calendar. Just like it sounds, Windows Calendar is a full-fledged scheduling program that replaces hastily scribbled sticky notes on the refrigerator. Fire it up by clicking the Start menu, choosing All Programs, and selecting Windows Calendar.

Shown in Figure 5-10, Calendar presents a monthly calendar on the left side, your day's appointments in the middle, and the highlighted appointment's details on the right.

To add an appointment, click a day on the calendar, click the time of the appointment, type a description, and start filling out the additional details on the right.

The beauty of Calendar is the way it lets you share appointments through e-mail or by publishing them to a Web site where friends and relatives can automatically *subscribe* to them, meaning Calendar will download and display them automatically.

The downside of Calendar is that you have no excuse for being late anymore.

✔ For a quick way to add dates for holidays, sporting events, TV shows, moon phases, and similar items, visit iCalShare (`www.icalshare.com`). The Web site lets people publish and share calendars.

✔ Windows Calendar lets you share calendars with people using Microsoft's Outlook program, Apple's iCal program, and Google's online calendar (`www.google.com/calendar`). For a real downer, you may be able to share your calendar from work, as well — ask your office network guru.

✔ To share your own calendar with friends, click your calendar's name from the Calendars section shown in Figure 5-10. Then choose Send Via E-mail from the Share menu. Calendar will e-mail your calendar to your friend, where it will appear on your friend's calendar program.

✔ Calendar lets you assign different colors to your friends' calendars so that you can easily tell which appointment belongs to which person. To remove somebody's appointments from your calendar, click their calendar's name and press Delete: All their appointments disappear.

Add an appointment

Delete selected appointment

View today's appointments

Change to week or month view

Add a task

Subscribe to other calendars

Figure 5-10:
Vista's Calendar shows the appointments of you and your friends, making it easier to plan events.

Current month's calendar   Day's appointments

Days with appointments   Details about highlighted appointment

Shared calendars

Finding symbols like © with Character Map

Character Map lets you insert common symbols and foreign characters into your current document, giving your documents that extra *coup de grâce*. The handy little program displays a box like the one shown in Figure 5-11, listing every available character and symbol.

For example, follow these steps to insert the copyright character — © — somewhere in your work:

1. **Click the Start menu, choose All Programs, select Accessories, choose System Tools, and select Character Map.**

   Make sure that your current font — the name for the style of your letters — appears in the Font box.

Figure 5-11:
Character
Map finds
symbols and
foreign
characters
to place in
your work.
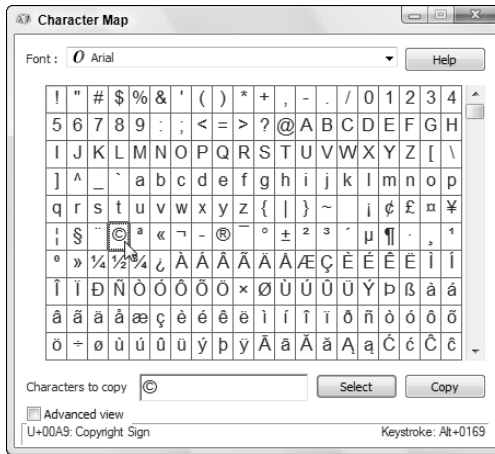
If the font you're using in your document isn't showing, click the Font box's down arrow and then scroll down and click your font when it appears in the drop-down list.

2. Scan the Character Map box until you see the symbol you're after; then pounce on that character with a double-click.

The symbol appears in the Characters to Copy box.

3. Right-click in the document where you want the symbol to appear and choose Paste.

The symbol appears, conveniently using the same font as your document.

- If you use foreign words a lot, place a shortcut to Character Map on your desktop, ready for quick consultation. Right-click on Character Map from the Start menu and choose Copy. Right-click on your desktop and choose Paste Shortcut. *¡Que conveniencia!*

- Find yourself constantly typing the same foreign character or symbol? Then memorize its shortcut key sequence, the little numbers shown in Character Map's bottom-right corner. See how Figure 5-11 says Keystroke Alt+0169? That's the shortcut for the copyright symbol. To paste © into any document any time, hold down Alt and type **0169** using your keyboard's numeric keypad. The copyright symbol appears as you release the Alt key. (Make sure that your Num Lock key is turned on.)

- Table 5-1 lists the shortcut keys for some commonly used symbols.

Table 5-1	Handy Codes for Handy Characters
To Insert This . . .	*. . . Press This*
©	Alt+0169
®	Alt+0174
° (as in 75°)	Alt+0176
™	Alt+0153
£	Alt+0163
¢	Alt+0162

Chapter 6

Briefly Lost, but Quickly Found

Sooner or later, Windows Vista gives you that head-scratching feeling. "Golly," you say, as you tug on your mouse cord, "that stuff was *right there* a second ago. Where did it go?" When Windows Vista starts playing hide-and-seek with your information, this chapter tells you where to search and how to make it stop playing foolish games.

Finding Lost Windows on the Desktop

Windows Vista works more like a spike memo holder than an actual desktop. Every time you open a new window, you toss another piece of information onto the spike. The window on top is easy to spot, but how do you reach the windows lying beneath it? If you can see any part of a buried window's edge or corner, a well-placed click will fetch it, bringing it to the top.

When your window is completely buried, look at the desktop's taskbar, that strip along your monitor's bottom edge. (If the taskbar's missing, retrieve it with a press of the Windows key, shown in the margin.) Click your missing window's name on the taskbar to dredge it back to the top. (See Chapter 2 for details about the taskbar.)

Still missing? Try Vista's fancy new Flip 3D view by holding down the Windows key and pressing Tab. Shown in Figure 6-1, Vista does a magician's shuffle with your windows, letting you see them hanging in the air. While holding down the Windows key, keep pressing Tab (or rolling your mouse's scroll wheel) until your lost window rises to the front of the pack. Let go of the Windows key to place that window at the top of your desktop.

If your older PC can't handle Vista's 3D View (or if your newer PC's graphics card isn't up to snuff), hold down Alt and press Tab for the two-dimensional substitute that works the same or perhaps better. While holding down Alt, keep pressing Tab until Vista highlights your window; let go of Alt to place your newfound window atop your desktop.

TIP

If you're convinced a window is open but still can't find it, spread all your windows across the desktop: Right-click the taskbar along the desktop's bottom and choose Show Windows Side By Side from the menu. It's a last resort, but perhaps you'll spot your missing window in the lineup.

Figure 6-1:
Hold down the Windows key and press Tab repeatedly to cycle through your windows; release the Windows key to drop the top window onto the desktop.
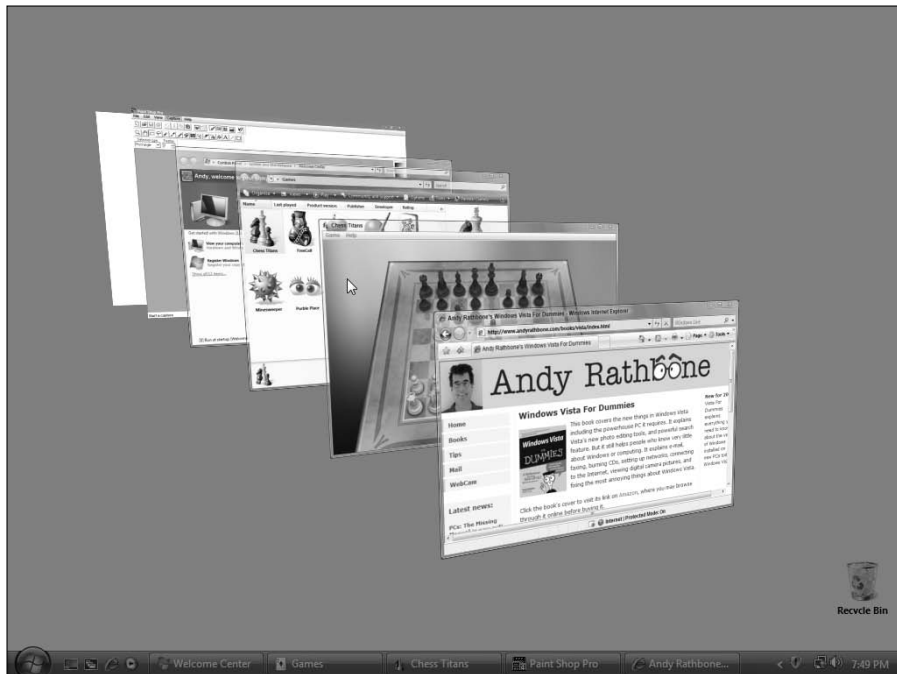
Locating a Missing Program, E-mail, Song, Document, or Other File

Finding information on the Internet rarely takes more than a few minutes, even though you're searching through millions of PCs worldwide. But try to find a document on your own PC, and you may spend days — if it even turns up at all.

To solve the search problem, Vista took a tip from Internet search engines like Google and created an index of your PC's main files. To find your missing file, open the Start menu and click in the Search box along the Start menu's bottom.

Start typing the first few letters of a word, name, or phrase that appears somewhere inside the file you're looking for. As soon as you begin typing, Vista's Start menu begins listing matches. With each letter you type, Vista whittles down the list. After you type enough letters, your lost document floats alone to the top of the list, ready to be opened with a double-click.

For example, typing the first few letters of **Thelonious** into the Start menu's Search box shown in Figure 6-2 brought up every Thelonious Monk song on my PC.

Figure 6-2: Type a few words from your document, e-mail, or music file, and Vista locates the files, placing the closest matches at the top.
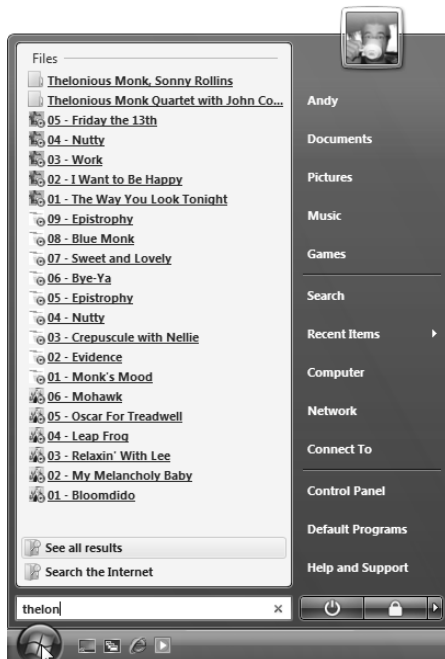
When the Search box comes up empty

Sooner or later, your trusty Search box won't strike gold. When you're faced with an empty list, these tips may help you mine that precious nugget from the veins of riches hidden in your PC:

✔ **Check for typos.** Windows Vista can't tell that "recieve" means you *really* want to find "receive." A typo will kill the search, every time.

✔ **Try the Big Search.** The Start menu's Search box offers simplicity and speed. If it's not coming up with the goods, however, switch to the Start menu's Search command. It brings up a new search window stuffed with so many options that it's slow and awkward. Covered in the "Commanding Vista's Big Search" section, the Search window may be worth a try in an emergency.

✔ **Add places to Vista's index.** Windows Vista normally finds everything in your User account folder, which includes your Documents, Pictures, and Music folders, as well as your e-mail and downloaded Web sites. But if you're storing files elsewhere — perhaps on an external hard drive or a tiny flash drive pushed into your PC's USB port — Vista won't find them unless you tell it about them, a chore covered in this chapter's "Fine-tuning Vista's Searches" section.

✔ **Rebuild the index.** People constantly move files in and out of their PCs. Vista's index tries to keep up, but eventually, the index may lose track of what's what. To start anew, tell Vista to rebuild the index, another chore covered in this chapter's "Fine-tuning Vista's Searches" section. Although Vista rebuilds the index in the background as you work, the process takes several hours. For best results, rebuild your index in the evening and let your PC run all night.

When you spot your file, click its name on the Start menu to open it. Or right-click its name and choose Open File Location from the pop-up menu to see the folder where your file's been hiding away.

✔ Vista's index includes every file in your Documents, Pictures, Music, and Videos folders, which makes storing your files in those folders more important than ever. (Vista doesn't let you search through files stored in accounts of *other* people who may be using your PC.)

✔ The index also includes any files strewn across your desktop, recently deleted files languishing in your Recycle Bin, people you've entered as contacts, and all your e-mail in Windows Mail. (Vista also indexes any files you're sharing in your Public folder — the folder that other PCs can access from a network.)

✔ If you're searching for a common word and Vista turns up too many files, limit your search by typing a short phrase: **Thelonious Monk played Tuesday night**. The more letters of a phrase you type, the better your chances of pinpointing a particular file.

✔ When searching for files, begin typing with the *first* letter of a word or phrase: **t** for Thelonious, for example. If you type **onious**, Vista won't find Thelonious, even though Thelonious contains that string of letters.

✔ The Search Box ignores capital letters. It considers **Bee** and **bee** to be the same insect.

✔ If Vista finds more matches than it can stuff into the small Start menu, shown in Figure 6-2, click the words See All Results directly above the Search box. That brings up the Advanced Search feature, which I cover later in this chapter's "Commanding Vista's Big Search" section.

✔ Want to route your search to the Internet rather than your PC? After typing your word or phrase, click the words Search the Internet, shown directly above the Search box in Figure 6-2. Vista sends your search to the search engine you've chosen in Internet Explorer. (Chapter 8 explains how to assign your search engine of choice to Internet Explorer.)

Finding a Missing File in a Folder

The Start menu's Search box probes Vista's entire index, making sure that it's looked everywhere. But that's overkill when you're poking around inside a single folder, looking randomly for a missing file. To solve the "sea of filenames in a folder" problem, Vista placed a Search box in every folder's upper-right corner. That Search box limits your search to files within that *particular* folder.

To find a missing file within a specific folder, click inside that folder's Search box and begin typing a word or short phrase from your missing file. As you begin typing letters and words, Vista begins filtering out files that don't contain that word or phrase. It keeps narrowing down the candidates until the folder displays only a few files, including, hopefully, your runaway file.

When a folder's Search box locates too many possible matches, bring in some other helping hands: the headings above each column. (For best results, choose Details from the folder's Views button, which lines up your file names in one column, shown in Figure 6-3.) The first column, Name, lists the name of each file; the adjacent columns list specific details about each file.

See the column headers, such as Name, Date Modified, and Type, atop each column? Click any of those headers to sort your files by that term. Here's how to sort by some of the column headers in your Documents folder:

✔ **Name.** Know the first letter of your file's name? Then click here to sort your files alphabetically. You can then pluck your file from the list. Click Name again to reverse the sort order.

Viewing
files in
Details view
lets you sort
your files
by name,
making
them easier
to find.
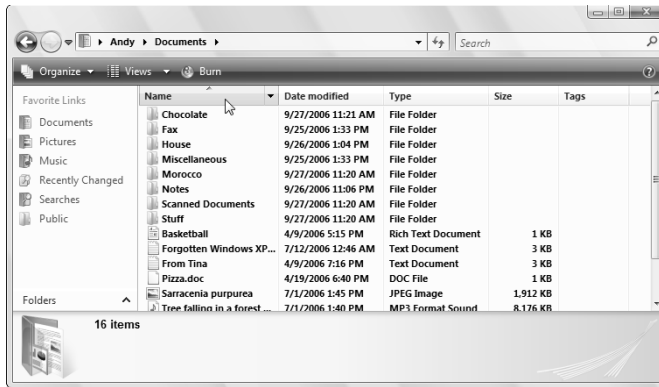
✔ **Date Modified.** When you remember the approximate date you last
changed a document, click the Date Modified header. That places your
newest files atop the list, making them easy to locate. (Clicking Date
Modified again reverses the order, a handy way to weed out old files you
may no longer need.)

✔ **Type.** This header sorts files by their contents: All your photos group
together, for example, as do all your Word documents. It's a handy way
to find a few stray photos swimming in a sea of text files.

✔ **Authors.** Microsoft Word and some other programs tack your name onto
your work. A click on this label alphabetically sorts the files by their cre-
ators' names.

✔ **Tags.** Vista often lets you assign tags to your documents, a task I
describe later in this chapter. Adding the tags "Moldy Cheese Photos"
to that pungent photo session lets you retrieve those pictures by either
typing their tags or sorting a folder's files by their tags.

Whether you're viewing your files as thumbnails, icons, or filenames, the
column headers always provide a handy way to sort your files quickly.

TIP

Folders usually display about five columns of details, but you can add more
columns. In fact, you can sort files by their word count, song length, photo
size, creation date, and dozens of other details. To see a list of available detail
columns, right-click an existing label along a column's top. When the drop-
down menu appears, select More to see the Choose Details dialog box. Click
to put check marks next to the new detail columns you'd like to see and then
click OK.

Deep sort

A folder's Details view (seen in Figure 6-3) arranges your files into a single column, with oodles of detail columns flowing off to the right. You can sort a folder's contents by clicking the word atop any column: Name, Date Modified, Author, and so on. But Vista's sort features go much deeper, as you'll notice when clicking the little downward pointing arrow to the right of each column's name.

Click the little arrow by the words "Date Modified," for example, and a calendar drops down. Click a date, and the folder quickly displays files modified on that particular date, filtering out all the rest. Beneath the calendar, check boxes also let you view files created Today, Yesterday, Last Week, Earlier This Month, Earlier This Year, or simply "A Long Time Ago."

Similarly, click the arrow next to the Authors column head, and a drop-down menu lists the authors of every document in the folder. Click the check boxes next to the author names you'd like to see, and Vista immediately filters out files created by other people, leaving only the matches.

These hidden filters can be dangerous, however, because you can easily forget that you've turned them on. If you spot a check mark next to any column header, you've left a filter turned on, and the folder is hiding some of its files. To turn off the filter and see *all* that folder's files, click the check mark next to the column header and examine the drop-down menu. Click any checked boxes on that drop-down menu; that removes their check marks and removes the filter.

Sorting, Grouping, and Stacking Files

Sorting your folders by their name, date, or type, described in the previous sections, provides enough organization for most people. To please the meticulous, Vista also lets you organize your files two other ways: *grouping* and *stacking*. What's the difference?

Stacking works much like organizing stray papers into piles on your office desk. You might pile them up by the date you created them, for example, tossing today's work in one big pile, and last week's work in another. Or you might want to put all your unpaid bills in one pile, and the bank statements in another.

Vista does something similar if you choose to stack your files by Date Modified, shown in Figure 6-4, as it tosses your current work in one pile, and last month's work in another. Or, stack your files by Type to separate your spreadsheets from your letters.

Vista's Grouping function also clumps similar items together. But instead of stacking the files into tall piles, Vista spreads them out flat, keeping related items next to each other. Grouping items by Date Modified, shown in Figure 6-5, groups your files by date, but places a label by each group: Last Week, Earlier this Month, Earlier this Year, and others.

TIP

To stack or group your files, right-click a blank spot inside the folder and choose either Stack By or Group By from the pop-up menu. Be sure to click a *blank* part inside the folder, which can be difficult in a crowded folder. To "unstack" or "ungroup," follow the same steps, but choose None from the Stack By or Group By menu.

Figure 6-4:
Right-click a blank part of a folder and choose Stack By to organize your work into neatly sorted piles.
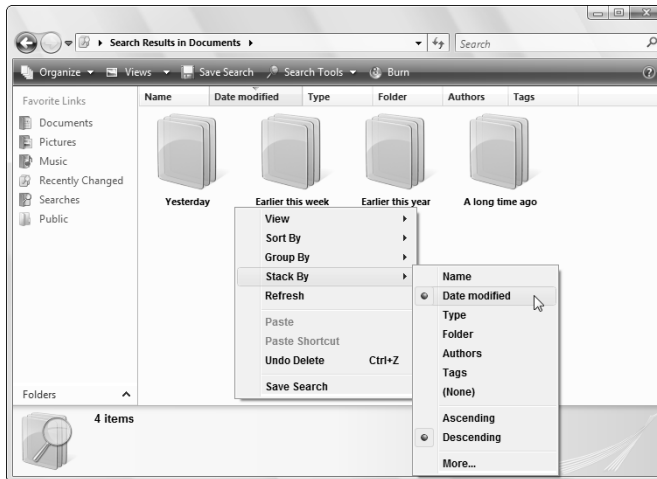
Figure 6-5:
Right-click a blank part of a folder and choose Group By to organize your work into groups of similar files.
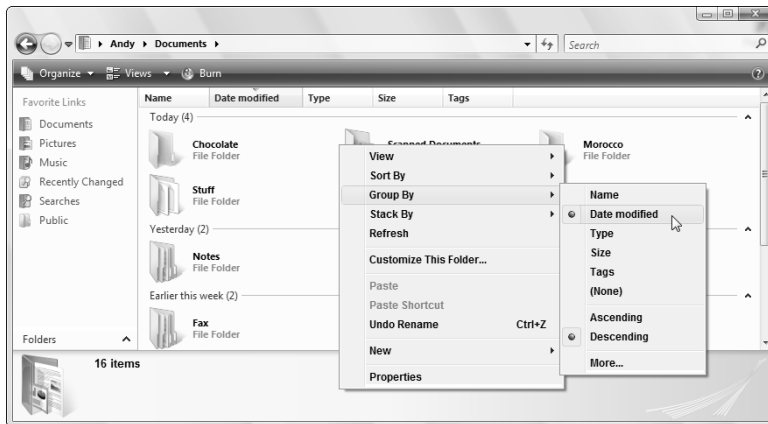
You can also stack and group by pressing Alt, clicking the View menu, and selecting Group By or Stack By.

There's no right or wrong time to choose Sort, Group, or Stack. It's up to your own preference, and the files you're dealing with at the time. Think of Vista as a card shuffler, able to quickly stack all your Costa Rica vacation photos into one stack. To see your photos, click the stack.

Finding Lost Photos

Windows Vista indexes your e-mail down to the last word, but it can't tell the difference between your Yosemite photos and your photo shoot at Dog Beach. When it comes to photos, the ID work lies in your hands, and these four tips make the chore as easy as possible:

- ✔ **Tag your photos.** When you connect your camera to your PC, described in Chapter 16, Vista graciously offers to copy your photos to your PC. While copying, Vista also asks you to "Tag these pictures." That's your big chance to type in a *tag* — a computer term for a descriptive word or short phrase. Tags give Vista something to index, making the photos easier to retrieve later.

- ✔ **Store shooting sessions in separate folders.** Vista's photo importing program, covered in Chapter 16, automatically creates a new folder to store each session, named after the current date and the tag you choose. But if you're using some other program to dump photos, be sure to create a new folder for each session. Then name the folder with a short description of your session: Sushi Dinner, Parboiling Potatoes, or Truffle Hunt.

- ✔ **Sort by date.** Have you stumbled onto a massive folder that's a huge mishmash of digital photos? Here's a quick sorting trick: Repeatedly click View from the folder's top menu until the photos morph into identifiable thumbnails. Then right-click a blank part of the folder, choose Sort By, and select either Date Modified or Date Taken. Sorting the photos by date usually lines them up in the order you snapped them, turning chaos into organization.

- ✔ **Rename your photos.** Instead of leaving your Belize vacation photos named DSCM1045, DSCM1046, and so on, give them meaningful names: Select all the files in your folder by holding down Ctrl and pressing A. Then right-click the first picture, choose Rename, and type **Belize**. Windows names them as Belize, Belize (2), Belize (3), and so on.

Following those four simple rules helps keep your photo collection from becoming a jumble of files.

Be *sure* to back up your digital photos to a portable hard drive, CDs, DVDs, or another backup method I describe in Chapter 12. If they're not backed up, you'll lose your family history when your PC's hard drive eventually crashes.

Finding Other Computers on a Network

A *network* is simply a group of connected PCs that can share things, such as your Internet connection, files, or a printer. Most people use a network every day without knowing it: Every time you check your e-mail, your PC connects to another PC to grab your waiting messages.

Much of the time, you don't need to care about the other PCs on your network. But when you want to find a connected PC, perhaps to grab the files from the PC in your family room, Vista is happy to help.

To find a PC on your network, choose Network from the Start menu. Vista lists every PC that's connected to your own PC. To browse files on any of those PCs, just double-click their names, as shown in Figure 6-6.

Figure 6-6: To find computers connected to your PC through a network, click the Start menu and choose Network.
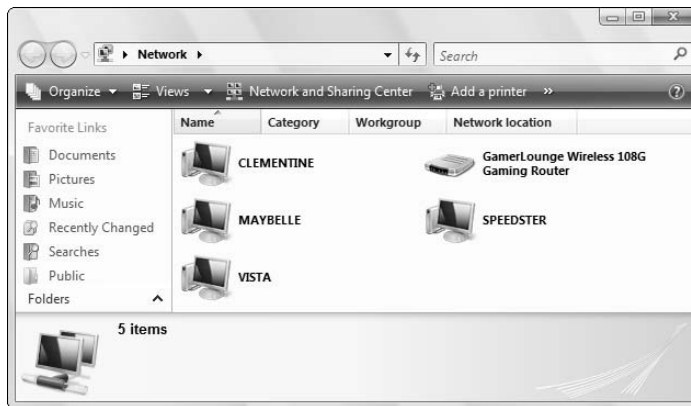
I explain how to create your own network in Chapter 14.

Finding Information on the Internet

When Vista comes up short while digging for information within your PC, tell it to search the Internet instead. Although you could fire up Internet Explorer, you can save a step by using the Start menu's Search box. Click in the Search box, type your words, and click Search the Internet above the Search box.

Vista sends your query to the search engine normally used by Internet Explorer's Search box, covered in Chapter 8.

Saving Your Searches

When you find yourself repeatedly searching for the same pieces of information, save yourself time by *saving* your search. Once you save your search, Vista keeps it current, automatically adding any newly created items that fit your search.

Click your saved search's name, and it opens like any other folder, but with the contents of your search already inside. For an example, click the word Searches, found on the Navigation Pane of every folder. Inside, Vista displays some saved searches that let you find files you've changed recently.

To save any search, perhaps one you've made from the Start menu's Search box, click the Save Search button (shown in the margin) along the top of the Search window. Type a name for your saved search and click Save.

Your saved search joins those already waiting in the Navigation Pane's Searches area. Tired of seeing an old Search on the list? Right-click its name and choose Delete. (That deletes only the search, not the files listed inside.)

Commanding Vista's Big Search

The Start menu's Search box performs remarkably well for most searches. It's simple, and it almost always delivers the goods promptly. So, how does the Start menu's Search *box* differ from the Start menu's Search *command* that's affixed to the right column?

Well, the Search command works best when the Search box leaves you with too many search results. For example, a search for "ice cream" on your PC may turn up recipes, photographs, Web sites, e-mails, and zillions of other matches.

To narrow down those results, click the Start menu's Search command to bring up the Search folder. The Search folder sports a standard-issue Search box at the top-right corner, as well as a strip of little buttons along the top: All, E-Mail, Document, Picture, Music and Other. Each button works as a filter, letting you narrow the scope of your search.

Type your search into the Search box — **ice cream**, for example — to see every file mentioning "ice cream." Then click the top buttons to narrow your results. Click the E-mail button, for example, to weed out every file but your e-mail mentioning "ice cream." Or click Picture to see pictures you've labeled with the word "ice cream."

Vista's Search command is overkill unless you're dealing with large amounts of information. But when you're stuck with a hard drive full of similar information, the Search command may be the tool you need to begin mining it.

Fine-Tuning Vista's Searches

Vista's Search feature has two dirty secrets. First, Vista doesn't index *every* file on your PC. Although that keeps your searches fast, it also means you may not be able to retrieve a particular file.

Second, Vista's index deteriorates with age, just like a rusty car. This section explains how to solve both problems.

Adding places to Vista's index

Vista indexes the files it thinks you need: everything in your Documents, Pictures, and Music folders, your e-mail, your Contacts, and more. But many people store important files elsewhere, out of the index's reach. Perhaps you've plugged an external hard drive into your PC. Or maybe you store some important files on a networked PC in the other room.

Follow these steps to add those places to the index's usual stomping grounds. (You must own an Administrator account, which I describe in Chapter 13, to add different folders to the index.)

1. **Open the Start menu and choose Control Panel.**

   The Control Panel, Vista's bundle of switches and options described in Chapter 11, appears in a window.

2. **Open the Indexing Options window.**

   On some PCs, you may have to click the System and Maintenance icon first. The Indexing Options window appears, listing the number of indexed files, and the folders it indexes.

3. **Click the Modify button.**

   The Indexed Locations window appears, shown in Figure 6-7, letting you pick and choose which areas of your hard drive should be indexed.

   Note: Only Administrators may see or change indexed locations. If you hold a less mighty account, you must click a Show All Locations button and enter an Administrator account holder's password to see the locations shown at the top of Figure 6-7.

4. Select the areas you want to index and then click OK.

Vista refers to external hard drives and thumbdrives as "removable disks." So, to make Vista index a particular folder on your F drive, click the little downward-pointing arrow next to the F drive's name, shown in Figure 6-7. The folder names tumble beneath the drive's name.

To add a single folder to the index, click the box next to its name. To add the entire drive's contents, click the box next to the drive's name.

When you click OK, Vista adds that location to the index, a process that may take from minutes to hours depending on the number of files.
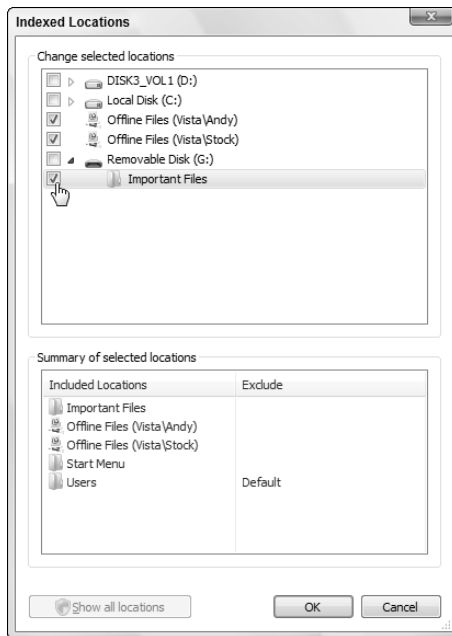
Figure 6-7: Click to put a check mark next to the areas you want to add to the index.

Rebuilding the index

When Vista's Search feature slows down considerably or doesn't seem to find files you *know* are in the pile, try Vista to rebuild the index from scratch.

Vista's kind enough to re-create its index in the background while you keep working, but to avoid slowing down your PC for several hours, consider sending the rebuild command in the evening. That way, Vista can toil while you sleep, ensuring that you'll have a complete index the next morning.

Follow these steps to rebuild your index:

1. **Open the Start menu and click the Control Panel.**

   The Control Panel appears in a window.

2. **Open the Indexing Options icon.**

   Don't spot it? Click the System and Maintenance icon to reveal the Indexing Options icon.

3. **Click the Advanced button and then click the Rebuild button.**

   Vista warns you, just as I do, that rebuilding the index takes a *long* time.

4. **Click OK.**

   Vista begins indexing anew, waiting until it's finished with the new index before it deletes the old one.

Chapter 7

Printing Your Work

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*O*ccasionally you'll want to slip something away from your PC's whirling electrons and onto something more permanent: A piece of paper.

This chapter tackles that job by explaining all you need to know about printing. Here, you find out how to make that troublesome document fit on a piece of paper without hanging off the edge. I also cover the mysterious *print queue,* a little-known area that lets you cancel documents mistakenly sent to the printer — before they waste all your paper. In addition, when you're ready to spiff up your work with some new fonts, you discover how to install them and view them on the screen, before they're even printed.

Printing Your Masterpiece

Windows Vista shuttles your work off to the printer in any of a half-dozen different ways. Chances are, you'll be using these methods most often:

- ✔ Choose Print from your program's File menu.
- ✔ Right-click your document icon and choose Print.
- ✔ Click the Print button on a program's toolbar.
- ✔ Drag and drop a document's icon onto your printer's icon.

If a dialog box appears, click the OK button; Windows Vista immediately begins sending your pages to the printer. Take a minute or so to refresh your

coffee. If the printer is turned on (and still has paper and ink), Windows handles everything automatically. If your coffee cup is still full, keep on working or playing FreeCell. Windows prints your work in the background.

If the printed pages don't look quite right — perhaps the information doesn't fit on the paper correctly or it looks faded — then you need to fiddle around with the print settings or perhaps change the paper quality, as described in the next sections.

✒ If you stumble upon a particularly helpful page in the Windows Help system, right-click inside the topic or page and choose Print. (Or, click the page's Print icon, if you spot one.) Windows prints a copy for you to tape to your wall or save in this book.

✒ For quick 'n' easy access to your printer, right-click your printer's icon and choose Create Shortcut. Click Yes to confirm, and Windows Vista puts a shortcut to your printer on your desktop. To print things, just drag and drop their icons onto your printer's new shortcut. (You can find your printer's icon by opening the Control Panel from the Start menu and choosing Printer in the Hardware and Sound area.)

✒ To print a bunch of documents quickly, select *all* their icons. Then right-click the selected icons and choose Print. Windows Vista quickly shuttles all of them to the printer where they emerge on paper, one after the other.

✒ Still haven't installed a printer? Flip to Chapter 11, where I explain how to plug one in and make Windows Vista embrace it.

Peeking at your printed page *before* it hits paper

For many, printing requires a leap of faith: You choose Print from the menu and close your eyes while the thing prints. If you're blessed, the page looks fine. But if you're cursed, you've wasted another sheet of paper.

The Print Preview option, found on nearly every program's File menu, foretells your printing fate *before* the words hit paper. Print Preview compares your current work with your program's page settings and then displays a detailed picture of the printed page. That preview makes it easy to spot off-kilter margins, dangling sentences, and other printing fouls.

Different programs use slightly different Print Preview screens, with some offering more insight than others. But almost any program's Print Preview screen lets you know whether everything will fit onto the page correctly.

If the preview looks fine, choose Print at the window's top to send the work to the printer. If something looks wrong, however, click Close to return to your work and make any necessary adjustments.

Adjusting how your work fits on the page

In theory, Windows *always* displays your work as if it were printed on paper. Microsoft's marketing department calls it *What You See Is What You Get,* forever disgraced with the awful acronym WYSIWYG and its awkward pronunciation: "wizzy-wig." If what you see on-screen *isn't* what you want to see on paper, a trip to the program's Page Setup dialog box, shown in Figure 7-1, usually sets things straight.

Page Setup, found on nearly any program's File menu, offers several ways to flow your work across a printed page (and subsequently your screen). Page Setup dialog boxes differ among programs and print models, but the following list describes the options that you'll find most often and the settings that usually work best.

Figure 7-1: Choose Page Setup from a program's File menu to adjust the way your work fits onto a piece of paper.
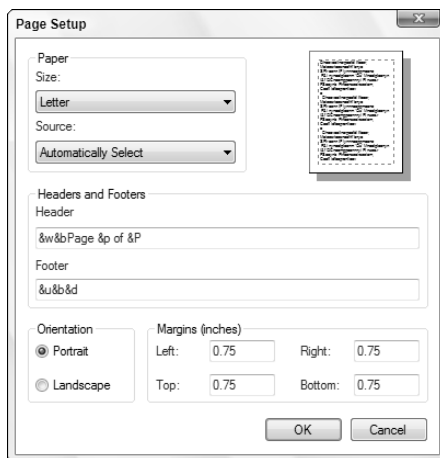
✓ **Size:** Lets your program know what size of paper you're currently using. Leave this option set to Letter to print on standard, 8.5-x-11-inch sheets of paper. Change this setting if you're using legal size paper (8.5 x 14), envelopes, or other paper sizes. (The nearby sidebar, "Printing envelopes without fuss," contains more information about printing envelopes.)

✓ **Source:** Choose Automatically Select or Sheet Feeder unless you're using a fancy printer that accepts paper from more than one printer tray. People with two or more printer trays can select the tray containing the correct paper size. Some printers offer Manual Paper Feed, making the printer wait until you slide in that single sheet of paper.

Printing envelopes without fuss

Although clicking the word Envelopes in a program's Page Setup area is fairly easy, printing addresses in the correct spot on the envelope is extraordinarily difficult. Some printer models want you to insert envelopes upside down, while others prefer right side up. Your best bet is to run several tests, placing the envelope into your printer's tray in different ways until you finally stumble on the magic method. (Or you can pull out your printer's manual, if you still have it, and pore over the "proper envelope insertion" pictures.)

After you've figured out the correct method for your printer, tape a successfully printed envelope above your printer and add an arrow pointing to the correct way to insert it.

When you eventually give up on printing envelopes, try using Avery's mailing labels. Buy your preferred size of Avery labels and then download the free Avery Wizard from Avery's Web site (www.avery.com/us/software/index.jsp). Compatible with Microsoft Word, the wizard places little boxes on your screen that precisely match the size of your particular Avery labels. Type the addresses into the little boxes, insert the label sheet into your printer, and Word prints everything onto the little stickers. You don't even need to lick them.

Or do like I did: Buy a little rubber stamp with your return address. It's much faster than stickers or printers.

✔ **Header/Footer:** Type secret codes in these boxes to customize what the printer places along the top and bottom of your pages: page numbers, titles, and dates, for example, as well as their spacing. For example, notice the letters *&u&b&p* in the Footer box of Figure 7-1? That means to print the Web page's address along the bottom left side and the current date along the bottom right. (The tip that follows explains how to locate and decipher your particular program's secret codes.)

Unfortunately, programs don't all use the same secret codes for their header and footer. If you spot a little question mark in the Page Setup dialog box's top-right corner, click it; then click inside the Header or Footer box for clues. No little question mark? Then press F1 and search for **page setup** in the program's Help menu.

✔ **Orientation:** Leave this option set to Portrait to print normal pages that read vertically like a letter. Choose Landscape only when you want to print sideways, a great way to print wide spreadsheets. (If you choose Landscape, the printer automatically prints the page that way; you don't need to slide the paper sideways into the printer.)

✔ **Margins:** Feel free to reduce the margins to fit everything on a single sheet of paper. You may need to change them for homework requirements, as well.

✔ **Printer:** If you have more than one printer installed on your computer or network, click this button to choose which one to print your work. Click here to change that printer's settings as well, a job discussed in the next section.

When you're finished adjusting settings, click the OK button to save your changes. (Click the Print Preview button, if it's offered, to make sure that everything looks right.)

TIP

To find the Page Setup box in some programs (including Internet Explorer), click the little arrow next to the program's Printer icon and choose Page Setup from the menu that drops down.

Adjusting your printer's settings

When you choose Print from a program's File menu, Windows offers one last chance to spruce up your printed page. The Print dialog box, shown in Figure 7-2, lets you route your work to any printer installed on your computer or network. While there, you can adjust the printer's settings, choose your paper quality, and select the pages you'd like to print.
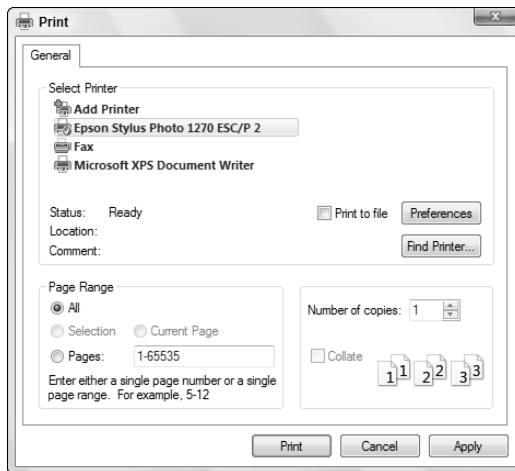
Figure 7-2:
The Print dialog box lets you choose your printer and adjust its settings.

You're likely to find these settings waiting in the dialog box:

✔ **Select Printer:** Ignore this option if you have only one printer because Windows chooses it automatically. If your computer has access to more than one printer, click the one that should receive the job.

The printer you may see called Microsoft XPS Document Writer sends your work to a specially formatted file, usually to be printed or distributed professionally. Chances are, you'll never use it.

✔ **Page Range:** Select All to print your entire document. To print just a few of its pages, select the Pages option button and enter the page numbers you want to print. For example, enter **1-4, 6** to leave out page 5 of a 6-page document. If you've highlighted a paragraph, choose Selection to print that particular paragraph — a great way to print the important part of a Web page and leave out the rest.

✔ **Number of Copies:** Most people leave this set to 1 copy, unless everybody in the boardroom wants their own copy. You can only choose Collate if your printer offers that option. (Most don't, leaving you to sort the pages yourself.)

✔ **Preferences:** Click this button to see a dialog box like the one in Figure 7-3, where you can choose options specific to your own printer model. The Preferences dialog box typically lets you select different grades of paper, choose between color or black and white, set the printing quality, and make last-minute corrections to the page layout.

Figure 7-3:
The Printing Preferences dialog box lets you change settings specific to your printer, including the paper type and printing quality.
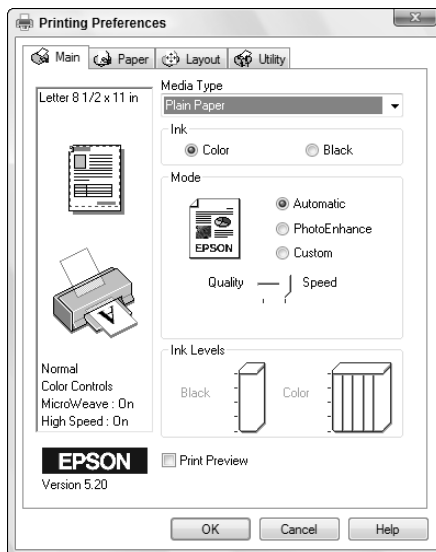
Canceling a print job

Just realized you sent the wrong 26-page document to the printer? So you panic and flip the printer's off switch. Unfortunately, most printers automatically pick up where they left off when you turn them back on.

To purge your mistake from your printer's memory, double-click your Printer's icon (which sometimes sits near the Taskbar's clock) to reveal the _print queue,_ shown in Figure 7-4. Right-click your mistaken document and choose Cancel to end the job. When you turn your printer back on, it won't keep printing that same darn document.

✔ If you can't find your printer's icon, try choosing Control Panel from the Start menu and choose the Printers icon.

✔ The print queue, also known as the print spooler, lists every document waiting patiently to reach your printer. Feel free to change their printing order by dragging and dropping them up or down the list. (You can't move anything in front of the currently printing document, though.)

✔ If your printer runs out of paper during a job and stubbornly halts, add more paper. Then to start things flowing again, open the Print Queue, right-click your document, and choose Restart. (Some printers let you push their Online button to begin printing again.)

✔ You can send items to the printer even when you're working in the coffee shop with your laptop. When you connect the laptop to your office printer, the print queue notices and begins sending your files. (Beware: When they're in the print queue, documents are formatted for your specific printer model. If you subsequently connect your laptop to a _different_ printer model, the print queue's waiting documents won't print correctly.)

Figure 7-4:
Use the print queue to cancel a print job.
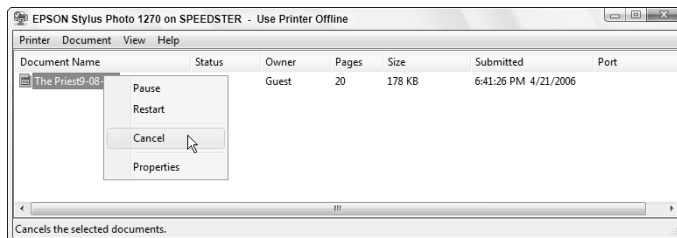
Printing a Web page

Although information-chocked Web pages look awfully tempting, *printing* those Web pages is rarely satisfying because they look so awful on paper. When sent to the printer, Web pages often run off the page's right side, consume zillions of additional pages, or are much too small to read.

To make matters worse, all those colorful advertisements can suck your printer's color cartridges dry fairly quickly. Only four things make for successfully printed Web pages, and I rank them in order of success:

- ✔ **Use the Web page's built-in Print option.** Some, but not all, Web sites offer a tiny menu option called Print This Page, Text Version, Printer-Friendly Version, or something similar. That option tells the Web site to strip out its garbage and reformat the page so that it fits onto a sheet of paper. This option is the most reliable way to print a Web page.

- ✔ **Choose Print Preview from your browser's File or Print menu.** After 15 years, some Web page designers noticed that people want to print their pages, so, they tweaked the settings, making their pages *automatically* reformat themselves when printed. You may have stumbled onto one of those sites.

- ✔ **Copy the portion you want and paste into WordPad.** Try selecting the desired text from the Web page, copying it, and pasting it into WordPad or another word processor. Delete any unwanted remnants, adjust the margins, and print the portion you want. Chapter 5 explains how to select, copy, and paste.

- ✔ **Copy the entire page and paste it into a word processor.** Although it's lots of work, it's an option. Choose Select All from Internet Explorer's Edit menu. Then choose Copy (which is also on the Edit menu) or press Ctrl+C. Next, open Microsoft Word or another full-featured word processor and paste it inside a new document. By hacking away at the unwanted portions, you can sometimes end up with something printable.

These tips may also come in handy for moving a Web page from screen to paper:

- ✔ The only surefire way to print a Web page is if the Web page's designer was thoughtful enough to build in a print option. If you spot an E-Mail option but no Print option, e-mail the page to yourself. You'll probably have better success printing it as an e-mail message.

- ✔ To print just a few paragraphs of a Web page, use the mouse to select the portion you're after. (I cover selecting in Chapter 5.) Choose Print from Internet Explorer's File menu to open the Print dialog box, shown in Figure 7-2, and then click the word Selection in the Page Range box.

> ↙ If a Web page's table or photo insists on vanishing off the paper's right edge, try printing the page in Landscape mode rather than Portrait. See the "Adjusting how your work fits on the page" section, earlier in this chapter, for details on Landscape mode.

Installing new fonts

Fonts change the appearance of letters, adding a different *mood* to your document. Windows Vista comes with several dozen different fonts, and you can view them all fairly easily.

To see all your currently installed fonts, open the Control Panel from the Start menu, click Classic View, and double-click the Fonts icon (shown in the margin). Windows Vista lists all your fonts by name. Double-click any font — the Impact font icon, for example — and Windows Vista shows how that font looks on the printed page, as shown in Figure 7-5. (Click the Print button to send a sample to your printer.)

Printing your Address Book

Although backing up Windows Mail is important, it's downright handy to print a list of your contacts — or at least print contact information for the people you'll be meeting that day. Here's how to turn a piece of paper into a personalized, on-the-fly address book:

1. **Open your Contacts folder and select the people to print.**

   Click your username atop your Start menu's top-right corner and then open your Contacts folder. Press Ctrl+A to highlight *all* your contacts or hold down Ctrl and click the names you want to print.

2. **Click the folder's Print button, select your printer, if necessary, and choose your Print Style.**

   The Print Style section offers three ways to print your contact sheet:

   ↙ **Memo:** Print *everything* about the contact.

   ↙ **Business Card:** Print standard business card items for each person, including name, phone, address, company, and e-mail address.

   ↙ **Phone List:** Print each contact's name and phone numbers (cell, fax, home, business).

3. **Click Print.**

Windows Mail prints a neatly formatted list according to your specifications. If you've never printed your contacts before, try each of the three printing options to see their look. It's worth three sheets of paper.

If you're not happy with your current font selection, you can buy or download new ones and install them on your computer. Most fonts sold at stores come with installation programs that spare you the messy details in Windows Vista's font installer. But if your new font didn't come with an installation package, here's how to install it:

1. **Place your new font in your Documents folder.**

   Many downloaded fonts arrive inside a *compressed* folder, also called a *zipped* folder. (Zipped folders have a little zipper on their icon, shown in the margin.) If your font arrived this way, right-click its icon, choose Extract All, and let the wizard extract its contents to a folder inside your Documents folder.

   If you'll be installing a lot of fonts, create a new folder called Fonts inside your Documents folder and use it as a dumping ground for newly extracted font folders.

2. **Right-click the downloaded font and choose Install.**

   The downloaded font's icon looks like one of the two shown in the margin. When you choose Install, Vista adds the font to your Control Panel's Fonts area, where it's available to all your programs.

   ✔ To delete any unwanted fonts, right-click their names in the Control Panel's Fonts area and choose Delete.

   ✔ Please don't delete any fonts that came with Windows Vista. Just delete fonts *you've* installed. Deleting some of Windows Vista's built-in fonts will remove letters from your menus, making Windows Vista even *more* difficult to use.

✔ If you can't resist downloading free fonts from the Internet, remember that Windows Vista can handle TrueType fonts, OpenType fonts, and PostScript fonts. And if you *really* get into fonts, you'll want to buy a font management program sold at most office supply stores. Finally, always scan downloaded fonts with your virus checker.

Troubleshooting your printer

If you can't print your document, are you *sure* that the printer is turned on, plugged into the wall, full of paper, and connected securely to your computer with a cable?

Choosing the right paper for your printer

If you've strolled the aisles at an office-supply store lately, you've noticed a bewildering array of paper choices. Sometimes the paper's packaging lists its application: Premium Inkjet Paper, for example, for high-quality memos. Here's a list of the paper types to keep on hand for different jobs. Before printing, be sure to click the Printer's Preferences area to select the grade of paper you're using for that job.

✔ **Junk:** Keep some cheap or scrap paper around for testing the printer, printing quick drafts, leaving notes to spouses, and printing other on-the-fly jobs. Botched print jobs work great here; just use the paper's other side. (Be sure you insert the paper in the right direction.)

✔ **Letter quality:** Bearing the words Premium or Bright White, this paper works fine for letters, memos, and other things designed for showing to others.

✔ **Photos:** You can print photos on any type of paper, but they look good only on actual Photo-Quality paper — the expensive stuff.

Slide the paper carefully into your printer tray so that the picture prints on the glossy, shiny side. Some photo paper uses a little cardboard sheet beneath it, which helps glide the paper smoothly through the printer.

✔ **Labels:** They've never sent me a T-shirt, but I still say that Avery's Wizard program (www.avery.com) makes it easy to print Avery labels and cards. The wizard teams up with Microsoft Word to mesh perfectly with Avery's preformatted mailing labels, greeting cards, business cards, CD labels, and many others.

✔ **Transparencies:** For powerful PowerPoint presentations, buy special transparent plastic sheets designed to be used with your type of printer.

Before plunking down your money, make sure that your paper is designed specifically for your printer type, be it laser or inkjet. Laser printers heat the pages, and some paper can't take the heat.

If so, then try plugging the printer into different outlets, turning it on, and seeing whether its power light comes on. If the light stays off, your printer's power supply is probably blown.

Printers are almost always cheaper to replace than repair. But if you've grown fond of your printer, grab an estimate from a repair shop before discarding it.

If the printer's power light beams brightly, check these things before giving up:

✔ Make sure that a sheet of paper hasn't jammed itself inside the printer somewhere. (A steady pull usually extricates jammed paper; sometimes opening and closing the lid starts things moving again.)

✔ Does your inkjet printer still have ink in its cartridges? Does your laser printer have toner? Try printing a test page: Click the Start menu, open the Control Panel, and choose Printers. Right-click your printer's icon, choose Properties, and click the Print Test Page button to see whether the computer and printer can talk to each other.

✔ Try updating the printer's *driver,* the little program that helps it talk with Windows Vista. Visit the printer manufacturer's Web site, download the newest driver for your particular printer model, and run its installation program.

Finally, here are a couple of tips to help you protect your printer and cartridges:

✔ Turn off your printer when you're not using it. Inkjet printers, especially, should be turned off when they're not in use. The heat tends to dry the cartridges, shortening their life.

✔ Don't unplug your inkjet printer to turn it off. Always use the on/off switch. The switch ensures that the cartridges slide back to their home positions, keeping them from drying out or clogging.

Part III
Getting Things Done on the Internet

The 5th Wave   By Rich Tennant

"Honey – remember that pool party last summer where you showed everyone how to do the limbo in just a sombrero and a dish towel? Well, look at what the MSN Daily Video Download is."

In this part . . .

*T*he Internet used to be clean, quiet, and helpful, just like a new library. You could find detailed information about nearly anything, read newspapers and magazines around the world, listen to music in the media section, or quietly browse the card catalogs.

Today, this wonderful global library has been bombarded with noisy people who toss ads in front of what you're trying to read. Some won't even let you close that book you inadvertently opened — the book keeps opening back up to the wrong page. Pickpockets and thieves stalk the halls.

This part of the book helps you turn the Internet back into that quiet, helpful library it once was. It shows how to stop pop-up ads, browser hijackers, and spyware. It explains how to send and receive e-mail so that you can keep in touch with friends.

Finally, it shows you how to stay safe using Windows Vista's new User Account Protection, firewall, security center, cookie manager, and other tricks to help bring back the Internet you love.

Chapter 8

Cruising the Web

. . . .

In This Chapter

▶ Finding out about Internet service providers

▶ Setting up Internet Explorer the first time

▶ Navigating the Web

▶ Finding information on the Internet

▶ Understanding plug-ins

▶ Saving information from the Internet

▶ Troubleshooting Internet Explorer problems

. . . .

Some people consider an Internet connection to be optional, but Windows Vista prefers mandatory, thank you very much. Even when being installed, Windows Vista starts reaching for the Internet, eager for any hint of a connection. After checking in with the Internet, for example, Windows Vista kindly nudges your computer's clock to the correct time. Some motives are less pure: Windows Vista checks with Microsoft to make sure that you're not installing a pirated copy.

This chapter explains how to connect with the Internet, visit Web sites, and find all the good stuff online. For ways to keep out the bad stuff, be sure to visit Chapter 10 for a quick primer on safe computing. The Internet's full of bad neighborhoods, and that chapter explains how to avoid viruses, spyware, hijackers, and other Internet parasites.

Once your computer's wearing its appropriate helmet and kneepads, however, hop onto the Internet and enjoy the ride.

What Is the Internet?

Today, most people take the Internet for granted, much like a telephone line. Instead of marveling at the Internet's internal gearing, they've grown accustomed to this new land called *cyberspace,* and its healthy stock of attractions:

✔ **Library:** The Internet is stuffed with educational material: classic books, hourly news updates, foreign language dictionaries, specialized encyclopedias, and more. Visit RefDesk (`www.refdesk.com`) for a detailed list of some of the Internet's best free reference materials.

✔ **Store:** Although the Internet seemed like a novelty ten years ago, today the Internet revolves around making money. You can purchase nearly anything available in stores (and some things *not* sold in stores) on the Internet and ship it to your thatch hut. Amazon (`www.amazon.com`) even lets you listen to song snippets and read reviews before putting that John Coltrane CD on your credit card.

✔ **Communicator:** Some people treat the Internet as a private postal service for sending messages to friends, coworkers, and even strangers around the world. Unfortunately, unwelcome marketers do the same, filling everybody's inboxes with increasingly desperate, unsolicited sales pitches known as *spam*. (I cover Windows Mail, Vista's e-mail program, in Chapter 9.)

✔ **Time waster:** When sitting in a waiting room, everybody naturally reaches for the magazine table. The Internet, too, offers zillions of ways to waste time. Jumping from one Web site to another is much like flipping pages in a magazine, but each flip often reveals a completely different, yet oddly related, magazine, brimming with fascinating information. Or at least it seems so at the time.

✔ **Entertainment:** The Internet brings not only a movie's show times into your home, but also its trailers, cast lists, reviews, and celebrity gossip. If you're tired of movies that week, browse for online games, research exotic travel destinations, or look up sporting statistics.

Simply put, the Internet is a 24-hour international library that's stocked with something for everyone.

✔ Just as a television channel surfer flips from channel to channel, a Web surfer moves from page to page, sampling the vast and esoteric piles of information.

✔ Almost every government but China loves the Internet. In the United States, the FBI shares pictures of its ten most wanted criminals (`www.fbi.gov`), and the Internal Revenue Service (`www.irs.ustreas.gov`) lets Internet users make free copies of tax forms 24 hours a day. Protesting a parking ticket? Your city's Web site probably hands you the right number faster than the phone book.

✔ Universities and scientists love the network, too, because they can file grant forms more quickly than ever. Worried about the goo coagulating in the crevices of your bromeliads? The Internet's famed botanical site (`www.botany.net`) enables researchers to study everything from Australian acacias to zoosporic fungi.

✔ Nearly all computer companies support their products on the Internet. Visitors can swap messages with technicians and other users about their latest computing woes. You may be able to download a fix or uncover the magic sequence of keystrokes that solves a problem.

What's an ISP, and Why Do I Need One?

Everybody needs four things to connect to the Web: a computer, Web browser software, a modem, and an Internet service provider (ISP).

You already have the computer, and Vista comes with a Web browser called Internet Explorer. Most PCs include a built-in modem. (If yours doesn't, you'll find out when you first try to set up your ISP, as I describe in the next section.)

That means most people need to find only an ISP. Although television signals come wafting through the air to your TV set for free, you must pay an ISP for the privilege of surfing the Web. Specifically, you pay the ISP for a password and account name. When your computer's modem connects to your ISP's computers, Internet Explorer automatically enters your password and account name, and you're ready to surf the Web.

Don't know which ISP to choose? First, different ISPs serve different areas. Ask your friends, neighbors, or local librarians how they connect, and whether they recommend their ISP. Call several ISPs for a rate quote and then compare rates. Most bill on a monthly basis; if you're not happy, you can always switch.

✔ Although a few ISPs charge for each minute you're connected, most charge a flat monthly fee between $15 and $50 for unlimited service. Make sure that you know your rate before hopping aboard, or you may be surprised at the month's end.

✔ Most free ISPs went out of business when the bottom fell out of the Internet market. At the time of this writing, you can still find limited Internet access for free from Juno (`www.juno.com`) and NetZero (`www.netzero.com`), but you have to peek around the ads to see the screen.

✔ ISPs let you connect to the Internet in a variety of ways. The slowest ISPs use a dialup modem and an ordinary phone line. Faster still are *broadband* connections: special DSL or ISDN lines provided by some phone companies, and the even faster cable modems, supplied by your cable company. When shopping for speedy ISPs, your geographic location usually determines your options, unfortunately.

✔ Some ISPs let their tech-savvy customers create their *own* Web pages for other Internet members to visit. Show the world pictures of your kids and cats, share your favorite recipes, talk about your favorite car waxes, or swap tips on constructing fishing flies or prom gowns.

Setting Up Internet Explorer the First Time

Windows Vista constantly looks for a working Internet connection in your PC. If it finds one, either through a network or wireless hotspot, you're set: Vista passes the news along to Internet Explorer, and your PC can connect to the Internet immediately. If Vista can't find the Internet, though — a frequent occurrence with dialup modems — the job's up to you.

To guide you smoothly through the turmoil of setting up an Internet connection, Vista passes you a questionnaire, quizzing you about the details. After a bit of interrogation, Vista helps connect your computer to your ISP so that you can Web surf like the best of them.

Setting up a wired or wireless network? Vista should automatically find the network's Internet connection and share it with every PC on your network. If not, see Chapter 14 for troubleshooting details.

To transfer your existing Internet account settings to or from another computer, use Windows Vista's Easy Transfer program, covered in Chapter 19. The program copies one PC's Internet settings into the other PC, sparing you the bother of following these steps.

Here's what you need to get started:

✔ **Your username, password, and access phone number.** If you don't have an ISP yet, the wizard finds you one, so grab a pencil and paper. (The wizard's ISP suggestions are a tad pricey, however.)

✔ **A plugged-in modem.** Most new computers come with a modem lodged in their innards. To see whether one's inside of yours, look for telephone jacks on the back of your computer, near where all the other cables protrude. Then connect a standard phone cable between that jack (the computer's jack says *Line,* not *Phone*) and the phone jack in your wall.

Whenever your Internet connection gives you log-on problems, head here and run through the following steps. The wizard walks you through your current settings, letting you make changes. Summon the wizard by following these steps:

1. **Click the Start button and choose Connect To.**

   The Connect To button fetches a list of every way your PC currently knows how to connect with the Internet. But when Vista can't find a way for your PC to connect, it comes up with an empty list.

   Instead, Vista may complain that it can't find any wireless networks in range of your PC. If so, ignore its whines and move to Step 2.

   If Vista did find a *wireless* network, by chance, you're in luck. You can hop aboard the signal by double-clicking the network's name. (I cover wireless networks in Chapter 14.)

2. **Choose Set Up a Connection or Network.**

   Scour the window's fine print for this option. When clicked, depending on your PC's model and setup, Vista may display any or all of these options:

   • **Connect to the Internet:** Vista makes yet another valiant effort to sniff out an Internet signal. Broadband users should click here, for example, to let Vista find and automatically set up their Internet connection.

   • **Set Up a Wireless Router or Access Point:** Head here to set up a private wireless Internet connection for your home or office, a task I cover in Chapter 14.

   • **Manually Connect to a Wireless Network:** If a wireless network demands a name and password, head here to enter them. You click here mostly when connecting to paid wireless networks at airports or coffee shops.

   • **Set Up a Wireless Ad Hoc (Computer-to-Computer) network:** Very rarely used, this option lets you connect two or more PCs for exchanging files and other information.

   • **Set Up a Dial-Up Connection:** This one lets you tell Vista what to do with that phone line you've plugged into your PC's phone jack.

   • **Connect to a Workplace:** This setting lets you connect securely to your office — if your office network supports this sophisticated type of connection. You'll need the settings and instructions from your office's computer department.

   • **Connect to a Bluetooth Personal Area Network (PAN):** If your PC has Bluetooth — a short-range form of wireless that replaces cables — click here to set up the connection. You head here to connect with Bluetooth cell phones, for example.

3. **Choose Set Up a Dial-Up Connection.**

   Because you're not choosing wireless or broadband, dialup is your only Internet connection option. To speed things along, Vista passes you a questionnaire, seen in Figure 8-1, ready for you to enter your dialup ISP's information.

4. **Enter your dialup ISP's information.**

   Here's where you enter your three all-important pieces of information: Your ISP's dialup number, your username, and your password, as described in the following list.

   • **Dial-up Phone Number:** Enter the phone number your ISP gave you, complete with the area code.

   • **User-Name:** This isn't necessarily your own name, but the username your ISP assigned to you when giving you the account. (It's often the first part of your e-mail address, as well.)

   • **Password:** Type your password here. To make sure that you're entering your password correctly, check the box called Show Characters. Then uncheck the box when you've entered the password without typos.

   Be sure to check Remember This Password. That keeps you from reentering your name and password each time you want to dial the Internet. (*Don't* check that box if you don't want your roommate or others to be able to dial your connection.)

   • **Connection Name:** Vista simply names your connection Dial-Up Connection. Change it to something more descriptive if you're juggling dialup accounts from several ISPs.

   • **Allow Other People to Use This Connection:** Check this option to let people with other user accounts on your PC log on with this connection.

Clicking the words I Don't Have an ISP brings up a window where you can sign up with Microsoft's own ISP or with one of Microsoft's partners.

TIP

Click the words Dialing Rules, next to the phone number. There, you can enter key details like your country, area code, and whether you need to dial a number to reach an outside line. Windows remembers this information, making sure that it dials a 1 if you're dialing outside your area code, for example. Laptoppers should visit Dialing Rules for every city they visit.

5. **Click the Connect button.**

   If you're lucky, your PC connects to the Internet (but doesn't offer any clues that you've connected). Load Internet Explorer from the Start menu, and see if it lets you visit Web sites.

   If Internet Explorer still can't visit the Internet, move to Step 6.

6. **Click the Start menu and choose Connect To.**

   Your newly created dialup connection will be waiting, shown in Figure 8-2.
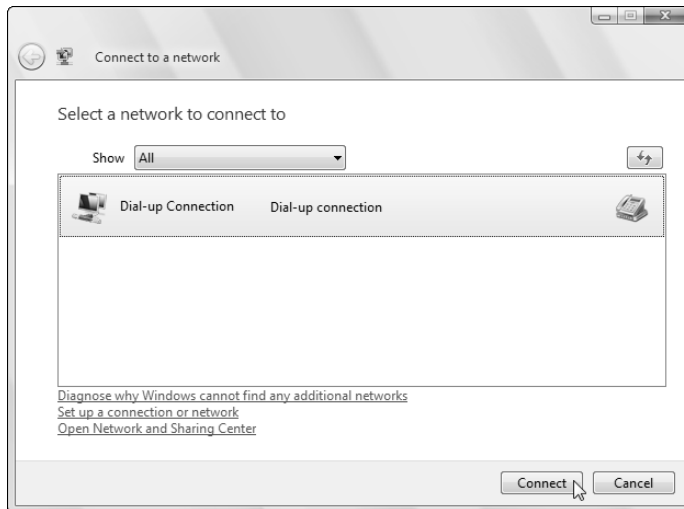
Figure 8-2:
Click your newly created dialup listing and click Connect to dial the Internet.

7. **Click the Dial-Up Internet connection and click Connect.**

   Vista tosses one more screen in your face, shown in Figure 8-3. This gives you a chance to type in your password, for example, if you didn't check Remember This Password in Step 4. It's also where you can tweak your connection settings, handy for temporarily changing the phone number, for example.

Figure 8-3:
Change the
phone
number, if
necessary,
and then
click Dial to
dial the
Internet.

8. **Click Dial to dial the Internet and connect to your ISP.**

You're done. Windows Vista automatically leaps into action, uses your settings to call your Internet provider, and lets you know when it's connected.

Then it's time to load Internet Explorer from the Start menu and start browsing. In the future, though, just load Internet Explorer when you want to browse. Your PC automatically dials the Internet using the connections you've created here.

Always plugging its own products, Microsoft drops you off at one of its own Web pages (Windows Live), and you're ready to browse. Need a place to go for a quick test? Log on to www.andyrathbone.com and see what happens.

Don't be afraid to bug your ISP for help. The best ISPs come with technical support lines. A member of the support staff can talk you through the installation process.

Internet Explorer doesn't automatically hang up when you're done browsing. To make your PC hang up the phone when you close Internet Explorer, choose Internet Options from the program's Tools menu and click the Connections tab. Click the Settings button and then the Advanced button. Finally, put a check mark by the words Disconnect When Connection May No Longer Be Needed and click OK.

But I want to see some pop-ups!

Early versions of Internet Explorer had no way to stop pop-up advertisements from exploding across your screen. Internet Explorer now offers a pop-up ad blocker that stops 90 percent of them. To make sure that it's turned on, choose Pop-up Blocker from Internet Explorer's Tools menu and make sure that no check mark appears in the Turn Off Pop-up Blocker box.

If you *want* to see pop-ups on certain sites, that same menu lets you choose Pop-up Blocker Settings. Add the Web site address, and Internet Explorer allows that site's pop-ups to pop unblocked.

If a site tries to send a pop-up ad or message, Internet Explorer places a strip along its top edge saying, `A pop-up was blocked. To see this pop-up or additional options, click here.` Click the strip to do any one of these three things: temporarily allow that pop-up to appear, always allow pop-ups from that particular site, or change the pop-up blocker's settings.

Finally, to stop the informational strip from making that obnoxious pop noise when it stops a pop-up, choose Pop-up Blocker from Internet Explorer's Tools menu, choose Pop-up Blocker Settings, and remove the check mark from the Play a Sound When a Pop-Up Is Blocked box.

Navigating the Web with Microsoft Internet Explorer

Your Web browser is your Internet surfboard — your transportation between the Internet's thousands of Web sites. Internet Explorer comes free with Windows Vista, so many people use it out of convenience. Other people prefer browsers published by other software companies, such as Mozilla's Firefox (`www.getfirefox.com`).

Simply put, you're not forced to stick with Internet Explorer. Feel free to try other browsers, as they all do pretty much the same thing: take you from one Web site to another.

Moving from Web page to Web page

All browsers work basically the same way. Every Web page comes with a specific address, just like houses do. Internet Explorer lets you move between pages in three different ways:

✔ By pointing and clicking a button or link that automatically whisks you away to another page

✔ By typing a complicated string of code words (the Web address) into the Address box of the Web browser and pressing Enter

✔ By clicking the navigation buttons on the browser's toolbar, which is usually at the top of the screen

Clicking links

The first way is the easiest. Look for *links* — highlighted words or pictures on a page — and click them. See how the mouse pointer turned into a hand (shown in the margin) as it pointed at the word *Books* in Figure 8-4? Click that word to see more information about my books. Many words on this page are links, as well; the mouse pointer becomes a hand when near them, and the words become underlined. Click any linked word to see pages dealing with that link's particular subject.

Figure 8-4: When the mouse pointer becomes a hand, click the underlined or high-lighted word or picture to see more information about that item.
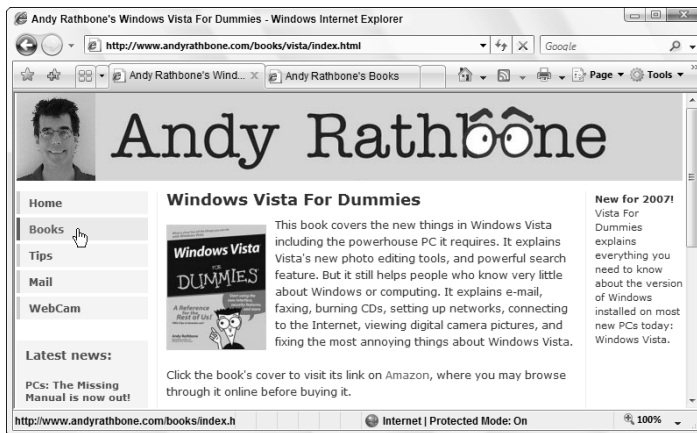
Web page designers get mighty creative these days, and without the little hand pointer, it's often hard to tell where to point and click. Some buttons look like standard elevator buttons; others look like fuzzy dice or tiny vegetables. But when you click a button, the browser takes you to the page relating to that button. Clicking the fuzzy dice may bring up a betting-odds sheet for local casinos, for example, and vegetables may bring information about the local farmers market.

Typing Web addresses in the Address box

The second method is the most difficult. If a friend gives you a napkin with a cool Web page's address written on it, you need to type the Web site's address into your browser's Address box yourself. You'll do fine, as long as you don't misspell anything. See the Web site address for my Web site along the top of Figure 8-4? I typed `www.andyrathbone.com` into the Address box. When I pressed Enter, Internet Explorer scooted me to my Web page. (You don't need to type the `http://` part, thank goodness.)

Using Internet Explorer's toolbar

Finally, you can maneuver through the Internet by clicking various buttons on Internet Explorer's toolbar, which sits at the top of the screen. Table 8-1 offers a handy reference of the important navigation buttons.

Hover your mouse pointer over a confusing Internet Explorer button to see its purpose in life.

Table 8-1	Navigating with Internet Explorer's Buttons	
This Button . . .	*Is Called This . . .*	*And It Does This . . .*
	Back	Pointed and clicked yourself into a dead end? Click the Back button to head for the last Web page you visited. If you click the Back button enough times, you wind up back at your home page, where you began.
	Forward	After you click the Back button, you can click Forward to revisit a page, too.
	Favorites Center	Clicking the Favorites button along the top reveals the Favorites Center, a list of links leading to your favorite Web sites.
	Add to Favorites	Click this yellow plus sign to add your currently viewed Web page to your Favorites list.
	Home	If you get stuck as you explore the Internet, click the Home button along the top to move back into familiar territory.

(continued)

Table 8-1 *(continued)*

This Button . . .	*Is Called This . . .*	*And It Does This . . .*
	RSS Feed	When this orange button lights up, you know the site offers Real Simple Syndication, a quick way to read the site's headlines without actually visiting.
	Print	Click here to print the Web site as you see it. (Click the tiny arrow to its right for printing options, including seeing a preview.)
	Page	These options relate to the current page: Enlarging its text size, for example, or saving it as a file.
	Tools	This button opens a menu full of Internet Explorer tweaks, letting you make adjustments to the pop-up blocker and phishing filter, among others.

Making Internet Explorer open to your favorite site

Your Web browser automatically displays a Web site when you first log on. That Web site is called your *home page,* and you can tell Internet Explorer to use any site you want for your home page by following these steps:

1. **Visit your favorite Web site.**

   Choose any Web page you like. I use Google News (`news.google.com`) so Internet Explorer always opens with the hour's current headlines.

2. **Choose the tiny arrow to the right of the Home icon and choose Add or Change Home Page.**

   The new, security-conscious Internet Explorer asks whether you'd like to use that Web page as your only home page.

3. **Click Use This Webpage As Your Only Home Page and click Yes.**

   When you click Yes, seen in Figure 8-5, Internet Explorer always opens to the page you're currently viewing.

   Clicking No sticks with your current home page, which starts out as Microsoft's Windows Live site.

Figure 8-5:
Click Use
This
Webpage
As Your Only
Home Page,
and Internet
Explorer
always
opens to
that page.
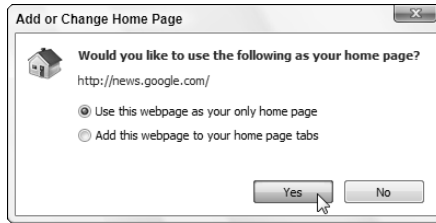
After Internet Explorer remembers your chosen home page, you can move around the Internet, searching for topics in Google (www.google.com) or other search engines, simply pointing and clicking different links.

- A home page of a Web site is its "cover," like the cover of a magazine. Whenever you jump to a Web site, you usually jump to the site's home page, and start browsing from there.

- If your home page is suddenly hijacked to a different site and these instructions don't fix it, then it's probably been hijacked by evil forces. Read the spyware section in Chapter 10.

- Internet Explorer lets you choose several pages as home pages, loading each one simultaneously and placing a tab atop each page for switching between them. To add home pages to your collection, choose Add This Webpage to Your Home Page Tabs in Step 3 of the preceding list (Figure 8-5).

Revisit favorite places

Sooner or later, you'll stumble across a Web page that's indescribably delicious. To make sure that you can find it again later, add it to Internet Explorer's built-in list of favorite pages by following these steps:

1. **Click the Add to Favorites icon (shown in the margin) on Internet Explorer's toolbar.**

   A little menu drops down.

2. **Click Add to Favorites from the drop-down menu and click the Add button.**

Internet Explorer's secret history of your Web visits

Internet Explorer keeps a record of every Web site you visit. Although Internet Explorer's History list provides a handy record of your computing activities, it's a spy's dream.

To keep tabs on what Internet Explorer is recording, click your Favorites button and click the History icon on the drop-down menu. Internet Explorer lists every Web site you've visited in the past 20 days. Feel free to sort the entries by clicking the little arrow to the right of the word History. You can sort them by date, alphabetically, most visited, or by the order you've visited on that particular day — a handy way to jump back to that site you found interesting this morning.

To delete a single entry from the history, right-click it and choose Delete from the menu. To delete the entire list, exit the Favorites area. Then choose Internet Options from Internet Explorer's Tools menu and click the Delete button in the Browsing History section. A menu appears, letting you delete your History and other items.

To turn off the History, click the Settings button instead of the Delete button. Then in the History section, change the Days To Keep Pages in History option to 0.

A box appears, offering to name the Web page by its title — the words that appear on the tab at the page's top. Feel free to shorten the title so that it fits better on the narrow Favorites menu.

When you're happy with the name, click the Add button to add the page to your Favorites list.

Whenever you want to return to that page, click Internet Explorer's Favorites button. When the Favorites menu drops down, click your favorite site's name.

Librarian-types like to organize their menu of favorite links: Right-click the Add Favorites button and choose Organize Favorites. That lets them create folders for storing similar and group-related links in single folders.

Don't see your favorites on the drop-down menu when you click the Favorites button? Click the word Favorites at the menu's top to switch to them. (You may be looking at the History, covered in the sidebar, or the RSS feeds, which list a site's headline.)

Finding things on the Internet

Just as finding a book in a library without a card catalog is nearly impossible, finding a Web site on the Internet without a good index is nearly impossible, too. Luckily, Internet Explorer lets you access an index — known as a search engine — through the Search box in its top-right corner.

Type a few words into the Search box about what you're seeking — **exotic orchids**, for example — and press Enter. Internet Explorer fires your search off to Windows Live, Microsoft's own Search engine. You can change that search engine to Google (www.google.com) or any other search engine you like.

In fact, you can add a variety of search engines, for example, routing most of your searches to Google, but sending searches for books and CDs to Amazon. Follow these steps to customize Internet Explorer's Search box to your liking:

1. **Click the downward-pointing arrow on the Search box's right edge.**

   A drop-down menu appears.

2. **Choose Find More Providers.**

   Internet Explorer visits Microsoft's Web site and lists a few dozen popular search engines.

3. **Click your favorite Search engine and choose Add Provider from the pop-up window.**

   When the window pops up, asking whether you want to add that Search Engine, click Add Provider.

   TIP If you want your searches to all go to one search engine — Google, for example — also click the Make This My Default Search Provider box. That tells Internet Explorer to automatically send all your searches to that provider.

4. **Feel free to add any other search engines you like, as well.**

   Choose other search engines you'd like to add. They'll all appear on the Search box's drop-down menu, seen in Figure 8-6.

Figure 8-6: To route searches to different places, click the arrow to the right of the Search box and choose a search engine to receive the search.
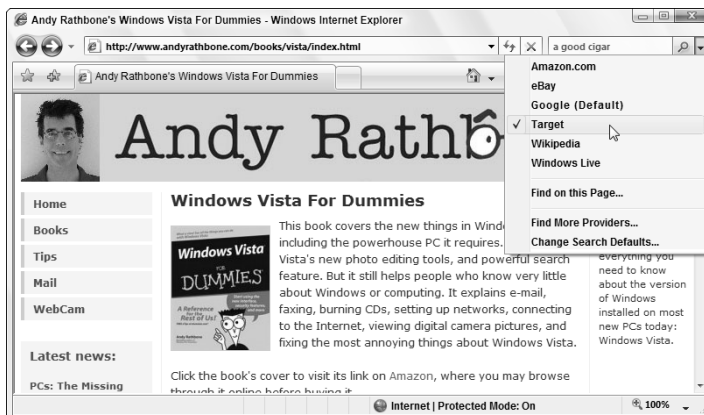
✔ You can change your default search engine at any time by choosing Change Search Defaults from the bottom of the drop-down menu in Figure 8-6. A window appears, listing all your search engines; click your favorite, and Internet Explorer sends it all your searches.

✔ If Google finds Web sites in foreign languages, it often translates them into your own language for you.

✔ Sometimes Google brings up a Web site that's been updated and no longer lists what you're searching for. If that happens, click the word Cached instead of the site's name. That brings up a snapshot of the Web site as it looked when it contained what you're searching for.

✔ Click Google's I'm Feeling Lucky button, and Google displays the site most likely to contain what you're after. This option works best when searching for common information.

The Web Page Says It Needs a Weird Plug-In Thing!

Computer programmers abandoned their boring old TV sets and turned to their exciting new computers for entertainment. Now, they're trying to turn their computers back into TV sets. They're using fancy programming techniques called Java, Flash, RealPlayer, QuickTime, and other goodies to add animation and other movies to the Internet.

Programmers are also adding little software tidbits called *plug-ins* that increase your computer's capability to display these flashy items — as well as splash moving advertisements along the top of your screen. You'll know when you need a plug-in when the Web site sticks a threatening notice in your face, as shown in Figure 8-7.

Figure 8-7: A site asks to install software.

Internet Explorer Add-on Installer - Security Warning

Do you want to install this software?

Name: Adobe Flash Player 9
Publisher: **Adobe Systems Incorporated**

More options   Install   Don't Install

While files from the Internet can be useful, this file type can potentially harm your computer. Only install software from publishers you trust. What's the risk?

WARNING!

What's the problem? If your computer says it needs a plug-in or its latest version, click the button that takes you to its download area — *but only if you can trust it.* Although it's often difficult to tell the good programs from the evil ones, I explain in Chapter 10 how to judge a plug-in's trustworthiness. The following plug-ins are both free and safe:

- ✔ **QuickTime (`www.apple.com/quicktime`):** The free version of QuickTime plays many video formats that Microsoft's Media Player can't handle, including those required to view most movie trailers.

- ✔ **RealPlayer (`www.real.com`):** Although I find this software offensive, sometimes it's the only way to see or view some things on the Internet. Be sure to download the *free* version, no matter now much the Real folks try to hide it behind the pay version on its Web site.

- ✔ **Macromedia Flash/Shockwave (`www.macromedia.com`):** Although this free download plays most of the elaborate moving advertisements on Web sites, it also lets you watch funny cartoons and animations.

- ✔ **Adobe Acrobat Reader (`www.adobe.com`):** Another popular freebie, Acrobat Reader lets you view documents as if they're printed on paper. (Sometimes it doesn't let you copy parts of them, though, or read them with your word processor.)

WARNING!

Beware of sites that try to slip in other programs when you download the plug-in. For example, Macromedia Flash Player sometimes tries to sneak in a copy of Yahoo!'s toolbar along with the plug-in. Examine the check boxes carefully and uncheck any that you don't want, need, or trust before you click the Install or Download button. If it's too late, I describe how to remove unwanted add-ons in this chapter's Troubleshooting section.

Saving Information from the Internet

The Internet places a full-service library inside your house, with no long checkout lines. And just as every library comes with a copy machine, Internet Explorer provides several ways for you to save interesting tidbits of information for your personal use. (Check your country's copyright laws for specifics.)

The following sections explain how to copy something from the Internet onto your computer, whether it's an entire Web page, a single picture, a sound or movie, or a program.

TIP

I explain how to print a Web page (or information it contains) in Chapter 7.

Saving a Web page

Hankering for a handy Fahrenheit/Centigrade conversion chart? Need that Sushi Identification Chart for dinner? Want to save the itinerary for next month's trip to Russia? When you find a Web page with indispensable information, sometimes you can't resist saving a copy onto your computer for further viewing, perusal, or even printing at a later date.

REMEMBER

When you save a Web page, you're saving the page as it *currently exists* on your screen. To see any subsequent changes, you must revisit the actual site.

Saving your currently viewed Web page is easy:

1. **Choose Save As from Internet Explorer's Page menu.**

   When the Save Webpage box appears, Internet Explorer enters the Web page's name in the File Name box, as shown in Figure 8-8, and fills out the Encoding box automatically.
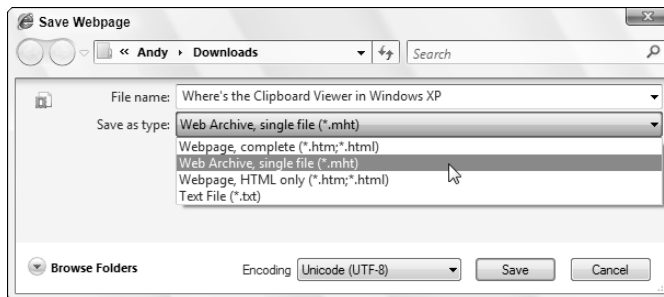
Figure 8-8:
Internet
Explorer
offers four
different
formats for
saving a
Web page.

2. **Use the Browse Folders drop-down list to choose where you want to save the file.**

   Internet Explorer normally saves the Web page in your Downloads folder, accessible with a click on your username that sits atop the Start menu's right corner. To save the Web page in a different folder, perhaps Documents, click the Browse Folders drop-down list.

3. **Choose how you want to save the page in the Save As Type box.**

   Internet Explorer offers *four* different ways to save the Web page:

   • **Webpage, Complete (*.htm;*.html):** Fast, handy, but a tad awkward, this option tells Internet Explorer to divide the Web page into two parts: a folder containing the page's pictures and graphics, and an adjacent link that tells the computer to display that folder's contents.

- **Web Archive, Single File (*.mht):** A much tidier option, this choice also saves an exact copy of the Web page. However, everything's packaged neatly into a single file named after the Web page. Unfortunately, only Internet Explorer can open this type of file, ruling out people who use other Web browsing programs.

- **Web Page, HTML Only (*.htm;*.html):** This option saves the page's text and layout but strips away the images. It's handy for stripping pictures and advertisements from tables, charts, and other formatted chunks of text.

- **Text File (*.txt):** This option scrapes all the text off the page and dumps it into a Notepad file, without taking many pains to preserve the formatting. It's handy for saving simple lists but not much else.

   4. **Click the Save button when you're done.**

To revisit your saved Web page, open your Downloads folder and click the saved file. Internet Explorer leaps back to life and displays the page.

Saving text

To save just a little of the text, select the text you want to grab, right-click it, and choose Copy. Open your word processor and paste the text into a new document and save it in your Documents folder with a descriptive name.

To save *all* the text from a Web site, it's easiest to save the entire Web page, as described in the previous section.

Saving a picture

As you browse through Web pages and spot a picture that's too good to pass up, save it to your PC: Right-click the picture and search the horribly over-crowded menu for the words Save Picture As, shown in Figure 8-9.

The Save Picture window appears, letting you choose a new filename for the picture or stick with the filename used by the Web page. Click Save, and your pilfered picture appears in your Pictures folder.

The right-click menu shown in Figure 8-9 offers other handy options, as well, letting you choose to print or e-mail the picture or even set it as your desktop's background.

Figure 8-9:
Right-click
the coveted
picture and
choose
Save
Picture As
from the
pop-up
menu.

TIP
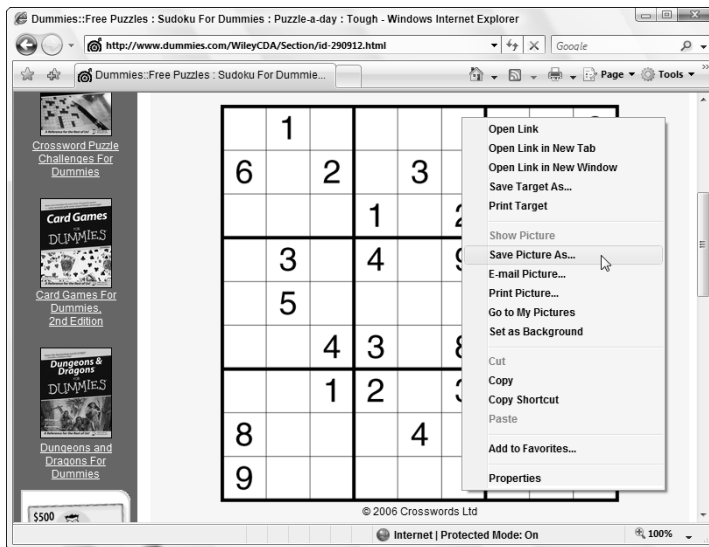
Remember the little picture by your name on Windows Vista's Welcome screen? Feel free to use any picture from the Internet. Right-click the new picture and save it to your Pictures folder. Then use the Control Panel (see Chapter 11) to transform that picture into your new user account picture.

Downloading a program or file

Sometimes downloading is as easy as clicking a Web site's Click to Download Now button. The Web site asks where to save your file, and you choose your Documents or Downloads folder for easy retrieval. The file arrives in a few seconds (if you have a cable modem) or a few minutes to hours (if you have a dialup modem).

But sometimes downloading takes a few extra steps:

1. **Right-click the link pointing to your desired file and choose Save Target As.**

   For example, to download Cory Doctorow's science fiction novel, *Someone Comes to Town, Someone Leaves Town,* from his Web site, right-click its link (the words "plain text file," in this case). Then choose Save Target As from the pop-up menu, similar to the menu shown earlier in Figure 8-9.

   TIP

   When you try to download a *program,* Windows asks whether you want to Save the File or Run It from Its Current Location. Choose Save the File.

Saving a sound or movie you've played

Some downright mean Web sites don't let you save movies or sounds you've just played in Media Player. But friendly sites let you choose Save Media As from Media Player's File menu to save the show to your hard drive. (Press Alt to see the hidden File menu.) But if that option's grayed out or Media Player doesn't automatically fill in the format, you're not allowed to save what you've just watched or heard.

This trick doesn't work for all media (especially for Internet radio stations), and it doesn't always work on different media players like QuickTime or RealPlayer. But it's sometimes worth a try.

---

2. Navigate to your Downloads folder, if necessary, and click the Save button.

Vista normally offers to save the file in your Downloads folder, saving you the trouble of navigating to it. (You can see Downloads listed in the folder's Address Bar in Figure 8-10.) But if you prefer to download it to a different folder, navigate to that folder and click the Save button.

Figure 8-10: Navigate to your Downloads folder and click the Save button.
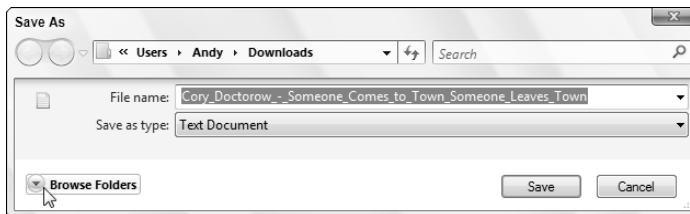
Windows Vista begins copying the file from the Web site to your hard drive. Windows Vista tells you when it finishes downloading, and you can click the Open Folder button to open your Downloads folder and see your downloaded file.

✔ Before running any downloaded programs, screen savers, themes, or other items, be sure to scan them with your antivirus program. Windows Vista doesn't come with one built-in, leaving it up to you to purchase one.

✔ Many downloaded programs come packaged in a tidy folder with a zipper on it, known as a *Zip file.* Windows Vista treats them like normal folders; just double-click them to open them. (The files are actually compressed inside that folder to save download time, if you care about the engineering involved.)

It Doesn't Work!

If something doesn't work, don't feel bad. The Internet's been around for a while, but this whole Web thing is relatively new and complicated. It's not supposed to work smoothly yet, and it isn't something you can figure out overnight. This section explores common problems and possible solutions.

The person holding the Administrator account — usually the computer's owner — is the only one who is authorized to make some of the changes you read about in this section. If a mean message pops up, waving its finger and mumbling about Administrator restrictions, you're locked out. Better find the computer's owner to proceed.

Here are some general tips that you may want to try before you explore the following sections:

✔ When a Web site gives you problems, try emptying Internet Explorer's wastebasket. Choose Internet Options from its Tools menu and click the Delete button. Look for the Temporary Internet Files section and click its Delete button. Twiddle your thumbs until it finishes, then click the Close button, revisit the problematic site, and try again.

✔ If your connection settings seem askew, try setting up your Internet connection again. Described in this chapter's "Setting Up Internet Explorer the First Time" section, the steps guide you through your current settings, letting you change things that look suspicious.

✔ If you can't connect to the Internet at all, your best bet is to call your ISP's tech support number and ask for help. (Be sure to call your Internet service provider, not Microsoft.)

✔ If a page doesn't seem to display correctly, look for Internet Explorer's warning strip along the page's top. Click the strip and tell Internet Explorer *not* to block what it's trying to block.

Removing Unneeded Plug-ins

Lots of Web sites install little programs inside Internet Explorer to help you navigate the Web or play with some Web sites. Not all of those little programs are well behaved. To help you pry off the leeches, Internet Explorer lets you see a list of all the currently installed little programs, called *add-ons*.

To see what's hanging onto your copy of Internet Explorer, click the program's Tools button and choose Manage Add-ons. Then select Enable or Disable Add-ons. (Don't click Find More Add-ons, as that just takes you to Microsoft's online shopping center.)

Internet Explorer's Manage Add-ons window appears, shown in Figure 8-11, letting you see add-ons currently loaded, add-ons currently running without your permission, and add-ons that have run in the past.
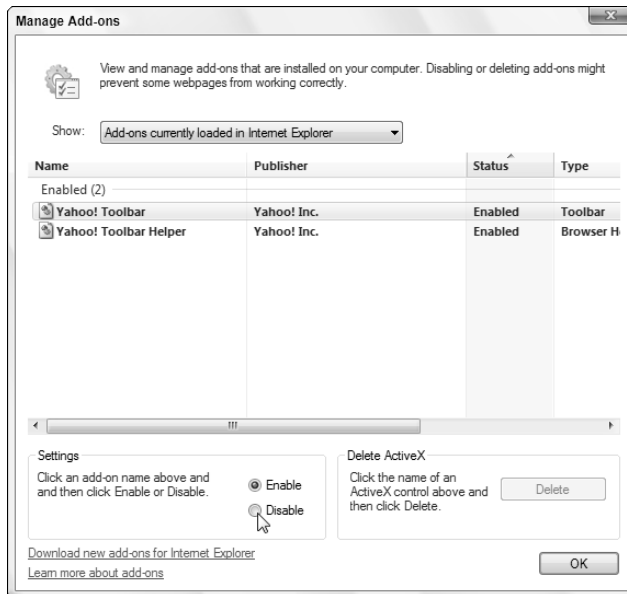
Figure 8-11:
Click a suspicious add-on and choose Disable in the Settings area.

Most add-ons listed in the Manage Add-ons window are fine. (The ones from Microsoft are generally harmless.) But if you spot an add-on that you don't recognize, or that you think is causing problems, look up its name in Google (www.google.com) to see what people say about it. If you find one that seems bad, click its name and click the Disable button.

If disabling the add-on keeps something from working correctly, return to the screen, click the add-on's name, and click the Enable button.

Managing add-ons turns into a game of trial and error, but it's a handy way to disable a rogue add-on installed by a nasty Web site.

The Pages Won't All Fit on My Screen

Some people (with good eyesight) can afford huge monitors that pack lots of information onto the screen. Other folks have smaller monitors that simply don't have the real estate to display everything. So, how does a Web site reshape itself to fit every screen? It can't.

Some try by fitting squarely onto smaller monitors but leaving white space along the edges of larger monitors. Others try to guess a monitor's size and resize themselves to fit. Others simply fall off your screen's right edge.

The best way to fight back is to experiment with your *screen resolution* — the amount of information your screen can display. Although I describe the process in Chapter 11, here are the quick-and-dirty steps:

1. **Right-click a blank part of your desktop and choose Personalize.**

2. **Click the Display Settings icon.**

3. **Slide the Resolution bar to adjust your Screen Resolution.**

   Sliding the bar to the *right* packs more information onto the screen but makes everything smaller. Sliding to the *left* makes everything larger but sometimes leaves parts of the screen hanging off the edge.

Although the resolution setting of 800 x 600 pixels works well for average to small monitors, many sites now pack their information into a resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels.

Internet Explorer Now Fills My Entire Screen!

Internet Explorer normally lives safely within its own menu-filled window. But occasionally it swells up to fill the entire screen, neatly trimming away both your menus and the desktop's taskbar. Full-screen mode looks great for movies, but the sparcity of menus leaves you with no way to switch to a different program.

To switch out of full-screen mode, press F11. That toggles full-screen mode, putting your menus back within reach. Press F11 again to watch the movie.

Pressing the Windows key brings back the Start menu and taskbar, handy for running a quick program and then returning to Internet Explorer.

Chapter 9

Sending and Receiving E-mail

*I*nternet Explorer turns the Internet into a multimedia magazine, but Windows Mail turns it into your personalized post office, where you never need to fumble for a stamp. A Windows Vista freebie, Windows Mail lets you send letters and files to anybody in the world who has an e-mail account. (And that's just about anybody, these days.)

Quite the bargain for a freebie, Windows Mail automatically sorts your incoming mail and stuffs it into the correct folder, juggles several e-mail accounts simultaneously, and adds some security to your e-mail as well.

If you've used Outlook Express, Windows XP's bundled e-mail program, you'll feel right at home with Windows Mail. Both programs are basically the same, with almost identical menus. Windows Mail can import all your old Outlook Express accounts, contacts, and e-mail. If you upgrade to Vista on your Windows XP computer, Windows Mail is even smart enough to import your information automatically.

Using Windows Mail

The Windows Mail screen, shown in Figure 9-1, splits your e-mail into two columns: The Folders side, along the left, automatically stores and sorts your e-mail. The work screen, along the right, lets you see and tinker with your e-mail.
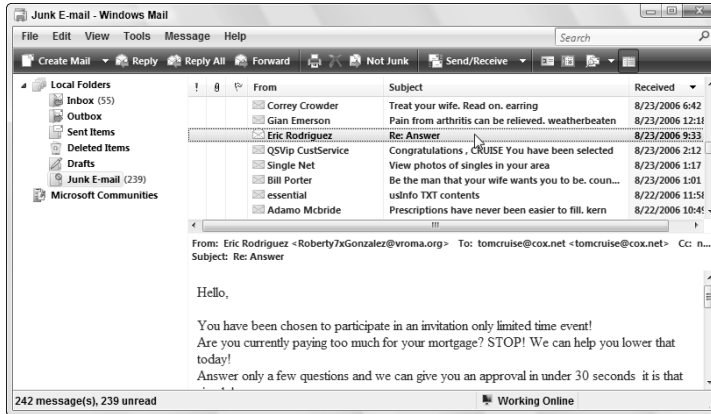
The folders in Windows Mail work much like traditional in baskets and out baskets for sorting memos. Click any folder's name to peek inside, and you're in for a pleasant surprise. Unlike your own office, Windows Mail automatically sorts your information into the following folders:

- ✔ **Inbox:** When you connect to the Internet, Windows Mail grabs any waiting e-mail and places it in your Inbox folder. On PCs with a broadband Internet connection, Windows Mail checks for new mail every 30 minutes — or whenever you click the Send/Receive button on the toolbar.

    Reduce your 30-minute wait by choosing Options from the Tools menu, clicking the General tab, and changing the number of minutes in the Check for New Messages Every X Minutes box.

- ✔ **Outbox:** When you send or reply to a message, Windows Mail immediately tries to connect to the Internet and send it. If you're already connected, Windows Mail immediately fires it off to its recipient.

- ✔ **Sent Items:** *Every* piece of e-mail you've sent lingers in here, leaving a permanent record. (To kill the particularly embarrassing ones, right-click them and choose Delete.)

- ✔ **Deleted Items:** The Deleted Items folder serves as Windows Mail's Recycle Bin, letting you retrieve accidental deletions. To delete something permanently from the Deleted Items folder, right-click it and choose Delete from the pop-up menu.

TIP

To keep deleted mail from cluttering your Deleted Items folder, choose Options from the Tools menu, click the Advanced tab, and click the Maintenance button. From there, select the Empty Messages from the 'Deleted Items' Folder on Exit check box.

✔ **Drafts:** When you're midway through writing an e-mail and want to finish it later, choose Save from your e-mail's File menu. The letter moves to your Drafts folder until you're ready to revive it.

✔ **Junk E-mail:** Windows Mail sniffs out potential junk mail and drops suspects into this folder.

To see the contents of any folder, click it. That folder's contents spill out to the top right. Click any mail, and its contents appear in the Preview Pane beneath.

TIP

Want to transfer all your e-mail from your old computer to a new one? I explain that chore in Chapter 19.

Exactly what do I need to send and receive e-mail?

To send e-mail to a friend or foe with Windows Mail, you need three things:

✔ **An e-mail account:** The next section describes how to set up Windows Mail to work with your e-mail account. Most ISPs (Internet service providers, covered in Chapter 8) give you a free e-mail address along with your Internet access.

✔ **Your friend's or foe's e-mail address:** Locate your friends' e-mail addresses by simply asking them. An address consists of a *username* (which occasionally resembles the user's real name), followed by the @ sign, followed by the name of your friend's ISP. The e-mail address of an America Online user with the username of Jeff9435 would be `jeff9435@aol.com`. (Unlike your local post office, e-mail doesn't tolerate any spelling errors. Precision is a must.)

✔ **Your message:** Here's where the fun finally starts: typing your letter. After you type the person's e-mail address and your message, hit the Send button. Windows Mail routes your message in the right direction.

You'll find people's e-mail addresses on business cards, Web sites, and even return addresses: Whenever you reply to e-mail, Windows Mail automatically adds that person's e-mail address to your list of contacts.

If you misspell part of an e-mail address, your sent message bounces back to your own Inbox, with a confusing *undeliverable* message attached. Check the spelling of the address and try again. If it bounces again, humble yourself: Pick up the phone and ask the person whether you have the right address.

Setting Up Your E-Mail Account

In order to send or receive e-mail in Windows Mail, you need these three things, all available from your ISP: your username, your password, and a working Internet connection. (You've already used these things if you successfully set up your Internet account, as described in Chapter 8.)

Most people set up more than one e-mail address, as well as the free account from their ISP. Whether you're setting up your 1st or your 40th e-mail account, follow these six steps:
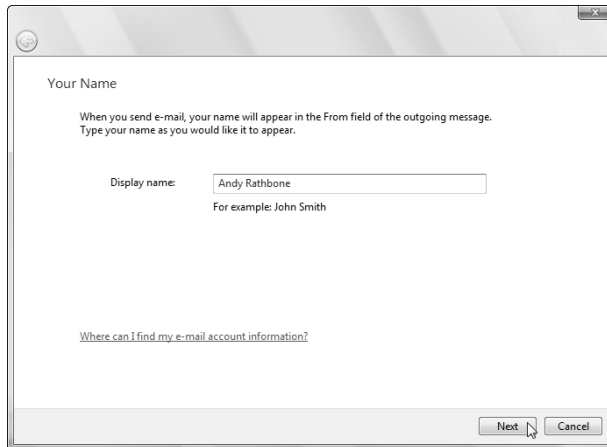
1. **Set up your Internet account and open Windows Mail.**

    You need to set up your Internet account *first,* as described in Chapter 8, or your e-mail won't have any way to reach the Internet.

    To call up Windows Mail for the first time, open the Start menu and click the Windows Mail icon (shown in the margin). If you don't see this icon, choose All Programs and then click Windows Mail. Windows Mail hops onto the screen, ready to be set up to send and receive your e-mail, as shown in Figure 9-2.

Figure 9-2:
When loaded for the first time, Windows Mail offers to set up your e-mail account.

> Your Name
>
> When you send e-mail, your name will appear in the From field of the outgoing message. Type your name as you would like it to appear.
>
> Display name: Andy Rathbone
>
> For example: John Smith
>
> Where can I find my e-mail account information?
>
> Next   Cancel

If the screen in Figure 9-2 doesn't appear automatically, open Windows Mail and choose Accounts from the Tools menu. Click the Add button, choose E-mail Account, and click Next to bring up the window in Figure 9-2, ready to add an e-mail account.

2. **Type your name and click Next.**

This name appears in the From box of all your e-mail, so most people simply type their own name, as shown in Figure 9-2. Names like *DragonSlayer* may come back to haunt you.

3. Type your e-mail address and click Next.

Your e-mail address is your username, the @ sign, and your ISP, all information that your ISP must provide you with. For example, if your username is *jeff4265* and your ISP's name is *charternet.com,* then type **jeff4265@charternet.com** into the E-Mail Address box.

4. Choose your server type and the names for your incoming and outgoing mail servers and click Next.

Here, you need to know what *type* of e-mail account the service uses. It's a weird word like POP3 or IMAP. (If it uses HTTP, Windows Mail can't work with it, which leaves out Hotmail users.) Most ISPs send you these handy settings and instructions through the post office. If you've lost them, visit your ISP's Web site or call your ISP's tech support folks and ask them for their mail server's *name* and *type.* Table 9-1 lists the information required by some common e-mail services.

Google's Gmail, AOL, and Yahoo! all require you to click the box marked Outgoing Server Requires Authentication on this page.

Table 9-1	E-Mail Settings for Popular ISPs		
Service	*E-Mail Type*	*Incoming Mail Server*	*Outgoing Mail Server*
Google Gmail (See the related sidebar for additional settings that Gmail accounts need.)	POP3	pop.gmail. com	smtp.gmail. com
America Online (AOL) (See the related sidebar for additional settings that AOL accounts need.)	IMAP	imap.aol. com	smtp.aol.com
Yahoo! (Only paid Yahoo! e-mail accounts can receive mail through Windows Mail.)	POP3	pop.mail. yahoo	smtp.mail. yahoo

5. Type your account name and password and click Next.

For your account name, enter the part of your e-mail address before the @ sign. Then type that account's password. Check the Remember Password box to fetch your mail automatically in the background.

Check the Secure Password Authentication box *only* if your Internet provider requests it. (Yahoo! does, for example.)

6. **Click Finish.**

That's it. Windows Mail should immediately fetch any waiting e-mail and let you begin sending e-mail.

✔ If the settings don't work or don't look right, they're easy to change. Choose Accounts from the Tools menu and double-click the name of the account that needs tweaking. Those steps also let you change the way Windows Mail lists your account's name, perhaps changing the obtuse *pop.mail.yahoo* to plain old *Yahoo,* for example.

✔ If your ISP lets you sign up for additional e-mail accounts for family members, feel free to create a second, "disposable" e-mail account for yourself. Use that e-mail address when signing up for online offers or filling out temporary forms. When that account becomes plagued with spam, simply delete it and create a new one.

✔ Be sure to make your favorite e-mail account your *default* account — the one listed as the return address on every mail you send. To set your default account, choose Accounts from the Tools menu, click your most-often used account, and click the Set as Default button.

✔ Back up these settings to avoid the hassle of ever filling them out again: Choose Tools, select Accounts, and click your account's name. Then click the Export button to save your account information as an IAF (Internet Account File), a format that works with most other mail programs. To import those settings back into mail — or into your laptop's mail program — choose Tools, select Accounts, and choose Import.

Finishing up your AOL account in Windows Mail

Even after finishing Steps 1 to 6 to set up your AOL account in Windows Mail, your account won't work correctly until you jump through the following hoops:

1. **Choose Accounts from Windows Mail's Tools menu to see your e-mail account (or accounts).**

2. **Select the AOL account you created, choose Properties, and click the Servers tab.**

3. **Click the My Server Requires Authentication box and click Apply.**

4. **Click the Advanced tab.**

5. **In the Outgoing Mail (SMTP) box, change the number to** 587 **and click Apply.**

6. **Click the IMAP tab and click to remove the check from the Store Special Folders on IMAP Server box.**

7. **Click Apply, click OK, and click Close.**

If a message asks you to download folders from the mail server, click Yes.

Finishing up your Gmail account in Windows Mail

After you set up your Gmail account, you need to jump through a few extra hoops before it works with Windows Mail:

1. **Choose Accounts from Windows Mail's Tools menu to see your e-mail account (or accounts).**

2. **Select the Gmail account you created, choose Properties, and click the Servers tab.**

3. **Click the My Server Requires Authentication box and click Apply.**

4. **Click the Advanced tab.**

5. **Check the box next to This Server Requires a Secure Connection (SSL) under Outgoing Mail (SMTP).**

   The Incoming Mail port changes to 995.

6. **Enter** 465 **in the Outgoing mail (SMTP) field.**

7. **Click Apply, click OK, and click Close.**

Composing and Sending an E-Mail

Ready to send your first e-mail? After you've set up Windows Mail with your e-mail account, follow these steps to compose your letter and drop it in the electronic mailbox, sending it through virtual space to the recipient's computer:
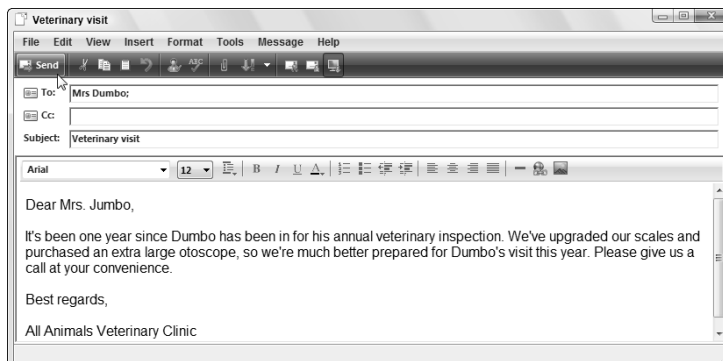
1. **Open Windows Mail and click the Create Mail icon from the program's menu.**

   If you don't see a Create Mail icon along the top (it looks like the one in the margin), click the File menu, select New, and choose Mail Message.

   A New Message window appears, as shown in Figure 9-3.

Figure 9-3: Click the Create Mail button, and a window appears for you to compose and send e-mail.

If you've set up more than one account, as described in the previous section, Windows Mail automatically addresses the mail with your *default* account — usually the first e-mail account you create in Windows Mail. To send your mail from one of your other e-mail accounts, should you have one, click the downward-pointing arrow in the From box — the box currently listing your e-mail address — and select the other account.

TIP

To send a quick e-mail to somebody in your Contacts folder, right-click his or her name, choose Action, and select Send E-mail. Windows Mail opens an e-mail already addressed to that person, saving you a step.

2. **Type your friend's e-mail address into the To box.**

Type the person's e-mail address into the To box. Or, click the To button next to where you type an address: A window appears, listing the names of people listed in your Contacts folder. Click your friend's name, click the To button, and click OK.

Sending or forwarding a message to several people? Preserve their privacy by clicking the Bcc button (shown in the margin) instead of the To button. That still sends them the same message but hides their e-mail addresses from each other, preserving their privacy. (If your Bcc button is missing, reveal it by clicking an e-mail's View menu and choosing All Headers.)

To let *everybody* see each other's e-mail addresses, select their names and click the Cc button, shown in the margin. (Unless the recipients all know each other, this is considered bad etiquette.)

3. **Fill in the Subject box.**

Although optional, the Subject line lets your friends know why you're bugging them. That makes it easier for your friends to sort their mail.

4. **Type your message into the large box at the bottom of the window.**

Type whatever you want and for as long as you want. There's very little limit on the size of a text file.

5. **To attach a file to your message, drag and drop the file onto the message or click the paper clip icon, navigate to the file, and double-click the file's name to attach it.**

Most ISPs balk at sending files larger than about 5MB, however, which rules out most MP3 files and some digital photos. I explain an easy way to send nearly any photo in Chapter 16.

6. **Click the Send button in the box's top-left corner.**

Whoosh! Windows Mail dials your modem, if necessary, and whisks your message through the Internet to your friend's mailbox. Depending on the

speed of the Internet connection, mail arrives anywhere within 15 seconds to a few days, with a few minutes being the average.

No Send button? Then click File in the New Message window and choose Send Message.

TIP

✔ Some people like the row of buttons along the top of Windows Mail, as shown in Figure 9-3. If your buttons are missing, and you want 'em back, right-click a blank part of the Windows Mail menu — an inch to the right of the word Help will do the trick. Choose Toolbar, and the buttons appear. To get rid of 'em and stick with the menus, right-click in the same place and choose Toolbar again to toggle them off.

✔ If the buttons are too small, make them larger: Right-click any part of the toolbar, choose Customize, and choose Large Icons from the Icon Options drop-down menu. Click Close, and your icons double in size.

✔ Are you a lousy speller? Then before you send the message, click the Spelling button (shown in the margin) from the icons along the top. Or choose Spelling from the Tools menu. Or press your F7 key. Or grab a dictionary off the shelf. (Pressing F7 is quicker.)

Reading a Received E-Mail

If you keep Windows Mail running while you're connected to the Internet, you'll know when a new letter arrives. Your computer makes a little hiccup to herald its arrival. You'll also spot a tiny envelope icon in your desktop's bottom-right corner, right next to the clock.

TIP

To check for any new mail when Windows Mail isn't running, load the program from the Start menu. When it loads, click the Send/Receive button (or click the Tools menu, choose Send and Receive, and then choose Send and Receive All). Windows Mail logs onto the Internet, sends any outgoing mail you have sitting around, and grabs any incoming mail to place in your Inbox.

Follow these steps to read the letters in your Inbox and either respond or file them away into one of the program's many folders:

1. **Open Windows Mail and look at your Inbox.**

   Depending on how Windows Mail is set up, you can do this step several different ways. If you see an opening screen announcing that you have unread mail in your Inbox, click the words Unread Mail to start reading. Or, if you see folders along the left side of Windows Mail, click the word Inbox.

Either way, Windows Mail shows you the messages in your Inbox, and they look something like Figure 9-4. Each subject is listed, one by one, with the newest one at the top.

Figure 9-4:
Click the word Inbox in Windows Mail to see your newly received messages.
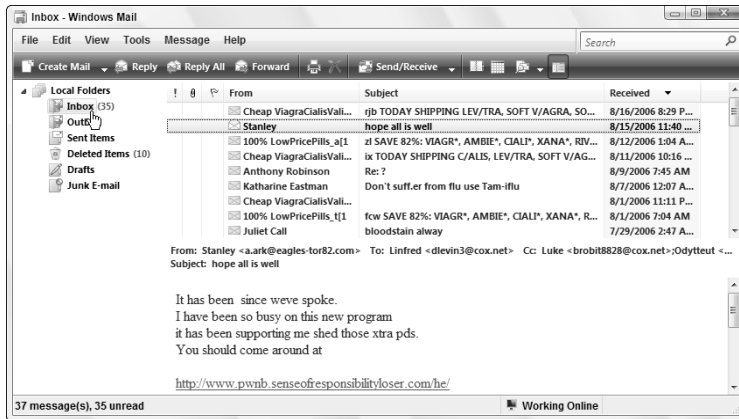
Want your newest e-mails to appear at the list's *bottom?* Then click the word Received at the top of the Received column. Windows Mail resorts everything but now places your newest message at the bottom. (You can also sort mail by subject or the sender's name by clicking the Subject or From column headers, too.)

2. Click any message's subject to read it.

Click any message, and Windows Mail spills that message's contents into the screen's bottom portion, as shown in Figure 9-5, ready for you to read. Or, to see the entire message in its own window, double-click it.

Figure 9-5:
Click a message's subject line to see the message's contents.
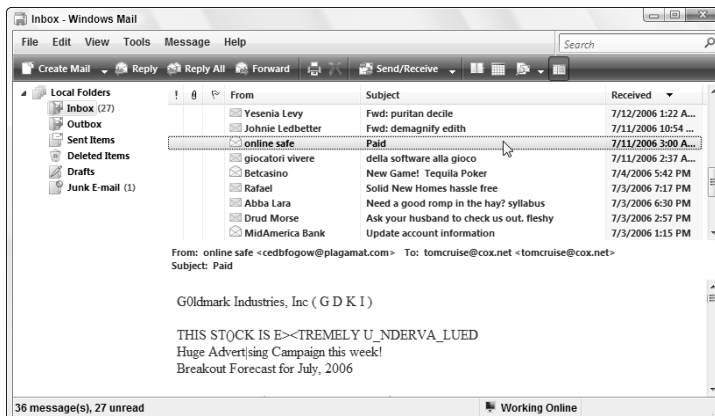
3. **From here, Windows Mail leaves you with several options, each described in the following list:**

   - **You can do nothing.** The message simply sets up camp in your Inbox folder until you delete it.

   - **You can respond to the message.** Click the Reply button along the top of Windows Mail (or choose Reply to Sender from the Message menu), and a new window appears, ready for you to type your response. The window is just like the one that appears when you first compose a message but with a handy difference: This window is preaddressed with the recipient's name and the subject. Also, the original message usually appears at the bottom of your reply for reference.

   - **You can file the message.** Right-click the message and choose either Move to Folder or Copy to Folder and then select the desired folder from the menu and click OK. Or simply drag and drop the message to the desired folder along the left side of your screen. (Don't see the folders there? Click the Folder List button, shown in the margin.)

   - **You can print the message.** Click the Print button along the menu's top, and Windows Mail shoots your message to the printer to make a paper copy.

   - **You can delete the message.** Click the Delete button to toss the message into your Deleted Items folder. Your deleted messages sit inside the folder until you right-click the Deleted Items folder and choose Empty 'Deleted Items' Folder. For automatic deletion, choose Tools, select Options, click the Advanced tab, click Maintenance, and choose Empty Messages from the Deleted Items folder on Exit.

These tips help you wring the most work out of Windows Mail:

- ✔ Windows Mail can be confusing when you drag and drop a message: As you drag the message over to some of the folders, the little envelope icon turns into a circle with a diagonal line through it. Don't fret. That menacing circle disappears when the mouse rests over a folder that's able to accept a message.

- ✔ To organize your incoming messages, right-click your Inbox and choose New Folder to create another folder inside. Create as many folders as you need to categorize your spam offers.

- ✔ Some people's e-mails contain not only words but a file, which computer folk refer to as an *attachment*. Attachments cause enough problems to warrant their own section, which appears next.

WARNING!

✔ If you ever receive e-mail from a bank, eBay, or other money-oriented Web site, think twice before visiting. A criminal industry called *phishing* sends e-mails that try to trick you into entering your name and password. That gives your coveted information to the evil folk, who promptly steal your money. Windows Mail sends you a warning when it spots suspicious phishing e-mails; I write more about phishing in Chapter 10.

✔ When you see a little red *X* in place of a picture or photo on your e-mail, that means Windows Mail is blocking it. To view the image, click the blue message Windows Mail places atop that e-mail. To keep Windows Mail from blocking images, choose Options from the Tools menu, click the Security tab, and remove the check mark from the Block Images and Other External Content in HTML E-Mail box.

Sending and Receiving an Attachment

Like a little photograph slipped into the envelope of a thank-you note, an *attachment* is a file that piggybacks onto an e-mail message.

Windows Mail lets you send files any of several ways. Start by composing a new message, as described earlier in this chapter. But before clicking the Send button, drag and drop your file inside the message. Windows Mail tacks on the file, listing its name in the new "Attach" line beneath the mail's subject line, shown in Figure 9-6.

Figure 9-6: Attached files appear listed in the Attach line of an e-mail.
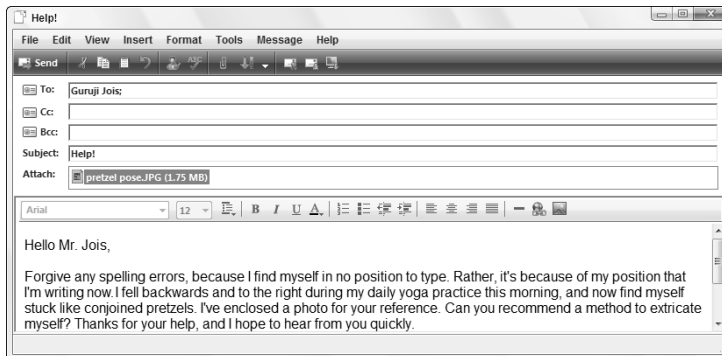
You can also right-click a file, choose Send To from the pop-up menu, and select Mail Recipient. Windows Mail opens a new e-mail for you with that file attached, waiting for you to choose a recipient.

Added a file you want to remove? Right-click its name and choose Remove.

You can e-mail just about any file, the only exception being size: E-mails larger than about 5MB tend to stick in the Internet's pipes rather than fly off to their recipient. To check a file's size, right-click its name or icon and choose Properties: The file's size appears among the fine print on the General tab.

Because digital files often surpass the 5MB limit, especially when you try to attach more than one, Windows Mail helps out by shrinking the photos — a process I cover in Chapter 16. The photos still fit on your recipient's screen nicely, but they consume much less file space.

E-mail makes it easy to send files to friends around the world. They're so easy to send, in fact, that virus writers quickly picked up on the trend, creating viruses that spread themselves by mailing a copy of themselves to everybody in the recipient's address book.

That brings me to the following warnings:

✔ If a friend sends you an attached file unexpectedly, *don't open it.* E-mail your friend and ask whether he or she *really* sent it. That attachment may be sent by a virus without your friend knowing about it. To be safe, drag received attachments onto your desktop and scan them with your antivirus program before opening. Don't open them directly from the e-mail itself.

✔ To prevent you from opening a virus, Windows Mail refuses to let you open almost *any* attached file. If Windows Mail won't let you open a file you're expecting from a friend, turn off that protection: Choose Options from the Tools menu, click the Security tab, and remove the check mark from the Do Not Allow Attachments to Be Saved or Opened That Could Potentially Be a Virus check box.

Finding Lost Mail

Eventually, an important a e-mail will disappear into a pile of folders and file names. Vista offers you three ways to retrieve it.

If you know which folder it's lurking in, click that folder's name. Then click in Windows Mail's Search box in the upper-right corner. Type the sender's name, or perhaps a few words from the e-mail, and press Enter.

Don't know the folder? Try the Start menu's Search box. The Start menu's Search box, which I cover in Chapter 6, constantly indexes your e-mail — and the Start menu's Search box works like a mini-Google to find it.

But when the Search boxes let you down, try Windows Mail's built-in search. It provides a meticulous search through all your folders when you follow these steps:

1. **Choose Find from the Edit menu and select Message.**

2. **In the Find Message dialog box that appears, shown in Figure 9-7, search for messages containing certain items.**

Figure 9-7:
Search for
messages
from John
Coltrane
mentioning
"gig."
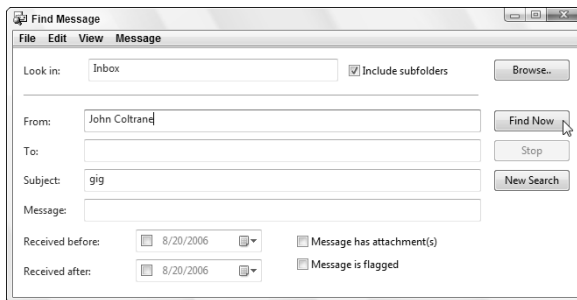
Here are your options:

- **Look in:** Normally, Search scours only your Inbox. To search *all* your mail folders, click Browse to choose Local Folders, click OK and then put a check mark in Include Subfolders. Then the Search looks in every folder: your Inbox, Outbox, Sent Items, Deleted Items, Drafts, and even your Junk E-mail folder. Or, to limit the search to a single folder, click Browse and click that folder's name.

- **From:** Looking for mail from a specific person? Type that person's name to see every message that person has sent you.

- **To:** To see messages you've sent to a particular person, type that person's name.

- **Subject:** Type a word that appeared in an e-mail's subject line to locate it.

- **Message:** Type any word that you *know* appears in the message.

- **Received before/after:** These two boxes let you isolate your search to a certain day or group of days.

- **Message has Attachment(s):** To retrieve any and all messages with attachments, click in this box.

- **Message is Flagged:** To retrieve any and all messages that you've *flagged* to catch your attention later — an option available in a message's Message menu — click in this box.

Usually filling out one box catches your message. Try entering just a few letters of a person's e-mail address or a single word that appeared in the message. If a search turns up too many items, keep adding more and more search terms to limit the number of matches.

3. **Click Find Now when you're done filling out the boxes.**

   Vista rummages through your folders, listing any e-mails that fit your search.

Managing Your Contacts

Just as every desk needs a business card holder, Windows Mail needs an address book to store everybody's contact information. Vista dumps Windows XP's old Address Book program in favor of a Contacts folder (shown in Figure 9-8).
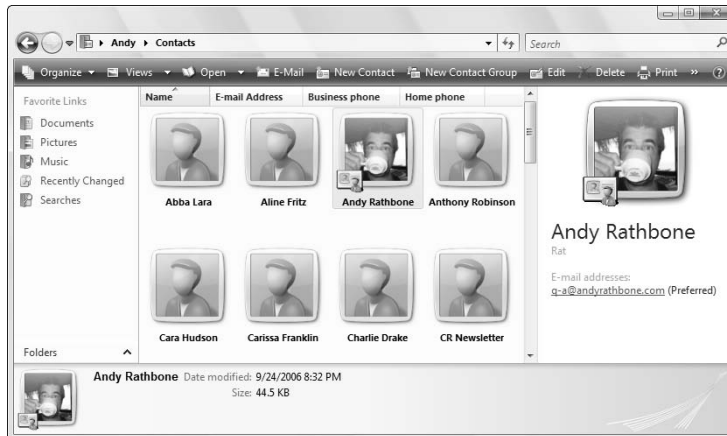
Figure 9-8: Vista's Contacts folder keeps track of everybody you contact.

To see your Contacts folder, open the Start menu, click your username at the top-right corner, and open the Contacts folder. Or, from within Windows Mail, click the Contacts button in the toolbar.

You can beef up your list of contacts several ways:

✔ **Let Windows Mail do it automatically.** When you respond to an e-mail, Windows Mail automatically tosses that person's name and e-mail address into your Contacts folder. If Windows Mail ever stops doing that, fix it: Choose Options from the Tools menu, click the Send tab, and select the Automatically Put People I Reply to in my Contacts List check box.

Keeping Windows Mail secure, but convenient

Windows Mail automatically turns on many security measures. To see what security switches it has flipped (and to turn them off if they annoy you), choose Options from Windows Mail's Tools menu and click the Security tab. Then examine these three sections, making changes as needed:

Virus Protection: Although some of these measures protect you from viruses, they do that by filtering out nearly *every* attached file. Here's the rundown:

✔ **Internet Explorer Security Zone:** Ignore this area. But if you've deliberately set *restricted* security zones in Internet Explorer, as explained in Chapter 10, head there for more information.

✔ **Warn Me When Other Applications Try to Send Mail as Me:** Leave this option on

because it's an inoffensive way to keep worms and viruses from spreading.

✔ **Do Not Allow Attachments to Be Saved or Opened That Could Potentially Be a Virus:** Because nearly *any* file can contain a virus these days, this setting effectively stops you from opening most attachments. Uncheck this box to open your attachments again.

Download Images: Windows Mail hides any pictures that are embedded in your e-mail. You can see them by clicking the little blue strip above the message, or you can remove this check mark to avoid that inconvenience.

Secure Mail: This area is much too complicated to worry about. Ignore it.

✔ **Import an Old Address Book.** To import an Address Book file from another computer, open your Contacts folder and choose Import from the toolbar. (This step assumes that you've already used your old Address Book's Export command to create a file you can import in any of these formats: CSV, LDIF, vCard or, if from Outlook Express, Windows Address Book File.)

✔ **Add Contacts Manually.** When somebody hands you a business card, you must enter the information by hand. From inside Windows Mail, choose New from the File menu and choose Contact. Simply add the person's name and e-mail address, or create a detailed dossier by filling out every box on every tab. Click OK when you're through.

These other tasks come in handy when you find yourself staring into your Contacts folder:

✔ To send a quick message to a contact in your Contacts folder, right-click that person's name, choose Action, and choose Send E-mail. Vista calls up a handy, preaddressed New Message window, ready for you to type your message and click Send.

✔ I explain how to turn your Contacts folder into a handy printed address book in Chapter 7.

✔ To back up your Contacts folder, just copy the entire folder to a CD. To back up just a few contacts, select them, choose Export from the Contact folder's toolbar, and export them as either CSV (Comma Separated Values) or vCards (folder of .vcf files).

TIP

✔ You can copy contacts to your iPod's Contacts list, as well. After you've connected your iPod, export your Contacts folder's most essential people in the vCards format, as described in the preceding bullet. When Vista asks you to select the folder for VCF export, choose the Contacts folder on your iPod. (Vista lists your iPod as a hard drive.)

Reducing Your Spam

Unfortunately, you can't get rid of spam completely. Believe it or not, some people still buy things from spammers, making the junk e-mails profitable enough for spammers to continue. Scowl at any neighbors who confide that they've bought a spammer's merchandise.

Luckily, Vista's wised up a bit when it comes to recognizing spam. In fact, when Windows Mail spots an e-mail that smells suspiciously like spam, it sends you a message, seen in Figure 9-9, and deposits the suspect into your Junk E-mail folder.

If you spot mail in the Junk E-mail folder that's *not* junk, click the good piece of mail and click the Not Junk button on the toolbar. Windows Mail quickly whisks that piece of mail back into your Inbox.

Figure 9-9:
Windows Mail's spam filter automatically moves spam to your Junk E-mail folder.

Windows Mail

Windows Mail has downloaded a message that appears to be junk or phishing e-mail. Junk e-mail messages are automatically moved to the Junk E-mail folder for your safety.

You should check the Junk E-mail folder regularly to ensure that you don't miss e-mail that you wish to receive.

What is phishing?

☐ Please do not show me this dialog again

[Open Junk E-mail Folder] [Junk E-mail Options...] [Close]

But although you can't completely stop spam, you can weed out much of it by following these rules:

- ✔ Give your e-mail address only to close friends, relatives, and trusted business contacts. Don't give it to strangers or post it on Web sites.

- ✔ Create a second, *disposable* e-mail account to use when signing up for online offers, filling out online forms, or carrying out any short-term correspondence. As I describe in this chapter's "Setting Up Your E-Mail Account" section, delete that address once it's plagued with spam, and create a new one.

- ✔ Never post your real e-mail address in an Internet's chat forum, news-group, or other public conversation area. And never respond to a spammer, even if it's to click the unsubscribe link. That merely adds you to the spammer's list of confirmed e-mail addresses.

- ✔ See whether your ISP offers built-in spam filtering. The filters work so well that many spammers now try to evade the filters by using nonsensical words. If they do make it through, the nonsense in the subject gives it away as being spam.

- ✔ Although Windows Mail offers some simple filtering rules in its Tools menu, spammers figured out how to fool them long ago. They're no longer handy for filtering spam, but they work fine for routing e-mail from certain people to certain folders.

Chapter 10

Safe Computing

. . . .

In This Chapter

▶ Dealing with Vista's permission warnings

▶ Automating Windows Update

▶ Avoiding phishing scams

▶ Removing spyware and other browser add-ons

▶ Setting Parental Controls

▶ Preserving your privacy

. . . .

*L*ike driving a car, working with Windows is reasonably safe, as long as you steer clear of the wrong neighborhoods, obey traffic signals, and don't steer with your feet while you stick your head out the sunroof.

But in the world of Windows and the Internet, there's no easy way to recognize a bad neighborhood, spot the traffic signals, or even distinguish between your feet, the steering wheel, and the sunroof. Things that look totally innocent — a friend's e-mail or a program on the Internet — may be a virus or prank that sneakily rearranges everything on your dashboard or causes a crash.

This chapter helps you recognize the bad streets in Windows' virtual neighborhoods and explains the steps you can take to protect yourself from harm and minimize any damage.

Understanding Those Annoying Permission Messages

After 20 years of Windows development, Vista's still pretty naive. For example, when you run a program to change settings on your PC, Vista can't tell whether *you're* loading the program or a *virus* is loading it in an attempt to mess with your PC.

Turning off permissions

Turning off Vista's nagging permission screens leaves your PC much more vulnerable to the dark forces of computing. But if you find yourself grinding your teeth more than working, Administrator account holders may turn off the permission screens by following these steps:

1. **Click the Start button, choose Control Panel, and then click User Accounts and Family Safety.**

   Vista's Control Panel, which I explain in Chapter 11, lets you tweak how Windows runs on your PC.

2. **Click User Accounts and choose Turn User Account Control On or Off.**

   As you try to shut it up, Windows sends out one last gasping permission screen.

3. **Give permission to continue.**

   Click Continue or enter your password and click OK to access the System Configuration area.

4. **Click to remove the check mark from the Use User Account Control (UAC) to Help Protect Your Computer check box and click OK.**

   A window appears, saying that you must restart your computer to apply your changes. Click the window's handy Restart Now button to restart your PC. It will wake up in a much more permissive mood.

These steps leave one side-effect, however. Vista's Security Center, described in the next section, immediately begins nagging that you've turned off User Account Control.

If you change your mind, turn the Permissions screens back on by following Steps 1 through 4 but adding the check mark in Step 4.

Vista's solution? When Vista notices anybody (or anything) trying to open something that can potentially harm Windows or your PC, it flashes a message asking for permission, like the one shown in Figure 10-1.

Figure 10-1:
Click Cancel if this message appears unexpectedly.
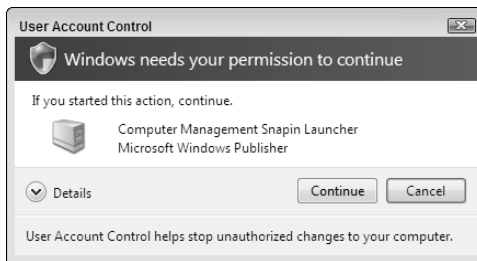
If one of these permission messages appears out of the blue, Vista may be warning you about a bit of nastiness trying to sneak in. So click Cancel to deny it permission. But if *you're* trying to do something specific with your PC and Vista puts up its guard, click Continue instead. Vista drops the boxing gloves and lets you in.

Or, if you don't hold an Administrator account, track down any Administrator account holder and ask her to type her password.

Yes, an annoyingly dimwitted security-guard robot polices Vista's front door, but it's also an extra challenge for the people who write the viruses.

Vista's permission screens are called *User Account Protection*.

Assessing Your Safety in Security Center

Take a minute to check your PC's safety with Windows Vista's Security Center. The Security Center more closely resembles a large panel of On switches than a command post. It lists Windows Vista's four main defenses, tells you whether they're activated, and provides handy "On" switches to activate any that may be turned off.

Shown in Figure 10-2, the Security Center shows whether you've turned on Windows Firewall, Microsoft's Automatic Updates feature, Malware protection against viruses and spyware, and other security settings like the ones in Internet Explorer and Vista's new User Account Control.

Figure 10-2:
The Security
Center lets
you turn on
your com-
puter's main
defenses:
Windows
Firewall,
Automatic
Updates,
and a virus
checker.
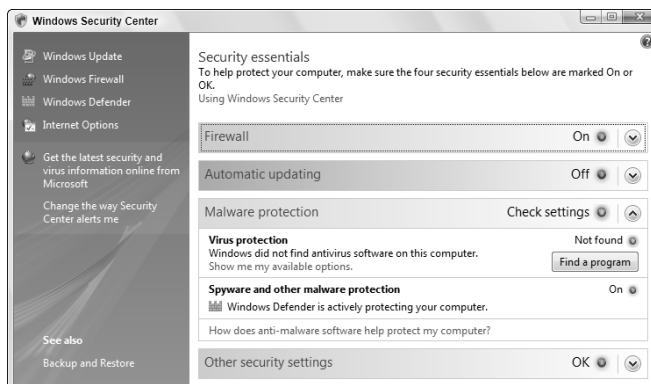
The computer tested in Figure 10-2 passes the firewall test, as it's listed as On. But the Security Center cautions that Windows isn't updating automatically, nor is it protected from maladies like viruses and spyware.

All these defenses should be up and running for maximum safety, because each protects you against different things.

To make sure that your computer's big cannons are loaded and pointing in the right direction, open the Security Center and ogle the settings:

1. **Open the Start menu's Control Panel, choose Security, and then choose Security Center.**

   The Security Center, shown earlier in Figure 10-2, hops into action and displays your computer's current security status in these four categories:

   If the Security Center says that *it's* been disabled, click Turn on Security Center.

   - **Firewall:** Windows Vista's updated, more powerful firewall monitors every connection arriving at your PC. When the firewall notices an unrequested connection trying to enter, it blocks it, stopping potential intruders.

   - **Automatic Updating:** When turned on, Windows Update automatically checks in with Microsoft through the Internet, downloads any new safety patches, and installs them, all for free, and all without any effort on your part.

   - **Malware protection:** Vista's Malware protection contains two parts: Virus protection and Spyware protection. Vista lacks a virus checker, so you must buy your own online or at a computer or office-supply store and pay subscription fees to keep it up-to-date.

     Vista does include a spyware remover, however, called Windows Defender.

   - **Other Security Settings:** This category covers security settings for both Internet Explorer and Vista's User Account Control, otherwise known as "those nagging permission screens," covered in this chapter's first section.

2. **Click the Turn On Now or Restore Settings buttons to fix any potential security problems.**

   Whenever the Security Center notices that one of Vista's defenses is turned off, it alerts you by placing a red shield icon (shown in the margin) near your taskbar's clock.

   Click any item with a red shield icon or that says Check Settings to reveal the Turn On Now or Restore Settings buttons.

By following the two preceding steps, your computer will be much safer than under any other version of Microsoft Windows.

The Security Center's four sections let you flip only an On switch. For more advanced fiddling, look for their names atop the Security Center's leftmost pane. A click on a name takes you to that area's settings menu, where you can change how it works, or even turn it off. (Each option— Windows Update, Windows Firewall, Windows Defender, and Internet Options — receives its own section later in this chapter.)

Changing the firewall settings

Just about everybody has dropped a fork to pick up the phone, only to hear a recorded sales pitch. Telemarketers run programs that sequentially dial phone numbers until somebody answers. Computer hackers run similar programs that automatically try to break into every computer that's currently connected to the Internet.

Broadband Internet users are especially vulnerable because their computers are constantly connected to the Internet. That increases the chances that hackers will locate them and try to exploit any available vulnerability.

That's where Windows Firewall comes in. The firewall sits between your computer and the Internet, acting as an intelligent doorman. If something tries to connect and you or one of your programs didn't request it, the firewall stops the connection.

Occasionally, however, you'll *want* another computer to interact with your computer over the Internet. You may be playing a multiplayer game, for example, or using a file-sharing program. To stop the firewall from blocking those programs, add their names to the firewall's Exceptions list by following these steps:

1. **Choose Control Panel from the Start menu, click Security, and choose Security Center (shown in the margin).**

2. **Click the words Windows Firewall from the window's left side and choose Change Settings.**

   Click Continue or enter an Administrator account's password if Vista's permissions screen nags you.

3. **Click the Exceptions tab.**

   Shown in Figure 10-3, Windows Firewall lists every program currently allowed to communicate through its firewall. (Windows Vista adds some of its programs automatically, so don't be surprised to see them already listed.)
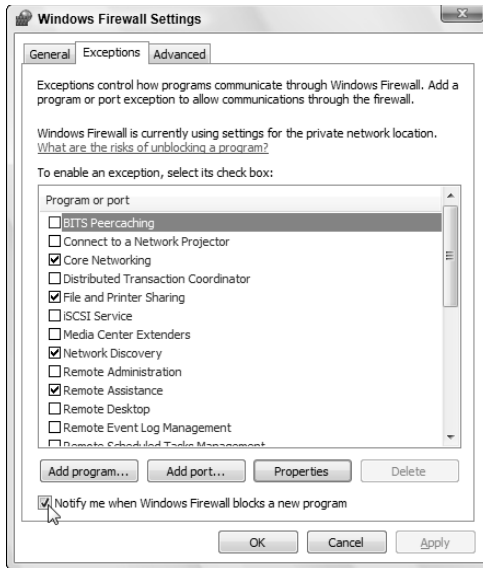
Make sure that a check mark appears in the Notify Me When Windows Firewall Blocks a New Program box, shown in Figure 10-3. When a program doesn't work correctly, that message lets you know that the firewall may be the culprit.

4. Click the Add Program button, select the program (or click Browse to locate the program), and click OK.

Almost all programs live in the Program Files folder on your C drive; the program's name bears the same icon you see on its Start menu entry.

The firewall adds your selected program to its Exceptions list and begins allowing other computers to connect to it.

- Don't add programs to the Exceptions list unless you're *sure* the firewall is the problem. Each time you add a program to the list, you're leaving your computer slightly more vulnerable.

- If a program requires you to open a port on the firewall, choose Add Port instead of Add Program in Step 4. Type the required port's name and number and then choose whether it's a TCP (Transmission Control Protocol) or UDP (User Datagram Protocol) port. Click OK to finish.

- If you think you've messed up the firewall's settings, it's easy to revert to its original settings. Click the Advanced tab in Step 3 and click the Restore Defaults button. Click the Yes button and then click OK, and the firewall removes *every* change you've made, letting you start from scratch.

Changing Windows Update settings

Whenever somebody figures out a way to break into Windows, Microsoft releases yet another patch to keep Windows users safe. Unfortunately, the bad folks find holes in Windows as quickly as Microsoft can patch them. The result? Microsoft ends up releasing a constant stream of patches.

In fact, the flow became so strong that many users couldn't keep up. Microsoft's solution is to make Windows Update work *automatically:* Whenever you go online, whether to check e-mail or browse the Web, your computer automatically visits Microsoft's Windows Update site and downloads any new patches in the background.

When your computer's through downloading the new patches, it installs them at 3 a.m. to avoid disturbing your work. Occasionally, you're prompted to restart your computer the next morning to make the patches start working; other times, you don't even notice the action taking place.

Vista's Security Center, covered earlier in this chapter, explains how to make sure that Windows Update is up and running. But if you want to adjust its settings, perhaps not installing new patches until you've had a chance to review them, follow these steps:
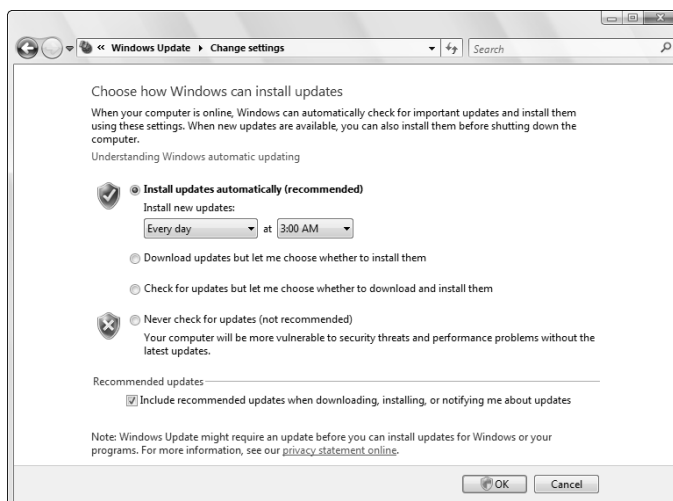
1. **Click the Start button, choose All Programs, and choose Windows Update.**

   The Windows Update window appears.

2. **Choose Change Settings from the leftmost pane.**

   Windows Update's settings page appears, shown in Figure 10-4.

Figure 10-4: Make sure that you choose Install Updates Automatically (Recommended).

   3. Make your changes and then click OK.

   Chances are, you won't need to make any changes. But night owls might want to change the 3 a.m. automatic installation time.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Some experienced computer users select the option Download Updates but Let Me Choose Whether to Install Them. That option gives them a chance to ogle the incoming patches before installing them.

Avoiding viruses

When it comes to viruses, *everything* is suspect. Viruses travel not only in e-mail and programs, but also in screen savers, themes, toolbars, and other Windows add-ons. Because Vista doesn't include a built-in virus program, follow these rules to reduce your risk of infection:

✔ When shopping for an antivirus program, look for one that runs automatically in the background. If you don't yet have an antivirus program, open the Control Panel's Security area, choose Security Center, and click the Malware Protection section's Find a Program button for free trial offers.

✔ Tell your antivirus program to scan everything you download, as well as anything that arrives through e-mail or a messaging program.

✔ Only open attachments that you're expecting. If you receive something unexpected from a friend, don't open it. Instead, e-mail or phone that person to see whether he or she *really* sent you something.

✔ Don't run two virus checkers simultaneously because they often quarrel. If you want to test a different program, first uninstall your existing one from the Control Panel's Programs area. It's then safe to install another virus checker that you want to try.

✔ Simply buying a virus checker isn't enough; you must also pay an annual fee to keep your virus checker smart enough to recognize the latest viruses. Without the most up-to-date virus definitions, virus checkers detect only older viruses, not the new ones sprouting daily on the Internet. (The newest viruses always spread most quickly, causing the most damage.)

REMEMBER

If you think you have a virus and you don't have an antivirus program, unplug your PC's network or telephone cable before heading to the store and buying an antivirus program. Install and run the antivirus program *before* reconnecting your computer to the Internet. That stops your computer from infecting others before you're able disinfect it.

McAfee offers a free virus-removal tool that removes more than 50 common viruses. Downloadable from `http://vil.nai.com/vil/stinger/`, it's a handy tool for times of need.

Staying Safe on the Internet

The Internet is not a safe place. Some people design Web sites specifically to exploit Windows' latest vulnerabilities — the ones Microsoft hasn't yet had time to patch. This section explains some of Internet Explorer's safety features, as well as other safe travel tips when navigating the Internet.

Setting Internet Explorer's security zones

Chances are, you won't need to fiddle with Internet Explorer's security zones. They come preset to offer the most protection with the least amount of effort. But if you're curious about Internet Explorer's zones, choose Internet Options from the program's Tools menu, and click the Security tab. Think you've messed up the preset security settings? Click the Reset All Zones to Default Level button.

Internet Explorer offers four security zones, each offering different levels of protection. When you add different Web sites to different zones, Internet Explorer treats the sites differently, placing restrictions on some and lifting restrictions for others. Here's the rundown:

✔ **Internet:** Unless you play with Internet Explorer's zones, Internet Explorer treats every Web site as if it were in this zone. This zone offers medium-high security, which works very well for most needs.

✔ **Local Intranet:** This zone is intended for Web sites running on an internal network. (Home users rarely have to deal with intranets because they're mostly found in corporations and large businesses.) Because internal Web sites are created in-house and self-contained, this zone removes some restrictions, letting you do more things.

✔ **Trusted Sites:** Putting sites in here means you trust them *completely.* (I don't trust any Web site completely.)

✔ **Restricted Sites:** If you don't trust a site at all, place it in here. Internet Explorer lets you visit it but not download from it or use any of its *plug-ins* — small downloadable programs adding extra graphics, animation, and similar enhancements. I used to place a few sites in here to strip their pop-up ads, but Internet Explorer's built-in pop-up blocker now eliminates the need.

Windows Mail respects the settings you've used for these zones. Normally, Windows Mail treats all incoming e-mail as if it were a Web site in the Restricted zone. (Many e-mails now come formatted as Web pages.) To change the zone that Windows Mail uses, choose Options from its Tools menu and choose the Security tab.

Avoiding evil add-ons and hijackers

Microsoft designed Internet Explorer to let programmers add extra features through *add-ons.* By installing an add-on program — toolbars, stock tickers, and program launchers, for example — users can wring a little more work out of Internet Explorer. Similarly, many sites use *ActiveX* — a fancy word for little programs that add animation, sound, video, and other flashy tricks to a Web site.

Unfortunately, dastardly programmers began creating add-ons and ActiveX programs that *harm* users. Some add-ons spy on your activities, bombard your screen with additional ads, redirect your home page to another site, or make your modem dial long-distance numbers to porn sites. Worst yet, some renegade add-ons install themselves as soon as you visit a Web site — without asking your permission.

Windows Vista packs several guns to combat these troublemakers. First, if a site tries to sneak a program onto your computer, Internet Explorer quickly blocks it, sending a warning (shown in Figure 10-5) across the top of Internet Explorer's screen. Clicking the warning reveals your options, shown in Figure 10-6.

Figure 10-5:
Internet Explorer blocks a program.
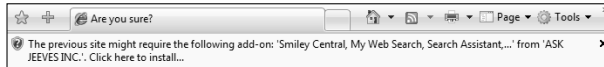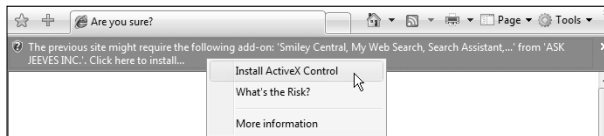

Figure 10-6:
The warning strip shows your options.

WARNING!

Unfortunately, Internet Explorer can't tell the good downloads from the bad, leaving the burden of proof to you. But if you see a message like the one shown in Figure 10-5 and you *haven't* requested a download, chances are the site's trying to harm you: Don't download the program or install the ActiveX control.

If a bad add-on creeps in somehow, you're not completely out of luck. Internet Explorer's Add-on Manager lets you disable it. To see all the add-on programs installed in Internet Explorer (and remove any that you know are bad), follow these steps:

1. **Choose Manage Add-ons from Internet Explorer's Tools menu and then choose Enable or Disable Add-ons from the pop-up menu.**

   Don't mistakenly choose Find More Add-ons. That takes you to Microsoft's store, which tries to sell you bushels of overpriced add-ons.

   The Manage Add-ons window appears, as shown in Figure 10-7, letting you see all currently or previously loaded add-ons, as well as add-ons running without permission. It also lets you see downloaded ActiveX controls, which often cause the most trouble.

Figure 10-7: Internet Explorer's Manage Add-ons window lets you see all installed add-ons and disable the ones you don't like.
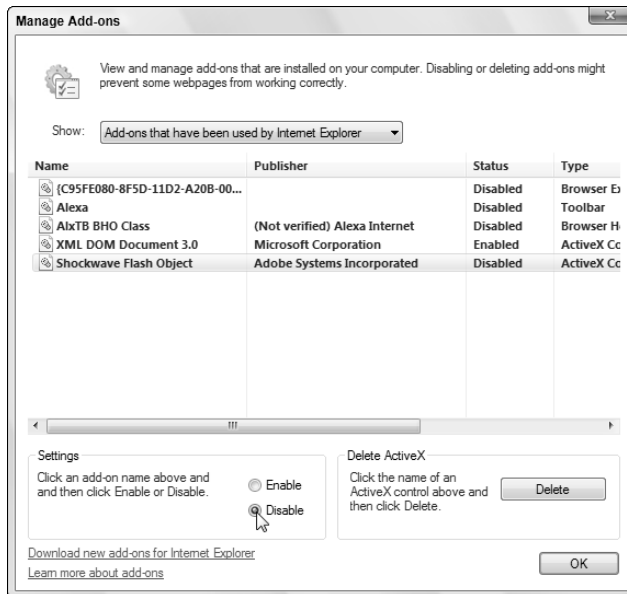
2. **Click the Add-on that gives you trouble and choose Disable.**

   Click the Show drop-down list at the top of the Manage Add-ons Window to see the four types of add-ons. Choose another of these types to see add-ons listed for that category. If you spot the name of an unwanted toolbar or other bad program, here's your chance to purge it.

3. **Repeat the process for each unwanted add-on and then click the OK button.**

   You probably need to restart Internet Explorer for the change to take effect.

REMEMBER

Not all add-ons are bad. Many good ones let you play movies, hear sounds, or view special content on a Web site. Don't delete an add-on simply because it's listed in the Add-on Manager.

✔ On the rare instance that disabling an add-on prevents a page from loading, click that add-on's name in Step 2 of the preceding steps and click the Enable button to return it to working order.

✔ Internet Explorer's Add-on Manager disables add-ons fairly easily, but if you spot a particularly evil one, remove it completely by clicking the Delete ActiveX button instead of the Disable button.

✔ How the heck do you tell the good add-ons from the bad? Unfortunately, there's no sure way of telling, although the name listed under Publisher provides one clue. The best way is to avoid being hijacked in the first place, mainly by not installing things Internet Explorer has tried to block.

✔ Make sure that Internet Explorer's pop-up blocker runs by choosing Pop-up Blocker from the Tools menu. If you see Turn Off Pop-up Blocker in the pop-up menu, you're all set. If you see Turn On Pop-up Blocker, click the command to turn it back on.

Avoiding phishing scams

Eventually, you'll receive an e-mail from your bank, eBay, PayPal, or a similar Web site announcing a problem with your account. Invariably, the e-mail offers a handy link to click, saying that you must enter your username and password to set things in order.

Don't do it, no matter how realistic the e-mail and Web site may appear. You're seeing an ugly industry called *phishing:* Fraudsters send millions of these messages worldwide, hoping to convince a few frightened souls into typing their precious account name and password.

How do you tell the real e-mails from the fake ones? It's easy, actually, because *all* these e-mails are fake. Finance-related sites never, ever e-mail you a link for you to click on and enter your password. If you're suspicious, visit the company's *real* Web site — by typing the Web address by hand. Then look for their security area and forward them the e-mail, asking whether it's legitimate. Chances are, it's not.

Vista employs four safeguards to thwart phishing scams:

✔ Windows Mail warns you with a message, shown in Figure 10-8, when it spots a suspicious e-mail in your Inbox. Then Windows Mail routes the e-mail to the Junk E-mail folder. Feel free to delete the e-mail, should you spot it in that folder.

✔ When you first run Internet Explorer, the program offers to turn on its Phishing Filter. Take Internet Explorer up on its offer. Unlike many of Vista's safety features, the Phishing Filter provides a very non-obtrusive safety net.

✔ Internet Explorer examines every Web page for suspicious signals. If a site seems suspicious, Internet Explorer's Address Bar — the normally white area that lists the Web site's address — turns yellow. Internet Explorer sends a pop-up warning that you're viewing a suspected phishing site.

✔ Internet Explorer compares a Web site's address with a list of known phishing sites. If it finds a match, the Phishing Filter keeps you from entering, shown in Figure 10-9. Should you ever spot that screen, close the Web page.

Figure 10-8: Windows Mail warns you when it detects an incoming phishing e-mail.
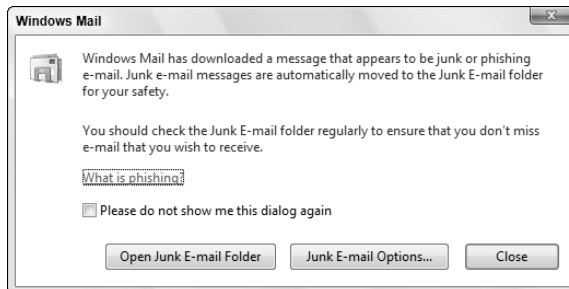

Figure 10-9: Internet Explorer warns you when you visit a known phishing site.

So, why can't the authorities simply arrest those people responsible? Because Internet thieves are notoriously difficult to track down and prosecute. The reach of the Internet lets them work from any place in the world.

✔ If you've already entered your name and password into a phishing site, take action immediately: Visit the *real* Web site and change your password. Change your username, too, if possible. Then contact the bank or company and ask it for help. It may be able to stop the thieves before they wrap their electronic fingers around your funds.

✔ You can warn Microsoft if you spot a site that smells suspiciously like phish. Choose Phishing Filter from Internet Explorer's Tools menu and choose Report This Website. Internet Explorer takes you to Microsoft's Phishing Filter Web site. Telling Microsoft of suspected phishing sites helps them warn other visitors.

✔ Curious about what phishing e-mails look like? Drop by `www.antiphishing.org` and browse through its archive of thousands of phishing e-mails.

Avoiding and removing spyware and parasites with Windows Defender

Spyware and *parasites* are programs that latch onto Internet Explorer without your knowledge. The sneakiest programs may try to change your home page, dial toll numbers with your modem, or spy on your Web activity, sneaking your surfing habits back to the spyware program's publisher.

Most spyware programs freely admit to being spies — usually on the 43rd page of the 44-page agreement you're supposed to read before installing the program.

Nobody wants these ugly programs, of course, so they do tricky things to keep you from removing them. That's where Vista's new Windows Defender program comes in. It stops some spyware from installing itself automatically, and pries off spyware that's already latched onto your PC. Best yet, Windows Update keeps Windows Defender up-to-date to recognize and destroy the latest strains of spyware.

To make sure that Windows Defender is running automatically on your PC, visit Windows Security Center, described in this chapter's "Assessing Your Safety in Security Center" section. When running automatically, Windows Defender scans your PC each evening and alerts you to any newfound spyware.

To make Windows Defender scan your PC immediately, a potential solution when your PC's acting strange, click the Start menu, choose All Programs, and launch Windows Defender. Click the Scan button and wait for it to finish.

Several other antispyware programs can also scan your computer for spyware, carefully snipping out any pieces that they find. Some programs are free in the hopes that you'll buy the more full-featured version later. Ad-Aware (`www.lavasoftusa.com`) and Spybot Search & Destroy (`www.safer-networking.org`) are two of the most popular programs.

Don't be afraid to run more than one spyware scanner on your PC. Each does its own scan, killing off any spyware it finds.

Using parental controls

A feature much-welcomed by parents and much-booed by their children, Vista's Parental Controls offer several new ways to police how people can access the computer, as well as the Internet. In fact, people who share their PCs with roommates may welcome the Parental Controls, as well.

The Parental Controls let you dictate what a person can and can't do on the Internet. They also keep tabs on how the person's using the PC, sending you reports on exactly when they're using the PC, what Web sites they're visiting, and what programs they're using.

To set Parental Controls, you must own an Administrator account. (I explain how to create the two types of accounts in Chapter 13.) If everybody shares one PC, make sure that the kids have Standard accounts. If your children have their own PCs, create an Administrator account on their PCs for yourself and change their accounts to Standard.

To set up Vista's Parental Controls, follow these steps:

1. **Open the Control Panel from the Start menu and choose Parental Controls in the User Accounts and Family Safety section.**

   If Vista's built-in policeman says, "A program needs your permission to continue," feel free to click the Continue button.

2. **Click the User account you want to restrict.**

   Vista only lets you add Parental Controls to one User account at a time, a process that caused considerable grief for Mr. and Mrs. Brady.

   When you choose a User account, the Parental Controls screen appears, shown in Figure 10-10. The next steps take you through each section of the controls.
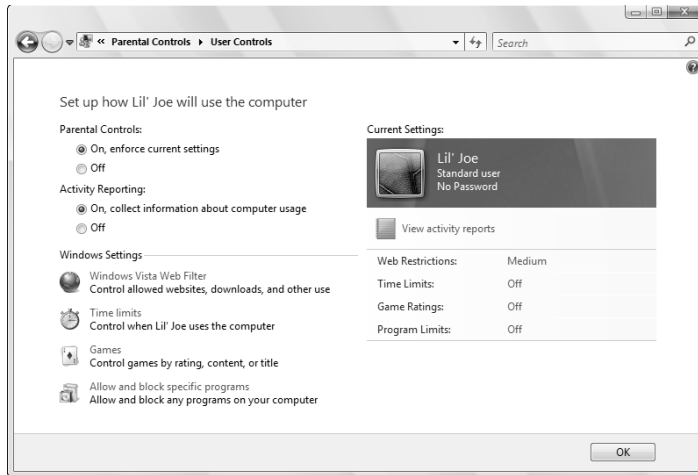
3. **Turn the Parental Controls on or off.**

   The Parental Controls area first presents two switches, letting you turn monitoring on or off:

   • **Parental Controls:** This toggle switch simply turns on or off any restrictions you've set. It's a handy way to turn on the restrictions when your suspicions are aroused or turn them off when they're not needed.

   • **Activity Reporting:** This switch toggles Vista's activity reporting. That tells the PC to spy on your children's habits, telling you exactly when they've logged on and off, what programs they've used or tried to use, and what Web sites they've visited or tried to visit.

4. **Set the Windows Vista Web Filter to determine what parts of the Web your child may visit.**

   The Web Filter lets you choose the parts of the Internet your child may view. To block some Web sites, click Edit the Allow and Block List. There, you can punish your child by keeping her off of MySpace.com for one week, for example. For ultimate control, block *every* Web site by clicking the Only Allow Websites Which Are on the Allow List box, and then adding a few safe sites to the allowed list.

   The Block Web Content Automatically area comes set to Medium, meaning Internet Explorer blocks sites containing mature content, pornography, drugs, hate speech, and weapons. Switch it to High to block everything not specifically designed for children. Or switch it to Custom and pick and choose specific categories you'd like blocked from your child's view.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Encrypting your PC with BitLocker

Vista's new BitLocker program scrambles the contents of your PC's hard drive. Then it automatically unscrambles it whenever you enter your User account's password. Why bother? To keep your information safe from thieves. If they steal your PC or even its hard drive, they won't be able to access your data, and its stash of passwords, credit-card numbers, and other personal information.

Unfortunately, BitLocker provides more protection than most people need. It's difficult to set

up, and if you ever lose your password, you've lost all your data, as well. BitLocker also requires your PC to be set up in a special way, with an extra *partition* — a separate storage area — on your hard drive. For full protection, it requires a PC with a special chip, something not found on many PCs today.

If you're interested in BitLocker, take your PC to your office's information technology person and ask them for help and advice on setting it up. It's not as simple as merely throwing a switch.

Be aware, however, that Web filters aren't 100 percent accurate, and some unwanted sites will always slip through the cracks.

5. **Choose whether to allow file downloads and then click OK.**

   The final box at this page's bottom lets you stop your child from downloading files, an easy way to keep them from downloading and installing programs without your knowledge. However, checking this box may also keep them from downloading files needed for schoolwork.

   Clicking OK returns you to the Parental Controls opening screen, shown in Figure 10-10.

6. **Add restrictions on time limits, games, and specific programs and then set activity reports, clicking OK after each.**

   This huge category lets you block specific things on your PC rather than the Internet:

   - **Time limits:** This option brings up a grid, letting you click on the hours when your child should be restricted from using the PC. Here's where you can make the PC off-limits after bed time, for example.

   - **Games:** You may allow or ban all games here, restrict access to games with certain ratings (ratings appear on most software boxes), and block or allow specific games.

   - **Allow and Block Specific Programs:** Here's where you can keep the kids out of your checkbook program, as well as particular

games. You can block all programs, only allowing access to a few. Or, you can allow access to all but a few programs.

- **Activity Reports:** This setting lists the activity of every User account on your PC. You can view lists of everybody's visited Web sites, downloaded files, log on and off times, played games, newly added contacts, Web Cam usage, accessed songs and videos, and much, much more. A handy summary on the first page sorts this vast amount of information into "Top Ten" lists for easy viewing.

   7. Click OK to exit Parental Controls.

To see what your child's been up to, return to Parental Controls and choose View Activity Reports.