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Geeks On Call® PCs



J. Geier
E. Geier
J. R. King



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Geeks On Call® PCs



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Introduction

Although personal computers (PCs) have been around for a few decades, they have been rapidly evolving in terms of their speed, power, and usefulness. With PCs, you can professionally create and edit documents, manage finances, and correspond with others through e-mail. To get the most out of your high-tech experience, it is important that you stay current by knowing how to troubleshoot common problems and how to upgrade your hardware to extend the life of your PC. This book discusses a wide range of topics related to PC usage and maintenance, such as:

- **Analyzing your PC:** Learn valuable information about your PC that can help you determine what to upgrade.
- **Upgrading your hardware:** Replace outdated parts or add exciting, new features.
- **Knowing how to buy a new PC:** With this valuable advice, you will know exactly what features and options to look for when shopping for a new PC.
- **Connecting your PC to the Internet:** Discover how easy it is to connect your PC to the Internet.
- **Using your PC:** Learn some tips and tricks that will enable you to operate your PC more effectively.
- **Adding printers and other peripherals:** Install helpful or fun devices such as printers, video game controllers, and media players.
- **Maintaining and troubleshooting your PC:** Fix common problems and perform simple preventive maintenance to keep your PC in tip-top shape.

PART I

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF PCs

From AGP cards to USB ports, the wide world of computer equipment is full of confusing acronyms and tongue-twisting terminology. Fortunately, your friendly neighborhood geeks from Geeks On Call are here to cut through the clutter and explain the basics of personal computers (PCs). Whether you are interested in buying a new computer or extending the life of your existing one, the information in these chapters will ensure that you don't have a hard time choosing hardware.

ANALYZING YOUR PC



Before upgrading your hardware, installing new software, or troubleshooting a computer problem, you need to know certain things about your PC — such as what version of Windows or how much RAM you have. Regardless of whether you tackle the computer work yourself or hire certified professionals such as Geeks On Call to do it, an analysis of your computer is the logical starting point.

Determine Your Version of Windows

Most computer programs and some pieces of hardware have restrictions on what versions of Windows can be used with them. To avoid buying products that won't work with your setup, you should determine what version of Windows you are running.

- 1.** Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, then click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and right-click My Computer. If you can't find the My Computer icon anywhere, do the following:
 - a.** Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b.** Select Properties.
 - c.** A window opens. Click the Desktop tab.
 - d.** Near the bottom of the window, click the Customize Desktop button.
 - e.** Another window opens. On the General tab, beneath the words Desktop Icons, place a checkmark in the My Computer box.
 - f.** Click OK.
 - g.** You are returned to the previous screen. Click Apply.
 - h.** Click OK.
 - i.** The My Computer icon appears on your desktop. Right-click it.
- 2.** Select Properties.

Do It Yourself

Determine Your Version of Windows

Determine Your Version of Internet Explorer

Determine the Manufacturer and Speed of Your Processor (CPU)

Determine Your Amount of System Memory (RAM)

Determine Your Hard Drive's Size and Remaining Space

Open Your Computer's Case

Determine Your Hard Drive's Interface

Look for USB Ports

Identify Your Version of USB

Look for FireWire Ports

Identify Your CD or DVD Drive

Look for a Floppy Drive

Look for a Dial-Up Modem

Look for a Network Card

Identify Your Video Card

Determine the Video Card's Interface

3. A window opens. Near the top of it, you should see the version of Windows your computer is running as well as any “service packs” (collections of updates and security patches) that have been installed (see Figure 1-1).



Figure 1-1

Determine Your Version of Internet Explorer

Some software on your computer or certain Web sites you visit may require you to use a certain version of Internet Explorer in order to function properly (or at all). Here’s how to determine what version you have:

1. Double-click the Internet Explorer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and click on the shortcut labeled either Internet Explorer or Internet.
2. Internet Explorer opens. Click the Help drop-down menu.
3. Click About Internet Explorer.
4. A window opens. Look for the word Version. Listed immediately next to it will be the version number for your copy of Internet Explorer (see Figure 1-2).
5. Click OK.



Figure 1-2

Determine the Manufacturer and Speed of Your Processor (CPU)

The processor—also known as a CPU—is the part of your computer’s hardware that performs the tasks handed out by your software. Typically, the faster a processor is, the more powerful your computer will be. Some programs and newer versions of Windows require a minimum CPU speed in order to work correctly. To find out how fast your CPU is and which company made it, do the following:

1. Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and right-click My Computer. If you can’t find the My Computer icon anywhere, do the following:
 - a. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b. Select Properties.
 - c. A window opens. Click the Desktop tab.
 - d. Near the bottom of the window, click the Customize Desktop button.
 - e. Another window opens. On the General tab, beneath the words Desktop Icons, place a checkmark in the My Computer box.
 - f. Click OK.
 - g. You are returned to the previous screen. Click Apply.
 - h. Click OK.
 - i. The My Computer icon appears on your desktop. Right-click it.
2. Select Properties.
3. A window opens. Near the bottom of it, you should see the name of the company that made your CPU (usually it is Intel or AMD) as well as the CPU’s speed listed in measurements of “MHz” (megahertz) or “GHz” (gigahertz)—for example, 500 MHz or 1.5 GHz (see Figure 1-3).



Figure 1-3

Determine Your Amount of System Memory (RAM)

The memory in your computer — commonly referred to as RAM (Random Access Memory) — is the hardware used by Windows and your software to store temporary information. The more RAM you have, the more programs you can use simultaneously and the faster your computer will be. Here's how to find out how much RAM your computer has:

1. Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and right-click My Computer. If you can't find the My Computer icon anywhere, do the following:
 - a. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b. Select Properties.
 - c. A window opens. Click the Desktop tab.
 - d. Near the bottom of the window, click the Customize Desktop button.
 - e. Another window opens. On the General tab, beneath the words Desktop Icons, place a checkmark in the My Computer box.
 - f. Click OK.
 - g. You are returned to the previous screen. Click Apply.
 - h. Click OK.
 - i. The My Computer icon appears on your desktop. Right-click it.
2. Select Properties.
3. A window opens. Near the bottom of it, you should see the amount of system memory (RAM). See Figure 1-4.



Figure 1-4

Determine Your Hard Drive's Size and Remaining Space

A hard drive is a piece of equipment that stores all of the programs and data on your computer (think of it as a digital warehouse). If your hard drive has too much information on it, your computer can become noticeably slow. If the hard drive becomes completely full, you will be unable to install new programs or download files from the Internet until you free up some space. To determine the overall size of your hard drive and how much room it has left, do the following:

1. Double-click the My Computer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and click My Computer. If you can't find the My Computer icon anywhere, do the following:
 - a. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b. Select Properties.
 - c. A window opens. Click the Desktop tab.
 - d. Near the bottom of the window, click the Customize Desktop button.
 - e. Another window opens. On the General tab, beneath the words Desktop Icons, place a checkmark in the My Computer box.
 - f. Click OK.
 - g. You are returned to the previous screen. Click Apply.
 - h. Click OK.
 - i. The My Computer icon appears on your desktop. Double-click it.
2. A window opens. Right-click the icon for the hard drive you want to check. For example, if you want to know the size and remaining space for your C: drive (which is the drive that most people have Windows installed on), then right-click the icon labeled C.

3. Select Properties.
4. A window opens. On the General tab, you should see the words Used space. This indicates how much of your hard drive is being used. You should also see the words Free space, which indicates how much room is left on your hard drive (see Figure 1-5). Both of these numbers will be expressed in measurements of gigabytes (GB) or megabytes (MB)—for example, 500MB or 2GB. Don't be alarmed if you see that your gigabytes have a smaller number than your megabytes; a gigabyte is much larger than a megabyte (one gigabyte is equal to 1,000 megabytes).

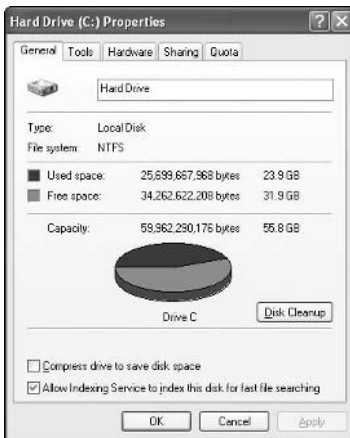


Figure 1-5

Open Your Computer's Case

After you have used Windows to do a quick analysis of your PC's primary features, you should open the computer's case and examine the equipment inside. Becoming comfortable with opening the case and identifying the components is essential if you ever want to perform a hardware upgrade on your own.

1. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
2. Examine your case to find out how it opens. Some cases have a removable cover shaped like an upside-down "U" that slides off when some screws are unfastened. Other cases have side panels (or doors) that slide off or swing open when they are unscrewed or when a special button is pressed.
3. If you cannot figure out how to open your computer's case, check the owner's manual or documents that came with your system.

Determine Your Hard Drive's Interface

All hard drives use special data cables to transfer information to and from the rest of your computer. By finding out what type of interface those cables have, you will be able to identify the style of your hard drive (which is crucial if you ever decide to upgrade it to a faster model or add a second one).

1. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
2. Remove the computer's cover.
3. Look for your hard drive (see Figure 1-6), which is one of the few devices that have data cables (also called "ribbon" cables) and power cables connected to them.



Figure 1-6

- a. If the hard drive has a flat ribbon cable connected to it, you are probably using an IDE or EIDE interface.
- b. If the hard drive has a different type of data cable connected to it (like a round one), you are probably using a Serial ATA interface.

Another way to determine your hard drive's interface is to look in the Windows Device Manager.

For Windows 2000 and Windows XP Home/Pro

1. Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and right-click My Computer. If you can't find the My Computer icon anywhere, do the following:
 - a. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b. Select Properties.
 - c. A window opens. Click the Desktop tab.
 - d. Near the bottom of the window, click the Customize Desktop button.
 - e. Another window opens. On the General tab, beneath the words Desktop Icons, place a checkmark in the My Computer box.
 - f. Click OK.
 - g. You are returned to the previous screen. Click Apply.
 - h. Click OK.
 - i. The My Computer icon appears on your desktop. Right-click it.
2. Select Properties.
3. A window opens. Click the Hardware tab.
4. Click the Device Manager button.
5. Another window opens. Click the plus sign (+) located next to the IDE ATA/ATAPI controllers category (see Figure 1-7).

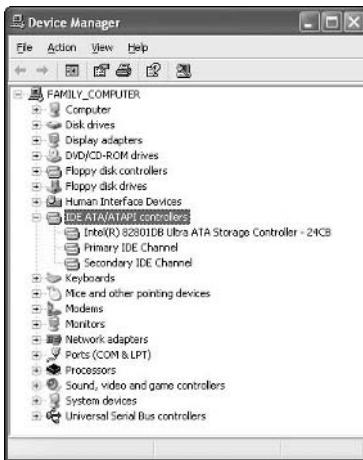


Figure 1-7

6. You will see a list of the hard drive “channels” on your computer. An IDE Channel indicates you are using an IDE hard drive. A Serial ATA Channel indicates you are using a serial ATA hard drive.

For Windows 98 and ME

1. Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop.
2. Select Properties.
3. A window opens. Click the Device Manager tab.
4. Click the plus sign (+) located next to the Hard disk controllers category (see Figure 1-8).

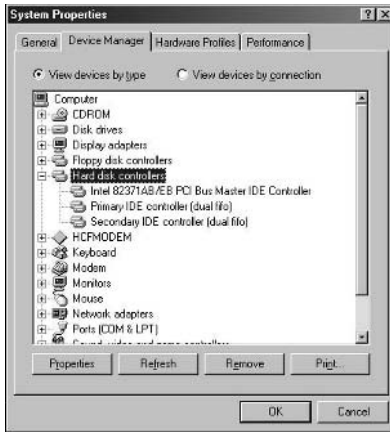


Figure 1-8

5. You will see a list of the hard drive “channels” on your computer. An IDE Channel indicates you are using an IDE hard drive. A Serial ATA Channel indicates you are using a serial ATA hard drive.

Look for USB Ports

Most modern computer peripherals such as printers and digital cameras connect to computers through USB ports. Determining whether or not your computer is equipped with USB will tell you what devices and gadgets can be used with your computer.

1. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
2. Pull your computer away from your desk so you can get a good look at its case. On the back of the computer, search for a thin, rectangular connector (see Figure 1-9). That is a USB port, into which you can plug USB devices such as printers, keyboards, mice, digital cameras, and much more.



Figure 1-9

3. If you cannot find any USB ports on the back of your computer, look at the front of the case. Some computers have these ports hidden behind doors or panels that swing open (see Figure 1-10).



Figure 1-10

Identify Your Version of USB

There are two versions of USB: 1.1 (somewhat slow) and 2.0 (very fast). Although their speeds are different, both USB formats are compatible with each other (which means you can plug a 1.1 device into a 2.0 port or vice versa). Identifying the speed of the USB ports on your computer can be quite helpful when deciding what type of peripherals to purchase. For example, if your computer has USB 2.0, you should buy a digital camera that also has USB 2.0 so you can transfer photos from the camera to your computer at the highest possible speed. To determine which version of USB you have, use the Windows Device Manager.

Note

Plugging a 1.1 device into a 2.0 port will not make that device perform faster. However, plugging a 2.0 device into a 1.1 port will cause the 2.0 device to perform slower.

For Windows 2000 and Windows XP Home/Pro

- 1.** Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and right-click My Computer. If you can't find the My Computer icon anywhere, do the following:
 - a.** Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b.** Select Properties.
 - c.** A window opens. Click the Desktop tab.
 - d.** Near the bottom of the window, click the Customize Desktop button.
 - e.** Another window opens. On the General tab, beneath the words Desktop Icons, place a checkmark in the My Computer box.
 - f.** Click OK.
 - g.** You are returned to the previous screen. Click Apply.
 - h.** Click OK.
 - i.** The My Computer icon appears on your desktop. Right-click it.
- 2.** Select Properties.
- 3.** A window opens. Click the Hardware tab.
- 4.** Click the Device Manager button.
- 5.** Another window opens. Click the plus sign (+) located next to the Universal Serial Bus controllers category (see Figure 1-11).

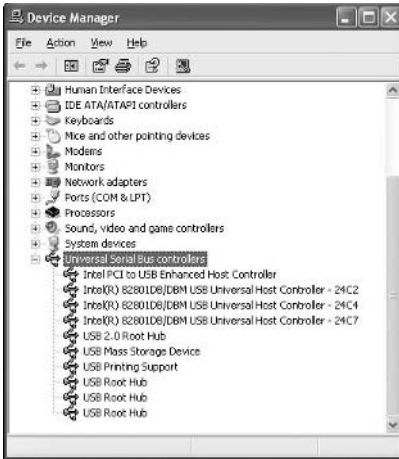


Figure 1-11

6. To determine if you have the fastest version of USB (called USB 2.0), look for an “enhanced” USB controller with a name like Standard Enhanced PCI to USB Host Controller, Intel PCI to USB Enhanced Host Controller, or NEC PCI to USB Enhanced Host Controller. If you do not see the word “enhanced,” you probably have USB 1.1 (the slower version).

For Windows 98 and ME

1. Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop.
2. Select Properties.
3. Click the Device Manager tab.
4. Click the plus sign (+) located next to the Universal serial bus controllers category (see Figure 1-12).



Figure 1-12

5. To determine if you have the fastest version of USB (called USB 2.0), look for an “enhanced” USB controller with a name like Standard Enhanced PCI to USB Host Controller, Intel PCI to USB Enhanced Host Controller, or NEC PCI to USB Enhanced Host Controller. If you do not see the word “enhanced,” you probably have USB 1.1 (the slower version).

Look for FireWire Ports

FireWire is another type of connection used to transfer information between a computer and a peripheral such as an external hard drive or a video camera. The speed of FireWire is similar to that of USB 2.0. To discover if your computer is FireWire-capable, do the following:

1. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
2. Pull your computer away from your desk so you can get a good look at its case. On the back of the computer, search for a connector that looks like Figure 1-13. That is a FireWire port, into which you can plug FireWire devices such as digital video cameras, external DVD drives, external hard drives, and much more.



Figure 1-13

3. If you cannot find any FireWire ports on the back of your computer, look at the front of the case. Some computers have these ports hidden behind doors or panels that swing open.

Identify Your CD or DVD Drive

CD-ROM drives sure have come a long way since their humble beginnings. Now there are recordable and rewritable compact discs (CD-R and CD-RW), as well as their offspring: recordable and rewritable DVDs (DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD+R, DVD+RW). Once you determine what type of CD or DVD drive is inside your computer, you will know which discs to buy and what software can be used with the drive.

1. Look at the front of your CD or DVD drive. Often there are words or logos that indicate the drive's capabilities or features.
2. If you have a CD drive, you should see a Compact Disc logo.

Note

All CD drives play music CDs and read CD-ROM data discs.

3. If you have a DVD drive, you will probably see a DVD logo.

Note

In addition to reading DVD-ROM data discs and playing DVD movies, a DVD drive is backwards compatible with CDs. That means it can play music CDs and read CD-ROM data discs.

4. If you have a CD or DVD burner that can record data onto writable or rewritable CD or DVD discs, that feature should be indicated by a logo labeled RW or Rewritable.

If you do not see any words or logos on the front of your CD or DVD drive, you can search for information about it in the Windows Device Manager.

For Windows 2000 and Windows XP Home/Pro

1. Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and right-click My Computer. If you can't find the My Computer icon anywhere, do the following:
 - a. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b. Select Properties.
 - c. A window opens. Click the Desktop tab.
 - d. Near the bottom of the window, click the Customize Desktop button.
 - e. Another window opens. On the General tab, beneath the words Desktop Icons, place a checkmark in the My Computer box.
 - f. Click OK.
 - g. You are returned to the previous screen. Click Apply.
 - h. Click OK.
 - i. The My Computer icon appears on your desktop. Right-click it.

2. Select Properties.
3. A window opens. Click the Hardware tab.
4. Click the Device Manager button.
5. Another window opens. Click the plus sign (+) located next to the DVD/CD-ROM drives category (see Figure 1-14).

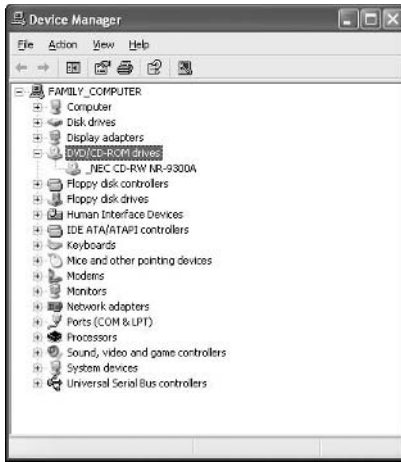


Figure 1-14

6. You should see a DVD/CD icon, next to which is the name of your DVD or CD drive as well as its model number. If not, do the following:
 - a. Double-click the DVD/CD icon.
 - b. A window opens. On the General tab, look for the name and model of your drive.
 - c. If you still can't find it, click the Details tab and look there.

For Windows 98 and ME

1. Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop.
2. Select Properties.
3. A window opens. Click the Device Manager tab.
4. Click the plus sign (+) located next to the CDRom category (see Figure 1-15).
5. You should see a CD icon, next to which is the name of your CD or DVD drive as well as its model number. If not, do the following:
 - a. Double-click the CD icon.
 - b. A window opens. On the General tab, look for the name and model of your drive.
 - c. If you still can't find it, click the Details tab and look there.

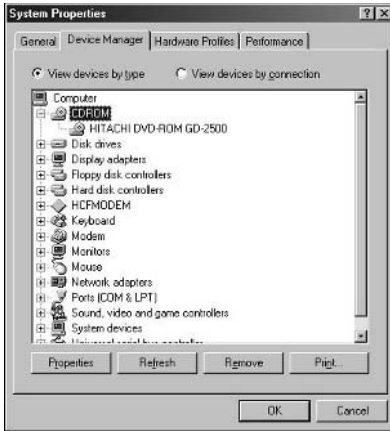


Figure 1-15

Look for a Floppy Drive

Although the old-fashioned floppy disk is rarely used anymore, many modern computers still have floppy drives (just in case someone needs to access an old file from 15 years ago that was stored on a floppy). If you aren't sure whether your computer has a floppy drive, do the following:

1. On the front of your computer, look for a slot about three-and-a-half inches long and about half an inch tall (see Figure 1-16).



Figure 1-16

2. Look for an eject button nearby.
3. Look for an LED status light (which lights up only when the floppy drive is being used).

Look for a Dial-Up Modem

Although the rising popularity of high-speed Internet is gradually pushing slow dial-up Internet services into retirement, most new computers still come equipped with dial-up modems. That way, people have the option to sign up for an inexpensive Internet service in exchange for a slow speed. Here's how you can check for a dial-up modem in your computer:

1. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
2. Pull your computer away from your desk so you can get a good look at its case. On the back of the computer, search for the section that has two telephone jacks (see Figure 1-17). These will be identical to the connectors on a standard telephone as well as the telephone jacks found in the walls of your home or office.



Figure 1-17

Look for a Network Card

A network card (also called an Ethernet card) is a device that enables a computer to connect to a high-speed Internet service such as DSL or cable. In addition, some modern computers have Wi-Fi (wireless) cards that allow them to

access computer networks and surf the Internet from any room in the house — without using Ethernet cables or connectors. To check for an Ethernet or Wi-Fi card, do the following:

1. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
2. Pull your computer away from your desk so you can get a good look at its case. On the back of the computer, search for an opening that looks like it connects to a very fat telephone cord (see Figure 1-18). This is an Ethernet jack, into which you can connect an Ethernet cable that will deliver high-speed Internet access and connect you to a computer network.



Figure 1-18

3. If the back of your computer has a card with an antenna sticking out of it (see Figure 1-19), you have a wireless (Wi-Fi) network card. You can use it to connect to wireless computer networks and receive wireless high-speed Internet connections.



Figure 1-19

Identify Your Video Card

Year after year, one of the most popular reasons for using a computer continues to be video games. And with each passing year, the graphics in those games grow more realistic and complex, requiring a powerful video card in order to play properly. To see if your current video card is up to the challenge, compare its specifications to the video game's minimum hardware requirements. In particular, pay attention to the amount of video RAM your card has compared to how much the game requires. Here's how to find your specs.

For all Windows versions

1. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
2. Select Properties.
3. A window opens. Click the Settings tab.
4. Click the Advanced button.
5. Another window opens. Click the Adapter tab (see Figure 1-20).
6. Based on your version of Windows, you should see a heading called something like Adapter Type. There you will learn the make and model of your video card. You might also see a heading called something like Adapter Information, which will tell you more information about the video card's manufacturer as well as the speed and the amount of RAM the card has.



Figure 1-20

Determine the Video Card's Interface

If you want to upgrade to a more powerful video card or replace one that has broken, you need to know what type of interface it uses to connect to your computer.

1. Look for information in the owner's manual or documents that came with your computer. If they are not helpful—or if you have misplaced them—you can inspect the hardware inside your computer to determine which video-card interface you have.
2. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
3. Remove the computer's cover.
4. Locate your video card by following the thick cable that goes from your monitor to the back of your computer. After you have pinpointed your video card, you need to figure out which interface it uses. Here are the three types:
 - **PCI:** This is the traditional interface that has existed in computers for well over a decade. It is used to connect multiple types of hardware such as video cards, sound cards, modems, and more. Usually it has a beige-colored slot that is approximately 3.25 inches wide. Also, most computers have several PCI slots that are stacked in a vertical or horizontal row. So if you see a group of slots neatly lined up, those are probably PCI slots.
 - **AGP:** This interface is used for modern, high-speed video cards. Often it has a brown- or black-colored slot that is nearly 4 inches wide. Most computers have only one AGP slot.
 - **PCI Express (PCIe):** This cutting-edge interface is beginning to appear in new computers. Its slots are noticeably smaller than those belonging to the old-fashioned PCI interface. Unless your computer was made in the past year or so, it is unlikely you have PCI Express.

2

UPGRADING YOUR PC



Have you ever thrown away an automobile because of a flat tire? Of course not. Then why get rid of a computer just because some of its parts have malfunctioned? Much like a car, a computer has many removable parts that can be replaced or upgraded to provide extra speed, power, or storage. Here are the two biggest reasons for upgrading a computer:

- **Saves money:** A new computer usually costs between \$500 and \$2,000. However, upgrading some of the important parts on a computer can be done for as little as \$100. Why is there such a difference? First of all, most new computers come as a complete package, meaning that along with the base unit they include a monitor, keyboard, mouse, and perhaps a printer. If you already have those other items and they are working fine, why replace them? Second, much of the cost of a new computer reflects the time and effort someone spent assembling and configuring it. If you can do the labor yourself, you can save significant dollars. Think of it as a home-improvement project: why hire someone when you can do it yourself?
- **Saves time:** When you buy a new computer, it's like buying a new house—you have to move in all of your belongings and decorate it. In computer terms, that means installing all of your software on the new machine, such as Microsoft Word and other Microsoft Office programs, financial or tax software, video games, and so on; transferring all of your files from your old PC to your new one; setting up your e-mail, Internet, and instant-messaging accounts on your new system; and much more. This process is often very time consuming and frustrating.

Do It Yourself

Do it yourself or call Geeks On Call?

What should be upgraded?

Upgrade to Windows XP

Add more system memory (RAM)

Add an internal hard drive

Add an external hard drive

Add a USB card

Add a FireWire card

Add a CD or DVD drive

Replace your floppy drive

Add a dial-up modem

Add a network card

Replace your video card

Replace your sound card

Do It Yourself or Call “Geeks On Call”?

If the thought of fiddling with the insides of a computer makes you cringe, don't worry—you can always have Geeks On Call come to your home or office to take care of your high-tech needs. However, if you feel a bit adventurous and want to get your hands dirty (metaphorically speaking), then pay close attention to the advice and 5-minute fixes in this book. If you are unsure which group you belong to, consider the necessary attributes of a digital do-it-yourselfer:

- **Basic understanding of a PC:** You should know how to unplug and reattach the cables and cords on the back of a computer and how to open the computer's case in order to access its internal parts.
- **Ability to follow step-by-step instructions:** You must be able to pay close attention and carefully follow the detailed directions listed in this book in order to prevent the upgrade from failing and possibly damaging the PC.
- **Asking for help:** You should be willing to seek professional high-tech help when upgrades don't work properly (which also will help to prevent the PC from being damaged).

What Should Be Upgraded?

The top questions asked by most digital do-it-yourselfers are “When do I need to upgrade?” and “What parts should be upgraded?” Here are some common PC problems and the hardware or software upgrades that might fix them:

- **Problem:** The computer takes an unusually long time to start up, to shut down, or to open programs and folders. Also, the computer feels sluggish.
Solution: Upgrade to a faster processor (CPU), or add more system memory (RAM).
- **Problem:** The computer frequently freezes or crashes, often resulting in error messages or blue screens displaying strange text.
Solution: Update or reinstall Windows, or add more system memory (RAM).
- **Problem:** Messages warn that the computer is running low on disk space or doesn't have enough room to install a program.
Solution: Upgrade to a larger hard drive, or add a second hard drive.

Upgrade to Windows XP

If you are using an outdated version of Windows such as 95, 98, or ME, consider upgrading to the most recent version: XP. Windows XP makes it easy to use peripherals such as digital cameras and printers, to connect to wireless networks, and so much more. But above all else, XP is more stable and safe than its

predecessors, which means you won't have to endure the frequent "blue screens of death" that plagued Windows 95 and 98. Here are the basic steps to take when upgrading to Windows XP:

Note

Windows XP has certain requirements about the type of hardware it can be used with. To see if your computer is compatible with XP, follow the steps in Chapter 1 to analyze your PC, and then compare your results to the requirements listed on XP's package.

- 1.** Determine which version of Windows your computer is currently running. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Determine Your Version of Windows" found in Chapter 1.
- 2.** Find out how fast your CPU is and how much RAM you have. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fixes "Determine the Manufacturer and Speed of Your Processor (CPU)" and "Determine Your Amount of System Memory (RAM)" found in Chapter 1.
- 3.** Determine how much hard drive space you have left. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Determine Your Hard Drive's Size and Remaining Space" found in Chapter 1.
- 4.** Carefully examine the hardware requirements for the version of Windows you are considering upgrading to because newer versions such as Windows XP require a minimum amount of RAM, hard drive space, and CPU speed in order to function properly.
- 5.** If you are thinking about upgrading to Windows XP, you must decide whether you want the Home Edition or the Professional Edition. XP Pro costs about \$100 more and offers several features not found in XP Home, such as encryption for files and folders. Many advanced users or businesses will benefit from these extra features, but the average home user can usually get by without them.
- 6.** If you plan to upgrade to XP Home or Pro from an older version of Windows (such as 98), you should use Microsoft's Upgrade Advisor to determine which of your older programs or hardware items will not run properly on XP. Visit www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/home/upgrading/advisor.msp to download the Advisor.
- 7.** Back up your important files and documents to prevent them from being accidentally damaged or erased when you perform the Windows upgrade. Although such a problem is rare, it is always a good idea to back up your valuable data just to be safe. Backups can be done by using an external hard drive, CD/DVD burner, USB thumbdrive, or tape drive along with backup or burning software such as Norton Ghost or Nero Burning ROM.
- 8.** To ensure a successful upgrade, carefully follow the printed instructions — as well as any onscreen instructions — that came with your new version of Windows.

Add More System Memory (RAM)

An inexpensive way to add some zip to your computer is to install more system memory (RAM). Along with the extra speed, you will be able to use more programs at the same time (such as checking e-mail while surfing the Internet while listening to digital music files).

- 1.** Determine what type of RAM your computer uses by reading the owner's manual or documents that came with your system. Another way to find this information is to visit www.powerleap.com and use its upgrade advisor to automatically detect your system settings and tell you which types of RAM are compatible with your computer.
- 2.** Purchase a new stick of RAM from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.
- 3.** Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
- 4.** Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer's base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.
- 5.** Remove the computer's cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Open Your Computer's Case" in Chapter 1.
- 6.** Locate the memory slots (see Figure 2-1). Typically, there are between two and four of them sitting side by side. To get a clear look at these slots, you might need to move some wires or cables out of the way. If you are simply adding more RAM to your existing RAM, proceed to Step 8. If you are upgrading to a faster type of RAM, you will need to remove your current RAM before you can install the new one (because if fast RAM is mixed with slower RAM, the fast RAM will drop its speed to match that of the slower RAM). For details on removing RAM, proceed to Step 7.
- 7.** To remove a stick of RAM, push down the two small plastic arms that hold the RAM in place. One arm is located on each end of the memory slot and is typically white or beige in color.
- 8.** To install a new stick of RAM, remove it from its protective bag or container. When handling RAM, touch only the smooth sides that do not have circuits printed on them. Do not touch anywhere else, because doing so might damage the RAM.

FYI

If you are upgrading to Windows XP from an older model of Windows, you can save a substantial amount of money by purchasing the version of XP labeled "Upgrade." You do not need to spend the extra money on the "Full" version of XP.

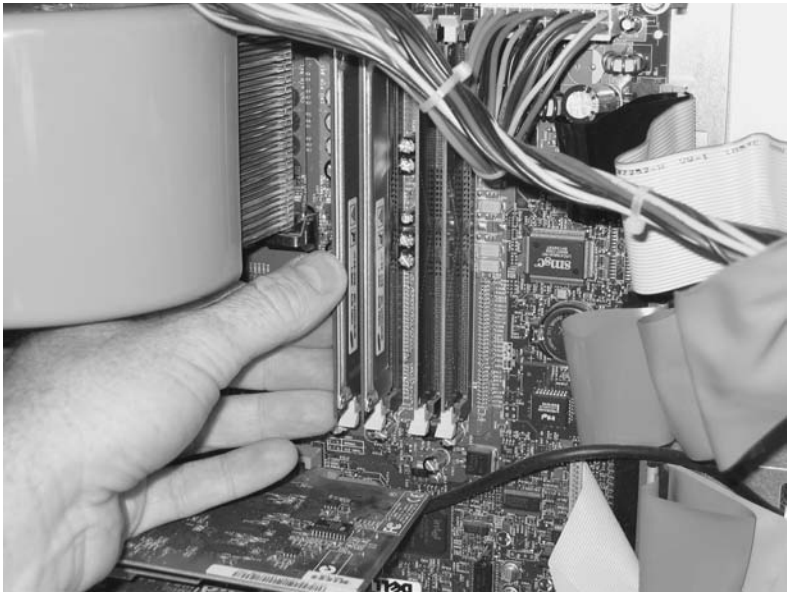


Figure 2-1

9. Line up the stick of RAM with the memory slot. Both of them are designed so that you can only insert the RAM a certain way. Firmly but gently push the RAM into the slot until both of the slot's plastic arms click into place (see Figure 2-1).
10. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the RAM, reconnect them.
11. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
12. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on. When your computer starts, it should instantly recognize the new RAM. If the RAM isn't recognized, your computer most likely will not start at all.

Add an Internal Hard Drive

If your computer is several years old, you probably have a small hard drive that is quickly running out of storage space. Replacing your current hard drive or adding an additional one will give you ample room to store your growing collection of documents, digital photos, digital music, videos, and software.

Note

It is much easier to add a second hard drive than to replace your current one.

1. Find out what type of hard drive your computer uses by referring to the 5-minute fix “Determine Your Hard Drive's Interface” in Chapter 1. Another way to find this information is to visit www.powerleap.com and use its upgrade advisor to automatically detect your system settings and tell you what type of hard-drive interface you have.

- 2.** Purchase a new hard drive from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.
- 3.** Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
- 4.** Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer's base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.
- 5.** Remove the computer's cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Open Your Computer's Case" found in Chapter 1.
- 6.** If your new hard drive is intended to replace your current hard drive, then you will need to purchase special software such as Norton Ghost (available at www.symantec.com) to help you copy all of the files from the old drive to the new one. If your new hard drive is not going to replace your current one but rather is intended to work alongside it and provide extra storage space, proceed to the next step.
- 7.** On the rear of the new hard drive is a tiny plastic "jumper" that must be placed onto the small metal pins in a specific way to allow the drive to work side by side with your current hard drive. On top of most hard drives is a diagram or picture that shows where to place the jumper to make the drive a "slave." Follow these instructions to make your new drive a slave.
- 8.** You probably need to change the jumper settings on your old hard drive so it works properly with the new drive. Look at the diagram or picture on top of the old drive. If you cannot see the picture, you might have to unscrew and remove the drive from your computer. The picture will probably show different jumper settings for "Single" and "Master." Examine the jumper on your old drive. If it is set to "Single," that means it is configured to operate by itself (without any slave drives). You need to move the jumper to the "Master" position as indicated by the picture.
- 9.** Connect a data cable to the new hard drive. For an EIDE drive, find the ribbon cable connected to your existing hard drive, and then use the gray connector in the middle of it to connect to your new hard drive. For a Serial ATA (SATA) drive, connect the cable that came with the drive to an SATA port on your motherboard.
- 10.** Connect a power cable to the new hard drive. Usually, all computers have extra power cables tucked away inside their cases.
- 11.** Find an empty mounting bay inside the computer's case, and then slide the new hard drive into the bay and secure it (usually by screwing the drive to the case).

12. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the new hard drive, reconnect them.
13. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
14. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on. When your computer starts, it should instantly detect your new hard drive.
15. Before you can use the new hard drive, you will probably need to format it. Double-click the My Computer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and click My Computer. If you can't find the My Computer icon anywhere, do the following:
 - a. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b. Select Properties.
 - c. A window opens. Click the Desktop tab.
 - d. Near the bottom of the window, click the Customize Desktop button.
 - e. Another window opens. On the General tab, beneath the words Desktop Icons, place a checkmark in the My Computer box.
 - f. Click OK.
 - g. You will be returned to the previous screen. Click Apply.
 - h. Click OK.
 - i. The My Computer icon appears on your desktop. Double-click it.
16. A window opens. Right-click the icon for your new hard drive.
17. Select Format.
18. Follow the onscreen instructions to format the drive.

It's a Fact

Modern computer programs use more hard drive space than ever before. For example, the popular video game *Sims 2* requires 3.5GB, and Microsoft's *Streets and Trips* (a travel planner) requires 1GB. These two programs alone could gobble up half the space on many older hard drives.

Add an External Hard Drive

The easiest way to add extra storage to your crowded computer is to buy an external hard drive. Basically this device is a standard hard drive enclosed in a rugged plastic or metal case that protects it from being damaged. The best thing is that it connects to your computer through USB or FireWire ports—which means you don't have to open your computer's case and tinker with its internal components.

1. Purchase an external hard drive from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.

2. If the external hard drive has a USB connector, simply connect one end of the USB cable to the drive and the other end to a USB port on your computer (see Figure 2-2). If the external hard drive has a FireWire connector, simply connect one end of the FireWire cable to the drive and the other end to a FireWire port on your computer.



Figure 2-2

3. Connect the power cable to the external hard drive, and then plug it into an electrical outlet.
4. Windows should automatically detect the external hard drive and enable you to use it right away.

Add a USB Card

USB is the type of connection used by almost all computer peripherals including printers, digital cameras, and scanners. If you have an older computer that lacks USB ports—or if you need extra ports—you can install a USB card.

Note

For the fastest speed, buy a USB 2.0 card.

1. Purchase a USB card from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often, an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.

FYI

To protect your critical documents from being lost forever as a result of a hard-drive crash, use an external hard drive and special backup software such as Norton Ghost (www.symantec.com) to make a copy of your data.

2. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
3. Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer's base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.
4. Remove the computer's cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Open Your Computer's Case" in Chapter 1.
5. Locate an empty PCI slot (see Figure 2-3), and then remove the slot's metal or plastic cover by unfastening the screw or plastic arm that holds it in place.

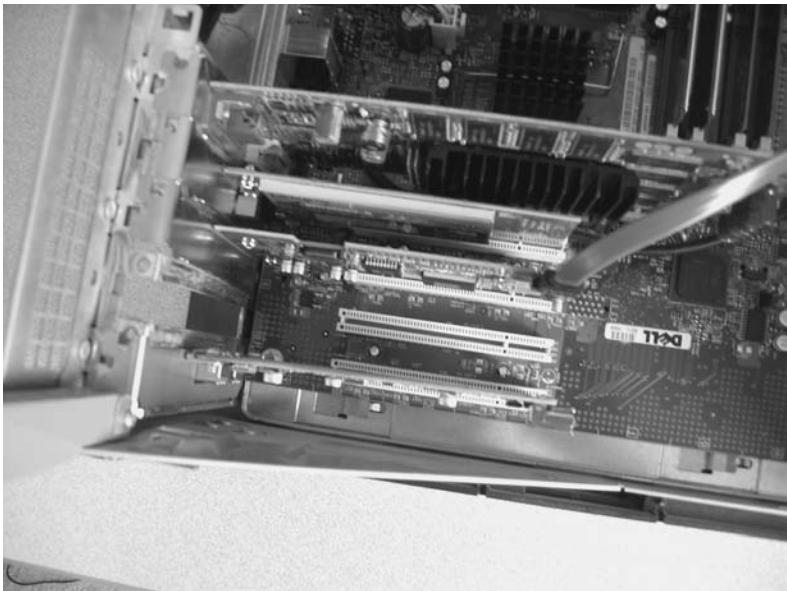


Figure 2-3

6. Firmly but gently insert the USB card into the empty PCI slot.
7. Secure the USB card by fastening a screw (see Figure 2-4) or snapping the plastic arm back into place.
8. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the USB card, reconnect them.
9. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
10. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on.
11. After Windows detects the new USB card, it searches for a "driver" to finish the setup. If the correct driver isn't found, you will need to install it by using the setup CD that came with the USB card.

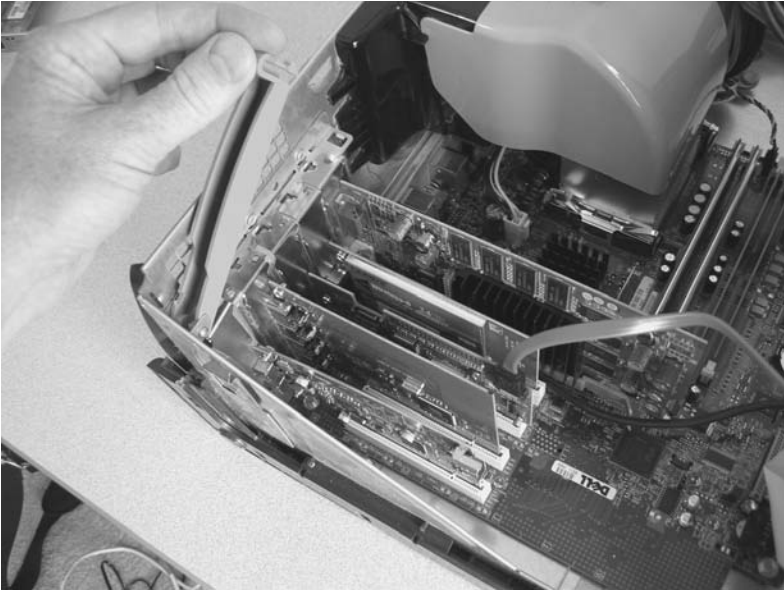


Figure 2-4

Add a FireWire Card

FireWire is another type of high-speed connection used by many computer peripherals such as external hard drives and video cameras. (However, FireWire is not used with as many peripherals as USB is.) Similar to USB, FireWire capabilities can be added to a computer by installing a special card.

- 1.** Purchase a FireWire card from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.
- 2.** Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
- 3.** Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer's base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.
- 4.** Remove the computer's cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Open Your Computer's Case" in Chapter 1.
- 5.** Locate an empty PCI slot (see Figure 2-5), and then remove the slot's metal or plastic cover by unfastening the screw or plastic arm that holds it in place.

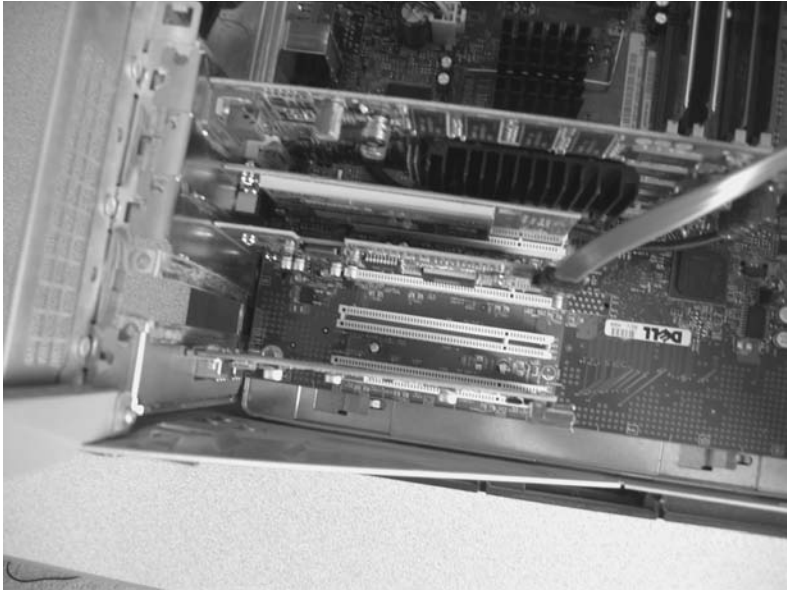


Figure 2-5

6. Firmly but gently insert the FireWire card into the empty PCI slot.
7. Secure the FireWire card by fastening a screw (see Figure 2-6) or by snapping the plastic arm back into place.

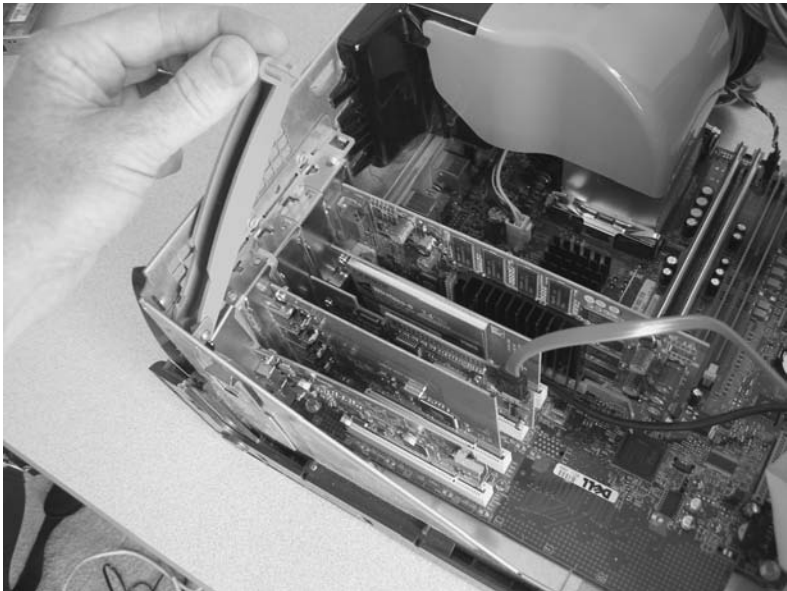


Figure 2-6

8. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the FireWire card, reconnect them.
9. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
10. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on.
11. After Windows detects the new FireWire card, it searches for a “driver” to finish the setup. If the correct driver isn’t found, you need to install it by using the setup CD that came with the FireWire card.

Add a CD or DVD Drive

Have you ever wanted to watch a DVD movie on your computer or make your own custom music CDs? With a modern CD or DVD drive, both activities are possible—and much more. Here are the different types of CD or DVD drives currently available:

- **Read-Only:** These drives can only read information on prerecorded discs. Examples include CD-ROM and DVD-ROM.
- **Recordable or rewritable:** These drives can read data on prerecorded discs and write (or “burn”) data onto blank discs. Examples include CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD+R, and DVD+RW. Most of these drives are restricted to using one type of disc. That means “minus R” (-R) drives cannot use “plus R” (+R) discs, and vice versa.
- **Combo drives:** These drives can read and burn data on any type of disc. They are an ideal choice for people who don’t want to worry about what type of discs to buy.

To install a CD or DVD drive in your computer, do the following:

1. Purchase a CD or DVD drive from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.
2. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
3. Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer’s base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.
4. Remove the computer’s cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix “Open Your Computer’s Case” in Chapter 1.

5. On the rear of the new CD or DVD drive is a tiny plastic “jumper” that must be placed onto the small metal pins in a specific way to allow the drive to work side by side with the hard drives or other CD/DVD drives in your system. On the top or rear of most CD or DVD drives is a diagram or picture that shows where to place the jumper to make the drive a “slave.” Although many CD or DVD drives are already configured to be slaves, yours may not be. In that case, follow the diagram or picture to make your new drive a slave.
6. Connect a data cable to the new CD or DVD drive. To do so, find the ribbon cable connected to your hard drive, and then use the gray connector in the middle of it to connect to your CD or DVD drive.
7. Connect a power cable to the new CD or DVD drive. Usually all computers have extra power cables tucked away inside their cases.
8. If you want to hear audio from any CDs or DVDs played on your new drive, you must connect an audio cable between the drive and the CD-audio input slot on your sound card or motherboard. For more details, refer to the owner’s manual or documents that came with your computer.
9. Find an empty mounting bay inside the computer’s case, and then slide the new CD or DVD drive into the bay and secure it (usually by screwing the drive to the case).
10. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the CD or DVD drive, reconnect them.
11. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
12. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on.
13. Windows should automatically detect the new CD or DVD drive and enable you to use it right away.

Replace Your Floppy Drive

Most people no longer use old-fashioned floppy disks, which is why many new computers don’t include floppy drives. However, if you still have old files or programs from many years ago stored on floppies, you should consider keeping a floppy drive in your computer. If your drive no longer works—or if you don’t have one—you can buy a brand new one for a few dollars and install it yourself.

1. Purchase a floppy drive from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.
2. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.

3. Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer's base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.
4. Remove the computer's cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Open Your Computer's Case" in Chapter 1.
5. Disconnect the data cable and power cable from your old floppy drive.
6. Remove the old floppy drive by unscrewing it from its mounting bay. (Newer computers may use plastic clips or other items to secure it.)
7. Connect the data cable and power cable to your new floppy drive.
8. Place the new drive into the empty floppy-drive mounting bay, and then secure it with the screws or plastic clips.
9. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the floppy drive, reconnect them.
10. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
11. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on.
12. Windows should automatically detect the new floppy drive and enable you to use it right away.

Add a Dial-Up Modem

If you use a dial-up Internet service such as AOL or Earthlink, you may be frustrated by unusually slow Web site connections or downloads that seem to take forever. Before griping to your Internet provider, consider this: The problem may be your modem. If your computer is quite old, it may not be equipped with a 56k modem (which is the fastest speed available over traditional phone lines). Fortunately, it is inexpensive and easy to install a new modem.

1. Purchase a dial-up modem from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.
2. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
3. Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer's base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.

4. Remove the computer's cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Open Your Computer's Case" in Chapter 1.
5. Locate an empty PCI slot (see Figure 2-7), and then remove the slot's metal or plastic cover by unfastening the screw or plastic arm that holds it in place.

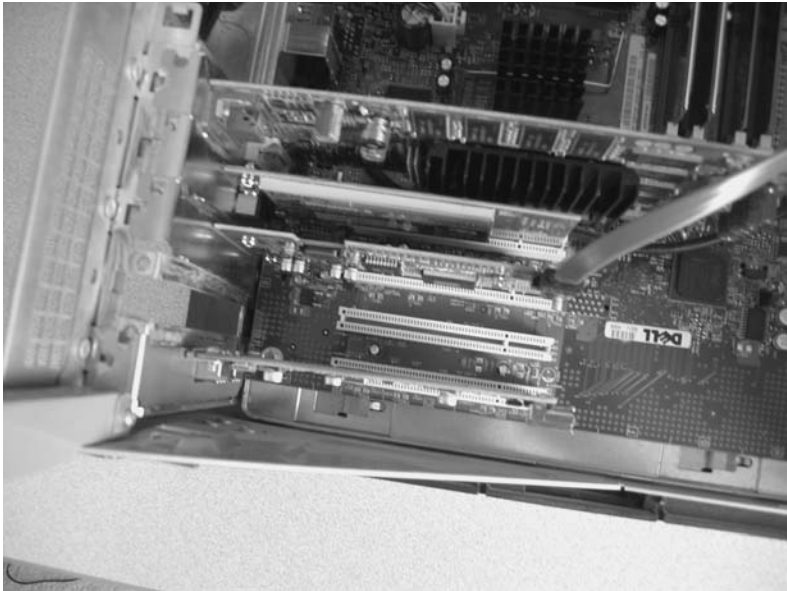


Figure 2-7

6. Firmly but gently insert the modem into the empty PCI slot.
7. Secure the modem by fastening a screw (see Figure 2-8) or snapping the plastic arm back into place.
8. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the modem, reconnect them.
9. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
10. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on.
11. After Windows detects the new modem, it searches for a "driver" to finish the setup. If the correct driver isn't found, you need to install it by using the setup CD that came with the modem.

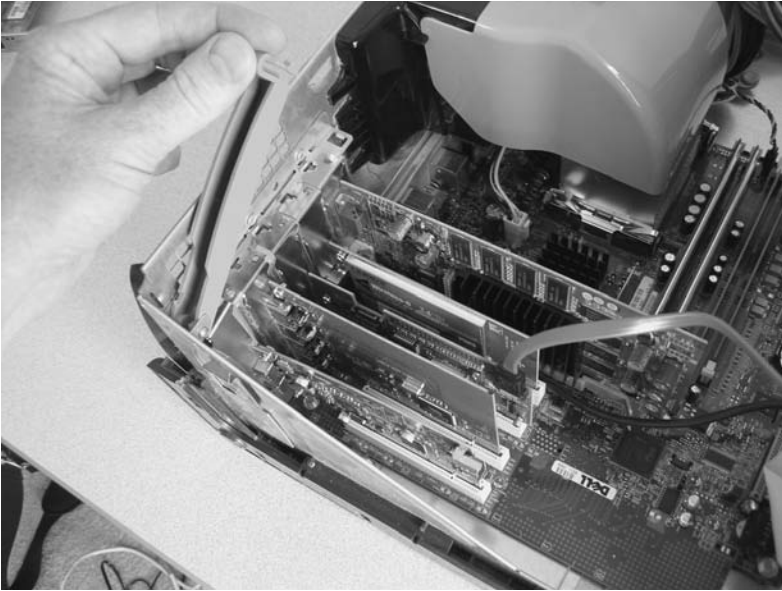


Figure 2-8

Add a Network Card

To connect to a high-speed Internet service such as DSL or cable, your computer must have a wired network card (also called an Ethernet card) or a wireless network card (also called a Wi-Fi card).

1. Purchase an Ethernet or Wi-Fi card from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.
2. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
3. Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer's base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.

FYI

If you ever cancel your dial-up Internet service and sign up for broadband (high-speed Internet), keep the dial-up modem in your computer. That way, if you ever move to a town in the boondocks that doesn't offer broadband, you can still access the Internet.

4. Remove the computer's cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Open Your Computer's Case" found in Chapter 1.
5. Locate an empty PCI slot (see Figure 2-9), and then remove the slot's metal or plastic cover by unfastening the screw or plastic arm that holds it in place.

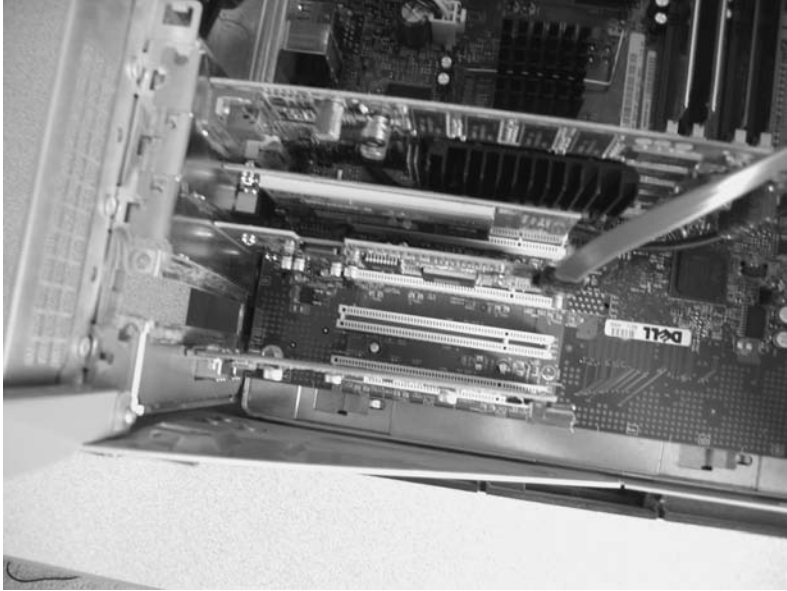


Figure 2-9

6. Firmly but gently insert the network card into the empty PCI slot.
7. Secure the network card by fastening a screw (see Figure 2-10) or snapping the plastic arm back into place.
8. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the network card, reconnect them.
9. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
10. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on.
11. After Windows detects the network card, it searches for a "driver" to finish the setup. If the correct driver isn't found, you need to install it by using the setup CD that came with the network card.

FYI

Even if you use a Wi-Fi card, it is a good idea to have an Ethernet card in your computer as a backup.

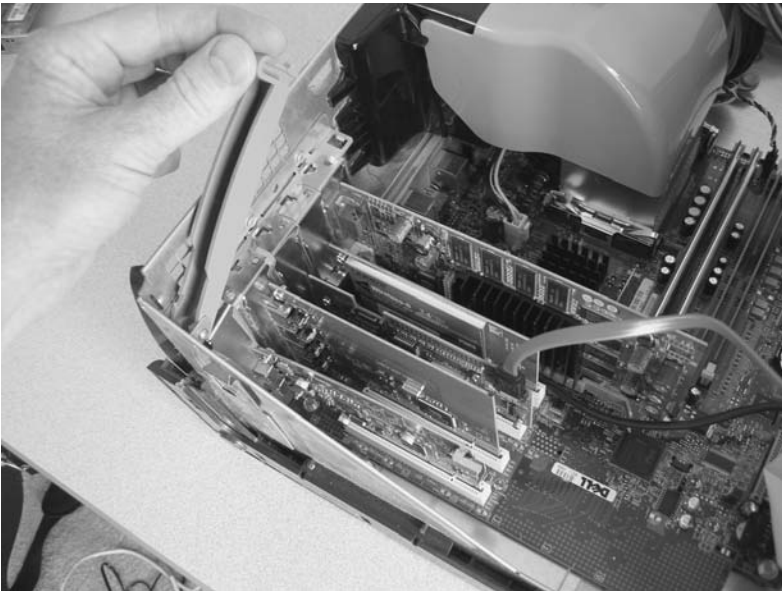


Figure 2-10

Replace Your Video Card

A video card is the important piece of hardware that sends images from your computer to your monitor. If the bulk of your computer activities involves the use of programs such as Microsoft Word, Outlook, and Internet Explorer, you don't need a powerful video card. However, if you want to play the newest PC video games that have cutting-edge graphics, you will need to upgrade to a fast video card.

1. Find out what type of video card your computer uses (PCI, AGP, or PCIe) by referring to the 5-minute fix “Determine the Video Card’s Interface” in Chapter 1. Another way to find this information is to visit www.powerleap.com and use its upgrade advisor to automatically detect your system settings and tell you what type of video-card interface you have.
2. Purchase a new video card from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.
3. Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
4. Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer’s base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or

sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.

5. Remove the computer's cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Open Your Computer's Case" in Chapter 1.
6. Based on the type of interface used by your new video card, locate an empty PCI slot, an empty AGP slot, or an empty PCIe slot. Remove the slot's metal or plastic cover by unfastening the screw or plastic arm that holds it in place.
7. Firmly but gently insert the video card into the appropriate slot.
8. Secure the video card by fastening a screw (see Figure 2-11) or snapping the plastic arm back into place.

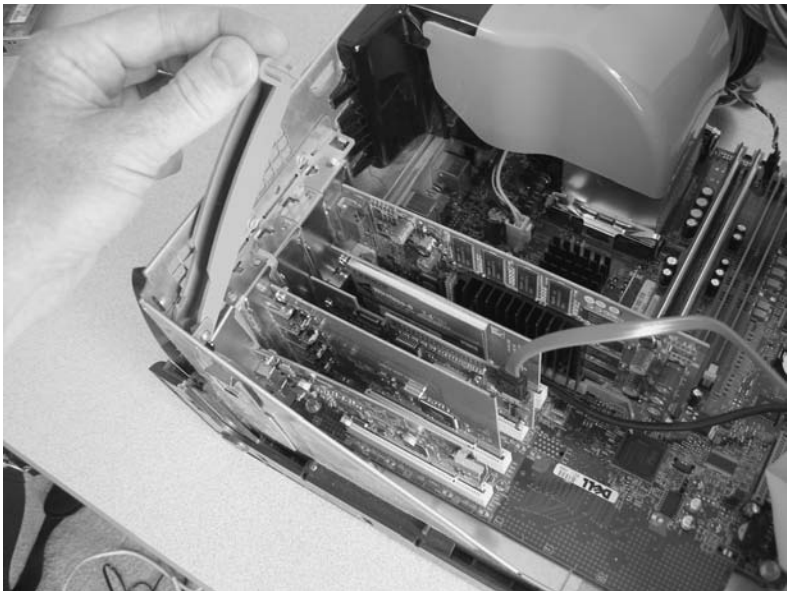


Figure 2-11

9. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the video card, reconnect them.
10. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
11. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on.
12. After Windows detects the new video card, it searches for a "driver" to finish the setup. Do not use the standard, default drivers that Windows installs. The only way to enjoy the powerful features of your new video card is to install the special drivers and software located on the setup CD that came with it.

Replace Your Sound Card

If you enjoy playing video games or watching DVD movies on your computer, you should consider upgrading your sound card to one that has enhanced features such as Dolby Digital 5.1 or 7.1 surround sound.

- 1.** Purchase a new sound card from a computer or electronics store or from an Internet retailer such as Newegg.com (www.newegg.com). Often an Internet store can save you quite a bit of money compared to its brick-and-mortar counterparts.
- 2.** Turn off your computer and unplug it from all electrical outlets. This will prevent you from receiving a serious electrical shock and will protect the computer from being damaged.
- 3.** Disconnect all wires and cables from the back of the computer's base unit, and then place the unit on a wooden floor or table. Do not attempt to perform any hands-on computer work while standing or sitting on a carpet or rug. Doing so can generate static electricity that can travel from your body into the computer and damage or destroy your hardware.
- 4.** Remove the computer's cover. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Open Your Computer's Case" found in Chapter 1.
- 5.** Locate an empty PCI slot (see Figure 2-12), and then remove the slot's metal or plastic cover by unfastening the screw or plastic arm that holds it in place.

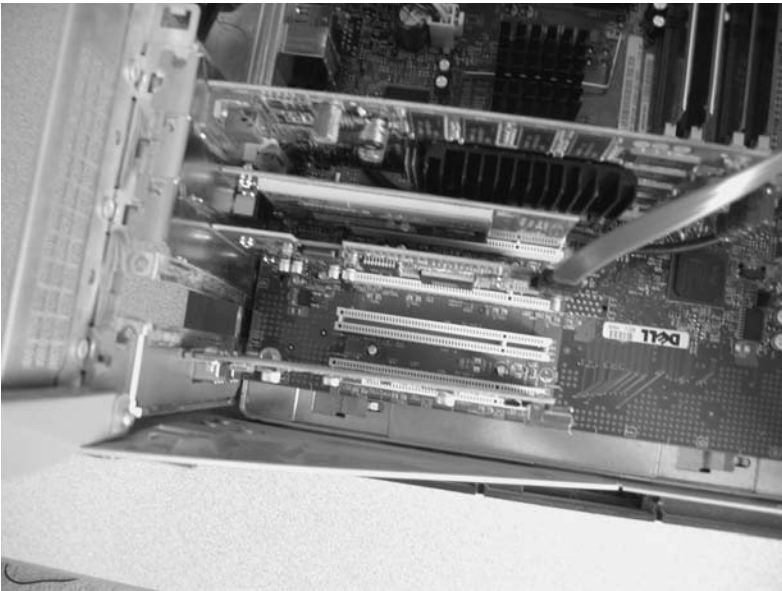


Figure 2-12

6. Firmly but gently insert the sound card into the empty PCI slot.
7. Secure the sound card by fastening a screw (see Figure 2-13) or snapping the plastic arm back into place.



Figure 2-13

8. If any wires or cables inside the computer were accidentally disconnected while installing the sound card, reconnect them.
9. Close the case, and then return the base unit to your desk.
10. Reconnect the wires and cables into the back of the base unit, and then plug the computer into an electrical outlet and turn it on.
11. After Windows detects the new sound card, it searches for a “driver” to finish the setup. Do not use the standard, default drivers that Windows installs. The only way to enjoy the powerful features of your new sound card is to install the special drivers and software located on the setup CD that came with it.

3

BUYING A NEW PC



Buying a computer is a lot like buying a car. Both require you to research the numerous makes and models available and carefully select the features—and price tag—that are right for you. Should you go with the humble, no-frills model? What about the turbocharged top-of-the-line model with all the bells and whistles? Is it worth getting an extended warranty? Questions like these can feel overwhelming (and unending). Fortunately, you are not alone in this process. Consider this chapter to be your digital chauffeur, here to help you bypass the traffic jams of overcrowded computer stores and arrive safely at a final decision.

If you already own a computer but are considering replacing it, the first thing you should ask yourself is “Do I really need a new one?” As discussed in Chapter 2, upgrading the broken or outdated parts on a computer is a great way to save time and money and to get the most out of your investment. However, it is true that some PCs are so old or have so many problems that it is easier (and sometimes cheaper) to replace them with new ones.

Here are the most common reasons for buying a new computer:

- **Meeting the demands of modern software:** Many modern programs such as video games or photo/video-editing software need a fast, powerful computer in order to run properly.
- **Eliminating high-tech headaches:** Some computers are so old or have so many problems that it is simpler to get rid of them and start over with a fresh, new system.

Do It Yourself

Pick the perfect PC

- **Upgrading can be difficult:** Because so many people today lead busy lives, they can't afford to spend time learning how to take apart and upgrade a computer.
- **Having the latest and greatest:** Sometimes it can be fun to have the newest cutting-edge equipment and gadgets to play with.

Pick the Perfect PC

If you have carefully considered the great debate about upgrading vs. buying and have decided that a new PC is the best choice for you, your next course of action is to pick the type of computer you need, select a style (desktop or laptop), and consider which additional features you want.

Computer Types

The most important factor to consider when buying a new computer is the activities you anticipate doing on it. How the computer will be used and the number of people using it will determine how many problems it develops, its condition one year from now, its overall lifespan, and more. Here are the four common types of computers. Choose the one that most accurately describes your needs:

- **Light general use:** Used by one to three people for a few hours each day. Activities include typing documents, sending and receiving e-mail, browsing the Internet, and playing older video games that do not have cutting-edge graphics.
- **Heavy general use:** Used by more than three people or used for many hours each day. Activities include typing documents, sending and receiving e-mail, browsing the Internet, and playing video games that have medium-level graphics.
- **Gaming:** Performs all of the activities of a heavy general-use computer and users play video games that have demanding, cutting-edge graphics.
- **High performance:** Meets all the criteria for a gaming computer plus has extra top-of-the-line hardware to handle demanding activities such as using video-editing programs or other heavy-duty, high-performance software.

FYI

Spend time thinking about how much your new computer might be used on a daily basis. That information will help you select the appropriate type of computer and get the most out of your investment. For example, if you anticipate using your PC for the majority of each day to do simple, routine tasks such as typing documents, browsing the Internet, and checking e-mail, you should consider buying a heavy general-use computer.

Desktop vs. Laptop

After deciding what type of computer suits your needs, you must choose its style: desktop or laptop.

Desktop

As shown in Figure 3-1, a desktop PC is the standard style of computer used in most homes and offices. Here are the advantages and disadvantages of buying a desktop:

- **Low cost:** Most desktop PCs cost under \$1,000, and some can be purchased for as little as \$300.
- **Versatile:** Can be used for all types of activities, including light general use, heavy general use, gaming, and high performance.
- **Upgradeable:** Probably the best thing about desktop PCs is their ability to be customized and upgraded. If a part breaks down, it can be easily replaced. If you want to add extra hardware to play cutting-edge video games or perform other demanding tasks, that too can be easily done.
- **Stationary:** Unlike a laptop computer, a desktop PC has to remain in one location at all times.



Figure 3-1

Laptop

As shown in Figure 3-2, a laptop (also called a notebook computer) is a small, portable computer that is becoming increasingly popular in our on-the-go world. Also, many educational institutions such as high schools and colleges are beginning to require their students to use laptops in the classroom. Here are the advantages and disadvantages of buying a laptop:



Figure 3-2

- **Mobile:** The freedom to take their computer wherever they go is the number-one reason most laptop users give when explaining why they bought one. However, the downside is that if the laptop is accidentally left behind in a cab, train, or subway, or if it is stolen, all of your computer files will be lost forever (and potentially used by a criminal to commit identity theft).
- **Higher cost:** An average laptop with middle-of-the-road features often costs more than \$1,000. A high-end, powerful laptop often costs \$2,000 or more.

FYI

Purchasing a laptop doesn't mean you can't use it at your home or office in the same way you would use a desktop. Special "base stations" allow you to connect a laptop to a normal desktop monitor, and nearly all laptops allow you to connect a regular, full-sized keyboard and mouse to them.

- **Less versatile:** The average laptop is limited to activities that fall under the light general-use category. However, expensive top-of-the-line laptops often have just as much power as most desktop PCs.
- **Limited upgrades:** A laptop cannot be opened to have its internal components replaced or upgraded. Instead, you have to add external upgrades such as cards that fit into the special slots on the side of the laptop, or external devices such as a hard drive or rewritable DVD drive that connects to the laptop's USB or FireWire ports.

Features

Once you have selected a computer type and chosen a style, your next step is to figure out which features you want. Here is a list of the four computer types and the hardware they typically offer:

Light general use

- Slower processor (CPU): Up to 2.4 GHz
- Limited amount of system memory (RAM): Up to 256 MB
- Smaller hard drive: Between 40 and 80GB

Heavy general use

- Medium-speed processor (CPU): Approximately 2.8 GHz
- Average amount of system memory (RAM): Between 256 and 512MB
- Large hard drive: 80 GB or more

Gaming

- Fast processor (CPU): 3.2 GHz or more
- Large amount of system memory (RAM): Minimum of 512MB
- Large hard drive: 80GB or more
- High-end speakers with a subwoofer or a complete surround-sound system
- Powerful video card containing more than 128MB of video memory

High performance

- Fast processor (CPU): 3.2 GHz or more
- Large amount of system memory (RAM): Minimum of 512MB
- Extra-large hard drive: Minimum of 100GB
- Recordable or rewritable DVD drive

Warranty

Have you noticed that when you buy a piece of equipment from a computer or electronics store, the salespeople immediately pounce on you and ask you to buy an extended warranty or service plan? Although that approach is extremely annoying, it doesn't mean that warranties should be avoided. Usually, it doesn't make sense to buy a warranty for an inexpensive product, but a warranty might be a wise decision for purchases that cost \$1,000 or more. Before you buy any warranty, you should always examine its features such as the length of coverage and the things it won't cover (which are usually listed in the fine print, so take the time to read it). Here are several things a good service plan should include:

- **No lemon policy:** If the product needs a certain number of repairs within a specified time limit, you will receive a new version of that product (or its equivalent). For example, if your laptop has to be repaired more than three times in one year, most warranties will replace that laptop with a new one.
- **Battery coverage:** If the product's battery stops working properly, it will be repaired or replaced.
- **Power-surge protection:** If the product is damaged as a result of a power surge through your electrical outlets, it will be repaired or replaced. This can be quite valuable if you live or work in an area that has unreliable electricity. But be warned: Some warranties specifically indicate that they do not cover damage caused by power surges entering a computer through other sources such as telephone wires connected to the computer's dial-up modem.
- **Renewable:** When your original warranty expires, you can renew or extend it for a specified amount of time.
- **Transferable:** The warranty stays with the product, not with the person who bought it. That means if you sell or donate your product to someone else, the warranty can still be used by that person.

PART II

ENHANCING YOUR PC EXPERIENCE

The number of helpful or fun activities you can do with a PC is simply staggering: paying bills over the Internet; printing digital photos; scanning old pictures to create long-lasting archival copies; editing home movies, listening to MP3 music files; and so much more. If you are interested in using your computer for more than playing Solitaire, this section of the book will show you numerous ways to make your high-tech experience more rewarding.

4



CONNECTING TO THE INTERNET

In the blink of an eye, the Internet—also referred to as the “Web”—has gone from novelty to necessity, ingraining itself in our culture to such an extent that people don’t just use it—they depend on it. For some, life without the Web is inconceivable. Typical daily tasks performed by Internet users include:

- Using e-mail to stay in contact with family, friends, and business associates
- Saving money by shopping at e-merchants (Internet stores)
- Managing bank accounts
- Paying bills directly from a checking account
- Doing research for school and work-related projects
- Reading the latest news headlines from the Associated Press or CNN
- Checking sports scores and movie show times
- Downloading “try-it-before-you-buy-it” versions of software
- Purchasing legal digital copies of music CDs and individual songs
- Viewing streaming videos of concerts, sporting events, and breaking news

Types of Internet Service

If you haven’t yet taken a dip in the vast digital ocean known as the Internet, what are you waiting for? Jump in—the water is great. The first step you must take is to decide what type of Internet service fits your needs and your budget. The three types of Internet used in most homes and small businesses are dial-up, DSL (which stands for digital subscriber line), and cable.

Do It Yourself

Types of Internet service

Sign up for Internet service

Restore a dial-up connection

Troubleshoot a slow dial-up connection

Access the Internet from a wired network

Solve problems connecting to a wired network

Access the Internet from a wireless network

Solve problems connecting to a wireless network

Repair a broken Internet connection

Dial-up Internet service

- Uses regular telephone lines
- Requires a dial-up modem (which most computers have)
- Is available in any home or office that has a working telephone line
- Has a very slow connection speed (up to 56K)
- Is inexpensive, costing between \$10 and \$22 per month (depending on whether your plan has a limited number of hours per month or has unlimited usage)

It's a Fact

DSL and cable Internet services are usually referred to as "broadband."

DSL Internet service

- Uses regular telephone lines
- Requires a USB or Ethernet port on your PC
- Is available in many larger communities but is not always offered in smaller ones
- Has a medium connection speed (between 300K and 800K, depending on how far away your home or office is from a DSL transmitter)
- Is reasonably priced, costing between \$15 and \$30 per month

Cable Internet service

- Uses cable lines to transmit signals (the same lines that provide cable TV)
- Requires a USB or Ethernet port on your PC
- Is not available in every community (but is usually offered in more areas than DSL)
- Has a fast connection speed (up to 1,500K)
- Is more expensive, costing between \$45 and \$50 per month

Sign Up for Internet Service

After you have decided what type of Internet access you prefer, you need to sign up for an account with an Internet service provider (ISP). For dial-up, this usually can be done without professional help. For DSL and cable, it either requires professional installation or a do-it-yourself kit offered by the Internet provider.

Dial-up Internet Access

Numerous local and national companies offer dial-up Internet services. Some of the more well-known names include AOL, MSN, Earthlink, and NetZero. When selecting a dial-up provider, consider these features:

- **Amount of access numbers:** Make sure the provider offers several local access numbers near your home or office (because if you don't dial a local number, you could be charged for making expensive long-distance calls every time you connect to the Internet). Also, choose a provider that offers more than one local access number. That way, if one number is busy, you can always call another.
- **Price:** Compare the monthly fees charged by each provider for unlimited Internet access.
- **Number of e-mail accounts:** Most dial-up providers allow you to have several e-mail accounts—enough for each person in your household or small business.
- **Web site space:** Many dial-up providers give you a specific amount of space to create your own Web site that can be accessed by anyone who uses the Internet. This is particularly useful if you run a small or home-based business.

When you have chosen a dial-up provider, follow these steps to set up an account:

1. If you have decided to go with a national dial-up company such as AOL or MSN, you will need to obtain a CD containing their installation software. Usually these CDs can be picked up free of charge at most computer or electronics stores. If no stores in your area carry them, ask your neighbors if they have any. If you still have no luck, use a computer at your office or at a neighbor's house to visit the dial-up provider's Web site and sign up for service as well as download the installation software.
2. If you have decided to go with a local dial-up company, you must call it to inquire about how to sign up. Usually the company sends a technician to perform the setup or mails you an installation CD.
3. Connect your modem to a telephone jack by plugging one end of a telephone cord into your modem and then plugging the other end into a telephone jack on the wall of your home or office.
4. Install the dial-up software and follow the onscreen instructions.

DSL Internet Service

Because DSL Internet services use a traditional telephone line, they are usually offered by your local phone company. Here is a general overview of the steps involved in setting up DSL:

1. Scan your local telephone directory to determine which phone companies in your area offer DSL. If you have more than one choice, compare their prices, features, and customer service before making a decision.
2. After you have picked a provider, sign up for a DSL account. Most DSL providers can install the necessary equipment—for a fee. To save money, ask for a self-installation kit. Typically, this kit contains a DSL modem, Ethernet cables, phone-line filters, an installation CD, and detailed instructions.

Cable Internet Service

As its name indicates, cable Internet services are offered by a local cable company (the same one that provides your local cable TV channels). Many communities have only a single cable provider, but a lucky few have more than one (which helps to drive down the cost of the cable services). Here is a general overview of the steps involved in setting up cable Internet:

1. Scan your local telephone directory to determine which companies in your area offer cable Internet. If you have more than one choice, compare their prices, features, and customer service before making a decision.
2. After you have picked a provider, sign up for an Internet account. Most cable providers can install the necessary equipment—for a fee. To save money, ask for a self-installation kit. Typically, this kit contains a cable modem, Ethernet cables, an installation CD, and detailed instructions.

Restore a Dial-up Connection

If your modem suddenly cannot access your dial-up Internet service, try these fixes:

- **Check for a dial tone:** Use a standard telephone to call the local access number that your modem is trying to dial. Within a few seconds you should hear a digital tone. If you don't hear it, either you called the wrong number or your Internet provider's equipment is not working properly. If you hear a busy signal, try using your modem to dial an alternate local access number.
- **Check your modem's status:** If you are certain that the local access number is working properly, you should determine whether your modem has malfunctioned. See the section that follows for details.

For Windows XP and Windows 2000

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click the Control Panel. (If you don't see this option, your start menu is in Classic mode. In that case, click Settings, and then select the Control Panel.)
3. If the Control Panel is in Category view, click the Performance and Maintenance category, and then click the System icon. If the Control Panel is in Classic view, simply double-click the System icon.
4. A window opens. Click the Hardware tab.
5. Click the Device Manager button.
6. The Device Manager window opens. Click the plus sign (+) next to the Modems category.
7. Double-click the name of your modem.

8. Another window opens. On the General tab, look for the Device status heading. There you should see a message indicating whether or not your modem is working properly.
9. If the message says your modem is not working properly or has an error, try uninstalling the software that came with your modem. Next, reinstall that same software, and then try using the modem again.
10. If the message says your modem is operating correctly, check to see if your connection problems have occurred because the telephone cord is loose or unplugged from either the modem or the phone jack. Also, check for cuts, splits, or large dents on the phone cord. If it is damaged, replace it, and then try your Internet connection again.
11. If your connection problems continue, replace your modem.

For Windows 98 and Windows ME

1. Right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop.
2. Select Properties.
3. Click the Device Manager tab.
4. The Device Manager window opens. Click the plus sign (+) next to the Modem category.
5. Double-click the name of your modem.
6. Another window opens. On the General tab, look for the Device status heading. There you should see a message indicating whether or not your modem is working properly.
7. If the message says your modem is not working properly or has an error, try uninstalling the software that came with your modem. Next, reinstall that same software, and then try using the modem again.
8. If the message says your modem is operating correctly, check to see if your connection problems have occurred because the telephone cord is loose or unplugged from either the modem or the phone jack. Also, check for cuts, splits, or large dents on the phone cord. If it is damaged, replace it, and then try your Internet connection again.
9. If your connection problems continue, replace your modem.

FYI

For dial-up Internet connections, use telephone cords shorter than 15 feet. Anything longer will degrade the signal quality and produce a slower Internet connection.

Troubleshoot a Slow Dial-up Connection

If your dial-up Internet feels unusually slow, try one of these remedies:

1. Try dialing an alternate access number. It is possible that your current access number has slowed because a large number of people are using it simultaneously.

2. Inspect your phone cord for cuts, splits, or large dents. If the cord is damaged, replace it, and then try your Internet connection again.
3. If your current phone cord is quite long, replace it with one that is as short as possible (because shorter phone cords often provide faster dial-up connections).
4. If you hear annoying static while making phone calls, there is a good chance the static is also interfering with the signals your dial-up modem sends and receives. Ask your phone company to repair the line and eliminate the static.

Access the Internet from a Wired Network

If your PC has a network card (also called an Ethernet card), you can use it to connect to a wired computer network that has been set up in your home or office or in a place like a hotel room.

Note

If you are connecting to a public network (such as those found in hotel rooms, coffee shops, and so on), you don't have to dial in to the Internet provider you use back home.

1. Obtain an Ethernet cable (often called a "CAT5" cable) long enough to reach between your computer and the Ethernet jack located on a nearby wired/wireless router or on a nearby wall (such as in your office, hotel room, and so forth).
2. Connect one end of the Ethernet cable to the Ethernet port on your PC (see Figure 4-1), and then connect the other end to the Ethernet jack on the router or wall (see Figure 4-2).
3. If you are using Windows XP, a message should appear near the bottom of your screen indicating that a network connection has been made.

FYI

Stay away from software that claims to boost the speed of your Internet connection. Known as a *Web accelerator*, *Internet accelerator*, or *Internet optimizer*, this type of program often does more harm than good, and uninstalling it from your computer can actually damage Windows and prevent you from connecting to the Web. If you currently use a slow, dial-up Internet connection and need more speed, the only tried-and-true solution is to sign up for a broadband service such as cable or DSL that is offered by your local cable and phone companies.



Figure 4-1



Figure 4-2

Solve Problems Connecting to a Wired Network

If your computer is having difficulty connecting to a wired network, you should find out whether your network card has malfunctioned. To do so, follow these steps:

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click the Control Panel. (If you don't see this option, your Start menu is in classic mode. In that case, click Settings, and then select the Control Panel.)
3. If the Control Panel is in category view, click the Performance and Maintenance category, and then click the System icon. If the Control Panel is in classic view, simply double-click the System icon.
4. A window opens. Click the Hardware tab.
5. Click the Device Manager button.
6. The Device Manager window opens. Click the plus sign (+) next to the Network Adapters category.
7. Double-click the name of your network card.
8. Another window opens. On the General tab, look for the Device status heading. There you should see a message indicating whether or not your network card is working properly.
9. If the message says your network card is operating correctly, check to see if your connection problems have occurred because your Ethernet cable is loose or unplugged from either the network card or the Ethernet jack. Also, check for cuts, splits, or large dents on the Ethernet cable. If it is damaged, replace it, and then try your Internet connection again.
10. If the message says your network card is not working properly or has an error, return to the Device Manager's main window.
11. Right-click the name of your network card, and then select Uninstall. If a message warns you that you are about to uninstall the card, click OK. This will cause your card to be uninstalled from Windows.
12. Shut down your computer and restart it. When Windows loads, it detects your network card and goes through the process of reinstalling it. If Windows cannot find the proper "drivers" to complete the setup of your card, you may have to use the installation CD that came with the card or with your computer.
13. If your connection problems continue, replace your network card.

Access the Internet from a Wireless Network

If your computer is equipped with a wireless network card (also called a Wi-Fi card), you can use it to access wireless networks at your home, office, or in a public place such as a coffee shop or bookstore.

Note

These steps apply to Windows XP only.

1. Right-click the wireless icon in the lower-right corner of Windows.
2. Click on View Available Wireless Networks. If you don't see any available wireless networks, go to Step 6. Otherwise, proceed to the next step.
3. Click the wireless network you want to access (see Figure 4-3).

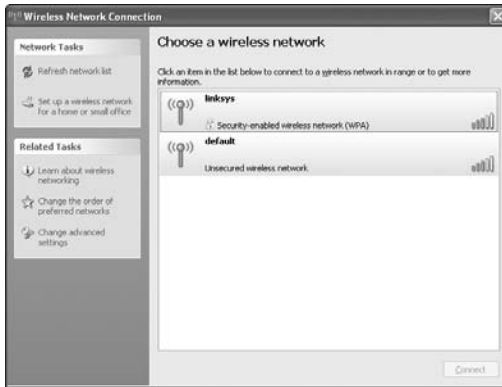


Figure 4-3

4. Click Connect.
5. If your version of Windows XP has Service Pack 2 installed and you are trying to access an unsecured network, you will probably have to click the Allow me to connect to the selected wireless network even though it is not secure option. On the other hand, if the wireless network you are connecting to is secured, you will be asked to enter an encryption key or password.
6. If you don't see any available wireless networks listed in Windows, make sure your wireless router is plugged into an electrical outlet and is working properly.

Solve Problems Connecting to a Wireless Network

If your computer is having problems accessing wireless networks, follow these fixes:

Note

These steps apply to Windows XP only.

1. Move closer to the wireless router. To have a strong connection you should be within 100 feet of the router.
2. Make sure the wireless router is plugged into an electrical outlet and appears to be turned on (as indicated by the solid or blinking lights on the front of the router).

3. Reboot your wireless router by unplugging its power cord from the electrical outlet, waiting 15 seconds and then plugging it back in.
4. Reboot your wireless card by disabling it and then re-enabling it within Windows. Here's how:
 - a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
 - b. Click the Control Panel. If you don't see this option, your start menu is in classic mode. In that case, click Settings, and then select the Control Panel.
 - c. If the Control Panel is in category view, click the Network and Internet Connections category, and then click the Network Connections icon. If the Control Panel is in classic view, simply double-click the Network Connections icon.
 - d. Double-click the icon for your wireless connection (see Figure 4-4).



Figure 4-4

- e. Wait a minute to see if a message pops up to say that the wireless card is connected to the network.
5. If the message indicates that no network connection is available, then you will have to manually set the “SSID” in the wireless card. Here's how:
 - a. Double-click the wireless icon in the lower-right corner of Windows. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and click All Programs to display a list of the programs on your computer. Next, click the name of the manufacturer's configuration utility for your wireless card.
 - b. After the configuration utility opens, find the section containing your wireless settings. Often, it is located on a Configuration tab.
 - c. Type the name (the SSID) of the wireless network you want to access. If you do not own that network, you will need to get the SSID from the proper owner. For example, if you are trying to

use a wireless network in a hotel, you will have to call the front desk and ask for its SSID.

- d. If the wireless network has encryption enabled, select the encryption type and enter the encryption key or password.

Repair a Broken Internet Connection

A common problem experienced by Windows users is a malfunctioning Internet connection. There are several reasons why this occurs — and just as many remedies.

Reboot Your Modem, Your Router, or Both

Sometimes a malfunctioning Internet connection can be caused by an error in computer hardware such as a cable/DSL modem or a router. To correct any problems with these devices, you must reboot them.

1. Shut down your computer.
2. Unplug the power cord from the back of your modem and router. An alternate method is to use the tip of a pencil to push the small “reset” button located at the rear of the modem or router.
3. The lights on the front of your modem or router will go dark. Wait 30 seconds, and then plug the power cord back in. This will cause the lights on the front of the modem or router to begin blinking rapidly in a particular pattern. Wait for an additional 30 seconds, and then restart your computer.

Temporarily Disable Your Software Firewall

Sometimes a software firewall such as ZoneAlarm or Norton Personal Firewall can experience a digital “hiccup” that interferes with the way it monitors and manages your Internet connection. Common symptoms of this problem include a suddenly slow Internet connection, Web pages that stall or are unresponsive, or the complete inability to access the Internet. To determine if your firewall is the cause of your problems, you can temporarily disable it.

1. Right-click the icon for your firewall, which is usually located in the lower-right corner of Windows near the clock.
2. Select the option to Close or Disable or Shut Down.
3. Try connecting to the Internet. If you are successful, restart your firewall by right-clicking its icon near the Windows clock and selecting Enable or Restore. If the firewall’s icon is not there, then you must manually restart the program by doing the following:
 - a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
 - b. Click on All Programs.
 - c. Select the folder containing the name of your firewall software. For example, if you use ZoneAlarm, select the Zone Labs folder.
 - d. Click the shortcut to launch the program.

4. If re-enabling your firewall causes your Internet connection to malfunction again, it is likely that your firewall has become corrupted and must be reinstalled by following the steps that follow. This requires its original installation CD-ROM or its digital installer and license key.
 - a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
 - b. Click the Control Panel. (If you don't see this option, your Start menu is in classic mode. In that case, click Settings, and then select the Control Panel.)
 - c. Double-click Add or Remove Programs.
 - d. A window opens. Scroll down the list until you see the name of your firewall.
 - e. Click the name of your firewall, and then click the Remove button on its right. If a message pops up and asks you if you want to uninstall the program, click Yes.
 - f. After the firewall has been successfully removed, reinstall it by using its CD-ROM or installer program.

Automatically Obtain an IP Address

Another potential cause of your Internet woes may be that Windows is using an incorrect IP address. To configure Windows to automatically obtain a valid IP address, do the following:

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click the Control Panel. If you don't see this option, your Start menu is in classic mode. In that case, click Settings, and then select the Control Panel.
3. If the Control Panel is in category view, click the Network and Internet Connections category, and then click the Network Connections icon. If the Control Panel is in classic view, simply double-click the Network Connections icon.
4. Double-click the icon for your network connection.
5. A window opens. Under the tab labeled General, click the Properties button.
6. Another window opens. Click once on the words Internet Protocol (TCP/IP). Be careful not to accidentally remove the checkmark from the box.
7. Click the Properties button.
8. A new window opens. Click the Obtain an IP address automatically option (see Figure 4-5).

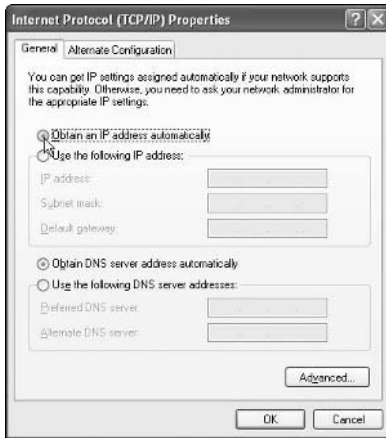


Figure 4-5

9. Click OK to save your changes.

Set a Permanent IP Address

Some Internet providers require their customers to use a static, unchanging IP address. If this is the case with your provider and you haven't configured Windows to use only one IP address, follow these steps:

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click the Control Panel. If you don't see this option, then your Start menu is in classic mode. In that case, click Settings, and then select the Control Panel.
3. If the Control Panel is in category view, click the Network and Internet Connections category, and then click the Network Connections icon. If the Control Panel is in classic view, simply double-click the Network Connections icon.
4. Double-click the icon for your network connection.
5. A window opens. Under the tab labeled General, click the Properties button.
6. Another window opens. Click once on the words Internet Protocol (TCP/IP). Be careful not to remove the checkmark from the box.
7. Click the Properties button.
8. A new window opens. Click the Use the following IP address option (see Figure 4-6).

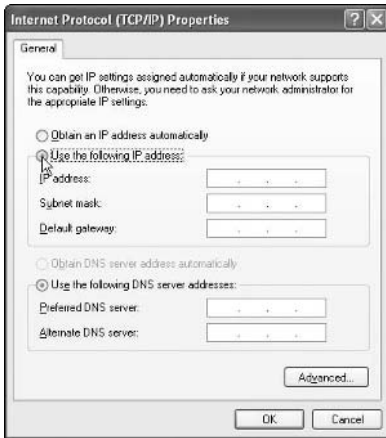


Figure 4-6

9. In the IP address box, type the numbers for the IP address given to you by your Internet provider. For example, if you were told that your permanent IP address is 192.168.1.5, you type those numbers into the box.
10. In the Subnet mask box, type the numbers for the subnet mask given to you by your Internet provider (often those numbers will be 255.255.255.0).
11. In the Default gateway box, type the numbers for the default gateway given to you by your Internet provider.
12. Click OK to save your changes. You may need to reboot your computer before the changes can be applied.

5



INSTALLING PERIPHERALS

Half the fun of using a computer comes from its accessories (usually referred to as “peripherals”) such as printers, scanners, and digital cameras. This chapter explains how to install and set up common peripherals and provides fixes for problems you might run into.

Use Newer Gadgets on Older PCs

To make a modern peripheral work on an outdated version of Windows such as 98 or ME, you need to install small pieces of software called “drivers” that tell Windows how to interact with the device. Usually all peripherals come with an installation CD-ROM containing the proper drivers, but if you have lost this CD or never received it (which often happens when you buy a used peripheral from a place like eBay), you will need to download the drivers.

1. Open your Web browser and visit the manufacturer’s Web site.
2. Find the section of the site either labeled Support or Downloads, and search for information about drivers.
3. You probably will need to know the make and model of your product (so you may need to look on its exterior for that information).
4. Find the drivers that are designed to work with your version of Windows. Usually, the downloads will come in the form of an executable program. If so, download the executable to a folder on your computer that you can easily locate.
5. Double-click the executable to begin the installation of the drivers.
6. Try connecting your product again.

Do It Yourself

Use newer gadgets on older PCs

Add a surge protector

Add a battery backup

Add a USB hub

Replace your speakers

Replace your monitor

Replace your mouse

Clean your mouse

Replace your keyboard

Connect a printer

Configure printer preferences

Connect a digital camera

Connect a camcorder

Connect a video game controller

Connect a scanner

Add a Surge Protector

Did you know it is dangerous to plug your computer or other gadgets directly into an electrical outlet? A thunderstorm or power surge can send intense bursts of electricity racing through the power lines in your home or office. These bursts can travel into your computer and fry it—or even worse, they can cause your computer to catch fire, which in turn could ignite the rest of your building. To prevent this from happening, use a device known as a surge protector.

Note

Not all surge protectors provide the same protection. Generally, the more expensive one is, the better protection it offers.

1. Properly shut down your PC and other equipment.
2. Unplug your PC and related equipment from the power strip or electrical outlet to which they are currently connected.
3. Plug your new surge protector into an available electrical outlet.
4. Plug your PC and other equipment into the outlets on the surge protector (see Figure 5-1).



Figure 5-1

5. Most surge protectors have an On/Off switch. Make sure this switch is set to the On position (which usually causes a light to turn on).
6. Turn on your computer and peripherals and use them as you normally would.

Add a Battery Backup

A battery backup (also known as an uninterruptible power supply) is a device that not only serves as a surge protector, but also has a large battery that provides emergency electricity during a power outage or brown-out. Originally, battery backups were designed only to provide a few minutes of power—just enough to save your open computer files and safely shut down your computer—but modern ones can often supply an hour or more.

1. Properly shut down your PC and other equipment.
2. Unplug your PC and related equipment from the power strip or electrical outlet to which they are currently connected.
3. Plug your new battery backup into an available electrical outlet.
4. Plug your PC and other equipment into the battery backup's outlets. Keep in mind that most battery backups have only a few outlets that connect to the backup system, while the others are just regular or surge-protected outlets.
5. Nearly every battery backup has an On/Off switch. Make sure this switch is set to the On position (which usually causes a light to turn on).

Add a USB Hub

If you have a lot of USB devices to connect to your computer but not enough USB ports, you can add more by installing a USB hub. Basically a hub is a small box that plugs into a single USB port on your computer. On the hub are usually between two and six USB ports. Instead of reaching around the back of your computer to plug in a USB device such as a digital camera, you can simply plug that device directly into the hub. Here's how to install a hub:

Note

If your computer supports high-speed USB 2.0 devices, be sure to buy a hub that also handles USB 2.0.

1. Most USB hubs have a USB cable built into them. If that is the case with your hub, connect the cable to an available USB port on your computer. If your hub has a detachable USB cable, plug one end into the hub and the other end into an available USB port on your computer.
2. Most USB hubs do not have a separate power cord, because they receive electricity through the USB cable. However, if your hub has a separate power cord, connect the appropriate end into the hub and the other end into an electrical outlet.
3. Plug your USB devices into the hub (see Figure 5-2).



Figure 5-2

Replace Your Speakers

If you enjoy using your computer to play video games or watch DVD movies, you should consider replacing your old, simple speakers with a state-of-the-art set. Most modern computer speakers come with a subwoofer to provide booming bass, and you can even buy an entire surround-sound system designed to work perfectly with your computer. To install new speakers, follow these steps:

1. Shut down your PC.
2. If your sound system has a subwoofer, do the following:
 - a. Plug your speakers into the subwoofer.
 - b. Plug the subwoofer into the audio-output connector on your computer.
 - c. Connect one end of the power cord into the subwoofer and the other end into an electrical outlet.
3. If your sound system does not have a subwoofer, do the following:
 - a. Plug one of the speakers into the main speaker.
 - b. Plug the main speaker into the audio-output connector on your computer.
 - c. Connect one end of the power cord into the main speaker and the other end into an electrical outlet.

FYI

If you are buying a surround-sound system for your computer, make sure it is compatible with Dolby Digital 5.1 or 7.1.

Replace Your Monitor

If your computer monitor is too small or doesn't produce a bright, sharp picture anymore, the best thing to do is replace it.

- 1.** Shut down your computer and monitor.
- 2.** Disconnect the monitor's video cable from the computer, and then unplug the monitor's power cable from the electrical outlet.
- 3.** Move your old monitor out of the way, and then move the new one into place.
- 4.** Connect your new monitor's video cable to your computer's video card.
- 5.** Connect one end of the power cord to the new monitor, and then plug the other end into an electrical outlet.
- 6.** Turn on your computer and your new monitor.

Clean Your Mouse

If you are using an old-fashioned computer mouse—the kind with a movable ball—you might notice that sometimes the mouse's onscreen cursor doesn't immediately respond to the movements of your hand. Usually the cause is dirt, hair, or other debris that has accumulated inside the mouse (see Figure 5-3). Fortunately, there is an easy solution: Clean your mouse.

- 1.** Shut down your computer.
- 2.** Unplug the mouse from the back of your computer.
- 3.** Remove the cover on the bottom of the mouse. Usually this is done by pushing down and turning the cover in the direction indicated by the arrows etched on it.
- 4.** When the cover opens, you will see a small rubber ball. Set the ball aside, but be careful not to lose it.
- 5.** You will see three rollers inside the mouse. Use the tip of a pen, tweezers, or your fingernails to remove the debris from the rollers.
- 6.** Clean your mouse ball with a warm, damp cloth. Make sure the ball is dry before proceeding to the next step.
- 7.** Insert the ball into the mouse (see Figure 5-4), and then reattach the cover.
- 8.** Plug the mouse back into your computer, and then turn on your computer.



Figure 5-3



Figure 5-4

Replace Your Mouse

Instead of using an old-fashioned mouse that needs to be cleaned every few months, consider replacing it with an optical mouse that doesn't use a ball. Instead, it uses a laser beam, which means the movements of your hand will be more accurately recognized and displayed on screen. Here's how to install a new mouse:

Note

Most modern mice use USB connectors. If your computer doesn't have any USB ports, you will need to use a "PS/2 to USB" adapter.

- 1.** If your new mouse is designed to use a USB interface, you can simply plug it into your computer while the computer is running. If your new mouse does not use USB, you must turn off your computer before connecting the mouse.
- 2.** Unplug your current mouse.
- 3.** Plug your new mouse into your computer's PS/2 or USB port.
- 4.** Turn on your computer (if necessary) and start using your new mouse.
- 5.** If your mouse came with a CD-ROM containing software that will enhance its features and performance, install that software.

Replace Your Keyboard

The keyboards that come with most computers tend to be very simple, lacking advanced features. If you want to replace your old keyboard with one that has multimedia buttons, shortcut keys, and many other enhancements, do the following:

Note

Most modern keyboards use USB connectors. If your computer doesn't have any USB ports, you will need to use a "PS/2 to USB" adapter.

- 1.** If your new keyboard is designed to use a USB interface, you can simply plug it into your computer while the computer is running. If your new keyboard does not use USB, you must turn off your computer before connecting the keyboard.
- 2.** Unplug your current keyboard.
- 3.** Plug your new keyboard into your computer's PS/2 or USB port (see Figure 5-5).



Figure 5-5

4. Turn on your computer (if necessary) and start using your new keyboard.
5. If your new keyboard has special features such as programmable buttons or a built-in video game controller, you will probably need to install special software by using the CD-ROM that came with the keyboard.

Connect a Printer

Almost all printers available today use USB interfaces. To connect a USB printer to your computer, follow these steps:

1. Most printers come with a USB cable (see Figure 5-6). Connect one end of the cable to the USB port on the printer, and then connect the other end of the cable to a USB port on your computer.
2. If the printer's power cord is not permanently attached, plug one end of it into the printer and plug the other end into an electrical outlet.
3. Windows should detect the new scanner and search for "drivers" to complete the installation. If Windows cannot find them, you will have to install the proper drivers by using the installation CD that came with the scanner or by downloading them from the manufacturer's Web site.
4. Use the CD that came with your printer to install the special software that will enable the printer to function properly.



Figure 5-6

Configure Printer Preferences

After you have installed a printer, you should configure its settings. Doing so can make your ink cartridges last longer, speed up printing time, and produce nicer-looking prints.

For Windows XP Home/Pro and Windows 2000

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click the Control Panel. If you don't see this option, your Start menu is in classic mode. In that case, click Settings, and then select the Control Panel.
3. If the Control Panel is in category view, click the Printers and Other Hardware category, and then click the Printers and Faxes icon. If the Control Panel is in classic view, simply double-click the Printers and Faxes icon.
4. Right-click the printer you want to configure.
5. Click Printer Preferences.
6. Printer preferences differ based on the computer and printer you are using, so you need to explore the available settings by clicking the various tabs and selecting or deselecting the numerous options. For example, you can change the printer quality (see Figure 5-7), the print color, the orientation (either "landscape" or "portrait" as shown in Figure 5-8), and the print order (front to back or back to front).

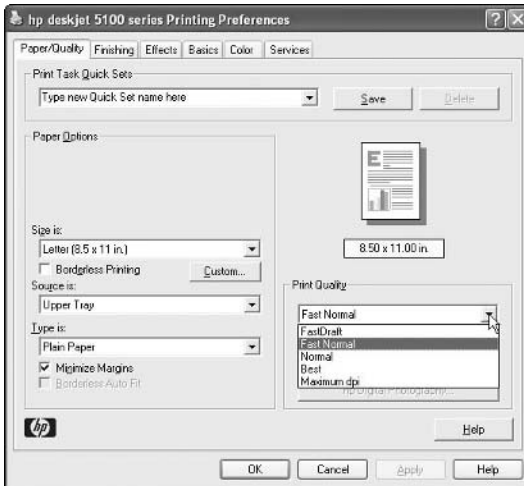


Figure 5-7

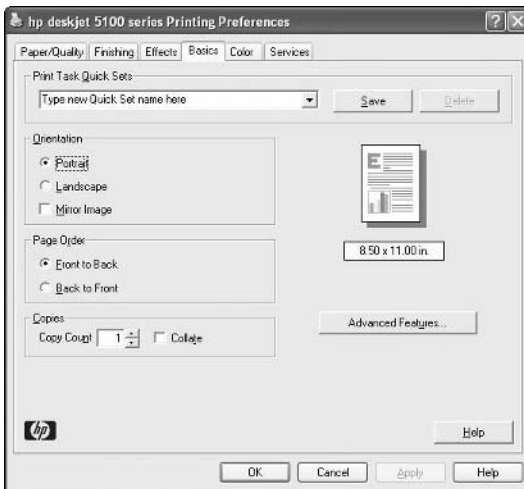


Figure 5-8

For Windows 98 and ME

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click Settings.
3. Click Printers.
4. Right-click the printer you want to configure.
5. Click on Printer Preferences.

FYI

To conserve ink and print documents faster, use a low-quality setting when printing average, unimportant documents. When you need to print special documents and official reports for work or school, return the print quality to a higher level.

- Printer preferences differ based on the computer and printer you are using, so you need to explore the available settings by clicking the various tabs and selecting or deselecting the numerous options. For example, you can change the print quality (see Figure 5-9), the print color, the orientation (either “landscape” or “portrait” as shown in Figure 5-10), and the print order (front to back or back to front).

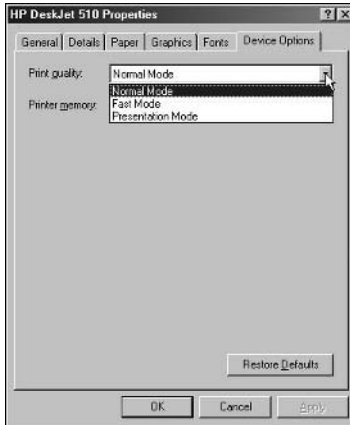


Figure 5-9

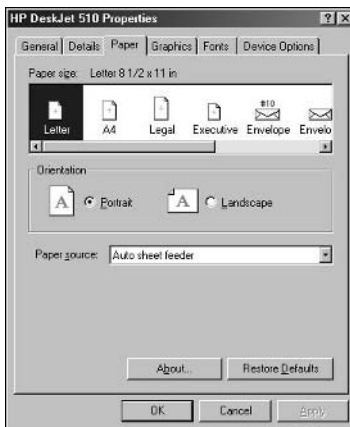


Figure 5-10

Connect a Digital Camera

One of the best things about using a digital camera is the ease with which you can connect it to your computer, transfer your photos to your hard drive, and then e-mail them to your friends and family—without having to get them processed by a photo lab. To connect a digital camera to your PC, follow these steps:

1. Most digital cameras come with a USB cable. Connect one end of the cable to the USB port on the digital camera, and then connect the other end of the cable to a USB port on your computer.
2. If you are using Windows XP, you will likely see a window that tells you a device has been connected and asks what program you would like to launch. To use this Windows utility to view and copy your pictures to your PC, select Microsoft Scanner and Camera Wizard, and then click OK (see Figure 5-11).



Figure 5-11

3. If you are using Windows 98, the Found New Hardware Wizard will likely pop up and ask you to install the drivers from the setup CD. Also, you will need to install the software included on that same CD in order to transfer photos to and from the camera.

Connect a Camcorder

If you own a digital camcorder that you use to make home movies, it probably has a USB or FireWire connector. If so, you can hook up the camcorder to your computer, transfer the video to your hard drive, and edit it. To connect a camcorder to your PC, follow these steps:

1. Most digital camcorders come with a USB or FireWire cable. Connect one end of the cable to the USB or FireWire port on the camcorder, and then connect the other end of the cable to a USB or FireWire port on your computer.
2. Windows should detect the new camcorder and search for “drivers” to complete the installation. If Windows cannot find them, you will have to install the proper drivers by using the installation CD that came with the camcorder or by downloading them from the manufacturer’s Web site.
3. Use the CD that came with the camcorder to install a special video-editing program, which will enable you to transfer video clips to and from your computer and edit those clips.

Connect a Video Game Controller

To play video games on your computer, you need to connect a game controller such as a joystick, gamepad, or steering wheel.

Note

These steps apply only to USB video game controllers.

1. Connect your controller to a USB port on your computer.
2. Windows should detect the new controller and search for “drivers” to complete the installation. If Windows cannot find them, you will have to install the proper drivers by using the installation CD that came with the controller or by downloading them from the manufacturer’s Web site.
3. After installation, configure and customize your controller by doing the following:
 - a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
 - b. Click the Control Panel. (If you don’t see this option, your Start menu is in classic mode. In that case, click Settings, and then select the Control Panel.)
 - c. If the Control Panel is in Category view, click the Printers and Other Hardware category, and then click the Game Controllers icon. If the Control Panel is in classic view, simply double-click the Game Controllers icon.
 - d. A window opens. In it, click the name of your controller, and then click the Properties button.

Connect a Scanner

If you have a large collection of family photos you want to preserve by digitizing them into your computer, you will need to install a scanner.

For USB and FireWire scanners

1. Most scanners come with a USB or FireWire cable. Connect one end of the cable to the USB or FireWire port on the scanner, and then connect the other end of the cable to a USB or FireWire port on your computer.
2. Most new scanners have their scanning heads locked to prevent them from being damaged. To unlock the scanning head, look for a knob or lever located near the scanner’s power cord or on/off switch.
3. Connect the power cord to the scanner, and then plug the other end into an electrical outlet.
4. Windows should detect the new scanner and search for “drivers” to complete the installation. If Windows cannot find them, you will have to install the proper drivers by using the installation CD that came with the scanner or by downloading them from the manufacturer’s Web site.

For *parallel-port scanners*

1. Shut down your computer before connecting the scanner.
2. Disconnect any devices that are currently connected to your computer's parallel port.
3. Connect one end of the parallel-port cable (which should have been included with your scanner) to the parallel port on the scanner, and then connect the other end to the parallel port on your computer.
4. If you disconnected a printer from the computer's parallel port, connect it to the printer port on the scanner.
5. Most new scanners have their scanning heads locked to prevent them from being damaged. To unlock the scanning head, look for a knob or lever located near the scanner's power cord or on/off switch.
6. Connect the power cord to the scanner, and then plug the other end into an electrical outlet.
7. Turn on your computer.
8. Windows should detect the new scanner and search for "drivers" to complete the installation. If Windows cannot find them, you will have to install the proper drivers by using the installation CD that came with the scanner or by downloading them from the manufacturer's Web site.

6



USING DIGITAL MUSIC PLAYERS

If you have been around long enough to remember vinyl records and 8-track tapes, you might be amazed at how far music technology has come. Now you can carry your entire music collection with you in a tiny device that fits in your hand or shirt pocket. Generally referred to as digital music players, these gadgets have forever changed the way people listen to music—and have made long plane rides or family road trips a lot easier.

Choose a Digital Music Player

A typical digital music player—as shown in Figure 6-1—can hold hundreds or even thousands of songs. All of these players fall into two categories: flash players that store music on internal or external flash memory cards, or hard-drive players that store music on miniature hard drives. See the sections that follow for advantages and disadvantages of each.

Note

Some digital music players require Windows XP and don't work with older versions of Windows. Also, some music players require USB 2.0 ports on your computer and don't work with older USB 1.1 ports.

Do It Yourself

Choose a digital music player

Assemble a digital music library

Solve common problems



Figure 6-1

Flash Players

- **No moving parts:** Because Flash players do not contain moving parts that can be damaged, they are ideal to use during high-impact activities such as jogging and other exercise.
- **Less expensive:** Typically between \$99 and \$200.
- **Small and lightweight:** Usually fits in the palm of your hand. Some are the size of a pack of chewing gum.
- **Holds hundreds of songs:** The average storage capacity is between 128MB and 1GB, which is equivalent to 4 to 16 hours of music.
- **Good battery life:** Usually between 10 and 45 hours.

Hard-Drive Players

- **Has moving parts:** These players use a small hard drive to store your music, which is similar to the hard drive found in your computer. Because hard drives have moving parts, they must be handled carefully. Therefore, a hard-drive music player should not be used during rigorous activities such as jogging and exercising.
- **More expensive:** \$200 to \$400.
- **Bigger and bulkier:** Typically they are larger than flash players, but most can still fit in your hand.

FYI

Digital music players aren't the only devices capable of playing digital songs. Some modern portable CD players can play discs containing songs in the MP3 and WMA formats. In fact, these CD players are usually less expensive than most digital music players.

- **Holds thousands of songs:** The average storage capacity is between 4GB and 60GB, which is equivalent to 60 to 1,000 hours of music.
- **Shorter battery life:** Usually between 12 and 20 hours.
- **Additional features:** Some players have fascinating enhancements such as a touch screen, backlit screen, sleep timer, video games, a calendar, to-do lists, and the capability to show digital photos or videos and serve as an external hard drive for your computer.

Assemble a Digital Music Library

After you have purchased a digital music player, your next steps are to create a digital music library and load the songs onto your player.

Convert CDs into Digital Songs

To transform the tracks on a standard music CD into digital files that can be heard on your computer or music player, you need to “rip” the songs off the CD and encode them into an audio format such as MP3 or WMA. To do that, you will need to use a digital music program. Here are some popular titles (in no particular order):

- **Windows Media Player:** Comes free with Windows XP
- **MusicMatch Jukebox:** www.musicmatch.com
- **Audiograbber:** www.audiograbber.com-us.net
- **dBpowerAMP Music Converter:** www.dbpoweramp.com
- **Easy CD-DA Extractor:** www.poikosoft.com

Buy Digital Songs from Internet Music Stores

Another way to acquire digital songs is to purchase them from an Internet store. Along with selling individual tracks for less than a dollar a piece, many of these stores offer monthly or yearly subscription services that enable you to hear streaming audio or download countless songs to your portable music player. Here are the most popular online music stores (in no particular order):

- **MSN Music:** <http://music.msn.com>
- **Napster:** www.napster.com
- **Yahoo Music Unlimited:** <http://music.yahoo.com/unlimited>
- **Music Now:** www.musicnow.com
- **Apple iTunes:** www.apple.com/itunes
- **Rhapsody:** www.listen.com
- **Wal-Mart Music Downloads:** <http://musicdownloads.walmart.com>
- **eMusic:** www.emusic.com

Load Songs onto Your Music Player

Once you have created or purchased digital songs, you can transfer them to your player by following these steps:

Note

These steps apply to Windows XP only.

- 1.** Using the USB or FireWire cable that came with your player, connect one end to the player and the other end to a USB or FireWire port on your computer. If this is your first time connecting the player, Windows XP automatically attempts to install the proper “drivers” that will enable the player to work with it. If this process is successful, proceed to Step 2. If not, you need to install the correct drivers by using the CD-ROM that came with the player.
- 2.** After the player has been properly installed, you can transfer music to it. Most players have two ways to do this: You can use its special software (which is usually included on the installation CD-ROM that came with the player), or you can use Windows. If you want to use the player’s software, insert the CD into your computer, install the program, and follow its onscreen instructions. If you want to use Windows to transfer your music files, proceed to Step 3.
- 3.** To transfer songs through Windows, double-click the My Computer icon on your desktop. If this icon is not available, click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows and click My Computer. If you can’t find the My Computer icon anywhere, do the following:
 - a.** Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b.** Select Properties.
 - c.** A window opens. Click the Desktop tab.
 - d.** Near the bottom of the window, click the Customize Desktop button.
 - e.** Another window opens. On the General tab, beneath the words Desktop Icons, place a checkmark in the My Computer box.
 - f.** Click OK.
 - g.** You are returned to the previous screen. Click Apply.
 - h.** Click OK.
 - i.** The My Computer icon appears on your desktop. Double-click it.
- 4.** A window opens. Double-click the icon for your portable music player.
- 5.** Another window opens, showing you the music currently stored on the player (if any). This is the window into which you must place your songs in order to transfer them to your player. To do so, you

can drag the songs from your music folder and drop them into the player's window, or you can copy the songs and paste them into the player's window.

6. When you are finished, disconnect the USB or FireWire cable from your music player.

Solve Common Problems

Like any high-tech equipment, digital music players are not perfect. Here are some common problems and their five-minute fixes.

Music Player Can't Connect to Your PC

- Check the owner's manual to see if you are using the player correctly.
- Try connecting your player to a different computer.

Songs Won't Play Properly or Sound Distorted

- Your music files might be corrupt or infected. To avoid this problem, do not download illegal, pirated songs through file-trading software such as LimeWire, Kazaa, or iMesh.
- To guarantee that the songs you download are completely legal, free of distortion, and of high digital quality, buy them from official online music stores such as those listed in the section "Buy Digital Songs from Internet Music Stores" earlier in this chapter.

Battery Life Drains Quickly

- Do not listen to your music at an extremely loud volume. Instead, use a medium level.
- Do not listen to a snippet of one song and then immediately jump to a new one. Instead of forcing your player to constantly search its memory for the songs you want—which can drain battery power—try listening to an entire song before selecting a new one.
- If your player has a backlight, use it sparingly.
- If your player has an audio equalizer or bass booster, use it sparingly.

Windows Media Audio Files Won't Play Properly or at All

- Your Windows Media Audio (WMA) files might be using a copy protection feature such as DRM (digital rights management) or PRM (personal rights management). Usually these protection schemes are turned on when the WMA files are created. Therefore, if the songs were not originally created to be used solely on your computer, there isn't much you can do to make them play.

- If you use Windows Media Player or other CD-ripper programs to make WMA files from your music CDs, disable the option to use copy protection or DRM. Here's how to do it in Windows Media Player:

Note

This five-minute fix requires you to access Windows Media Player's "menu bar," which contains the drop-down menus you must click in order to change the player's settings. If the menu bar does not automatically appear at the top of your player, you can make it visible by simultaneously pressing the Ctrl key and the M key on your keyboard.

1. Open Windows Media Player.
2. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
3. Select Options.
4. A window opens. Click the Rip Music tab.
5. Look for the Copy protect music option. Next to this option, remove the checkmark from the box.
6. Click Apply.
7. Click OK.

7

5-Minute Fixes



TROUBLESHOOTING

Let's face it: Sometimes computers can be so frustrating that they make you want to abandon them forever and switch to an old-fashioned, reliable typewriter. But before you take such a drastic action, scan through this chapter to learn how to troubleshoot and solve common PC problems.

Computer Randomly Crashes or Displays Blue Screen

If you have used Windows for several years, you have probably experienced numerous freezes, crashes, or the error messages jokingly referred to as “blue screens of death” (see Figure 7-1). If shutting down and restarting your computer doesn't solve these problems, you might benefit from the fixes in the following categories.

Do It Yourself

Computer randomly crashes or displays blue screen

Nothing happens when the computer is turned on

Computer takes a long time to power up

Computer continuously accesses the hard drive

Laptop battery life is too short

Monitor has poor image quality

Screen flickers

Invalid system disk while booting

Software installation goes horribly wrong

New hardware doesn't work

Computer or software won't respond

Keyboard won't respond

Video game doesn't work correctly

No sound

Determine whether a program or game will run on your computer

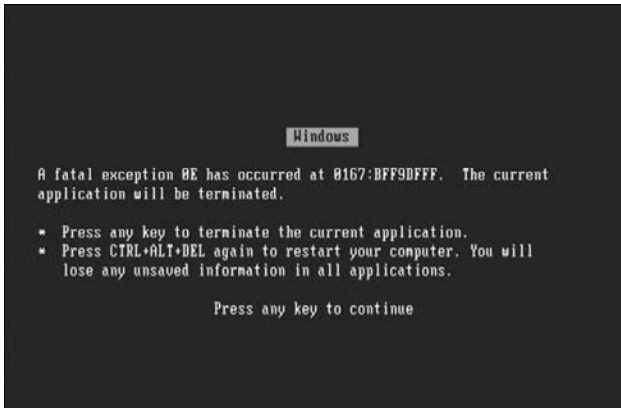


Figure 7-1

Software troubles

1. If you recently installed a new program, try uninstalling it. For more information, see the 5-minute fix “Software Installation Goes Horribly Wrong” later in this chapter.
2. If uninstalling the software solves your problem, contact its manufacturer for information on how to install the program properly so it won’t conflict with Windows or with your other software.

Overheated computer

1. Download software to analyze the temperature inside your computer. One option is to visit www.hmonitor.net and download a program called Hardware Sensors Monitor. If you find the temperature in your computer to be near the upper limit, which is generally 120 degrees Fahrenheit, overheating is probably causing your problems.
2. Move your computer’s base unit so that it is at least 6 to 12 inches away from all walls, desks, or anything else that might prevent air from flowing into your PC through its fans and exhaust ports.
3. Listen for the sound of your computer’s internal cooling fans. If you don’t hear them, they may have malfunctioned. In that case, replace them.

Malfunctioning USB hub

1. If you have a USB hub, disconnect it for a few hours to see if it is the source of your troubles.
2. If removing the hub does not correct your problems, go ahead and reconnect it.

If you have tried these fixes and your PC still has problems, it is possible that it might have a software conflict, faulty memory, or a malfunctioning hard drive. In that case, contact Geeks On Call.

Nothing Happens When the Computer Is Turned On

If you attempt to start your computer but nothing happens—no lights, no fan noise, no sounds, nothing—follow these steps:

1. Make sure your computer and your monitor are plugged into a power strip or an electrical outlet.
2. If you are using a power strip, check to see if it is actually plugged into an electrical outlet and is turned on. Most surge protectors have an On/Off switch. Make sure this switch is set to the On position (which usually causes a light to turn on).
3. Find out if the electricity in your home or office has malfunctioned:
 - a. See whether the lights in your room are working.
 - b. Plug a light into your computer's power strip to see if that strip is working properly. It is possible that the power strip has malfunctioned.
4. If you are certain that both your computer and monitor are receiving electrical power, it is possible that the power supply or another piece of hardware inside your computer has died. In that case, call Geeks On Call.

Computer Takes a Long Time to Power Up

Having a computer that is slow to start up doesn't necessarily mean there is something wrong with it. The slowness can be caused by important programs that often take a while to load (such as antivirus software) or by having too many programs on your computer. Your first remedy is to remove any software you no longer use (such as old video games). If that doesn't work, try adding more RAM to your computer by following the 5-minute fix "Add More System Memory (RAM)" in Chapter 2. If the slowness continues, try reducing the amount of programs that load when Windows starts. Here's how:

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click Run.
3. A window opens. Type **msconfig** in the blank, and then click OK or press the Enter key on your keyboard.
4. A window named System Configuration Utility opens. Click the Startup tab on the far right.
5. In the left column (Startup Item) is a list of programs with checkmarks next to them (see Figure 7-2). A checkmark indicates that the program is scheduled to launch each time Windows starts. To prevent a program from loading at startup, remove the checkmark from its box. Here are guidelines about which programs to allow or to disable:
 - Disable non-essential multimedia programs such as `qttask` (which is part of the QuickTime software), `realsched` (which is part of the RealPlayer software), or Adobe Reader.

- Allow common processes for Windows and Microsoft Office.
- Allow programs related to your antivirus software, anti-spyware software, or firewall. For example, if you use the ZoneAlarm firewall and Spy Sweeper anti-spyware program, then you should allow the startup programs named zclient and SpySweeper.
- Allow programs related to your printer. For example, if you have an Epson printer, then allow the startup program named Epson Status Monitor.

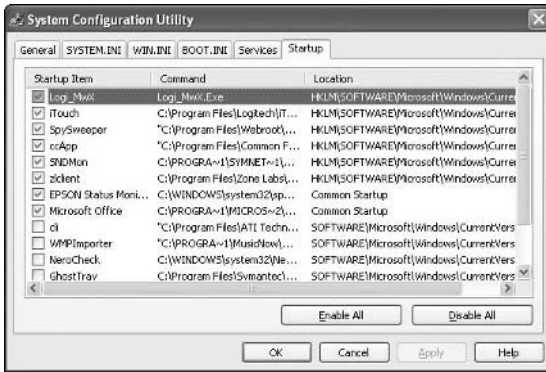


Figure 7-2

6. If you are uncertain about whether or not to disable a particular program, do the following:
 - a. Write the program's name on a piece of paper.
 - b. Connect to the Internet.
 - c. In your Web browser, type **http://www.processlibrary.com** to visit the Process Library.
 - d. Near the top of this Web site's main page is a search box labeled Search for a Process. Type the name of your program into this box, and then click the Search Now button.
 - e. You are taken to a Web page that explains what your program is used for and whether or not it is essential to your computer's performance.
7. When you have finished tweaking the System Configuration Utility, click Apply.
8. Click OK.
9. A message alerts you that you must restart your computer for the changes to take effect. Click the Restart button. Your computer automatically shuts down and reboots.

10. When you return to Windows, a message alerts you that you have just used the System Configuration Utility to change the way Windows starts. Put a checkmark in the Don't show this message or launch the System Configuration Utility when Windows starts box.
11. Click OK.

Computer Continuously Accesses the Hard Drive

Does the hard drive in your computer sound like it is running non-stop? Does the small light on the front of your computer constantly flash, indicating that the hard drive is always being used? If so, your hard drive may be overworked because you don't have enough system memory (RAM). Here's what to do:

1. Restart your computer.
2. Check how much RAM your computer has. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Determine Your Amount of System Memory (RAM)" in Chapter 1.
3. Add more memory, preferably twice as much as your current amount. For more information on doing this, refer to the 5-minute fix "Add More System Memory (RAM)" in Chapter 2.

Laptop Battery Life Is Too Short

Laptop computers are quite convenient — assuming they have power. If you can't plug a laptop into an electrical outlet, it has to rely on batteries. Most laptops run only two to three hours on a fully charged battery. To extend the life of your laptop's battery, do the following:

1. Lower the brightness of your screen.
2. Disable your wireless card. To do so, double-click the wireless icon in the lower-right corner of Windows, and then click Disable (see Figure 7-3).



Figure 7-3

3. To reduce the battery's usage and extends its life, configure the power options in Windows.

For Windows XP and Windows 2000

- a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
- b. Click Control Panel. If you don't see this option, your Start menu is in Classic mode. In that case, click Settings and then select the Control Panel.
- c. If the Control Panel is in Category view, click the Performance and Maintenance category and then click the Power Options icon. If the Control Panel is in Classic view, simply double-click the Power Options icon.
- d. Select an appropriate Power Scheme (see Figure 7-4).
- e. Click OK.

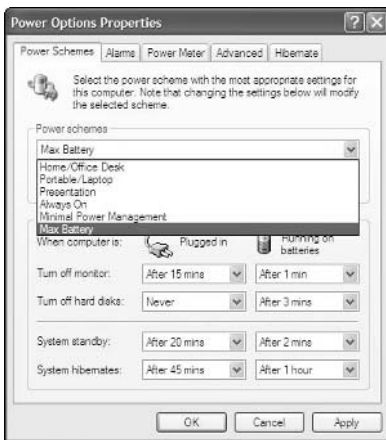


Figure 7-4

For Windows 98 and Windows ME

- a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
 - b. Click the Control Panel.
 - c. Double-click Power Management.
 - d. Select an appropriate Power Scheme.
 - e. Click OK.
4. If your battery continues to last for less than one hour, replace it.

Monitor Has Poor Image Quality

Poor image quality on your computer's monitor can be annoying in more ways than one. Not only does it make fine details in photos or videos difficult to see, but it also causes eye strain. If the images on your monitor look grainy or distorted, try the following:

1. Increase the resolution of your monitor:
 - a. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
 - b. Select Properties.
 - c. A window opens. Select the Settings tab.
 - d. Move the Screen Resolution slider bar to a higher resolution. If your current resolution is 640×480 pixels, move it to 800×600 pixels. If your current resolution is 800×600 pixels, move it to $1,024 \times 768$ pixels (see Figure 7-5).

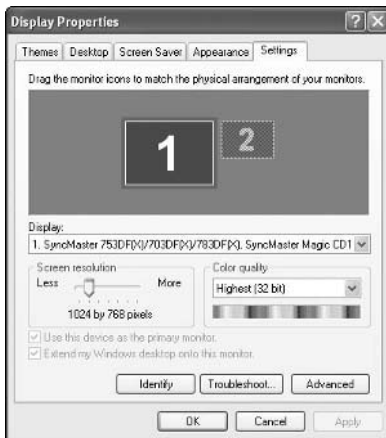


Figure 7-5

2. Unplug the monitor from your computer and look for bent or missing pins on the end of the monitor's video cable. If some are bent, try straightening them. If some are missing, you will need to replace the cable.
3. If the images on your monitor are poor or grainy only when you use a specific program such as a video game, you may need to upgrade your video card to a newer model that can handle advanced graphics. For more information, refer to the 5-minute fix "Replace Your Video Card" in Chapter 2.

Screen Flickers

If your computer's monitor appears to constantly flicker or blink, its "refresh rate" is probably too low. Rather than suffer eye strain by continuing to use your PC under those conditions, you should increase the refresh rate.

For Windows XP Home/Pro and Windows 2000

1. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
2. Select Properties.

3. A window opens. Click the Settings tab.
4. Click the Advanced button.
5. Click the Monitor tab.
6. Choose a higher refresh rate (if available). Generally you want 75 Hertz or higher (see Figure 7-6).



Figure 7-6

7. Click OK.
8. If this doesn't fix the problem, you may need to replace the monitor.

For Windows 98 and Windows ME

1. Right-click in the empty space on your desktop.
2. Select Properties.
3. A window opens. Click the Settings tab.
4. Click the Advanced button.
5. Click the Adapter tab.
6. Choose a higher refresh rate (if available). Generally, you want 75 Hertz or higher.
7. Click OK.
8. If this doesn't fix the problem, you may need to replace the monitor.

Invalid System Disk While Booting

If, after turning on your computer, you see a message that says you have an invalid system disk or that you need to remove a disk, you can easily solve this problem:

1. Eject the floppy disk from your floppy drive.
2. Press any key on your keyboard to restart your computer.

Software Installation Goes Horribly Wrong

Once in a while, installing a new program can wreak havoc with your entire computer, causing it to freeze, crash, or not operate normally. If so, do the following:

1. Uninstall the software:

For Windows XP Home/Pro and Windows 2000

- a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
- b. Click the Control Panel. If you don't see this option, your Start menu is in Classic mode. In that case, click Settings, and then select the Control Panel.
- c. Double-click the Add or Remove Programs icon.
- d. Select the software and click the Remove or Change/Remove button (see Figure 7-7).



Figure 7-7

For Windows 98 and Windows ME

- a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
- b. Click on Settings.
- c. Click the Control Panel.
- d. Double-click the Add or Remove Programs icon.
- e. Select the software you want to remove, and then click the Add/Remove button (see Figure 7-8).

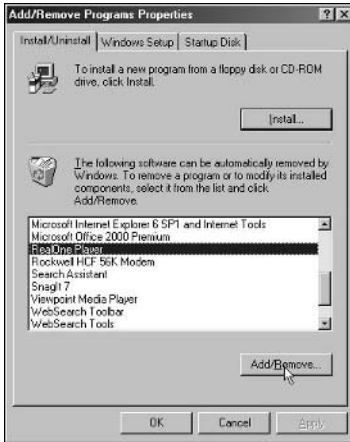


Figure 7-8

2. Shut down your computer and restart it.
3. If your computer still has problems after uninstalling the software, you can use a last-ditch fix called System Restore. In a sense, System Restore sends your computer back in time to a day when it was working properly. Here's how to use it:
 - a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
 - b. Click on All Programs.
 - c. Select Accessories.
 - d. Select System Tools.
 - e. Click the words System Restore.
 - f. The System Restore window opens. Click the Restore my computer to an earlier time button (see Figure 7-9).

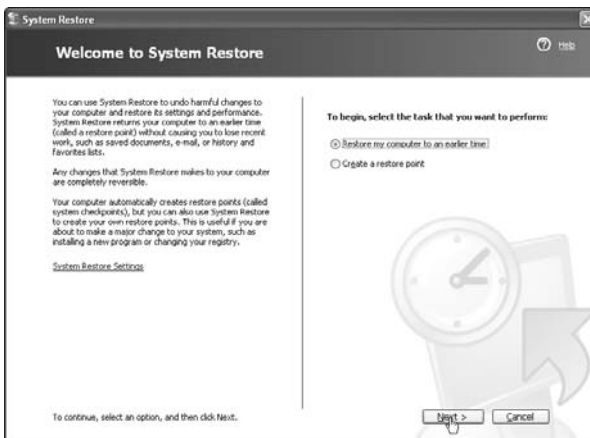


Figure 7-9

- g. Click the Next button, located near the lower-right corner of this window.
- h. A calendar appears. In it, click on a day when your computer was working properly. For example, if your PC had problems after installing Microsoft Works, choose that specific restore point (see Figure 7-10).

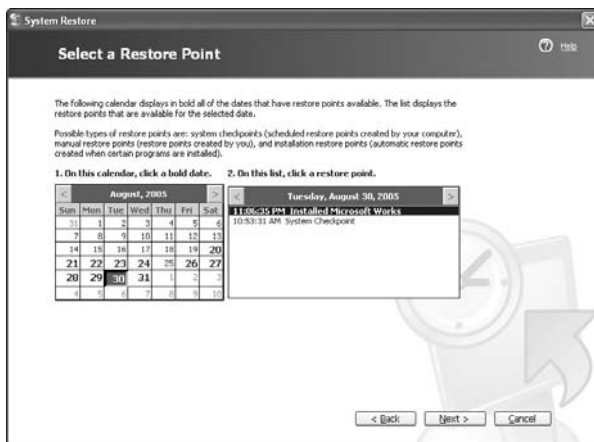


Figure 7-10

- i. Click Next.
- j. To confirm your choice, click Next again.
- k. The System Restore process begins. Moments later, your computer automatically restarts itself. When it boots up, follow the onscreen instructions.

New Hardware Doesn't Work

If a new piece of hardware you just connected to your computer doesn't work properly—or not at all—follow these fixes:

1. Make sure you properly followed the hardware's instructions word for word (and make sure you followed the directions that apply to your particular version of Windows).
2. Check the hardware to ensure that it is hooked up correctly and has a secure connection. For example, if you installed a PCI card, make sure it was properly snapped into place and is not loose. Or, if you installed a printer, make sure its connection to the computer is tight and secure.
3. Update Windows with the latest patches and drivers by visiting <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com> (don't put a www in front of this Web address).

4. Try uninstalling and then reinstalling the hardware.
5. If the hardware still doesn't work properly, check its documentation or contact its manufacturer by visiting its Web site or calling its customer support line.

Computer or Software Doesn't Respond

One minute your computer is working fine. The next minute, everything freezes. Windows, your software, and your mouse don't respond to your commands. Sound familiar? If you are a regular user of Windows, this scenario has probably happened to you more than once. The next time it does, try the following:

1. Wait a minute because your computer may just be experiencing a temporary freeze (which can happen if you try to open or run several programs at once).
2. Open the Windows Task Manager by simultaneously pressing the Ctrl, Alt, and Delete keys on your keyboard. If 30 seconds have elapsed and the Task Manager has not opened, proceed to Step 5.
3. When the Task Manager opens, click the Applications tab (see Figure 7-11).

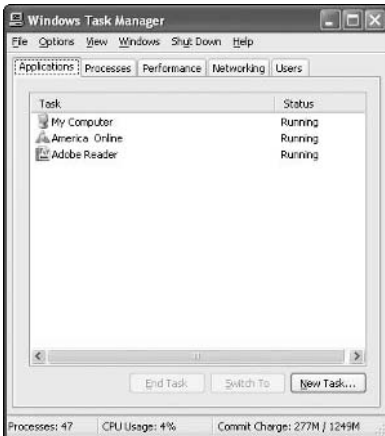


Figure 7-11

4. If the Task Manager indicates that a particular task or program is not responding, click its name, and then click the End Task button (see Figure 7-12). If a window pops up and asks whether you want to end the task or program, click the End Task button again.
5. If the troubled task or program continues to be unresponsive—or if your computer as a whole is experiencing problems—save any open documents (if you can), and then turn off your computer by pushing or holding down the power button on the front of your computer. Next, restart the computer.

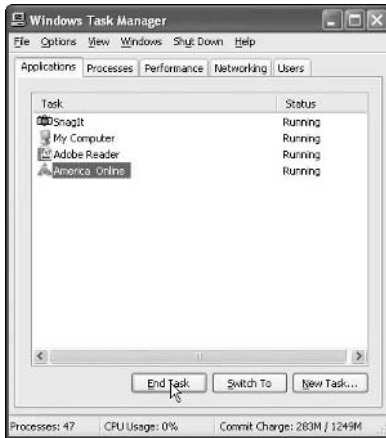


Figure 7-12

Keyboard Doesn't Respond

If your keyboard suddenly stops working, it might be unplugged or damaged. Here's what to do:

1. Make sure your keyboard is connected to your computer. If not, plug it back in and restart the computer.
2. If your keyboard is connected, slightly wiggle the connector and make sure it fits snugly into the port. Next, restart the computer.
3. If your keyboard uses a PS/2 connector, it is possible that the connector has been damaged or has worn out. Look for bent or missing pins on the end of the connector. If some are bent, try straightening them. If some are missing, you will need to replace the keyboard.

Video Game Doesn't Work Correctly

A common problem experienced by PC video-game users is slow or sputtering graphics. If you experience similar issues, here are some tips:

1. Refer to Chapter 1 for information on analyzing your PC. After you know what type of hardware and software your PC has, you can compare it to the system requirements listed on the game's package.
2. If your PC is not compatible with the game's system requirements, you might be able to upgrade some of your hardware components. For more information on upgrading a PC, refer to Chapter 2.
3. If your PC meets the system requirements, refer to the owner's manual or documentation that came with the video game to see if it provides tips on troubleshooting problems. If the manual doesn't list any tips or if you don't have a manual, contact the game's manufacturer by visiting its Web site or calling the customer support number.

No Sound

Have your computer's speakers suddenly gone silent? Then one of these fixes should do the trick:

1. If you have external speakers, make sure they have been plugged into an electrical outlet and have been turned on (usually a light will illuminate to indicate that the speakers are powered up).
2. Check to see if the sound on your computer has been turned down or muted. Double-click the sound icon located in the lower-right corner of Windows. If this icon is not available, do the following:
 - a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
 - b. Click Programs (or All Programs).
 - c. Click Accessories.
 - d. Click Entertainment (or Multimedia).
 - e. Click Volume Control.

Look for any controls that have been muted or turned down, especially the main volume control (see Figure 7-13). If you can't see all of the controls, click the Options drop-down menu, and then select Properties. Make sure that all of the volume controls are checked; then click OK (see Figure 7-14).

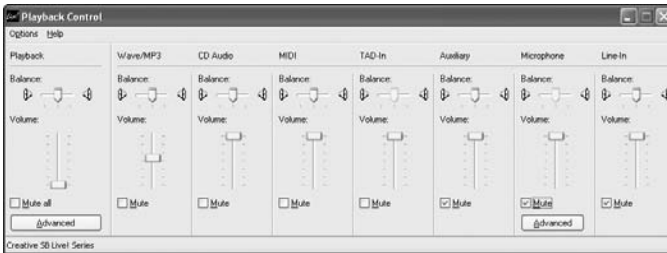


Figure 7-13



Figure 7-14

3. If you have external speakers, make sure their audio wires or cables are connected properly.
4. If the sound still doesn't work, your sound card or speakers might have to be replaced.

Determine Whether a Program or Game Will Run on Your Computer

Before buying new hardware or software, make sure they will work properly on your computer by following this advice:

1. Refer to Chapter 1 for information on analyzing your PC. After you know what type of hardware and software your PC has, you can compare it to the system requirements listed on the package of the game or program you want to install.
2. If your PC is not compatible with the program's system requirements, you might be able to upgrade some of your hardware components. For more information on upgrading a PC, refer to Chapter 2.

PART III

POPULAR PROGRAMS

If you are upgrading a PC or buying a new one, your choices of hardware are seemingly endless. But when it comes to software, the pickings are slim. Most categories of software are dominated by a particular program—for example, Microsoft Word is the most widely used word processor, and Microsoft Excel is the most popular spreadsheet. This section of the book examines several popular software titles, which may already be installed on your computer, and gives you 5-minute fixes to help you master their important features.

8

5-Minute Fixes

MICROSOFT WORD

Without a doubt, Microsoft Word is the most popular word-processing program on Earth—for good reasons. Not only is it easy to use, but it also has many powerful features that you may not be aware of. This chapter explores some things you can do to get the most out of Word.

Alter the Office Assistant

The Office Assistant is the animated paper clip that is supposed to help you solve your Microsoft Word problems (but more often than not, it seems to get in the way). If you want to get rid of the assistant or change its animated character, follow these fixes.

Make the Office Assistant Disappear

1. Right-click the Office Assistant.
2. Click Hide (see Figure 8-1).



Figure 8-1

Or

1. Click the Help drop-down menu.
2. Click Hide the Office Assistant (see Figure 8-2).

Do It Yourself

[Alter the Office Assistant](#)

[Change the default font](#)

[Tweak the toolbars](#)

[Copy and paste](#)

[Use Find and Replace](#)

[Change the headers and footers](#)

[Automatically double-space your document](#)

[Insert charts](#)

[Insert pictures into your document](#)

[Change the margins](#)

[Use auto bullet and numbering](#)

[Use the Format Painter](#)

[Print on envelopes](#)

[Print on template paper](#)

[Recover documents after power outages](#)

[Convert a Word document to a PDF file](#)

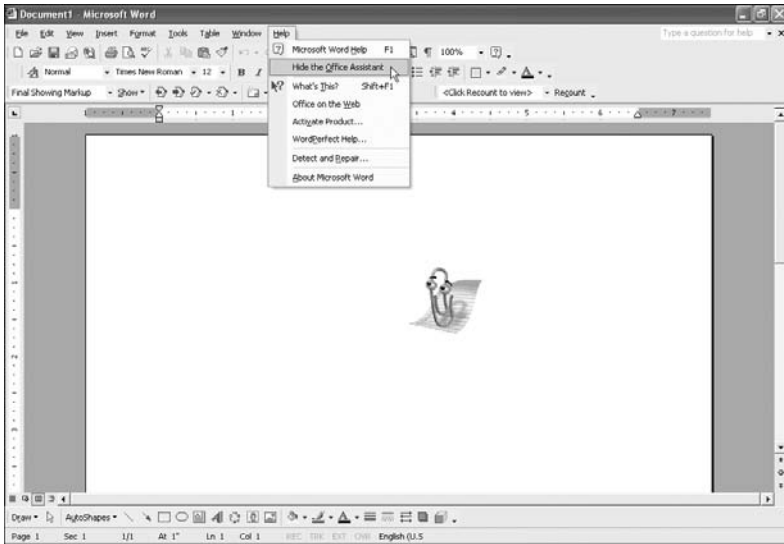


Figure 8-2

Make the Office Assistant Appear

1. Click the Help drop-down menu.
2. Click Show the Office Assistant.

Change the Office Assistant Character

1. Right-click the Office Assistant.
2. Click Choose Assistant (see Figure 8-3).

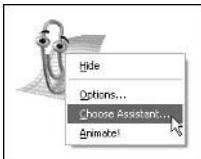


Figure 8-3

Change the Office Assistant's Settings

1. Right-click on the Office Assistant.
2. Click Options.
3. Make any desired changes.
4. Click OK.

Move the Office Assistant

1. Click the Office Assistant and hold.
2. Drag it to your desired location and release it.

Change the Default Font

If the old faithful Times New Roman 12-point font doesn't excite you, or if you find yourself constantly switching fonts when creating a new document, you can change the default font to one you like better.

1. Click the Format drop-down menu.
2. Click Font.
3. Choose your preferred font settings (see Figure 8-4).



Figure 8-4

4. Click the Default button.
5. You will be asked if you want the default font to be changed. Click Yes.

Tweak the Toolbars

In Microsoft Word, a toolbar is a horizontal grouping of buttons that serve as shortcuts to frequently used commands. To give Word a customized appearance, you can choose which toolbars you want to use and where they should be positioned.

Control Which Toolbars Are Shown

1. Right-click on any toolbar. The toolbars that are currently being shown will have a checkmark next to them.
2. Uncheck the toolbars you want to get rid of, and then click any you want to use.

Move the Toolbars

1. Move your cursor to the start of the toolbar.
2. When your cursor changes to an image that has four arrows (pointing up, down, left, and right), use the left mouse button to click the toolbar. Be sure to keep the mouse button pressed down. Next, drag the toolbar to your desired location. To drop the toolbar, release the mouse button.

Copy and Paste

One of the simplest tasks you can do with a computer is also one of the most useful: copying and pasting text. You can copy text from almost anything on your computer, such as your Web browser, e-mail, and text files, and then paste that information into another format. If you aren't familiar with the different ways to copy and paste text, here are some tips:

1. Highlight the text or other objects, and then tell the computer you want to copy the selection by doing the following:
 - a. Simultaneously press the Control (Ctrl) key and the C key on your keyboard.
 - b. An alternate method is to right-click the selection and select Copy (see Figure 8-5).

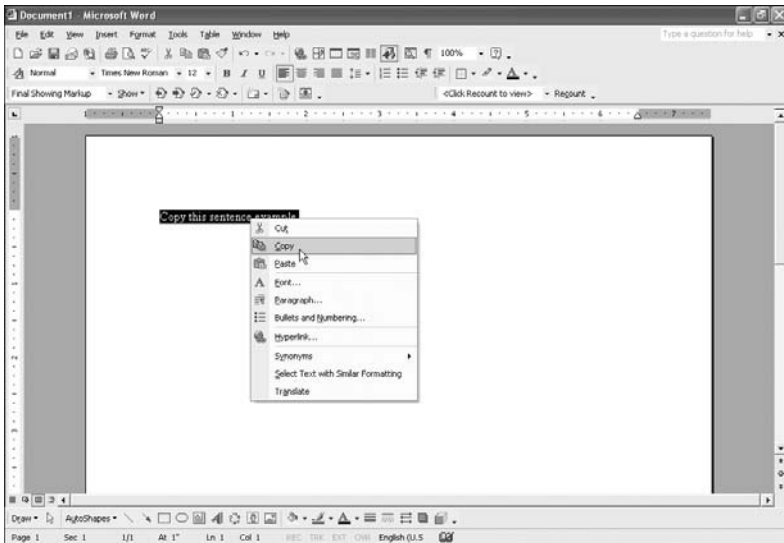


Figure 8-5

- c. Another method is to click the Edit drop-down menu and select Copy.

2. After copying the text or other objects, you need to paste them by clicking somewhere in the input field (such as in the middle of a paragraph in a Microsoft Word document). Here's how:
 - a. Simultaneously press the Control (Ctrl) key and V key on your keyboard.
 - b. An alternate method is to right-click where you want to insert the text, and then click Paste.
 - c. Another method is to click the Edit drop-down menu, and then select Paste (see Figure 8-6).

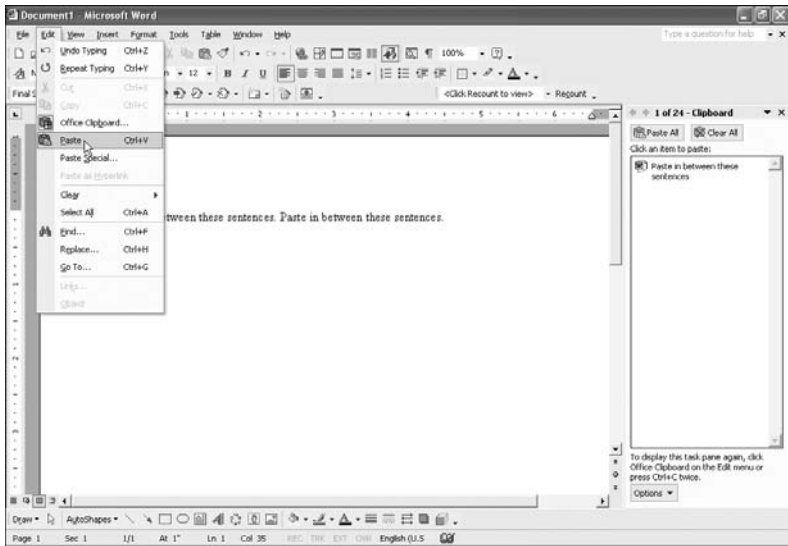


Figure 8-6

Use Find and Replace

If you want to replace a particular word or phrase that appears multiple times in your document, you don't have to manually locate and delete each instance of it. Instead, use the Find and Replace feature to handle the process automatically.

1. Click the Edit drop-down menu.
2. Click Replace.
3. The Find & Replace window opens. Specify what word you want to find and what its replacement word should be.
4. For advanced search options, click the More button (see Figure 8-7).

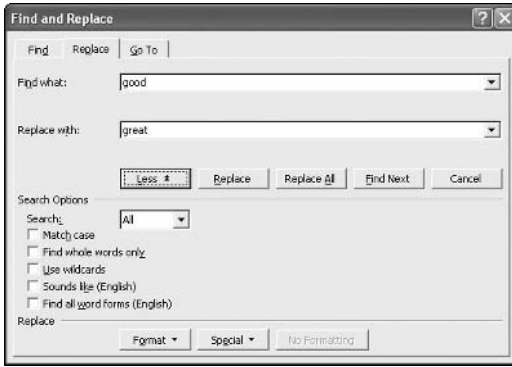


Figure 8-7

Change the Headers and Footers

Headers and footers are the parts of a document containing information that remains the same on each page, such as the page number, date and time, author's name, and so forth. To access the header or footer in order to add or remove text, follow these steps:

1. Click the View drop-down menu.
2. Click Header and Footer.
3. To view the footer, switch between header and footer by clicking the button on the floating header and footer toolbar (see Figure 8-8).

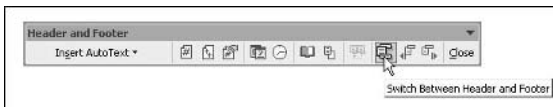


Figure 8-8

Automatically Double-Space Your Document

Rather than manually double-space your document, you can automate the process by doing the following:

1. Click where you want to start having the new line spacing or highlight the text you want to have the new line spacing.
2. Click the Format drop-down menu.
3. Click Paragraph.
4. Set your desired spacing. For example, to double-space your text, click the Line spacing drop-down menu, and then select Double (see Figure 8-9).

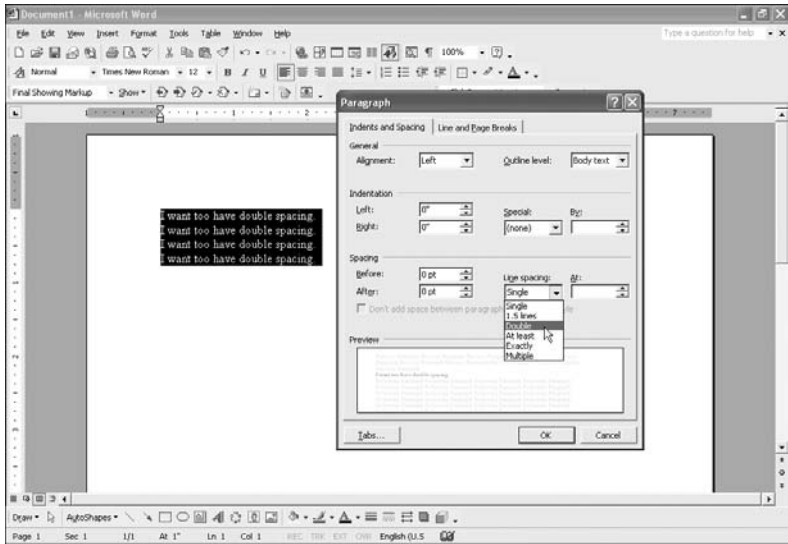


Figure 8-9

Insert Charts

Using charts is a great way to add more visual appeal to your Word documents.

Input Raw Data

To insert data into a chart, do the following:

1. Click the Insert drop-down menu.
2. Click Picture.
3. Click Chart.
4. Input your data using the example as your guide (see Figure 8-10).

	A	B	C	D	E
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	
1 East	20.4	27.4	90	20.4	
2 West	30.6	38.6	34.6	31.6	
3 North	45.9	46.9	45	43.9	

Figure 8-10

5. To name the chart and axis, and to set other properties, click the Chart drop-down menu. Next, click Chart Options (see Figure 8-11).

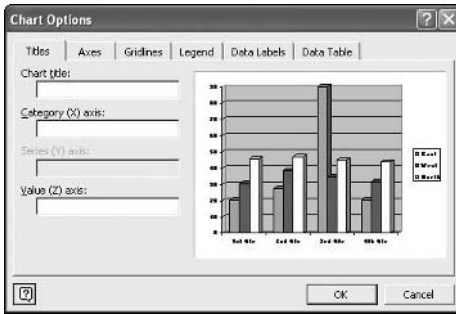


Figure 8-11

6. When you are finished, click somewhere in the document, which will take you out of the chart editor. Then you should see the finished product.

Use Data from an Excel Document

A great time-saving technique is to import data into Word from an existing Excel spreadsheet.

1. Click the Insert drop-down menu.
2. Click Picture.
3. Click Chart.
4. Click the Edit drop-down menu.
5. Click Import File.
6. Find and select a spreadsheet file.
7. Click Open.
8. If you have more than one sheet, select which one to import.
9. Click OK.
10. To name the chart and axis, and to set other properties, click the Chart drop-down menu. Next, click Chart Options.
11. When you're finished click somewhere in the document, and it will take you out of the chart editor. Then you should see the finished product (see Figure 8-12).

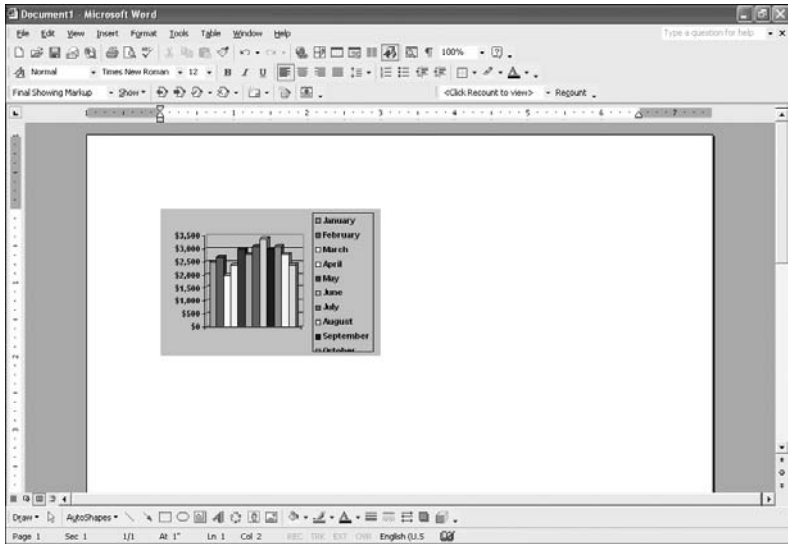


Figure 8-12

Use a Table in Your Word Document

If you created a table in your Word document but think it is too boring, you can easily turn it into an eye-pleasing chart.

1. Highlight the table you want to convert to a chart.
2. Click the Insert drop-down menu.
3. Select Picture.
4. Click Chart.
5. To name the chart and axis, and to set other properties, click the Chart drop-down menu. Next, click Chart Options.
6. When you're finished, click somewhere in the document, and it will take you out of the chart editor. Then you should see the finished product.

Insert Pictures into Your Document

A fun way to jazz up your Word documents is to insert pictures or photos into them. Here's how:

1. Click where you want to insert the picture.
2. Click the Insert drop-down menu.
3. Click Picture.
4. Click From File.

5. Find and select the picture you want to insert into the document (see Figure 8-13).

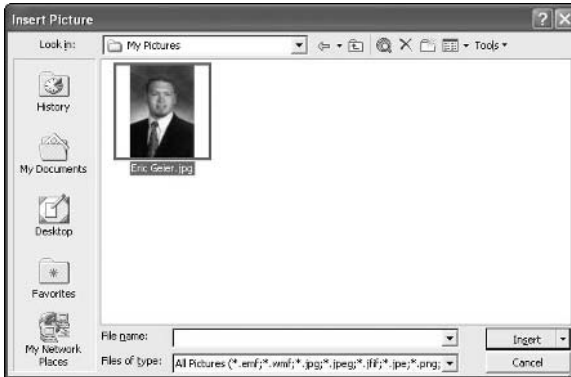


Figure 8-13

6. Click OK. You should now see the picture (see Figure 8-14).

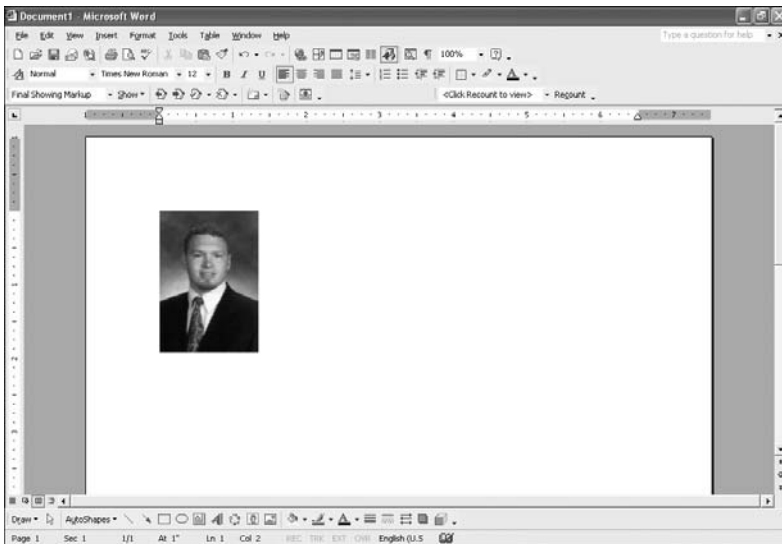


Figure 8-14

Change the Margins

If you want to make the margins of your document wider or narrower, follow these steps:

1. Click the File drop-down menu.
2. Click Page Setup.
3. Click the Margins tab.

4. Specify the top, bottom, left, and right margins. If you want them to be your new default settings, click the Default button, and then click Yes.
5. Click OK.

Use Auto Bullet and Numbering

Instead of manually adding numbers or bullet points to your lists, you can generate automatic lists.

1. To start a list, click the numbering or bullets icon on the formatting toolbar (see Figure 8-15). If you don't see these icons, you can make them visible by right-clicking any toolbar and selecting Formatting.

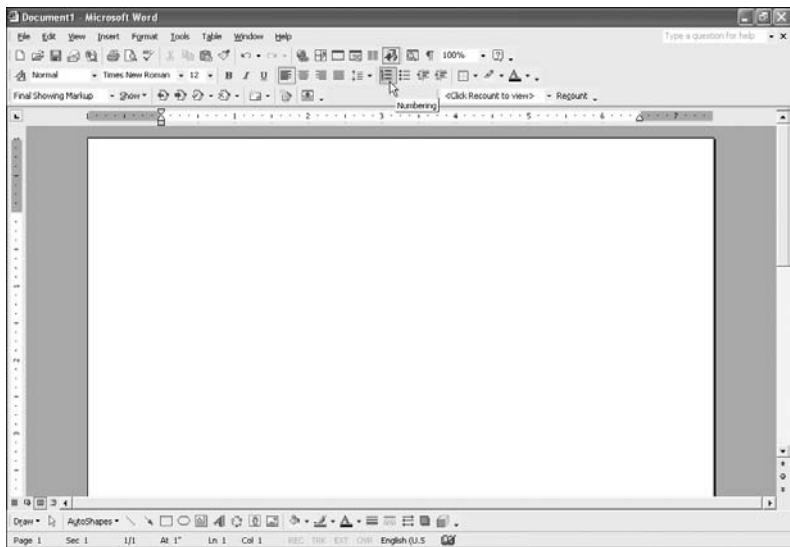


Figure 8-15

2. To start a new entry in the list (such as number 2 of the list), press the Enter key on your keyboard.

Use the Format Painter

If you use Word on a regular basis, you probably have had many headaches trying to format your documents properly. Once you have a document formatted exactly as you want it, you can use the “format painter” to apply that same formatting to any new text you create.

1. Highlight the selection that contains the formatting you want to copy (see Figure 8-16).
2. Click the format painter icon located in the standard toolbar (see Figure 8-16). If you don't see this icon, you can make it visible by right-clicking any toolbar and selecting Standard.

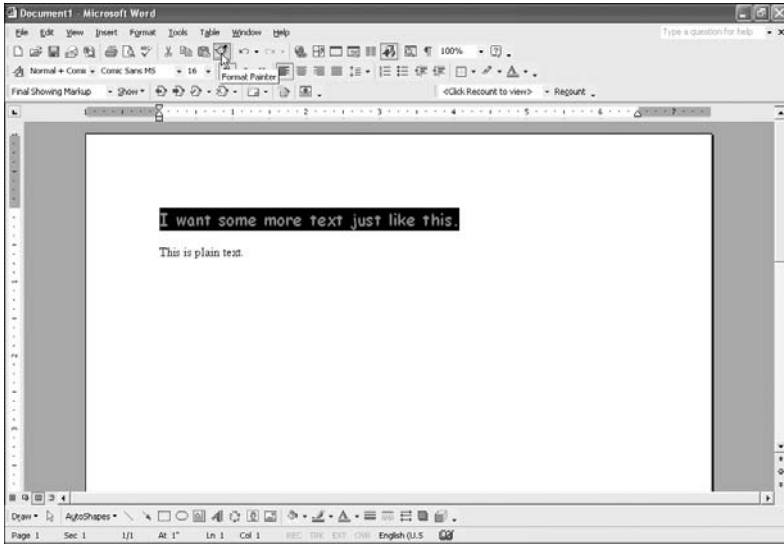


Figure 8-16

3. Highlight the sections you want to paint with the same formatting.

Print on Envelopes

Instead of handwriting the names and addresses on the envelopes you mail, consider using the envelope-printing feature of Microsoft Word. Not only will it give your envelopes a professional look, but it will enable you to place graphics or logos on them.

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click Letters and Mailings.
3. Click Envelopes and Labels.
4. Click the Envelopes tab.
5. Enter the destination and return address (see Figure 8-17).

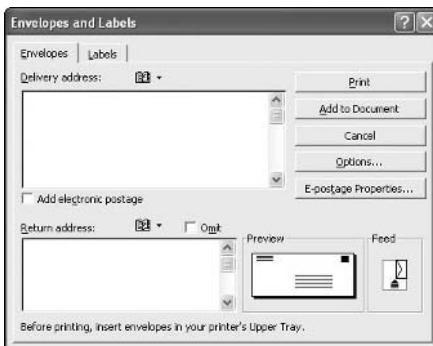


Figure 8-17

6. If you want to change the address's font, or if the default feed method for your printer doesn't work, you can define these settings and more by clicking the Options button.
7. Load the envelope into your printer. Most new printers have a special envelope feeder or slot, while older models load the envelope in the same manner that regular paper is loaded. See your printer's user manual for more information.
8. Click Print.

Note

If you would like to add a logo or graphics to your envelope, you should click Add to Document before clicking the Print button. Then you can insert or drag images into your document.

Print on Template Paper

Most office-supply stores carry an assortment of template paper such as address labels or stickers. Most of these template papers are compatible with Microsoft Word. Here's how to use them:

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click Letters and Mailings.
3. Click Envelopes and Labels.
4. Click the Labels tab.
5. Click the Options button.
6. Select the product number of your paper (see Figure 8-18). This is usually marked clearly on the product's cover.

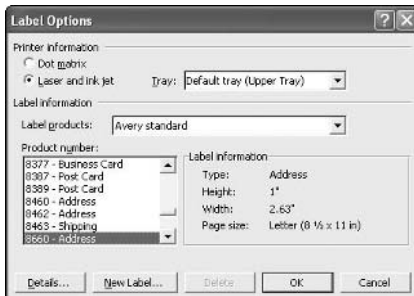


Figure 8-18

7. Click OK.
8. Click the New Document button.
9. Enter your desired information into the defined sections (see Figure 8-19).

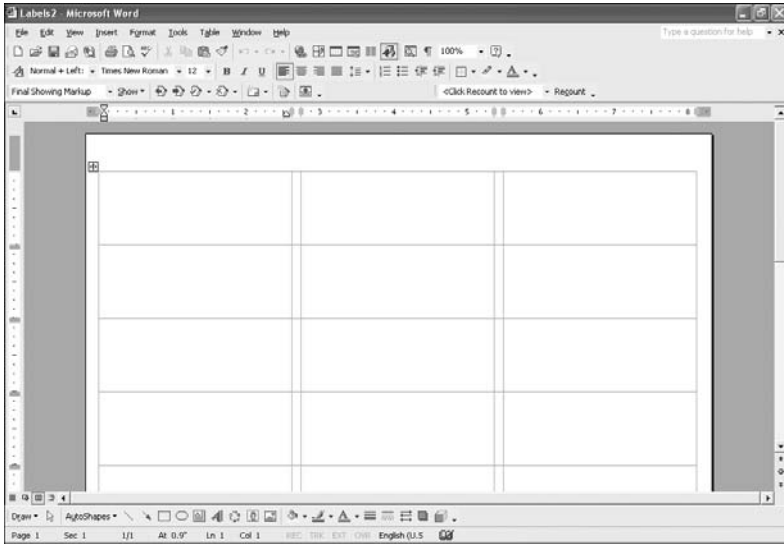


Figure 8-19

10. Load the template paper into your printer.
11. Print by clicking the print icon on the standard toolbar. Or click the File drop-down menu, select Print, set any specific settings, and then click OK to print.

Recover Documents After Power Outages

If the power goes out while you are in the middle of using Microsoft Word, you should be able to recover the document you were working on.

1. Simply turn your computer back on, if needed.
2. Start Microsoft Word.
3. You should see the Document Recovery task pane on the left (see Figure 8-20).

If a document is listed as *Recovered*, that is the last auto-saved version of it—which means it might be missing a few minutes of your work (because by default, the auto-save feature saves you files only every 10 minutes).

If your document(s) is listed as *Original*, it's the last manually saved copy of your document.

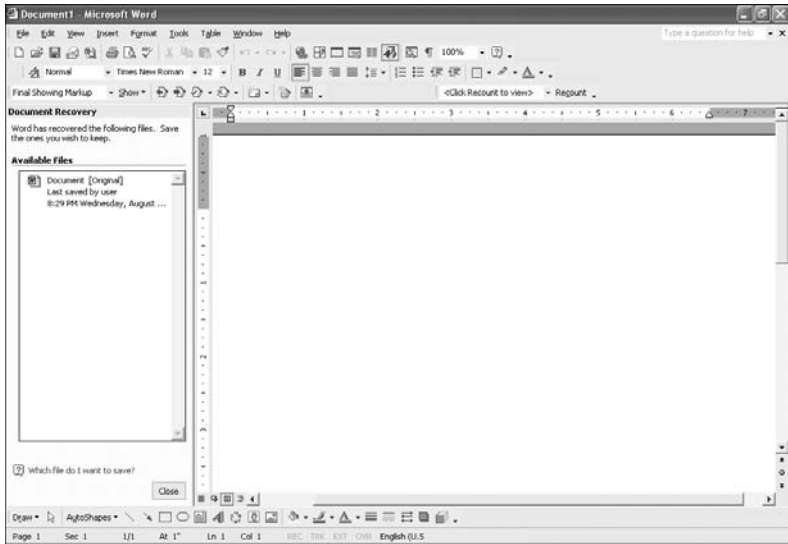


Figure 8-20

Convert a Word Document to a PDF File

A popular way to distribute documents is to convert them to PDF files. By using this format, you can prevent people from illegally copying or printing the text in your document. To read a PDF or to convert a file to that format, you must install special software.

1. Download a PDF converter. There are simple, free versions available on the Internet (such as PrimoPDF), as well as more professional versions that can be purchased (such as Click to Convert).
2. Depending on which converter you use, you may have a special button on your Word toolbar that allows you to instantly convert a Word document to a PDF. If not, then you can probably achieve the same outcome by clicking the File drop-down menu, selecting Save as, and then choosing PDF.

9

MICROSOFT EXCEL



Microsoft Excel is arguably the most popular spreadsheet program in the world. You can use it to help you with invoices, budgets, or just about anything with numbers. When using the functions and other features in Excel, you might run into problems or need advice to help you along. This chapter examines the most common Excel issues and offers fast solutions.

Correct a Cell That Displays “#NAME?”

If a cell in your Excel document displays text that says “#NAME?” (see Figure 9-1), that means the formula is invalid and needs to be corrected. To do so, check the formula by clicking the cell. Next, look for these typical errors:

- Misspelling of the function’s name, such as SUM or AVERAGE.
- Text within formulas needs to be in quotation marks.
- The colon in a range is missing.
- Single quotation marks are missing from around the sheet name if the formula calls data from another sheet.

Do It Yourself

Correct a cell that displays “#NAME?”

Use multiple sheets in one document

Use AutoFormat

Use sorting

Use functions

Change the format of cells

Create charts

Import real-time data from the Web

Reveal hidden cells

Webpage Preview doesn’t work

Recover corrupt documents

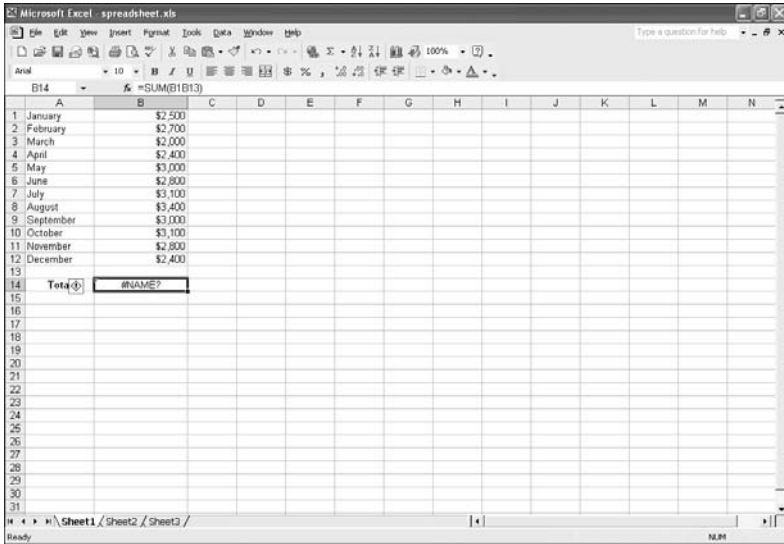


Figure 9-1

Use Multiple Sheets in One Document

Using multiple sheets within one Excel document can be very useful.

Go to Other Sheets

To go to another sheet, click its tab in the lower-left corner (see Figure 9-2).

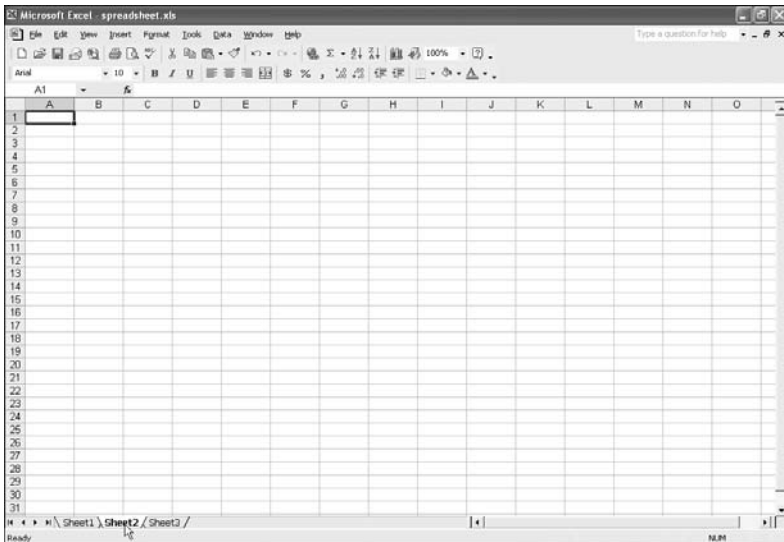


Figure 9-2

Rename a Sheet

You can give your sheet a new name.

1. Right-click the tab of the sheet you want to rename.
2. Click Rename.
3. Type a new name (see Figure 9-3).

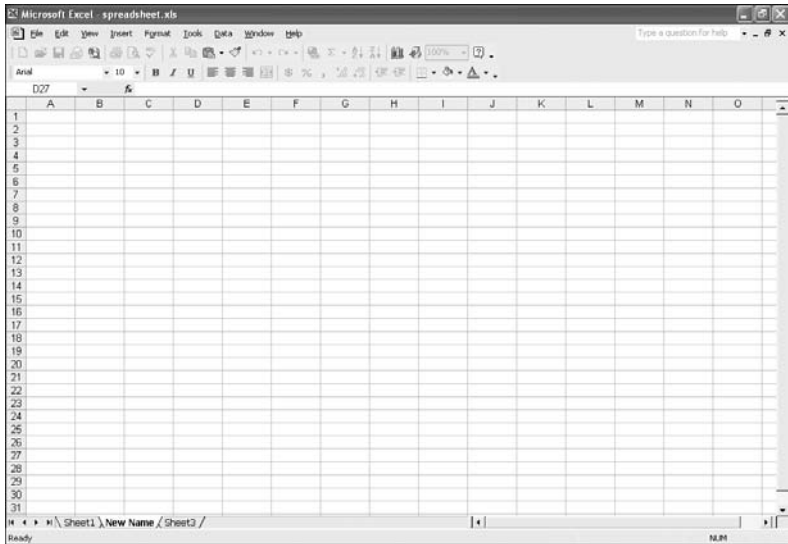


Figure 9-3

4. To apply the changes, press Enter on your keyboard.

Move a Sheet

You can change the order in which the sheet's tabs appear in the lower-left corner.

1. Click the tab of the sheet you want to move, making sure to hold down the mouse button.
2. Drag the tab to the position you desire by using the arrows for reference (see Figure 9-4).
3. When the arrow is pointing to your desired location, release the mouse button.

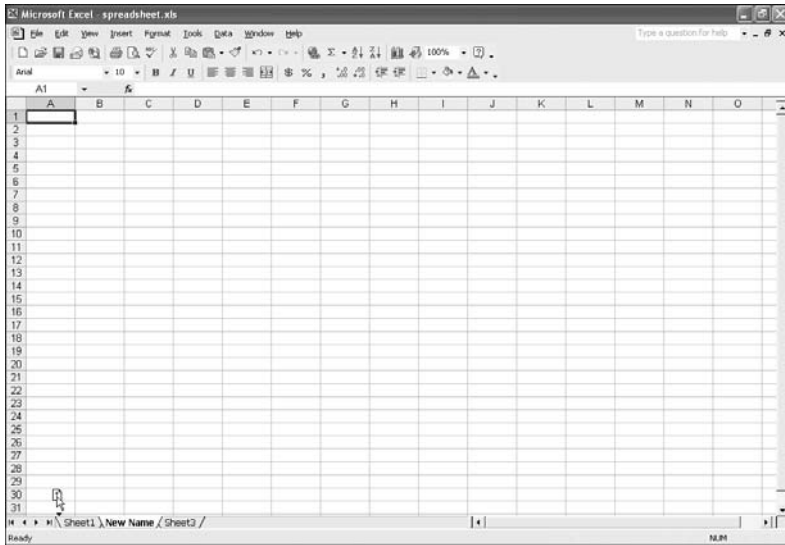


Figure 9-4

Create a Sheet

If you used up all of the sheets, you can easily add more.

1. Click the Insert drop-down menu.
2. Click Worksheet.
3. Rename the worksheet if necessary.

Tip

To get rid of an unused worksheet in your document, right-click on the sheet's tab and click Delete.

Use AutoFormat

Using AutoFormat allows you to display your data in a professional and flashy style.

1. Highlight the data you want to AutoFormat.
2. Click the Format drop-down menu.
3. Select your desired style (see Figure 9-5), and then click the Options button to define which individual formats to apply.
4. To apply the format, click OK.

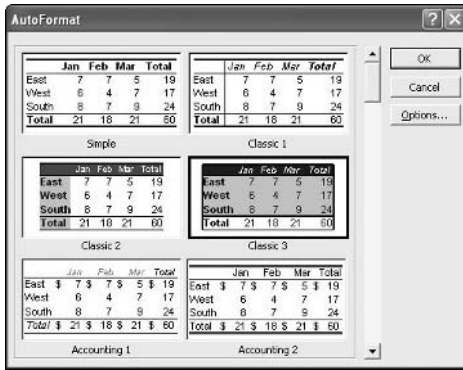


Figure 9-5

Use Sorting

You can use the sorting feature to sort your data quickly.

1. Highlight the data you want to sort (see Figure 9-6).

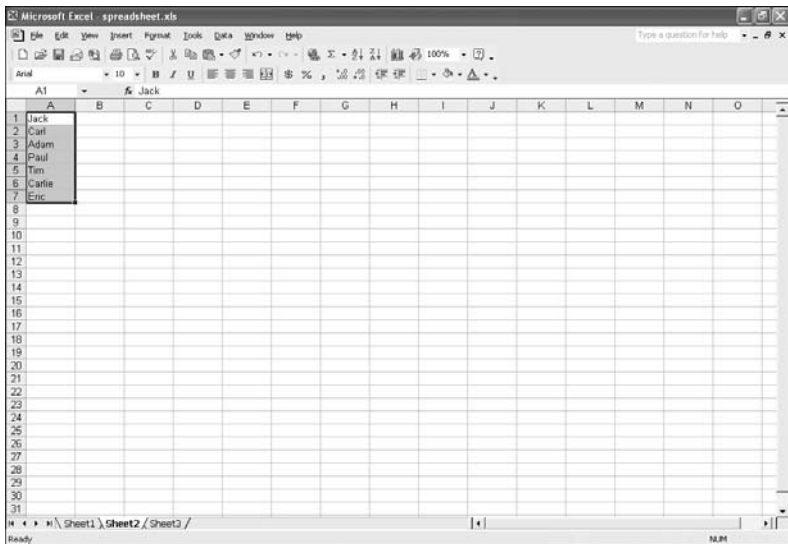


Figure 9-6

2. Click the Data drop-down menu.
3. Click Sort.
4. Choose whether to sort in ascending order or descending order, and select your other options. (See Figure 9-7).
5. To sort your data, click OK.



Figure 9-7

Use Functions

Functions are some of the best and most powerful features of Excel. They can do simple work for you such as calculating the sum and average of defined cells or solving complex problems such as asset depreciation.

1. Select where you want to insert the function.
2. On the standard toolbar, click the arrow on the function icon. Next, select a common function (see Figure 9-8) or click More Functions. An alternate method is to click the Insert drop-down menu, click Function, and then select a function (see Figure 9-9).

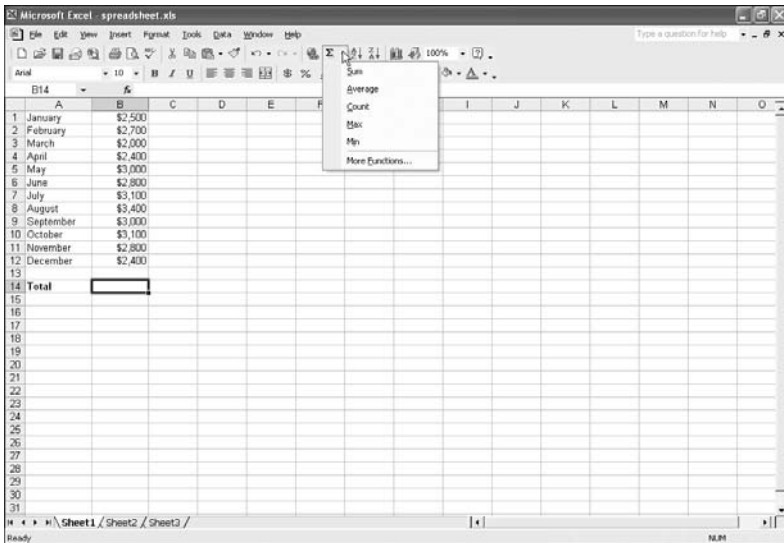


Figure 9-8

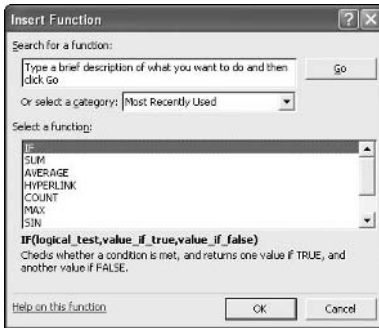


Figure 9-9

- After applying the function, Excel automatically chooses a range of cells to use in the function, as defined by the blue box. If the range of cells is incorrect, resize the blue box as necessary by using the corners (see Figure 9-10).

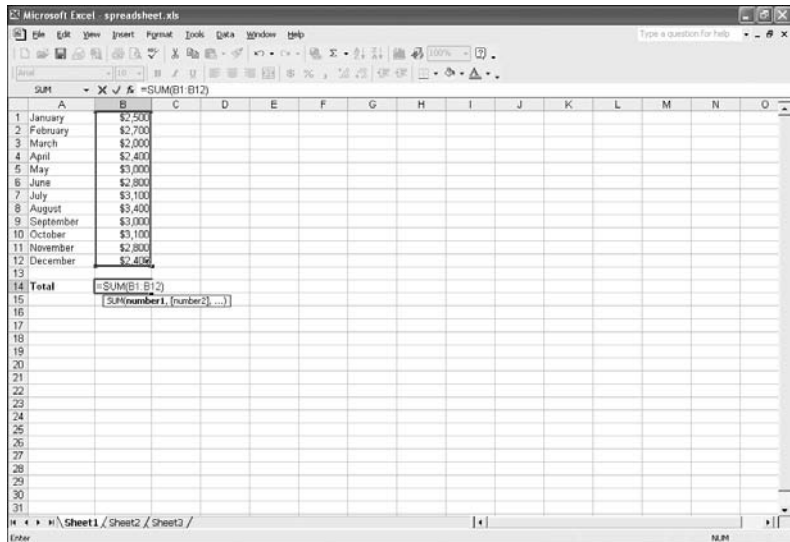


Figure 9-10

- When you are finished, press the Enter key on your keyboard.

Note

If you would like to define cells that are not located directly next to each other, hold down the Control key (Ctrl) on your keyboard and highlight the cell(s).

Change the Format of Cells

You change the format of the cells to a specific category such as Currency or Percentage, and you can change the font and properties.

1. Highlight the cell(s) you want to format.
2. Right-click the cell(s).
3. Click Format Cells.
4. Click the Number tab.
5. Select a category (see Figure 9-11). For example, choosing Currency will automatically add the dollar sign to the cell(s).

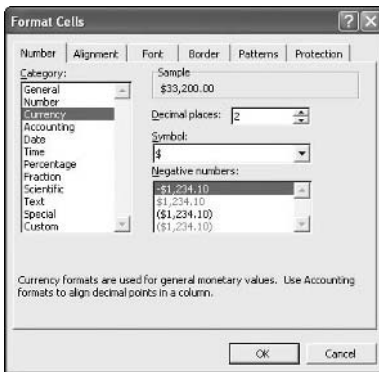


Figure 9-11

6. Click the Alignment tab (see Figure 9-12). This is where you can set the position of the text within the cell(s), along with the wrapping of the text, the shrinking of text to fit within the cell(s), and the merging of cells.

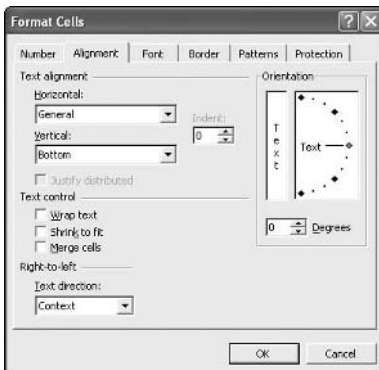


Figure 9-12

7. Click the Font tab. This is where you can change the font of the selected cell(s). You can also set the borders, patterns, and protection of the selected cell(s) by going to their tabs.
8. When you are finished, click OK.

Create Charts

Using charts is a great way to add pizzazz to your documents and present your data in a more appealing way.

1. Highlight the cells you want to convert to a chart (see Figure 9-13).

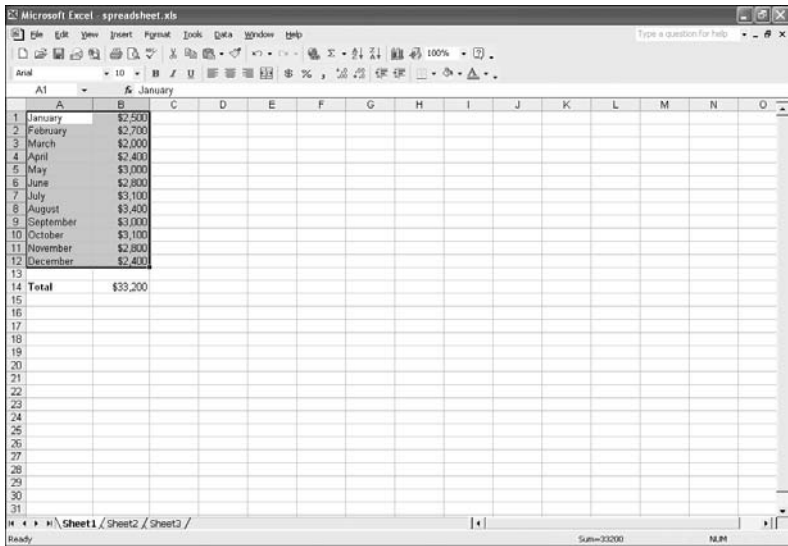


Figure 9-13

2. Click the Insert drop-down menu.
3. Click Chart.
4. Select a chart type and sub-type (see Figure 9-14).

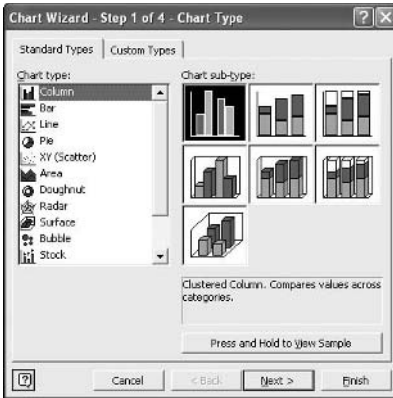


Figure 9-14

5. Click Next.
6. If you need to redefine the cells you will use when creating the chart, click the button on the right side of the data-range field. If needed, change the series in the field.
7. Click the Series tab. This is where you can name the series and define where to grab the series values and labels.
8. Click Next. This is where you name the chart and axes.
9. Click Next. Specify whether to create the chart in the existing sheet or in a new sheet.
10. Click Finish to see your finished product (see Figure 9-15).

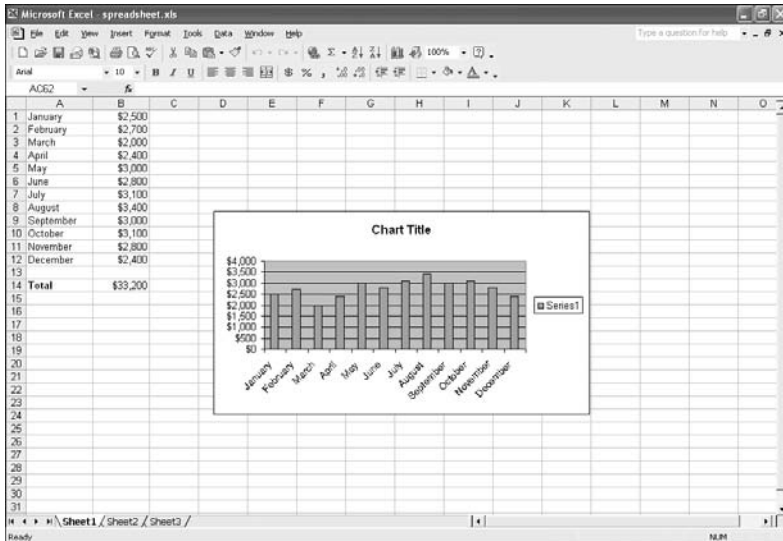


Figure 9-15

Import Real-Time Data from the Web

Importing real-time data from the Internet is a helpful way to retrieve information that can be inserted into your documents.

1. Choose where you want the data to be inserted by selecting a cell.
2. Click the Data drop-down menu.
3. Click Import External Data.
4. Click New Web Query.
5. Go to a Web site and select a table to import by clicking its arrow (see Figure 9-16).

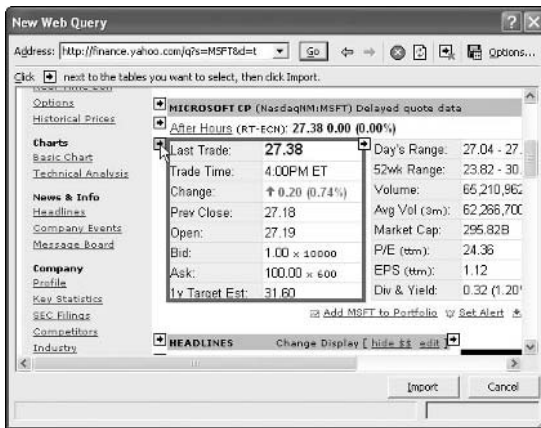


Figure 9-16

6. Click Import.
7. Select where to import the data: either in the current worksheet or a new worksheet.
8. Click Properties. This is where you can set the properties of the data you are importing—for example, how often to refresh the data (see Figure 9-17). Click OK when you are finished.



Figure 9-17

9. Click OK to import the data (see Figure 9-18).

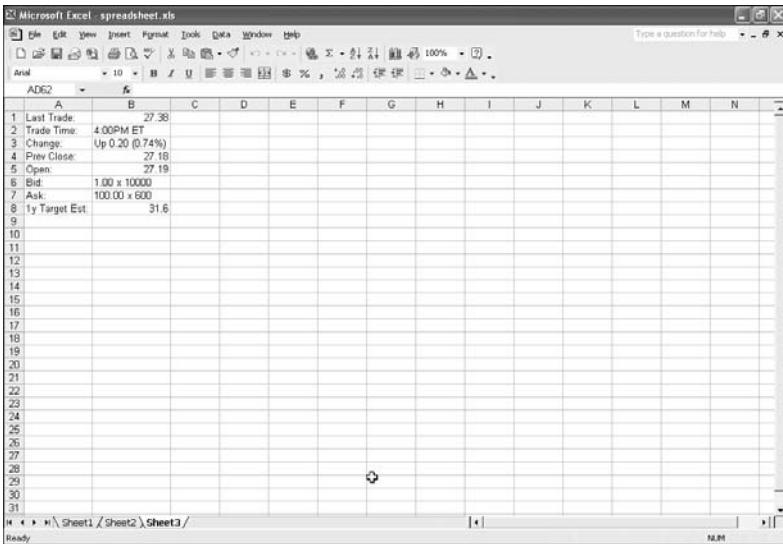


Figure 9-18

Note

After you have imported data, you can change its properties by right-clicking it and then clicking Data Range Properties.

Reveal Hidden Cells

If some of the rows or columns in your Excel document have been hidden and you don't know how to reveal them, follow these steps:

1. Select the entire document by simultaneously pressing the Control key(Ctrl) and the A key on your keyboard.
2. Click the Format drop-down menu.
3. If you want to reveal a hidden row, click on Row. If you want to reveal a hidden column, click on Column.
4. Click Unhide.

Web Page Preview Doesn't Work

If you have tried to preview your document as a Web page but it doesn't do anything, check to see if the document is protected. If password protection has been enabled on it, that is probably the source of your problems. In that case, try to unprotect the document while previewing as a Web page.

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click Unprotect Document.
3. Enter the password.
4. Try the Web page preview again.

Recover Corrupt Documents

If an Excel document becomes damaged or corrupt, you can try to repair it by using this fix:

1. Click the File drop-down menu.
2. Click Open.
3. Find and select the document that is corrupt.
4. Click the arrow on the Open button.
5. Click Open and Repair.
6. Click Repair.
7. If that doesn't work, you can try to save some of your work by extracting the data. Just follow the same steps, but when you get to Step 5, click the Extract Data button.
8. After you have successfully repaired your document, make sure all of its errors have been corrected. Save your document as a Web page, and then open the Web page document in Excel. Next, change it back to a regular Excel document by using Save As from the File drop-down menu.

10

MICROSOFT OUTLOOK



When it comes to e-mail, Microsoft Outlook is the pre-eminent program. Along with making e-mail easy to manage on desktop and laptop computers, Outlook also helps you stay connected wherever you go by enabling you to transfer your messages to a PDA (personal digital assistant) or a Pocket PC. If you are unfamiliar with Outlook, be sure to read all of the essential topics discussed in this chapter. They will tell you what you need to know to become an Outlook pro.

Choose Your Default E-Mail Application

If you prefer using Outlook but have discovered that another e-mail program launches when you click the e-mail link on a Web site, you can fix this problem by setting Outlook as your default e-mail application.

For Internet Explorer 5 and 6

- 1.** Open Internet Explorer.
- 2.** Click the Tools drop-down menu.
- 3.** Select Internet Options.
- 4.** Click the Programs tab.
- 5.** In the E-mail drop-down menu, select Microsoft Outlook (see Figure 10-1).
- 6.** Click Apply.
- 7.** Click OK.

Do It Yourself

[Choose your default e-mail application](#)

[Add an e-mail account](#)

[Add an AOL e-mail account](#)

[Choose a default e-mail account](#)

[Configure your e-mail download settings](#)

[Create additional folders](#)

[Save your data](#)

[Restore your data](#)

[Save copies of e-mail on the server](#)

[Unable to send or receive e-mail](#)

[Create an automatic signature](#)

[Automatically send and receive e-mail](#)

[Search for e-mail](#)



Figure 10-1

For Internet Explorer 4

1. Open Internet Explorer.
2. Click the View drop-down menu.
3. Select Internet Options.
4. Click the Programs tab.
5. In the Mail drop-down list, select Microsoft Outlook.
6. Click Apply.
7. Click OK.

Add an E-Mail Account

In order to send and receive e-mail through Outlook, you must add an e-mail account.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click E-mail Accounts.
3. Click the Add a new e-mail account **option** (see Figure 10-2).
4. Click Next.
5. Select the type of e-mail server your account uses. If you don't know, ask your e-mail service provider.
6. Click Next.

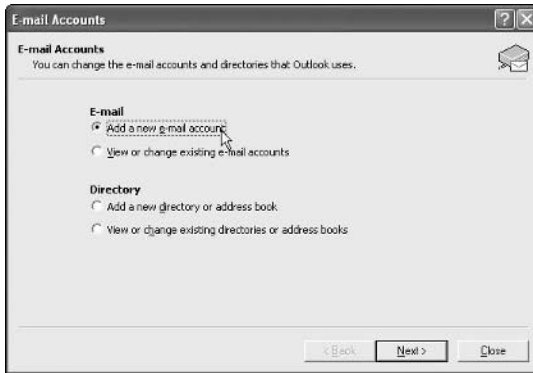


Figure 10-2

7. Enter the information given to you by your e-mail service provider. If you are setting up a POP3 account, you can see if it works by clicking the Test Account Settings button (see Figure 10-3).

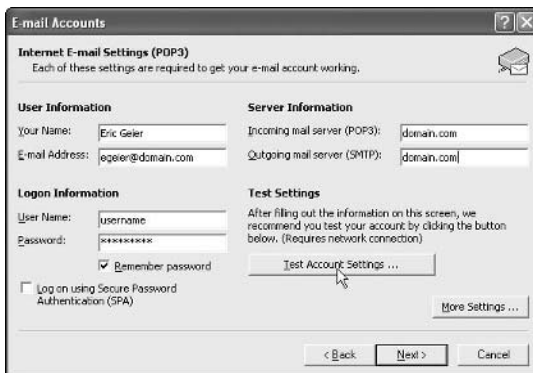


Figure 10-3

FYI

When setting up a POP3 account for your own Web site, you typically enter the domain for your incoming and outgoing servers. For example, you would enter yourwebsite.com.

8. When you are finished, click Next.
9. Click the Finish button.

Add an AOL E-Mail Account

If you have an account with America Online, you can configure Outlook to download your AOL e-mail.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click E-mail Accounts.
3. Click on Add a new e-mail account.

4. Click Next.
5. Select IMAP (see Figure 10-4).

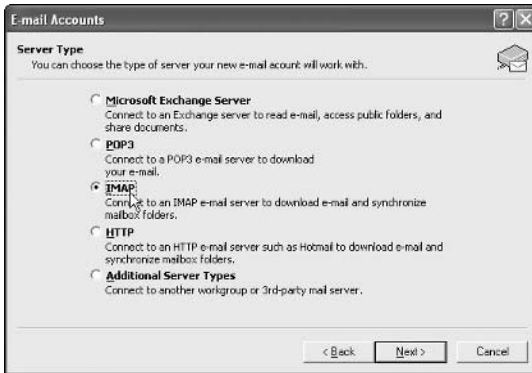


Figure 10-4

6. Click Next.
7. Enter the appropriate information into the boxes.
 - a. Be sure to enter your full e-mail address — for example, screen-name@aol.com.
 - b. Enter your AOL screen name and password for the username and password fields.
 - c. For the incoming mail server (IMAP) field, use imap.aol.com and for the outgoing mail server (SMTP) use smtp.aol.com.
8. Click the More Settings button.
9. Click the Outgoing Server tab (see Figure 10-5).



Figure 10-5

10. Check the My outgoing server requires authentication option.
11. Select the Use same settings as my incoming mail server option.
12. Click the Advanced tab.
13. In the Outgoing mail (SMTP) field, type 587.
14. Click OK.
15. Click Next.
16. Click Finish.

Choose a Default E-Mail Account

If you have several e-mail accounts set up in Outlook, one of them will be selected as your default account (which means it will be the account that appears when you create a new e-mail). If you want to make a different account the default, do the following.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click E-mail Accounts.
3. Select the View or change existing e-mail accounts option.
4. Click Next.
5. Click on the e-mail account you want to use as your default account.
6. Click the Set as Default button (see Figure 10-6).

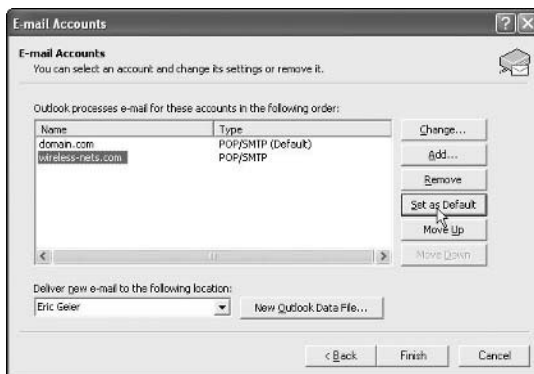


Figure 10-6

7. Click the Finish button.

Configure Your E-Mail Download Settings

Outlook allows you to decide whether an entire e-mail should be downloaded or just its header. The sections that follow show how to change those settings.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click Send and Receive Settings.
3. Click the Define Send and Receive Groups option.
4. Click the Edit button.
5. In the account list on the left, click the appropriate account (see Figure 10-7).



Figure 10-7

6. Click the folder that contains the settings you want to change.
7. If using a POP3 account, you can select the Download item description only option, which downloads only the header information, requiring you to manually retrieve the other information later. Or you can select the Download complete item including attachments option, which downloads entire e-mail messages from the server.
8. If you are using an Exchange Server and want to create a limit for the size of the e-mail messages you download, you can check the Inbox's checkbox and select the Download only headers for items larger than option. Using this option means that if an e-mail (including any attachments) is over the size limit, Outlook downloads only the header and not the full message.

9. If you are using IMAP and HTTP accounts, you can select the Download item description only option (which downloads only the header information) or the Download complete item including attachments option (which downloads entire e-mail messages from the server).
10. Click OK.
11. Click Close.

Create Additional Folders

An easy way to organize your e-mail and reduce the clutter in your Inbox is to create new folders to store your messages. Here's how.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the File drop-down menu.
2. Click New.
3. Click Folder.
4. Give the folder a name.
5. Specify what will be in the folder by selecting an option from the Folder contains drop-down menu.
6. Select the folder you would want to create the new folder in (such as the Inbox). If you want to create a main folder, select the top entry.
7. Click OK to create the folder.
8. When prompted, specify whether or not to add a shortcut to the new folder on the Outlook Bar (it will be listed on the My Shortcuts tab).

Note

To view all your folders, click the View drop-down menu and click Folder List.

Save Your Data

To prevent your e-mail and other Outlook data from being wiped out by a hard-drive crash or a virus, be sure to back them up by doing the following.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the File drop-down menu.
2. Click Import and Export.
3. Click Export to a file (see Figure 10-8).



Figure 10-8

4. Click Next.
5. From the list, select the type of file you want to save your data as. The recommended option is Personal Folder File (.pst).
6. Click Next. If the selected file type has not been installed, it will prompt you to do so.
7. Select the folder or subfolder in which your file will be saved.
8. Click Next.
9. If you want to save the exported file to a location that is not in the list, click the Browse button. Next, you should find and select a destination; then click OK.
10. Select a choice from the options section.
11. Click Finish to start exporting your e-mails. Keep in mind that depending on the amount of data you are exporting, this can take 30 minutes or more.

Note

Depending on the amount of data you are exporting, the file size could be very large (several hundred megabytes or more). Keep this in mind if you don't have a lot of hard-drive space available or if you plan to save your files to a removable disk such as a recordable CD.

Restore Your Data

If you are moving from an old computer to a new one, or if you are recovering from a serious computer problem such as hard-drive failure, you will need to restore the Outlook files you previously backed up.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the File drop-down menu.
2. Click Import and Export.

3. Select the Import from another program or file option (see Figure 10-9).



Figure 10-9

4. Click Next.
5. Select the type of exported file (which likely is Personal Folder File .pst).
6. Click the Browse button.
7. Find and select the file to import.
8. Click Open.
9. Select an option from the options section.
10. Click Next.
11. Select the folder you want to import. If you would like to import all folders, select the top entry and make sure you check the Include sub-folders option.
12. If you want to import the folders into the active folder, select the option Import items into the current folder. If you want to import the folders into those that have the same name as the folders you previously chose from the drop-down list, select the option Import items into the same folder.
13. Click Finish to begin importing your data. Keep in mind that depending on the amount of data you are importing, this can take 30 minutes or more.

Save Copies of E-Mail on the Server

When you download e-mail from your Internet provider, those messages are removed from the provider's computers (known as "servers"). That means that if your computer crashes and your files are lost, your e-mail will be gone forever (unless you backed it up). Fortunately, Outlook gives you the option to save copies of your e-mail on your Internet provider's servers.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003 using POP3 accounts

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click E-mail Accounts.
3. Select the option View or change existing e-mail accounts.
4. Click Next.
5. Select your e-mail account (see Figure 10-10).

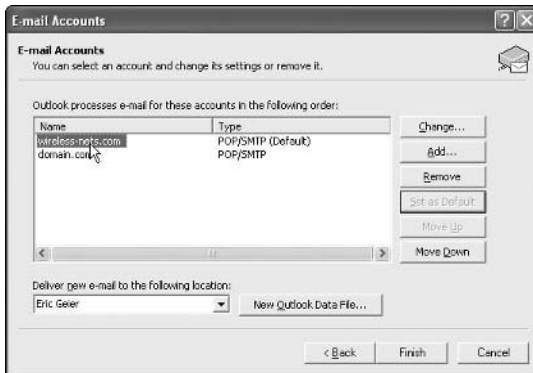


Figure 10-10

6. Click the Change button.
7. Click the More Settings button.
8. Click the Advanced tab.
9. Under the Delivery section, check the option Leave a copy of messages on the server.
10. Specify if you want to have the e-mail removed from the server periodically or when you delete them from Outlook's deleted items.
11. Click OK.
12. Click Next.
13. Click Finish.

Unable to Send or Receive E-Mail

One of the most common problems people have with Outlook is difficulty sending or receiving e-mail. If you experience similar problems, see the sections that follow for some advice.

View Error Details

Reading the details of Outlook's error messages might help you figure out why you are unable to send or receive e-mail.

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click Send and Receive Settings.
3. Click Show Progress. If you do not see any details, click the Details button.

Causes of Errors

There are several reasons why you might be having problems sending and receiving e-mail:

- You might not have an Internet connection.
- The e-mail server information specified during setup might be incorrect.
- Your e-mail server might be down. Check with your provider.
- Spam filters might be blocking e-mail. Contact your provider to see if you have spam controls enabled on your e-mail account.

Create an Automatic Signature

Another great feature of Outlook is the ability to create an e-mail signature. Basically, this signature is a group of text—such as your name, phone number, and address—that appears at the bottom of every new e-mail you create. To set up a signature or change an existing one, follow the steps below.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click Options.
3. Click the Mail Format tab.
4. Under the signature section, click the Signatures button.
5. Click New.
6. Specify a name for your new signature.
7. Click Next.
8. Type or paste your desired signature (see Figure 10-11). You can use the formatting buttons to format your signature.



Figure 10-11

9. Click Finish.
10. Click OK.
11. To specify whether you want to include your signature in replies and forwards, select your new signature from the drop-down list (see Figure 10-12).

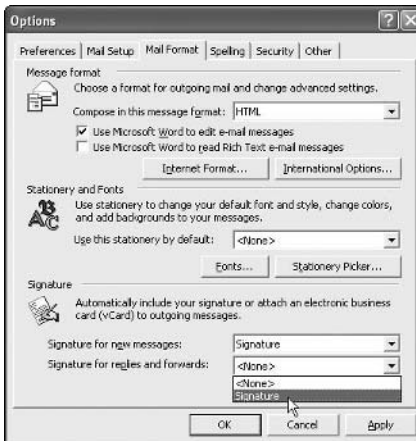


Figure 10-12

12. Click OK.

Automatically Send and Receive E-Mail

If you desire, you can configure Outlook to send and receive e-mail at regular intervals, such as every 15 minutes, every 30 minutes, and so on.

For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click Send and Receive Settings.
3. Click Define Send and Receive Groups.
4. Select the desired group (if more than one). See Figure 10-13.

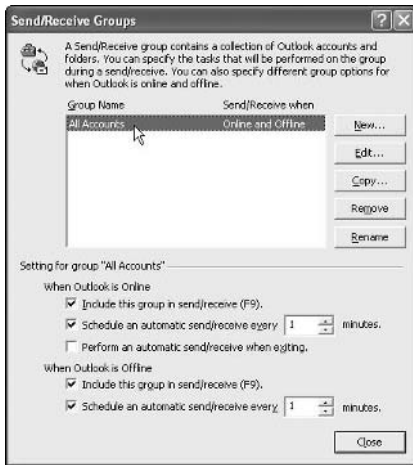


Figure 10-13

5. Check the option Schedule an automatic send/receive every “X” minutes.
6. Specify the time interval by entering a number into the minutes field.
7. Click Close.

Search for E-Mail

Like most e-mail users, you probably have an Inbox full of messages numbering in the hundreds (or even the thousands!). This can make it extremely difficult to find one specific e-mail. Fortunately, Outlook has a few search methods that can help you quickly locate a particular message.

Simple Find — For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click Find.
3. In the Look for box, type a word, phrase, or other information such as an e-mail address.
4. Indicate where to search by selecting a choice from the Search In drop-down menu (see Figure 10-14).

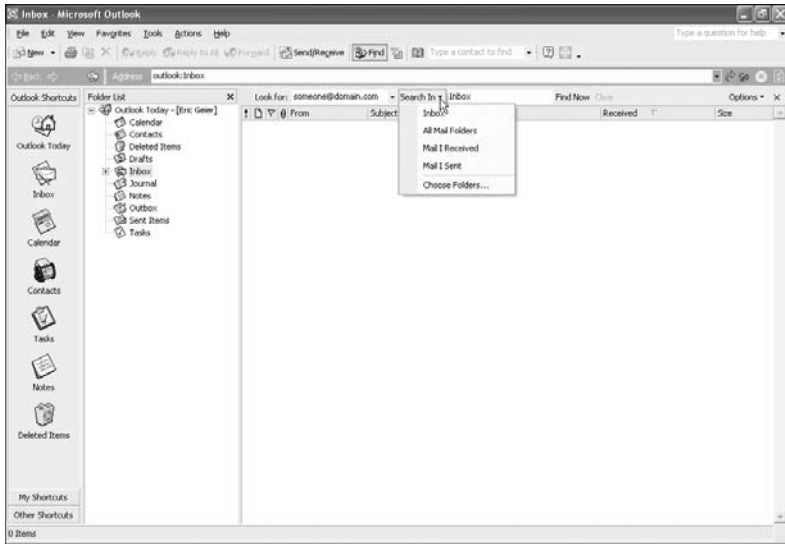


Figure 10-14

5. If you want to search entire e-mail messages instead of just their headers, click the Options button (located on the right of the toolbar named Find). Next, select the option Search all text in each message.

Advanced Find — For Outlook 2002 (also known as Outlook XP) and Outlook 2003

1. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
2. Click Advanced Find.
3. To select what you want to search for, click the Look for drop-down menu (see Figure 10-15).

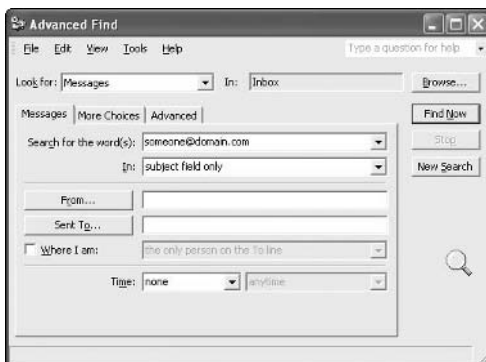


Figure 10-15

FYI

If you have done a simple search of your e-mail, you might have noticed that it searched the oldest messages first. To force Outlook to search newer items first, perform an Advanced Find and use the Data/Time option on the Advanced tab.

- 4.** To select where to search, click the Browse Next button, check the appropriate folders, and then click OK.
- 5.** Specify how to search, using the criteria you input. Don't forget to use the More Choices and Advanced tabs.
- 6.** When you are ready to begin the search, click the Find Now button.

11

MICROSOFT WORKS 8



Microsoft Works 8 is similar to the Microsoft Office software, but it streamlines the programs and provides a portal containing shortcuts to the applications, templates, and other features—all in one spot. If you are moving from the Microsoft Office suite to Works, or if you are using both at the same time, you need to make the documents compatible.

Stop AOL Instant Messenger from Popping Up

If you have America Online's Instant Messenger software installed on your PC and you open Outlook Express from Works, you will notice that the AOL Messenger automatically launches and signs into your account (if you have one). To prevent this from happening, do the following:

1. Open Outlook Express from the Microsoft Works task launcher.
2. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
3. Select Options.
4. In the General section, remove the checkmark from the Automatically log on to AOL Instant Messenger box (see Figure 11-1).
5. Click OK.

Do It Yourself

Stop AOL Instant Messenger from popping up

Open documents from previous versions of Works

Open a Microsoft Office document

Save files so others can read them

Clear your document history

Use a different Web browser

Make Outlook Express your default e-mail program

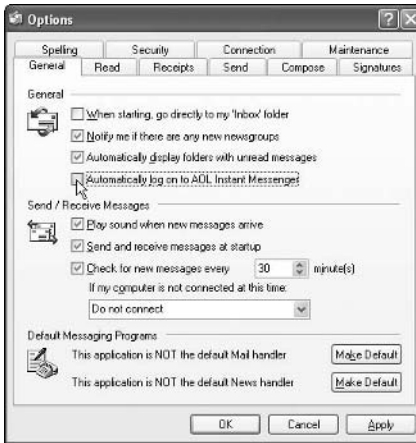


Figure 11-1

Open Documents from Previous Versions of Works

If you have upgraded to Works 8, you can still open documents from previous versions of Works.

1. Open the particular Works program (word processor, spreadsheet, or database) to which the file belongs. For example, if the file you want to open is a Microsoft Word document, you should open Works Word Processor. If it is a Microsoft Excel document, you should open Works Spreadsheet.
2. Click the File drop-down menu.
3. Click Open.
4. Select the version of the Works document from the Files of type field (see Figure 11-2).

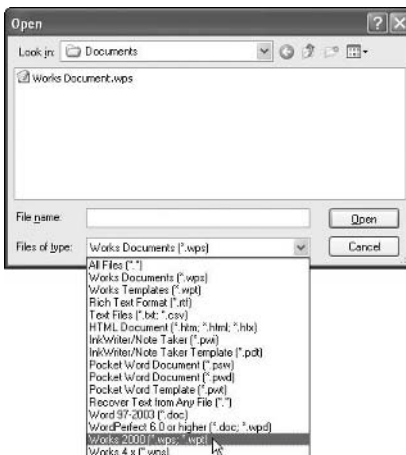


Figure 11-2

5. Find and select the file.
6. Click the Open button.

Open a Microsoft Office Document

Microsoft Works can open almost any document created by a Microsoft Office program. Here's how:

1. Open the particular Works program (word processor, spreadsheet, or database) to which the file belongs. For example, if the file you want to open is a Microsoft Word document, you should open Works Word Processor. If it is a Microsoft Excel document, you should open Works Spreadsheet.
2. Click the File drop-down menu.
3. Click Open.
4. In the Files of type field, select the Microsoft Office program to which the file belongs. For example, if you are trying to open a Microsoft Word document, you select Word 97–2003 (*.doc). See Figure 11-3.



Figure 11-3

5. Find and select the file.
6. Click the Open button.

Save Files So Others Can Read Them

To share your Works documents with people using Microsoft Office, do the following:

1. Launch the Works program, and then click the File drop-down menu.
2. Click Save As.

3. In the Files of type field, select the type of Microsoft Office format you want to save your Works document as. For example, if you want to save your word-processing document as a Microsoft Word document, select Word 97–2003 (*.doc).
4. Specify a filename (see Figure 11-4).

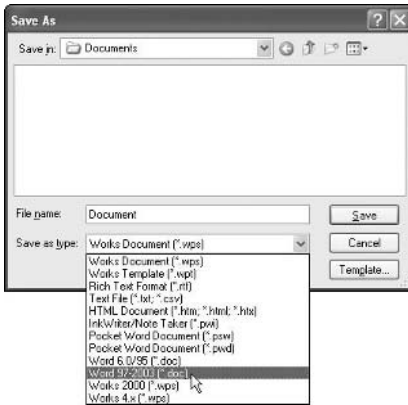


Figure 11-4

5. Find and select the folder in which you want to save your document.
6. Click Save.

Clear Your Document History

To prevent prying eyes from seeing the list of documents you have recently opened or used, do the following:

1. Go to the Works task launcher. On the top of it, click the History icon.
2. Click the Clear History button (see Figure 11-5).
3. To confirm your decision to delete the history entries, click Yes.

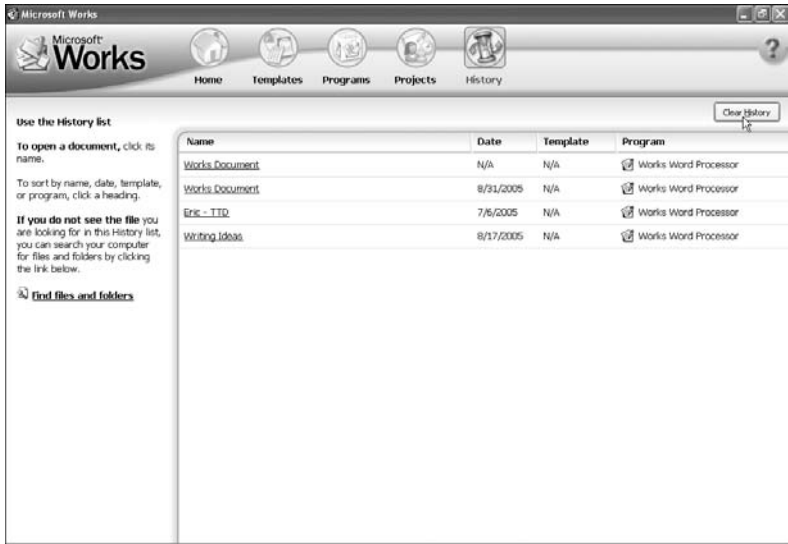


Figure 11-5

Use a Different Web Browser

If you like using the Web site shortcuts in the Works templates but don't want to use the particular Web browser that automatically launches, you can change the settings for your default browser.

For Netscape 7

1. Start Netscape.
2. Click the Edit drop-down menu.
3. Click Preferences.
4. Click the Set Default Browser button.
5. Click OK.

For Netscape 8

1. Start Netscape.
2. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
3. Click Options.
4. Under the Default Browser section, click the Check Now button (see Figure 11-6).

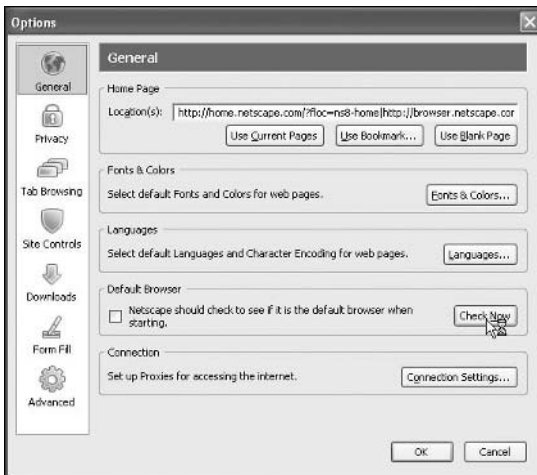


Figure 11-6

5. When prompted, click Yes (see Figure 11-7).

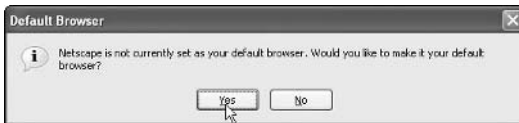


Figure 11-7

For Internet Explorer (All Versions)

1. Close any open Internet Explorer windows.
2. Open your Control Panel.
 - a. In Windows 98 or Windows ME this is done by clicking the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows, clicking Settings, and then clicking the Control Panel.
 - b. In Windows XP Home/Pro and Windows 2000, this is done by clicking the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows, and then clicking the Control Panel. If you don't see this option, your Start menu is in classic mode. In that case, click Settings and then select the Control Panel.
3. Double-click the Internet Options icon.
4. Click the Programs tab.
5. Select the Internet Explorer should check to see whether it is the default browser option (see Figure 11-8).
6. Click OK.
7. Open Internet Explorer.
8. When you are prompted to make Internet Explorer the default browser, click Yes.



Figure 11-8

Make Outlook Express Your Default E-Mail Program

If you like using Outlook Express to send and receive e-mail but can't get it to launch when you click the e-mail button in your Web browser, you can fix this problem by making Outlook Express your default e-mail program.

1. Open Outlook Express from the Microsoft Works task launcher.
2. Click the Tools drop-down menu.
3. Click Options.
4. In the Default Messaging Programs section, click the Make Default button (see Figure 11-9).

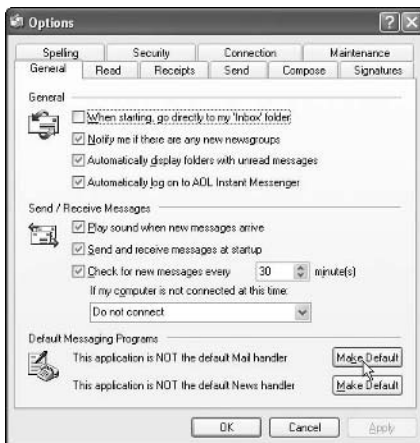


Figure 11-9

5. Click OK.

12

QUICKEN



Quicken moves your banking and checking experiences into the digital world. Instead of keeping that old leather checkbook up to date, you can log on to your PC and print your checks. You can also track your spending, monitor accounts, create budgets, and get help with your taxes.

Back Up Your Quicken Files

Backing up your Quicken data on a regular basis will prevent your critical financial data from being permanently lost as a result of a sudden hard-drive crash.

1. Insert a floppy disk or recordable CD into your computer.
2. In Quicken, click the File drop-down menu.
3. Click Backup.
4. Click Browse. This enables you to select the location where you want to back up your files (in this case, your floppy disk or recordable CD). When you're finished, click OK (see Figure 12-1).
5. Click OK to complete the backup.

Note

If you receive a warning message about the file being too large, you need to use a floppy disk or CD with more free space or a much larger disk such as an external hard drive.

Do It Yourself

[Back up your Quicken files](#)

[Restore your data](#)

[Set a password](#)

[Set up additional accounts](#)

[Set up online account access and bill payment](#)

[Migrate from Microsoft Money](#)

[Void and delete transactions](#)

[Change a deposit you entered incorrectly](#)

[Change a transfer you entered incorrectly](#)

[Find previous transactions](#)

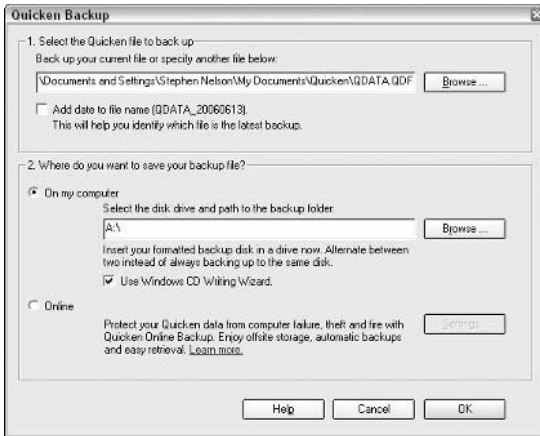


Figure 12-1

Restore Your Data

If a computer virus or hard-drive crash wipes out your Quicken data, you can easily restore it — assuming you backed it up recently.

1. Insert the floppy disk or recordable CD containing your backed-up Quicken files.
2. In Quicken, click the File drop-down menu.
3. Click Restore Back File.
4. Find and select the backup file located on your floppy disk or recordable CD. When you're finished, click OK (see Figure 12-2).

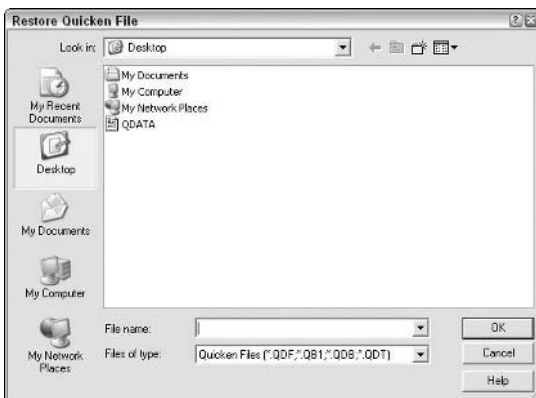


Figure 12-2

5. If you receive a message asking whether you want to overwrite or replace the current file with the one stored on the floppy disk or recordable CD, click OK.
6. Update the account registers as necessary if you have made any changes since the time you created the backup file.

Set a Password

To prevent your children or Internet intruders from looking at your sensitive financial information, you can protect your Quicken files with a password.

1. Click the File drop-down menu.
2. Select Passwords.
3. Select File.
4. In the New Password box, type a password of your choosing.
5. In the Confirm Password box, type your password a second time (see Figure 12-3).
6. Click OK.



Figure 12-3

Set Up Additional Accounts

If you didn't set up all of your checking, savings, and money-market accounts when Quicken was installed, or if you have new accounts, you can easily add them.

1. Click the Cash Flow Center button located on the left edge of the window.
2. Click Add Account (see Figure 12-4).
3. Identify the financial institution.
4. Click Next.
5. Select your financial institution from the list. If it isn't listed, click None of These.
6. Select the type of account (see Figure 12-5).
7. Click Next.
8. Name the account
9. Click Next.
10. Enter the account balance date (see Figure 12-6).
11. Click Done.



Figure 12-4



Figure 12-5

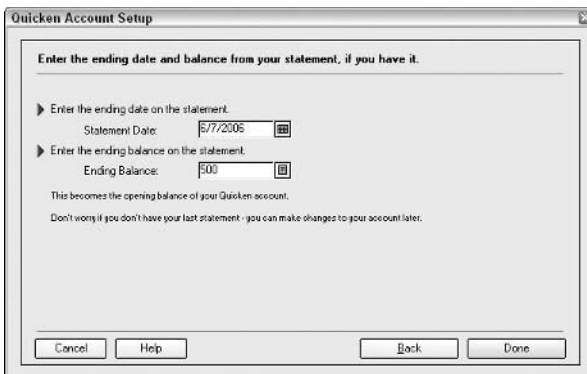


Figure 12-6

Set Up Online Account Access and Bill Payment

Paying your bills over the Internet not only saves time and money (because you no longer have to buy stamps), but it also ensures you won't be slapped with late fees if your bills are lost in the mail.

1. Get details from your bank on how to sign up for online account access and bill payment through Quicken.
2. After receiving the details and information, start Quicken.
3. Click the Cash Flow Center button.
4. Click the account you are setting up.
5. Click the Set Up Now button, which appears at the bottom of the register area (see Figure 12-7).

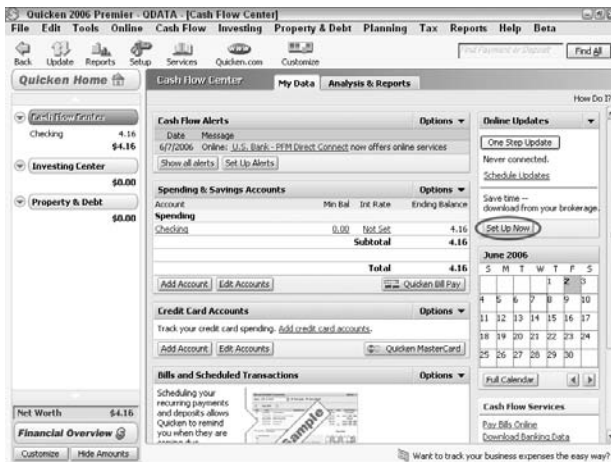


Figure 12-7

6. Enter a customer-identification number and a personal-identification number (PIN).
7. Click OK.

Migrate from Microsoft Money

If you are currently using Microsoft Money to manage your finances and want to switch to Quicken, follow these steps.

Warning

When converting files from Microsoft Money to Quicken, some of your financial data might become jumbled or lost.

1. In Microsoft Money, export your data file to a QIF file.
2. Start Quicken.

3. Click the File drop-down menu.
4. Select Import.
5. Click QIF File.
6. Find and select the QIF file, and then follow the onscreen instructions.

Void and Delete Transactions

If you made a mistake and need to undo a transaction, you can either void or delete it.

1. In the register, highlight or select the transaction(s) you want to delete or void.
2. Click the Edit button.
3. Choose your desired action:
 - a. Using the void option leaves a transaction in the register but marks it as void and erases the payment or deposit amount.
 - b. Using the delete option completely removes the transaction from your register.

Change a Deposit You Entered Incorrectly

If you made an error in your deposit transaction information, making a correction is easy.

1. Select the deposit from the register.
2. Use the Tab and Shift+Tab keys to move the cursor to the field you want to change.
3. Make your fix.
4. Click Enter to save the changes.

Change a Transfer You Entered Incorrectly

If you entered the wrong transfer information, you can always make corrections.

1. Select the transfer from the register.
2. Use the Tab and Shift+Tab keys to move the cursor to the field you want to change.
3. Make your fix.
4. Click Enter to save the changes.

Find Previous Transactions

To find details about a previous financial transaction—such as to whom a check was written—follow these steps:

1. Click the Edit drop-down menu.
2. Select Find & Replace, and then click Find. You can also click the Find button on the Register tab.
3. Enter the piece of text or number that identifies the transaction you want to locate (see Figure 12-8).

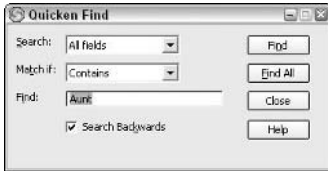


Figure 12-8

4. In the Search field's drop-down list, select where you want to search.
5. In the Match drop-down list, select how you want Quicken to search.
6. If you clicked the Find button from the register tab, specify whether you want Quicken to search forward or backward from the selected transaction by checking or unchecking Search Backwards.
7. Begin your search by clicking Find or Find All:
 - a. The Find option highlights the matching transactions in the register.
 - b. The Find All option only displays a list of the matches.
8. Browse through any finds (see Figure 12-9).

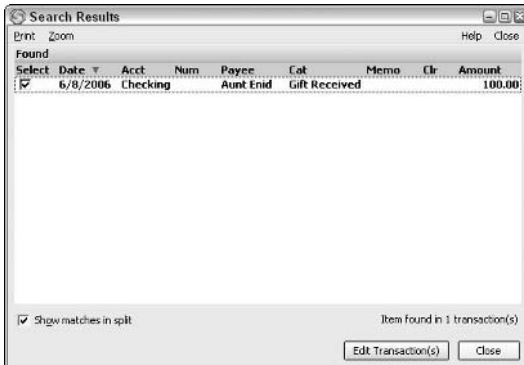


Figure 12-9



GLOSSARY

AGP: An Accelerated Graphics Port is the type of connection used by modern video cards.

broadband modem: The device that connects your PC to the Internet. You must subscribe to an Internet service provider (ISP) before accessing the Internet.

CAT5 cable: Also called a Category 5 cable or an Ethernet cable, it connects computers to devices such as broadband modems or routers.

dial-up connection: A method for connecting to the Internet using standard telephone lines and a dial-up modem inside your PC.

Ethernet: Another name for a CAT5 cable, as well as the name for the port on a computer or peripheral that a CAT5 cable connects to.

FireWire: A high-performance interface for connecting video cameras and other peripherals to your PC.

hard drive: The device inside your computer that stores all of your files and software.

ISP: An Internet service provider is a company that sells access to the Internet.

MP3: MPEG layer 3 is the most common way to create digital music files from standard music CDs.

PDA: A Personal Digital Assistant is a small handheld computer that serves as a storehouse for your personal information (such as names and phone numbers). Some models can even download e-mail and browse the Internet.

RAM: Random Access Memory is memory in your computer that stores running programs as well as associated data. When the electrical power to your PC is cut off (such as when you shut down the PC), the RAM's storage is cleared.

RJ-11 plug: A connector at both ends of a telephone cord needed for linking the telephone modem in your PC to a telephone jack for the purpose of connecting to the Internet.

RJ-45 plug: A connector at both ends of an Ethernet (CAT5) cable needed for linking the Ethernet card in your PC to an Ethernet port on your broadband modem or wireless router.

surge protector: Provides electrical outlets for your PC, monitor, printer, and other peripherals, and protects those items from being damaged by electrical surges caused by lightning storms or power fluctuations.

telephone modem: Hardware that usually installs inside your PC and connects to the Internet through a standard telephone cord and telephone jack.

UPS: An Uninterruptible Power Supply includes a continuously charged battery that will operate your PC for a short period of time during a power outage.

USB hub: Universal Serial Bus is a very common interface for connecting a keyboard, mouse, PDA, printer, or video game controller to a PC.

wireless router: Hardware that provides a wireless interface between PCs having wireless cards and the Internet.

WMA: Windows Media Audio is an audio-compression format similar to MP3 but with copy protection and usage-restriction features.

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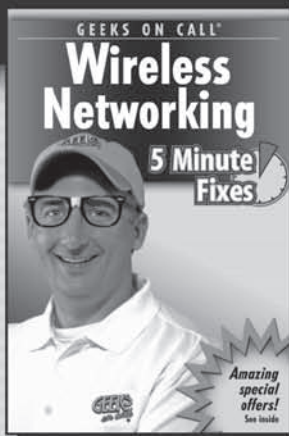
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