Welcome

Thank you for purchasing or considering the purchase of *Special Edition Using Microsoft Windows Vista* Second Edition. It’s amazing the changes that 20 years can bring to a computer product such as Windows. When we wrote our first Windows book back in the mid-1980s, our publisher didn’t even think the book would sell well enough to print more than 5,000 copies. Microsoft stock wasn’t even a blip on most investors’ radar screens. Boy, were they in the dark! Who could have imagined that a little more than a decade later, anyone who hoped to get hired for even a temp job in a small office would need to know how to use Microsoft Windows, Office, and a PC. Fifteen or so Windows books later, we’re still finding new and exciting stuff to tell our readers.

Some people (including the U.S. Department of Justice) claim Microsoft’s predominance on the PC operating system arena was won unethically through monopolistic practices. Whether or not this is true (we try, almost successfully, to stay out of the politics in this book), we believe that Windows has earned its position today through reasons other than having a stranglehold on the market. Consider that Windows NT 3.1 had 5 million lines of code. Windows Vista weighs in with about 50 million and takes up 4 or 5 gigabytes (sometimes more!) of disk space by itself. This represents a lot of work by anyone’s accounting. Who could have imagined in 1985 that a mass-market operating system two decades later would have to include support for so many technologies, most of which didn’t even exist at the time: DVD, DVD±RW, CD-R and CD-RW, Internet and intranet, MP3, MPEG, WMA, DV, USB, FireWire, APM, ACPI, RAID, UPS, PPOE, gigabit Ethernet, 802.11g, WPA2, IPv6, Teredo, fault tolerance, disk encryption and compression…? The list goes on. And that 4GB of disk space Vista occupies? It would have cost more than a quarter of a million dollars in 1985. Today, it costs a dollar or two.

Although rarely on the bleeding edge of technology, and often playing the role of the dictator with partner businesses and exterminator with competing businesses, Bill Gates has at least been benevolent from the users’ point of view. In 1981, when we were building our first computers, the operating system (CP/M) had to be modified in assembly language and
recompiled, and hardware parts had to be soldered together to make almost any new addition (such as a video display terminal) work. Virtually nothing was standardized, with the end result being that computers remained out of reach for average folks.

Together, Microsoft, Intel, and IBM changed all that. Today you can purchase a computer, a printer, a scanner, an external disk drive, a keyboard, a modem, a monitor, and a video card over the Internet, plug them in, install Windows, and they’ll work together. The creation and adoption (and sometimes forcing) of hardware and software standards that have made the PC a household appliance the world over can largely be credited to Microsoft, like it or not. The unifying glue of this PC revolution has been Windows.

Yes, we all love to hate Windows, but it’s here to stay. Linux and Mac OS X are formidable alternatives, but for most of us, at least for some time, Windows and Windows applications are “where it’s at.” And Windows Vista ushers in truly significant changes to the landscape. That’s why we were excited to write this book.

**Why This Book?**

We all know this book will make an effective doorstop in a few years. You probably have a few already. (We’ve even written a few!) If you think it contains more information than you need, just remember how helpful a good reference can be when you need it at the 11th hour. And we all know that computer technology changes so fast that it’s sometimes easier just to blink and ignore a phase than to study up on it. Windows Vista is definitely a significant upgrade in Windows’s security and sophistication—one you’re going to need to understand.

Windows Vista might seem similar to its predecessor, Windows XP, but it’s a very different animal. Yes, the graphics and display elements are flashier, but it’s the deeper changes that matter most. With its radically improved security systems, revamped Control Panel, friendlier network setup tools, new problem-tracking systems, improved support for mobile computers, and completely revamped networking and graphics software infrastructures, Vista leaves Windows XP in the dust. In all ways, it’s superior to any operating system Microsoft has ever produced.

Is Windows Vista so easy to use that books are unnecessary? Unfortunately, no. True, as with other releases of Windows, online help is available. As has been the case ever since Windows 95, however, no printed documentation is available (to save Microsoft the cost), and the Help files are written by Microsoft employees and contractors. You won’t find criticisms, complaints, workarounds, or suggestions that you use alternative software vendors, let alone explanations of why you have to do things a certain way. For that, you need this book! We will even show you tools and techniques that Microsoft’s insiders didn’t think were important enough to document at all.

You might know that Windows Vista comes in a bewildering array of versions, primarily Home Basic, Home Premium, Business, Enterprise, and Ultimate (not to mention Starter, which is sold only in emerging markets, and several extra versions sold in the European Union to comply with antitrust court-mandated restrictions). But Vista is Vista, and all that
really distinguishes the versions is the availability of various features. Most of the differences matter only in the corporate world, where Vista will be managed by network administrators, so you don’t need to worry about those yourself. For the remaining features, we tell you when certain features do or don’t apply to your particular version of Windows Vista. (And we show you how to upgrade from one version to a better version, if you want the features your copy doesn’t have!)

In this book’s many pages, we focus not just on the gee-whiz side of the technology, but why you should care, what you can get from it, and what you can forget about. The lead author on this book has previously written 16 books about Windows, all in plain English (several bestsellers), designed for everyone from rank beginners to full-on system administrators deploying NT Server domains. The coauthor has designed software and networks for more than 20 years and has been writing about Windows for 10 years. We work with and write about various versions of Windows year in and year out. We have a clear understanding of what confuses users and system administrators about installing, configuring, or using Windows, as well as (we hope) how to best convey the solutions to our readers.

While writing this book, we tried to stay vigilant in following four cardinal rules:

■ Keep it practical.
■ Keep it accurate.
■ Keep it concise.
■ Keep it interesting, and even crack a joke or two.

We believe that you will find this to be the best and most comprehensive book available on Windows Vista for beginners through advanced users. And whether you use Windows Vista yourself or support others who do, we firmly believe this book will address your questions and needs.

Our book addresses both home and business computer users. We assume you probably are not an engineer, and we do our best to speak in plain English and not snow you with unexplained jargon. As we wrote, we imagined that you, our reader, are a friend or co-worker who’s familiar enough with your computer to know what it’s capable of, but might not know the details of how to make it all happen. So we show you, in a helpful, friendly, professional tone. In the process, we also hope to show you things that you might not have known, which will help make your life easier—your computing life, anyway. We spent months and months poking into Vista’s darker corners so you wouldn’t have to. And, if you’re looking for power-user tips and some nitty-gritty details, we make sure you get those, too. We try to make clear what information is essential for you to understand and what is optional for just those of you who are especially interested.

We’re also willing to tell you what we don’t cover. No book can do it all. As the title implies, this book is about Windows Vista. We don’t cover setting up the Server versions of this operating system called Windows 2000 Server, Windows Server 2003 Server, and the
upcoming Windows Server code named “Longhorn.” However, we do tell you how to connect to and interact with these servers, and even other operating systems, including Mac OS X, Linux, and older variants of Windows, over a local area network.

Because of space limitations, there is only one chapter devoted to coverage of Windows Vista’s command-line utilities, batch file language, and Windows Script Host. For that (in spades!), you might want to check Brian’s book Windows XP Under the Hood, which is still relevant to Vista.

Even when you’ve become a Windows Vista pro, we think you’ll find this book to be a valuable source of reference information in the future. Both the table of contents and the very complete index will provide easy means for locating information when you need it quickly.

**HOW OUR BOOK IS ORGANIZED**

Although this book advances logically from beginning to end, it’s written so that you can jump in at any location, quickly get the information you need, and get out. You don’t have to read it from start to finish, nor do you need to work through complex tutorials.

This book is broken down into six major parts. Here’s the skinny on each one:

Part I, “Introducing Windows Vista,” introduces Vista’s new and improved features and shows you how to install it on a new computer or upgrade an older version of Windows to Vista. It also shows you how to apply Service Packs to keep your version of Vista up-to-date. Finally, we take you on a one-hour guided tour that shows you the best of Vista’s features and walks you through making essential settings and adjustments that will help you get the most out of your computer.

In Part II, “Using Windows Vista,” we cover the core parts of Vista, the parts you’ll use no matter what else you do with your computer: managing documents and files, using the Windows desktop, starting and stopping applications, searching through your computer’s contents, printing, and the new “Sidebar” desktop gadgets. Don’t skip this section, even—or rather, especially—if you’ve used previous versions of Windows. Vista does many things differently, and you’ll want to see how to take advantage of it!

Vista has great new tools for viewing, playing, creating, editing, and managing music, movies, and pictures. In Part III, “Multimedia and Imaging,” we show you how to use the new Windows Media Player, purchase music online, burn CDs, extract and edit images from cameras and scanners, use Windows Movie Maker to edit video, and create DVDs. Finally, we show you how to use Windows Media Center, which lets you view all that stuff, and on a properly equipped computer, records and plays back your favorite TV shows. We even show you how to burn DVDs from your recorded shows and compress them for playback on other devices.
In Part IV, “Windows Vista and the Internet,” we help you set up an Internet connection and then move on to Vista’s Internet tools. We provide in-depth coverage of the new and improved (and safer!) Internet Explorer and the new and improved (and safer!) Windows Mail, which replaces the Outlook Express email and newsgroup reader provided with previous versions of Windows. The final two chapters show you how to set up your own web server and how to diagnose Internet connection problems.

Networks used to be found only in high-falutin’ offices and corporate settings. Now, any home or office with two or more computers should have a network. A LAN is inexpensive, and with one you can share an Internet connection, copy and back up files, and use any printer from any computer. In Part V, “Networking,” we give you a tour of Windows Vista’s network features, walk you through setting up a network in your home or office, and show you how to take advantage of it in day-to-day use. We also show you how easy it is to share a DSL or cable Internet connection with all your computers at once, show you how to network with other operating systems, and finally, help you fix it when it all stops working.

Part VI, “Maintaining Windows Vista,” covers system configuration and maintenance. We tell you how to work with the Control Panel and System Administration tools, provide tips and tricks for customizing the graphical user interface to maximize efficiency, manage your hard disk and other hardware, and describe a variety of ways to upgrade your hardware and software (including third-party programs) for maximum performance. We show you how to troubleshoot hardware and software problems, edit the Windows Registry, and for real power-users, show how to use the command-line interface.

When Windows was introduced nearly two decades ago, computer viruses, online fraud, and hacking were only starting to emerge as threats. Today (thanks in great part to gaping security holes in previous versions of Windows), computer threats are a worldwide problem, online and offline. In Part VII, “Security,” we provide a 360-degree view of Windows Vista’s substantial improvements in security. Here you’ll find out both what Vista will do to help you, and what you must do for yourself. We cover protection against viruses and spyware, loss and theft, hackers and snoops, and fraud and spam—in that order.

Part VIII, “Windows on the Move,” shows you how to get the most out of Windows Vista when either you or your computer, or both, are on the go. We show you how to use wireless networking safely, how to get the most out of your laptop, and how to connect to remote networks. We also show you how you and others can work together using your computers and Windows Meeting Space, and we finish up with a chapter that shows you how to use Remote Desktop to reach and use your own computer from anywhere in the world.

Appendix A, “Windows Programs and Services,” lists all the programs and services provided with all the versions of Windows, so you can find out just what each of those things do that you see in the Task Manager and Control Panel.

CONVENTIONS USED IN THIS BOOK

Special conventions are used throughout this book to help you get the most from the book and from Windows Vista.

TEXT CONVENTIONS

Various typefaces in this book identify terms and other special objects. These special typefaces include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Italic</em></td>
<td>New terms or phrases when initially defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monospace</td>
<td>Information that appears in code or onscreen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bold monospace</strong></td>
<td>Information you type.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words separated by commas—All Windows book publishers struggle with how to represent command sequences when menus and dialog boxes are involved. In this book, we separate commands using a comma. Yeah, we know it’s confusing, but this is traditionally how the Special Edition Using book series does it, and traditions die hard. So, for example, the instruction “Choose Edit, Cut” means that you should open the Edit menu and choose Cut. Another, more complex example is “Click Start, Settings, Control Panel, System, Hardware, Device Manager.”

Key combinations are represented with a plus sign. For example, if the text calls for you to press Ctrl+Alt+Delete, you would press the Ctrl, Alt, and Delete keys at the same time.

TIPS FROM THE WINDOWS PROS

Ever wonder how the experts get their work done better and faster than anyone else? Ever wonder how they became experts in the first place? You’ll find out in these special sections throughout the book. We’ve spent a lot of time under the Windows hood, so to speak, getting dirty and learning what makes Windows Vista tick. So, with the information we provide in these sections, you can roll up your shirt sleeves and dig in.

SPECIAL ELEMENTS

Throughout this book, you’ll find Notes, Cautions, Sidebars, Cross-References, and Troubleshooting Tips. Often, you’ll find just the tidbit you need to get through a rough day at the office or the one whiz-bang trick that will make you the office hero. You’ll also find little nuggets of wisdom, humor, and lingo that you can use to amaze your friends and family, not to mention making you cocktail-party literate.
We designed these elements to call attention to common pitfalls that you’re likely to encounter. When you see a Troubleshooting Tip, you can flip to the end of the chapter to learn how to solve or avoid a problem.

**Cross-References**

Cross-references are designed to point you to other locations in this book (or other books in the Que family) that will provide supplemental or supporting information. Cross-references appear as follows:

➔ For information on updating offline web pages, see “Browsing Offline,” p. 299.

**Sidebars**

Sidebars are designed to provide information that is ancillary to the topic being discussed. Read this information if you want to learn more details about an application or task.
In this chapter

Learning the Basics  260
Getting Music and Video on Your Computer  266
Taking Your Music and Video On the Go  272
Organizing Your Music Collection  279
Updating Media Information and Album Art  282
Tips from the Windows Pros: Playing Audio from Your Portable Device Through Your Car Stereo  285
LEARNING THE BASICS

Windows Media Player has grown into a pretty amazing application with multiple personalities. Its talents include playing music and video files from online sources or local drives (including DVDs), playing online radio and TV stations, displaying specialized web pages, organizing your music files (MP3s and WMAs), burning music CDs, copying and syncing to portable MP3 players, and providing a conduit to online media shopping sites.

MEDIA TYPES COMPATIBLE WITH MEDIA PLAYER

Windows Media Player can play the file types shown in Table 8.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8.1 WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER–SUPPORTED FILE TYPES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>File Type</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music CD (CD audio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intel Indeo video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio Interchange File Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(digitized sound)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows Media (audio and video)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows Media Center video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows video and audio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QuickTime content*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows Media Player skins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPEG (Motion Picture Experts Group) video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU (UNIX audio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP3 (digital audio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVD video</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only QuickTime files version 2.0 or earlier can be played in Windows Media Player. Later versions of QuickTime require the proprietary Apple QuickTime Player.

NOTE

Vista doesn’t come from Microsoft with DVD playback capability, except in the editions containing Media Center—Vista Home Premium and Vista Ultimate. If your version of Vista does not contain Media Center and you want to play back DVD video and .mp2v files, you must first install a hardware or software DVD decoder on your system. If you insert a
Getting Around Windows Media Player 11

Media Player 11 has a redesigned user interface, as shown in Figure 8.1, to make it easier for you to manage and enjoy your digital media. The classic menus have been replaced by an organized tab system, making managing and viewing your digital media easier than ever.

Navigating Menu Tabs

The tabs in Media Player 11, shown in Figure 8.2, provide a way to quickly focus on the task you want to perform.
These tabs are accessed from the top of the Media Player 11 window and perform the following tasks:

- **Now Playing**—When you select online or locally stored content for playback, the Now Playing window displays a list of the content you’re playing. An optional Visualizations feature can be used to display album art (when available) or various animated abstractions that change in response to the music.

  **TIP**

  Many visualizations are available online for use with Windows Media Player 11. A personal favorite of mine called PixelTrip can be obtained from the Windows Media Player website at http://www.wmplugins.com/ItemDetail.aspx?ItemID=881. Another excellent visualization is provided by Brian Spangler and is called TwistedPixel. You can download it from his website for free at www.visolu.com/TwistedPixel.

- **Library**—Use this feature to organize and locate your favorite media types you’ve downloaded or created with Rip. As you download and create music, Media Player automatically creates album and artist information for audio and video content. You also can view content by type and by genre.

- **Rip**—Click this button to copy all or selected tracks from your favorite music CDs to the Music folder on your system.

  **TIP**

  When you copy music, by default, Windows Media Player prevents copied tracks from being played on any other computer. If you want to disable this feature so you can move copied music from one PC to another, uncheck the box labeled Copy Protect Music in the Rip Music dialog box that appears when you click More Options in the Rip tab menu.

- **Burn**—After you download or convert music tracks to WMA format, use this feature to transfer your music mix to writable CDs (CD-R or CD-RW media).

  **TIP**

  Be sure you fill your CD with all the music you want to play; unlike conventional CD-mastering programs or Windows Vista’s Copy to CD feature in other parts of the operating system, Windows Media Player’s Copy to CD feature closes the CD (so it no longer can accept data) after you copy your selected music to it, even if you use only a small portion of the CD. Why? Standalone CD players are designed to handle single-session CDs and won’t work if you add music later. If you want to create a CD for playback on your computer, use Windows Explorer’s Copy to CD feature instead, which will allow you to copy music over several sessions.
Sync—After you download or convert music tracks to WMA format, use this feature to transfer your music mix to PlaysForSure compatible portable audio players.

Media Guide/Online Stores—This option enables you to purchase media online or select from a variety of online content.

The arrows below each tab provide quick access to setting and options relevant to the task of that tab. For instance, as shown in Figure 8.3, the arrow below the Now Playing tab provides the options for playback Enhancements as well as the capability to change the current Visualization.

**TIP**

To show the classic menus, right-click an empty area of the taskbar or an empty area around the playback controls and select Show Classic Menus or press Ctrl+M.

![New tab menus for accessing options in Windows Media Player 11.](Image)

**REDESIGNED BROWSING AND SEARCHING**

The navigation of the music library is similar to that in Windows Explorer.

**NOTE**

For the best browsing and search experience, ensure that the media information is correct and up to date as described in the section “Updating Media Information and Album Art.”

You can browse your media by performing the following steps:

1. Click the Select a Category button to choose the type of media to browse, as shown in Figure 8.4. Options include Music, Pictures, Video, Recorded TV, and Other Media.

2. Choose the desired view for your media. This includes Artist, Album, Songs, Genre, and more.

3. Narrow the items shown for the chosen view by clicking the arrow on the Address bar, as shown in Figure 8.5.
Figure 8.4
Select a media category.

Navigation Views

Media Category

TIP
More views can be found by right-clicking Library in the Navigation Pane and selecting Show More Views.

Figure 8.5
Narrow the items shown in the view by using the Address bar.

Address Bar Options for Current View
Searching can also be used to narrow the view of a chosen media category. After you have chosen a category as described in Step 1, enter your search term into the search box as shown in Figure 8.6.

**Figure 8.6**
Searching is a fast and easy way to narrow your media views.

---

**Playing Audio and Video in Windows Media Player 11**

There are three options for playing audio and video media in Windows Media Player 11. These include audio CDs and video DVDs, media stored on your hard disk, and media accessible over a home network.

**Playing an Audio CD or DVD**

To play an audio CD or DVD in Windows Media Player 11, follow these steps:

1. Insert the CD or DVD you want to play into your computer’s CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive.
2. Click the arrow below the Now Playing tab and select the drive that contains the disk you want to play, as shown in Figure 8.7.
3. While a disk is playing, you can use the Play/Pause, Previous, and Next buttons of the playback controls shown in Figure 8.1 to navigate the songs or chapters on the disk, or you can double-click the song or chapter in the List pane to play it immediately.
Playing Media Stored on Your Hard Disk or Network Share

To play an item stored on your hard disk, add it to the library following the instructions in the section “Adding Items from Your Computer to Your Library.” After the item is added to the library, you can select the media you want to view by double-clicking it in the Library view. If you want to add an item to the Now Playing list, right-click the item and select Add to Now Playing. Now Playing items can be navigated using the same playback controls described in the previous section.

➔ To play media shared over your home network, see the section labeled “Sharing Media Throughout Your Home.”

Getting Music and Video on Your Computer

Media Player 11 offers many ways to add media to your media library. These methods include ripping music from CDs to your computer, purchasing media from online stores, and adding media items already stored on your computer to the library.

Ripping Songs from CDs onto Your Computer

The process of copying music from a CD to your computer and converting it to a format that Media Player understands is known as ripping. Songs ripped using Windows Media Player 11 automatically appear in the media library for playing.
To rip music to your computer, complete the following steps:

1. Choose the desired format and bit rate for the file by clicking the arrow below the Rip tab, as shown in Figure 8.8. Select the desired options from the Format and Bit Rate commands. For more information on these options, see “Choosing a File Format” and “Choosing a Bit Rate” later in this section.

![Figure 8.8](image)

**Figure 8.8**
Change Format and Bit Rate in the Rip menu.

2. Insert a CD into the CD-ROM drive and click the Rip tab, as shown in Figure 8.9.

**NOTE**
By default, Windows Media Player 11 begins ripping automatically when you are on the Rip tab and insert a new CD. Automatic ripping options can be changed by selecting More Options from the Rip tab menu.

3. After the player has started ripping the CD, you may choose to uncheck songs that you do not want Media Player to rip to your computer. You can also stop or start by clicking the Stop Rip or Start Rip buttons that appear in the Rip view.
Choosing a File Format

By default, Windows Media Player 11 uses the Windows Media Audio Format. This format offers a balanced combination between sound quality and file size. Other available formats are

- **Windows Media Audio Pro**—Ideal for portable devices because of its higher sound quality at low bit rates.
- **Windows Media Audio Variable Bit Rate**—Results in smaller file size with the same audio quality.
- **Windows Media Audio Lossless**—Provides the best audio quality with the largest file size.
- **MP3**—Provides added flexibility with similar audio quality and a slightly larger file size than Windows Media Audio.
- **WAV**—Another lossless format providing added flexibility with high audio quality and large file size.

Choosing a Bit Rate

The bit rate determines the audio quality and file size of the resulting file. Typically, lower bit rates result in smaller file sizes that have lower audio quality. Alternatively, high bit rates result in high quality audio with very large file sizes.

You should choose a bit rate that balances quality and file size to meet your usage needs. A good bit rate is usually 96Kbps or 128Kbps if you plan to use your audio on portable devices.
with limited storage. Higher bit rates should be used for audio archiving on your PC where storage space is not an issue. True audiophiles won’t be satisfied with MP3s ripped at anything under 192Kbps, however.

**Shopping for Music and Video from Online Stores**

Online stores provide a quick and easy way to legally download your favorite music or videos. Media Player 11 allows the browsing and purchasing of media from many online stores that are part of the PlaysForSure program. Although many stores are available, I will focus on the Napster service for buying songs and listening to online radio. Before October 2007, there was an online store called Urge, which was a partnership between Microsoft and MTV. It was fully integrated within Media Player and let you buy media directly from Library view, as shown in Figure 8.10. Unfortunately, this alliance ended, and MTV allied with the Rhapsody media service instead of Media Player.

![Figure 8.10](image)
The URGE music store was integrated directly into the library. Stores after SP-1 are not.

**Choosing an Online Store**

The Online Stores tab displays the currently chosen online store, or might read Online Stores or Media Guide in the case that there is no store currently active. To choose an online store, click the arrow below the Online Stores tab, as shown in Figure 8.11, and select the desired store from the list. If you want to use a store not listed in the Online Stores menu, select Browse All Online Stores. Then you can choose Napster or whatever.
**Setting Up an Account**

Most online stores require a similar setup process of creating a username and password, entering your billing information, and choosing your account type. To set up an account for Napster, follow these steps:

1. Find Napster in the Browse Online Stores list, and read the instructions for downloading the Napster plugin for Media Player.
2. Select Create New Account in the dialog box that appears, as shown in Figure 8.12.

3. Enter your billing information and select an account type.
   
   Common account types are as follows:
   
   - **Purchase Only**—Standard account type that allows purchasing songs on an individual basis. Songs can usually be played on the computer, burned to a CD, or transferred to a portable device.
   - **Subscription with Streaming**—Subscription account that allows unlimited streaming of all content contained in the store’s catalog. You must be connected to the Internet at all times to use this type of account.
■ Subscription with Streaming and Download—Subscription account that allows the download of music to your computer for playback when not connected to the Internet.

■ Subscription with Streaming, Download, and Sync—Subscription account that allows you to download media and sync it to a PlaysForSure-compatible portable device.

**Adding Items from Your Computer to Your Library**

By default, Windows Media player 11 searches certain folders on your computer for media files and automatically adds these files to your library. If your media does not appear in the library automatically, it is located in a folder that is not monitored by Media Player. To change the folders that are monitored, perform the following steps:

1. Click the arrow below the Library tab and select Add to Library.
2. In the Add to Library dialog box, click Advanced Options.
3. As shown in Figure 8.13, you can Add or Remove monitored folders as well as change options for monitoring.

**Tip**

To add .m4a, .mp4, .m4p, or .aac files from iTunes to your Media Player 11 library, you must first convert the files to a compatible format such as Windows Media Audio or MP3. Many software programs convert media files, such as Xilisoft Audio Converter. To find one of these programs, search Google for “Audio Converter” and look for one that supports your desired source file type.

![Figure 8.13 Add to Library options.](image-url)
**Taking Your Music and Video on the Go**

Windows Media Player 11 provides many ways that make it easier than ever to take your music and video files with you. Media Player 11 has built-in functions for burning CDs, synchronizing files to your portable media player, and for sharing your media throughout your home network.

**Media Player 11 and PlaysForSure Versus iTunes & iPod**

One of the first questions that is asked is should I get an iPod or another type of MP3 player? Having used a large number of portable music players in the past, I would recommend one of the excellent, more featured alternative players. If you are choosing a new portable device, the first consideration is the software you currently use for your digital media. If you currently use iTunes for your digital media management and purchasing, then you should definitely choose the iPod since it would integrate with your current media system. However, if you currently use Windows Media Player or any other PC-based media software, I would recommend using Windows Media Player in conjunction with a PlaysForSure compatible device. Of the portable devices I have used, the Creative Zen Vision:M, found at www.creative.com, is by far a superior device. The device has an incredible screen offering 256,000 colors to view your video as well as extremely crisp audio provided by Creative’s patented audio processors. The player also includes the ability to listen and record FM radio as well as support for TiVo-to-Go, both of which the iPod lacks. Other advantages over the iPod include the longer battery life of 4 hours of video or 14 hours of audio playback. The Zen provides a much larger number of formats, which is its main advantage over the iPod, in my opinion. Instead of being limited to a couple of audio and one video format, the Zen offers support for the WMA, MP3, and WAV audio formats as well as MPEG1/2/4-SP, WMV9, Motion-JPEG, DivX, and XviD, and TiVo-to-Go video support. All PlaysForSure devices also support the large number of online content providers available through Windows Media Player 11 instead of being restricted to only one provider, as iTunes/iPod are, the iTunes Store. Finally, with the newly redesigned Media Player 11, the benefits of the standardized PlaysForSure program offer far superior function to the proprietary iTunes software suite without the need to install another piece of software onto your system. For this reason, it is my recommendation to choose Windows Media Player 11 and a compatible PlaysForSure device over iTunes and the iPod as long as your current media software is not iTunes.

**Burning Customized CDs**

Media Player 11 provides the capability to create customized CDs for playing in your home or car CD player. Before you can burn a CD, you must first have a Windows Vista-compatible CD burner and a blank CD-R disc. To burn a custom CD, perform the following steps:

1. Begin by selecting the Burn tab.
2. Click the arrow below the Burn tab and select Audio CD, as shown in Figure 8.14.
3. Insert a blank CD into your CD burner drive.

**Note**

If you have multiple CD burners, you can change the destination burner by clicking Next Drive in the List pane of the Burn view, as shown in Figure 8.15.
4. Create the list of songs to burn by dragging items from the Details pane to the List pane to add those items to the burn list. To remove items from the list, right-click the item and choose Remove from List. Items can be rearranged by clicking and dragging the songs to match the order you desire for your CD.

Figure 8.15
Use the List pane to change the destination drive, set up the burn list, and start the burn.
5. At the bottom of the List pane, choose Start Burn, as shown in Figure 8.15. It is recommended that you not perform other tasks while the burn is in progress. The current progress can be viewed in the burn list.

Syncing Files to Your Portable Media Player

The first step to synchronizing your files with your portable media player is to choose a portable device. Many players will work with Windows Media Player 11, but for the best experience, you should look for a device that is PlaysForSure compatible.

Tivo-To-Go

For users with a Tivo Series 2 DVR, there is now a way to get those recorded episodes of 24 onto your portable player for watching on the go. This requires a PlaysForSure Video mobile device that states its support for Tivo-To-Go videos. An excellent player, and one I use quite often for this purpose, is Creative’s Zen Vision:M. To use this feature, you must first have a Tivo that is connected to your home network. See your Tivo manual for how to do this. Secondly, you will need to download the free Tivo desktop software from Tivo’s website at www.tivo.com/tivotogo. After it is installed, follow the instructions on Tivo’s website or the Tivo desktop help file for how to transfer your recordings to your PC. After your recordings have transferred successfully to your PC, you can add them to your Media Player 11 Library, as described in “Adding Items from Your Computer to Your Library,” and sync the files to your device either automatically or manually as described next.

PlaysForSure is a program between Microsoft and hardware vendors that ensures the best operation with Windows Media Player 11 without the need to install drivers or software for those devices. PlaysForSure is separated into many compatibilities that describe what services a device offers. To view a list of PlaysForSure devices, visit www.playsforsure.com. When shopping for your PlaysForSure device, look for the logos shown in Figure 8.16.
After you have your device, open Media Player and connect the device to your computer. Media Player prompts you to choose either Automatic or Manual sync method. For a description of these methods, see the corresponding section that follows. If you decide later to change the sync method, click the arrow below the Sync tab, point to the device, and select Set Up Sync. You can then select or clear the Sync This Device Automatically check box.

Choosing What Syncs Automatically

If your device is set to sync automatically, the items selected to sync will be updated each time you connect your device to your computer. To select the items that will be synchronized, follow these steps:

1. Click the arrow below the Sync tab, point to the device name, and select Set Up Sync.
2. In the Device Setup dialog box, shown in Figure 8.17, you can choose the playlists that are synchronized with your device. Using the available playlists, select Add to sync the selected playlist with the device. To stop a playlist from synchronizing, select it in the Playlists to Sync list and choose Remove.

TIP

To make sure your favorite playlists sync in the event that your device runs out of storage space, make sure to use the priority arrows in the Device Setup dialog box to set the priority of the selected playlist.

Figure 8.17

The Device Setup dialog box allows you to choose the playlists to sync and their priority.

Selecting Item to Sync Manually

If your device is set to sync manually, each time you want to make changes to the files on your device, you must create a list of files to sync. To remove files from your device,
navigate the device using the Navigation pane to find your file. Right-click the file and choose Delete. To set up a list of files to sync to the device, perform the following:

1. Select the Sync tab and clear the sync list by clicking the Clear List pane button as shown in Figure 8.18.

2. Find your media in your library and drag them to the List pane to add them to the Sync List as shown in Figure 8.18. To select multiple items, hold down the CTRL key while selecting your media. To remove items from the Sync List, right-click the item and select Remove from List.

**TIP**

To have Media Player automatically choose a set of random songs from your library, you can choose Click Here on the List pane when there are no items in the Sync List. After doing this, you can add or remove items from the list and click Shuffle Now.

3. After you have set up your Sync List, make sure that all the items will fit on your device by looking at the List pane. Remove any necessary items from the Sync List and click Start Sync.

**Figure 8.18**

Sync view allows you to manually set up your Sync List for your device.
SHARING MEDIA THROUGHOUT YOUR HOME

Before you begin to set up media sharing throughout your home, you will need to make sure you have all the required equipment. To enable media sharing, you will need a home network and a networked digital media player. A networked digital media player, also known as a digital media receiver, is connected to your network and plays the content shared by Media Player on your Windows Vista machine. Suitable digital media receivers include other Windows Vista PCs and the Xbox 360, as well as a number of standalone units that can be found by visiting the PlaysForSure website at www.playsforsure.com.

To connect a digital media receiver to your network, you can use an ethernet cable or a wireless network adapter. Consult the documentation that comes with your device for more information on getting it connected to your home network. If you are connecting another Windows Vista PC as a digital media receiver or setting up a new home network, see Chapter 20, “Creating a Windows Network,” later in this book.

After your device is connected to the network, turn it on and complete any configuration steps that may be needed to finalize the installation. If you are using another Windows Vista PC as your device, you must select the Find Media Others Are Sharing check box in the Media Sharing dialog box shown in Figure 8.19. After your device is fully connected and operational, complete the following steps to enable media sharing on your Windows Vista PC with your newly installed digital media receiver.

1. Click the arrow below the Library tab and select Media Sharing.
2. In the Media Sharing dialog box, enable media sharing by checking the Share My Media check box, as shown in Figure 8.19, and click OK.

3. To allow sharing with your device, find the device in the list of devices in the Media Sharing dialog box and choose Allow, as shown in Figure 8.20. If you want to prevent access to a device, choose Deny.

TIP

To change what library items are shared with new devices by default, choose Settings in the Media Sharing dialog box. To change what library items are shared with a certain device, select that device from the device list and choose Customize.
After you have sharing enabled, you are ready to play your media on your new digital media receiver. For information on how to do this, see the documentation that came with your device. If your digital media receiver is another Windows Vista PC, the shared media will appear in the Library view of Windows Media Player 11, as shown in Figure 8.21.

Not all shared media will play back on your digital media receiver. Check your device’s documentation for information on supported media types. Also note that media obtained from online stores may be supported only if purchased and might not be supported if obtained from a subscription service.
Organizing Your Music Collection

To keep track of all your media that you have added to your library, you must learn to organize your library and files for easy access of your favorites. Your media library can be set up to contain playlists that allow you to quickly play your favorite music. In addition, arranging the media files on your computer’s hard disk in a neat fashion will greatly aid you in the event that you need to back up your media files for transfer to a new PC or for repair of your current PC.

Creating Your Own Custom Playlists

With Windows Media Player 11, it is easier than ever to create and edit custom playlists to contain your favorite media. With playlists, you can create the perfect layout of songs for any occasion. To create a new playlist, follow these instructions:

1. Open Windows Media Player 11 and select the Library tab. If you need to clear the List pane, click the Clear List pane button shown earlier in Figure 8.18.
2. To add media to your playlist, drag items from your media library onto the List pane, as shown in Figure 8.22. To rearrange items in the playlist, select and drag the item to the desired location. To remove items from the list, right-click the item, and select Remove from List.
3. When you are finished creating your playlist, select Save Playlist at the bottom of the List pane, as shown in Figure 8.22, and enter the name for your playlist.

NOTE

After your playlist is saved, you can play it by right-clicking it in the library Navigation pane and selecting play. In addition, the playlist may be edited anytime by selecting it from the Navigation pane and choosing Edit in List Pane. After it is opened in edit mode, make any changes to the playlist as described in Step 2 and select Save Playlist to save your changes.

Creating and Editing Auto Playlists

An auto playlist is a playlist that is set up with a set of filters. Using these filters, the content of these playlists is automatically updated to reflect changes to your media library. To create a new auto playlist, complete the following steps:

1. Click the arrow below the Library tab and select Create Auto Playlist.
2. Type the name of your new auto playlist into the Auto Playlist Name box.
3. In the bottom half of the window, set up your filters by selecting Click Here to Add Criteria, as shown in Figure 8.23. You can add as many filters as you would like to your auto playlist. To remove a filter, select it and choose Remove.
**NOTE**

To edit an existing auto playlist, right-click the playlist in the Navigation pane and select **Edit**.

**Figure 8.22**
Drag items to the List pane to create a new playlist.

**Figure 8.23**
Name your auto playlist and create filters.
Organizing your Media Collection

Over time, your PC will have media files scattered all over the hard drive. This can make it difficult to find all your media files in the event that you want to create a backup. Your media library may also become cluttered with media files you no longer want or that you want to remove from your media library.

**CAUTION**

Before performing this next section, ensure that all your media has the correct media information as described in “Updating Media Information and Album Art.” This will prevent the creation of incorrectly named folders and improperly grouped media.

To arrange your media files into an organized central location, perform the following:

1. Make sure your Rip music settings are set to use your Music folder and the filename is set up as described in the first note under “Ripping Songs from CDs onto Your Computer.”
2. Click the arrow below the Library tab and select More Options.
3. Set up the Automatic Media Information Updates for Files section of the Library Options dialog box, as shown in Figure 8.24, and click OK.
4. Apply these changes to your media library files by clicking the arrow below the Library tab and selecting Apply Media Information Changes. The result will be a single Music folder, your rip music folder, arranged in folders by artist. Each Artist folder will contain Album folders that contain the songs that appear on that album.

**TIP**

When browsing your media files using Windows Explorer, you can set your view to any icon view to see the Album Art displayed for Album folders and a Collection of one or more Album Art images on Artist Folders. This provides a nice visual way to view your media files when you are not using Windows Media Player 11.

Housecleaning for Your Media Library

Although Media Player 11 automatically removes files from the library that are no longer present in the file system, you may at some point decide that you want to clean out your library. If you have tons of files that you no longer use and want to remove them from your library, you have two options:

First is to leave the file on your computer’s hard drive and remove the file only from the library. This is a good choice if you think you might want to add the file back at a later time or if you just want to hold on to that file for sentimental reasons.
Second, you can have Media Player 11 remove the file from both your library and your PC. This results in the file being permanently lost and should be used only if you are sure you are never going to want the file again.

To remove media from your library, find the item in the Library view. Right-click the item and choose Delete. In the dialog box, choose the appropriate option for removal, as described previously.

**Updating Media Information and Album Art**

Most of the time, your media information will already be correct because it is downloaded when you rip a CD or it is embedded in the file when you buy music from an online store. However, on occasion, the media information that is downloaded for a file on your hard drive or for a CD is incorrect or missing. Incorrect or missing media information is a major problem when ripping CDs that are not well known or are a mix of different songs previously burned onto a CD.

**TIP**

To ensure your files stay organized and updated, make sure you update your media files after changing any media information or album art. To do this, click the arrow below the Library tab and select Apply Media Information Changes.
Adding or Editing Media Information

In some cases, the media information of a file may be incomplete or missing. This inaccurate media information should be corrected immediately to ensure that your library and files remain neatly organized and easy to navigate and maintain. It is a lot easier to find your favorite song if it contains the correct media information than if its media information reads “Track 2, Unknown Album, Unknown Artist,” along with about 400 other songs in your library. It may be tedious, but supplying your media library with correct information will make things much more enjoyable in the long run. You can enter media information into Windows Media Player 11 in several ways, including automatically from online databases, dragging items, and using the Advanced Tag Editor.

Automatically Get Media Information from an Online Database

Many albums have their information stored in online databases accessible to Windows Media Player 11. This is usually the easiest and fastest way to update your media information. To do this, complete the following steps:

1. Find the album you want to update in the Album view of the library.
2. Right-click the album and select Find Album Info.
3. Follow the instructions on the Find Album Information dialog box to search for the correct information and update the album.

If you are unable to find the album information in the online database, or if your media was originally part of a mix CD, you must use one of the manual options. The first of these is useful if you have at least one file in your library that has correct information for the album. Files with incorrect media information can be dragged on top of a file with the correct media information. Confirm the move and media information change to add the correct media information to the desired file. If this option is not possible, you must use the Advanced Tag Editor. This is the most powerful option for editing your media information and personally is my favorite because each file is edited independently and there is no chance you can mess up the media information you have already entered for other files. To use the Advanced Tag Editor, right-click a song in the library and select Advanced Tag Editor. Enter the correct media information in the boxes for the Track Info tab and the
Adding or Changing Album Art

The most common missing piece of media information is the album art. The album art provides a visual representation of every album in your media library and is displayed in the Expanded Tile view of your media library; it’s used as well by many portable media players and digital media receivers.

**TIP**

To enter multiple artists in the Artist field, enter all artists separated by semicolons.

**Figure 8.25**
The Advanced Tag Editor is the most powerful way to modify a file’s media information.

**TIP**

Make sure all media information is correct before updating album art. This will reduce the risk of files being assigned incorrect album art.
To add or edit the album art, complete the following:

1. Click the Library tab and locate the album for which you want to add or change the album art.
2. To automatically find the album art, right-click the album and select Find Album Info. Search for the correct media information and click the correct entry.

If the media information found is correct, but there is a generic album art image or if the media information is not found at all, you must manually set the album art. The following steps describe how to manually add or change the album art.

1. Click the Library tab and locate the album for which you want to add or change the album art.
2. Find the image you would like to use on your computer or on the Internet. Good websites for finding album art are Google images, images.google.com, and albumart.org. When you find the desired album art, right-click the image and select Copy.
3. In Windows Media Player 11, right-click the album art box of the desired album and select Paste Album Art. The Album Art for all songs in that album is updated with the new album art.

Tips from the Windows Pros: Playing Audio from Your Portable Device Through Your Car Stereo

So now you know how to work Media Player and how to organize your media with complete media information and album art. You have synchronized your media to your portable device. The majority of music that people listen to during the day is in the car during the commute to and from work. Next, I explain the options you have for getting your newly stocked portable player connected to your car stereo so that you never have to carry a CD again.

To decide the best method to use, you need to know a little bit about your car stereo. If you have not already checked, see whether your stereo has an auxiliary input. This information can usually be found in the vehicle or stereo’s manual, or you may need to call your local dealership. Another option to look into is whether your stereo supports a stereo Bluetooth link. After you know this information, review the following options, listed from best sound quality to worst, and choose the one that best suits your needs. In all cases, the portable media player’s headphone jack is used as the audio source.

- **Auxiliary Input**—This is a direct connection to your stereo either through an auxiliary (front/rear) or an adapter connected to your specialized CD changer input. There is little interference with this type of connection and as a result, it is highly recommended over other methods.
■ **Bluetooth Link**—If your stereo supports a Bluetooth link, you can get an adapter for your portable device that will allow a high-quality wireless direct connection with your stereo. Because the link is wireless, the Bluetooth link is subject to slightly more interference than the Auxiliary Input method.

■ **Cassette Adapter**—This option offers quality similar to that of the FM options discussed next. However, because it is not bound to the FM spectrum, it is subject to less interference and noise. This device connects from your portable device directly into your car’s cassette player.

■ **Wired FM Transmitter**—This option does offer decreased sound quality to the previous option because of the limitations of the FM spectrum. A wired FM transmitter is a device installed in line with your stereo’s FM antenna. While an audio source is connected to the device, the car’s antenna is switched off and the audio signal is modulated to a set FM frequency, such as 88.9 FM. When there is no audio input source, the device switches the antenna back on to keep from interfering with FM radio reception.

■ **Wireless FM Transmitter**—This is identical in operation to the wired FM transmitter, except that it modulates the audio to the FM frequency and then broadcasts it within a short range (usually 3–6 ft.) so that it can be picked up by your vehicle’s antenna. Notice that this device does not switch off the vehicle’s antenna, because it requires it for operation. Although most used, this option has the lowest audio quality because of the large amount of interference introduced by the wirelessly transmitted FM signals competing with other local FM stations.
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