



Online  
Resource

# B

## GOALS

Play audio and  
video, display photos,  
and watch and record  
TV programs using  
Windows Media Center





## ONLINE RESOURCE B

# Windows Media Center

As mentioned in Lesson 11, the Home Premium and Ultimate editions of Vista come with Media Center, which does some of—but not all—the same things as Media Player. It has some neat additional features and a different user interface.

Media Center's two main claims to fame are its ability to record TV (similar to a TiVo or other DVR) and its ability to work with an optional remote control, turning your PC into a home entertainment center. Although you can use Media Center with a regular PC monitor, the idea behind the software is to use it with a PC that's connected to a TV set, either directly or over a wired or wireless network.





## Running Media Center

To watch and record TV, your PC needs to be equipped with a compatible tuner. Most PCs aren't, so if you want this function, be sure to order the tuner when you buy the PC, or shop around for an aftermarket model (such as the WinTV-PVR-500 MCE from Hauppauge or Xtreme TV from Diamond Multimedia). As we explain later in this lesson, you don't need a tuner to enjoy video, because you can download and watch programming as long as you have a broadband Internet connection.

To run Media Center:

- Click the Start button, and type Media Center in the Start menu's Search box.

*or*

Choose Start > All Programs > Windows Media Center.

## Finding Your Way Around Media Center

If you're using your PC with a mouse and a keyboard, the Media Center user interface can be a bit confusing. Media Center has no familiar pull-down menus and no Home button, and the relatively unambiguous main menu from earlier versions of the program is gone. All this makes sense if you consider that Media Center shines when you're sitting on a couch controlling the PC with a remote control, but it doesn't work as well for those of us who are controlling our PCs in a more traditional manner.

Still, after you figure out how to use this dauntingly redesigned program, you will discover some pretty interesting features, even if you don't have a TV tuner and even if your PC isn't attached to a TV set.

### Follow the arrows?

Unless you use your keyboard to navigate, the navigation system for Media Center depends on four onscreen arrows that you either click with the mouse or select with a remote control. The mere existence of these arrows may not be obvious, because they appear and disappear in a seemingly random manner.



Actually, the arrows aren't quite random. If you don't see them, you may be able to make them appear by moving your mouse pointer over the screen, depending on where you are in the product.

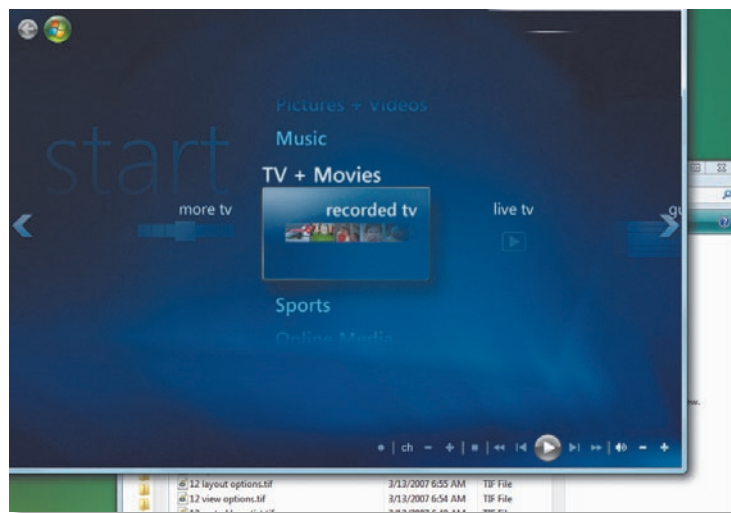
If you don't see an arrow, try moving your pointer up, down, left, and right. Don't move too fast or too far, because for some reason we can't figure out, Microsoft designed the interface so that the arrows disappear if your pointer isn't in just the right spot.

When you locate an arrow, you can click it to scroll the display up or down and find what you're looking for.

## The easy way to navigate Media Center

We found an easier way to master Media Center: Use the arrow keys on your keyboard. Instead of trying to figure out how to navigate with the mouse, just press the up- and down-arrow keys to move from function to function and the left- and right-arrow keys to select different tasks within each major function.

Moving up and down lets you select different types of media: TV + Movies, Pictures + Video, Music, or Online Media. The right- and left-arrow keys give you access to various options that change depending on the type of media you're working with. If you're in the TV + Movies area, for example, you can use the left- and right-arrow keys to switch to such options as More TV, Record TV, and Live TV.



You can navigate Media Center by clicking the arrow keys on your keyboard.

## Watching and Recording TV

As we said earlier in this lesson, if you have a TV tuner in your PC, Media Center lets you not only watch live TV, but also pause live TV, rewind, and record shows to watch later. You don't need to connect your PC to a TV set to enjoy TV. You can watch TV on your PC monitor, or if you're the multitasking type, you can watch it in a little window in the corner of your screen while you surf the Net, catch up on your email, and do your work at the same time.

## Configure Media Center to watch TV

If your PC doesn't already have a tuner, you need to obtain one and install it according to the manufacturer's instructions. Most third-party tuners come with both drivers and software. You need the drivers but you may not need the software, because Media Center is redundant with most of those programs.

1. With Media Center open, use the up- and down-arrow keys on your keyboard to locate the Tasks section; use the right- and left-arrow keys to locate Settings; and press Enter.

The Settings screen appears.

2. Click TV.

The TV Settings screen appears.

3. Click Set up TV Signal.

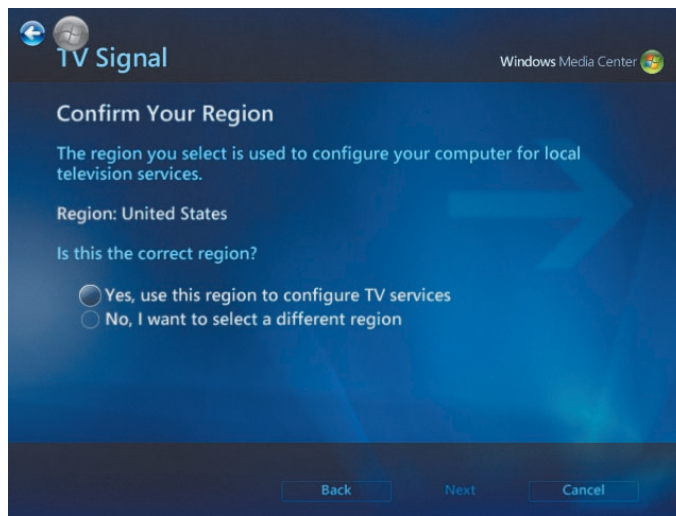


If you've set up a TV signal before, a warning message appears; click Yes.

The Set Up Your TV Signal screen appears.

4. Click Next.
5. In the next window, confirm your region.

If you're in the United States, click Yes to use this region to configure your TV signal. If you're outside the United States, click No, and select your country.



Media Center downloads up-to-date settings for your region.

6. In the Automatic TV Signal Setup window, choose whether to let Media Center configure your signal automatically or do it manually. We recommend that you try automatic configuration first by selecting Configure My TV Signal Automatically and clicking Next.

Media Center examines your signal and determines your settings. The process could take several minutes, as Media Center tests for various types of inputs. If it fails, you can always go back and enter the data manually.

When it finishes, Media Center asks whether you want to set up guide listings. This free program guide downloads from the Internet, depending on where you live and what type of TV service you have.


7. Click Set Up Guide Listings; then keep clicking Next until Media Center asks for your zip code, which is necessary for local listings.

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8. Type your zip code; then click Next.

Media Center downloads information about your local area and may ask you for your local provider, such as a cable or satellite company. When it has all the information it needs, it downloads the program guide.

9. When the download is complete, click Next until you return to the Settings screen.
10. Click the Media Center icon  in the top-left corner of the screen to return to the Media Center home page.

## Watch a TV program

Now that Media Center is installed, you can watch and record live TV. Here's how:

1. With Media Center open, use the up- or down-arrow keys on your keyboard (or an optional remote control) to navigate to the TV + Movies screen. Navigate to live TV; and press Enter.

If everything got configured correctly in the preceding exercise, you should see a TV program playing on your screen.

2. To get channel information about the show you're watching, right-click anywhere onscreen, and choose Program Info from the shortcut menu.

A screen pops up, displaying detailed information about the show you're watching. You can also use this screen to watch the show, record the show, and record the series (among other options), but hold off on that until we show you a more powerful method of choosing and recording programs.



## Manage your TV-viewing options

The program guide is Media Center's main tool for managing your TV viewing. You can use it to find out what's on now or in the future, and use it to select a show you want to watch now or one you want to record in the future. If you opt to record a show, you can record one episode or (for a series) all episodes. This feature is very much like the experience that TiVo and other DVR users have—like having your own TV butler.

To access the guide:

1. Use the up- and down-arrow keys on your keyboard to choose TV + Movies; press the right- and left-arrow keys till Guide is highlighted; and press Enter.



2. In the program guide, use the arrow keys to navigate to a show you want to watch or record.

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3. If the show is on now, double-click it to play it now.

*or*

If the show is on in the future, double-click the show's title to display the Record menu.



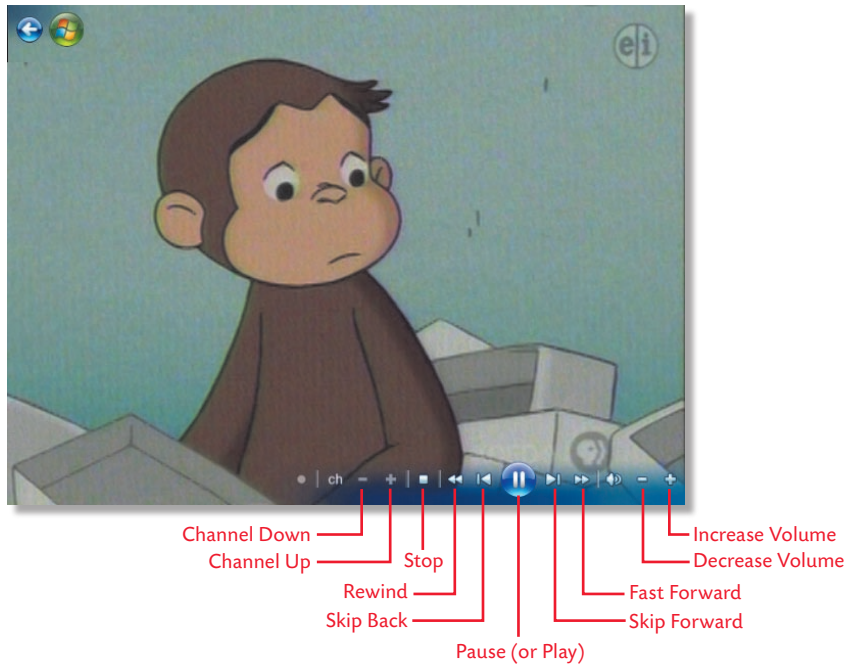
4. Experiment with the various menu options.

The options include Advanced Record, which lets you control how often to record the show, how long to keep the show on your hard drive, and whether the show will stop and start on time or a bit early. You can also click Other Showings to find out other times the program will air.

## Change channels while watching live TV

The easiest way to change channels while watching live TV is simply to type the channel number. You can also use another method.

If you click anywhere onscreen while watching live or recorded TV, you see some controls at the bottom of the screen that look like typical VCR controls.



If you click the minus (–) or plus (+) icon just to the right of the Ch icon, you can change channels that way. Or just press the plus or minus key on your keyboard.

You can also use the controls to perform other tasks, such as rewinding, stopping, pausing, and fast forwarding.

## Accessing Video Programming Without a TV Tuner

One of the most interesting features of Media Center is Online Media, where you can find programming from Fox Sports, ABC News, Comedy Central, Yahoo, NPR News, and other sources. You don't need a TV tuner to access this content, but you do need a broadband Internet connection.

To get to Online Media:

1. With Media Center open, use the up- and down-arrow keys on your keyboard until Online Media is highlighted.
2. Press the right-arrow key to highlight Explore.  
A list of available programming appears.
3. Use your mouse or the arrow keys to highlight programs of interest, and press Enter to play the media.

*or*

Use the up- and down-arrow keys to highlight Showcase, TV + Movies, Music + Radio, News + Sports, or Pictures to access additional programs.

## Exploring Other Media Center Activities

The more you explore Media Center, the more you realize just how many incredible features it has. You can use this remarkable program to do other activities, such as the following:

- Listen to music.
- Burn media to CD and DVD (assuming that the DRM permits it).
- Sync media to a digital video or music player.
- Use an optional "extender" such as the Xbox 360, which can allow you to play Media Center programs on a TV via your home network.

Many of those functions, of course, are redundant with Windows Media Player, which we recommend that you use for most desktop applications. Still, Media Center is worth exploring, if only for its unique user interface.

**Media Center Keyboard Shortcuts**

Live TV	Ctrl+T	Pause/Resume TV	Ctrl+P
Display Menu	Ctrl+D	Fast Forward	Ctrl+Shift+F
Program Guide	Ctrl+G	Skip Forward	Ctrl+F
Next Channel	Page Up	Skip Back	Ctrl+B
Previous Channel	Page Down	Rewind	Ctrl+Shift+B
Record TV Show	Ctrl+R	Toggle Full Screen	Alt+Enter
Recorded TV	Ctrl+O		

## What You've Learned

- How to use Windows Media Center