Chapter

Make Windows Vista Faster and More Efficient

Whether you use Windows Vista at work or at home, you probably want to spend your computer time creating documents, sending and receiving e-mail, browsing the Web, playing games, and doing other useful and fun activities. You probably do *not* want to spend your time wrestling with Windows Vista or waiting for it to finish its tasks.

Using a few simple techniques, you can make working with Windows Vista faster and more convenient. For example, rather than opening a number of Start menu folders to get to a program, you can create a shortcut in a more convenient location.

Also, you can work with a few settings to ensure Windows Vista is working quickly and

efficiently. For example, you can speed up your display by reducing the number of visual effects Windows Vista uses to draw screen elements.

Sometimes getting the most out of Windows Vista is a simple matter of taking care of the little details. For example, do you find yourself wasting precious time every time you accidentally press the Caps Lock key and have to delete and retype the errant text? If so, you can avoid the problem altogether by setting up Windows Vista to warn you when you turn on Caps Lock.

This chapter introduces you to these and many other techniques for maximizing your Windows Vista productivity.

# 1	Create Shortcuts for Your Favorite Programs 4	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
# 2	Adjust Visual Effects for Best Performance 6	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
#3	Ensure Windows Vista Is Optimized for Programs8	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
# 4	Improve Performance with a USB Flash Drive 10	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
# 5	Run a Program with Elevated Privileges 12	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
# 6	Make Your File Searches Run Faster	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
# 7	Hear an Alert When You Press the Caps Lock Key16	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
#8	Display More Programs on Your Start Menu	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
#9	Launch Control Panel Icons Faster by Using a Menu20	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
#10	Update a Device Driver to Ensure Top Device Performance	DIFFICULTY LEVEL

CREATE SHORTCUTS

for your favorite programs

If you have a program that you use regularly, you can access the program more quickly by creating a shortcut. A *shortcut* is a special file that points to a program. When you double-click the shortcut, Windows Vista automatically loads that program. Shortcuts become particularly handy when you create them in a convenient location. For example, you can create a program shortcut on your Windows Vista desktop. That way, instead of clicking the Start

menu and opening a number of subfolders to find and launch a particular program, you can simply double-click the shortcut on the desktop.

You can create as many shortcuts as you want; the Windows Vista desktop offers a number of features that help you keep your shortcuts organized. And if you find that you no longer use a shortcut, you can safely delete it without affecting the associated program.



What item would you like to create a shortout for?

This wizard helps you to create shortout to local or network programs, files, folders, computers, or Internet addresses.

Type the location of the item:

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Click No.

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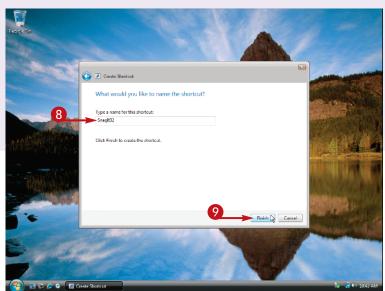
- 1 Right-click the location on your desktop where you want to create the shortcut.
- 2 Click New.
- 3 Click Shortcut.

The Create Shortcut wizard appears.

- 4 Click Browse.
 - The Browse for Files or Folders dialog box appears.
- **5** Select the program that you want the shortcut to start.

Note: You can also create shortcuts to documents.

- 6 Click OK.
- Click Next.



- **8** Type a name for the shortcut.
- Olick Finish.





 An icon for the shortcut appears on the desktop.

Note: You can also pin shortcuts to your Start menu, as explained in Task #11.



Taskbar Trick!

The problem with adding shortcuts to your desktop is that other windows often obscure the desktop, particularly if you prefer running your program windows maximized. However, Windows gives you a quick method to get to the desktop. Right-click an empty section of the taskbar and then click Show the Desktop.

Desktop Trick!

If you frequently use the Windows Vista desktop to store your program shortcuts, the desktop can quickly become a jumble of icons that make it difficult to find the shortcut you want. To solve this problem, right-click an empty spot on the desktop, click Sort By and then click Name. This sorts the shortcuts alphabetically by name.

ADJUST VISUAL EFFECTS

for best performance

You can turn off some or all of the visual effects that Windows Vista uses to display screen elements. This reduces the load on your computer, which improves the overall performance of your machine.

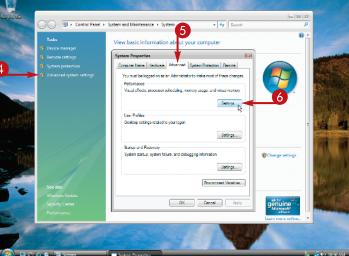
These visual effects include the animation Windows Vista uses when you minimize or maximize a window. For example, when you minimize a window, it appears to shrink down to the taskbar. Such effects are designed to help a novice user better understand what is happening on their computer.

For graphics in general, and the visual effects in particular, performance is mostly determined by the

amount of memory on the *graphics adapter*. This is a circuit board inside your computer that processes the graphical data generated by Windows Vista and displayed on your monitor. The more memory on the adapter, the faster it can process the visual effects.

Most new computers have a decent amount of adapter memory — at least 32MB — so turning off visual effects will have little impact on performance. If your adapter has 8MB or less, turning off visual effects can improve performance.





- Click Start.
- 2 Right-click Computer.
- 3 Click Properties.

The System window appears.

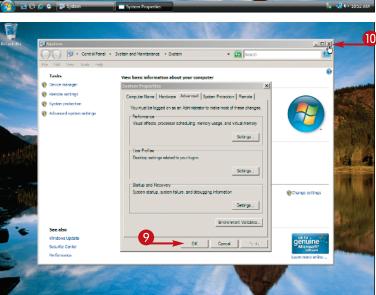
4 Click Advanced System Settings.

Note: If the User Account Control dialog box appears, click Continue or type an administrator password and click Submit.

The System Properties dialog box appears.

- 6 Click the Advanced tab.
- 6 In the Performance area, click Settings.





- The Performance Options dialog box appears.
- 7 Click the Adjust for best performance option (changes to).
- 8 Click OK to return to the System Properties dialog box.

Windows Vista turns off the visual effects.



- Olick OK.
 The System Properties dialog box closes.
- 10 Click the Close box.

Customize It!

If you prefer to turn off only certain visual effects, click the Adjust for best appearance option in step **7** (changes to) to ensure all the effects are activated. Click the Custom option (changes to) and then click the check box for each visual effect you want to turn off (changes to).

Did You Know?

If you do not know how much memory your graphics adapter has, Windows Vista can tell you. Follow steps 1 to 3 to display the System window, and then click the Windows Experience Index link. In the Performance Information and Tools window that appears, click the View and print details link. The Dedicated graphics memory value tells you the amount of memory in your graphics adapter.

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Ensure Windows Vista is OPTIMIZED FOR PROGRAMS

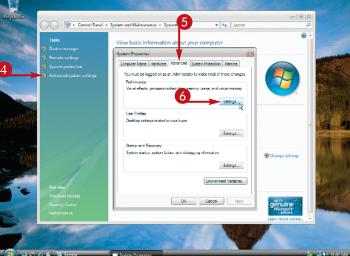
You can set an option that ensures Windows Vista maximizes the performance of your programs. This option controls processor scheduling in Windows Vista.

The processor (or CPU) is the chip inside your machine that coordinates all the computer's activity; some call it the brain of the computer. Processor scheduling determines how much time the processor allocates to the computer's activities. In particular, processor scheduling differentiates between the foreground program — the program in which you are

currently working — and *background programs* — programs that perform tasks, such as printing or backing up, while you work in another program.

Memory (or RAM) is a set of chips inside your computer that constitute the work area of the machine. Programs and files are loaded from the hard drive into memory. Windows Vista sets aside a portion of memory as the system cache, which holds recently used data for faster access. In terms of memory usage, the bigger the system cache, the less memory is available for your programs, which can reduce performance.





- Click Start.
- 2 Right-click Computer.
- 3 Click Properties.

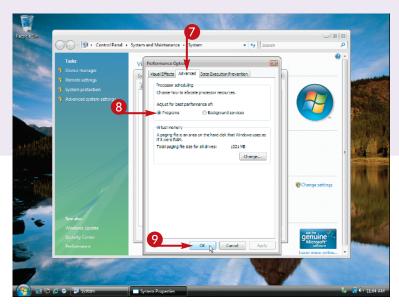
The System window appears.

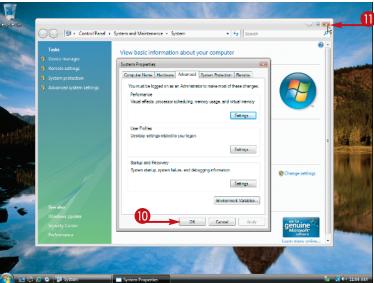
4 Click Advanced System Settings.

Note: If the User Account Control dialog box appears, click Continue or type an administrator password and click Submit.

The System Properties dialog box appears.

- 6 Click the Advanced tab.
- 6 In the Performance area, click Settings.





The Performance Options dialog box appears.

- Click the Advanced tab.
- In the Processor scheduling area, click the Programs option (changes to).
- Click OK to return to the System Properties dialog box.

Windows Vista applies the performance settings.



- Click OK.
- (I) Click the Close box.

The System Properties dialog box closes.



Did You Know?

There are circumstances where you may be better off clicking the Background services option (changes to) in the Advanced tab of the Performance Options dialog box. Specifically, if you often use programs that typically perform a great deal of work in the background, you can benefit from this choice. Good examples are the Windows Vista Backup program and Windows Update, both of which perform processor-intensive tasks in the background, and so would perform faster if given more processor cycles.

Did You Know?

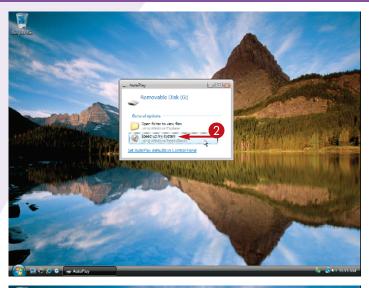
If you do not know what kind of processor or how much memory your computer has, Windows Vista can tell you. Follow steps 1 to 3 to display the System window and then click the Windows Experience Index link. In the Performance Information and Tools window that appears, click the View and print details link. In the Details column, read the Processor and Memory (RAM) values. See Task #10 to learn how to determine your system rating.

IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

with a USB flash drive

If you add a USB flash drive to your computer, Windows Vista can use the memory on that drive to improve the performance of your system. Windows Vista uses a technology named SuperFetch to boost system performance. SuperFetch tracks the programs and data you use over time to create a kind of profile of your hard drive usage. Using this profile, SuperFetch can then anticipate the data that you might use in the near future. It would then load (fetch) that data into memory ahead of time. If that data was indeed what your system required, then performance would increase because Vista would not have to retrieve the data from your hard drive.

However, SuperFetch goes even further by also using Vista's new ReadyBoost technology. If you insert a USB 2.0 flash drive (also called a memory key) into your system, Windows Vista asks you if you want to use the device to speed up your system. If you elect to do this, SuperFetch will use that drive's capacity as storage for the data that SuperFetch anticipates you will require. This frees up the system memory that SuperFetch would otherwise use for storage, and more available memory means better performance for Windows Vista and your programs.





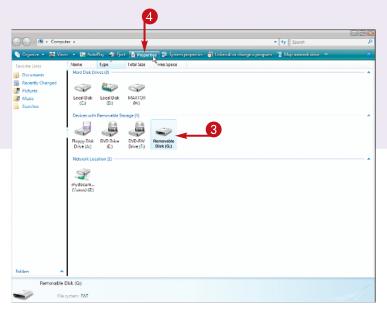
SPEED UP YOUR SYSTEM WITH FLASH DRIVE MEMORY

- 1 Insert a flash drive into a USB port on your computer.
 - The AutoPlay dialog box appears.
- 2 Click the Speed up my system option.

Windows Vista configures SuperFetch to use the flash drive's memory.

CONFIGURE THE AMOUNT OF FLASH DRIVE MEMORY USED BY WINDOWS

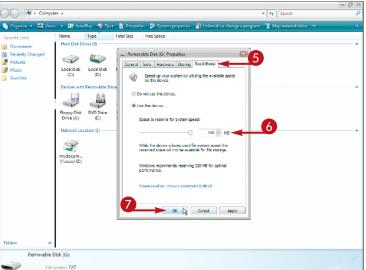
- Click Start.
- 2 Click Computer.



The Computer window appears.

- 3 Click the flash drive icon.
- 4 Click Properties.





The drive's Properties dialog box appears.

- 6 Click the ReadyBoost tab.
- 6 Click and drag the slider to set the amount of drive memory Vista sets aside for SuperFetch.
- Click OK.



Did You Know?

If you have two USB flash drives and your computer has two available USB ports, you can insert both flash drives and tell Windows Vista to use them both to speed up your system. You should also know that you probably will not see much improvement in performance if your system has at least 1GB of RAM, because SuperFetch does not need extra space when it has that much memory available.

Reverse It!

If you decide later on that you want to use the flash drive's full capacity for file storage, you can tell Windows Vista not to use the drive to augment SuperFetch. Click Start, Computer, click the flash drive, and then click Properties. Click the ReadyBoost tab and then click the Do not use this device option (changes to). Click OK to put the new setting into effect.

Run a program with ELEVATED PRIVILEGES

If you need to perform advanced tasks in a program, you may need to run that program with elevated privileges.

Windows Vista implements a new security model named *user account control* (UAC). The basic idea behind this new security strategy is that you have permission to perform only a few day-to-day Windows tasks, such as moving and copying files. For more ambitious tasks that could affect the security of the system, Windows Vista asks you to provide credentials to prove that the task is not being performed by a virus program or other malicious software.

The credentials you provide depend on the type of account you have. If you have an administrator

account, you click Continue in the User Account Control dialog box; if you have a standard user account, you have to provide an administrator password.

However, this security model falls short when you need to perform certain actions. For example, if you edit a file in one of the Windows Vista protected folders, you will receive a Permission Denied error when you try to save your changes.

To work around such problems, you need to start the program you are using with elevated privileges. This tells Vista to run the program as though you were using the Administrator account, the highest-level account on your system, and the only account that does not need to provide credentials.



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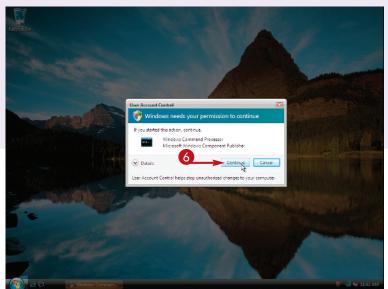
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- Click Start.
- 2 Click All Programs.

- Open the Start menu folder that contains the icon of the program you want to run.
- For example, to run the Command Prompt with elevated privileges, click Accessories.
- 4 Right-click the program icon (for example, the Command Prompt icon).
- 6 Click Run as administrator.

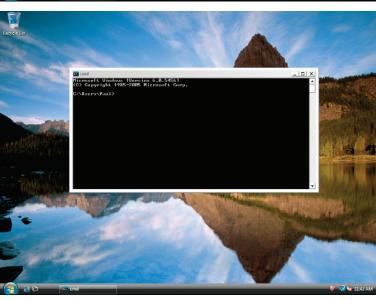


The User Account Control dialog box appears.

6 Click Continue.

If you have a standard user account, type the password for an administrator and then click Submit, instead.





Windows Vista runs the program with elevated privileges.



Did You Know?

If you have a program that you use frequently and you normally run it with elevated privileges, you can tell Windows Vista to always run the program elevated. Follow steps 1 to 3 in this task to find the program icon, right-click the icon, and then click Properties. Click the Compatibility tab, click the Run this program as an administrator check box (changes to), and then click OK.

Caution!

When you run a program with elevated privileges, it not only enables you to perform otherwise forbidden tasks using the program, but the program itself can perform tasks that programs are usually prevented from doing (at least until you enter your credentials to allow them access to the system). Because elevated programs can perform forbidden tasks, only elevate privileges for programs you know and trust. Otherwise, you might inadvertently give a virus or Trojan horse program complete access to your system.

Make your file searches RUN FASTER

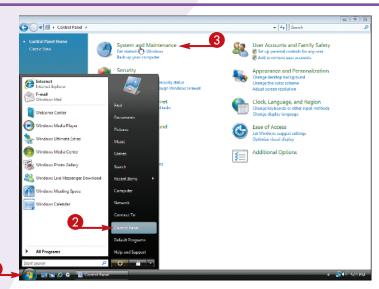
You can add folders to the Windows Search engine's index, which makes your file searches in those folders run noticeably faster.

Having a lot of data is certainly not a bad thing, but finding the file you want among all that data can get frustrating. Fortunately, the Windows Vista Search feature can help by enabling you to search for files based on name, content, size, and more.

This works well if what you are looking for is in your main user account folder or one of its subfolders (such as Documents, Pictures, and Music). This is

because Windows Vista automatically *indexes* those folders, which means it keeps a detailed record of the contents of all your files. Using this index, the Search feature can find files up to a hundred times faster than without an index.

However, if you have files in a different location, Windows Vista does not index them, so searching those files is very time-consuming. You can dramatically speed up the searching of those files by adding their location to the Search index.



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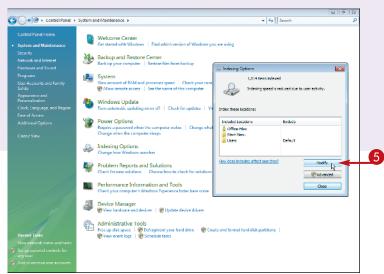
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- Click Start.
- 2 Click Control Panel. The Control Panel window appears.
- 3 Click System and Maintenance.

The System and Maintenance window appears.

4 Click Indexing Options.



The Indexing Options dialog box appears.

6 Click Modify.



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6 Show all locations.

Note: If the User Account Control dialog box appears, click Continue or type an administrator password and click Submit.

The Indexed Locations dialog box appears.

- Click the folder you want to include in the index.
- The folder appears in the list of included locations.
- 8 Click OK.
- Olick Close.

Windows Vista includes the folder in the index and begins rebuilding the index.

Note: See Task #36 to learn how to run advanced searches in Windows Vista.



Did You Know?

If Windows Vista takes a long time to search or cannot find your files, you may need to rebuild the index. Follow steps 1 to 5 to display the Indexing Options dialog box and activate the global settings. Click Advanced to display the Advanced Options dialog box, and then click Rebuild.

Caution!

The catalog created by the Indexing Service can use up hundreds of megabytes of hard drive space. To move the catalog to a hard drive with more space, follow steps 1 to 5 to display the Indexing Options dialog box and activate the global settings. Click Advanced to display the Advanced Options dialog box. Click Move, select a new location, and then click OK.

HEAR AN ALERT

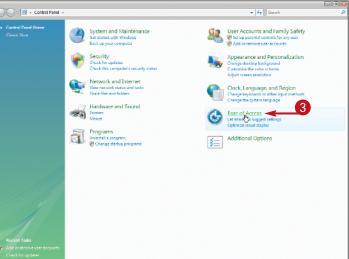
when you press the Caps Lock key

You can adjust a setting that tells Windows Vista to beep your computer's speaker whenever you press the Caps Lock key.

When you are typing quickly, it is common to accidentally press the Caps Lock key instead of either Shift, Tab, or A. As you probably know, when you inadvertently press Caps Lock, it may be a while before you realize it. This means that you end up with a great deal of typing that has the capital letters reversed. Not only must you delete this text, but you must also retype it with the correct letters, all of which wastes valuable time.

To save all the time it takes to fix mistakes caused by accidentally pressing Caps Lock, you can configure Windows Vista to beep your computer's speaker when you press Caps Lock. This alerts you that Caps Lock is now activated, so you can immediately press the key again to deactivate it and continue with your work after only a short interruption. It is also possible to quickly disable the Caps Lock alert for those times when you need to use the Caps Lock feature.

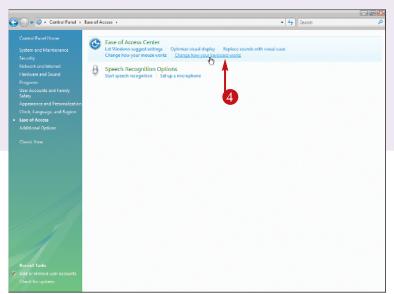




- Click Start.
- 2 Click Control Panel.

The Control Panel window appears.

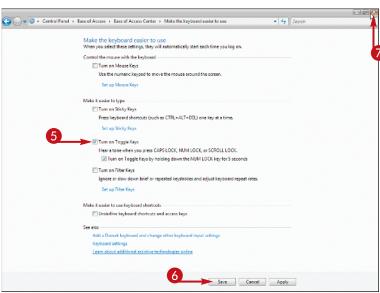
3 Click Ease of Access.



The Ease of Access Center window appears.

4 Click Change how your keyboard works.





- **5** Click the Turn on Toggle Keys check box (☐ changes to ☑).
- 6 Click Save.
- 7 Click the Close box to close the Ease of Access Center window.

Windows alerts you with a tone when you press the Caps Lock key.



Did You Know?

You can turn off Toggle Keys by holding down the Num Lock key for five seconds, until you hear a beep. To turn it back on, hold down Num Lock for five seconds, until you see the Toggle Keys dialog box. Click OK to turn Toggle Keys on; click Cancel to leave Toggle Keys off.

Did You Know?

Many of today's keyboards come with settings that enable you to disable Caps Lock. To check for such a setting, click Start, Control Panel, Hardware and Sound, and then Keyboard to display the Keyboard Properties dialog box. Look for a tab named Key Settings or something similar and then look for a Caps Lock option that you can turn off.

DISPLAY MORE PROGRAMS

on your Start menu

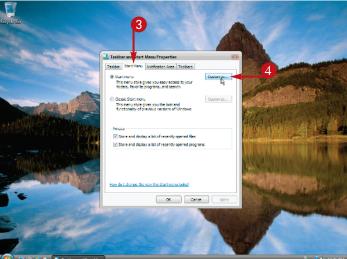
You can customize the Start menu to display more of the programs you use most often.

The list displaying your most-frequently used programs appears on the bottom-left side of the Start menu, above All Programs. As you work with your programs, Windows Vista keeps track of how many times you launch each one. The programs that you have launched most often appear on the Start menu for easy, two-click access. These programs appear at the top of the list, followed by the next

most-often-used programs, and so on. When another program becomes popular, Windows Vista drops the bottom program and adds the new one.

Unfortunately, the default Start menu shows just the six most popular programs. If you find that some of your regular programs are constantly getting dropped from the Start menu, you can increase the size of the list to force Windows Vista to display more programs.





- 1 Right-click Start.
- 2 Click Properties.

The Taskbar and Start Menu Properties dialog box appears.

- 3 Click the Start Menu tab.
- 4 Click Customize.





The Customize Start Menu dialog box appears.

5 Type the number of programs you want to see.

Note: The maximum number of programs is 30.

- 6 Click OK to return to the Taskbar and Start Menu Properties dialog box.
- **7** Click OK.



 Windows Vista adjusts the size of the Start menu's most-frequently used program list.

More Options!

The height of the Start menu is restricted by the height of your screen. To display more Start menu items without changing the screen height, follow steps 1 to 4 to open the Customize Start Menu dialog box. In the list, click to uncheck the Use large icons check box (changes to), and then click OK. Using smaller icons enables more items to appear on the Start menu.

Customize It!

If you want to get even more items on the Start menu, you can change the height of your screen by increasing the screen resolution. Right-click the desktop, click Personalize, and then click Display Settings. In the Display Settings dialog box, click and drag the Resolution slider to the right, and then click OK.

LAUNCH CONTROL PANEL ICONS

faster by using a menu

You can quickly access items in the Control Panel by converting the Start menu's Control Panel item into a menu.

Control Panel is the Windows Vista customization shop, with more than 50 icons. Using these icons, you can customize and modify features such as accessibility, the display, folders and fonts, the Internet, and user accounts. You can install and uninstall programs and devices, and you can tweak specific devices such as game controllers, the keyboard, the mouse, the modem, printers, scanners, and more.

The longer you use Windows Vista, the more you appreciate the Control Panel. The problem, however, is that the default Control Panel window uses a category view that groups the Control Panel icons into categories, such as System and Maintenance, Security, and Appearance and Personalization. That view hampers more experienced users, who must often negotiate several windows to get to the icon they want. Converting the Start menu's Control Panel item into a menu on the Start menu enables you to easily find and choose any Control Panel item.

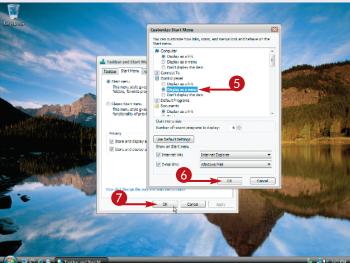




- Right-click Start.
- 2 Click Properties.

The Taskbar and Start Menu Properties dialog box appears.

- 3 Click the Start Menu tab.
- 4 Click Customize.





The Customize Start Menu dialog box appears.

- In the list of Start menu items, under Control Panel, click the Display as a menu option (changes to).
- 6 Click OK to return to the Taskbar and Start Menu Properties dialog box.
- Click OK.



- 8 Click Start.
- Olick Control Panel.
- A menu of the Control Panel items appears.
- If the entire menu does not fit on your screen, position the mouse here to expand the menu.

TIPS

More Options!

There are other Start menu items that you can display as menus. Follow steps 1 to 5 to display the Customize Start Menu dialog box. The following branches have a Display as a menu option that you can click (changes to): Computer, Documents, Games, Music, Personal folder, and Pictures.

More Options!

For easier access to some of your documents, follow steps 1 to 5 to display the Customize Start Menu dialog box. Click the Favorites menu check box (changes to) to display a menu of Internet Explorer favorites. Click OK to return to the Start menu tab. Click the Store and display a list of recently opened files check box (changes to) to display a list of the 15 documents you have used most recently.

UPDATE A DEVICE DRIVER

to ensure top device performance

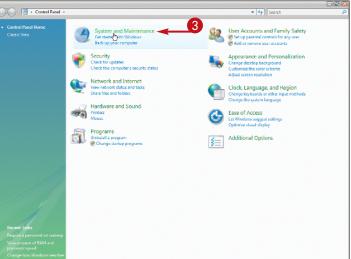
You can ensure that a device is working at optimum performance by updating the device's driver to the latest version.

Windows Vista acts as a go-between for you and your programs and the hardware devices on your system. For example, when you press a key on your keyboard, Windows Vista accepts the keystroke and either displays it on screen (if you are typing) or runs a command (if you pressed a shortcut key).

Windows Vista communicates with a hardware device by using a small program called a *device driver*, and this communication works two ways: from the device and to the device. For example, a keyboard uses its device driver to let Windows Vista know which key you pressed.

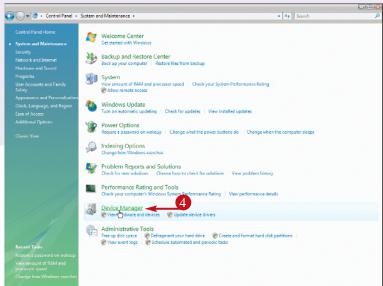
Hardware manufacturers often create new versions of their device drivers to fix problems and improve the device's performance. For these reasons, it is a good idea to always use the latest device drivers for your system's hardware. After you download a new driver from the manufacturer's Web site, you then need to update the existing driver on your system.





- Click Start.
- Click Control Panel.
 The Control Panel window appears.

3 Click System and Maintenance. The System and Maintenance window appears.



4 Click Device Manager.

Note: If the User Account Control dialog box appears, click Continue or type an administrator password and click Submit.



Device Manager

File Action View Help

Image: PAULSPC

Image:

The Device Manager window appears.

5 Click the device you want to update.



Check It Out!

Windows Vista has a new feature that enables you to quickly update the drivers of those devices that were not installed properly on your system. Click Start, All Programs, Accessories, Welcome Center, and then double-click Set up devices. (If you do not see this icon, click the Show all X items link.) If the User Account Control dialog box appears, click Continue or type an administrator password and click Submit.

Did You Know?

If you have a device that is performing slowly or is having problems, the cause may be a corrupted device driver file. In most cases, you can fix this problem by reinstalling the device's driver. Follow the steps in this task and, when it is time to select the driver, select the original driver, which is usually on the CD that came with the device.

UPDATE A DEVICE DRIVER

to ensure top device performance

Most device manufacturers offer a Web site where you can download the latest drivers, but it helps to know how to navigate these sites.

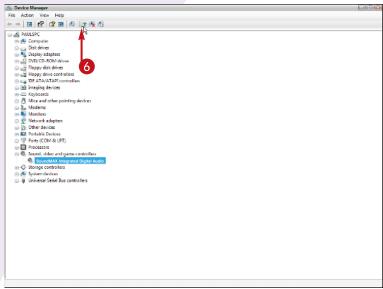
Look for an area of the site dedicated to driver downloads. The good sites have links to areas named Downloads or Drivers, but it is far more common to first have to go through a Support or Customer Service area.

Go through each step the site provides. For example, it is common to have to select an overall driver

category, and then a device category, and then a line category, and then the specific model you have.

When you get to the device's download page, be careful which file you choose. Make sure that it is a Windows Vista driver, and make sure that you are not downloading a utility program or some other non-driver file.

When you finally get to download the file, save it to your computer. The best location is your user account's Downloads folder.



© Device Manager

File Action View Help

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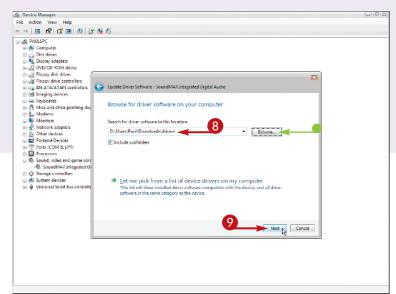
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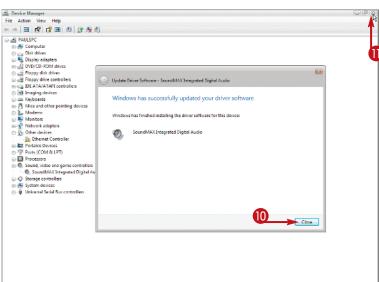
6 Click the Update Driver Software button.

The Update Driver Software dialog box appears.

7 Click Browse my computer for driver software.

Note: If you have a CD with the device driver, insert the disc and click Search automatically for updated driver software, instead.





The Browse for driver software on your computer dialog box appears.

8 Type the location of the folder where you saved the downloaded driver.

CONTINUED

- Alternatively, click
 Browse, use the Browse
 for Folder dialog box
 to select the folder, and
 then click OK.
- Olick Next.
 Windows Vista installs the driver.
- (I) Click Close.
- 1) Click the Close box to close Device Manager.

Windows Vista now uses the updated device driver.



Reverse It!

The latest device drivers are usually the most stable and bug-free. However, you may occasionally find that updating a device driver causes problems. In that case, you need to *roll back* the driver to the previous version. Follow steps 1 to 4 to display Device Manager, and then double-click your device. Click the Driver tab and then click the Roll Back Driver button.

Remove It!

When you remove a device from your system, Windows Vista usually recognizes that the device is no longer part of the system and it uninstalls the device's driver. However, Windows Vista will sometimes not realize the device is gone and continue to load the driver. If this happens, follow steps 1 to 4 to display Device Manager, right-click the device, and then click Uninstall.