

Controlling Applications under Windows

You might think of Windows XP as a set of cool accessories, such as games, a calculator, and an address book, but Windows is first and foremost an operating system. Windows' main purpose is to enable you to run and manage other software applications, from word processing and spreadsheet programs to the latest 3D computer action game. Using the best methods for accessing and running software with Windows saves you time, and setting up Windows XP in the way that works best for you can make your life easier.

In this chapter, you explore several simple and very handy techniques for launching and moving among applications. You go through step-by-step procedures ranging from installing software to removing it, and from logging on to Windows to shutting down your computer. Along the way, you discover the Windows Start Menu (a command central for running programs) and the Quick Launch bar (which might sound like a salad bar at a fast food restaurant, but it's actually the area of the Windows taskbar that lets you open frequently used programs).

Here, then, are the procedures that you can use to launch, navigate, and organize programs in Windows XP.

Chapter

1

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Log On to Windows

1. Turn on your computer to begin the Windows start up sequence. (*Note:* If you haven't set up the password protection feature, you're taken directly to the Windows desktop, as shown in Figure 1-1.)
2. In the resulting Windows Welcome screen, enter a password and click the green arrow button. Windows verifies your password and displays the Windows desktop.



To log on as another user (for example, if somebody else in your family is logged on and you want to change to your user account), choose Start→Log Off. Click the Switch User button. Click your user name in the list of users that appears (the same list that you see on the Windows Welcome screen), and then follow the steps in this task to finish logging on.

Install Software

1. If you insert a software CD and nothing happens, choose Start→Control Panel and click the Add or Remove Programs icon to open the Add or Remove Programs window.



In many cases, you don't need to go through Windows to install software. Just pop the software CD into your CD drive, and the installation process begins. Give Windows a vacation — after all, it works hard day after day, right?

2. Click the Add New Programs button on the left and then click the CD or Floppy button, shown in Figure 1-2.



Figure 1-1: The Windows desktop

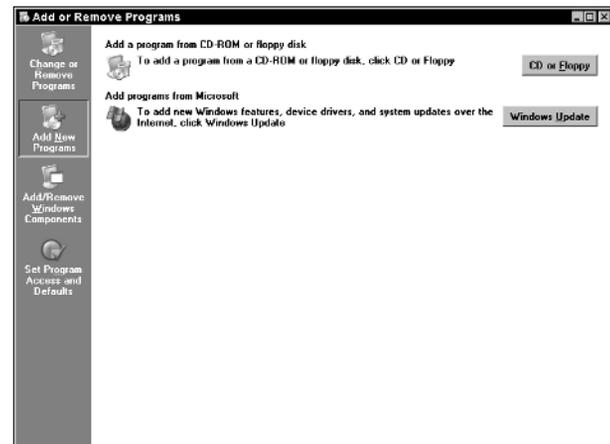


Figure 1-2: The Add or Remove Programs window

3. When the resulting Install Program from CD or Floppy dialog box appears (see Figure 1-3), click Next to run the software.
4. Follow the prompts for that software installation. (*Note:* Some programs require that you reboot your computer, so turn it off and then on to complete the setup of the new program.)



If you install software and later want to change which features of the program have been installed, go to the Control Panel. When you choose Add or Remove Programs, find the software in the list that appears and click the Change/Remove button.



Figure 1-3: Install Program dialog box

Open an Application

1. Open an application by using any of the following three methods:
 - Choose Start→All Programs. Locate the program name on the All Programs menu and click it; if clicking it displays a submenu, click the program item on that menu (as shown in Figure 1-4).
 - Double-click a program shortcut icon on the desktop.
 - Press the Windows key to display the taskbar if it's hidden and then click an icon on the Quick Launch bar, just to the right of the Start button.
2. When the application opens, if it's a game, play it; if it's a spreadsheet, enter numbers into it; if it's your e-mail program, start deleting junk mail . . . you get the idea.

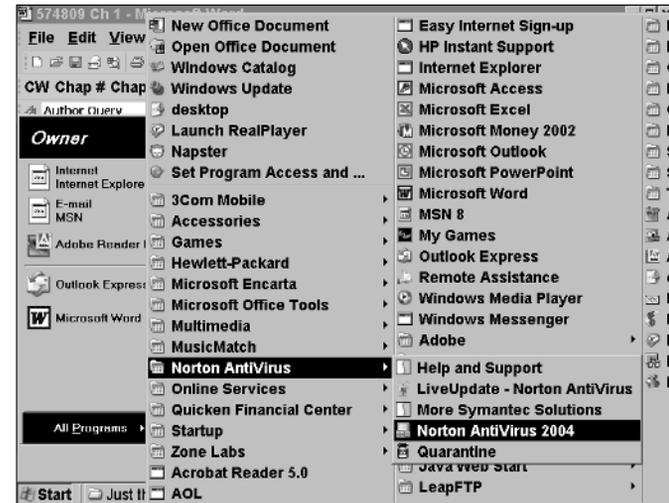


Figure 1-4: The All Programs menu



Not every program that's installed on your computer appears as a desktop shortcut or Quick Launch bar icon. To add a program to the Quick Launch bar, see the task "Utilize the Quick Launch Bar," later in this chapter. To add a desktop shortcut, see Chapter 2.

Resize an Application Window

1. With an application open and maximized, click the Restore Down button (looks like two overlapping windows) in the top-right corner of the program window.
2. To enlarge a minimized application to fill the screen, click the Maximize button (see Figure 1-5). (*Note:* This is in the same place as the Restore Down button, and the button that appears depends on whether you have the screen reduced in size or maximized. A ScreenTip identifies the button when you pass your mouse over it.)



With a window maximized, you can't move the window around on the desktop, which is one way to view more than one window on your screen at the same time. If you reduce a window in size, you can then click and hold the title bar to drag the window around on the desktop. You can also click and drag the corners of the window to resize it any way you want.

Switch between Running Applications

1. Open two or more programs. The last program that you open is the active program.
2. Press and hold Alt+Tab to open a small box, shown in Figure 1-6, revealing all opened programs.
3. Release the Tab key, but keep Alt held down. Press Tab to cycle through the icons representing open programs.
4. Release the Alt key, and Windows switches to whichever program is selected. To switch back to the last program that was active, simply press Alt+Tab, and that program becomes the active program once again.

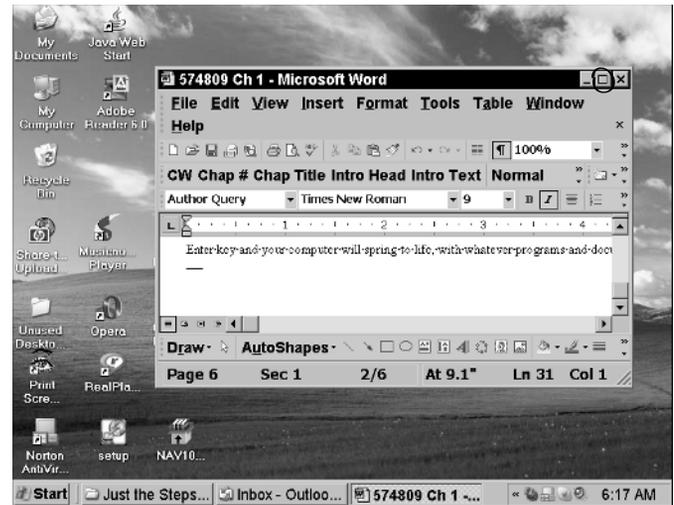


Figure 1-5: Maximize the minimized Microsoft Word file

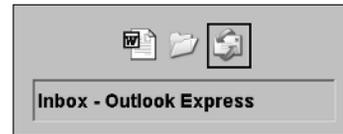


Figure 1-6: Open programs in Windows



All open programs also appear as items on the Windows taskbar. You can click any running program on the taskbar to make it the active program. If the taskbar isn't visible, press the Windows key to display it.

Move Information between Applications

1. Open two applications and, if their windows are maximized, click the Restore Down buttons in the upper-right corners to reduce their sizes.
2. Click the bottom-right corner of each program window and drag to change the size further until you can see both programs on the Windows desktop at once (see Figure 1-7).
3. Click and hold their title bars to drag the windows around on your desktop or right-click the taskbar and choose Tile Horizontally or Tile Vertically to arrange the windows on the desktop.
4. Select the information that you want to move (for example text, numbers, or a graphical object). Right-click the selection and drag it to the other application document.
5. Release your mouse, and the shortcut menu shown in Figure 1-8 appears. Choose Move Here to move it, or choose Copy Here to place a copy in the new location.



You can also use simple cut-and-paste or copy-and-paste operations to take information from one application and move it or place a copy of it into a document in another application. In addition, some applications have Export or Send To commands to send the contents of a document to another application. For example, Microsoft Word has a Send To→Microsoft Office PowerPoint command to quickly send a Word document to be the basis of a PowerPoint presentation outline.

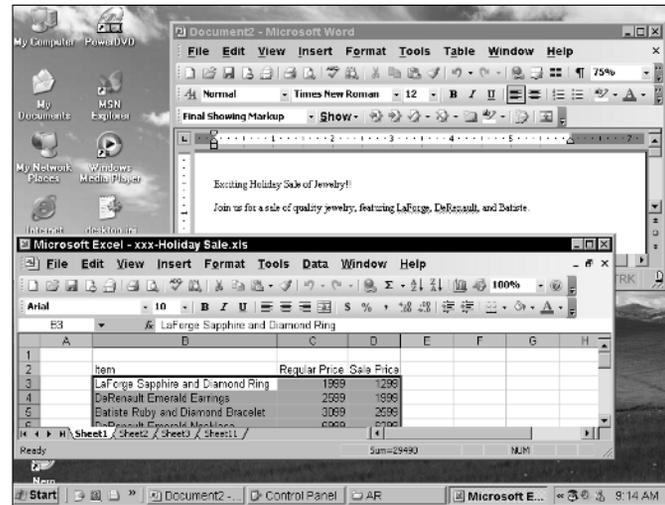


Figure 1-7: Arranging windows

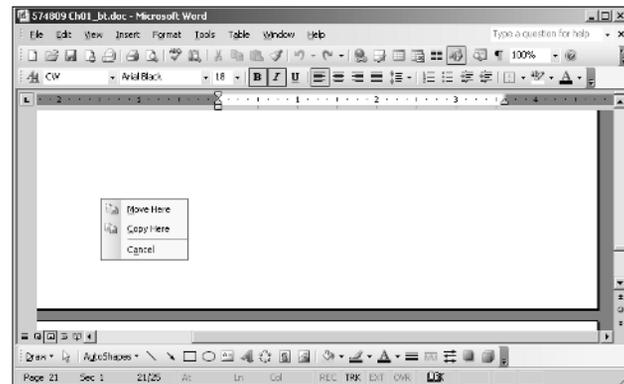


Figure 1-8: Shortcut menu

Utilize the Quick Launch Bar

1. Locate the Quick Launch bar on the taskbar just to the right of the Start button; if it's not visible, right-click the taskbar and choose Toolbars⇨Quick Launch from the shortcut menu (see Figure 1-9). By default, it includes the Show Desktop icon and some Microsoft programs, such as Internet Explorer and Outlook.



The Quick Launch bar is a feature of the taskbar. If it doesn't appear, from the Windows desktop, right-click the taskbar and choose Toolbars ⇨ Quick Launch.

2. To place any application on the Quick Launch bar, shown in Figure 1-10, click that application's icon (or *shortcut*) on the Windows desktop and drag it to the Quick Launch bar. (If you want help creating a desktop shortcut, see Chapter 2.)



If you have more programs in this area than can be shown on the taskbar, click the arrows to the right of the Quick Launch bar and a shortcut menu of programs appears. However, don't clutter up your Quick Launch bar, which can make it unwieldy. Logical candidates to place here are your Internet browser, your e-mail program, and programs that you use every day, such as a word processor or a calendar program.



When the Quick Launch bar is displayed, the Show Desktop button is available. When you click this button, all open applications are reduced to taskbar icons. It's a quick way to clean your desktop or hide what you're up to!



Figure 1-9: The Toolbars menu



Figure 1-10: Icons on the Quick Launch bar

Organize the Start Menu

1. Press the Windows key to display the Start menu. Right-click anywhere on an empty part of the Start menu and choose Properties.
2. In the resulting Taskbar and Start Menu Properties dialog box, click the Customize button to display the Customize Start Menu dialog box shown in Figure 1-11. You can do the following:
 - Click the up or down arrows on the Number of Programs on Start Menu text box to display more or fewer of your frequently used programs.
 - Use the drop-down lists of alternate Internet and E-Mail programs to select different applications to appear on the Start menu.
3. Click the Advanced tab to display it. Determine what items you want to display on the Start menu and select or deselect items in the Start Menu Items list.
4. After you finish making selections, click OK to save the new settings. Your Start menu now reflects your changes, showing items for accessing and running programs and features, such as the ones in Figure 1-12.



Right-click the list of programs and choose Sort By Name to alphabetize the list. Folders get reordered to appear first, and then individual programs.

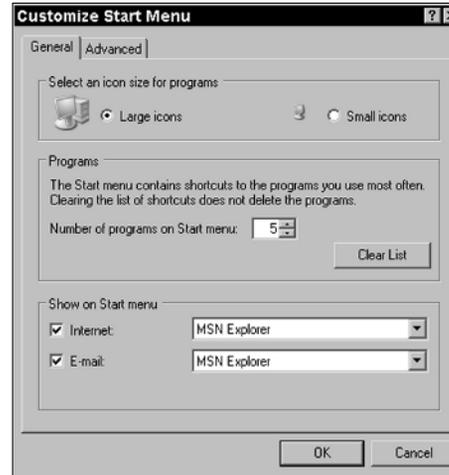


Figure 1-11: The Customize Start Menu dialog box

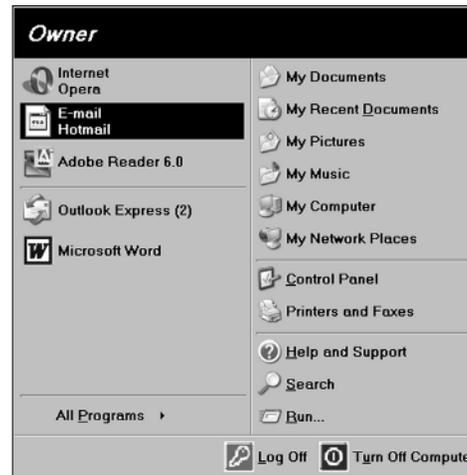


Figure 1-12: A typical Start menu, customized for the programs I use most

Start an Application Automatically

1. Right-click the Start menu button and choose Explore, as shown in Figure 1-13.
2. In the resulting Windows Explorer dialog box is a list of folders on the left side. Click the plus sign next to the Start Menu folder, then the Programs folder, and then the Startup folder to see a list of programs in it.
3. Click a program from the list and drag it into the Startup folder (see Figure 1-14).
4. When you finish moving programs into the Startup folder, click the Close button in the upper-right corner.



In this procedure, you change to the Classic Start menu style. This gives your Start menu a different appearance, used in earlier versions of Windows. Here items are organized differently and fewer options are offered. To display the Taskbar and Start Menu dialog box with this style displayed, you must choose Settings->Taskbar and Start Menu.



You can remove an application from the Start menu by right-clicking the Start button and choosing Properties. On the Start Menu tab, click the Customize button. In the Customize dialog box, click the Advanced tab and then clear the check box for the item you want to remove.

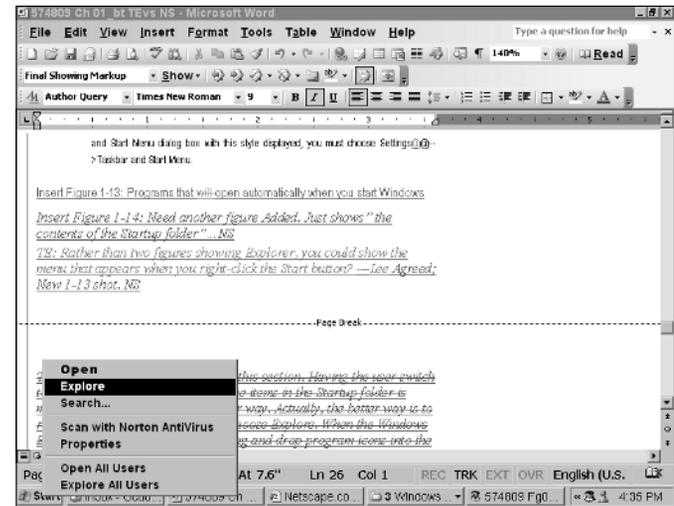


Figure 1-13: Opening Windows Explorer

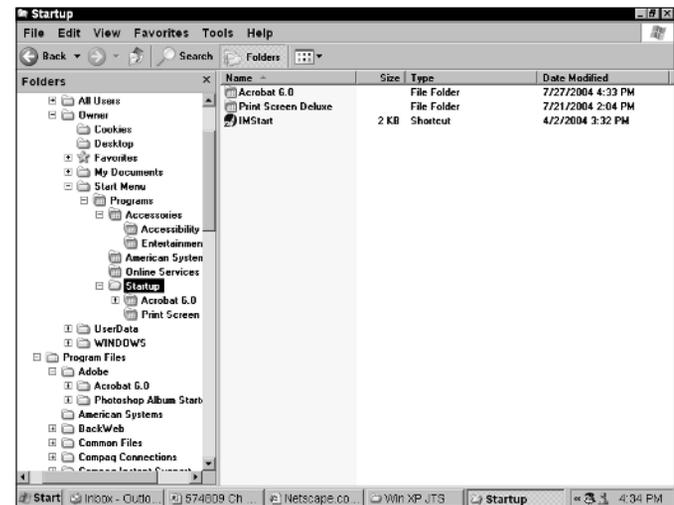


Figure 1-14: The Startup folder contents

Set Program Access Defaults

1. Choose Start→All Programs→Set Program Access and Defaults.
2. In the resulting Add or Remove Programs window, shown in Figure 1-15, click the arrow next to any of the choices to see specifics about the programs that they set as defaults.
3. Select one of the following options to see detailed information (shown in Figure 1-16):
 - **Computer Manufacturer:** Restores defaults set when your computer shipped. Your version of Windows XP may or may not have been set up with this option by your computer manufacturer.
 - **Microsoft Windows:** Sets defaults used by Windows.
 - **Non-Microsoft:** Removes access to Microsoft programs and uses currently set-up programs as defaults. This is popular with Linux users and Microsoft haters.
 - **Custom:** Allows you to set up the programs that you have currently set as default, Microsoft programs, or a combination.
4. Click OK when you've made your settings to save them.



When you deselect the Enable Access to this Program option in the Custom option, you don't find it on the Start menu any longer. It's still on your hard drive, though, and you can open it by using Windows Explorer.

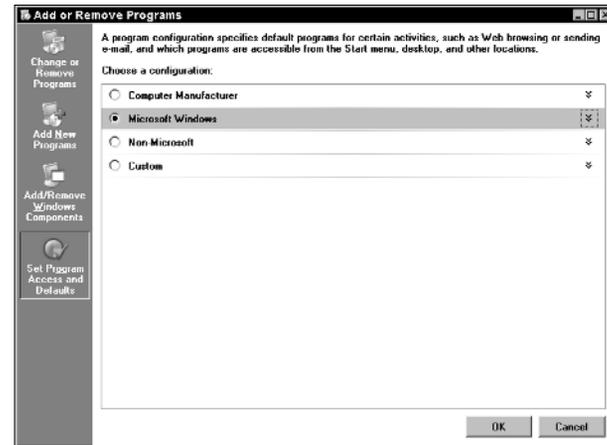


Figure 1-15: The Add or Remove Programs window

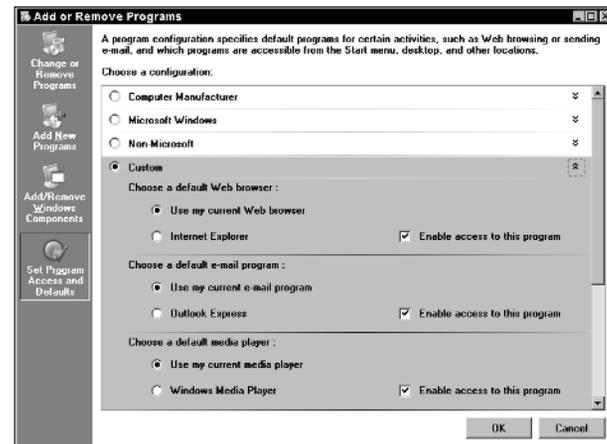


Figure 1-16: Various custom access options

Remove an Application

1. Choose Start→Control Panel→Add or Remove Programs.
2. In the resulting Add or Remove Programs window, shown in Figure 1-17, click a program and then click the Remove button.
3. If you're sure that you want to remove the program, click Yes in the confirmation dialog box shown in Figure 1-18. A dialog box shows the progress of the procedure; it disappears when the program has been removed.
4. Click the Close button to close the Add or Remove Programs dialog box.



With some programs that include multiple applications, such as Microsoft Office, you might want to remove only one program, not the whole shooting match. For example, you might decide that you have no earthly use for Access, but can't let a day go by without using Excel and Word, so why not free up some hard drive space and send Access packing? If you want to modify a program in this way, click the Change button in Step 2, rather than the Remove button. The dialog box that appears allows you to select the programs that you want to install or uninstall.



Warning: If you click the Change or Remove Programs link, there are some programs that will simply be removed with no further input from you. Be really sure that you don't need a program before you remove it.

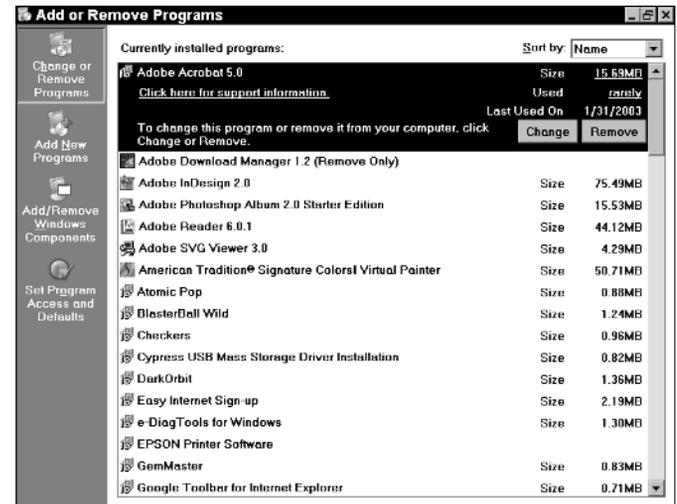


Figure 1-17: The Add or Remove Programs window

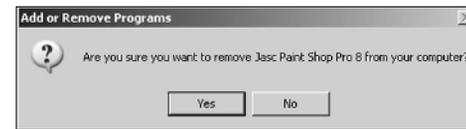


Figure 1-18: The confirmation dialog box

Run Windows Update

1. Connect to the Internet, and then choose Start⇨All Programs⇨Windows Update.
2. On the resulting Windows Update Web page, click the Scan for Updates link, shown in Figure 1-19.
3. When the scan is complete, the Pick Updates to Install page appears. Click the Review and Install Updates link.
4. On the resulting Web page, use the scrollbar to review the recommended updates, clicking the Remove button for any that you don't want to install.
5. Click Install Now to see the progress of the downloads (see Figure 1-20).



Updates typically include security updates to Microsoft products, updated drivers for peripherals such as printers, mouse, and monitors, and updates to Microsoft products to fix *bugs*, as they're affectionately known among computer geeks. Bugs are bad, but updates are usually good.



Warning: If you're running Windows XP on a network, it's possible that your network security settings could stop you from using the Windows Update feature. However, the good news is that if you're on a network, your network administrator should be taking care of all that stuff for you.

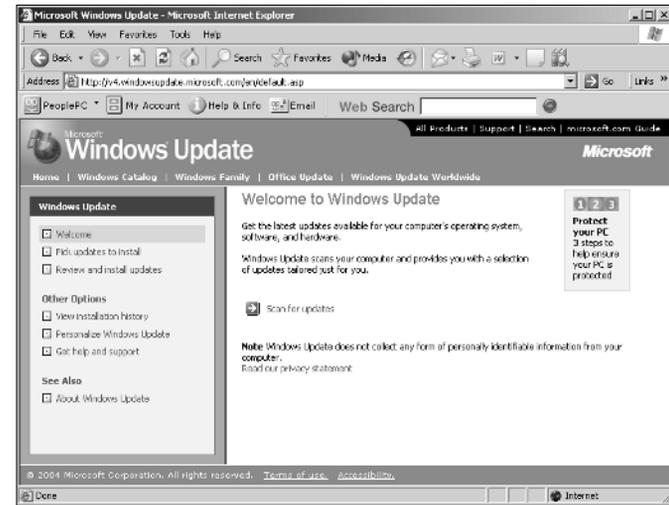


Figure 1-19: The opening window of Windows Update

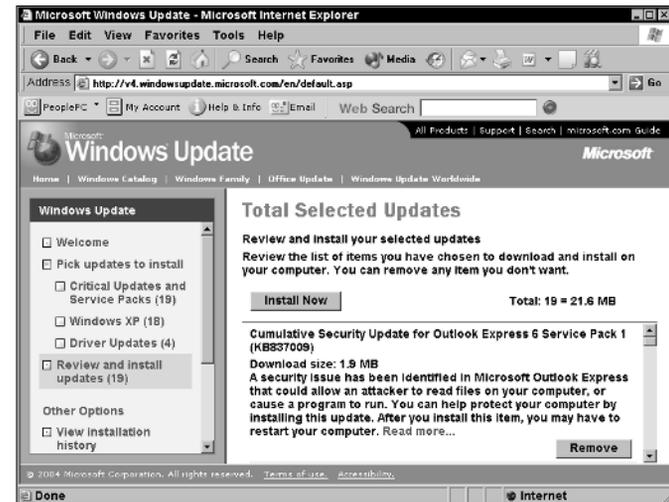


Figure 1-20: Updates ready to install

Shut Down Your Computer

1. Choose Start⇨Turn Off Computer.
2. In the resulting Turn Off Computer dialog box shown in Figure 1-21, click the Turn Off button to shut down the computer completely; if you want to *reboot* (turn off and turn on) your computer, click the Restart button.



If you're going away for a while but don't want to have to go through the whole booting up sequence complete with Windows music when you return, you don't have to turn off your computer. Just click the Stand By button in Step 2 to put your computer into a kind of sleeping state where the screen goes black and the fan shuts down. When you get back, click your mouse button or press Enter and your computer springs to life, and whatever programs and documents you had open are still intact.



Figure 1-21: The Turn Off Computer dialog box