Chapter 1: Getting to Know Norton Products

In This Chapter

✔ **Appreciating Norton's long history in the PC help biz**

✔ **Figuring out exactly who Norton is**

✔ **Getting to know Norton products by type**

*E*ven if you're brand-spankin'-new to computers, and before you purchased your Norton software, you probably heard or read the name Norton many times. In fact, Norton is one of the relatively few PC-industry names that has been with us since early on in the history of personal computers. If you only knew how many companies have gone bust or been bought up by bigger firms over the last two-plus decades, you would be astounded!

This chapter introduces you to the various tools that are available under the Norton name (plenty!). Here, I focus in on the type of software, because you have so many different ones to choose from. Just as finding and using the right tool in your household tool chest is important when you're wanting to do a specific repair, choosing the right Norton product for the PC protection, repair, or maintenance job you face is important — and in this chapter, I help you do just that.

Norton: A Name Long Associated with PC Care

IBM's name is still associated with the original PC-class computer that rolled out in 1981. This is true even though so many other manufacturers have joined the PC design and rollout industry.

Not very long after the debut of the IBM PC, the name IBM was joined by the name Norton for some of the first utilities created to help consumers work with those PCs. Those initial offerings not only eventually developed into a broad range of additional products under the Norton name, but they also helped spawn the creation of similar tools by other software developers. Some of those competing titles and the companies who published them have actually been rolled into Norton products as they exist now.

Yes, Virginia, there really *is* a Norton

Getting jaded about product packaging and advertising is easy, because you've learned over time that there really isn't a great baker named Betty Crocker or a buttery-tasting pancake aficionado named Mrs. Butterworth.

But Norton products are a bit different, because there really *is* a man named Norton. His name is Peter Norton, in fact, and his name has become synonymous with PC utilities. Grizzled vets in the PC industry remember him as the guy who wrote all those books that were the first to explain the inner workings of the IBM PC and how to use it. Even today, his name still appears on new books.

Just as Oprah's image shows up on the cover of every issue of her magazine, Peter Norton graced the covers of almost all his books (rare in PC help books, where the computer is the star). He usually wore a proper office shirt with rolled-up sleeves and a slightly loosened tie, giving you the distinct impression that this fellow was no stranger to hard work at the office.

But don't speak of him in the past tense, because he's alive, well, and still active. His name remains an icon in the PC world and he still writes for a number of publications. However, his bestselling utilities have long been produced not by him but by the talented folks working at the software publisher, Symantec.

Although today, you can choose from a whole shelf of various utility software in a large electronics superstore, you'll always see the name Norton (that is, unless they've sold out). People who can't correctly name one other disk utility can identify Norton Utilities and all the tools within it. The same holds true for antivirus software and other products.

If you've happened to use Windows for a bit, you've probably seen tools initially designed by the Norton folks rolled into the system tools packed into the operating system. So the influence Norton has had over the entire industry — and we, those lowly end users they work for — has been nothing short of phenomenal.

Knowing Your Norton Products

The very first thing you need to understand is that Norton makes a *lot* of different products. That's the good news, because they offer a little something for everyone, regardless of your particular needs.

Yet on top of that, many of the Norton products are available as *standalones* (meaning just a single product, sold individually), many are sold both in

home (or small-business) and professional versions, and some are packaged into *suites* (three or more products packed into one).

The result is often that people mix up which Norton package is which. But don't worry, because you won't. Before you're finished here, you'll know them well.

One of the smartest ways you can easily identify and remember what different Norton products do is by understanding the type of job they're designed to handle. With this in mind, in the following sections I examine each of those products covered within this book.

But before I do that, keep in mind that most of your installed Norton products have an option you can use to further explore the wealth of other Norton options. To view those other Norton options, first be sure you're connected to the Internet. Then follow these steps:

1. **Choose Start⇨All Programs, and then point to your Norton product in the list (such as Norton AntiVirus).**

2. **From the submenu that appears, choose More Symantec Solutions.**

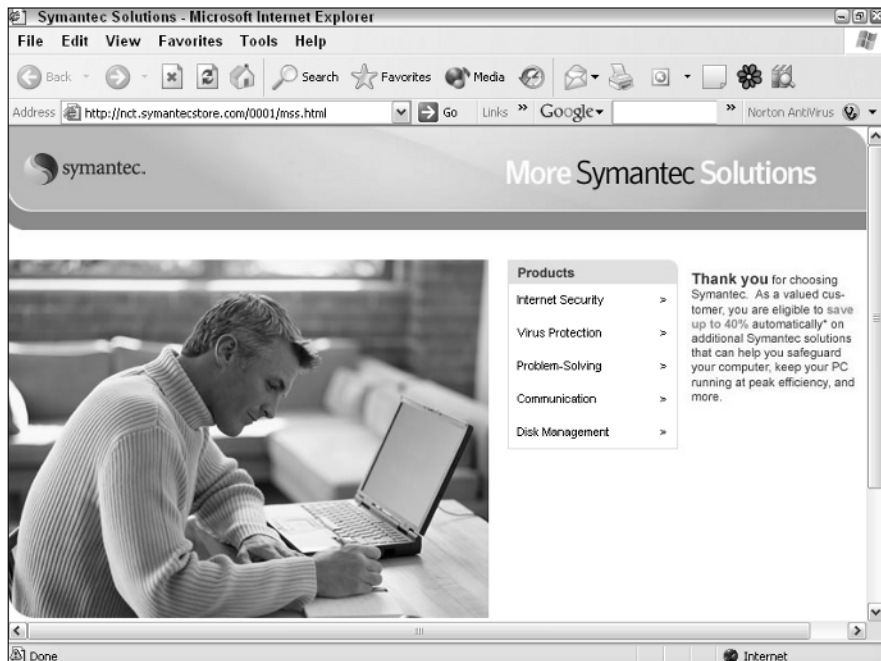*3.* **Your Web browser launches and opens the page shown in Figure 1-1.**

Figure 1-1: Explore some of the other recommended Norton products.

TIP

While you're at the Norton Web site, take a moment to see if any new versions have been released for the Norton products you already have. I tell you more about what happens when you mix and match different versions of the various Norton tools as we go along. But knowing when a new version is available and what it offers is always a good idea.

Antivirus protection

For protection from viruses, you want Norton AntiVirus, available either as a standalone product or packaged into both Norton Internet Security suite or Norton SystemWorks suite. Before Norton AntiVirus even installs, it does a special scan to be sure your system isn't infected in some way that may make it difficult for AntiVirus to install and work.

Also, the LiveUpdate tool within Norton AntiVirus means you can keep up-to-date on protection for the most recently released computer viruses, Trojans, and worms. If you're not up on your infected PC terminology, fear not — Book VI, especially Chapter 1 of that book, tells you everything you need to know.

Right now, all you need to know is that very strange people are sitting in front of a monitor somewhere around the globe, every day, creating all new problems and twists they can try to send into unprotected PCs. In fact, many viruses are designed to try to kill your antivirus software before they do anything else. Because these no-goodniks are so determined (and all too productive), you need serious protection against them.

REMEMBER

The antivirus software you install today may not be ready for tomorrow's new virus. Keeping your antivirus software updated — and with Norton, that's through LiveUpdate — along with exercising good PC behavior is your best chance of keeping someone else's nasties off your precious system.

Oh, about that good PC behavior: I show you how to do that in Chapters 1 and 2 of Book VI.

Comprehensive Internet security

The Internet is the greatest library on the globe and provides some of the best fun you can have legally, but it also presents some real dangers. It can take a security wiz to try to sew up all the holes in PC security so that your personal information (like credit card or Social Security numbers stored on your PC) doesn't get revealed, your kids don't wind up on a sleazy site, and you don't inadvertently advertise your e-mail address to the world.

Thankfully, Norton has packaged up your very own security wizard (he was a tight fit in that little box) to protect you from things you may not even know exist.

Consider Norton Internet Security suite, a comprehensive package that includes the most popular and necessary tools for safe Web surfing and online sessions. For example, Norton Internet Security 2005 packages together:

✦ **Norton AntiSpam** for controlling e-mail ads and annoyances

✦ **Norton AntiVirus** (see "Antivirus protection," earlier in this chapter), which includes a special tool added directly to your Web browser to scan files and other things that can cause you problems online

✦ **Norton Personal Firewall** for creating a virtual moat around your PC and Internet connection to keep unwanted visitors out

✦ **Norton Parental Control** to help you keep your kids safe from some of the Internet's shady characters and dimly-lit back alleys

✦ **Norton Privacy Control** to block certain private information from being transferred to strange Web sites and services, sometimes without your knowledge

Beyond what you can find in Norton Internet Security, there is another tool available called Password Manager. I bet you can guess its job: to keep track of the many passwords you likely use on the Internet. It does more, however. You can store your credit card information and your work and/or home addresses and phone numbers within Password Manager. Then, when needed, the tool can automatically copy your details directly into Web forms. This is a must for anyone who loves the convenience of online shopping but really hates having to fill out all the blanks on the virtual order forms. At the same time, Password Manager *encrypts* (scrambles) this confidential info you store within it, so the bad guys have a harder time stealing it.

Norton AntiSpam, AntiVirus, and Personal Firewall are also sold as standalone packages, but you pay less if you buy them as part of the Internet Security 2005 suite. If you don't already have one or more of these products, you may want to consider buying the suite rather than buying them separately.

Drive diagnosis, management, maintenance, and repair

For all of the above, think Norton Utilities, one of the original names in handling a multitude of drive checking and repair jobs. The title — utilities — is apt because it rolls together a number of tools into one spiffy interface.

Within Norton Utilities, you'll find a tool to make your drives run faster and more efficiently by cleaning up any messes created on them by system lockups, power outages, and those times you hit the Off button rather than properly shut down. Later in the book, I explain how information gets written to

your disk when you save files. If the files don't get written correctly, the results can be very much like a big filing cabinet in which hundreds of pieces of paper have been tossed with very little rhyme or reason.

If you've ever run the Windows Disk Defragmenter utility (choose Start⇨All Programs⇨Accessories⇨System Tools⇨Disk Defragmenter), you may have seen a mess. Check out Figure 1-2 and you see a large drive with a lot of disorganized data written all over the place. This phenomenon is called *fragmentation* (and the cleaning of it is known as *drive defragmentation* or *optimization*).

WARNING!

Let a drive stay badly fragmented, and it will only get worse. Fragmentation increases the time it takes for Windows to locate and open the programs and files stored in that clutter. Eventually, some of the files won't load at all or may seem damaged.
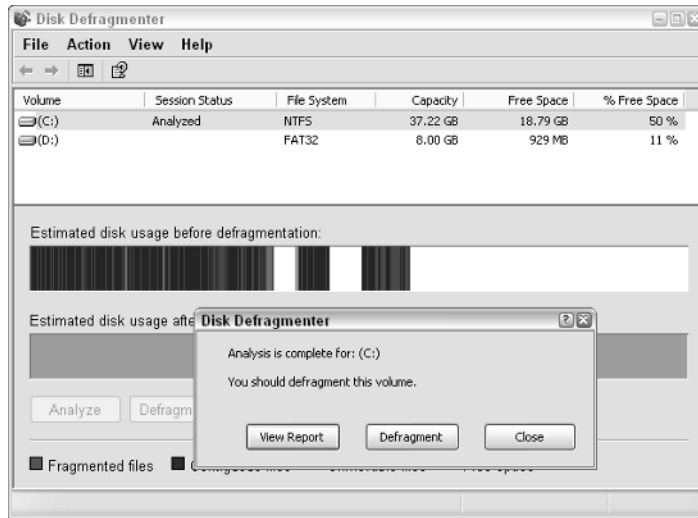
Figure 1-2:
Running
Windows
Disk Defrag-
menter.

Norton Utilities is only the premier product in this category. There are others, too, including

✦ Norton AntiVirus, which protects against the kinds of viruses that can make your drive about as useful as a dead goldfish or turn the files stored on that drive into garbage

✦ CheckIt Diagnostics, which allows you to perform a thorough examination of your drive against a standard list of common problems

✦ Norton CleanSweep, a tool that helps removed unneeded files from your system, including the ton of virtual dust bunnies left behind by Web browsing

✦ Norton Ghost, which creates what is called a *drive image* that you can copy onto a brand-new PC or a newly-installed hard drive to start the new system or drive off where your old system/hard drive left off

✦ Norton Partition Magic, which does many different jobs, and also creates smaller drive sizes to reduce the time required to perform routine drive maintenance

Norton SystemWorks, one of the Norton suites, includes several of these utilities. You'll find out more about this package in the next several chapters.

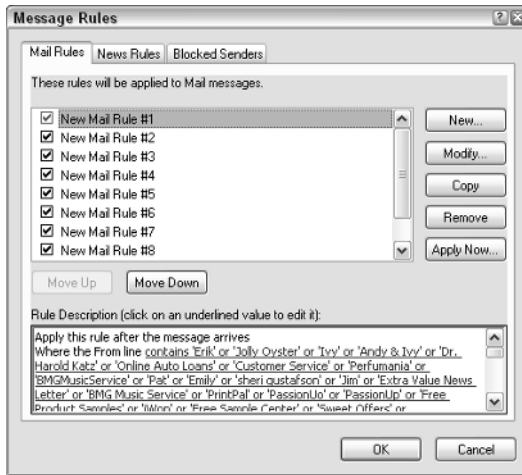## E-mail management and protection

If you're like 103 percent of PC users and now feel like your e-mail inbox has turned into Grand Central Station, where anybody and everybody can walk in, shout things at you, and entice you with goodies you don't want, check out Norton AntiSpam.

AntiSpam was designed to give you a great deal more power over whose e-mail can actually make it into your inbox. It does this by bolstering the simpler, less effective tools already present in e-mail software such as Outlook Express (all of which, as you may have noticed, still allow way too many ads in). Look at Figure 1-3 and you'll see that I've set up several special rules in Outlook Express to try to reduce the 500 to 700 pieces of spam I get each day. But even with all my efforts to stop the spam, Outlook Express lets a lot of unwanted e-mail in.

The Norton AntiSpam tool also has a special built-in feature that performs an analysis of the type of e-mail you send to try to help it guess what type of e-mail you may *want* to receive. Although you'll need to tweak AntiSpam settings for best results — I show you how to do that in Chapter 3 of Book V — you may be pleasantly amazed at how much fewer "buy this" and "just give us your bank information so we can steal from you" e-mails you receive.

Beyond AntiSpam, Norton AntiVirus can scan the e-mail you receive — and send — to cut down on the likelihood that you and those you communicate with may fall victim to a computer virus or mail worm. This feature is great when you consider how much unwanted mail you receive with files attached to them. Even if you know the rules (don't open a file from anyone you don't know), you're human and you probably make mistakes occasionally (we all do). AntiVirus can keep the mistake from morphing into disaster.

Figure 1-3:
Outlook
Express
Message
Rules.

Keeping Windows happy

It can be startling how fast Windows can morph into that really fussy old aunt who doesn't like anything — not the new mattress you bought just because of her visit and not the box of candy you wrapped yourself. You want to have a good time while she visits, but you just can't imagine how.

But unlike the fussy aunt who probably isn't really upset with you, you usually bear a certain amount of responsibility when your operating system begins to behave poorly. Think of what you do to it from the moment you unpack a new PC from its box!

If you're anything like me, you install all sorts of strange software and keep trying to get another month or two of use out of hardware someone else would have tossed ages ago. On top of it, you're usually better about checking the oil in your car and cleaning out the fridge than you are about doing proper PC maintenance. And if you're honest about the fridge, you know how many times you've found fuzzy tuna and mystery meat. So yeah, Windows often has legitimate cause to grouse.

With this in mind, several Norton products work to keep Windows running well and to make necessary maintenance both easier and more productive for you to perform:

✦ **Norton Utilities** (see "Drive diagnosis, management, maintenance, and repair," earlier in this chapter) offers WinDoctor, a special tool designed to look for common problems and less-than-great settings you've tweaked. Then the good doctor makes its best guess about what needs to be done to resolve it. Other tools it offers, like SpeedDisk, can keep Windows and your PC running at good speed.

✦ **Norton AntiVirus** protects Windows from viruses and little software gremlins that may let a hacker through a hole in the operating system's screen door. This is important, especially because some viruses are written specifically to hurt Windows or turn one of its features against you.

✦ **Norton Personal Firewall** can prevent problems from getting through your Internet connection to lock up your Windows session or foul up your online connection.

✦ **Norton GoBack** gives you the ability to jump back to the way your Windows ran at an earlier point in time, to rescue you from a mistaken change in settings or other issue that may prevent Windows from loading or running properly.

✦ **Norton Ghost** can take a smart snapshot of your system when everything is working well, so that you have a way to get back to normalcy faster after a drive disaster or complete Windows failure.

✦ **PartitionMagic** lets you divide a large-capacity hard drive into smaller parts through a process known as *partitioning* (no Ginsu carving knives required) for better organization. But did you know that, if you wanted, you could run a different operating system from each of those partitions? For example, on the PC I'm typing on right now, I have three different Windows versions installed, because I use them for different purposes.

✦ **System Optimizer,** part of Norton SystemWorks, evaluates your entire system and then tweaks it to try to improve overall PC speed and performance.

Beyond all these specifics, it just makes sense that when you have a well-maintained PC that you've properly protected from viruses and Internet intrusions, Windows will run better. Now if Norton only had a product to manage that refrigerator, eh? Alas, there is no Mold Doctor or AntiMush tool.

TIP

Making the best choice

Just because you see all these different Norton products listed in this chapter doesn't mean I expect that you're going to have each and every one of them. Almost no one does. This book has been designed to help people who have any of these major products, but presented in a way so that you can pick and choose what you read based on what applies to you. However, thinking about whether you need additional products based on what you've already read (and will read throughout this book) is smart. Determine your needs and your problems, and then decide which Norton product or products you want to buy.

If you've become something of an expert around Windows, you probably realize that Windows includes utilities to do some of the same jobs mentioned here. For example, System Restore in Windows is the same basic type of tool as Norton GoBack. In upcoming chapters, I fill you in on the differences between some of the Windows tools and those in Norton.