

# Introduction

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

—T. S. Eliot

**M**y goal in writing *Microsoft Windows Vista Unleashed* is to cover the good, the bad, and, yes, even the ugly of Windows Vista. In particular, I give you complete coverage of the intermediate-to-advanced features of Windows Vista. This means that I bypass basic topics, such as wielding the mouse, in favor of more complex operations, such as working with the Registry, maintaining and troubleshooting your system, networking, and getting around the Internet.

I've tried to keep the chapters focused on the topic at hand and unburdened with long-winded theoretical discussions. However, there are plenty of situations in which you won't be able to unleash the full power of Windows Vista and truly understand what's going on unless you have a solid base on which to stand. In these cases, I'll give you whatever theory and background you need to get up to speed. From there, I'll get right down to brass tacks without any further fuss and bother.

## Who Should Read This Book

All writers write with an audience in mind. Actually, I'm not sure whether that's true for novelists and poets and the like, but it *should* be true for any technical writer who wants to create a useful and comprehensible book. Here are the members of my own imagined audience:

- ▶ **IT professionals**—These brave souls must decide whether to move to Vista, work out deployment issues, and support the new Vista desktops. The whole book has information related to your job and Vista.
- ▶ **Power users**—These elite users get their power via knowledge. With that in mind, this book extends the Windows power user's know-how by presenting an exhaustive account of everything that's new and improved in Windows Vista.
- ▶ **Business users**—If your company is thinking of or has already committed to moving to Vista, you need to know what you, your colleagues, and your staff are getting into. You also want to know what Vista will do to improve your productivity and make your life at the office easier. You learn all of this and more in this book.

- ▶ **Road warriors**—If you travel for a living, you probably want to know what Vista brings to the remote computing table. Will you be able to synchronize data, connect to the network, and manage power better than before? What other new notebook features can be found in Vista? You'll find out in this book.
- ▶ **Small business owners**—If you run a small or home business, you probably want to know whether Vista will give you a good return on investment. Will it make it easier to set up and maintain a network? Will Vista computers be more stable? Will your employees be able to collaborate easier? The answer turns out to be “Yes” for all of these questions, and I'll show you why.
- ▶ **Multimedia users**—If you use your computer to listen to music or radio stations, watch TV, work with digital photographs, edit digital movies, or burn CDs and DVDs, you'll be interested to know that Vista has a handful of new features that affect all of these activities.

Also, to keep the chapters uncluttered, I've made a few assumptions about what you know and what you don't know:

- ▶ I assume that you have knowledge of rudimentary computer concepts such as files and folders.
- ▶ I assume that you're familiar with the basic Windows skills: mouse maneuvering, dialog box negotiation, pull-down menu jockeying, and so on.
- ▶ I assume that you can operate peripherals attached to your computer, such as the keyboard and printer.
- ▶ I assume that you've used Windows for a while and are comfortable with concepts such as toolbars, scrollbars, and, of course, windows.
- ▶ I assume that you have a brain that you're willing to use and a good supply of innate curiosity.

## How This Book Is Organized

To help you find the information you need, this book is divided into seven parts that group related tasks. The next few sections offer a summary of each part.

### Part I: Unleashing Day-to-Day Windows Vista

Part I takes your basic, workaday Windows chores and reveals their inner mysteries, allowing you to become more productive. After an initial chapter on what's new in Vista, topics include the myriad ways to get Windows Vista off the ground (Chapter 2), how to use Windows Vista to work with files and folders (Chapter 3), getting the most out of file types (Chapter 4), installing and running applications (Chapter 5), working with user accounts (Chapter 6), dealing with digital media (Chapter 7), using Contacts, Calendar, and faxing (Chapter 8), and Vista's mobile computing tools (Chapter 9).

## **Part II: Unleashing Essential Windows Vista Power Tools**

The chapters in Part II get your advanced Windows Vista education off to a flying start by covering the ins and outs of four important Vista power tools: Control Panel and group policies (Chapter 10), the Registry (Chapter 11), and the Windows Script Host (Chapter 12).

## **Part III: Unleashing Windows Vista Customization and Optimization**

In Part III, you dive into the deep end of advanced Windows work: customizing the interface (Chapter 13), performance tuning (Chapter 14), maintaining Windows Vista (Chapter 15), troubleshooting problems (Chapter 16), and working with devices (Chapter 17).

## **Part IV: Unleashing Windows Vista for the Internet**

Part IV shows you how to work with Windows Vista's Internet features. You learn how to get the most out of a number of Internet services, including the Web (Chapter 18), email (Chapter 19), and newsgroups (Chapter 20). I close this part with an extensive look at the Internet security and privacy feature that come with Windows Vista (Chapter 21).

## **Part V: Unleashing Windows Vista Networking**

To close out the main part of this book, Part V takes an in-depth look at Windows Vista's networking features. You learn how to set up a small network (Chapter 22), how to access and use that network (Chapter 23), and how to access your network from remote locations (Chapter 24).

## **Part VI: Appendixes**

To further your Windows Vista education, Part VI presents a few appendixes that contain extra goodies. You'll find complete list of Windows Vista shortcut keys (Appendix A), a detailed look at using the Windows Vista command prompt (Appendix B), and a batch file primer (Appendix C).

## **What's New in the Second Edition**

*Microsoft Windows Vista Unleashed 2E* includes coverage of the new features that are part of Windows Vista Service Pack 1 (SP1). Most of those features are under-the-hood tweaks that improve Vista's performance, reliability, security, application compatibility, and driver support. I'll talk about those where appropriate, and of course I'll also talk about any changes that SP1 makes to the Vista interface. (For example, in Chapter 15, "Maintaining Your Windows Vista System," I talk about the new Disk Defragmenter feature that enables you to select which disks get defragmented.)

## Conventions Used in This Book

To make your life easier, this book includes various features and conventions that help you get the most out of this book and Windows Vista itself:

Steps	Throughout the book, I've broken many Windows Vista tasks into easy-to-follow step-by-step procedures.
Things you type	Whenever I suggest that you type something, what you type appears in a <b>bold monospace</b> font.
Filenames, folder names, and code	These things appear in a monospace font.
Commands	Commands and their syntax use the monospace font as well. Command placeholders (which stand for what you actually type) appear in an <i>italic monospace</i> font.
Pull-down menu commands	I use the following style for all application menu commands: <i>Menu, Command</i> , where <i>Menu</i> is the name of the menu that you pull down and <i>Command</i> is the name of the command you select. Here's an example: File, Open. This means that you pull down the File menu and select the Open command.
Code continuation character	When a line of code is too long to fit on only one line of this book, it is broken at a convenient place and continued to the next line. The continuation of the line is preceded by a code continuation character (➔). You should type a line of code that has this character as one long line without breaking it.

This book also uses the following boxes to draw your attention to important (or merely interesting) information:

### NOTE

The Note box presents asides that give you more information about the current topic. These tidbits provide extra insights that give you a better understanding of the task. In many cases, they refer you to other sections of the book for more information.

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**TIP**

The Tip box tells you about Windows Vista methods that are easier, faster, or more efficient than the standard methods.

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**CAUTION**

The all-important Caution box tells you about potential accidents waiting to happen. There are always ways to mess things up when you're working with computers. These boxes help you avoid at least some of the pitfalls.

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