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# MANAGING FILES

As you work with a computer creating more and more documents, you need to find a way to keep this information organized. Without a good organizational method, all your files are lumped together in one place. This is the equivalent of shoving all your files into one filing cabinet.

Keeping your files organized provides many benefits. First, you can more easily find the folder or file you want. Second, you can keep your disk running in good shape by periodically weeding out old files. Third, with a good setup, backing up files is easier. (Chapter 17, "Safeguarding Your Work," covers backing up files.)

Good file management does not take much time and involves just a few key ideas. This chapter covers these ideas and explains the important tasks for working with files.

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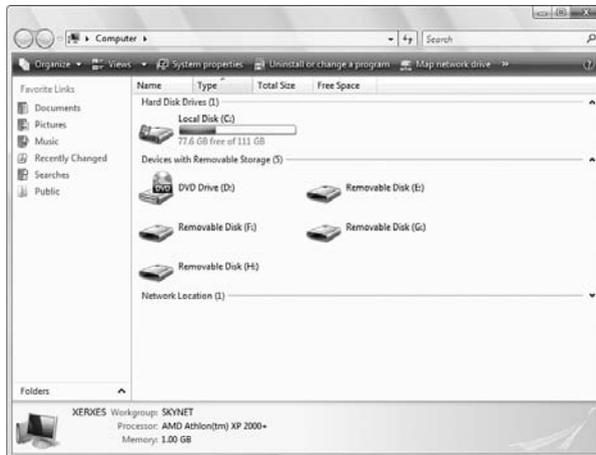
## Displaying Your Computer's Contents

Windows Vista includes many tools for file management, and the most commonly used tools are Explorers. Explorers are windows that display the contents of the folders on your computer. Vista comes with several preset folders that you'll find useful: Documents, Pictures, Music, and Computer, for instance. Explorers display the contents of that particular folder, and they contain tools to work with the contents and navigate to other folders on your computer.

To open an Explorer, click Start and then click the Explorer you want to open. For instance, click Computer to see the various drives connected to your PC (see Figure 3.1).

**FIGURE 3.1**

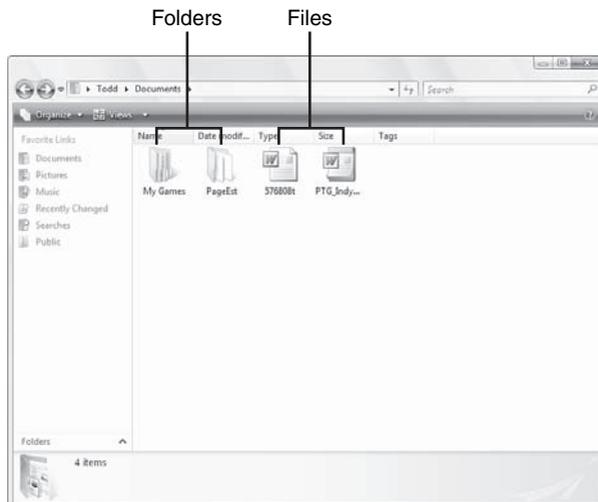
When you want to work with the drives on your computer, open Computer.



To open a folder that contains your user files (and other folders versus your drives), click Start and then click Documents (see Figure 3.2).

**FIGURE 3.2**

When you want to work with the folders or files on your computer, open a content-based folder like Documents.



To help you keep your documents organized, Windows sets up several special folders in addition to your primary Documents folder. These include Pictures, Music, and the new Games Explorer. You can view the contents of any of these folders by clicking Start and then clicking the folder you want to open.

## Understanding Files and Folders

Folders, at heart, are containers. They can hold files and other folders (sometimes called subfolders). In Vista, folders actually look like file folders. Files are work you have created and saved, such as a word processing document, spreadsheet, database, presentation, music track, programs, and so on. Files are indicated by an icon, but these icons vary depending on the type of file (refer to Figure 3.2).



### tip

Next to the address bar, you see the Instant Search bar; you can use this text box to type a word or phrase to find a file, program, or folder. See “Using Instant Search,” in Chapter 4, “Viewing and Finding Files,” for more information.

## Understanding an Explorer Window

When you open a folder or drive, you see the contents in an Explorer window. Windows Vista has made the features in this window consistent to make it easier for users to figure out how to use the features in the windows. Learning the various elements in an Explorer window can help you better learn how to navigate among folders and keep your folders and files organized.

Elements you can expect to find in an Explorer include the following (see Figure 3.3):

- The list pane displays the contents of the window.
- Because folders can be nested within other folders, the address bar shows you the path of how the folders are nested.
- The command bar lists the commands for working with the contents of this window. These commands vary depending on the type of window. For instance, if you are working in the Music folder, you see music-related commands. If you are working with pictures in the Pictures folder or the Windows Photo Gallery, you see picture-related commands.

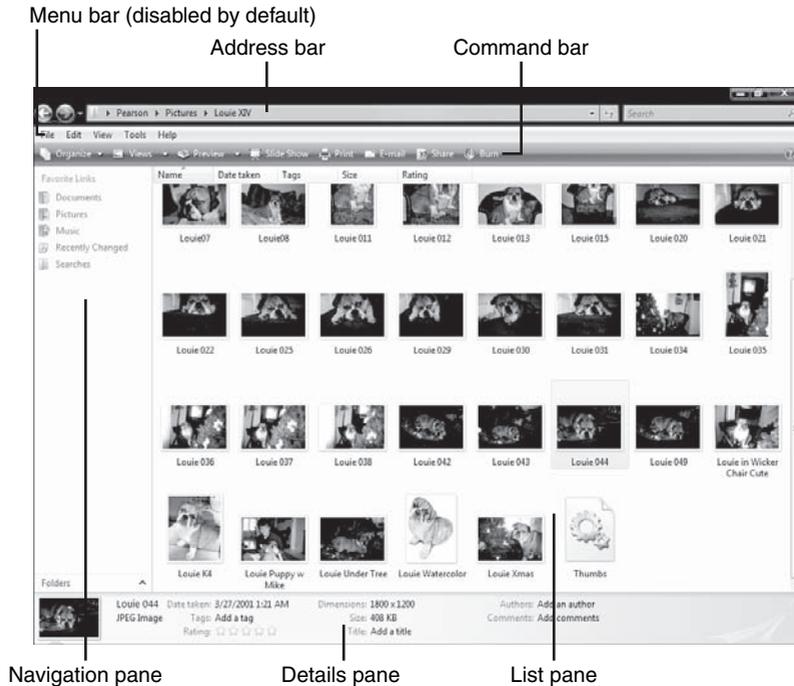


### note

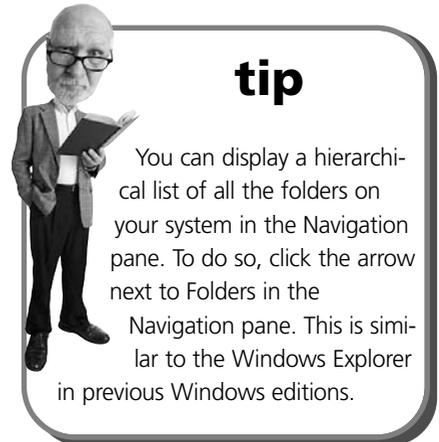
Note that by default the menu bar does not appear in Explorer windows. You can turn them on by clicking Organize, Layout, Menu Bar. The rest of the figures in this chapter show the menu bar displayed because those users who are used to having easy access to the menu bar might prefer to keep it available. After activating the menu bar through an Explorer’s Organize menu, it will remain on until you turn it off by following the same steps. However, if you just want temporary access to the menu bar you can also press the Alt key to display it.

**FIGURE 3.3**

An Explorer provides tools to navigate among the contents of your computer and work with the contents of that particular folder.



- The Navigation pane contains commonly accessed folders. Just click a folder to select it.
- The Details pane displays information about the selected item. If no item is selected, you see only the number of items in this window.
- As mentioned at the start of this section, the menu bar does not appear by default but is a tool that most beginners find useful.

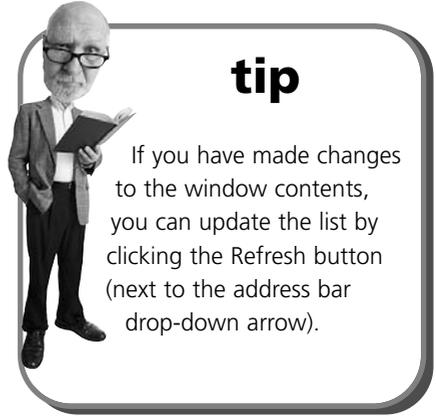


## Navigating Folders

Part of using a computer is learning to navigate among the various folders on your system. You might need to find a document; to do so, you need to open the folder that contains that document. You might want to create new folders; you need to open the folder in which you want to place this new folder. Windows Vista provides several ways to navigate among the folders and drives on your computer.

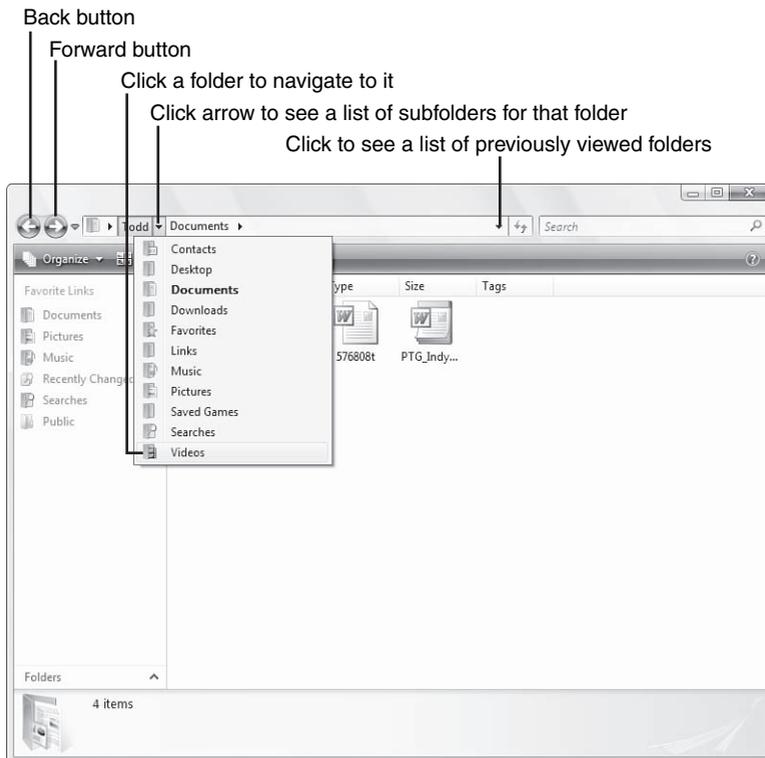
To change to a different folder, use any of these methods:

- In the address bar, click any of the listed folders to view that folder. Or, you can click the down arrows next to any of the folders to see a list of all of the folders it contains (see Figure 3.4). Microsoft refers to this new way of navigating folders as breadcrumbing.
- Click the down arrow next to the address bar to display a list of folders you have previously viewed. You can click any folder in that list to go to that folder.
- If you have gone from one folder to the next, you can click the Back and Forward buttons to move back to a previous folder or forward (if you have gone back).
- To go to a folder in the Navigation pane, double-click the folder name. You see the contents of that folder.



**FIGURE 3.4**

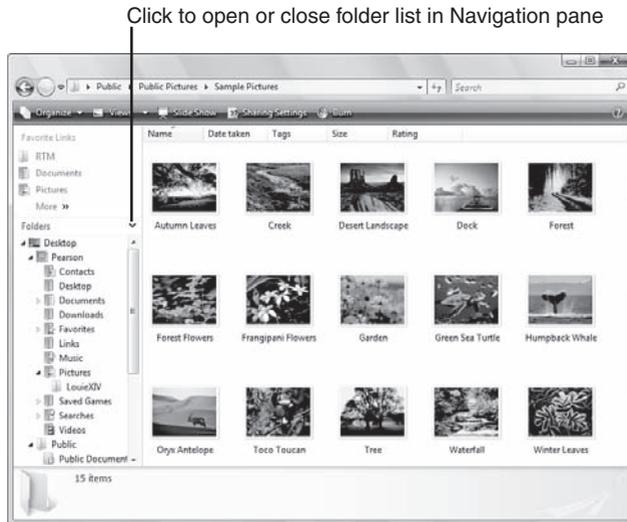
Use the address bar to back up to a previous folder in the folder path or to display a list of previously visited folders.



- To view and navigate using the Folders list, click the up arrow next to Folders. Folders contained within other folders are indented under the containing folder so that you can see how they folders are nested. Then click any of the folders to display its contents (see Figure 3.5). To hide the Folders list, click the down arrow.

**FIGURE 3.5**

You can display the Folders list in the Navigation pane and use it to open and move to other folders.



## Creating a New Folder

Finding, saving, and opening documents are easier if you group related files into folders. For example, you might want to create a folder for all your word processing documents. Creating a folder enables you to keep your documents separated from the program's files so that you can easily find your document files.

You can create a folder within any of the existing folders on your computer. Follow these steps:

1. Open the folder in which you want to create the new folder.
2. Click Organize and then New Folder (see Figure 3.6).

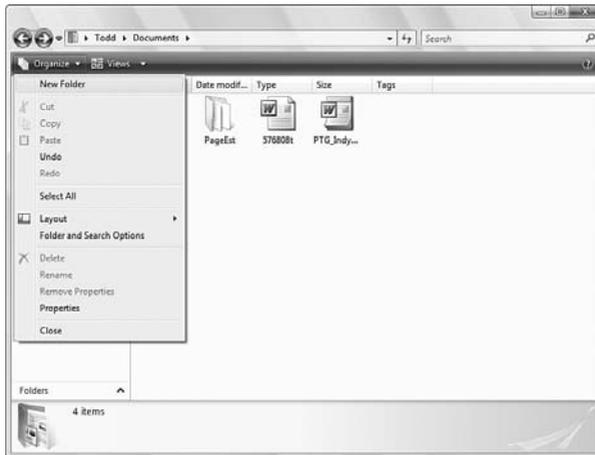


### tip

Windows Vista includes several shortcuts to the Documents folder. Therefore, you might want to set up all your document folders within this one key system folder.

**FIGURE 3.6**

You can create additional folders to store your files.



3. The new folder appears in the window, and the name is highlighted. Type a new name and press Enter. The folder is added.

## Displaying and Selecting Files

When you want to perform some file- or folder-related task, you start by selecting that file or folder. You can select a single file or multiple files. For instance, if you wanted to delete a group of files, you could select the ones to delete and then give the command to delete them.

For any task, the first step is to open the drive and folder where the file is stored. After you display the files you want to work with, you then select the file or files by doing any of the following:

- To select a single file, click it.
- To select several files next to each other, click the first file of the group that you want to select, and then hold down the Shift key and click the last file. The first and last files and all files in between are selected. Figure 3.7 shows multiple files selected.
- To select several files that are not next to each other, hold down the Ctrl key and click each file you want to select.
- To select all files, click the Organize menu and then click the Select All command. Or press Ctrl+A.
- To deselect a file, click outside the file list.

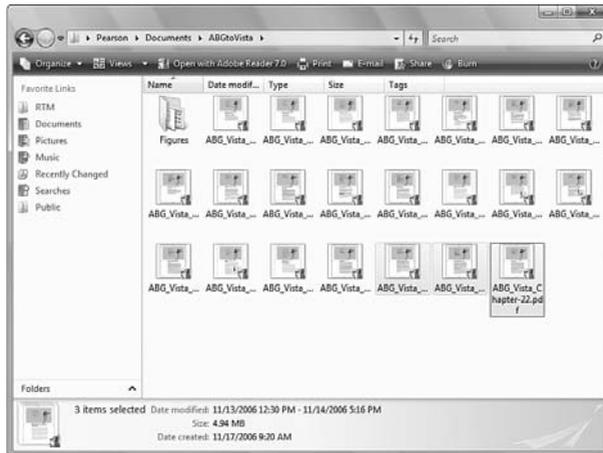


### tip

When you select a single file, you can view details about the file in the Details pane. This is a new feature in Windows Vista's Explorers.

**FIGURE 3.7**

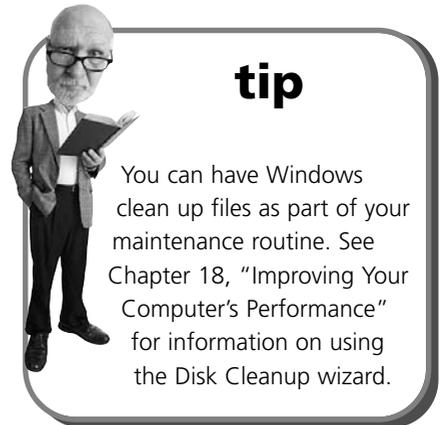
Note that when several files are selected, Windows Vista displays the number of items selected and the approximate size of all the selected files in the Details pane.



## Deleting and Undeleting Files and Folders

Eventually, your computer will become loaded down with files you no longer need, and you might find that you have a hard time organizing and storing them all. You can delete any files you no longer need. You can also delete entire folders. When you delete a folder, the folder and all its contents are moved to the Recycle Bin.

Windows Vista doesn't really delete a file or folder, at least not initially; instead, it moves it to the Recycle Bin. While a file or folder resides in the Recycle Bin, if needed, you can still retrieve it. This common task is also covered in this section.



## Deleting a File or Folder

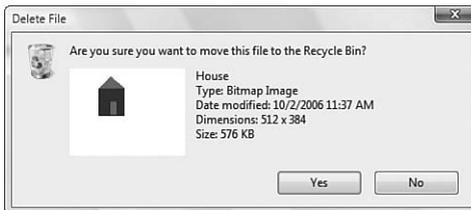
Follow these steps to delete a file or folder:

1. Right-click the file you want to delete and then click Delete.
2. Confirm the deletion by clicking Yes (see Figure 3.8). The file is deleted and no longer appears in the file list. (The file is actually moved to the Recycle Bin, which you can retrieve; this task is covered next.)



**FIGURE 3.8**

Before deleting, Windows Vista prompts you for confirmation.



## Undeleting a File from the Recycle Bin

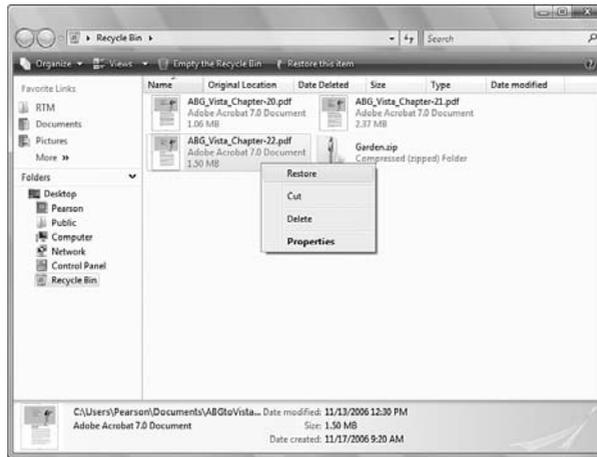
Sometimes you delete a file or folder by mistake. If you make a mistake, you can retrieve the file or folder from the Recycle Bin (as long as the Recycle Bin has not been emptied) and return the file or folder to its original location. Usually Murphy's Law goes into effect: The minute you delete an old file is a minute before you determine you need it. Don't fret, though, you can undelete a file.

To undelete a file or folder, follow these steps:

1. Double-click the Recycle Bin icon on your desktop. You see the contents of the Recycle Bin, including any folders, icons, or files you have deleted.
2. Right-click the file you want to undelete and click Restore (see Figure 3.9). The file is restored to its original location. You can also select multiple files and then click Restore all items.
3. Click the Close button to close the Recycle Bin.

**FIGURE 3.9**

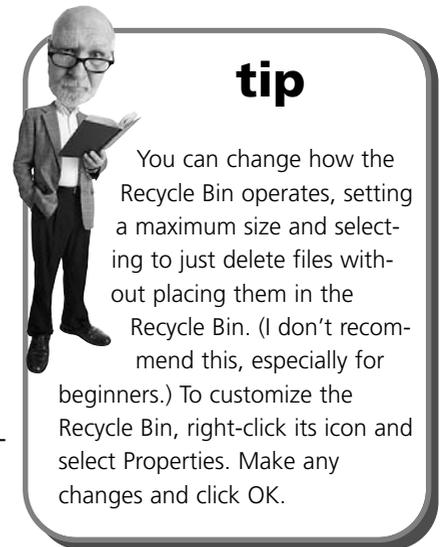
Use the Restore command to undelete a file from the Recycle Bin.



## Emptying the Recycle Bin

The contents of the Recycle Bin take up disk space, so periodically you should empty it. You can permanently delete the contents by emptying the Recycle Bin. Be sure that it doesn't contain any items you need. Follow these steps:

1. Double-click the Recycle Bin icon.
2. Check the contents of the Recycle Bin and undelete any files or folders you need.
3. Click the Empty Recycle Bin in the command bar.
4. Click Yes to confirm that you want to permanently delete all these items (see Figure 3.10).

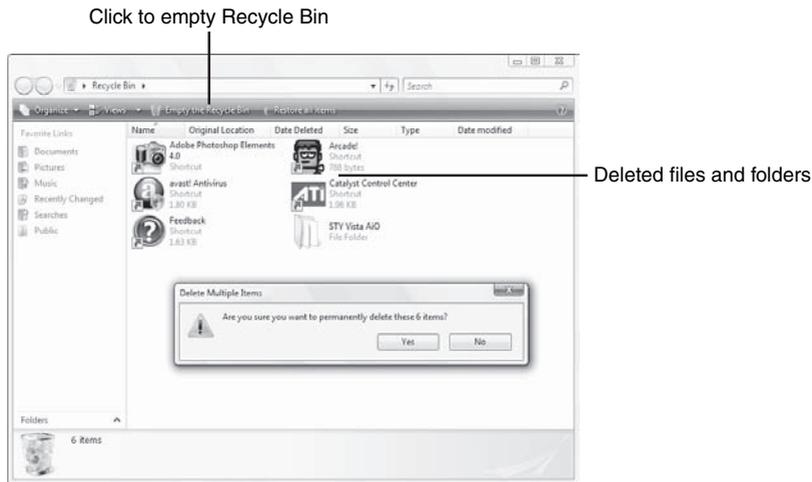


### tip

You can change how the Recycle Bin operates, setting a maximum size and selecting to just delete files without placing them in the Recycle Bin. (I don't recommend this, especially for beginners.) To customize the Recycle Bin, right-click its icon and select Properties. Make any changes and click OK.

**FIGURE 3.10**

To make sure you do want to permanently delete these files, you are prompted to confirm this action.



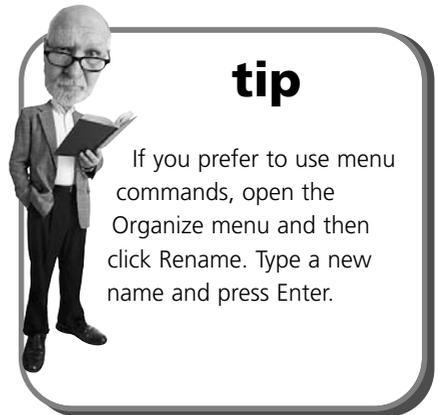
If you are sure the Recycle Bin doesn't contain anything you need, you can also right-click the Recycle Bin icon and then select the Empty Recycle Bin command from the shortcut menu. (It's usually best to open and check the contents of the Recycle Bin before emptying it.)

## Renaming a File or Folder

If you did not use a descriptive name when you saved the file, if you misspelled the file name, or if the current name doesn't accurately describe the file contents, you can rename it. You can also rename folders you created, selecting a more descriptive name as needed. You can rename only a single item at a time.

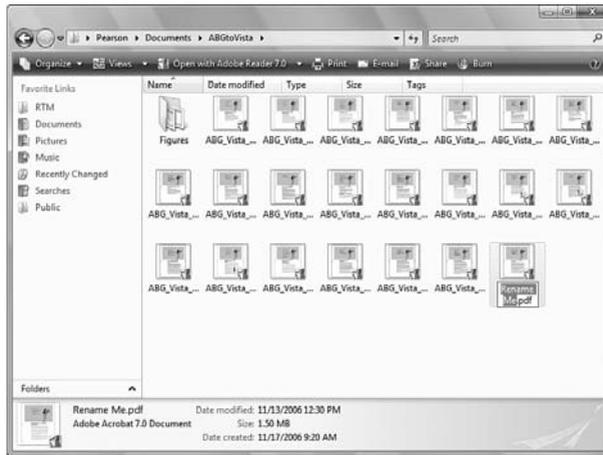
Follow these steps:

1. Right-click the file or folder you want to rename.
2. Click Rename. The current name is highlighted (see Figure 3.11).
3. Type the new name and press Enter. The file or folder is renamed.



**FIGURE 3.11**

Type a new name for the highlighted file.



## Moving Folders and Files

As you create more and more documents, you might need to do some rearranging. For example, say you have several documents all within one folder, and you decide it makes sense to create subfolders to further organize and categorize the files. You can create a new folder and then move files (or folders) to this new folder.

To move a file or folder, follow these steps:

1. Right-click the file you want to move and click Cut.
2. Navigate the folder where you want to move the file.
3. Right-click a blank area of the file list and click Paste.
4. The file is pasted to the new location.

If you make a mistake, you can undo the move by right-clicking a blank area of the file window and then clicking Undo Move. (Or press the shortcut key Ctrl+Z.)



## Copying Folders and Files

In addition to moving folders and files, you can also copy files or folders. You might want to keep an extra copy of files or folders. Rather than use a backup program

(covered in Chapter 17), many users simply copy files or folders to create a backup copy. As another example, you might copy files to a floppy disk or a CD, for instance, to share with others or to bring home from your office.

Windows Vista provides several methods for copying files and folders. If you want to copy folders to other folders, consider using the Copy command. If you want to copy files or folders to another drive, consider using the Send To command, both covered in this section.

## Copying with the Copy Command

To copy a file or folder, follow these steps:

1. Right-click the file(s) you want to copy and click Copy.
2. Navigate to the folder where you want to place the copy.
3. Right-click a blank area of the window and click Paste.
4. The file is copied to the new location.

## Copying Files to a CD or DVD

Virtually all new and recent computers include a writable CD or DVD drive. Because these drives can hold lots of information (DVDs hold over six times as much data as a CD), it makes a good medium for making a copy of files you want to save. Copying files to a CD or DVD is often called “burning.” To burn to one of these optical disc drives you need a disc of the appropriate type. Disc types you’re likely to encounter include:

- CD-R (a recordable disc that you can only write data to once)
- CD-RW (a rewritable disc that you can erase and burn again)
- DVD-R and DVD+R
- DVD-RW and DVD+RW

If you have a read-only (ROM) CD or DVD, you can read only information from the drive; you cannot record information.

### caution

Because reading files from an optical drive is slower, don’t use this as a primary storage device. However, use it for big files you want to keep. It’s a great way to make a backup copy of important files. Also, note that some audio discs created on CD-RW drives can’t be read in some conventional CD players. The same is true of recordable DVDs and conventional set-top DVD players.



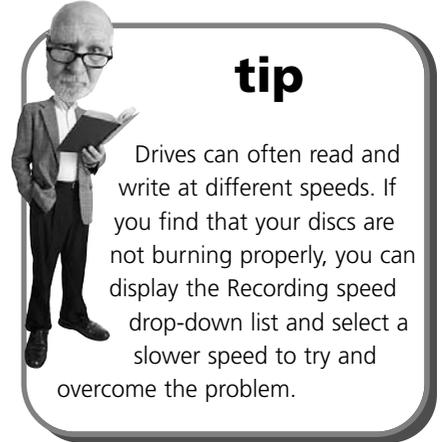
### tip

You can use this same process to copy a file to a floppy disk or any of the folders or drives listed on the Send To menu.



To copy files or folders to a disc, follow these steps:

1. Select the file(s) or folder you want to copy.
2. Right-click the selected item(s), select Send To, and then select your CD or DVD drive from the submenu.
3. When prompted, type a title for this disc and then click Next. The files are copied to the media.



## THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM

This chapter provides the basics of file management, including the following concepts:

- You have at least one hard drive on your system, and this is the C: drive. You might have additional drives, lettered consecutively.
- To view the drives, folders, and files on your computer, open the Computer icon. You can then navigate and open any of the drives and folders on your system.
- You can open the preset folders that Windows creates including the Documents, Pictures, and Music folders.
- To keep your files organized, you can create folders. You can create new folders as needed.
- When you want to perform an action on a file (such as delete it), you select it. You can select a single file, multiple files, or all files within a window.
- Delete files you no longer need. If you delete a file by accident or find that you really do need it, you can undo the deletion by retrieving the item from the Recycle Bin.
- If you did not use a descriptive name for a file or a folder, you can rename it.
- If you need to change the location where a file or folder is stored, you can move the file(s) or folder.
- You can copy your folders or files to keep an extra copy, or to move a copy of a file(s) or folder to another location.