

4 Navigate Windows and Folders

In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- ✓ Work with windows.
 - ✓ Understand files, folders, and libraries.
 - ✓ Find your way around your computer.
 - ✓ Connect to network resources.
 - ✓ Find specific information.
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To simplify the way you work with files on your computer, Windows uses a hierarchical storage system to organize information on your computer in a way similar to the way you would organize information in an office. Instead of organizing pieces of paper in cardboard folders in filing cabinets, you organize electronic files in electronic folders on the storage disks accessible to your computer.

You use Windows Explorer to look at the folders and files stored on your computer. With earlier versions of Windows, the Windows Explorer window could display the contents of only one folder at a time. With Windows 7, you can look at the contents of multiple folders in one window, by adding the folders to a library. This new feature allows you to easily access files while still maintaining an organizational system.

No matter how organized you are and how skillful you become at working with libraries, sometimes you might not remember where you stored a particular file. No problem! Windows 7 includes powerful search features that can help you almost instantly locate files and other information on your computer.

In this chapter, you'll first learn how to size, arrange, hide, and otherwise manage windows on your desktop. You'll learn about the standard file storage structure Windows 7 uses, and about the types of files you'll find on your Windows 7 computer. Then you'll explore the Windows 7 file storage structure. You'll also experiment with searching for files by using the different search methods that are available.

Practice Files Before you can complete the exercises in this chapter, you need to install the practice files specified in “Using the Practice Files” at the beginning of this book to their default location. The practice files you will use to complete the exercises in this chapter are in the Navigation practice file folder.

Working with Windows

As the name of the Windows operating system indicates, most of the information you view on your computer is displayed in a window. Files open in program windows (windows that host the program controls), and folders open in Windows Explorer windows (windows that display the folder contents). Regardless of the content they display, all windows share certain common characteristics and can be manipulated in the same ways. You can change the appearance of windows by using controls built into their frames, as well as controls available from the desktop and from the Windows Taskbar. Windows 7 provides many new window-management controls that are very cool as well as useful.

See Also For more information about the features of folder windows, see “Understanding Files, Folders, and Libraries” later in this chapter.

Sizing, Moving, and Arranging Windows

You can minimize, maximize, restore, or close a window by clicking the buttons at the right end of the title bar. Additionally, you can use the following techniques to change the size or position of an individual window:

- To change the location of a window, but not its size, drag it.
Tip To drag a window, point to its title bar, press and hold the mouse button, and then move the mouse.
- To change only the height of a window, drag the top or bottom border of its frame.
- To maximize the height of a window without changing its width, drag the top border of its frame to the top edge of the screen or the bottom border of its frame to the bottom edge of the screen.
- To change the width of a window, drag the left or right border of its frame.
- To simultaneously change the height and width of a window, drag any corner of its frame.

Tip You cannot resize a maximized window by dragging an edge of its frame; you must first restore the window to its non-maximized state.

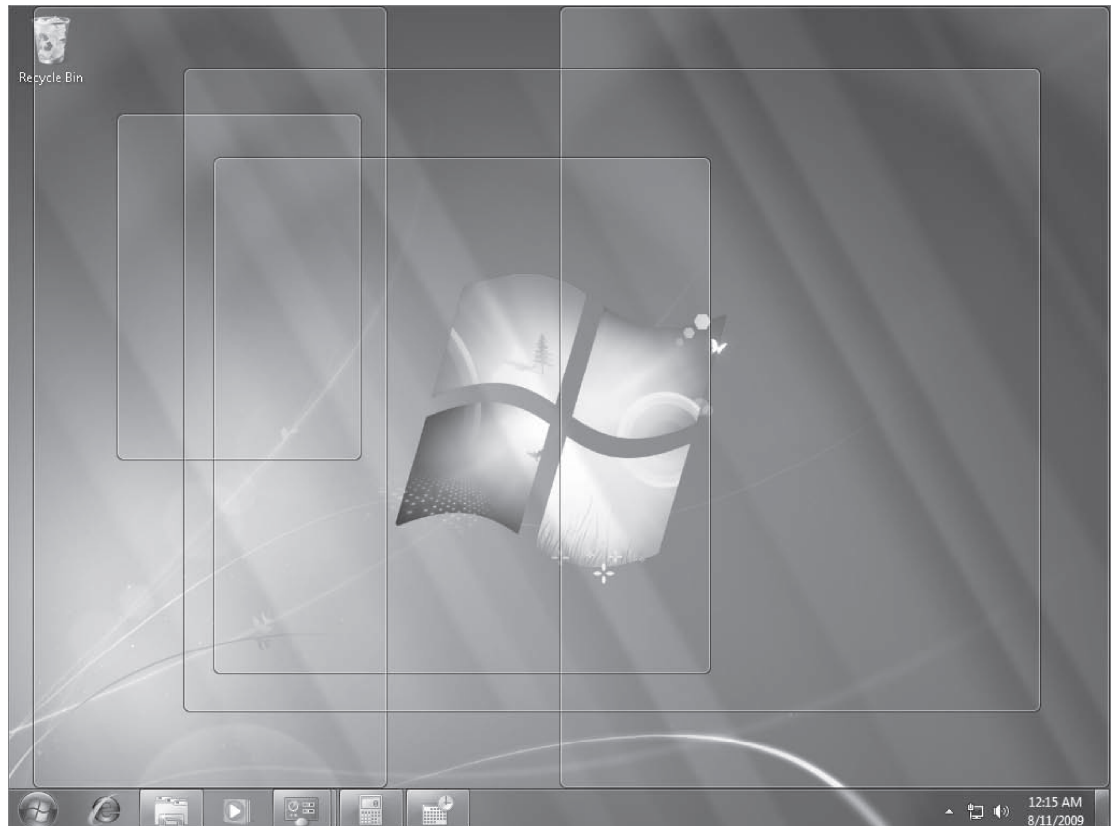
In every arrangement, the open windows are sized similarly, regardless of their size before you arranged them.

See Also When windows are arranged, an Undo command appears on the taskbar shortcut menu. For information about other the taskbar shortcut menu commands, see “Modifying the Taskbar” in Chapter 10, “Change System Settings.”

Hiding and Displaying Windows

In addition to the Show The Desktop command on the taskbar shortcut menu, you can use the following techniques to control the display of multiple open windows:

- Pointing to the Show Desktop button at the right end of the Windows Taskbar makes all the open windows temporarily translucent so that you can see through them to the desktop. The taskbar, desktop shortcuts, and gadgets remain visible. This new feature is called Aero Peek, and is one of the features that works only on hardware that supports Aero functionality.



The effect of pointing to the Show Desktop button, located at the right end of the taskbar.

Keyboard Shortcut You can peek at the desktop by pressing the Windows logo key+Spacebar.

- 17.** In the **Windows Explorer** thumbnail pane, click the **Pictures** thumbnail.

The Pictures window opens on the right half of the screen.



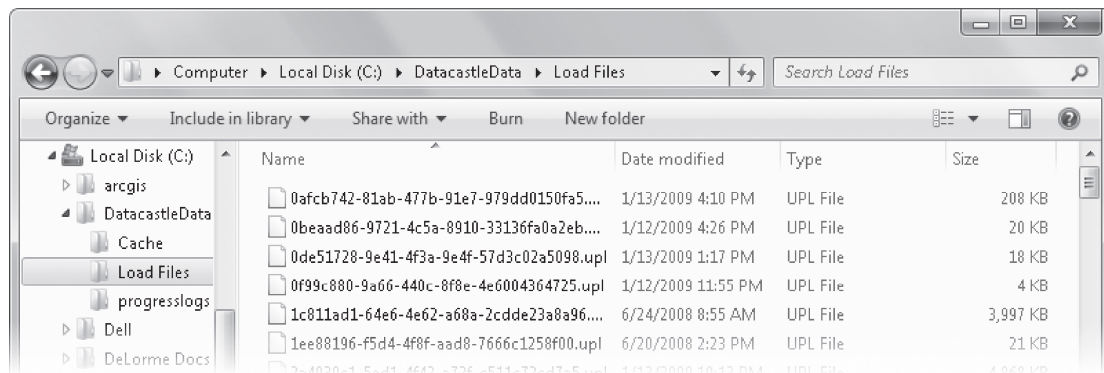
- 18.** At the right end of the **Pictures** window title bar, click the **Close** button.



CLEAN UP Close any open windows before continuing to the next exercise.

Understanding Files, Folders, and Libraries

Files associated with programs and tools, as well as the files you create to contain your information, are stored in a hierarchical structure of folders on hard disk drives and other storage devices (such as CDs, DVDs, or USB flash drives). You can look at a representation of this storage structure by displaying the contents of the available drives in Windows Explorer.



Files are stored on each disk drive in a series of hierarchical folders.

Tip This graphic displays the contents of the Downloads folder in Details view. You change the way folders and files are depicted in the Content pane by selecting a view from the Views list. For more information, see “Viewing Folders and Files in Different Ways” in Chapter 5, “Manage Folders and Files.”

Each drive is identified by a letter, and in some cases by a description. Your computer’s primary hard drive (the one where the operating system is installed) is almost always identified by the letter C. (By tradition, the letters A and B are reserved for floppy disk drives, which have been superseded by higher-capacity storage media and seem to be becoming quite rare.) If your computer has additional hard drives, they are assigned the next sequential letters, followed by any removable media drives.

File Types

There are many different types of files, but they all fall into these two basic categories:

- **Files used or created by programs** These include executable files and dynamic-link libraries (DLLs). Some of these files may be hidden (not shown in a standard folder window view) to protect them from being inadvertently changed or deleted.

Tip When files are hidden you can't select or delete them, or delete the folder structure they're stored in; a folder might appear empty, but if it contains one or more hidden files, you cannot delete it. You can choose to display and work with hidden files, folders, and drives by clicking that option in the Folder Options dialog box, which is discussed in "Viewing Folders and Files in Different Ways" in Chapter 5, "Manage Folders and Files."

- **Files created by you** These include documents, worksheets, graphics, text files, presentations, audio clips, video clips, and other things that you can open, look at, and change by using one or more programs.

The files installed with a program and those it creates for its own use are organized the way the program expects to find them, and you shouldn't move or remove them. However, you have complete control of the organization of the files you create (such as documents and worksheets), and knowing how to manage these files is essential if you want to be able to use your computer efficiently.

Windows System Folders

When Windows 7 was installed on your computer, it created three system folders:

- **Program Files folder** Most programs (including the programs and tools that come with Windows 7) install the files they need in subfolders of the Program Files folder. You may have the option to choose a different folder, but there's rarely a reason to do so. After you install a program you shouldn't move, copy, rename, or delete its folders and files; if you do, you might not be able to run or uninstall the program.
- **User account folder** The first time you log on to the computer with a new user account, Windows 7 creates a folder for that user account in the Users folder. The user account folder contains 12 subfolders, which we refer to in this book as your personal folders. Eleven of your personal folders are visible in your user account folder: Contacts, Desktop, Documents, Downloads, Favorites, Links, Music, Pictures, Saved Games, Searches, and Videos. One folder is hidden—the AppData folder that contains information about your user account settings for Windows and for programs that you use. As you work on your computer and personalize Windows, it saves information and settings specific to your user profile in these folders.

Tip You can display your personal folders by clicking your user account name that appears at the top of the right pane of the Start menu.

In addition to the user account–specific folder for each user account that is active on the computer, the Users folder also contains a Public folder, the contents of which are accessible to anyone logged on to the computer. The Public folder contains nine subfolders. Six of these are visible: Documents, Downloads, Music, Pictures, Recorded TV, and Videos. Three hidden subfolders—Desktop, Favorites, and Library—contain information about settings that are common to all user accounts on the computer. If you want to make files available to anyone who logs on to the computer, you can store them in the public folders rather than your personal folders.

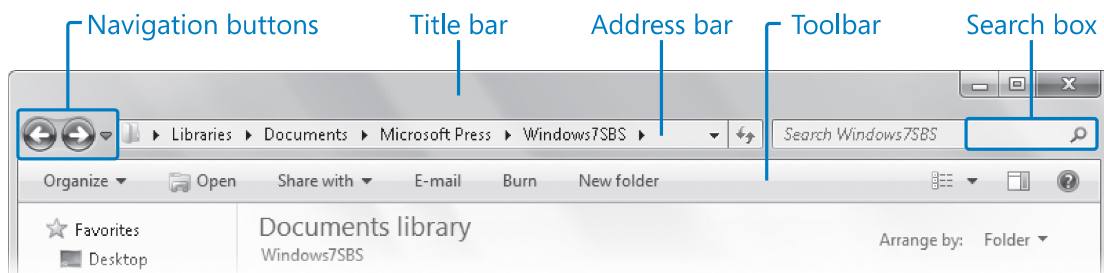
Tip To clearly differentiate your personal folders from the public folders, Windows 7 refers to your personal folders as My Documents, My Music, My Pictures, and My Videos, and to the public folders as Public Documents, Public Music, Public Pictures, and Public Videos. The default Documents, Music, Pictures, and Videos libraries include the corresponding personal and public folders.

- **Windows folder** Most of the critical operating system files are stored in this folder. You can look, but unless you really know what you are doing, don't touch! Most Windows 7 users will never need to access the files in the Windows folder.

Troubleshooting If you upgraded your computer from an earlier version of Windows, the Windows folder from the earlier version might still remain on your computer. However, it will have been renamed to Windows.old during the upgrade process to avoid confusion.

Folder Window Features

In Windows Explorer, every folder window displays two consistent elements: the title bar and the toolbar; you can't hide either of these elements.

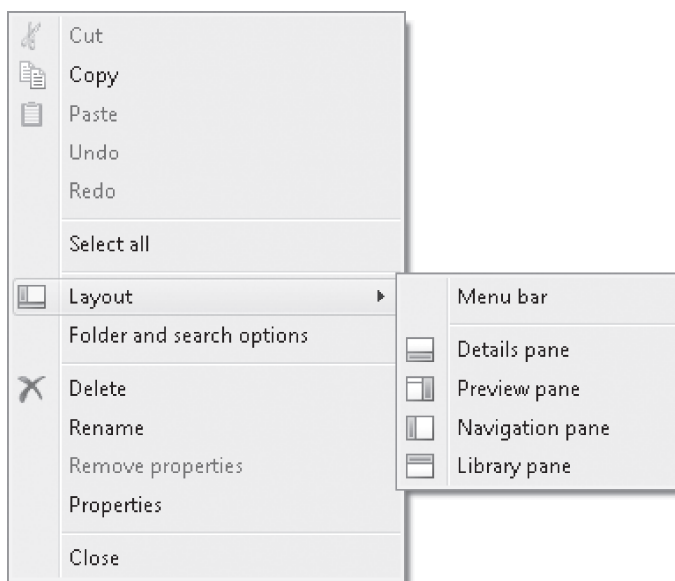


All folder windows include the title bar and toolbar.

Displaying and Hiding Panes

Each pane of a window displays a specific type of information. You can display and hide window panes to show or hide information, or to change the amount of space available in the Content pane. For example, if your folders typically contain many files and you are adept at navigating in the Address bar, you might want to turn off the Navigation, Detail, and Preview panes so that the Content pane occupies the entire folder window. To display or hide any window pane, click Organize on the toolbar, point to Layout, and then click the pane you want to change.

Keyboard Shortcut You can display or hide the Preview pane by clicking **Alt+P**.



You control which window panes are visible.

Tip You can change the size of a pane by pointing to its border and dragging in the direction you want to increase or decrease its size. This technique is useful if you want to display more information in one pane without closing the other panes.

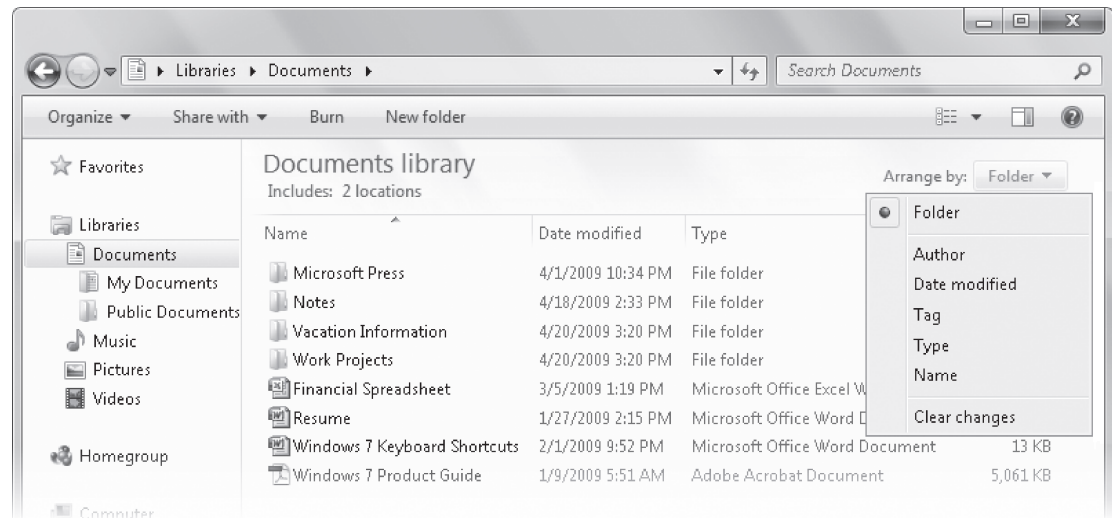
Finding Your Way Around Your Computer

You view all the drives, folders, and files that are part of your computer's storage system, as well as those on any computers you are connected to through a network, in Windows Explorer.

Tip If there are no folders or files in your **Public Documents** folder, the content shown in the **Content** pane won't change.

- 15.** In the **Library** pane, click the button to the right of **Arrange by**.

The **Arrange By** menu appears.



You can view library contents arranged in folders; grouped by author, date modified, tag, or type; or listed in alphabetic order by file name.

- 16.** Try the different arrangements to see how each displays files and folders.

✕ CLEAN UP Close the **Documents** window.

Connecting to Network Resources

If your computer is connected to a work network or to a home network, you might want to access folders that are located on other computers on the network.

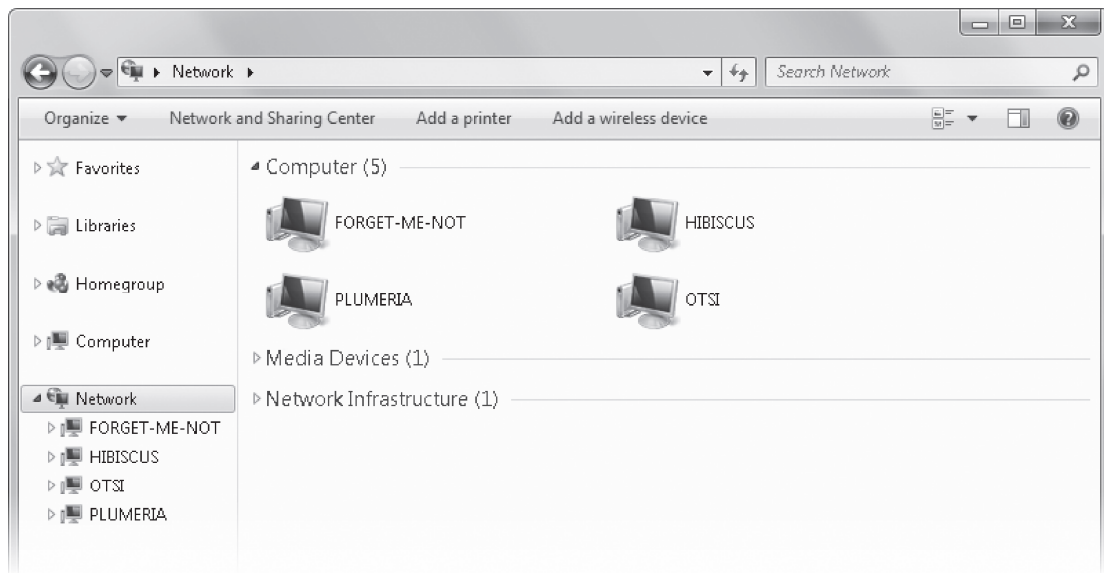
See Also For information about sharing folders and drives, see “Sharing Files on Your Network” in Chapter 3, “Manage Your Network.”

Navigating to a Shared Folder

In Chapter 3, “Manage Your Network,” you learned how to share files, folders, and drives with other people on your network, either by sharing them with homegroup members (computers), if your computer is part of a homegroup, or by sharing them with all or selected network users (people). You also learned about sharing files by placing them in public folders, and how to control whether public folders are visible to other network computers.

If your computer is connected to a network, you can use Windows Explorer to navigate not only to drives and resources on your own computer, but also to drives and resources across your entire network.

You can view files, folders, and drives that other network users have shared with you in the same way that you view information on your own computer. Open the Computer window and then, in the Navigation pane, click the Network group. The Network window shows all the computers that are currently available through the network that your computer is connected to.



The Network window.

Navigate to shared resources on the computers by expanding the Network group computers and their folders in the Navigation pane, or by double-clicking computers and folders in the Content pane.

Mapping a Network Drive

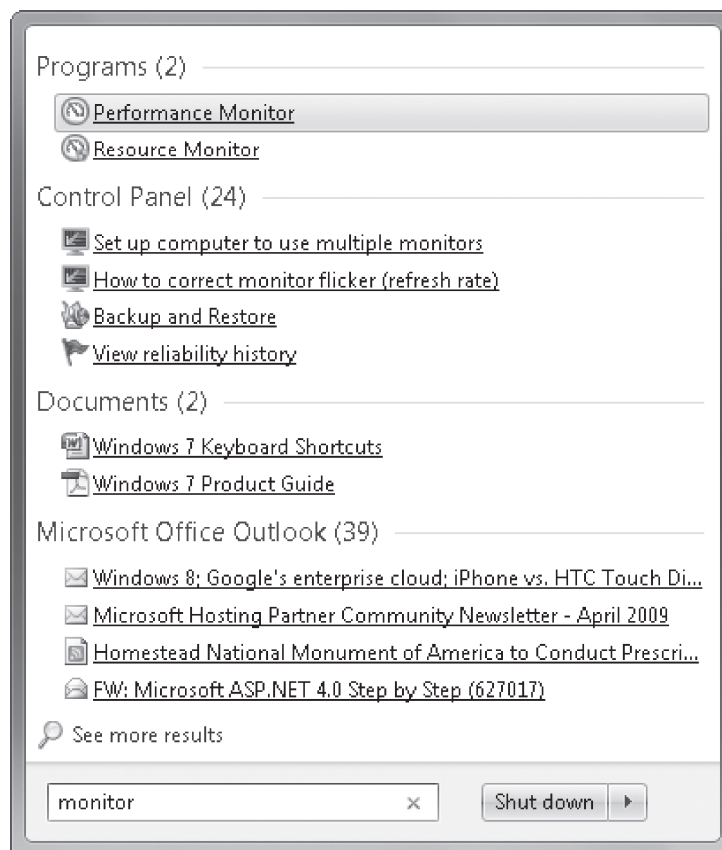
If you want to access a specific network drive or folder on a regular basis—for example, if you frequently connect to a shared external hard drive—you can map the drive in Windows Explorer to make it more easily available. When you map a drive, you assign it a local drive letter so that it appears along with other available storage devices and locations when you view the contents of your computer. You can map a drive for the duration of the current computing session, or instruct Windows to reconnect to that drive every time you log on.

Finding Specific Information

Recent advancements in online and computer search technology have made the instant location of information and files so simple that it's easy to forget how tedious tracking down the same items would have been in the past. The Windows Search technology that is built in to Windows 7 is quite simply excellent. We touted the search capabilities in Windows Vista as one of its top three features, but the Windows 7 search engine is better.

Windows Search

Using Windows Search, you can find programs, files, messages, and message attachments on your computer almost instantly. You don't need to know the name or location of the file or item you want to find; simply type a word or phrase in the Start menu Search box to display a list of matching items, organized by type. To restrict your search to the contents of a specific folder (and its subfolders), display the folder in Windows Explorer and enter your search term in the Search box in the upper-right corner of the window.



Search results are divided into categories. Click any category heading to display a list of all the search results in that category.

How does Windows Search find items so quickly? Behind the scenes, Windows Search maintains an index of all the key words in, and associated with, the files stored on your computer—program names, common tasks, and the file names and content (when possible) of documents, audio and video recordings, images, e-mail messages, Web pages, and other data files. Windows Search automatically indexes the most common file types (such as Word documents, text files, and e-mail messages) and doesn't index file types you are less likely to search (such as operating system files). For certain types of files (such as PowerPoint presentations), Windows Search indexes the file properties and the file content, but for others (such as PowerPoint slide templates) it indexes only the file properties. (It does not include the system files; such an index would be huge and would slow down the search process.) When you enter a search term, Windows looks for the term in the index instead of searching the actual files on your hard disk.

Tip By default, Windows doesn't index encrypted files because a search by another computer user could reveal the encrypted data. You can add encrypted files to the search index if you first put in place a full-volume data-encryption solution, such as Windows BitLocker Drive Encryption. For information about BitLocker, see *Windows 7 Step by Step Deluxe Edition*, by Joan Preppernau and Joyce Cox (Microsoft Press, 2010).

If a simple search from the Start menu Search box or the Search box in a Windows Explorer window doesn't locate the item you are looking for, you can perform more advanced searches in the Search Results folder. Your search criteria can include the date a file was created, its size, part of its name or title, its author, and any tags you might have listed as properties of the file.

See Also For information about file properties, see "Working with Folder and File Properties" in Chapter 5, "Manage Folders and Files."

You can save a set of search parameters so that you can display updated results at any time. Saved searches are added to the Favorites group in Windows Explorer and are also available from your personal Searches folder.

Windows Search Parameters

You can change which file types and locations are included in the Windows Search index at any time. You can change the search settings in the following places:

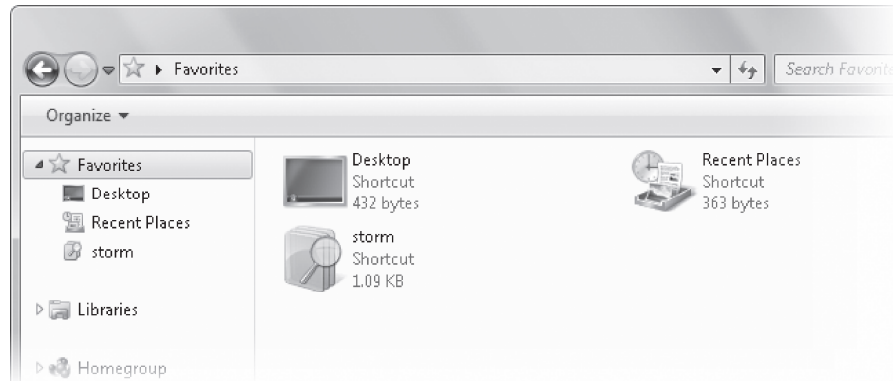
- **On the Search tab of the Folder Options dialog box** You can open the Folder Options dialog box by clicking Organize on the toolbar of any Windows Explorer window and then clicking Folder And Search Options on the Organize menu.

- 19.** In the **Save As** dialog box, click **Save** to accept the default name and save the search in the Searches folder.

The folder window now displays the contents of the new Searches\ice storm folder.

- 20.** At the top of the **Navigation** pane, expand the **Favorites** group.

The Navigation pane and Content pane display the contents of the Favorites group.



The saved search is available in your Favorites group.

You can display up-to-date search results for the term *storm* at any time by opening the saved search from the Favorites group.

✕ CLEAN UP Close the Favorites window.

Key Points

- All windows share common characteristics. You can work with them in standard ways, such as by sizing, moving, arranging, and hiding them.
- Files are organized on your computer in a hierarchical storage structure.
- Windows Explorer provides several ways to move around your computer's storage system. Becoming familiar with them will increase your ability to quickly navigate to specific files.
- You can quickly locate information on your computer by entering a search term in either the Search box on the Start menu or the Search box in the upper-right corner of a folder window.
- You can refine a search by filtering the search results, for example, to show only files of a specific type.