

What's New in Windows XP SP2?

Every year or so Microsoft releases a service pack (abbreviated SP) for Windows, and for some of their other major software products. A service pack includes all the improvements, hotfixes, security patches, and bug fixes released individually through individual Windows Updates prior to the release of the service pack.

Usually, the service pack includes some additional goodies of its own. This time, with the release the Service Pack 2, there are lots of extra goodies. This chapter is a quick overview of the most dramatic changes to Windows XP that you'll find in Service Pack 2. What's new in this chapter is only in relation to pre-Service Pack 2 Windows XP. If you're just now making the transition from Windows 98, ME, or 2000, just about everything will be new.

The New Security

If I had to summarize what's new in SP2 in two words, those words would be *Internet security*. Like the rest of us, I think Microsoft has had it with all the worms, viruses, adware, spyware, and every other type of *malware* (bad software). Not to mention the human slimedogs who are wasting all of our time and energy with this garbage for their own amusement or financial gain. So, Microsoft wisely decided to focus some major resources on that problem this time around and get everything rolled up into a single service pack that's easy to download and install.

It's difficult to miss the change. The once barely noticeable Internet Connection Firewall has been replaced by a much-improved Windows Firewall. The equally obscure Automatic Updates feature is now nearly impossible to miss. And even though Microsoft is still out of the antivirus software market, they don't make it easy for you to ignore the importance of protecting your computer against such threats.

The new firewall, automatic updates, and antivirus alerts and options have been brought together into a single Security Center window. The Security Center makes itself known automatically if there are any weaknesses in your PC's Internet defenses, through notification messages and a notification icon, as in the example shown in Figure 1-1.



In This Chapter

How Service Pack 2 makes the Internet a safer place to be

Take advantage of the new Wireless Network Setup Wizard

Start using Bluetooth devices to wirelessly sync your cell phone and PDA to your PC and printer

Take advantage of all that's new in Windows Media Player 10 and Movie Maker 2.1

