

## Introduction

Ten years ago, notebook PCs were expensive and relatively rare machines, at least outside of the corporate environment. I was using a notebook 10 years ago, but I was also in the corporate world. At that time, many traveling executives and most mobile salespeople had notebooks, but the typical office worker didn't, neither did the average small businessperson or home computer user. The notebook PCs of that era were thick, heavy things, relatively underpowered and definitely overpriced. You could buy a good desktop PC for \$1,500 or so, but the lowest-priced notebooks went for \$2,500 or more—and offered far less processing power, memory, and storage capacity.

Today, the world is different. Notebook PCs are still a little higher priced than comparable desktop models, but the price difference is just a few hundred dollars. Decent notebook PCs can be purchased for \$700 or less, and their performance and capacity approach similarly priced desktop models.

Because of this evolution in notebook price and performance, notebook PCs now outsell their desktop brethren. Notebook sales overtook desktop sales in 2005 and continue to rise. Notebooks aren't just for corporate types anymore; today's notebook owner is just as likely to be a home user as it he is to be a traveling salesman.

My personal experience verifies the statistics. Over the past nine months, my friends and family have purchased eight new notebook PCs—and zero desktop models. Here are the most recent notebook purchases I've personally been involved with, in chronological order:

- My girlfriend's youngest daughter, Amy, purchased a Toshiba notebook for college.
- My girlfriend's oldest daughter, Kristi, purchased a Gateway notebook for college.
- My girlfriend's middle daughter, Laura, received a Gateway tablet PC as part of her college's laptop computer program.
- My friend Orson purchased a Compaq notebook to go along with his new broadband Internet connection.
- My sister-in-law Stephanie replaced her defunct Toshiba notebook with a new Gateway model.
- My nephew Alec received a new Gateway notebook as a high school graduation present.
- My girlfriend's eighth-grade son, Ben, received a relatively new hand-me-new Gateway notebook to replace his older Gateway that bit the dust after five years of operation.
- I purchased myself a new Toshiba notebook to replace the Gateway notebook I gave to my girlfriend's son.

That's a lot of new notebooks—and a lot of new notebook users. For some of these users, the notebook was their first PC. For others, who had used desktop PCs before, these were their first notebooks. For a handful, the new notebook replaced an existing notebook.

What all these users have in common is that they have to familiarize themselves with a new type of computer—and, in many cases, a new operating system. Most new notebook PCs currently come with Windows Vista installed, and Vista is a lot different from the older Windows XP and Windows 2000 operating systems, especially where notebook operation is concerned.

Every one of these users face a learning curve—the same learning curve you face if you've just purchased a new notebook PC. From opening the box and plugging everything in to learning how to operating Windows Vista to transferring files and settings from your old PC to your new one, you have a lot to learn about your new PC.

Even if you're already familiar with desktop PCs, operating a notebook PC is quite a bit different. Do you know how to configure your system for optimal

battery operation? Do you know how to make the best use of limited hard drive space? Do you know how to connect to a public wireless hot spot? Do you know how to safely use your notebook while you're on the road? These are all issues you need to address if you're using a notebook PC—issues you never had to face with a desktop system.

Because so many people are switching to notebook PCs, and because operating a notebook is so much different from operating a desktop, I've written this book. *Your First Notebook PC* shows you how to get the most out of your new notebook PC, from the moment you first open the box to when you're sitting in Starbucks trying to send a file via email. There's a lot to learn, and I've covered it all within the covers of this book.

## How This Book Is Organized

*Your First Notebook PC* contains information of value to both new computers users and more experienced users migrating to their first notebook. To make finding the right information easier, this book is organized into five main parts, each focusing on a particular topic:

- **Part I, “Getting to Know Your Notebook PC,”** provides an introduction to portable computing, helps you choose the right notebook PC for your particular needs, guides you through the setup process, shows you how to use Windows on your new notebook, and provides step-by-step instructions for moving your existing files and programs from your old PC to your new notebook.
- **Part II, “Using Your Notebook in the Home,”** is for the home PC user with a new notebook. Here you find step-by-step instructions for connecting your notebook to a wireless home network and the Internet, sharing files and peripherals with other computers on your home network, using your notebook with an iPod, digital camera, or video camera, and playing games on your notebook.
- **Part III, “Using Your Notebook in the Office,”** is all about office use of a notebook PC. You learn how to connect your notebook to the office network, use your notebook for business, and give presentations with your notebook.
- **Part IV, “Using Your Notebook on the Road,”** takes your notebook out of the office or house and into public. You learn how to connect your notebook PC to a wireless Internet hot spot, send and receive email from the road, travel with your notebook (including how to

breeze through airport security), play movies and music while you travel, extend the life of your notebook's battery, and make sure nobody steals your notebook while you're not looking.

- **Part V, "Getting the Most Out of Your Notebook PC,"** presents all the different accessories and software utilities available for your notebook. You also learn how to use your notebook as a desktop PC, upgrade your notebook's hardware, and troubleshoot common problems.

You don't have to read the book from front to back, of course; it's perfectly okay to read only those chapters that deal with particular issues of interest. It's your call.

## Who Can Use This Book

This book is written for notebook users of all levels, from beginners with their first PCs to more experienced users moving from a desktop to a notebook model. I do focus on Windows PCs rather than Apple models, so if you're a PowerBook user, there's little here for you. (Using Apple computers is a whole other book in itself... .) In addition, I focus primarily on notebooks running Windows Vista, because most new notebooks sold today come with some version of Vista already installed. If you use an older notebook or a corporate model running Windows XP or Windows 2000, most of the information here is still good, even if the particular instructions might differ somewhat.

## Conventions Used in This Book

I hope that this book is easy enough to figure out on its own, without requiring its own instruction manual. As you read through the pages, however, it helps to know precisely how I've presented specific types of information.

## Menu Commands

Windows presents an intuitive point-and-click interface. To indicate navigation through Windows and various software programs, I use the following notation:

Main menu, Submenu, Submenu.

All you have to do is follow the instructions in order, using your mouse to click through the various menus and submenus. For example, if I tell you to open the Start menu and select All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, you know to click the Start button and select the various menus and submenus in order. It's pretty easy.

## Web Pages and Manufacturer Information

Because we discuss notebook hardware, software, and accessories, there are a lot of web page addresses in the book, like this one: [www.molehillgroup.com](http://www.molehillgroup.com). When you see one of these addresses (also known as a *URL*), you can go to that web page by entering the URL into the address box in your web browser. I've made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the web addresses presented here, but given the ever-changing nature of the Web, don't be surprised if you run across an address or two that has changed. I apologize in advance.

Many of the web pages listed in this book deal with things you can buy for your notebook. These listings are for your information only; just because I describe a particular item doesn't mean I personally endorse it. (In many instances, comparable equipment from different manufacturers is equally deserving.) Know that the prices mentioned in this book are current as of July 2007 and are retail prices suggested by the manufacturer; actual street prices might be and probably are lower, depending on where you shop.

## Special Elements

As you read through this book, you'll notice several special elements, presented in what we in the publishing business call "margin notes." There are different types of margin notes for different types of information, as you see here.

**note** This is a note that presents some interesting but not necessarily essential information about a topic discussed in the surrounding text.

**tip** This is a tip that might prove useful for whatever you're in the process of doing.

**caution**  
This is a caution that something you might accidentally do could have undesirable results—so take care!

## There's More on the Web

Now that you know how to use this book, it's time to get to the heart of the matter. But when you're ready to take a break from using your new notebook PC, you may also want to check out my personal website, located at [www.molehillgroup.com](http://www.molehillgroup.com). Here you'll find more information about all the other books I've written and am in the process of writing. I'll also post any updates or corrections to this book, in the inevitable event that an error or two creep into this text. (Hey, nobody's perfect!)

In addition, know that I love to hear from readers of my books. If you want to contact me, feel free to email me at [notebook@molehillgroup.com](mailto:notebook@molehillgroup.com). I can't promise that I'll answer every message, but I do promise that I'll read each one!

But enough with the preliminaries. Turn the page and get ready to learn more about notebook computing!