

Windows Media Center Notes

A Media Center PC replaces your everyday PC, DVD player, FM Radio, Equalizer, CD player, Slide Projector, and TV.

Windows Media Center still operates as a Windows XP computer for your business, home, gaming, internet and e-mail needs.

The desktop will be quite familiar to you since it looks very similar to the standard XP desktop.

Media Center will easily join a peer to peer / home network.
This allows you to share pictures, files and videos with all computers you already have in place.

Windows Media Center has built in capacity for Surround Sound, Dolby Digital, DTS and PCM Sound decoding. This includes 5.1 and 7.1 speaker systems.

Displays can be Standard or Wide Screen monitors or televisions.

With a wide screen monitor you can view “normal” mode (non wide screen), wide screen, zoom or stretched modes.

So ladies if your man is staring a little too hard at Angelina Jolie just give her a stretch and watch is eyes turn back to you.

Also, with Media Center, you can use a TV as a monitor or of course with a monitor (or two).

Multiple monitors and TVs can be used as mirrored displays, or split and separate screens.

Your TV can be a standard tube type, Plasma, LCD TV, or Projector.

In addition to being a "normal" PC, Media Center has a fist full of integrated choices.
Live and recorded TV, Movies, videos, music, photos, radio and on-demand entertainment.

To get the most out of your system, you really need the following hardware beyond what a “Normal” computer has:

A DVD Burner to backup your favorite shows, home movies and pictures.

A TV Tuner Card to capture Cable, Satellite or Rabbit Ear Television programs.

A FM Tuner to listen to local radio stations (this will be part of a quality TV Tuner)

A Windows Media Center Remote control

And of course a Wireless Keyboard and Mouse for the 10 foot viewing pleasure from your couch.

Now let's explore some of the Media Center Features...

The **PLAY DVD** area simply, well, plays DVD's.

You can play DVD movies, DVD slide shows, Home movies burned to DVD, almost any DVD and picture or video disk can be played here.

Speaking of DVD's, Windows Media Center has built-in DVD burning software that supports
Data DVD

Video DVD (Home movies and recorded TV)

And DVD Slideshow for your pictures and photographs

All of which can be played on most commercial DVD Players when burned with the built in Media Center software.

Media Center also comes with Windows Movie Maker making it easy to create and distribute home movies.

By the way, you can burn a DVD while performing other tasks, that is why they call it multi-taking.

Speaking of DVD Movies...

Media Center detects and cooperates with "Content Protection" as established by the Hollywood Elite.

You can record and watch copy protected material (Movies and music) on the Media Center PC it was recorded on. But not on other devices, even if they are connected to the Media Center computer via a network.

Non protected media can be viewed on any PC, TV or Portable Media Center Device with the proper viewing software.

And if applicable can be viewed on a commercial DVD player when burned to a disk.

ONLINE SPOTLIGHT allows you to subscribe to TV and Movies, Music and Radio, News and Sports, Games and Lifestyle.

All of which are available over the internet.

You can watch a movie from ABC Family TV or Comedy Central.

You can view the latest music videos on MTV and VH1 or just listen to your favorite music genre on XM Satellite or Music Match.

Once you have chosen your method of Internet music you can choose from your pre-selected stations

Add new stations
Select and Era (by year or decade)
Or select a Genre of music
Going to your favorites is as easy as one click
Or search for an artist by name.

If music isn't your thing, with News and Sports you can keep up with the latest News, Photos, and scores of your favorite teams.

Internet gaming is available.

Whether playing with other users across the globe or downloading the games you like the most, a full range of games is at your finger tips.

You can purchase and play the newest games without fighting the crowds or even leaving your couch.

For the parents, most all gaming sites allow you to set password protected parental controls.

Another feature of the Online Spotlight is the Lifestyle Section.

Under "Lifestyle" you can visit photo galleries, download DVD software, you can even order prints of your favorite photos.

Of all the features here, some of these have "free" usage (usually very limited), others have free trials and the "best" are pay for services.

MY VIDEOS Plays your home movies, downloaded videos. Simple enough.

With **MY PICTURES** you can create a slide show of all your pictures or by individual folder, Or you can create a CD or DVD slide show that can be played on common household DVD players.

If you need to add pictures, Media Center automatically detects newly inserted picture CD's and offers to install the photos for you.

If that feature fails (yeah like something from Microsoft would not work right), simply right click in any empty area and select "add pictures".

As a matter of fact, if you pictures are on another PC or elsewhere on the hard drive, just do the same thing. That is all there is to it.

The **MY TV** section allows you to download a free TV Guide.

Based on your choices, Windows Media Center will automatically detect how you will be connecting for Television (satellite, Cable or Rabbit ears) and what area you live in.

This way you get the correct guide that you need.

You can pause or fast forward live TV just like TiVo without the additional cost.

With the correct hardware you can connect to a VCR with your TV tuner card. Then record from your VCR to your Hard Drive or DVD disk.

Or record to the VCR from your Hard Drive or a DVD disk.

By the way, while I am thinking about it, Media Center is HDTV and digital TV compatible too.

Television features:

"**Live**" picks out what is on right now. Giving you the Station name, show name and time it is on.

"**Recorded TV**" allows you to view or sort your stored shows by date or title as well as allows you to schedule a recording.

"**Scheduled**" lets you pre set recording based on Date, Title or even as an entire series.

"**Recording**" gives so much freedom that you can even choose to record from the guide, by a Search, by Category, Title or even by Keyword.

You can select a Channel, frequency or time to record.

The "**Movies**" section allows you to see what is on now or coming up soon. By Genre, Rating, Actors or even by the Directors name, and of course by Title.

If a recording conflict occurs Windows Media Center will resolve it based on your preferences, with your highest priority show recorded first.

If you have a system with multiple TV tuners, then multiple shows can be recorded at once.

For those of you worried about hard drive space, recording of TV has four qualities: Fair, Good, Better, and Best.

They use from 1 to 3 GB of hard drive space per hour of Television.

With two or more monitors you can watch TV and use the computer for other purposes, like internet bill paying, at the same time.

The **MY MUSIC** section searches and stores all of the music you have downloaded onto your hard drive (from legal sources like the "Online Spotlight" to your CD collection you backed up on the hard drive).

You can sort and play by Album, Artist, or Genre

You can also create your own Play List or Search for a specific song, singer or album.

If you have a Radio tuner which is usually built into good TV tuners cards you can listen to your favorite local radio stations with the click of a mouse.

You can also find and subscribe to Internet radio stations that you set up with the On-Line Spotlight I mentioned earlier.

MORE PROGRAMS:

From here you can use MSN Messenger,
Synchronize to Portable Media Devices,
Create a CD or DVD,

Access your online games, music and movie selections you chose in the "Online Spotlight" section I mentioned earlier.

Additional devices that are available are called Portable Media Center Devices two such devices are the Iriver PMC-120 and the Samsung Yepp (YH-999).

So whether you are waiting for the bus or sitting at Aunt Louise's for Sunday brunch, you can take your home entertainment with you.

Finally we come to the **SETTINGS** area of Windows Media Center.

Here we can set up our Media Center controls.

Under "**General**" you create a personalized set of menus and visualizations, parental controls and downloads.

The "**TV**" section lets you set up and configure you monitor and TV and well as recordings, audio and closed captioning.

The "**Pictures**" area allows you to configure the pictures, slide shows, covers of Music/Albums in a totally unique and personal way.

In the "**Music**" category you get to customize the different isolations available.

The "**DVD**" section sets up language, audio, captions, and remote control options.

"**Messenger**" is for configuring Microsoft Messenger to interact with Media Center

And "**Radio**" allows you to pre-program your favorite radio stations.

Finally the "**Help**" setting allows you to find assistance with the many areas of Windows Media Center...

There is the Help using Media Center (does that make it Help on Help?)

You can go to Forums dedicated to Media Center issues and advice.

The Tips help enhance your Home Theater experience.

Finally, the hardware section connects you to the hardware vendors of components in your Media Center computer.

With the **Windows Media Center remote** you can browse and control all of the Media Center functions – TV, Program Guides, Record TV, Play or record Music, view Photos and Videos.

In addition, **Media Center Extenders** can connect up to 5 PC's, TV's and XBox 360's to the Media Center PC. This connection can be wireless or wired.

The Media Center Extender even turns your XBox 360 into a full fledged internet and entertainment PC.

The Media Center Extender allows these added devices to access television programs, Music, Photos, Movies and online content from the Media Center PC.

In addition to the features discussed here, there are many Microsoft Certified "plug ins" to enhance your Video and Audio experiences. Just check out the Media Center web site for links and information.