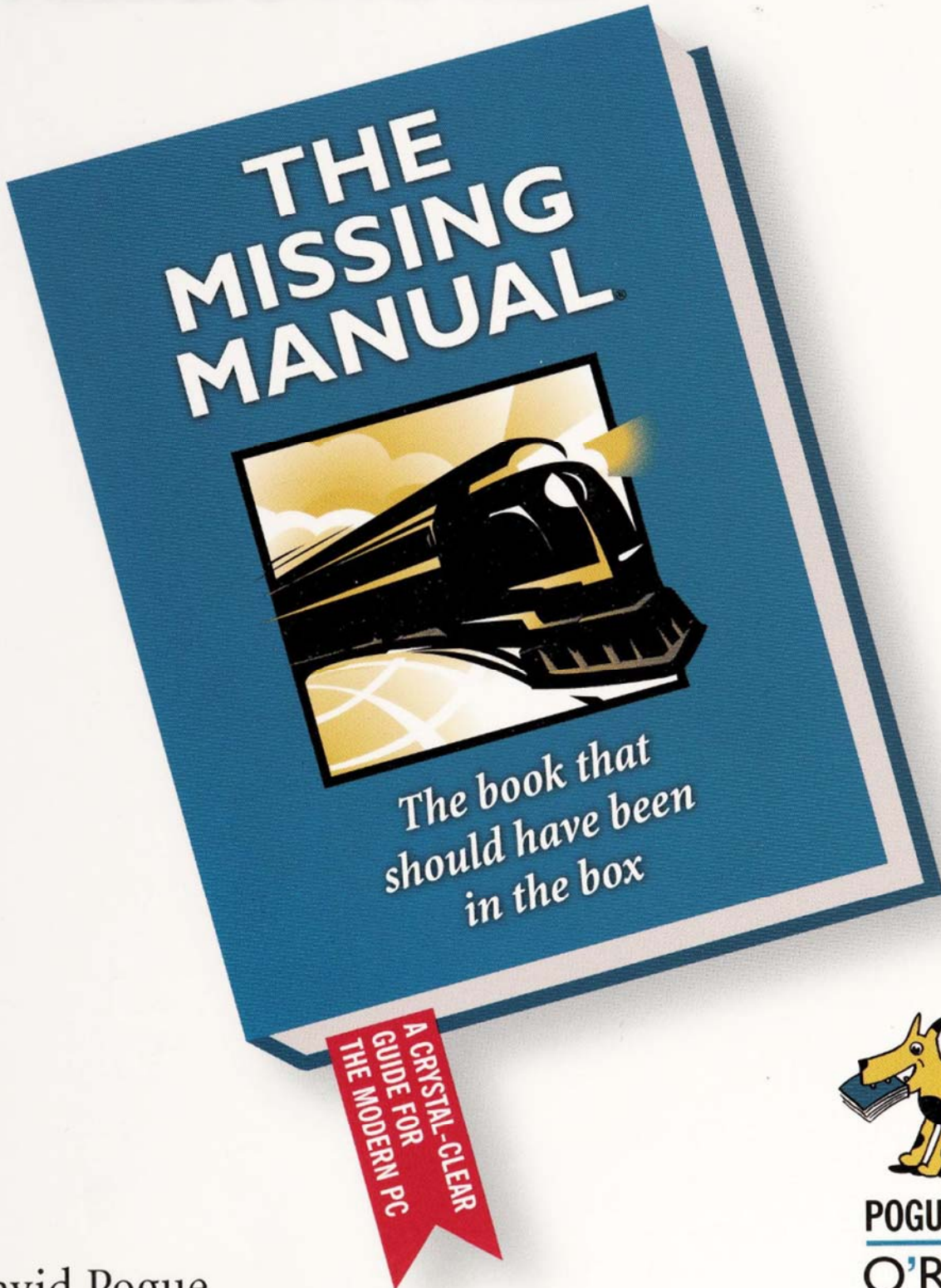


Second Edition—Covers Service Pack 2

Windows XP *Home Edition*



David Pogue



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Windows XP Home Edition: The Missing Manual

SECOND EDITION

by David Pogue

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Windows Messenger

You might argue that you'll have plenty to do at your desk, what with all of the games and programs included with Windows XP (oh, yeah...and *work*). But if you've got even more time to kill, Microsoft invites you to "chat" with other people on the Internet by typing live comments into a little window. For millions of people, chat is a big deal. It offers the immediacy of a phone call, with the privacy, transcript-keeping features, and price (\$0) of email.

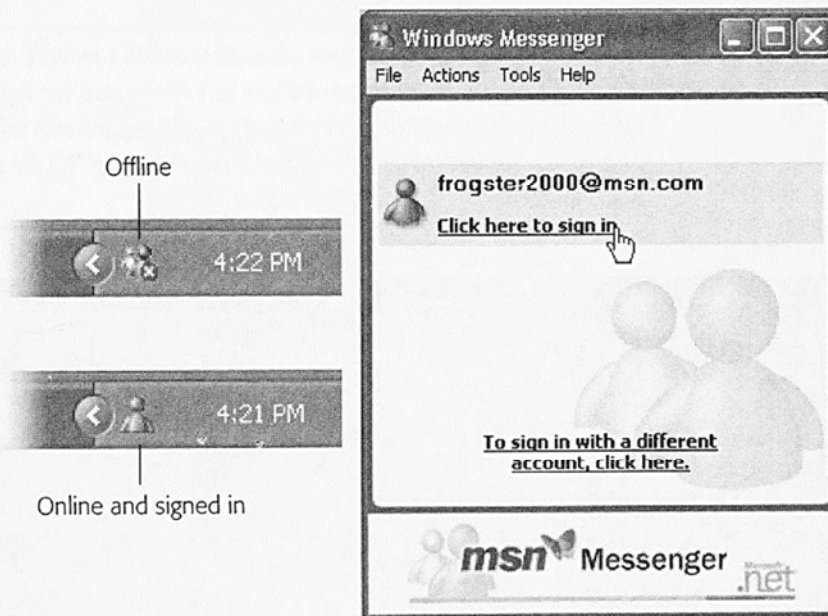
Better yet, you don't have to *type* all of your witty comments. If your PC has a microphone and speakers (or a headset), you can also *speak* to your friends, using the Internet as a free long-distance service. It's not quite as handy as a phone—you and your conversation partner must arrange to be online at a specified time—but the price is delightful. And adding an inexpensive Web camera means that you can actually turn your PC into a cheapo videophone, Dick Tracy-style.

The software you need is Windows Messenger (which was called MSN Messenger Service in previous versions of Windows). The quickest way to open it is by double-clicking the icon that appears in your notification area (see Figure 11-10). If you don't see it, just choose Start→All Programs→Windows Messenger (although you may also find the icon listed in the left-side column of your Start menu).

Figure 11-10:

Left: To open Windows Messenger, double-click its icon in your notification area. (This icon's appearance indicates whether or not you're online and signed in.)

Right: If Windows Messenger didn't automatically sign you in when you went online, you may have to click the link to do so. (This dialog box may look different in your version of Messenger. Microsoft updates this Windows component, via the Automatic Updates feature, more often than almost any other.)



Duck out for a moment

Windows Messenger offers a list of Status messages: Online, Busy, Be Right Back, On The Phone, and so on. Whatever status you choose appears next to your name on the screens of your conversation partners.

To hang out one of these little “Do not disturb” signs, choose from the File→My Status submenu, or right-click the Windows Messenger icon in the notification area and choose from the My Status submenu there. (To duck out for good, sign out. Do that by right-clicking the Messenger icon in the notification area and choosing “Sign out” from the shortcut menu.)

Send a text message to a phone

To send a message to somebody’s pager or cellphone, just right-click the person’s name, and then choose Send a Message to a Mobile Device from the shortcut menu. (If it’s a text pager, you can even type up a little message to send.)

Exchange files

As the conversation proceeds, you can send a photo, Word document, or any other file to your chat partner. There are two ways to do so:

- Drag the icon of the file you want to send right into the chat window (from the desktop or a folder, for example).
- Click the Send a File or Photo link at the right side of the screen. A “Send a File” window appears, so that you can navigate to and double-click a file that you want to send.

Either way, your buddy sees an invitation to accept the file (Figure 11-13), and then a stern warning to be careful of doing so, for fear of viruses and other nasty surprises.

Tip: This feature is especially welcome if you’ve grown frustrated transmitting files via email. Some programs, notably Microsoft Outlook, refuse to accept files—like application programs (.exe files)—that could conceivably harbor viruses. Messenger imposes no such restriction. Nor will you encounter “mailbox full” problems when you send files back and forth using Messenger, the way you sometimes do when sending them as email attachments.

Add another chatter

You can include another person in your chat by choosing Actions→Invite Someone to this Conversation. You’ll be offered a list of other people in your buddy list who are already online. (Up to five people can participate in a typed chat, although only two of you can use the video or phone features described in the following sections.)

Get help

As you can see by Figure 11-14, “Ask for Remote Assistance” is another link on the task pane. Clicking it initiates a *Remote Assistance* session, in which some helpful

geek on the other end of the line takes control of your computer, and sees what's on your screen, in order to troubleshoot a specified problem. Complete details in Chapter 4.

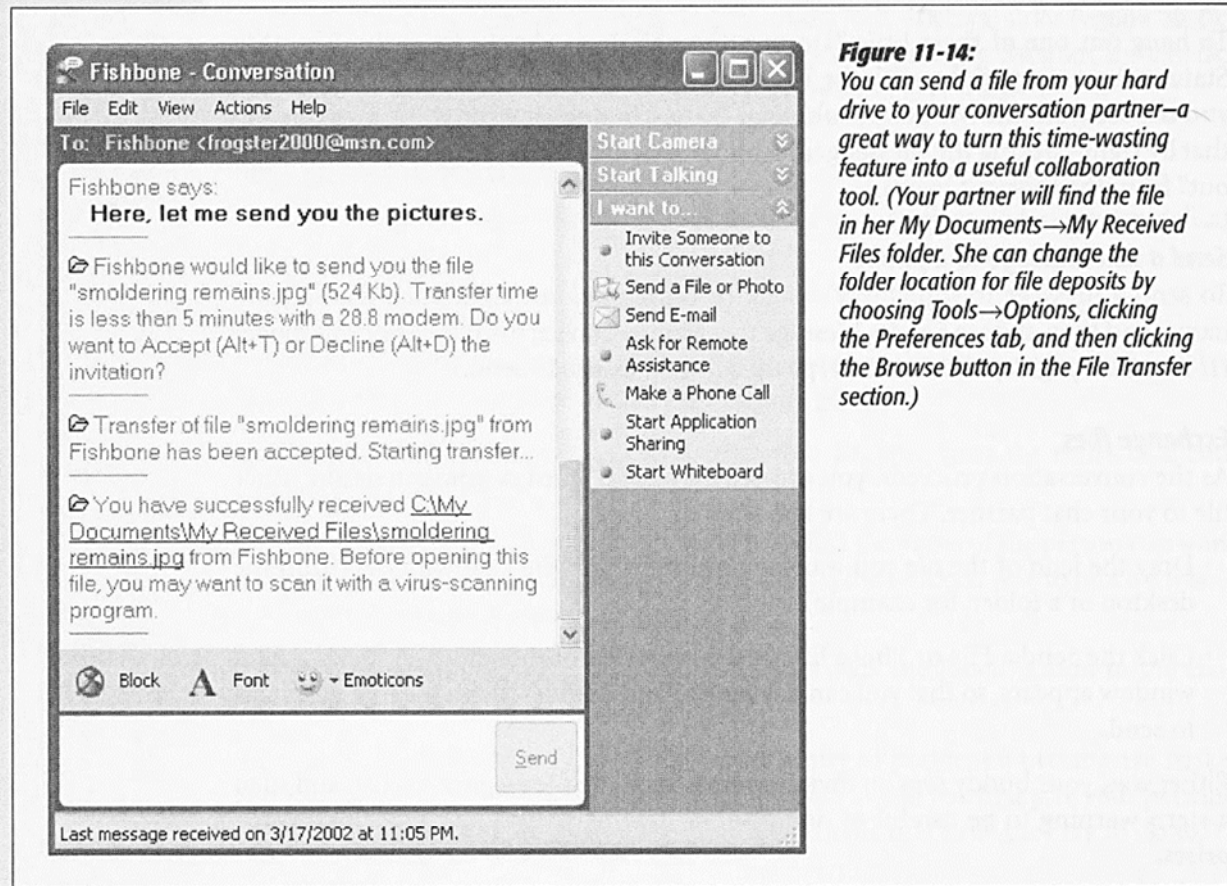


Figure 11-14: You can send a file from your hard drive to your conversation partner—a great way to turn this time-wasting feature into a useful collaboration tool. (Your partner will find the file in her My Documents→My Received Files folder. She can change the folder location for file deposits by choosing Tools→Options, clicking the Preferences tab, and then clicking the Browse button in the File Transfer section.)

Add features

As time goes by, Microsoft adds new features to Windows Messenger without telling you. You can already send short text messages to your friends' cellphones, see how many new Hotmail email messages are waiting for you, create and edit your own online profile, and so on—but only by first going to the Microsoft Add-In Web page and downloading the necessary software modules.

To do so, choose Tools→Add-In Web Site. Your browser opens to a Microsoft Web site that lists whatever new modules are available; click "Click here to download this add-in!" to add them to your copy of Windows Messenger. (Windows: It's not just an operating system—it's a lifestyle!)