Faxing

In the increasingly rare event that your PC has a built-in fax modem, and your PC is connected to a phone line, it can serve as a true-blue fax machine. This feature works like a charm, saves money on paper and fax cartridges, and may even spare you the expense of buying a physical fax machine.

Sending a fax is even easier on a PC than on a real fax machine; you just use the regular Print command (Ctrl+P), exactly as though you were making a printout of the onscreen document. When faxes come *in,* you can opt to have them printed automatically, or you can simply read them on the screen. You even get a dedicated program, Windows Fax and Scan, for the purpose of managing faxes

Tip: The similarity with printing doesn't stop there. The Devices and Printers folder even contains a Fax icon that works just like a printer icon.

Sending a Fax from Any Program

Now, the one big limitation of PC-based faxing is that you can transmit only documents that are, in fact, *on the computer.* That pretty much rules out faxing notes scribbled on a legal pad, clippings from *People* magazine, and so on (unless you scan them first).

If you're still undaunted, the procedure for sending a fax is very easy:

1. **Open up whatever document you want to fax. Choose File→Print.**

   The Print dialog box appears.

2. **Click the Fax icon (or choose Fax from the Select Printer list, as shown in Figure 1), and then click OK or Print.**

   The very first time you try faxing, you encounter the Fax Setup Wizard. It first asks you to connect to a fax modem. Choose that option, and then type a name for your fax modem.

   Next it wants you to specify what happens when someone sends a fax to *you* (that is, when the phone line your PC is connected to "rings"). Click "Answer automatically" if you want Windows to answer incoming calls after five rings, assuming that if you haven't picked up by that time, the incoming call is probably a fax.

   If you choose "Notify me," then each incoming call triggers an onscreen message, asking you whether you want the PC to answer as a fax machine. And if you choose "I'll choose later," you can postpone the decision and get on with sending your first fax.

Note: At this point, the Windows Firewall, rather stupidly, may interrupt to ask if it's OK for Windows Fax and Scan to run. Click Unblock.

   Finally, you arrive at a New Fax window (like a New Message window) (Figure 1, bottom).

3. **Type the recipient's fax number into the "To:" box.**

   Or click the tiny envelope next to "To:" to open up the Select Recipients list (where you can find people listed as your Windows Contacts and others). Double-click the name of the fax-equipped buddy you want.

4. **If you want a cover page, choose a cover-page design from the Cover Page drop-down menu.**

   A new text box opens up, where you can type a little note, which also appears on the cover page.

Note: You can ignore the main message box at the bottom of the window for now. It's intended for creating faxes from thin air, as described below, rather than faxes that began life as documents on your PC.

   At this point, type a subject for your fax. You may also want to choose View→Preview (or click the tiny Preview icon on the toolbar) to give it a final inspection before it goes forth over the wires. When you're finished looking it over, your fax is ready to send.

5. **Click Send in the toolbar.**

Your modem dials, and the fax goes on its merry way. A status dialog box appears (although its progress bar doesn't actually indicate how much time remains). You can go do other work on the PC; when the fax goes through, a cheerful message appears in your notification area.

Figure 19-11:
Top: To send a fax, pretend you're printing the document–but choose Fax as the printer.

Bottom: Address and send the fax.
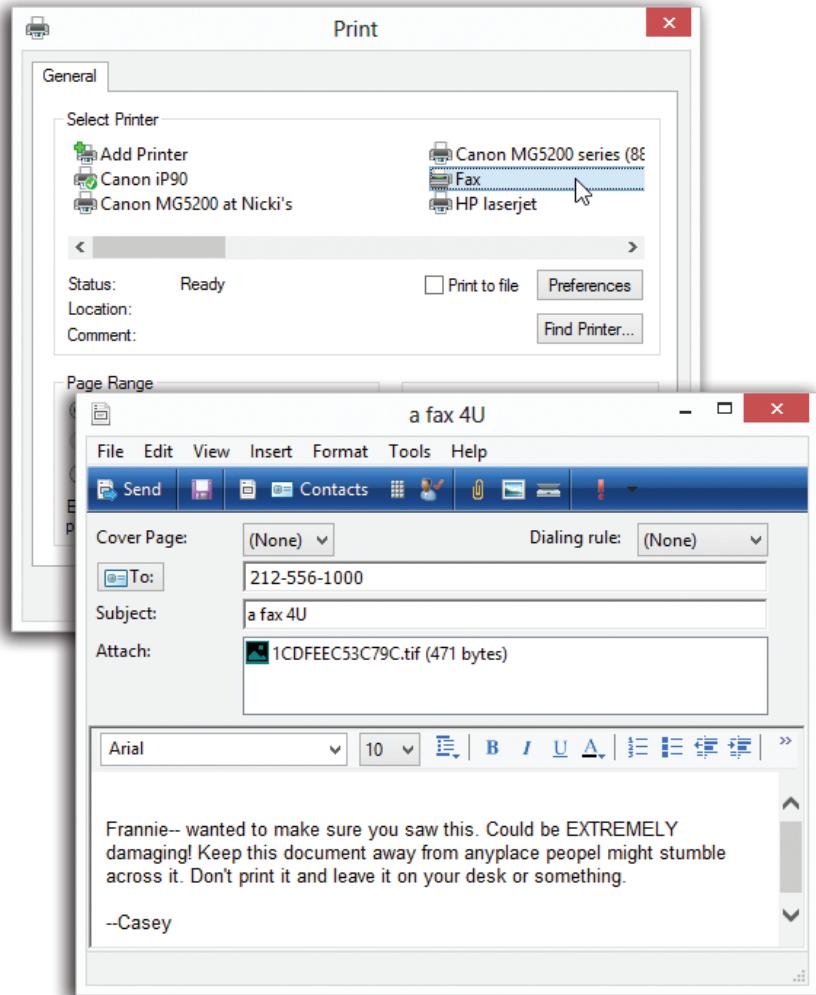
Your recipient is in for a real treat. Faxes you send straight from your PC's brain emerge at the receiving fax machine looking twice as crisp and clean as faxes sent

from a standalone fax machine. After all, you never scanned them through a typical fax machine's crude scanner on your end.

Faxing Using Windows Fax and Scan

If you just have a few quick words to fax to somebody, you can use Fax and Scan by itself, without first opening a document on your PC. Open the Fax and Scan program by searching for it at the Start screen.

Click New Fax in the toolbar, fill in the fax number, and choose a cover page as described in the preceding steps. This time, however, you can use the broad message area at the bottom of the window to type the body of your text.

Tip: Cover pages automatically include your name, fax number, and so on. And how does it know all this? Because, in Fax and Scan, you chose Tools→Sender Information and filled it out.

Receiving Faxes

There are several reasons why you may *not* want your PC to receive faxes. Maybe you already have a standalone fax machine that you use for receiving them. Maybe your house has only one phone line, whose number you don't want to give out to people who might blast your ear with fax tones.

But receiving faxes on the PC has a number of advantages, too. You don't pay a cent for paper or ink cartridges, for example, and you have a handy, organized software program that helps you track every fax you've ever received.

Note: The discussion here applies to normal people who send faxes using a computer's built-in fax modem. If you work in a corporation where the network geeks have installed a *fax server,* life is even easier. Incoming faxes automatically arrive in the inbox of the Fax and Scan program.

Exactly what happens when a fax comes in is up to you. Start by opening Windows Fax and Scan; then choose Tools→Fax Settings, and proceed as shown in Figure 2.

You have two options for receiving faxes:

- **Manually answer.** This option is an almost-perfect solution if your PC and telephone share the same phone line—that is, if you use the line mostly for talking, but occasionally receive a fax. From now on, every time the phone rings, a balloon in your notification area announces: "Incoming call from [the phone number]. Click here to answer this call as a fax call." (See Figure 2.)

  When you do so, your PC answers the phone and begins to receive the fax. To see it, open Fax and Scan.

- **Automatically answer after.** Use this option if your PC has a phone line all to itself. In this case, incoming faxes produce a telephone-ringing sound, but there's

otherwise no activity on your screen until the fax has been safely received. Once again, received faxes secret themselves away in your Fax and Scan program.

While you're setting things up in the Fax Settings dialog box, don't miss the "More options" button. It's the gateway to two useful features:

- **Print a copy to.** If you like, Windows can print out each incoming fax, using the printer you specify here. Of course, doing so defeats the environmental and cost

Figure 2:
Top: Click the General tab and then turn on "Allow device to receive fax calls." If you choose "Automatically answer," you can also specify how many rings you want to go by before the PC answers; you don't want it answering regular incoming voice calls before you've had a chance to pick up.

Bottom: Windows Fax and Scan takes over and begins to download the fax. The incoming fax winds up in your inbox, just as though it's a par- ticularly old-fashioned email message.
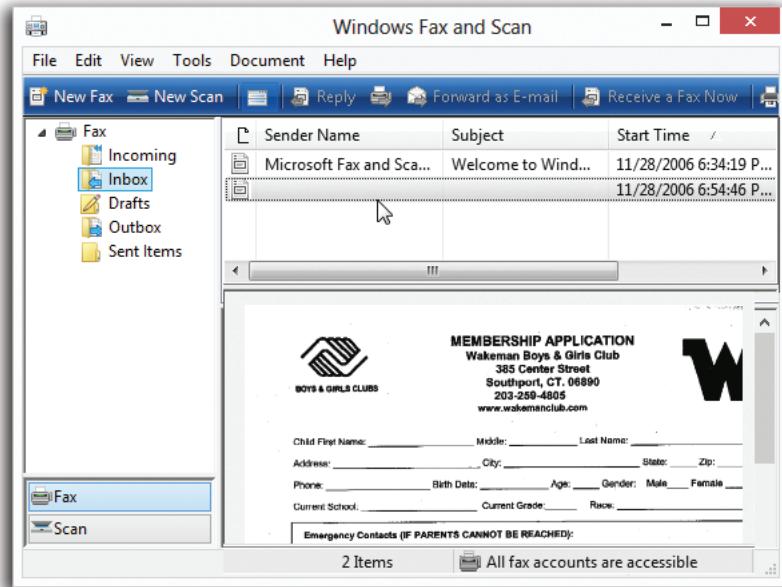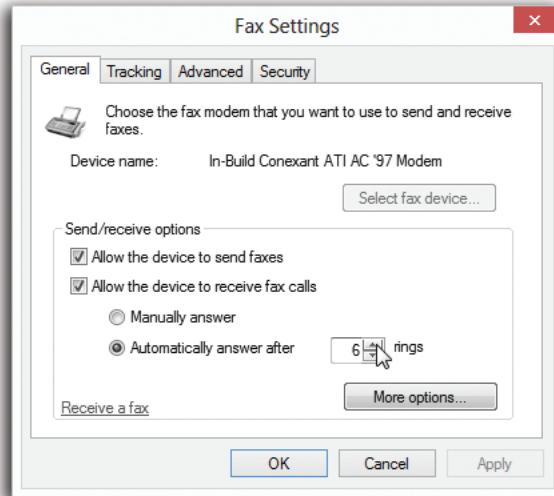
advantages of viewing your faxes onscreen, but at least you've got something you can hold in your hand.

- **Save a copy to.** Ordinarily, incoming faxes are transferred to your Fax and Scan program. If you turn on this option, however, you can direct Windows to place a *duplicate* copy of each one—stored as a graphics file—in a folder of your choice. (Either way, it's handy to know that these are standard TIFF graphics files that you can email to somebody else—or even edit.)

To look at the faxes you've received, open Fax and Scan. Click the inbox to see a list of faxes that have come in—and then double-click one to open it up (Figure 2, bottom).

Tip: Another great way to capitalize on the power of your PC for fax purposes is to sign up for J2 or eFax (*www.j2.com* and *www.efax.com*). These services issue you your own personal fax number. And here's the twist–all faxes sent to that number arrive at your PC as email attachments.

The brilliance of the system, of course, is that you don't need another phone line for this, and you can get these faxes anywhere in the world, even on the road. And here's the best part: As of this writing, both of these services are absolutely free. (You might consider reserving a separate email address just for your J2 or eFax account, however, since waves of junk mail are part of the "free" bargain.)