

Chapter 5

The Media Blade

In This Chapter

- ▶ Watching DVDs on your Xbox 360
 - ▶ Playing music from your iPod
 - ▶ Viewing pictures from your PC
-

You walk in the door, pull your MP3 player from your pocket, hook it up to your stereo, and fire up some tunes. After fixing a snack, you unwrap that great new CD you just bought and rip it onto a hard drive — but just when you start listening, your buddy shows up with photos from his trip. You hook up his camera so he can show you, on your TV, where he got that tan. Looking at pictures gets old, so you fire up *Project Gotham 3*, toss your friend a controller, and pick your new CD as the game soundtrack. When you finish kicking your friend's butt up and down the race course, you put in a DVD and watch a movie.

The Xbox supports many features that aren't directly related to games. Most of these features take advantage of the fact that the Xbox 360 is hooked up to a TV in your family room. This chapter shows you how to tap into music, photos, and movies on your Xbox 360. Your interface to these features is through the Xbox 360 Media blades, which expose all your options for music, photos, and video.

DVD Movies



Every Xbox 360 can play DVD movies right out of the box — no additional parts necessary.

If you have Xbox 360, you probably don't need a separate DVD player.

Watching a movie on the Xbox 360 is a straightforward process.

Console operation

It's easy to start a DVD movie with Xbox 360:

- ✓ The movie is loaded automatically if you either
 - Pop the DVD into the tray (like a game disc).
 - Switch the console power on with a DVD in the drive.
- ✓ If you have a movie in the drive when you're using the Dashboard, you can pick the "Play DVD" option from the bottom of any of the blades.

When the movie loads, the movie's menu screen usually appears automatically. You can use the arrow keys and OK button on your remote control (or the Directional pad and A button on a regular Xbox 360 controller) to start the movie.

Remote control

Although you can watch movies without any additional hardware, you will probably find it useful to have an Xbox 360 remote control.



If you're watching a DVD and press the Xbox Guide button (the orb with an X carved into it) on the remote, you're taken right into the dashboard. The rest of your Xbox's features are never far away.

There are two Xbox 360 remotes:

- ✓ A larger remote (called the "Universal Media Remote").

Figure 5-1 shows the Universal Media Remote.

This is sold separately for use with any Xbox 360 console. This remote has more features for your complete home entertainment system, such as

- TV volume control
- TV channel selection

The Universal control even lights up when you press it. That makes watching scary movies in the dark even better!

- ✓ A small remote known as the "Media Remote."

This remote is included with some of the first Xbox 360s sold (but it works with any Xbox 360 console).



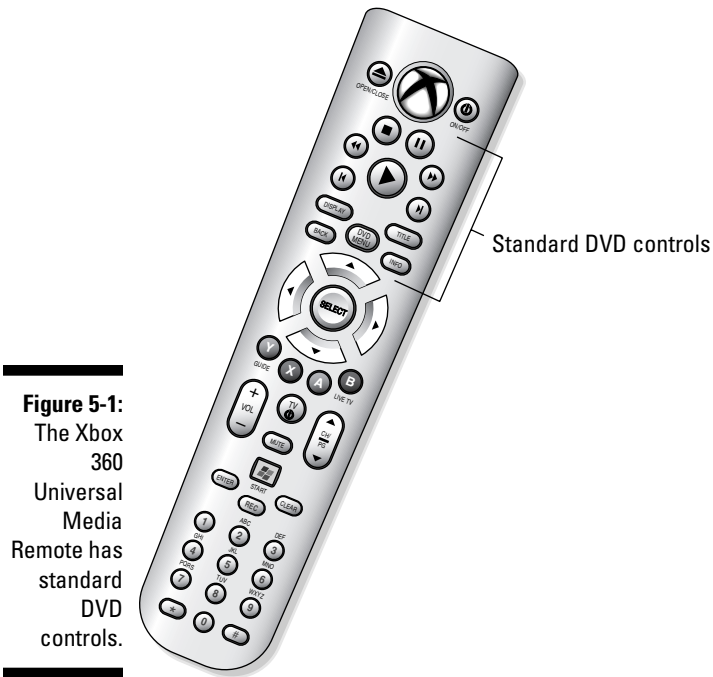


Figure 5-1:
The Xbox
360
Universal
Media
Remote has
standard
DVD
controls.

Either of the Xbox 360 remotes can perform standard DVD activities, such as

- ✓ Using the DVD's menu
- ✓ Pausing the movie

Parental control

Any parental controls you've set up are in effect when you play a DVD. You need to enter a pass code before viewing content that exceeds the allowed rating.



Chapter 11 has full information on

- ✓ Parental controls
- ✓ Movie and game ratings

Setting DVD rating controls

Follow these steps to set DVD rating controls on your Xbox 360 console:

- 1. Navigate to the System blade by using the left analog stick on the controller.**

The System blade opens and lists the display items.

- 2. Highlight Family Settings and press A.**

- 3. Choose Console Controls and press A.**

If you already have a pass code set, you need to enter it again to access the Console Controls menu.

The Console Controls menu appears.

- 4. On the Console Controls menu, select DVD Movie Ratings.**

Now you can choose the movie ratings you will allow to be played on this Xbox 360. (Chapter 11 covers movie rating systems.)

- 5. Select an option in the DVD Movie Ratings menu and press B.**

If you select Allow All DVD Movies, any DVD put in the Xbox 360 will run.

When you press B to exit the Movie Ratings menu, the Set Pass Code menu option appears automatically.

If you don't want to set a new pass code, you can stop here.

- 6. If you want to set or change the pass code, scroll down to the Set Pass Code menu option and press A, then press a sequence of four controller buttons to be your pass code.**

This code is a four-button combination that you select by using the direction pad, left and right triggers, left and right shoulder buttons, the X button, and the Y button.

For example, you could set the code to be X,X,Y,Y or left Directional pad, right Directional pad, up Directional pad, down Directional pad.

You will be asked to *repeat* your pass code to make sure it's what you want.

Make sure you write down and save your pass code. If you forget the code, you have to contact technical support to reset the console. You can find contact information for support at www.xbox.com/support.

Progressive scan video

Progressive scan is a feature of the DVD output in the Xbox 360 (and is a standard feature of most recent DVD players), producing smoother output when playing movies on televisions that support high definition (see the sidebar "Progressive scan," in this chapter, for more information).

Progressive scan

HDTVs and the Xbox 360 output content using *progressive scan*, which means that all of the lines of the picture are drawn for every frame. Normal-definition TVs and non-progressive-scan DVD players display content as *interlaced*, outputting all the odd lines for one frame, then all the even lines for the next frame, and so on. By displaying full frames, progressive scan

produces a smoother, better-looking picture. In specifications of video devices (such as DVD players and TVs), the letters *p* and *i* are often used to indicate progressive and interlaced output, respectively. 480p indicates output that has 480 lines of vertical resolution and uses progressive scan, while 1080i indicates 1,080 lines of resolution with interlaced output.



Progressive scan video only works when

- ✓ Your console is hooked up to a monitor that supports a resolution of 480p (such as any high-definition TV, or HDTV)
- ✓ Your cables and connectors can support high-definition display. These are either
 - Component video
 - VGA

Quiet mode

The Xbox 360 kicks itself into quiet mode when you watch a movie, so the console can slow down its cooling system. The result isn't silence, but it's a lot closer to it than the first Xbox (which was *loud*).

Accessing Your PC

One of the Xbox 360's more compelling media features is its support for a technology called Windows Media Connect. This feature lets you access music and photos stored on a computer — and you can get the media right from the Xbox 360's dashboard.

Your PC must meet only a few requirements to share its music and photo information with the Xbox 360:

- ✓ A valid network connection
- ✓ Windows XP Service Pack 2 (or a higher service pack)
- ✓ Windows Media Connect software



Stopping at 480p

If you have an HDTV, 480p (the *p* indicates progressive) is the second-lowest resolution you can display (regular TV is the lowest). But 480p is the output for a DVD. Why aren't movies viewed at 720p or 1080i (the *i* indicates interlaced)? You're limited by the quality of the source material. A DVD's video content is stored as 480p so no work is required to produce 480p output. In fact, the content normally has to be reduced in quality for viewing on normal-definition TVs.

To produce 720p or 1080i output, a DVD player would have to scale the content up and use fancy math to *interpolate* (make an educated guess about) the missing information. In the end, you might not see much of an improvement for the hassle and expense of an external DVD

player. Having said that, I actually own a DVD player that outputs 720p/1080i (the Samsung DVD-HD931), and I find that movies really do look better on 720p. However, I bought this player over a year ago and doubt I would've if the Xbox 360 had been available at the time. If you get a DVD player that is capable of higher than 480p output, I recommend looking for one that uses DCDi (Faroudja) technology to perform the conversion.

In the future, a new form of DVD will natively support high definition, but two competing standards exist: HD DVD and Blu-ray. Saying which one will dominate is difficult. We recommend waiting until at least 2007 before you buy a high-definition DVD player.



If you have a *Windows Media Center PC*, skip to Chapter 13. Windows Media Center PCs usually are ready to connect directly to your Xbox 360.

Setting up your PC

Windows Media Connect requires the right PC setup. Here's how to make sure you're ready.

Windows PC systems

Windows Media Connect requires a recent version of Windows XP with the right upgrades.

Windows XP

The basic requirement for Windows Media Connect is a Windows XP computer. (If you have a Windows XP computer, you see the Windows XP logo whenever you start your computer.)



If you bought your PC before October 2001, it didn't come with Windows XP.

If your Windows PC isn't running Windows XP, you have a couple of options:



- **Upgrade your existing PC to Windows XP.** You can buy the full upgrade in a boxed package, like other retail software.

Before you open the upgrade box, make sure your PC meets the minimum requirements printed on the upgrade package.



- **Buy a PC with Windows XP installed.**

If your PC is so old that it didn't come with Windows XP, you'll be amazed how cheaply you can buy a new, better PC with Windows XP (especially if you plan on reusing your existing monitor, keyboard, and mouse).

Service Pack 2

Microsoft regularly releases Windows updates for the latest computer and entertainment technology. These releases are called *Service Packs*. Windows Media Connect requires a Windows XP PC with Service Pack 2.



If you bought your PC before August 2004, it didn't come with Service Pack 2.

To check whether your Windows XP computer has Service Pack 2, follow these steps:

- 1. Right-click your “My Computer” icon on the desktop of your PC.**
- 2. Select “Properties.”**

The current version of Windows will be listed there, along with “Service Pack 2,” if it's installed.



If your Windows XP PC doesn't have Service Pack 2, you can download the service pack and install it from <http://update.microsoft.com>.

Windows Media Connect

Windows Media Connect is a piece of software that allows devices on your network, such as the Xbox 360, to browse and access photos and music stored on your Windows XP PC. It's a requirement if you want to access any PC-based media from your Xbox 360.

You may need to install or configure Windows Media Connect on your PC.

Installation

Windows Media Connect may already be installed on your PC. Here's how to check for it (and install it if necessary):



1. In your Control Panel, look for a Windows Media Connect icon.

Look under the Sounds, Speech, and Audio devices category if you're using category view.

If you see the Windows Media Connect icon, you can skip to the following section, "Configuration."

2. If you don't see the Windows Media Connect icon, follow these steps to download and install the software onto your PC:

- a. **Connect to** www.xbox4dummies.com.
- b. **Click the Downloads link.**
- c. **Click the Windows Media Connect link.**
- d. **If you're prompted to choose between saving and running the download, choose "Run."**

Configuration

When Windows Media Connect is installed, you need to configure it by specifying folders you want to make available to your Xbox 360.

Follow these steps to allow file sharing on your PC with Windows Media Connect:



1. In the PC's Control Panel, click the Windows Media Connect icon.

The icon's location depends on your Control Panel view:

- In category view, the icon is under the Sounds, Speech, and Audio Devices category.
- In classic view, the Windows Media Connect icon will appear in the full list along with all the other Control Panel icons.

When you click the Windows Media Connect icon, either

- The main user interface opens.
If the main user interface opens, skip to Step 3.
- The Windows Media Connect wizard starts.
If the wizard opens, go to Step 2.



2. If the Windows Media Connect wizard starts (see Figure 5-2), follow these steps to switch to the full interface:

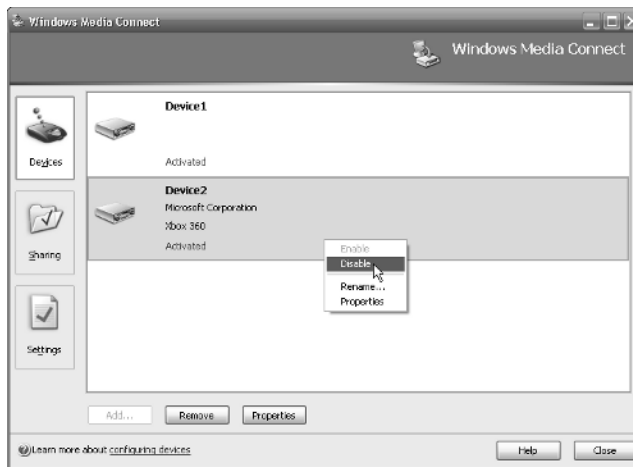
- a. **Don't select any of the listed devices on the "Select the devices . . ." page.**
- b. **Click Next.**
- c. **Select "Let Me Choose" from the listed options.**
- d. **Click Finish.**

This launches you into the full user interface (UI), shown in Figure 5-3.

Figure 5-2:
The Windows Media Connect control panel launches into a wizard on first use.



Figure 5-3:
The main Windows Media Connect UI can configure devices and share folders.



After you run the Windows Media Connect wizard once, the full user interface appears whenever you select this control panel.

3. In the Windows Media Connect window, select the Sharing button from the three options listed along the left side.

4. Select folders you want to share:

- By default, your My Pictures and My Music folders are shared.
- If you want to share other folders, the sidebar “Sharing media folders,” in this chapter, shows you how.



Sharing media folders

By default, the Windows Media Connect wizard shares My Pictures and My Music folders. If your media are stored in other folders, carefully pick other folders to share.

Follow these steps in the Windows Media Connect application's Sharing section for each folder:

1. Click the Add button.

The Add dialog box (shown in this sidebar's accompanying figure) lets you name your folders for viewing on the Xbox 360 and specify access options.

2. Identify a folder to share.

3. Select or deselect the Only Share This Content When I Am Logged In option.

Make your decision based on the access you want other users to have. The Only Share . . . option restricts content sharing to when you're on the host PC. Normally, if you want to be able to access your music whenever you're using the Xbox 360, you leave this option unchecked.

4. Choose "Make this content available to all devices" or "Make this content available only to the selected devices . . ."

Specify devices in the box below this option if you would like to restrict content sharing to only certain devices (such as your Xbox 360). If your Xbox 360 isn't listed, the "Connecting with Xbox 360" section in this chapter shows how to configure Windows Media Connect so it appears.



5. If you want folder sharing to start automatically when the PC starts, check "Automatically start folder sharing . . ." in the Settings area of the Windows Media Connect application.

At this point, Windows Media Connect is ready to start sharing with any client devices, including your Xbox 360.

Connecting with Xbox 360

To use music and photos from your PC, your Xbox 360 needs to be connected and activated as a device for Windows Media Connect.



If Xbox 360 is listed in your PC's Devices tab and doesn't have red text below it, it's ready for Windows Media Connect. Skip to the section "Browsing and accessing media," later in this chapter.

Connecting the device

If the Xbox 360 isn't listed in the PC's Devices tab, follow these steps to connect:

- 1. Connect your Xbox 360 on the same network as your PC.**

Chapter 2 shows how to connect Xbox 360 to a home network.

When you connect the Xbox 360 and it's powered up, a notification balloon on your PC tells you that a device is available.

Don't click the balloon. If you click that balloon, you restart the Windows Media Connect wizard. You don't need to do that.

- 2. Open the PC's Windows Media Connect control panel.**

Your Xbox 360 should now be listed in the Devices tab.

If your Xbox 360 doesn't appear in the Devices tab now, check www.xbox.com/pcsetup for support options.



Activating the device

If the Windows Media Connect device labeled Xbox 360 is marked *Activated*, you don't need to do anything else. You're ready to skip to the following section, "Browsing and accessing media," and start using music and photos from your PC with your Xbox 360.

If your Xbox 360 is marked *Deactivated* in the Devices tab, follow these steps to activate it:

- 1. Right-click Xbox 360 in your devices list.**

- 2. Select Enable to allow this device to connect to your PC.**

When Windows Media Connect is configured and your Xbox 360 is activated as a device, you're ready to start browsing music and photos with your Xbox 360.

Browsing and accessing media

After your Xbox 360 and your PC are all set up with Windows Media Connect, you can go to Xbox 360's Dashboard at any time to access your music and photos on your TV.

Playing music

To select from all of the music installed on your PC and play it through your Xbox 360, follow these steps:

- 1. Open the Xbox 360 Dashboard.**
- 2. Select the Media blade.**
- 3. Select Music.**

The Music page slides into view, as shown in Figure 5-4.

The page's Computer option is the Windows Media Connect server — your PC — that the Xbox 360 detected and connected to.

- 4. Select Computer.**

If menu choices such as Artists and Albums appear at this point, then you're ready to go straight to Step 5.



Figure 5-4:
The Music page lists a PC (if available) and any USB-connected devices.



The first time you choose Computer on the Music or Pictures blade, Xbox 360 guides you through the steps of setting up a connection with a PC running Windows Media Connect:

- a. **Confirm that you have Windows Media Connect installed on your computer.**
- b. **Choose from the list of available PCs found on your local network.**

There are two machines running Windows Media Connect in my house, so I see them both (see Figure 5-5).

After selecting a computer, if you are shown a “Can’t connect” message, you need to enable the Xbox 360 device on your home PC. (The section “Connecting with Xbox 360,” earlier in this chapter, shows you how.)

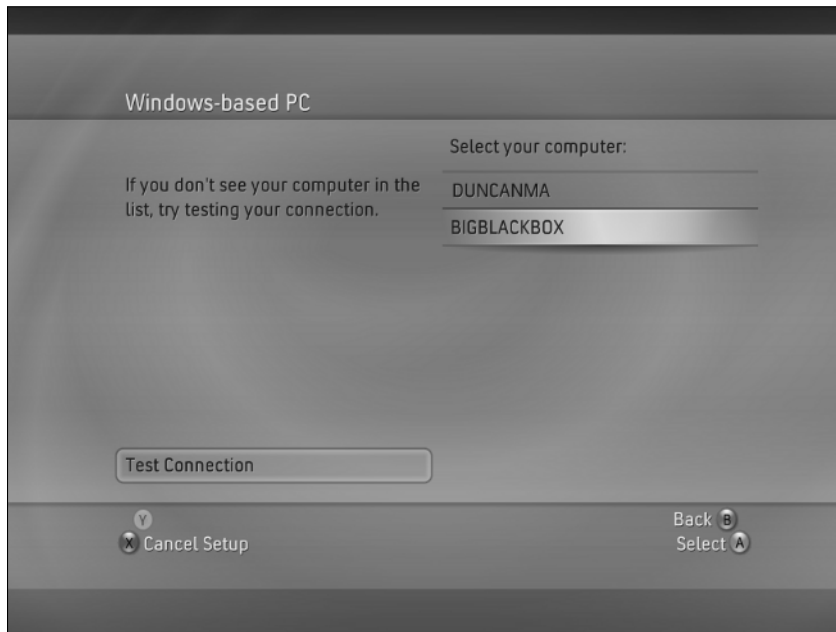


Figure 5-5:
More than one computer can be available on your network.

5. Select an option (Albums, Artists, Genres, . . .) to browse your music collection.

Xbox 360 arranges your content so you can browse music by such categories as album or artist. See Figure 5-6.

6. Browse to an artist, album, or song.

After you browse to an artist, album, or song (see Figure 5-7), you can start the music with one of the options listed on the bottom of the screen:

- **Y:** Plays an entire category.
- **A:** Shows a category's contents for choosing individual songs.



Figure 5-6: Music files are grouped by artist, album, and genre.

When you're playing music, the "Music Player" view is shown (see Figure 5-8).

The music player view is pretty useful when you're just listening to music and even includes visualizations, but you don't have to stay on this view. You can use the rest of the Dashboard as you wish and the music will keep playing. Selecting Music and then Music Player from the menus on the Media blade can take you right back to this view whenever you wish.

Viewing pictures

If you shared at least one folder of images on your PC, you can use the Photos option on the Xbox 360's Media blade to view them right on your TV. Follow these steps:



1. Open the Xbox 360 Dashboard.

To get to the Dashboard, you can either

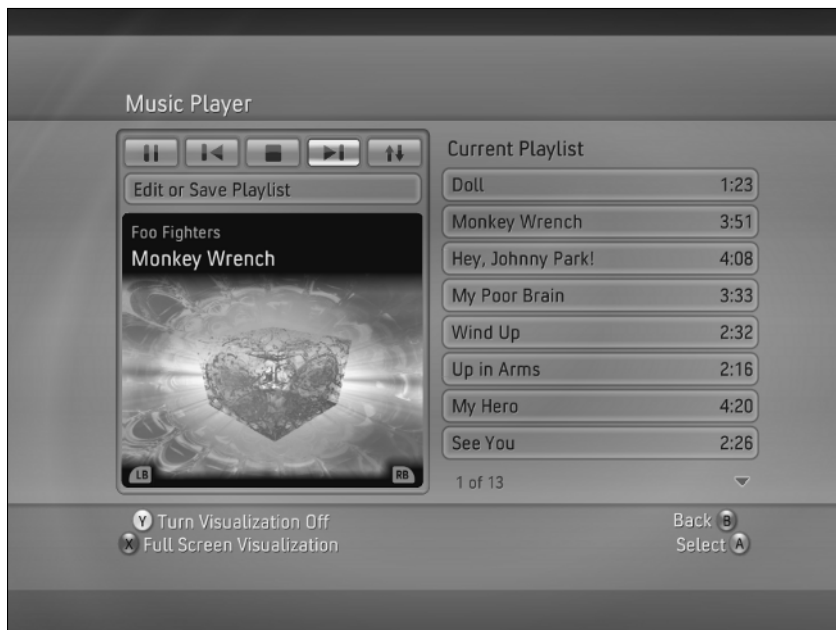
- Press the "Guide" button on any Xbox 360 controller or remote.
- Remove the game disc or DVD from the Xbox 360.

Figure 5-7:
You can find
and play
your music
by using the
buttons on
your
controller or
remote.



Matches controller buttons

Figure 5-8:
The Music
Player view
shows you
what is
"Now
Playing."



2. Select the Media blade.**3. Select Pictures.**

The first option on the page is Computer, representing your connected PC.

Photos are displayed in a series of directories according to how they're stored on your PC. See Figure 5-9. All image directories end up being displayed in the top list of folders, regardless of how they were nested on your PC. For example, if you have two folders full of photos that are both named "Family" but one is under C:\CurrentPics\Family and the other is at C:\OldPics\Family, you end up with two folders listed on your Xbox 360: Family and Family 1. This can be confusing at first, depending on how your photos are set up on your PC, but it makes all your photos available within one click on the Xbox 360.

4. Select a folder to view its images.

Figure 5-9:
Browse
photos on a
connected
computer.

Troubleshooting

Can't get your PC and Xbox 360 connected? Check whether your Xbox 360 is listed in the Windows Media Connect control panel, under the Devices tab. The following problems are the most common.

Deactivated

Confirm that your Xbox shows up in the Windows Media Connect control panel under the Devices tab.



If your Xbox 360 is marked *Deactivated*, follow these steps in the Windows Media Connect control panel to make it active:

1. **Right-click the Xbox 360 item.**
2. **Select Enable to make your Xbox 360 active.**

Unlisted

If your Xbox doesn't appear in the Windows Media Connect control panel under the Devices tab, then you likely have a network issue.

Connection

Check your physical network connection between the two devices.



See Chapter 2 for more information on network configuration.

Firewall

A firewall can prevent connections between Xbox 360 and your PC. You have a couple of options to fix this problem:

- ✓ If you're using the Windows XP SP2 firewall, check www.xbox4dummies.com/windowsmediaconnect for a link to directions about setting up your Windows XP SP2 firewall so it allows two devices to connect.
- ✓ If you're using other firewall software, check the documentation that comes with your firewall for the steps to allow traffic through a specific port.

Table 5-1 lists network ports that Windows Media Connect uses to

- Discover compatible devices.
- Communicate over the network.



Table 5-1 Ports Used by Windows Media Connect

<i>Protocol</i>	<i>Port</i>
TCP	10243
UDP	10280
UPnP UDP	1900

If this information isn't enough to get you up and running, check out the Support options at www.xbox4dummies.com/windowsmediaconnect.

USB Media Devices

USB ports let you connect many devices and access content, such as photos and music files.

The Xbox 360 has three standard USB ports:



✔ Front (2)

Use the front USB ports for connecting wired controllers, cameras, and music players so they are very accessible.

✔ Back (1)

Use the rear USB port to connect the optional wireless network adapter, if you have one; otherwise you can use it just like one of the front ports.

USB devices that Windows XP recognizes as mass storage and removable storage should work with the Xbox 360. Most USB-connectable cameras and music players do provide this recognition. But you aren't limited to just cameras and music devices; anything that shows up as a drive in Windows XP without installing its own software should work. Some examples of devices that you can connect are

✔ Memory Card readers, such as

- CompactFlash
- Secure Digital (SD)
- Memory Sticks

✔ Digital cameras

✔ USB keydrives (portable storage devices, often small enough to fit on a keychain)

✔ Music players, such as the Rio Carbon, Creative Zen, and Apple iPod

✔ A Sony PSP

After you've connected a device, follow these steps to access any media that it contains:

1. **Go to the Media blade.**
2. **Select Pictures or Music, depending on the content stored on the device.**



An entry for your connected device appears on the appropriate page, as shown in Figure 5-10.

Depending on your device, the corresponding menu item label might be either

- Generic (like “Digital Camera”)
- Specific (like “Canon PowerShot SD400”)
- Personalized (like “Duncan’s iPod”)



Figure 5-10: Devices show up under Pictures or Music based on the content they contain.

After you select the item, your browsing experience is essentially the same as

- ✓ Music/photos from a PC on your network
- ✓ Music/photos/videos on the Xbox 360’s hard drive

Files with playback restrictions, including those purchased from an online site such as Napster, will show up as blocked (note the songs with the No icons next to them in Figure 5-11).

Your connection to these USB-connected devices is *read-only*:

- ✓ You can view or listen.
- ✓ You *can’t* add, delete, or change content.



Turn off or disconnect your devices when you're done working with them. Some digital cameras and music players won't go into standby while they're connected to a USB port. That could lead to dead batteries if you leave them connected to your Xbox 360 overnight.



Figure 5-11:
Browsing
the music
available on
a connected
device.

Viewing photos

Regardless of the source (digital camera, your PC, or right off the Xbox 360's hard drive), the experience of browsing and using your photos has some common elements.

Slideshow

Whenever you view a folder of images, you have the option to start a slideshow, which play through all the images, fading from picture to picture.

When a slideshow is running, or when you're viewing a single picture, if you press the Directional pad on your controller or the remote, you get a small taskbar of options. These options, shown in Figure 5-12, include the ability to

- ✓ Move backward and forward through the current folder
- ✓ Turn shuffle on and off
- ✓ Rotate images (either counterclockwise or clockwise)

Figure 5-12:
The photo
taskbar lets
you move
through
your
images.



Set as background

When viewing the directory view of images, where they are all displayed as *thumbnails* (small preview images shown in a grid), you can select any photo to be the background of your Xbox 360's Dashboard by using the X button on your remote or controller. Your chosen image will appear behind all of the Dashboard blades, like the image shown in Figure 5-13.

To remove your custom image, either

- ✓ Select a different photo from the Photos option on the Media blade.
- ✓ Follow these steps to choose a different theme:

- 1. Press the “Xbox Guide” button on your remote.**
- 2. Select Personal Settings.**
- 3. Select Themes.**
- 4. Choose the theme you want.**



If you don't know what theme you were using before, then you were probably using the Xbox 360 default settings (shown in the list with the word *Default* next to it).



Figure 5-13:

You can make your Xbox 360 distinct with a custom background image.

Ripping music from CDs

If you want to put some music right onto the hard drive of your Xbox 360, you can *rip* (copy the music from) one of your CDs:

- 1. Insert a music CD.**

The Music Player page appears.

- 2. Select Rip CD.**

- 3. Select the tracks you want to extract from the disc.**

Ripping proceeds over the next few minutes; see Figure 5-14 for a look at the nice animated graphic that appears while your Xbox 360 rips the music. Good thing it's there because you can't really do much else with the Xbox until this process completes.

Don't use any other Xbox 360 features while ripping is in progress. If you do, ripping is canceled.



If an Internet connection is available, the Xbox 360 uses it to gather artist, album, and song information, much like Windows Media Player does if you rip a CD onto your computer.

**Figure 5-14:**

A nice animated graphic appears while your CD rips.

Media integration in the Guide

When you bring up the Guide by pressing the center Xbox button on your controller during a game, you can access a very limited form of the Music section of the Media blade by selecting “Select Music” below the small music control taskbar. Figure 5-15 shows the result.

This lets you pick a music source, even from an attached device like an iPod, and play it while you go back to your game. The UI is a limited form of the standard Media blade, but it does allow you to access music on

- ✔ The Xbox 360’s hard drive
- ✔ Attached devices
- ✔ Your Windows XP PC

After you have your music selected and playing, you can use the music taskbar to

- ✔ Move to the next song.
- ✔ Pause the music.
- ✔ Toggle the shuffle setting.
- ✔ Adjust the music playback volume.

For more information

Check out our Web site at www.xbox4dummies.com for

- ✔ Additional information and links to even more information about Xbox 360 media features
- ✔ Links to portable devices that work well with the Xbox 360
- ✔ Links to the downloads necessary to get Windows Media Connect working on your network



Figure 5-15:
From this blade, press A to pick and play music.

Videos

Xbox 360's Media blade exposes a Videos page. From here, you can browse through and select any of the videos currently stored on the Xbox 360's hard drive:

- ✔ Enjoy the preinstalled videos.
- ✔ View videos you get from Xbox Live's marketplace:
 - Free trailers for games and movies
 - Movies you buy with either online points (detailed in Chapter 4) or cold, hard cash

You can access any video on your console through the Media blade's Videos option.