Repairing Windows

Windows users can add crashes to
their list of life's certainties, but thanks
to XP they can at least hope to salvage data
if the operating system can't be resuscitated

Safe mode might have got you out of trouble in the past, but Windows XP doesn't come with a fail-safe boot option. So what do you do if Windows refuses to raise so much as an eyebrow when you press the power button?

Based as it is on the more robust Windows NT family (whose siblings include 2000 and Me), XP's a far less crash-prone system than 95 or 98. But while startup failures might be a much less common occurrence, even XP's famed stability won't always save the day. Without the worst-case-scenario option to boot to DOS – the last resort with previous Windows versions – you could be left high and dry.

Reformatting and reinstalling will restore Windows settings to their factory defaults and you'll have to reload any applications not on the Windows recovery disc. And, of course, your files will be lost if you don't have an up-to-date backup. Even if you have the patience to completely rebuild your drive, do you have the time to wade through all those install prompts?

Windows XP improves on its predecessors by generally making troubleshooting tasks easier – its invaluable System Restore feature being a case in point. And as a means of repairing your operating system without the hassle of wiping the hard disk and losing important data in the process, Recovery Console is priceless. But we're willing to bet that you've never even heard of this tool. Our survival guide, over the page, shows you how to install and use one of XP's best kept secrets.

Recovery Console's not for the fainthearted but, should the worst happen, our easy-to-follow advice will guide you through the process. What better way to keep the tech spods from the third floor away from your PC than to fix it yourself? ■

Publish photos to the web fast

Want to share your snaps with friends and family? XP's Web Publishing Wizard can put photos from your hard disk on to the web in a matter of minutes.
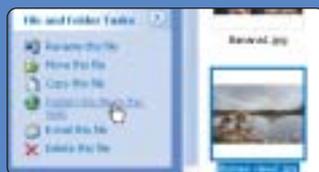
1 Open the folder where your photos are stored. Click the picture you want to publish and, in the taskpane menu on the left, click 'Publish this file to the Web'

2 If you decide to include all the images in the folder, choose Select All or simply tick the box in the top corner of an image
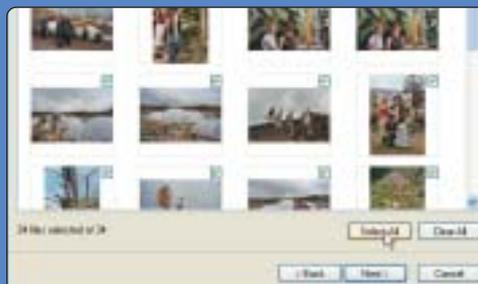
3 The wizard will now walk you through the process of publishing your images to the online location of your choice. Follow the instructions and your photos are posted to a website. Simply send the web address to anyone that you want to have access the pictures