

Five ways to make sure you never miss a birthday again



If you have a terrible memory for dates and occasions, Windows Vista can help you out. Here are five ways to ensure you don't miss that important anniversary. **By Long Zheng**

1 Use the new calendar

Windows Calendar is a new program that helps you to manage your time more easily and efficiently with schedules and reminders. Set up a separate calendar (**File → New Calendar**) if you want to separate birthdays from work and family schedules. In this calendar, simply add a new 'appointment' for each person's birthday. The clever part is to now set up this date as a 'yearly' recurrence – so you won't need to schedule the same birthday next year. And since we're all forgetful, it's probably a good idea to set up a reminder to make sure you get plenty of time to shop for presents.

2 Take notes as you talk

So, you're talking to your friends on the phone, and they tell you a bunch of birthdays you must go to. But by the time you've clicked on the Start button, they've hung up. The notes gadget is somewhere that you can store snippets of information when it's too time-consuming or too much of a hassle to

load up a full application. This gadget would be great for keeping a list of birthday dates, party venues and gift ideas. You can put 'notes' in your Sidebar or even on your desktop, by simply dragging the gadget from the **Add gadgets...** box. Put up as many notes as you like – and each can contain an unlimited number of words.

3 Update on the fly

Take your calendar with you on the road wherever you go, or access it from other computers with a web browser. Because Windows Calendar uses the popular iCal format to store its data, it is easy to use it in conjunction with many other tools, such as Google Calendar. You can even update, add or remove appointments in Google Calendar and have them reflected in your Windows Calendar too!

To make Windows Calendar auto-download your Google Calendar schedules, go to **Manage calendars** and select the calendar you wish to synchronise. Find the private address for your calendar, copy the iCal-format URL, click **Subscribe** on the **Windows Calendar** toolbar and

paste the URL. Now your Windows Calendar will always share the same dates as you have in your Google Calendar. However, this is a one-way synchronisation. Changes you make in Windows Calendar will not be updated in your Google Calendar.

4 Stick to the facts

Designed for use with Tablet PCs, Sticky Notes is similar to the notes gadget in almost every way – but it extends the input capabilities by adding the capability to scribble notes using a stylus and even narrate your notes using a microphone. You can save and open these notes in a Microsoft 'sticky notes' format, though this isn't much use beyond preserving any Oscar-winning acceptance speeches you might have dreamt about.

5 Keep dates at hand

Also designed for use with tablet input, Windows Journal isn't intended to be a calendaring tool, but because it has the ability to be indexed and searched, it's extremely handy for the unorganised and disorganised. You can simply write out a list of dates, places and gift ideas, then save the document. Once the document has been saved, you'll be able to search through these journals by using the Start menu or Windows Search. Of course, this will only work if the handwriting recognition software can interpret what you've written. So if you're a doctor, you might think twice about using this tool... ❄

Dates for your diary

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