

Distinguishing between Local Resources and Network Resources

In case you don't catch this statement in Chapter 1, one of the most important differences between using an isolated computer and using a network computer lies in the distinction between local resources and network resources. *Local resources* are items — such as hard drives, printers, CD or DVD drives, and flash drives — that are connected directly to your computer. You can use local resources whether you're connected to the network or not. *Network resources*, on the other hand, are the hard drives, printers, optical drives, and other devices that are connected to the network's server computers. You can use network resources only after your computer is connected to the network.

Whenever you use a computer network, you need to know which resources are local resources (belong to you) and which are network resources (belong to the network). In most networks, your C: drive is a local drive, as is your Documents folder. If a printer is sitting next to your PC, it's probably a local printer. You can do anything you want with these resources without affecting the network or other users on the network (as long as the local resources aren't shared on the network). Keep these points in mind:

- » You can't tell just by looking at a resource whether it's a local resource or a network resource. The printer that sits right next to your computer is probably your local printer, but then again, it may be a network printer. The same statement is true for hard drives: The hard drive in your PC is probably your own, but it (or part of it) may be shared on the network, thus enabling other users to access it.
- » Because dedicated network servers are full of resources, you may say that they're not only dedicated (and sincere), but also resourceful. (Groan. Sorry. This is yet another in a tireless series of bad computer-nerd puns.)

What's in a Name?

Just about everything on a computer network has a name: The computers themselves have names, the people who use the computers have names, the hard drives and printers that can be shared on the network have names, and the network itself has a name. Knowing all the names used on your network isn't essential, but you do need to know some of them.