RAPID START TUTORIAL FOR WINDOWS 8

For this rapid-start tutorial, I'm going to assume you're already adept at either Windows XP or Windows 7, can find the Control Panel, Windows Explorer, and use antivirus software and other common add-ins (such as Firefox or Chrome).

This info is forwith Windows 8 — not Windows RT.

In the process of setting up Windows 8 (either turning on a new machine for the first time or going through the online upgrade), you were asked to pick a user ID. Unless you went through three — yes, three — nonstandard choices in proper sequence, you ended up providing or creating a Microsoft account to sign in to Windows. Your Microsoft account, registered with (and tracked by) Microsoft, looks like an e-mail address — and might, in fact, be a real Microsoft e-mail address (i.e., @hotmail.com, @live.com, or @outlook.com, among others).

If you're already using a Microsoft account as your main Win8 account, don't fret: I'll have a few tips in next week's Windows Secrets Newsletter about reducing the privacy implications. On the other hand, if you set up a *local* account (typically, a Windows 8 user name that doesn't look like an e-mail address), I salute you — and also point you to next week's issue.

If you haven't yet set up your PC, I suggest that you follow the somewhat hard-to-find options and set your new Win8 system to a local account for now. You can later add Microsoft accounts till the cows come home, after you've read the caveats and suggestions next week.

This one-hour orientation takes into account all three major Windows 8 input methods: touch screen (which might work on your machine), keyboard (a very big help, even if it isn't literally required), and mouse/single-point trackpad. If you have a multitouch trackpad, and its driver is working correctly — by no means a foregone conclusion — the trackpad should behave much like a touch screen.

So get your Win8 computer cranked up, make sure the keyboard's plugged in, and follow along as we jump back and forth between the Dr. Jekyll — Mr. Hyde Win8 interfaces.

Fifteen minutes: Desktop/Metro basic navigation

The Windows 8 setup sequence includes a Microsoft-produced *tutorial* (I hesitate to use the term) that admonishes you twice to "move your mouse into any corner." That's a bit like sitting behind the steering wheel on a new Bugatti Veyron, pushing the Start button, and watching the heads-up display tell you (twice) to "Step on the gas pedal." Hey, at least the Bugatti *has* a Start button.

Moving your mouse into all four corners actually isn't a bad idea, but it presumes you have a mouse, and it really doesn't show you much at all. Try this:

When you start Windows 8 for the first time, you'll see the "Mr. Hyde" Metro Start screen. (Yes, I know Microsoft doesn't use the term "Metro" any more. But I do — and it's useful for clarity.) Depending on your screen resolution and the options you chose during setup, the first smiling screen looks more or less like Figure 1.



Figure 1. Windows 8's default Start screen with the new application tiles

The very first thing you'll want to do is to run over to the traditional "Dr. Jekyll" Windows desktop — if only to reassure yourself that it's still there. To do so, tap or click the tile marked Desktop. It should be in the lower-left corner of the Start screen, as illustrated in Figure 1. (The exact location can vary, depending on your screen resolution. Look for the daisies, which — according to a nice little game site — pirates love.)

If you've tapped or clicked correctly, you see the plain, old-fashioned Windows desktop, as in Figure 2. Don't be surprised that it works almost precisely the same way as the Windows 7 desktop (and more or less the same way as XP). The only obviously missing component is the Start orb.



Figure 2. The Windows 8 Desktop should look quite familiar.

Yes, the Internet Explorer and Windows Explorer icons at the bottom work almost precisely the same way they do in Windows 7. If you click on the Windows Explorer icon (renamed File Explorer), you see another very familiar look, as shown in Figure 3.

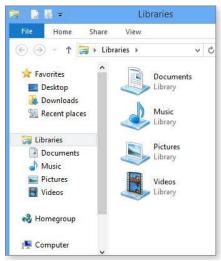


Figure 3. Windows Explorer has been renamed File Explorer, but it looks and behaves much like what you're used to.

Now that you have your old Windows bearings set, jump back to the new Start screen by either (1) pressing the Windows key on your keyboard, (2) pushing the Windows key on your tablet, or (3) hovering your mouse in the lower-left corner of the screen (you know, where the Start button should be) — waiting for an oversized Start tile to appear, and then clicking it. You should now be back to the Start screen shown in Figure 1.

Congratulations. That completes your first, crucial, Windows 8 round trip — from Hyde to Jekyll and back. An important takeaway: To get to the Metro Start screen, press the Windows button; to get to the desktop, tap or click the desktop tile. There are about 100,000 different ways to get from Start to desktop and back, but those are the ways you're bound to use most. (Typically, repeatedly tapping the Windows key will cycle between Start and Desktop.)

To complete your first exposure to Win8 navigation, try these minor excursions:

• Whack-an-app. While in the Start screen, just start typing. In a method vaguely reminiscent of the old Windows Start/Run search box, Win8 searches for programs with names that match whatever you type. The details are complex (see my book, "Windows 8 All-In-One For Dummies," [site] for the tricky parts),

but most of the time, if you want to start an app, it's as easy as typing its name. For example, to run Microsoft Paint, go to the Start screen, type **paint**, and press Enter.

• Hidden panels on the top and bottom of Metro apps. Each program works differently, but some Metro apps give you important panels on the top and bottom of the screen.

To see how it works, start Metro Internet Explorer by clicking or tapping on its tile. (This doesn't work in the Desktop version of IE.) With a touch-sensitive screen, swipe vertically, starting from the top or bottom of the screen. With a mouse, right-click. At the top, you see a list of currently open tabs — the same way you would see open tabs on, uh, the Desktop version of IE. On the bottom of the IE window, there's a navigation bar with content that changes as you bookmark sites.

Two important points about these Metro app panels: They are hidden unless you swipe or right-click, and the content varies, depending on which Metro app you're using.

Switcher on the left. Personally, I find it much easier to switch among running programs by using Alt + Tab, the same way we've been cool-switching for years. Windows 8 supports Alt + Tab, and it'll switch among Metro and Desktop programs alike.

But if you want to switch visually, you can — provided you accept that all running Desktop apps are treated as a single program. To visually switch with a mouse, hover in the upper-left corner and then *slowly* move your mouse downward. You should see a bunch of thumbnails appear. Click on the one you want.

With a touch-sensitive screen, swipe from the left; then, without lifting your finger, slide your finger back a bit. It's kind of like a snap — swipe out a bit and then come back in. You should see the same bunch of thumbnails; tap on the one you like.

If you swipe too quickly, Windows swaps out the currently running program with the one you last ran. If you swipe too slowly, Windows carves out a niche on the left side of the screen and runs the two programs side by side. Microsoft calls that *Snap*, but it isn't at all similar to the Win7-like Snap on the Desktop.

■ Charms on the right. One of the truly new concepts introduced in Windows 8, the Charms bar on the right of the screen brings a handful of new capabilities to Windows — and it really shines with the Metro apps. (I talk more about the Charms in the next section.)

There are two ways to bring up the Charms bar. The hard way: Swipe from the right on a touch-sensitive screen or hover your mouse in the upper-right or lower-right corner of the Start screen, wait for a heartbeat or two, then slide your mouse down the right edge of the screen.

The easier way: Press Windows key + C.

One last important navigation tip: To turn the machine off, bring up the Charms bar and click or tap Settings (near the bottom of the panel). Click or tap Power, then Shut down. Intuitive, eh?

Ten minutes: Start with the Metro side

Most Metro apps seem designed for people intimidated by the idea of setting a clock. It's hard to believe, but the Metro Mail app won't even pick up POP3 e-mail.

Play around with the Metro apps a bit. Right-click or swipe from the top or bottom to see what's available but hidden. And don't take any of these apps too seriously.

Be aware that the Metro Mail, People, Messaging, and Calendar apps are all interconnected. If you feed Metro Mail your **@hotmail.com** address, for example, your Hotmail contacts get imported to the Metro People app and your calendar entries go in the Metro Calendar.

Also be aware of the interconnectedness of non-Microsoft data sources. Add your Gmail account to the Metro Mail app, and your Google Contacts go into Metro People, too. Put your Facebook photos in Metro Photos, and your Facebook Friends go into Metro People.

The oddest part of the Metro side of Win8, at least to an experienced Windows user, has to be the Charms bar. Here's what the individual Charms do:

- Search lets you conduct searches, of course, but the type of search varies depending on which program or application you have open at the time. For example, if you use the Search charm while you're in the Metro version of Internet Explorer, IE uses its current default search engine (Bing, unless you went through the Herculean steps to change it) to perform a search on the Web. But if you use the Search charm while running the Desktop version of IE, you're flipped over to the Start screen's default All apps search. Bizarre.
- Share is a bit like copy, except the format of what you copy can vary depending on which application you're copying from and which application you're copying to. For example, you can bring up a picture in the Photos app, run the Share charm, and choose to share the photo in a Metro Mail message.

In several Metro apps, you can bring up a file, then use the Share charm to copy the file to the cloud with your SkyDrive account. Someday, we're assured, this will be a very powerful capability. Right now, it's a bit stunted.

- Start just takes you to the Start menu, the same as pressing the Windows key. Yawn!
- Devices doesn't do much yet. If you want to print a webpage in Metro IE 10, for example, you bring up
 the page, go to the Devices charm, and choose your printer. Some day this Charm will do more, no
 doubt.
- Settings works differently depending on whether you're on the Start screen or the Desktop. On the Start screen, the Settings charm lets you make some small adjustments to your PC or bring up the onscreen keyboard. At the bottom of the Settings panel, the link marked Change PC Settings will take you to a gaudy display of all sorts of settings, including your startup screen, adding new users, and much more. On the Desktop side of things, the Settings charm lets you into the Control Panel.

I guarantee you're going to find it, uh, interesting how Microsoft has divided up the functions of the Metro Change PC Settings screen and the old Control Panel. But that will have to wait for an advanced course.

Five minutes: Behold, the new desktop

On the surface, there's nothing new on the Windows 8 desktop. Scratch just a tiny bit below the surface, though, and you'll find lots and lots of changes — improvements to many aspects of Windows 7. My favorite example is Storage Spaces, which I covered in a Jan. 12 <u>column</u>. But the improved Task Manager, a much easier-to-use File History feature, and a better Copy dialog are all first-class improvements.

Flip over to the desktop and try it. While you're there, type **Windows Key + X** or right-click in the lower-left corner to reveal the **WinX menu**, which should help you get around.

Fifteen minutes: Install key applications

If you've been typing like crazy and didn't dawdle to absorb the scenery, the preceding should've taken you about half an hour. Now let's get serious.

As I stated at the top, most experienced Windows users will suffer from Win8 whiplash — the round trip from Metro Start screen to Desktop and back isn't just visually jarring, it's a huge drag on your productivity. Well, possibly not *your* productivity, but it is on mine — and I've been using Win8 in its various incarnations for more than a year.

The trick with making Win8 work better, in my experience, is to keep it from flipping over to the flipping Metro side as much as possible. If you agree, you should start by installing default programs that keep you on the desktop.

For example, when you double-click on an MP3 file, Win8 flips you over to the Metro Music app to play the song. That's ludicrous — in addition to being jarring and disruptive. (And the fact that Metro Music doesn't even have a volume control, for heaven's sake, should be deterrent enough.) The solution is to install an MP3 player that keeps you on the Desktop — instead of rocketing you off to Hydesville.

Here are the apps I always install on new Win8 machines (the links go to their download/info sites):

- VLC Media Player Let it take over all supported files, including audio and video.
- Foxit Reader I recommend this app only grudgingly because recent versions have included all sorts
 of crapware in the installer. Be careful when you install it.
- Picasa or IrfanView Excellent for viewing pictures.

Although it hasn't been around long enough for me to recommend it wholeheartedly, many people swear by <u>Start8</u> as a Start menu replacement.

Fifteen minutes: Customize and personalize

This is an open-ended exercise. It'll take you 15 minutes just to get started.

Continuing in the spirit of staying on the Desktop as much as possible, it would behoove you to pin as many frequently used applications as possible to your Windows taskbar, down next to the IE and File Explorer icons. The method for pinning in Win8 is exactly the same as in Win7: locate the program, right-click on it, and choose Pin to Taskbar.

Into every desktop life a little rain must fall, and Win8 is no exception — sooner or later, you're going to land on the Metro Start screen. That's why it's worthwhile to put your most-used programs' tiles someplace that's easy to find on the Start screen. You can move tiles around by simply clicking and dragging. Start new groups of tiles by moving existing tiles way over to the right. Put headings on groups and move groups around by *pinching* the Start screen (if you have a touch-sensitive screen) or clicking or tapping the little minus sign at the lower-right corner of the screen.

A little bit of organizational effort now will pay off handsomely in time savings later.

Your hour's done; take a break with whatever clears your head.

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