

NIFTY APPS FOR WINDOWS 8 - ALL FREE EXCEPT THE LAST ONE

So you've got a new Windows 8 laptop or tablet. What to do with it? You already know all about Microsoft Office and other traditional Desktop apps. What you *really* want is to try out apps with Windows 8's new "Modern" interface (formerly called "Metro").

Separating the winners from the losers in the Windows Store can be tough. While the [50,000 apps](#) available there may be small potatoes compared to the Apple App Store's [775,000 apps](#) or the Google Play Store's [800,000](#), it's still a lot of apps to wade through.

I've picked out ten of my favorites for you to try, skipping well-known tools like Twitter, Skype and Evernote in favor of lesser-known apps, all of which are free.

[Toolbox for Windows 8](#)

Windows 8 isn't exactly bristling with little tools and applets, but this app is: It offers a Web browser, calculator, world clock, stopwatch and more. Unlike typical Windows 8 apps, these mini-apps don't hog the whole screen; you can run up to six of the tools on your screen at once.

Dictate voice notes, doodle, check the weather, see what's up with Facebook and more -- all at the same time. You can also build separate toolsets so you can call up a suite of them with a tap or click.

The app currently offers 11 tools, with more on the way, according to the developer.

[Windows 8 Cheat Keys](#)

The new features of Windows 8 aren't particularly intuitive. You may not realize that you can run Windows 8 apps and Desktop apps side by side, or that there's a Power User menu, just waiting for you to pop it up. You may not know how to close a Windows 8 app, how to customize Live Tiles or...

Let's just say it's easy to get lost and confused. Windows 8 Cheat Keys does a nice job of helping you out by laying all the tips out in a visually appealing way.

(Of course, there's another solution: Read our [Windows 8 cheat sheet](#) and [Windows 8 tips, tricks and hacks](#).)

[Jellyfish: Tentacle Debacle](#)

Life's easy if you're a jellyfish. Float endlessly through your days, scarf down some plankton and all is right in the world ... or is it? Not according to this game.

You've got to avoid hungry, seaborne predators as you travel the seven seas, give birth to jellyfish eggs and protect them from predators and environmental dangers while you try to navigate tricky ocean currents and eat as much plankton as you can. It's got great cartoon graphics and increasingly difficult levels to work through -- six in the free version, and 57 in the paid, which costs \$3.49.

[Fresh Paint](#)

If you've got a tablet or touchscreen laptop, you'll want to download this free paint program and give it a try. It lets you draw, doodle and color using your fingers, with many more features than the basic ones you get in Toolbox for Windows 8.

There's a great set of tools, including a paint palette that not only includes preset colors, but lets you mix your own. There are different sizes of paintbrushes, different surfaces and pre-built images for coloring. You can also buy additional images, such as several from Disney.

It's mainly for kids, but you'll want to get your hands on it as well. You won't even get paint on them.

[News Bento](#)

Looking to turn your Windows 8 PC or tablet into a great news reader? News Bento is the way to go. It's a visually based RSS reader that lets you subscribe to and read news feeds from across the Web. It has a host of RSS feeds built in, plus many more you can add with a click. You'll be able to add any of your own as well.

This is an excellent solution for Google Reader users who are searching for a new RSS tool now that [Google Reader's end is near](#): You can easily import all of your existing Google Reader feeds into News Bento.

[Corporate BS Generator](#)

Who ends up getting ahead in the dog-eat-dog corporate world? More often than not, the person who controls the conversation. And how do you do that? With a big, healthy

dose of business jargon, phrases full of important-sounding, high-concept words that signify nothing, but sound as if they do.

Before your next meeting, run the Corporate BS Generator and memorize a few key phrases like "distinctively reintermediate enterprise-wide markets" or "appropriately iterate highly efficient e-commerce." Then drop them in at the right moment. A VP position is just a phrase away.

[Network Usage](#)

This simple app does exactly what it says -- shows your Windows 8 device's network use over time. It'll appeal to people who are geeks about such things, and to those who pay for mobile connections and want to hold down costs.

You'll see monthly, daily and hourly use, for data both sent and received. You can also compare similar time periods, such as your March 2013 vs. February 2013 usage.

If you use more than one network connection (for example, a Wi-Fi connection, an Ethernet connection and a mobile data connection with a cellular provider such as AT&T), you'll be able to see usage for each. You also get details about the connection, including the IP address, speed, encryption type and more.

[Shuriken Ninja](#)

Fellow ninjas, just how proficient are you with shuriken -- throwing stars? Here's how to find out.

Destroy targets by throwing shuriken, but take care: The targets are moving or protected by walls as well as wooden and metallic obstacles. You'll need to bounce the stars off of metallic obstacles, but avoid wooden ones, in which the shuriken merely lodge. It's a game of strategy and logic, and the 169 levels will keep you occupied for a long time.

You can purchase new capabilities for your shuriken or new levels for \$1.49 to \$4.99. There's also a free editor for building your own levels.

[Meeting Money](#)

Time is money. So imagine how much money is spent in staff salaries at one of the many pointless and endless meetings you attend. In fact, you don't have to imagine -- with Meeting Money you can now calculate it precisely.

Before a meeting starts, enter the names of the people who will attend the meeting, along with their estimated monthly salaries. When the meeting gets going, click the Start button. Second by second, the app calculates how much is being spent in salaries as time goes by.

[Fhotoroom](#)

This nifty photo editor offers countless ways to muck around with and improve your photos. You'll be able to change the exposure and color mix, resize and crop photos, add a variety of frames and filters, change the color saturation and more.

Fhotoroom uses the Windows 8 interface to put all tools within easy reach. For advanced editing, such as using some of the more sophisticated filters, you'll have to buy the for-pay version for \$1.49.

For more apps, search the Windows Store

Ready to go out and find more Windows 8 apps? With no obvious search tools and minimal categorization, browsing through screen after screen of apps in the Windows Store can be an exercise in frustration.

There's a better way: Use Windows 8's built-in search function. Press the Windows key + Q to bring up the Search Charm, highlight Store on the right side of the screen, type in your search term, and you'll see Windows 8 apps related to your search term over on the left.

On a touchscreen device, swipe in from the right side of the screen to call up the Charms Bar, tap Search, then tap Store and type in your search term.

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<http://www.computerworld.com/slideshow/detail/95263#slide13>