

## Windows 8.1 little changes are a huge improvement

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Windows 8.1 is available in 'preview' version for developers on Wednesday.

SAN FRANCISCO (CNNMoney)

Microsoft on Wednesday released its first preview of Windows 8.1, a vastly improved update of its forward-thinking but flawed PC operating system.

On paper, the list of changes that Microsoft made to Windows 8.1 don't seem all that major. No, the app tiles aren't gone. Yes, the Start button is back, but not exactly as you remember it.

It isn't until you actually start using the latest version of Windows that you can appreciate the big benefits of little tweaks.

**Start button:** The return of the Start button to its rightful spot on the desktop taskbar is a perfect example.

The Start button's main function in Windows 8.1 is actually to call up the Start screen (the series of app tiles that Microsoft ([MSFT](#), [Fortune 500](#)) calls "Modern UI," which was introduced in Windows 8) -- not the labyrinth of nested menus that it used to hide. But when you're in desktop mode and you click the Start button, it won't take you

completely out of the desktop. Instead, a semi-transparent version of the Modern UI will float on top of the desktop, allowing you to choose an app.

That feature also allows you to control how you organize the Start screen. You can quickly lump together all the icons for your desktop apps in the Modern UI and label them as such.



## Windows 8 says goodbye to the Start button

In other words, the new Start button brings back all the functionality of the Start button from Windows 7, but with the look and feel of the more modern Windows 8.1.

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**Snap view:** The biggest change in Windows 8.1 is the expansion of the "snap view" feature that enables multiple apps on the screen at the same time.

Windows 8.1 will let you run up to eight apps side by side -- up from just two in Windows 8. (That's provided you have two 2560x1600 resolution monitors. On a smaller device like the Surface, you can still only have two.)

Unlike Windows 8, which ran the second app in snap view as a more limited widget in a small strip of the screen, Windows 8.1 lets users decide how much space each app takes up on the screen -- half? a third? a quarter? Your call!

To make Windows 8.1 users feel less locked into a single app, snap view will automatically launch in certain situations. For example, if you're reading an email and you click on a link, you will no longer exit the email app and go into the browser. Instead, the screen will automatically split itself into two (if it isn't already), and Internet Explorer will pop up right next to your email app. You can even rearrange panes and drag and drop files between them as easily as you would two windows in desktop mode.

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**App improvements:** Microsoft has put in a lot of work into more tightly integrating its own services throughout Windows 8.1.

For example, if you search for a musician using the Bing search app, links and play buttons to that artist's songs and albums will be integrated into the results.

When you receive a Skype call and your computer is locked, you will be able to answer the call without having to first unlock your computer.

And most importantly, the SkyDrive cloud storage service will be more tightly woven into Windows 8.1. SkyDrive won't just make your cloud files look and feel native inside Windows, but it will also sync all your Windows and app settings on the fly, so that you don't have to reconfigure every Windows 8.1 device you use.

Go to the website below to activate the video.

<http://money.cnn.com/2013/06/26/technology/enterprise/windows-8-1-preview/index.html>