

How to find your way around Microsoft's new OS Windows 8 and make the most of its features.

Computerworld - Ready or not, Windows 8 is here. One of the most controversial versions of the operating system ever released, its main interface feels designed more for touch-screen tablets than traditional computers. What's more, the Desktop has been hidden away and weakened with the removal of the Start button.

The horizontally oriented Start screen (once called the Metro interface) sports big tiles that practically beg you to touch them. The Start screen and the Desktop feel as if they're dueling operating systems, because each works differently from the other in many ways.

All this might sound overwhelming, but as you'll see, it's not that tough to master Windows 8. In this cheat sheet I'll show you how to get the most out of the new Start screen and its apps, the Desktop, the new Charms bar, Internet Explorer 10 and plenty more. I've also provided quick reference charts listing useful [touch-screen gestures](#) and [keyboard shortcuts](#).

Note: If you want to get the most out of Windows 8, you'll have to use a Microsoft ID as your user account. Without a Microsoft ID, you won't be able to use a number of [new Windows 8 apps](#), including Mail and People, and you won't be able to sync settings among multiple devices. So when you set up Windows 8 for the first time, sign in with an existing Microsoft ID or create a new one. (You can also switch to a Microsoft ID account later on via the "[PC settings](#)" screen.)

There's a new lock screen in town

When you start Windows 8 you'll see the first big difference from previous versions of Windows -- a whole new look for the lock screen. Like the lock screens on Windows Phone devices, it sports a big graphic image and displays a variety of information, such as the date and time, the local weather, the number of new emails you have, the strength of your network connection and how much power you've got left on your device.



Windows 8's new lock screen mimics the lock screens on mobile devices. This information isn't interactive; you can't click or tap to see your email, for example. (Later in the story I'll cover how to [change the information that appears on your lock screen](#).)

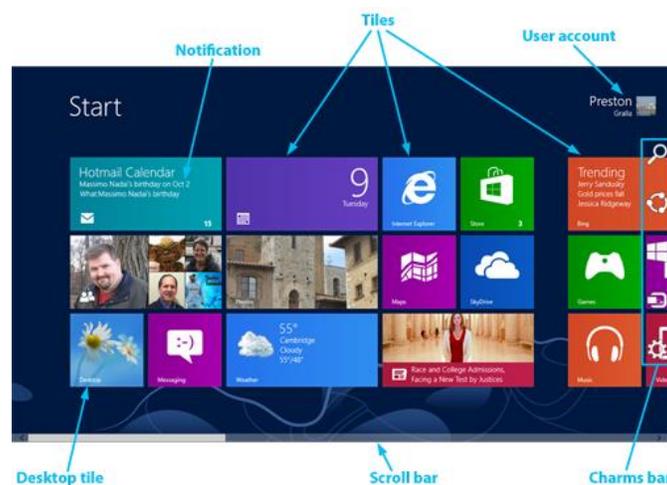
To log into Windows, tap a key or click the mouse -- or, on a touch system, swipe from the bottom up -- and you'll come to a sign-in screen. Select an account if you've got multiple accounts, then type in your password and press Enter to sign into Windows 8.

Meet the Start screen

Once you've logged into Windows from the lock screen, you head directly to the new Start screen rather than the familiar Desktop interface. Like it or not, this is the new face of Windows.

Initially Microsoft called this design the "Metro" interface, but now it's just calling the new UI "Windows 8 design." Laptop and desktop PC users might dislike the Start screen's big tiles and horizontal orientation, but I've got some advice for you: Get used to it -- it's your new home. Here's what you need to know about it.

Tiles. The Start screen is made up of a grid of colorful tiles. Each tile represents an app; click (or tap) the tile to run the app.



Your new home: the Windows 8 Start screen.

To begin with, you'll find tiles for several simple new apps -- People, Mail, Calendar, Messaging and others -- that are built into Windows 8 and have the same look and feel as the Start screen. Formerly called Metro apps, they're now variously referred to as Windows 8 apps, Windows Store apps, Modern apps or Start apps by industry watchers. In this cheat sheet, I'll call them Windows 8 apps to distinguish them from Desktop apps (more about those in a moment).

Notifications. Some Windows 8 apps grab information from the Internet and show live updates known as notifications on their tiles. For example, the Calendar app displays upcoming events and friends' birthdays on its tile, the People app tile displays social media updates from friends, and the Mail app tile displays the sender and subject

line of your most recently received emails. (Some notifications can also appear on the lock screen, depending on how you've configured Windows 8.)

A word about Windows RT

Buying a new Windows-based tablet this fall? Some tablets, such as Microsoft's own [Surface RT](#), don't come with Windows 8 but are instead based on [Windows RT](#), a lightweight version of Windows 8 that's designed for devices with energy-efficient ARM processors. Windows RT shares the new Windows 8 interface and many of its features and apps, and it ships with its own version of the Office 2013 productivity suite. It doesn't, however, run most traditional Desktop-based applications.

This cheat sheet is for users running the full version of Windows 8, but Windows RT users can use this guide to learn about the Start screen, the Charms bar, Windows 8 apps and navigational gestures.

Deciding between a Windows 8 tablet and a Windows RT tablet? See [Seven things to consider for a Windows tablet](#).

By default, those apps that show notifications have larger Start screen tiles than those that don't.

You'll also find tiles for Desktop-based apps on the Start screen, and the Windows Desktop itself is now accessed via a **Desktop tile**. Desktop apps are traditional programs like Microsoft Word or Adobe Photoshop; as a general rule, any application that you've run on previous versions of Windows is a Desktop-based app.

Desktop-based app tiles don't show notifications, and they have smaller graphics on them. Also, tiles for Desktop apps often appear on the right side of the screen, and they (and other tiles as well) may be off of its edge, so you'll have to scroll (or swipe, if you've got a touch-screen device) to see them.

Charms bar. If you move your mouse pointer to the upper-right or lower-right corner of the screen, the Charms bar appears as an overlay on the screen -- sometimes directly on top of tiles or other content. This bar gives you quick access to features such as search and system settings from anywhere in Windows 8.

Scroll bar. The Start screen has a horizontal orientation, so when you want to see more tiles on the screen, you'll have to scroll or swipe to see them. The scrollbar is not normally visible, but it makes its appearance when you move your mouse. You use it as you would any normal scroll bar, except you'll scroll to the right and left rather than up and down.

User account. This shows the name of the current account logged into Windows 8, along with the picture associated with the account. Click it to change the picture, lock your device, sign out or switch to another account.

Check out "Customize the Start screen" later in this article for details about how to change tile sizes, rearrange tiles on the screen and more.

Your old friend the Desktop

The Desktop is no longer front and center in Windows 8, having been delegated to second-class status by the Start screen. As befits a second fiddle, you don't boot directly into it when you log into Windows. Instead, you run it like any other app by clicking the Desktop tile on the Start screen.

When you get there, you'll find a familiar-looking Desktop minus what had been one of its key features in previous versions of Windows -- the Start button and its menu. And that means that you're going to have to get used to a new way of using the Desktop and put up with some kludgy ways of accessing apps and features that previously were directly in reach. (there are non-Microsoft-approved ways to reinstate the Start button and even to boot directly into the Desktop.)



The Windows 8 Desktop, notable for what's missing: the Start button.

Other than that, the Desktop is essentially the same as it was in Windows 7. It shows icons for Desktop apps that you've installed; run them by clicking them. (See "[Meet the Start screen](#)" for the differences between Desktop apps and Windows 8 apps.)

There's a taskbar where you can pin apps and that shows currently running apps as well as a notification area all the way to the right that displays icons showing your network status, the time and date, and more.

Additionally, the Desktop supports all of Windows 8's systemwide navigation features, including the Charms bar and keyboard shortcuts.

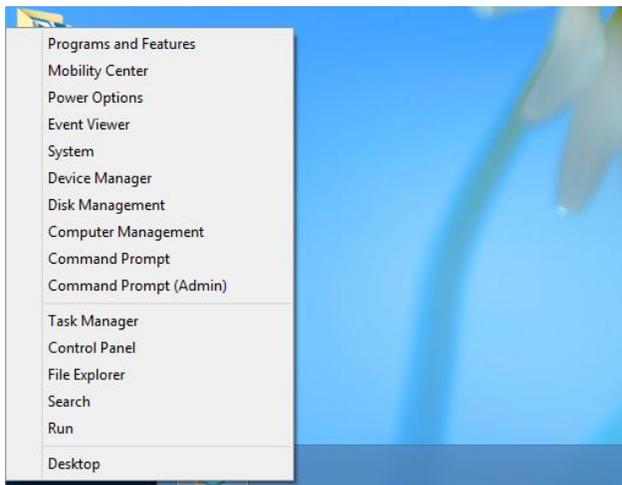
There is, however, a significant visual change from Windows 7 and Vista.

The Desktop no longer uses the Aero interface, along with its transparency, animations and other visual effects and graphics-intensive traits. Instead, windows are now flatter and with simpler colors.

You can't run the new Windows 8 apps from the Desktop. You'll have to either go back to the Start screen (press the Windows key) and click their tiles, or else use the

Search charm: Run the Search charm, type the app's name, and then click the icon when it appears. ([Complete instructions below.](#))

Typically, when you install Desktop applications, they show up both as icons on the Desktop and as tiles on the Start screen, so you can launch them from both locations. Some system utilities and other Desktop apps don't appear as icons on the Desktop by default; you can use the Search charm to search for and launch them.



This handy menu takes you to a plethora of power user tools.

The lack of a Start button makes the Desktop annoying to use, but it does offer one useful trick: Right-click in the lower-left portion of the screen (or press the Windows key + X), and a menu pops up that gives you access to the Control Panel, File Explorer (called Windows Explorer in previous versions of Windows), the Task Manager, the command prompt and a variety of other administrative and power user tools. (You can also bring up this power tools menu from the Start screen using the same methods.)

Introducing the Charms bar

The new Charms bar offers quick access to several powerful tools for navigating and working with Windows 8. When you move the mouse to the upper-right or lower-right corner of the screen to make the Charms bar appear, its icons aren't labeled, so at first it's not clear what they do. As you move your mouse toward them, though, the full Charms bar appears with labeled, easy-to-see icons on a black vertical bar.

At the same time, a black rectangle appears toward the lower-left portion of the screen, displaying the time and date and, if you're using a portable device, the state of your Internet connection and power supply.



The full Charms bar appears on a black background as you move your mouse toward it. You can also display the full Charms bar by pressing the Windows key + C on your keyboard -- or, if you have a touch-screen device, by swiping from the right edge of the screen toward the center.

You can get to the Charms bar no matter where you are in Windows 8 -- on the Start screen, on the Desktop, in a Windows 8 app, and even in a Desktop app. This feature is one of the ways in which Microsoft has attempted to bolt together the Start screen and the Desktop.

There are five charms on the Charms bar. Several of them are context-sensitive and offer slightly different options depending on what you're doing at the time you invoke the bar. Here's a brief description of what each charm does.

Search. Click this and you can search for apps, files and settings; you can also search inside any app. Underneath the search box is a list that includes Apps, Settings, Files and each of your individual Windows 8 apps. When you type in a search term, click anything in the list to search it. So to search for an app, you'd click Apps, and to search inside an individual app, click the name of that app -- for example, to search your email, click Mail.



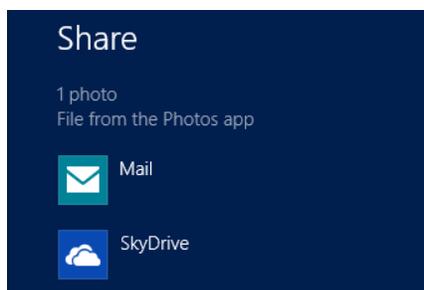
Windows 8's Search charm with Apps selected.

Windows 8 supports three keyboard shortcuts that take you directly to the Search charm without going through the Charms bar first: Pressing the Windows key + F takes you to Search with Files already highlighted, the Windows key + Q takes you to Search with Apps selected, and the Windows key + W takes you to Search with Settings selected.

Because the Desktop no longer includes a Start button, you'll frequently use the Search charm to run apps from the Desktop. It's kludgy -- press the Windows key + Q to launch the Search charm, type the first few letters of the app's name and click the icon of the app you want to run. Note that when you're on the Start screen you don't need to launch this charm in order to do a search. Instead, just start typing what you want to search for, and the Search charm appears with your text in the search box. You can't do this from the Desktop, though.

To close the panel for the Search charm or any other charm, just press the Esc key.

Share. Some of the new Windows 8 apps include a built-in Share feature that lets you share information from the app via email, social media, SkyDrive or messaging.

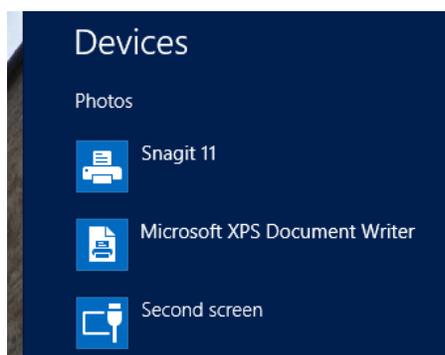


Windows 8's Share charm, accessed from the Photo app.

It's context-sensitive, so you can share what you're currently viewing as long as the app has been written to take advantage of the Share feature. For example, the Photo app can share via Mail and SkyDrive, and the Music app lets you share via Mail and the People app.

At this point, not many apps support the Share feature, and of those that do share, not all can share in all ways -- it's up to the app developer to decide. Desktop apps can't use the Share feature at all. Pressing the Windows key + H activates this individual charm.

Start. Clicking this charm sends you back to the Start screen. If you're already on the Start screen, you'll return to wherever you were before you headed to the Start screen -- an app or the Desktop. Pressing the Windows key by itself accomplishes the same thing as clicking the Start charm.



Windows 8's Devices charm, accessed from the Photo app.

Devices. This charm is context-sensitive, so what appears when you click it depends on what you're doing at the time and what kind of devices you've connected to your Windows 8 computer or tablet.

Generally, you use the Devices charm to print from a Windows 8 app and to manage your printers and other connected devices. For instance, if you've got two or more displays connected to your device, Devices lets you control how the screens work.

Pressing the Windows key + K activates the Devices charm.

Settings. This charm, which you can also launch by pressing the Windows key + I on your keyboard, gives you access to a wide variety of application-specific and system wide settings. When you click it, you'll see that it's divided into two parts.

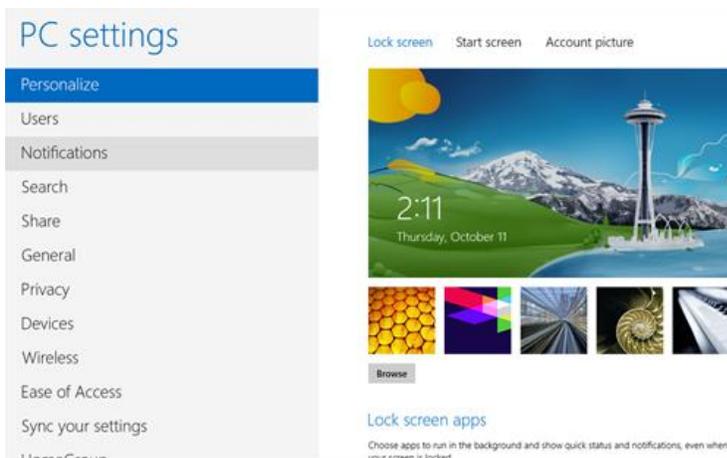
The top part is context sensitive, showing settings related to what you're currently doing in Windows 8. If you click the Settings charm while you're in the Windows 8 Photo app, for example, you can designate which folders, computers and websites (such as Facebook and Flickr) you want photos displayed from, among other options. From the Start screen, you can change settings related to tiles, such as whether to show tiles for administrative tools like the Control Panel.



The Settings charm, as activated from the Start screen. The bottom part of Settings is the same no matter where you are; it lets you change global Windows 8 settings for your network, sounds, screen, notifications, power and keyboard.

Click the "Change PC settings" link at the bottom of the screen to get to the new "PC settings" screen, which lets you customize how the most important features of Windows 8 work from a single location.

For example, its Personalize section lets you change your account picture and the background images for your lock screen and Start screen, and choose which Windows 8 apps -- Weather, Mail and so on -- should deliver information to the lock screen. (Desktop apps can't send information to the lock screen.)



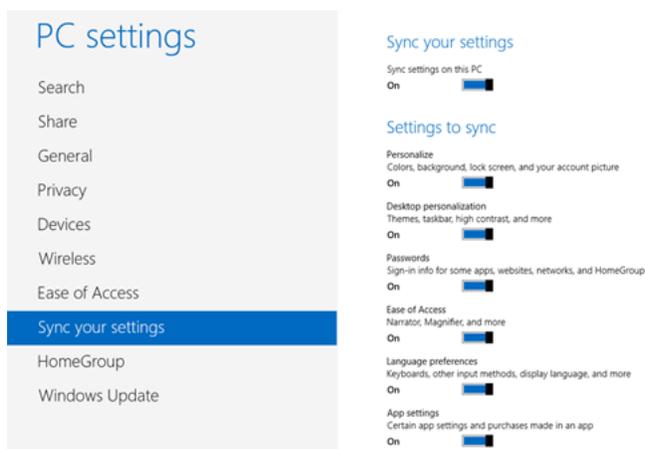
The PC settings screen: one-stop shopping for customizing how Windows 8 works

If you're signed into Windows with a non-Microsoft ID account, here's where you can change that. Click Users, then click "Switch to a Microsoft account" and you'll be able to sign in with an existing Microsoft ID, or else create a new one and sign in with that.

You can also change myriad other system settings, including app notifications, search preferences, privacy options and more. The settings are all straightforward and self-explanatory. Just click the one you want to change and get to work.

One noteworthy section in the PC settings screen is "Sync your settings." Microsoft built Windows 8 assuming that people would be using it with multiple devices. This feature lets you sync some of your settings among them.

You can sync your lock screen; account picture; Desktop personalizations; passwords for apps, websites and networks; app, browser and mouse settings; and so on. Simply turn on or off which items you want to sync or not sync.



You can customize how your settings sync among multiple devices.

More system wide navigation

When you first start using Windows 8, the navigation will probably confuse you -- particularly because Windows 8's two interfaces coexist uneasily. To help ameliorate that, Windows 8 has a number of systemwide navigational features that are available wherever you are -- on the Start screen, the Desktop, inside a Windows 8 app or in a Desktop app. The Charms bar is one of them, but there are others as well.

One is a longtime Windows favorite: the Alt-Tab key combination. Press it, and as with previous versions of Windows, a strip of thumbnails of your running programs appears. While holding down the Alt key, keep pressing the Tab key until you come to the

thumbnail of the program you want to run. Release the keys, and you'll switch to that program.



The old standby, Alt-Tab, works in Windows 8.

Another way to switch among your running apps is to move your mouse pointer to the upper-left corner of the screen (called a "hot corner").

A small thumbnail appears of the last app you were running, or where you last were. Click it to switch there. Keep clicking, and you'll cycle through all your apps and open locations.

There's a caveat, though: You won't cycle through all your Desktop apps. If you've got three Desktop-related items running, only the last app that was opened full screen, or else the Desktop itself, will appear in the upper-left corner. It's just one more example of the Desktop's afterthought status in Windows 8. (See "Meet the Start screen" for the differences between Desktop apps and Windows 8 apps.)

Here's another navigation trick to try: Move your mouse pointer to the upper-left hot corner until the thumbnail of your previous location appears, then move the mouse pointer down. You'll see thumbnails of all of your running apps. Click any to switch to it. However, the same caveat holds here about Desktop apps. Even if you've got multiple Desktop apps running, you'll see only a single Desktop-related thumbnail, either the last full-screen Desktop app you were running on the Desktop itself.



Viewing thumbnails of open apps in Windows 8..

Pressing the Windows key acts as a location toggle between the Start screen and the place you last were before going there.

If you're a fan of the mouse rather than the keyboard, you can do the same thing by moving your cursor to the lower-left corner of the screen. A small thumbnail of the Start screen appears (or if you're at the Start screen, of where you were previously). Click it to go there.

Touch-screen navigation

Windows 8 supports a whole host of touch-screen gestures, including the swiping, pinching and rotating motions familiar to smartphone and tablet users. Tapping an item opens it; pressing and holding an item pops up a menu to display more information about it. Note, however, that these gestures often don't work in Desktop apps. (See "Meet the Start screen" for the differences between Desktop apps and Windows 8 apps.)

Windows 8 also uses something called edge UIs, in which you swipe from the edge of the screen toward the center. Swiping in from the right edge of the screen displays the Charms bar. Swiping quickly in and back out from the left edge of the screen cycles through your open apps.

While the previous edge UI gestures work universally, some are specific to Windows 8 apps. When you're in a Windows 8 app, swiping up from the bottom of the screen or swiping down from the top of the screen displays the App bar. You can close a Windows 8 app by pulling down from the top edge of the screen all the way to the bottom of the screen. The app shrinks to a thumbnail and then disappears.

Following is a list of useful Windows 8 gestures, including more edge UI gestures. Keep in mind that not all of the following gestures work in all places and apps. Typically, they don't work in Desktop apps.

Windows 8 touch gestures

Gesture	What it does
Tap	Open an item. It's the equivalent of clicking with a mouse.
Press and hold	Pop up a menu to display more information about the item.
Press and hold, slide and release	Move an item to a new location. It's the equivalent of dragging an item with a mouse.
Pinch with two fingers	Zoom out. Used in apps such as Maps where you commonly zoom in and out.
Spread two fingers apart	Zoom in. Used in apps such as Maps where you commonly zoom in and out.

Gesture	What it does
Rotate with two fingers	Rotate the display in the direction you move your fingers. Very few apps use this gesture.
Swipe horizontally	Scroll sideways through a screen, such as the Start screen to see apps off to the right side.
Swipe vertically	Scroll up or down.
Short downward swipe on an item	Select the item and show additional options, often in an App bar.
On the lock screen, swipe up from the bottom edge of the screen	Display the login screen.
In a Windows 8 app, swipe in from the upper or lower edge of the screen	Activate the App bar.
Swipe in from the right edge of the screen to the center	Display the Charms bar.
Swipe quickly in from left edge of the screen	Display a thumbnail of the previously run app.
Swipe slowly in from the left edge of the screen	Display a second app side-by-side with the current app on your screen.
Swipe quickly in from the left edge of the screen, then swipe quickly back	Display thumbnails of all your running apps.
Pull down from the top of the screen to the bottom	Close a Windows 8 app.
In Internet Explorer (Windows 8 version only), swipe right or left	Go forward or back.

Keyboard shortcuts

Not using a touch-screen device? Like previous versions of Windows, Windows 8 includes a host of keyboard shortcuts, so you don't need to spend your life clicking. Those earlier keyboard shortcuts -- for example, Ctrl-C to copy text -- still work. But Windows 8 also has keyboard shortcuts for many of its new features.

The following table shows some of the most useful shortcuts for Windows 8; it includes both new keyboard shortcuts and some that worked in previous versions of Windows.

Windows 8 keyboard shortcuts

<u>Key combination</u>	<u>What it does</u>
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Windows key shortcuts

Windows key	Go to the Start screen or toggle between the Start screen and your previous location
Windows-C	Open the Charms bar
Windows-D	Show the Desktop
Windows-E	Open File Explorer
Windows-F	Go to Files in the Search charm
Windows-H	Go to the Share charm
Windows-I	Go to the Settings charm
Windows-K	Go to the Devices charm
Windows-L	Lock the device
Windows-M	Minimize all windows (only on the Desktop)
Windows-O	Lock the screen orientation
Windows-Q	Go to Apps in the Search charm
Windows-R	Launch the Run box

<u>Key combination</u>	<u>What it does</u>
Windows-T	Put the focus on the taskbar and cycle through your running Desktop apps
Windows-V	Cycle through your notifications
Windows-W	Go to Settings in the Search charm
Windows-X	Open a menu of tools for power users
Windows-Z	Launch the App bar (or make it disappear if it's already showing)
Windows-1 through 9	Go to the app in the corresponding position on the taskbar (Desktop only)
Windows-, (comma)	Peek at the Desktop (on Desktop only)
Windows-spacebar	Switch the input language and keyboard layout
Windows-Home	Minimize non-active Desktop apps
Windows-Page Up	Move Start screen to left monitor
Windows-Page Down	Move Start screen to right monitor
Windows-up arrow	Maximize a Desktop app
Windows-down arrow	Restore/minimize a Desktop app
Windows-F1	Run Windows Help and Support
Other keyboard shortcuts	
Alt-Tab	Cycle through thumbnails of open apps
Alt-F4	Close a Windows 8 app
Ctrl-A	Select all

<u>Key combination</u>	<u>What it does</u>
Ctrl-C	Copy
Ctrl-E	Select the Search box in the Windows 8 Internet Explorer app; select the Address bar in Desktop version of IE
Ctrl-N	Open a new window in Internet Explorer (Desktop version only)
Ctrl-R	Refresh
Ctrl-V	Paste
Ctrl-X	Cut
Ctrl-Y	Redo
Ctrl-Z	Undo
Ctrl-F4	Close the active document in Desktop apps
Ctrl-mouse click	Select multiple items in File Explorer
Ctrl-Shift	Select a group of contiguous items in File Explorer
Ctrl-W	Close the current window in Internet Explorer (Desktop version)
Ctrl-Shift-Esc	Run the Task Manager
Ctrl-Shift-N	Create a new folder in File Explorer
PrtScrn	Take a screenshot and place it on the Clipboard

Working with the new Windows 8 apps

Windows 8 ships with a complement of new Windows 8 apps including Mail, People, Weather, Music, Bing, Photos, Maps and others. You can also download third-party Windows 8 apps through the Windows Store.

I'll show you how to work with Windows 8 apps in general. (See "Meet the Start screen" for the differences between Desktop apps and Windows 8 apps.)

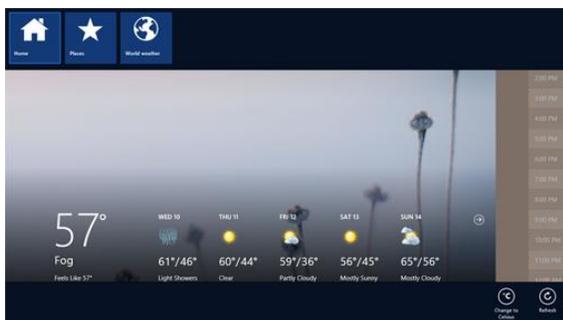
One thing to keep in mind about most Windows 8 apps: They're generally not powerful. Some are downright anemic. They're more like tablet apps than they are full-blown applications written for traditional computers. In Mail, for example, you can't create new mail folders, read mail using threaded messaging or make rules to route incoming mail to specific folders. And the SkyDrive Windows 8 app doesn't sync files between your Windows 8 devices and your SkyDrive cloud-based storage (for that you'll have to download the SkyDrive Desktop app).

Most of the other Windows 8 apps have similar limitations. They're fine for tablets, but they're often not so fine for traditional computers.

Windows 8 apps are designed to run in full-screen mode, so you won't be able to resize them like Desktop apps. And there's no apparent way to close Windows 8 apps. It can be done, however: When you're in the app, press the Alt key + F4 -- or if you have a touch screen, drag from the top of the screen until the app shrinks to a small size in the middle of the screen, then keep dragging it to the bottom of the screen.

However, you can also just leave Windows 8 apps running and let Windows 8 handle closing them for you. If you've launched one and aren't using it any longer, Windows 8 will eventually close it down if you don't come back.

Windows 8 apps don't have visible menus or immediately obvious ways to control or customize them. To do so, right-click anywhere in the app or press the Windows key + Z; on a touch screen, swipe down from the top of the screen or up from the bottom of the screen. An App bar appears at either the top or the bottom of the screen, or both. The App bar is context-sensitive, so what it displays varies according to the app you're running, and even according to what you're currently doing in the app itself.



In the Weather app, the App bar appears at the top and bottom of the screen..

If you right-click when you're on the main screen of the Weather app, for instance, you'll be able to tell the app to refresh itself to check for the latest weather, change the degrees between Fahrenheit and Celsius, navigate to other places you've chosen to display weather, and so on.

If you display the App bar from the main screen of the People app, you can add a new contact or show which of your contacts are currently online. And if you display the App bar from the Notifications page of the People app, you can only refresh the page to check for the latest notifications.

Also, when you're in any app you can run the Settings charm and change the settings for that specific app.

The two Internet Explorers

In Windows 8, Microsoft introduces Internet Explorer 10. No, let me amend that slightly. It introduces two different versions of Internet Explorer 10: one a Windows 8 app and one a Desktop app.

The Windows 8 IE app, like many other Windows 8 apps, is somewhat underpowered. Its greatest shortcoming is that it doesn't have a Favorites manager. You can pin sites to the Start screen, but that's no substitute for a Favorites manager, because you won't be able to group the sites into folders -- and if you pin too many sites, your Start screen gets so cluttered it's barely usable. The Windows 8 version of IE also won't run add-ons, browser extensions or ActiveX controls.

What's more, the two versions of Internet Explorer don't always play well together. When you open a website in one version, that site doesn't open in the other version -- so you can have one set of sites open in the Windows 8 version and another set of sites opened in the Desktop version.

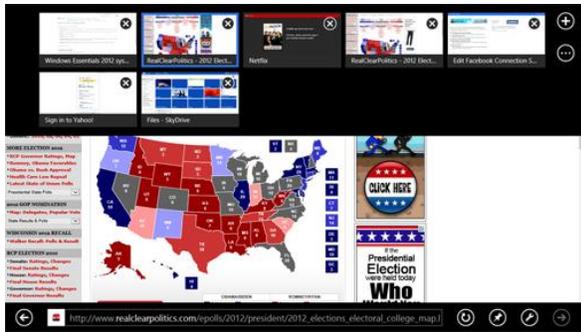
For these reasons, some traditional PC users will choose to forgo the Windows 8 version of IE in favor of the Desktop version. If you do want to try out the Windows 8 version, here are a few tips for using it.

Using the Windows 8 IE10 app



The Windows 8 version of Internet Explorer shows just a full-screen Web page.

When you launch the Windows 8 version of IE, at first all you see is a Web page, with no address bar or other controls. Right-click or press the Windows key + Z (or swipe down from the top or up from the bottom of a touch screen) to display the App bar, and two sets of controls appear.



The Windows 8 IE app with controls. On the top are thumbnails for the most recent sites you've visited or tabs you've opened; click any to go there, or click the X at the top of any to close it.

To go to a new site, click the + button to the far right of the thumbnails and a page appears with a blank address bar at the bottom, a list of sites you've visited frequently, and any sites you've pinned to the Start screen. Click a frequently visited site or pinned site to go there, or type an address into the Address bar.



Also at the top when you display the App bar is a button with three dots on it. Click it and you get two choices: Close all of your tabs or launch a new InPrivate Browsing tab that prevents IE from storing cookies, site history and other data about your browsing session.

Opening a new blank tab in the Windows 8 version of Internet Explorer: nothing on top, thumbnails and an address bar at the bottom. Also at the top when you display the App bar is a button with three dots on it. Click it and you get two choices: Close all of your tabs or launch a new InPrivate Browsing tab that prevents IE from storing cookies, site history and other data about your browsing session.

Down at the bottom of the screen when you display the App bar in IE is an Address bar; forward, back and refresh buttons; a pin button that lets you pin the current site to the Start screen or add it to Favorites (which you will be able to use only in the Desktop version of IE); and a wrench button that, when clicked, lets you search for text on the current Web page, view the page in the Desktop version of Internet Explorer, or download a Windows 8 app associated with the site you're visiting, if it has one.

The Address bar does double duty as a way to go to websites and to perform searches: Just type a Web address or a search term into the bar. When you type in a search term, you'll see several kinds of results -- those from sites you've visited often, those from sites you've pinned, those from your Favorites, and those from the Web, via Bing.

Note that you don't have to make all the controls appear to use the back and forward buttons. When you're on a Web page, move your mouse cursor to the left edge of the screen and a back arrow appears; move it to the right edge and a forward arrow appears.

The bottom set of controls -- the Address Bar and various buttons -- also pops up from time to time without you having to display the App bar. For example, they appear when you click a link or when you use the back and forward arrows as described in the previous paragraph.

To make the controls go away, right-click, press the Windows key + Z or swipe down from the top on a touch screen.

Using the Desktop version of IE10

The changes to the Desktop version of IE are generally under the hood: notably, improved performance and an overhauled rendering engine. So just use the Desktop version of IE in the same way you've always used it.

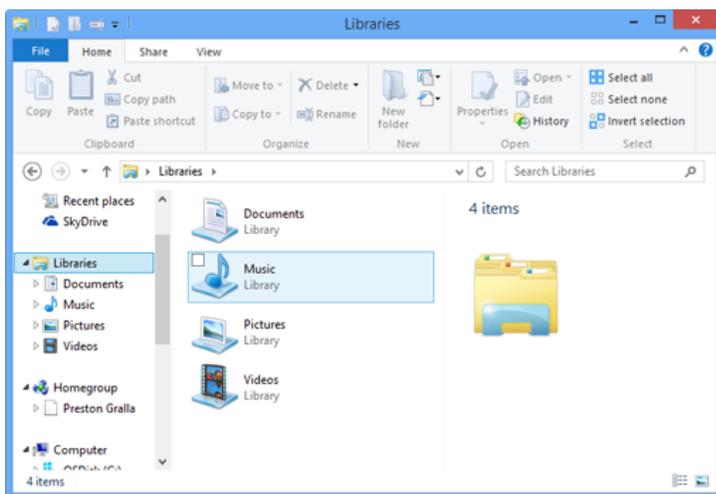
Other new features

There have been plenty of other changes in Windows 8, too numerous to list in this article. Here are some of the more important ones.

File Explorer

The file management app once called Windows Explorer has been renamed File Explorer. The change is not just in name only. It has also been redesigned and now has a Ribbon interface. (New to the Ribbon interface? Check out our [Word 2010 cheat sheet](#) to get acquainted.)

Note that the first time you use File Explorer the Ribbon might be hidden. To expand the Ribbon (or collapse it if it's already expanded), either press Ctrl-F1 or click the small down arrow in the top right corner of the window. You can also leave the Ribbon collapsed and simply click on any tab to see its available commands.



File Explorer, with the Ribbon turned on.

The Ribbon's Home tab contains a grab bag of file-management commands, such as copy, paste, copy a path, move, rename and open. You can also create a new folder, select multiple files or folders, and more. The Share tab lets you share files and folders via email, by burning to disc, by printing and so on. The View tab lets you customize the overall File Explorer interface (by, for example, turning the left-side navigation pane on or off) or the display of files and folders (by showing hidden items or not, changing the icon size and configuration, and so on).

Clicking the File tab on the left pops up a small box that lets you open new File Explorer windows, shows you a list of your frequently visited places so you can navigate to them quickly, and includes several other features.

File History

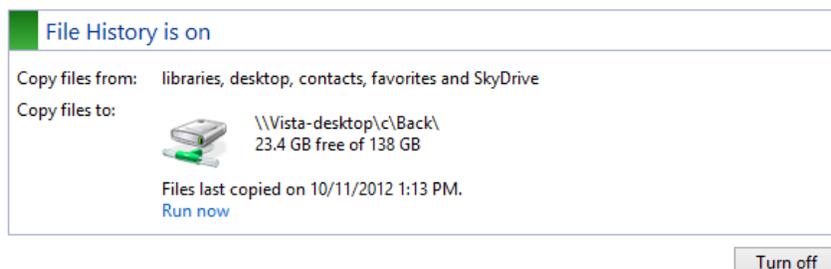
This new feature, turned off by default, backs up files stored in your Libraries, Favorites, Contacts and Desktop. Keep in mind that your Libraries include many folders, including public and private Documents, Music, Pictures and Videos folders, so you can use this feature to back up plenty of files. And you can add other locations you want backed up as well. It's a vast improvement over the less-than-useful Windows 7 feature called Previous Versions.

Of course, you'll need storage media such as a USB drive to back up your files to, or you can back up to local network storage. File History uses compression to reduce the amount of disk space you'll need. It does more than just back up files. It also keeps interim versions of them, so that you can see previous versions of a file.

To turn on File History, first run Control Panel by typing "Control Panel" at the Start screen and clicking the Control Panel icon that appears. Then, in the Control Panel search box, search for "file history" and click the File History link that appears. Click the "Turn on" button and make any selections necessary, such as which drive you want to back up your data to.

Keep a history of your files

File History saves copies of your files so you can get them back if they're lost or damaged.



Turning on Windows 8's new File History feature.

Three tips for getting more out of Windows 8

It may take you a little while to become comfortable with Windows 8, so I've put together three tips to help you get up to speed. The first two will help you make the most of the new interface, and the third will bring back an old friend: the Start button.

1. Customize the Start screen

The Start screen that appears by default is not necessarily the Start screen that's best for you. There are many ways to customize it, though. Here I'll show you how to add, remove, rearrange and otherwise tweak the tiles on your screen.

To remove a tile from the Start screen, right-click it and select "Unpin from Start" from the bar that appears at the bottom of the screen. You can select multiple apps by holding down the Ctrl key as you right-click them, and then unpin them in one fell swoop.

If you don't want a live tile such as the Weather app to display changing information, right-click it and select "Turn live tile off." To make a large tile smaller or a small tile larger, right-click it and select "Smaller" or "Larger."

Adding tiles to the Start screen takes a little more work than unpinning them, but not a lot. If you're on the Start screen and you know the name of the app you want to add, type its name. You'll be sent to the Search charm, and the app will show up on the left. Right-click it, and from the bar that appears at the bottom of the screen, select "Pin to Start." If you search for a Desktop app and right-click it, you'll also be able to pin it to the Desktop taskbar. If it's already pinned to the taskbar, you can unpin it.

To browse a list of your apps (or many of them, at least), you can right-click any tile on the Start screen and select "All apps" on the far right of the bar at the bottom -- or just press the Windows key + Z. You'll see a list of every Windows 8 app on your PC, and some -- but not all -- of your Desktop apps. (I have yet to figure out how Windows decides which Desktop apps to list under "All apps.") Right-click any apps you want to pin and proceed as above.

By default, the tiles on the Start screen seem to be randomly placed into groups, but you can group them however you like. To move a tile to a different group, just drag and drop it wherever you want it, including in the middle of a group -- the other tiles in the group will automatically rearrange themselves to accommodate it.

To create a new group, drag a tile away from an existing group. When you drag it far enough away from the group, and also far enough away from other groups, a vertical bar appears. That means you can drop the tile, and a new group will be formed with the app in it. Now drag other tiles into the group.

To name the new group, hover your mouse over the bottom right corner of the Start screen and click the – (minus) icon. All of your groups and tiles will minimize to small thumbnails. Right-click a group, and a "Name group" icon appears in the bar at the bottom of the screen. Click the icon, type in the group's name, click the Name button and you're done. You can also move the

group to a different location on the Start screen: Right-click its thumbnail, drag it where you want it to be and drop it there.



Customizing the Windows 8 Start screen.

2. Run apps side by side

Windows 8 apps normally run full screen -- unlike Desktop apps, they don't appear in resizable windows, and at first glance, it appears that you can't run them side by side. However, using a feature that Microsoft calls Snap, you can run two Windows 8 apps, two Desktop apps, or one of each side by side. (Note that Snap works only if you have a minimum screen resolution of 1366 x 768.)

First, make sure you're running both apps. When you're in one of the apps, move your mouse to the upper-left hot corner. When a thumbnail of your last location appears, move your mouse down, and thumbnails of your currently running apps will appear. Click and hold the thumbnail of the app you want to run side by side with the current one, and then drag the thumbnail to the right and drop it. The two apps will now be running side by side, with the one you just dragged appearing in a sidebar on the left.



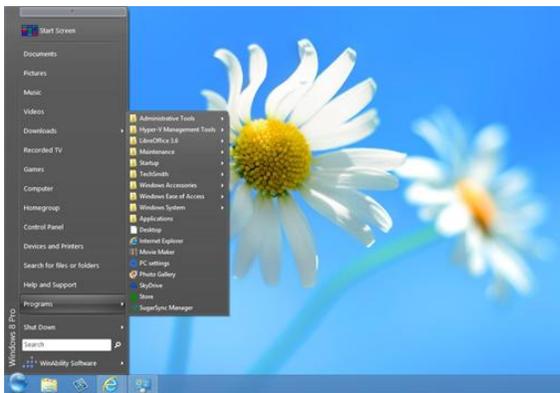
Running apps side by side in Windows 8.
You can use each app as you would normally. There's a border with three dots on it running on the right side of the app running in the sidebar, separating the apps.

Drag it to the left or right to resize the app so it takes up more or less of the screen. To go back to running just one app, drag the dotted bar to the edge of the screen.

3. Bring back the Start button

One of the biggest complaints about Windows 8 is that Microsoft killed the very useful Start button on the Desktop. However, I've found two downloads that bring back some of the Start button features. One of them even lets you bypass the Start screen entirely and go directly to the Desktop when you log into Windows 8.

StartFinity Starter Edition from WinAbility Software adds a Start button to the Desktop. Click it, and up pops a list that looks quite similar to the old Windows 7 Start menu, with links to Documents, Pictures, Music, Control Panel and so on. You can also click Programs to see and run all your Desktop apps. The Starter Edition is free, but if you want to customize the program, you'll have to pay \$14.95 for the full version.



StartFinity adds its own Start button and menu to the Windows 8 Desktop.

Another option is Start8 from Stardock

It offers a menu that's much like the old Windows 7 Start menu, with links to programs, Control Panel, Documents and so on; it also includes a search bar for finding programs and files.



In addition to offering a menu like Windows 7's Start menu, Start8 lets you bypass the Start screen and head straight to the Desktop when you sign into Windows 8.

It may be slightly confusing to use at first, though, because in order to pop up the menu, you press the Windows key instead of clicking a Start button. (In place of the Start button at the left edge of the taskbar is a Windows button; if you click that you'll go to the Windows 8 Start screen.)

Start8 also lets you boot directly to the Desktop, bypassing the Windows 8 Start screen. It offers some other extras as well, such as letting you disable the Charms bar when you're using the Desktop and disabling top-left hot corner on the Desktop. Start8 costs \$4.99, but you can try it for 30 days for free.

***Preston Gralla** is a contributing editor for Computerworld.com and the author of more than 40 books.*

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