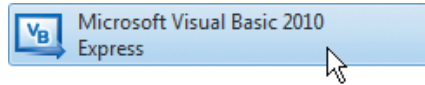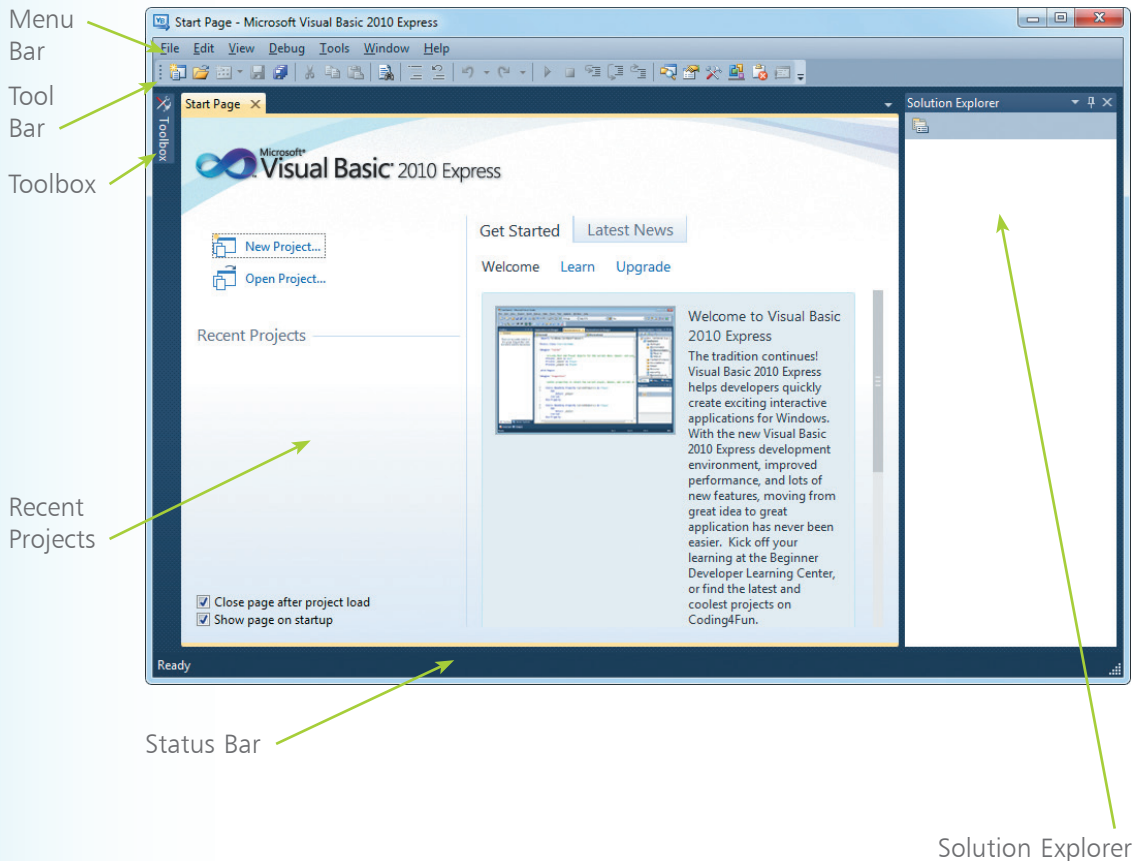# Exploring the IDE

To launch the Visual Basic Integrated Development Environment click Start, All Programs, then select the Visual Basic menu item:

Almost immediately the Visual Basic Integrated Development Environment (IDE) appears from which you have instant access to everything needed to produce complete Windows applications – from here you can create exciting visual interfaces, enter code, compile and execute applications, debug errors, and much more.

The Visual Basic IDE initially includes a default Start Page, along with the standard IDE components, and looks like this:

Menu Bar

Tool Bar

Toolbox

Recent Projects

Status Bar

Solution Explorer

Start Page elements

The default start page provides these useful features:

- **Recent Projects** – conveniently lists recently opened projects so you can select one to reopen, or create a brand new project

- **Get Started** – contains helpful hyperlinks offering assistance on Visual Basic topics

- **Latest News** – feeds the latest online news direct from the Microsoft Developer Network (MSDN)

Visual Basic IDE components

The Viual Basic IDE initially provides these standard features:

- **Menu Bar** – where you can select actions to perform on all your project files and to access Help. When a project is open extra menus of Project, Build, and Data, are shown in addition to the default menu selection of File, Edit, View, Debug, Tools, Window, and Help

- **Tool Bar** – where you can perform the most popular menu actions with just a single click on its associated shortcut icon

- **Toolbox** – where you can select visual elements to add to a project. Place the cursor over the Toolbox to see its contents. When a project is open "controls", such as Button, Label, CheckBox, RadioButton, and TextBox, are shown here

- **Solution Explorer** – where you can see at a glance all the files and resource components contained within an open project

- **Status Bar** – where you can read the state of the current activity being undertaken. When building an application a "Build started" message is displayed here, changing to a "Build succeeded" or "Build failed" message upon completion

Hot tip

You can return to the Start Page at any time by selecting View, Start Page on the Menu Bar.

Don't forget

Online elements of the Start Page require a live Internet connection – if the hyperlinks do not appear to work verify your Internet connection.