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1

Get Windows 8.1

This chapter explains how Windows 8.1 has evolved from previous releases, identifies the new features and helps you recognize what's needed to upgrade your existing computer. You can update to the latest versions of Windows 8.1, where you can choose to sign in to the Start screen or the Desktop.

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Releases of Microsoft Windows intended for business and server computers include: Windows NT, Windows 2000, Windows Server 2003, Windows Server 2008 and Windows Server 2012.



Windows RT and 8.1 RT are versions of Windows designed for tablet PCs with the ARM processor, used in cell phones, etc.



Windows 8.1 is an in-service update to Windows 8 available from Windows Store, while the Windows 8.1 Update 1 is available from Windows Update.

Windows 8.1

Windows 8.1 is the latest release of Microsoft Windows, the operating system for personal computers. There has been a long list of Windows releases including:

- 1995 Windows 95
- 1998 Windows 98
- 2000 Windows Me
- 2001 Windows XP
- 2003 Windows XP MCE (Media Center Edition)
- 2007 Windows Vista
- 2009 Windows 7
- 2012 Windows 8 and Windows RT
- 2013 Windows 8.1 and Windows 8.1 RT
- 2014 Windows 8.1 and 8.1 RT Update 1

When you buy a new computer, it is usually shipped with the latest available release of Windows. This takes advantage of the hardware features generally available at the time. Every year sees new and more powerful features being incorporated into the latest computers. In line with this, the requirements for Microsoft Windows have increased steadily. For example, the minimum and recommended amounts of system memory have increased from Windows 95 (4MB to 8MB), Windows 98 (16MB to 24MB), Windows XP (64MB to 128MB), Windows Vista (512MB to 1024MB), Windows 7 and Windows 8/8.1 (1GB to 2GB). There's a similar progression in terms of the processor power, the video graphics facilities and hard disk storage.

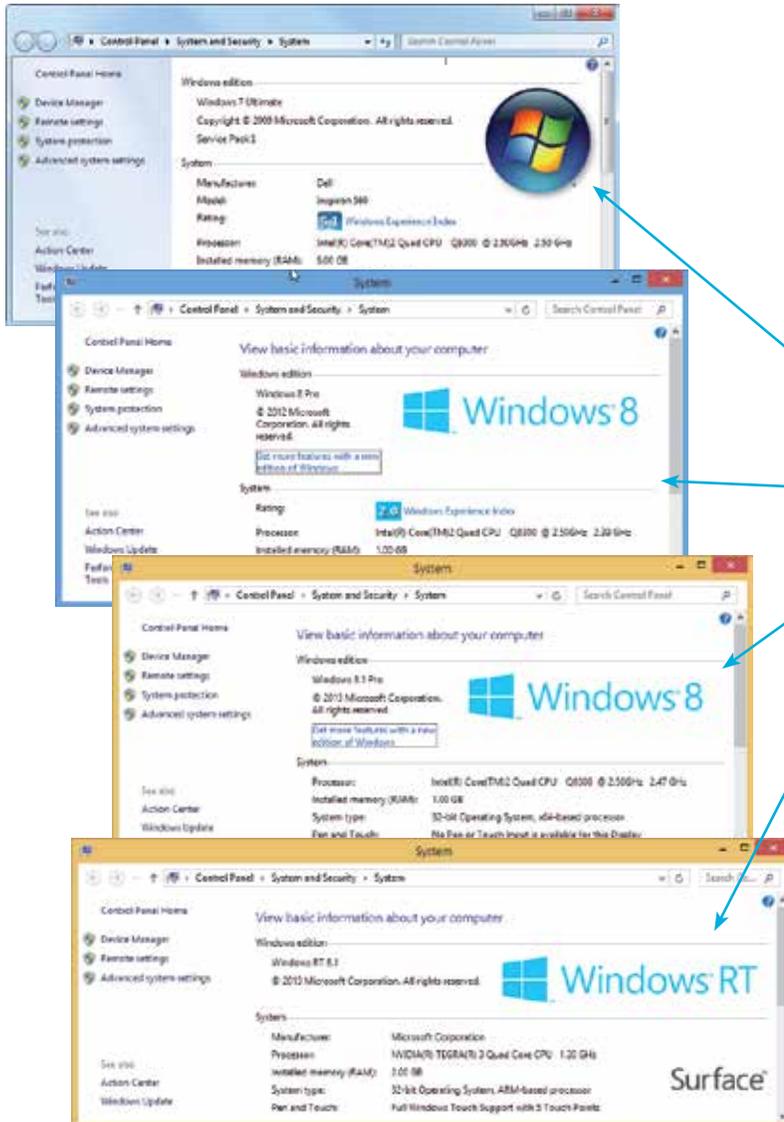
This means that your computer is likely to need upgrading or extending in order to use a later release of Windows, especially if you want to take advantage of new capabilities such as multi-touch. To take full advantage of new features, you may need a new computer, for example a “tablet” PC.

Each release enhances existing features and adds new facilities. Thus, the new Windows 8.1 is able to support all the functions of Windows 8, Windows 7 and prior releases, often with enhancements, plus its own unique new features. This allows you to use your computer to carry out tasks that would not have been possible with previous system releases. In an unusual twist, Windows 8.1 and Update 1 introduce features to improve use with older style computers.

Which Release is Installed?

To check which release of Windows is currently installed on your system, you can look in System properties.

- 1 Press WinKey + Break key or right click the Start button and click System to display the Properties
- 2 The operating system details will be displayed (along with user, memory and processor information)



WinKey is normally used to represent the Windows Logo key. Break key is the one normally labeled Pause/Break.



These images show the System properties for computers with:

Windows 7

Windows 8

Windows 8.1

Windows RT 8.1



It shows the Windows edition and service level. Other details vary, e.g. Windows 8.1 has no Experience Index (system rating). Some changes are not shown, e.g. Update 1.



The Start screen replaces the Start menu of previous releases of Windows. The Desktop is used for traditional Windows applications.



There are some new Windows 8.1 apps and some traditional desktop applications provided with Windows 8.1 at installation, but you will need to visit the Windows Store for many functions that were previously included.

Features of Windows 8.1

Tile-based User Interface

Windows 8.1 features a tile-based user interface, similar to the interface for the Windows Phone and optimized for touchscreens as well as mice and keyboards. The Start screen displays live application tiles which start Windows 8.1 apps. These run full-screen, or two can be displayed side-by-side on higher resolution (1366 × 768 and larger) monitors.

Windows 8.1 also displays a login/lock screen that shows the date and time and notifications, along with a customizable background.

Windows Store

Windows Store is a digital distribution application that is the only means of distributing Windows 8.1 apps to users. Microsoft will scan apps for security flaws and malware. Apps may be free or may carry a charge for download.

The Windows Store also allows developers to publish traditional desktop applications, providing links to those applications on the developer websites.

File Explorer

Access to files, folders and drives is provided by the new version of Windows Explorer, now known as File Explorer, which now includes a Ribbon interface to provide in-context access to commands.

Restore and Reset

With Windows 8.1 you can refresh your PC, which keeps all your documents, accounts, personal settings and modern apps but returns Windows to its original state. You can completely restore your PC to the state it was in when you first got it.

You can create a recovery drive on a USB key with the files needed to refresh or reset your PC even if Windows 8.1 can't boot. Restoring from the USB drive is a good option if you have a tablet PC without a disc drive or you just want to save space.

...cont'd

Shorter Start-up Times

Windows 8.1 has short boot times, because it saves the kernel's memory to the hard disk on shutdown (similar to the existing hibernate option) and reloads it on start up.

Internet Explorer 11

The latest version of the Windows web browser, Internet Explorer 11, dedicates the entire screen to your websites, giving a full edge-to-edge display. Only when you need them do the browser tabs and navigation controls appear and they quietly get out of the way when you don't want them anymore. By taking advantage of Windows 8.1 and your computer's hardware acceleration features, Internet Explorer makes browsing faster and more fluid and the security capabilities ensure that your access is safe.

Microsoft Account Integration

Your Windows User account is linked to your Microsoft account. This means that you will not lose your settings and files as you move from your home computer to your work laptop, or to any other computer also using Windows 8.1 and sign in via your Microsoft account.

Multiple Monitors

If you have multiple monitors, Windows 8.1 can span the taskbar across the desktop on each of the monitors. Similarly, you can show different wallpapers on different monitors, or the same wallpaper stretched across multiple monitors.

Removed Features

Several features that were present in Windows 7 and prior releases are no longer available in Windows 8. The Start menu and the Start button were removed, although a form of Start button has been restored to Windows 8.1. The Aero Glass themes have been replaced by Windows 8 themes. The Microsoft Gadgets Gallery has also been removed. Windows Media Center is not included and Windows Media Player does not provide DVD playback.



Some features are only available in particular editions of Windows 8.1, or have specific hardware prerequisites.



The Windows Media Center will be available for purchase as an add-on and this will include DVD playback capability.



The terms 32-bit and 64-bit relate to the way the processor handles memory. You'll also see the terms x86 and x64 used for 32-bit and 64-bit respectively.



The product functions and the graphics capabilities may vary depending on the system configuration.

What's Needed

The minimum configuration recommended by Microsoft to install and run Windows 8.1 is as follows:

- Processor 1GHz 32-bit or 64-bit
- System memory 1GB (32-bit) or 2GB (64-bit)
- Graphics DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 driver
- Hard disk drive 16GB (32-bit) or 20GB (64-bit) free
- Optical drive DVD/CD (for installation purposes)

There may be additional requirements for some features, for example:

- SVGA display monitor with 1024 x 768 or higher resolution (1600 x 1200 to snap three Windows apps)
- Internet access for online services and features such as Windows Update
- TV tuner for Windows Media Center functions
- Five point Multi-touch hardware for touch functions
- A network and multiple PCs running Windows 8.1 for HomeGroup file and printer sharing
- An optical drive with rewriter function for DVD/CD authoring and backup function
- Trusted Platform Module (TPM) 1.2 hardware for BitLocker encryption
- USB flash drive for Windows to Go/BitLocker To Go
- An additional 1GB memory, 15GB extra hard disk space and a processor with Intel VT or AMD-V hardware features, for Hyper-V virtualization
- Audio output (headphones or speakers) for music and sound in Windows Media Player

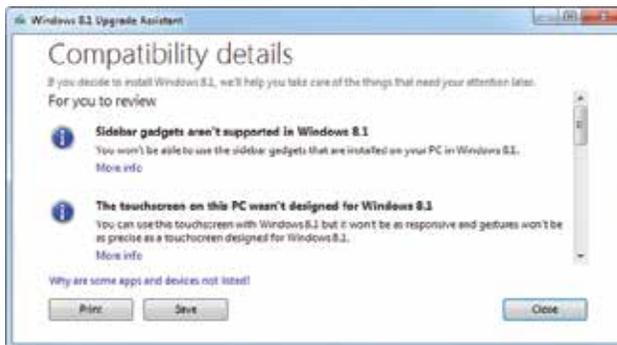
Upgrade Assistant

To have your computer assessed to see if it is able to support Windows 8.1, run the Windows 8.1 Setup program from the Windows 8.1 installation DVD (or from the Microsoft Web Installer site at www.microsoft.com/windows).



This program will assess your computer and generate a report to tell you if any changes are needed to support Windows 8.1 on your computer. It also identifies any incompatible software or accessories that you may have.

For example, when run on a PC that is currently running Windows 7, the Upgrade Assistant finds a number of compatibility issues.



Among the problems identified, you are told that Sidebar Gadgets from Windows 7 won't be usable when you upgrade to Windows 8.1. Also, the two point touch monitor that works with Windows 7 will not fully support touch gestures in Windows 8.1, where a five point multi-touch capability is required for full operation.



If your computer runs Windows 7 or Vista, it may already be able to run Windows 8.1, perhaps with a hardware upgrade. Computers running earlier versions of Windows are unlikely to have the necessary capabilities.



You can upgrade from Windows 7, Windows Vista and Windows XP, but you might not be able to keep all of your files, programs and settings.



The ARM processor is a RISC (reduced instruction set computer) processor with enhanced power-saving features, used for mobile phones, media players and tablet PCs. Currently, it is 32-bit only.



For the business user, the main choices are the Professional and the Enterprise editions.



Update 1, available from Windows Update (see page 228) adds further features to Windows 8.1 and Windows 8.1 RT.

New features offered by Update 1 will be noted where appropriate.

Windows 8.1 Editions

There are three editions of Windows 8.1 for computers based on the x32/x64 Intel or AMD processors (until now the usual processors for Windows PCs), plus an edition called Windows RT for PCs based on the ARM processor.

Windows 8.1

Windows 8.1 is the base edition, intended for consumers and containing the main features of Windows 8.1, including touchscreen and keyboard/mouse support, Windows 8.1 apps, Windows Store, Internet Explorer 11, enhanced Task Manager and improved multi-monitor support.

Windows 8.1 Pro

Windows 8.1 Pro is the edition designed for advanced users and business/technical professionals and includes all the features in Windows 8.1 plus features for encryption, virtualization, PC management and domain connectivity. Windows Media Center is not included in any edition of Windows 8.1 but is available as a chargeable media pack add-on to Windows 8.1 Pro.

Windows 8.1 Enterprise

Windows 8.1 Enterprise is the edition for customers with Software Assurance agreements and includes all the features of Windows 8.1 Pro plus features for IT organization, to enable PC management and deployment, advanced security, virtualization and new mobility scenarios. Unlike Windows 8.1 and Windows 8.1 Pro, it will not be supplied as a separate retail pack.

Windows RT

Windows RT is only available pre-installed on PCs and tablets powered by ARM processors. It is designed to enable new thin and lightweight form factors with enhanced battery life.

Windows RT does not support conventional Windows desktop applications, though it does include special touch-optimized desktop versions of Microsoft Office applications – Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint and OneNote.

Selecting your Edition

If you are unsure which of these editions of Windows 8.1 is best for you, it may be useful to focus on those features that are excluded or restricted in particular editions.

The main selective features are:

Feature	B	P/E	R
Multi-touch capability (hardware req)	Y	Y	Y
Desktop support (restricted in RT)	Y	Y	Y
Storage Spaces	Y	Y	-
Upgrade from Win 7 Starter/Home	Y	Y	-
Windows Media Player	Y	Y	-
x32/x64 processor support	Y	Y	-
BitLocker and BitLocker To Go	-	Y	-
Boot from VHD	-	Y	-
Client Hyper-V	-	Y	-
Domain Join	-	Y	-
Encrypting File System	-	Y	-
Group Policy	-	Y	-
Remote Desktop (host)	-	Y	-
Upgrade from Win 7 Pro/Ultimate	-	Y	-
Windows Media Center (add-in)	-	Y	-
ARM support	-	-	Y
Device encryption	-	-	Y
Microsoft Office (included)	-	-	Y

If one of these features is a must have, this will dictate the editions that you need to investigate in more detail. In practice, the choice will often be dictated by the hardware characteristics of your computer, since Windows RT is the only option for the ARM-based systems.

For home use on x32/x64 computers, the choice is between the Base and the Professional editions, while business users will have either Professional or Enterprise, depending on their company's preferences.

For traveling, a computer based on the power-saving ARM processor may be the preferred choice, except where there are conventional (legacy) applications that must be used.



Windows 8.1 has the same set of editions as Windows 8. The four editions are:

B	Base
P	Pro
E	Enterprise
R	RT



If you choose the Base edition and discover you do need additional features, you have the opportunity to upgrade your edition to the higher level.



Check at the Microsoft website for your location, or with your software retail store, to find your prices for Windows 8.1 upgrades, during and after the new-release promotion and for the prices for the full release of Windows 8.1.



If you install from DVD or USB, rather than running Setup from your existing Windows, you are also unable to retain Windows settings, personal data and applications.

Upgrade to Windows 8.1

If you are planning to install Windows 8.1 on an existing computer running a previous version of Windows, you may be able to upgrade and retain your existing Windows settings, personal data and applications.

The upgrade paths available include:

- Upgrade to Windows 8.1 (Base edition) from Windows 8 (Base edition) and retain Windows settings, personal data and applications
- Upgrade to Windows 8.1 Pro from Windows 8 Pro and retain Windows settings, personal data and applications
- Upgrade to Windows 8.1 (Base edition) from Windows 7 Starter, Home Basic or Home Premium and retain Windows settings, personal data and applications
- Upgrade to Windows 8.1 Pro from Windows 7 Starter, Home Basic, Home Premium, Professional or Ultimate and retain Windows settings, personal data and applications
- Upgrade to Windows 8.1 Enterprise from Windows 7 Professional or Enterprise and retain Windows settings, personal data and applications (volume licensees only)
- Upgrade to Windows 8.1 from Windows Vista (with SP1) and retain personal data and Windows settings
- Upgrade to Windows 8.1 from Windows XP (with SP3) or Vista (without SP1) and retain personal data only

There is only one upgrade path offered for Windows RT.

- Upgrade to Windows RT 8.1 from Windows RT via the Windows Store, and retain Windows settings, personal data and applications

You won't be able to upgrade or retain Windows settings, personal data and applications if you make a move between 32-bit and 64-bit configurations, whichever edition of Windows you are using.

First Logon

When you upgrade your existing Windows to Windows 8.1, there are several actions that you may be asked to carry out.



The first time you start up a new computer with Windows 8.1 preinstalled, you'll also be prompted for these actions.

Personalize

- 1 Choose one of the 25 color schemes offered (or accept the default scheme)



- 2 Provide a descriptive name (such as your name) for the computer and click the Next button

Apply Settings

- 1 Select Use express settings to accept the suggested settings for Windows updates, Security, Searching, etc.



- 2 Select Customize for your own choice of settings



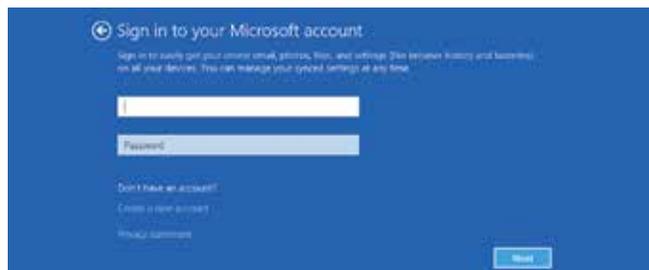
The Express Settings will enable Windows Update, Windows Firewall and Windows Defender, turn on network sharing and ensure that Windows 8.1 apps are personalized for your location.



If you do not have a Microsoft account, select Create a new account and provide the email address and the personal details requested so that a Microsoft account can be created.

Microsoft Account

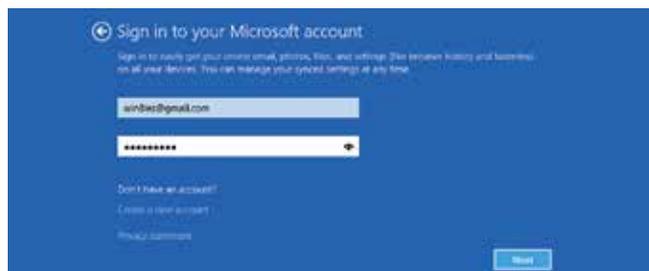
You'll be asked to provide the email address that you use as your Microsoft account, to let you access the Windows Store (see page 128), get online content and sync settings online.



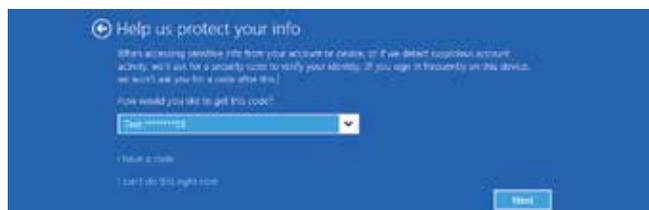
- 1 Enter the email address and password for your Microsoft account and click Next



If there is already a PC associated with your Microsoft account, you can choose to copy Windows apps and settings from that PC, or to set up the computer as a new PC.



- 2 Windows will send a security code to validate the computer, so click the down-arrow to choose the cell phone or email address associated with your account



- 3 Click Next to request the security code

...cont'd

- 4 Enter the code from the text or email message and click Next to register the computer



- 5 Click Next to confirm that your pictures, documents and settings will be saved to your OneDrive



- 6 Windows displays your Start screen with the initial selection of tiles for your Windows apps



In Windows 8 you could choose to use a Local Account not associated with a Microsoft account but you were not able to access the Windows Store to download Windows apps and your settings did not travel with you when you switched computers. However, in Windows 8.1 you can no longer use a local account when installing or upgrading (though you can still add a new user as a local account).



Microsoft provides the OneDrive (see page 126) which is online storage associated with your Microsoft account. This can be used to store your documents and pictures.



When Windows 8.1 finishes loading, it will normally display the Start screen, which shows tiles for some but not all of the Apps on your system.

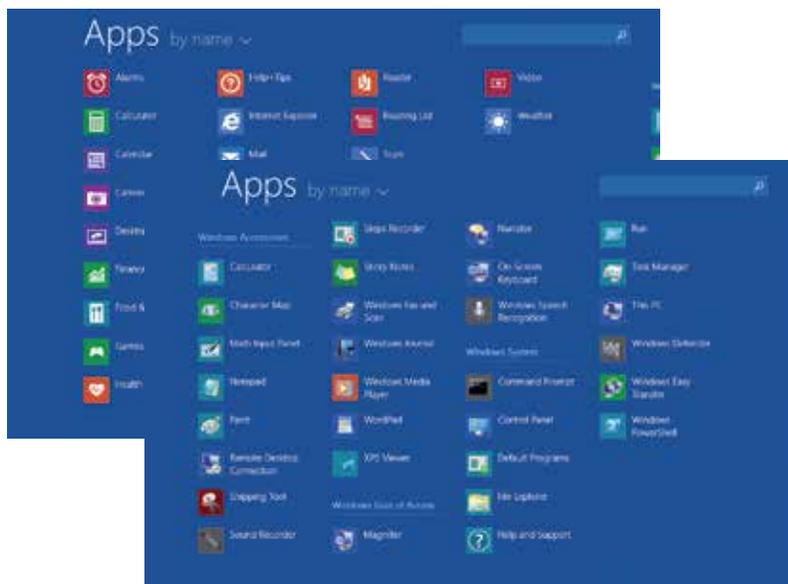
Apps Screen and Desktop

To view all the Apps installed on your system:

- 1 Move the mouse pointer and click the Arrow button that appears (or swipe up on a touchscreen)

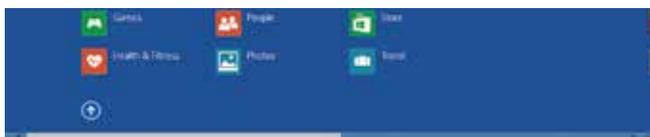


- 2 The Apps screen view displays all the Windows Apps. Swipe sideways to reveal the Accessories, Ease of Access and System components



You can pin apps from the Apps screen to the Start screen and the Taskbar (see page 69).

- 3 Click the Up Arrow button to return to the Start screen (or swipe down on a touchscreen)



...cont'd

- 4 To display the desktop, click the Desktop tile on the Start screen, or the Desktop App entry on the Apps screen



- 5 The Desktop will be displayed



- 6 Note the Start button and the application icons on the Taskbar



- 7 Desktop for Windows RT 8.1 is similar but features icons on the Taskbar for Office 2013 applications



- 8 Click the Start button on the Taskbar to return to the Start screen or press WinKey (the Windows Logo key)



Windows Accessories and conventional Windows applications, designed for previous versions of Windows, are run in the Desktop environment.



Windows RT 8.1 has a special version of Office 2013, and includes associated tiles on the Start screen, as well as icons on the Taskbar.





If your PC is currently running Windows 8 or Windows RT, it's free to update to Windows 8.1 or Windows RT 8.1. And you'll get this update from the Windows Store.

Updating Windows 8

If you have a PC that is currently running Windows 8, Windows Store will also provide the update for the system:

- 1 Visit the Windows Store and you will be offered the option to Update to Windows 8.1 for free



- 2 Click the panel to see more details of the update



- 3 Click Download and follow the prompts



The process updates or replaces some of your existing built-in apps. Other existing Windows Store apps don't transfer, but once the update is complete, you can reinstall as many as you need (see page 132 for Your apps).

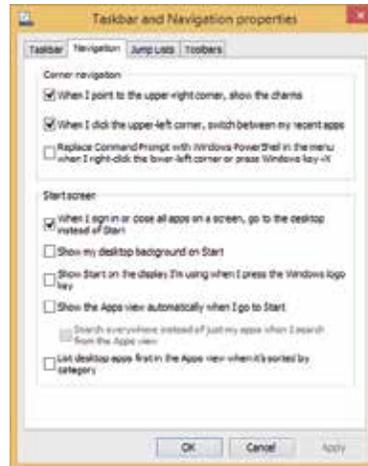
Windows 8.1 Update 1

If you are running Windows 8.1 or Windows 8.1 RT, you can install Update 1 from Windows Update (see page 228). The changes included in this update provide improved functionality for mouse and keyboard operations, with changes to the Start screen, Desktop and Taskbar, and easier multitasking between Windows apps and Desktop applications.

Boot to Desktop

Computers with mouse and keyboard will automatically boot to the Desktop, while Touch systems will continue to boot to the Start screen.

You can adjust this behavior using Taskbar Properties, where you select the Navigation tab and choose the initial screen for Startup.



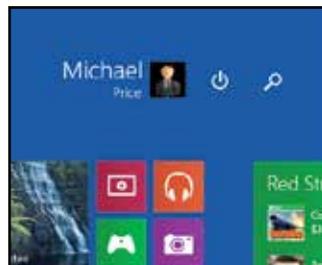
Enhanced Taskbar

The Taskbar, by default, will now include an Icon for the Store app. You can pin an icon to the Taskbar for any Windows app, by right-clicking its entry on the Startscreen or the Apps screen.



Search and Power Options

Search and Power Options icons are displayed next to the user name and account picture, on the top right corner of the Start screen.



These icons save you having to display the Charms bar when you want to carry out a Search, or when you want to Shutdown, Restart etc.



Make sure to install all updates related to Windows 8.1 Update 1, since some may be listed as optional.



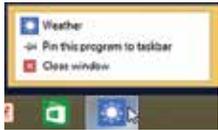
Changes that are less visible include reduced hardware requirements, meaning the operating system can now run on hardware with as little as 1GB RAM and 16GB storage.



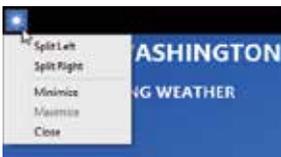
The Taskbar will also display shortcuts for all active Windows apps (see page 26), in the same way that it displays shortcuts for Desktop applications.



The Taskbar entry for an open Windows app has a Thumbnail and a Jump list.



Click the Windows app icon on the Title bar to display the context menu with options to Split, Minimize, Maximize and Close.



...cont'd

Taskbar on Startscreen and Windows Apps

Move the mouse pointer to the bottom edge of the screen, and the Taskbar will appear, on the Start screen or on the screen for the active Windows app.



Move the mouse point away from the Taskbar, and it will be removed from the screen.

Titlebar on Windows Apps

Move the mouse pointer to the top edge of the screen, and the Titlebar will appear on the screen for any Windows app. This shows the Windows app icon, the title, the minimize button and the close buttons.

