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1 Introducing Windows 8

This chapter explains what Windows is and what is new in Windows 8; including the new Windows 8 interface, Charms and touch screen capabilities.

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16 PC Requirements
17 32-Bit versus 64-Bit
18 Installing Windows 8

What is Windows?

Windows is an operating system for PCs (personal computers). The operating system is the software that organizes and controls all of the components (hardware and software) in your computer so that they integrate and work efficiently together.

The first operating system from Microsoft was known as MS-DOS (Microsoft Disk Operating System). This was a non-graphical, line-oriented, command-driven operating system, able to run only one application at a time.

The original Windows system was an interface manager that ran on top of the MS-DOS system, providing a graphical user interface and using clever processor and memory management to allow it to run more than one application or function at a time.

Don't forget

There have also been versions of Windows aimed specifically at businesses, including Windows NT, Windows 2000, Windows 2003 and Windows 2008.

The basic element of Windows was its "windowing" capability. A window (with a lower-case w) is a rectangular area used to display information or to run a program. Several windows can be opened at the same time so that you can work with multiple applications. This provided a dramatic increase in productivity when using PCs, in comparison with the original MS-DOS.

Microsoft released four versions of this interface management Windows, with numerous intermediate versions, including:

- 1985 – Windows 1.0
- 1987 – Windows 2.0, 2.1 and 2.11
- 1990 – Windows 3.0, 3.1, 3.11 (Windows for Workgroups)
- 1995 – Windows 95, 98, 98 SE and Me (Millennium Edition)

Hot tip

Windows XP and later versions no longer incorporate MS-DOS, though they do still feature a Command Prompt that permits DOS-like command line functions.

The next version, Windows XP, was a full operating system in its own right. This was eventually followed by Windows Vista:

- 2001 – Windows XP (eXPerience) Home and Professional
- 2007 – Windows Vista Home, Home Premium, Ultimate etc
- 2009 – Windows 7 Starter, Home Premium, Ultimate etc

About Windows 8

The latest version of Windows was released in 2012.

- 2012 – Windows 8, Windows 8 Pro and Windows RT. This is the eighth major version (as Microsoft views the Windows product release cycle)

One of the main developments with Windows 8 is that it is designed to work equally well on touch screen devices and traditional computers. The number of versions of Windows 8 has been consolidated too, compared with previous versions and there are now three main options on offer.

Don't forget

The Windows logo has also been redesigned, to make it look more like a window and less like a flag, as in previous versions.

Windows 8

This is the main consumer version of the software. It is a fully-featured version including all of the new features such as the new Windows 8 interface, Windows 8 apps, the improved File Explorer and Internet Explorer 10 which has versions for both the Windows 8 interface and the traditional Desktop environment. Windows 8 is designed to work equally effectively on desktop PCs, laptops and also touch screen computers and tablets. This version of Windows 8 can be upgraded to from, among others, Windows 7 Starter, Home Basic and Home Premium.

Windows 8 Pro

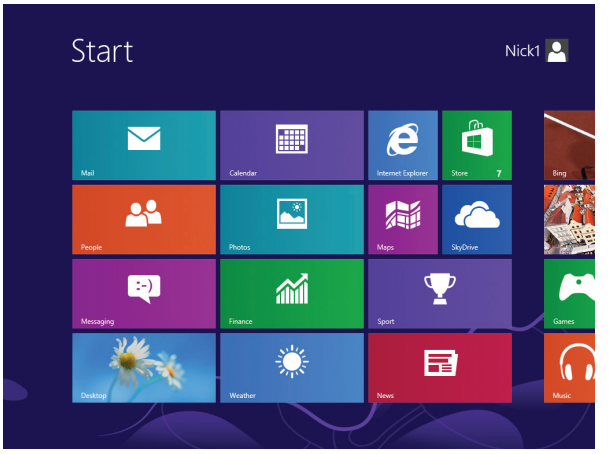
This is targeted more towards the business user. It contains all of the features in the Windows 8 version plus added features for security encryption and PC management. If you are upgrading from Windows 7 Professional or Ultimate then this is the version to use.

Windows RT

This version of Windows 8 is only available pre-installed on PCs and tablets with ARM processors, which help with a lightweight design and improved battery life for mobile devices. The RT version also comes with a pre-installed version of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Powerpoint and OneNote) that is optimized for use on touch screen devices.

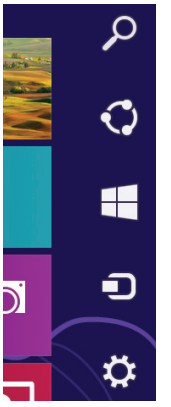
Windows 8 Interface

Windows 8 is the most significant change to the Windows operating system since Windows 95 helped redefine the way that we look at personal computers. The most obvious change in Windows 8 is the new Windows 8 interface. This will be the first view of Windows 8 and all of the elements are accessed through the brightly colored Start screen.



The Windows 8 interface defines one of the main purposes of Windows 8: it is an operating system designed for the mobile generation so it will work in the same way on a desktop, laptop or tablet computer. It is the same operating system for all of these devices and it is also possible to synchronize Windows 8 so that all of your settings and apps will be available over multiple devices through an online Microsoft Account.

Another innovation in Windows 8 is the greater use of custom apps (applications) that are accessed from the Start screen. This is done through the colored tiles: each tile gives access to the relevant app. For instance, if you click or tap on the Photos app you will be able to view, organize and edit your photo files and folders. A lot of the Windows 8 apps are linked together too, so it is easy to share content through your apps. There are also a number of Windows 8 Charms that can be accessed at any point within Windows 8 to give a range of functionality. These can be accessed from the right-hand side of the screen.



Beware

There is no Start Button in Windows 8. This has been replaced by the Start screen.

Don't forget

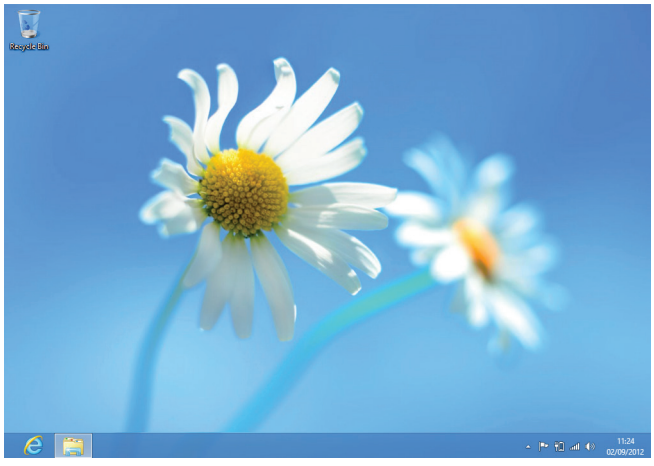
Windows 8 apps are designed to be used in full-screen mode and cannot be minimized in the traditional way with Windows programs.

Don't forget

For a detailed look at working with the Windows 8 Charms see Chapter Two.

Windows 8 is also optimized for touch screen use, so it is ideal for using with a tablet (such as the Microsoft Surface) where all of the screen navigation can be done by tapping, swiping and pinching on the screen. These features can also be used on desktops and laptops that have this functionality.

Even though Windows 8 has a very modern look with the Windows 8 interface, the old favorites such as the Desktop are not far away. The Desktop and all of its functionality that users have got used to with previous versions of Windows is available at the click or tap of a button and this takes you into an environment that, initially, may be more familiar.



In a way, Windows 8 can be thought of as two operating systems that have been merged: the new Windows 8 interface, with its reliance on apps; and the traditional Windows interface with access to items through the Desktop.

Don't forget

Most leading laptop manufactuers now have a range of touch screen laptops, such as the Acer Aspire S7 and S5, HP's Envy TouchSmart and Spectre and Sony's VAIO T and VAIO E. There are also various tablets and hybrids, which are tablets with docking and keyboard facilities.

Beware

It can take a little time getting used to working with the two interfaces.

Navigating Windows 8

Since Windows 8 is optimized for use with touch screen devices this introduces a new factor when it comes to navigating around the system, particularly the new Windows 8 interface. The three ways of doing this are:

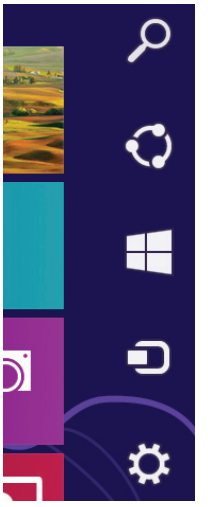
- Mouse
- Keyboard
- Touch

Some of these methods can be used in conjunction with each other (for instance mouse and keyboard, and touch and keyboard) but the main ways of getting around Windows 8 with each are:

Mouse

- Move the mouse to the bottom left-hand corner to access the Start screen. Click on it once when it appears. this can be done from any app or the Desktop

- Move the cursor over the top or bottom right-hand corners to access the Charms bar. Move down and click on one to access it

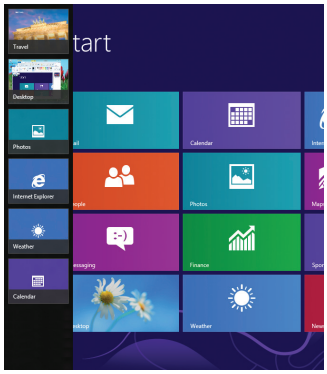


Don't forget

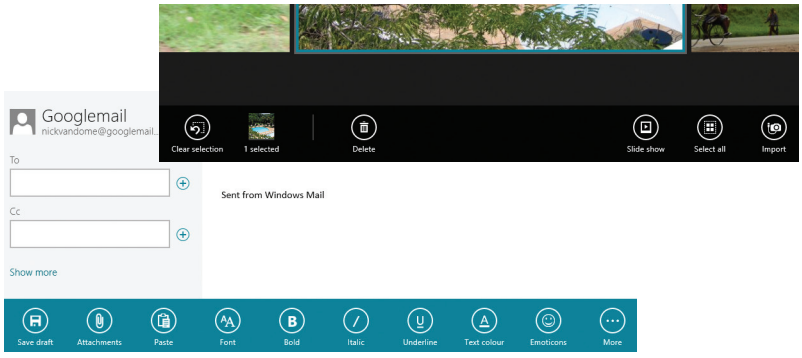
One of the most obvious changes on the Start screen is how to turn off or restart your Windows 8 computer (see page 58).

- Move the cursor over the top left-hand corner to view the most recently-used app. Click on it to access it

- Move the cursor over the top left-hand corner and drag down the left-hand side to view all of the currently-open apps (App Switcher). Click on one to access it



- In an open Windows 8 app, right-click to access the bottom toolbar. This will have options specific to the app in use



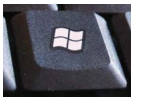
- In an open Windows 8 app, click and hold at the top of the window and drag down to the bottom of the screen to close the app

You can also close a Windows 8 app with the mouse by accessing the App Switcher and right-clicking on one of the apps and then clicking on the **Close** button.

...cont'd

Keyboard

The majority of the keyboard shortcuts for navigating around Windows 8 are accessed in conjunction with the WinKey. Press:

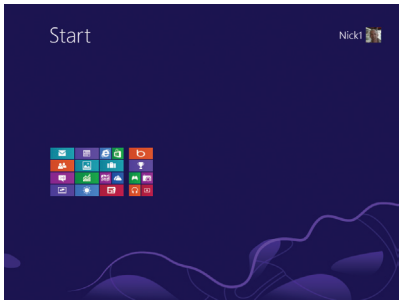


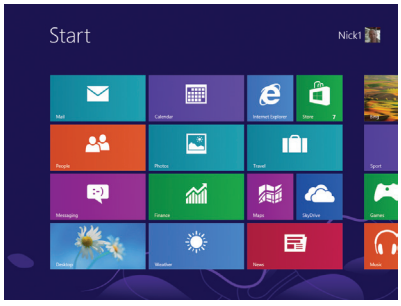
- **WinKey** to access the Start screen at any time
- **WinKey** + **L** to lock the computer and display the Lock screen
- **WinKey** + **C** to access the Charms bar
- **WinKey** + **I** to access the Settings Charm
- **WinKey** + **K** to access the Devices Charm
- **WinKey** + **H** to access the Sharing Charm
- **WinKey** + **Q** to access the Search Charm to search over apps
- **WinKey** + **F** to access the Search Charm to search over files
- **WinKey** + **D** to access the Desktop
- **WinKey** + **M** to access the Desktop with the active window minimized
- **WinKey** + **E** to access File Explorer, displaying the Computer folder
- **WinKey** + **T** to display the thumbnails on the Desktop Taskbar
- **WinKey** + **U** to access the Ease of Access Center
- **WinKey** + **X** to access administration tools and quick access to items including the Desktop and the Control Panel
- **WinKey** + **Z** in a Windows 8 app to display the app's toolbar at the bottom of the screen
- **Alt** + **F4** to close a Windows 8 app
- **Ctrl** + **Shift** + **Esc** to access the Task Manager

Touch

To navigate around Windows 8 with a touch screen device:

- Tap on an item to access it
- Swipe inwards from the right-hand edge to access the Charms bar
- Swipe inwards from the left-hand edge to switch between currently-open apps
- Swipe inwards slowly from the left-hand edge and drag one of the apps away from the App Switcher to snap it to the left-hand side
- Swipe inwards from the left and then back again to show the currently-open apps (App Switcher)
- In an open Windows 8 app, swipe upwards from the bottom of the screen, or downwards from the top of the screen, to access the app's toolbar
- In an open Windows 8 app, swipe down from inside the app to view its settings
- In an open Windows 8 app, hold at the top of the screen and drag down to the bottom to close the app
- On the Start screen, swipe down on an app's tile to view additional options relating to the app
- Pinch outwards to minimize the Start screen. Pinch inwards to return to normal view





To perform a right-click operation on a Windows 8 touch screen device, such as a tablet, tap and hold on an item on the screen until a contextual menu appears. This will contain the options that you can perform for the selected item.

Swipe left or right on the screen to move through the Start screen.

PC Requirements

The recommended specifications for PCs running Windows 8 are based on the processor mode used. On most current processors, you have the choice of 32-bit or 64-bit mode.

Windows 8 for 32-bit Processor Mode

The PC should have these minimum hardware requirements:

- Processor 1 GHz
- System Memory 1 GB
- Graphics SVGA (800x600)
- Graphics adapter DirectX9 class with WDDM 1.0 driver
- Graphics memory 128 MB (for Aero support)
- Hard Disk 16 GB available space
- Other DVD-RW optical drive

Windows 8 for 64-bit Processor Mode

The PC should have these minimum hardware requirements:

- Processor 1 GHz
- System Memory 2 GB
- Graphics SVGA (800x600)
- Graphics adapter DirectX9 class with WDDM 1.0 driver
- Graphics memory 128 MB (for Aero support)
- Hard Disk 20 GB
- Other DVD-RW optical drive

Windows Virtual PC requires a PC with Intel-VT or AMD-V enabled in the CPU, since the software relies on hardware virtualization features.

If you want to upgrade your existing PC to run Windows 8, you can run the Windows 8 Upgrade Assistant (see page 18) to identify any potential problems or short-comings.

Don't forget

These are the supported specifications. However, Windows 8 will work with virtually any graphics hardware that supports Windows XP or later.

Hot tip

Additional hardware includes a pointing device such as a mouse, a sound card and speakers. Note that BitLocker Drive Encryption requires a TPM 1.2 chip or a USB 2.0 flash drive.

32-Bit versus 64-Bit

As well as choosing your Windows 8 edition, you also need to decide between the 32-bit and the 64-bit versions of the operating system. This choice is available for all editions of Windows 8 with the retail packs including installation DVDs for each modes.

The 32-bit or 64-bit nomenclature refers to the memory address length which the processor can reference. This dictates the maximum amount of memory, which is 4 GB for 32-bit mode (or more exactly 3.4 GB, since some memory needs to be allocated to other purposes). For 64-bit mode, the maximum may be much higher, though the Windows 8 editions do not make full use of the potential. As well as more memory, 64-bit mode will also be faster, typically about 10%.

However, you need applications that are specifically optimized for 64-bit processing to take advantage of the speed improvements and memory increase. Many games for example include the necessary enhancements.

Remember that choosing a 64-bit system means that you can no longer run 16-bit applications. This is only a problem if you use very old software (from the Windows 3.1 days).

More seriously, existing 32-bit drivers for your devices will not operate in 64-bit mode, so you will have to locate 64-bit versions of the drivers. You may have problems with some devices, particularly the older ones.

You may also find that running 32-bit applications in a 64-bit operating system might actually be slower, due to the additional overheads imposed by conversion between the address systems.

In summary, if you have a 64-bit capable computer but use older hardware or 32-bit applications, you might do better to stay with the 32-bit version of Windows 8. With the latest hardware and drivers, and applications that are 64-bit optimized, for especially demanding applications such as video editing or image packages, the switch to 64-bit and higher memory would offer significant improvements.

It will not be long before 64-bit computing becomes the standard, and 32-bit operation becomes an optional extra, but for the present there are still large numbers of 32-bit applications.

If your computer is more than a few years old, it is quite possible that you can only run the 32-bit version of Windows 8.

Installing Windows 8

As with many things to do with Windows 8, the installation process has been simplified as much as possible. Depending on how you have obtained Windows 8 the options are:

- Upgrade – Replace an older version of Windows, retaining the installed applications and settings
- Dual Boot – Install Windows 8 while retaining the existing version of Windows, using a second disk partition. You'll need to install required applications to the new system
- Clean Install – Add Windows 8 to a newly-formatted disk, then install all required applications
- Pre-install – Buy a new PC with Windows 8 already installed, then install the required apps

When you have an existing version of Windows on your PC, you can purchase an Upgrade version of Windows 8, which will be at a reduced price from the full version.

In previous versions of Windows there was an Upgrade Advisor that checked your PC to see if there were any issues in regard to updating to the next version of Windows. However, with Windows 8 this is all incorporated into the Windows 8 Setup process itself. If you are upgrading from a previous version of Windows there is a Windows 8 Upgrade Assistant that will help with the installation process. Initially it will check the compatibility of your current setup and apps and flag up any issues. Then the installation will go through the following steps:

- Product key. This will be needed if you install your copy of Windows 8 from a DVD
- Personalize. These are settings that will be applied to your version of Windows 8. They include the color for the Start screen, a name for your computer and a connection to a wireless network. These settings can be selected within PC Settings once Windows 8 has been installed too
- Settings. You can choose to have express settings applied, or customize them
- Microsoft Account. You can set up a Microsoft Account during installation, or once you have started Windows 8

Upgrades to Windows 8 can be downloaded from www.windows.com. There is also a packaged DVD version available. The upgrade price for the download version of Windows 8 is $39.99 (approx. £25); the boxed version is $69.99 (approx. £45), both for an introductory period until January 31, 2013. If you have bought an eligible copy of Windows 7 since June 2, 2012 you should qualify for the Windows Upgrade Offer whereby you will be able to purchase a copy of Windows 8 for $14.99 (£14.99 in UK), until January 31, 2013. *(Prices correct at the time of printing.)*

If you are upgrading from Windows 7 you will be able to keep all of your settings, files and apps; if you are upgrading from Windows Vista you will be able to bring your settings and files; if upgrading from Windows XP you will only be able to bring your personal files.