Getting Started with Windows 7

Software: Windows 7 Professional   **Availability:** Purchase

Overview

Windows 7, released in the Fall of 2009, is the current version of Microsoft's Windows operating system software. Since Windows Vista was never implemented on institutional computers relevant sections of this help sheet are written from the perspective of someone accustomed to Windows XP. (If you have seen or used Windows Vista, Windows 7 will look quite familiar. Users moving from Windows XP directly to Windows 7 will notice more of a change.)

Although a few of the basic features, tools and interface have been moved or renamed, most of what you are used to in Windows XP is still available in Windows 7. The overall look has been updated and new features have been added to help you find and manage your files. Perhaps most importantly, the underlying system management software has significantly changed to be more stable and to take better advantage of modern hardware.

Windows 7 is available in various editions. All use the same underlying software technology and have the same interface but they contain different combinations of features. Home Premium, Professional and Ultimate are the retail versions you are most likely to see.

Something else to keep in mind for those migrating from Windows XP (skipping Vista) is software compatability: some older programs may not run on the new operating system. Some programs may simply need a free update or patch, usually available via the manufacturer's Web site or as an option in the program's Help menu. Other programs, especially versions older than about 3 years, may require a purchased upgrade. If a program stops working when you upgrade to Windows 7, make sure that you have the most recent manufacturer updates and check the Compatability Center on Microsoft's Web site (see Further Information, page 5).

User Accounts

User Accounts are maintained in Windows 7 allowing for privacy and personalization. Faculty and Staff will continue using Active Directory, which seamlessly logs users in to the campus network as they log in to Windows on the computer.

The Desktop

What you'll see when your computer has started up will have a lot in common with previous versions of Windows. But now you get the new *Aero Desktop Experience*. Aero Desktop is what Microsoft calls the new look and feel: windows now have transluscent "glass" frames so you can see what's behind them while resizing and repositioning windows is smoother and seems more effortless with new, subtle animations.

Navigating, Managing and Finding your Files and Folders

Whether you have two windows open or ten you now have several tools to help you manage them so that you can efficiently find the one you want.

Snap

To maximize use of the space on your screen you can *snap* the edges of windows right up to the last pixel at the edge of the screen.

Snapping a window to the side:

1. Click and drag the title bar of any window to the left or right edge of the screen.
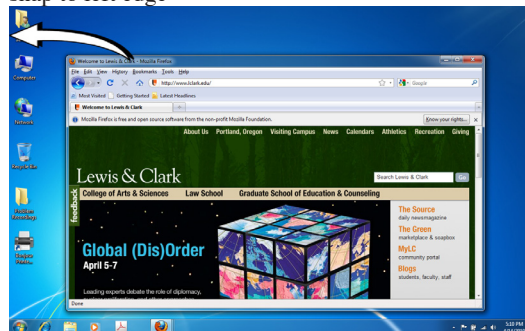
snap to left edge

figure 1

2. When you see the predicted outline of your new window, release the mouse button to complete the snap.
3. Do the same with another window, dragging it to the other side of the screen.
   You now have two windows side by side, both as large as they can be while remaining 100% visible.

• Maximizing two windows can be helpful when dragging files from one locaton to another. You can see both the original location and the destination.
• Snap can be helpful to line up windows if you need to compare two documents side-by-side.
• To return a window to its former size just click and drag the title bar away from the monitor edge and release.
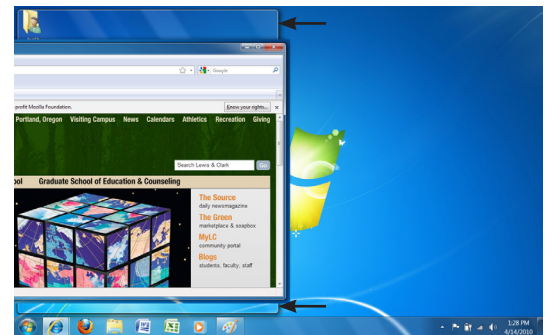

figure 2

Snap to Top

Snap Vertically

You can also Snap a window vertically. *Snapping Vertically* increases the height of the window to fill the screen (without affecting the window width) as opposed to *Snapping to the Top* which moves the window upward so that the top edge of the title bar is at the top edge of your screen. To Snap a window to the Top, click and drag the title bar to the top edge of your screen. To Snap Vertically, click and drag the top edge of the title bar.
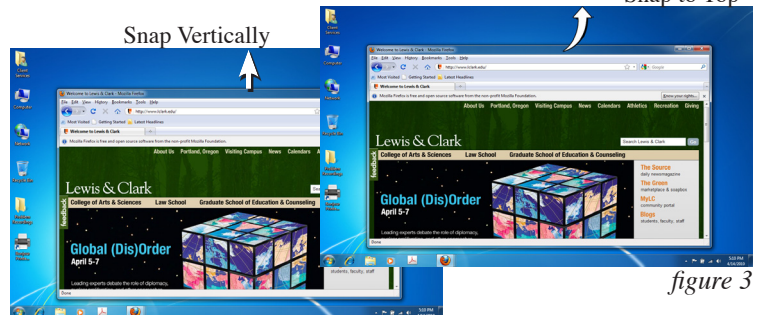
figure 3

Peek

Peek

Peek helps you find files without abandoning your current working window. It makes open windows transparent so that you can see through to the Desktop. It's as easy as pointing to the Desktop button at the right edge of the Taskbar (see figure 6, page 3). To return to your work move your pointer away from the button. If you click the button, windows will disappear (they'll be minimized but still available via the Task Bar) and you'll be at the Desktop.

The same concept works with program and window icons in the Taskbar: point at the icon to view just that window, file or program. (This variation of Peek overlaps a bit with the functionality of Jump Lists, page 3.)

Outlines of temporarily   Desktop   *figure 4*
transparent windows   Button

If you are working in a program it makes all other programs' windows transparent so that you can see what else you have open in the same program.

Shake

Even the best multi-tasker can get distracted by too many open programs and files. To get rid of the clutter point your mouse at the title bar of the window you want to focus on. Click and continue to hold the mouse button down while you wiggle, jiggle or "shake" the mouse until you are left with just the window you want.

As with *Peek*, windows are minimized, not closed entirely.

To replace the windows to their pre-shake size and location, click the title bar and shake the same window a second time.
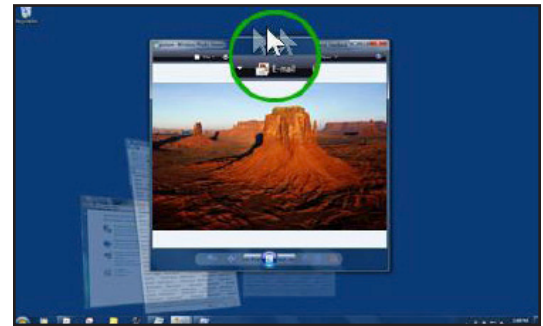

figure 5

Taskbar

Check out the new Taskbar! The Taskbar got a significant facelift for Windows 7 – the sleek *Aero* look is enhanced by the consolidation of open windows and a reduced number of icons in the System Tray at the right end of the Taskbar. Remember that beauty is more than skin deep: there are a variety of features that will help you keep things organized and help you find files and programs when you need them.

Pinned Programs Volume Indicator Desktop Button

Start Menu SEP icon (antivirus) Notification Area

figure 6

Quick Access

Don't let the redesigned Taskbar intimidate you – you will soon appreciate its flexibility. Now you can Pin your favorite programs to the Taskbar, like you have been able to do to the Start menu in the past. What makes this exciting is that you have direct access to the Pinned program and the associated Jump List.

Jump Lists are lists of frequently accessed items including files, folders, websites, etc. and are organized by the program you use to open them. You'll find Jump Lists associated with programs permanently pinned to the Taskbar and Start menu as well as with open programs. Since Jump Lists look a bit like the pre-existing Taskbar Preview (that would show a consolidated list of the open windows associated with the same program) Taskbar Preview has been updated. Taskbar Preview now displays thumbnail images of the open windows associated with open programs.

Pinning a Program to the Taskbar:

To Pin a program to the Taskbar: right-click the program's icon and select Pin this program to taskbar. When you Exit the program the icon will remain visible in the taskbar and the Jump List will still be accessible. You can rearrange pinned programs by clicking and dragging their icons. If you want a program pinned to both the Start menu and the Taskbar you'll have to pin it to each one individually.

Accessing a Jump List:

There are two ways to access Jump Lists. You can right-click a program's Taskbar button or you can click and drag the button toward the Desktop. Click an item in the Jump List to open it.
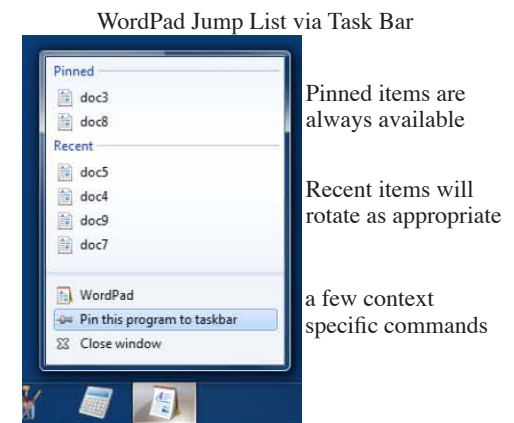
WordPad Jump List via Task Bar

Pinned items are always available

Recent items will rotate as appropriate

a few context specific commands

figure 7

Pinning an Item to a Jump List:

If there is a file that you use regularly you can make sure that it never gets bumped off of the appropriate Jump List by Pinning that item. The process is similar to pinning a program to the Taskbar: right-click the item you want and select Pin to...

Accessing the Taskbar Preview:

Compared to earlier versions, Windows 7 is much more likely to consolidate open windows for any one program under a single icon representing that program. To view the thumbnail images of open windows for a program, hover your mouse over the program icon in the Taskbar. As you move your mouse (no clicking, no need to hold the button) each thumbnail will enlarge as you cross over it. When you find the one you want, click it to bring it up as your active window.

Internet Explorer Jump List via Taskbar
Right-Click Internet Explorer Icon

Internet Explorer Taskbar Preview
Hover Mouse over Internet Explorer Icon

figure 8

Desktop Button

The Desktop Button, that makes everything else disappear so that you can see your entire Desktop has been moved to the far right end of the Taskbar, to the right of the Notification area. Instead of the old Taskbar icon ( ) you see a blank, rectangular button (see figure 6). Click the button to switch to the Desktop or let your mouse hover over the button to temporarily Peek at the Desktop.

Start Menu

If you've already read the Task Bar section, you know about the Jump Lists (page 3) associated with Pinned programs. Programs pinned to the Start menu also have associated Jump Lists (figure 11, page 5) – one more way Windows 7 is trying to make it easier for you to find your files. The Start menu has a few other new tricks that are worth knowing about, too.

Libraries

We are all familiar with organizing files by sorting them into folders. Using folders and subfolders based on subject matter is still the primary method you'll use to keep things straight but Libraries give you another option. A Library organizes files based on file-type, regardless of where they are stored, and displays them as one list – without moving the actual file(s). Libraries can include files that are not stored on your hard drive. You can choose to include files from network drives, external hard drives, etc. Of course you'll need to have that drive connected at the time you are viewing a Library to be able to see those files.

Libraries:
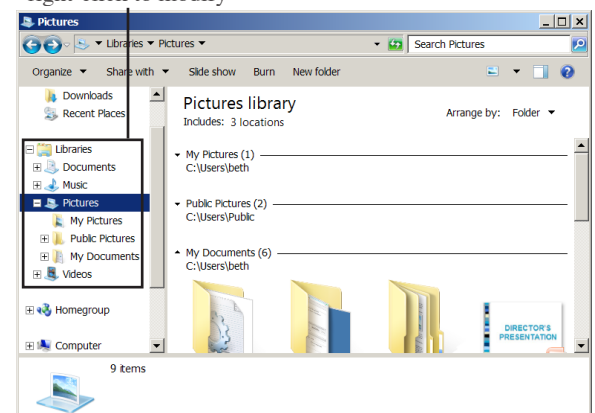single-click to view contents
right-click to modify

figure 9
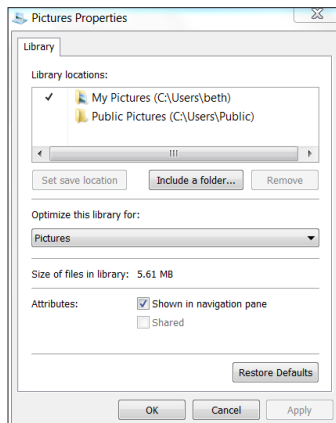
Library Properties

figure 10

There are four Libraries pre-created for you: Documents, Music, Pictures and Videos. The first three are available directly on the Start menu (figure 11). All 4 are available in the Navigation area on the left side of any Windows window (figure 9). To adjust settings for any of these libraries simple right-click the icon and select Library Properties.

To create a new Library, click once to select the Libraries folder icon, then click the New Library button in the toolbar.

Search

Search itself is not new, but how Search works is new. When you start typing in the Search box on the start menu, your computer immediately starts looking for matching files, folders, programs, e-mail messages, etc. As potential matches are found they are displayed above the Search, covering the Start menu. The list is sorted by types of items: all files will show up as a group, all programs another group, e-mail messages a third, etc. Keep typing until you see what you are looking for then click to go directly to that item. If the exact item you are looking for doesn't appear select the appropriate category to view an expanded list of that type of item.
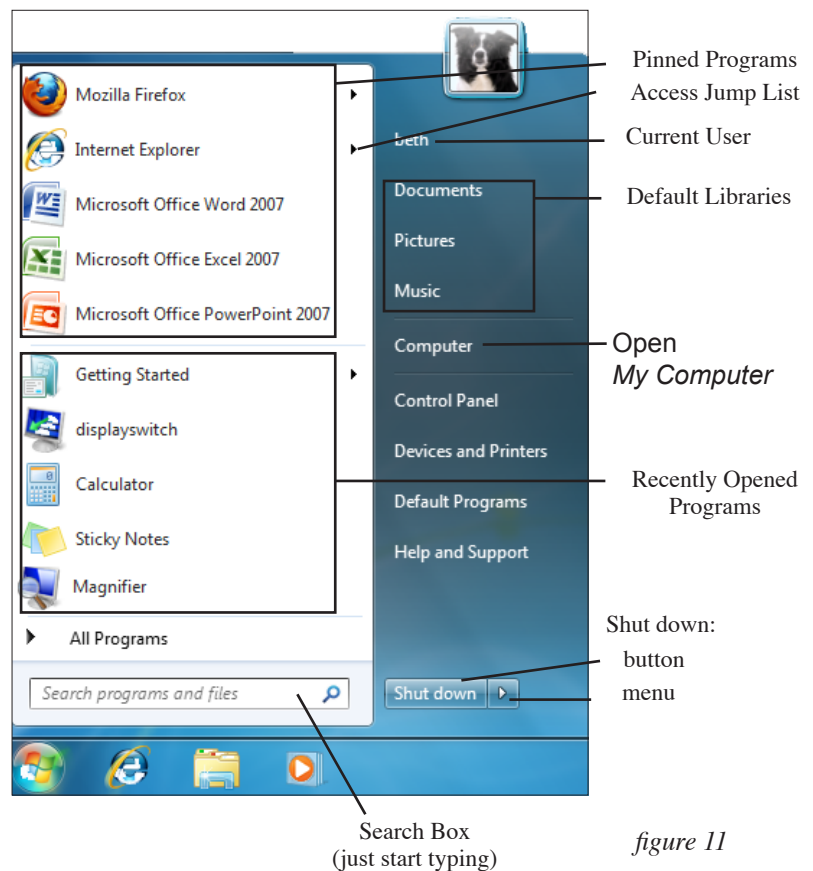

Pinned Programs

Access Jump List

Current User

Default Libraries

Open
My Computer

Recently Opened
Programs

Shut down:
   button
   menu

Search Box
(just start typing)

figure 11

Further Information

http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us - Windows home

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows_7_editions - Compares all 6 editions of Windows 7

http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/products/system-requirements - Read what hardware you need to run Windows 7, download Upgrade Advisor and access Compatibility Center

http://www.microsoft.com/windows/compatibility/windows-7/en-us/ - Find out if your version of a program will work with Windows 7

This page is intentionaly blank.