

Getting to Know Windows 10

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Get Started App

A good way to get an introduction to Windows 10 is to run the Get Started App.

Start Button and menu



The start button now brings up a hybrid menu incorporating features of Windows 7 and Windows 8.

The items on the left are the most used programs and apps as Windows learns over time based on your usage. You cannot modify this list except to ask that a program not show on the list. When you first use Start the list is populated by programs of Microsoft's choice. These will change over time as you use your system. The lower portion is also pre-set with File Explorer, Settings, Power and All Apps. At this time there is no way to modify the left hand column.

The right hand side is similar to Windows 8 with the tiles for programs you want rapid access to. Again, Microsoft has set up a starting list of things they want you to use, mostly apps. If you have migrated from Windows 8 your app selections from there will also be in the list. The size of the area for showing tiles can be changed by dragging the right edge.

The tiles can be manipulated in many ways. They can be rearranged, resized, deleted or added to. Additionally you can create groups to cluster programs that you want together.

A new feature is the ability to uninstall programs directly from the start menu.

Adding programs to the start menu

To add a program to the start screen go to all apps and find the program you want to add. Right click it and select pin to start. When you have pinned it you can open the start menu and move it to the location of your choice as well as resizing it if desired.

Adding programs to the task bar

To add a program to the task bar find the program you want, either in the start menu or from all apps. Right click it and select pin to taskbar.

Change start menu to Classic Shell or Start 10

Despite the improvements to the start menu from Windows 8 it is still not as friendly or useable as Windows 7. You might want to consider replacing the start menu with Classic Shell (available for free on ninite.com) or Start 10 (available from stardock.com for \$4.99.)

Both of these will give you an experience far closer to what you had in Windows 7 or XP.

Settings vs. control panel

Microsoft is in the process of moving all settings from the Control panel to the Settings App. Not everything has been moved yet so you will still need to have access to the control panel for the foreseeable future.

Cortana

Cortana is Microsoft's answer to Siri. It is designed to be a digital assistant. It will accept both typewritten and spoken commands if your system has a microphone. To work at its best you need to have logged in with a Microsoft account. While this involves giving up some privacy it is the most effective way to get Cortana to give you the results you want.

When you do a search from the start menu or the Cortana box you are using Cortana to do the search. It will return results from both your system and the internet. You can tell it to refine the search to your stuff or the web. If you are looking for a file you would want to select My Stuff.

By default Cortana uses Bing and Edge as the source for web searches. If you want to change that to Google for example you will need to set Chrome or Firefox as your default browser. Open Settings and go to System. Find the item for default apps. Go to the browser section and click on the default browser (probably Edge). This will bring up a list of browsers. Click on Chrome or Firefox. Once Chrome or Firefox is set as your default browser there is one more step.

If you choose Chrome as your default browser open it and lick the hamburger icon in Chrome (the three horizontal bars in the upper right) and select settings. Click on extensions and at the bottom of the list click on get more extensions. In the search box type Chrometana and hit enter. Install the Chrometana extension and when it installs it will ask you which search engine you want to use - Chrome, DuckDuckGo or Yahoo. Choose your search engine of choice and click it. You will now get search results in Chrome from the search engine of your choice.

If you choose Firefox as your default browser, to make your default search engine in Firefox the search engine for Cortana open Firefox and click the magnifying glass button on the "Search" box. Click "Change Search Settings" on the drop-down box. Make sure your search engine of choice is selected or change to what you want. Check the "Use this search engine for searches from Windows" checkbox. As with Chrome you will need to follow the procedure above to select Firefox as your default browser.

Cortana can handle a large number of requests for information as well as starting programs, giving you the weather, solving math problems and much more.

There is a good article on all the things you can do with Cortana at <http://lifehacker.com/everything-you-can-ask-cortana-to-do-in-windows-10-1721725525>

Edge Browser

The Edge browser is a replacement for the old Internet Explorer. It is designed to be faster, more secure and more closely follow web standards. When you first install Windows 10 it will be your default browser no matter what you had previously. While it is a major improvement over Internet Explorer it still is not as good as Chrome or Firefox. Currently it does not support extensions or add-ons. Follow the procedure above to change to a different browser as your default.

One new feature of edge is the ability to display PDF files. Any PDF file on your system will now open in Edge by default. To change this go to Settings, System, Default Apps. Choose “default app by file type.” From the list choose PDF and select the program you want to use to open PDF files such as Adobe reader.

Action Center

The action center is designed to give you information about changes to your system as well as information about any problems your computer may be experiencing. It also gives you quick access to a number of settings.

Security

Windows 10 comes with a built in anti-virus and anti-malware program called Windows Defender. This is a combination of the old Microsoft Security Essentials and the Windows Defender found in earlier versions of Windows. While it is not as highly regarded as other security products it does a decent job. And provides you with security out of the box. If you wish to use a different security product (Such as Norton or McAfee) you can install it. Because it is not a good idea to have two such products running the Windows Defender will be disabled when you install the other product. If you had another product when you installed Windows 10 it will still be active and the Windows Defender will be disabled.

Print to PDF

Print to PDF is a new feature included with Windows 10. Previously you needed to purchase Adobe Acrobat if you wanted to create your own PDF files. In Windows 10 to create a PDF you only need to select the Microsoft PDF printer to print to and choose a location to save the file to.

Using Apps

Apps are a new type of application. Originally created for smart phones and tablets apps were introduced for the computer in Windows 8. An app is usually a small program with a single use such as giving you the weather, showing your photos, playing a game or providing a news feed.

Apps are available on the right side of the start menu and in the all apps menu item.

Getting Apps - the Windows store

Additional apps are available from the Windows Store. The store offers you a fairly large number of apps from both Microsoft and other developers. As with the Apple and Google stores some are free and others have a (usually) small charge.

Additionally there are apps for some popular web sites such as Facebook, Pandora and Wikipedia.

Modify the File Explorer

There are several modifications you can make to the File Explorer. The File Explorer (previously known as the Windows Explorer) now supports a ribbon bar similar to that found in other Microsoft programs. You can control its presence or not by clicking the small up or down pointer just to the left of the help icon (the question mark in a blue circle.)

The File Explorer also has a Quick Access section at the top of the left hand menu. By default several items are already there such as downloads and documents. You may add your own folders to this list by finding the folder on your computer and right clicking it. Then select pin to quick access. To remove a

folder from quick access right click it in the quick access menu and select unpin from quick access. Pinned items can be rearranged by clicking and dragging to the desired position.

If you prefer the old style Explorer with This Computer as the starting point click on View then select options and choose “change folder and search options”. From the drop down list choose This PC. You will need to restart the File Explorer for the change to be visible. The Quick access section will still be the top item but the contents of the right hand windows will now be this computer. If you don’t wish to see the quick access section click the down facing arrow just to the left of Quick Access. To restore it click the now right facing arrow.

Near the top left of the File Explorer is the Quick Access Toolbar (not to be confused with the Quick Access list). This gives you quick access to a number of tools for use in the File Explorer such as the ability to delete an item, rename an item, create a new folder or see the properties of an item. It can be modified by using the drop down list at the right end of the toolbar and checking or unchecking items on the list.

Bonus: Have Windows enter your logon password automatically. In the search box type netplwiz and select netplwiz.exe from the search results. Uncheck the box “Users must enter a user name and password to use this computer” then click OK. In the box which appears make sure your user name is correct and enter your password in twice.

This trick works with all versions of Windows.