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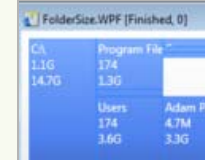#downloads

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Lifehacker's Complete Guide to Windows 7

20 diggs digg it

By Kevin Purdy

digg f ✉ t

🕐 Oct 22, 2009 9:30 AM   🔥 65,845

more about #windows

Waver is a Compact Google Wave Client

FastPictureViewer Codec Pack Adds RAW Support to Windows

Windows 7 officially launches today, but we've been testing, tweaking, customizing, fixing, and writing about this OS for a year now. We present here a guide to everything we've learned about the OS, from first install to final settings change.

Whether you've played around with Windows 7 during its beta or release candidate versions, launch day is finally here, and Windows 7 is finally ready for widespread, public consumption. This guide will take you straight through from system requirements and upgrading your PC to highlighting Windows 7's best new features to helping you hit the ground running with all of the awesome tweaks Windows 7 has in store for you.

read more: #windows7, #windows, #operatingsystems, #upgrade, #upgrades, #taskbar, #jumplists, #top, #feature, #customization, #customizations, #keyboardshortcuts, #keyboard, #mouse, #mousegestures, #desktop, #printing, #themes, #wallpaper, #gizmodo

System Requirements

According to Microsoft:

- 1 gigahertz (GHz) or faster 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor
- 1 gigabyte (GB) RAM (32-bit) or 2 GB RAM (64-bit)
- 16 GB available hard disk space (32-bit) or 20 GB (64-bit)
- DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver

Buying, installing, and upgrading

- Figure Out Which Windows 7 Edition Has the Features You Need: *Not everybody*

Los Angeles, 11:28 PM
Thu Oct 22
19 posts in the last 24 hours
AU | JP

Suggest a post:
tips@lifehacker.com

lifehacker team

Editor:
Adam Pash
Email | AIM | Twitter

Senior Editor:
Kevin Purdy

	Starter	Home Premium
32-bit and 64-bit versions	32-bit only	Both
Maximum physical memory (64-bit mode)	N/A	16 GB
Maximum physical CPUs	1	1

needs Windows 7 Ultimate, but what if there's a certain feature you must have when you grab your upgrade this Thursday? CNET breaks down each Windows 7 edition feature by feature in a handy chart.

- **Prep Your PC for Windows 7**: *When Windows 7 drops this Thursday, you can either spend many, many hours watching a progress bar, or you can boot into a clean, speedy system with that new-OS smell. Let's get your system set up for a proper Windows 7 upgrade.*
- **Get Windows 7 Home Premium for $30 With a College Email Address**: *If you're a U.S. college student, or at least having a working .edu email address, you don't have to pay $120 to upgrade Vista to Windows 7. You can get the Home Premium upgrade for just $30.*
- **Run Windows 7 for 120 Days Without Activation**: *The command line code (`slmgr -rearm`) that could be entered at the end of three different 30-day periods to give Vista 120 days without activation works just the same in Windows 7.*

Our take on Windows 7

- **Top 10 Things to Look Forward to in Windows 7**: *Windows 7 isn't a dramatic overhaul of its predecessor Windows Vista, but it does fix several sore spots and add a few welcome features.*
- **Windows 7's Best Underhyped Features**: *It's these less sexy, but very useful features, that make me think the more I use Windows 7, the less chance I'll ever use Vista or XP again.*
- **Windows 7 Versus Mac OS X Leopard: The Feature-by-Feature Showdown**: *Oh, I know: the Mac versus PC debate is so played out. Perhaps, but dumb commercials aside, if you're deciding between buying a Mac or a PC in the coming months, it helps to know what you're getting from one or the other.*

New features

- **Windows 7 Tells You Why You Can't Touch That File**: *Windows 7 doesn't just give you a wagging finger (and pretend-useful "Try Again" button) when you want to move or delete a file that's in use. It actually tells you which application is using the file.*
- **Windows 7 Lets You Customize Your Logon Background**: *Expert Windows hacker Rafael Rivera finds a change in the latest build of Windows 7—you can finally customize the log-on screen natively.*

flash drive into this computer

py the network settings for YDQ48 to your USB drive.

ve to continue.

- **Windows 7 Transfers Your Wireless Settings Easily**: *To transfer the settings for yourself, head into the Network and Sharing Center, click on Manage Wireless Networks, and then in the properties for your wireless network you'll find the link to open the wizard that will copy all your settings onto a flash drive.*
- **How to Burn ISOs in Windows 7**: *Burning that ISO to a disc is as simple as: 1. Double-click the ISO file (or right-click and select Burn disc image); 2. Click Burn.*
- **Play Your iPod Through Your Windows 7 PC's Speakers**: *You can play an external audio device through your computer's speakers without any extra software using a simple configuration setting.*

- **Windows 7 Makes UAC Less Annoying Than Vista**: *The biggest change in Windows 7 is the new User Account Control "slider" setting, where you can choose your own balance between annoyance and security—but behind the scenes, Microsoft reduced the amount of actions that will prompt you.*
- **Netflix Update Comes to Windows 7 Media Center, Looks Excellent**: *Starting this week, Microsoft is rolling out an upgraded Watch Instantly interface to Windows 7 Media Center for users looking to get their streaming TV and movie fix on their upgraded PCs.*
- **Setup File and Printer Sharing From XP to Windows 7**: *This guide walks you through the process of enabling network discovery, sharing your folders and printers, and accessing your shared resources from either Windows 7 or XP.*
- **IE8 Can Proactively Close Crashing Tabs in Windows 7**: *The copy of IE8 found only in (Windows 7) has a "timer" that monitors new tabs as they open. If they aren't responsive within a relatively short amount of time, the browser will pop up and tell you this, possibly with a reason why, and ask whether you want to wait or kill the tab before it causes further problems.*
- **Windows 7 Lets You Finally Uninstall Internet Explorer (Kinda)**: *... It won't completely uninstall—only the executable is actually removed. Still, being able to finally banish IE proper from your system is a pretty good start for folks who really don't like IE.*
- **Windows 7 Will Let You Uninstall Most Built-In Apps**: *You can turn almost every built-in application on or off, including Windows Search, Gadgets, and even Media Player.*
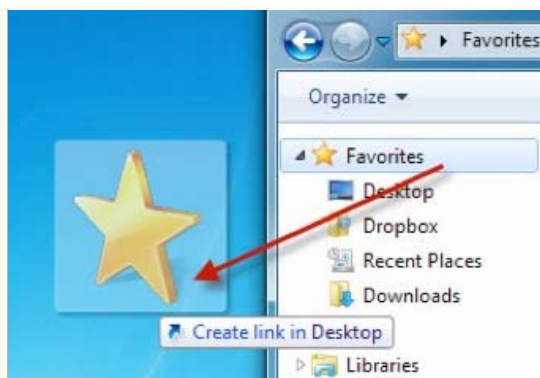
The Taskbar

- **Aero Peek**: *Peek supercharges Windows' taskbar thumbnail previews, and lets you view, close, and switch between multiple windows by just hovering over the taskbar thumbnail, as well as pin programs to the taskbar permanently.*
- **Pin Individual Folders to the Windows 7 Taskbar**: *Windows 7's taskbar lets you pin any running program to the taskbar for easy future access, but it treats folders like second-class sub-items of the Explorer icon. Create a fake "program" to pin individual folder shortcuts to your taskbar.*
- **Middle-Click to Close Applications from Windows 7's Taskbar**: *In Windows 7, middle-clicking a taskbar button opens a new program instance. The easy solution for closing an app? Middle-click its preview window.*
- **Hold Shift While Dragging to Windows 7 Taskbar to Open Files**: All you have to do is hold down the Shift key while dragging a file to an icon on the taskbar, and the tooltip will change to say "Open with" instead of pinning to the taskbar.
- **Pin Any Item to the Windows 7 Taskbar**: *We already showed you how to pin specific folders, and this is just a slightly tweaked application of that method.*

Put a Recycle Bin Shortcut on the Windows 7 Taskbar: *Once you are finished, you'll have a separate recycle icon on the taskbar—useful for quick access to deleted files without having to hunt down an icon on your desktop.*

- Get a Functional Recycle Bin on Windows 7's Taskbar: *TechSpot's solution—creating a Quick Launch taskbar, removing its text and title, then bringing the desktop Recycle Bin icon into it—covers all the bases, and lets you place your Recycle Bin pretty much wherever you'd like on the taskbar.*
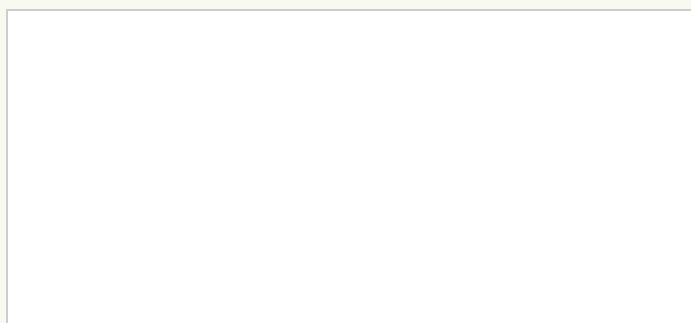
Jump lists

- **Master Windows 7 Jump Lists to Boost Your Win7 Productivity**: *For those of you that haven't yet tried out Windows 7, when you right-click on a taskbar button in Windows 7, a menu slides out with recent documents and application tasks.*

Here's a rundown of our favorite Jump List boosters.

- Winfox Adds Jump Lists to Firefox on Windows 7: *Jump Lists are one of the best new features in Windows 7, and since Firefox still doesn't take advantage of them, a small utility called Winfox adds the feature for you.*
- Win7shell Adds Windows 7 Jump List Support to Winamp: *Once you've downloaded, installed the plugin, and pinned Winamp to the taskbar, the Jump List should immediately start tracking your recently played media files.*

Built-in Applications

- Set Up and Use XP Mode in Windows 7: *Windows 7's new XP Mode lets you seamlessly run virtualized applications alongside your regular Windows 7 applications— so your outdated software will continue to work.*
- Calculator: *While mathletes, scientists, coders, and statisticians will appreciate Windows 7's built-in calculator's programmer, statistics, and scientific modes, everyday people will love figuring out things like hourly wages and mortgage payments without a spreadsheet.*
- PowerShell: *(A) souped-up command line and scripting GUI that frees you, finally, from the limits of DOS batch scripts.*

Windows 7 Media Center's Music Player Is Hot Hot Hot: *Good news for music lovers excited for Windows 7: The new and improved music interface in Windows 7 Media Center is overflowing with eye candy and usability.*

- Windows 7's WordPad Opens Word 2007 DOCX Files: *... The ribbon-style WordPad in Windows 2007 opens Word 2007 files, the .docx kind, pretty handily, albeit with some formatting loss.*
- Backup and Restore Center: *For the average user with both media and crucial file needs, Windows 7's default backup features look promising.*
- Windows 7 Guest Mode Creates Bomb-Proof Accounts: *In the simplest terms, Guest Mode takes a snapshot of how a PC was working before the kid, friend, coffeeshop customer, or whoever else is using the Guest Mode account logs on. That user can't do much to alter the system, and whatever they can do, like dropping files on the desktop, is discarded when they log off.*
- Windows 7 Calibration and ClearType Tools Fine-Tune Your Displays: *Windows 7's color calibration and ClearType tools might be good enough for non-graphic-designers to stick with.*

Themes, wallpapers, and login screens

- Windows 7 Beta's Many Free and Legit Themes: *Microsoft is offering 20 fresh themes (in Windows 7). Here's a closer look.*
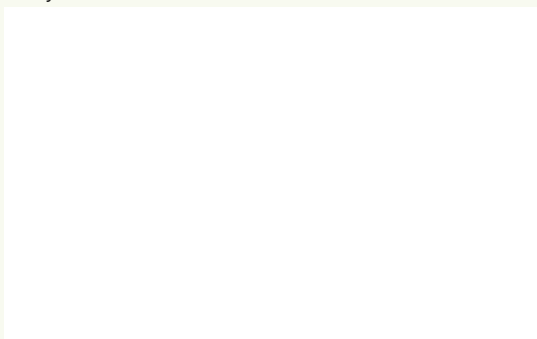- Grab Every Region's Windows 7 Wallpapers in One Download: *Microsoft allowed Windows Vista Magazine to bundle up every wallpaper from Windows 7's regional releases and, boy, we're glad they did. One file brings a lot of new looks to any desktop, Windows 7 or otherwise.*
- Secret Registry Hack Customizes Windows 7 Logon "Button Set": *Rafael Rivera, the same expert Windows hacker that figured out how to customize your Windows 7 logon background, finds another hack that changes the UI to look better with darker background images.*
- Microsoft Releases More Free Windows 7 Theme Downloads: *The full-fledged themes are specific downloads for Windows 7 users, but anyone can grab the wallpapers from Windows 7's Personalization Gallery for their system.*

Mouse and Keyboard Shortcuts

- The Best New Windows 7 Keyboard Shortcuts: *Windows 7 has more cool new shortcuts than you can shake a stick at.*

- Aero Shake: *When you want to focus on the task at hand on a desktop cluttered with windows, just grab the window bar of the app you want to work in and shake it back and forth to clear away the rest. Another shake will*

restore the background apps to their former state. You can also drag and drop a window to the edge of the screen to maximize it, and click on its top bar again to restore its previous size.

■ Snap windows to half screen size: *... Dragging a window to the top of the screen maximizes it. Following that, if you drag a window all the way to the left or the right of the screen, Windows 7 will display a glass overlay on the desktop. Let go of the mouse button and it will snap the window onto that overlay, which is half the screen's size—a handy helper for widescreen monitor owners.*

■ Maximize Windows Vertically with a Double-Click in Windows 7: *Reader John points out that you can simply move your mouse to the top of a window until the pointer switches to the resize icon, and then double-click your mouse to instantly maximize the window to fill all the available vertical space.*

■ Shift and Right-Click to Expand Windows 7's Send To Menu: *Just as with Vista, holding down the Shift key while right-clicking in Windows 7 gives you a fuller range of options.*
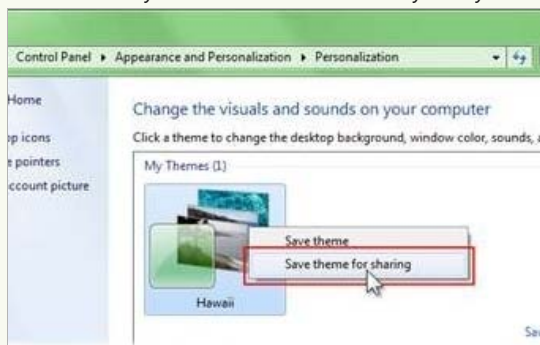
■ Activate Windows 7 Jumplists with the Left Mouse Button: *You don't have to right-click on the taskbar buttons to activate Windows 7's Jumplists —you can hold the left mouse button and drag upwards.*

■ Windows 7 Creates New Folders With a Hotkey: To create a new folder, simply press Ctrl+Shift+N with an explorer window open and the folder will instantly show up, ready to be renamed to something more useful.

Tweaks, fixes, and customizations

■ The Best Windows Tweaks that Still Work in Windows 7: *The final version of Windows 7 is being released this week to the general public, and after you get your hands on it the first thing you'll need to know is: Do all my tweaks still work?*

■ Customize or Disable Windows 7's Action Center: *Windows 7's Action Center does a great job of compressing all of Windows' update/alert/whatever notifications into one icon, but it takes some tweaking to make it show what you want, or disable it entirely.*

■ Add text to the Windows 7 taskbar buttons: *Just right-click the taskbar, select Properties, then change the Taskbar buttons drop-down from "Always combine, hide labels" to "Never combine."*

■ Set Default Printers Based on Network in Windows 7: *Windows 7 sports a great new feature that allows you to set default printers based on what network your computer is connected to, perfect for folks who carry laptops from network to network.*

■ Get Quick Access to Windows 7's Jump Lists From the Keyboard: *When we showed you how to master Windows 7's new Jump Lists feature, there was one extremely useful tip that we left out: you can also access them from your keyboard.*

■ Create and Share Custom Themes in Windows 7: *Microsoft's Engineering Windows 7 weblog details how to create, save, and share your own custom Windows 7 themes, complete with wallpaper, window color, and sounds.*

■ Get the Old "Show Desktop" Back in Windows 7—Kinda: *The short version: Create a folder, place a "Show Desktop.scf" file in there (either your standard Google-found kind or the script available at the bottom link), then right-click your taskbar to create a "New Toolbar" that points to that folder. Turn off the text and titles on that new toolbar, change*

the icons to large size, and then put your new one-button toolbar where you'd like.

- **Hidden Windows 7 Tool Troubleshoots Sleep Mode Problems**: *The report lists all of the devices that are causing problems with sleep mode, explains the different power saving modes your computer supports, and even gives you detailed information on your battery —invaluable information when your system takes forever to go in and out of sleep mode.*

- **Disable the New Libraries Feature on Windows 7**: *Simply download, extract, and double-click on the provided registry hack file, then restart your computer and you'll see that the Libraries are completely gone. There's also an uninstall registry script provided just in case.*

Third-party helpers

- **Logon Changer Customizes the Windows 7 Login Screen**: *Tiny system customizing utility Logon Changer for Windows 7 swaps out the logon screen wallpaper easily. Using the utility is simple—just select a new wallpaper, test it, and you are done.*

- **Xdn Tweaker Updates to Tweak Windows 7**: *If you want your system to remember or not remember how you sort certain folders, edit what's accessible through the right-click menu, or de-hook Windows Media Player from all the files it tries to glom onto, Xdn does those things for Windows 7.*

- **Glass CMD Enables Aero Transparency for the Command Prompt**: *Glass CMD for Vista forces command prompt windows to use Aero's glass transparency effect.*

- **Gmail Notifier Plus Adds Email Alerts to the Windows 7 Taskbar**: *Gmail Notifier Plus displays your unread email count right in the Windows 7 taskbar, including popup message previews and Jump Lists integration.*

- **Switch Power Management Plans With a Hotkey**: *Once you've created the shortcut, you can assign a hotkey in the properties dialog—even better, put the shortcut in a location to be indexed by Launchy or the Vista start menu search, or even add it to your AutoHotkey automation script.*

- **CSMenu Brings the Classic Start Menu Back to Windows 7**: *Application launcher CSMenu makes up for the lack of a classic start menu option in Windows 7 by creating a menu that looks and works just like the ancient Windows 2000 menu did.*

- **Ultimate Windows Tweaker Updates, Improves Windows 7 Support**: *Ultimate Windows Tweaker adds new features to an already excellent tool for tweaking all of the hidden Windows settings you normally can't access.*

- **VistaSwitcher is an Absolutely Awesome Alt-Tab Replacement**: *It's a little difficult to showcase how well this thing works with just a screenshot, but you can see the partially transparent Alt-Tab switcher window, complete with a massive preview window and the window titles easily readable.*

- **Windows 7 Recovery Discs Gets Your System Out of Tight Spots**: *Boot your system from NeoSmart's CD, and you'll get a stripped-down Windows system with a window offering startup file repair, Restore Point returns, recovery from a whole-cloth image, memory testing, and a command prompt for those dire moments when only frantically*

Google-d terminal instructions can save you.

- Hulu Desktop Integration Brings Hulu to Windows 7 Media Center: *Free application Hulu Desktop Integration brings Hulu's remote-friendly desktop app to your Windows Media Center.*

We hope you found at least one link in that rather large list that helps you get settled into your new OS. Did we miss anything? Got a favorite tip or link you feel Windows 7 newcomers should consider? Share it in the comments.

Send an email to Kevin Purdy, the author of this post, at kevin@lifehacker.com.

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