

Windows 10 – Its here!

With Windows 10, Microsoft is trying to keep some of the touch and tablet features it created for Windows 8, combine them with the familiar Start menu and desktop, and run it all on top of an improved operating system with more security, a new browser, the Cortana assistant, its own version of Office for on-the-go editing and plenty of new features intended to make life simpler. Of course, that also means it's very different to use, whether you come from Windows 7, Windows 8 or Windows XP. You have to look in a new place even to turn your PC off.

On top of that, Windows 10 is more than just a PC operating system; it's also what will run on Windows phones – and on small tablets as well, because a 6-inch phone and a 7-inch tablet aren't such very different devices. Microsoft is expecting people to put Windows 10 on a billion devices (which ought to encourage more app developers to at least take a look at building their apps for Windows phones and tablets, as well as for Xbox One and HoloLens).

Here are some of the key new and reworked features you'll see in Windows 10.

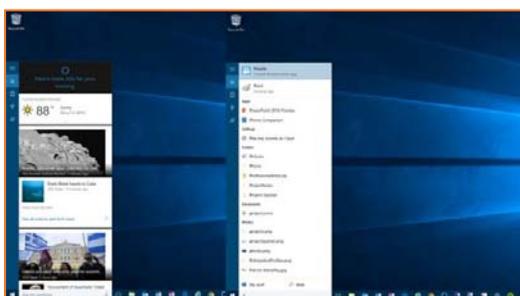
The start menu returns

The full-screen Start screen of Windows 8 is back to being a Start menu in Windows 10 that tries to combine the best of both options. You get a scrolling Start menu that's restricted to a single column, with jump lists and flyout menus for extra options, divided into frequently used and recently installed programs, with the option to switch to a scrolling view of all your applications, sorted alphabetically.



But you also get an extra pane where you can pin Windows 8-style tiles, complete with 'rotating 3D cube' animations of live tiles. You can drag the Start menu to be a larger size or even set it to be full screen

Cortana makes searching easy

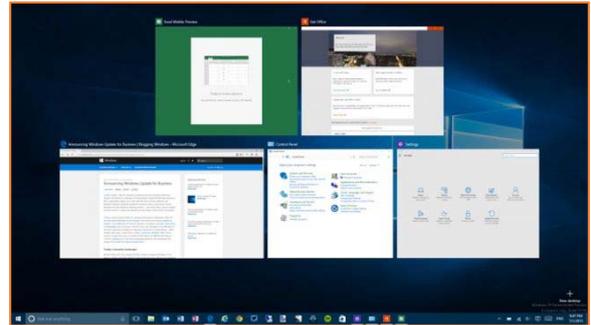


Cortana, the Windows Phone assistant, shows up in Windows 10 as a search pane on the taskbar, which you can also trigger by saying 'Hey Cortana' – and when you start searching the Start menu. That gets you apps you have installed, documents you have access to, apps you could install from the Store, search results from the web and a range of other information – including from apps and services that integrate with Cortana. You can set reminders for different times and places

that appear on other Cortana devices, so you can get your Microsoft Band to remind you to take the rubbish out as you walk up to your front door.

Task switcher

Most Windows users don't know the Alt-Tab keyboard combination to see and switch between all running apps, so as well as having a redesigned task switcher with bigger thumbnails, Windows 10 also puts a task view icon in the taskbar to help them find it.



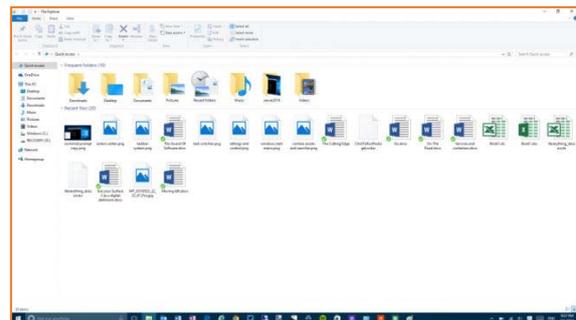
Action Centre



If you've used Windows Phone 8.1 (or Android and/or iOS), you're used to a notification centre you can drag down from the top of the screen. Windows 10 puts that on the right of the screen, where the charms bar was in Windows 8, with notifications from various apps at the top and your choice of various settings buttons at the bottom for quick access.

Improvements to Windows Explorer

The new 'Home' view in Explorer shows you a Quick Access list of useful locations and folders you visit frequently, with a list of recently opened files underneath it, which is faster than having to go to the Recent Places link in older versions of Windows. The Share tab on the ribbon gets a makeover too – if you used to use the Share charm in Windows 8, this is where you'll find it...



The new Edge browser

To catch up with fast-moving browsers like Chrome and Firefox, Microsoft took its browser back to basics, ripping out years of code that didn't fit with web standards and making a lean, fast browser.



It's a work in progress – it won't get support for things like ad-blocking extensions until a while after Windows 10 launches – but you can do plenty of neat things here. For example, you can scribble notes on a web page to send to a friend (if you're trying to decide what hotel to stay in on holiday, for example) and Edge has Cortana built in to pull useful information out of web pages, like the phone number of a restaurant, or the opening

hours.

Sites like Medium that didn't work properly with IE should look better and have more features in Edge.

Multiple desktops



If you need to arrange a lot of windows and you don't have multiple monitors, you can put them on multiple virtual desktops. You can use Alt-Tab to move between apps as usual and then Windows-Ctrl and the left and right arrow keys to move between desktops.

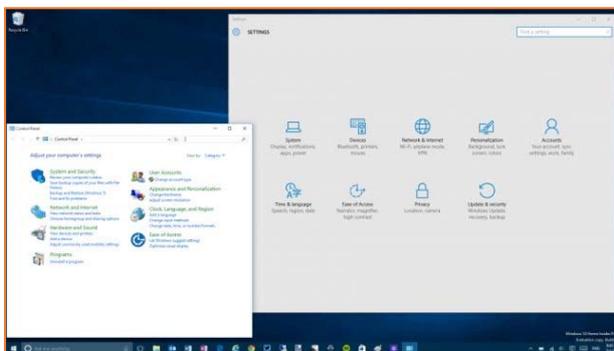
This is handy if you're working on two projects and you want to group things together so you don't get them mixed up, or if you're on a conference call and you need to share your screen – but you don't want to close the apps you don't want people to see.

Universal apps

Windows 10 gets a new Windows Store, where you can download desktop programs as well as modern Windows apps. Many of those apps will be universal apps that are the same code on a PC, a Windows phone, an Xbox One and even on HoloLens, with the interface changing to suit the different screen sizes. The Office for Windows apps like Word and Excel are universal apps, as are the Outlook Mail and Calendar apps.



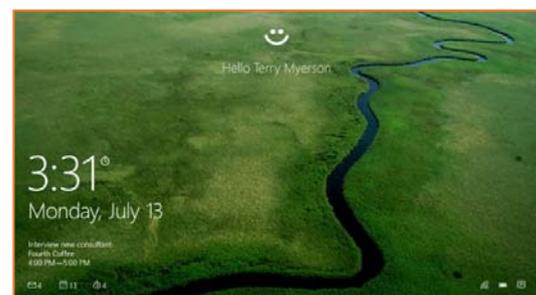
Settings and Control Panel



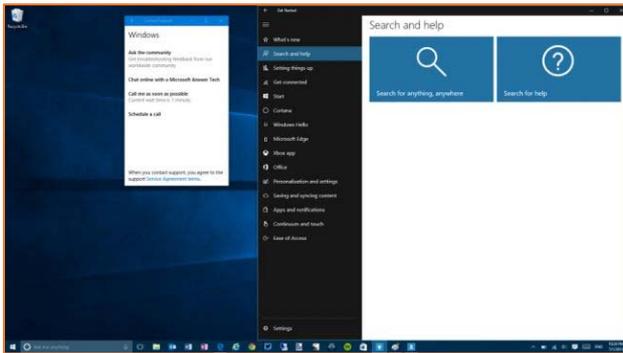
The Windows 8 Settings app has taken over many more of the settings that used to be in Control Panel, and it has a Control Panel-style interface with icons to navigate with. But the old Control Panel interface is still there, for settings that aren't in the new Settings app (or if you're just used to finding things there).

Say hello to your PC

As well as the usual fingerprint scanning support, Windows 10 can use your face or your iris to log you on to your PC. Windows Hello will work with existing fingerprint readers, but it needs a new 3D infrared camera in your PC to use your face – it needs the infrared to know that you're alive and the 3D camera to get the contours of your face, so it doesn't work if someone holds up a photo or wears a mask.



Support is right there



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So far there are only a few notebooks from Asus, HP, and Dell that have the right camera, and an all-in-one PC from Lenovo. Once you log in with Hello, Windows can do secure authentication with sites and apps that use the FIDO standard (and with Azure Active Directory) instead of you typing in a password.

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