

50 ESSENTIAL WINDOWS 7 TIPS



PCWorld
SUPERGUIDE

50 Essential Windows 7 Tips

EDITORS: Alex Wawro, Patrick Miller, Rick Broida

PRESIDENT AND CEO: Mike Kisseberth

MANAGING EDITOR: Kimberly Brinson

COPY EDITORS: Stephen Compton, Steven Gray, Tracy Yee-Vaught

DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION: Nancy Jonathans

ART DIRECTOR: Beth Kamoroff

CONTRIBUTING DESIGNER: Sharon Anderson

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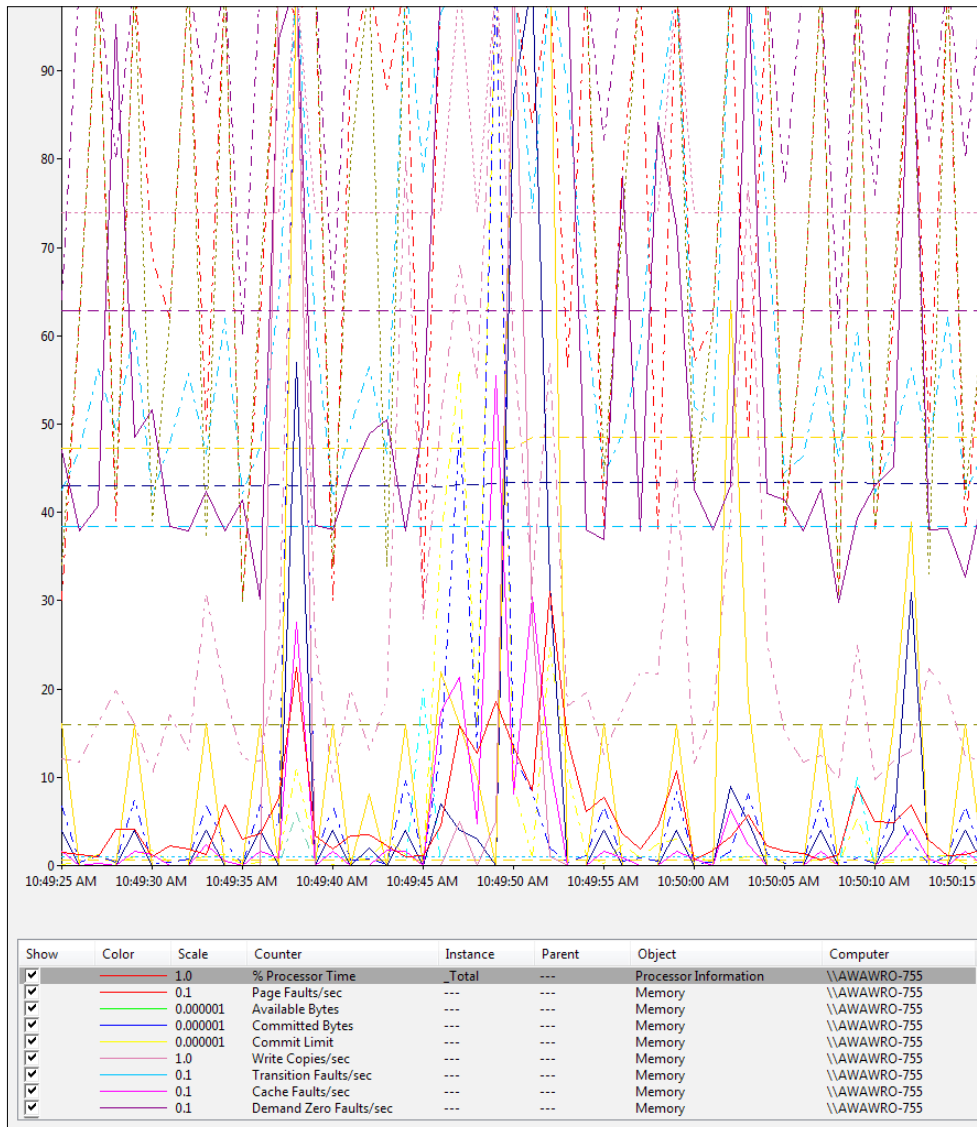
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50 Essential Windows 7 Tips

**Master Windows 7
with our list of tips, tricks,
and secret utilities.**



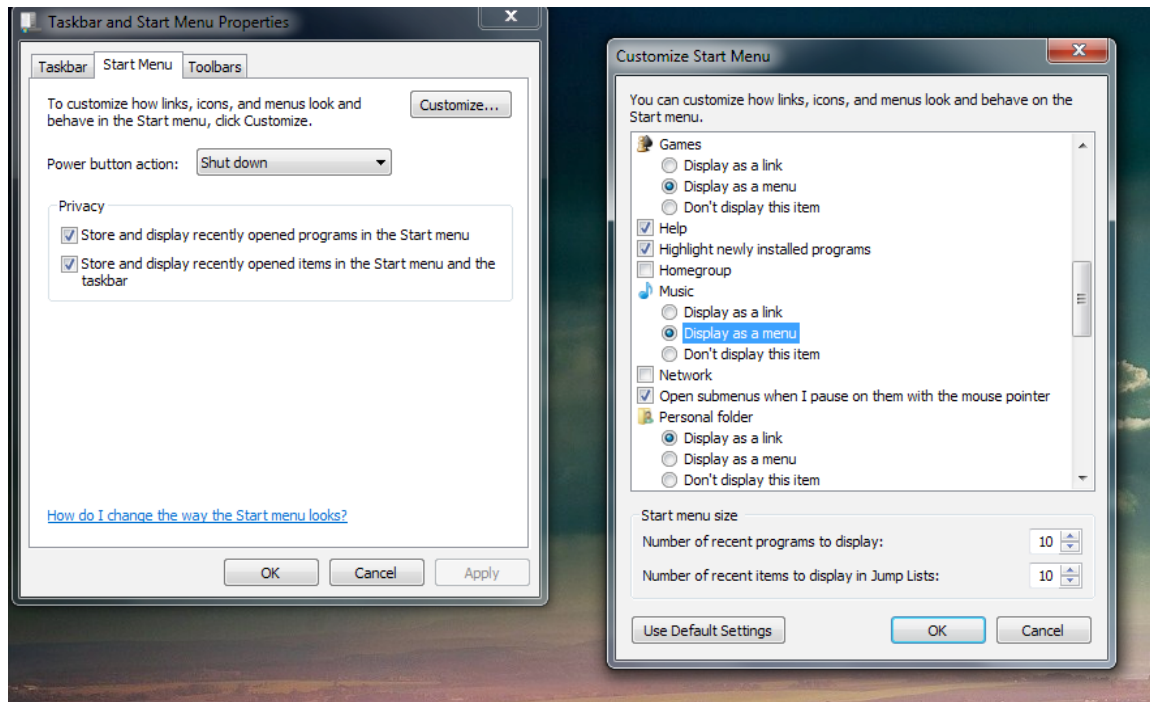
1. Keep an Eye on Your PC With Performance Monitor



If you like charts, numbers, and data sets, Windows 7 has just the tool for you. Performance Monitor tracks your PC's hardware and applications in real time, generating all kinds of data that you can review and compare. It's aimed more at system administrators than at everyday users, but if you're trying to confirm a sneaking suspicion that, say, iTunes is single-handedly tanking your system's performance, it can help.

To access *Performance Monitor*, press the <Windows> key, type **perfmon**, and press <Enter>. You can start evaluating your system by expanding the Monitoring Tools folder and clicking *Performance Monitor*. From there you'll probably need to delve into the built-in help files, as the tool isn't exactly user-friendly.

2. Add Fly-Out Menus to the Start Menu



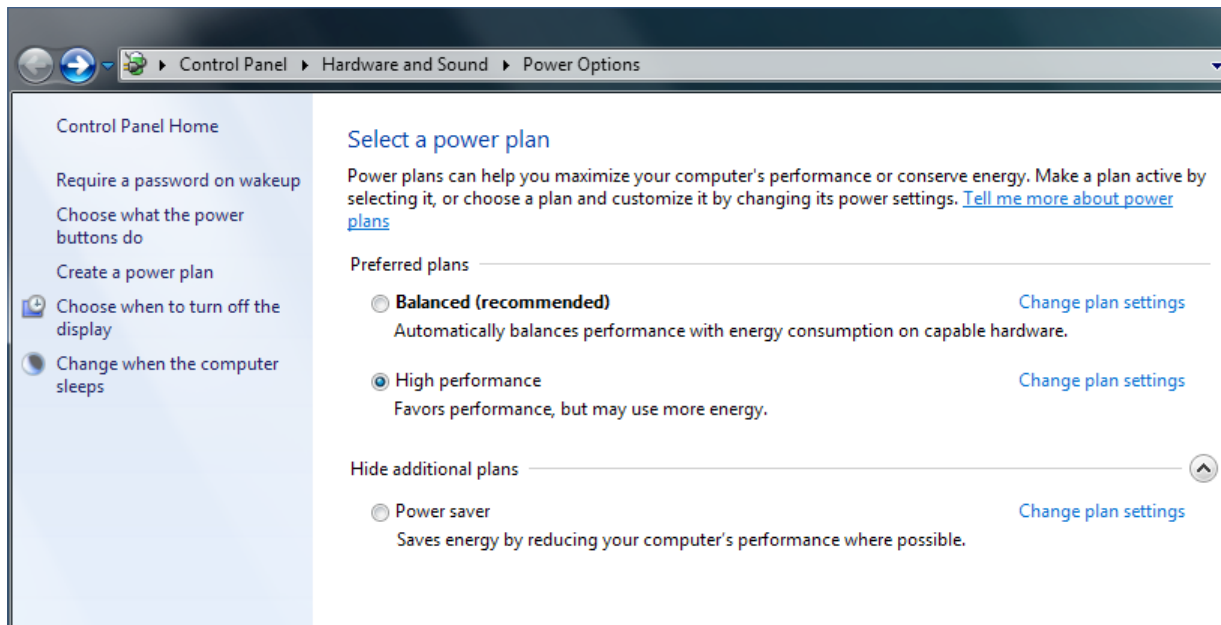
For faster Windows browsing, tweak the Start menu so that options such as Documents, Pictures, Computer, and Control Panel produce fly-out menus when you mouse over them. You'll probably find this method preferable to opening such items in new windows (the default setting), which involves extra clicks and more searching.

With fly-out menus, you can mouse over the desired option, and then choose the item you want. Here's how to configure your system accordingly.

- Right-click the Start button, and then click *Properties*.
- In the Start Menu tab, click the *Customize* button.
- You'll see entries marked Computer, Control Panel, Documents, Games, Music, and so on. For any or all of them, enable *Display as a menu*.
- Click *OK* twice to exit.

Now, when you venture into the Start menu, you'll see that these items have little arrows. Mouse over one (or click it outright), and you'll quickly see the associated options in a fly-out menu.

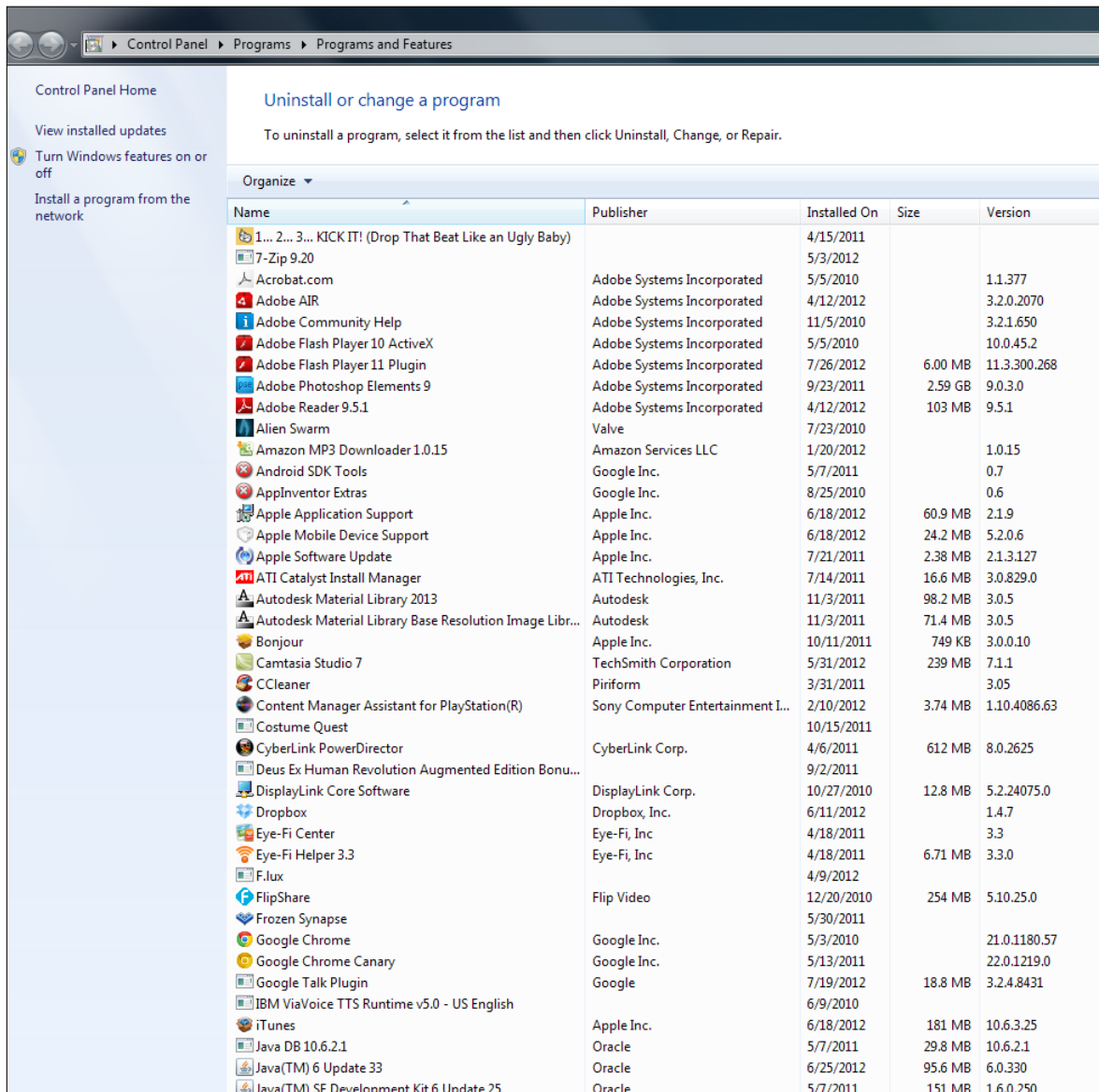
3. Optimize Power Settings



Using Windows' power-management features to save energy makes sense—but you shouldn't do it at the expense of productivity. For example, if you're working on a desktop PC (or using a plugged-in laptop as your desktop), you don't need the hard drive to turn off after 5 minutes, the processor to throttle back when idle, or the video playback to be 'optimized for power savings'. Since you're not trying to preserve battery life on this machine, you should crank every performance setting to maximum.

By default, Windows Vista and 7 both come configured for 'Balanced' performance. To rev things up a bit, click *Start*, type **power**, and select *Power Options*. Choose the *High performance* plan. (If you don't see it listed, click *Show additional plans*.) Now your PC will run with desktop-optimized power settings. If you want to tweak individual settings, such as how long the hard drive should sit idle before shutting down, click *Change plan settings* > *Change advanced power settings*.

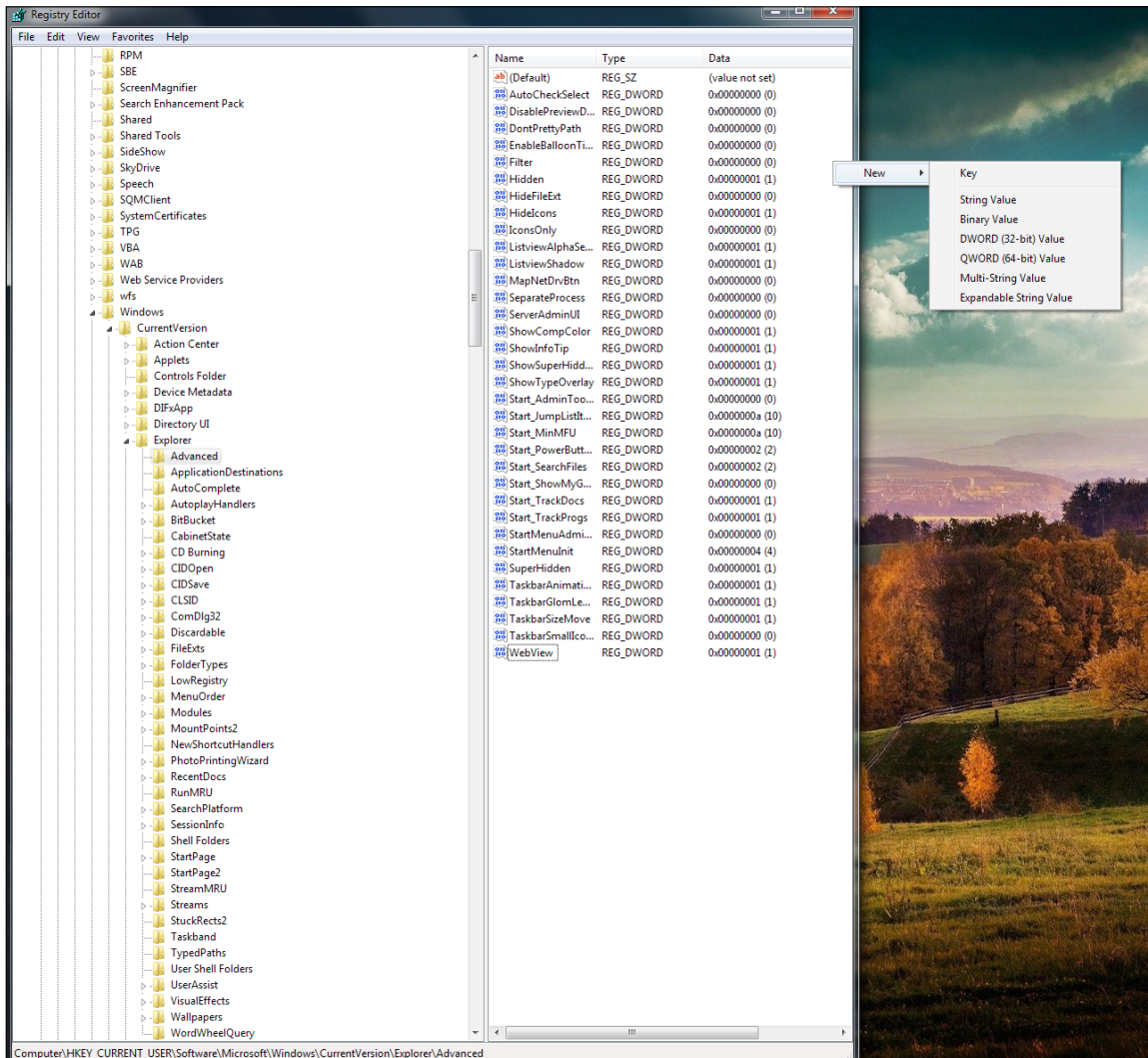
4. Remove Shovelware



To this day many PC manufacturers insist on stuffing new systems with **unnecessary unwanted software** that consumes drive space and slows startup. We're talking security suites you may not require, games you might not want, and vendor-branded utilities that are more nuisance than necessity.

Kick that junk to the curb. You can venture into the Control Panel and click *Uninstall a program*, or use one of our favorite freebies, [Revo Uninstaller](#), to make a clean sweep; the utility not only uninstalls software but also removes leftover files and Registry entries. Just make sure not to firebomb anything important, such as Adobe Flash Player or Microsoft .Net Framework.

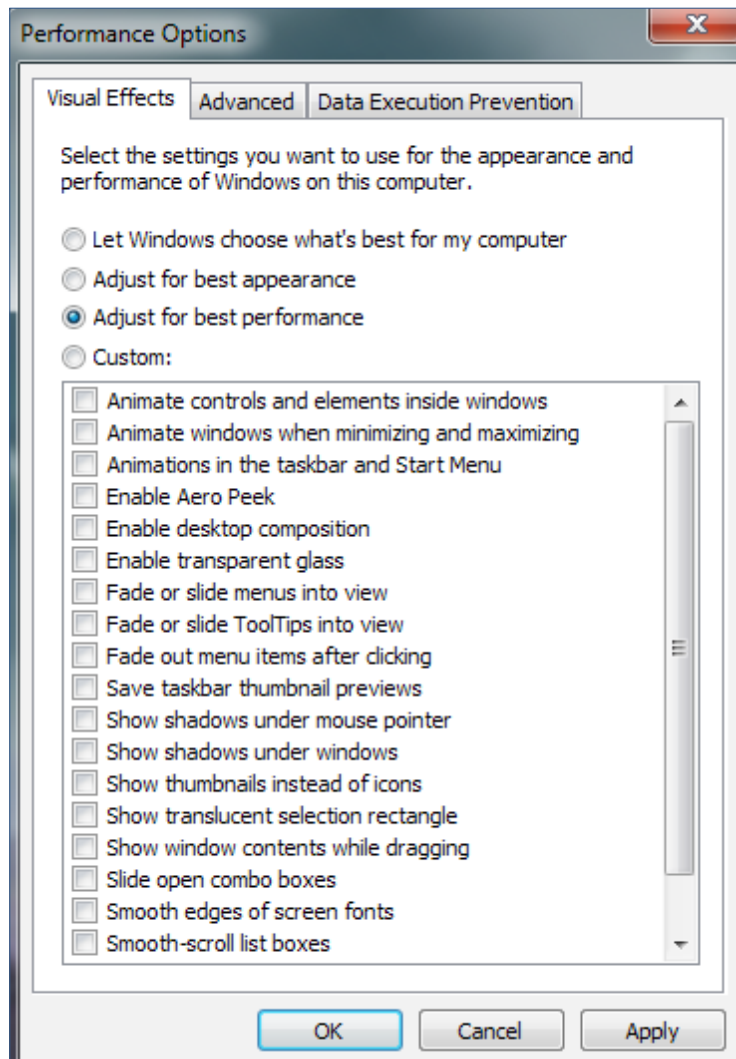
5. Eliminate the Aero Peek Delay



Aero Peek, one of Windows 7's most celebrated enhancements, temporarily turns all your windows transparent when you mouse over the Show Desktop button. However, if you accept the default settings, the effect takes nearly a full second to kick in. Why wait? A simple Registry hack will enable instantaneous transparency.

Press the **<Windows>** key to open the Start menu, type **regedit** in the search box, and press **<Enter>**. In the Registry, navigate to `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced`. Right-click an empty area in the right pane, and choose **New > DWORD (32-bit) Value**. Name it **DesktopLivePreviewHoverTime**. By default, Windows will assign a value of 0, which is exactly what you want. Now just restart your computer (or log off and back on). The next time you mouse over Show Desktop, you'll be Peeking at light speed.

6. Turn Off the Eye Candy



Everybody loves bells and whistles, but Windows' eye candy comes at a price—especially on older PCs with single-core processors or minimal RAM. If you're more concerned about zippy performance than you are about transparent windows and animated controls, consider turning off the visual effects.

Open the Control Panel, type **visual** in the search field, and click *Adjust the appearance and performance of Windows*. Choose *Adjust for best performance*, and then click *Apply*. After a few seconds you'll see a decidedly plainer Windows interface—and you'll enjoy a much snappier response. If the look is too stark, you can choose the *Custom* option and then select any effects you want to restore. Just remember: The more you enable, the greater the performance hit.

7. Install Microsoft Security Essentials

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About Microsoft Security Essentials

Use Microsoft Security Essentials to guard against viruses, spyware, and other evil software. It provides real-time protection for your home or small business PCs.

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* Your PC must run [genuine Windows](#) to install Microsoft Security Essentials. Internet access fees may apply while downloading.

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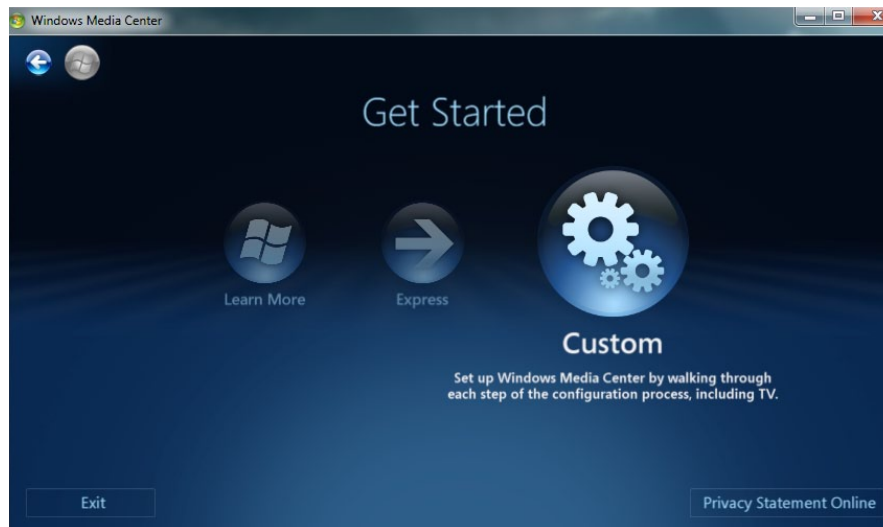
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Key Features

- Comprehensive malware protection
- Simple, free* download
- Automatic updates
- Easy to use

Windows 7 comes equipped with some solid security tools, including a robust firewall and the spyware-blocking Windows Defender. On top of that, you need a good antivirus program, one that works quietly in the background and won't bog down your system. [Microsoft Security Essentials](#) provides real-time protection against viruses and other kinds of malware, and its performance impact is negligible; *PCWorld* security guru Erik Larkin says it “holds its own” against other [free antivirus utilities](#). Sounds like a fine alternative to paying an annual fee for virus protection.

8. Ditch the Antenna, Keep Your Digital Channels



In previous versions of Windows, the built-in Media Center software could tune in (and record, DVR-style) locally broadcast digital channels—but only if you used an ATSC tuner and connected a reasonably good set of rabbit ears. This over-the-air approach worked well enough, but Windows 7 offers a much better option: ClearQAM, which delivers unencrypted digital channels via your basic-cable feed (assuming that you're still a cable subscriber, of course).

All you need is a tuner card that supports ClearQAM technology (which virtually all current models do). With that, you should be able to tune in your local channels in all their digital, high-def goodness, no antenna required.

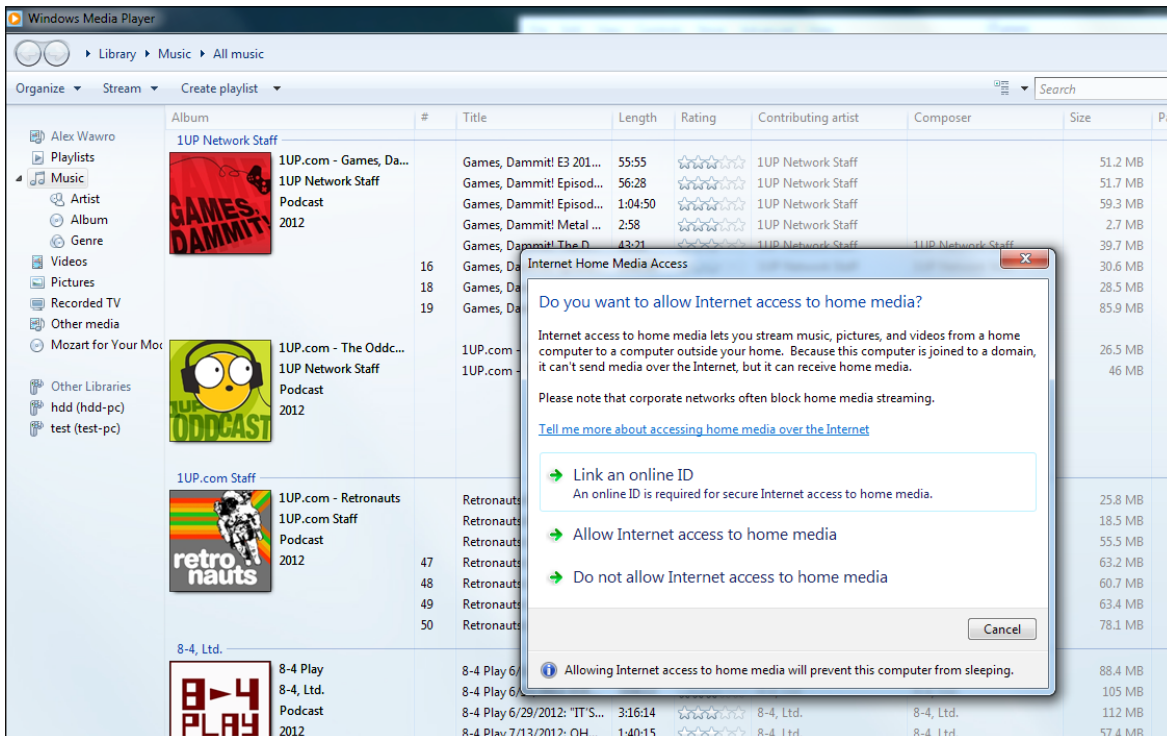
If you already own a tuner, just install the latest drivers for the device, disconnect the antenna, and replace it with the cable-TV coaxial cable. You'll need to restart Windows and then run through Windows Media Center's signal-setup process, which you can find under *Tasks > Setup > TV > TV Signal > Set Up TV Signal*. Don't be surprised if you gain a few additional channels compared with what you received from the antenna alone.

9. Save Time Closing All Your Apps

Done working for the day? Don't try to close all your open programs individually. Instead, close them all in one fell swoop with a click of the Close All Windows icon. Unlike the Show Desktop function, which merely minimizes all open windows, Close All Windows terminates each running program. Don't worry about losing your work: If an open document needs saving, the program will prompt you—the same as if you had clicked the red Close button up in the corner.

To make the best use of Close All Windows, pin it to your taskbar.

10. Stream Your Media to Other PCs



Windows 7 allows you to stream your music, photos, and videos (including recorded TV) from your home PC to other PCs running Windows 7. That's great if you're on the road with your laptop or netbook and you want to watch the football game you recorded at home; what's not so great is the number of hoops that Microsoft makes you jump through to set the feature up. Here's how to do it.

Start Windows Media Player, and click *Stream > Allow Internet access to home media*. Click *Link an online ID*, and then select *Add an online ID provider*. On the Web page that appears, choose either *Download for 32-bit* or *Download for 64-bit*, depending on which version of Windows 7 you have. Save and then run the downloaded file, which installs the Windows Live ID Sign-in Assistant app.

When that's done, return to the Link Online IDs window and, under Online ID Provider, click *Link online ID*. Enter your Windows Live ID username and password. (Don't have a Live ID? Click the link in the box to sign up.) Finally, click *OK*. Return to Windows Media Player, and click *Allow Internet access to home media*.

That's one computer done. On your second system (say, your laptop), you'll need to repeat the entire procedure. Afterward you'll be able to browse the Other Libraries section in Windows Media Player to find the music, videos, pictures, and/or recorded TV that you want to view from afar. Setup may be a hassle, but Windows 7 media streaming works beautifully.

Thanks for reading.

We hope you've found a few good Windows Tips you can put to use in this Superguide. PCWorld also offers superguides on Android, Windows, and Speeding Up Everything. Take a look at www.pcworld.com/superguide, and check out PCWorld.com for the latest tips, tricks, how-tos, and news.