

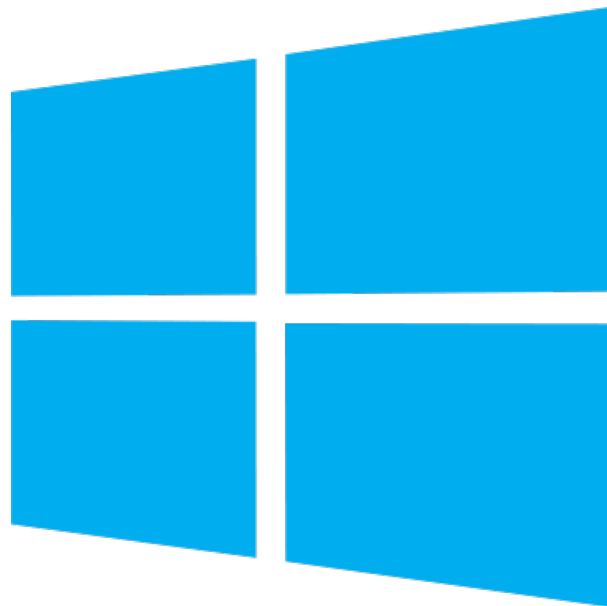
Windows 8 Starter Guide



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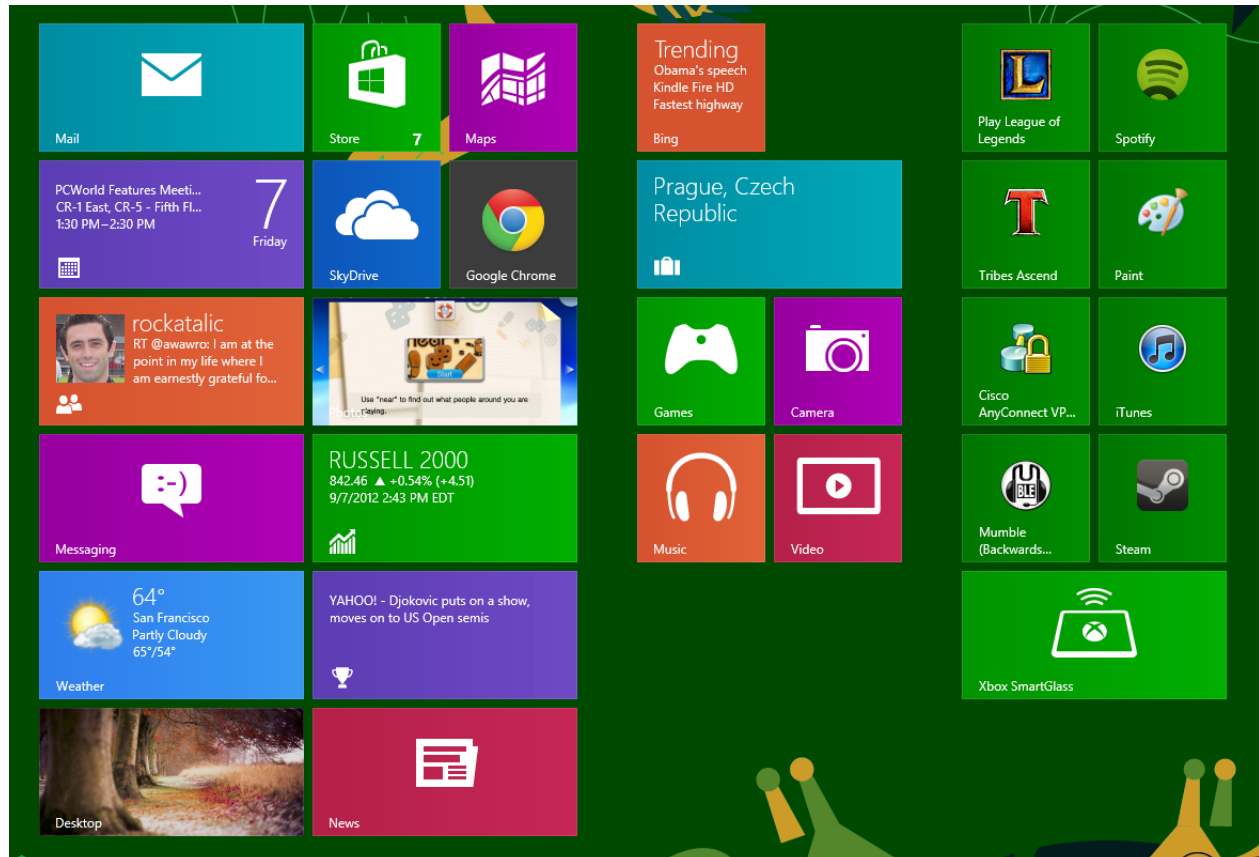
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Why Upgrade to Windows 8?



Why Upgrade to Windows 8?

Perhaps you're not fazed by the Windows 8 Modern UI, or by Microsoft embracing the touchscreen interface. Even so, here are five reasons to consider making the move to Windows 8:



1. Bargain Price

Most people don't go out and buy Windows. The preferred method of upgrading for both small businesses and consumers is to acquire the latest operating system by attrition when it's time to get a new PC. Of course, the price of purchasing Windows by itself—even the discounted upgrade price—has always been a deterrent as well.

However, with Windows 8, Microsoft is slashing the price to a mere \$40 until 2013. For anyone still running Windows XP, the upgrade to Windows 8 should be a no-brainer. Those who have already switched to Windows 7 have a reason to switch, too: [Windows 8 performs better than Windows 7](#) even on existing hardware.

Why Upgrade to Windows 8?

2. Staying in Sync

Microsoft developed Windows 8 with the cloud in mind. If you log in to Windows 8 using a Microsoft account, your apps and preferences are synced to the cloud. When you log in to Windows 8 on another system, those settings and preferences are downloaded as well so you get a consistent Windows 8 experience no matter where you are.

3. Refresh / Reset

Refresh [gets you a mostly fresh start](#). Your personal files and configuration settings are retained, along with any Modern UI apps from the Windows 8 app store. But, all other applications are removed, and Windows 8 is otherwise [returned to default factory settings](#). A list of the removed software is placed on the desktop so you know what's missing and you can begin the process of re-installing them cleanly to try and isolate which program might have been causing you problems.

Reset is more drastic. Reset is a feature you might use if you want to decommission a system to re-provision to another user, or if you plan to sell or donate the PC. Reset wipes out everything and returns Windows 8 to the way it was “out of the box” so to speak.

4. Storage Spaces

Have you ever run out of space on your hard drive? It may not be as common as it once was thanks to 1TB and 2TB drives, but it can still happen—especially when storing mass amounts of digital photos or video clips.

[Storage Spaces solves that dilemma](#) by allowing you to group multiple drives under a single logical drive letter. If you start to run out of space, you could simply throw another USB hard drive on the system to expand your storage.

Of course, if a USB drive storing crucial data crashes, it could pose a problem. Windows 8 Storage Spaces has a solution for that as well. Microsoft employs a software-based RAID system to protect data and ensure that your data remains available even in the event of a hardware failure.

5. File History

Windows 8 has new tools to protect your important data from corruption or accidental changes or deletions. File History periodically scans file locations like Libraries, Desktop, Favorites, and Contacts to identify any changes.

File History stores a copy of the changed file in an alternate location designated by you. File History will maintain a complete history of the changes made to personal data over time. With File History, you'll be able to go back in time and easily reverse any unwanted changes

Oh, and did we mention the bargain price? The \$40 price tag is a temporary offer from Microsoft that's set to expire in January. Even if you already have Windows 7 and you're happy with it, spend the \$40 on Windows 8 while you can and just file away the OS until you need it.

How to Upgrade to Windows 8



How to Upgrade to Windows 8

Upgrading to a new operating system is always exciting. But if you don't take the proper precautions, you risk losing your documents, photos, and other important data. So whether you are upgrading your computer from an existing copy of Windows or starting fresh with Windows 8, protect yourself from needless aggravation by following the steps outlined in our handy upgrade guide.

Make Sure Windows 8 Works With Your Hardware

First, verify that Windows 8 is compatible with your current hardware. Microsoft identifies the following minimum requirements for the OS: a 1GHz CPU, a graphics chipset (integrated or discrete) capable of running DirectX 9, and a monitor with a screen resolution of 1024 by 768. Also, the 32-bit version of Windows 8 requires at least 1GB of RAM and 16GB of space on your hard drive, while the 64-bit version requires at least 2GB of RAM and 20GB of space. If you're already running Windows Vista or Windows 7, you can probably upgrade to Windows 8 without much trouble.

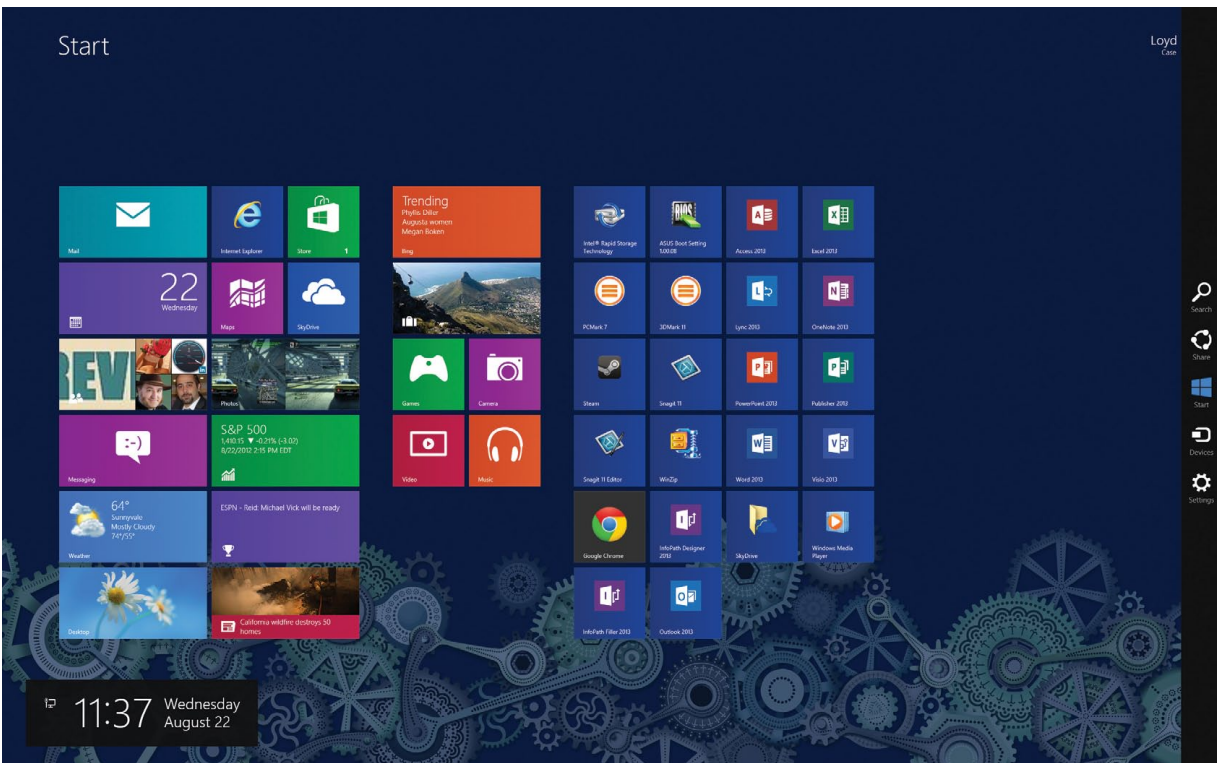
Next, you need to verify that your favorite programs and PC peripherals are compatible with Windows 8. To do so, open your Web browser and navigate to Microsoft's Compatibility Center for Windows 8 Release Preview (at go.pcworld.com/compatibilityctr). Here you can type in the name of your keyboard, printer, or other PC accessory to see whether it will operate under Windows 8. In some cases the Compatibility Center may provide a link to driver software that you need to download.

Check Windows Device Manager for the full list of devices you use. If you're upgrading from Windows XP, select *Start*, right-click *My Computer*, choose *Properties*, click the *Hardware* tab, and then click the *Device Manager* button. If you're using Vista or Windows 7, click *Start*, type **device manager**, and press **<Enter>**. You needn't verify that all your devices are compatible, but make sure that your display, audio, and networking devices will work with Windows 8.

Which version of Windows 8 should you install? Four versions are available: Windows 8, Windows 8 Pro, Windows 8 Enterprise, and Windows 8 RT. Enterprise is meant for business enterprise use, and RT is designed specifically for Windows tablets, so that leaves most PC owners with two options: Windows 8 and Windows 8 Pro. The Pro version includes a few extra features that serious PC users may appreciate (such as BitLocker encryption and the ability to use the Remote Desktop feature as both client and host). If you run Windows 7 Professional or Ultimate, and you want to keep your data intact, your only option is to upgrade to Windows 8 Pro.

If you don't mind losing your data, you can perform a fresh install of Windows 8, and that's the next decision you face: whether to perform a fresh install of Windows 8 or simply to upgrade Windows. The upgrade process is faster and easier than performing a fresh install, and Windows will automatically preserve your settings, applications, and data for use in Windows 8. Of course, you'll also carry over a lot of excess baggage in the form of old data, backups, and applications that have fallen into disuse and now just take up hard drive space. If you prefer a clean start, opt for a fresh install of Windows 8; but be sure to back up all your important data and critical device drivers first, so you can get back to work as soon as possible. This guide applies to both installation procedures (except where noted).

The New Interface



The New Interface

The Windows 8 modern approach to interface design brings Microsoft's operating system into line with the touch-centric devices that have taken center stage in our lives. Applications are readily accessible and serve up useful information without forcing users to rely on shortcut icons or third-party applications. Gestures make getting around the PC faster and more efficient—and they work just as well for keyboards and mice as they do for the touchscreen devices they're designed to accommodate.

The Modern UI isn't just pretty: It's efficient and supports considerably faster navigation than was possible with earlier incarnations of Windows.

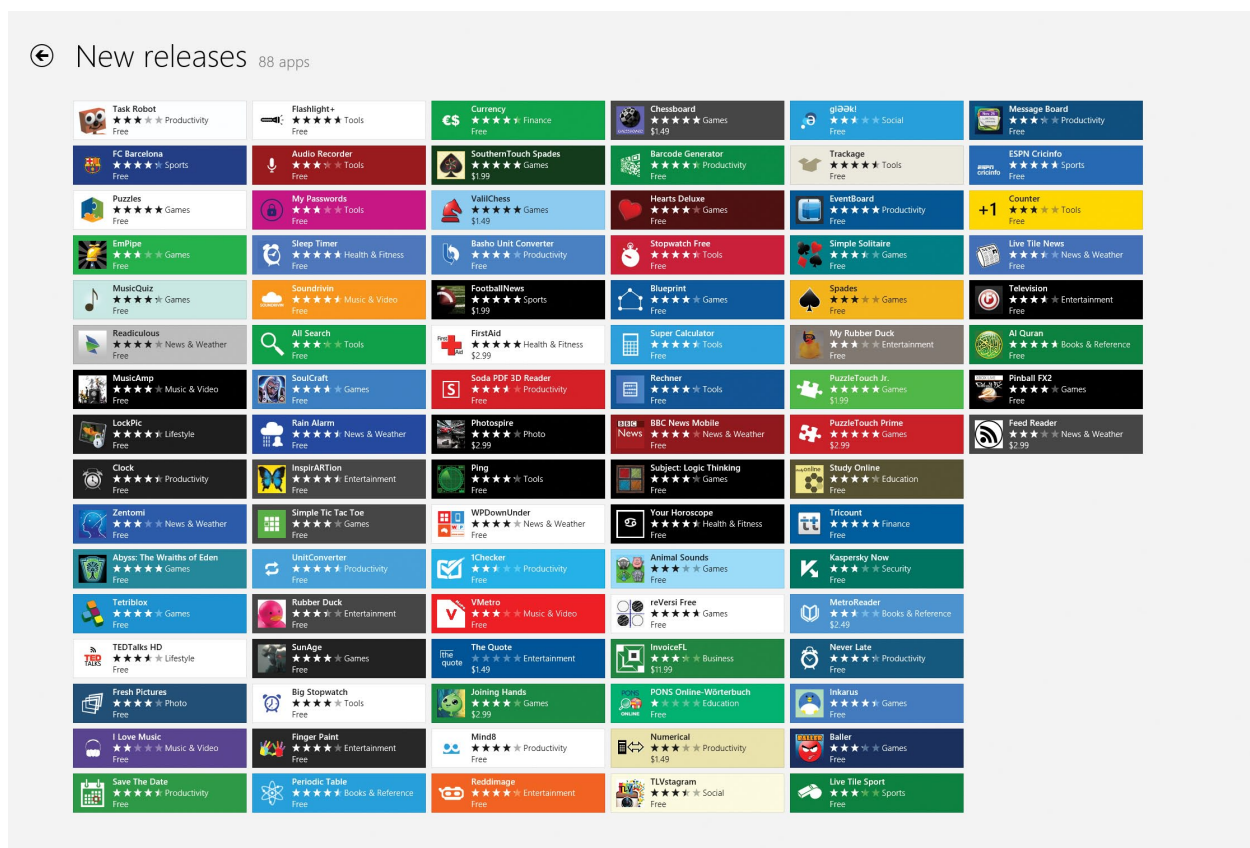
The large, unwieldy tiles that dominate the screen may be a bit disorienting at first, but think for a moment about the Start menu that we've all grown accustomed to. It's a mess: a thin, staid list of applications and folders that necessitates either cramming the Taskbar with applications that you use often or cluttering the desktop with a sea of shortcuts.

Metro takes that clutter and makes it a little more aesthetically pleasing. But there's more: You can easily group and shuffle applications. Windows has always supported the possibility of having your apps at the ready, but being able to silo them into cliques greatly simplifies the task of finding what you actually need to use.



Windows 8's live tiles keep you informed.

Personalizing Windows



Personalizing Windows

If you don't like Windows 8 out of the box, you can customize it, with some exceptions. Perhaps the most controversial exception is the fact that you can't set Windows to boot directly to the desktop, though third-party utilities may enable this.

Since the Start screen consists of groups of tiles, moving your favorite or most commonly used tiles to the left side of the screen is pretty easy. You can also specify the tile size (normal or double-wide) and turn off live-tile updates if you find them distracting. In addition, you can group tiles by program type, such as business applications, games, and so on.

One configuration option that Microsoft has buried in the past is the startup configuration. In older versions of Windows, customizing which applications launched on startup required entering the Msconfig system-configuration utility. In Windows 8, you can select which applications launch at boot-up with the new Startup tab in Task Manager, which you can easily launch in the simplified Start menu.

Some customization configurations are less obvious. One example concerns the games you might buy from Valve Software's Steam download service. When you install a game from Steam, the procedure asks you whether to create a desktop shortcut. But that shortcut isn't an application shortcut; it's actually a URL, which points to the local Steamapps folder where the game is installed. If you right-click a URL shortcut, you'll find no option to pin it to the Start screen. Instead, you have to copy the shortcut to the Start Menu folder (yes, it's still called the 'Start Menu' folder), typically in `C:\Users\user folder\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Windows\Start Menu`.

Desktop customization is also available, except for the obvious lack of Start-menu tweaks. The taskbar is present, as it was in Windows 7, and you can pin applications to it as before.

Hardware and Devices



Hardware and Devices

The base PC hardware requirements for Windows 8 are the same as they were for Windows 7—perhaps even a little less stringent. That means Windows 8 should run more effectively on, for example, machines using the latest Intel Atom processors, as we might see on some Windows 8 tablets.

Beyond the basics, Windows 8 supports new hardware, the most obvious being touch-enabled hardware. Of course, Windows 7 supported touch, but it never let you forget that touch was a bolted-on feature. In contrast, the touch interface is as much a part of Windows 8 as a keyboard and mouse are. Windows 8 supports full ten-point multitouch, including support for multifinger and even two-handed gestures.

You'll start to see standard clamshell laptops with ten-point touchscreens. Touch enables casual browsing and media consumption more easily than a mouse and keyboard do. New laptops without touch-enabled LCDs will have ten-point multitouch touchpads that support edge detection. Working with such a touchpad is merely an extension of using a Windows 7 touchpad, so you can use one of these new touchpads just as you did an older one, if you prefer, or you can take advantage of the new capabilities.

What seems to be missing at this point is a range of desktop displays supporting ten-point multitouch. PC companies are readying a number of all-in-one systems with touch, but traditional desktop systems with touch displays, as well as stand-alone touch-enabled displays, seem to be nowhere in sight.

In addition to clamshell laptops with touch, we'll see more convertible laptops with touch displays that either fold over the back of the system or detach from the keyboard to become a tablet



HP Envy Ultrabook 4

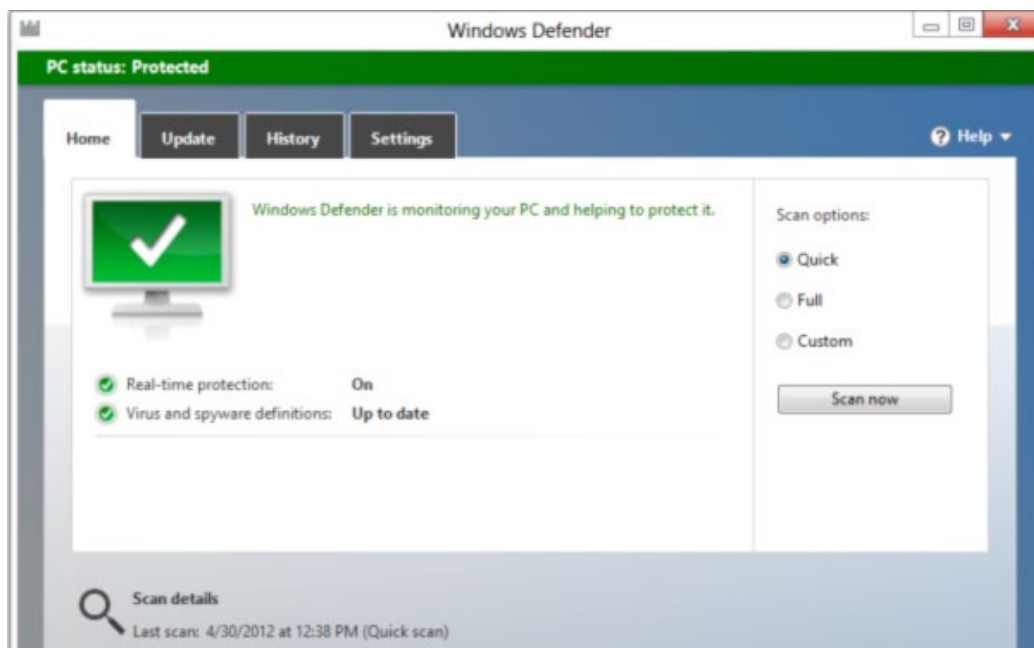
What's New in Security



The new Start screen in Windows 8 and apps will likely be the first changes you'll notice, but those aren't the only things that are new. Microsoft is also making some serious security enhancements to help keep your system safer and to improve Windows' ability to combat viruses and malware. It just may be the biggest improvement to Windows security yet.

Antivirus Comes Preinstalled

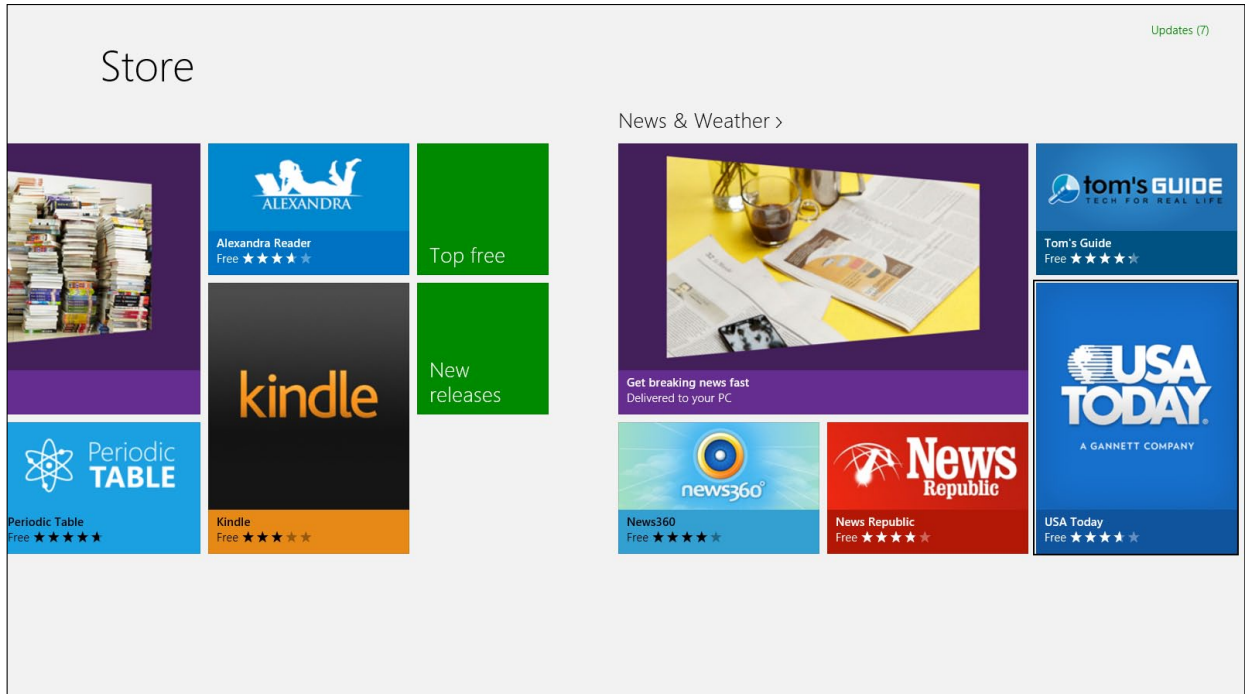
For the first time in the history of Windows, you'll enjoy protection from viruses, spyware, Trojan horses, root-kits, and other malware from the very first day you turn on your Windows PC—without spending a cent. Windows 8 comes with an updated version of Windows Defender that includes traditional antivirus functions in addition to the spyware protection and other security features that it has offered since Windows Vista. Windows Defender now provides similar protection—and a similar look and feel—to that of the free [Microsoft Security Essentials](#) antivirus program, which Microsoft has offered to users as an optional download since 2009.



The updated Windows Defender resembles Microsoft Security Essentials.

Since Windows Defender will provide at least basic virus and malware protection, purchasing yearly antivirus subscriptions (such as from McAfee or Norton) or downloading a [free antivirus package](#) (like AVG or Avast) is optional, whereas before it was pretty much required if you wanted to stay virus-free. Of course, you may disable Windows Defender and use another antivirus utility that promises better protection and more features, but at least everyone will have basic protection by default.

The Microsoft Store



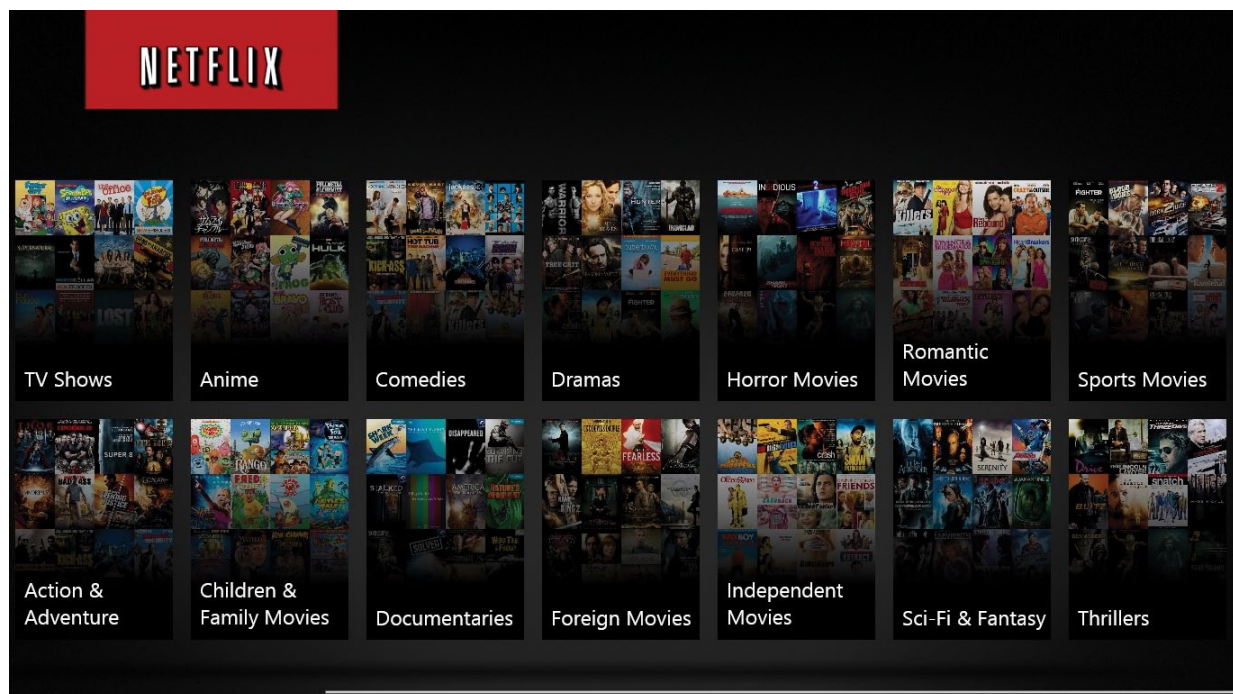
The Microsoft Store

Late to the game, Microsoft added a store to Windows, much like the marketplaces for Mac OS X, iOS, and Android. If you want to buy apps from the Microsoft Store, you need to create a Microsoft account.

You'll find more than one store within Windows 8. You buy Windows 8 apps by clicking the Store tile—but you purchase music by launching the Music app, and you buy videos by launching the Video app.

Even more confusing, the app store is called just the “Store” while the music and video stores are named Xbox Music and Xbox Video. (Of course, both the Music app and the Video app are media playback tools as well, though they are less robust compared with Windows Media Player or the likes of iTunes. The new operating system’s lack of a unified Windows 8-style media player is a pretty significant hole.)

Navigating the Microsoft Store is similar to navigating the Start screen. Featured apps come in individual tiles, and are sorted by groups; each group also has a ‘Top Free’ tile and a ‘New releases’ tile. As of this writing, however, the Store listed about 8000 apps, so Microsoft has a little catching up to do.



Netflix: The popular streaming media service gets a Windows 8 makeover and takes full advantage of Windows 8’s split-screen Snap View. The app also supports the OS’s “Semantic Zoom” feature (shown above), which helps you quickly navigate among content thumbnails by zooming in and out on a page.

Thanks for reading.

We hope this guide has helped you get familiar with Windows 8. PCWorld also offers superguides on Android, Windows 7, and Speeding Up Everything. Take a look at www.pcworld.com/superguide, and check PCWorld.com for the latest tips, reviews, news, and how-to advice.