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Michael Miller

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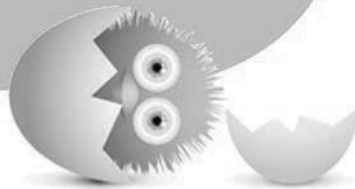
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# Computer Basics

Windows® 10 Edition

**ABSOLUTE  
BEGINNER'S  
GUIDE**



Michael Miller

**que**®

800 East 96th Street,  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46240

# Computer Basics Absolute Beginner's Guide, Windows® 10 Edition

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## About the Author

**Michael Miller** is a successful and prolific author with a reputation for practical advice, technical accuracy, and an unerring empathy for the needs of his readers.

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He is known for his casual, easy-to-read writing style and his practical, real-world advice—as well as his ability to explain a variety of complex topics to an everyday audience.

Learn more about Mr. Miller at his website, [www.millerwriter.com](http://www.millerwriter.com). Follow him on Twitter @molehillgroup.

## Dedication

*To Sherry—life together is easier.*

## Acknowledgments

Thanks to the usual suspects at Que, including but not limited to Greg Wiegand, Michelle Newcomb, William Abner, San Dee Phillips, Andy Beaster, and technical editor Vince Averello.

## We Want to Hear from You!

As the reader of this book, *you* are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we're doing right, what we could do better, what areas you'd like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you're willing to pass our way.

As an associate publisher for Que Publishing, I welcome your comments. You can email or write me directly to let me know what you did or didn't like about this book—as well as what we can do to make our books better.

*Please note that I cannot help you with technical problems related to the topic of this book. We do have a User Services group, however, where I will forward specific technical questions related to the book.*

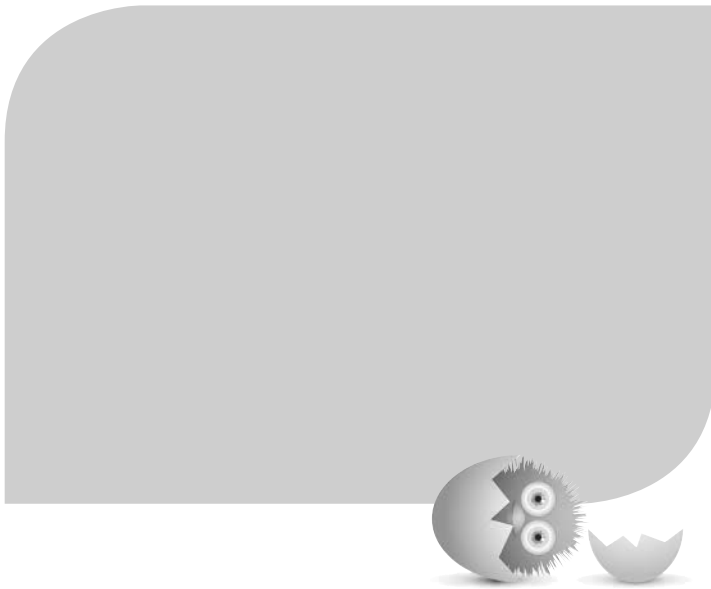
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# INTRODUCTION

Because this book is titled *Computer Basics: Absolute Beginner's Guide*, let's start at the absolute beginning, which is this:

Computers aren't supposed to be scary. Intimidating? Sometimes. Difficult to use? Perhaps. Inherently unreliable? Most definitely. (Although they're much better than they used to be.)

But scary? Definitely not.

Computers aren't scary because there's nothing they can do to hurt you (unless you drop your notebook PC on your foot, that is). And there's not much you can do to hurt them, either. It's kind of a wary coexistence between man and machine, but the relationship has the potential to be beneficial—to you, anyway.

Many people think that they're scared of computers because they're unfamiliar with them. But that isn't really true.

You see, even if you've never actually used a computer before, you've been exposed to computers and all they can do for the past three decades or so. Whenever you make a deposit at your bank, you work with computers. Whenever you make a purchase at a retail store, you work with computers. Whenever you watch a television show, read a newspaper article, or look at a picture in a magazine, you work with computers.

That's because computers are used in all those applications. Somebody, somewhere, works behind the scenes with a computer to manage your bank account and monitor your credit card purchases.

In fact, it's difficult to imagine, here in the 21st century, how we ever got by without all those keyboards, mice, and monitors (or, for that matter, the Internet and social networking).

However, just because computers have been around for a while doesn't mean that everyone knows how to use them. It's not unusual to feel a little trepidation the first time you sit down in front of that intimidating display and keyboard. Which keys should you press? What do people mean by double-clicking the mouse? And what are all those little pictures onscreen?

As foreign as all this might seem at first, computers really aren't that hard to understand—or use. You have to learn a few basic concepts, of course (all the pressing and clicking and whatnot), and it helps to understand exactly what part of the system does what. But when you get the hang of things, computers are easy to use.

Which, of course, is where this book comes in.

*Computer Basics: Absolute Beginner's Guide, Windows 10 Edition*, can help you figure out how to use your new computer system. You learn how computers work, how to connect all the pieces and parts (if your computer has pieces and parts, that is; not all do), and how to start using them. You learn about computer hardware and software, about Microsoft's Windows 10 operating system, and about the Internet. And when you're comfortable with the basic concepts (which won't take too long, trust me), you learn how to actually do stuff.

You learn how to do useful stuff, such as writing letters and scheduling appointments; fun stuff, such as listening to music, watching movies and TV shows, and viewing digital photos; online stuff, such as searching for information, sending and receiving email, and keeping up with friends and family via Facebook and other social networks; and essential stuff, such as copying files, troubleshooting problems, and protecting against malware and computer attacks.



All you have to do is sit yourself down in front of your computer, try not to be scared (there's nothing to be scared of, really), and work your way through the chapters and activities in this book. And remember that computers aren't difficult to use, they don't break easily, and they let you do all sorts of fun and useful things after you get the hang of them. Really!

## How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into eight main parts, as follows:

- **Part I, "Understanding Computers,"** discusses all the different types of computers available today; describes all the pieces and parts of desktop, all-in-one, and notebook PCs; and talks about how to connect everything to get your new system up and running.
- **Part II, "Using Windows,"** introduces the backbone of your entire system, the Microsoft Windows operating system—in particular, Windows 10. You learn how Windows 10 works, how it's different from previous versions of Windows, and how to navigate your way around the desktop and the Start menu. You'll also learn how to use Windows to perform basic tasks, such as copying and deleting files and folders.
- **Part III, "Setting Up the Rest of Your System,"** talks about all those things you connect to your computer—printers, external hard drives, USB thumb drives, and the like. You also learn how to connect your new PC to other computers and devices in a home network.
- **Part IV, "Using the Internet,"** is all about going online. You discover how to connect to the Internet and surf the Web. You also learn how to search for information, do research, shop, and even sell things online. This is the fun part of the book.
- **Part V, "Communicating Online,"** is all about keeping in touch. You find out how to send and receive email, of course, but also how to get started with social networking, on Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, and other social networks. It's how everyone's keeps in touch these days.
- **Part VI, "Working with Software Programs,"** tells you everything you need to know about using software programs. (What some people call "apps.") You learn how software programs work, which apps are included in Windows 10, and where to find more apps. (This last bit covers Microsoft's Windows Store, which is where a lot of fun apps can be had.)

- **Part VII, “Doing Fun and Useful Stuff with Your PC,”** brings more fun—and a little work. You learn all about getting productive with Microsoft Office, as well as how to manage your schedule with the Windows Calendar app. You also discover how to use your PC to manage, edit, and view digital photos; listen to music, both on your PC and over the Internet; and watch movies and TV shows online. Like I said, fun and useful stuff.
- **Part VIII, “Keeping Your System Up and Running,”** contains all the boring (but necessary) information you need to know to keep your new PC in tip-top shape. You learn how to protect against Internet threats (including viruses, spyware, and spam), as well as how to perform routine computer maintenance. You even learn how to troubleshoot problems and, if necessary, restore, refresh, or reset your entire system.

Taken together, the 26 chapters in this book can help you progress from absolute beginner to experienced computer user. Just read what you need, and before long you'll be using your computer like a pro!

## Which Version of Windows?

This edition of the *Absolute Beginner's Guide to Computer Basics* is written for computers running the latest version of Microsoft's operating system, dubbed Windows 10. If you're running previous versions of Windows, you'll be better off with previous editions of this book. There are editions out there for Windows 8.1, Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, even Windows XP. If you can't find a particular edition at your local bookstore, look for it online.

## Conventions Used in This Book

I hope that this book is easy enough to figure out on its own, without requiring its own instruction manual. As you read through the pages, however, it helps to know precisely how I've presented specific types of information.

### Menu Commands

Most computer programs operate via a series of pull-down menus. You use your mouse to pull down a menu and then select an option from that menu. This sort of operation is indicated like this throughout the book:

Select File, Save.

or

Right-click the file and select Properties from the pop-up menu.

All you have to do is follow the instructions in order, using your mouse to click each item in turn. When submenus are tacked onto the main menu, just keep clicking the selections until you come to the last one—which should open the program or activate the command you want!

## Shortcut Key Combinations

When you use your computer keyboard, sometimes you have to press two keys at the same time. These two-key combinations are called *shortcut keys* and are shown as the key names joined with a plus sign (+).

For example, Ctrl+W indicates that you should press the W key while holding down the Ctrl key. It's no more complex than that.

## Web Page Addresses

This book contains a lot of web page addresses. (That's because you'll probably be spending a lot of time on the Internet.)

Technically, a web page address is supposed to start with `http://` (as in `http://www.millerwriter.com`). Because web browsers automatically insert this piece of the address, however, you don't have to type it—and I haven't included it in any of the addresses in this book.

## Special Elements

This book also includes a few special elements that provide additional information not included in the basic text. These elements are designed to supplement the text to make your learning faster, easier, and more efficient.



A *tip* is a piece of advice—a little trick, actually—that helps you use your computer more effectively or maneuver around problems or limitations.



A *note* is designed to provide information that is generally useful but not specifically necessary for what you're doing at the moment. Some are like extended tips—interesting, but not essential.



A *caution* tells you to beware of a potentially dangerous act or situation. In some cases, ignoring a caution could cause you significant problems—so pay attention to them!

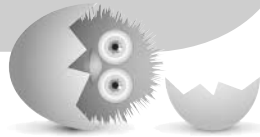
## There's More Online

If you want to learn more about me and any new books I have in the works, check out my website at [www.millerwriter.com](http://www.millerwriter.com). Who knows, you might find some other books there that you would like to read. You can also follow me on Twitter (@molehillgroup), and leave messages to me on my website. I love hearing from readers!

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- A Short History of Windows
- Windows 10 for Windows 8/8.1 Users
- Windows 10 for Windows 7 Users
- Windows 10 for Windows XP Users
- The Most Important New Features of Windows 10

# 5



## GETTING TO KNOW WINDOWS 10—IF YOU’VE USED WINDOWS BEFORE

Windows 10 is the latest version of Windows, the operating system from Microsoft that’s been driving personal computers since the late 1980s. It’s a considerable improvement over the previous version (Windows 8) and a worthwhile upgrade if you’re using any older version of Windows.

## A Short History of Windows

If you've recently purchased a new PC, the version of Windows on your PC is probably Windows 10. Microsoft has released different versions of Windows over the years, and Windows 10 (released in July 2015) is just the latest in a 30-year run.



**NOTE** If your computer runs an older version of Windows, you should pick up a previous edition of this book covering that operating system. There are editions that cover Windows 8.1, Windows 8, Windows 7, and Windows Vista; you can find these editions at Amazon.com and other online booksellers.

### Early Windows

The history of Windows actually goes back further than 30 years. That's because Windows wasn't Microsoft's first operating system. Windows evolved from Microsoft's original DOS operating system, which was released in 1981. The DOS operating system was developed by Bill Gates and Paul Allen to run the then-new IBM Personal Computer, and utilized a stark text-based interface and simple one-word user commands. It wasn't what you would call user-friendly.



**NOTE** DOS (stands for *disk operating system*) was the generic name for what were actually two different operating systems. When packaged with IBM's personal computers, DOS was dubbed PC DOS. When sold in a standalone package by Microsoft, DOS was dubbed MS-DOS. Both versions were functionally identical.

Microsoft believed, however, that for personal computers to become mainstream, they had to be easier to use, which argued for a *graphical user interface* (GUI) instead of DOS's command-line interface. With that in mind, development on the inaugural version of Windows started in 1983, with the final product released to market in November, 1985.

Windows was originally going to be called Interface Manager and was nothing more than a graphical shell that sat on top of the existing DOS operating system. While DOS was a keyboard-driven, text-based operating system, Windows supported the click-and-drag operation of a mouse. That said, individual windows could be tiled only onscreen and could not be stacked or overlaid on top of each other.

Windows 1.0 didn't gain a lot of users, but Microsoft kept at it, releasing the next version (Windows 2.0) in 1987. Windows 2.0 added overlapping windows and

allowed minimized windows to be moved around the desktop with a mouse. Its big claim to fame, however, was that it came bundled with Microsoft's Word and Excel applications. It still wasn't a big success.

## Windows Goes Mainstream

The first commercially successful version of Windows was Windows 3.0, released in 1990. This version of Windows sold more than 10 million copies. Windows 3.0 was the first version of Windows to incorporate true multitasking, thus providing a real alternative to the dominant DOS operating system of the time. In addition, the Windows 3.0 interface was a lot nicer looking, with 3D buttons and such, and users could, for the first time, change the color of the underlying desktop.

Two years later, in 1992, Microsoft released Windows 3.1. This version, more than a simple point upgrade, not only included the requisite bug fixes, but also it was the first version of Windows to display TrueType scalable fonts—which turned Windows into a serious platform for desktop publishing. Also new to Windows 3.1 were screensavers and drag-and-drop operation.

## Starting It Up with Windows 95

The next version of Windows would be the biggest so far—and to date, for that matter. Windows 95 was released in 1995, and it was a genuine media event, with live television coverage and customers lined up outside stores waiting for the midnight release of the product. (I know, because I was there.) This was Windows hitting the big time, to the soundtrack of the Rolling Stones' "Start Me Up."

What was the big deal? Windows 95 looked better and worked better, both things for which users had been waiting for years. Windows 95 introduced the taskbar, which held buttons for all open windows. It was also the first version of Windows to use the Start button and Start menu (hence the tie-in to the Rolling Stones' song); desktop shortcuts, right-clicking, and long filenames also debuted in this version.

Three years later, Microsoft introduced Windows 98, an evolutionary change to the previous version. It looked and felt pretty much like Windows 95, even though it did include some useful improvements under the hood. There was also a "Second Edition" of Windows 98 released in 1999, which was more of a bug fix release.

At the turn of the century, Microsoft released a "millennium edition" of Windows, dubbed Windows Me. This version was considered a failure that seemingly broke more things than it fixed. Although Windows Me upgraded the operating system's multimedia and Internet features, added the Windows Movie Maker application,

and introduced the System Restore utility—all good things—it was notably bug-ridden and prone to frequent freezes and crashes. This caused many users to skip the upgrade entirely.

## Windows XP, Vista, and 7

All those bugs got fixed with the 2001 release of what Microsoft called Windows XP. This was the first version of Windows to bring corporate reliability to the consumer market—and consumer friendliness to the corporate market. From the end user's standpoint, XP was a faster and better-looking version of Windows, and a lot more reliable than the failed Windows Me. It also supported a more modern animated interface, dubbed Luna.

Microsoft stuck with Windows XP for 6 years, not upgrading it until the 2007 release of Windows Vista. Vista added increased security and reliability, improved digital media functionality, and the dazzling Aero 3D user interface. Unfortunately, Vista proved every bit as buggy as the older Windows Me and had a lot of compatibility issues with older computer hardware. It was a bomb, pure and simple—which led Microsoft to replace it with the new and improved Windows 7, released in 2009, just 2 short years after the release of Windows Vista.

What changed in Windows 7? First, it fixed a lot of what people didn't like about Windows Vista. Older hardware and software were more compatible, and there was even a Windows XP Mode that let you run XP-era apps in their native environment—actually a virtual PC running the real honest-to-goodness Windows XP operating system. There were also some subtle interface changes, including a revamping of how the taskbar looked and worked.

## Then Came Windows 8

Users loved Windows 7. Even large companies, seemingly wedded to Windows XP, eventually migrated to the better user interface and increased performance of the newer operating system. Everybody was happy.

That wasn't good enough for Microsoft, however. Microsoft was looking at the burgeoning sales of Apple's iPad and feared that traditional notebook and desktop computers would soon be replaced by tablets—a form factor that Microsoft had virtually no presence with. So the brain trust in Seattle put their heads together and came up with a striking reimagining of their core operating system, designed for smaller touchscreen devices.

Windows 8 was released in 2012, and was met with immediate derision. Users took issue with having the new “touch first” interface forced on them, as the



vast majority of users were running traditional nontouch notebook and desktop computers, and avoided upgrading to Windows 8.

What exactly was different about Windows 8? First, it didn’t boot to the traditional desktop; instead, users saw a new Start screen with clickable tiles for all their installed applications. This Start screen replaced the tried-and-true Start menu, which simply vanished from Windows. Users could no longer click the Start button to see a Start menu full of their installed apps. This was not only confusing to long-term users, but it was also less productive than using the old Start menu.

Many common operations previously done with the mouse or keyboard were translated into touch gestures, which were meaningless for the majority of users who didn’t have touchscreen computers. A new class of applications (variously called Metro or Modern or Windows Store apps) was also introduced, displayed solely in full-screen mode and designed to operate best on touchscreen devices.

In short, Microsoft abandoned its huge user base and forced them to learn a new way of doing things that they neither wanted nor needed. It’s not surprising that Windows 8 was so derisively received, nor that this move almost singlehandedly destroyed the entire personal computer industry. Users not only refused to upgrade their old PCs to Windows 8, but also refused to buy new PCs that were running the despised operating system. Microsoft couldn’t have done worse if it tried to.

The company tried to reverse some of the damage with the release of Windows 8.1 in 2013. Windows 8.1 returned the Start button to the taskbar (but tied it to the Start screen; still no Start menu), and let users boot directly to the desktop instead of the Start screen, but the changes were too few to make much of a difference. Microsoft had turned Windows into a joke—and an extremely disliked user experience.

## Introducing Windows 10

Lets’ face it; Windows 8 was a disaster. Users avoided it like the plague, unless they were forced to buy a new PC with Windows 8 preloaded. Microsoft tried to force a new GUI and operational paradigm on its billions of users, even though users weren’t asking for or wanting to change the way they did things on their computers. The result? One of the biggest failures in technology history—a mistake that ranks right up with New Coke and the Edsel.

Fortunately for all those despondent Windows 8 users, that bomb of an operating system has been replaced by Windows 10. Windows 10 undoes pretty much everything that Windows 8 got wrong and is finally a worthy successor to the much-beloved Windows 7.

## Windows 10 for Windows 8/8.1 Users

If you were forced to use Windows 8/8.1, you have my sympathy. The good news is, Windows 10 is a lot better. A whole lot better.

What exactly is new in Windows 10? A lot! Here's a short list of changes you'll find:

- The Start button is back, as is the Start menu. Click the Start button and you see a new and (really) improved version of the Start menu, with all your installed programs listed.
- Programs pinned to the Start menu now appear as resizable tiles, some of which display live information without having to be opened.
- Windows boots directly to the desktop. No more full-screen Start screen. (Actually, the Start screen no longer exists in Windows 10; instead, if you run Windows on a tablet, you see a full-screen version of the Start menu.)
- Although you can operate Windows 10 with touch gestures, you don't have to. Everything you need to do you can do with your mouse and keyboard.
- The full-screen Modern apps from Windows 8 have been rewritten to appear in resizable windows on the traditional desktop.
- A new Action Center pane is accessible from the taskbar, which displays important system messages and offers quick access to important system tools.
- There's a new virtual personal assistant, named Cortana, which you can use to search the web or find important information. You can use Cortana with the keyboard or via voice commands.
- A new web browser, called Edge, is faster and more streamlined than the old Internet Explorer.
- The Charms bar from Windows 8 is no more; all configuration options are available from the new Settings tool (or the traditional Control Panel, which is still around).

There are even more new features, including some changes to the interface design, but that gives you a feel of what's new and different. If you still run Windows 8 or Windows 8.1, you need to upgrade to Windows 10.

The good news about upgrading from Windows 8/8.1 is that it's easy and it's free—for the first year of release, anyway. If you have a Windows 8/8.1 PC, open the Windows Store app to download and install Windows 10. You should experience no compatibility issues with hardware or software you ran with Windows 8/8.1.

## Windows 10 for Windows 7 Users

It's fair to say that the last great version of Windows was Windows 7. It was so beloved that most Windows 7 users didn't upgrade to Windows 8 or 8.1; they kept running 7 on their old machines and avoided buying new PCs so that they wouldn't have to run the dreaded Windows 8. (Nobody liked Windows 8. Trust me on this one.)

But Windows 7 is starting to get a little long in the tooth, and many of those older Windows 7 PCs are starting to show their age. There's a raft of Windows 7 users who've been holding out on upgrading until something better than Windows 8 came along. That something is Windows 10.

If you're a Windows 7 user, you'll find Windows 10 extremely familiar. I view Windows 10 as the natural upgrade to Windows 7 that Windows 8 should have been but wasn't. Windows 10 sticks with everything that people liked about Windows 7 and makes some natural and quite useful enhancements.

What will Windows 7 users find new in Windows 10? Here's a short list:

- There is no Start screen or full-screen Modern apps to deal with. By moving from Windows 7 directly to Windows 10 you avoid everything that everybody hated about Windows 8.
- The translucent Aero interface is gone, replaced by a more contemporary flat interface design with minimal windows "chrome." (Although the Start menu is still somewhat see-through.)
- There aren't any desktop "gadgets" in Windows 10. Sorry about that.
- The Start menu has been substantially revamped. Pinned apps now appear as live resizable tiles on the Start menu, and the Start menu itself is resizable.
- You now sign into Windows with a Microsoft account. You can sign into multiple PCs (all running Windows 10) with the same account and have your personal options appear on the other PCs.
- There's a newer, faster, more compatible web browser to replace the older, slower Internet Explorer. The new browser is called Edge, and it has a similar (but edgier) "e" shortcut icon as the older Internet Explorer.
- Windows Explorer is renamed to File Explorer, with a new ribbon interface.
- The Task Manager tool is completely overhauled to make it more functional.
- The Windows Defender antivirus/antispyware tool is still included, free of charge.
- Windows adds options to both refresh and reset the operating system in case of severe system problems.

In terms of compatibility, Windows 10 should run just fine on a Windows 7 PC. You may find some compatibility issues with some older software, so check with Microsoft or your software publisher to make sure everything works well together.

You should be able to upgrade from Windows 7 to Windows 10 without losing any of your files, programs, or settings. Any Windows 7 user can upgrade to Windows 10 for free, for the first year of release.

## Windows 10 for Windows XP Users

Some people might find it hard to believe, but there are still tens of millions of people and companies still using Windows XP, 14 years after its initial release—and more than a year since Microsoft quit officially supporting it. That loss of support is reason enough to upgrade from XP to Windows 10; you also gain a great deal of functionality by moving to a more modern operating system.



**NOTE** Why are so many installations still using a 14-year-old operating system? In a lot of cases, it's because companies are using purpose-built software that was designed for the Windows XP platform. If this is the main software your company uses, there has been little need to upgrade operating systems—especially if the old software won't run on newer versions of Windows.

How different is Windows 10 from Windows XP? The changes are almost too numerous to note, but include

- Revamped Start menu with live tiles for pinned apps.
- Revamped taskbar to which you can pin shortcuts to your favorite apps. There's also a search button directly on the taskbar, and you can use the search functionality to find apps and files on your computer.
- It's a lot easier to connect your computer to a network, especially with the Homegroup feature.
- The Documents and Settings folder has been replaced by traditional User folders.
- You can more easily switch from one open app to another with the Alt+Tab keyboard shortcut.
- The new and improved Microsoft Edge web browser replaces Internet Explorer.
- Windows 10 runs a lot faster, especially on newer PCs, and crashes less often.

The challenge with upgrading directly from Windows XP to Windows 10 is that you’re moving from a 14-year-old operating system to a brand new state-of-the-art one. If you use a computer that’s as old as the operating system, it may not run Windows 10; certainly, you’re likely to run into some compatibility issues with older peripherals and software programs.

In addition, the upgrade itself won’t be easy. You can’t just upgrade the operating system; you have to wipe your computer’s hard disk completely clean and then install Windows 10 fresh on top of that. (This is called a *clean install*.) You’ll lose all your files and programs and settings, so you’ll want to back up your files first and then restore them after you install Windows 10. You’ll need to reinstall all your software programs from scratch, as well.

In addition, Windows XP users are not eligible for the same free upgrade offered to Windows 7 and 8.1 users. If you want to upgrade to Windows 10, you’ll have to pay for it.

For these reasons, it’s difficult to recommend that “absolute beginners” upgrade from Windows XP to Windows 10, even with all the benefits that might come from such a move. A better approach is to ditch your older computer (or give it to one of your kids) and buy a new computer with Windows 10 already installed. New computers are a lot less expensive than they were a decade ago, and getting a new PC up and running will take a lot less time and effort than trying to upgrade a Windows XP machine to Windows 10.

## The Most Important New Features of Windows 10

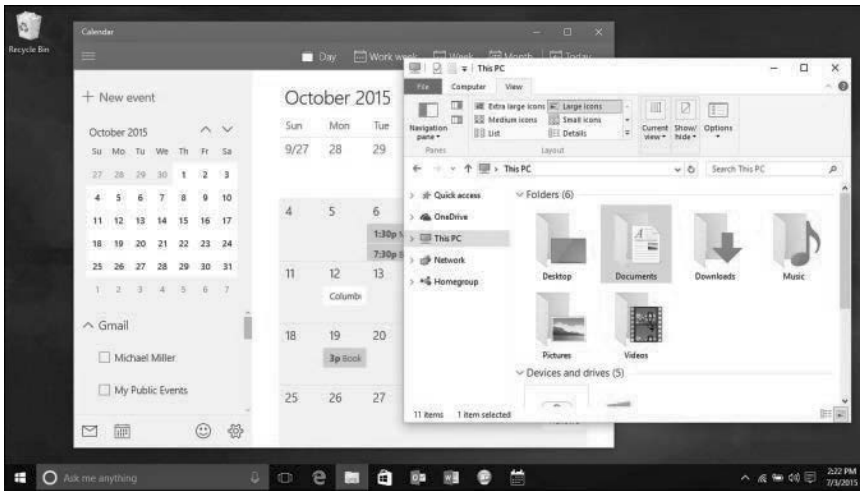
Now that you know what’s new in this latest version of Windows, let’s take an in-depth look at the most important features in Windows 10.

### Back to the Desktop (Goodbye, Start Screen)

The biggest mistake that Microsoft made with Windows 8 was trying to apply a single interface paradigm to all possible devices—and then picking the wrong interface. Microsoft assumed that tablets would obliterate desktop and notebook PCs, so it developed a touch-based, full-screen interface that worked fine on those touchscreen devices, but then forced that interface on all traditional PC users. Bad decision.

The biggest change in Windows 10 is the abandonment of that touch-based paradigm—at least if you have a regular notebook or desktop PC. When you boot Windows 10 with a traditional PC, you’re booted directly to the desktop, shown

in Figure 5.1. There's no Start screen (which is how you had to open apps in Windows 10), no Charms bar you have to swipe in from the right (which is where many system settings were located in Windows 8), no "Modern" or "Metro" apps that took up the entire screen to display a minimal amount of information. You start your PC, you see the same old desktop you've grown to love and expect, and you're off to the races.



**FIGURE 5.1**

*The Windows 10 desktop, complete with flat design and thinner window frames.*

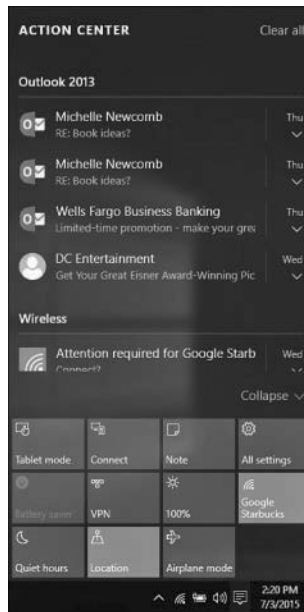
The Windows 10 desktop looks pretty much like the desktop in Windows 7. There's a taskbar at the bottom of the screen, application shortcuts on the desktop itself, even a Start button in the lower-left corner (more on that in a moment). You don't need to touch it to make it work; it's designed for use with your mouse and keyboard, just as you're used to. In short, it's the Windows desktop you want, with no unnecessary interference.



**NOTE** If you run Windows 10 on a touchscreen tablet, however, you won't see the desktop—you see a full-screen version of the Start menu, along with much of the touch-based stuff first introduced in Windows 8. And that's as it should be; different interfaces for different types of devices, without negatively impacting traditional desktop users. Learn more about the version of Windows 10 in Chapter 6, "Using Windows 10 on a Touchscreen Device."

By the way, the Windows 10 desktop doesn’t look exactly like the Windows 7 desktop. The older operating system’s opaque Aero interface is gone, with Windows 10 instead adopting the trendy “flat” design that shows windows floating above the desktop with a slight drop shadow. Individual windows have thinner frames (or no frames at all) so the contents are front and center with a minimum of unnecessary “chrome.” And most of the system icons have been redesigned, as well.

At the far-right corner of the notification area of the taskbar you see a new Notifications icon. Click this to display the Action Center, as shown in Figure 5.2, that displays system messages and (if you’re using the right email client) new messages in your email inbox. Not necessary, but kind of nice.



**FIGURE 5.2**

*The Action Center in Windows 10.*

## The Start Menu Returns—Better Than Ever

Perhaps the most significant change in Windows 10 is that little piece of real estate in the lower-left corner. That’s right, the Start button and the Start menu are back!

Perhaps the dumbest thing Microsoft did in Windows 8 was to remove the Start menu, which is how we’ve all been launching programs since the advent of

Windows 95 two decades ago. In Windows 8, you had to navigate to the Start screen, which took up the entire screen (of course), find your app among the dozens or hundreds displayed there, and then do the tap or click thing. There was no compelling reason for this change, nobody was demanding it, and users quite frankly despised it.

Well, Microsoft heard the complaints, and the Start menu is back in Windows 10. Click the Start button and you see the Start menu—although it looks a little different from what you were used to in Windows 7, as you can see in Figure 5.3.



**FIGURE 5.3**

*The Windows 10 Start menu, complete with live tiles for pinned programs.*

Actually, the left side of the new Start menu looks familiar—it's the normal list of favorite and last-used applications, in a slightly different order than before. There's also the requisite All Apps option that, when clicked, displays a scrolling list of all installed programs.

It's the right side of the Start menu that's radically different. Here is where you see any apps you've pinned to the Start menu, but not in the traditional list. Instead, you see a "tile" for each item. These are similar to the tiles on the Windows 8 Start screen, to the extent of being "live"—that is, displaying current information when available. If you pin the Weather app, for example, the Weather tile displays



current temperature and weather conditions. The News tile displays current news headlines. And so forth.

These tiles are resizable, and the Start menu can be resized vertically. The tiles create a new level of usability for the Start menu, resulting in a nice addition of Windows 8 functionality into the traditional Windows desktop paradigm.

## Modern Apps in Desktop Windows

In Windows 8, Microsoft introduced a new class of applications, originally dubbed Metro (then Modern, and then Windows Store) apps. These apps ran full screen and were designed to be used on touch interfaces.

As a whole, these Modern apps were not successful. In many cases, they presented too little information on too much screen real estate. (Do you really need a Weather app running full screen?) In other cases, the apps were actually pretty good but suffered simply by being associated with the hated Windows 8.

In Windows 10, Microsoft tries to offer the best of both worlds. All the former full-screen Modern apps (now called Universal or just Windows apps) are redesigned to appear in traditional windows on the desktop, as shown in Figure 5.4. You can resize the windows as you like, and display multiple app windows at a time. You get all the functionality of these newer apps but in a desktop-friendly package—just as it should be.



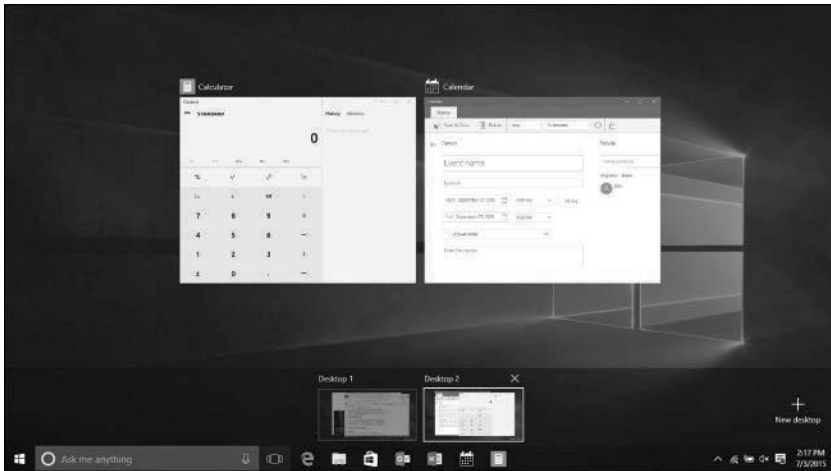
**FIGURE 5.4**

*The Weather app, running in a desktop window.*

By the way, in Windows 8 the configuration options for these apps appeared in the swipearable Charms bar. The app-specific Charms bars are gone for these revised Universal apps; instead, all the app options are accessible from a “hamburger” (three bar) button on the app’s toolbar. Much more friendly for desktop users.

## More New Stuff

Now that Windows 10 takes us back to the desktop, Microsoft has devised a new way to run multiple desktops for better productivity. This new feature is called Task View, and it lets you create multiple desktops, each with its own combination of open windows. Click the new Task View button on the toolbar to switch between desktops, as shown in Figure 5.5.

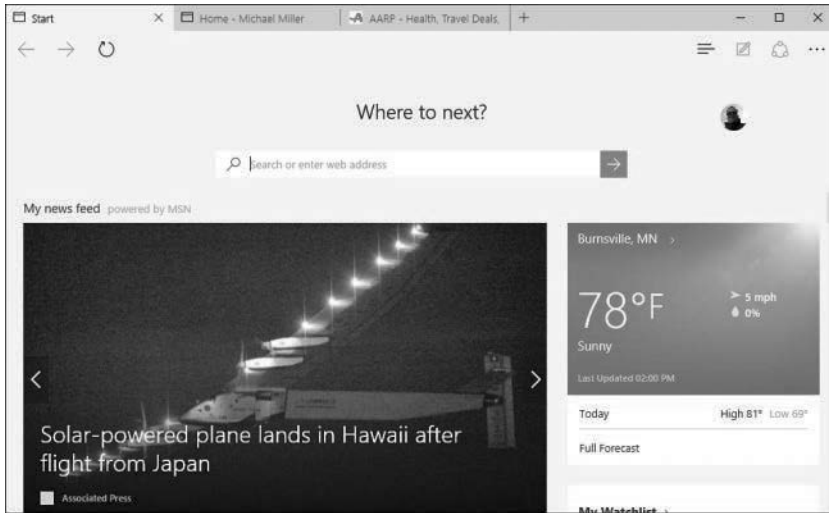


**FIGURE 5.5**

*Using Task View to switch between two virtual desktops.*

Windows 10 also incorporates Cortana, a Siri-like virtual assistant first introduced on Windows Phone devices. You use Cortana to search for content on your PC or on the Web, as well as to set reminders, schedule tasks, and such. You can search with Cortana from your computer keyboard or speak voice commands into your PC’s microphone.

In addition, Windows 10 features a new web browser (in addition to the older Internet Explorer), named Edge. This new browser looks and feels more like the more modern Chrome and Firefox browsers and, like those browsers, support browser extensions.



**FIGURE 5.6**

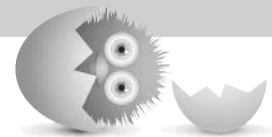
*Windows 10’s new Edge web browser.*

And there are a lot more changes, big and small, under the hood and hiding in plain sight. This makes Windows 10 a must-have upgrade for both beleaguered Windows 8 users and expectant Windows 7 devotees. It’s the upgrade to Windows 7 that Windows 8 should have been—and it’s now available on your personal computer.

## THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM

This chapter showed you how Windows 10 differs from older versions of Windows. Here are the key points to remember:

- Windows 10 corrects many of the big issues that users had with the ill-fated Windows 8.
- Windows 10 reintroduces a new and improved Start menu, accessible from the Start button.
- There is no Start screen for notebook and desktop users of Windows 10; you boot directly to and stay on the traditional desktop.
- The Modern apps introduced in Windows 8 now are called Universal apps and run in resizable windows on the traditional desktop.



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