PCWorld SUPERGUIDES

Windows 8 Starter Guide

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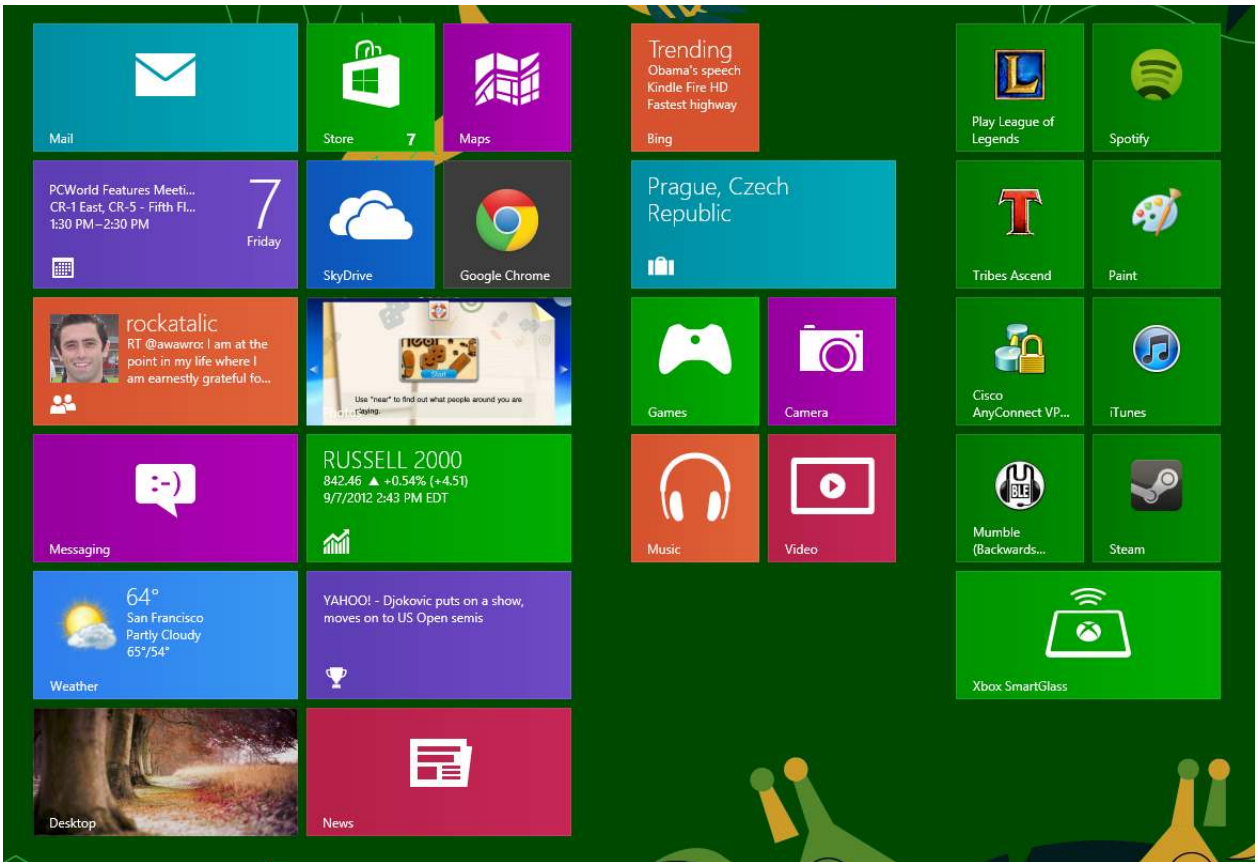
Why Upgrade to Windows 8?

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.

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.

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