

## A Peek ahead to Windows 8

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Windows 7 has been an excellent and stable platform for home and business users. But it will be replaced later this year with Windows 8. Today I want to show you a preview of Windows 8. This computer is loaded with the Windows 8 Consumer Preview edition of the operating system, which was released by Microsoft earlier this year to get feedback from developers and end users. Windows 8 is designed to run on all devices from smart phones and tablets, to desktops, laptops, and servers.

The main interface is a tiled interface called the metro interface, each tile leading to a new style of application called a metro app. Metro apps are tightly integrated to the web. This is very similar to your smart phone.

An example of a Metro App is the default weather application.

Look at Internet Explorer 10, note that by default you get the last page viewed.

When I click on the address bar, I get a list of frequently visited sites, along with those site I pinned to the interface. Now look at the metro interface, the pinned sites show as tiles.

I also installed my favorite web browser, Firefox. It shows as a tile on the metro interface with the Firefox logo, and when I click on it, I go to the traditional computer desktop with Firefox up and running.

Note that we can toggle back and forth between the desktop and the metro interface.

Traditionally we want the applications we use in front of us all the time. As you become familiar with Windows 8, I think you will eventually choose one interface, either desktop or metro.

Note the icon on the top left, the app store. Of course, you buy apps from the app store. In order to do so, you need a Microsoft id. Though not required to install, Windows 8 asked me for my Microsoft id during the installation process, so I entered it. The integrated email app picked it up also. Fortunately, we can add other email accounts to this app.

I installed my favorite email client, thunderbird, and it works perfectly, again from the desktop just like Firefox.

What about Microsoft Office? Office 15 is rumored to have a metro style interface. I installed office 12 (2007) and it works just fine.

When I install Office, I create shortcuts on the desktop for Word, Excel, Powerpoint by right clicking on the program in the start menu, then send to desktop. Lets try it.

OH MY!, guess what, there is no Start button on the Windows 8 desktop. This is the most frequent criticism I have read about Windows 8. Most critics are urging Microsoft to restore the Start button in the release version on Windows 8

Now let's look at Sky Drive. Just as the name implies, this is Microsoft's cloud storage application, allowing you to store your files on Microsoft's servers and have access to them from any Sky Drive connected device. Microsoft will attempt to ratchet this up by allowing you to log into your account from any device and having that device look just like your desktop. Personally, I am not a fan of this technology. When I worked for a big bank, they implemented this type of computer desktop where everything was stored on a server, and it was extremely slow even with a wired connection. Of course, the bank owned the information and wanted the data on the central server. But you own your information, not Microsoft. Proceed with caution here, as with any type of cloud storage.

A little about navigating the interface. No matter where you are, if you move the mouse just off the bottom left of the screen and click, you will return to the metro interface.

Move the cursor to the top left of the metro interface, and you will see which metro apps are running. Note that the desktop is presented as a metro app, no matter how many traditional applications I have open on the desktop, there is just one desktop entry on this interface.

Right click all apps to see everything available to you in the metro interface, then click bottom left to return

As I wrap I, I want to shut down the computer. Oh-oh, no start button so how do I shut down? Another off screen technique, move the cursor to the top right to bring up the Charms bar, then settings>power>shutdown.

As you can see, the interface is very similar to a the touch screen interface of a ipad or tablet, and is in fact designed for touch screens. This interface is a radical departure from the previous interfaces of Windows. Will Windows 8's metro interface be a dinosaur like Vista, or will it be accepted as the new normal? It will be interesting to see how this plays out.