Looking to get your Start Button Back?

Try [Classic Shell](). It very easy to use and free.

- Press the Windows key to enter the tiled Start screen. (or bring up your start menu if you've installed classic shell)
- The Windows key + M minimizes everything that's showing on the desktop.
- The Windows key + E opens Explorer for quick access to folders.
- On the Start screen, press the Windows key + D to instantly get to the desktop.
- The Windows key + Tab opens a list of currently running programs.
- The Windows key + Print Screen takes a screenshot and saves it in a Screenshots folder nested in your Pictures folder.
- To take a screenshot on a Windows 8 tablet, simultaneously press the Windows button and the volume-down button on the tablet chassis.
- The Windows key + Q opens a global search menu. Type what you're looking for and where you would like to look.
- The Windows key + W opens a search in your system settings to quickly locate and change system properties.
- The Windows key + F opens a file and folder search.
- The Windows key + Pause opens the system properties page to show you a quick rundown of your specs.
- The Windows key + "," (that's the comma sign!) makes all current windows transparent, giving you a peek at the desktop as long as you hold down the Windows key.
- The Windows key + "." (the period) snaps a window to the right or left side (toggling each time you press ".").
- The Windows key + R prompts the Run command—useful for quickly launching apps and other routines with a command prompt.
- The Windows key + X opens the Quick Access Menu, exposing system functionality such as the Command Prompt, Disk Management, File Explorer, Run, and more. Alternatively, you can right-click on the bottom right corner of the screen to spawn the Quick Access Menu.
- The Windows key + I opens the settings menu, giving you quick access to the Control Panel, Personalization, and your Power button, among other features.
- The Windows key + O locks orientation on devices with an accelerometer.

Need to stop something from running?

You no longer have to run the MSConfig program to change startup items. Startup items now show up in a tab on Task Manager. Simply press Ctrl + Alt + Del and select Task Manager. Click the "More details" tab at the bottom and find the Startup tab at the top.

Want to Boot Directly to your Desktop?

One of biggest complaints about Windows 8 is that it boots straight to the Start screen—an annoyance for many committed desktop users. Several different utilities help you avoid this but you can actually boot straight to the desktop without installing anything extra.

Go to the start screen and type in "schedule" to search for Schedule Task in Settings. Click on *Task Scheduler Library* to the left, and select *Create Task*. Name your task something like "Boot to desktop." Now select the *Triggers* tab, choose *New,* and use the drop-down box to select starting the task "At log on." Click *OK* and go to the *Actions* tab, choose *New,* and enter "explorer" for the Program/Script value.

Press *OK*, save the task, and restart to test it out!

Log in without a username or password

 To speed up the log-in process, you may want to disable the username and password log-in screen. You can do so by opening the Run window (press the Windows key + R) and typing in "netplwiz" to access the User Accounts dialog box. Uncheck the box near the top that says "Users must enter a user name and password to use this computer." Click *OK,* and enter the username and password one last time to confirm your choice, and you are all set for easy access to your system.

Maintenance and Cleaning.

If your system is feeling a little sluggish, it may be time for a refresh. In the past we would have to find our copy of Windows 7, back up all of our data, and perform a fresh install to enjoy that back-to-factory-fresh feeling. But now Windows 8 allows you to perform a fresh install from within Windows without losing any of your created Data. YOU WILL LOSE ANY PROGRAMS YOU'VE INSTALLED. Like Office (word, excel, outlook, etc) and printers, graphics, firefox, chrome, adobe, java, etc. So do this at your own risk.

In order to perform the refresh, go to Settings and click the *Change PC Settings* tab near the bottom. Select the *General* tab and find the "Refresh your PC without affecting your files" section near the middle (you may also select "Remove everything and reinstall Windows" to get the true factory settings treatment WARNING, WIPES OUT ALL YOUR DATA). To Refresh, Select "Get started" and press "Refresh." After a few minutes the PC will restart, and you will have a fresh copy of Windows 8.

Start in Safe Mode

Safe Mode is a great way to get into your system when something won't allow you to start up normally. Troubleshooting becomes a breeze when corrupted drivers and files aren't loaded that prevents a system from functioning. It used to be as easy as pressing F8 when the system starts up, but doing so with Windows 8 will take you to Automatic Repair Mode. Safe mode has been neutered and is very difficult to get into. First, If you need to get into Safe Mode, and you're lucky enough to be able to from within Windows, open the dialog box (the Windows key + R) and type "**msconfig**" (no quote marks). Select the *Boot* tab and check the *Safe boot* box. The system will continually boot into Safe Mode until you go back and uncheck the box.

The trick to getting back to good old fashioned Safe Mode is fairly complex, so we won't go into it here.

See our "How to boot into safe mode on windows 8" pdf for complete options. The run down is that you want to get into recovery mode, and there are several ways to do that and even some manufacturers add or change those.

Once in Recovery mode. Select "advanced options," then "troubleshoot," then the "advanced options" again (there are a lot of advanced options). Select *Windows Startup Settings* and finally the *Restart* button. This will reboot the computer and give you the option to boot into Safe Mode.

Family Safety:

Want to avoid some nasty surprises on your credit card? Create a separate, standard account on the device for your kids (Family Safety can't be applied to an administrator account). You can activate Family Safety by going to the *Control Panel, User Accounts,* and *Family Safety,* and selecting the account you would like to apply it to. From these settings you can get reports on the account's activity; set a level of Web filtering; set time limits; and enforce Windows Store, game, and app restrictions.

(Note: This won't work on a computer joined to a domain, also most "pro versions" require group policy editing to get this option to show up at all)
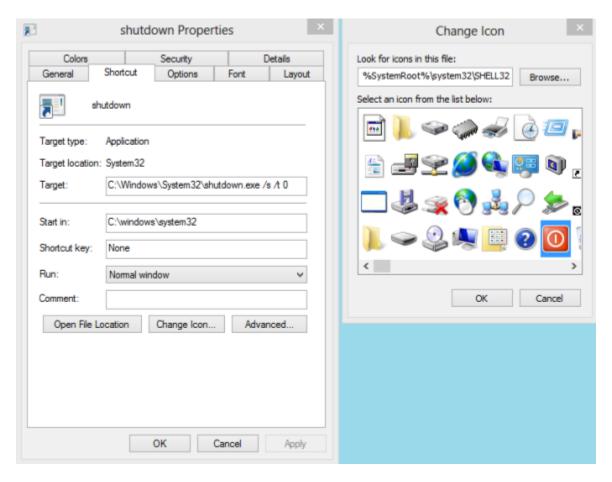
Shut down with one click

Easy to create button to shut down.

Windows 8 hides the Power button in the Settings menu, forcing a multistep process just to shut down one's PC. But thanks to a crafty shortcut trick, you can pin a Shutdown button right onto the bottom of your desktop. Here's how.

Create a shortcut on your desktop (right-click, go to *New,* then *Shortcut*). Enter "shutdown /s /t 0" (with no quotes, and, yes, that's a zero not an "O") as the location of the item, and press *Next*. Now name the shortcut (prefereably "Shutdown") and press *Finish*.

Right-click the shortcut, and navigate to *Properties*. Choose *Change Icon* in the Shortcut tab, and then *OK* to leave the warning box. Choose an icon of your choice from the list.

Choose how your files open:

Tired of pictures popping you over to the tile interface? Want pdf's to open in Adobe or Foxit? Music opening in Itunes instead of Winamp?

On any type of file. (a pdf, or picture, for example) Right click and choose "open with" and then on the menu that slides out, choose "choose default program"

You'll want to have the program installed already that you want to use, obviously. Then you can choose that program to always open that type of file.

Tweak Smart Screen

Windows 8 now uses Internet Explorer's SmartScreen system-wide, checking downloaded files to ensure they're safe. This is a very good thing - a report by NSS Labs revealed that IE10 blocks more malware than any other browser - but if you have any problems then it can be tweaked.

Launch Control Panel, open the Action Centre applet, and click Change Windows SmartScreen Settings in the left-hand pane. Here you can keep the warning, but avoid the requirement for administrator approval, or turn SmartScreen off altogether. Make your choice and click OK to finish.

Set up Windows 8 File History

Windows 8 includes an excellent File History feature, which can regularly and automatically back up your libraries, desktop, contacts and favourites to a second drive (even a USB flash drive - just connect it, and choose 'Configure this drive for backup using File History' from the menu).

To set this up, go to Control Panel > System and Security > File History. Click Exclude Folders to help define what you're saving, Advanced Settings to choose the backup frequency, Change Drive to choose the backup destination, and Turn On to enable the feature with your settings.

And once it's been running for a while, you can check on the history for any file in Explorer by selecting it, choosing the Home tab and clicking History.

Pool storage spaces

If you have multiple hard drives packed with data then you'll know that managing them can be a hassle. But that's all about to change with a new Windows 8 feature, Storage Spaces.

The idea is that you can take all your hard drives, whether connected via USB, SATA or SAS (Serial Attached SCSI), and add them to a storage pool. And you can then create one or more spaces within this pool, formatting and accessing them as a single drive, so you've only one drive letter to worry about.

What's more, the technology can also maximise your performance by spreading files across multiple drives (the system can then access each chunk simultaneously). There's an option to mirror your files, too, so even if one disk fails your data remains safe. And if your Storage Space begins to fill up then just plug in another drive, add it to the pool and you can carry on as before.

Yes, we know, this is just a consumer-friendly take on RAID. But there's nothing wrong with that, and it looks promising. If you'd like to read up on the technical details then the official Windows 8 blog has more, and you can then create and manage your drive pool from the new Control Panel\System and Security 'Storage Spaces' applet.