

1. Windows Management. By now, you've probably seen that Windows 7 does a lot to make window management easier: you can "dock" a window to the left or right half of the screen by simply dragging it to the edge; similarly, you can drag the window to the top of the screen to maximize it, and double-click the window top / bottom border to maximize it vertically with the same horizontal width. What you might not know is that all these actions are also available with keyboard shortcuts:



Windows 7™

- **Win+Left Arrow** and **Win+Right Arrow** dock;
- **Win+Up Arrow** and **Win+Down Arrow** maximizes and restores / minimizes;
- **Win+Shift+Up Arrow** and **Win+Shift+Down Arrow** maximizes and restores the vertical size.

This side-by-side docking feature is particularly invaluable on widescreen monitors – it makes the old Windows way of shift-clicking on two items in the taskbar and then using the context menu to arrange them feel really painful.

2. Cut Out The Clutter. Working on a document in a window and want to get rid of all the extraneous background noise? Simply hit **Win+Home** to minimize all the non-active background windows, keeping the window you're using in its current position. When you're ready, simply press Win+Home again to restore the background windows to their original locations.

3. Command Junkies Only. One of the most popular power toys in Windows XP was "Open Command Prompt Here", which enabled you to use the graphical shell to browse around the file system and then use the context menu to open a command prompt at the current working directory. In Windows 7 (and in Windows Vista, incidentally – although not many folk knew about it), you can simply hold the Shift key down while selecting the context menu to get exactly the same effect. If the current working directory is a network location, it will automatically map a drive letter for you.

4. Who Stole My Browser? If you feel like Internet Explorer is taking a long time to load your page, it's worth taking a look at the add-ons you have installed. One of the more helpful little additions in Internet Explorer 8 is instrumentation for add-on initialization, allowing you to quickly see whether you're sitting around waiting for plug-ins to load. Just click Tools / Manage Add-ons, and then scroll right in the list view to see the load time. On my machine, I

noticed that the Research add-on that Office 2007 installs was a particular culprit, and since I never use it, it was simple to disable it from the same dialog box.

5. Rearranging the Furniture. Unless you've seen it demonstrated, you may not know that the icons in the new taskbar aren't fixed in-place. You can reorder them to suit your needs, whether they're pinned shortcuts or running applications. What's particularly nice is that once they're reordered, you can start a new instance of any of the first five icons by

pressing **Win+1**, **Win+2**, **Win+3** etc. I love that I can quickly fire up a Notepad2 instance on my machine with a simple Win+5 keystroke, for instance.

- What's less well-known is that you can similarly drag the system tray icons around to rearrange their order, or move them in and out of the hidden icon list. It's an easy way to customize your system to show the things you want, where you want them.

6. I Want My Quick Launch Toolbar Back! You might have noticed that the old faithful Quick Launch toolbar is not only disabled by default in Windows 7, it's actually missing from the list of toolbars. As is probably obvious, the concept of having a set of pinned shortcut icons is now integrated directly into the new taskbar. Based on early user interface testing, we think that the vast majority of users out there (i.e. not the kind of folk who read this blog, with the exception of my mother) will be quite happy with the new model, but if you're after the retro behavior, you'll be pleased to know that the old shortcuts are all still there. To re-enable it, do the following:

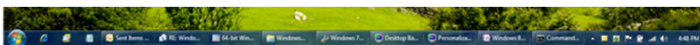
- Right-click the taskbar, choose Toolbars / New Toolbar
- In the folder selection dialog, enter the following string and hit OK: `%userprofile%\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Quick Launch`
- Turn off the "lock the taskbar" setting, and right-click on the divider. Make sure that "Show text" and "Show title" are disabled and the view is set to "small icons".
- Use the dividers to rearrange the toolbar ordering to choice, and then lock the taskbar again.

If it's not obvious by the semi-tortuous steps above, it's worth noting that this isn't something we're exactly desperate for folks to re-enable, but it's there if you really need it for some reason. Incidentally, we'd love you to really try the new model first and give us feedback on why you felt the new taskbar didn't suit your needs.

7. It's a Drag. Much play has been made of the Jump Lists feature in Windows 7, allowing applications like Windows Live Messenger to offer an easy task-based entry point. Jump lists replace the default right-click context menu in the new taskbar; another way to access them (particularly useful if you're running Windows 7 on a one-button MacBook) is by left-clicking and dragging up in a kind of "swooshing" motion. This was designed for touch-enabled devices like the beautiful HP TouchSmart all-in-one PC, where the same gesture applies.

Another place where you can "swoosh" (not an official Microsoft term) is the IE 8 address bar, where the downward drag gesture brings up an expanded list containing the browser history, favorites and similar entries. The slower you drag, the cooler the animation!

8. Windows Vista-Style Taskbar. I wasn't initially a fan of the Windows 7 taskbar when it was first introduced in early Windows 7 builds, but as the design was refined in the run up to the beta, I was converted and now actively prefer the new look, particularly when I've got lots of windows open simultaneously. For those who really would prefer a look more reminiscent of Windows Vista, the good news is that it's easy to customize the look of the taskbar to more closely mirror the old version:



To achieve this look, right-click on the taskbar and choose the properties dialog. Select the "small icons" checkbox and under the "taskbar buttons" setting, choose "combine when taskbar is full". It's not pixel-perfect in accuracy, but it's close from a functionality point of view.

9. Peeking at the Desktop. While we're on the taskbar, it's worth noting a few subtleties. You've probably seen the small rectangle in the bottom right hand corner: this is the feature we call "Aero Peek", which enables you to see any gadgets or icons you've got on your desktop. I wanted to note that there's a keyboard shortcut that does the same thing – just press **Win+Space**.

10. Running with Elevated Rights. Want to quickly launch a taskbar-docked application as an administrator? It's easy – hold down **Ctrl+Shift** while you click on the icon, and you'll immediately launch it with full administrative

rights (assuming your account has the necessary permissions, of course!)

11. Specialized Windows Switching. Another feature that power users will love is the ability to do a kind of "Alt+Tab" switching across windows that belong to just one application. For example, if you've got five Outlook message windows open along with ten other windows, you can quickly tab through just the Outlook windows by holding down the **Ctrl** key while you repeatedly click on the single Outlook icon. This will toggle through each of the five Outlook windows in order, and is way faster than opening Alt+Tab and trying to figure out which of the tiny thumbnail images relates to the specific message you're trying to find.

12. Walking Through the Taskbar. Another "secret" Windows shortcut: press **Win+T** to move the focus to the taskbar. Once you're there, you can use the arrow keys to select a particular window or group and then hit Enter to launch or activate it. As ever, you can cancel out of this mode by hitting the Esc key. I don't know for sure, but I presume this shortcut was introduced for those with accessibility needs. However, it's equally valuable to power users – another good reason for all developers to care about ensuring their code is accessible.

13. Pin Your Favorite Folders. If you're always working in the same four or five folders, you can quickly pin them with the Explorer icon on the taskbar. Hold the right-click button down and drag the folder to the taskbar, and it will be automatically pinned in the Explorer Jump List.

14. ISO Burning. Easy to miss if you're not looking for it: you can double-click on any DVD or CD .ISO image and you'll see a helpful little applet that will enable you to burn the image to a blank disc. No more grappling for shareware utilities of questionable parentage!

23. Hiding the Windows Live Messenger Icon. Hopefully your first act after Windows 7 setup completed was to download and install the Windows Live Essentials suite of applications (if not, then you're missing out on a significant part of the Windows experience). If you're a heavy user of IM, you may love the way that Windows Live Messenger is front and central on the taskbar, where you can easily change status and quickly send an IM to someone:

On the other hand, you may prefer to keep Windows Live Messenger in the system tray where it's been for previous releases. If so, you can fool the application into the old style of behavior. To do this, close Windows Live Messenger, edit the shortcut properties and set the application to run in Windows Vista compatibility mode. Bingo!