Making Windows 7 Easier to Use

You can change Windows 7 in many ways that may make using your computer easier and more comfortable. In this chapter, you choose adjustments that may make all the difference to you.

If you strain and squint to make things out onscreen, change your screen to make everything larger. Increase the size of the screen font and adjust the sharpness of text.

Go from double-clicking to single-clicking to open programs and documents.

Add a new method for selecting files: check boxes. With check boxes, you don’t need any keystrokes as you make selections and those selections are very obviously marked.

Windows 7 provides a magnifier for zooming into an area of the screen. An onscreen keyboard can substitute for a mechanical keyboard. And Windows 7 can read screen content to you.

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Make Your Screen Easier to See

1. Two factors work together in determining the appearance of a computer screen:

   - **The display** — the TV-like device sometimes called a monitor or an LCD — has a width and height you can’t change. Displays are measured diagonally. Sizes range from 17 to 25 inches for desktops and 8 to 17 inches on laptops.

   - **Screen resolution** determines how much content fits on the screen.

To change your screen resolution, right-click the desktop. Choose Screen Resolution. The Screen Resolution dialog box appears, as shown in Figure 16-1.

![Figure 16-1](image)

Choose a screen resolution.
If your desktop display is too small, consider buying a new one to replace it. See Chapter 7 for information on adding a second display before you give the old one away.

2. Click the Resolution drop-down list. Available resolutions appear with width and height measured in pixels (dots). The slider marks the current resolution. In Figure 16-2, the current resolution is 1024 x 768, a very common resolution ideal for displays around 16 inches.

Figure 16-2

Choose a lower resolution to make the items onscreen larger.

3. The choices available to you in the dialog box may be different from those in the figure. If you have 800 x 600 as an option, select that. Otherwise, click the next resolution lower than the current resolution (down the menu). Click the Apply button to see this resolution.
4. A dialog box appears to ask Do You Want to Keep These Display Settings? If you want to try this resolution for a while, click the Keep Changes button. If you don’t want this resolution, click the Revert button to return to the previous resolution. This dialog box has a 15-second timer. If you don’t respond, it reverts automatically. That’s a safety measure. If you choose a resolution that prevents you from seeing the dialog box — that’s possible — don’t panic; just count to 15 and let Windows 7 fix the problem. For the purposes of these steps, click the Keep Changes button if you can read the dialog box comfortably.

5. Here’s the catch about screen resolution: Lower resolution makes everything onscreen bigger but shows less. Higher resolution shows more onscreen but smaller, which may be harder to read. You may need to use a particular resolution for a while to judge the effect. Look at how your desktop, taskbar, and Start menu change with the resolution. Start IE and browse a familiar Web site. Play a game you’ve played before.

6. In the Screen Resolution dialog box, choose 1280 x 1024 or the next resolution higher than the current one (up the menu). Click Apply. If you can read the dialog box, click the Keep Changes button. Check out this resolution by looking at familiar screens.

7. In the Screen Resolution dialog box, return to your original screen resolution.

8. Feel free to try other resolutions to find the one that works best for you. You may need to return to this section after you use a resolution for a while.

If you use a high screen resolution, you may want to increase screen font size. See the following task, “Change Screen Font Size,” for steps to increase font size.
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Change Screen Font Size

1. You can increase the size of text on the screen by 25 or 50 percent. Right-click the desktop and choose Screen Resolution. The Screen Resolution dialog box appears (refer to Figure 16-1). Click the Make Text and Other Items Larger or Smaller link. The Display window appears (see Figure 16-3).

2. Increase the screen font size by choosing Medium (125%) or Larger (150%) and clicking Apply. Be aware that you may see consequences from choosing this increase, including

- A warning that some items may not fit on your screen with the current screen resolution
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- Some dialog boxes that are too large for a screen resolution of 1024 x 768 or lower

3. If you encounter a problem seeing an entire dialog box, you may be able to move it to see the missing areas, or you may have to reset the screen font size to 100 percent. Click Apply.

4. To complete the change, click the Log Off Now button, as shown in Figure 16-4.

![Log off to apply the change.]

Figure 16-4

5. Log in by choosing your user icon and, if necessary, entering your password. Figure 16-5 shows the Start menu with each option selected.

- As you increase screen resolution, consider increasing screen font size to keep the text legible.

- Some programs may have their own options for adjusting text size onscreen. In IE and some other programs, press Ctrl+= (the Ctrl key and the equal sign key, which also has a plus sign on it) to increase text size. Or press Ctrl+- (the Ctrl key and the minus key) to decrease text size. Press Ctrl+0 (the zero key...
above the letters) to return to 100 percent. If your mouse has a wheel, hold down the Ctrl key and roll the wheel away from you to increase or towards you to decrease text size.

Medium font size

Larger font size

Figure 16-5

**Turn On ClearType Text**

1. ClearType improves legibility of text on an LCD display. On the Start menu, type `clear` and click Adjust ClearType Text. (There is also a link from the Display window where you adjust screen font size.) Figure 16-6 shows the first screen of the ClearType Text Tuner, a series of dialog boxes that help you fine-tune text sharpness.
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Select to use ClearType.

2. Select the Turn On ClearType check box if it isn’t already selected. You may notice an immediate improvement in text legibility in the box. Click Next.

3. In each of the next four dialog boxes, click the box containing the sharpest text. This is like a visit to the eye doctor — better or worse? One or two? Don’t fret; just go with what looks sharpest. Click Next on each screen.

4. The last screen indicates you’ve finished tuning the text on your monitor (screen). Click Finish.

As you use your computer, if you notice text isn’t as sharp as you want, repeat these steps.
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Stop Double-Clicking for Good

1. For icons on the desktop or in Windows Explorer, you click once to select the icon, and you double-click to open that item. You can reduce the double-click to a single-click — which may not seem like much of a change — but consider the following:

   • You already single-click items on the Start menu and taskbar, as well as most buttons and menu items.
   
   • Even links on Web pages involve a single-click to open or browse that link.
   
   • Double-clicking to open an icon, such as the Recycle Bin on the desktop, seems an odd exception.

2. You can make icons behave more consistently with the rest of Windows 7. Open the Start menu and type folder in the Search text box. In the list of search results, click Folder Options. On the General tab (see Figure 16-7), under Click Items as Follows, select the option called Single-Click to Open an Item (Point to Select). Click OK.

3. Hover your mouse pointer over the Recycle Bin icon (or any other icon) on the desktop to select it. Click the icon to open it. You won’t double-click much anymore (once you break that habit).

4. This change requires an adjustment if you’ve used Windows before. You may open things you only intended to select. You’ll get used to this and love it if you give it some time.
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Choose Single-click.

Figure 16-7

Check to Select

1. In Windows Explorer, if you want to select more than one file at a time, you can use the Ctrl key to select additional files. For an alternative method, have Windows 7 add a check box to each file. Use the check box to select each file. On the Start menu, type folder in the Search box and then, in the list of search results, click Folder Options. On the View tab (see Figure 16-8), under Advanced Settings, scroll down to the Use Check Boxes to Select Items check box and select it. Click OK.
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2. Choose Start ➤ Pictures. Open the Sample Pictures folder. As you move the mouse pointer over each picture, a small check box appears in the upper-left corner of the icon (see Figure 16-9) or left of the filename in Details view. Click in that check box to select that photo. Repeat to select additional photos. If a photo is selected, click in the check box to deselect that photo. Close the window after you’ve seen how these check boxes work.

Select Use Check Boxes to Select Items.

![Figure 16-8](image)

This change works especially well with the change in the earlier task “Stop Double-Clicking for Good.” With both changes, click anywhere on the icon to open it or click on the check box to select it.
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Selecting files is just a step before copy, move, rename, delete, and more. See Chapter 4 for information on working with files.

Hover over an item to see the check box.

Figure 16-9

Get Recommendations for Specific Needs

1. In the Start search box, type **access**. In the search results list that appears, click Ease of Access Center. Maximize the window by clicking the middle of the three buttons in the upper-right corner of the window, just left of the Close button (the X). The Ease of Access Center, shown in Figure 16-10, provides even more ways to adjust the usability of Windows 7.

   Pressing **Q**+**U** also displays the Ease of Access Center.

2. Click the link to Get Recommendation to Make Your Computer Easier to Use. In a series of five screens, select
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all statements that apply to you. Click Next on each screen.

Click to take a survey and get recommended settings.

3. On the fifth screen, click Done. The Recommended Settings appear based on your responses, as shown in Figure 16-11. Turn on features you wish to use, such as Narrator. Adjust settings on this screen or follow links to set up appropriate functions.

Although this survey and the resulting recommendations are a good place to start, the following sections provide information on separate functions the Recommended Settings combines into one page.
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Check settings to use.

![Image of windows settings]

Adjust settings and features.

Figure 16-11

Start Magnifier

1. The Magnifier places (or, in techy terms, docks) a panel across the top of your screen. As you move the mouse, the area around the mouse appears magnified in this panel. In the Ease of Access Center, click the Start Magnifier button (refer to Figure 16-10).

2. Click the magnifying glass to display the Magnifier toolbar (see Figure 16-12). With these tools, you can increase (click the Plus button) or decrease (click the Minus button) magnification. Click the Views drop-down list to
switch the magnification panel from docked to full screen. Click the gear icon for Magnifier Options; for instance, you can

- Adjust the percentage change of zoom.
- Turn color inversion on or off.
- Change the tracking from following the mouse (default) to following keyboard focus or the text insertion point.
- Click the link to Control Whether Magnifier Starts When I Log On.

Click OK to keep changes to these options or Cancel to discard changes.

3. To turn off the Magnifier, click the X in the Magnifier toolbar.

**Figure 16-12**

**Use the On-Screen Keyboard**

1. Using the On-Screen Keyboard, you can type with the mouse or other pointing device, such as a joystick, pen,
or mouth-stick. In the Ease of Access Center, click Start On-Screen Keyboard.

2. Using your mouse or other pointing device and the On-Screen Keyboard, click the Windows logo key, Q (it’s between Ctrl and Alt). The Start menu appears. Click the letters k-e-y (see Figure 16-13). As you select letters with the On-Screen Keyboard, words matching what you’ve typed appear across the top of the keyboard. You can click the correct word (keyboard, for example). The word keyboard is inserted into the Start search box, and matching items appear.

3. You can drag the On-Screen Keyboard by the title bar to reposition it. Minimize by clicking the first of the three buttons in the upper-right corner of the keyboard if you need it later.
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4. On the On-Screen Keyboard, click the Options button. You can turn off the audible click that accompanies clicking the keys. You can turn on the display of the numeric keypad. Consider the option to Hover Over Keys, which enables you to select a key by hovering over it instead of clicking it, if clicking the keys isn’t practical.

Windows 7 has another On-Screen Keyboard called the Tablet PC Input Panel. Search for tablet on the Start menu. You may prefer either of these virtual keyboards.

Let Narrator Read to You

1. Narrator is a screen reader, which is software that reads screen text aloud. Press the \( \text{Esc} \) key. Type narrator (narr is enough) in the Start menu search box. Press Enter to start Narrator.

2. The Narrator Settings dialog box opens (see Figure 16-14). This window stays on top of other windows, unless you minimize it. Narrator reads aloud the contents of any window you click in. Initially, Narrator reads its own window’s content. If you click in IE, Narrator begins reading the contents of the Web page you are browsing. You may want to adjust speaker volume or volume control in the taskbar.

3. Narrator reads the content based on focus, which is the currently selected item. Onscreen, the item with focus is highlighted by a box of dots.

4. Press Tab to move the focus in the window from one item to the next. Each time you press Tab, you move the focus to the next item, and Narrator reads the text of that item and its tooltip, if any. Pressing Shift+Tab moves the focus to the previous item.
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Figure 16-14

5. Press the Tab key to move the focus to the Quick Help button. Narrator reads just the button text and tooltip. Press Enter to listen to Quick Help, which announces these keystrokes, among others:

- Press the Ctrl key to stop Narrator from reading the current content.

- Press Ctrl+Shift+Enter to make Narrator read information about the current item. Use this to repeat text Narrator reads.

- Press Ctrl+Shift+spacebar to make Narrator read the entire active window, top to bottom.

6. Press the key. The Narrator reads the Start menu search box. Type help to select Help and Support under Programs. Press Enter.

On the Start menu, if you need to move between selections, press the down- or up-arrow keys.

7. In Windows Help and Support, type narrator and press Enter. Press Tab to move among search results. Listen for Hear Text Read Aloud with Narrator. Press Enter. This
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Help page includes a list of keyboard shortcuts. Press Ctrl+Shift+spacebar to hear the whole page.

8. Switch back to Narrator using Alt+Tab. (Hold down Alt and tap Tab repeatedly until Narrator is selected.) In the Narrator window, press Tab until Exit is selected and then press Enter. Press Enter again to select Yes. Narrator closes.

Explore All Access Settings

Although there are many other options you may appreciate in the Ease of Access Center (⊞+U), I want to highlight a few (refer to Figure 16-11). Some of these options appear in more than one place, including the recommendations discussed in the task “Get Recommendations for a Specific Need.”

- **Click the Use the Computer without a Display link.** You can then change how long pop-up notifications display from the default 5.0 seconds to up to 5 minutes. These pop-ups don’t stick around long enough, it seems to me. If you use Narrator, select the Turn On Narrator check box to turn it on automatically when Windows 7 starts and select the Turn On Audio Descriptions check box. Click OK to return to the Ease of Access Center.

- **Click the Make the Computer Easier to See link** and then select the Make the Focus Rectangle Thicker check box. This option puts a thicker box around selections in dialog boxes. Change the Set the Thickness of the Blinking Cursor setting from the default of 1 to 3 or more (note the Preview). If you use the Magnifier, select the Turn On Magnifier check box to turn it on automatically when Windows 7 starts. Click OK to return to the Ease of Access Center.
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- Click the Make the Mouse Easier to Use link and then select the Activate a Window by Hovering Over It with the Mouse check box. This option makes it unnecessary to click in a window to make it active — hovering your mouse pointer makes it active. If you have trouble with windows rearranging automatically as you drag them, select the Prevent Windows from Being Automatically Arranged When Moved to the Edge of the Screen check box. See Chapter 14 for information on modifying the mouse pointer.

- Click the Make the Keyboard Easier to Use link and then choose these options:
  - Select the Underline Keyboard Shortcut and Access Keys check box to add an underline to menu items below the letter you use with the Ctrl key, such as Ctrl+S for Save.
  - If you have trouble pressing combinations of keystrokes, such as Ctrl+S, select the Turn on Sticky Keys check box to turn combinations into sequences: press Ctrl and release, press S and release.
  - If you sometimes accidentally press Caps Lock, Num Lock, or Scroll Lock, select the Turn On Toggle Keys check box to hear a tone when you press one of these keys.

- Click the Use Text or Visual Alternatives for Sounds link and then select the Turn On Visual Notifications for Sounds check box if you have trouble hearing the Windows 7 alert and error sounds. See Chapter 14 for information on changing the sounds in Windows 7.