

Windows

Gone Wild



Everything you ever wanted to know about moving, opening, closing, and resizing windows

Today the standard human-computer interface has become a computer screen partitioned into distinct “windows” of information. Most of us spend much of our day looking at these windows. Unfortunately, they aren’t always well behaved and appear in unwanted sizes and locations. This column discusses everything you ever wanted to know (and probably more) about manipulating and arranging the windows on your desktop.

Switching between programs

Switching between open programs is one of the most frequent things we all do as we work on our computers. For this task most of us use a mouse to select a button on the task bar. There is a much faster way.

Pressing Alt+Tab will open a rectangular grey pop-up window in the centre of your screen. It will have an icon for each program that is running on your computer. Hold down the Alt key, and repeatedly press Tab to jump from one icon to the next. To help you find the window you want, the text from the title bar of each window appears in a box at the bottom of the pop-up. Simply release both keys when you get to the window you want.

In this pop-up window, the icons are presented, from left to right, in the order you last looked at their respective windows. This means that the window you were in previous to the current one is just one Alt+Tab away. This makes jumping back and forth between two programs easy and instant.

Switching between documents

On occasion you will want to jump from one document to another within a single program. For example, switching between two or more letters within Word. Use Ctrl+F6 to do this. Hold down the Ctrl key, and repeatedly hit F6. Again, release both keys when you get to the document you want. This shortcut works on many, but not all Windows programs.

Minimize, maximize, restore and close

On occasion you will want to look at two or more windows at the same time. Perhaps you want to compare text in different documents, or cut and paste parts of one document to another. So now we need to learn about moving and resizing windows.

Let's look at the Minimize, Maximize, Close and Restore caption buttons (and their equivalent keyboard shortcuts). These buttons appear in the top right corner of every window on your computer.

To make a window completely disappear by closing it, click on the Close button (✕), or press Alt+F4.

To make a window disappear from the screen by shrinking it to a button on your taskbar, click on the Minimize button (▢). To open a minimized window to its previous size, simply click its taskbar button.

The Maximize button (◻) expands a window to fill the entire desktop. To make a window appear in a size that is less

than a full desktop, click on the Restore button (🪟).

The title bar is the bar across the top of every window. You can double-click a window's title bar to change it back and forth between maximize and restore sizes. Drag and drop a non-maximized window's title bar to move it around your desktop.

Windows vs. dialog boxes

You should be aware that there are two types of windows that can appear on your desktop. A program such as Word or WordPerfect opens in a fully functional window. Dialog boxes are primarily used to communicate with or configure a program. They have a Close caption button, and sometimes a Help caption button (it looks like a question mark). They never have a Minimize or Maximize button. The most commonly used dialog box is the Print dialog box. Dialog boxes don't appear on the task bar.

Resizing windows

After selecting Restore, you have a window that fills only part of your screen. To change the height or width of a window, put your mouse pointer over one of the window's edges. When the pointer changes into a double-headed arrow, drag the border to make the window larger or smaller. To change the height and width simultaneously, go to any window corner, and when the pointer changes into a diagonal double-headed arrow, drag the corner in any direction. You can't resize a window when it is displayed in a full screen (maximized).

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Free is good:

Three fantastic and free Web resources

Sometimes the good content on the Web is a bit hard to find. This month's tip highlights three helpful Web site resources, all of which are free.

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Arranging all open windows

You can simultaneously arrange multiple windows in several ways.

To simultaneously minimize all open windows and dialog boxes, click the Show Desktop button (🖥️) on the taskbar. It is only available when the Quick Launch bar is displayed. If the Quick Launch bar is not displayed, right-click an empty area on the taskbar, point to Toolbars, and then click Quick Launch.

Pressing the Windows logo key (🪟) and M will also minimize all windows. **🪟+Shift+M** will restore windows to their pre-minimized sizes.

You can also reduce all open windows to taskbar buttons by right-clicking an empty area on the taskbar and selecting Minimize All Windows. To restore all the windows to their previous state, right-click an empty area on the taskbar, and then click Undo Minimize All.

Cascading and tiling windows

If you right-click an empty area on the taskbar, you will be given three choices: Cascade Windows, Tile Windows Horizontally, or Tile Windows Vertically. The Cascade option stacks all windows in a diagonally stacked pile so that the title bar for each window is visible. The Tile option automatically resizes all non-

minimized windows so they appear like floor tiles.

When using the Cascade and Tile options, windows that have been reduced to taskbar buttons will not be displayed. This makes it easy to cascade or tile just a few selected windows, rather than a window for every program that is open on the computer. To restore your windows to their previous state, right-click an empty area on the taskbar, and then click Undo Cascade or Undo Tile.

Go wild and have some fun with your windows.

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