

Windows 8 – the Final Word

Windows 8 is here to stay at least for the next 3 years until Microsoft decides to drop something different on us. For the most part it has been pretty well received with the majority of complaints aimed at the new Metro Interface. Since it is fairly easy to make Windows 8 look and feel like Windows 7, this really isn't a major drawback. Products like Start 8 and Startmenu 8 can give you that old Windows look and feel for little or nothing.

With that out of the way, Windows 8 is quite workable and is even a little faster than Windows 7, with improved Windows Explorer and Internet Explorer functions. Pressing the Windows Logo Key will allow you to toggle between the Metro and Desktop modes if you want to familiarize yourself with the new interface. Remember to press <ALT><F4> to close a window in Metro mode as there is no "X" in the corner of the screen. Users with tablets and touch screen monitors can do this simply with a closing hand gesture.

Several clients are now looking at Windows 8 tablets as workable replacements for their laptops. Products like the Microsoft Surface Pro with 128 gb of storage are making this seem reasonable, although the price tag including keyboard is somewhat over \$1000.

Still, the gorilla glass touch screens and solid state drives should make these tablets fairly durable and the easily replaceable keyboard is a nice touch when prices come down a little.

As universal docking stations become more common, we expect more and more users to adopt the tablet while away from the office. Then, when they get back, the docking station will allow them to connect to a larger monitor as well as a full sized keyboard and mouse.

For most people this will still be much more efficient for day to day typing and e-mail.

Windows Features You Should Know

Windows has always provided a number of quick and easy features that every user should know about. Since many people are unaware of these essential features, here are a few:

<F11> - Internet Explorer and several other programs allow you to toggle back and forth from Full Screen Mode by typing the F11 key

<WIN><L> - If you are called into a meeting or invited to lunch you can press the Windows Logo Key and the letter "L" to lock your computer until you return and unlock it, saving you the time it takes to save files and logoff.

<CTRL><A> - When you are in Windows Explorer and wish to tag a group of files you can hold down the CTRL key and click on individual files or click one file and press CTRL and the letter "A" to tag them all.

<CTRL><SCROLL> - Many programs like Internet Explorer, Word, Excel, etc. allow you to hold down the CTRL key and roll the wheel on your mouse to adjust the fonts within the active window to make them larger or smaller.

<ALT><PRINT SCREEN> - This key sequence allows you to capture the image of a Window to be pasted into a document or e-mail for manuals or technical support correspondence.

<F8> Safe Mode – If you develop serious problems after installing a driver or pick up a virus, you need to know how to get into Safe Mode. Safe Mode is a simple version of Windows that you can get into when you first turn on your computer by pressing <F8> over and over again. Once in Safe Mode you can roll back a defective driver or scan your computer for viruses with a product like Malwarebytes. This can save you an expensive trip to the computer repair shop to have it fixed. This works in Windows XP, Vista and Win 7 but is more complicated in Windows 8.