

Lesson 1 - Diving In

1.1 Introduction to the Desktop

In our first video, we give you a quick tour of the Windows 7 desktop. This should have been at least somewhat familiar to those of you who have used Windows before. Let us take a look at the elements of the desktop, figure 1.1 shows them:-

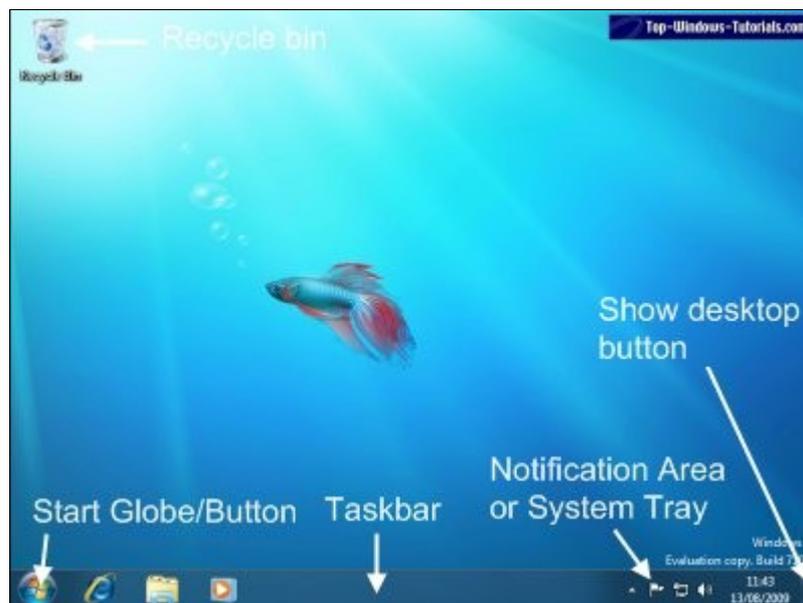


Figure 1.1 – The standard Windows 7 desktop

Figure 1.1 shows the standard Windows 7 desktop you will see on a clean (new) installation of the operating system. We'll go back over the basic elements we reviewed in the video.

Start Globe/button:- Windows Vista users will be familiar with a Start Globe, whereas XP users will be more familiar with the Start Button. This is the main starting point for most activities on your computer because it opens the Start Menu. Clicking it once opens up the Start Menu and clicking it again closes it. From the Start Menu you can access all the programs installed on your computer.

Taskbar:- The area at the bottom between the Start Globe and the Notification Area is called the Taskbar. The Taskbar works a little differently to both Windows XP and Windows Vista. To the right of the Start Globe you may have noticed some icons. If you are familiar with earlier versions of Windows

you will know that the Taskbar is where you can see programs that are already running. You might be worried as to why there appears to be programs already running. Well, these programs are not actually running at all. Unlike earlier versions of Windows, programs can be “pinned” on the Taskbar. This means that they will stay on the Taskbar for easy access even when they are not running. By default, from left to right we get Internet Explorer, Windows Explorer and Windows Media Player. This might be different on your version of Windows 7 depending on whereabouts you live in the world and which version of Windows 7 you have installed.

It is important to understand that icons on the Taskbar do not necessarily represent programs that are running. You can click on the icons pinned to the Taskbar to start the program running. When a program is running, it will have a border around its Taskbar icon, see figure 1.2 for an example:-



Figure 1.2 – Internet Explorer running on the Taskbar, next to Windows Explorer which is “pinned” but not running

If you hover your mouse pointer over a running Taskbar icon, Windows will show you a preview window:-



Figure 1.3 – Hover your mouse pointer over a program running on the Taskbar to see a preview of the window

You can click on the preview window to go directly to the application. (This feature is only available if your PC is running the Aero Glass interface).

Notification Area or System Tray:- The official Microsoft name for this part of the desktop is the Notification Area, but lots of users refer to it as the System Tray. Whatever you choose to call it, it has changed significantly in Windows 7. To see your System Tray icons, you now click the small up pointing arrow. See figure 1.4 for more details.

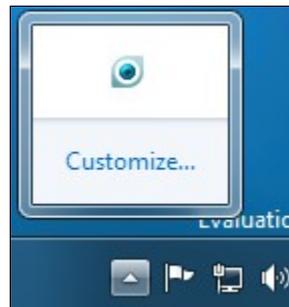


Figure 1.4 – The new Notification Area/System Tray is opened with a click on this small arrow icon

If you are not sure what the Notification Area is for, do not worry, we cover it in more detail in lesson 14.

To the right of the arrow icon highlighted in Figure 1.4, there are three other icons. These icons are also counted as part of the Notification Area, though you might think otherwise at first glance. The flag shaped icon is the Action Center. This notifies you about potential problems on your PC, such as security alerts. Next to that is the network icon, this can be used for connecting quickly to networks, both wired and wireless. Then there's the volume icon, a quick click of this accesses a sliding control which can adjust the volume level for all sounds on your computer.

Date and time:- To the right of the Notification Area (see figure 1.1) is the date and time display. This is fairly self explanatory. You can click on the date and time display down here to adjust your computers clock if it is not showing the correct time.

Show Desktop button:- Clicking in the very bottom right hand corner of the Windows 7 desktop will activate the Show Desktop button. This button hides all of your open windows so that you can see the desktop. Clicking it again will reveal the windows again.

Recycle Bin:- This lonely looking icon in the top left hand corner of the desktop is the Recycle Bin. Files and folders you delete are (usually!) placed in this folder before being removed entirely. We cover this in more detail in lesson 10.

Note:- The picture of the fish in the background on our desktop is called the

Desktop Background or Wallpaper. This picture can be changed to any image you like and we show you how in lesson 29. Many of our videos and lessons were compiled using a pre release version of Windows 7 and the standard Desktop Background was changed for the release version. Because of this, don't be alarmed if your desktop background looks different.

If you have never used Windows before, you might be confused as to what all these different components do. Lesson 1 was really to give you an overview of the components and not what they do, so move along to lesson 2 where we look at the Start Menu, probably the most important component to master on your Windows 7 machine.