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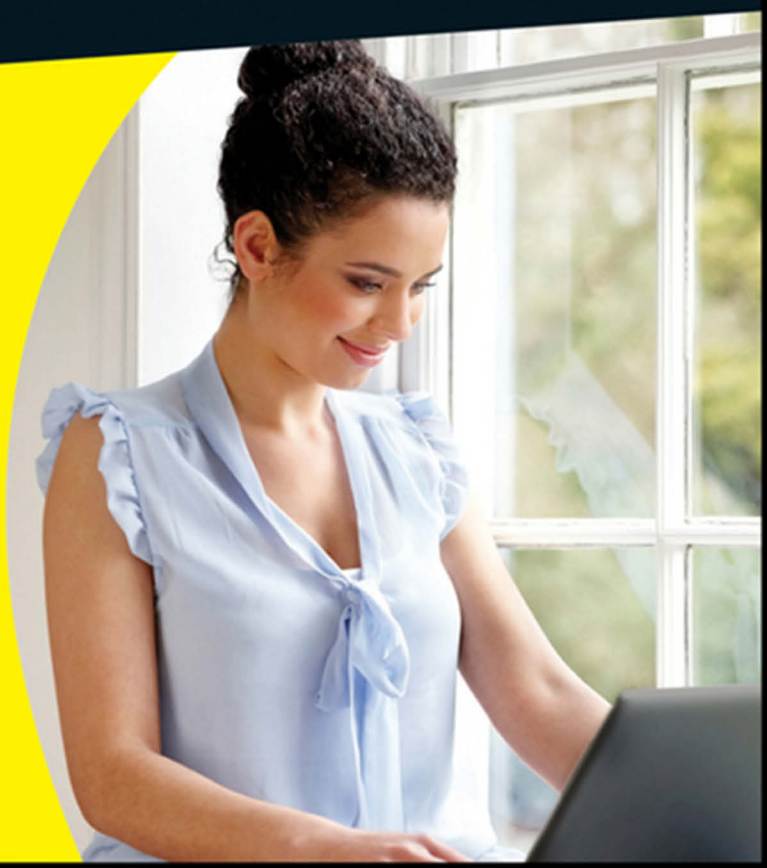

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- Send e-mail and link to social media accounts
- Create music playlists, watch videos, and organize photos
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Andy Rathbone

Bestselling author of all previous editions of Windows For Dummies

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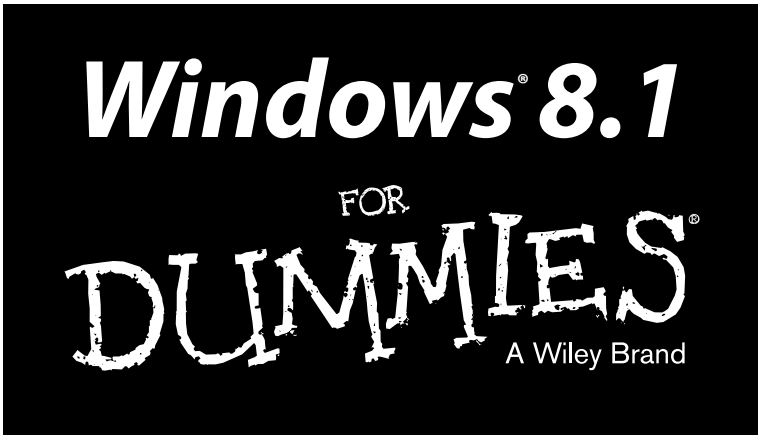

by Andy Rathbone

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Introduction

Welcome to *Windows 8.1 For Dummies,* the world's best-selling book about Windows 8.1!

This book's popularity probably boils down to this simple fact: Some people want to be Windows whizzes. They love interacting with dialog boxes. Some randomly press keys in the hope of discovering hidden, undocumented features. A few memorize long strings of computer commands while washing their hair.

And you? Well, you're no dummy, that's for sure. But when it comes to Windows and computers, the fascination just isn't there. You want to get your work done, stop, and move on to something more important. You have no intention of changing, and there's nothing wrong with that.

That's where this book comes in handy. Instead of making you a whiz at Windows, it merely dishes out chunks of useful computing information when you need them. Instead of becoming a Windows expert, you'll know enough to get by quickly, cleanly, and with a minimum of pain so that you can move on to the more pleasant things in life.

And you can do that whether you're dealing with a touchscreen, laptop, or desktop computer.

About This Book

Don't try to read this book in one sitting; there's no need. Instead, treat this book like a dictionary or an encyclopedia. Turn to the page with the information you need and say, "Ah, so that's what they're talking about." Then put down the book and move on.

Don't bother trying to memorize all the Windows jargon, such as Select the Menu Item from the Drop-Down List Box. Leave that stuff for the computer enthusiasts. In fact, if anything technical comes up in a chapter, a road sign warns you well in advance. Depending on your mood, you can either slow down to read it or speed on around it.

Instead of fancy computer jargon, this book covers subjects like these, all discussed in plain English:

- Keeping your computer safe and secure
- Making sense of the new Windows Start screen
- Finding, starting, and closing programs and apps
- Locating the file you saved or downloaded yesterday
- Setting up a computer for the whole family to use
- Copying information to and from a CD or DVD
- Saving and sharing photos from your digital camera
- Printing your work
- Creating a network between two or more computers to share the Internet, files, or a printer
- Fixing Windows when it's misbehaving

There's nothing to memorize and nothing to learn. Just turn to the right page, read the brief explanation, and get back to work. Unlike other books, this one enables you to bypass the technical hoopla and still get your work done.

How to Use This Book

Windows 8.1 will most definitely leave you scratching your head at some point. It's the most confusing version of Windows ever released to the public, so take pride in the fact that you're strong enough to persevere.

When something in Windows leaves you stumped, use this book as a reference. Find the troublesome topic in this book's table of contents or index. The table of contents lists chapter and section titles and page numbers. The index lists topics and page numbers. Page through the table of contents or index to the spot that deals with that particular bit of computer obscurity, read only what you have to, close the book, and apply what you've read.

If you're feeling adventurous and want to find out more, read a little further in the bulleted items below each section. You can find a few completely voluntary extra details, tips, or cross-references to check out. There's no pressure, though. You aren't forced to discover anything that you don't want to or that you simply don't have time for.

If you have to type something into the computer, you'll see easy-to-follow bold text like this:

Type **Media Player** into the Search box.

In the preceding example, you type the words *Media Player* and then press the keyboard's Enter key. Typing words into a computer can be confusing, so a description follows that explains what you should be seeing on the screen.

When I describe a key combination you should press, I describe it like this:

Press Ctrl+B.

That means to hold down your keyboard's Control key while pressing your keyboard's B key. (That's the shortcut key combination that applies bold formatting to selected text.)

Whenever I describe an e-mail address or filename, I present it this way:

```
notepad.exe
```

And website addresses appear like this:

`www.andyrathbone.com`

This book doesn't wimp out by saying, "For further information, consult your manual." Windows doesn't even *come* with a manual. This book also doesn't contain information about running specific Windows software packages, such as Microsoft Office. Windows is complicated enough on its own! Luckily, other *For Dummies* books mercifully explain most popular software packages.

Don't feel abandoned, though. This book covers Windows in plenty of detail for you to get the job done. Plus, if you have questions or comments about *Windows 8.1 For Dummies,* feel free to drop me a line on my website at `www.andyrathbone.com`. I answer a reader's question on my website each week.

Finally, keep in mind that this book is a *reference.* It's not designed to teach you how to use Windows like an expert, heaven forbid. Instead, this book dishes out enough bite-sized chunks of information so that you don't *have* to learn Windows.

Touchscreen Owners Aren't Left Out

Although Windows 8.1 comes preinstalled on all new Windows computers, Microsoft not-so-secretly aims this bold new version of Windows at owners of *touchscreens.* Tablets, as well as some laptops and desktop monitors, come with screens you can control by touching them with your fingers.

If you're a new touchscreen owner, don't worry. This book explains where you need to touch, slide, or tap your fingers in all the appropriate places.

If you find yourself scratching your head over explanations aimed at mouse owners, remember these three touchscreen rules:

- **When told to *click*, you should *tap*.** Quickly touching and releasing your finger on a button is the same as clicking it with a mouse.
- **When told to double-click, *tap twice*.** Two touches in rapid succession does the trick.
- **When told to *right-click* something, *hold down your finger on the item*. Then, when a little menu pops up, *lift your finger*.** The menu stays put onscreen. (That's exactly what would have happened if you'd right-clicked the item with a mouse.) While you're looking at the pop-up menu, tap any of its listed items to have Windows carry out your bidding.

If you find touchscreens to be cumbersome while you're sitting at a desk, you can always plug a mouse and keyboard into your touchscreen tablet. They'll work just fine. In fact, they usually work better than fingers when working on the Windows desktop.

And What about You?

Chances are good that you already own Windows 8.1 or you're thinking about upgrading. You know what *you* want to do with your computer. The problem lies in making the *computer* do what you want it to do. You've gotten by one way or another, perhaps with the help of a computer guru — either a friend at the office, somebody down the street, or your fourth-grader.

But when your computer guru isn't around, this book can be a substitute during your times of need.

Icons Used in This Book

It just takes a glance at Windows to notice its *icons,* which are little push-button pictures for starting various programs. The icons in this book fit right in. They're even a little easier to figure out.

Watch out! This signpost warns you that pointless technical information is coming around the bend. Swerve away from this icon to stay safe from awful technical drivel.

This icon alerts you about juicy information that makes computing easier: a new method for keeping the cat from sleeping on top of your tablet, for example.

Don't forget to remember these important points. (Or at least dog-ear the pages so that you can look them up again a few days later.)

The computer won't explode while you're performing the delicate operations associated with this icon. Still, wearing gloves and proceeding with caution is a good idea.

Windows 8 changed Windows in an extraordinary number of ways. If you're moving to Windows 8.1 from an older Windows version, such as Windows 7, Windows Vista, or Windows XP, this icon alerts you to big changes introduced in Windows 8 and continued in Windows 8.1.

Did you upgrade from Windows 8 to Windows 8.1? This icon calls out places where Windows 8.1 behaves differently than its predecessor.

Controlled by fingertips rather than mice and keyboards, touchscreens are standard fare on tablets as well as some laptops and desktop computer monitors. This icon appears next to information aimed directly at the touchy feely crowd.

Beyond the Book

This section describes where you can find the book's companion content at `www.dummies.com`. Here's what you can find there:

- **Cheat Sheet:** Visit `www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/windows8dot1` to find a list of tips and tricks that make life easier with Windows 8.1.
- **Dummies.com online articles:** Need to know more about Microsoft accounts? Can't figure out how to edit photos with the Photos app? Confused about how Windows 8.1 treats the "library" system? Articles about those subjects and more appear on this book's Extras page located at `www.dummies.com/extras/windows8dot1fd`.
- **Updates:** Head to this online section to keep your book up to date with any updates or corrections. The URL for this stuff is also available at `www.dummies.com/extras/windows8dot1fd`.

Where to Go from Here

Now you're ready for action. Give the pages a quick flip and scan a section or two that you know you'll need later. Please remember, this is *your* book — your weapon against the computer nerds who've inflicted this whole complicated

computer concept on you. You can circle any paragraphs you find useful, highlight key concepts, add your own sticky notes, and doodle in the margins next to the complicated stuff.

The first chapter explains how to upgrade from Windows 8 to Windows 8.1, a free update that softens many of the ragged edges found in Windows 8. You definitely want to install the upgrade.

The more you mark up your book, the easier it will be for you to find all the good stuff again.

Part I

Windows 8.1 Stuff Everybody Thinks You Already Know

web extras

Visit www.dummies.com for more great *For Dummies* content online.

In this part . . .

- Understand Windows 8.1.
- Work with the Windows 8.1 Start screen.
- Work with the traditional desktop.
- Store your files on your computer and in the cloud.

Chapter 1

What Is Windows 8.1?

In This Chapter

- Getting to know Windows 8 and 8.1
- Discovering the new features in Windows 8.1
- Deciding whether to switch to Windows 8
- Upgrading to Windows 8.1
- Figuring out whether your PC is powerful enough to run Windows 8
- Knowing which version of Windows 8.1 you need
- Understanding the "Spring Update"

Chances are good that you've heard about *Windows:* the boxes and windows that greet you whenever you turn on your computer. In fact, millions of people worldwide are puzzling over Windows as you read this book. Almost every new computer and laptop sold today comes with Windows preinstalled, ready to toss colorful boxes onto the screen.

This chapter helps you understand why Windows lives inside your computer, and I introduce Microsoft's latest Windows versions, *Windows 8* and *Windows 8.1*. I explain how Windows 8 differs from previous Windows versions and help you determine whether you should upgrade to Windows 8 from older Windows versions.

Finally, I explain what's new in Windows 8.1 and how to install this free upgrade onto your Windows 8 computer.

What Is Windows, and Why Are You Using It?

Created and sold by a company called Microsoft, Windows isn't like your usual software that lets you calculate income taxes or send angry e-mails to mail-order companies. No, Windows is an *operating system,* meaning it controls the way you work with your computer. It's been around for nearly 30 years, and the latest incarnation is called *Windows 8.1,* shown in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: The newest version of Windows, Windows 8.1, comes preinstalled on most new PCs today.

The name *Windows* comes from all the little windows it places on your computer screen. Each window shows information, such as a picture, a program, or a baffling technical reprimand. You can place several windows onscreen simultaneously and jump from window to window, visiting different programs. Or, you can enlarge one window to fill the entire screen.

When you turn on your computer, Windows jumps onto the screen and begins supervising any running programs. When everything goes well, you don't really notice Windows; you simply see your programs or your work. When things don't go well, though, Windows often leaves you scratching your head over a perplexing error message.

In addition to controlling your computer and bossing around your programs, Windows comes with a bunch of free programs and *apps* — mini-programs. These programs and apps let you do different things, such as write and print letters, browse the Internet, play music, and send your friends dimly lit photos of your latest meal.

And why are you using Windows? Well, you probably didn't have much choice. Nearly every computer sold since October 2012 comes with Windows 8 or 8.1 preinstalled. A few people escaped Windows by buying Apple computers

Separating the ads from the features

Microsoft touts Windows as a helpful companion that always keeps your best interests in mind, but that description isn't really true. Windows always keeps *Microsoft's* interests in mind. You'll find that out as soon as you call Microsoft for help with a Windows problem. Microsoft charges $100 an hour for phone support.

Microsoft also uses Windows to plug its own products and services. Internet Explorer opens to Microsoft's own MSN.com website, for example. The browser's Favorites area, a place for you to add *your* favorite web destinations, comes stocked with *Microsoft* websites.

Windows 8.1 places a link to OneDrive (formerly called SkyDrive), its online storage service, in every folder. But Microsoft isn't as quick to mention that you must pay an annual fee when you surpass your storage limit of seven gigabytes.

The Maps app uses the Microsoft Bing mapping service, rather than Google Maps or another competitor. The list goes on.

Simply put, Windows not only controls your computer, but also serves as a huge Microsoft advertising vehicle. Treat these built-in advertising flyers as a salesperson's knock on your door.

(those nicer-looking computers that cost a lot more). But chances are good that you, your neighbors, your boss, and millions of other people around the world are using Windows.

- Windows 8 introduced a radical new full-screen–sized Start menu that's designed for *touchscreens* — displays controlled with your fingertips. Now called a *Start screen,* it also appears on desktop PCs, oddly enough. Be prepared for some initial mouse awkwardness as you try to mimic a fingertip with your mouse pointer.

- The new automatic backup program in Windows 8, *File History,* greatly simplifies what you should have been doing all along: creating copies of your important files for safekeeping. Because Microsoft leaves it turned off, I explain how to turn it on in Chapter 13.

- Microsoft released a major update to Windows 8 in the Fall of 2013. Known as Windows 8.1, the free update makes Windows 8 run much more smoothly. You should definitely install it.

What's New in Windows 8.1?

About a year after Windows 8 hit the shelves, Microsoft cranked out *Windows 8.1,* a free upgrade for Windows 8 owners that makes Windows 8 work much more smoothly.

Windows 8.1 changes Windows 8 in several ways:

- **Start button:** Discarded in Windows 8, the Start button returns to the desktop in Windows 8.1. Don't get too excited, though. The Start button fetches only the Start screen rather than the Start menu of days gone by.
- **Desktop and Start screen improvements:** Windows 8.1 makes it easier for desktop owners to stay on the desktop and for touchscreen owners to stay on the touch-friendly Start screen.
- **OneDrive:** Microsoft's online file storage service, OneDrive, comes built into the Windows 8.1 desktop. When you first sign in to Windows 8.1, Microsoft asks whether you'd like to store your files there automatically. (I explain how to tweak the OneDrive options in Chapter 5.)
- **Skype:** Windows 8.1 drops the Messaging app but brings in Skype, a more full-featured messaging program.
- **Search:** Finding things is a lot easier in Windows 8.1, whether you're looking for files on your computer, apps in the Store, or information on the Internet.
- **Store:** The Windows Store finally reached 100,000 apps. Appropriately, the newly improved Store app makes it easier to search for specific apps.
- **Libraries:** Windows 8.1 removes libraries from folders. They still exist, though, and I explain how to turn them back on in Chapter 5.

Perhaps most important of all, Windows 8.1 eases the transition between the Start screen and the desktop. They can both share the same wallpaper, for example, a small change that eases the jarring sensation of switching between them.

In short, Windows 8.1 is an update you don't want to miss. To update a Windows 8 computer to Windows 8.1, visit the Windows Store and search for the Windows 8.1 Upgrade. It downloads and installs just like any other app. When your computer restarts, it will be running Windows 8.1, and all of your files will remain in place.

Should I Bother Upgrading to Windows 8 or 8.1?

If you're happy with your current version of Windows, don't bother upgrading to Windows 8 or 8.1. In fact, most people stick with the Windows version that came installed on their computers. That way they avoid the chore of figuring out a new version. Windows 8 comes with a particularly steep learning curve because it's quite different from earlier Windows versions like Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP.

Also, many of the biggest changes in Windows 8 work best with *touchscreens* — those fingertip-controlled screens found on expensive cellphones, tablets, and some of the latest laptops. Desktop PC owners often find the new controls to be cumbersome.

Instead of upgrading, stick with the masses and stay with your current computer. When you're ready to buy a new computer, the latest version of Windows will be installed and waiting for you.

If you're already running Windows 8, though, take advantage of the free upgrade to Windows 8.1. The update smoothes over many of the rough edges in Windows 8.

Windows 8 doesn't support *Windows XP mode,* a popular way to run a Windows XP desktop inside its own window within Windows 7. If you rely on Windows XP mode in Windows 7, don't upgrade to Windows 8 or 8.1.

What's So Different about Windows 8?

You've probably worked with earlier versions of Microsoft Windows. If so, toss away that hard-earned knowledge because Windows 8 starts from scratch. Why? Because Windows 8 tries to please two camps of computer owners.

See, some people are mostly *consumers.* They read e-mail, watch videos, listen to music, and browse the web, often while away from their desktop PC. Whether on the go or on the couch, they're consuming media (and popcorn).

Other people are mostly *creators.* They write papers, prepare tax returns, update blogs, edit videos, or, quite often, tap whichever keys their boss requires that day.

To please both markets, Microsoft broke Windows 8 into two very different sections:

- **Start screen:** For on-the-go information grabbers, the Windows 8 Start screen fills the entire screen with large, colorful tiles that constantly update to show the latest stock prices, weather, e-mail, Facebook updates, and other tidbits. Shown earlier in Figure 1-1, that information appears before you touch a button. And *touch* is a key word: The Start screen works best with a touchscreen monitor or tablet.
- **Desktop tile:** When it's time for work, head for the Start screen's *desktop* tile. The traditional Windows desktop appears, shown in Figure 1-2, bringing all its power — as well as its detailed, cumbersome menus.

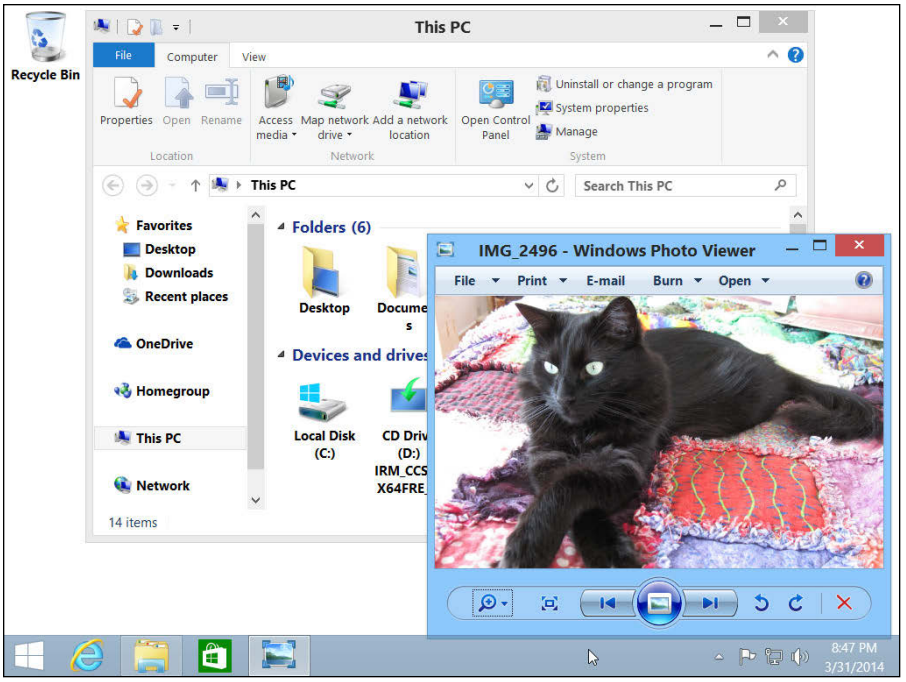

Figure 1-2: The new Windows desktop works much as it did in Windows 7.

Some people like the convenience of having both types of computers built into one. Others find the two experiences to be oddly disjointed.

- In a way, Windows 8 offers the best of both worlds: You can stay on the Start screen for quick, on-the-go browsing. And when work beckons, you can head for the desktop, where your traditional Windows programs await.
- If you're sitting at a desktop PC, "on-the-go browsing" simply means an unwanted trip away from the desktop.
- Windows 8.1 changes many things, but Windows remains a split personality. I explain the Start screen in Chapter 2; the Windows desktop awaits your attention in Chapter 3.

Can My Current PC Still Run Windows 8.1?

If you want to upgrade to Windows 8.1, your computer probably won't complain. Windows 8.1 should run without problem on any PC currently running Windows 8, Windows 7, or Windows Vista. In fact, Windows 8.1 may run faster on your old PC than Windows Vista did, especially on laptops.

If your PC runs Windows XP, it may still run Windows 8.1, but not at its best.

If you have a technogeek in your family, have him or her translate Table 1-1, which shows the Windows 8.1 hardware requirements.

Table 1-1 The Windows 8.1 Hardware Requirements

Architecture	*x86 (32-bit)*	*x86 (64-bit)*
Processor	1 GHz	1 GHz
Memory (RAM)	1GB	2GB
Graphics Card	DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver	
HDD free space	16GB	20GB

In common language, Table 1-1 simply says that nearly any computer sold in the past five years can be upgraded to Windows 8 with little problem.

Windows 8.1 runs nearly any program that runs on Windows 7 and Windows Vista. It even runs some Windows XP programs as well. Some older programs, however, won't work, including most security-based programs, such as antivirus, firewall, and security suites. You'll need to contact the program's manufacturer for an upgraded version.

Windows 8.1 drops the Windows Experience Index rating, leaving no easy way to check a PC's performance on the showroom floor. But because showroom floors are rapidly disappearing from the world's shopping malls, most people won't miss it.

Don't know what version of Windows runs on your current PC? If clicking the Start button brings a Start menu, right-click the menu's Computer entry, and choose Properties. The screen that appears lists your Windows version.

If there's no Start button, you're running Windows 8; if clicking the Start button fills the screen with colorful tiles, you're running Windows 8.1.

The Four Flavors of Windows 8.1

Microsoft offers four main versions of Windows 8.1, but you'll probably want only one: the aptly titled "Windows 8.1" version.

Small businesses will choose Windows 8.1 Pro, and large businesses will want Windows 8.1 Enterprise. Still, to clear up the confusion, I describe all the versions in Table 1-2.

Table 1-2 The Four Flavors of Windows 8.1

The Version of Windows 8.1	*What It Does*
Windows RT 8.1	Designed for long battery life, this version only comes preinstalled, mostly on touchscreen tablets and laptops. It runs the Start screen and apps, but its limited desktop won't run your own Windows programs. To compensate, Windows RT 8.1 includes versions of Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, and the popular Outlook mail program.
Windows 8.1	Aimed at consumers, this version includes the Start screen, apps, and a full-featured Windows desktop that can run most Windows programs.
Windows 8.1 Pro	Aimed at the small business market, this version features everything from the Windows 8.1 version, as well as tools used by small businesses: encryption, extra networking features, and similar tools. If you buy a Media Center Pack upgrade, Windows 8.1 Pro can record TV shows through a TV tuner with Windows Media Center, as well as play DVDs. (To upgrade Windows 8.1 to Media Center, buy a Windows 8.1 Pro Pack.)
Windows 8.1 Enterprise	Microsoft sells this large business version in bulk to large businesses.

Each version in the table contains all the features of the versions preceding it. Windows 8.1 Pro contains everything found in Windows 8.1, for example.

Here are some guidelines for choosing the version you need:

- If you're considering a tablet with **Windows RT or RT 8.1**, make sure you realize that it *can't run regular Windows programs.* You're limited to its bundled Office programs and any apps you download from the Windows Store.
- If you'll be using your PC at home, pick up **Windows 8.1** or **Windows 8.1 Pro.**