

***Windows Vista***™  
FOR  
**DUMMIES**®  
***QUICK REFERENCE***

**by Greg Harvey, PhD**



Wiley Publishing, Inc.



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## Windows Vista™ For Dummies® Quick Reference

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**Greg Harvey**, the author of a slew of *For Dummies* books running the gamut from *Excel For Dummies* to *The Origins of Tolkien's Middle-earth For Dummies*, has had a long career of teaching business people the use of IBM PC, Windows, and Macintosh software application programs. From 1983 to 1988, he conducted hands-on computer software training for corporate business users with a variety of training companies (including his own, PC Teach). From 1988 to 1992, he taught university classes in Lotus 1-2-3 and Introduction to Database Management Technology (using dBASE) in the Department of Information Systems at Golden Gate University in San Francisco.

In mid-1993, Greg started a new multimedia publishing venture, Mind over Media, Inc. As a multimedia developer and computer book author, he hopes to enliven his future online computer books by making them into true interactive learning experiences that will vastly enrich and improve the training of users of all skill levels. In 2006, he received his PhD in Comparative Philosophy and Religion with a concentration on Asian Studies from the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, California. When he isn't busy writing, Dr. Greg works as a patient care and bereavement volunteer with the Hospice of Marin in Larkspur, California and Hospice by the Bay in San Francisco, California and a home and hospital volunteer with the Center for Attitudinal Healing in Sausalito, California.



## ***Dedication***

To my alma mater, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, birthplace of NCSA (National Center for Supercomputing Applications) Mosaic, the great-granddaddy of Microsoft Internet Explorer 7.

Thanks for helping me gain the analytical, language, and writing skills that all came into play in the creation of this work.

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Greg Harvey

Point Reyes Station, California

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# Part 1

## The Vista User Experience

If such a thing as a *beautiful* user interface for a personal computer operating system exists, Microsoft's Windows Vista, shown in the following figure, is surely at the top of this list. However, as you find out in this part, the Windows Vista desktop is much more than just a pretty face. Indeed, Vista is also Microsoft's most powerful and usable personal computer interface to date (and this is coming from someone who really liked Windows XP).



### In this part . . .

- ✓ Meet the Aero Glass Interface
- ✓ Guide for displaced Windows XP Users migrating to Windows Vista
- ✓ Personalizing your copy of Windows Vista
- ✓ Using the Start Search and Search features
- ✓ Using the Vista taskbar

## Aero Glass Interface

In Windows Vista, A is for Aero Glass, the name given to the operating system's graphical user interface (GUI). The name is a combination of the acronym AERO — Authentic, Energetic, Reflective, and Open — which describes the original design goals for the new operating system, and glass (the stuff of which actual windows are made), this stunning new user interface is all about clarity, in the sense of both brightness and simplicity.

The first thing to note about the Aero Glass desktop when first installed (and after you close the Welcome Center window that automatically appears) is the overall openness of the screen (due to a decided lack of program icons) and a rather minimalist Start button and taskbar, as shown in Figure 1-1. This open screen makes the most of your screen space, whatever the size of your monitor, by accommodating more open windows and more information within each open window.

Figure 1-1



The second thing to notice is the relative transparency and high degree of reflectiveness displayed by the various Vista screen elements, especially the taskbar, Start menu, and title bars of open windows (depending upon the graphics capability of your computer). You notice the transparency most in the title bars of windows and in the right column of the Start menu (especially when the menu is on top of another open window, as in Figure 1-2). You notice the reflectiveness most when you position the mouse pointer over buttons and desktop icons — they actually appear to glow. This effect is accomplished by backlighting the graphic with various contrasting colors — blue for most buttons and icons and bright red for a window's Close button.

The third thing to notice about the Aero Glass interface is the extremely smooth way in which screen elements change and the high degree to which this version of the operating system supports live visual previews.

You notice the screen smoothness whenever you open or close a new window and resize or move it on the Windows desktop. When Vista opens a window, it does so in a much more fluid manner than previous Windows versions. So too, when you drag an open window around the Vista desktop (even one playing a video or showing a music visualization), the graphics don't break up and become pixilated as they pass over other screen elements.

Figure 1-2



The live visual previews in Vista show up in several really cool desktop features: live taskbar thumbnails, Flip, and Flip 3D, which are used to switch between open windows. The live taskbar thumbnails feature enables you to see a thumbnail version and name of any window that is currently minimized on the Vista taskbar simply by positioning the mouse pointer over its icon. That way, you can get tell whether a particular window icon on the taskbar contains the particular application or Vista window you want to restore to its previous position and size on the Vista desktop.

Note that the Flip feature is a more graphic version of a switching feature first introduced in Windows XP (and still activated by pressing Alt+Tab). This feature enables you to activate a particular open window from among those currently minimized on the Windows taskbar by selecting its icon and window name in a band that appears in the middle of the desktop. In the Vista version of the Flip feature, however, rather than just a generic window icon, you see an actual live thumbnail of the contents of the window along with its window name (see Figure 1-3). This live preview helps you immediately identify the window you want to open on the desktop.

**Figure 1-3**

The Flip 3D offers an even faster visual method for activating an open window among those you have open. It accomplishes this by showing a stack of live 3-D representations for all the windows you have open in Vista (see Figure 1-4). You can then quickly flip through this stack until the thumbnail of the window you want to activate is displayed at the front of the stack. **See** “Flip and Flip 3D” later in this part for details on how to use Flip and Flip 3D to select a window.

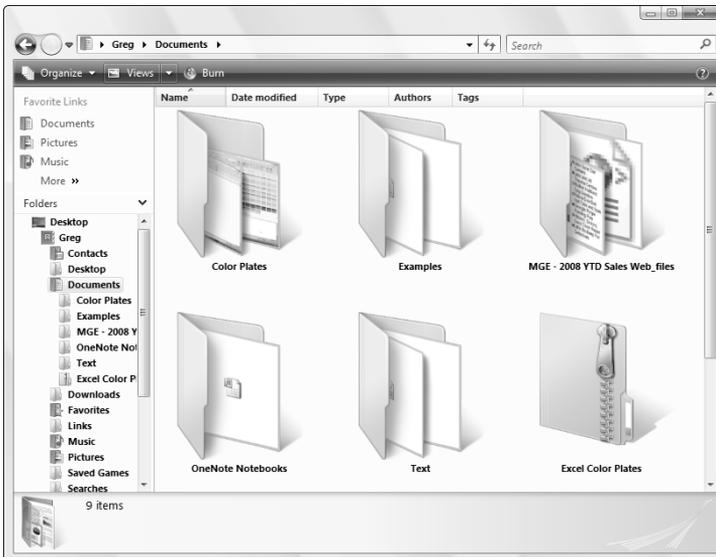
Visual previews also show up in windows that contain file folders when using the Extra Large Icons viewing option. Figure 1-5 illustrates such a situation. Here, you see the contents of a few of the folders inside an Excel Wrkbk folder on my computer’s hard drive after selecting Extra Large Icons on the window’s Views pop-up slider. When any size between Large Icons and Extra Large Icons are selected, Vista actually shows a live preview of the first few documents within that folder so that you see a thumbnail of an actual graphic image, if the folder contains photos, and a worksheet, if it contains spreadsheets.

As you can begin to see from this brief overview, the Aero Glass interface in Windows Vista offers you an extremely visual and highly dynamic environment in which to work. All around, when coupled with the many less glitzy enhancements that the Microsoft software stuck under the hood, Windows Vista makes for a very satisfying user experience.



Figure 1-4

Figure 1-5



## Ah, That's What They Did with It!

If you're coming to Windows Vista as a user of Windows XP who was completely comfortable with its tried and true ways of doing business, the new Windows Aero Glass desktop may appear to you initially as less open and simple than originally promised. In fact, if your first few minutes with the new and improved Windows graphical user interface are anything like mine, you may feel just a wee bit lost when you first start doing the everyday tasks you seemingly did so effortlessly in the past with Windows XP.

Never fear! You have absolutely no reason to panic: In no time at all, I can set you straight on the new, *more efficient* ways of finding all the stuff on your computer system that you used in the past, while at the same time pointing out what they did with some of your more familiar Windows elements such as the much-beloved My Documents and the underrated Run command.

### Start is a very good place to begin

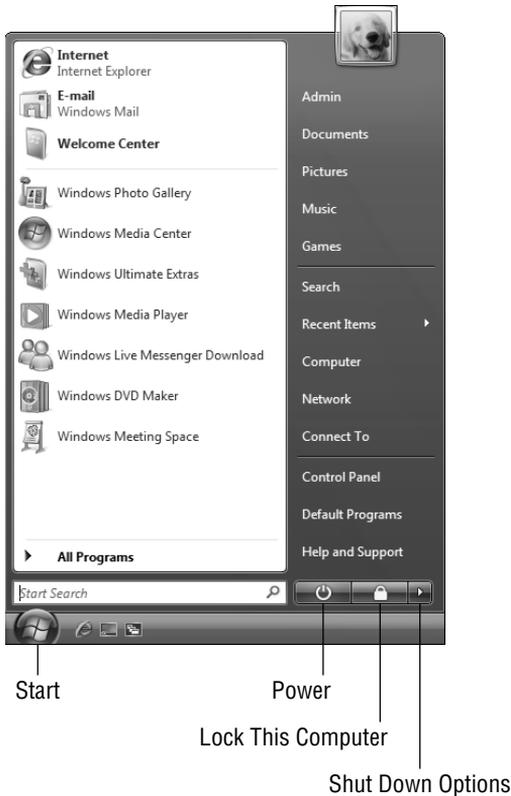
The first thing to note is that the Start button on the Vista taskbar is no longer a rectangular green button that says Start and sports the four-color Microsoft Office banner. Instead, it's now a real circular button sporting only the four-color Microsoft Office banner icon.

Clicking the Start button on the Vista taskbar (or pressing the Start key on your keyboard, if it's so equipped) still opens the Start menu in a two-column format. However, as shown in Figure 1-6, this Start menu has some new buttons and a whole new way of displaying the information about the stuff on your computer.

The new elements located along the bottom of the Vista Start menu include

- ✔ **Start Search** text box, where you can enter search text to find any folder or document on your computer or any topic on the Internet by typing the first few characters of its name. Note that Vista immediately starts matching the characters in the Start Search text box against the contents on your computer (displaying the results in left-hand column of the Start menu) as you type them.
- ✔ **Sleep** button to save your work session and put your computer into a low power mode so that you can quickly resume working with the current desktop arrangement simply by pressing a key (such as Shift or Enter) or by clicking the mouse button.
- ✔ **Lock This Computer** button to lock up your computer when you're away from your desk so that nobody else can use it — keep in mind that you must be able to accurately produce your user password in the text box at the startup screen with your login and picture in order to unlock the computer so you can use it once again (assuming that you've been assigned a password).

Figure 1-6



- ✓ **Shut Down Options** button to open a pop-up menu containing the following options: Switch User to enable you to log onto the computer with a different user account, Log Off to close down your work session and select a different user account, Lock to lock your computer (see the previous bullet “Lock This Computer”), Restart to completely reboot the computer, Sleep to put the computer into a low-power state (see “Sleep” earlier in this list), Hibernate (if you’re running Vista on a laptop computer) to save any work in memory to your hard drive and shut your machine down, and Shut Down to close all windows and shut down all power to the computer.

The left-hand column of the Start menu still contains the icons for Windows programs you recently used (which you can fix to this part of the Start menu by right-clicking it and then clicking Pin to Start on the shortcut menu). The right-hand column, although vaguely familiar, lacks all of your accustomed “My” windows (from My Document to My Network Places). All of its items (from Documents to Help and Support) are arranged under the icon you selected for your user account and your username (see the dog icon above Admin in Figure 1-6). As you mouse over the items in this column, you’ll notice that a new icon representing the type of item replaces your user account picture at the top of the right-hand column.



Documents, Pictures, Music, Computer, and Network on the Windows Vista Start menu respectively take the place of My Documents, My Pictures, My Music, My Computer, and My Network Places on the Windows XP Start menu.

## Using the All Programs item

The All Programs item on the Windows Vista Start menu performs the exact same function as it did in Windows XP — opening menus that you can use to launch Windows utilities and applications programs installed on your computer. Here, however, Vista has it all over XP because it performs this in a much tidier and more efficient manner.

Instead of opening sprawling menus and submenus that can take over pretty much your entire desktop (depending upon how many programs you've installed), Vista keeps all the All Programs menu action restricted to the left-hand column of the Start menu. When you click its All Programs button, Vista displays a list of all the application programs and Windows utilities on your computer (with a vertical scroll bar if there are too many items to display on the left-hand column) and the button changes from an All Programs to Back.

To launch a program or utility, simply click its item in the left-hand column. If the item sports a folder icon (such as Microsoft Office or Accessories), clicking the icon causes an indented submenu to appear (still within the left-hand column of the Start menu) and you can then click the icon for the program you want to launch.

## The role of Start Search

You may have noticed the Search item that appeared on the right side of the Windows XP Start menu has changed into a Start Search text box at the very bottom of the Start menu in Windows Vista. This Start Search text box is part of the Search feature that permeates the Vista operating system (you find a similar Search text box in most of the utility windows such as Documents, Pictures, Music, and so on).

Unlike the old clunky search feature in Windows XP that simply opened a dialog box where you had to specify the type of search before you entered the search text and then started the search operation, Quick Search in Vista is always ready to go. All you have to do to initiate a search is to start typing the first few characters of the item you're looking for. Vista starts displaying matching items in the open window (or on the left-hand side of the Start menu when using Start Search) as you type.

For example, if I want to open Microsoft Word to create a new document on my computer, I simply type **wo** in the Start Search text box. Doing this almost immediately displays Microsoft Office Word 2007 (among other items such as WordPad and folders and files whose names contain the letters “wo” as part of