

Introduction to Windows

About Windows

Microsoft Windows is an **operating system** (or **OS**) that allows you to easily communicate with your computer. This class will cover information about the Windows desktop, what exactly a “window” is, and how the program Windows can help you keep your files organized.

Types of Operating Systems

- **Windows** is the most widely used OS. The computers in Osceola County Libraries, for example, run on **Windows XP** software.
- **Mac OS X** is the OS used on Apple computers (**Lion** is the most current as of 2011).
- **Linux** is another OS that is popular with programmers. This is because it is free and because it allows the user to play with the code and customize the system.

There are different versions of Windows. Your computer might run **Windows 98**, **Windows 2000**, **Windows MT**, **Windows XP**, **Windows Vista**, or **Windows 7**. The latest version of Windows is **Windows 7**. Although the newer versions of Windows try to improve on the older versions, they all play by the same general rules. Once you become familiar with the desktop and the way Windows works, you should be able to navigate a computer running any other version of Windows with ease.

Most manufacturers pre-load the Windows software onto the computer you buy. If you are building your own computer, however, you will need to purchase the Windows software separately.

Tip: Keep in mind which version of Windows you have when you go to buy a program or peripheral (like a printer or scanner). Companies will print on the box which operating systems the program can work with.

THE DESKTOP

The following image captures the Windows **desktop**. This is what you'll see on your screen when you boot your computer. Think of the desktop as the top of your desk at home or at work. You keep different tools on your desk—pens to write with, scissors to cut paper, a stapler, folders to store documents, etc. The Windows desktop uses the same concept: it's a workspace.



The small pictures you see on the desktop are called **icons**. Each icon stands for a program or a file. Windows provides shortcuts to the programs you use the most on the desktop. You can also keep current or recently used files on the desktop, so they will be easier for you to find. When you want to use a particular program or file, you **double-click** on the icon to open it.

On your desk at home, you might like to see things organized a particular way. Pencils in a pencil cup, a file cabinet on one side, an inbox on the other, etc. You can also arrange the icons on your desktop to your liking. This involves a mouse skill called **drag and drop**.

Here's a quick refresher on how to drag and drop:

- Move the pointer of your mouse over one of the desktop icons. Click down on the left button of your mouse, but do **NOT** lift up your finger.
- Move the icon to wherever you like on the desktop.
- Lift your finger from the mouse.

Windows can also arrange your icons automatically. Pick a blank area on your desktop and **right click**. Click on **arrange icons**. This will show you the options you have to automatically organize your desktop.

Most of the time, programs you install on the computer will create a shortcut for you on the desktop. You can also create shortcuts to programs yourself.

- Click on **Start**
- Click on **All Programs**
- Mouse over the **Games** folder until it opens
- Right Click on **Solitaire**
- Mouse over **Send To**
- Click on **Desktop (create shortcut)**
- A shortcut to Solitaire is now on the desktop.

The Task Bar

Running across the bottom of your screen, you can see a blue bar. This is called the **task bar**. The task bar shows you the programs and files that you have open and allows you to move back and forth between them very easily. This is useful, since you can work in several programs at once using Windows. Doing this is called **multi-tasking**—performing multiple tasks at once.

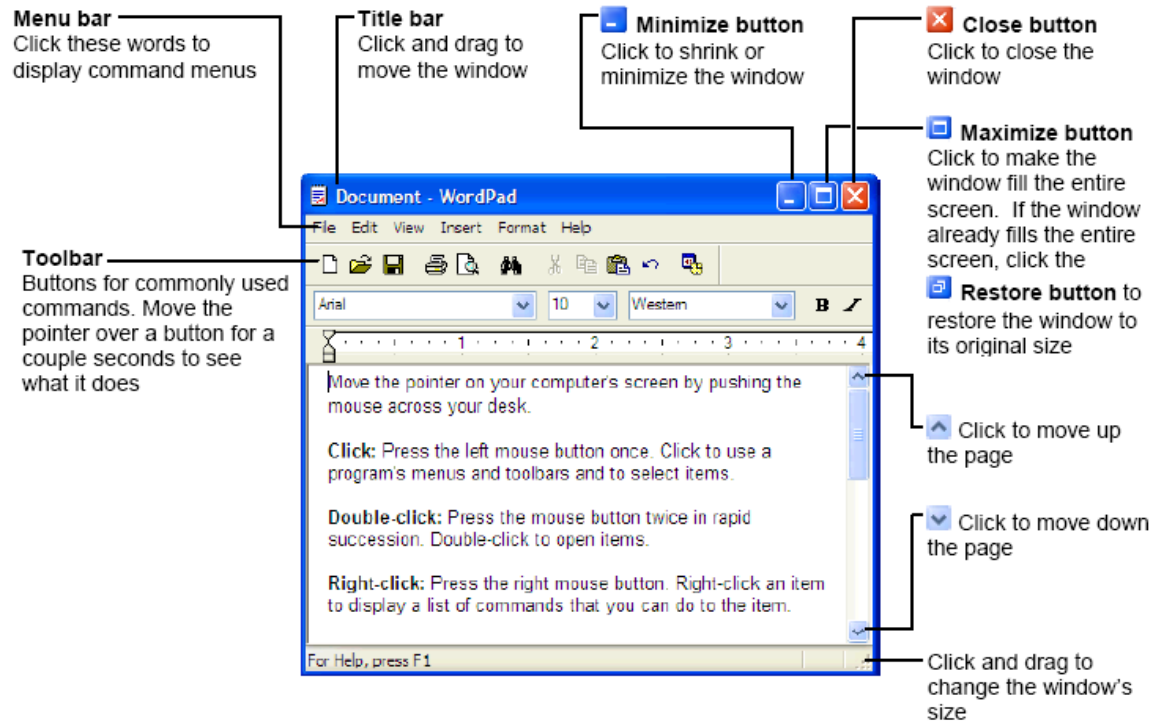
Let's practice. Find the icon for **Microsoft Word** on the desktop and double-click it.

Congratulations! You just opened up a **Window**. Notice when you open the word processor, a button appears on the task bar at the bottom of your screen. The button shows a little Word icon and says "Document 1." This button represents the document you have open in front of you.

Try clicking on that button. What happens? You may think the document disappeared, but it's actually still on the desktop. It has simply been set aside, or **minimized**, so that you can do something *else* on your desktop, like open another file or another program. It's as though you closed a book or file on a real desk in order to reach for another object—you're simply moving things out of the way.

PARTS OF THE WINDOW

When a program or file opens, it opens in a window. **Go to Start >> Program >> Accessories >> WordPad**



First let's focus on the three buttons in the upper right-hand corner of your screen: the **minimize button**, the **maximize/restore down button**, and the **close button**.

Minimize Button

The button that looks like it has a minus sign on it is the **minimize button**. This button will set the open document or program aside so that you can see the desktop or other program windows that are open beneath it.

Maximize Button/Restore Down Button

The middle button can be tricky. Sometimes, if your window is taking up the entire screen, it will look like two small boxes. When it looks like this, it is called the restore down button. Clicking on this button will make your window smaller.

If the window is already smaller, the button will look like one big box. Clicking the button when it looks like this will maximize the window—in other words, it will make the window take up the entire screen.

Resizing Windows

Windows that are not maximized can be **resized**.

- Place the pointer of your mouse on the lower right-hand corner of the window. Your arrow should change into a **black double-sided arrow** when it is in the right spot.

- When you see the black arrow, click and hold your left mouse button, as you did to drag and drop the icon earlier. As you move your hand, the size of the window changes.
- When you lift your finger off the mouse button, the window will stay the size and shape that you made it.

Resizing a window is useful if you want to be able to see several different windows on the screen at one time. You can move a window to a different place on the desktop by clicking on the **title bar** and dragging and dropping the window. The **title bar** shows you the name of the document you are working on. This is in case you have more than one file of the same type (two word processing documents, two Internet browsing windows) open at once.

Close Button

Finally, let's talk about the button with an X on it in the right-hand corner of the window. This is the **close button**. When you click this button, you exit out of the program or window completely. If you are working on a document that needs to be saved, often a menu will pop up that says "Do you want to save [name of document]?" However, when using a web browser, make sure you do not close a window that you are using to compose an e-mail unless you are finished. Web browsers do not save your progress.

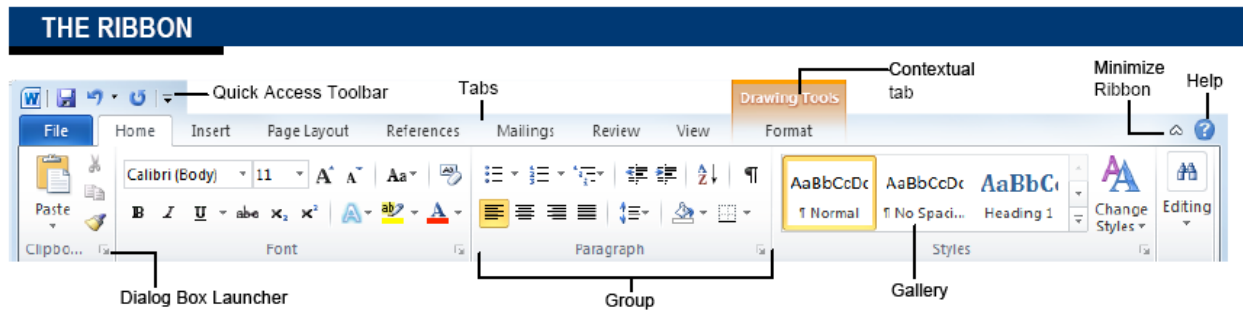
Menu Bar

The **menu bar** is where you will find most of the commands you need to use in a program. Do you need to save? Print? Start a new document? Change the font you're using? All of these commands can be found under one of these menus. The menus generally follow the same form in other Windows programs, except for Microsoft Office products, which have switched to using the **Ribbon** (see below).

Tool Bar

Below the menu bar is a **tool bar**. This particular toolbar contains shortcuts to some of the program's basic commands. The little disk, for example, is a shortcut to **save**. The little printer is a shortcut to **print**. Using these shortcuts can help you save time, but if you need to perform a more specific task (use a particular printer, save to a particular folder), you will probably use a command from the menu bar instead.

Tip: If you ever want to become more familiar with the toolbar, move the pointer of your mouse so it hovers over one of the small icons. You don't need to click on it; just mouse over and pause. A box will appear that tells you what the shortcut button does.



The Ribbon

On the **task bar**, click on the **Microsoft Word** icon to **maximize** it. Notice that the traditional menu and tool bar are gone. Microsoft has combined them to create what they call the **Ribbon**. Commands are organized in logical groups, which are collected together under tabs. Each tab relates to a type of activity, such as writing or laying out a page. To reduce clutter, some tabs are shown only when needed. For example, the **Picture Tools** tab is shown only when a picture is selected.

Using the Scroll Bar

The **scroll bar** allows you to move through a document without using your keyboard. You can do this several different ways.

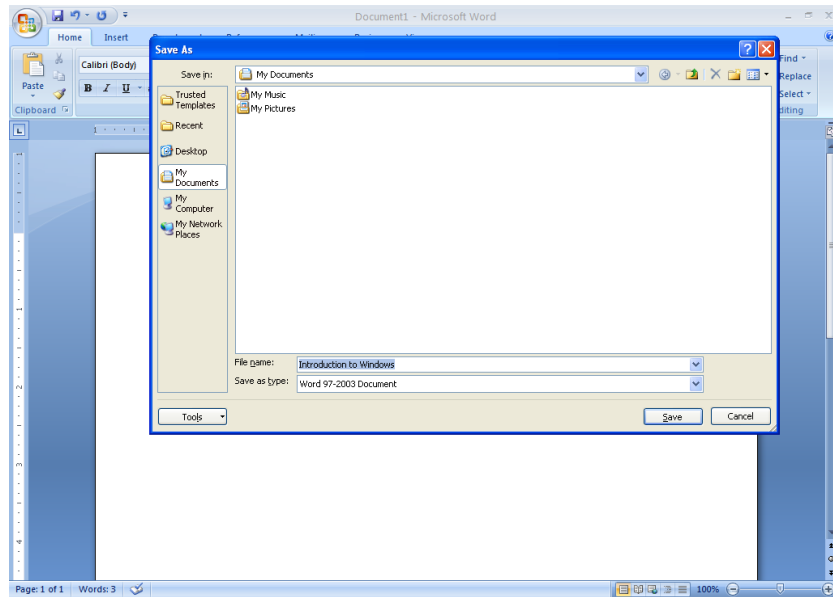
- You can click on the two arrows at the top or bottom of the scroll bar to move up or down on a page. If you click and hold your finger down, you will scroll faster. When you release your finger, the darker grey bar (also called “the elevator”) will stop moving and you will stop moving through the document or web page.
- Click and hold the elevator. You can then **drag** the elevator up or down the scroll bar to a particular area of the page.
- Click in the lighter grey space of the scroll bar. If you click in the space above the elevator, you will move **one page up** toward the beginning of your document. If you click in the space below the elevator, you will move **one page down** toward the end of the document

FILE MANAGEMENT

Saving a Document

To save a document:

- Click on the **File Tab or Button** in the top left corner
- If you are saving for the first time, click on **Save as...** A dialogue box will pop up on your screen.



- Click on the small black arrow next to the “Save in” box. From here, you can pick where your file will be saved—on the desktop, in a particular folder, on a particular drive, etc.
- In the box next to “file name,” type the name of your document. Always name your document something simple and memorable. For example, if you’re typing a letter to your friend Mary, type “Letter to Mary.” This will help you remember what a document is without having to open the file.
- Finally, click on the **save** button.

If you continue working on the file, click the save button on the toolbar (the disk), or select “save” under the file menu. The computer will save your new work over the old copy.

Creating a folder

To organize files on your desktop, you can create folders.

- Pick a blank area on the desktop and right click.
- Highlight the word **new**.
- Another menu will appear. Highlight and click on the word **folder**.
- While the folder is highlighted, type in a name for it. If you accidentally click off of the folder, you can still re-label it. Simply right click on the folder and select **rename** to change the name of the folder.