Are you ready for some Windows 8 on your desktop?
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Now that Windows 8 Consumer Preview is a reality, you can download it and "play" with
the latest and greatest from Microsoft. Just remember, this is a beta version; so
everything that you see, or don't see, is subject to change when all of the customer
feedback is analyzed by the Microsoft folks. Also, vendors have not developed many
drivers for the beta version; so the goodies that you normally use, including printers,
may be inoperable in one way or another.

With that said, you can still get a feel for what is coming – and it is definitely a change. If
you are currently using a Smartphone, Tablet, or play games on Xbox, then you're going
to feel much more comfortable with the new Metro dashboard than someone who has
never seen such a thing before. Basically, everything you associate with a computer is
changing, including the Start Menu, how you shut down your computer, etc.

The following are my observations from downloading, installing, and using Windows 8
Consumer Preview since its release. It is by no means an in-depth look at all of the
options. http://tinyurl.com/7rnql5l

First, go to and download the Windows 8 Consumer Preview Setup which will verify
that your computer and the associated programs on your computer are compatible with
Windows 8.

Once this process is accomplished, you are offered the option of downloading
either the 3.8gb ISO file (will require much time for such a large download) that allows
you to burn a DVD of the program, or you can download a file that runs from a bootable
USB drive that has a minimum size of 4 GB, which will be optioned for boot during the
process. This option allows folks without a DVD player to load the system from a
bootable USB drive.

Once you do this, install the system – but not on your main system by updating to
Windows 8! Remember, this is a prerelease and many things will change before the
Windows 8 final edition is released. You can make a separate partition on your hard
drive and install it there, or run it in a virtual machine on your existing operating system.
If you choose the separate partition option, which was my choice, you will be dual
booting to either the native system on your computer or to Windows 8, which gives you
full processor and RAM capabilities in Windows 8 and, in my opinion, makes your
testing phase more realistic. (Ed Walker says, see how to dual boot Win7 & Win8:
http://goo.gl/UUFfg)

The installation procedure gives you a choice of which system is declared default. If you change your mind later, you can easily change the default system by going to the start menu in Windows 7 and typing msconfig. This will bring up the msconfig window. Go to the boot tab, highlight the operating system that you wish to be default and then click the "Set as Default" button. You will see the Default OS designation move to that operating system. If you look on the middle right of this tab you will see the default timeout delay time of 30 seconds, which you can change to a lower time if you desire. Close the window. The next time you restart your computer the default program will be highlighted and will activate after the timeout period, unless you press the Enter key to speed up the process.

The first and most start ling thing you notice is the Metro UI has the word Start at the top left corner, there is no taskbar with its normal start button on the left hand side, and no desktop or icons – just rectangles with Apps listed in them.

Since there is no start menu on the desktop, there must be no convenient way to search your computer, right?

– but wait, there is an unbelievably cool way. In the Start or Metro location, without clicking anywhere with the mouse, just start typing what you would like to do or search on your keyboard; and Voilà, you are switched to the app window and the choices from your search are shown! But, there are also other ways to get there (and depressing the Windows logo key on the keyboard is no longer an option). You can depress the Windows Logo key+F and the Start sidebar on the right side of the screen appears. If you're a mouser, move your mouse to the extreme bottom right side of the screen; and a similar looking sidebar, called the "Charm" will appear with the search logo at the very top. The Charm area also has your system settings that allow you to tailor Windows 8 to your liking.

Notice on the start page that one of the apps listed is the Desktop, which looks almost like the classic Windows 7 desktop, but still has the start button missing because you are now in Windows 8 environment. All of your Windows 7 functions, keyboard shortcuts, etc., work just fine here and most of the keyboard shortcuts also work fine on the start page, or any other page in Windows 8. When you are at the desktop, just depress the Windows Logo key on the keyboard to toggle back to the Start page. You can also move your mouse to the bottom left corner of the screen and a start screen thumbnail will appear. Left click here and you will go back to the start page. You can also click the Start icon in the Charm area on the right.

If you right-click on an unused area of the start page, a bar at the bottom has an icon that allows you to view all of your installed items plus what you see on the start page. This is the best way to find items (Apps) in Windows 8 without using search.

So, how do you shut down Windows 8 since there is no start button to click? The easiest way is to depress CTRL-ALT-DEL, look on the bottom right for the power logo, right click and choose your option. You can also move the mouse to the right side of the

screen, access the charm area, click settings, and the power icon will be in the area at the bottom. Click it, and you will be offered sleep, shutdown, or restart.

While this is by no means an in-depth article, you will now be able to navigate in Windows 8, install the programs you need, and shut down or restart the system to gracefully exit Windows 8.

Go forth and conquer!