Crabby's Windows 7 House Party

Crabby Office Lady

I don't normally get too excited about operating systems. To me, they're necessities of computing, not the subjects of gushing excitement. I have to make an exception for Windows 7, however. It's put a kick in my step and a song in my heart.

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As you may have heard — and giggled about — by now, Microsoft is sponsoring Windows 7 Launch Parties. What this means is that hosts all over the country are opening up their geek cribs to friends and family and...having parties, I guess, with Windows 7 as the guest of honor.

I am pretty impressed with this new software (and it takes a bit to impress me, as you can guess). One of the perks of working at Microsoft is that we get to try out new and upcoming software before it's released to the public, and I've been using Windows 7 for a few months now. I tried to think of something crabby to say about it, but I'm coming up empty.

There are so many useful (yes, useful!) features and options in Windows 7 that I felt I had to write about it (even though I'm not the Crabby Windows Lady). It's that good.

Below are a few of my favorite things about Windows 7; what are yours?

Taskbar

The word "task" connotes drudgery, responsibility, and duty. Well, toss those terms out the window because the new, updated taskbar in Windows 7 isn't remotely tedious.

You've always counted on the taskbar — that list of programs on the bottom of your window. Now you can point to a taskbar icon to see a thumbnail preview of open files or programs. Then, move your mouse over a thumbnail to preview the window full-screen. You can even close windows from the thumbnail previews. That's classy!

Watch the taskbar in action

Jump lists

The jump list is part of the taskbar, too. Instead of hovering over a program's icon to see what's open and active, right-click the icon. What you see depends on the program. The list of Internet Explorer 8 shows frequently and recently-viewed Web sites. The Word jump list shows frequently viewed or worked on documents. And so on.

But wait, there's more! Some jump lists also give you quick access to certain commands such opening a new mail message or opening a new tab in the browser.

Watch jump lists in action

Window juggling

There are three new features that will help you get a handle on all the windows you have open: Aero Shake, Aero Peek, and Snap.

- **Aero Shake** Want to focus on one window? Shake it, and all the other open windows on your desktop will be hidden. Shake again, and they're all back. No, really! Click on the top of the window, give your mouse a shake...and all the other windows disappear. Shake again, and they're back.

  Watch Aero Shake in action

- **Aero Peek** I now bless you with...the power of x-ray vision! With Aero Peek, you can look through all the open windows straight through to the your desktop. You simply hover over the far right corner of the taskbar and voilà, all of your open windows become completely transparent so that you can see everything on your desktop. If you click that spot on the taskbar, all the windows are minimized; click it again and they go back to how they were.

  Watch Aero Peek in action

- **Snap** Sometimes you need to know what's going on EVERYWHERE; you want to look at all your windows at once. Snap is a new way to resize open windows by dragging them to the edges of your screen. Depending on where you drag it, you can expand a window vertically, make it full screen, and even compare several windows, side-by-side.

  Watch Snap in action

Connecting to networks

Now that everywhere seems to have WiFi and wireless access, connected quickly and easily has never been more important. You might have 10 different places you connect to and a regular basis: home, work, the cafe down the street, the airport, the mall, your kids' school, and so on.

Windows 7 makes it so easy to pick the one you want and connect; it's all right there on the taskbar. **View available networks** displays all your wired and wireless options — Wi-Fi, mobile broadband, dial-up, or corporate VPN. You click...you connect. No more hunting through the Control Panel or anything. You get an immediate look at everything available.

Device management

I have many peripherals that I connect to my computer, including cameras, phones, and printers. It used to be a hassle keeping track of everything. I could go to the Device Manager and slog through the long list of everything there — mice, keyboards, various drivers, video cards, etc. — but I'd rather not.

Two new features, Device Stage and the Devices and Printers Folder make it much easier.

- **Device Stage** This is basically a single, easy-on-the-eyes location where you can check on all your devices. Various device manufacturers can customize Digital Stage to, for example, display an actual picture of the model of camera you're using as well as the number of shots left in it. You just plug in your device and a customized window for that device and its options pops up to do your bidding.

  Watch the Device Stage in Action

- **Devices and Printers Folder** This folder shows you everything connected to your PC. Then you can choose which device you want to address at the moment.

I want it! How do I get it?

Feeling excited? Going to run out and attend a Windows 7 Launch Party? Even if you're not taking it *that* far, I can almost guarantee that you'll be happy with this new version of Windows. And how does it compare to that last version of Windows? Let's just say it doesn't...and leave it at that.

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Did this article help you?** feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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