

Vista for Former Windows Users

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Assumptions

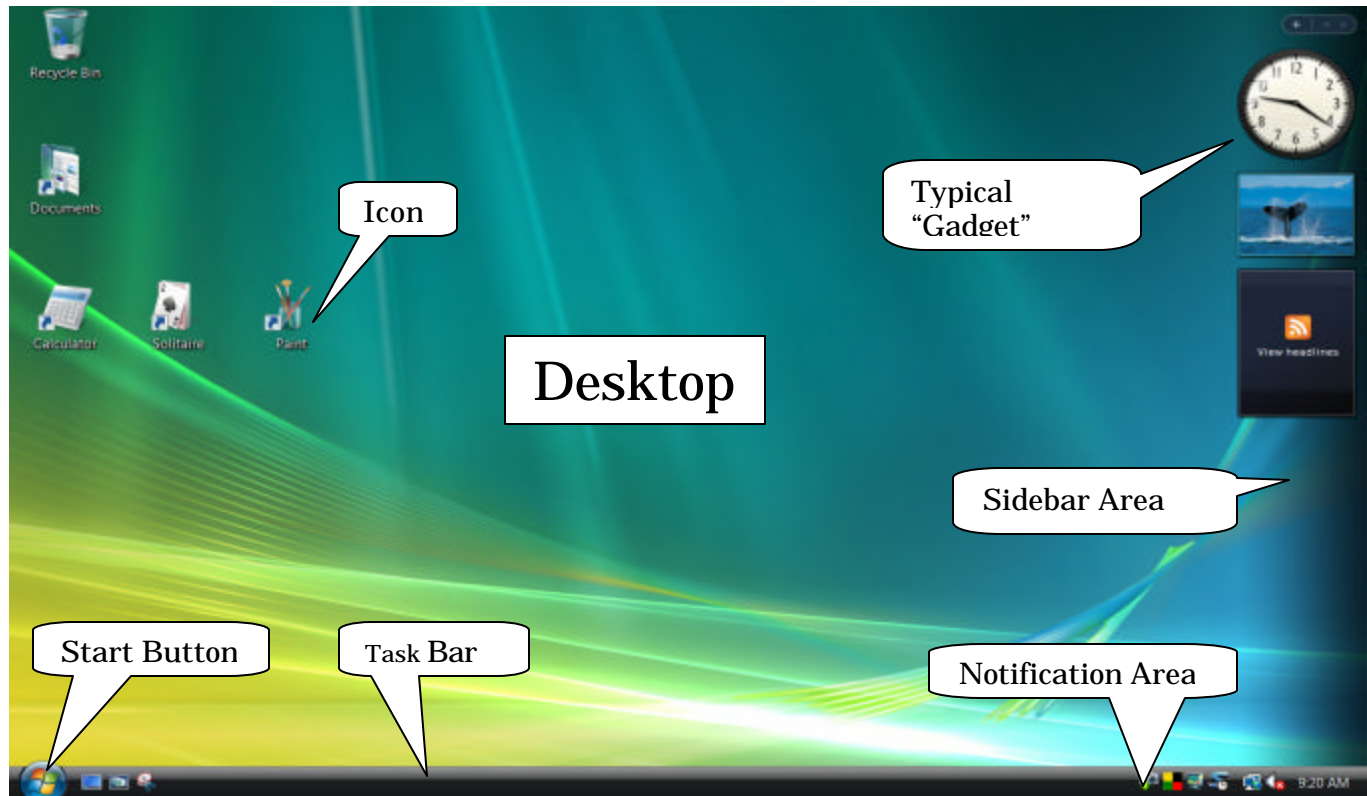
This material assumes that you are relatively skilled with an operating system that is a predecessor to Windows Vista, i.e. Windows XP, 2000, ME, 98. Also, although there are several Vista versions available, materials presented here are based solely on the Vista Home Premium edition. This material does not cover every new feature of Vista, as it discusses only significant differences with XP and/or former Windows versions as determined by the author.

Principle Differences with XP

Themes

As with XP, Vista's windows can be set up with different Themes that select the colors scheme and other display factors. The default "look" or "theme" is Windows Vista, and it looks much like XP with a few variations. An entirely new "look" termed Windows Aero is available with Vista Home Premium and higher versions. It features a transparent look to windows along with some 3D effects. However, your graphics card must have a large memory

capacity and it must support DirectX 9.0 with Pixel Shader 2 in hardware. New systems may have this capacity, but many older systems do not. Aero is not covered here.



The Desktop

The Vista desktop differs only slightly from XP as may be seen in the illustration. The Start button is just that – a button in the lower left corner of the screen. The rest of the desktop looks like XP except for the new **Sidebar** feature. The sidebar is a somewhat superfluous attraction rather than an essential addition. However, some people like it. After all, the clock is much bigger than the display in the lower right corner!

Sidebar & Gadgets

The Windows Sidebar shows up along the right edge of the desktop where you can install several “Gadgets” that are displayed in this area. Illustrated here is a clock face at the top and some other gadgets. The user can define exactly what gadgets appear in the sidebar. If the sidebar feature is not already on the screen you can open it by clicking on Start, then in the Search box enter “Sidebar” (without the quotes) followed by the Enter key. Notice that the sidebar may not display if screen resolution is 1024 x 769 or less.

Right-click in the sidebar area and select “Add gadgets” to open a window containing the available gadgets. To close the Sidebar right-click in the sidebar area and select “Close sidebar”. At this point a new icon will appear in the Notification area. Clicking on it will reopen the sidebar.

Taskbar

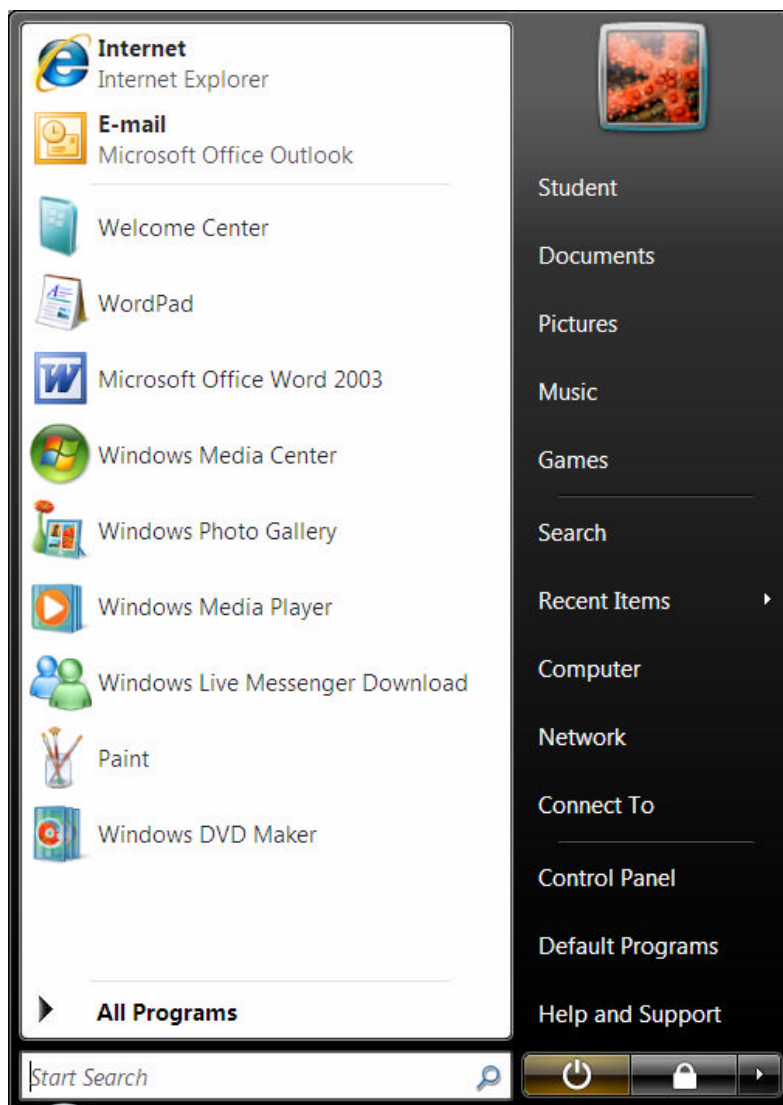
As with XP you will find across the bottom of the screen the **Taskbar**. Each program you run shows up as an entry on the Taskbar. At the left end of the Taskbar is the round “Start” button, and at the right end are some very small icons and a clock in what is termed the **Notification Area**. Between the Start button and the Task Bar is an area called **Quick Launch**. It may or may not appear on your computer. If not you can enable it by opening the Task Bar menu (right-click in the Taskbar area), select Properties and check the “Show Quick Launch” box. Quick Launch is handy when you are running a program(s) in the full screen mode and you don’t want to minimize or close them all in order to run another program.

Start Menu

The Start Menu has a new look and it works slightly differently than XP. (If you want the old “Classic” look then right-click on Start, choose Properties and then selected the Classic Start Menu.) Clicking on the Start button at the left end of the Taskbar displays the **Start Menu** illustrated here and provides access to all major computer functions..

On the left side there are many icons providing a quick way to access various programs available on your computer. Some of these are duplicates of icons on the Desktop. Clicking once on an icon will run that program. The icons near the top (above a faintly visible line) are fixed, but the others may change depending on which programs you have been running.

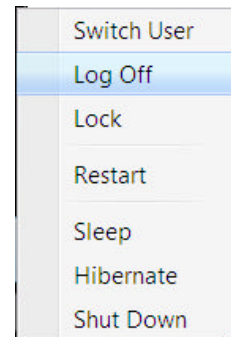
Clicking or even **hovering** the mouse pointer on “All Programs” (near the bottom of the menu) does not open a cascading menu out to the right. The All Programs menu pops up inside the Start Menu frame along with a scroll bar (if necessary) to provide access to the programs. Clicking once on the icon (or the name) will open that program in its own Window. Some items have a folder icon and clicking on the icon (or the name, e.g. “Accessories”) presents an expanded list of programs within that folder. Click on it a second time and the list will collapse. It works much like the Favorites list in Internet Explorer.



Similar to XP the right side consists of quick links to various folders or special areas such as Control Panel, Computer, etc.

Shut Down or Switch Users Options

To shut down Vista point the mouse at the small right-arrow next to the padlock symbol at the bottom of the Start Menu. This opens a small sub-menu. Click on Shut Down to turn the computer off. The other options are equivalent to similar XP selections.



Folders

The folder at the top of the list belongs to the current user and displays that user's logon name. (Remember, like XP Vista is a multi-user system, and each user has his/her own desktop and set of folders.) Within the user's folder resides all other folders belonging to that user, and here is a significant difference with XP. XP's default folder arrangement had the My Pictures, My Videos, etc. sub-folders all residing inside the My Documents folder. Vista has a different arrangement. As you can see, Vista has default folders named Documents, Pictures, Music, etc. They have dropped the "My", and these folders, including Documents, are sub-folders within the current user's folder (e.g. within Student in the above example). If you click on the current user's folder you will see all the default folders residing there.

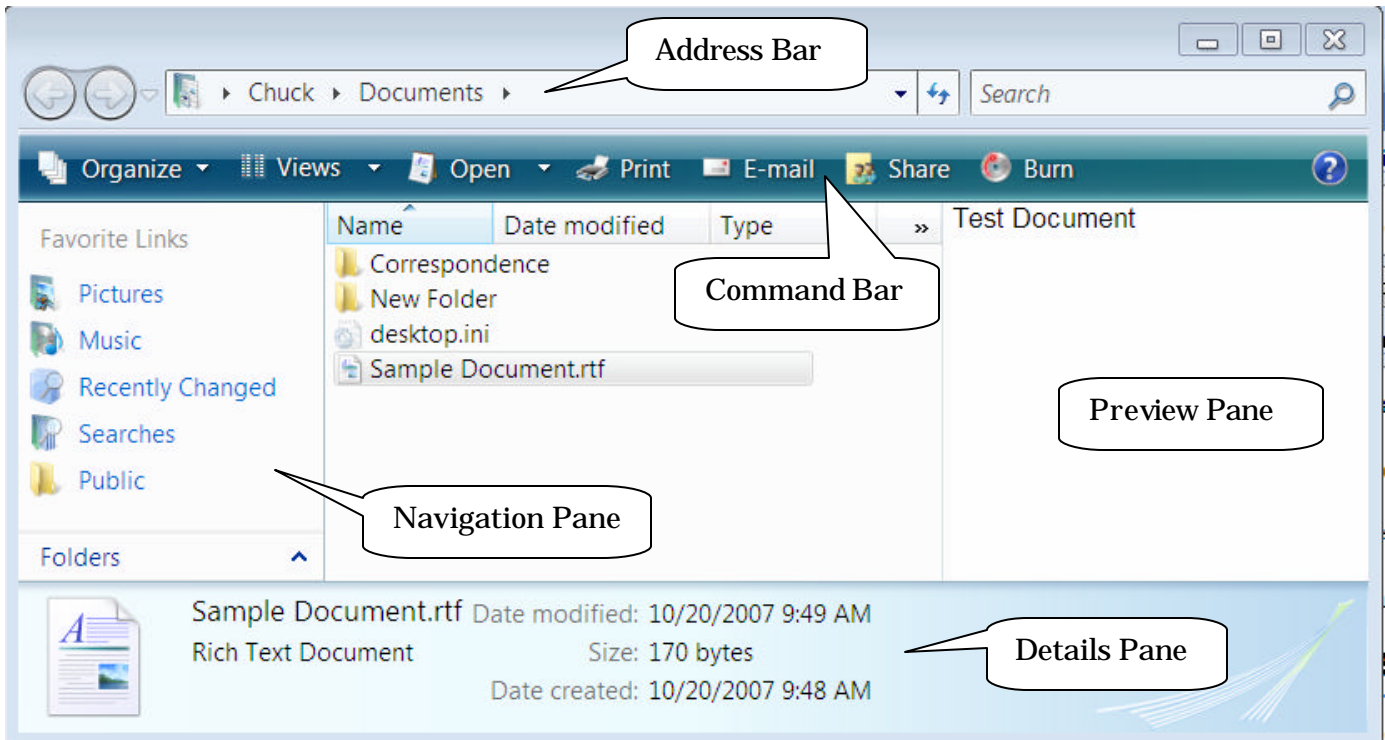
New to Vista is the Games folder – a quick way to navigate to all games on your computer. The Recent Items folder provides a list of shortcuts to various files you have accessed recently. See the Appendix for a quick reference to Vista's folder list.

Search Facility

Vista features a significantly expanded context sensitive search facility. It can search for many things other than just documents, and the search may depend on where you start the search from. For example, when using the search facility in the Start Menu it will typically search for programs. However, an even simpler method is to tap the Windows key (between the Ctrl and Alt keys) this opens the Start menu with the insertion point already in the Search text box. Start typing the name of the program you want (e.g. Solitaire) and it will display a list of programs that begin first with an "s", then an "so", etc. expanding as you type. You can then use the arrow keys or the mouse to select the program you want. This is especially useful for all you "keyboard types."

Explorer Window

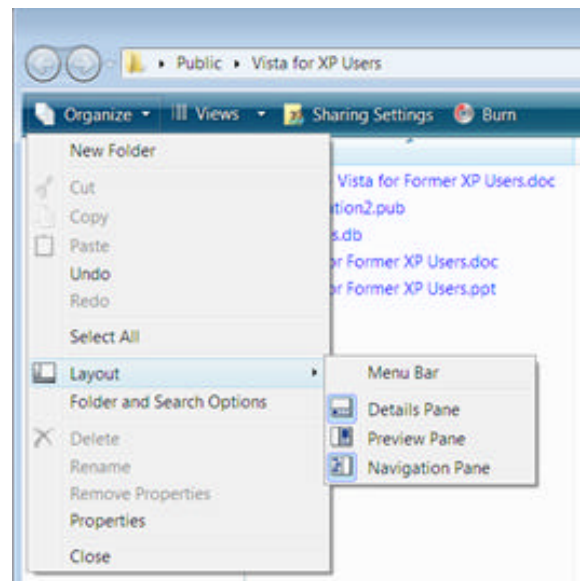
Vista has abandoned the familiar XP "Task Pane" feature and has adopted a relatively new look to the Explorer window as illustrated here.



There is no title in the Title bar, just the usual three buttons at the right end. The old Menu Bar is gone. (But you can get it back by tapping the Alt key.)

The various panes in the illustration may be enabled or disabled from the Layout option within the Organize drop down menu as shown here.

The Address bar is divided into drop-down menu nodes and it is referred to as the Breadcrumb bar (?). Clicking on the small arrow to the right of a node opens up a drop-down menu listing the folders and/or files within that node. You can also use the Forward and Back arrows as with Internet Explorer to go to folder you have visited. Clicking in a blank area of the Address bar will display the classic look, i.e. "D:\Users\Public\Intermediate Vista" instead of Nodes. As with Internet Explorer, clicking on the small down-arrow at the extreme left end of the Address bar will produce a history of places visited. Click on a URL in the list and it will open Internet Explorer and proceed to that address.



The new Command Bar is context sensitive, and buttons on the command bar change depending on what items have been selected. In the above case the "Sample Document.rtf" file is selected so items such as Email, Share or Burn are available at the Command bar. If nothing is selected these action buttons may not appear. The Navigation Pane runs along the

left edge providing quick links to favorite places. The Details Pane provides additional information about the selected item, and the Preview Pane shows a preview of the selected file contents (if available).

You can open up a Folders list in the Navigation Pane by clicking on the small up arrow to the right of the word “Folders” at the bottom of the Navigation Pane. This closely resembles the folder list in the older Explorer windows. Thus, the simplest way to copy or move files is to have the object folder displayed somewhere on the Navigation Pane, then select the files to be copied or moved and drag and drop them on the desired folder.

Notice that the Navigation Pane has a folder named “Public.” Placing objects in this folder makes them available to all users, i.e. Public is, by definition, a shared folder. Also, the Documents, Favorites, Music, Pictures, and Video folders are colored blue-green instead of yellow.

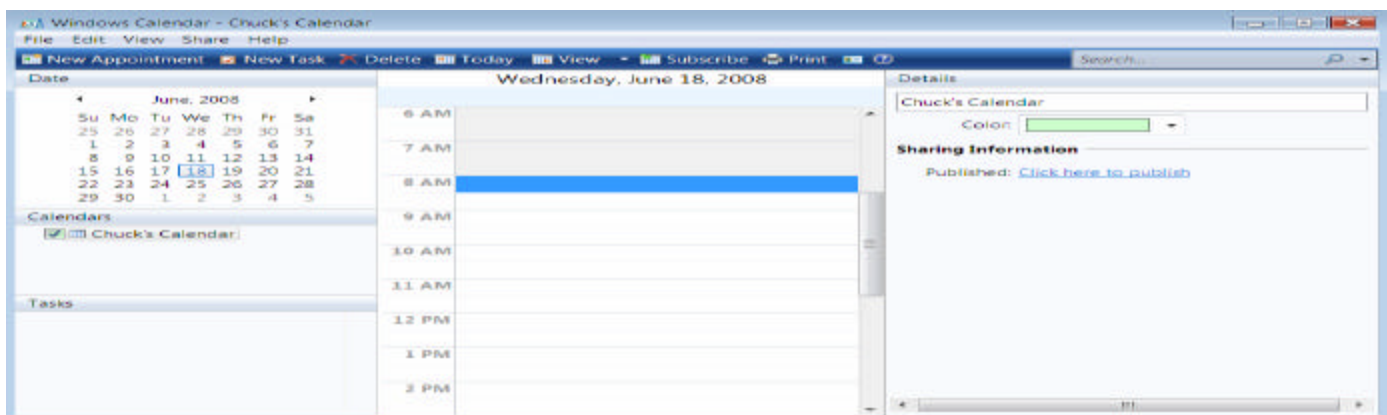
As with XP, clicking Views on the Command Bar exposes a drop-down menu where you can select the way files and folders are displayed within the main window. A new wrinkle is a slider along the side of the drop-down menu that lets you select the particular view you prefer all the way from extra large icons down to a simple list.

Security Features

Vista has incorporated a multitude of new security features along with the usual features found, for example, in XP such as Firewall and Automatic Updates. If an anti-virus program is not present Vista will post a warning. There are many other security enhancements especially when any attempts are made to install new programs or features. Various pop-ups will occur warning the user of the security risk or requiring a password. If, for example, you are not logged in as a system administrator and you attempt to install a new program, a pop-up will require the administrator’s password before you can proceed.

Windows Calendar

Found in the Start menu Windows Calendar is a nice tool for tracking appointments and scheduling one’s time. It is quite similar to calendar programs such a Microsoft Outlook and the calendar function within Microsoft Works. Here is a look at the Calendar window. Feel free to explore the calendar and it’s various features.



Windows Mail

“Windows Mail” is the new name given to the old Outlook Express email program. It features the new Vista look, and there are only a few minor changes from the original Outlook Express. Perhaps the most significant is that the familiar Contact pane in the lower left side is missing. So you can no longer double click on a contact’s name to open up a new message to that person. As with Outlook Express, you open a new message by clicking on Create Mail. Then you can either start typing in the To address or click on TO to open up the contact list and make your selection(s).

In fact, the Address Book has been replaced with an entirely new Vista Contacts List that exists in a folder within the user’s main folder. (Why Contacts is not listed in the Start Menu like the other user folders such as Documents, Pictures, etc. remains a mystery, but you can click on the User name to get to it.) In Windows Mail you must click on the Contacts button (to the right of the Send/Receive button) to open up the Contacts list. From there you can enter or edit contacts in the list.

Backing up Data

Vista has a backup files wizard available in the Systems and Maintenance section of the Control Panel. It will set up the backup to any selected drive. Notice, however, that you cannot backup to a disk or partition on the same drive.

Appendix

The following table compares Vista’s folder list with comparable folders in previous Windows versions.

Vista Folders	Previous Folders
User Name	User Name
Contacts (new)	
Documents	My Documents
Downloads (new)	
Favorites	Within IE6 or 7
Saved Games (new)	
Pictures	My Pictures
Music	My Music
Searches (new)	
Videos	My Videos