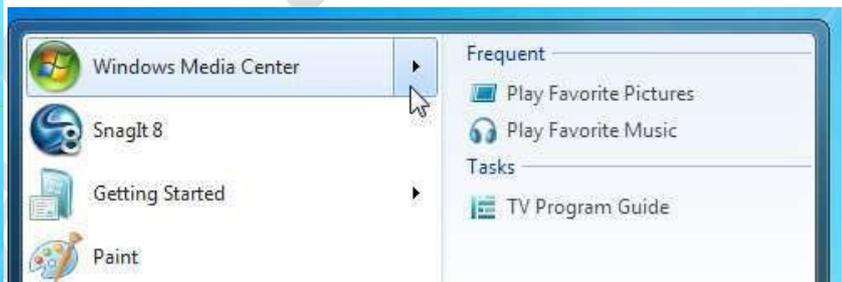## Customizing the Start Menu

The Start menu is the main gateway to everything your computer has to offer. All installed programs can be accessed here, you can view different locations on your computer, and you can use it to search and view files.

Using the Start Menu

You should be fairly comfortable using the Start menu now, but a refresher never hurts. Click the Start button in the lower left-hand corner of your screen to view the Start menu: Click an item in the list on the left to open the program, and use the links on the right to access different areas of your computer or change settings.

Point to the (>) arrow beside a program name to open content or features recently used by that program:
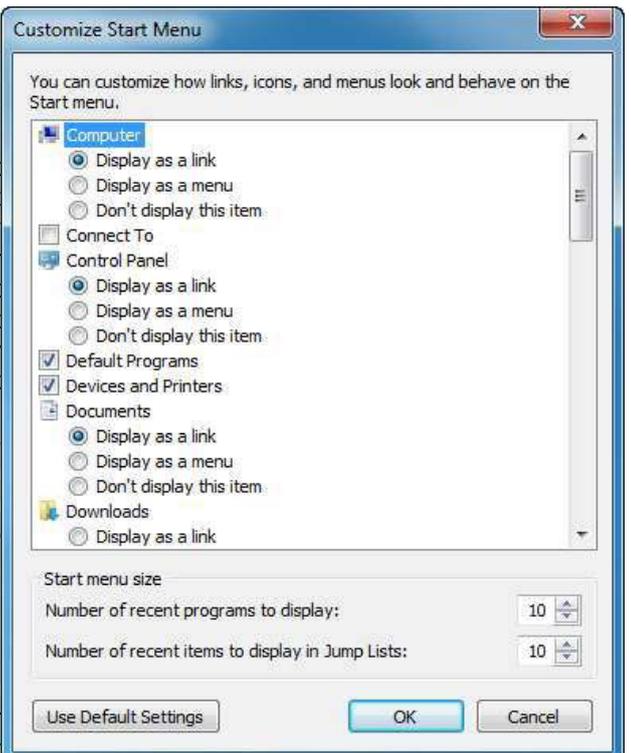
Search parts of your computer by typing part of a file or program name in to the Search Bar at the bottom of the menu Finally, you can click Shut down to turn off your computer or use other power options:

Customizing the Start Menu

Most people will find the default Start menu layout easy to use. However, if you would rather not have so many icons, or have a very specific layout that you like to use, Windows lets you customize just about everything. To customize the Start menu, right-click in an empty space on the taskbar and click Properties. When the Taskbar and Start Menu Properties dialog box appears, click the Start Menu tab, and then click Customize: The Customize Start Menu dialog box will appear: The list at the top of the window allows you to modify many of the main commands in the Start menu.

Each of the items in the Computer Control area of the Start menu can be displayed as a link to a folder, displayed as a submenu inside the Start menu, or removed from the Start menu.
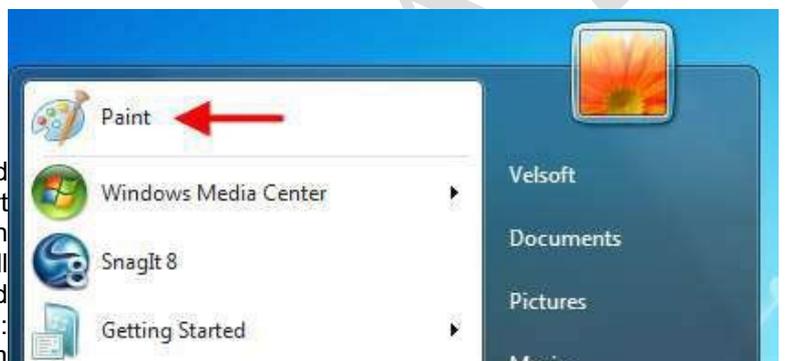
You can choose to enable/disable the Favorites folder which gives you quick access to all the stored Web sites on your computer. You can also choose to highlight any programs that

have been installed recently: There are other options that can be enabled here as well. If you have a network of printers that you have access to, you can add a Printers link to view the properties and print queues of the different machines. You also have the option to add a Run command, which lets you open programs by entering their specific launch command.

You can also control how many recently used programs to display and how many recent items to show in a Jump List (like how many previously visited Web pages in Internet Explorer). Finally, you can undo any changes and restore the default Start menu by clicking the Use Default Settings button: Click Cancel to discard any changes you have made or click OK to accept the changes.
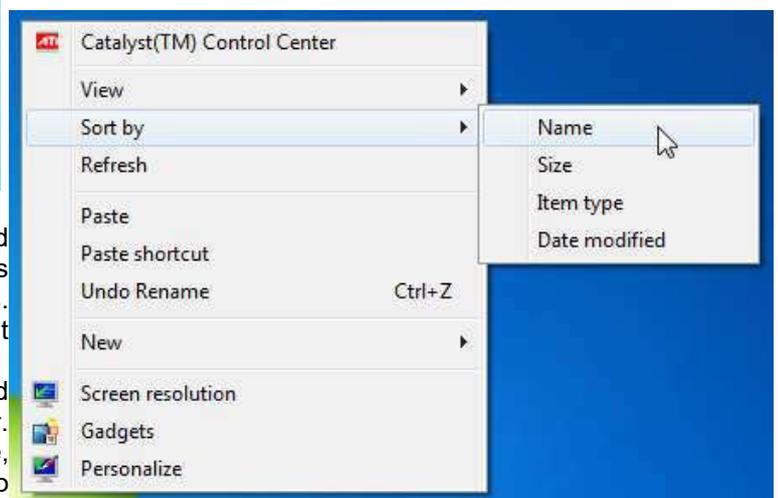
Using the Pinned List

The Start menu contains an area at the top where you can "pin" commonly used programs. By default, there are no items pinned to the list; instead, the order of programs shown when you click the Start menu will change depending on how often you use the program. You can add any program to the pinned list by right-clicking a program icon in the Start menu and clicking Pin to Start Menu: Now each time you click the Start button, that program will always be at the top of the Start menu and separated from the other icons with a faint line: Conversely, if you want to remove an item from the pinned list, right-click the pinned icon in and click Unpin from Start Menu.

Moving Icons

The Windows desktop is designed to be used as you would a desk or table. Items can be arranged in any order, folders and files can be saved on the desktop, and all programs run in windows on the desktop. Consider the following desktop: Icons can be moved one at a time around the desktop by clicking and dragging. If you want to move many icons at once, click and drag a box around the icons first: Now if you click and drag any of the selected icons, you can move all of them as a group:

Sorting Icons

If you use your desktop as a place to dump files and deal with them later (like me) it sometimes comes in handy to first sort the icons in different ways. Consider the following icons on my desktop right now:
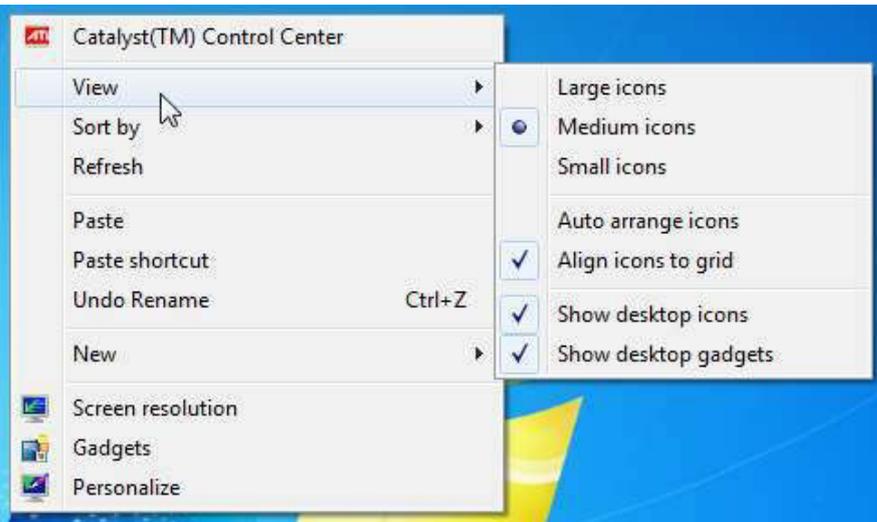
As you can see, there are files, folders, and other icons arranged in no particular order. Windows allows you to sort these icons by Name, Size, Type, and the Date they were modified. To do this, right-click on any empty space on the desktop, point to Sort, and click an option Since I have lots of different kinds of files, I will sort by name: Now all of the icons will be arranged alphabetically:

Setting View Options By default, Windows displays medium size icons and aligns the objects to an invisible grid. However, Windows allows you to modify lots of display options, including the look of the icons themselves. You can change view options by right-clicking on the desktop and pointing to View: Let's explore the different options:

Icon Size Choose between large, medium, and small icon sizes:

Auto Arrange If you arrange your icons by name as we did earlier in this lesson, then enabling Auto Arrange will automatically sort any new folders or file types alphabetically into the icons that already exist. For example, if your desktop contains biographies of famous people and you sorted all of them by name, then any new file would automatically be placed in alphabetical order for you.

Align to Grid All of the icons on the desktop are by default arranged in a grid pattern. Any new icons added to the desktop are automatically fitted into an invisible grid to keep everything neat. However, you can turn that alignment off if you like.

Show Desktop Icons Enable or disable this option to show or hide the Recycle Bin.

Show Desktop Gadgets Enable or disable this option to show or hide your gadgets.

Deleting Icons

To delete something from the desktop, you can click and drag an icon on top of the Recycle Bin or right-click the icon and click Delete. If you try to remove a shortcut to a program, you will see a warning like this:

To truly remove something from your computer, empty the Recycle Bin.