

Windows 8 Tip: Windows Key Shortcuts

Sep. 19, 2011 [Paul Thurrott](#) | *Paul Thurrott's Supersite for Windows*

One of the big myths about [Windows 8](#) is that its new shell, as most obviously seen in the new Start screen, is somehow touch-centric. It's not, and as Microsoft has tried (largely unsuccessfully), this new shell works equally well with the keyboard and mouse, as well as with a Tablet PC-style stylus, or pen. Regardless of your stance on this UI, at least know this: Microsoft realizes that the number one selling form factor for the [Windows 8](#) generation of PCs will indeed be traditional laptop-style portable computers. And for this reason, it's engineering the system to work well on such hardware. And laptops, as you know, come with keyboards (and mouse-like pointing devices).

It's a bit early to worry about whether anyone can be truly productive on a PC running the Windows 8 Developer Preview. After all, this is an incomplete, buggy, and unreliable early peek at the OS aimed at developers only and should thus be used solely on secondary machines, or in a VM. But it's not too early to figure out the new (and still useful) keyboard shortcuts in Windows 8. And in this first in a series of articles about these shortcuts, I'll examine a new class of keyboard shortcuts that involve the Windows key, since this key is gaining new importance in this release.

With the understanding that these shortcuts could change or be augmented over time, here's what I've found so far.

Windows shell (Start screen)

The following Windows key shortcuts work in the new Windows shell/Start screen.

WINKEY - Toggles between the Start screen and the foremost running app (Metro-style) or the Windows Desktop.

WINKEY + 1, WINKEY + 2, etc. - Switch to the (classic) Windows desktop and launch the nth shortcut in the Windows taskbar. So WINKEY + 1 would launch whichever application is first in the list, from left to right.

WINKEY + B - Switch to the (classic) Windows desktop and select the tray notification area.

WINKEY + C - Display Charms and time/date/notification overlay. (Note that this shortcut displays the charms in the lower left of the screen and not on the right as would be the case using touch.)

WINKEY + D - Switch to the (classic) Windows desktop and toggle Show Desktop (hides/shows any applications and other windows).

WINKEY + E - Switch to the (classic) Windows desktop and launch Windows Explorer with Computer view displayed.

WINKEY + F - Search Files using the new Windows Search pane.

WINKEY + I - Display Settings pane for the Start screen (also provides access to Networks, Volume, Screen Brightness, Notifications, Power, and Language).

WINKEY + L - Lock PC and return to Lock screen.

WINKEY + M - Minimize the selected Explorer window.

WINKEY + O - Toggle orientation switching on slate and tablet PCs.

WINKEY + P - Display the new Project (for "projection") pane for choosing between available displays.

WINKEY + Q - Search (within) Apps using the new Windows Search pane.

WINKEY + R - Switch to the (classic) Windows desktop and display the Run box.

WINKEY + U - Switch to the (classic) Windows desktop and launch the Ease of Access Center.

WINKEY + X - Switch to the (classic) Windows desktop and display the Windows Mobility Center application.

WINKEY + Z - Display the App Bar in a Metro-style app.

Note that tapping **WINKEY + [any unsupported letter]** will trigger a Search Apps (and classic applications) task using the new Windows Search pane, with the letter pre-typed in the search box. So WINKEY + A would start searching for apps (and applications) that include the letter 'a'. This is no different from simply tapping the letter 'a' at the Start screen, since any such typing starts the Search Apps task.

Windows desktop (classic)

The following Windows key shortcuts work in the classic Windows desktop. Note that while many of these shortcuts also work in Windows 7, some are new to Windows 8.

WINKEY - Toggles between the Windows desktop environment and the new Start screen.

WINKEY + 1, WINKEY + 2, etc. - Launch the nth shortcut in the Windows taskbar. So WINKEY + 1 would launch whichever application is first in the list, from left to right.

WINKEY + B - Select the tray notification area.

WINKEY + C - Display Charms and time/date/notification overlay.

WINKEY + D - Toggle Show Desktop (hides/shows any applications and other windows).

WINKEY + E - Launch Windows Explorer with Computer view displayed.

WINKEY + F - Search Files using the new Windows Search pane.

WINKEY + I - Display Settings pane for Windows Desktop (also provides access to Networks, Volume, Screen Brightness, Notifications, Power, and Language).

WINKEY + L - Lock PC and return to Lock screen.

WINKEY + M - Minimize the selected Explorer window.

WINKEY + O - Toggle orientation switching on slate and tablet PCs.

WINKEY + P - Display the new Project (for "projection") pane for choosing between available displays.

WINKEY + Q - Search (within) Apps using the new Windows Search pane.

WINKEY + R - Display Run box.

WINKEY + U - Launch Ease of Access Center.

WINKEY + W - Search Settings using the new Windows Search pane.

WINKEY + X - Display Windows Mobility Center application.

WINKEY + ARROW KEYS - [Aero Snap](#).