

Larry's newsLETTER



Windows 7 features: Gadgets

Gadgets put information and fun—like news, pictures, games, and the phases of the moon—right on your desktop.

In Windows Vista, gadgets were corralled in the Sidebar. Windows 7 sets them free on the screen, where you can move and resize them as you like.

Drag a gadget close to the edge of the desktop—or another gadget—and watch it snap neatly into place for a streamlined look. Open windows getting in the way of your gadgets? Use Peek to make them instantly reappear.

Peek gives you the power of X-ray vision, so you can peer past all your open windows straight to the Windows 7 desktop. Simply point to the right edge of the taskbar—and watch open windows instantly turn transparent, revealing all your hidden icons and gadgets.

To quickly reveal a buried window, point to its taskbar thumbnail. Now only that window shows on the desktop.

Peek is included in the Home Premium, Professional, Ultimate, and Enterprise editions of Windows 7. If you like it, check out two new related features: Shake and Snap.

Shake: Ever need to cut through a cluttered desktop and quickly focus on a single window? Just click a pane and give your mouse a shake. Voila! Every open window except that one instantly disappears. Jiggle again—and your windows are back. (Who says the old mouse can't learn a new trick?)

Shake is included in the Home Premium, Professional, Ultimate, and Enterprise editions of Windows 7. If you like it, check out two new related features: Peek and Snap.

Snap: Snap is a quick (and fun) new way to resize open windows, simply by dragging them to the edges of your screen.

Depending on where you drag a window, you can make it expand vertically, take up the entire screen, or appear side-by-side with another window. Snap makes reading, organizing, and comparing windows a...well, you get the picture.

These gadgets are all related to one another. Chances are if you like one you'll like the other.

Article courtesy of microsoft.com.

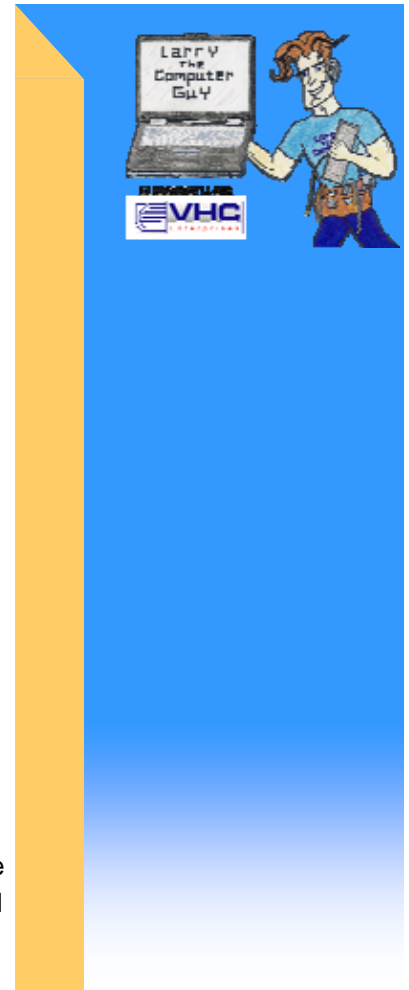
Techie Term:

UPS: Uninterruptible Power Source

(UPS)- a constantly charging battery pack which powers the computer. A UPS should have enough charge to power your computer for several minutes in the event of a total power failure, giving you time to save your work and safely shut down.



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Whole-house Entertainment with Windows 7 Media Streaming

Media streaming has been around for a long time; the term refers to the live or on-demand delivery of multimedia content over a network (as opposed to, for instance, downloading the entire media file from a server to the hard drive or flash memory on a device and then playing it from the device). Streaming was difficult to do in the early days of computing because slow processors and slow networks resulted in uneven or "jerky" playing of the content, but with the advent of high speed networks (both LANs and Internet connections) and fast processors, even large volume high definition content can be played smoothly over the network.

Microsoft has built several new media streaming features into Windows 7, with the goal of providing a "whole-house entertainment experience" that's easy to implement, both for streaming music and videos between computers and devices across your local network or streaming across the Internet. First off, Windows 7 supports the DLNA (Digital Living Network Alliance) standard. This is a standard for sharing digital content that is supported by many different consumer electronics vendors in their devices, which means Windows 7 can share content not just with other computers, but with DLNA compliant sound systems, televisions, electronic picture frames and other types of devices. Such manufacturers as Motorola, Philips, Panasonic, Pioneer, Samsung, Nokia, Sharp and Sony (and more) have DLNA devices on the market or in the works.

DLNA specifies four different "roles" that a device can play: Digital Media Servers (DMS), Digital Media Players (DMP), Digital Media Controllers (DMC) and Digital Media Renderers (DMR). Windows Media Player 12 in Windows 7 supports all four roles. You can install DLNA software on a Windows or Linux PC to make it function as a DLNA device. Some examples of such software include Cyberlink Media Server 2 (a DMS) and Cyberlink SoftDMA 2 (a DMP). HP's Media Vault home servers, Microsoft's Xbox 360 (with Media Center Extender), some Nokia cell phones, Sony's PlayStation 3 and some Pioneer amplifiers and TVs are just a few examples of DLNA devices.

Windows 7 implements streaming on your local network through the "Play To" feature. The "Play To" option appears in the context menu when you right click a media file and lets you send it to devices on your home network that are capable of functioning in the DMR (renderer) role. Once you've enabled that role, the device will show up in the "Play To" list in the right context menu for media files on other computers and devices on your network.

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For example, in WMP 12, you first need to turn on media streaming because it is disabled by default. You do this via the Stream menu (in Library view). You'll be notified that if you turn on media streaming, your network profile and firewall settings will be modified, and that you should only turn on media streaming on networks you trust, such as your home or work network (not when you're connected to a public network such as a wi-fi hotspot). You'll be asked to choose media streaming options and name your media library (by default, the name is your user account name). To allow your computer's media to be detected and added to the "Play To" menu on other Windows 7 PCs, select "Allow remote control of my Player" in the "Stream" menu.

You can choose what files are streamed based on star ratings and parental ratings and you can select which other PCs or devices are allowed to access your media. The "Play To" feature can turn Windows 7 into a universal remote control for your media files. You select the media and then choose where you want it to be played, and there is a remote control window displayed for each "Play To" session. You can have multiple "Play To" sessions going on simultaneously, to different devices. The remote control window includes standard options such as Play, Pause, Skip, Seek and volume.

Note that this feature was changed between the Windows 7 beta and the final release, so if you used it in the beta, you might be wondering where it went. The beta had a "Share" menu in WMP 12, by which you checked an option to "receive media on your network." This was replaced by the "Stream" menu. Also note that "Play To" only exists in WMP and Windows Explorer, not in Windows Media Center (unfortunately). The option won't appear in the context menu (even if you've enabled media streaming for this PC) if Windows 7 doesn't detect another DLNA capable device on the network.

Of course, we have long been able to share files among our computers. The most exciting thing - to me - about "Play To" is the ability to send the file to your DLNA enabled home audio system, TV or phone. This allows you to truly put your music or videos wherever you want them, anywhere in your house.

The "Play To" feature is for sharing media files within your local network. Windows 7 also makes it easy for you to stream media over the Internet, e.g. from your home PC to your laptop when you're on the road.



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Quotes of the Week

"Imagination rules the world."
- Napoleon Bonaparte

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." - George S. Patton

"The most basic question is not what is best, but who shall decide what is best." - Thomas Sowell



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In addition to turning on media streaming in WMP, you'll need to select (in the "Stream" menu) to "Allow Internet access to home media" and link an online ID (such as your live.com email address) to your Windows 7 user account. There is a wizard that walks you through that process. You have to do this on the home computer and on the remote computer. The home PC has to be set to a "home" network location for this to work. The network location setting is in the Network and Sharing Center. Once you have it set up, you can access your media libraries from any Internet-connected PC. No longer do you have to copy the files to a portable device to be able to enjoy them when you're away from home.

Deb Shinder, Editor of Win7 News

**The Staff of Larry The Computer Guy wishes
you a**

Happy New Year!



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