

TRY TASK VIEW AND VIRTUAL DESKTOPS IN COMBINATION

If you juggle a bunch of tasks on your Windows desktop, two features unique to Windows 10 can help you stay organized. They are Task View and Virtual Desktops. Let's take a look at each, and how they can help you be more productive.

For (Task) Jugglers

Do you typically have more than one program open at a time while using Windows? For discussion, assume you have five open programs on your desktop -- Edge browser, Word, Excel, Outlook, and Gmail. In doing so, you can easily switch between them, sometimes copying and pasting data from one to another.

You get the picture... everyone has his own set of frequently used tools. If so, these tips will help you manage and switch more easily from one to the other.

Task View Icon

Let's start with Task View, which displays thumbnails of all open apps and lets you choose any one of them with one click. It also enables the creation of Virtual Desktops, each which can contain all the apps and data associated with a particular task.

Some users think Task View is unnecessary. After all, you can switch from one app to another using the Alt-Tab key combo; this Task Switcher feature has been around since Windows 3.0. But Task Switcher is an example of sequential data access; you may have to Alt-Tab through a number of open apps to get to the one you want. Task View enables random access; you can jump right to the app you want.

Task View also takes things a step further, showing you what you've been working on for the past few days. If you've ever had one of those head-scratching moments where you were trying to remember what document or photo you were working on two days ago, Task View will tell you!

To see how Task View works in Windows 10, click on the icon nearest the "Search Windows" icon on your Taskbar. The icon looks like a tiny ladder. You'll see your desktop and thumbnails of all open apps.

Take Task View for a Test Drive

Open three active tasks: Windows Settings, File Explorer, and the Edge Browser. Click on any thumbnail and that app is restored; you can go right to work in it. But wait, there's more to the Task View!

In the upper-left corner of Task View, there's a "+" sign labeled, "New desktop." Click on that area and a new, empty desktop will appear. Click on Desktop 2 to switch to it. Now you can open apps in Desktop 2 while all the apps in Desktop 1 remain undisturbed.

Press Windows Key + Ctrl + LeftArrow or Windows Key + Ctrl + RightArrow to quickly switch between virtual desktops. You can also move apps between desktops. Just drag one of the apps in the active desktop to the Desktop 2 icon above your Taskbar.

Another way to create a new desktop is to click on the Task View icon and drag an app over the "+ New desktop" area. A new desktop will be created and the app you dragged will move into it.

To close a desktop, hover over its thumbnail in Task View and click the X button on the upper-right corner. Any apps in the closed desktop will be moved to the next-lower numbered desktop. If you close Desktop 1, then Desktop 2 becomes Desktop 1, Desktop 3 becomes Desktop 2, and so on. Closing all but one desktop returns you to the normal desktop view.

There is no limit to the number of virtual desktops you can have, but they do consume RAM. Your system may slow down if you create too many desktops.

Task View and Virtual Desktops are also useful if you share a PC with a trusted adult. You can create his-and-her desktops, one holding your apps and the other holding your spouse's apps. Then, when a spouse asks to use the PC, just switch virtual desktops instead of logging off and logging in the other user. When the other user is finished, you can switch back to your desktop without losing any of your open apps, as you would when logging out.

And yes, you can have multiple instances of a single app open in different desktops. If a browser is open in Desktop 1, the same browser can be opened in Desktop 2, but the second instance will be a "fresh start." It won't contain any tabs that are open in the first browser.