

VISTA Lessons from CNET

The new Windows Vista Start menu

- First, Vista banishes the cascading application menus that used to fly up and out from All Programs. Now, when you click All Programs (or hold your mouse pointer over it for two seconds), your installed applications appear in a compact, scrollable list.
- Vista's second Start-menu change is its Instant Search box, which appears immediately above the Start button when you click it. Type a few letters into the box and Vista immediately begins to display matching results. Because this particular Instant Search box resides in the Start menu (other boxes are littered everywhere within Vista), it lists matching applications first, then other items it finds on your PC: documents, Web favorites, and so on.
- Vista's third Start-menu modification changes the way you shut down your PC. Just to the right of the Instant Search box you'll see a circle with a line in the middle. Click it to put your PC in standby mode (Vista does a better job managing this low-power state than XP did), or click the arrow next to it to access the complete shut-down menu.

This can seem a little awkward at first, especially if you're more accustomed to finding a program by its location within the cascading menus. (For instance, perhaps you instinctively knew to look for Picasa near the top of the second cascading pane.) However, this new method is actually a much faster way to find a program, as you don't have to wait for and scan fly-out menus that can span the entire screen. Instead, you just scroll until you find what you're after.

Thus, you can launch programs without ever taking your hands off the keyboard. Just press the Windows button, type the first few letters of the desired application (such as "pic" for Picasa), then press Enter to launch it.

Revised 6/11/2009 JMM

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