Topic 01 - Manipulating Windows

File Explorer, or Windows Explorer as it was known prior to Windows 8, is the application which displays your folders and files.

For this and many other lessons you will find it easier if you have a mouse rather than just using the touch sensitive pad on your keyboard. These notes are written for Windows 10 but you may have to use a different method to open a second window on earlier versions.

What is the desktop, what is a window ?
The desktop can be thought of a workshop desktop. You may store certain items on it but essentially it is a surface on which you work. The desktop surface can be plain or you could put a large print on it. That does not change its function.

OK, in the real world we don't put windows on a desktop so now we have to think of a wall. In the computer world our windows are different
  • we can change their size from small to taking the whole desktop
  • when they do not cover the whole desktop we can freely move them around
  • we can temporarily make them dissappear and recall them when we want.
  • when we are finished with them we can close them
  • **we can have any number of windows on our desktop, we don't need to close one before opening another.**

So what is the purpose of a window : basically it is a structure in which an application comes to life. We can then interact with that window. It is the means through which the app communicates to you and the means by which you communicate with the app.

A windows contains one and only one application.

Sometimes the application may open a child window. The child window can
  • either thereafter exist on its own even if its parent is closed
  • or it may take control and have to be closed before you can interact with its parent

Some applications only allow a single instance (window) to be active. Other applications allow multiple instances, each in its own window. For example, you can have multiple windows of File Explorer.

While the software which comes with Windows generally adheres to the standard window layout sometimes the window will be fixed size and hence only have the "X" at the top right to close the window. Sometimes it may have the minimise and close controls.

Often non Microsoft applications do not adhere to the standard rectangular layout. However, it still operates as a vehicle for the application.

## Exercise 1 – Controlling the size and location of a window
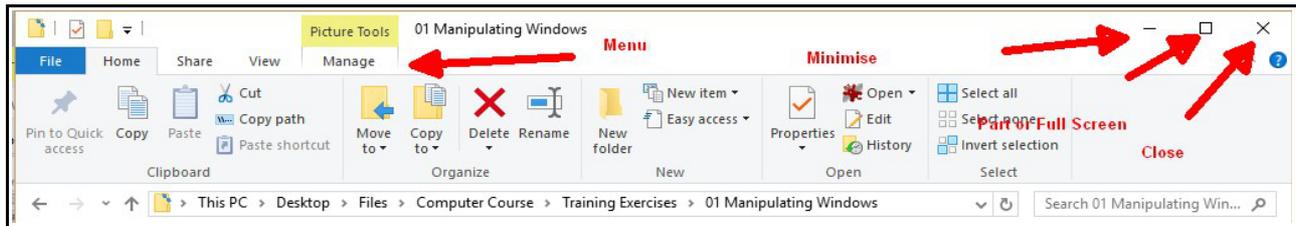
1. Open File Explorer – note this process applies to all applications which use standard windows. Some applications may not support full screen display and use their own screen layout.
2. The window will open either full screen or part screen depending upon its setting when closed from a previous session
3. The size controls are at the top right. The **rightmost** is an "X" which closes the window. It may change to a red background as you hover the cursor over it.
4. The **middle** control is a toggle display. If you are currently full screen it will be an icon of two overlapping rectangles. If you are currently part screen it will be a single rectangle to allow you to change to full screen. Practice sizing the window by clicking this toggle control. Note that sometimes you may have your part screen set so large that it appears to be full screen. It will still behave as a part screen.If you are uncertain check the icon.
5. The **leftmost** control is a "-". Click to minimise.

6. You now need to display the taskbar at the bottom of the screen and click on the relevant tab to restore. Note that the taskbar can be set to display on either side, the top or the bottom. Please ask during the lesson if you wish to change the location.
7. Practice minimising and restoring the display.
8. Set the display to part screen. If you move the cursor to the side or top/bottom edges of the window the cursor will change to a double pointed arrow. Hold the **left mouse** button down while the double arrow is displayed and practice changing the size of the window by dragging the cursor.
9. Moving the cursor to the corners works in the same way but allows you to change the width and height at the same time.
10. With the window still part screen position the cursor within the window anywhere along the topmost line. Hold down the left mouse button and drag the window around the screen.
11. Controlling the size of a window is extremely useful as it allows you to have multiple windows on display at the same time, e.g. an email message and a document.

Exercise 2 – Working with multiple windows
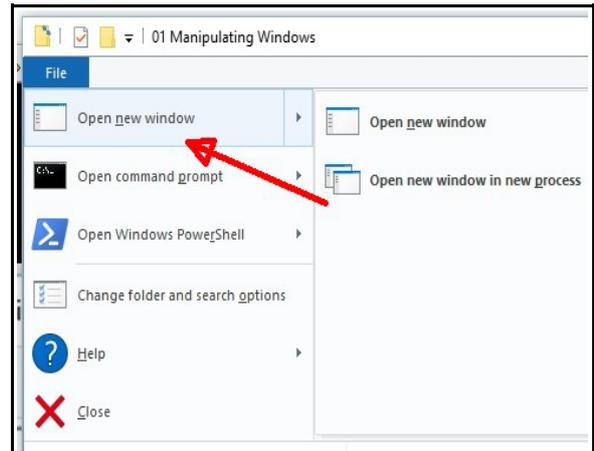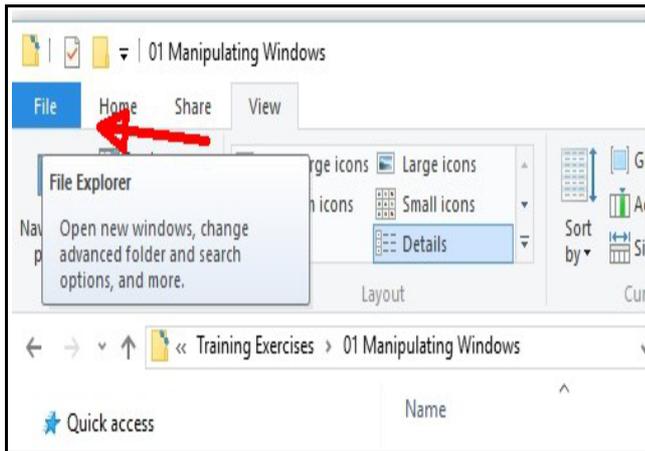
1. It is now necessary to open a second window. Click the "File" option on the top left part of the File Explorer window.
2. Click on the top option which should be "Open new window"
3. You can now practice your skill in sizing and moving windows so that you have both on display alongside each other.

Some Comments

1. You can have different applications displayed next to each other. They do not have to be the same as in the above exercise.
2. You can layer windows on top of each other
3. If you find this confusing use the minimise button and then use the taskbar at the bottom of the screen to redisplay them.
4. You do not have to keep closing windows to open another. The limiting factor will be the amount of RAM you have but Windows uses disk space to create "virtual RAM" at a cost of performance.

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