

How to create your own Start button

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Requirements and tools

To get started, you must have an image editing application, Photoshop is one of the most powerful and widely known applications, but any one that works with bitmap (BMP) and supports layers Transparent alpha will also work well.

Warning:

Be sure to check the DPI setting before proceeding. The DPI setting (Dots Per Inch) in Windows determines the size that everything on the screen displays, making the text and buttons larger without changing the screen resolution.

In general, you can see the DPI you're using according to the size of the current Start and Taskbar buttons. Here is an example of the same resolution with 3 DPI settings:

However, if you are not sure and want to check again, right-click on the desktop and select **Screen Resolution**. In this window, click the link labeled **Make text and other items larger or smaller** , as seen here:

The next page that appears will display the currently selected DPI setting:

Depending on the DPI selected, you will need to create a Start button with one of the following image sizes:

1. 100% DPI - use 54 x 162px
2. 125% DPI - use 66 x 198px
3. 150% DPI - use 81 x 243px

For the purposes of this tutorial, the article will work with the standard **100% DPI** .

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Create a new image with the following settings:

Note:

* To fit the standard Windows 7 DPI Start button, the image size must be 54 x 162.

* The **Resolution** setting is very interesting. **100% DPI** in Windows is **96 DPI**. There isn't any difference between using **72** and **96 DPI**, but some users may prefer to use the same DPI as Windows uses. This is entirely up to you. Just keep in mind the higher the DPI, the bigger the file size will be.

* Leave **Color Mode** as **RGB** with 8 bits per channel.

When the image window opens, select the **Fill** tool and fill the background with black. Also, open the image you want to use as the Start button next to it, as in the example below:

Note: In this example, the article also added standard lines to divide the image into three equal parts for button states (the first line is at 54px and the second is at 108px).

The next step is to prepare the image to be used as the Start button. Since this requires the transparency of the layer to calculate the alpha channel (explained later), the button you want to use needs not to have any colors or background behind.

Select the button that corresponds to any method you like, as seen below, which is much easier when zooming to a reasonable level:

Note : No need to worry about choosing too much or too little in this step. If you end up with a bit of redundant background, it can be clipped later.

With the button selected, copy the selection to a new layer and hide the old layer. The shortcut `Ctrl + J` is the fastest way to do this. This shortcut takes the selected area of the current layer and copies it to a new layer in the same image.

Once you've separated the Start button on its own layer, it's time to change the image to the size appropriate for the Start button. Right-click on the top bar of the image and select **Image Size**.

Note :

1. **Image Size** will resize the image along with its content - what we want.
2. **Canvas Size** will only change the canvas size and making it smaller will cause the image to be cropped - this is not what we want.

When resizing images, there are a few important points to note:

Warning: You will need to experiment with image sizes here. This setting affects the overall image size, not just the button. First try the width of 54px and if it is too large you can descend it from that level.

Check the **Resolution** setting for this image and make sure it matches the 72 pixels per inch you previously selected for the Start button.

When you're happy with the button size, drag the edited button into the original Start button image window and place it in one of the three blocks defined by the calibration lines. The result looks like this:

Note: From changing the previous image size, sometimes the edges may look a little funny. In this case, there is still a very thin border here. Now that you have the button of the size you want, trim the rest of the border any way you choose.

Depending on the image used, enlarging and using the Eraser tool with a size of 15px and a hardness of 50% for the brush usually works well in this case.

Once you've finished editing the image, it's time to duplicate it into 3 button states. You will end up with 3 icons, as seen below:

Note : The following is a trick to keeping these icons properly aligned:

1 - Start with the button in the top block, press `Ctrl + J` to duplicate.

2 - Then hold `Shift + Ctrl` and press the down arrow **5** times.

3 - Hold `Ctrl` , release `Shift` and press the down arrow **4** times.

Holding `Shift` and `Ctrl` will move the layer another 10 pixels, just holding `Ctrl` will move another 1 pixel. The method above makes sure your button moves straight down to 54 pixels.

Now the fun part and completely up to you: Building node states. The idea of ??three button states is very simple: The top is the static state, the middle is the state when hovered over and the bottom is the click state.

Try not to touch the top button too much and keep it simple. Pay a little attention to the middle ball and make it look better. Apply some effects click on the bottom button to complete it.

The final result for each person will look different, but there is an example of creating a very simple button state, which is using the **Outer Glow**, **Inside Glow** and **Satin** effects:

Note : Keep the layers to the right in the same order as the buttons in the image (top layer for top sphere, bottom layer for bottom sphere, etc .). It helps to see which layers are doing, why, how and everything else people like.

Warning : Do not let the effects go too far! The taskbar is not as big as the Start Orb image 54 x 162px will make you wonder. Try keeping the Start buttons within 9 or 10 pixels from the border of each block. Here is an example of a 9px border around the Start button:

Now you need to merge all the Start buttons into one layer to prepare for the Alpha layer. Hold `Ctrl` and click once on the name of each Start button layer to select them. Note do not select the background here. With the Start button selected, right click and select **Merge Visible** :

This step will give you a single layer with all Start button states and their unique effects on a single layer above the background. To prepare the Alpha layer, first select the contents of the Start button layer. Hold `Ctrl` and click once on the preview for the Start button layer. Note the mouse cursor changes when you hold `Ctrl` :

Note : If you've done this correctly, you'll see a selection indicator around all three Start button states, as seen above.

In **Layers**, there is a tab called **Channels**. Please click this tab. Color channels are used to store the amount of each primary color that each pixel contains in the RGB image (Red Green Blue). Since 3 channels are not

enough, the example will create a fourth channel that does not store colors (this is really technical, just know that you need it).

Click the **Create New Channel** button at the bottom of this section. Photoshop will know what you want it to do:

At this point, select the newly created **Alpha 1** channel and watch the Start button. You can't see them, but it's okay now. This layer will determine which part of the image BMP Explorer will display (the white area) and hide (the black area) when the Start button is completed.

Switch to the **Brush** tool , set it to a minimum of **100px**, the hardness doesn't matter here and fill the selection with white (as much as possible). Note how the previous selection was made according to the lighting effect and only allows a certain amount of white to be drawn on the Alpha channel. That's what brings the soft edges on the Start button later.

Warning: If the edges look a little stiff on the alpha channel at this stage, you may want to go back to when the application was applied to the Start buttons and merged layers to make sure you have a real image like desire.

At this point, you're basically building your Start button. Reselect the **RGB Channel**, deselect the selection and return to **Layers**. If you're ready with your Start button, it's time to save it.

From the **File** menu , choose **Save** or just use the keyboard shortcut **Ctrl + S** In the **Save** dialog box , enter a funny name for the Start button, make sure **Alpha Channels** is selected and click **Save**.

In the next step, make sure you are saving a Windows bitmap and it is saved as 32 Bit.

Last step

Now your Start button is complete. You can use any Start button changer to make it active on the taskbar. You should use the Win 7 Start Button Changer 2.6 tool for this, or any utility you like.

Note : You should use Kishan's app. Version 2.6 has been updated to change the Start button image for any DPI setting. You just need to make sure you use the correct size image for the DPI you are using. As noted above:

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The Start button created in the example will look like this:

Note : People who do not have Photoshop can also use GIMP to do this.

Hope you are succesful.

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