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Windows 10 Screen Capture Tools

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The ability to capture an image of a whole computer screen or Window has been around since the 1960’s. It comes in handy for anyone who wants to include a portion of a screen, such as a picture, group of text, chart or graph, in another place. For example, you might be typing a letter to a friend and want to include a map of your recent vacation trip from an online catalog. You can open both the letter and the page that contains the map. Using a capture tool, you can snip (capture) just the map and paste it into the letter.

The original capture tool was the Print Screen key (PrtScr) on the keyboard. At first, this basic tool could capture only the content of the whole screen or an active Window. You can still find Print Screen on most keyboards as one of the F keys along the top, but to use it in Windows 10, you must first enable it. Click Start > Settings > Ease of Access > Keyboard (in left pane near the bottom) > Print Screen Key. Turn on “ Use the Print Screen key to open screen snipping.”

Windows currently offers three capture tools.

1. **Snipping Tool** was introduced in 2002 as part of the Microsoft Tablet PC. In 2006, it became one of the accessories in the VISTA operating system. Besides the basic captures of Windows and screens, it added freeform captures and editing tools like colored pens and an eraser. It also added a time delay of 1 to 5 seconds to give the user time to open a menu which would otherwise not be visible during the capture.

Snipping Tool captures are saved as photos (.jpg files). They can be copied into MS Paint for more extensive editing. Once saved and edited, they can be pasted into the Office apps, such as Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, Outlook emails, or PowerPoint presentations.

2. **Screenshot** was introduced in 2017 in the Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook applications. It is a newer version of the Print Screen key and is located on the Insert tab in the Illustrations or Images group. It can capture the whole screen, a Window, or a portion of a screen or Window. Detailed instructions for its use can be found by holding your mouse pointer over the Screenshot icon, then clicking Tell Me More.

3. **Snip and Sketch** is the newest Windows 10 capture tool, which was part of the Fall 2018 Windows update 1809. It has all the features of Snipping Tool plus a few new ones to accommodate the features of current devices, such as touch screens. It has a ruler and a protractor to use if a capture needs to be a specific dimension. Its time delay choices are 3 or 10 seconds.

Snip & Sketch also lets you crop the snip before leaving the app. A capture can be shared with nearby devices using Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. In Windows 10, pressing the enabled Print Screen key will open the Snip & Sketch mini toolbar, or you can open it by pressing the Windows key + Shift + S.

Snip & Sketch Toolbar

As a longtime fan of Snipping tool, I was concerned when I learned that it will be replaced soon by Snip & Sketch. However, Snipping Tool will still be available at no cost in the Microsoft store. The more I use Snip & Sketch, the more I find it to be a good upgrade, but I’m keeping them both among my apps until I decide which is my favorite. Everyone needs a capture tool.