
By Greg Shultz

As I've been using [Microsoft Windows Vista](#), I've discovered a handful of useful tricks that I use every day to make things a bit easier. In this edition of the [Windows Vista Report](#), I thought that I would pass on some of these tricks.

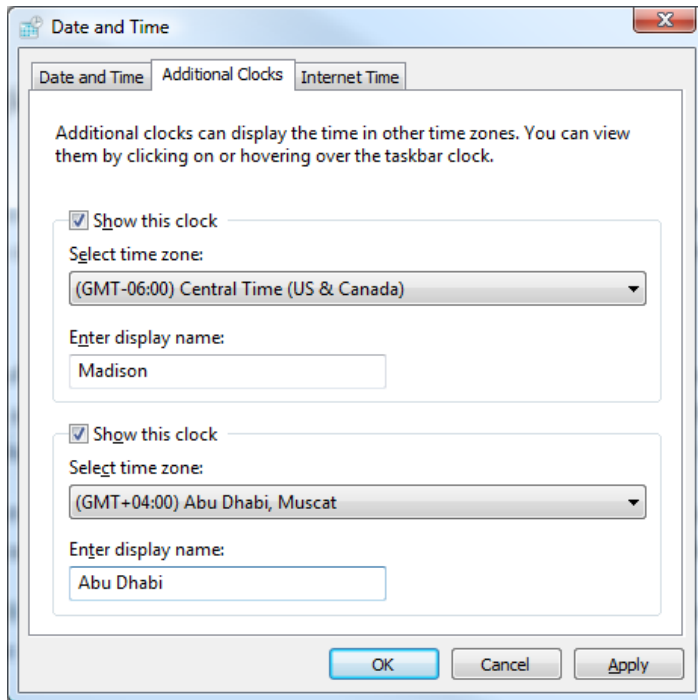
Keep track of multiple Time Zones

If you're like most folks in this day and age, chances are good that you regularly communicate with people or businesses in cities in other time zones. As such, you're always wondering what time it is where these people or businesses are, so that you know when to call or expect an e-mail response.

Wouldn't it be cool if you could tell at a glance what time it is in those other time zones? Well, that's the whole idea behind Windows Vista's Additional Clocks feature, which can display up to three clocks: one for the local time, and two for other time zones.

Fortunately, using and configuring Vista's Additional Clocks feature is easy; just right-click the time display in the notification area and select the Adjust Date and Time command from the context menu. When you see the Date and Time dialog box, select the Additional Clocks tab. You can then select the Show This Clock check box, choose a time zone, and enter a name that you want to associate with the additional clock, as shown in **Figure A**. To activate your new clocks, just click OK.

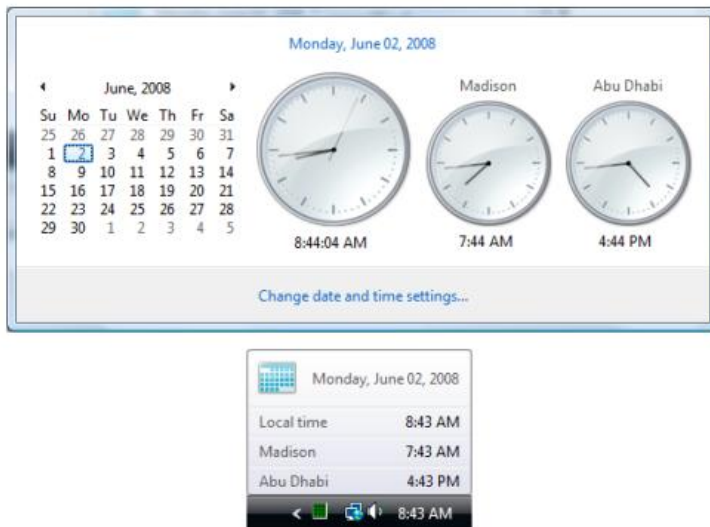
Figure A



You can keep track of other time zones if you enable additional clocks.

Now, when you want to see what time it is in the other locations, you can just hover your mouse pointer over the time display in the notification area and you'll see a pop up showing the time in the other time zones. If you click the time display, you'll see a larger pop up showing you the clocks along with the calendar. Both of these pop ups are shown in **Figure B**.

Figure B



There are two displays that you can use to view other time zones.

Instantly access Task Manager

As you know, in Windows XP, you can press [Ctrl]+[Alt]+[Del] and instantly get to Task Manager. In Windows Vista, that same keystroke combination will blank your display and display a full screen menu from which you can launch Task Manager.

In order to get directly to Task Manager in Windows Vista, you need to press [Ctrl]+[Shift]+[Esc].

Toggle Aero off and on

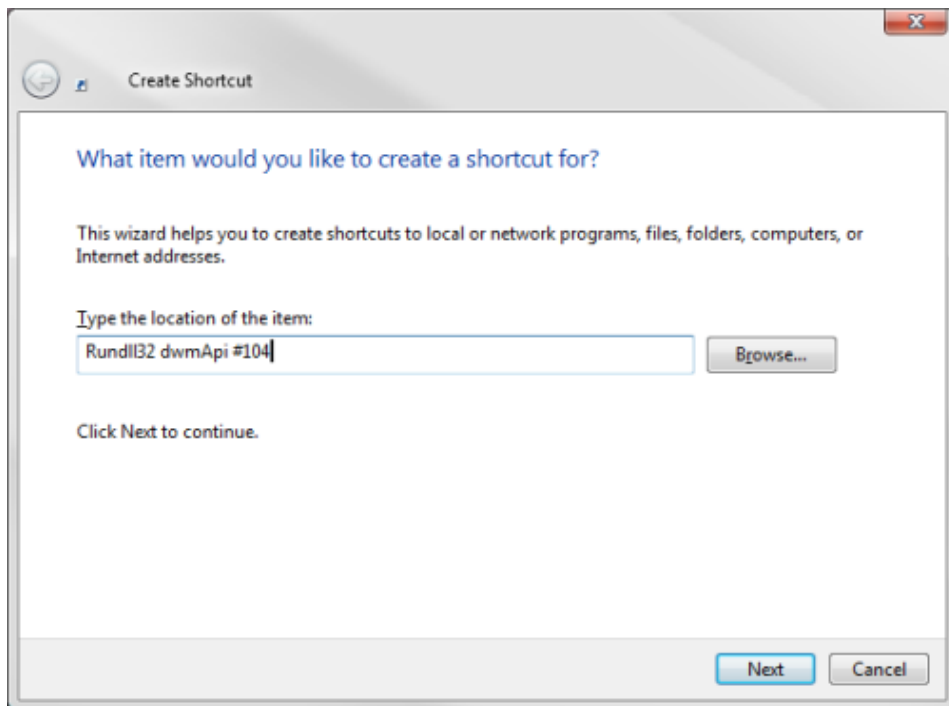
As you know, Aero is the fancy visual interface in Windows Vista that features the transparent glass design with cool window colors and neat animations. However, there are times when you may want to disable Aero to improve system responsiveness. For example, some games or other graphics intensive application may perform better with Aero disabled. Fortunately, you can easily do so with a shortcut.

To begin, right-click anywhere on the desktop and select the New | Shortcut command from the context menu. When the Create Shortcut wizard appears, type:

```
Rundll32 dwmApi #104
```

in the text box, as shown in **Figure C**, and click Next. Then, name the shortcut Turn Aero Off and click Finish.

Figure C



Create this shortcut to turn Aero off.

You can then create a second shortcut to re-enable Aero. To do so, launch the Create Shortcut wizard again and this time type:

```
Rundll32 dwmApi #102
```

in the text box. Name this shortcut Turn Aero On and click Finish.

Keep in mind that when you turn Aero off, the process will happen without any fanfare. However, when you turn Aero back on, the screen will blink momentarily as Windows readjusts the screen display.

Using Shell command shortcuts

While you can use Explorer, the Control Panel, or the Start menu to access key features in Windows Vista, sometimes a shortcut can be more useful. Hidden underneath the Windows Vista architecture are a whole host of special shortcuts known as Shell commands. To use a Shell command, all you need to do is press [Windows]+R to access the Run dialog box and the word shell followed by a colon (:) and then the command as in:

```
Shell:command
```

As you can see there are no spaces between the word Shell and the colon and the command -- it is essentially one word.

While there are close to 100 Shell commands, not all of them are very useful. As such, I won't actually list them all. I'll just list the ones that I find most useful in everyday situations first and then list the other ones that I find occasionally useful.

Keep in mind that not all of these Shell commands will work in all versions of Windows Vista.

Most useful Shell commands

- **shell:ChangeRemoveProgramsFolder** – opens the Programs and Features (Add/Remove Programs) window.
- **shell:Sendto** – opens the SendTo folder so that you can easily add more locations to the Send To list.
- **shell:Common Administrative Tools** – opens the Administrative Tools menu as a folder
- **shell:Desktop** – opens the Desktop as a folder.
- **shell:Downloads** – opens your Downloads folder.
- **shell:Quick Launch** – opens the Quick Launch folder.
- **shell:Searches** – opens the Search folder showing all your saved searches.

The other useful Shell commands

- **shell:AppUpdatesFolder** - opens the Installed Windows Updates location in Program and Files.
- **shell:Cache** - opens Internet Explorer's temporary internet files folder.
- **shell:CD Burning** - opens the folder where Windows Vista temporarily stores files to be burned to a CD.
- **shell:Common Desktop** - opens the Public Users Desktop folder.
- **shell:Common Documents** - opens the Public Users Documents folder.
- **shell:Common Programs** - opens the Start menu shortcuts folder.
- **shell:Common Start Menu** - opens the Start Menu as a folder.
- **shell:Common Startup** - opens the Startup folder.
- **shell:Common Templates** - opens the Templates folder.
- **shell:CommonDownloads** - opens the Public Users Downloads folder.
- **shell:CommonMusic** - opens the Public Users Music folder.
- **shell:CommonPictures** - opens the Public Users Pictures folder.
- **shell:CommonVideo** - opens the Public Users Video folder.
- **shell:ConflictFolder** - opens the Sync Center Conflicts folder.
- **shell:ConnectionsFolder** – opens the Network Connections folder.
- **shell:Contacts** - opens your Contacts folder.
- **shell:ControlPanelFolder** - opens the Control Panel.
- **shell:Cookies** - opens the cookies folder
- **shell:Favorites** - opens your Favorites folder.
- **shell:Fonts** - opens Vista's Fonts folder.
- **shell:Gadgets** - opens your Windows Sidebar Gadgets folder.
- **shell:History** - opens the Internet Explorer history folder.
- **shell:InternetFolder** - opens Internet Explorer.
- **shell:Links** - opens your Links folder location.

- **shell:MyMusic** - opens your Music folder.
- **shell:MyPictures** - opens your Pictures folder.
- **shell:MyVideo** - opens your Video folder.
- **shell:MyComputerFolder** - opens Computer window.
- **shell:NetHood** - opens Network Shortcuts folder.
- **shell:NetworkPlacesFolder** - opens the Network Places location.
- **shell:Original Images** - opens Windows Photo Gallery Original Images folder.
- **shell:Personal** - opens your Documents folder.
- **shell:PhotoAlbums** - opens your Slide Show folder.
- **shell:Playlists** - opens your Playlists folder.
- **shell:PrintersFolder** - opens Printers in the Control Panel.
- **shell:Profile** - opens your main folder.
- **shell:ProgramFiles** - opens the Program Files folder.
- **shell:Public** - opens the Public User folder.
- **shell:Recent** - opens the Recent Items folder.
- **shell:RecycleBinFolder** - opens the Recycle Bin folder.
- **shell:Start Menu** - opens Start Menu folder.
- **shell:Startup** - opens the Startup folder
- **shell:System** - opens the System32 folder location.
- **shell:Templates** - opens the Templates folder location.
- **shell:UserProfiles** - opens the Users folder.
- **shell:UsersFilesFolder** - opens your main folder.
- **shell:Windows** - opens the Windows folder.

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