# The ribbon interface in Windows

Earlier versions of Windows Explorer (now called File Explorer) had toolbars like those shown below, from Windows 98 and Windows XP.
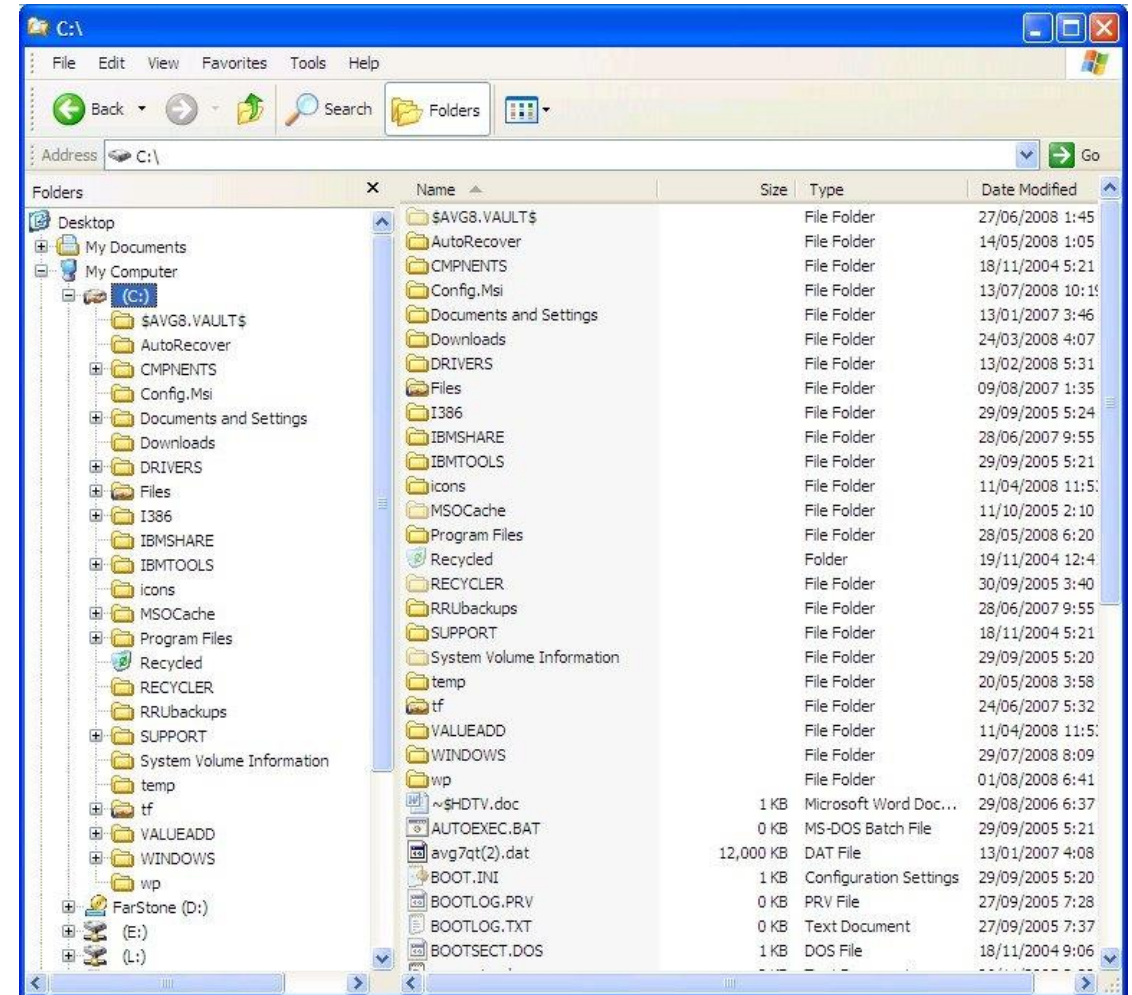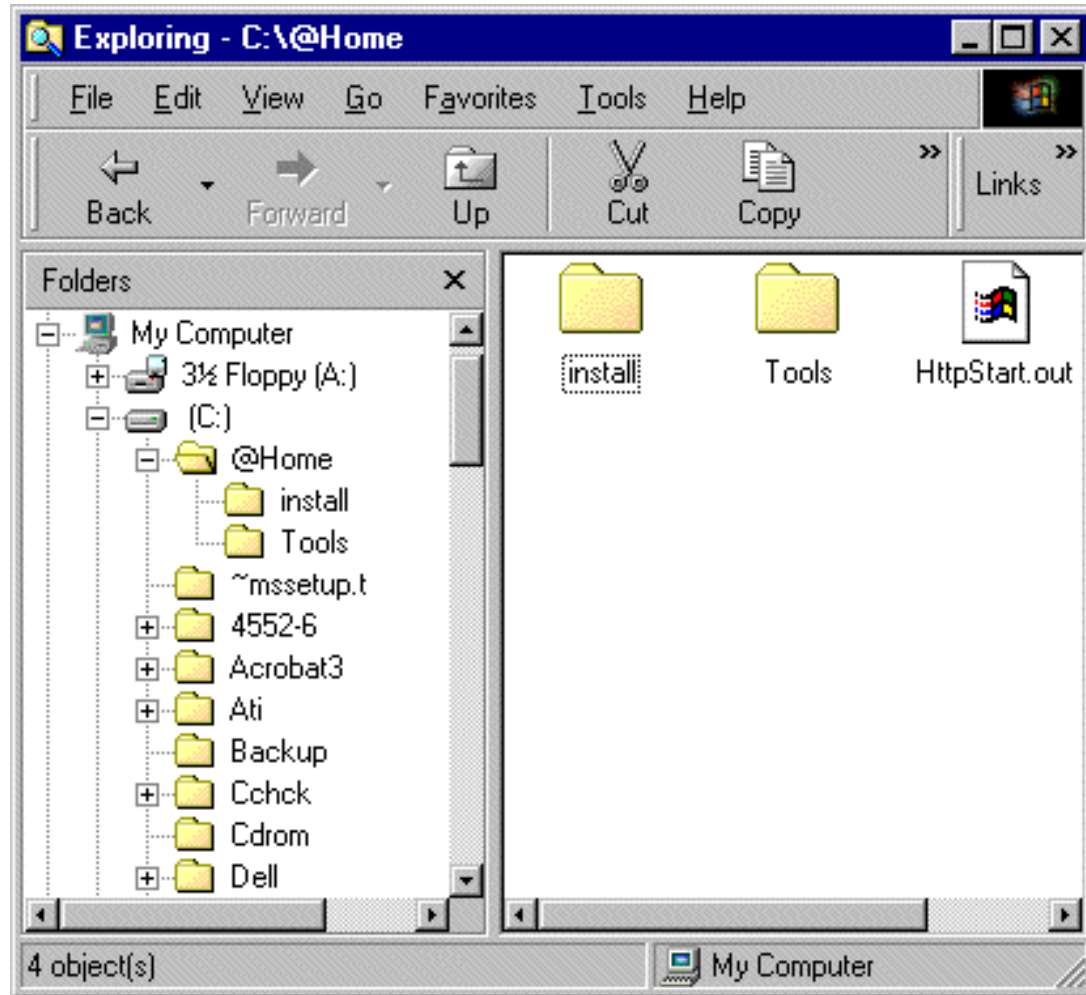
This picture shows how the ribbon (shown in WordPad here) has developed in the different versions of Windows after being introduced as part of Windows 7.
Microsoft Office applications also benefitted from the ribbon interface from Office 2007 onwards.
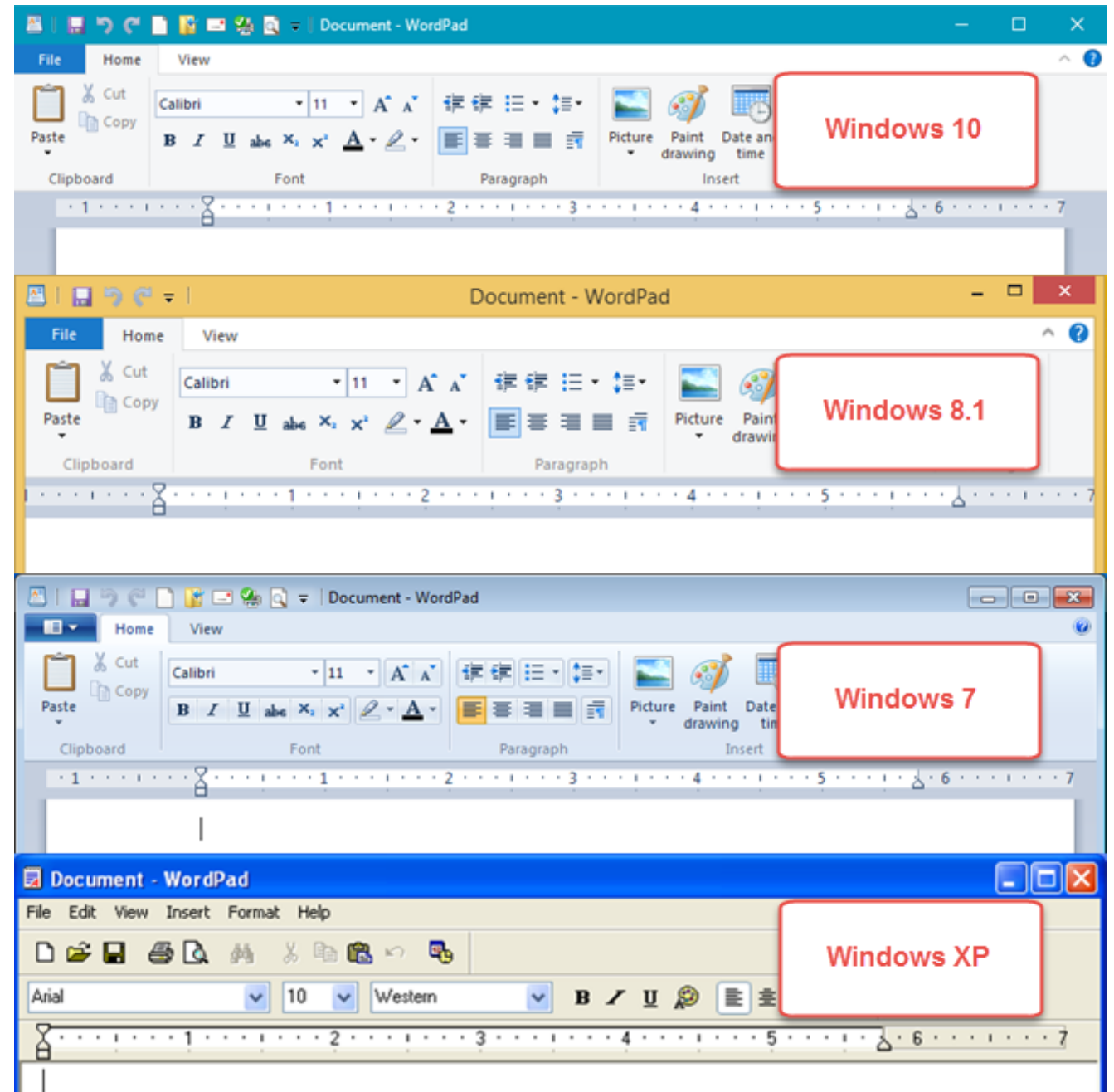
The first image below shows the pre-ribbon toolbar from PowerPoint 2003. In this version several separate toolbars could be customised and displayed or hidden according to the user's taste. Each separate toolbar can be identified by a vertical row of 4 dots.


The ribbon interface introduced with Office 2007 included all the available controls and grouped them in a way that seemed logical to Microsoft. (Although not everyone agreed!)
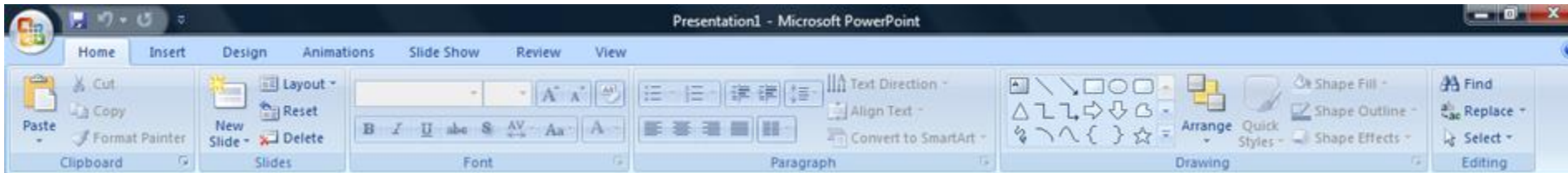
Let's have a closer look at the ribbon

Microsoft's Ribbon contains one menu (File) and a set of Core tabs that are always visible along with the Contextual tabs, which appear based on the object you've selected—such as location, folder, or file—and then provide related commands. This system is designed to make it easier to access any of close to 200 different file commands. Most of these commands have always existed in Windows Explorer, but they were buried in numerous nested menus, pop-ups, dialog boxes, or right-click context menus.

The Ribbon in File Explorer (shown below) includes the File menu and three Core tabs titled **Home, Share**, and **View**.
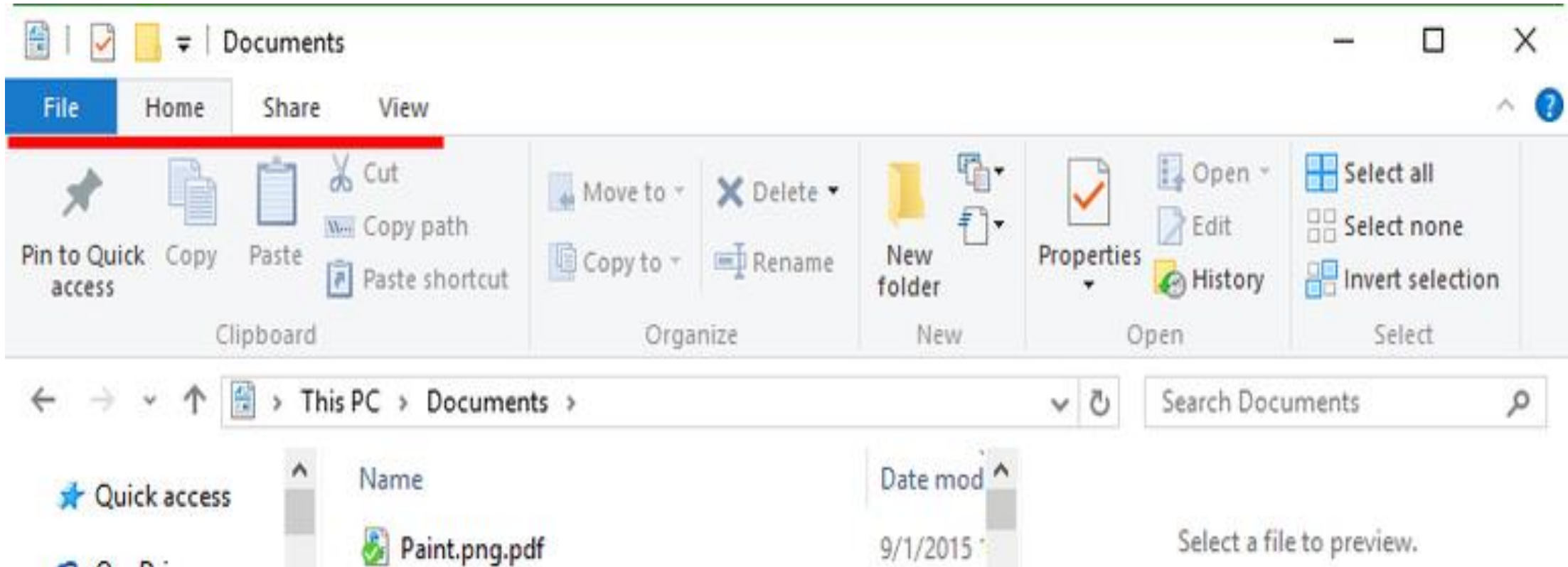

We'll look at each part individually in the next few slides.

File menu

The Ribbon toolbar contains one menu called **File** (below) which is designed to provide you with quick access to some of the more general commands in File Explorer. When you access the File menu, you'll see a set of commands on the left side and **Frequent Places** on the right. The **Frequent Places** panel shows the most recently accessed folders, and remains visible until you select a command on the left that has a submenu. That submenu then overlays the Frequent places space and provides you with related options.

The submenu for "Open new window" is shown here: the difference between the 2 options is beyond the scope of this tutorial and has very little practical impact.
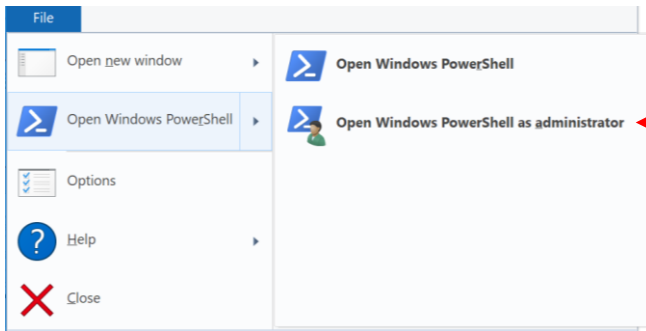
The submenu for "Open Windows PowerShell" is shown here: the 2 options are beyond the scope of this tutorial.
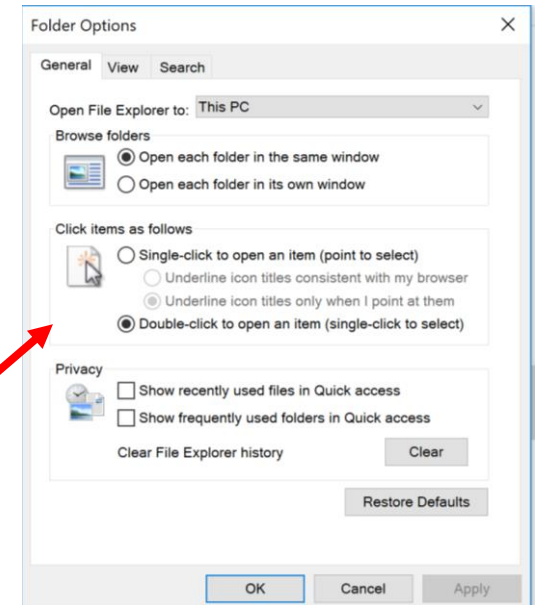
Clicking on "Options" will open the *Folder Options* window shown here.
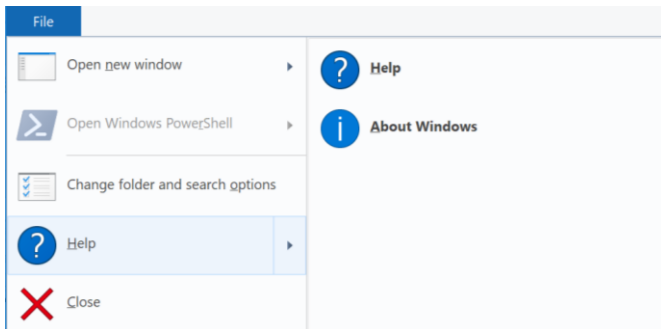
The submenu for "Help" is shown on the left. The second "Help" opens an internet browser to enable searching the Microsoft website, while "About Windows" opens this screen.

Clicking on "X Close" will close File Explorer, not just the File menu.

The Home tab

This provides you with access to the main file management commands. For example, in the **Organize** group, you'll find the *Move to* and *Copy to* commands which allow transfer of the selected file or folder to another location. The *Delete* and *Rename* commands also live in this group.

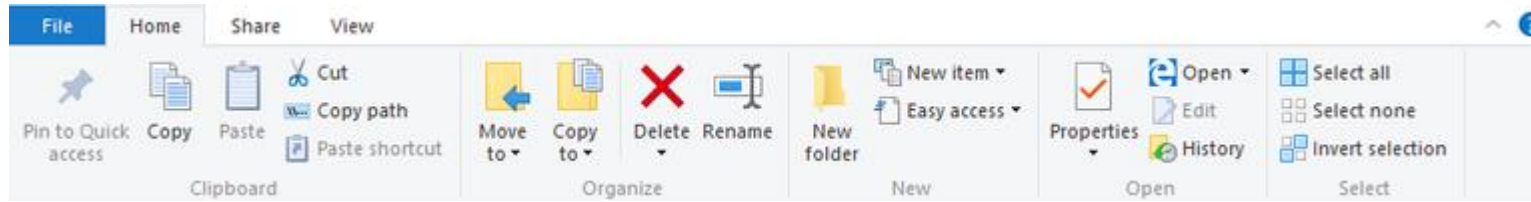In the **New** group, you can create new folders and files of various types. The *Easy access* options allow you to make things easier to find by adding folders to a Library or to Favourites, as well as mapping a drive letter to a network location. This menu also contains items for configuring and using Offline files and folders.

The **Open** group provides you with quick access to the *Properties* dialog box as well as allowing you to *Open* and *Edit* the selected items in the appropriate program. *History* is a subject too detailed to be included in this tutorial.

The **Select** group provides you with a set of commands for selecting groups of files and folders.

The Share tab
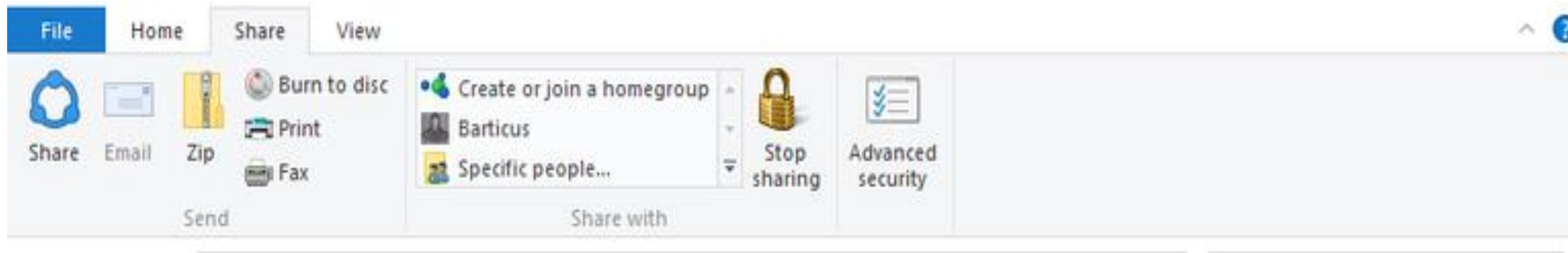
The Share tab is your one-stop location for anything to do with sharing files with others. For example, within the **Send** group, you can create a Zip file and email the original or the compressed file. You can burn files to an optical disc, and print or fax documents if your computer is connected to a printer or fax machine.

In the **Share with** group, you'll find a gallery that allows you to share files and folders with your homegroup (your local network, if indeed you are connected to one) or with specific users on your network. The *Advanced security* command opens the Security tab where you can set specific permissions for files and folders. The *Stop sharing* command is rather self-explanatory.

As a general rule it is safer not to share anything. If you want someone else to have one of your documents surely it is easy enough to send it to him or her rather than allowing anyone else access to your documents.
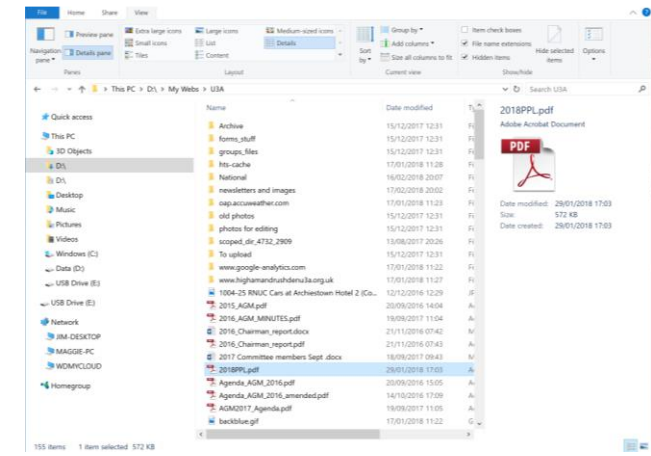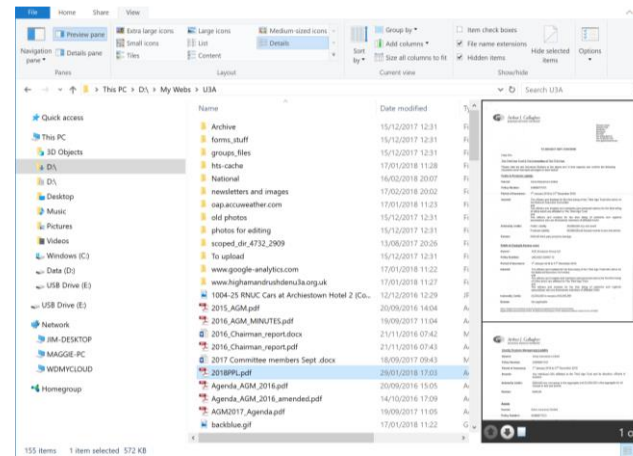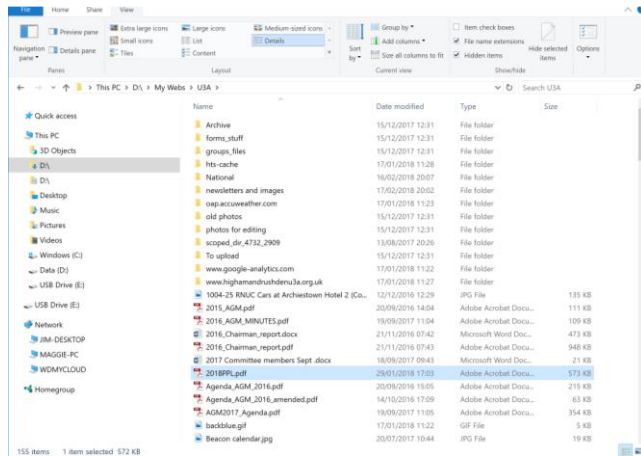
View tab
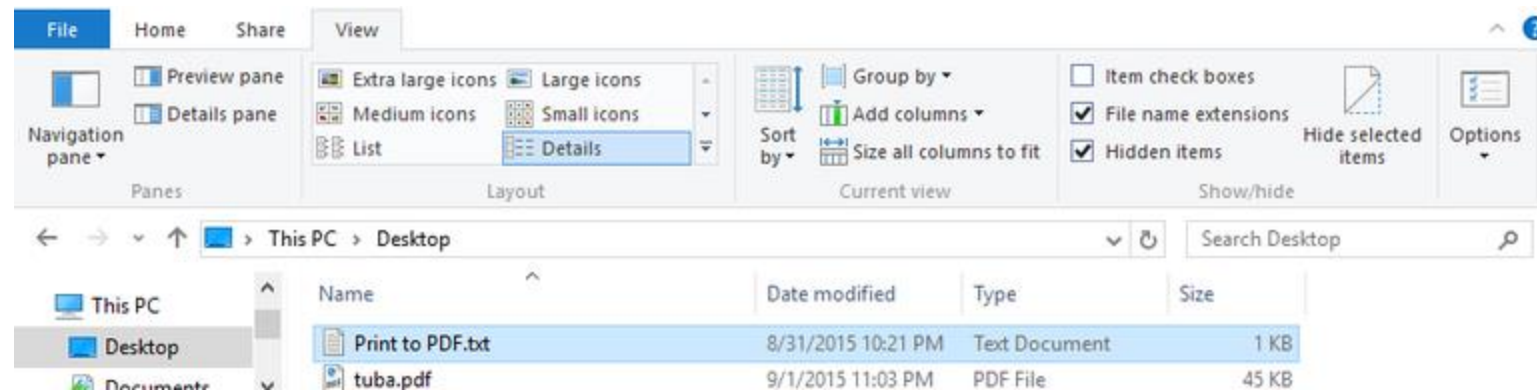
On the View tab you'll find a host of commands that you can use to configure the way you want File Explorer to display files. In the **Panes** group, you can configure the Navigation pane (the left-hand part of the window), plus enable or disable the Preview pane or the Details pane.

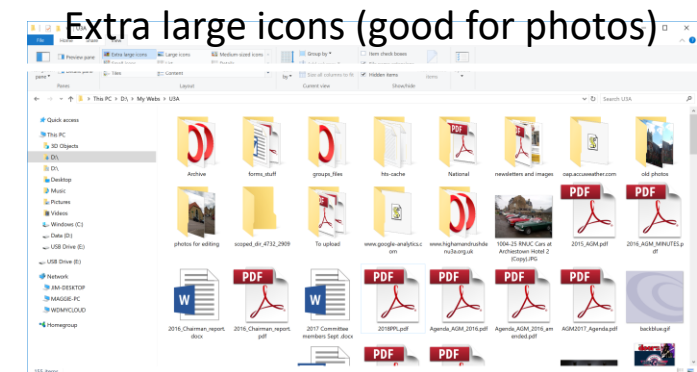| **Normal view**	**With _Preview_ pane**	**With _Details_ pane**

You can see that the Preview pane lets you see all or part of the document or file, while the Details pane lists some data like the size of the file and the dates it was created and modified.
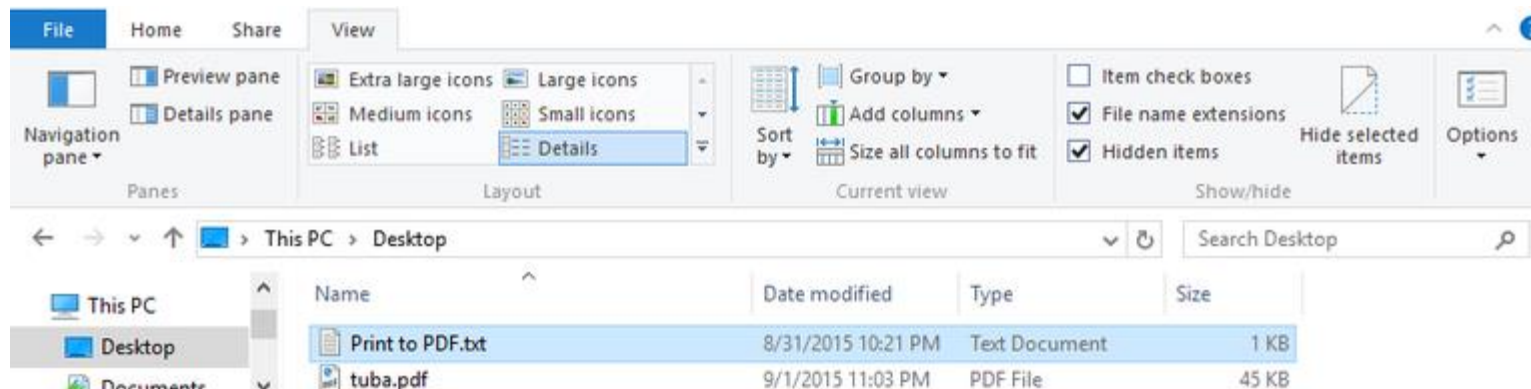
The **Layout** group includes a live preview gallery for choosing your icon display - just hover over an option in the gallery, and the file display changes accordingly. Click on the option to select it. The options include the following:

Details

Content

Tiles

List view (icons left to right)

Medium-sized icons

Extra large icons (good for photos)
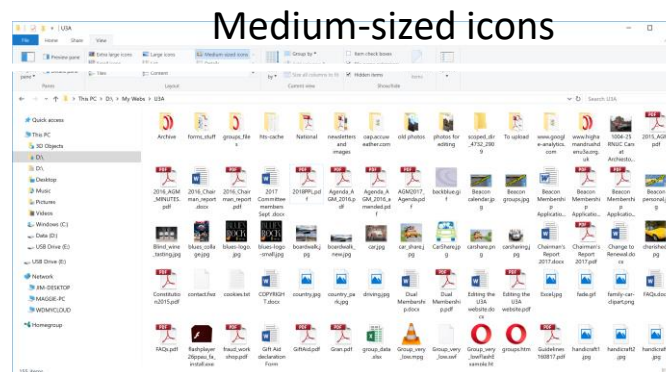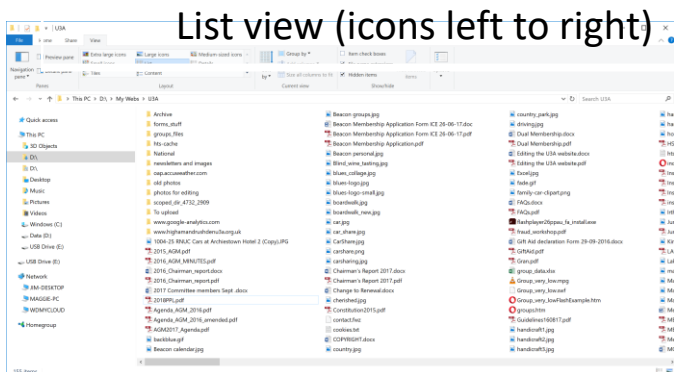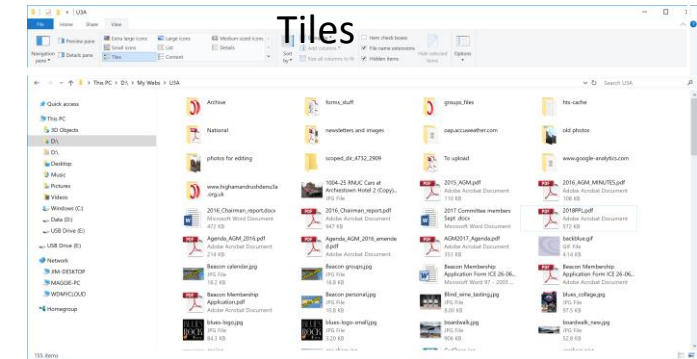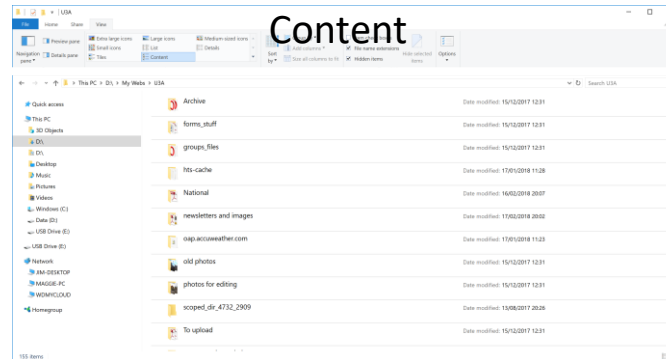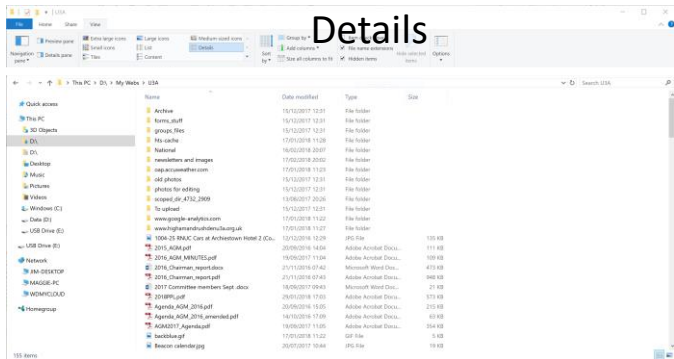
The **Current view** group contains several useful commands. The *Group by* and *Sort by* commands give you ways to organize the display of your files so that they are readily available. More usefully, when you're using the Details layout, the *Add columns* and *Size all columns to fit* commands come in real handy for getting a better look at the available file and folder details in File Explorer's display. The best example of this is probably the ability to include a lot of necessary information in an easy-to-read format. For music files it is possible to show information like composer, conductor, length of track, and for images camera settings.

The **Show/hide** group has several useful commands items that were previously hidden away. The *Item check boxes* option allows you to enable the check box file selection feature, making selecting multiple non-contiguous files much easier.

When you want to show or hide file extensions quickly (for example if you have an image or music file in several different formats), just select the *File name extensions* check box.

When you need to quickly see hidden files (which are normally system files that Microsoft doesn't really want you to touch), just select the *Hidden items* check box.

The *Hide selected items* command allows you to quickly set the Hidden attribute without changing the Properties dialog box for each item.

The *Options* command opens the Folder Options dialog box, also accessible from the File menu and shown in slide 6.

It is worth spending some time getting to know the basics of the ribbon, particularly if you are likely to be using any Microsoft Office programs (Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Publisher, Access, OneNote, Project and Visio). Although the ribbons in these programs are different from the File Explorer ribbon, and indeed from the ribbons in the other Office programs, they do have many features in common.
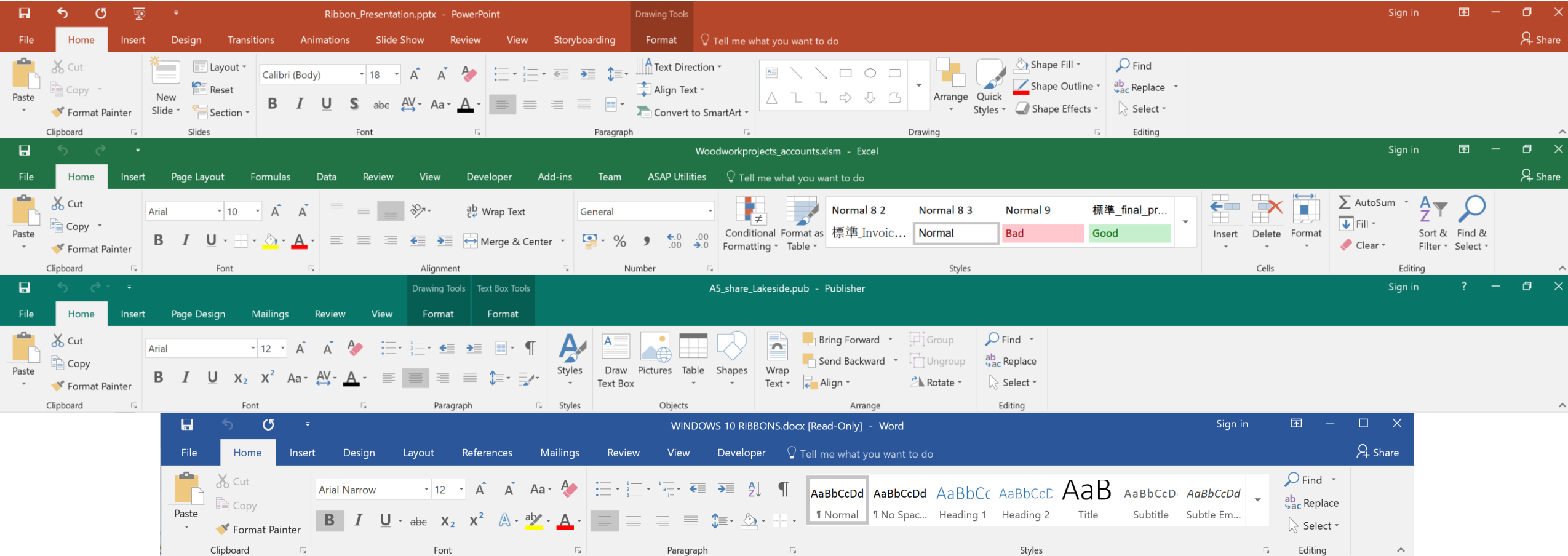
I think you would agree that the *Home* tabs of these 4 programs have more similarities than differences.
In "Ribbon 2" we will have a look in more detail at some of the features common to all Office ribbons.

THE END