Windows 8
Platform
Considerations

The Windows 8 platform is very versatile. It offers users the ability to employ touch, keyboard and mouse, and ink for input. The types of machines it runs on range from tablets to laptops to traditional desktops. Apps can run in portrait or landscape orientations across a range of screen sizes and resolutions. The platform even offers a way for two applications to run simultaneously, by snapping one application to the right or left side of the screen. While this versatility is a bonanza for users, when designing apps, it does require that we consider the platform more closely than we might with other operating systems. Therefore, we will concentrate on the following topics in this chapter:

- Designing for touch
- Form factor and layout

Designing for Touch

Windows 8 is not a traditional desktop operating system. It is also not simply a tablet operating system with a “desktop mode.” Windows 8 is an operating system that has been designed to be truly touch-first. It runs on many different types of machines, both with and without touch. Because many of these devices have touch, it is imperative that we recognize touch input as a
first class citizen on this platform. The good news is that, if we design for
touch, we automatically receive support for the mouse and keyboard. There
are various components to successfully designing for touch that go beyond
merely having objects appear large enough onscreen for a finger to tap. We
will have to consider the following:

- The Windows 8 Touch Language
- Touch targets
- Responsiveness
- Task-centered design

The Windows 8 Touch Language

In order to build a touch-first operating system, Microsoft recognized that
it needed to define the set of touch interactions that would be supported
in the system. Having a consistent set of interactions that it could commu-
nicate to developers and users alike was key to the success of the platform.
Microsoft captured these interactions into something it calls the Windows 8
Touch Language. This touch language is shown in Figure 5-1.

![Figure 5-1](image)

Press and hold to learn  Tap for primary action  Slide to pan  Swipe to select
Pinch and stretch to zoom  Turn to rotate  Swipe from edge for app commands  Swipe from edge for system commands

These eight simple gestures are the foundation for the touch interactions
users will employ to interact with your application and system-wide. It is very
important as designers and developers that we do not override these interac-
tions to mean different things. Doing so will only confuse users and make your
app undesirable. Instead, you should exploit these gestures knowing that users
will be familiar with how they work. Feel free to be creative with the gestures,