Workspace panels are essential elements of the Altium Designer environment. Whether specific to a particular document editor, or used on a more global, system-wide level, they present information and controls that aid productivity and allow you to design more efficiently.

**Accessing Panels**

When Altium Designer is first started, a number of panels will already be open. Some panels, including the **Files panel** and **Projects panel**, will appear grouped and docked to the left side of the application window. Others, including the **Libraries panel**, will be in pop-out mode and appear as buttons on the right-hand border of the application window.

At the bottom of the application window there are a number of buttons that provide quick access to the available workspace panels, in context with the document editor you are currently using. Each button is labeled with the name of the category of panels it gives access to. When a button is clicked, a pop-up menu of the constituent panels in that category will appear.

The buttons reside on the Status Bar. If this bar is not currently displayed, it can be made visible by choosing the **View » Status Bar** command from the main menus. In addition, if you need to hide the buttons - to allow more space for other status information to be displayed - simply click the >> button, to the right of the buttons. To bring the buttons back, click the << button.
Click on an entry in a menu to open the corresponding panel. If a panel is open but not visible, for example it is a non-active panel in a group of docked panels, or it is currently in pop-out mode, clicking its entry in a menu will make it visible, and it will become the active panel.

A tick symbol (✓) next to a panel's name in a menu, is used to indicate that the panel is open and visible in the workspace.

All currently available workspace panels can also be accessed from the View » Workspace Panels sub-menus.

Panel Display Modes

Depending on the particular document editor that is currently active, a large number of panels may be accessible, or indeed open, at any given time. To facilitate the layout and use of multiple panels in the workspace, various panel display modes and management features are provided.

Three different display modes are supported for panels:

- **Docked Mode** - panels are permanently displayed within the workspace.
- **Popup Mode** - panels are hidden, appearing when their button is hovered over, or clicked on.
- **Floating Mode** - panels float over the workspace, becoming transparent whenever the cursor approaches.

**Docked Mode**

In this mode a panel can be docked horizontally, or vertically, within the main application window. Right-click on a panel's title bar (or tab) and choose **Allow Dock** from the pop-up menu to configure the docking capability of the panel - **Horizontally** and/or **Vertically**. When docking vertically, a panel will dock to the right or left of the main design window. When docking horizontally, a panel will dock either above the main design window (and below docked toolbars) or below the main design window (and above the status bar).
Where a panel is already docked, the corresponding docking control will be greyed-out.

For ease of access, frequently used panels can be docked within the main environment.

**Popup Mode**

This mode is essentially an extension of the standard docked mode. A docked panel can be put into this mode by clicking on the pin symbol next to the panel's close cross. The pin symbol will change to indicate the mode:

- the pin symbol in this case appears as ![Docked Mode](image), indicating that the panel is in docked mode.

- the pin symbol in this case appears as ![Popup Mode](image), indicating that the panel is in popup mode.

In this mode, a panel will appear as a button on the application border, giving back valuable workspace. Moving the cursor over the panel button will result in the panel sliding out from the border. Moving the cursor away from the panel will cause it to slide back again.
Example panels in popup mode, accessed by hovering the cursor over the corresponding panel button on the application border. The illustration ends by showing how a panel can be quickly toggled between popup and docked modes using the pin symbol.

Clicking on the panel button will expand the panel without sliding. In this case, click away from the panel to slide it back again.

The speed at which the panel slides in and out is configured on the System - View page of the Preferences dialog.
Configure popup panel display attributes as part of your Altium Designer preferences.

**Floating Mode**

In this mode a panel can be placed anywhere within, or outside of, the Altium Designer environment. This is the standard opening mode for panels that have not been previously placed in docked, or popup modes.

An example floating panel, which can be placed over, or outside of, the main application window.
A floating panel positioned over the editing area of the main design window can also be made transparent when carrying out an interactive operation in the workspace, in accordance with options defined on the System - Transparency page of the Preferences dialog.

Configure floating panel transparency attributes as part of your Altium Designer preferences.

These options allow for making such panels (and toolbars for that matter) transparent immediately when launching an interactive editing process. You can also make the transparency dynamic, so that floating entities become more transparent as the cursor approaches, as illustrated below.
Floating panels can be configured to become transparent whenever performing an editing action in the workspace, and also dynamically as the cursor approaches, so as not to impede your activity.

**Grouping Panels**

Panels may be grouped by simply dragging and dropping one panel on top of another. Two modes of grouping panels are supported:

- **Tabbed Grouping** - this mode displays a set of panels as a tabbed group, with only one panel in the group visible at any time.
- **Fractal Grouping** - this mode displays a set of panels as a fractal grouping, with multiple panels in the group visible at the same time.

The resulting display of the group depends on where exactly you drop the panel being added. If you drop it on the center of the target panel they will become a tabbed group. If you drop the moving panel onto one of the small arrows that appear on each edge of the target panel, they will become a fractal group.

**Tabbed Panel Grouping**

To group a panel with other panels, in tabbed fashion:

1. Click on the source panel's name and drag it over the center of the target panel (or existing group). The entire target panel will become shaded blue, indicating that the panels will become a single tabbed group.
2. A small positional arrow will appear to the right of the target panels' tabs, indicating that the source panel will be added to the group as another tab. You can control where the source panel
will appear in the tabbed set, by moving the mouse near the existing tabs.

3. Drop the source panel now (release the mouse) to group the panels together.

An example of dragging a source panel onto an existing tabbed grouping of panels.

Once grouped, use the small down-arrow at the top-right of the panel grouping to change the visible panel. Alternatively, make another panel in the group the visible panel by clicking directly on its tab. The order of the panels in a tabbed group of panels can be changed at any time - simply click on a panel's tab and drag to the left or right as required. A positional arrow will appear marking the position in the group order at which the panel will be placed when the mouse button is released.
Illustrating how to change the visible panel, and panel tab ordering, within a tabbed grouping of panels.

**Fractal Panel Grouping**

This mode displays a set of panels as a fractal grouping, with multiple panels in the group visible at the same time. Fractal grouping is similar to horizontal/vertical tiling of open windows - you can drag a panel to dock it within another panel, effectively tiling them. A fractal grouping can consist of individual panels and/or standard tabbed panels.

To group a panel with other panels, in fractal fashion:

1. Click on the source panel's name and drag it over the target panel. The entire target panel will become shaded blue, with icons presented at the top ( ), bottom ( ), left ( ), and right ( )
2. Move the cursor over the required icon - only that side of the target panel will become shaded, indicating where, in relation to the target panel, the source panel will appear.

Ensure that only the shading for the required side is displayed, and not full shading, otherwise the source panel will be added into a tabbed grouping, rather than a fractal one. This can also be verified by looking at the tab of the target panel (or tabs if already grouped). If there is a positional arrow, then the source panel will be added as a member of the tabbed grouping. For fractal grouping, ensure this positional arrow is not present.

3. Drop the source panel now (release the mouse) to group the panels together.
An example of dragging a source panel onto an existing fractal grouping of panels, to further split the region occupied by a target panel.

To make a panel active in a fractal grouping, simply click on it. If the required panel is part of a tabbed grouping within the overall fractal structure, make it visible/active either by clicking on its corresponding tab, or by choosing the required panel from the menu associated to the small down-arrow, at the top-right of the panel grouping.
Illustrating how to change the active/visible panel, within a fractal grouping of panels.

Moving Panels

The following points relate to moving workspace panels within the Altium Designer environment:

- A single floating, or docked panel, is moved by clicking within the panel's title bar, and dragging it to a new position. For a single panel that has been put in popup mode, it can be also moved by clicking on its corresponding button in the application border and dragging the panel to the required position.
- When multiple panels have been grouped, clicking within a panel's caption bar and dragging will move all panels in that group. To move a single panel out of a group, click and drag the panel name in the caption bar (or its tab if available).
- Moving a panel to an application border that already contains one or more panels will result in the panel being added in the same mode (docked or popup) as those already present.
- To take a panel out of fractal grouping mode (where it has been tiled) and back into a standard tabbed grouping, drag the tiled panel by its caption bar into free space, or to a target panel, or existing tabbed group, until a positional arrow appears (target becomes fully shaded) and then release - the panel will be added to the tabbed grouping.
- As you move a panel close to another floating panel, the edges will snap together. Similarly, moving a panel towards the extremities of the desktop will snap the panel to the desktop's edge. This 'snap-attraction' feature allows for easier arrangement of floating panel sets within the environment.
- To prevent a moving panel from automatically docking, grouping, or snapping, hold the Ctrl key.

Closing Panels

A panel can be closed by:

- Right-clicking in its caption bar and choosing the Close command from the context menu.
- Right-clicking on its tab (where available) and choosing the Close command from the context
• Clicking the close cross at the far right of the panel's caption bar.

If the panel is part of a group (tabbed or fractal), doing this will close all panels in the group.

If a panel is closed and then accessed again, it will be displayed (restored) in the same location as that prior to its closure. If you have closed a grouping of panels, the group can be restored - exactly as it was - by simply opening the independent panels in the group.

**Maximizing/Restoring Panels**

When in floating mode, a panel (or grouping of panels) can be maximized by right-clicking in its caption bar (or on its tab, where available) and choosing the *Maximize* entry from the context menu. To restore a maximized panel (or grouping of panels) back to its original size, simply right-click in its caption bar (or tab) and choose the *Restore* command from the context menu. Alternatively, double-click in the caption bar to toggle between maximized and restored state.

Maximizing/restoring any visible panel in a fractal grouping of panels, will cause the entire fractal grouping to be maximized/restored.

**Resetting, Saving, and Loading Panel Arrangements**

You can save and reload panel arrangements, and also reset them to the installation defaults, using the commands available on the *View » Desktop Layouts* submenu. For example, to reset all panels back to their default locations and visibility, choose the *View » Desktop Layouts » Default* command.

Environment layout information, including the application window, which toolbars and panels are open, where they are open, and how they are sized, is stored in a Desktop Layout file (*.TLT). When you close Altium Designer, the layout information - how you have configured your environment - is stored in the UserTools.TLT file (found in the following location for a default installation: `\Users\<ProfileName>\AppData\Roaming\Altium\Altium Designer <GUID>`). This file will be used when Altium Designer is next run, or if you choose the *View » Desktop Layouts » Startup* command. Since this file is overwritten with any change to the environment each time you shut-down, you may wish to create and save specific layouts (View » Desktop Layouts » Save layout), which can then be reloaded at any time (View » Desktop Layouts » Load layout).

Default layout files are found in the `\Program Files (x86)\Altium\AD<VersionNumber>\System\Desktop Layouts` folder, for a default installation.

**Source URL:** https://www.altium.com/documentation/display/ADES/Working+with+Panels+in+Altium+Designer