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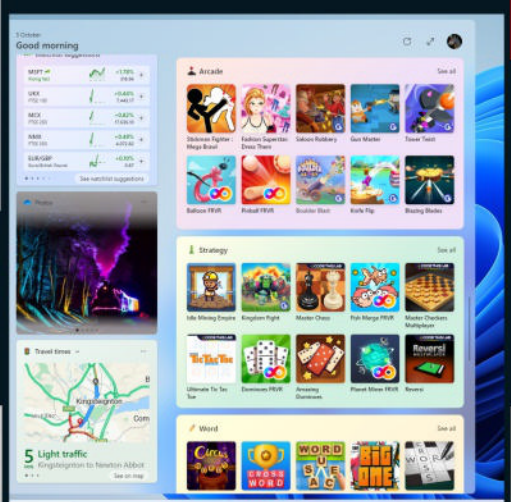

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Windows 11

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Windows 11 is the operating system of choice for the smart thinking beginner, intermediate and advanced computer user. It's designed to push the boundaries, to encompass the everyday digital world and help bring us closer together than ever before. It brings a clean and easy to interact with AI assisted user interface, together with powerful and ever involving code under the hood. Everything you need to help drive you into 2024 and beyond. The Windows 11 Manual will guide you through Microsoft's latest operating system, offering you something new to learn on every page and providing you with the necessary knowledge to make Windows 11 work for you. In here you'll find tips and tutorials, unlocking all of Windows 11's secrets and helping you become a more advanced user. So, let's dive into Windows 11 and start building both your confidence and understanding of this amazing operating system.

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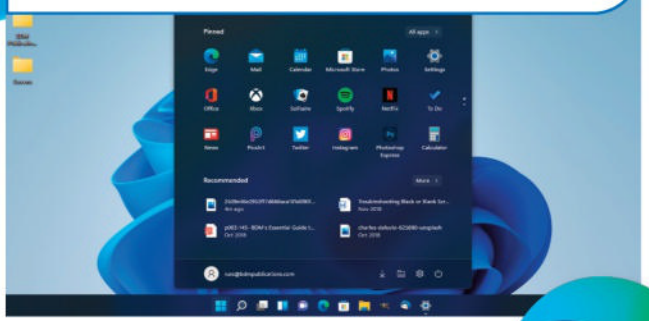

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Installing & Updating to Windows 11

Microsoft's latest version of Windows hit the update servers on October 5th 2021, but it seemed many computers were still waiting for the go-ahead from their Windows Update screens, if you are one of them we can help you. Here's how to step up the process.

If you're still on Windows 10, and waiting patiently for your update screen to display the exciting 'Ready to update Windows 11' notification, then this is the guide for you. Rather than tweaking with the update settings, or delving into the murky depths of the command prompt, there's an easier way to get the ball rolling and get you on and working with Windows 11.

Before You Leap

Before we go about running the update process, it's worth checking that your system can actually run Windows 11. Many of us have already been down this route, and have discovered that we need to apply a few elements prior to installing the newest OS from Microsoft.

TPM 2.0

TPM stands for Trusted Platform Module, and its task is to protect data through authentication, perform platform integrity, utilise disk encryption, and store passwords and certificates. In short, it's an extra layer of hardware protection to help stop your PC from being compromised or to stop many forms of malware from infecting the core components of your computer.

Now that you know what TPM is, you can begin to understand Microsoft's insistence of it being present before even allowing Windows 11 to be installed. Windows is, by quite a margin, the most popular operating system in the world, and as such it's the main target for malware and many other very unpleasant things out there in the wild world. By using TPM, Microsoft is under the opinion that it's making things a little more difficult for any hackers and creators of malware. It is, however, totally possible to bypass the TPM requirements.

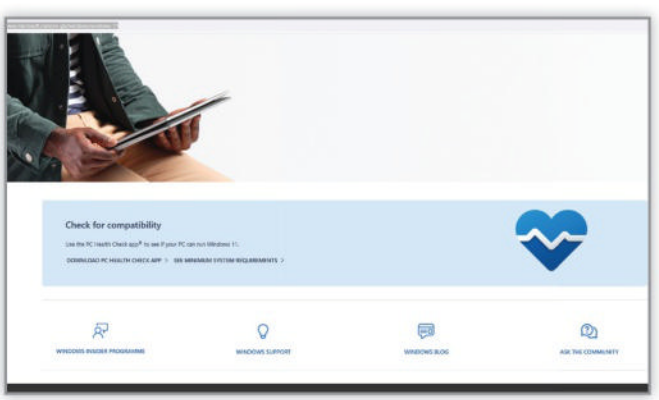
Anyway, in general, if your computer is reasonably up to date, or roughly less than four years old, then there's a good chance that you have a TPM present in your system. For some systems, TPM comes in the form of an actual module that physically plugs into a socket on your motherboard, for most computers, though, TPM is offered via the processor.

What you will need to do is drop into your BIOS, this can normally be done by tapping either the Del or F2 keys when you first power up your computer (before it starts to boot into Windows). Naturally, different motherboard manufacturers offer different keypresses, so you'll need to check with your manual.

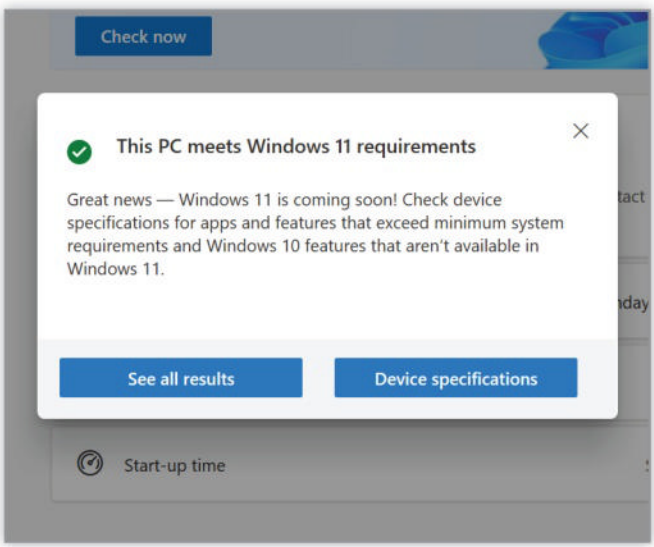
When in the BIOS, look for Settings > Security > Trusted Computing. If you've got an AMD processor, you may also have to look for AMD CPU fTPM. Enable both, if available, save the settings and reboot the computer before your prodeed.

These entries will differ from one motherboard to the next, as previously mentioned. You may need to Google your motherboard make and model number, together with the words 'enable TPM', to see how to specifically enable it for you.

Once enabled, and rebooted into Windows 10, go to https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/windows/windows-11, and scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the Download PC Health Check App button to start the download process.



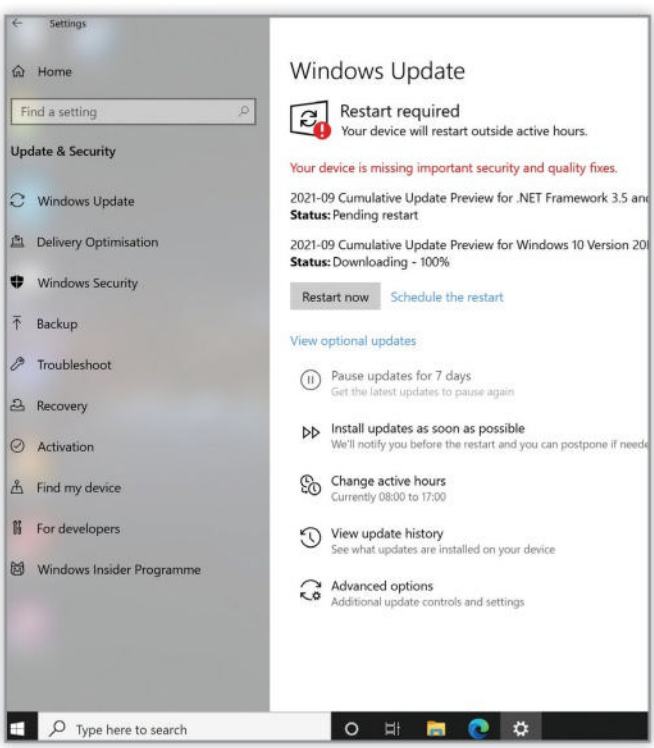
Once it's downloaded, double-click to install it. When installed, run the Health Check App, and look for the Check Now button in the Introduction Windows 11 section. Click it, and you'll be given a report as to whether your computer can run Windows 11 or not. If not, you're told where it's failed and you can look up what to do next and remedy the situation.

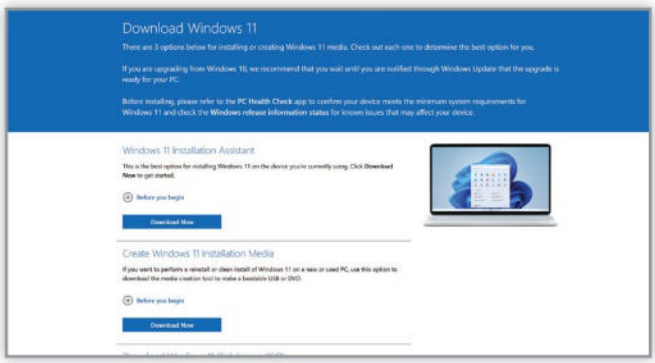


Windows 11 Installation Assistant

To force the update to Windows 11, providing your computer can handle it, you'll need to run the Windows 11 Installation Assistant. This is a separate app that enables Windows 10 users, who have a valid Windows license, to update their computers to the latest version of Windows 11.

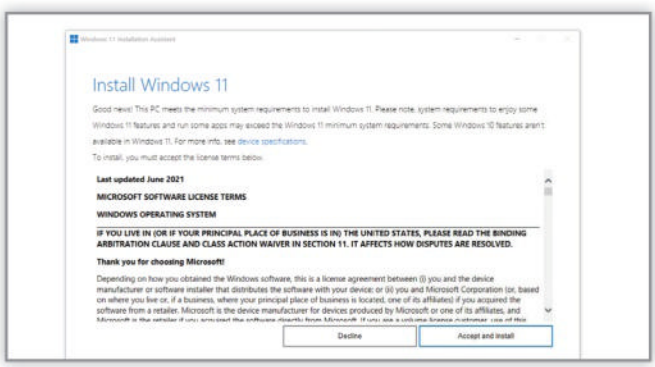
You'll need to ensure that you have at least version 2004 of Windows 10 before you begin. It's worth going to the Windows Update section in the Settings and checking for the latest updates.



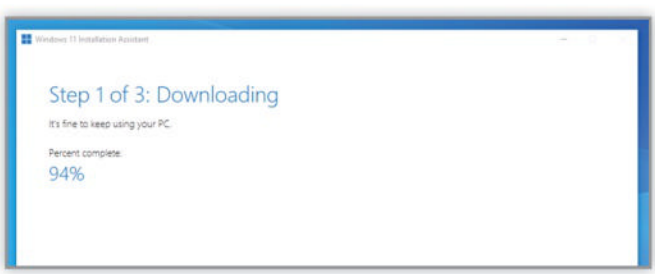


If all is well, head on over to https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/software-download/windows11, and locate the Windows 11 Installation Assistant section. Click on the Download Now button, to save the app to your computer.

Locate the app on your computer, and double-click it to begin the Windows 11 installation process. If everything is as it should be, you'll be presented with an Install Windows 11 window. Click on the Accept and Install button to continue the process.



Next, the app will download the necessary file and perform the forced installation of Windows 11. This could be anywhere between 20 minutes to nearly an hour – depending on the speed of your computer, connection to the Internet and so on.



It's a three-step process, and the final step will have you reboot the computer. You'll then need to go through a Welcome process, and once that's done, the Windows 11 desktop will load; retaining all your files, desktop settings etc.

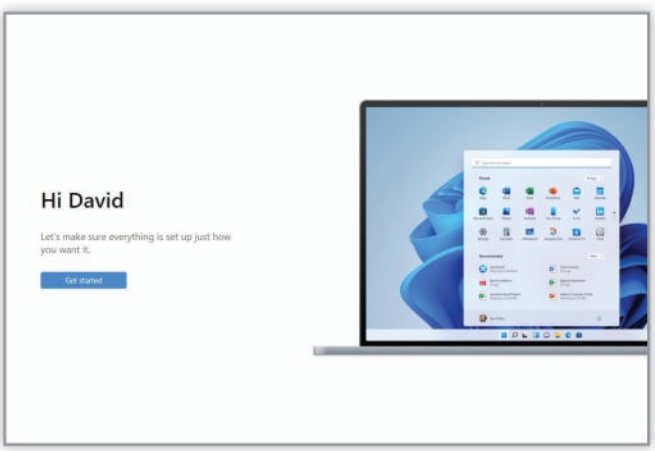
Windows 11 - Getting Started

Microsoft has greatly improved its initial Windows setup routine with intuitive guides. Where once you were simply delivered onto the desktop and left to your own devices, now Windows 11 ensures you can comfortably hit the ground running.

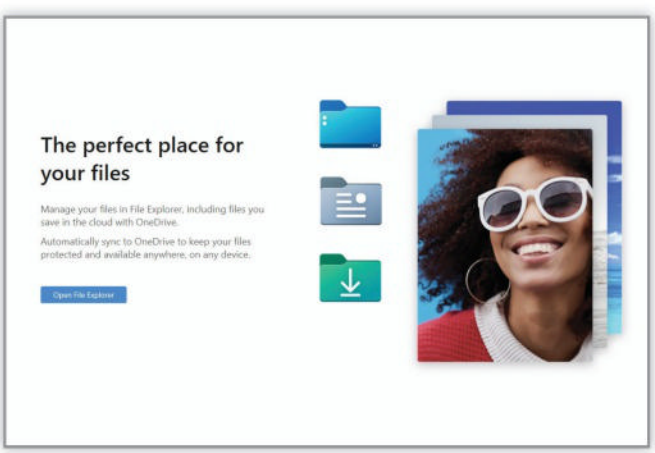
Hello Windows 11

One of the first tasks to complete when you boot into Windows 11, is to run through the Getting Started guide. Here's how it works.

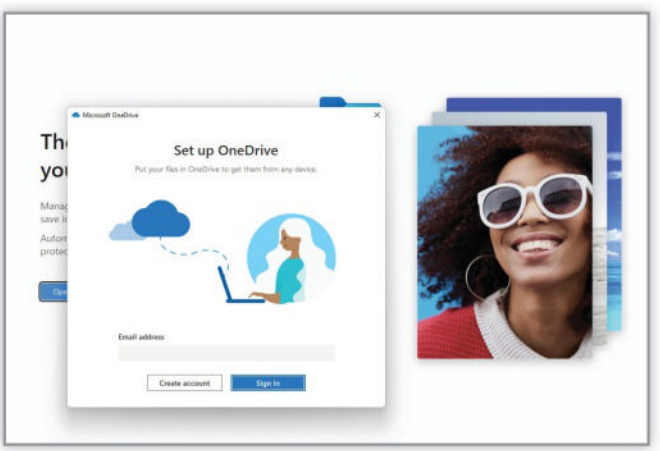
Step 1 You'll find the Getting Started guide in the Start menu, when you click the Windows logo button on the taskbar. It's a welcome to Windows setup wizard, and makes sure you're ready to use your files, and get access to your work quickly and effectively. Once it has opened, click the Get Started button to continue to the next step.



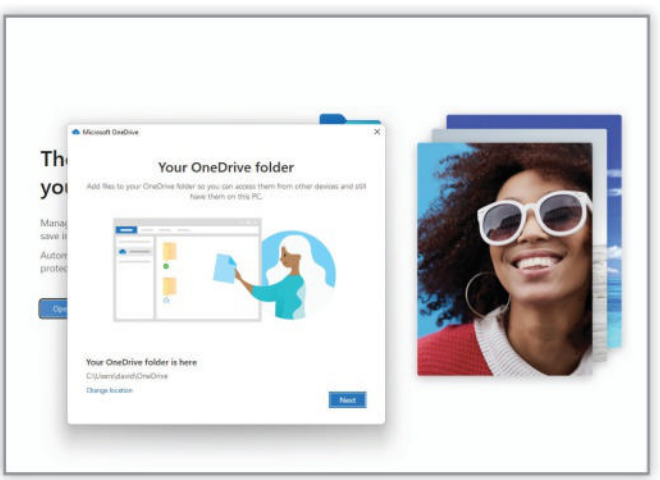
Step 2 Microsoft's use of OneDrive for both business and personal data has become one of the cornerstones of the company's services. OneDrive offers a secure space to store your data, which will always be available no matter what happens to your computer. Click on the Open File Explorer button to begin your OneDrive setup and login.



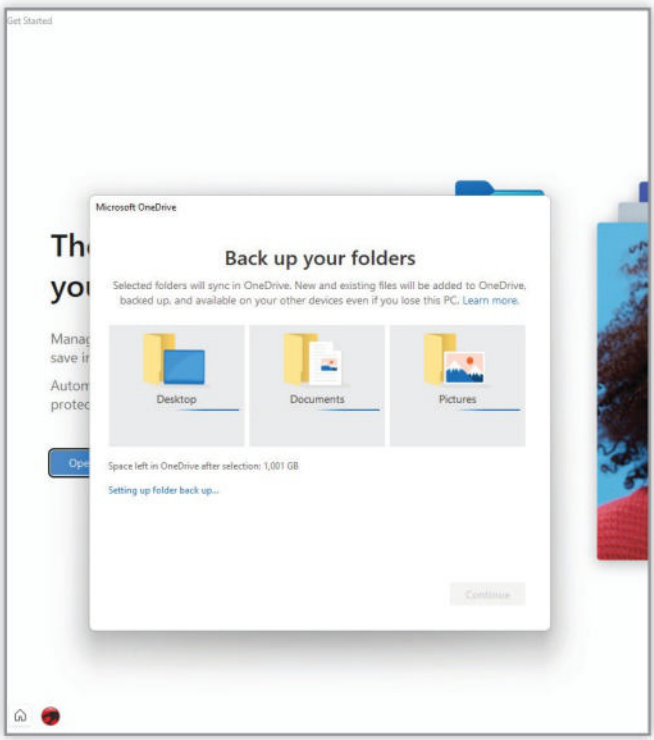
Step 3 If you already have a OneDrive, or Microsoft, account, then click on the Sign In button to enter your details and link your OneDrive with the account on the Windows 11 PC you're currently setting up. If you don't have a OneDrive account, click the Create Account button and then follow the on-screen instructions.



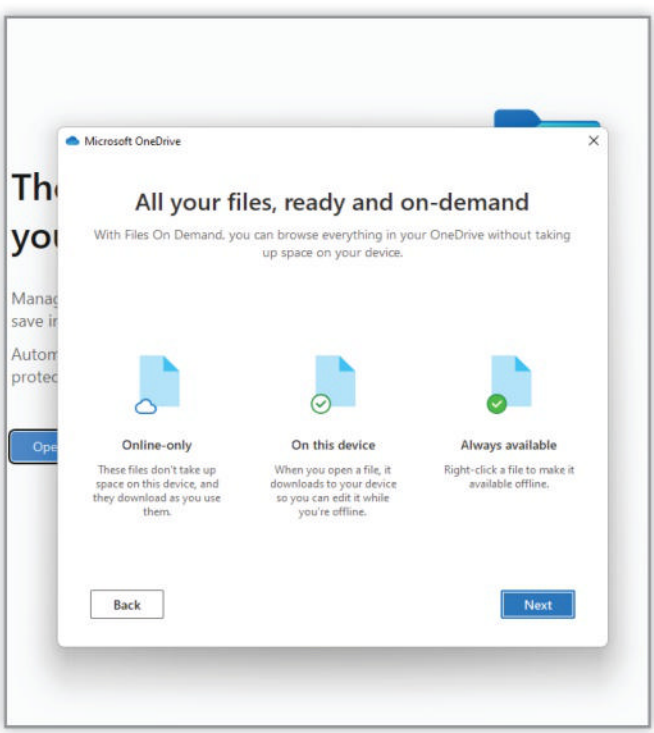
Step 4 When you've completed the setup and logged into OneDrive, a special folder within your user account on the PC will be setup. This folder allows you to interact in real-time with the OneDrive cloud service, so any files created in the folder will be automatically uploaded to OneDrive; and vice versa.



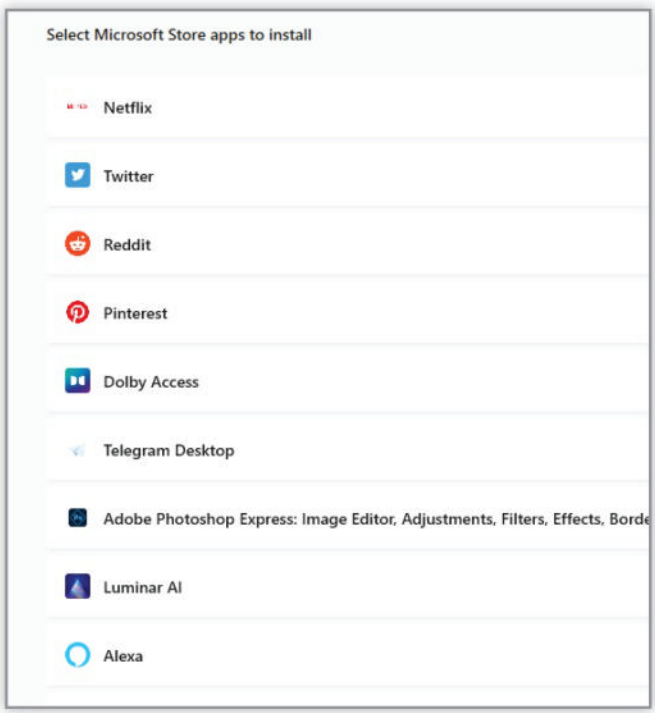
Step 5 OneDrive will also setup an automated service that will backup any files and folders that you store on the Desktop, in your Documents folder, and in your Pictures folder. Click on the 'Setting up folder back up' link to add more folders to backup, or deselect any you don't want to.



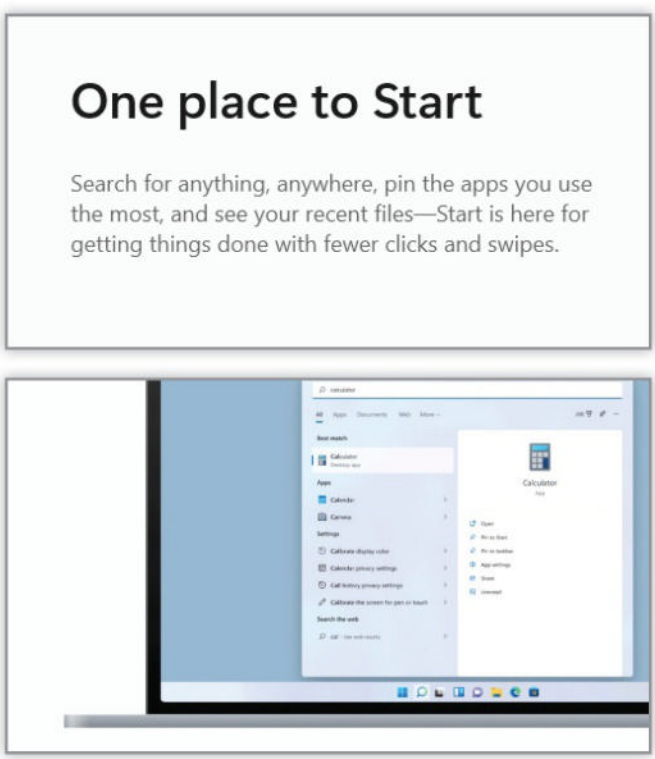
Step 6 The service will help reduce the amount of space taken up on the PC, or other Windows 11 devices you're using, by utilising Files On Demand. This is an automatic setup that will let you view and edit files on OneDrive without downloading them locally. You can, however, opt to makes files and folder Always Available.



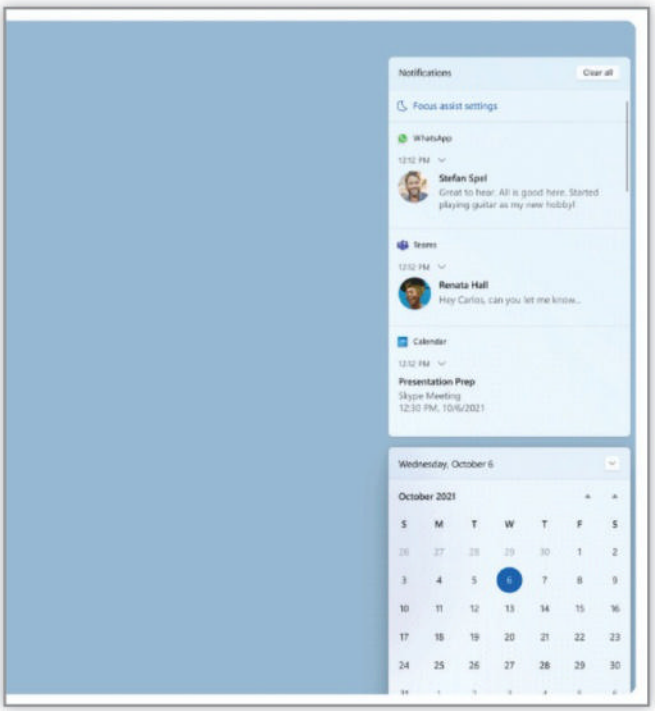
Step 7 The next step in the Getting Started process has you viewing and selecting any of the popular apps that are currently available for Windows 11. Naturally, you can install these apps via the Windows Store at a later date, but having them to begin with can reduce the amount of time you spend setting up the computer.



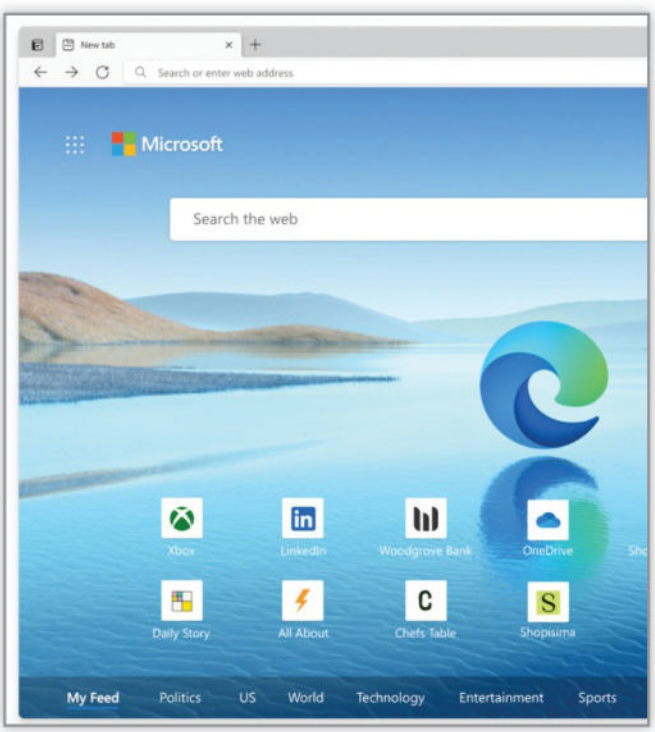
Step 8 An interesting element to the Getting Started setup are the informational sections; such as this one. It details the new Search app that's located on the taskbar. It also highlights the new Start launch taskbar, and shows how easy it is to use, and pin any Apps to.



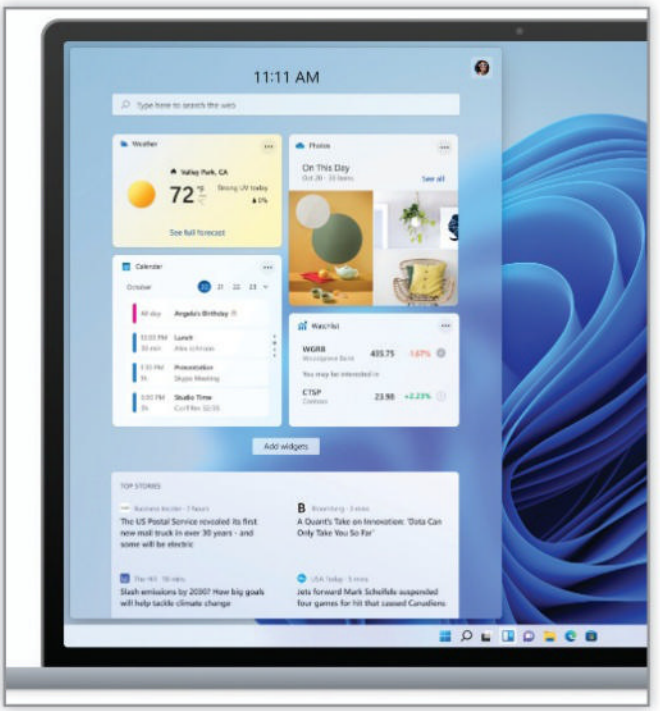
Step 9 The Focus Assist setting is designed to help you choose the notifications you'd like to see and hear, without the distractions of those you don't. Any notification that's not set in the Priority list of apps, will be added to the Notification area without disturbing your workflow. Click the Open focus assist settings button for further information.



Step 10 Microsoft Edge has seen some dramatic improvements over the years, so much so that it's now regarded as one of the most secure, and fastest browsers available. Of course, if you prefer to use Chrome, Firefox or another browser, then you're free to do so. Edge, however, is built on Chrome technologies, so it might be worth giving it a go.



Step 11 Widgets are a resurfacing technology from the Windows Vista days; only now they work a lot better. This panel of the Getting Started setup shows you how to access your Widgets, and how to explore what's available. The widget window scrolls in from the left of the screen, slightly raised above the taskbar.

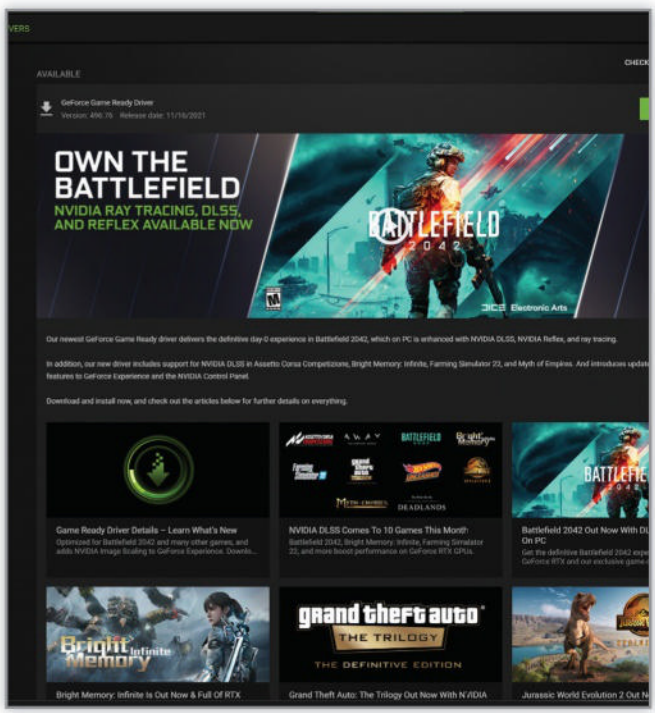


Step 12 Linking your Android phone with Windows is a function that appeared in the early years of Windows 10. Since then it has improved significantly, and you can easily setup and configure the interface from this panel in the Getting Started guide. Simply click the, Link your Android button to begin the connection process.

Step 13 The new Chat icon in the taskbar is an element of Microsoft Teams. Teams has proved its worth in gold during lockdown, and has now been included by default in Windows 11. It's cross-platform, and easy to setup and use. Just click on the Chat button in the taskbar to begin the setup process.

Step 14 That's the Getting Started guide complete. You'll now have a fully setup and working OneDrive with active folders, sorted out your notifications, launched and begun to use the Edge browser, and connected your Android phone. Before you do get started, we suggest you try the following.

Step 15 Now would be a good opportunity to check that any specific hardware drivers are updated to Windows 11. To do this depends greatly on the type of hardware. For example, Nvidia GPUs will use the Nvidia GeForce Experience. Simply click to open the hardware setup client, and follow the on-screen instruction to apply the update(s).



Step 16 If you have any older software, it's worth taking a moment to test that it still behaves the way you expect it to under Windows 11. If not, then look the software up online, see if there's an update to Windows 11, or contact the developers directly to ask for guidance relating to the specific software itself.

Windows 11 Essentials

Windows 11 is a lot different to previous versions of the operating system. There's a new taskbar, Start menu, Windows Search and much more. It's all groundbreaking stuff, and you'll need to be familiar with the basics before you can begin to dive into the more technical territory.

Read on, and discover Windows 11 essentials.

"Welcome to Windows 11 on your desktop, laptop or tablet. You are about to embark on a fanastic adventure with the world's most popular operating system and we are coming with you for every single step of the way!"

Windows 11 Start Screen

The Windows 11 desktop user interface (UI) is a radical change from what we're used to with previous versions of Windows. The main differences are the new taskbar, Notifications and Widgets.

1 Widgets

The Widgets snap in from the left of the desktop when you move your mouse over to the edge of the screen. You'll notice that the Widget window is slightly raised, this is to avoid it clashing with the taskbar; to help keep the desktop clutter-free. You can also open them by pressing the Windows Key + W on your keyboard.

2 Customise

You can use these options to look for more specific content, and add them to your desktop for a more personalised desktop environment. Note that new Widgets are being added to Windows 11 almost on a daily basis. Keep an eye out, to see if the one you've always wanted makes an appearance.

3 Taskbar

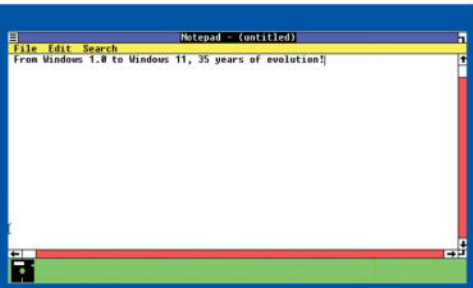
The new Windows 11 taskbar expands out from the centre of the desktop now. The Windows Start button still works in the same way, displaying installed apps and offering access to the OS settings.

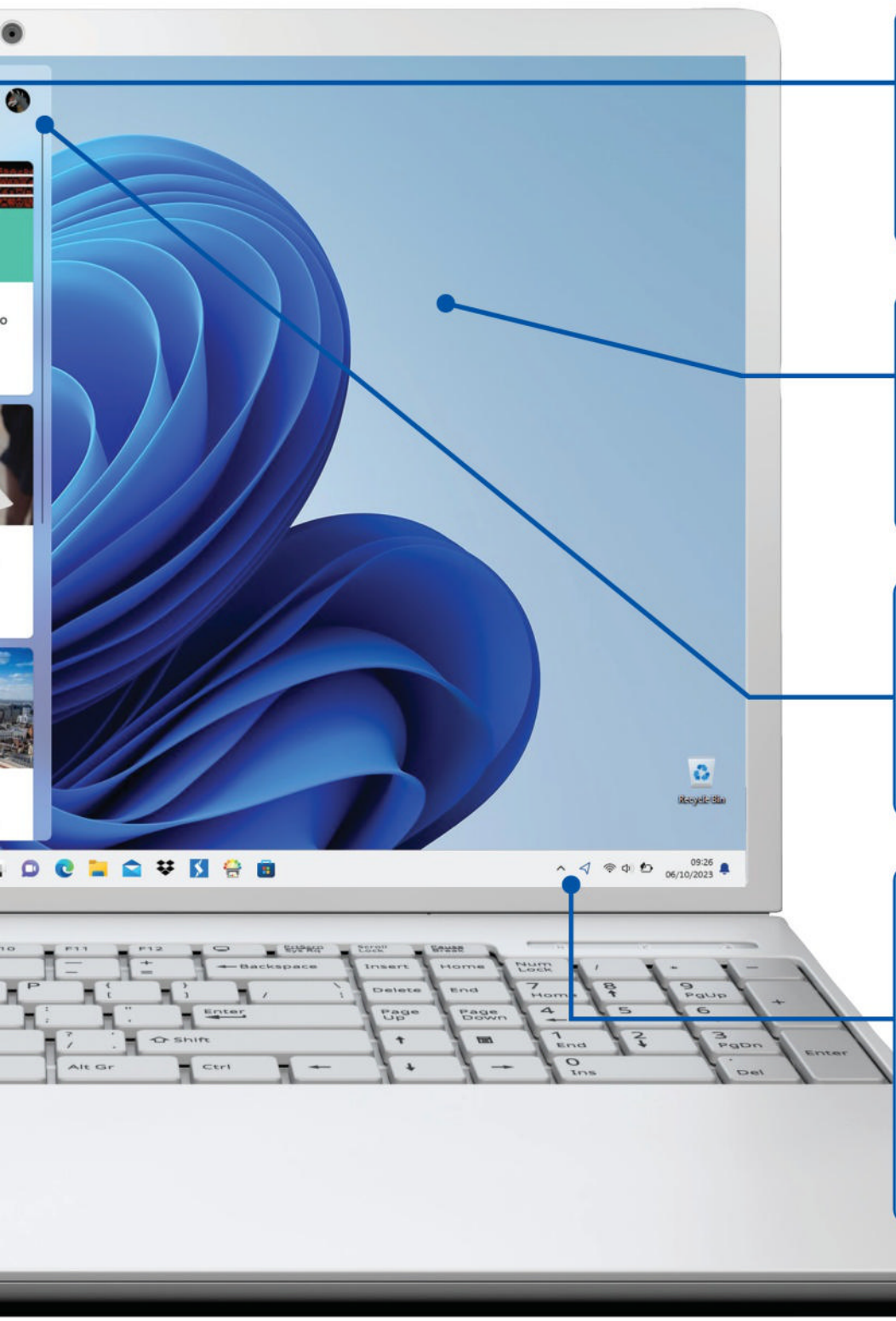
4 Search

The Search function within Windows 11 is greatly improved, and easier to find what you're looking for. Whether it's a document on your computer, or something online, you can find it here.

Then and Now

We've come a long way since the early days of Windows version 1.0. Through ups and downs, Windows has evolved to become the most used desktop operating system in the world. Over 35 years have passed since Windows 1.0 has released, let's see what the next 35 hold for Microsoft's OS.





5 Default Display

The default Widgets display the latest news, the current weather, entertainment, recommanded websites and the state of Stocks and Shares. These can be dragged and dropped to different locations, changed or deleted.

6 Desktop

As with all previous versions of Windows, the Desktop can be personalised and configured how you like. Its new look is brighter, with cleaner edges and better resolution than before, to help ease eye-strain and keep you focused.

7 Profile

Your Microsoft or local Windows 11 profile image will be displayed here. By clicking it, you'll be able to access further settings relating to many aspects of the core operating system, as well as specific settings to do with the Widgets feature.

8 Notifications

The Notification Centre and the taskbar are now combined. Click the set of icons that represent Wi-Fi, battery and so on, and the screen will expand upward to reveal more settings. In here you'll find access to the important elements of the computer. Notifications will be displayed next to the date; as and when they're needed. This allows you to focus more on what you're doing without unnecessary distractions.

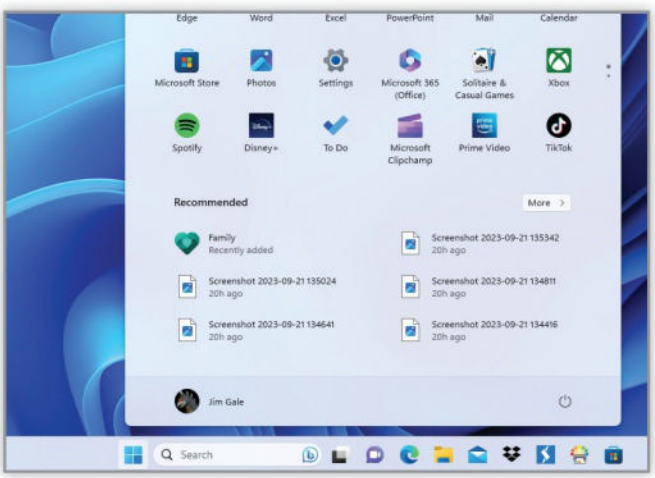
How to Use the Start Menu

The Start menu has been given a big makeover for Windows 11, simplified in some ways and expanded in others. It will quickly become your go to way to access your device, as it is the main way to access your installed apps, software and games.

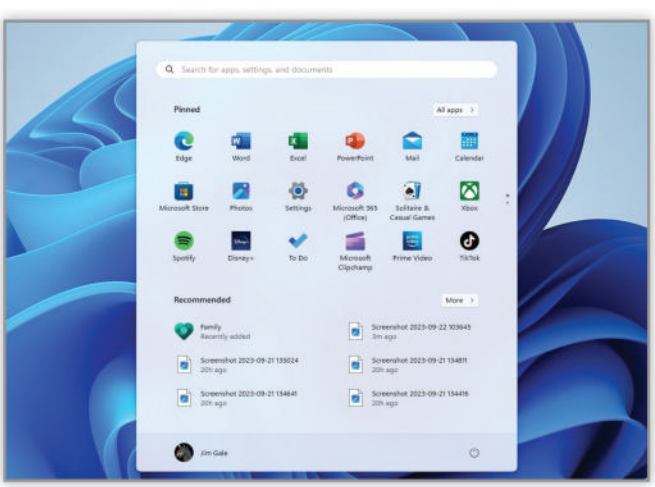
Get to Grips with Start

If you have used Windows before, the Start menu shouldn't hold too many surprises for you, but it is still a good idea to familiarise yourself with its features.

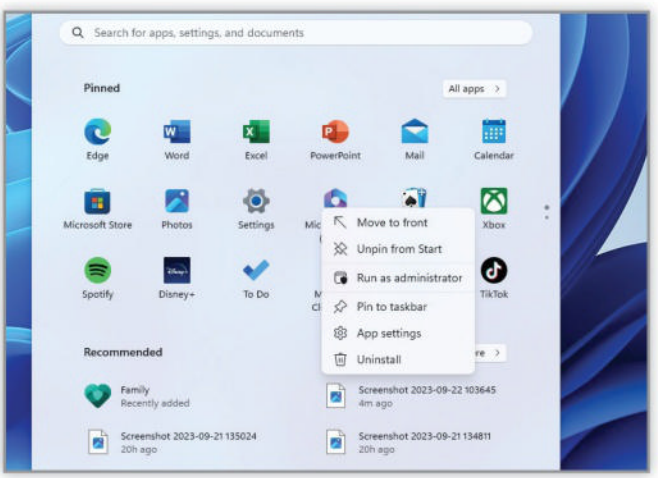
Step 1 The completely redesigned Start menu is opened by clicking on the Windows icon in the taskbar, or by pressing the Windows Key on your keyboard. It opens above the taskbar icons, floating in the middle of the screen. It will appear over the top of any open windows.



Step 2 The Start menu is arranged into four main sections: Search, Pinned Apps, Recent or Recommended Files and Account/Power. Clicking in the Search field will switch to the dedicated Search panel, rather than letting you type your search term directly into the Start menu.

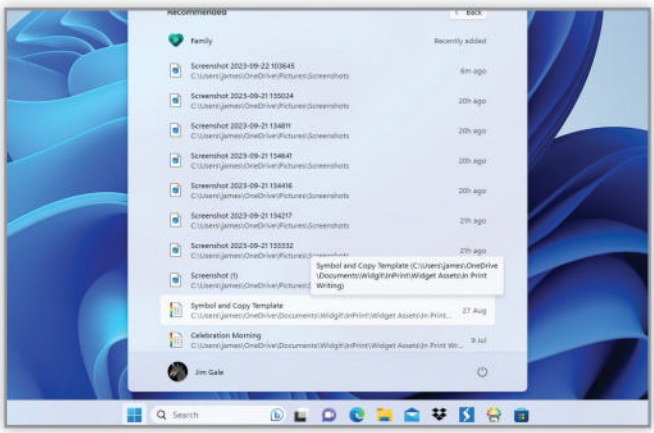


Step 3 If the app you want to open is shown, click the icon to open it. If not, you can click the "All Apps" button to open the full, scrollable list of apps. You can change the apps that appear here by right-clicking on the icon and choosing "Unpin/Pin to Start" from the action menu.

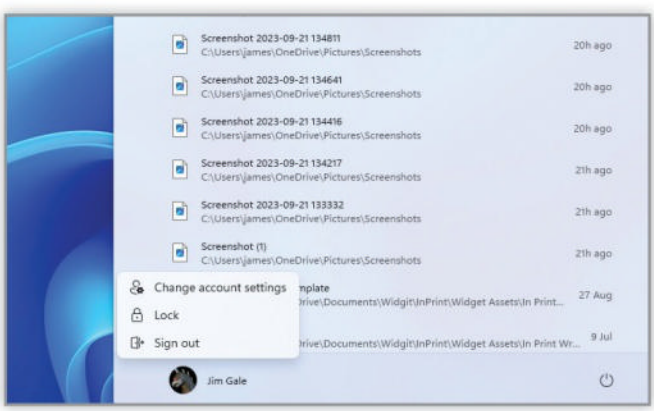


Step 4 In the app menu, apps are sorted alphabetically, except for a Pinned section at the top. By clicking the All apps links, you will open a complete list of yours will can be scrolled through alphabetically, to open any of them simply click on their icon.

Step 5 The Recommended section shows files that have been recently opened, or that have been opened frequently. Click on any icon to open the file in whatever app/program it is associated with. Click the “More” button to the right to open a larger list of files.

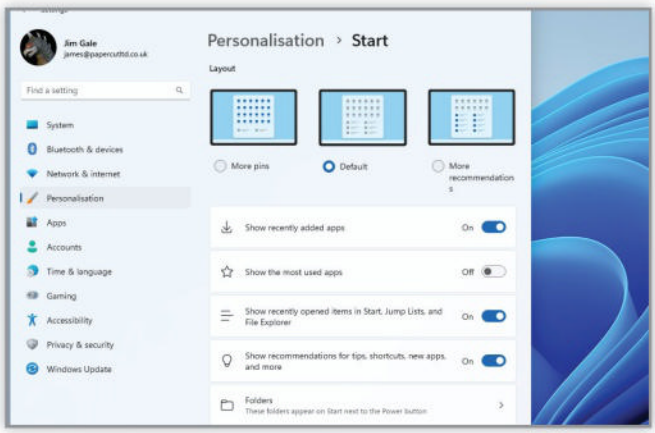


Step 6 The bottom section contains a link to the Microsoft Account menu. Click this to change account settings, lock your computer or sign out of the current account. At the other end of the section is the power button. Click this and choose from the available power options.



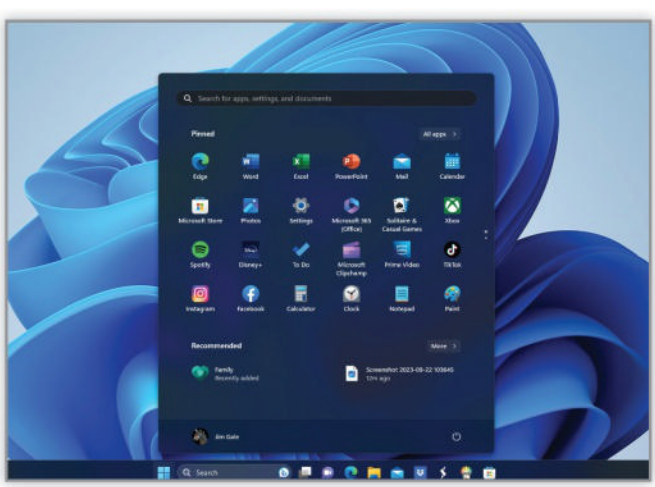
Step 7 It is also possible to display your most used apps and a selection of folders in the Start menu. To enable these features, open the main settings menu (you should see the icon for this in the pinned apps) and click on the Personalisation section. Then choose the Start option.

Step 8 Use the sliders to enable or disable Start menu features you want or no longer want. To add folders to the Start menu, click the folders option in the Start settings and then use the slider switches to add any of the preset folders you want or need quick access to.



Step 9 Open the Start menu again to see the newly added (or removed features). You may not initially notice any difference to the apps list if you have not yet used any apps repeatedly. The folders you added can be found next to the power button in the bottom section.

Step 10 It is not possible to resize the Start menu, nor is it possible to change the style of it. You can change the overall colour mode (light, dark or custom), which will change the colour of the Start menu along with other main elements of the interface such as the taskbar.



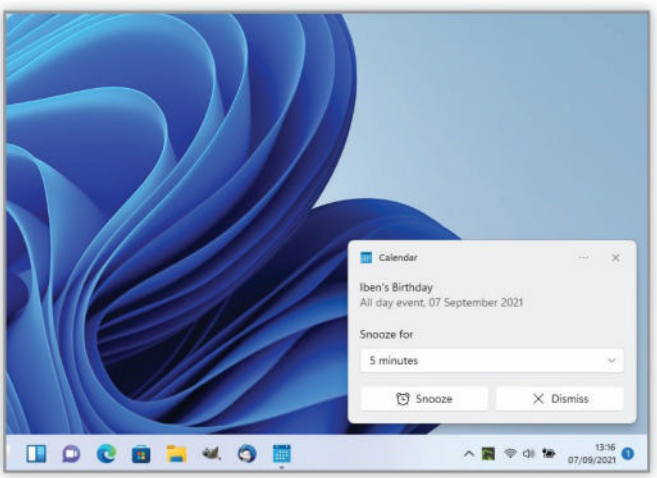
Notifications and Quick Settings

There have always been pop-up messages in Windows but now there is a centralised way in which these are viewed and interacted with. In Windows 11, this is called the Notification Center, it works more like the notifications panel on a smartphone or tablet.

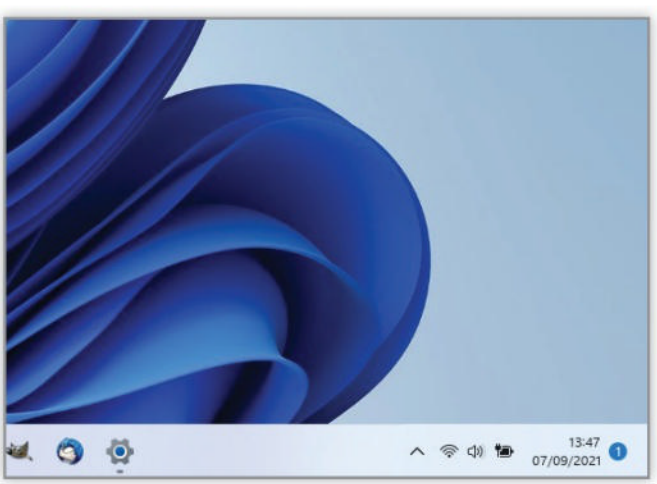
Exploring the Notification Center

The Notification Center is an important and useful element in Windows 11, providing you with access to the calendar as well as notifications and alerts.

Step 1 New notifications and alerts will pop up at the bottom-right corner of the screen (by default, but you can change the notification settings), disappearing after a few seconds. After the initial pop-up has disappeared, you can view all current notifications by clicking on the time/date in the taskbar.

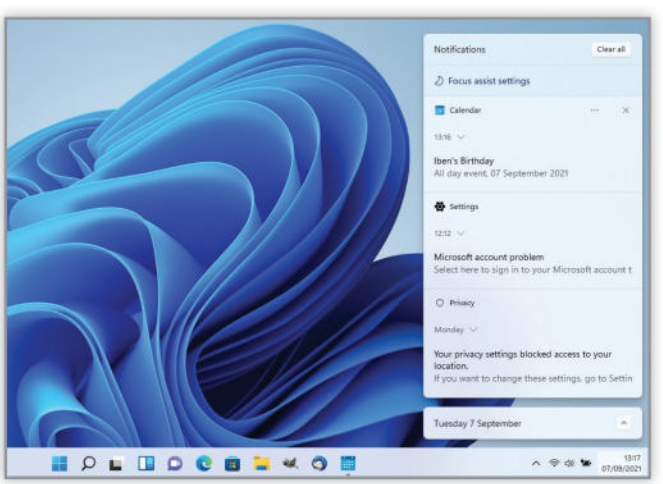


Step 2 You can see if there are new notifications waiting to be viewed by the badge that will appear on the corner of the time/date in the taskbar. You can turn off these badges in the settings, but they are a useful and unobtrusive way to see, at a glance, if you have something requiring your attention.

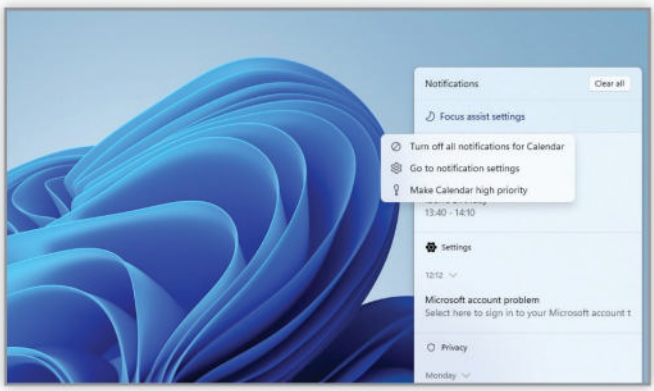


Step 3 Unlike Windows 10, the Notification Center (which was called the Action Center previously) only contains notifications and alerts, not quick settings. It does include the calendar now, which is expanded by clicking the arrow next to the date at the bottom of the notification panel.

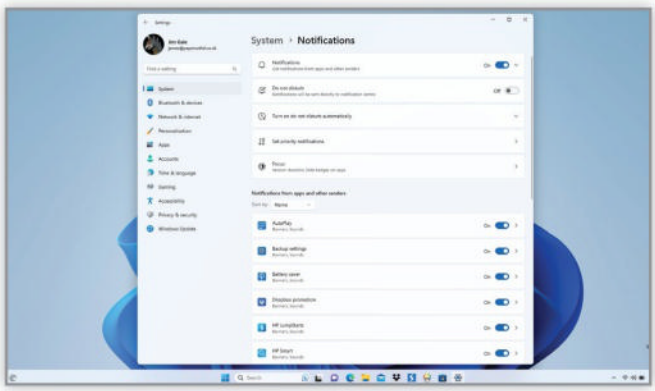
Step 4 Above the calendar section is your notification panel. Notifications can be from the system (Windows updates for example), from your calendar, from apps and even from settings that need to be managed. Notifications are sorted into sections within the notifications panel; based on their type.



Step 5 At the top of the Notifications panel is a button to clear all notifications. You can clear notifications individually by hovering the pointer over them and clicking the X. You can also click the menu button on each notification to see some notification settings, such as setting similar messages as a priority.



Step 6 To manage your notification display settings, go to Settings > System > Notifications. Here you can choose the apps/features which can send you notifications, using the slider switches. Click the name of the app to see further settings, such as whether a sound is played, and the priority level.



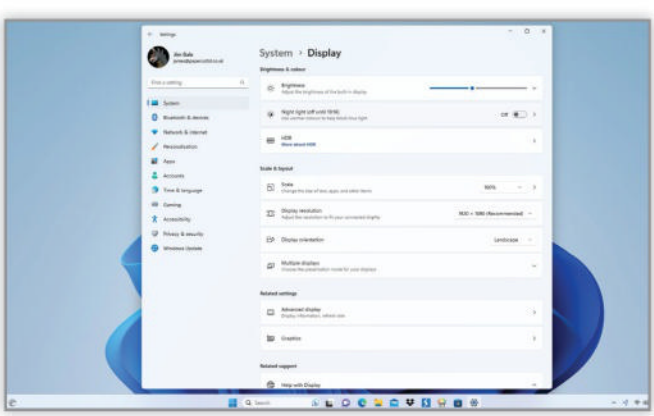
Quick Settings Panel

Unlike in the previous version of Windows, Windows 11 separates the quick settings panel from the Notification Center.

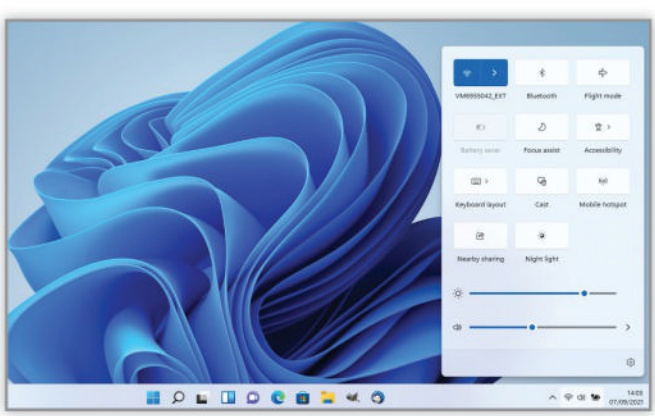
Step 1 To access the quick settings panel in Windows 11, press Windows Key + a. The panel will appear in the same position on screen as the Notification Center. By default the panel contains buttons to quickly enable/disable Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Flight Mode, Battery Saver (if using a laptop) and Focus Assist.

Step 3 Right-click anywhere on the Quick Settings panel to see a link to “Edit quick settings”. Click this and the buttons will be greyed out, and unpin icons will appear on each. Click these to remove a button from the panel. You can also click the + button at the bottom to add other quick settings buttons.

Step 2 There are also sliders to control screen brightness and system volume. The exact settings that appear in the quick settings panel will vary, depending on if you are using a desktop or a laptop computer. At the bottom of the panel is a button to open the main Windows 11 settings app.



Step 4 Some of the quick settings buttons will have an arrow on the button. Clicking these buttons will open a new panel, with further options for that particular feature. For example, the Wi-Fi button will open a list of available networks, and Keyboard Layout will open a list of the different layouts available.



How to Use the Taskbar

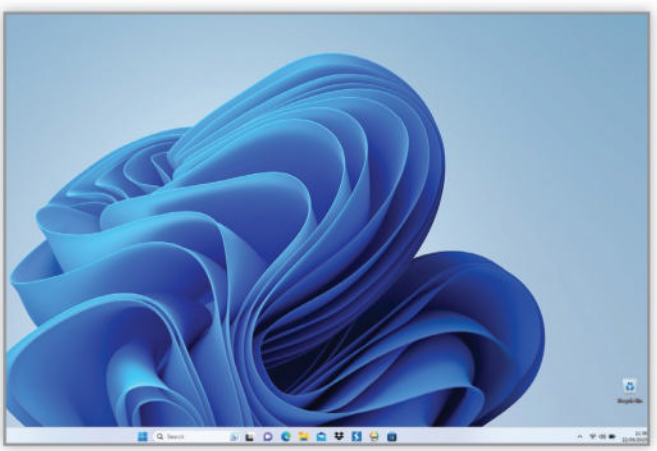
If you are moving from Windows 10 to Windows 11, the taskbar will likely be the first and most obvious change you notice. The taskbar has always been a useful tool, but in Windows 11 it becomes the real focus of the desktop and contains even more features and tools.

Mastering the Windows 11 Taskbar

The taskbar has always been more useful than many users realise. In Windows 11 the emphasis has shifted much more towards a simplified, but still powerful, selection of pinned tools/apps.

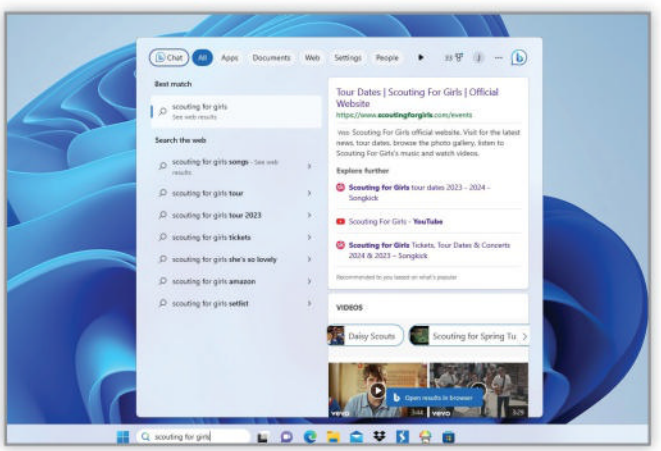
Taskbar Layout

The taskbar runs the full length of the bottom of the screen, and is now divided into two main sections: Start Menu/Pinned App and System Tools. In Windows 11 the taskbar app icons are arranged in the centre of the taskbar (although this can be changed), with system tools on the right.



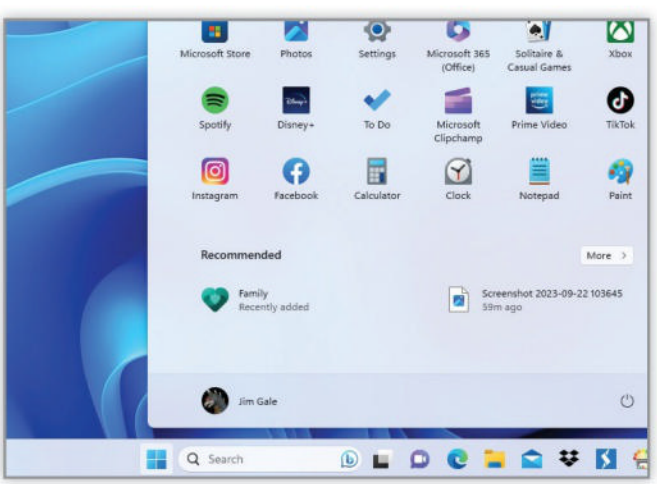
Search Tool

The embedded search field of Windows 10 is back, simply enter a search term here and press return. This opens a new system search panel. This unified search allows you to not only search for things on your computer, but also in OneDrive and for results from websites. As you begin typing, search suggestions appear.



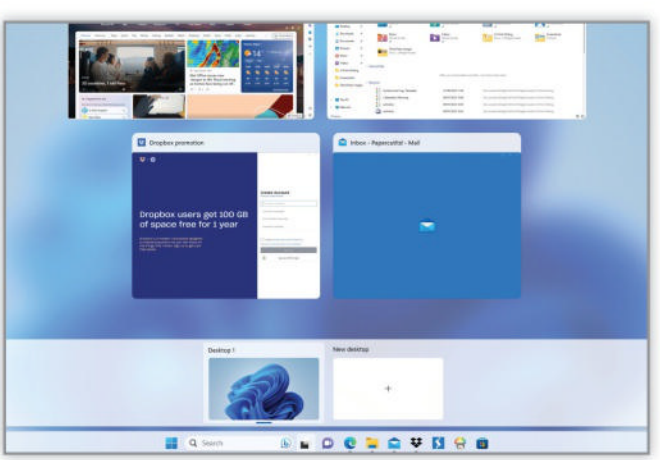
Start Menu

The first icon in the row of taskbar icons is the Start menu button. Clicking this opens the Start menu directly above the icons. You can right-click the Start menu button to see a jump menu of additional links and tools. These include a shortcut to shut down or sign out of your computer.



Task View

The third button in the row of taskbar icons opens Task View. Task View is not a new feature to Windows, but it has been slightly changed and streamlined for this version. Task View allows you to quickly see every app and window you have open, switch between them and even create new desktops.

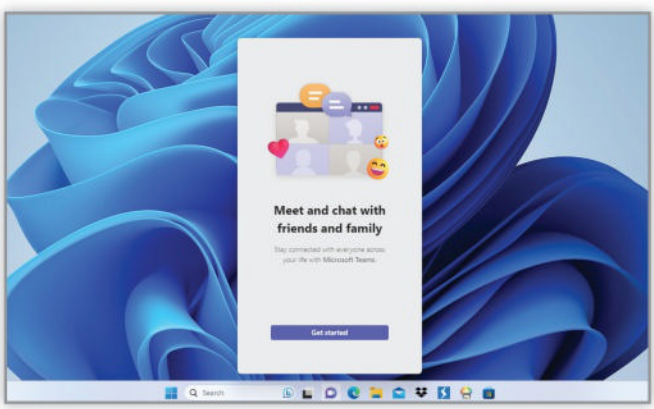


Widgets

The far left Weather report button opens the Widget panel, on the screen. The widget panel can be customised to suit your needs with information such as weather, photos, stock prices, sports results and news stories. As Windows 11 develops, it is likely even more functionality will be added.

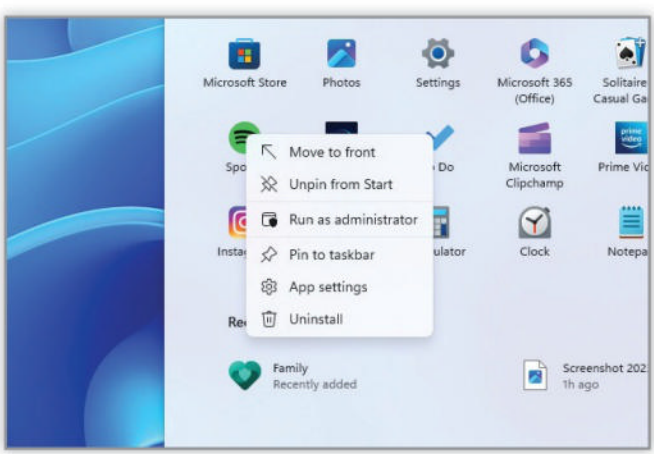
Chat/Teams

The huge recent rise of remote working and video meetings goes some way to explain why Microsoft have embedded Teams as part of Windows 11. Once you are set up and signed into your Teams account, clicking this button will open the start/join meeting interface.



Pinning Apps

A few other apps and other software will be pinned to the taskbar when you first use your Windows 11 PC. You can add several more as and when you choose. To pin compatible apps, right-click on the app icon anywhere you see it (Start menu for example), and then click Pin to Taskbar.



Peek

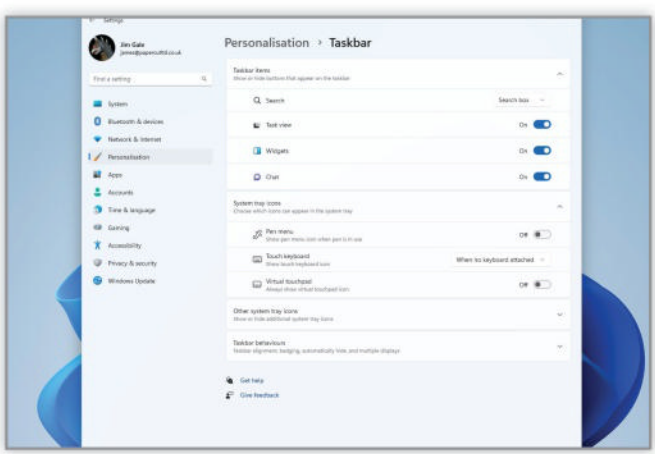
Hovering over any open app icon in the Taskbar brings up a Peek preview of the window. If a movie is playing, for example, you will see it playing here too. If you mouse over the preview, the actual app or window will pop up on screen. You will also see an X to close the window, without actually selecting it.

System Tools

The right-hand side of the taskbar is reserved for the system tools, the time and date (which opens the Notification Center upon a click) and the Show Desktop button. The system tools will vary depending on your computer, but may include battery status, Wi-Fi status, Sound and OneDrive.

Taskbar Settings

You have quite a lot of free reign when it comes to which apps you have showing in the taskbar. Open Settings > Personalisation > Taskbar. Here you can use the slider switches to enable or disable the default apps that appear. You can also change the alignment of the pinned apps back to the left.



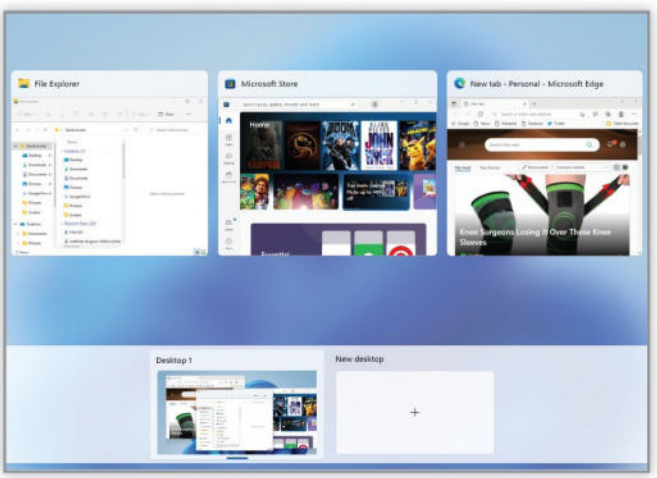
Using Task View and Multiple Desktops

Task View was introduced properly in Windows 10, as a way to make multi-tasking easier and allowing the creation of extra desktop areas. In Windows 11 it's even easier to instantly check and switch to open windows; and to create and manage multiple desktops.

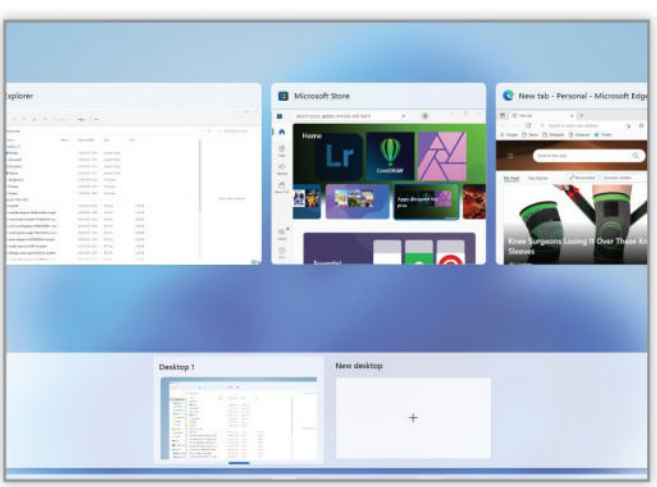
Using Task View

Task View is a quick way to view and manage all of the windows and apps open on your PC at any given moment, even those that are minimised.

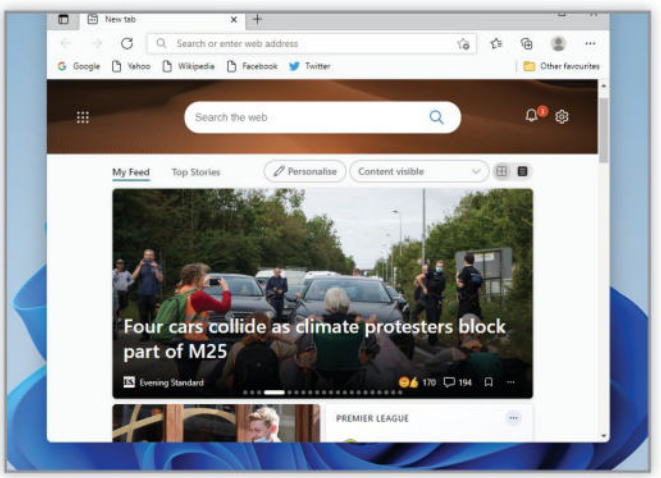
Step 1 Task View is accessed by clicking the third icon in the taskbar; the white square on the black square. The Task View screen is split into two sections: Open tasks and desktops. Any apps or windows you have open, even if they are currently minimised, will be displayed in the open tasks panel.



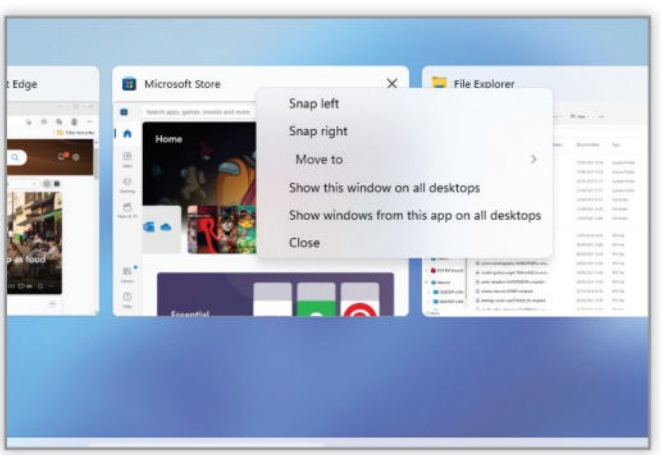
Step 2 The size and shape of the windows shown in Task View depend on the size and shape of the actual window. For example, if you have Microsoft Edge open at full screen, it will be displayed as a wide rectangle in Task View. If you have a lot of windows open, the open tasks panel will be scrollable.



Step 3 Click on any window or app in Task View to open it at full size on the desktop. It will appear in front of any windows you already had open and visible on the desktop. You can also close windows or apps directly from the Task view. Just hover the mouse over the window and click the X button.



Step 4 If you right-click on one of the windows/apps shown in Task View, you will see several more options. Snap left/right will open the selected window, but "snapped" or positioned to the left or right of the home screen. You will see that there are also several options for showing/hiding the window on new desktops.

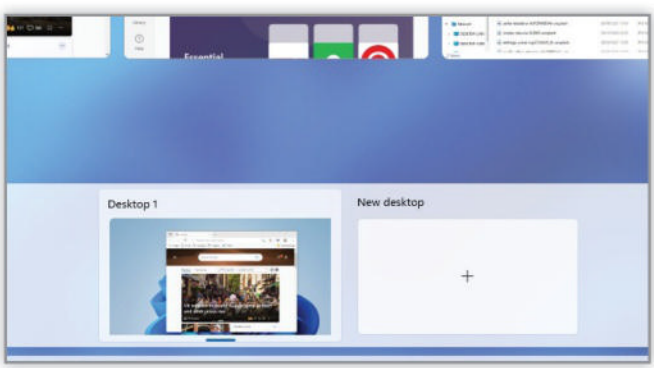


Using Multiple Desktops

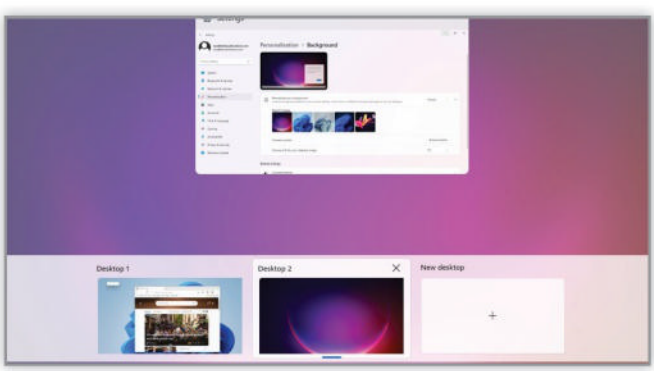
Creating multiple desktops is a great way of separating your activities across multiple defined spaces, and helps you concentrate and split your workload.

Step 1 One of the great features in Task View is the ability to add extra desktops. Virtual desktops are essentially extra workspaces, so for example you can have one space with your email and chat windows open and another where you're working in PowerPoint without email distractions.

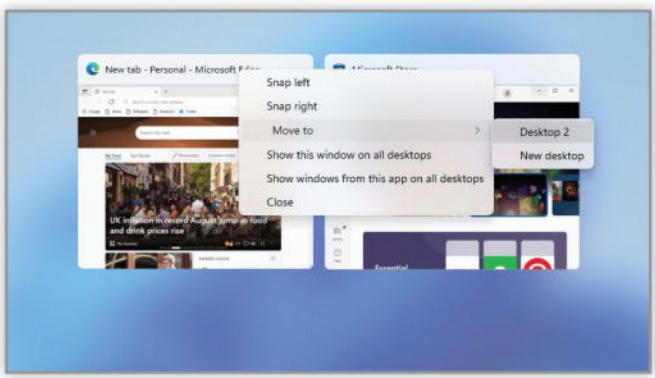
Step 2 Click or tap the New Desktop button at the bottom of the Task View screen and you will see an entirely new and blank desktop. If you had any apps or windows open in the main desktop, they won't be open here. Don't worry, they haven't been closed, they are still open on the other desktop.



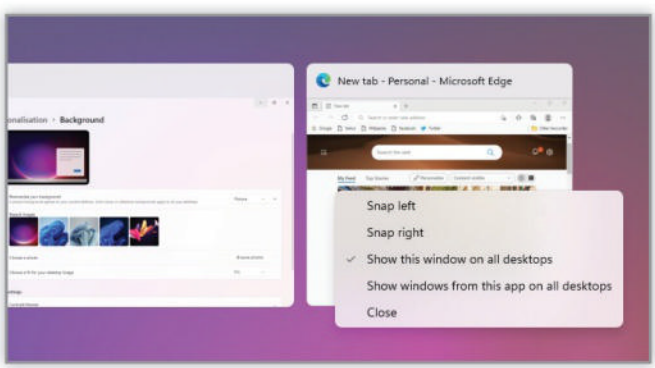
Step 3 With Task View open, right click on one of the desktop previews at the bottom and you can choose a different background wallpaper (making identifying which desktop you are on currently easier), and also you can choose to move a desktop to the left or right, switching which one is the main desktop.



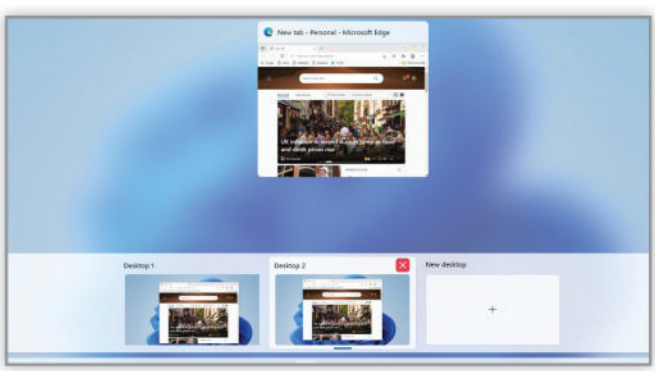
Step 4 You can right-click the apps in Task View to send them to another desktop. You can also drag and drop windows/apps from one desktop to another. If you have an app or window open in one desktop and then try to open it in another, you will just switch to the desktop where it was already open.



Step 5 To get around this problem, open the Task View and right click on an app or window. From the menu, choose either "Show this window on all desktops" or "Show windows from this app on all desktops". You can also use this menu to move apps or windows between your open desktops.



Step 6 If you hover over the apps and windows shown in the Open Tasks panel, you will see an X appear; now you can close superfluous desktops down to save resources. Doing this doesn't close any apps down, so you don't need to manually move them yourself. It just automatically adds them to the main desktop for you.



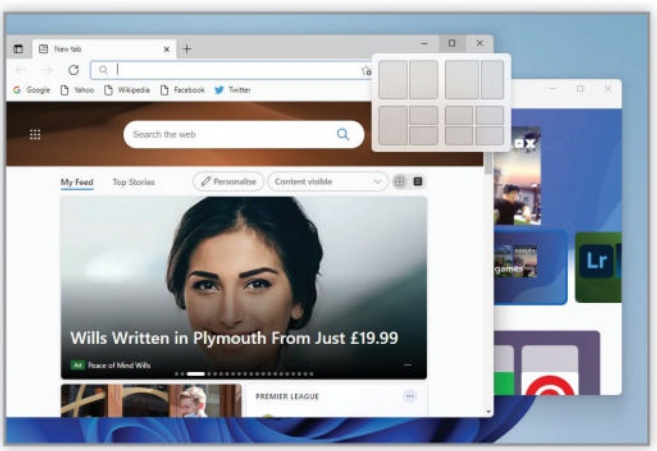
Using Snap Layouts and Snap Groups

Snap Layouts and Snap Groups, while similar to Snap Assist in Windows 10, are completely new features for Windows 11. Each is designed to make your life easier by giving you new ways to organise and retrieve apps and windows on a busy desktop.

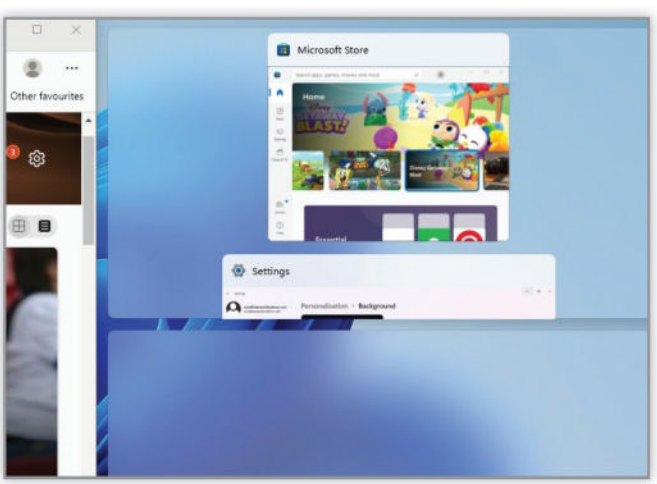
Using Snap Layouts

Snap Layouts are a quick and easy way to organise a busy or cluttered desktop. They are similar to Snap Assist, but are created in a new and different way.

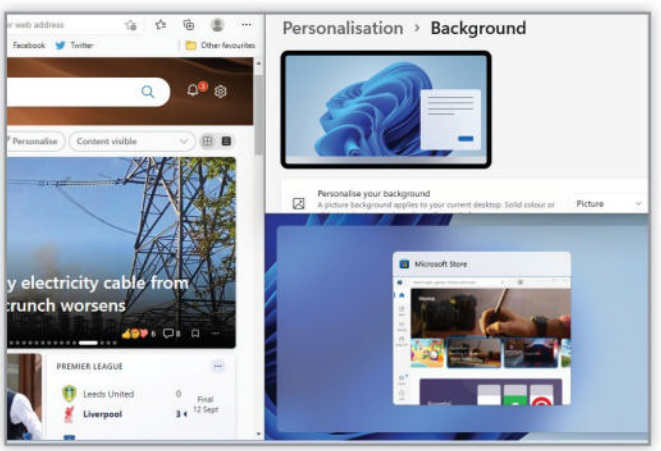
Step 1 Snap Layouts can be created with just one open app or window, but really come into their own when several are open. Move your mouse over the Maximise button (top-right corner) of any open app or window, without clicking. After a second, a brand new menu will pop up, showing the available layouts you can use.



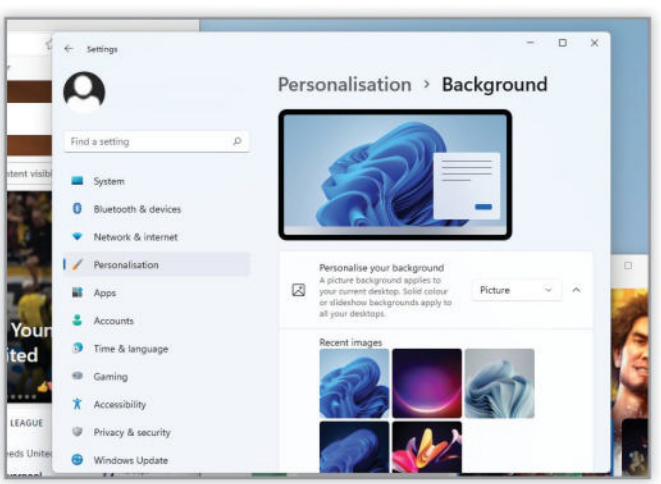
Step 2 There are 4 preset layouts available (at present, although more may be added): 2 equal windows side-by-side, 2 unequal windows side-by-side, 3 windows and 4 equal windows. Click on whichever you want to use, and the window/app you used to open the layout will snap into one of the positions.



Step 3 Your other open windows/apps will appear as previews in one of the other layout positions. Click one of them to open it in that layout position. The process is then repeated for any other open windows, if you choose a layout with more than 2 spaces. Windows are automatically resized to fit in the layout.

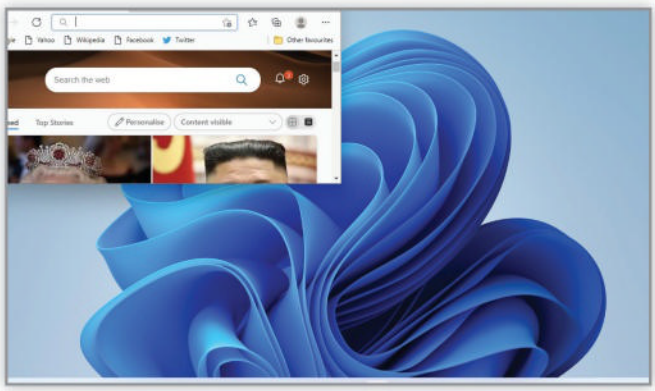


Step 4 If you now try to move a window or app out of the layout, it will switch back to its original dimensions when it unsnaps from the grid. You can create multiple Snap Layouts, each containing different apps/windows. These remain until the windows are closed or removed from the group.



Step 5 You can change the dimensions of the layout once you have created one. With the layout open, hover your mouse over the line where the windows meet, either horizontally or vertically. A wider bar will appear, which you can click and drag to change the horizontal or vertical dimensions of the layout.

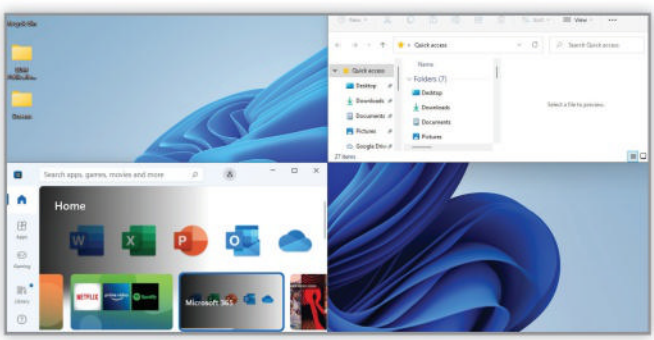
Step 6 You can snap apps and windows into position using a keyboard shortcut as well. Highlight a window and then press Windows Key + one of the arrow keys. Depending on which direction you press, the window will snap left, right, up or down. Combine key presses to snap up and left, for example.



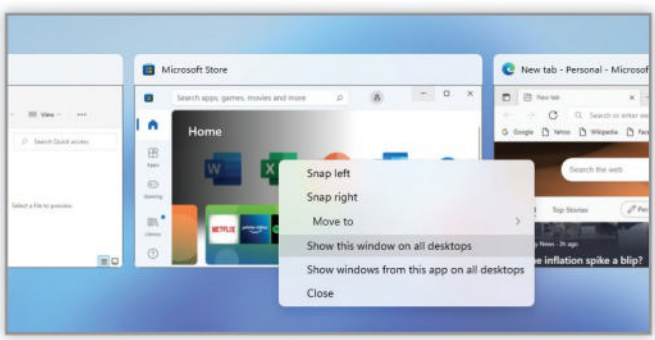
Using Snap Groups

Snap Groups are an extension of Snap Layouts, keeping snapped apps and windows together even when the layout is minimised.

Step 1 Once you have created a Snap Layout, or multiple layouts, you can minimise the whole thing (by clicking the Show Desktop button on the right of the Taskbar) or minimise each individual app or window. As long as they are not closed, the layout persists as a Snap Group.



Step 3 If you use multiple desktops, you can move Snap Groups to any of the additional desktop areas. Just open the Task View, and then right click on each of the apps or windows in the group and choose, “Show this window on all desktop”. The group will automatically be recreated on the other desktop.

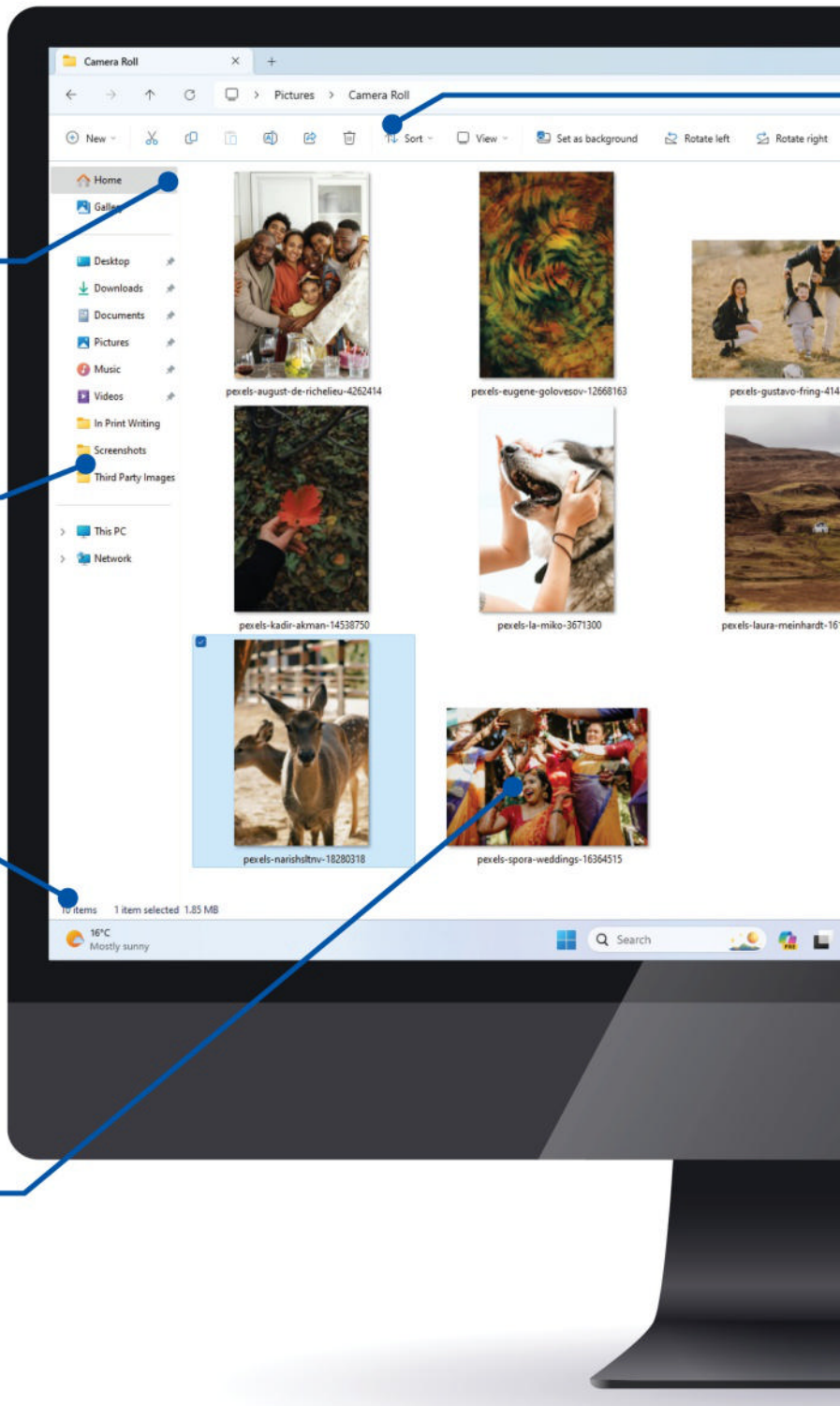


Step 2 If you move your mouse over any of the Taskbar icons of apps or windows in a group, two Peek windows will pop up. One shows the app on its own, and they other shows the app in the group. To re-open the group, just click on the group preview. To open the app on its own, click that preview.

Step 4 You can find a lot of different settings for how windows snap in the main settings > System > Multi-tasking. Click the Snap windows option and a list of different settings will open. You can also, if you wish, completely turn off window snapping here, using the slider switch.

Inside the File Explorer

Although the File Explorer is much the same as it was in previous versions of Windows, it's still worth exploring it further. The File Explorer is one of the most overlooked tools in Windows, but if you want to be able to find your accumulated photos, music files, word documents and other files, without having to use Search every time, it's definitely something you should be familiar with.



1 File Explorer Toolbar

The simplified Explorer toolbar still contains all of the tools you need to manage the different files and folders you can view. Once you have selected a file or folder in the main pane, more tools become active. You can also click the "More menu" button to see additional options such as Burn to disc and Compress to Zip file.

2 Navigation Pane - Folders

The left-hand sidebar contains a list of different file folders on your computer. Clicking on any of the folders shown here will display the various files and folders inside; in the main pane. The list is split into sections, including Quick Access/Recent, OneDrive and This PC. If you right-click on a blank area, you can choose to show All Folders here.

3 Info Bar

The thin bar along the bottom of the File Explorer displays several bits of useful information. If nothing in the main window is selected, the info bar shows the total number of items in the selected folder. Click on a file and the file size is also shown here. If you select several files, the number of items selected is shown, along with the total size of all selected items combined.

4 Folder Contents Pane

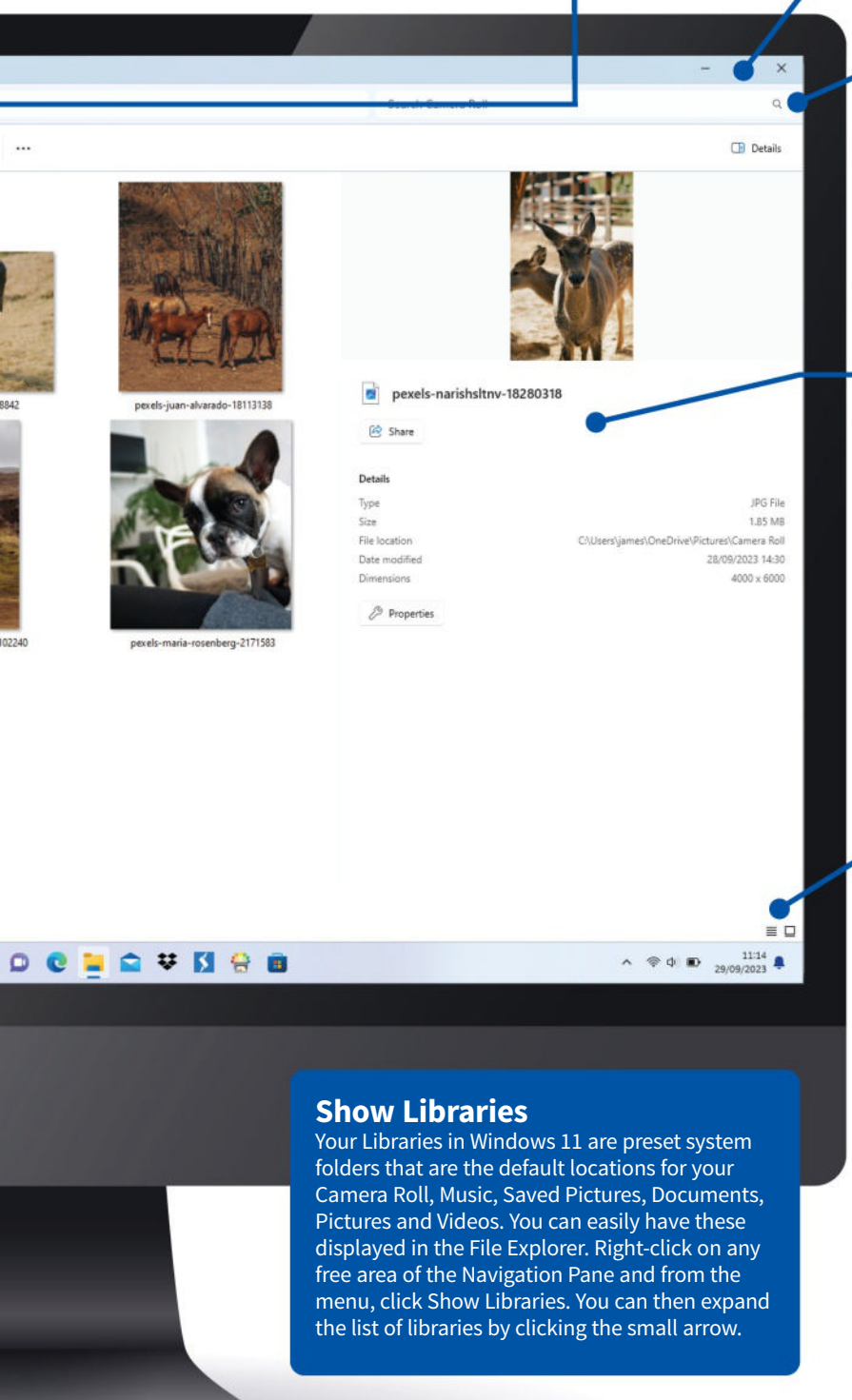
When a folder is selected in the File Location sidebar, its contents are shown in the main pane. The contents of any single folder may vary greatly of course, but Windows uses standard icons to show Word documents, text files, various different image formats and shortcuts to apps and software. As you can see here, images will usually be displayed as a thumbnail unless view settings have been changed.

5 Menus

You will have noticed by now that Windows 11 has some fancy new icons in place of the previous cut, paste, copy, rename and so on. They may a little getting used to, especially if your muscle memory mouse finger keeps hitting the wrong icon! Don't worry, though, it won't take long to adapt.

6 Window Controls

Almost every window that opens in Windows includes these controls. From left to right they are: Minimise, Maximise and Close. In Windows 11, moving the mouse over the maximise button brings up the Snap Layouts panel. Right-clicking on the control bar will show you a couple of extra controls, including Restore, Move and Size.



7 Search

The familiar Search Bar may look identical to previous versions of Windows, however, there's a lot more going on under the hood. Windows 11 utilises new search patterns, making it faster and easier to find what you're after.

8 Preview Pane

If the preview pane is enabled, approximately a third of the File Explorer window will be reserved for a preview of any selected files. Normally, only image, html and text files will display a preview in this pane. The preview pane can be increased or decreased in size by clicking and dragging the scroll bar to the left of it.

9 Folder View

The two buttons here let you choose between viewing the contents of the folder in a thumbnail format or alternatively, as a list. When the folder items are displayed as a list, you can choose to display a varying amount of information, including date last modified, file type and file size. Items shown as a list will still display a preview in the Preview Pane when selected.

Show Libraries

Your Libraries in Windows 11 are preset system folders that are the default locations for your Camera Roll, Music, Saved Pictures, Documents, Pictures and Videos. You can easily have these displayed in the File Explorer. Right-click on any free area of the Navigation Pane and from the menu, click Show Libraries. You can then expand the list of libraries by clicking the small arrow.

The View Tab

The View tab in File Explorer allows you to completely change how the window looks, how files are displayed and even whether each item has a permanent check box next to it. One of the most useful tools in the View tab is the Details Pane button. This switches the Preview Pane to show a list of file details instead. This is particularly useful if you are looking at images.

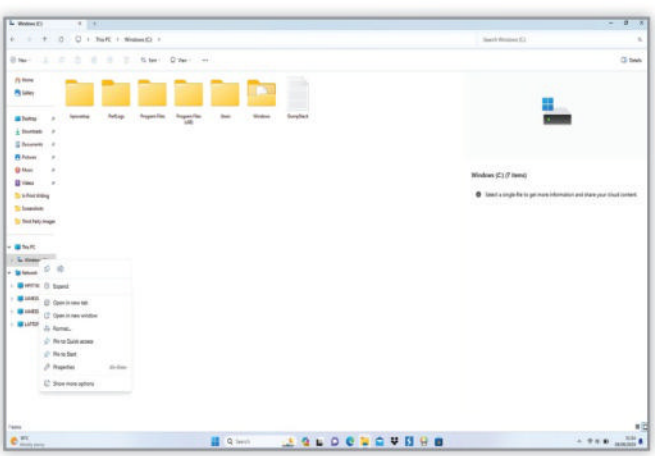
How to Use File Explorer

You can just use the powerful and improved search feature to find files and documents; but the new, simplified File Explorer is often a better choice, especially if you are looking for groups of files or want to preview several files to find the right one.

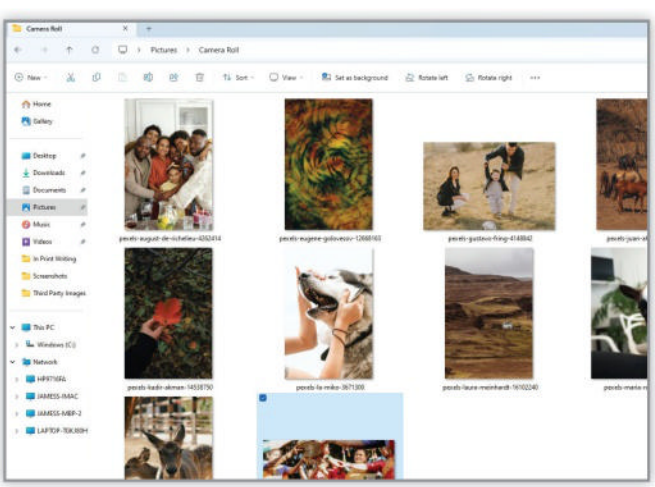
What Features in File Explorer?

File Explorer is a much undervalued part of Windows. And while it hasn't fundamentally changed for several versions of the operating system, Windows 11 has made some changes, which we'll take you through here.

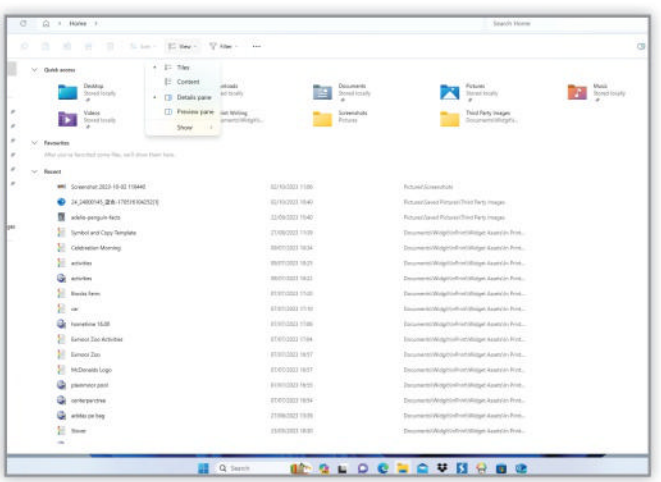
Step 1 The way you browse files in Windows 11 is similar to previous versions of Windows, but File Explorer has been slightly simplified. The main Quick Access window shows you your most frequently used folders (after all, how many of us dip into more than five or ten folders in a day?) and also recent files.



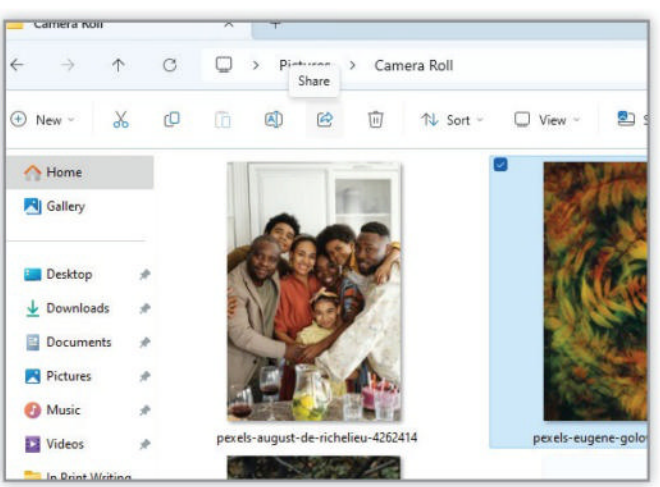
Step 2 The sidebar also works on the same principle, and via a new Quick Access feature you can pin folders or files that you want to stick around. It will also show you Frequent folders too. You can pin things permanently onto Quick Access by right-clicking them and selecting Add to Quick Access.



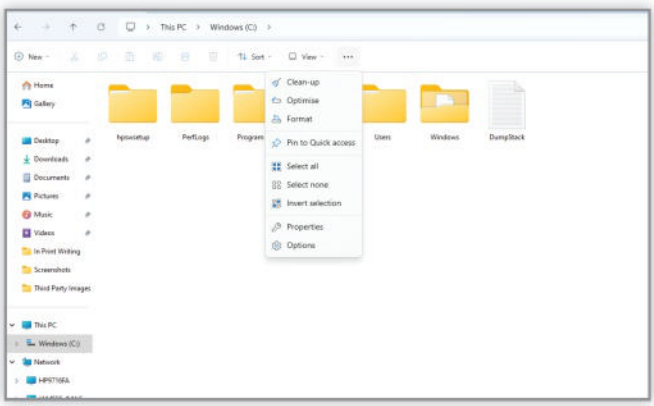
Step 3 There are new icons across all File Explorer views. And there are a lot more file operations that you can access on the menu at the top of the window (known as the 'ribbon'), without the need to use the right-click menu. This makes it easier to use on PCs with touch screens.



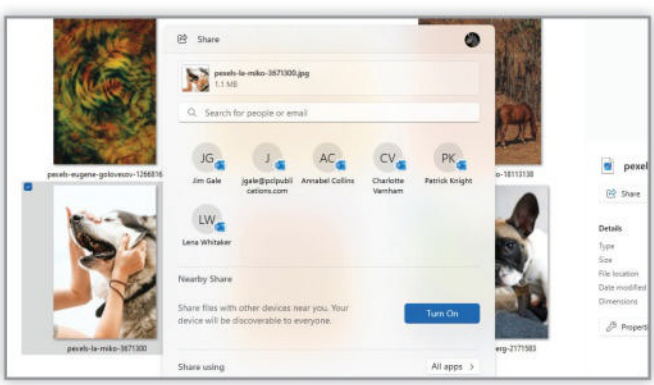
Step 4 The new icons are all fairly self-explanatory if you have used any PC in the past. There are icons for Cut, Copy, Delete, Rename and Share, as well as folder control icons like View and Sort. If you are unsure what any icon does, just hover your pointer over one to see a label pop up.



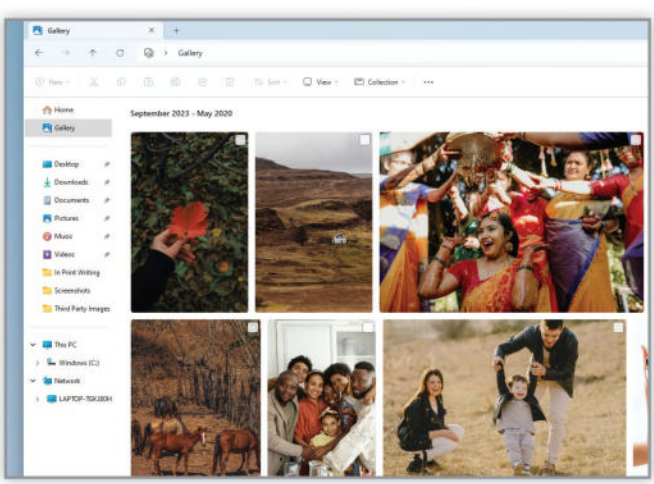
Step 5 The simplification continues on the This PC screen. All of the controls are still there, you just need to click on the More menu (the three dots) in the top bar. This menu is contextual. For example, select a drive such as C: and then click the menu to see additional options such as Pin to Quick access and Properties.



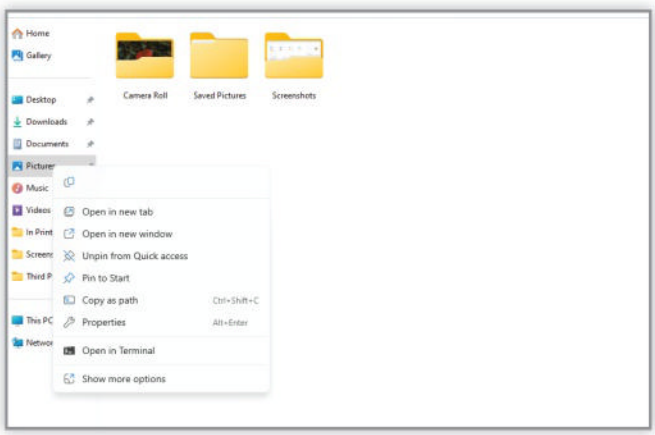
Step 6 Sharing files in File Explorer is again a simple process, click on the Share link and the share panel will open. The sharing options shown here will vary depending on which apps you have installed and which communication features you have decided to set up.



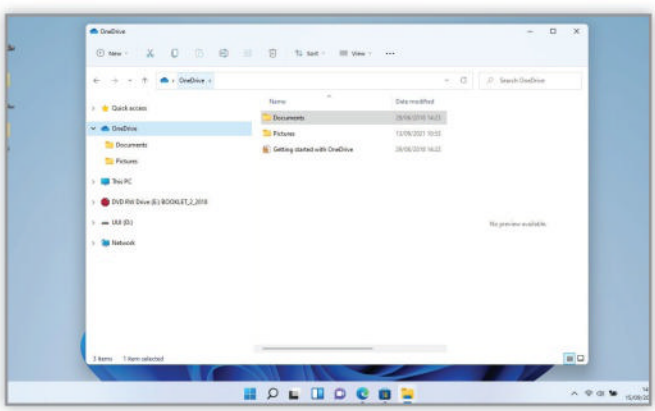
Step 7 When viewing some files, such as photos, in File Explorer, it can be useful to see numerous images together. This is where the Gallery option, in the left side quick folders view, becomes very useful. By selecting this option you can access all the images you have on your device.



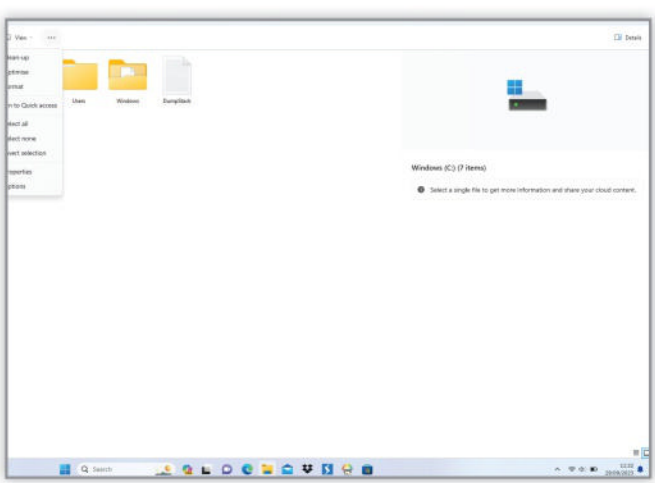
Step 8 You can access just about every folder on your computer, both system and created folders, from the File Explorer. There are several folders in the sidebar that are always shown, including This PC, Network and OneDrive. Right click on the sidebar to add even more useful folders to this area.



Step 9 If you've come from an earlier version of Windows, you should be familiar with OneDrive. It's Microsoft's cloud storage application and it's available to access directly from File Explorer in Windows 11; so you can view your cloud-stored files just as if they were on your computer.



Step 10 You can quickly change how you view files in File Explorer using the folder view buttons in the bottom-right corner (thumbnail view or detail view). There are many more folder options, including privacy and view options, accessed by clicking the More button and then choosing Options.



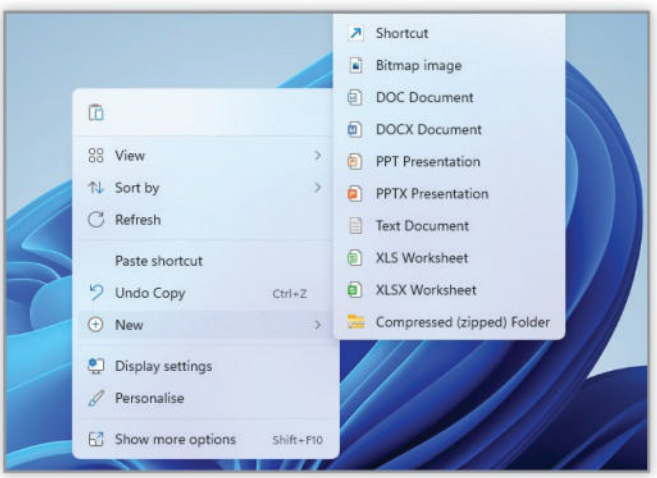
Create and Manage Folders

Despite all of the changes to the Window's OS, folders have remained one of the core tools for organising your files. Much more than just boxes to keep your photos or music files in, folders can really help to improve how you use Windows 11 on a day-to-day basis.

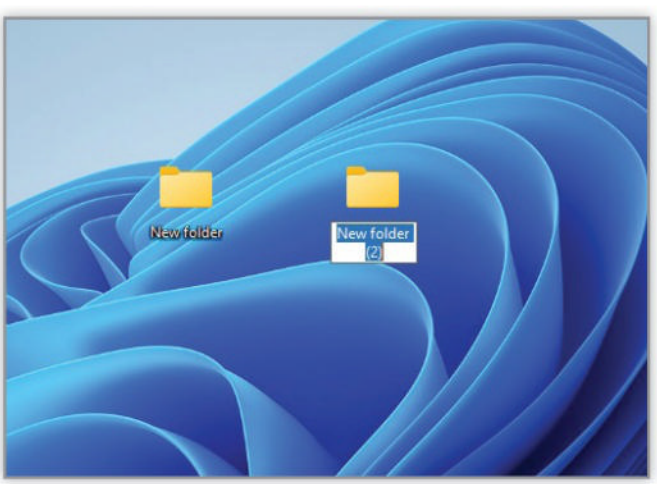
Creating New Folders

It may seem too simple if you are a long time Windows user, but here's a look at how to create new folders on the desktop and within other folders.

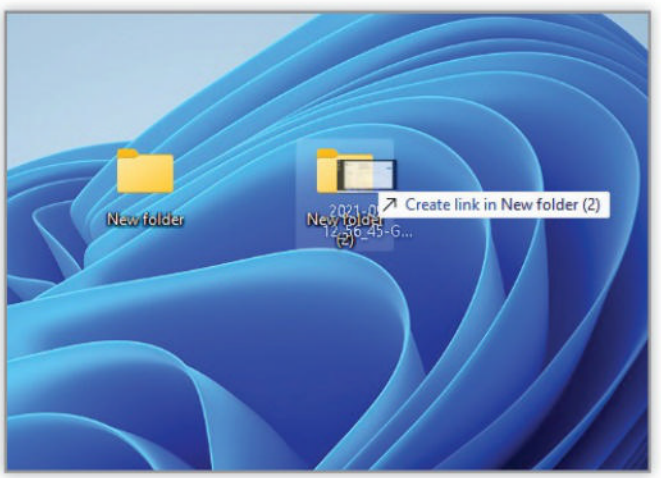
Step 1 On the desktop, right-click and select New folder from the action menu that appears. The familiar yellow folder icon will then appear at that position on the desktop (wherever you clicked), with the name automatically set as 'New folder' but highlighted ready to change.



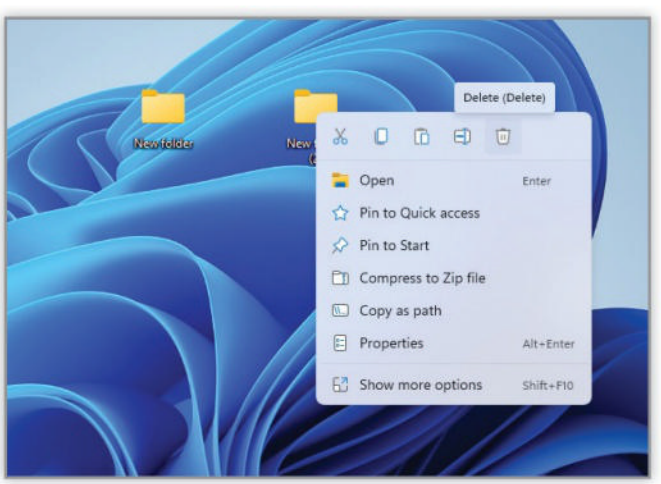
Step 2 You can leave the name as 'New folder' if you wish. If you then create a second folder next to the first, it will automatically be named 'New folder (2)'. You can rename a folder at any time by left-clicking on the title once, or right-clicking and selecting Rename from the menu.



Step 3 Double-click any folder to open it and view the contents. You can move items into a folder by selecting, dragging and dropping into an open folder or a closed one. If the folder is closed, drag the selected items over the top of it until the folder is highlighted, then release.



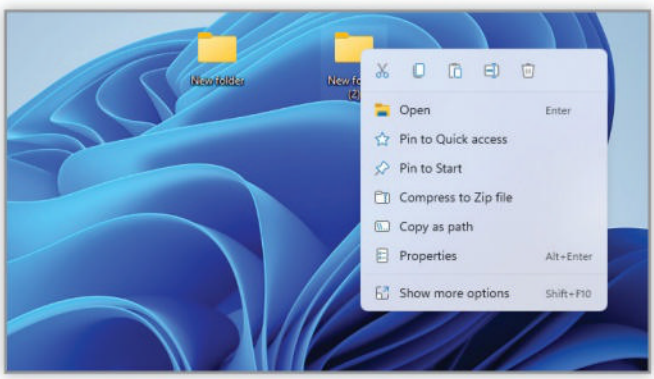
Step 4 To delete a folder, right-click on it and select Delete from the action menu. You can also click and drag the folder to the Recycle Bin icon on your desktop. Anything in the folder will also be placed in the recycle bin. To move folders around the desktop, just click, drag and drop them.



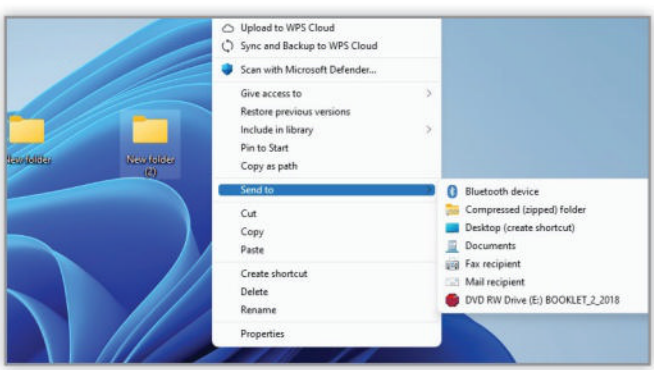
Managing Your Folders

Once created, folders can be adapted and customised in a number of ways. You can even change the default icon used whenever a new folder is added.

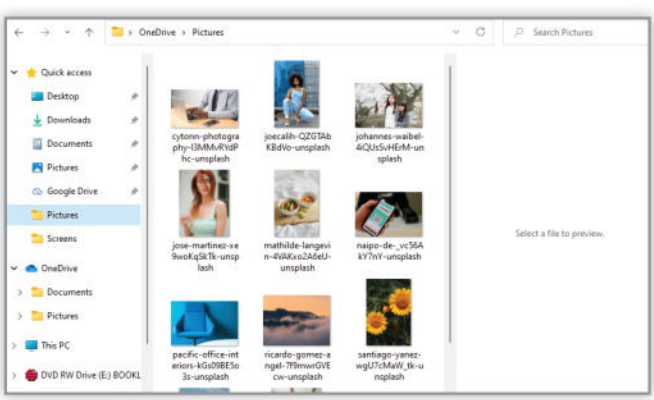
Step 1 You can manage a folder in a number of ways, without even opening it. Right-click on any folder and the action menu appears. The exact options that appear will depend on the apps or software you have installed but can include: scan for viruses, compress, shred, zip and more.



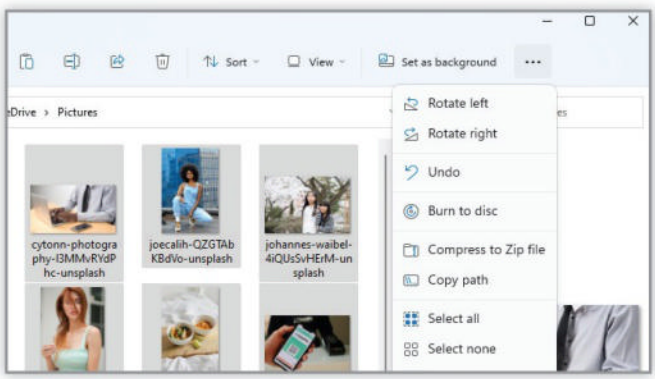
Step 2 The standard (Windows 11) options in the folder action menu include: Pin to Quick Access, Open, Share, Pin to Start, Send To, Cut, Copy, Rename and Delete. Some of these options are shown as new icons along the top of the action menu. You can see more folder options by clicking that option.



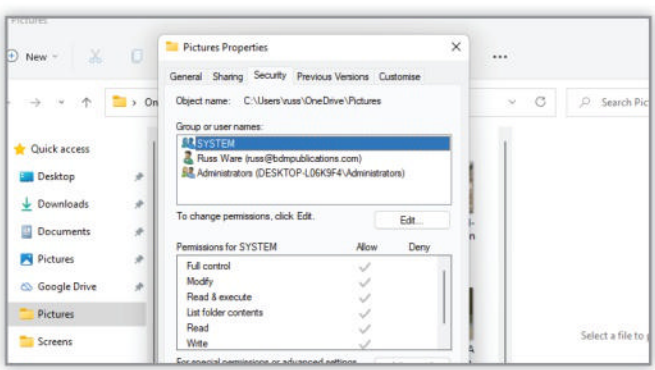
Step 3 Open the folder and a whole range of further options are available along the top of the new window. Again, these are a mix of icons and test options. When you select something in the folder, yet more options will appear, which vary depending on the type of file you selected in the folder.



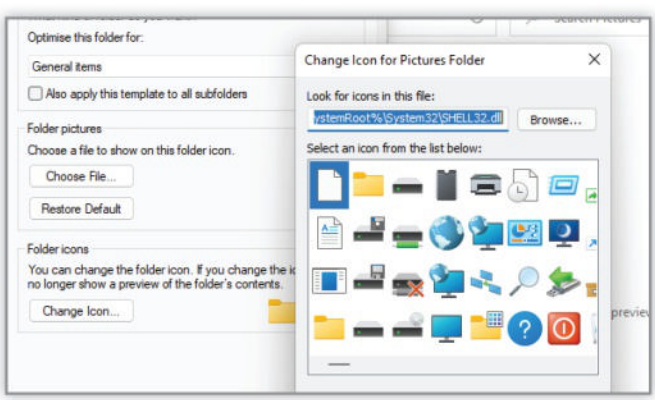
Step 4 Most of these options are self-explanatory, such as copy, paste and select all, but some are a little more confusing. Most casual computer users won't need to use 90 per cent of the options in day-to-day use but it is worth understanding them anyway. Add a few files to the folder and experiment.



Step 5 If you want to get really deep into managing your folders, there are even more options to explore. Open any folder and right-click anywhere inside the main window. From the action menu that appears, click Properties. Here you can manage all sort of things; from security to icon style.



Step 6 To change the icon style (which will change the style of all folder icons), click the customise tab and then click Change Icon at the bottom. Scroll to view all of the available icons (downloaded icons can be accessed by browsing), click on your preferred icon and click OK.



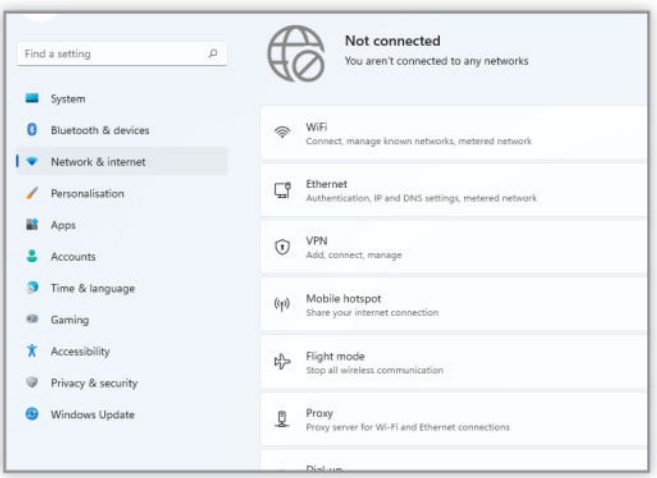
Connecting Your PC to the Internet

Setting an Internet connection is an important step. Windows 11 makes joining and managing networks easy, bringing all of the relevant settings together in one place, including VPN and hotspot settings; and even the Wi-Fi adaptor hardware properties.

Connecting to Wi-Fi

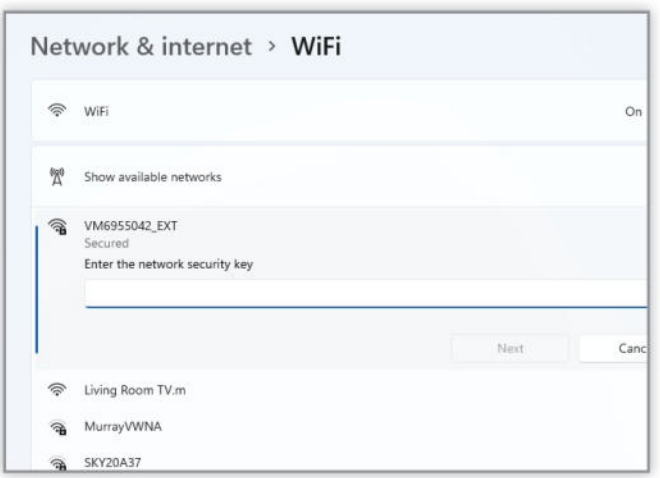
A Wi-Fi network connection is now by far the most common way people connect to the Internet. The process should be fairly familiar to you by now, but if not, here are the exact steps to connect.

Step 1 If your computer is not connected to the Internet, Windows will display a small globe icon on the right side of the taskbar. You can either click this and select Wi-Fi from the quick settings, or you can open the main Settings app > Network & Internet > Wi-Fi (the best route with a brand new connection).

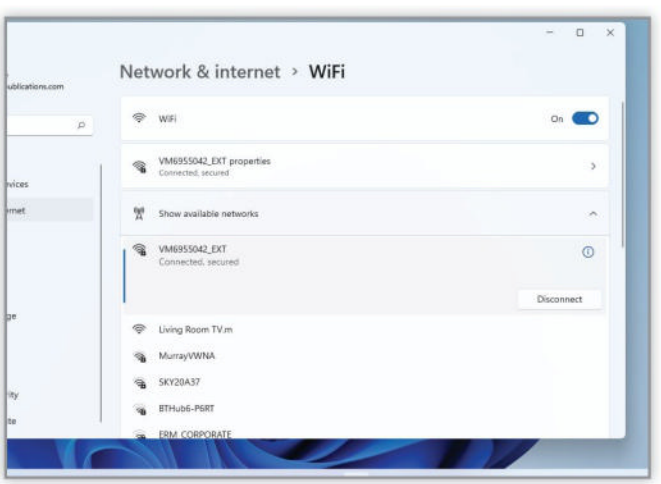


Step 2 Use the slider switch to enable Wi-Fi on your computer. Now click "Show available networks" to see a list of the networks within range of your computer. This may take a few seconds to scan and find the networks. Hopefully you will see the Wi-Fi network you want to connect to.

Step 3 Click on the required network name in the list and then click "Connect". As this is probably the first time you are connecting, you will then need to enter the password (Network security key) for the network. Click "Next" and as long as the network/password is correct, you should be good to go.



Step 4 To disconnect from the Wi-Fi network at any time, open Settings > Network & Internet > Wi-Fi again, and click on the networks list. Click the Disconnect button. You can also choose to Forget the network (sometimes useful for troubleshooting connections), in the Manage known networks section.

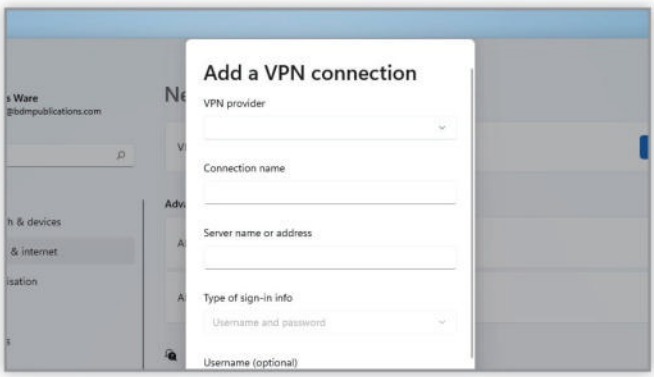


Manage Network Settings

We'll show you how to master your Wi-Fi settings and explain what you need to do if you have a problem connecting to the Internet.

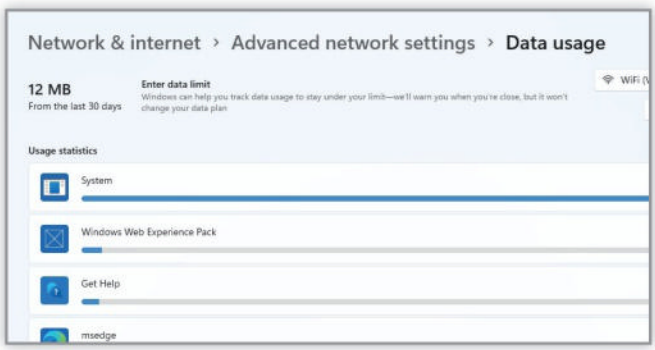
VPN Settings

If you need to log in to a home VPN or corporate network, this is where you will need to enter the appropriate VPN settings. It's fairly easy to do but you'll need the configuration details from your IT help desk (they will have to enable your VPN access), plus your username and password.



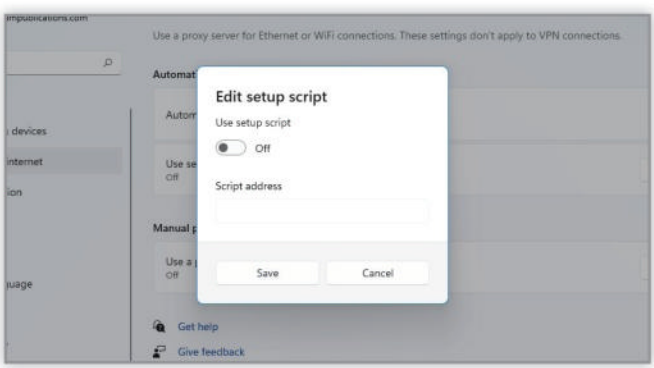
Usage Stats

In a move designed to keep up with more mobile-based computing devices, Windows 11 includes a data usage page in Settings too. Here it splits your data between wired and wireless. We'd like to see more advanced settings than this too, so you could see how much data you used on a public wireless hotspot, for example.



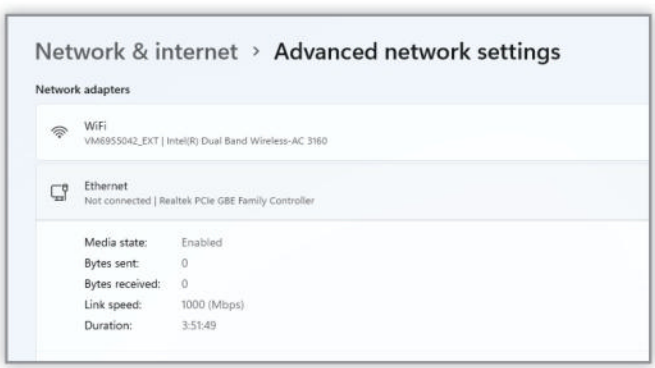
Proxy Settings

If you use a proxy server, this is where you enter any specific settings to do with that. However, Windows 11 should automatically detect proxy settings. Note that the settings you configure here won't apply if you connect via a VPN, because a VPN essentially skips the need for a proxy.



Disable Adaptors

Another thing you can do is to disable and re-enable your network adapter (like the Wi-Fi card in your laptop). View your network connections by clicking Advanced Network Settings in Network Internet and then right-click the network connection in question. You can disable or re-enable it.

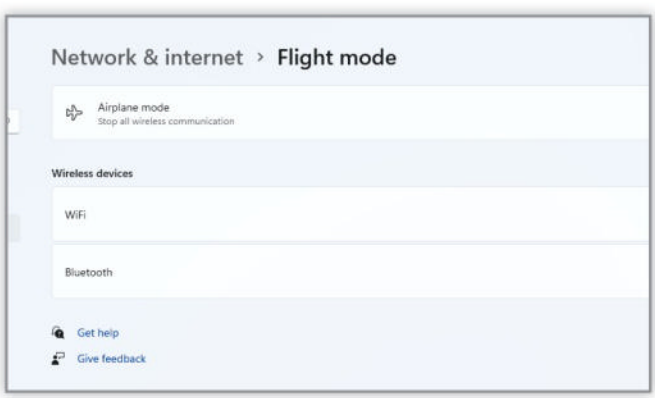


Mobile Hotspot

You can turn your Windows 11 PC into a mobile hotspot, sharing your Internet connection with other devices over Wi-Fi. You can share Wi-Fi, ethernet or cellular data connections. Once enabled, other devices will be able to see your computer when they search for networks to connect to.

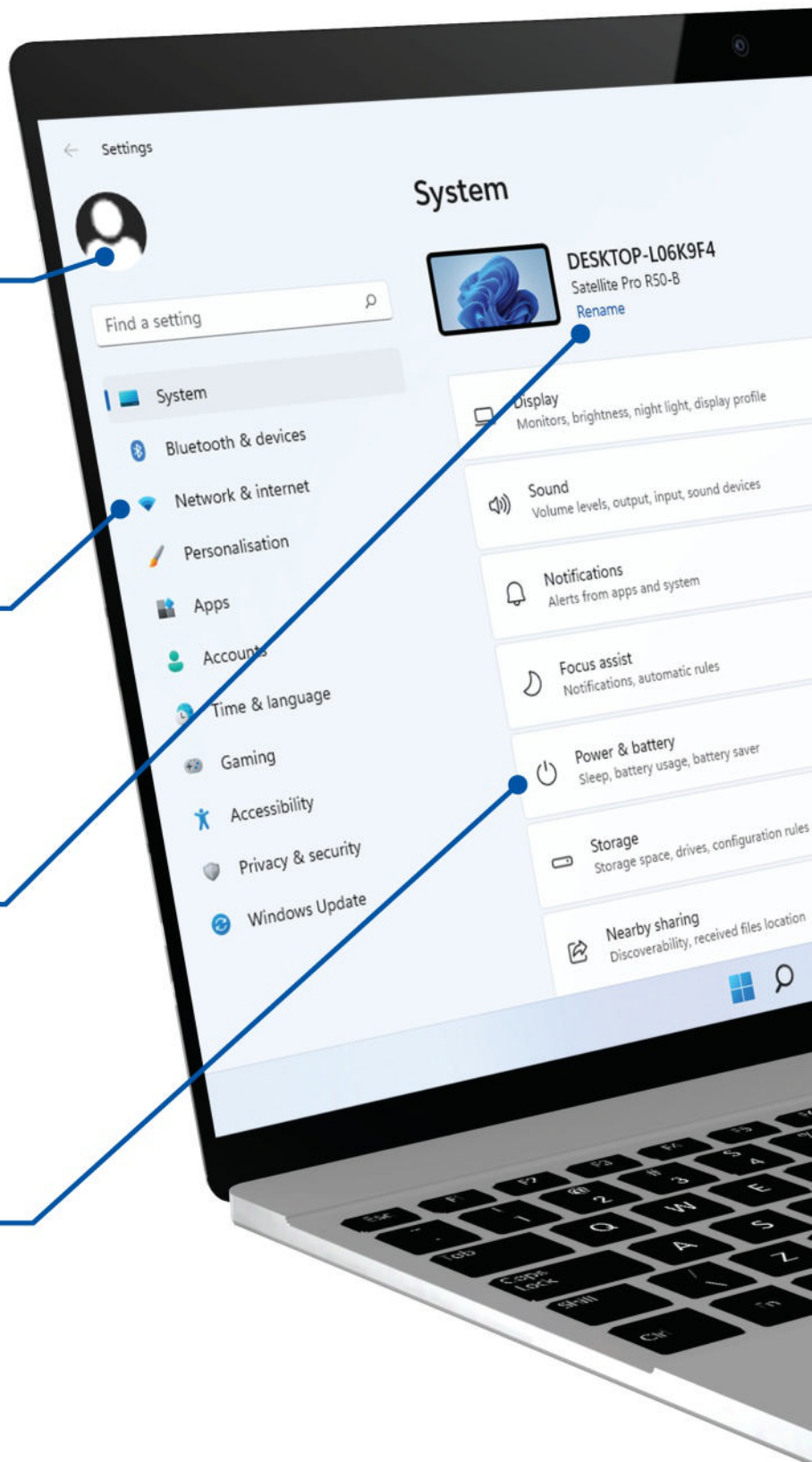
Flight Mode

If you are using a laptop, you will also have access to Flight mode settings (this can also be accessed through the Quick settings panel from the home screen). Here you can disable Wi-Fi and Bluetooth individually, or simply use the Flight Mode slider switch to disable all wireless connections.



Exploring the Windows 11 Settings

The main settings app in Windows 11 has been completely redesigned, making it much easier to find everything you need to keep your computer working the way you need it to. You can find the settings app in the Start menu, or open it by pressing the Windows Key + I.



1 Account & Search

At the top-left of the settings window, you will see your Microsoft account name and email address, along with an avatar image (if you have chosen one). Clicking this will take you to the settings Accounts page. Below that is a search field, allowing you to look for specific settings within the app.

2 Settings Categories

In the left sidebar are all of the main settings categories, from System settings to Windows Update settings. This sidebar remains visible no matter where you are within the settings app. Clicking each category heading will open a list of sub categories.

3 Quick Info Panel

Along the top of several settings categories you will see relevant information about the current settings. For example, at the top of the System settings, you will see the name of the PC, Windows Update status and links to OneDrive and Office365. At the top of the Network & Internet category, you will see the currently connected network, data usage and network properties.

4 Settings Sub-categories

This is where you'll find the individual settings you can change. Some of the settings can be controlled using slider switches displayed in the main sub-category, but most will take you to a more detailed selection of options when clicked. Certain details about current settings may be displayed along the top of the sub-category.

Privacy & Security
The privacy settings contains sections for all of the main areas where your privacy may be compromised, including some which might not be obvious at first.

System Settings
These are the core settings for your computer. Things like Display, Sound, Power & Battery and Storage can be found in this settings category.

Bluetooth & Devices
Having trouble with your mouse or printer? This is where you can access the settings for almost anything that connects to your computer.

Network & Internet
View, connect to and manage your Wi-Fi, Network and other Internet settings here. You can also find a section for adding a VPN, and setting up a Mobile Hotspot.

Personalisation
If you want to change how Windows 11 looks, this is the settings category you need to explore. Change everything from the desktop background to the Start menu styling.

Apps
Every app or piece of software you have installed can be viewed and managed from here. You can also set things like the default apps, and the apps that run on startup.

Accounts
Manage your account settings, from your Microsoft account to your Family Safety, in this section. You can also find your PC sign-in options here.

Time & Language
No surprise that you can change your computers time and language settings here. You will also find settings for speech, typing, auto-correct and advanced keyboard setup.

Windows Update
It is important to make sure that your Windows computer is up-to-date with all the latest updates and revisions. Here you can check to see which updates are available to download and install.

Accessibility
If you have additional accessibility needs, you can find lots of settings here to make life easier. From a narrator tool and screen magnifier, to closed captioning and mouse and keyboard settings.

Using Widgets in Windows 11

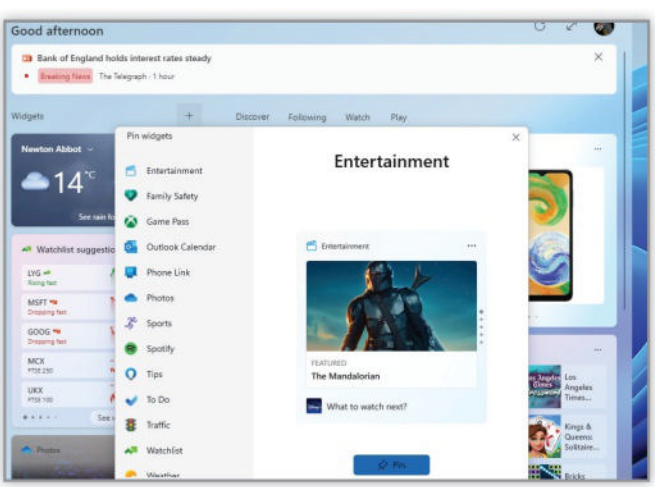
Widgets are desktop app previews, allowing you to see important information from Windows apps, without needing to actually open those apps. Widgets are not new, but the way they are managed and displayed in Windows 11 is new.

Wonderful Widgets

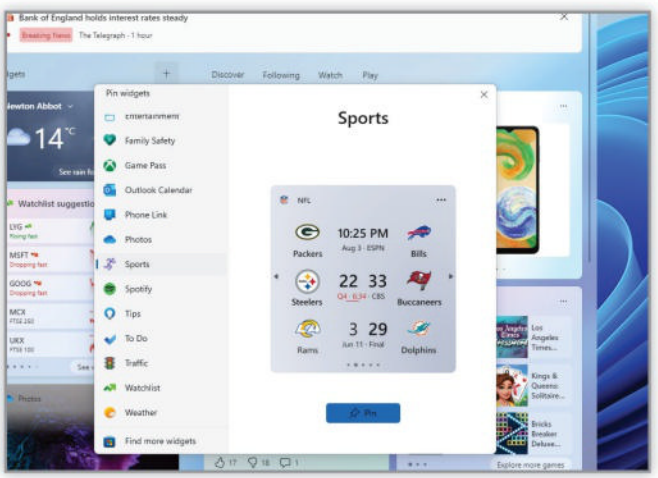
If you are not used to using widgets, you could be excused for hardly noticing they are a part of Windows 11. But once you do start using them, their usefulness becomes obvious.

Step 1 To open the widget panel, click or tap the button in the Taskbar (the blue and white square icon) or press Windows key + W on the keyboard. The panel slides out from the left side of the screen, and will sit over the top of any other apps or windows you currently have open.

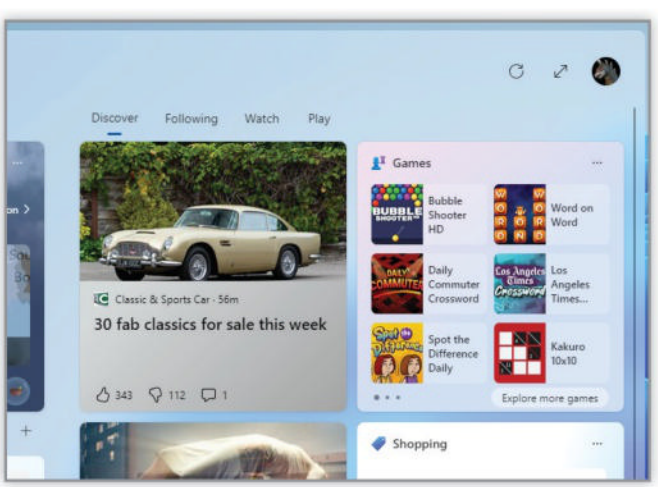
Step 2 The widget panel is initially split up into three main sections: Widgets, Dsicover, Following, Watch and Play. Scroll down the panel to see more content. At the top-right is an account icon, which opens a new panel with account information and the ability to add new widgets.



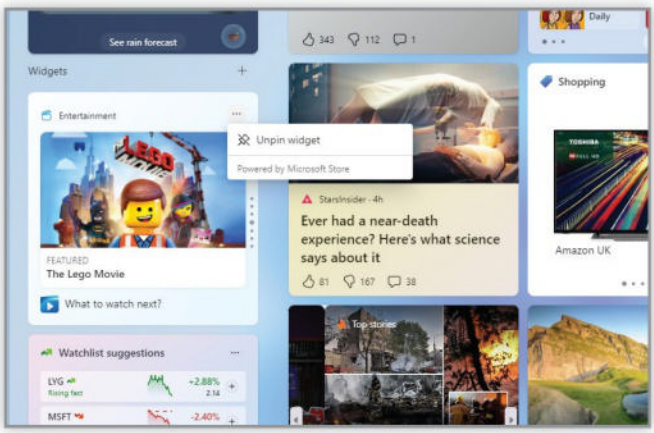
Step 3 The exact widgets available to add will vary, depending on which apps you have installed. As Windows 11 develops, more widgets are likely to be added here, possibly from third-party developers as well as from Microsoft. To add new widgets, just click the + button on each.



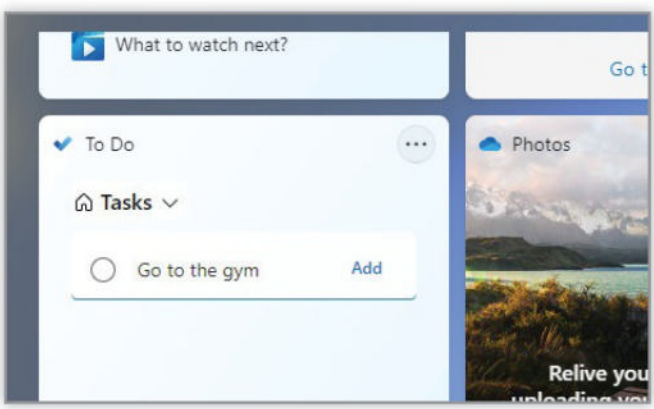
Step 4 After adding widgets, close the account panel and you will see the added widgets in the panel. You can move widgets around in the panel by clicking on the top of the widget and dragging it to the required position. Other widgets will rearrange to fit when you do this.



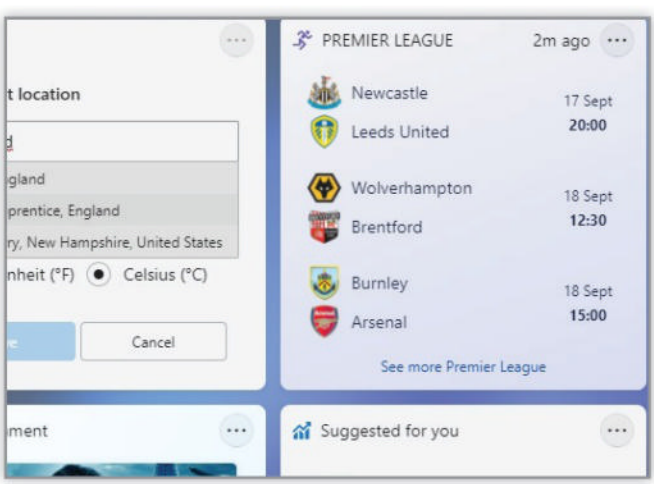
Step 5 To remove a widget, click on the Menu button at the top-right of the widget and choose “Unpin Widget” from the menu. You may also see the option to change the size of the widget in this menu. Not all of the widgets will allow all three of the sizing options.



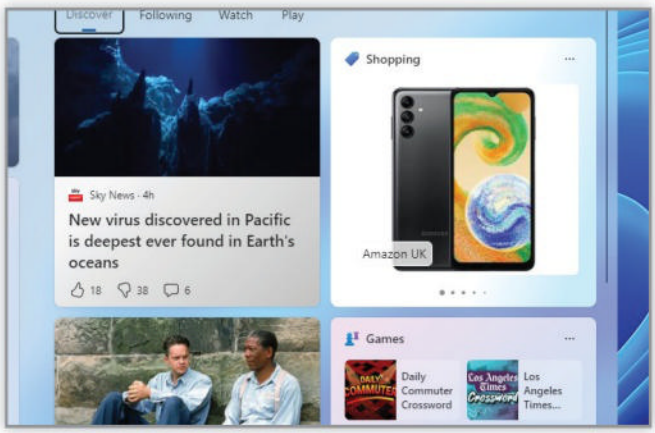
Step 6 Some Widgets allow content editing within the widget. A good example of this is the To Do widget. You can create tasks in the widget by clicking the “Add a task” button, without having to the open the main To Do app. The task then displays instantly in the widget.



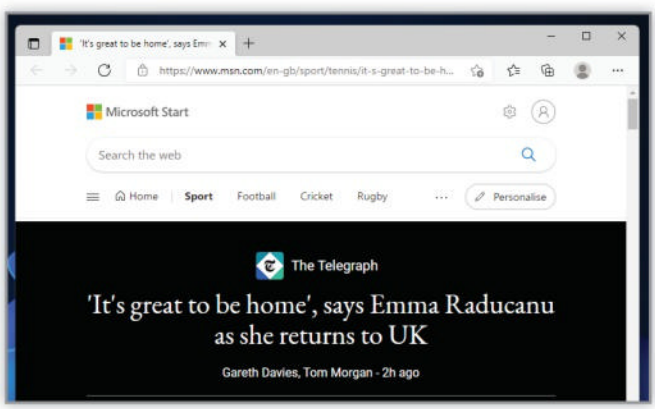
Step 7 Some of the Widgets allow customisation through the More Menu button. The Weather widget, for example, lets you set the default location for the weather forecast that is shown. The Stocks widget lets you change which stock prices are displayed, etc.



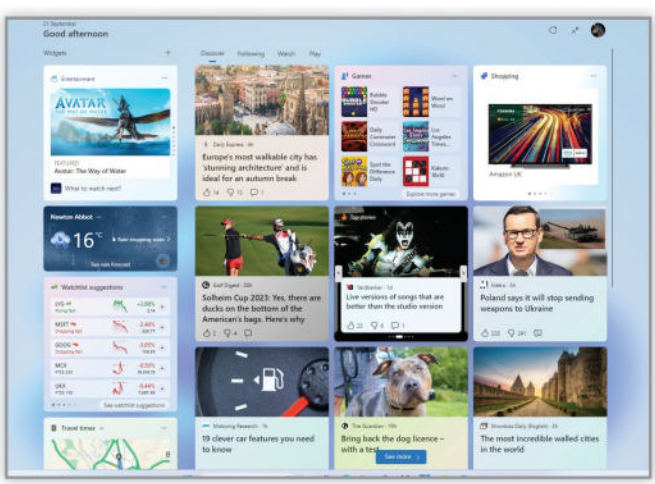
Step 8 The news stories further down the Widgets panel also allow for some customisation. You can click the X to remove a news story, and you can click the More Menu button to choose to see “More/Fewer stories like this”, or to hide all stories from that particular news source.



Step 9 Clicking on a news story will take you to the webpage the story is from. At the top of the News section is a wide panel containing Top Stories. These are the top 6 news headlines. These will change as you like or dislike stories, or choose different news sources.

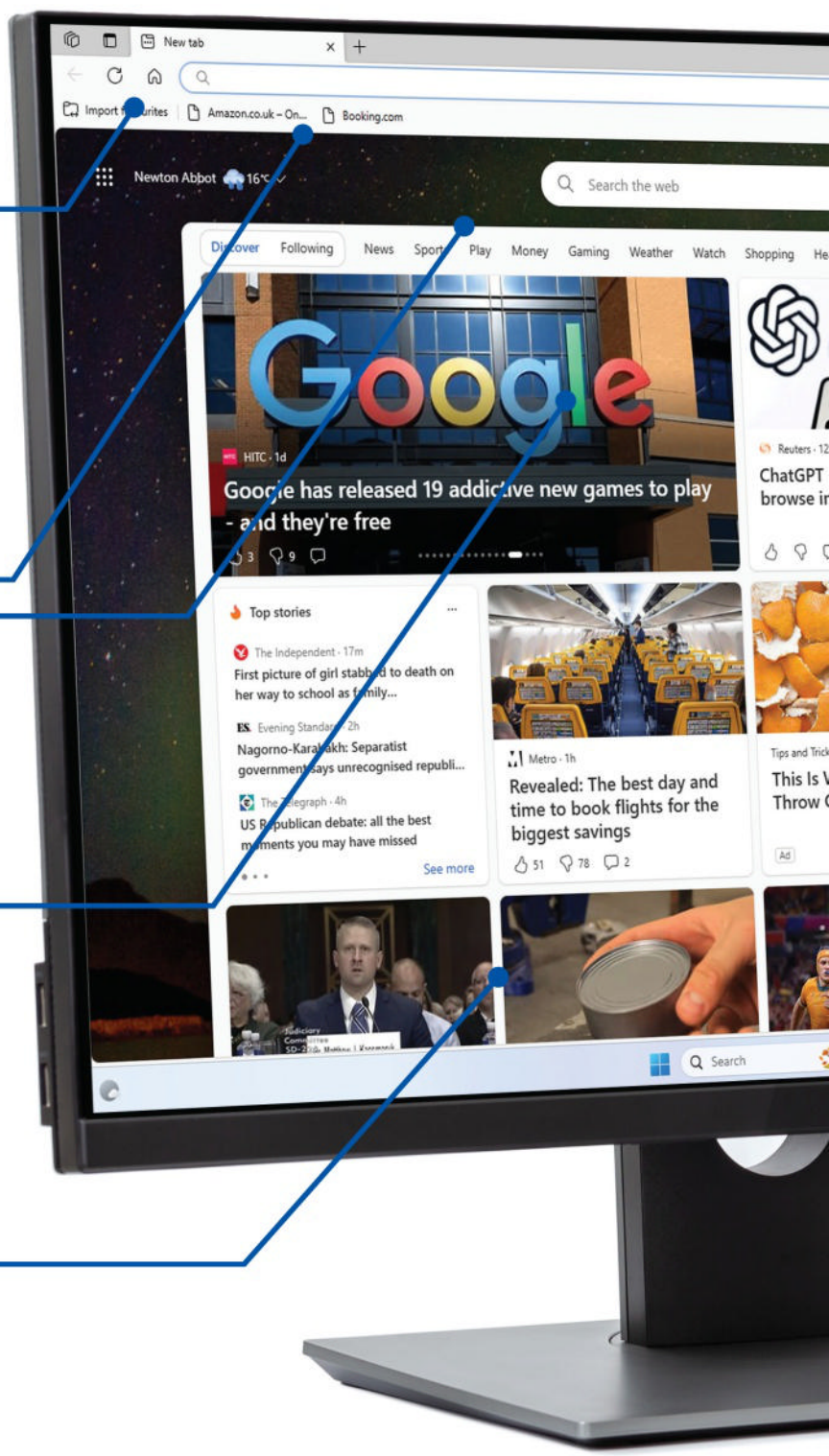


Step 10 At the top of the Widgets panel are your profile link, refresh and full screen options. The former makes the Widgets bar fill the screen and the latter updates on current Widgets. These options and the profile link cannot be removed from the Widgets panel, nor can they be moved.



Exploring Microsoft Edge

Edge continues to get better and better, and the latest version in Windows 11 is no different. You should be familiar with it if you are upgrading from Windows 10, as it is basically the same version; but let's take a look at the newest and best features of Microsoft Edge.



1 Browser & Tab Controls

In the top left corner, where you would probably expect to find them, are the browser controls. These include the Home button, the Page refresh button and the Page forward/Page back buttons. Also in the top corner is the Tab control, allowing you to set the tabs vertically, or restore closed tabs. Right-click on the active tab to see additional options.

2 Search Fields

There are two search fields in Edge, one at the top (which is also the address field when viewing a website), and one which floats at the top or middle of the start page; depending on the layout you choose. Use either of these and search suggestions appear as you begin typing.

3 Recently Viewed/Favourites

A group of icons are displayed for the most recently visited websites/pages. These automatically update as you browse, but can also be edited to show your favourite or most-used sites by clicking on the + symbol at the end of the row of icons.

4 News Feed

The Start screen of Microsoft Edge is also a news feed. The news feed is provided by MSN and is made up of news stories based on your geographical location. Either the feed is displayed at the top, or you scroll down to it; depending on the layout you choose. Click "Personalise" to filter the news types, and click "Content visible" to choose how stories are displayed.

5 Favourites Menu

The Hub from the old version of Edge, which contained favourites, history and a reading list has gone. Instead, you can access Favourites and Collections here. The star with a + icon in the search field is the button to add a new web page to your favourites.

6 Launch

Remember, if you don't want to use Microsoft's launch page to start using the Internet, you can change this via the setting to one of your own choice. Perhaps you prefer the Google homepage, or maybe you've created your own, unique launch page experience.

7 Collections

Collections are groups of tabs/web pages that you can save and then instantly return to using this button. To save a Collection, click the Tab Controls button at the top-left, and choose "Add all tabs to collections".

8 Start Page Layout

You can customise the Start screen in several ways here. There are three preset layouts: Informational, Inspirational and Focused. You can also choose a custom layout, which lets you turn on/off individual elements, such as pic of the day and the news feed.

9 Notifications

The small alarm/bell icon opens a list of top news stories. A badge will appear on top of it to tell you how many new stories are waiting to be read. As you browse the news feed, Edge will learn what type of news you like to read and tailor the notifications accordingly.

Edge Settings

Alongside options to change the style of the Edge browser, including changing to a dark theme, are several important settings. You can choose how the Edge browser opens, showing the Start page or another specified page for example. The advanced settings include options to block pop-ups and allow Flash Player.

How to Use the Edge Browser

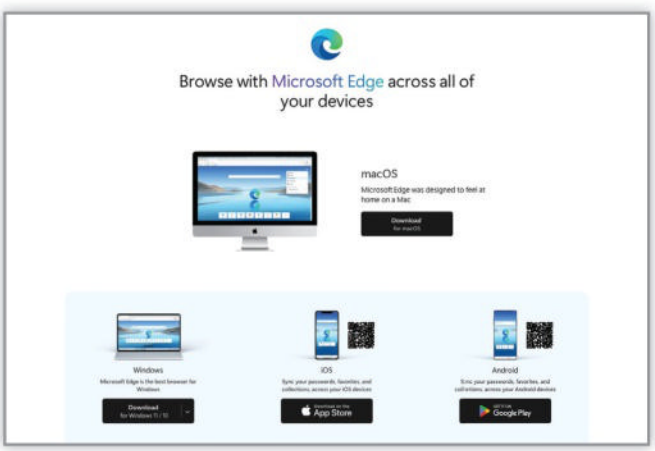
The latest browser, Edge Chromium, is a significant change to the original Edge browser; and offers a much better experience. Based on the Google Chrome browser, Edge is focused on modern web standards, privacy and security and has an impressive feature and tool list.

Get Started with Edge

Edge in Windows 11 feels much less clunky than the previous version and already feels more like the most popular browsers available, such as Chrome or Firefox.

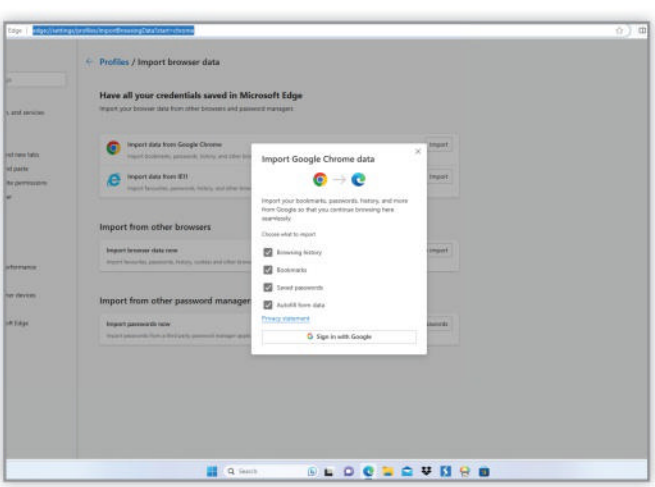
Installing Edge

Edge comes pre-installed with Windows 11, and if you have upgraded from Windows 10 (and were using Edge previously) it should already be set up and working as normal. If you bought a PC with Windows 11 installed, or have never used Edge before, it will require a bit of setup to begin.



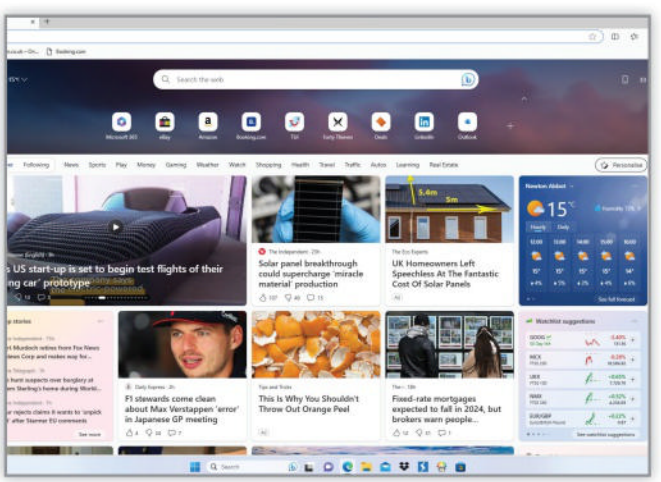
Edge Setup

During setup, you have the option to import browser data such as bookmarks and favourites from Google Chrome, choose the initial start page layout and set up syncing across devices (other computers, your phone, etc.) Once installed, Edge opens at the start page.



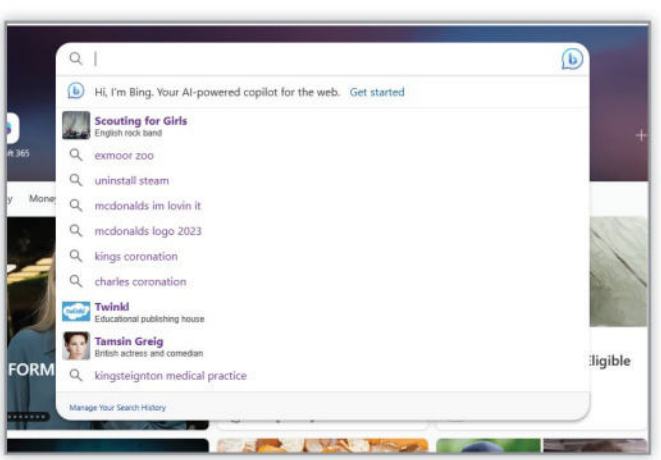
Start Page Layout

Depending on the layout you chose during setup, the start page will either display a news feed or a cleaner page (with the news feed just a scroll away below it). You can check out the other layouts easily by clicking the Gear icon at the top right and choosing from the menu.



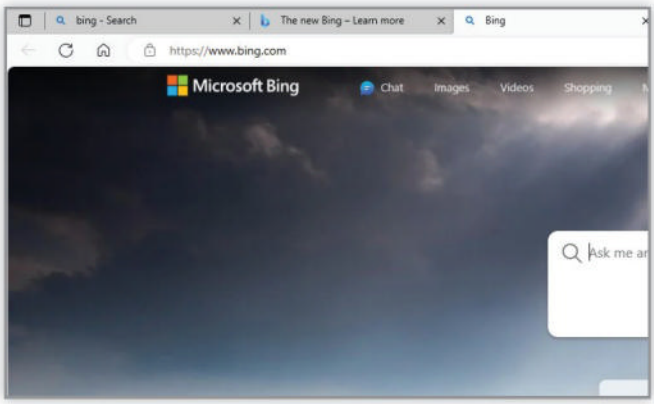
Search in Edge

To search for a website or web page, you can type in the search field at the top (which is always there), or you can type in the search box floating on the Start page if you prefer. When you type in either box, Edge shows a list of suggestions based on what it thinks you require. The default search engine is Bing.



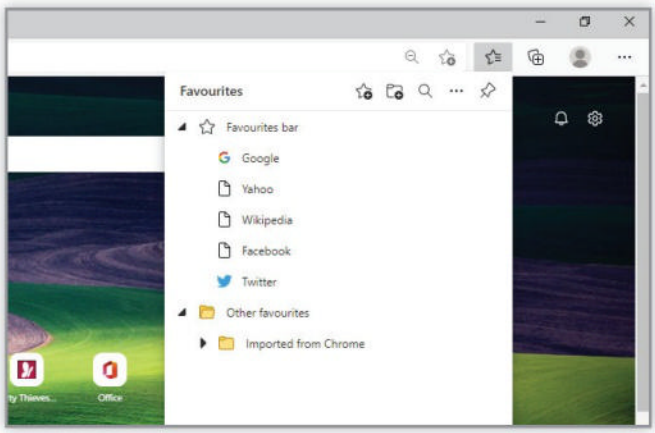
Browser Controls

The browser controls are on the top bar. On the far left is: Back, Forwards and Refresh Page (Home button can be added in the browser settings). On the right are the zoom control, add to favourites, favourites list and collections buttons. There is also a More button to open the browser menu.



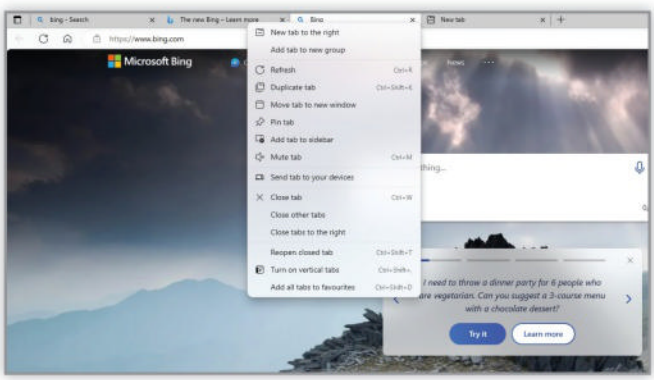
Favourites

To access Favourites, or bookmarked sites, click the button directly to the right of the address bar (star with three lines). Clicking it opens a fly-out list, at the top of which is the option to “Manage favourites”. This opens the list in a new page, where you can remove or re-order them.



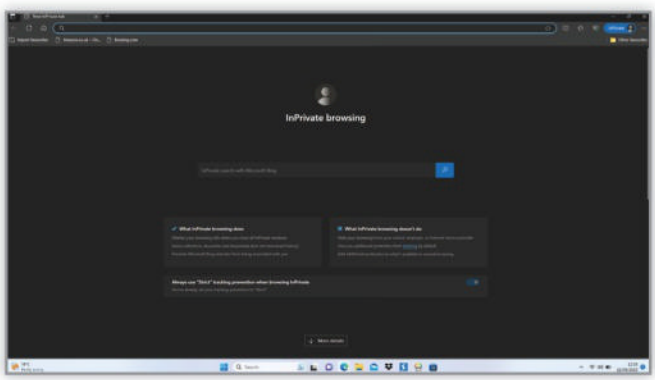
Edge Tabs

Clicking the + opens a new tab and clicking the small X closes the tab. To the left of the tabs is the Tab actions menu button. You can use this to move tabs to the side of the window (vertically), create tab collections and restore recently closed tabs. Right-click on any tab to see additional tab options.



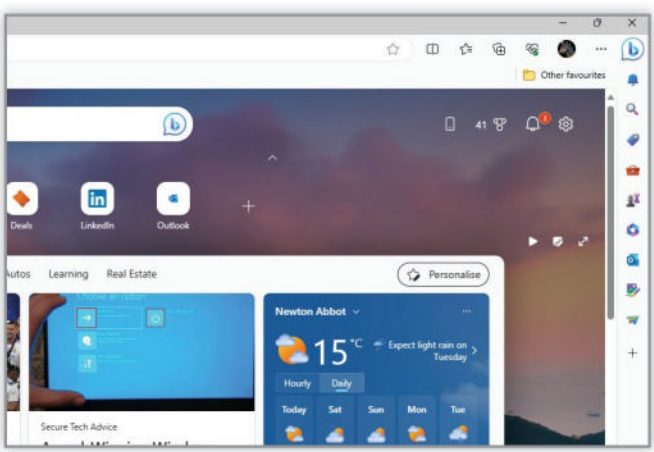
InPrivate Window

If you want to browse in private mode when using Edge, you can do so easily. To open a new InPrivate tab, click the browser menu button at the top right and select “New InPrivate Window”. You can also open a new private tab by using the keyboard shortcut Ctrl + Shift + N while Edge is active.



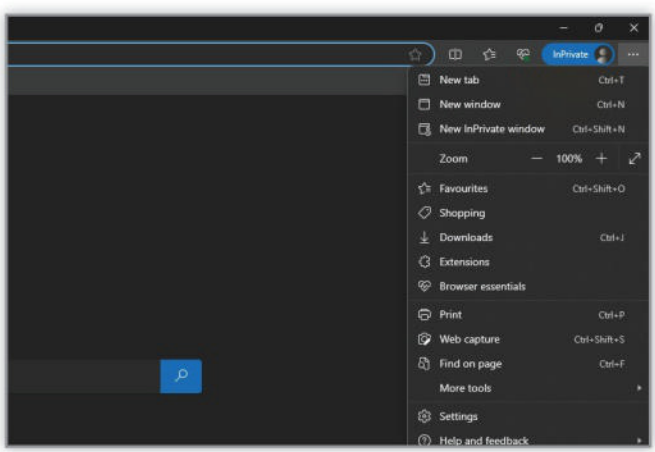
Quick Links

As part of the browser window itself, you find the Quick Links options on the right-hand side. From this listing you can access Bing AI Chat, Quick Search, Shopping, Tools, Games, 365, Outlook, Image Creator and Drop. You can also add further quick links using the + icon, or close this sidebar using the link below.



Edge Menu

Click the Menu button (three small dots on the top right) to open the Edge menu. From this menu, you’re able to access Settings, print a page and find words or phrases in the open web page. It also contains links to Favourites, Collections, History, Downloads, Apps, Extensions and much more.

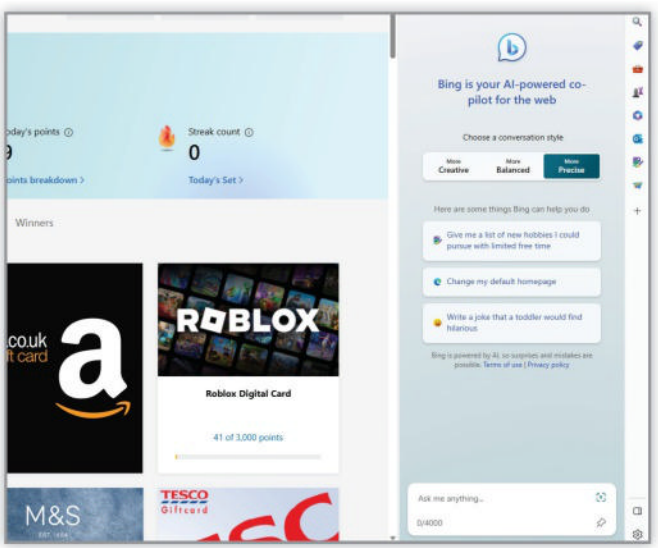


Using Bing AI Chat

The use of AI is controversial to say the least (hey, we've all seen 'The Terminator'), yet the inclusion of the Bing Chat feature directly into the Edge app brings a new, more specific and deeper way to search online.

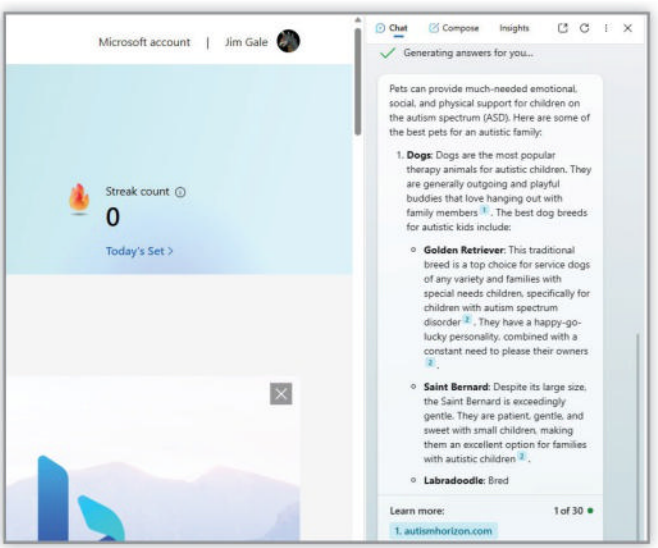
Ask A Simple Question

Having accessed Bing Chat via the right sidebar, a side panel opens. First you're asked to select your conversation style; Creative, Balanced and Precise. The choice is yours to make through experimentation, but let's start with Precise. Now ask your question in the input bar at the bottom.



Curating Your Answer

Bing Chat attempts to answer your question in the style of your choice. What follows is a detailed breakdown of the Bing AI's response to your question. This response links to any pages or publications referenced, and even poses further questions inspired by your original query.

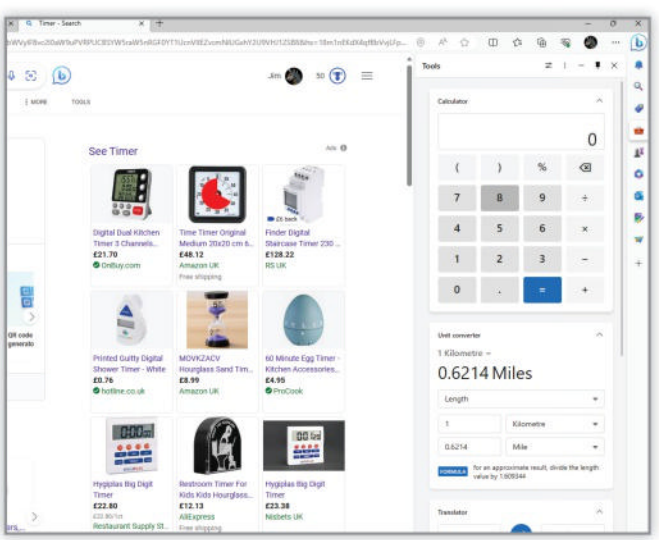


Making Edge Work For You

The direct intergration of linked applications and online accessible features within the Edge browser offers a unique and almost seemless experience to the user.

On the right sidebar you notice the Quick links option. While each app is worthy of inclusion, here we look at those we use on a daily basis. Firstly the Games option, which links the user to a host of browser-based games, both single and multiplayer, that are accessed via the Edge browser and require no further software or downloads to play.

The Tools option is also highly recommended. With a simple tap or click, you're given access to the following software without stepping out of the Edge app: Calculator, Unit Converter, Translator, Dictionary, World Clock, Timer, Stopwatch, Number Converter, OR Code, Random number generators and a Typing Test. All of these are browser based.



Personalising Edge

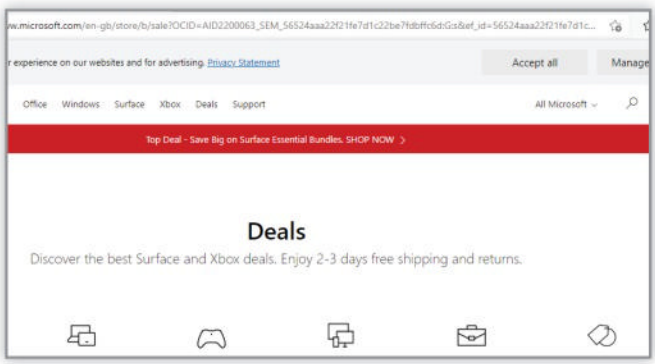
Aside from the customisations to the Start page, you can personalise the look of the browser in several other ways too.

Light or Dark Theme

If you have changed the system theme to light or dark, Edge should automatically be set to the same. You can, however, choose the theme for Edge separately to the system theme. Open the Edge menu > Settings, and click Appearance. Choose the light, dark or system default theme.

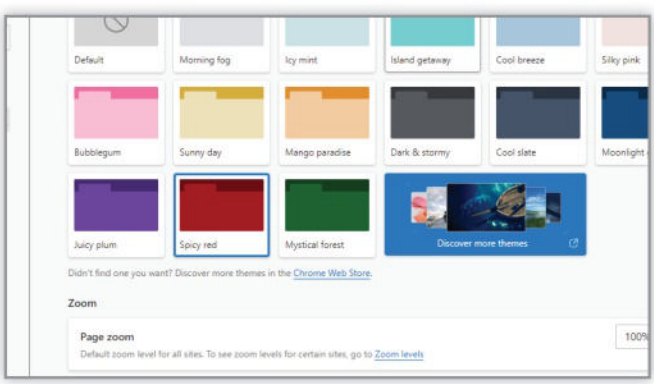
Add Browser Controls

The default browser controls are Back, Forward and Refresh page. Open the menu > Settings > Appearance and you can scroll down to see more buttons to add. These include Home (including option to set the URL), Extensions, History, Downloads and strangely, a Maths Solver button.



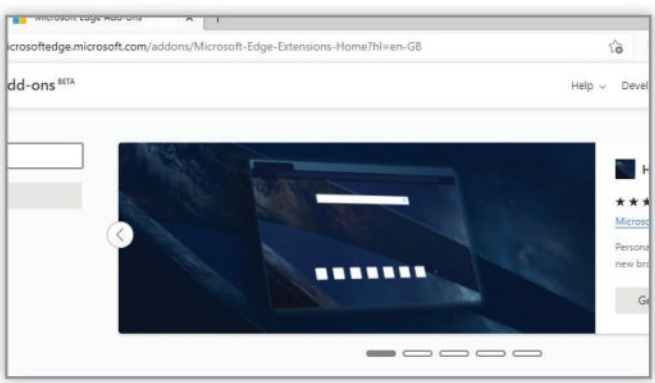
Edge Themes

As well as light or dark, Edge lets you choose from about 15 other theme colours, from Morning Fog to Mystical Forest. Go to Edge menu > Settings > Appearance and click on the theme colour you want to apply. This will only apply colour to the top bar and tabs. It will not override the light/dark setting.



Extensions

Just like the previous version, Edge Chromium features extensions, which are downloaded from the Microsoft Store. You can view installed extensions in the Browser Menu > Extensions. There are fewer extensions available for the new version, but this situation will improve as it matures.

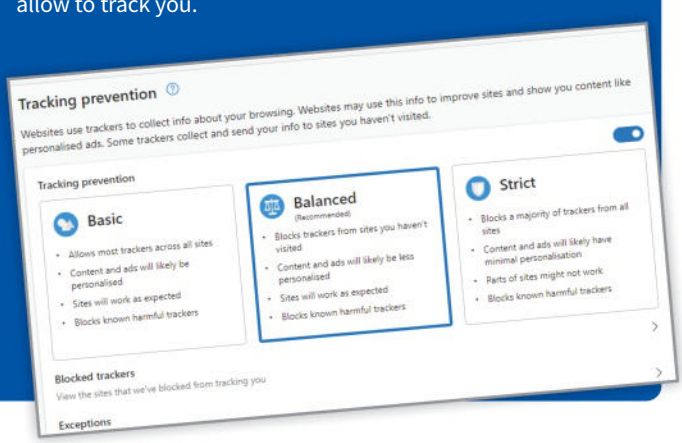


Edge Privacy

Microsoft seems to be taking users' privacy choices seriously with Edge Chromium, and you now have a much easier way to control your browsing data and history. The biggest improvement is Tracking Prevention. You can access these settings in Browser Menu > Settings > Privacy & Services.

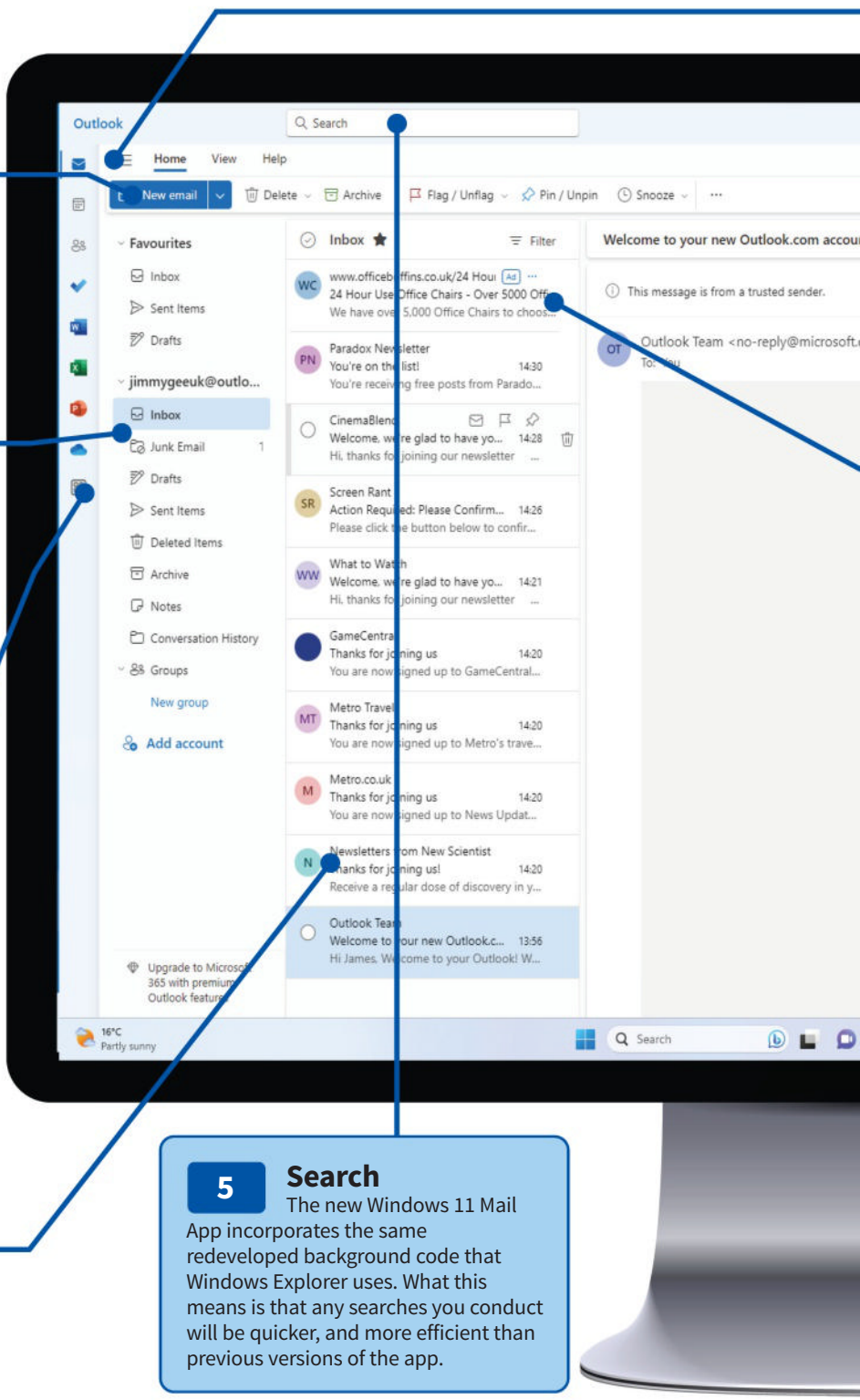
You can choose three different levels of tracking prevention: Basic, Balanced and Strict. These options all block known harmful trackers, but how personalised content (such as adverts) is displayed and how well all website features work, depends on the level you choose. Our advice is to switch to Strict and then see how it affects your favourite websites. If you find things are not displayed as they should be, you can always switch back to Balanced.

You can view sites that you have blocked from tracking you, and also allow exceptions if there are sites which you want to allow to track you.



Exploring Windows Mail

Long gone are the days of Microsoft Outlook Express being included with new releases of the OS, replaced instead by the Microsoft Mail app. This app first appeared in Windows 8, was vastly improved in Windows 10, and has now been improved yet again for Windows 11.



1 New Mail Button

If you are not replying to an email, but rather starting a new email, you can do so in a couple of different ways. You can either click the New Mail button at the top of the Mail Menu or you can use the Ctrl-N. Both methods open a new email in the main window, with a blank recipient field.

2 Mail Menu

The left-hand menu, which can be minimised and expanded using the button at the top of the panel, contains all of your email accounts (those you have added to Windows Mail). Click on any of your email account headers and the individual folders, such as Inbox and Sent Items, are displayed here also.

3 Calendar App

You can open the Windows Calendar app directly from within the Mail app. Click the Mail app icon at the bottom of the Mail Menu panel and the calendar screen will open in a second window. If you have never used the Calendar app before, you will need to link it to an account.

4 Mail Folder

The messages in whichever email folder you have selected are shown in this panel. By default, the most recent emails are at the top of the list. You can change how the emails are viewed, so that only unread or flagged emails are displayed, using the dropdown menu at the top of the inbox.

5 Search

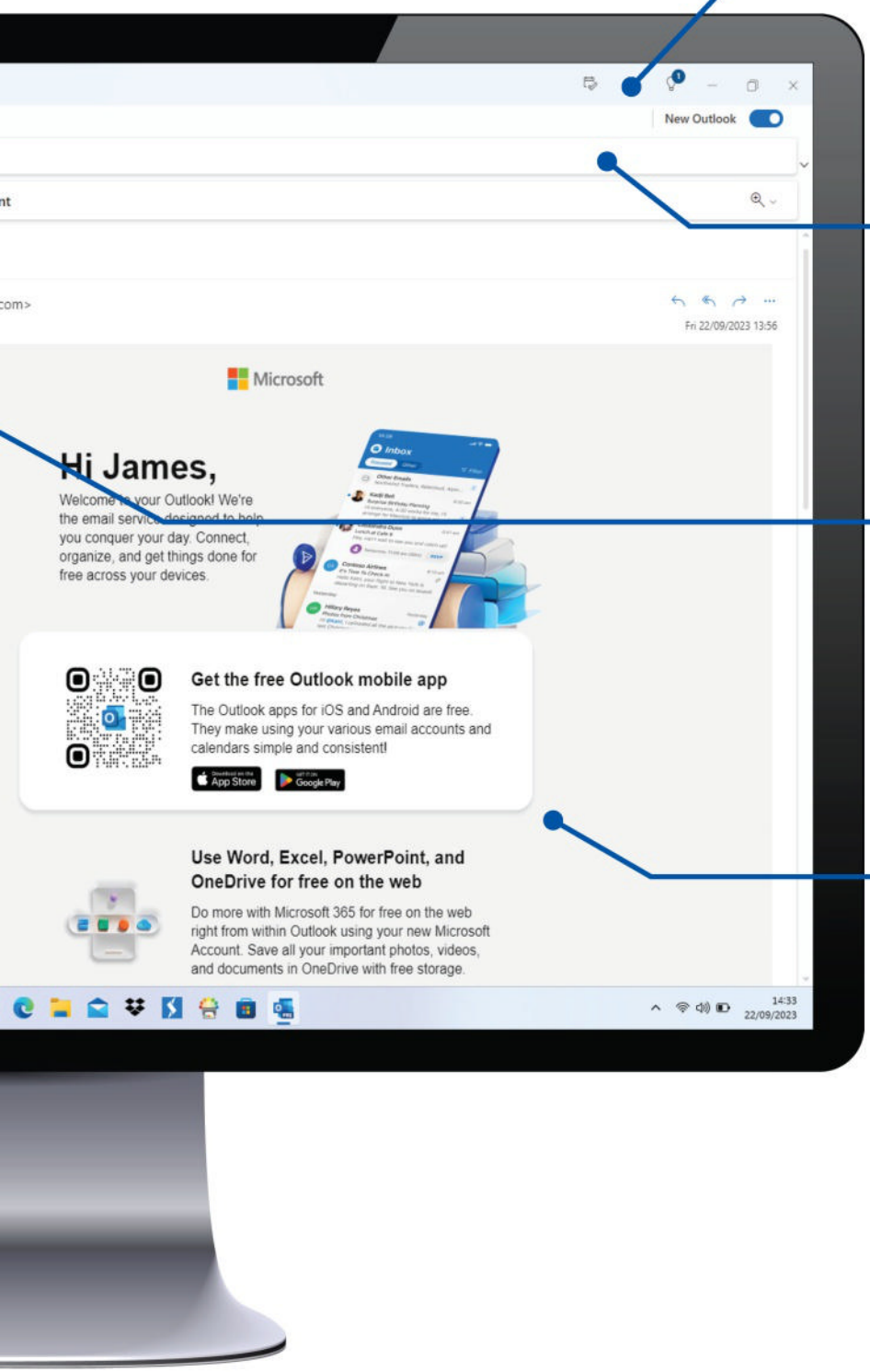
The new Windows 11 Mail App incorporates the same redeveloped background code that Windows Explorer uses. What this means is that any searches you conduct will be quicker, and more efficient than previous versions of the app.

6 Mail Settings

The settings for the Mail app allow you to easily add accounts, change how emails are displayed when they arrive, whether outgoing emails have a signature (which can be customised) added to them, as well as how you are notified of new emails in Windows 11.

7 Message Format

How messages appear can differ depending on the type of account you've specified and setup. For example, Google and Gmail emails accounts may look slightly different to those of iCloud or Yahoo!. This is mainly due to the way that the different mail providers encode their messages and delivery systems.



8 Message Options

In a row along the top of the main message window are the message options. These include Reply, Reply All, Forward, Archive and Delete emails; more options can be seen by clicking the Menu button to the right. The message options only appear when viewing a received message.

9 Message Tools

Roll over or click on any of the messages in your inbox, sent items or drafts folders and three icons will appear. These let you quickly Archive, Delete or Flag any message directly in the folder panel. Archived messages can be recovered at any time and returned to the inbox if required.

10 Main Message Window

When you start a new email or select an email in one of the mail folders, it will appear in the main message window. As you would normally, you can scroll down to view all of the messages shown. You can roll over the address in the To: field, to see more contact details.

Customise Mail

You can customise how the Email app looks in a number of ways, from simple changes like choosing between a light and dark theme, to setting the overall colour and changing the background image for the app. To personalise the Mail app, click the Settings button and select "Personalisation".

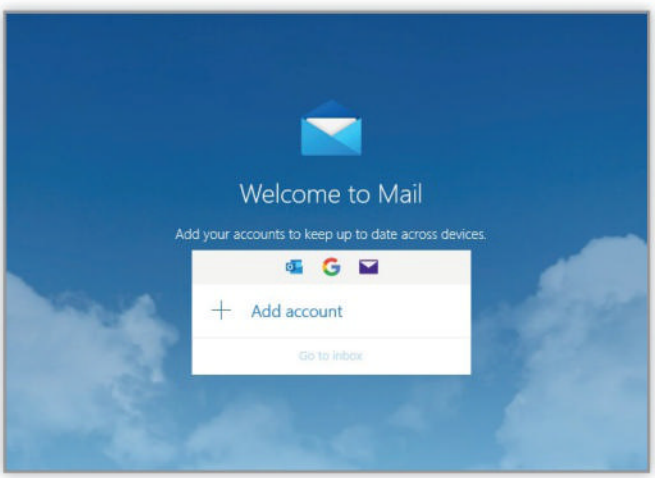
How to Set Up the Mail App

The Mail app has barely changed in the update, remaining a simple and easy way to have all of your emails in one place. If you have updated from Windows 10, your email should already be up and running. But if not, here's how to set up the Mail app in Windows 11.

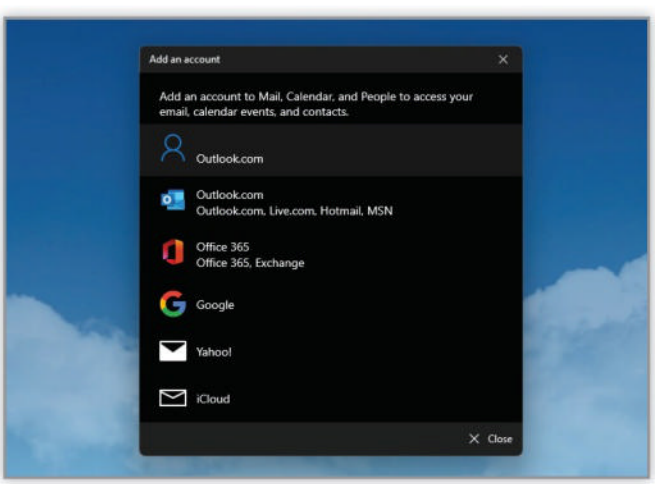
Setting Up Email Accounts

The Windows 11 email client can be used to view emails from multiple accounts, from your POP3 Internet provider account, to Microsoft Exchange, Gmail and even Apple's iCloud.

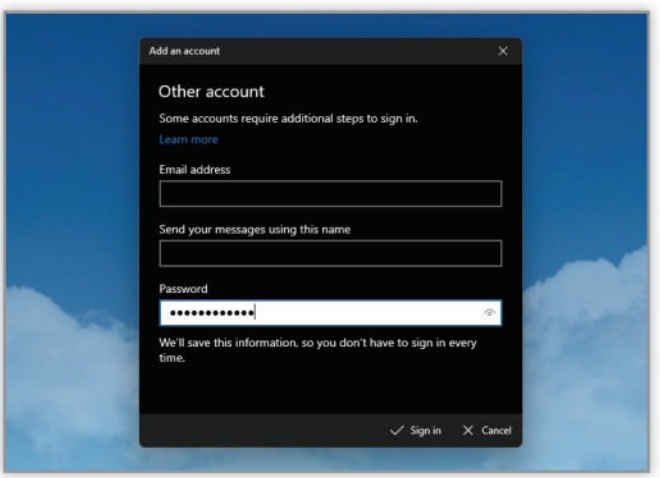
Step 1 If opening Mail for the first time, you will be greeted by a welcome screen, containing a link to "+Add account". Click this to open the list of available account types. You will need the server, password and other information required for each email account you want to add to Mail.



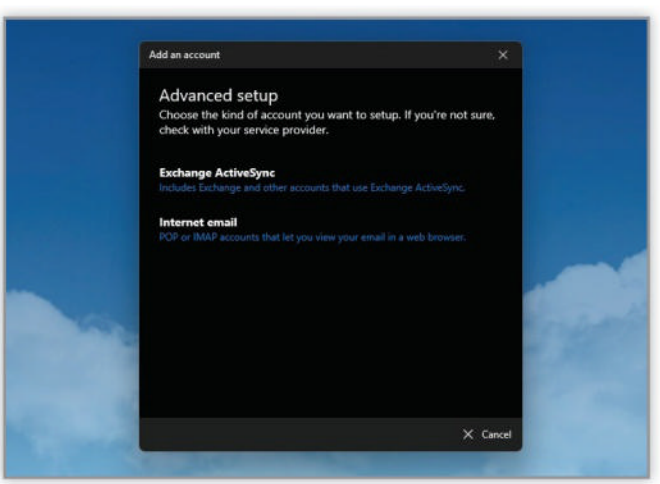
Step 2 You can add accounts from many popular providers including Google, Yahoo! and Apple's iCloud. You can also set up other more specialist accounts if you have the details. Finally, there's also an option to add a Microsoft Exchange account, if your workplace uses that (including Office 365).



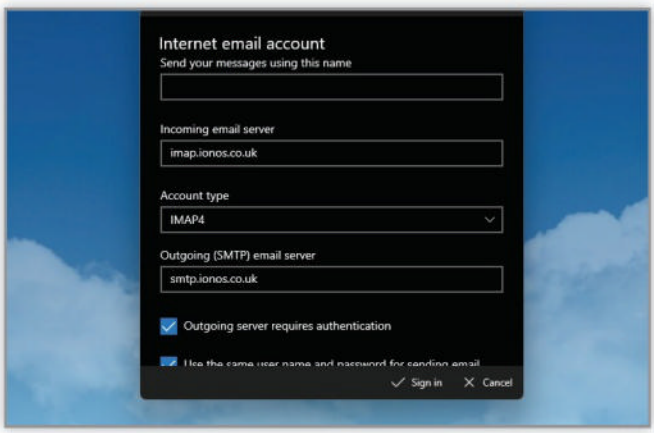
Step 3 Click the email account type you want to set up first. We are going to start with the POP, IMAP option. Enter the email address, sender name and password for your account. You can get this info from your email service provider if you don't have it to hand. Then click "Sign in".



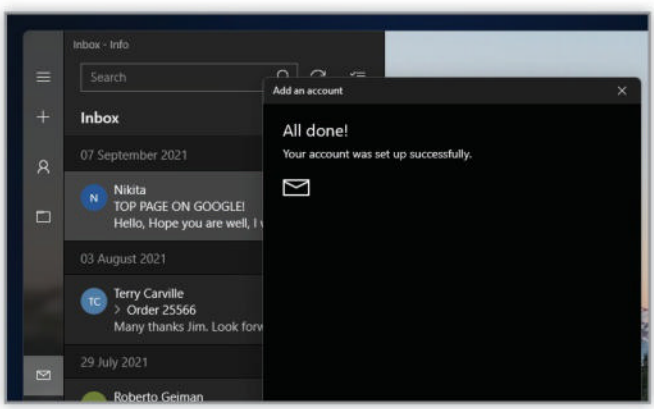
Step 4 The app will try to look for the server settings needed to set this email account up. If it finds them, you should be finished. If not, you will need to add the settings manually. If this is the case, click "Cancel" and then select the "Advanced setup" option in the account list.



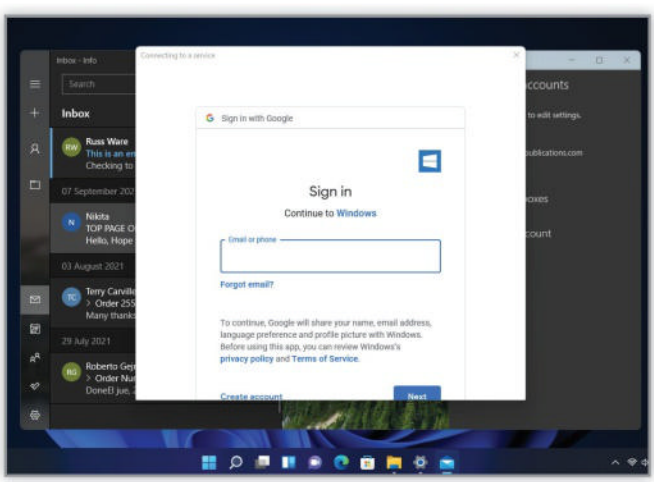
Step 5 Choose the relevant option (in our case, this is "Internet email"), and enter all of the required information; including the incoming/outgoing mail server addresses. With all of the information added, click the Sign in button. If everything was entered correctly, that account is now set up.



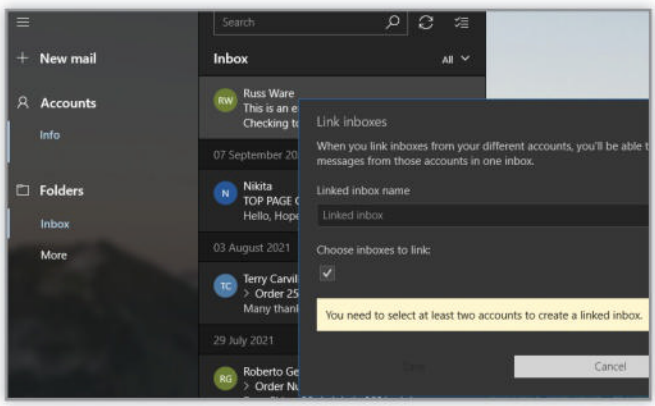
Step 6 To add an additional account after setting up the first one, simply click the settings button in the bottom-left corner of the Mail app window, select Manage Accounts, and then +Add account. Select the account type and repeat the steps above to add the second, third or fourth account to Mail.



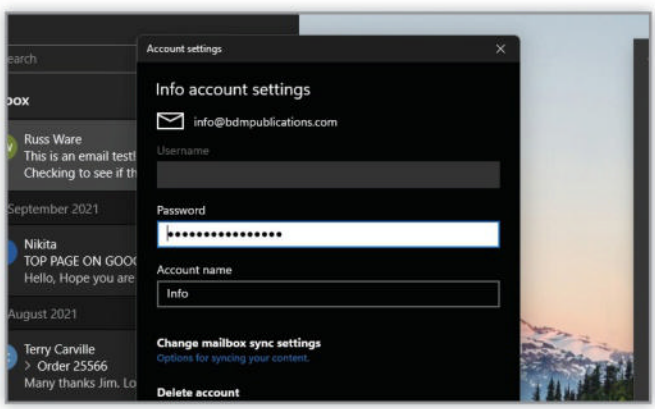
Step 7 If you're adding a Google account, click the option in the account setup list and you'll get the familiar pop-up appearing inviting you to enter your username and password. If you have Google's two-step authentication enabled, you'll get a text message to confirm your identity before you can continue.



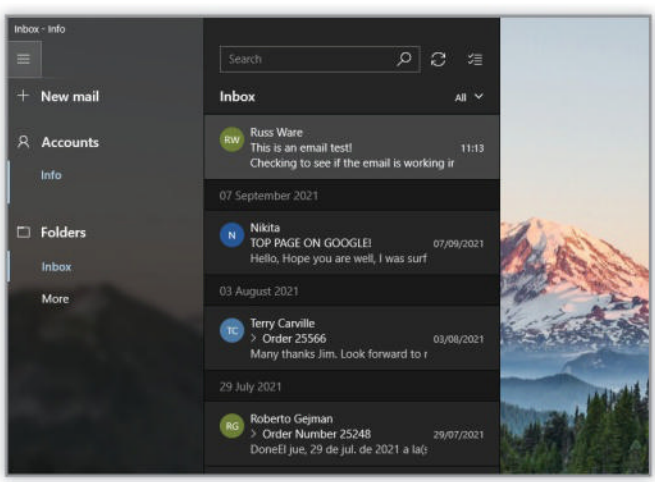
Step 8 Having more than one email account set up in Mail can be slightly confusing. To help with this, the app allows you to Link Inboxes. This puts all of the emails from your linked accounts into one inbox. To do this, click Settings > Manage accounts > Link inboxes. Select the accounts that you want to link.



Step 9 To manage or delete any of the email accounts you have set up, click Settings > Manage Accounts and then click on the account you want to manage from the list of accounts. You can then change the password, account name, mailbox sync settings, or delete the account from the Mail app.



Step 10 Your accounts are shown in the left sidebar of the mail app. Select them here to view the different folders for each account (inbox, sent mail, etc.), if you have not linked the inboxes. If you don't see the left sidebar, click the Expand button at the top-left of the Mail app window.

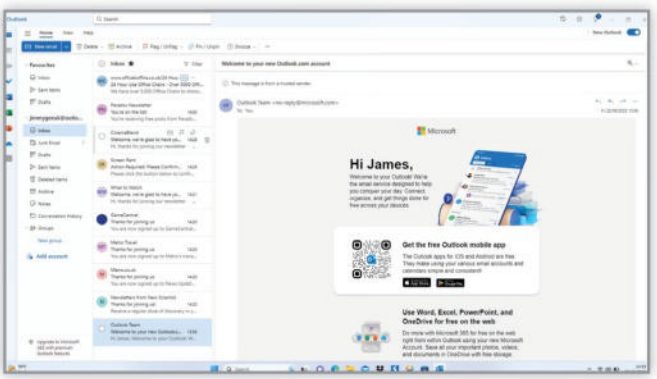


Using the Mail App

With your email accounts set up, you can now start using the app to send and receive emails. You can also personalise how the app looks, and start using the advanced features.

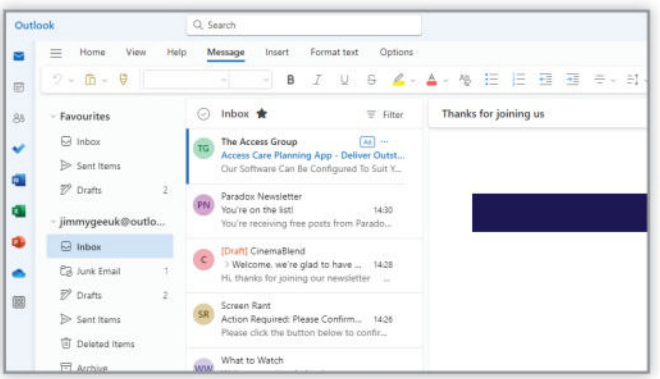
Reading Emails

Emails will appear automatically in your inbox as and when they arrive. New emails will be displayed with a highlight in the list. Click any email in the inbox list to open it in the main panel on the right. You can search for emails using the Mail Search field at the top of the inbox panel.



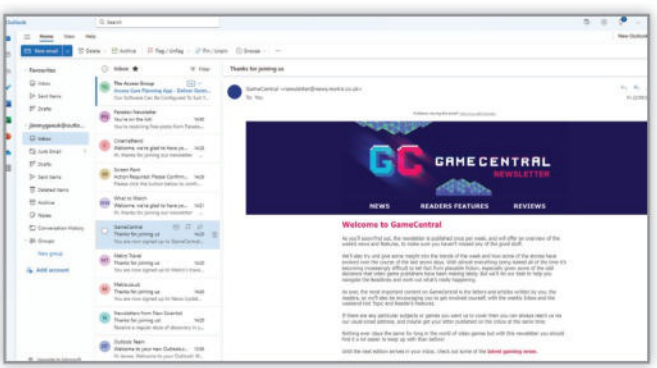
Mail Folders

Open the Mail app menu on the left and you will see the Favourites section. The inbox is listed here as well, but to see more folders, click "More". Here you can find the Outbox, Drafts, Sent items, Deleted items and Junk Mail folders. Click on any of them to see the emails in those folders.



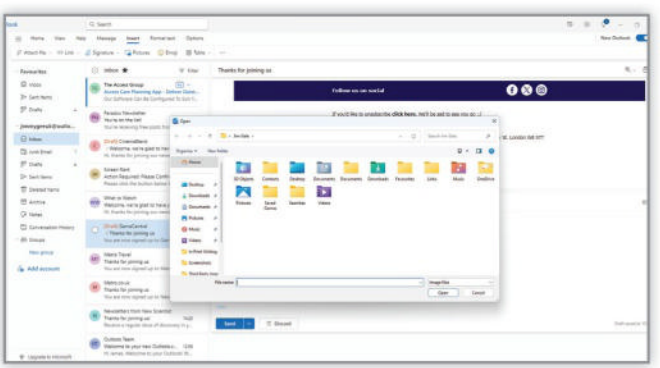
Writing Emails

Click the New mail button in the Mail app menu (the + button if the menu is collapsed). The blank email will appear in the main panel. Enter the recipient's address, subject and then write your email text. Basic text formatting options are available at the top of the email. Click "Send" when finished.



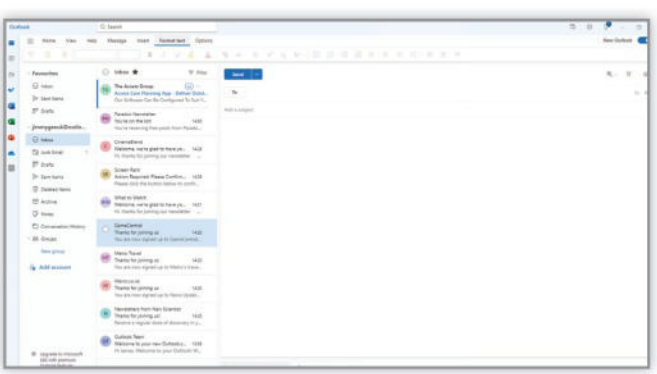
Email Attachments

Adding file attachments to emails in the Mail app is easy. Write your email, and then click the Insert tab at the top. Here you can find the option for attaching files. Click the link and browse to the file you want to attach. Click "Open" and a thumbnail of the attachment will appear in the email.



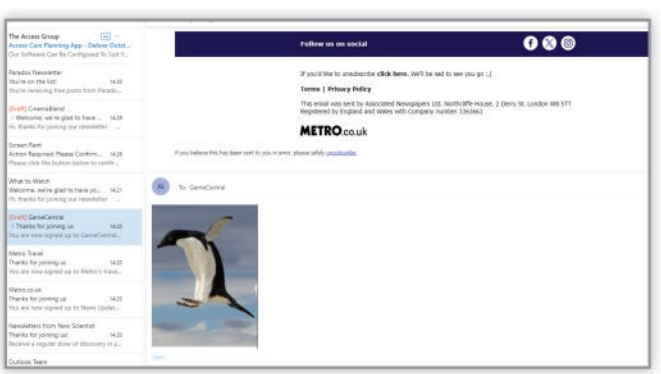
Responding to Emails

When viewing any email in the Mail app, you will see a number of options at the top of the email panel. These include Reply, Reply All and Forward, etc., (all of the normal email options). Click reply and you can start typing your reply, with the original email included above your reply.



Inserting Images

As well as the button to include attachments, the Insert tab features a Picture button so you can insert an image into your email; as opposed to just sending it as an attached file. Once inserted, you can select it with your mouse and adjust its size (drag the corners as you can see in the example shown here).

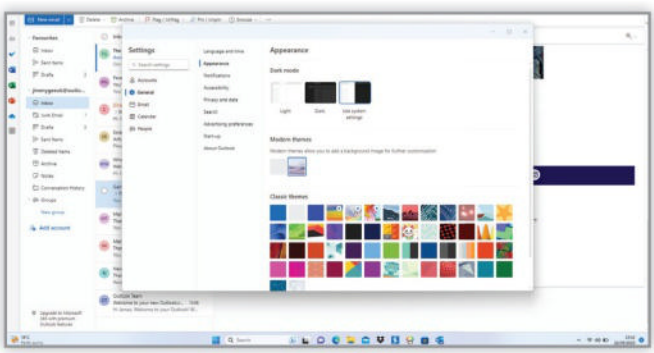


Customise the Mail App

There are several ways to customise the Mail app to better suit your needs, from changing the background image and accent colour, to adding a signature and the display font.

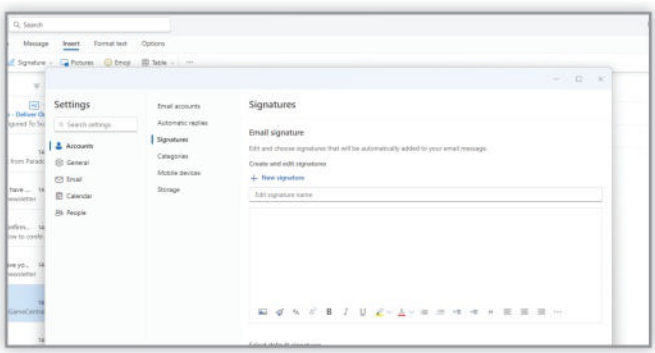
Background Image

The background of the Mail app is set to an image by default. This is purely decorative, and can be changed. Open Settings > General. Appearence in the Mail app, then scroll to the bottom to see the different backgrounds available. Alternatively you can switch to Dark Mode from this link.



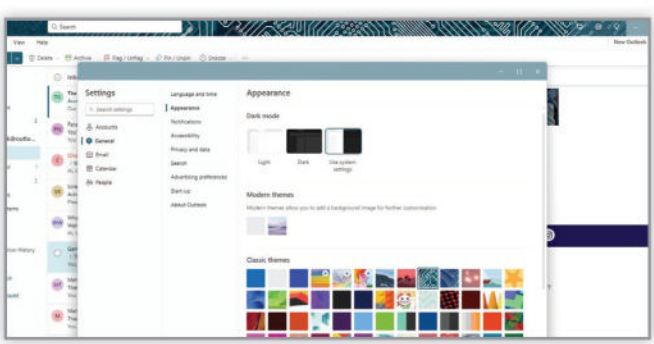
Signature

The default signature for the Mail app is “Sent from Mail for Windows”. The signature is automatically added to the end of your email message, but can be changed or turned off completely if not needed. Go to Settings > Signature, choose an account/all accounts and write your signature in the pane.



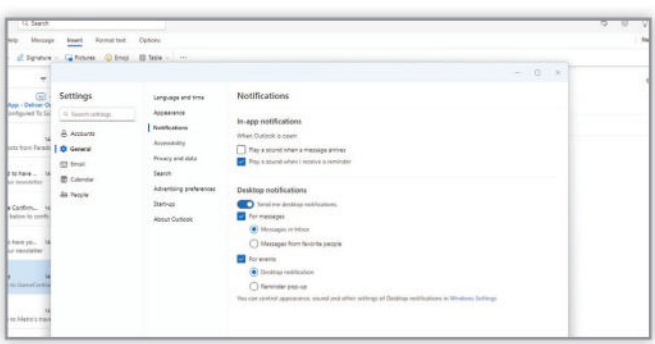
Mail App Colour

The colour tint on the Mail app menu (on the left) and the colour of the accents such as buttons and highlights, can also be changed in the Personalisation settings. Just click a colour block to change it. You can also change the theme of the app from light to dark here, or use the Windows theme setting.



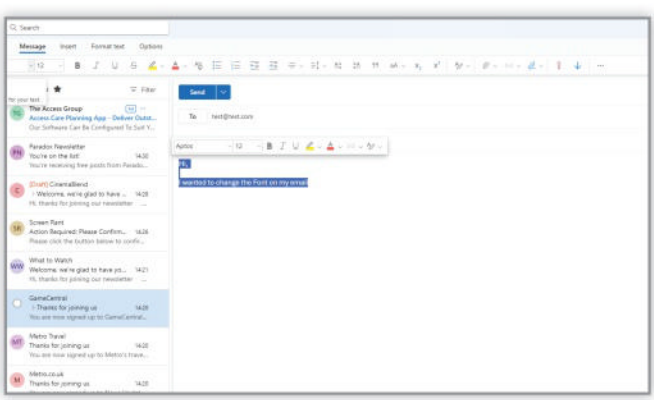
Notifications

You can easily control how you are notified of new emails. Go to Settings > Notifications, and you can control whether notifications are shown in the Notification center (Action center), if a sound is played and if pinned folders have notifications. As with other settings, you can apply to one account or all.



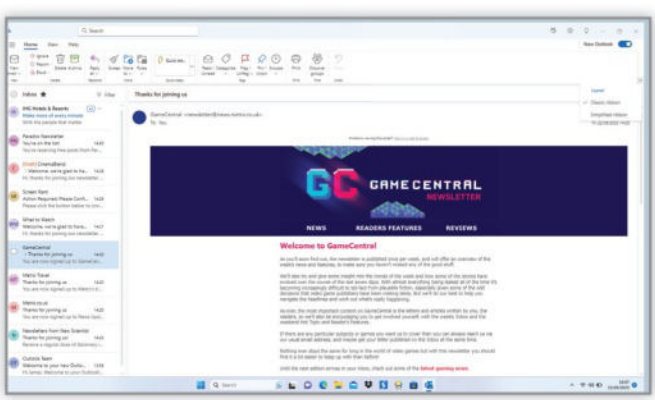
Email Font

The default font for your emails is Calibri Body, unless you have changed it in the main system fonts options. This can be changed for any and all of your email accounts. Using the Font and layout customisation features which are accessed when sending an email, directly below the New Message bar.



Classic Display

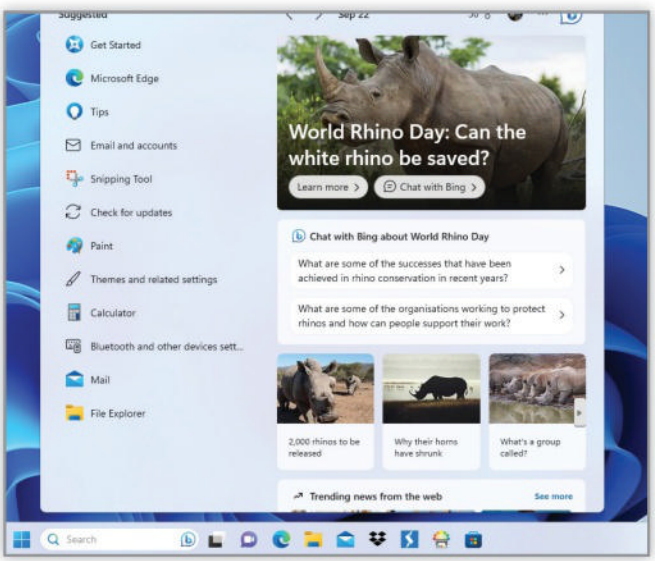
If you are already familair with a Windows based operating system you can revert to the classic Outlook email control layout by select the Layout pop up menu by tapping the downward arrow on the right side. Selecting the Classic ribbon option.



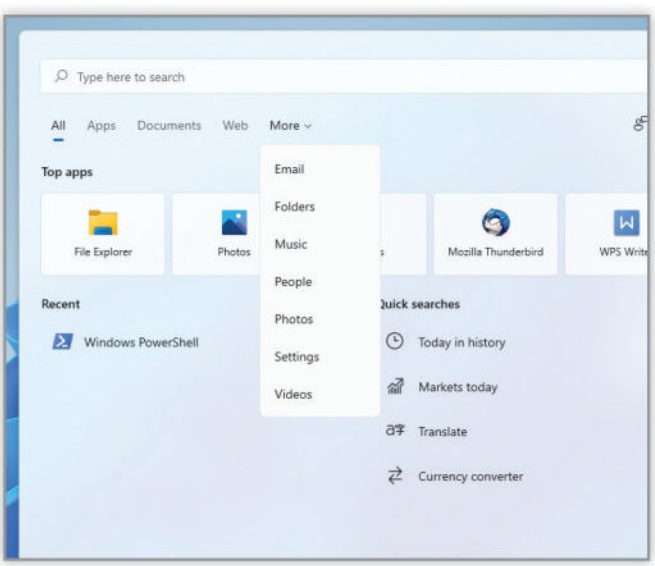
Search in Windows 11

It's hard to describe just how much better Search is in Windows 11, than in previous versions. Microsoft have done a lot to try to match the search functions on offer in rival operating systems, and the results can be seen in the new search feature.

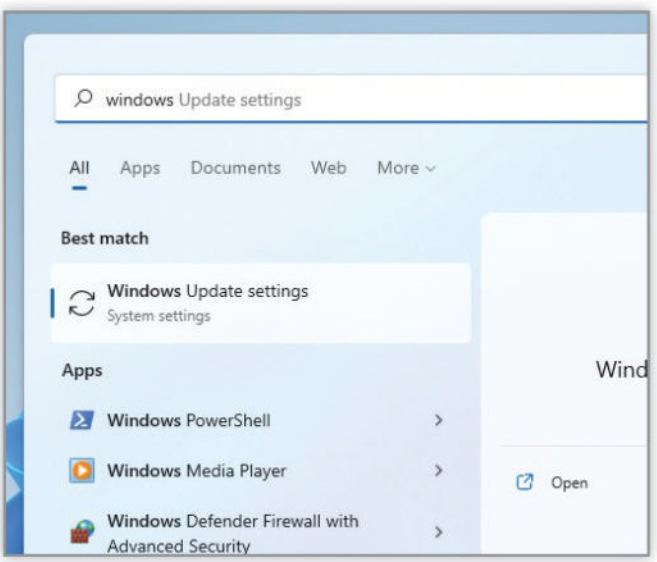
Step 1 If you need to search for anything on your Windows 11 PC, the taskbar search tool is now the place to do it. The search field in the taskbar from Windows 10 is no longer there. You can also access search through the Start menu, or by pressing Windows key + S on your keyboard.



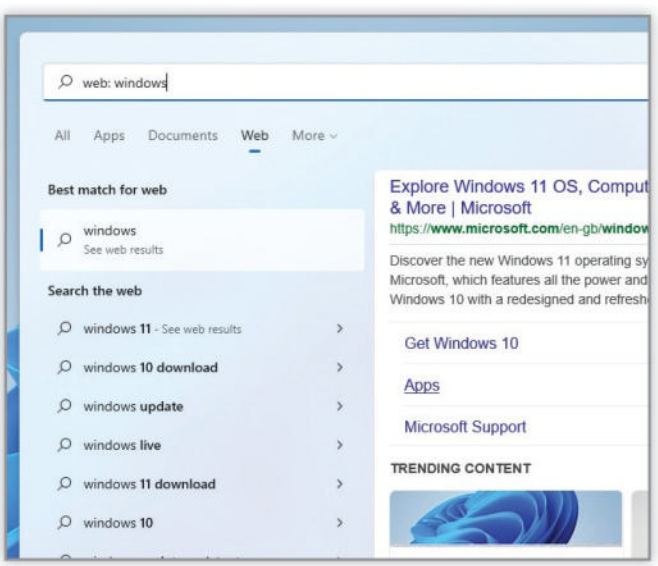
Step 2 In addition to files and folders, you can search for web results and apps. When you first click in the search box you will see three tabs along the bottom that let you choose what to search for; but even if you don't click one of these, the search function is smart enough to return results from all.



Step 3 Search results are displayed in sections (best match, apps, folders, etc.) so that you know what you are looking at. Apps will be displayed with their icon next to them. Folders will have a folder icon and images will be shown as small thumbnails, within the search results panel.



Step 4 You can further filter the results that have appeared after you search by clicking on the titles of the results section in the panel. This lets you filter various results, even music or video. Suggested search results can be previewed by clicking the right-facing arrow next to them.

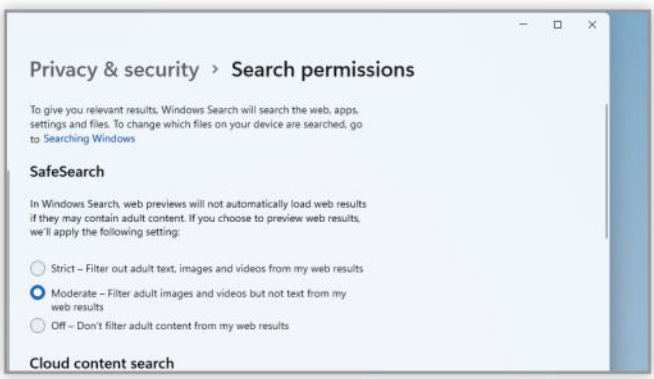


Search Settings and Tools

You have quite a lot of control over exactly how search provides you with search results, and what information it stores about your search history.

Safe Search

Sometimes web search results may show content that is not suitable for the younger audience, which is the reason Cortana also offers search filters. Go to Settings > Cortana > Permissions and History, and under SafeSearch, select the search filter that is most appropriate for you.

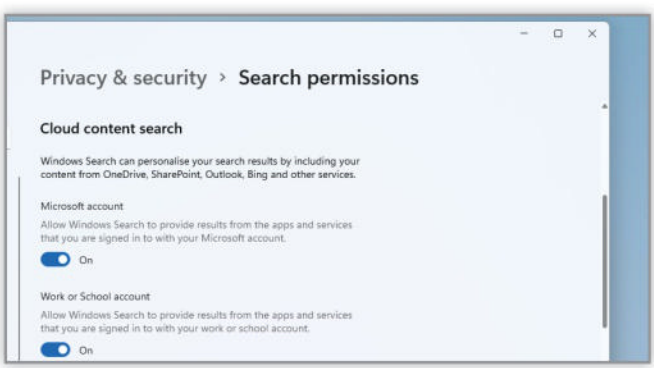


Search History

Search History can help to provide better search results. It can also be turned off, just like the Device History. Head in to Settings > Permissions & History and use the toggle to turn it off. If you click Search History Settings a browser window opens showing the history.

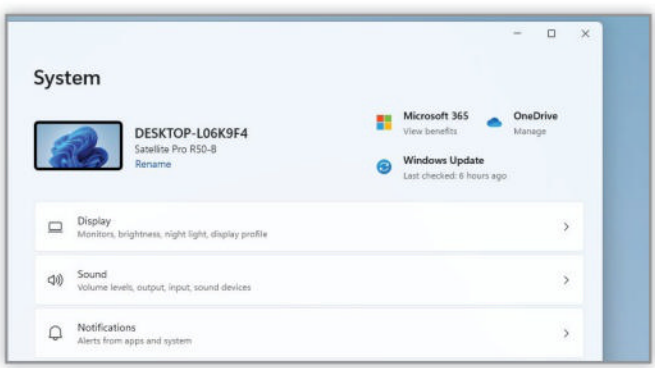
Cloud Search

Cloud search is an option introduced in Windows 10, which allows you to suppress cloud content on search results. Under Cloud Search, you will see a toggle that says Windows Cloud Search. This option manages whether Cortana shows cloud content in Windows Search.



File Explorer Search

You can always search for files and folders in File Explorer as you could in previous versions of Windows. With the new taskbar search you won't need to use this as often as you did, but it's still there if you need it. We don't find it as quick as the taskbar search, though.

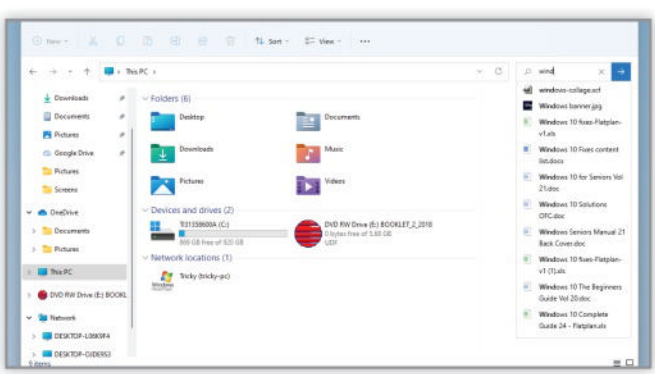


Device History

This setting allows for the improvement of on-device search results, whether you are using an app, settings or another search from any signed on device. If you prefer that Windows does not record the on-device search history, you can switch this option off in Settings > Permissions & History.

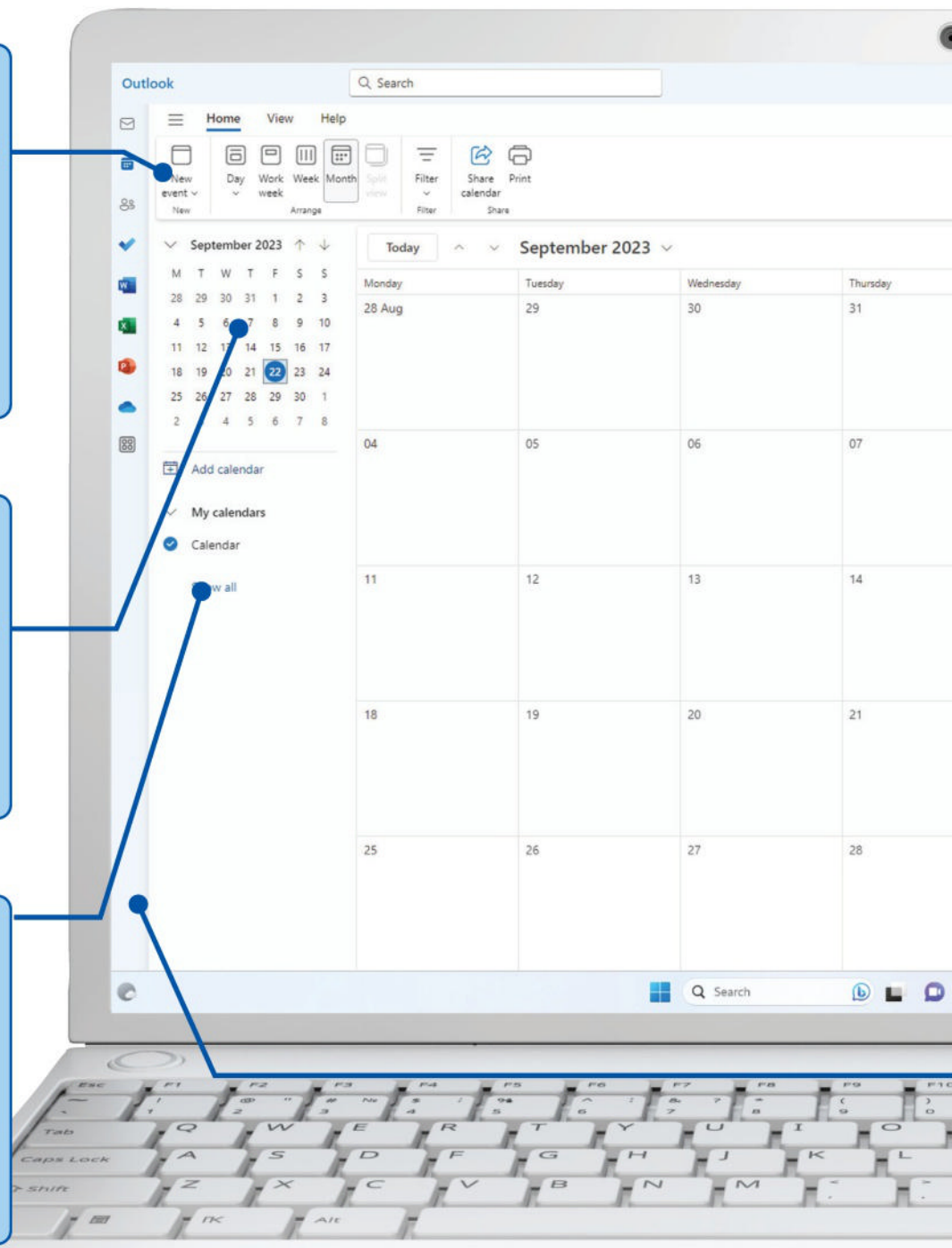
Searching in Settings

Windows 11 allows you to search for settings from within the Settings app. Open the app and you will see the search box right at the top, underneath the window title. Possible results are displayed as you type, just like a normal search, but the results will only be from settings, nowhere else.



Inside the Calendar App

The Windows 11 Calendar app is a fully integrated planning tool that can be linked up to your email accounts and easily synced to your other Windows devices. You can add new events manually, or you can simply use it to view national and public holidays; all of which are automatically added based on your location.



1 Add New Event

There are two main ways to add a new event to your calendar. You can either click on the date in the main window or, if the date you want is not in view, you can click the New Event button here. You can then add an event name, location, and a start and end date. Give the event a short description, especially if you plan to share it with a contact. You can do that by adding people using the pane on the right of the Add Event screen.

2 Monthly View

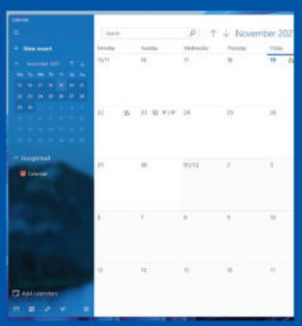
No matter which view you choose for the main Calendar pane - day, week, etc. - the month preview always shows a full month. You can use the arrows above the mini calendar to skip to different months and clicking on a date brings that date into view on the main Calendar pane. The current day is highlighted in the Month Preview.

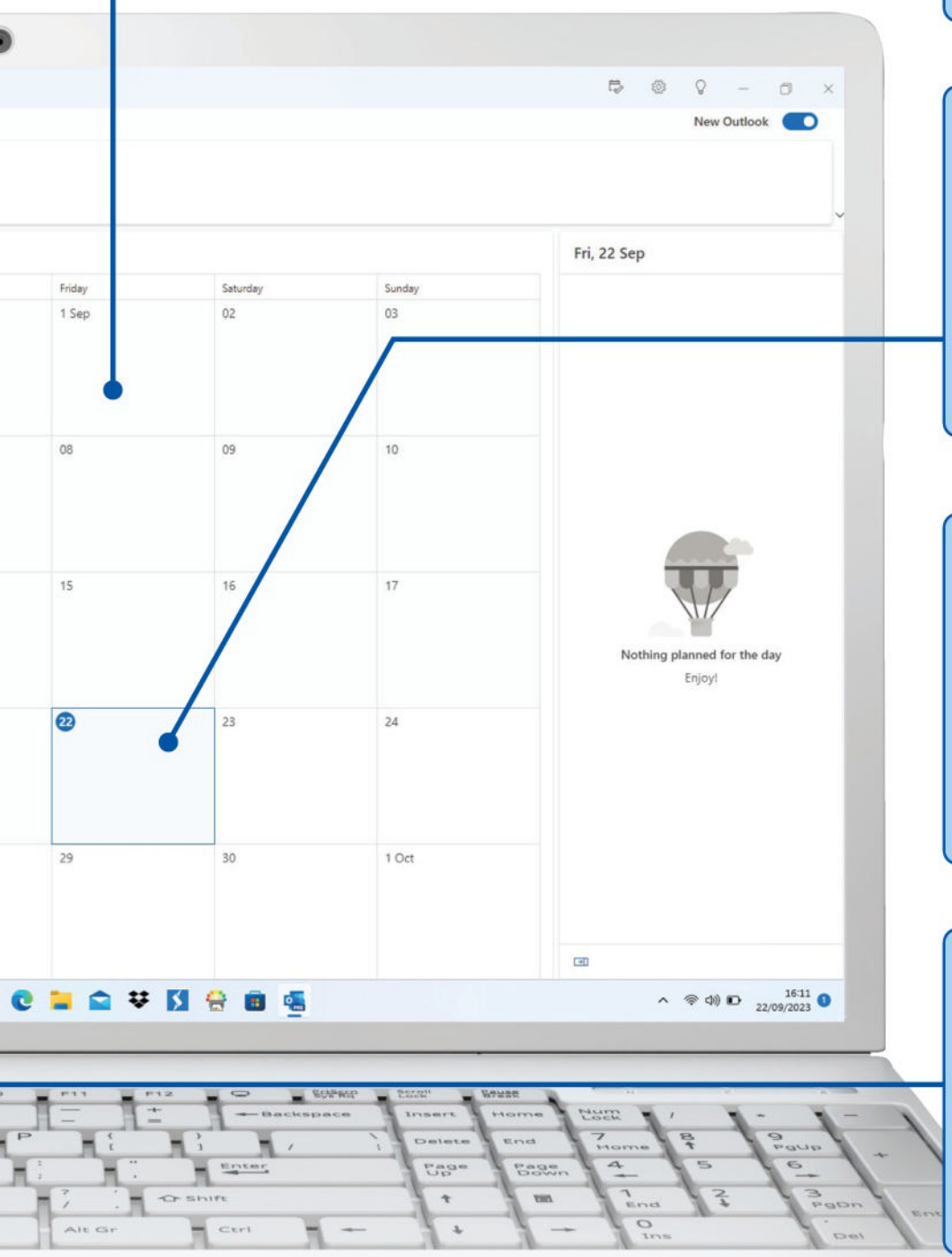
3 Linked Calendars

Your calendar can be linked to your email account, which is shown here. If you are using Gmail for your email account, and have any calendars set up in Google Calendar, these are also shown here. You can use the checkboxes to select and deselect calendars from showing in the main pane; each is colour coded, so you know from which custom calendar an event comes.

Calendar Updates

The new Windows 11 Calendar app is one of a number of apps that Microsoft are actively updating on a regular basis. Features were removed and added even in the first few months of Windows 11's launch, and there's more to come. Whether any of the previous features that were removed will return is anyone's guess, as Microsoft is remaining silent. But, with each new update, the Calendar gets better, so keep an eye on it and see how it evolves over time.





4 Calendar Pane

The main Calendar pane, however you choose to view it with the View buttons, contains several different bits of useful information. Public and national holidays are automatically added, based on location. The current day is accentuated in your chosen highlight colour. Weather and temperature information is shown for the current day, along with a few days after. Clicking the weather symbol opens the Weather app.

5 Add Event

Click on any day in the main pane, or any hourly slot in day view, and a mini Add Event pane opens. You can use this to add an event to your calendar quickly. The pane includes event name, time-slots and location; it also lets you choose into which custom calendar you want to add it. If you choose to add more details, click the More Details button, if not, click Done to add the event.

6 Calendar Settings

Alongside various customisation settings, such as the ability to choose light and dark themes and change the default highlight colour, are settings for adding new email accounts and changing the default view. You can also add public or national holidays manually, in Calendar Settings, if they have not been correctly added automatically.

7 Switch to Tabs

The Mail and Calendar apps are closely linked, and you can quickly switch between the two using the buttons here. Receive an email with an appointment in it, and you can quickly add it to your calendar using the tools in the Mail app. You can also quickly switch to the People app and the ToDo app using the tabs/buttons here.

Dates & Appointments with Calendar

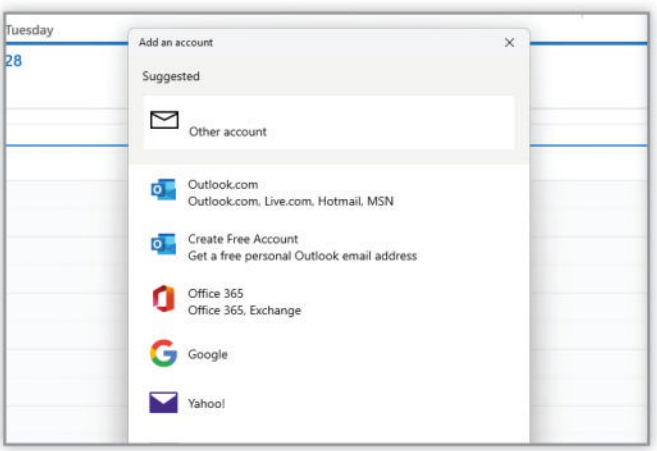
Digital calendars are no longer the preserve of business people scheduling appointments via email. With mobile phones now our new diaries, digital calendars are being used by increasing numbers of people to organise their busy lives. Welcome to Calendar.

Setting Up Calendars

The calendar can be a great productivity tool. We'll show you how to set up your calendar, arrange events and change settings, so your calendar is exactly the way you want it.

Adding Calendars

Like Windows 11's email app, Calendar also enables you to add multiple accounts; and from different providers too. So whether you use an Outlook calendar at work or have shared Google calendars, you can join them all together in the Calendar app. To Start click on Add Accounts.

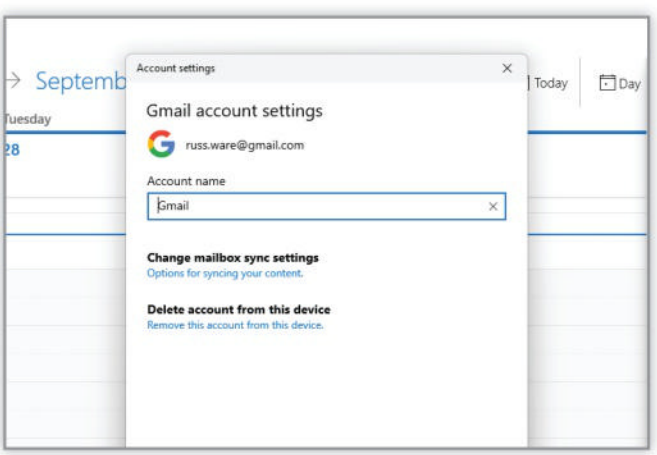


Allow Location

You'll be asked to enable location access for Mail and Calendar. This is predominantly for one simple reason – Calendar shows you the weather for your location each day. You can always revoke access via the Settings app. Go to Location and you can turn off Calendar's access to Location.

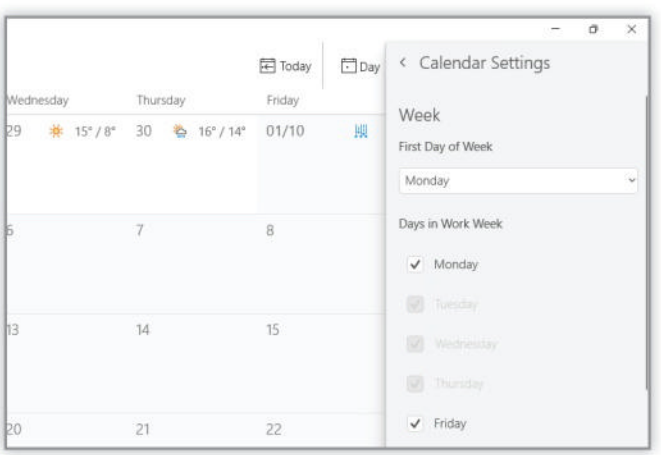
Sign In to Calendars

Now add the accounts you want to use in Calendar. You can do this at any point you choose via Settings > Accounts. From there you can easily add an Outlook.com, Exchange, Google or iCloud calendar; or enter advanced settings for any other calendars you may have from other providers.



Calendar Settings

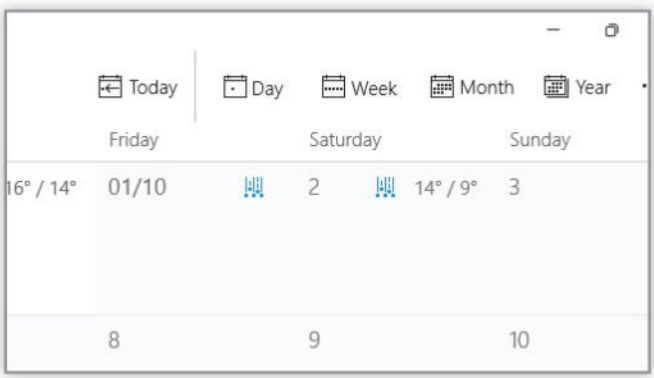
The calendar settings are fairly basic, boiling down to adding accounts, changing the appearance and setting the weather region. The only other settings are the controls to how the calendars are displayed (First day of week, Days in work week, Week numbers on/off, etc.).



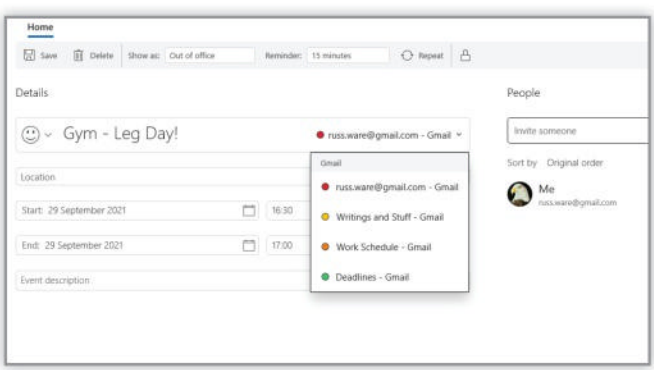
Creating and Managing Events

In the Calendar app, the appointments and reminders you add manually are called Events. You can add multiple events to each day, add emojis and set events to repeat.

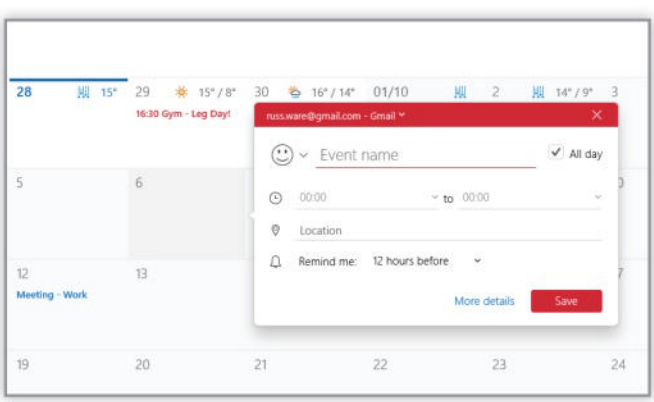
Step 1 The default view when opening the Calendar is the month view. You can switch to the different views (Day, Week, Month and Year) using the buttons along the top of the calendar. There is also a button here to take the view back to the current day, if you have been browsing future or past months.



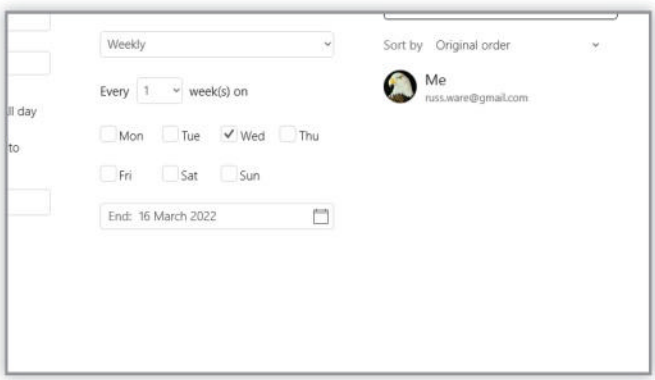
Step 2 Click the New Event button in the top left. Add the name of the event, a location should you wish to, plus start and end dates and times. You're also able to invite people by email using the field on the right-hand side. This will then insert the event into their calendar as well.



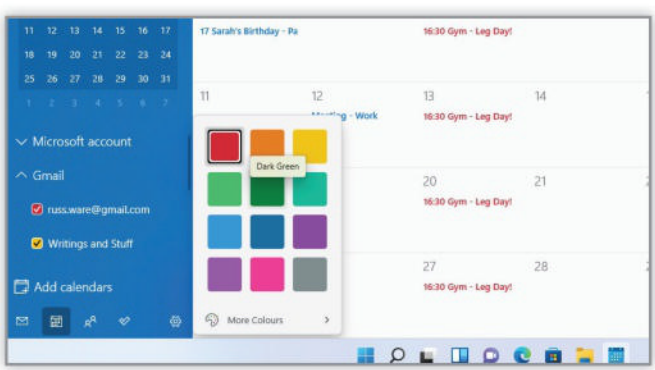
Step 3 You can also add events by clicking on the relevant date block (or time block in Day view), and then adding the event details in the quick event pop-up box. If you want to see the full, new event screen at this point, you can click the "More details" link in the quick event box.



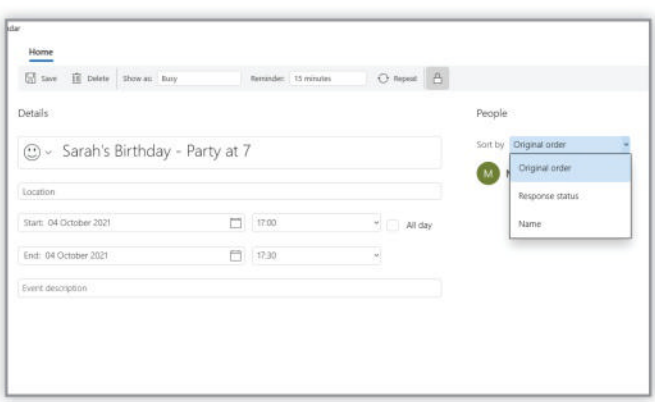
Step 4 You can also choose to set repeat events – just click the Repeat button in the toolbar when you're creating a new event. Check the days you want. You can repeat daily, weekly, monthly or yearly, depending on what you need to do. You can even set a date when the repeated events end.



Step 5 You're also able to assign different colours to different calendar accounts. Each calendar account you add will automatically be assigned a different colour. You can then change this assigned colour by clicking the arrow next to the calendar name and choosing from the pop out menu.



Step 6 One of the best things about the Windows 11 Calendar app is how admirably it copes with multiple calendars. So providing they invite your account (or you invite them), you're able to easily share events with others. If you do share, you can set certain events as private, so only you see them.



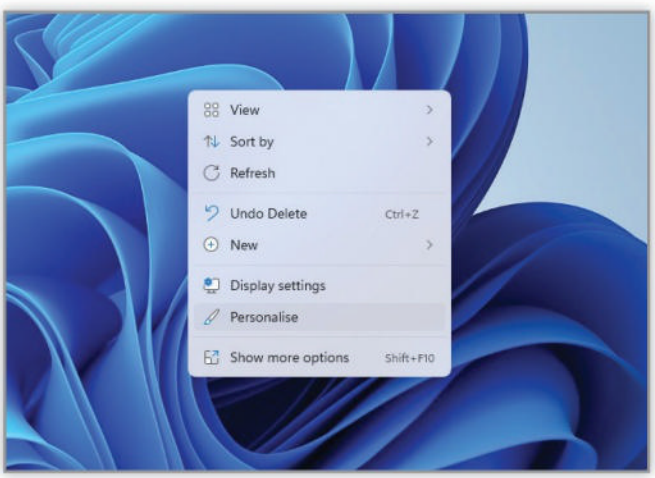
Personalising Windows 11

As with all recent versions of Windows, you can completely change the look and feel of Windows 11 to suit your own needs or style. From the desktop wallpaper to the colour themes everything can be customised and personalised.

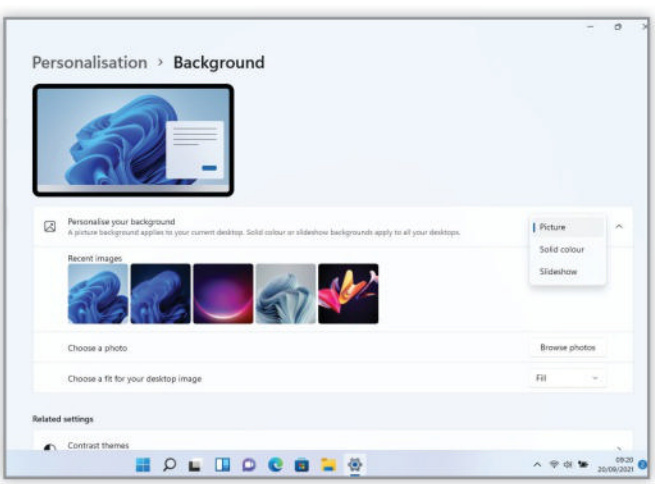
Change the Desktop Background

The desktop personalisation procedure hasn't changed much since Windows 10, so if you've used that OS before this will feel very familiar.

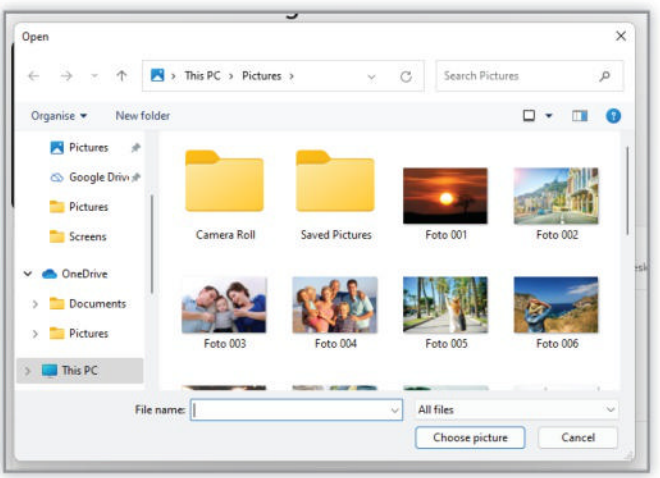
Step 1 You can get started with personalising the Windows 11 desktop in exactly the same way you did with Windows 10. For anyone completely new to Windows, that means right-clicking anywhere on the desktop screen and selecting Personalise from the action menu that appears.



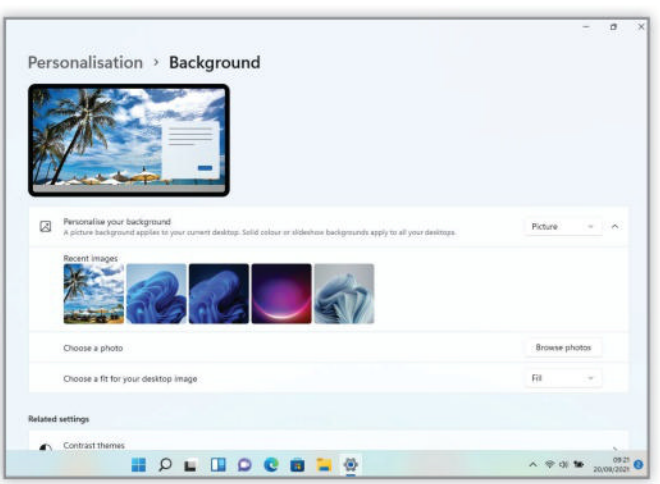
Step 2 The Background settings will be displayed first by default. Click the first drop-down menu to select whether to use the default backgrounds, solid colours or choose to display folders of your own images. Your choices here changes what is displayed in the background settings.



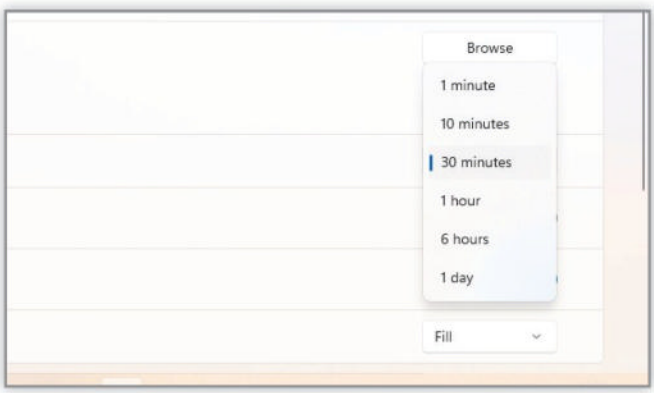
Step 3 To select your own pictures for the background, click on Browse photos in the Choose a photo section and navigate to the folder containing the images you want to use. For best results, use pictures that have the same aspect ratio (i.e. widescreen landscape), as your monitor screen.



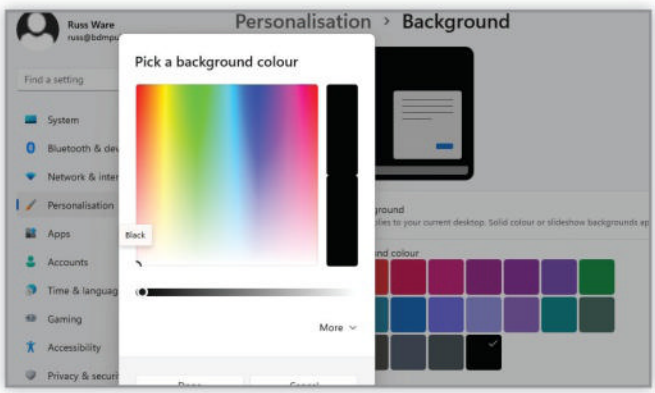
Step 4 To set a picture as your desktop background, simply click on it. It will instantly be set as your new desktop background image (a preview will display). The screen shows you the last five images used or you can click the Browse button to choose a new one from your folders.



Step 5 If you opt for Slideshow, you will see some additional options to choose from. You can set the interval for the slide show from the 'Change picture every' menu and decide how you'd like the images to fit on the screen by clicking the 'Choose a fit' menu.



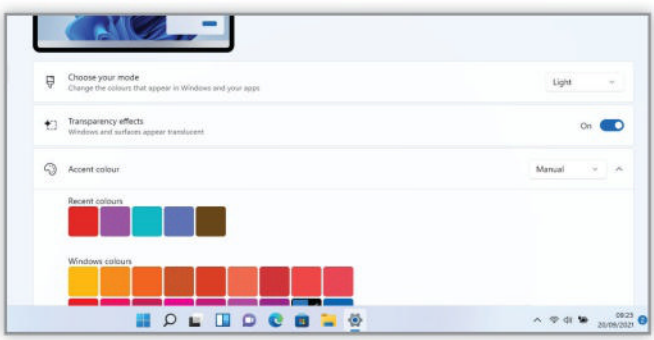
Step 6 If you choose to set your desktop background as a solid colour, you will see a grid of about 25 colours that you can choose from. If you want to use a colour not shown in the grid, click on the View colours option and use the colour picker to select the exact colour you want to apply.



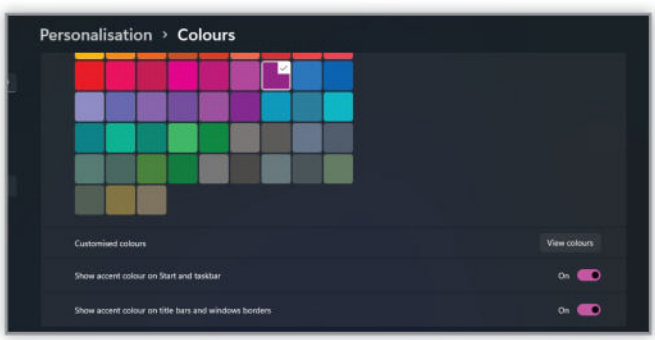
Setting Accent Colours

By accent colours we mean the colour of the taskbar, the Start menu and the frames of new windows and so on, that you open on your computer.

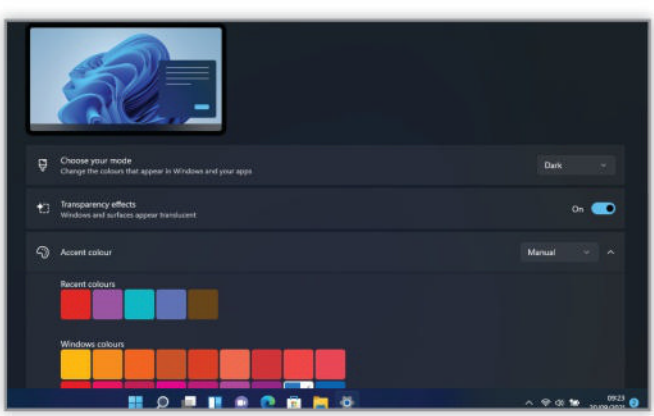
Step 1 Aside from the desktop background, you can also change the colour of the taskbar and the Start menu and other system components. Click on the Colours option in the main Settings sidebar. Here you will see several colour control options, including the option to choose light or dark mode.



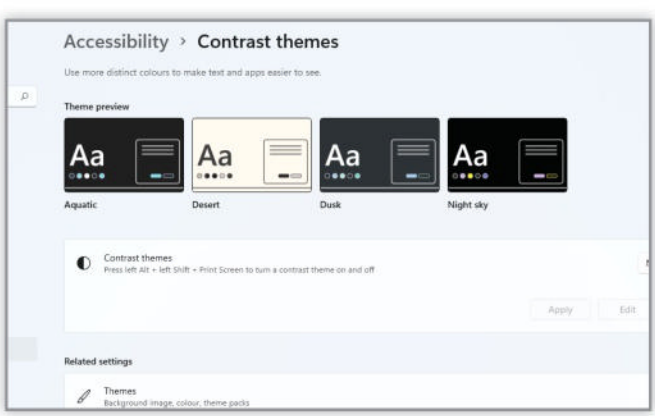
Step 3 To apply a colour other than light or dark to the taskbar, Start menu and other accents, you need to first select Dark mode, then select a colour from the grid of colours and then select the option below that to "Show accent colour on Start and Taskbar". You can also apply it to title bars and borders.



Step 2 Light mode is the default that Windows 11 is set to when installed. Select Dark mode to see an immediate and obvious change. Dark mode affects most menus like the taskbar, Start menu and folders etc. The third option is Custom, which lets you choose light/dark modes separately for system and apps.



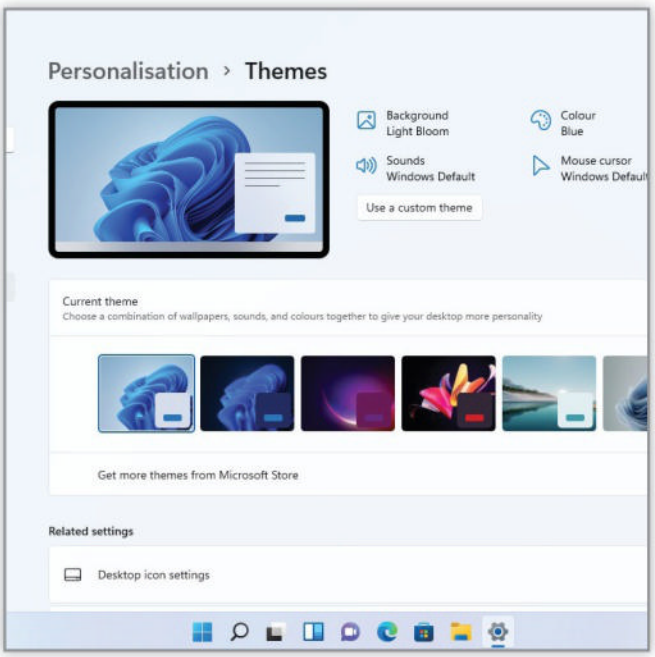
Step 4 If you need to set the colour scheme to high contrast (if, for example, you have a vision impairment), you can access several preset colour themes from the Colours menu. You will see a preview of the different themes, and can then apply the one you like from the drop-down menu.



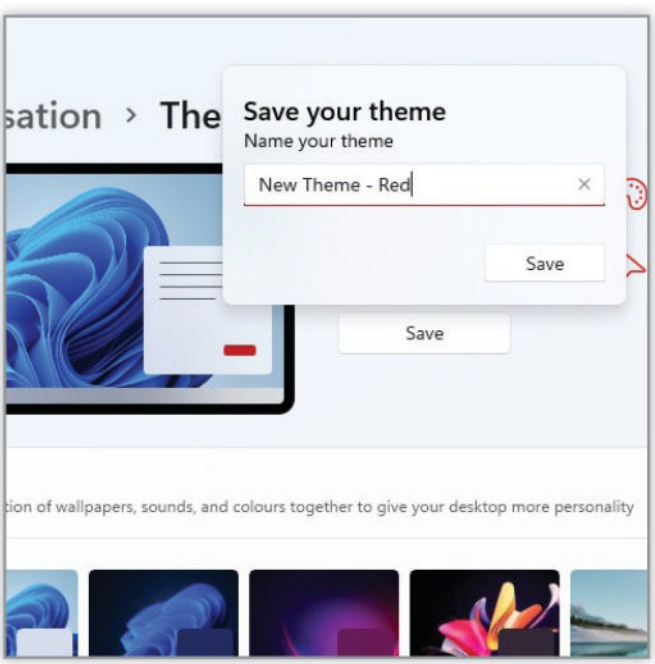
Modifying Themes

There are several themes preset in Windows 11. These can be applied at the click of a button, and then further customised to suit your needs.

Step 1 You can find the preset themes in Settings > Personalisation > Themes. The current theme is displayed at the top of the page, with details about background, colour, sounds and mouse cursor displayed next to it. Each of these details can be clicked to go to a section where you can edit it.

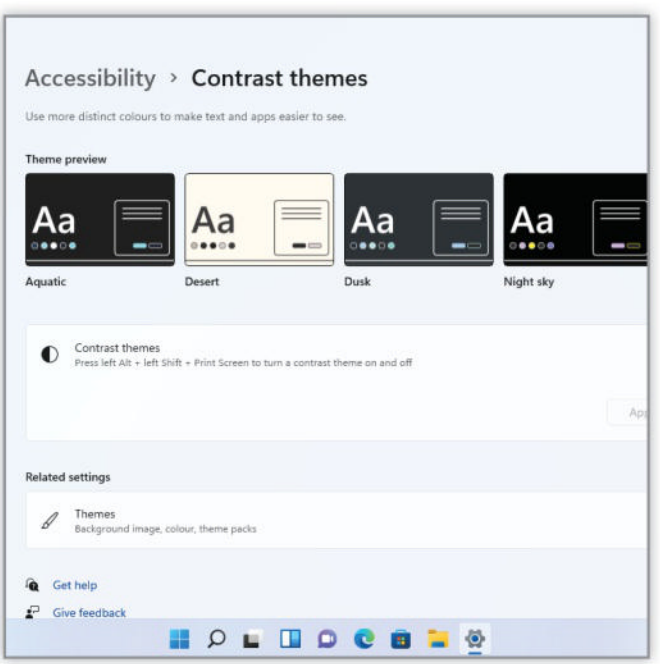


Step 2 Each time you make a change using these links, return to the Themes section to see the changes in the preview window, or minimise the Settings app to see the desktop. When you are happy with all of the changes, click "Save" and the theme will be set and added to the other themes.



Step 3 Further down the page are five more preset themes displayed in a panel. Simply click each one to activate it and apply the changes. Minimise the Settings app to see the changes to the background, etc. As with the default theme, the details of the new theme are displayed at the top of the page.

Step 4 At the bottom of the themes settings page are a few more links, taking you directly to desktop icon settings and high/low contrast themes. Desktop icon settings are separate to the themes, so if you change these, they will remain even if you then go back and choose a new theme.



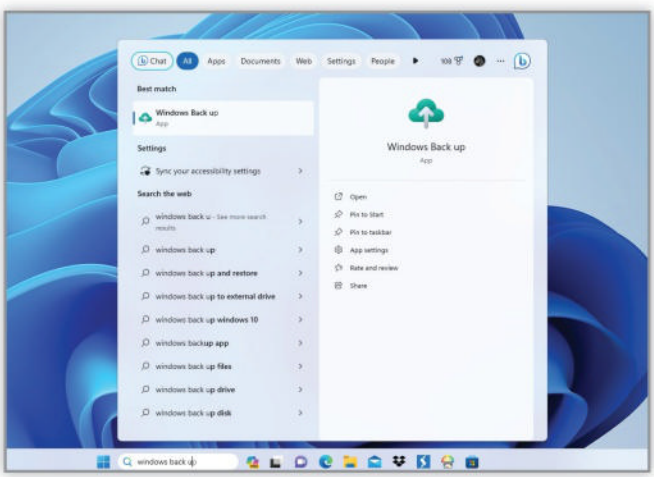
Using Windows Back up

It may seem odd to be reading a guide to backing up your device while we are still working through the core functionality. We can assure you that is not the case, as backing up your device regularly is essential to protecting your files and your hardware.

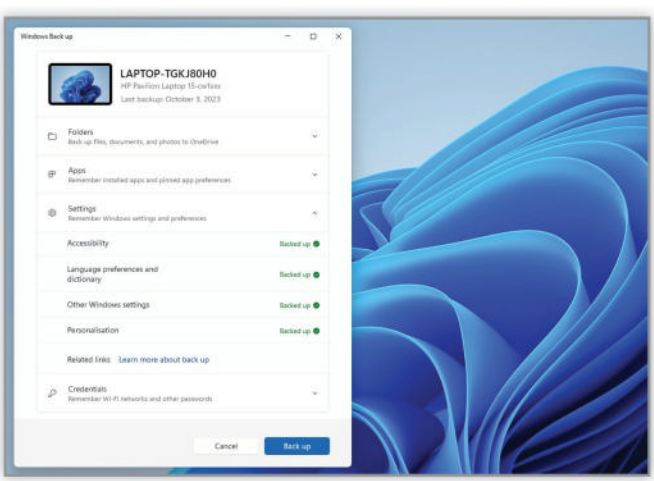
Activating and using Windows Back up

Your files and your data are as precious as your tablet, desktop or laptop computer itself. Use this guide to protect your entire Windows 11-powered environment.

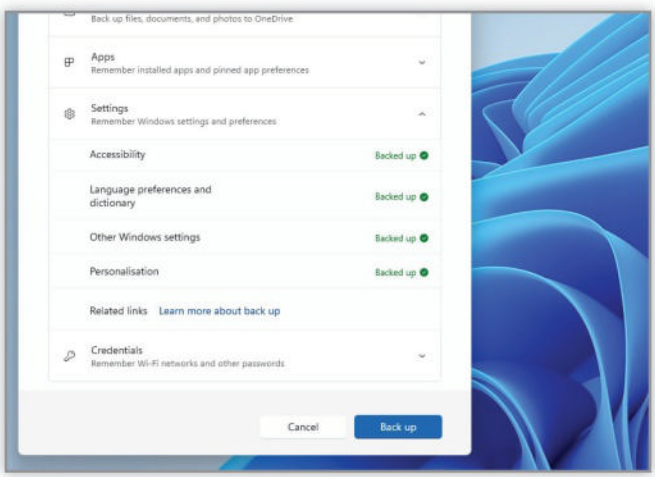
Step 1 Using the Search bar, enter the term “Windows Back Up” to quickly locate the application. From the results, click on the app to open it in a small window that’s accessible from the desktop. Your devices core details are displayed here, and also the date of any available back ups.



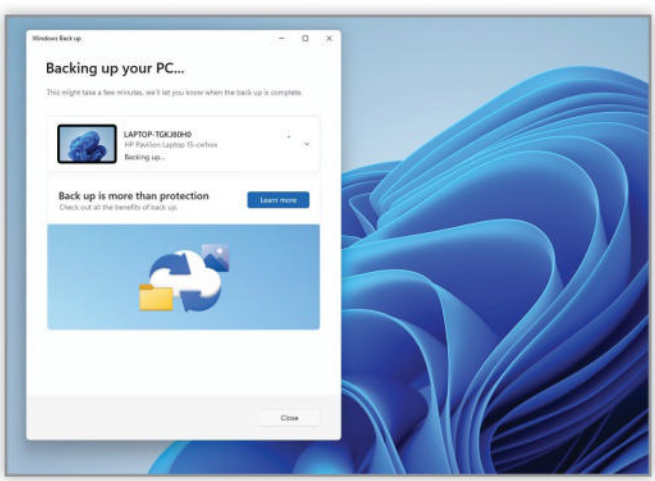
Step 2 Below this info, you can customise the data, settings and file you wish to back up. These are broken down accordingly Folders, Apps, Settings and Credentials. By activating Folders in back up you add any files, photos and documents; we advise doing so.



Step 3 An apps back up ensures any installed applications and related data are added to your back up. A Settings back up retains all personal preferences you have made to your system, from personalisation to accessibility. Again, both are recommended additions to your back up.



Step 4 Finally, when selected ‘Credentials’ saves your personal settings, from passwords to wi-fi networks. Again we suggest adding this data to all back ups. Once you’ve made your selections, click Back Up. The app then stores all your selections. Repeat this process regularly.



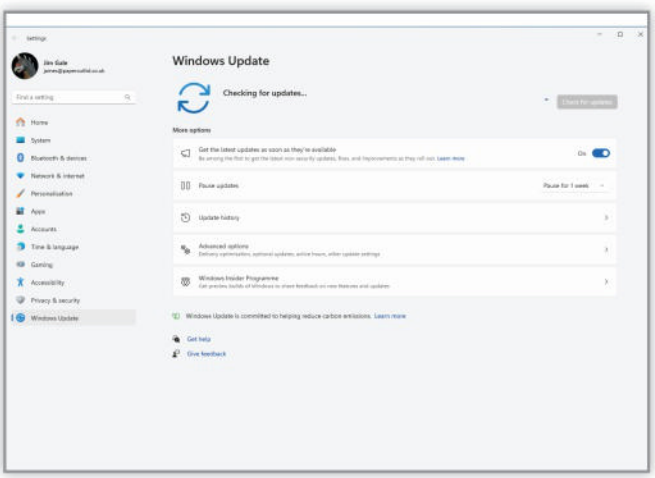
10 Ways to get more from Copilot

The Copilot app is one of the most intriguing additions to Windows 11's portfolio of amazing features since its launch. As the use of AI in our delay life slowly increases, Copilot provides an expansive showcase of how far this technology has progressed since Cortana retired. What follows is our ten steps to getting the best from Copilot.

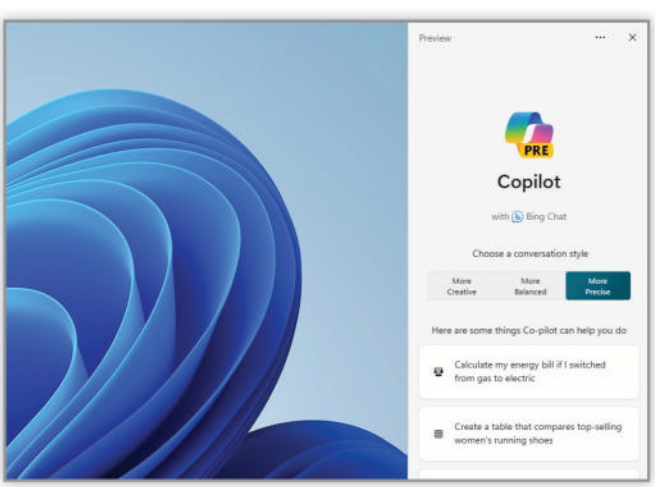
From Set Up to reaching for the stars

As the key part of the 2023 Windows 11 update and the replacement for the rather poor former Windows AI assistant Cortana, Copilot is packed with features. Let's take a look at our top picks.

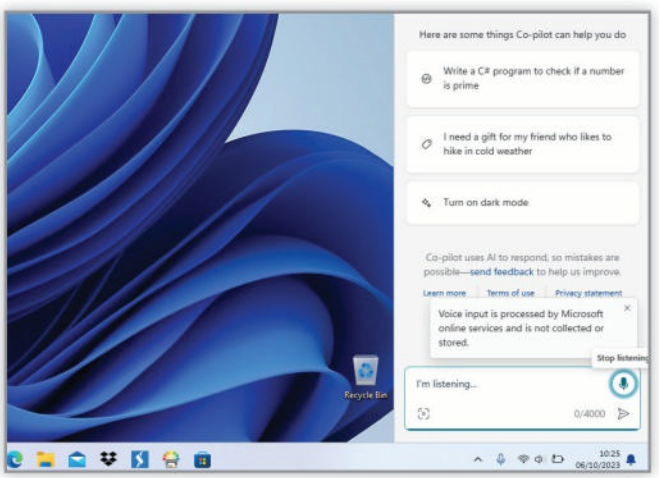
Step 1 Copilot is a new feature of Microsoft's major 2023 Windows 11 software update, so before we start let's check you have the application installed. If you have, the quick launch link is automatically added to the task bar. If it's not there, you need to perform an update.



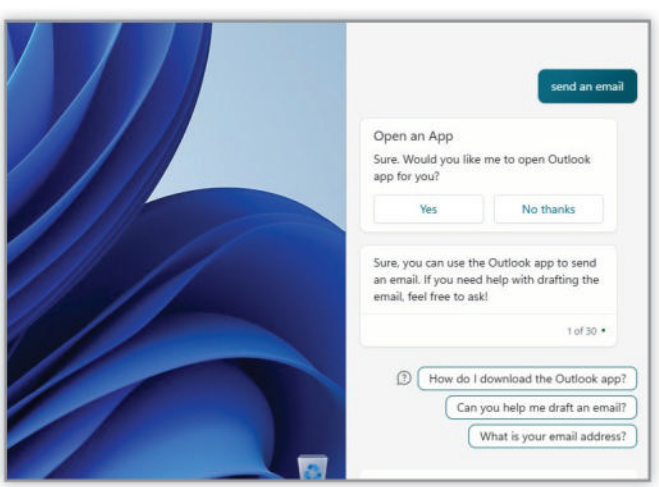
Step 2 When you open Copilot, via the quick launch or Win+C, you're given three 'conversation styles' you can choose from; Creative, Balanced and Precise. This choice massively changes your Copilot experience, and we would advise you to make the choice based on your task/question.



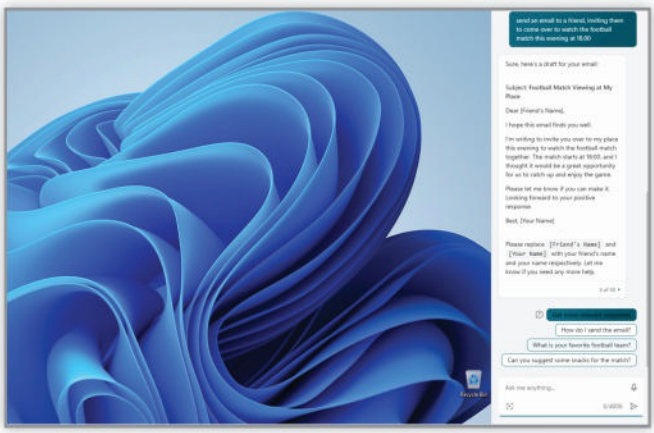
Step 3 Interaction with Copilot is performed via your voice or direct keyboard input, using the 'Ask me anything...' input bar at the base of the Copilot panel. Click the microphone icon to interact using your voice or click on the Ask me anything text to enter your request via the keyboard.



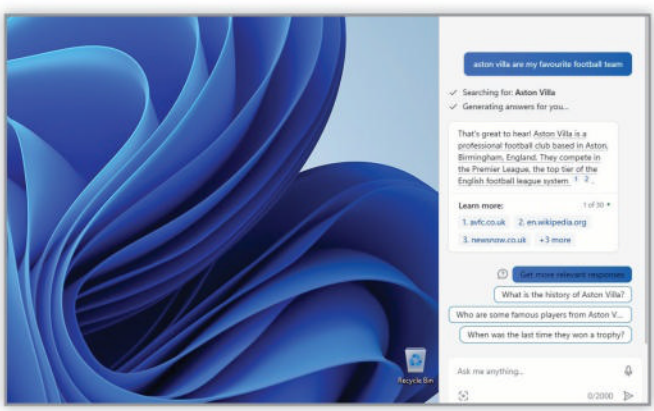
Step 4 Now we're set up, let's start using Copilot. One core area of the app is using it to perform simple operational tasks on your Windows 11 device. For example, if you select the Precise conversation style and ask Copilot to "Send an email", it then asks you if you wish to open Outlook.



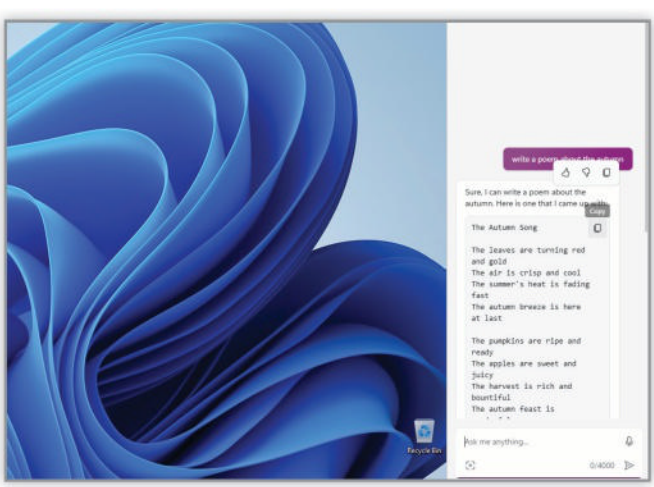
Step 5 After your initial request Copilot remembers your choices. The app often asks you a question related to your request. For example, having elected to send an email, Copilot offers to draft this message for you, based on the basic content structure you have provided for you to send.



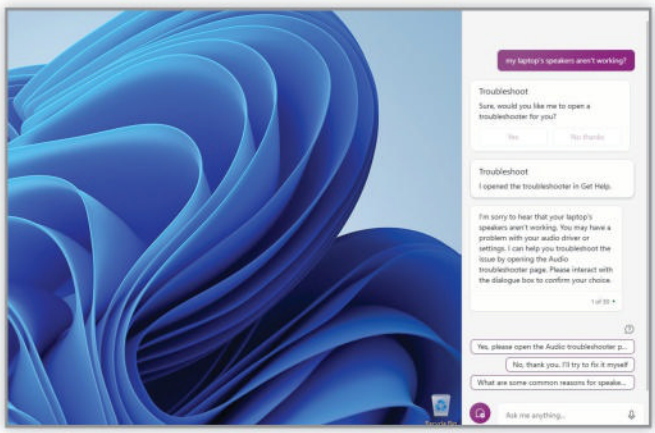
Step 6 The more you use Copilot, the better and more personal the experience becomes. The app is keen to learn more about you, and asks you questions to build its knowledge base. For example, ask it for the latest sports scores and the app asks your favourite team.



Step 7 Let's ask it to write a poem about the Autumn. Select the Creative style and enter the request into the input bar. Did you enjoy its work? Let Copilot know by selecting the thumbs up/down options from the Copy link top-right of the piece, or Copy to move the text to another document.

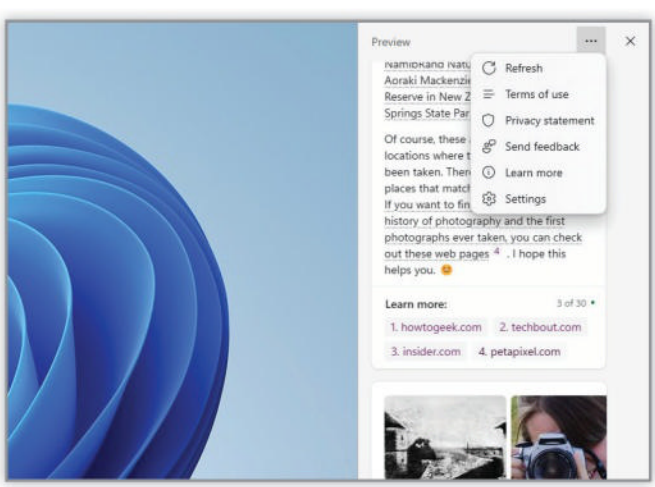


Step 8 An area in which Copilot quickly becomes an essential service is the short question input. Need a recipe? Ask. Want to compare an iPhone to Samsung Galaxy smartphone? Ask. Want the latest sports scores, movie reviews, news, a store's opening times or tech support? Ask.



Step 9 You can also ask Copilot to identify an item, object or individual from an image. Drag the image to the input bar and ask, "What is this image?" With this or any question you can also ask to translate the description to another language. Copilot then gives its response.

Step 10 Your interactions with Copilot are displayed as a dialogue flow, which can be explored using the slider on the right. Once you've finished your interaction, click the three dots at the top of the panel and click Refresh to clear the chat. Your interaction is stored by the app itself.



Windows 11 Keyboard Shortcuts

Keyboard shortcuts are a useful way to speed up navigating your way around Windows 11, especially if you are using a laptop with a touchpad. There are literally hundreds to learn, but here are some of the most useful keyboard shortcuts for everyday use.

Basic Keyboard Shortcuts

Ctrl+C Copy the selected item
Ctrl+X Cut the selected item
Ctrl+V Paste the selected item
Ctrl+Z Undo an action
Alt+Tab Switch between open apps
Alt+F4 Close an active item, or exit an app
Shift+Delete Delete item without moving to Recycle Bin
Ctrl+Shift+Esc Open the Task Manager

Windows Key Shortcuts

Windows key Open Start menu
Windows key + A Open Quick Settings panel
Windows key + S Open Search
Windows key + C Open Teams Chat
Windows key + Tab Open Task view
Windows key + I Open Windows 11 Settings
Windows key + W Open Widgets panel
Windows key + E Open File Explorer
Windows key + R Open the Run app
Windows key + V Open the Clipboard
Windows key + G Open the Xbox Game Bar
Windows key + N Open Notifications panel
Windows key + X Open a system context menu
Windows key + U Open Accessibility settings
Windows key + L Lock your PC or switch accounts
Windows key + H Open Voice typing control
Windows key + T Cycle through apps on the Taskbar
Windows key + comma Peek at the desktop
Windows key + D Display and hide the desktop
Windows key + Ctrl + D Add a virtual desktop
Windows key + Ctrl + Right Arrow Switch to virtual desktop on the right
Windows key + Ctrl + Left Arrow Switch to virtual desktop on the left
Windows key + Ctrl + F4 Close the virtual desktop you're using
Windows key + Home Minimise all but the active desktop window
Windows key + Up arrow Stretch the desktop window to the top and bottom of the screen
Windows key + Down arrow Restore desktop windows vertically, maintaining width
Windows key + plus or minus Zoom in or out using Magnifier
Windows key + Esc Exit Magnifier

Windows Snap Shortcuts

Windows key + Up Arrow Maximise current window
Windows key + Down Arrow Restores window size
Windows key + Left Arrow Snaps current window to the left
Windows key + Right Arrow Snaps current window to the right
Windows key + 2 Arrow Keys Snaps current window into one corner

Taskbar Shortcuts

Shift + click a taskbar button Open an app or quickly open another instance of an app
Ctrl + Shift + click a taskbar button Open an app as an administrator
Shift + right-click a taskbar button Show the window menu for the app
Shift + right-click a grouped taskbar button Show the window menu for the group
Ctrl + click a grouped taskbar button Cycle through the windows of the group

Typing Shortcuts

Ctrl + C Copy the selected item
Ctrl + D Delete the selected item and move it to the Recycle Bin
Ctrl + R Refresh the active window
Ctrl + V Paste the selected item
Ctrl + S Save document
Ctrl + Y Redo an action
Ctrl + Z Undo an action
Ctrl + Right arrow Move the cursor to the beginning of the next word
Ctrl + Left arrow Move the cursor to the beginning of the previous word
Ctrl + Down arrow Move the cursor to the beginning of the next paragraph
Ctrl + Up arrow Move the cursor to the beginning of the previous paragraph
Ctrl + Shift with an arrow key Select a block of text

Wordpad Shortcuts

Ctrl + 1 Set single line spacing
Ctrl + 2 Set double line spacing
Ctrl + A Select all
Ctrl + B Make selected text bold
Ctrl + C Copy a selection
Ctrl + E Align text center
Ctrl + F Search for text in a doc
Ctrl + H Replace text in a document
Ctrl + I Italicise selected text
Ctrl + J Justify text
Ctrl + L Align text left
Ctrl + N Create a new document
Ctrl + O Open an existing document
Ctrl + P Print a document
Ctrl + R Align text right
Ctrl + S Save changes
Ctrl + U Underline selected text
Ctrl + V Paste a selection
Ctrl + X Cut selection
Ctrl + Y Redo change
Ctrl + Z Undo change
Ctrl + Shift + greater than (>) Increase font size
Ctrl + Shift + less than (<) Decrease font size
Ctrl + Shift + A Change to all capitals
Ctrl + Shift + L Change bullet style
Ctrl + Home Go to the beginning of the doc
Ctrl + End Go to the end of the doc

Movies & TV Shortcuts

Alt + Enter Play full-screen
Esc Leave full-screen
Enter Select what is in focus
Spacebar Play or pause
Alt + Left arrow key Go back
Ctrl + T Turn repeat on or off
F7 Mute the sound
F8 Volume down
F9 Volume up

Microsoft Edge Shortcuts

Ctrl + Shift + B Show/hide the favorites bar
Ctrl + Shift + D Save all open tabs as favourites to a folder
Alt + D Select the URL in the address bar
Ctrl + E Open a search query in the address bar
Ctrl + F Find on page
Ctrl + Shift + L Paste and search
Ctrl + N Open a new window
Ctrl + Shift + N Open a new InPrivate window
Ctrl + P Print the current web page
Ctrl + R Reload the current page
Ctrl + S Save the current page
Ctrl + T Open and use a new tab
Ctrl + Shift + U Start or stop Read Aloud
Ctrl + Shift + V Paste without formatting
Ctrl + W Close the current tab
Ctrl + Shift + W Close the current window

Take the time to learn your keyboard shortcuts for Windows 11, and you'll be opening, closing, moving, creating and modifying everything on your desktop with ease. You don't have to learn them all, but make yourself familiar with the basics of each app you use, and you'll be maximising your workflow in no time.

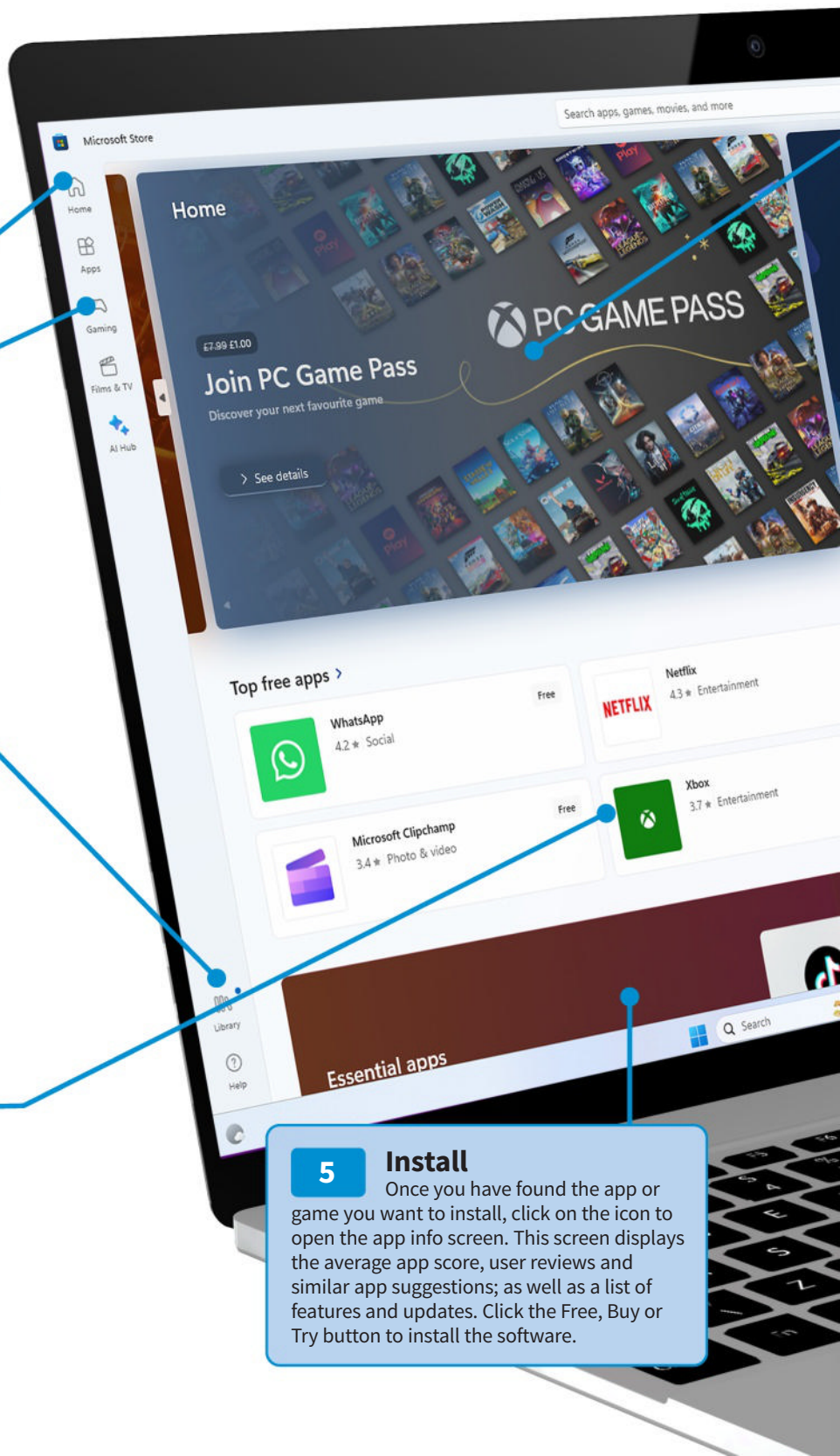
Do More with Windows 11

Want to do more with Windows 11 and its new features? Excellent, then this is the chapter for you. Within the coming pages, you'll learn how to utilise Microsoft's apps to your best advantage, and how to get to grips with some of the more technical aspects of the operating system. From learning how OneDrive works through to navigating with Maps, and exploring Windows 11's interesting interactive features, there's something for every user here.

"Learn how to purchase additional apps, media and games, make video calls with Teams and Skype, connect additonal devices to your Windows 11 powered hardware and so much more."

Exploring the Microsoft Store

If the Desktop, Widgets, Notifications and new apps weren't enough of an update for you, then you're in luck as Microsoft has also updated and revamped its online Store. Giving you access to the best apps and entertainment.



1 New Look
The Microsoft Store has a new look to it, in-line with the rest of the Windows 11 theme and desktop. You'll find the Store located by default in the taskbar.

2 Categories
Quick access to the main categories: Apps, Gaming and Films & TV are available to the left-side of the Store window. Click each one to be taken to specific pages where you can find the latest content.

3 Library
The Library contains all the apps you currently have installed on your system. From here you can further break them down into sub-categories such as Games, Movies & TV, etc. You can also check their update status, pin them to the Start or taskbar, and even open them.

4 Top Apps
Scrolling down through the Store will reveal the most popular, Top Free, Essential and New content available. Simply click on one of the tiles, and you'll be taken to the content's Store front.

5 Install
Once you have found the app or game you want to install, click on the icon to open the app info screen. This screen displays the average app score, user reviews and similar app suggestions; as well as a list of features and updates. Click the Free, Buy or Try button to install the software.

6 Featured Offers
Periodically, the Store will feature offers for its users. This could be a free 30 day trial, or other download offers. Click on the link to read more about the offer and then follow the instructions to take advantage of it.

7 Search
If you're looking for something specific, then rather than trawling through the categories, use the Search function to find it, and other apps and content relating to it. The Windows 11 Store search is much faster than previous versions.

8 Profile
Clicking your name in the upper-right of the Store window will display the profile you're logged in as. From here you can setup payment methods, redeem gift cards and manage Windows computers under your Microsoft login.

9 See All
You can click the See All links throughout the Microsoft Store to reveal all the apps under a general category, or simply all the ones currently available with a special offer, for example. Drilling down further can often yield some great apps and bargains.

10 App Information
Featured apps will also scroll horizontally across the screen, depending on what's currently trending, or based on apps you've searched for or installed previously. Some contain videos, so be sure to click on them for more information when they appear.

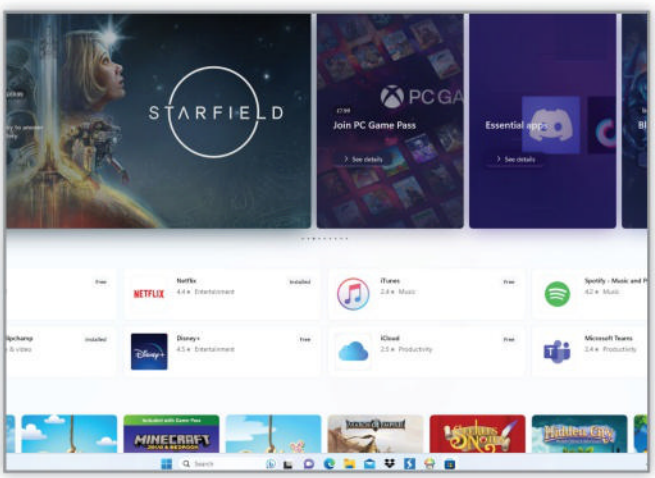
How to use the Windows App Store

The Windows App Store has been updated, and given a new look fresh for Windows 11. It's now designed to be more efficient and easier to get to the apps you want; and those that are trending or highlighted by Microsoft.

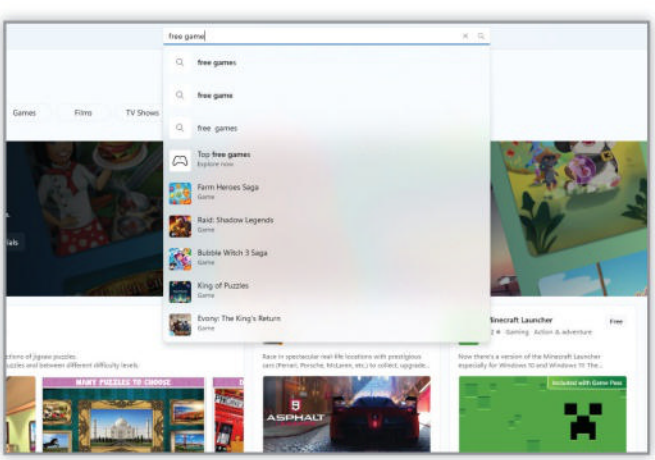
Go Shopping

With more content, and more to explore, there's a lot to cover in the Windows 11 App Store. Here's how it works, and some of the highlights.

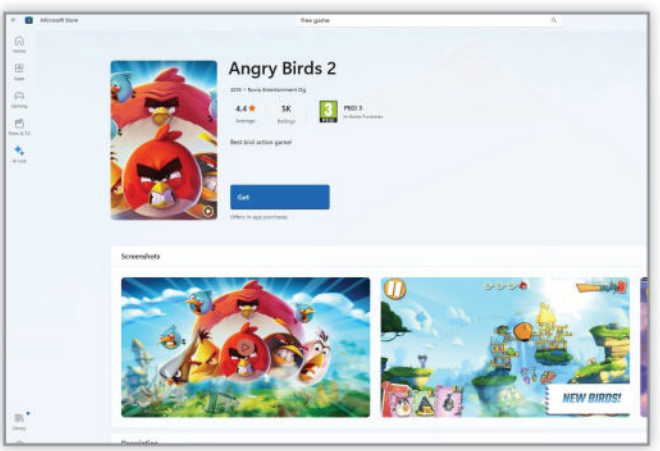
Step 1 The Windows App Store is located, by default, within the new taskbar. It's easy to identify, it's the carrier bag icon with the Microsoft logo. Click it, and as long as you're signed into a valid Microsoft account, it will launch with the latest trending and highlighted apps displayed.



Step 2 Let's run through locating and installing an app from the App Store. In the Search box, located at the top of the Store window, enter: VLC. In case, you're wondering, VLC is a free, cross-platform media player. In the Search bar, there will be a number of returned results, click the VLC UWP entry with the traffic cone icon.

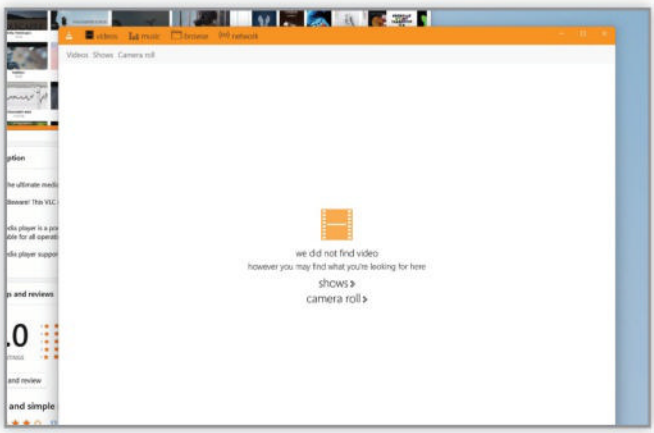


Step 3 Every app in the App Store will behave in the same manner: there will be screen shots of the app along the top, a short description, rating and reviews from other users, and in the left-hand pane you will find a brief summary of the app. Also, in the left-hand pane, is a Get button. To install VLC, click on the Get button.

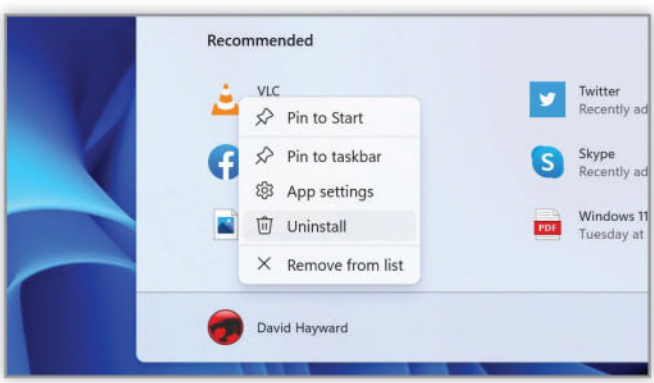


Step 4 The information below the Get button will change, displaying the amount of time left to download through the number of megabytes (or more) remaining from the total. When it's downloaded, there'll be a brief installation display, and when that's done the button will change to read, Open.

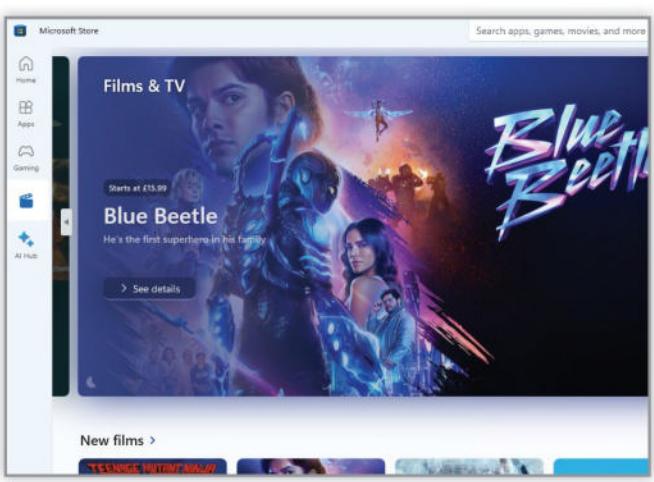
Step 5 Click on the Open button and the app will launch. This will work for most, if not all the available apps on the App Store. Some may require further steps, such as signing into a third-party account – the Twitter app, for example, requires you to have a Twitter account.



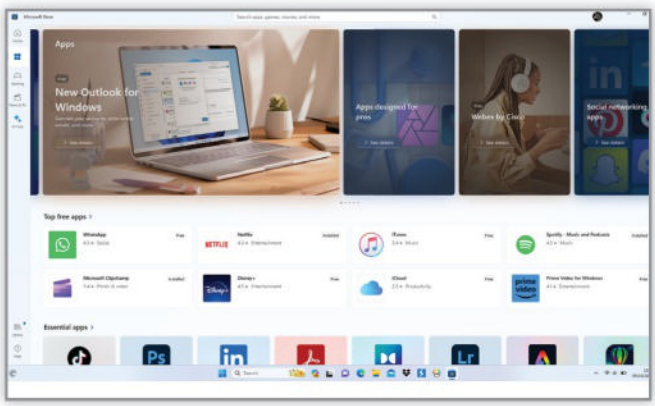
Step 6 Sadly, you can't remove an app via the App Store. To remove an App Store installed app, locate it within the taskbar Start button, right-click the app, and select Uninstall from the list. This will remove the app, and any associated elements that were installed by the App Store. Anything you've added outside the App Store may remain, however.



Step 7 You'll notice that down the left-hand panel of the App Store Home screen, are a number of category icons: Home, Apps, Gaming, Films & TV; and further down the screen, Library and Help. The Home button will return you to the main Home screen, click the Apps button next.

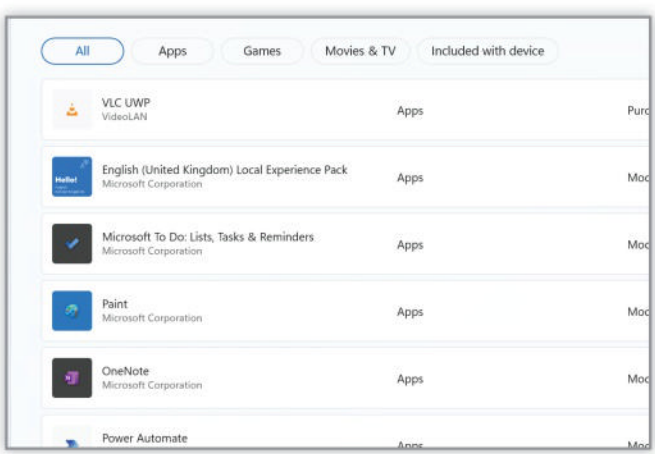


Step 8 The App category simply removes the Gaming and Films & TV entries in the Home screen, to help you find what you're looking for without unnecessary content getting in the way. Scrolling down through the Apps section reveals best selling apps, collections, and specific apps such as productivity, photo and video editing and so on.



Step 9 The Gaming category does the same, but removes the other apps and retains all the apps relating to games. Again, you can scroll down to reveal top free games, highest rated, top paid, and special deals that may be currently running on the App Store. Films & TV is identical in behaviour, but displays the latest titles to rent or buy.

Step 10 The Library section will detail all the apps you currently have installed on your Windows 11 system. These can be further broken down into Apps, Games and Movies & TV; as well as the apps that are included in Windows 11 by default. You can also check for any app updates, and Share the app across other devices.



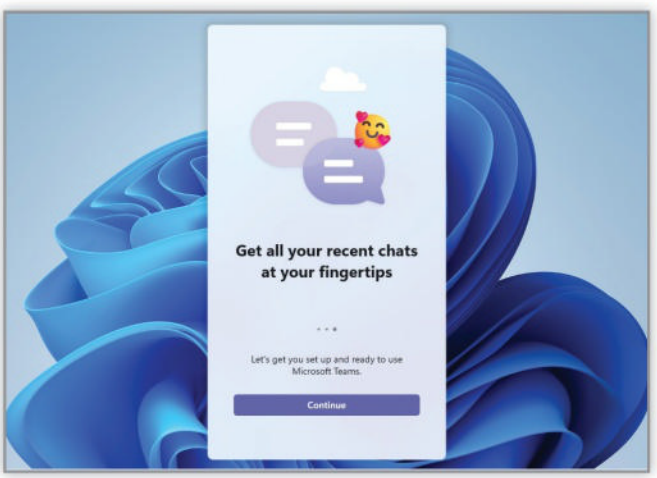
How to Use Teams Chat

Online meetings have been a big thing recently, so the addition of Microsoft Teams to Windows 11 makes sense. You'll need a Microsoft Teams account set up to use the chat and video meeting tools, but once you have, remote working becomes a whole lot easier.

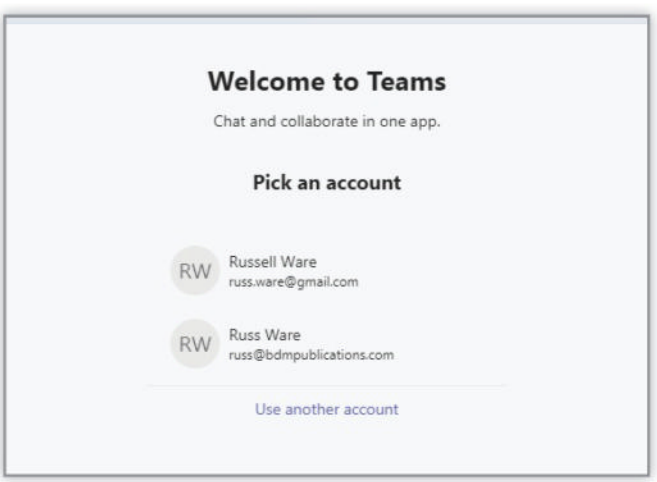
Setting Up the Teams App

Getting started with Microsoft Teams on Windows 11 is relatively easy if you have a Teams account already set up, which we assume you do if you are trying to use this app.

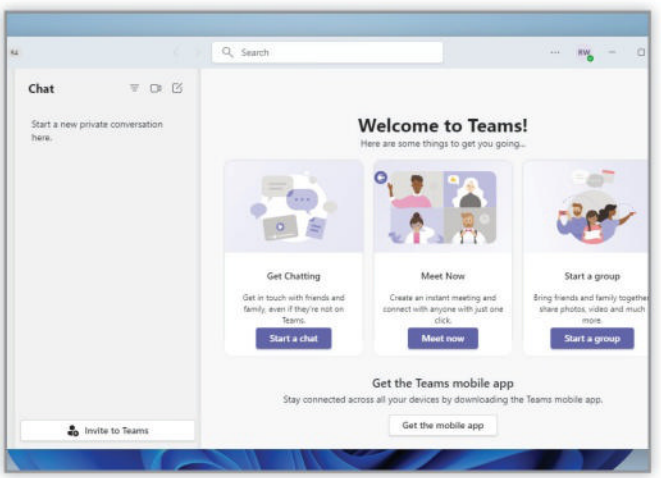
Step 1 Click the Teams Chat icon in the taskbar, or open the Teams app in the main apps list. If your Microsoft account email matches the one you use when setting up your Teams account, the app should automatically detect it, and log you in to the app after a few moments.



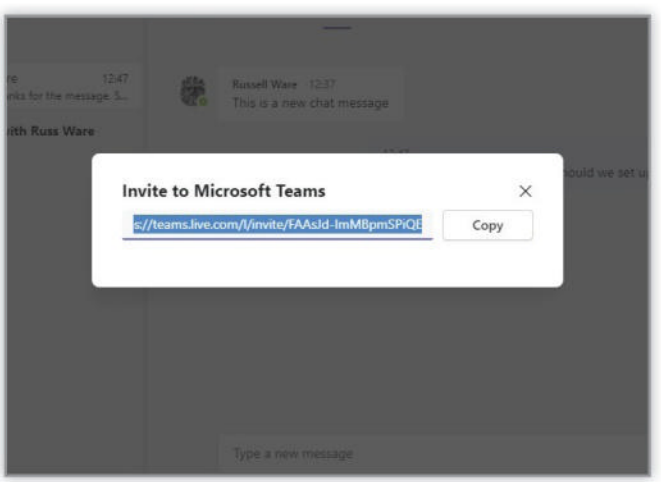
Step 2 If the app doesn't recognise your email address, it will open the Teams login screen. Here you can choose an account to sign in to (if any are displayed), or you can pick another account. If you have yet to set up an account, you can use the link at the bottom and set one up in the browser.



Step 3 Once signed in to your Teams account, the main app window will open. If you automatically signed in by clicking the Chat icon (step 1), you can access the Teams app by clicking the "Open Microsoft Teams" link at the bottom of the chat pop-up window on the taskbar.



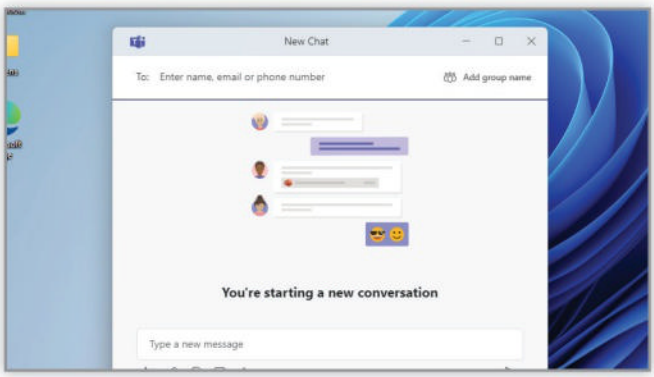
Step 4 You can invite people to Teams using the button on the left sidebar. Clicking this will create a link that you can send to anyone you want to join Teams. You can invite people to chat by clicking the "Start a chat" button, then entering a name (if in your contacts), email address (anyone) or phone number.



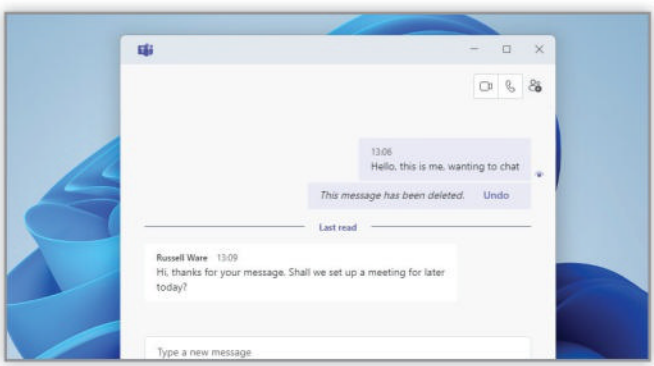
Meet and Chat in Teams

With Teams set up, you can now easily start or join meetings, or chat with others who are also using Microsoft Teams. Either from the main app or by using the taskbar tool.

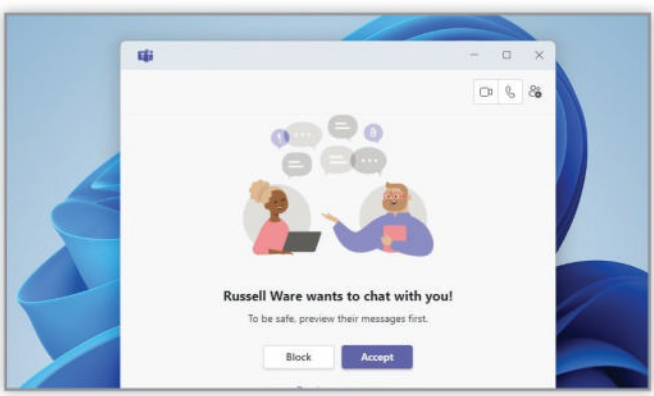
Step 1 To begin a chat, click the Teams Chat icon in the taskbar. From the pop-up window, click on the Chat button. In the new window that opens, enter a contact name, email address or phone number. Type your message and that person will receive a notification telling them you want to start a chat.



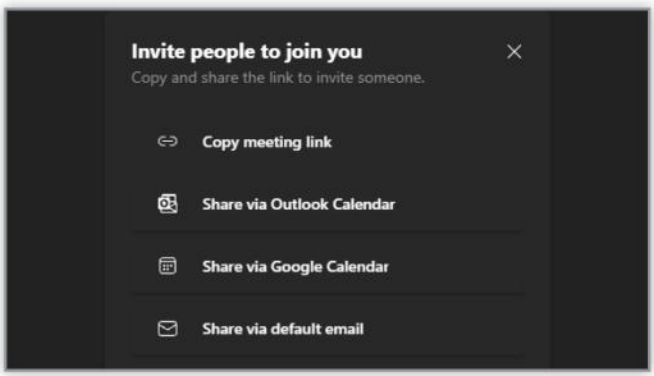
Step 2 Your messages, and the replies, are shown in the conversation window. You can attach and send files via the chat by clicking the paper clip icon. If you want to switch from a text chat to an audio or video call, click either of the buttons at the top-right of the chat window.



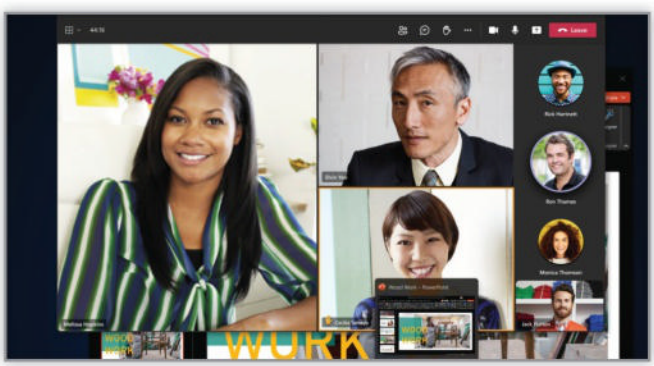
Step 3 If you receive a chat request, you will see a notification in the main Notification center (Action center), and a badge will appear on the chat icon in the taskbar. You can choose to accept or reject the chat request. If you accept, the message will appear and you can start chatting.



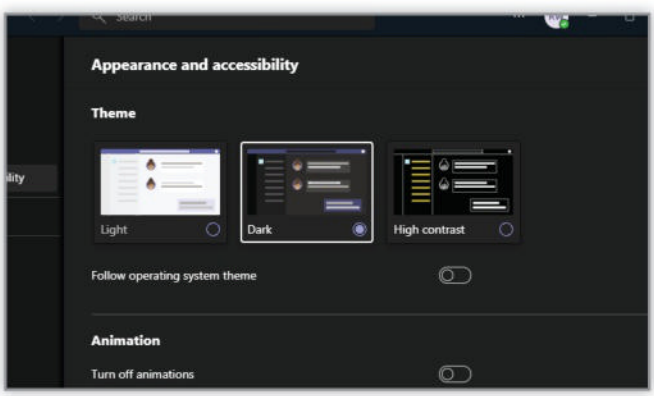
Step 4 To start a meeting, click the Meet button. Give your meeting a name, and you will then be shown several ways to invite people. These include a link you can send, via Outlook Calendar, Google calendar or email. Once shared, you can start the meeting and wait for others to join.



Step 5 Once you are in the meeting you have controls to enable/disable the microphone, enable/disable the camera or set a background blur, etc. To leave a meeting, you just have to click the red Hang up button. If the meeting host ends the meeting, you will automatically be hung up from everyone.



Step 6 You can change the look of the Teams app and Teams Chat in the app settings. Under Appearance & Accessibility, choose from light, dark or high contrast themes. You can also choose to turn off animations, select the app language and change how you are notified of new chats and meetings.



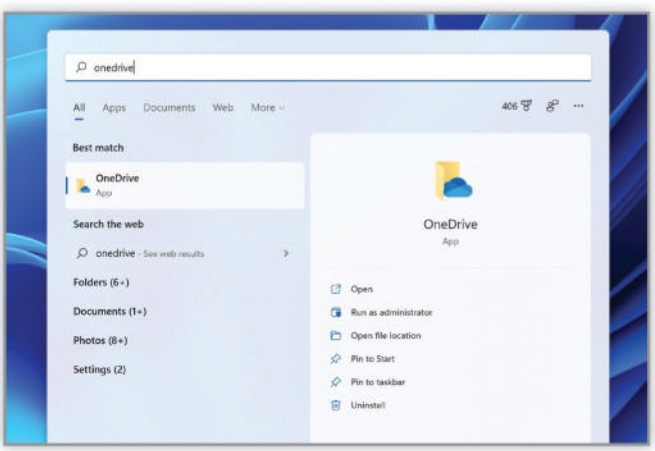
Using OneDrive Cloud Storage

Microsoft's OneDrive has vastly improved over the years. Where once it was a simple backup and online storage solution, today it's now a connected collaborative service, with many excellent features. All of which make it one of the best cloud services available.

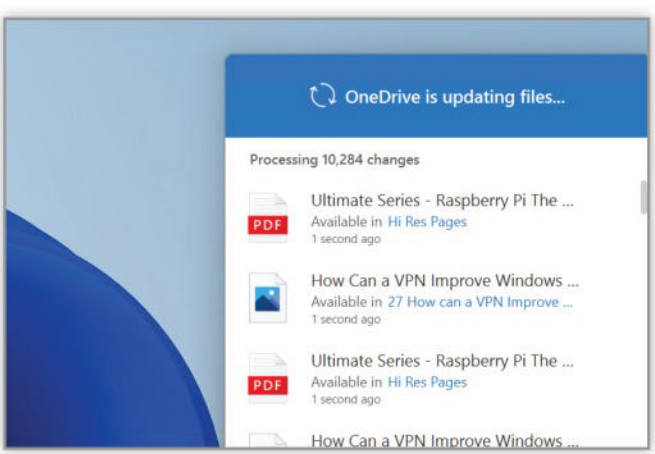
Silver Linings

Here's a quick guide on how to get the best from your OneDrive service, and how to ensure that your important data is always backed up and safely stored within that voluminous online cloud.

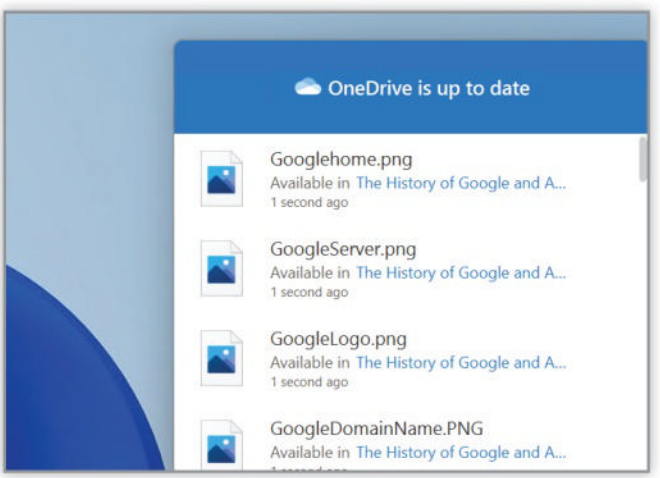
Step 1 You can check to see if you have Microsoft's OneDrive already loaded on your Windows 11 computer by clicking in the notification area in the bottom-right of the desktop. You're looking for a cloud icon. If it's not there, simply click the Windows Start button and type 'OneDrive'. Click the OneDrive app that appears in the list.



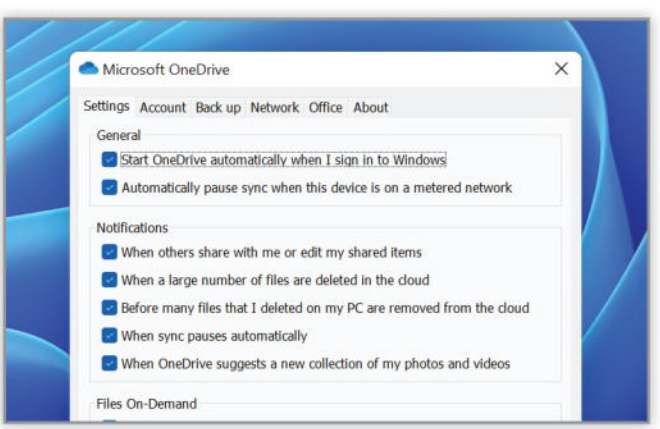
Step 2 You may be asked to sign in with your Microsoft account, follow the instructions, and you'll notice that the cloud icon in the notification area may have an extra icon over it to indicate it's synchronising with your computer and OneDrive. If you click it, you'll notice a flurry of activity, this is because OneDrive is automatically backing up your files.



Step 3 When your current files on your computer have been backed up, a OneDrive notification will inform you that OneDrive is up to date. This will also list the files that have been synced across from your PC to your OneDrive area in the cloud. You can scroll though the list to view the files synced.

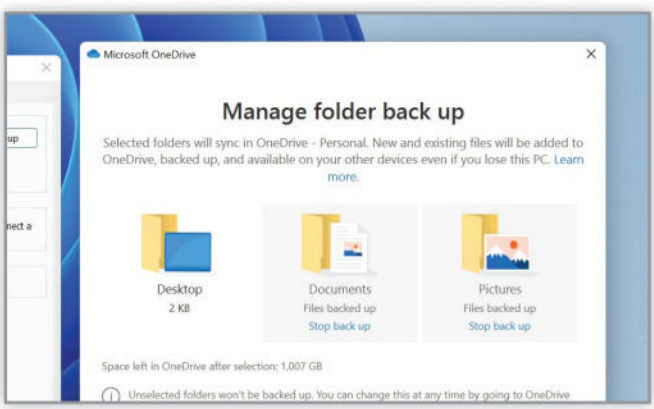


Step 4 Right-click the OneDrive cloud icon in the notification area. This will bring up a menu; click on the Settings option within the menu. The OneDrive Settings menu is divided into several tabs. To begin with, ensure that in the Settings tab, the first option, Start OneDrive automatically when I sign into Windows, is ticked. Otherwise, your auto-backups are pointless.

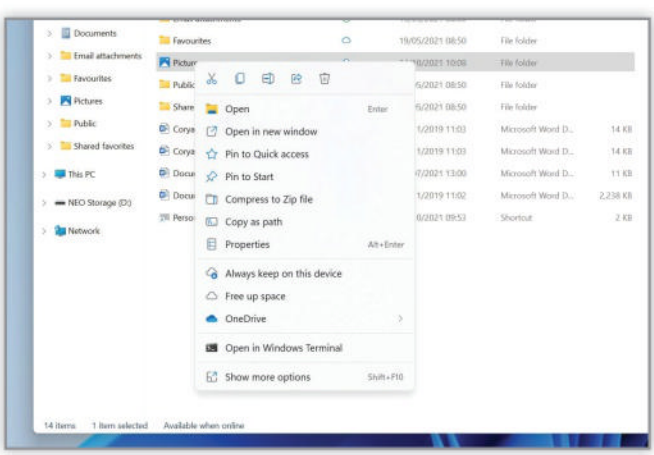


Step 5 In the Account tab, you can choose to Unlink the PC with the OneDrive account, Add another Microsoft OneDrive account (such as your work account), and Choose which folders will be available on the PC in your personal OneDrive File Explorer area.

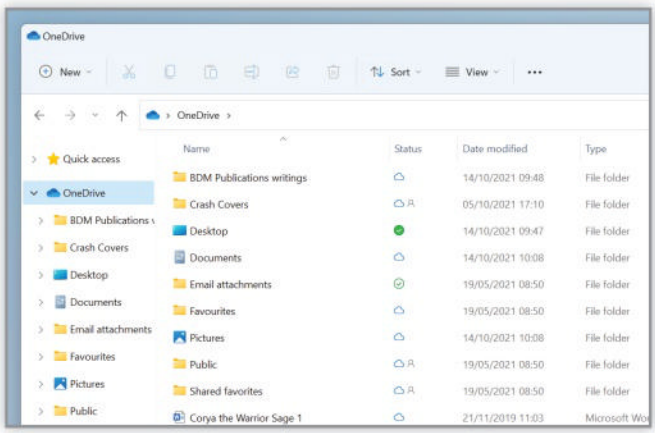
Step 6 In the Backup Tab, click the Manage Back Up button. These are the default, important folders on your PC that will automatically be backed up by OneDrive. You can de-select these folders whenever you want, but they won't be available to other Windows or Microsoft devices when you login to them.



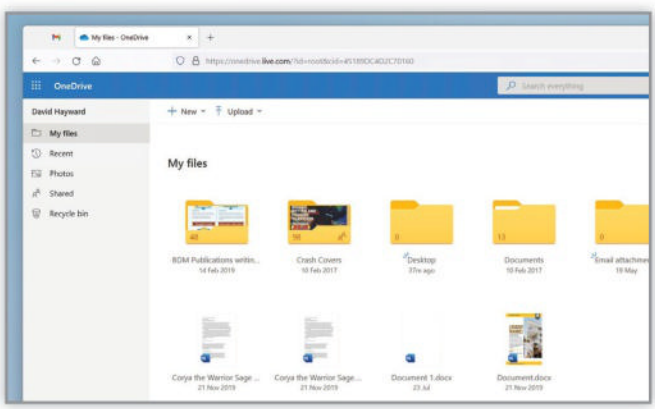
Step 7 If you close the OneDrive Settings window, and now open File Explorer, you'll notice a new section in the left-hand pane: OneDrive. This is where you can work with your online files from your PC. They'll only be available on demand, but can be made available permanently by right-clicking and selecting Always Keep on this Device.



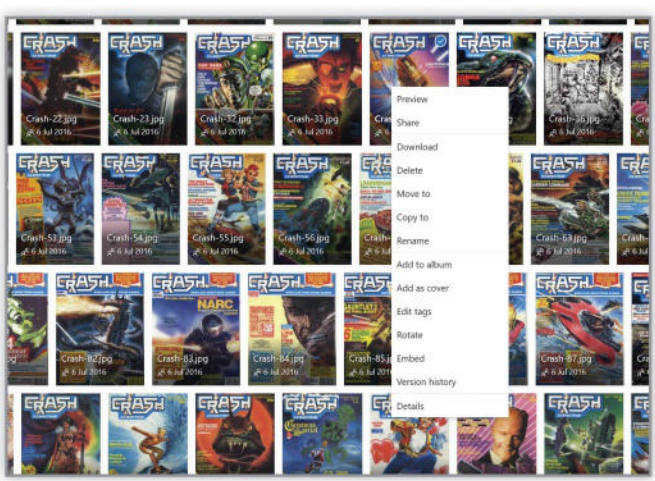
Step 8 If you need to ensure that any file or folder is to be backed up to OneDrive, they must exist in either the main Documents, Pictures or Desktop folders within your user area, or be copied to the OneDrive folder. This will make sure they're synchronised with your online OneDrive storage area.



Step 9 If you again right-click the OneDrive cloud icon in the notification area, and select the View Online option, a web browser window will open and take you directly to your OneDrive storage area in the cloud. This area is available from any device that's connected to the Internet.



Step 10 From within the online OneDrive view, you can create files and folders, view image galleries, move, copy, rename, upload, and most importantly, share any of the content with others. Everything can be done via the top menu bar, or by right-clicking each of the files or folders within your area.



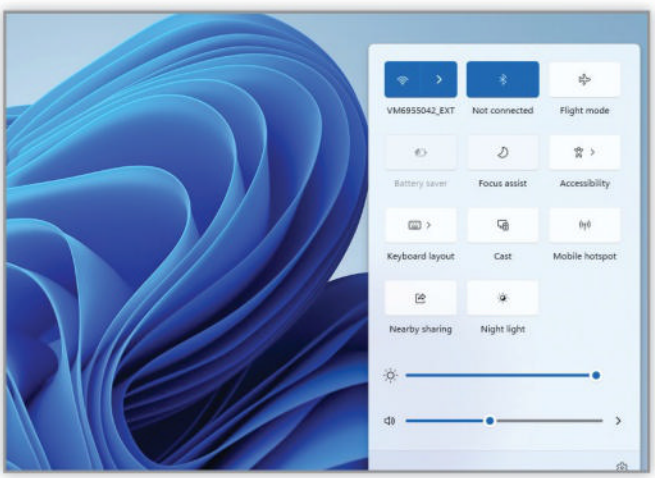
Using the Focus Assist Tool

Focus Assist allows you to create distraction-free periods by blocking alerts, notifications and other sounds. Turn on Focus Assist to stop distractions like social media or alternatively set it to turn on automatically at certain times during the day.

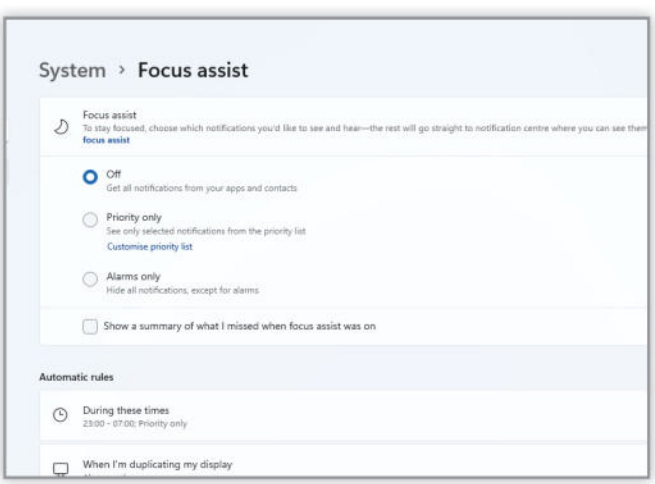
Blocking Notifications

Choose which notifications you want to see and hear. The remainder of your alerts will go into the Action Center so you can see them at a more convenient time.

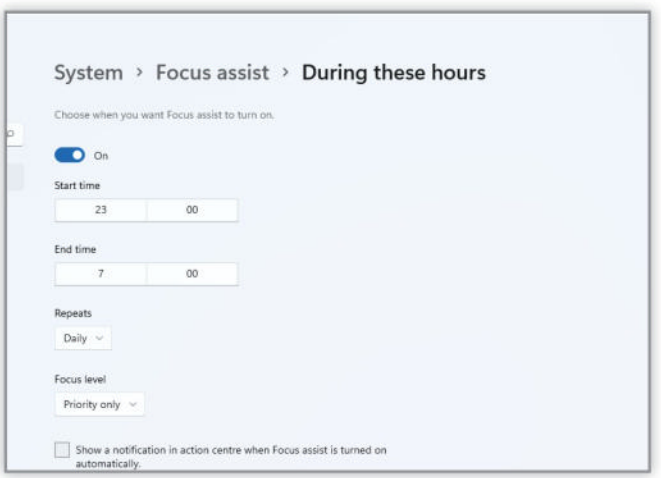
Step 1 You can easily activate Focus Assist using the quick actions panel in the Action Center. The default setting is Off. Click the Quick action button once to allow priority notifications only, click it a second time to allow alarms only. Click the button a third time to turn Focus Assist off again.



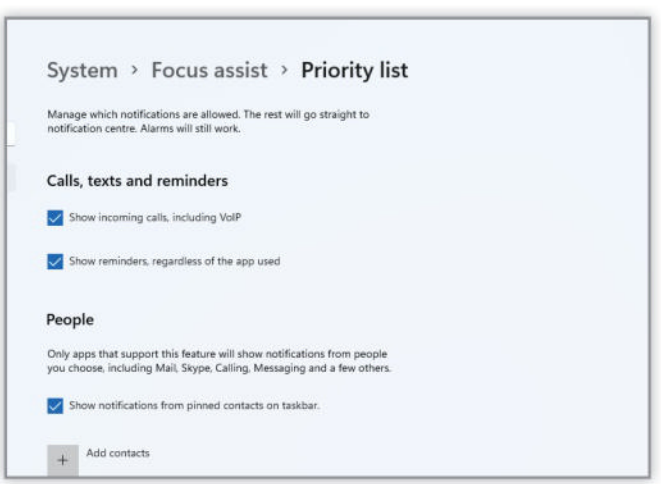
Step 2 You can also turn Focus Assist on or off in the main settings (settings > system > focus assist). Once there, you can also set up your automatic rules and customise your priority list. You can set automatic rules based on times, when you are duplicating your display or when playing a game.



Step 3 To set an automatic rule by time, click on the option and then click the slider to On. You will now see menus to set start time, end time and whether to repeat the rule daily, just on weekdays or just on weekends. The focus level lets you choose if this applies to priority notifications or alarms.



Step 4 If setting Focus Assist to priority, you can set a priority list by clicking 'Customise your list'. Here you can add or remove specific apps, people or Windows 10 features that notify you. When you turn off Focus Assist (manually or automatically), a summary of missed notifications can be shown.



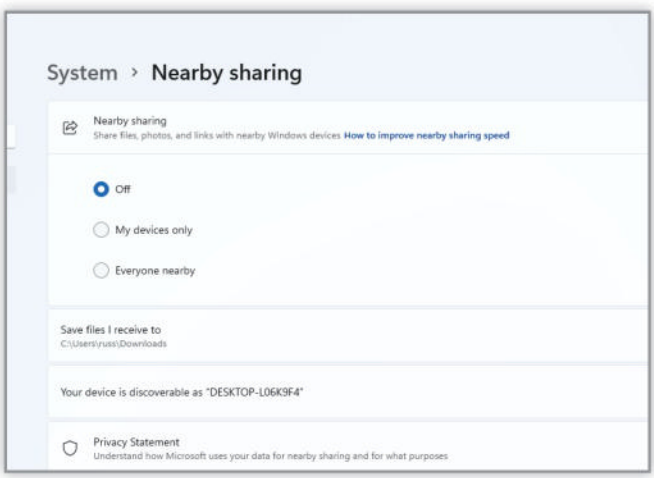
Sharing to Nearby Devices

Nearby Sharing lets you share your videos, photos, documents and websites with people and devices close by, over Bluetooth or Wi-Fi. Useful if, for example, you're in a meeting with colleagues and need to quickly send them a report you're looking at on your screen.

Nearby Sharing

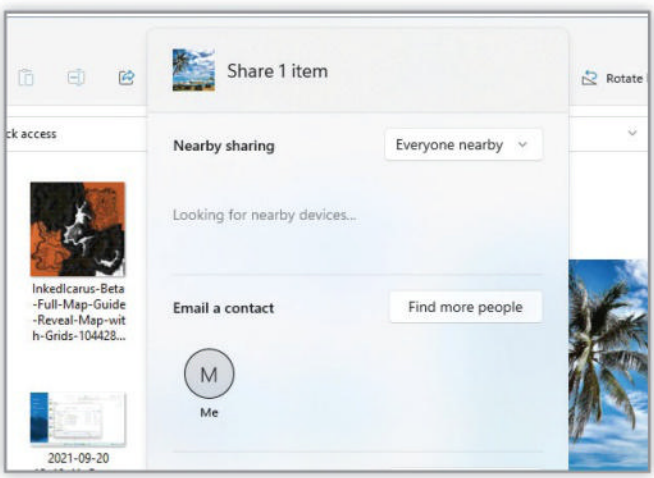
Share your files quickly with Nearby Sharing: your computer automatically picks the fastest way to share your file or webpage, either over Bluetooth or Wi-Fi.

Step 1 To enable Nearby Sharing, open Settings and click on System. Now click on Shared experiences and turn on the Nearby Sharing option. You may be asked to sign in, or confirm sign in, if you have several accounts associated with your computer (Microsoft account, email account, etc.).

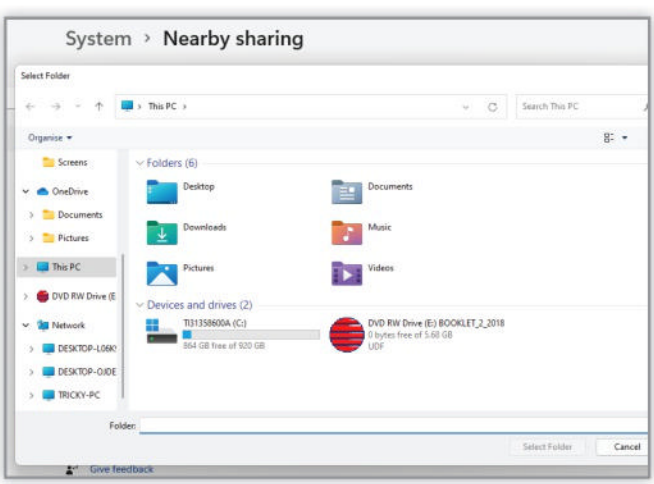


Step 2 You can also activate Nearby Sharing from the quick actions menu in the Action Center. You can send any video, photo, document or webpage viewed on Microsoft Edge to people or devices nearby by clicking on the share icon in the top right corner of the app or right-clicking to view the share menu.

Step 3 If there is a nearby device available, it will be shown in the share menu that pops up. You will need to know the name of the device you want to share to. Once you select the device, the other user will see a notification asking them to accept the transfer. This will time out in a few seconds if not accepted.



Step 4 By default, transfers will be stored in the Downloads folder but you can specify another folder or another drive very easily. Open settings and click on system > shared experiences. Under 'Nearby Sharing', look for the 'Save files I receive to' option and click the Change button.



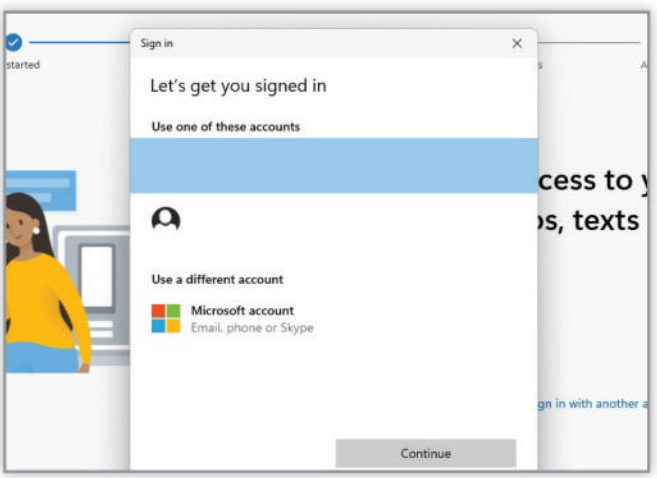
Connect Your Phone to Your PC

You can connect an Android phone to both your Microsoft account and Windows 11, allowing you to view the photos on your phone from the comfort of your desktop, and even view call and SMS details on your computer as they arrive on your phone.

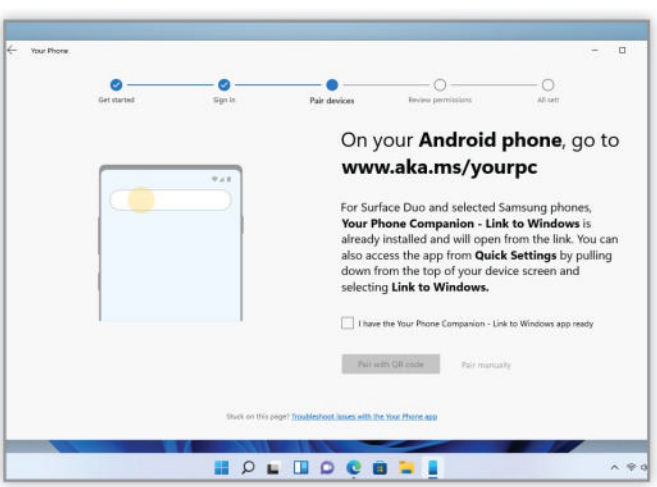
Using the Your Phone App

The setup steps for connecting a mobile device to your Windows 11 computer are the same for almost all compatible Android devices. The app offers additional features for Samsung devices.

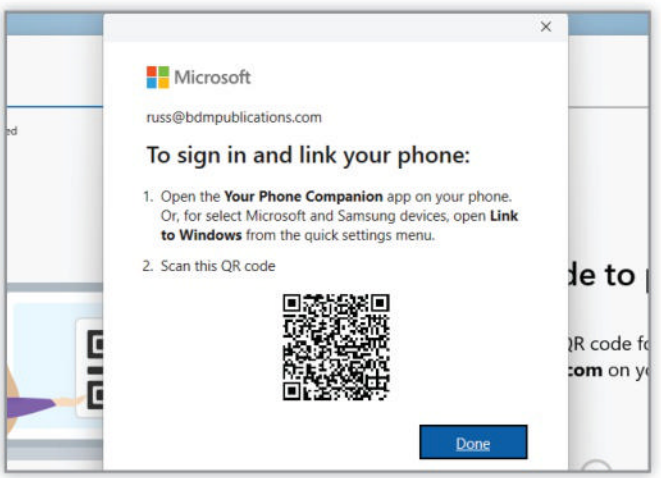
Step 1 Open the main app list from the Start menu and look for "Your Phone". Click the app and then click the "Get Started" button on the screen that opens. You will need to sign in with the same Microsoft account on both the PC and the companion app on your phone. Select/sign in to that account next.



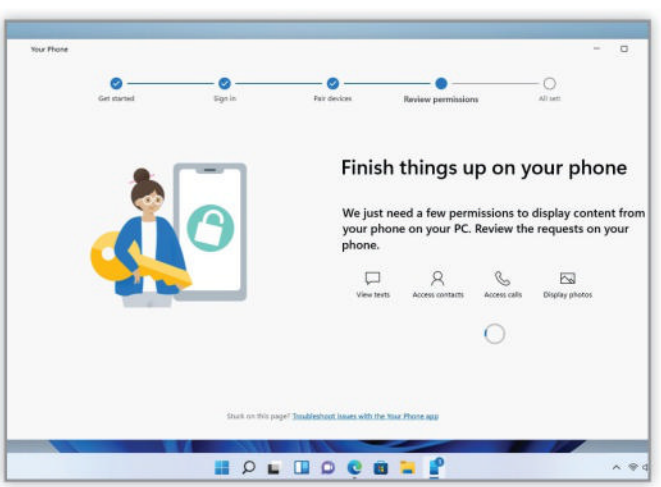
Step 2 On your Android phone, open a browser window and go to www.aka.ms/yourpc. You may already have an app installed that can link to windows called Your Phone Companion (on Samsung, open the Quick settings and look for "Link to Windows"). If so, open the app and follow the instructions.



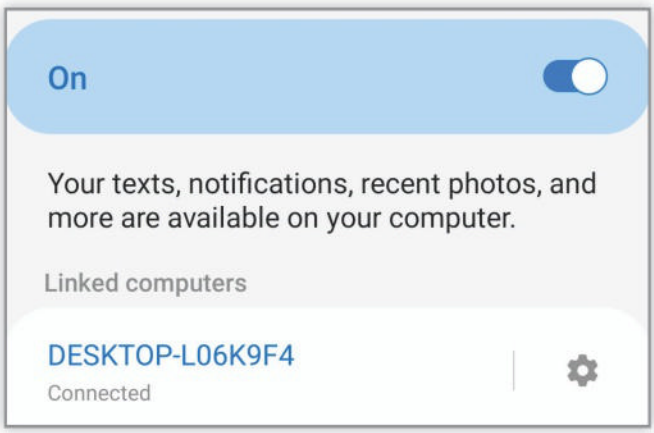
Step 3 When asked, click "Pair with QR code" in the Your Phone app on your computer. A QR code will be created and appear on screen. On your phone, click Continue and a QR code reader screen will open. Use this to read the QR code on your computer screen. After a few seconds the two devices should link.



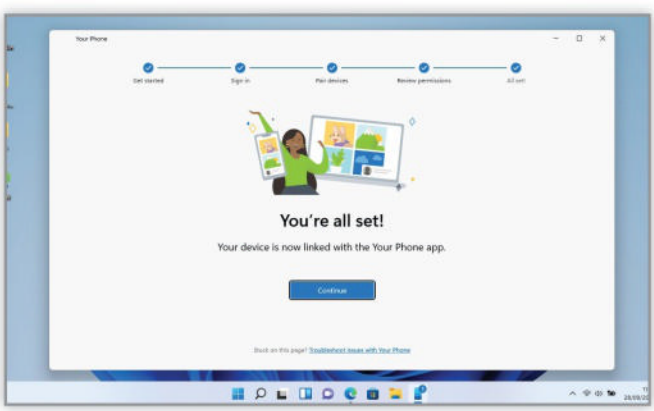
Step 4 You will need to give the app permission to access certain things on your phone. These include contacts, calls, photos and media, and SMS messages. You can refuse any of these individual permissions and the Your phone app will still work, just without access to that feature.



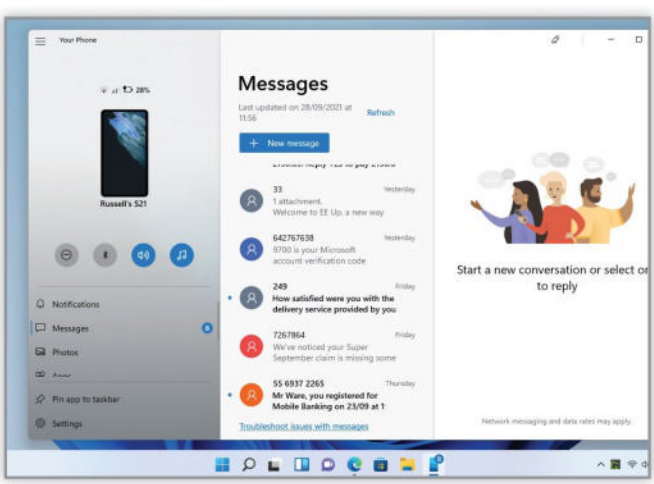
Step 5 If all is successful, you should now see your phone displayed in the Your Phone app on your computer. There is a new screen displayed on your phone, this shows the settings for the Microsoft companion app, alongside which Windows 11 computer it is connected.



Step 6 Now it's time to start using the Your Mobile app. In the left-hand sidebar are several different sections. These include Photos, Messages, Notifications and Apps. Some of these need to be set up further to begin using them, follow the on-screen instructions to do so.

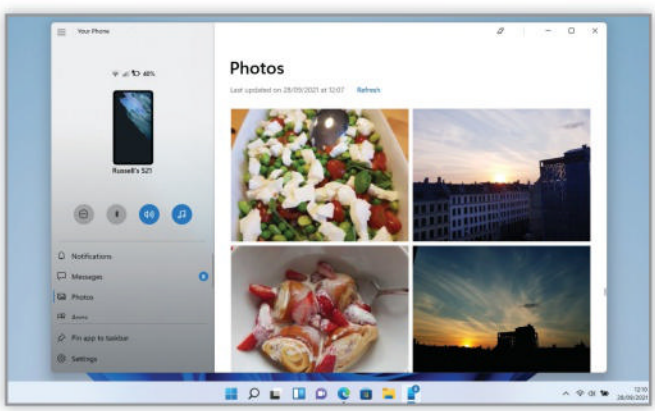


Step 7 Click on Messages first. When asked, send a notification to your phone to ask permission to access messages (if already given, this opens the messages list). Your phone messages are now displayed, and you can click on any to read and reply. You can also create new messages from your PC.

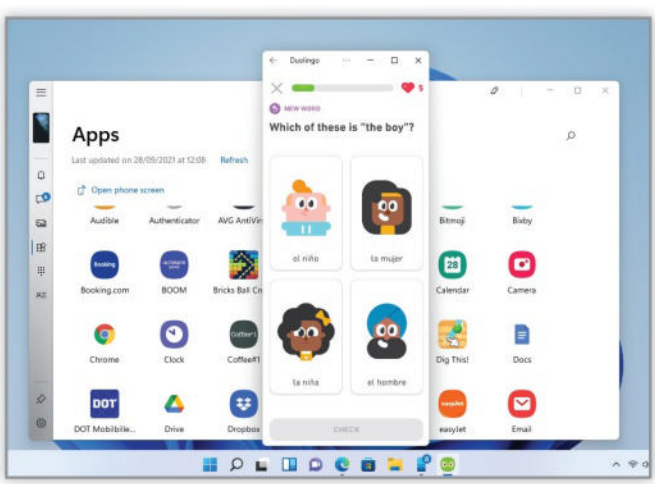


Step 8 If you want to be able to see notifications from your phone on your PC screen, you need to click on Notifications and then click "Get Started". Again, you need to allow this on your phone settings. Phone notifications will pop up on your PC screen in the same place as other notifications.

Step 9 To view photos stored on your phone from the comfort of your PC, click the Photos section. Allow access as before, and then wait while the view refreshes. You can open them in the Photos app by clicking on them. You can now also delete photos on your phone from the PC app.



Step 10 You can open apps that are on your phone, on your computer. Click the apps section, then click on an app icon in the list. You will need to give permission on your phone to cast to the Windows app, but once done, the app will open on your computer screen in a phone screen shaped window.



Learn How to Import Photos in Windows 11

Importing your photos to your PC may seem like a very simple task but if you have never done it before, you can encounter problems. We take a look at importing photos from your devices; using different methods and tools already included in Windows 11.

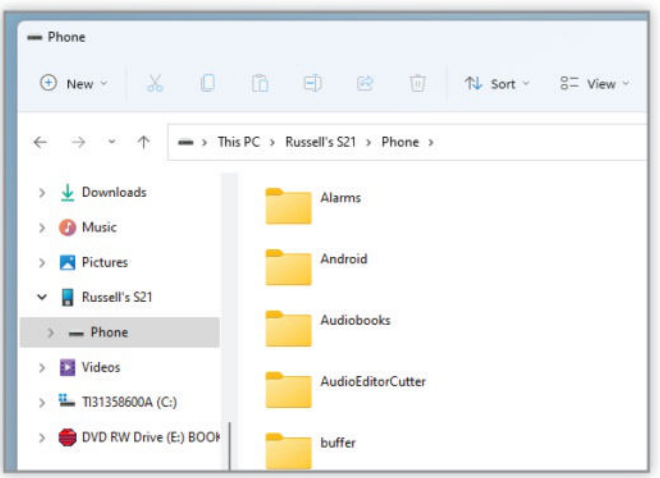
Importing to a Folder

The setup steps for connecting a mobile device to your Windows 11 computer are the same for almost all compatible Android devices. The app offers additional features for Samsung devices.

Step 1 The first thing you need to do to import photos directly from a phone or camera is to connect the relevant cable to your PC. In almost all cases, this will be a USB cable of some sort. You will have been supplied a transfer cable with the device you are using. Plug this into a free USB port.

Step 2 Normally, when you first plug a device in to your computer which contains storage of some sort, Windows will ask how you want to handle the files in that storage. Scroll down the list to see 'Open in a Folder'. In some cases, Explorer will open showing the connected device.

Step 3 Now click on the device storage, this may be Phone and Card on a smartphone, and navigate to where the photos are stored. This will normally be in a folder called DCIM on your phone or camera. You can now simply cut and paste, or drag and drop, images to a new folder on your PC.

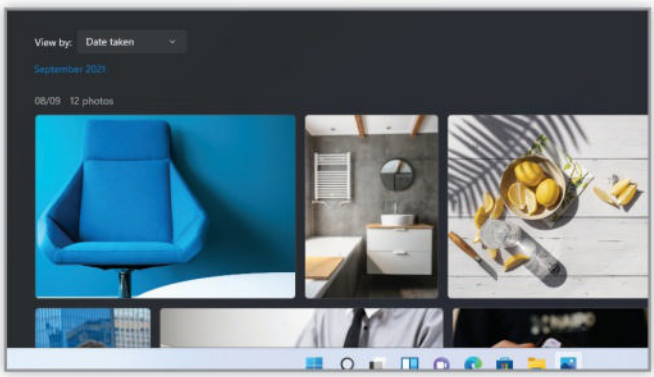


Step 4 If you have connected your phone and PC using the Your Phone app, you can import images from your phone wirelessly. Simply open the app, click on the Photos tab and then browse to the photos you want to import. You can then choose Save as…, or copy and paste to a folder.

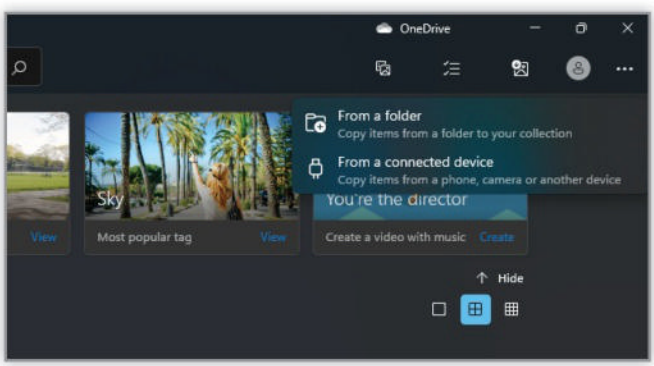
Importing to the Photos App

The Photos app is a great tool for importing photos from a phone, tablet or camera. It allows you to preview and individually pick images more easily, and even sorts them.

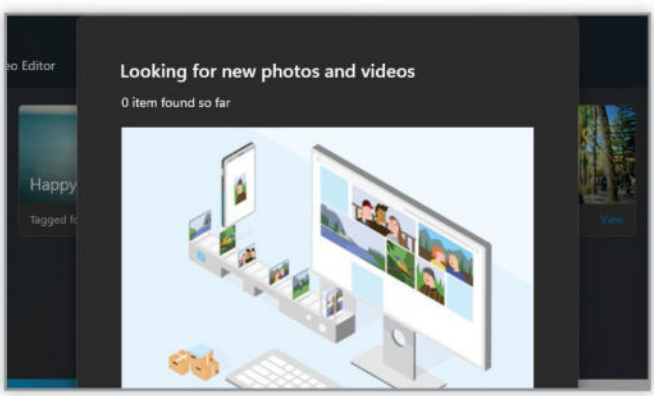
Step 1 Open the Photos app on your PC. Now connect your phone or camera to your computer using the relevant USB cable. If you see the pop-up menu asking how you want to deal with the storage media you just connected, ignore it or click it closed.



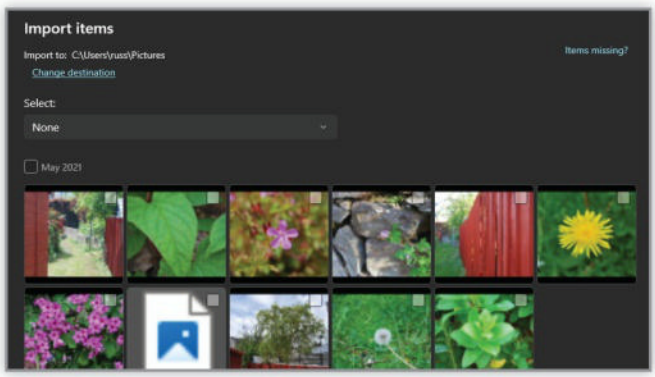
Step 2 The Photos app should have opened up with the Collections screen showing. If not, click the tab at the top to open it now. Along the top of the Collections tab are your controls: Refresh, Select, Slideshow and Import. Import is the only one you need to click at this point.



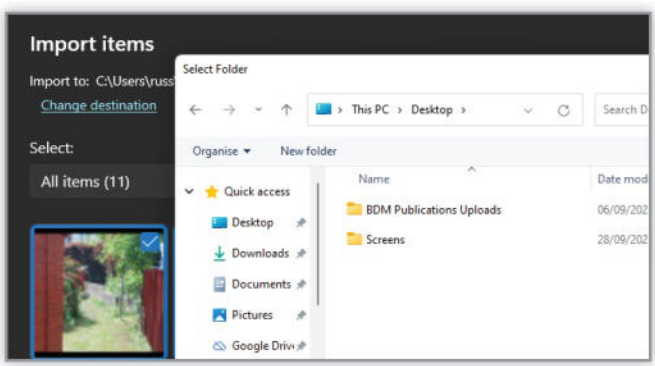
Step 3 The Photos app will now search for photos available to be imported. If your device is not connected properly, or the correct USB drivers are not installed, it will fail to find anything at this point. If you are transferring from a phone or tablet, you may also have to unlock the screen to continue.



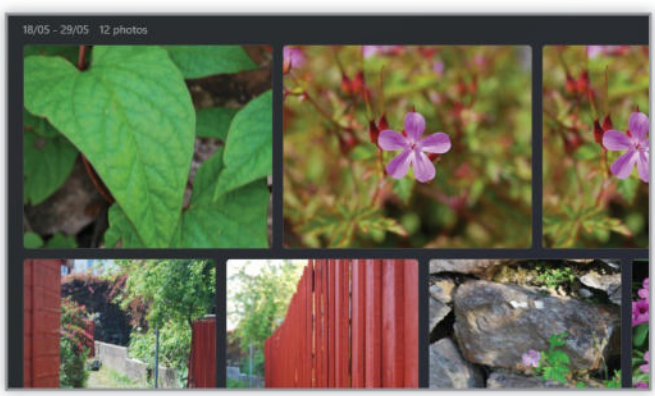
Step 4 By default, every image detected on your device will be selected for importing. If you want to import everything, click Continue. If not, you can use the check boxes on the images to select those you want to import; use the Clear All and Select All buttons as required.



Step 5 You can now choose where the imported photos will be saved. By default, this will probably be somewhere like C:\Users\YourName\Pictures. Click the 'Change where they're imported' link to do just that. You can also choose to import into folders arranged by month or day.



Step 6 Click Import. Your image will now begin to appear in the Photos app window, within the Collections section. An album will also be created called Last Import. Click on one of the images shown to begin editing or enhancing it with the tools Photos offers.



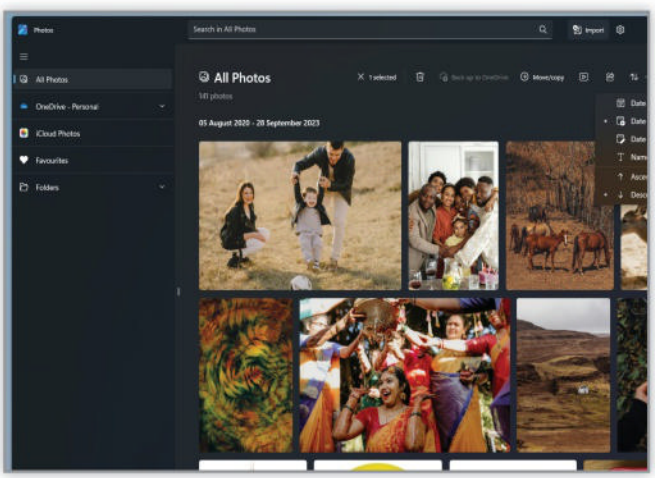
How to Manage and Edit Your Photos

The Photos app was first introduced in Windows 8, but it wasn't the best experience. In Windows 11 it has been improved, even over the Windows 10 version, with better ways to browse photos and a lot more editing options to make the most of your images.

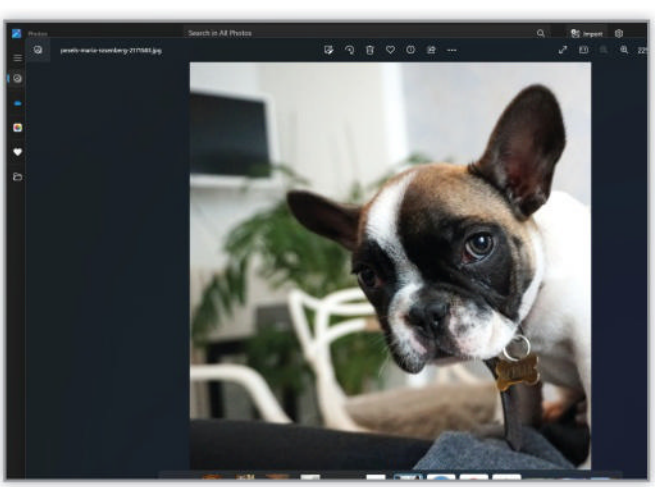
Managing Your Images

The Photos app has seen some useful improvements over the last few years and is actually very powerful now. It doesn't offer the flexibility of an app like Photoshop Elements, but it does simple image management well.

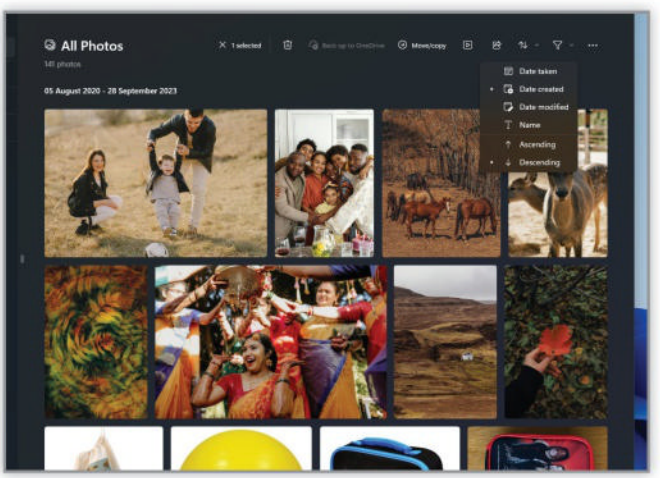
Step 1 Photos shows all of your images in a chronologically displayed timeline of images (All Photos), with some automatically created collections (Memories) and further options below it. You can click on any image to get a full-window view of it, allowing you to view, adjust and edit it.



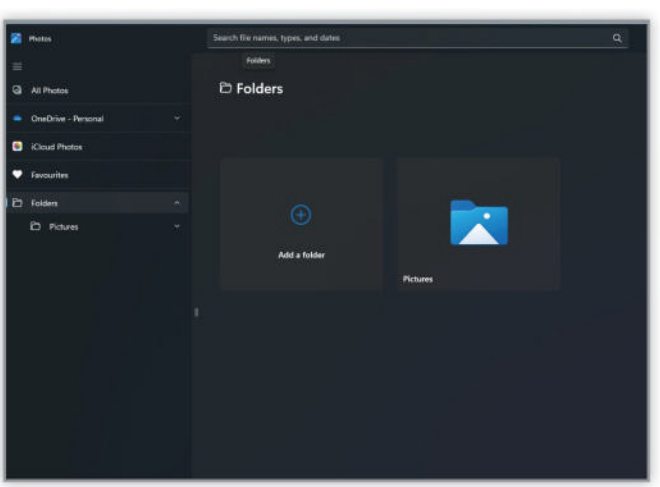
Step 2 Along the top of the full image view is a toolbar. This contains zoom and rotate buttons, an edit image button and draw button, as well as delete, add to favourites, file information, save as, resize and several more. You can click the Back arrow in the top left corner to return to the main image list.



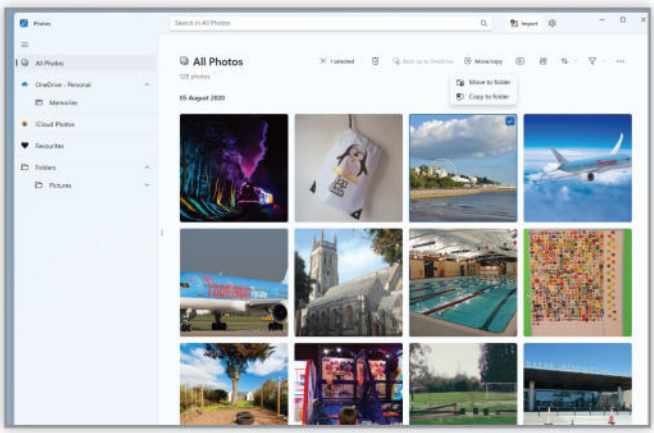
Step 3 You can manage the main image view All Photos in several ways. The View by menu lets you switch between sorting images by date taken or recently added. On the opposite side of the screen are the view controls, changing between large view, medium view and small thumbnail view.



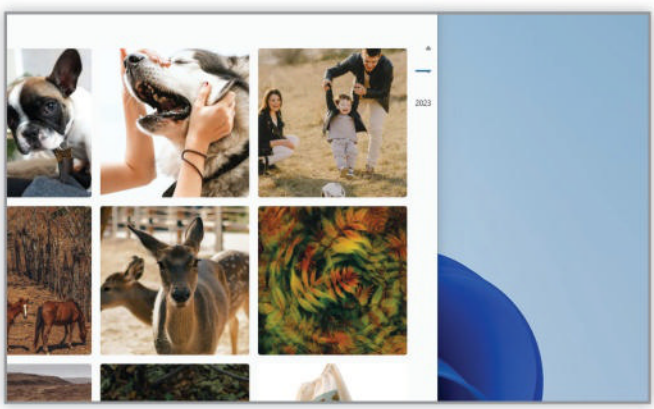
Step 4 The Folders, accessed by clicking the tab at the left of the main window, enables you to creates groups of photos based on your specific criteria. For example, images that have been drawn on with Windows Ink, or images that have been tagged as favourites.



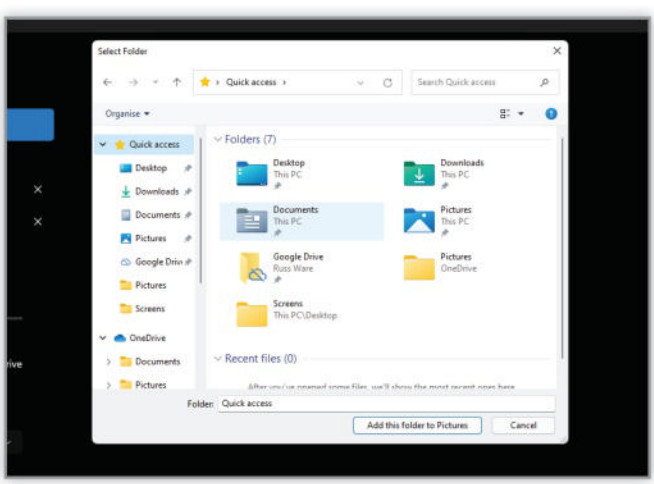
Step 5 You can create your own folders by clicking the "Move/copy" button. You can then select any images in the Photos app you want to add. With all of the images you want selected, click the Create button and the folder will be shown in the left panel. You can then rename the folder.



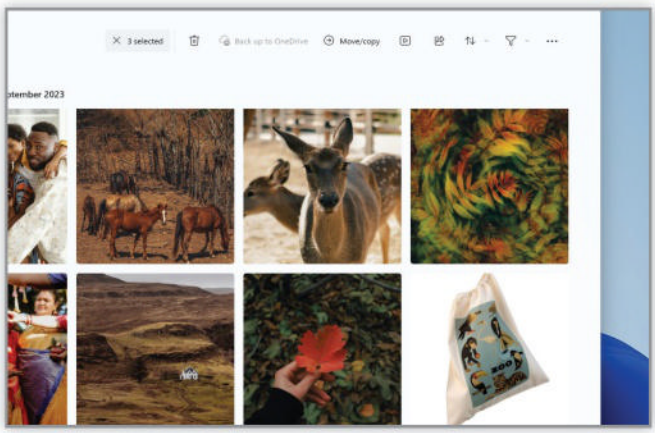
Step 6 The Timeline option is another automatically-created section, that builds collections of images based on the date they were created. As you begin to add new photos, Timeline automatically places them and then sorts those images by the differing dates they were created based on metadata.



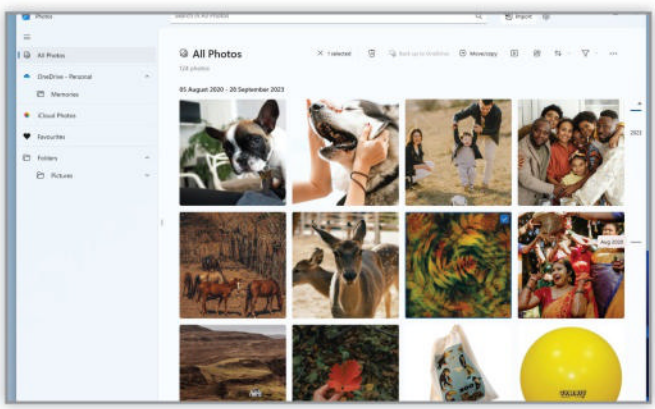
Step 7 You can choose where Photos should look for images in the app Settings. Your own Pictures folder, plus the OneDrive Pictures folder, are automatically included (if you have OneDrive set up), but you can change this if you store your images somewhere else; perhaps on an external hard drive.



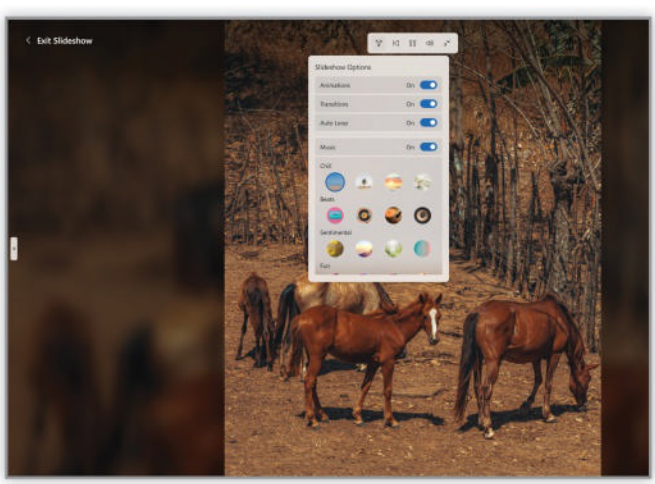
Step 8 The selected feature, found in the menu at the top right, enables you to select individual or multiple images. You'll see the top menu bar changes, and each image has a tick box appear on it. Click them to choose the images you want. You can then use the tools at the top (share, copy, add to and delete, etc.).



Step 9 The final option on the Photos home screen is Slideshow. This allows you to make videos made up of multiple images or video clips in your collections. It isn't the most powerful video editing tool, but it enables you to create simple videos with music.



Step 10 To begin making a slideshow video, you first need to select the images you wish to be added to the Slideshow itself by tagging the tick box on each one. Now simply click the 'Start Slideshow' icon, top right. Then add music by clicking the musical note icon on the pop-up controller, by clicking on screen.

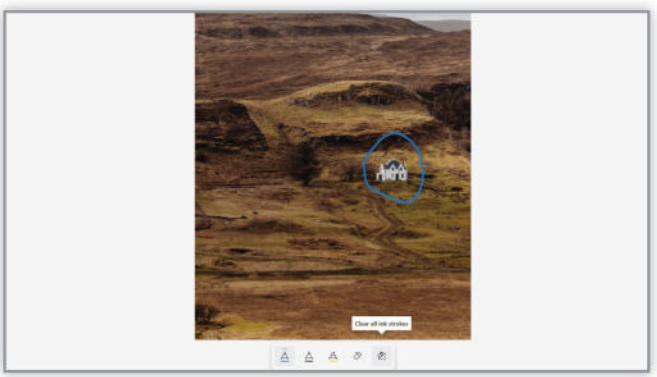


Editing Images and Videos in Photos

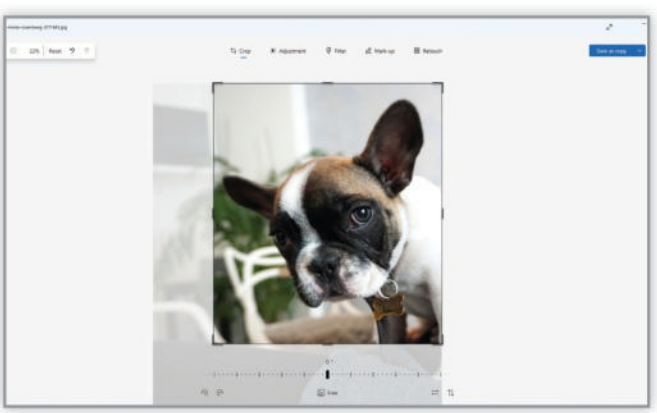
The editing tool in Photos may look deceptively simple, but while this is not for the professional, you do have a good selection of tools to make your images look better.

Step 1 Double-click an image to open it in Photos. Along the top of the image are several buttons; click the Edit button. You see a new window and set of buttons and controls appear at the top. With all the edits shown here, ensure to save each as a copy to retain the original.

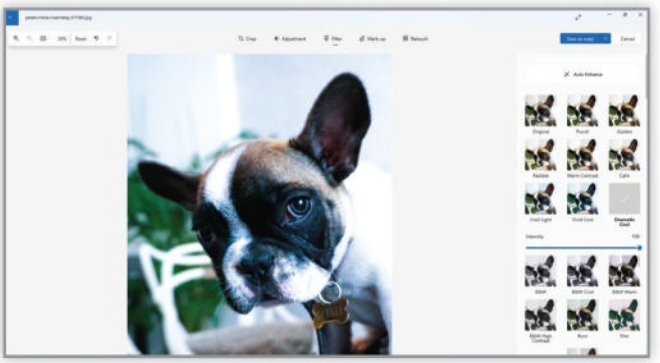
Step 2 From left to right, these buttons allow you to Crop, Adjustment, Filter, Mark Up and Retouch your images. If you click on Mark-up you can access a selection of options at the bottom of the page. Make your choice and mark up your image as you require. You can also delete your last mark – or all of them – too.



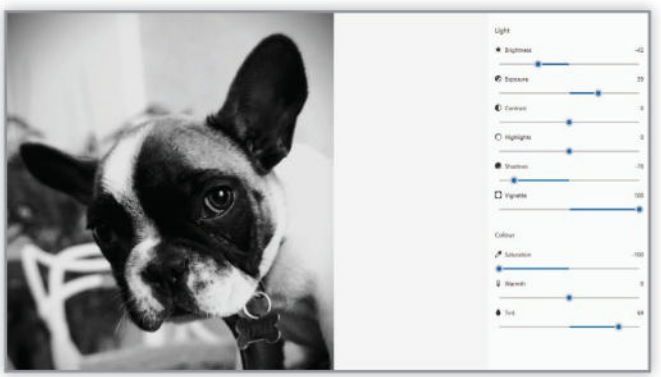
Step 3 Open a new image in Photos and click on the Edit button at the top of the screen. Note; the image is shrunk down slightly to fit the editing screen. Now select Crop. With this tool you can adjust the focus area of an image, using the sliding bars on all four edges.



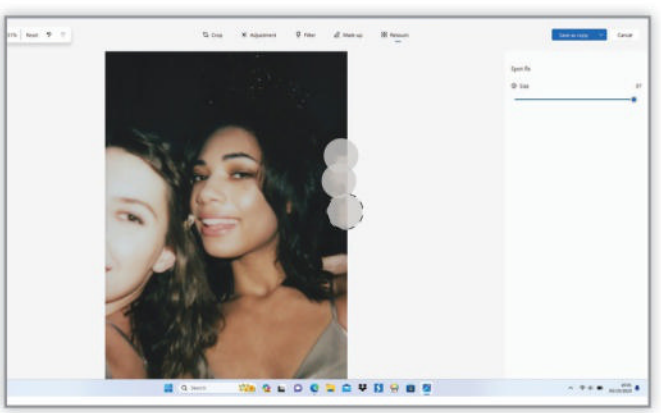
Step 4 Moving back to the edit section, at the top of the toolbar is the Filter button. Click this to enable the application to Auto Enhance the image itself. Alternatively, you can apply one of the filters from the listings on the left panel yourself by selecting it. You can also increase the intensity of the filter here.



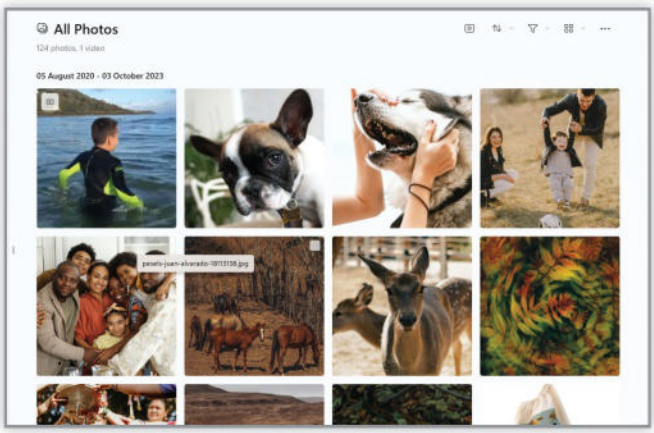
Step 5 You can, of course, apply specific enhancements yourself using the Adjustment option. Using the sliders you can edit core areas of your image. You will see the changes applied to your image directly to the image in real time. Hit the Reset button in the top-right to undo your changes.



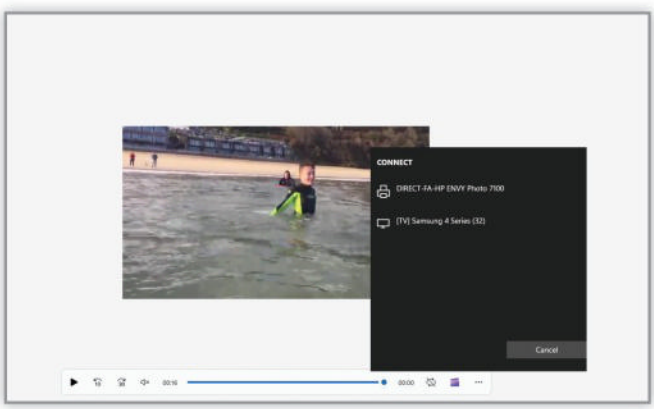
Step 6 Moving on to the Re-Touch tool, click this and the cursor changes to a white circle, the size of which can be adjusted on the left. Place this over the part of the image you want to remove and click. The app matches what's under the spot to the scenery or colour around it, removing it.



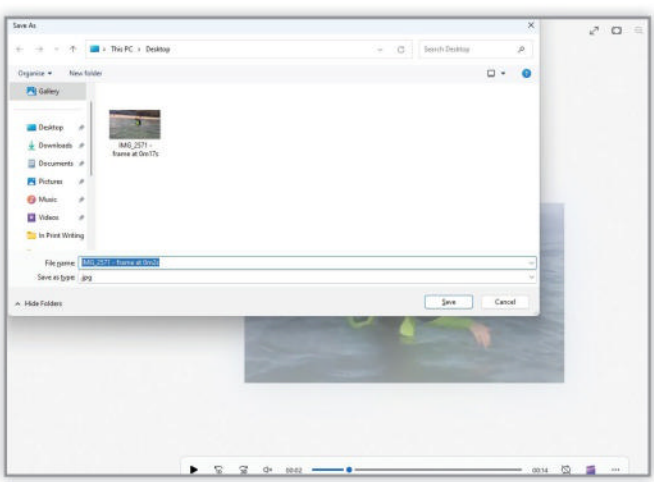
Step 7 Moving to Video Editing, things get a lot more in-depth. For this guide we're going to show you the must-know basics on how to create your own mini movie. Click on any video you can access via the Photos app to open it. NOTE: videos are shown with a film strip icon on the top-left corner.



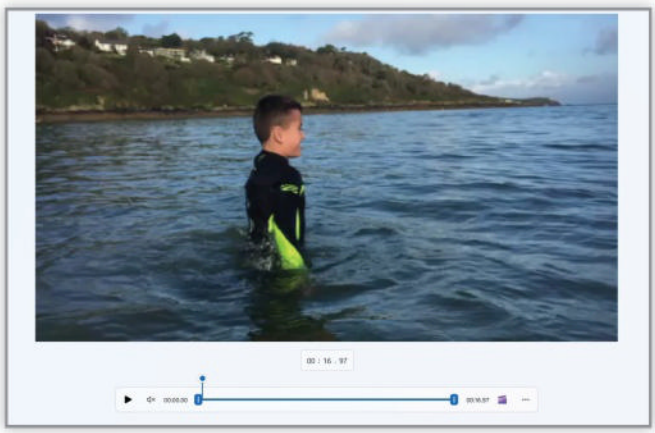
Step 8 Your video now autoplays in a new window. You can view the video clip in this window, using the controls displayed at the bottom of the window. You can also access further controls using the More link. These include Cast to Device, enabling you to view the video on a networked device.



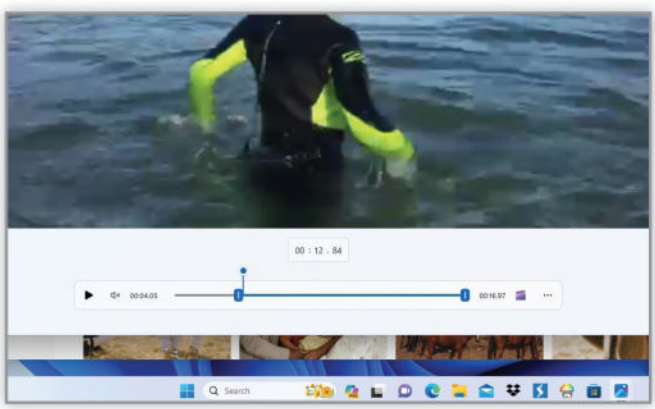
Step 9 A great feature found here is the ability to pull a single image from the video clip using the Save a Frame option. Using the scroll bar, move through the frames to one you wish to save and then select the option from the list. You can now rename and save the image to your choice of location.



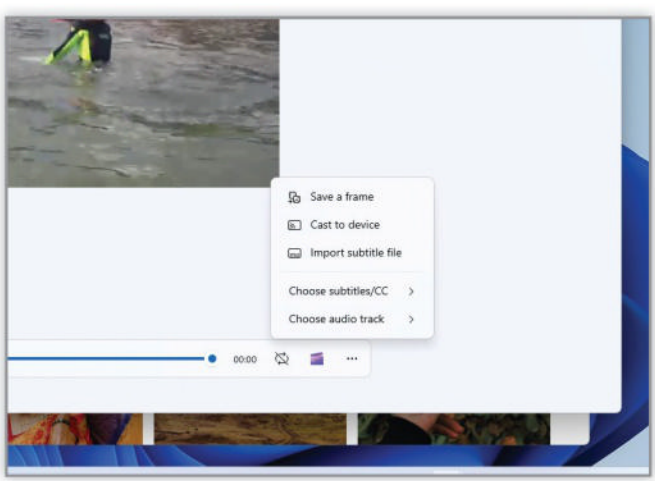
Step 10 You can edit the clip to remove any content you no longer wish to view by clicking on the Video Trim option in the top bar. By doing this, your video opens in a new window; notice there are two large blue icons in the control bar at the start and finish of the scroll bar.



Step 11 The blue icon on the left indicates the beginning point and the icon on the right marks the end. You can move each individually to create new start and finish points. When you're happy with the edited-down version of the video, you need to save it.



Step 12 When you've finished editing an image, you can click the 'Save a copy' button to create a new file that includes the changes, whilst retaining the original. Or you can choose 'Save' from the pop-up menu, which overwrites the original image with the version you just edited.



Explore the Powerful Maps App

Just like Google, Microsoft provides its own Maps app. This incredibly useful tool not only shows you a 2D map of anywhere in the world but also lets you see a satellite view, traffic information and even view major cities in 3D. You can even draw or write on top of maps.

1 Directions

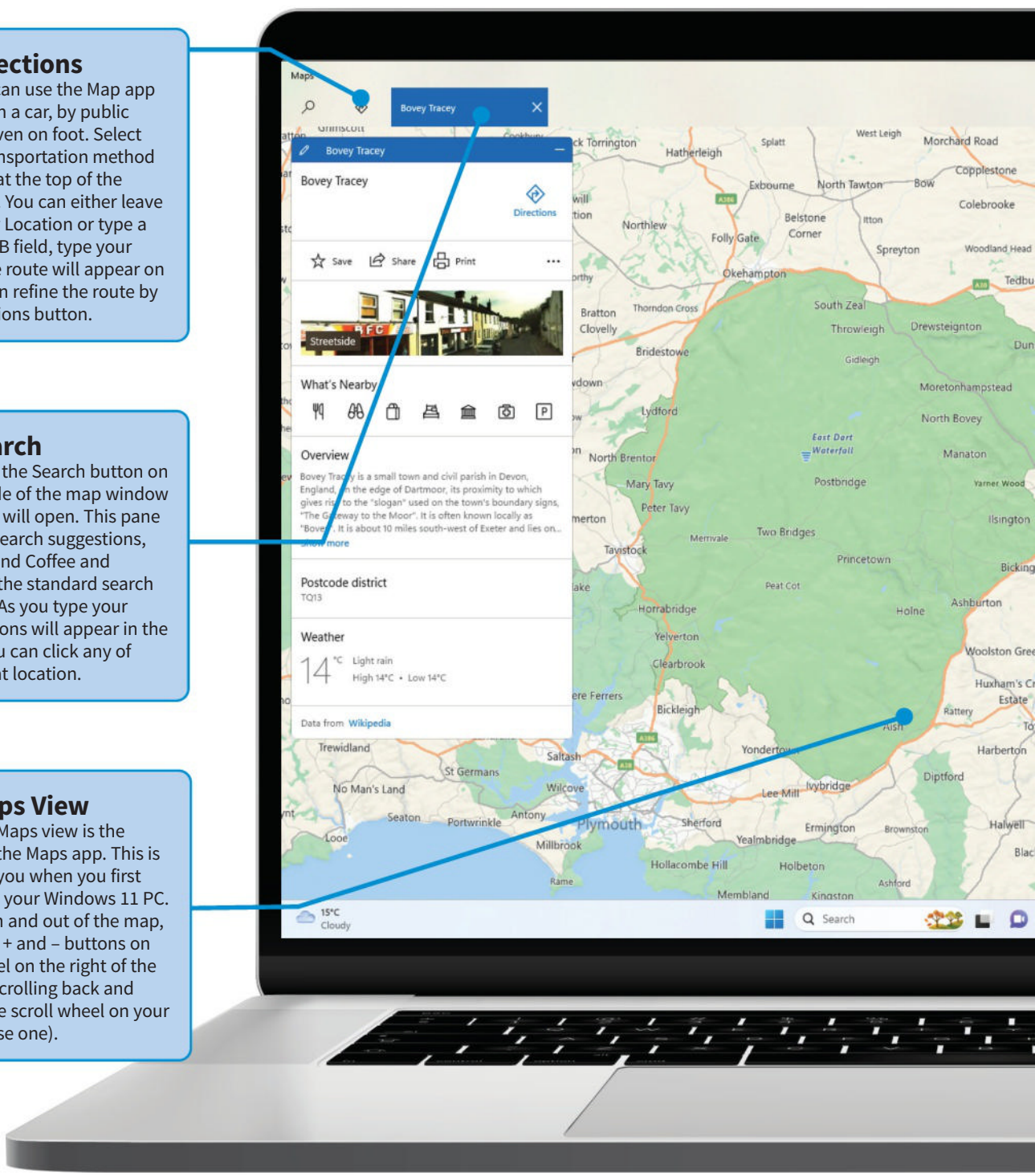
You can use the Map app to plan routes: in a car, by public transport and even on foot. Select your chosen transportation method using the icons at the top of the Directions pane. You can either leave the A field as My Location or type a new one. In the B field, type your destination. The route will appear on the map. You can refine the route by clicking the Options button.

2 Search

Click the Search button on the left-hand side of the map window and a new pane will open. This pane contains some search suggestions, such as Hotels and Coffee and Shopping, with the standard search field at the top. As you type your search, suggestions will appear in the search pane. You can click any of these to find that location.

3 Maps View

The Maps view is the default one for the Maps app. This is what will greet you when you first load the app on your Windows 11 PC. You can zoom in and out of the map, using either the + and – buttons on the control panel on the right of the window, or by scrolling back and forward with the scroll wheel on your mouse (if you use one).



4 Your Location

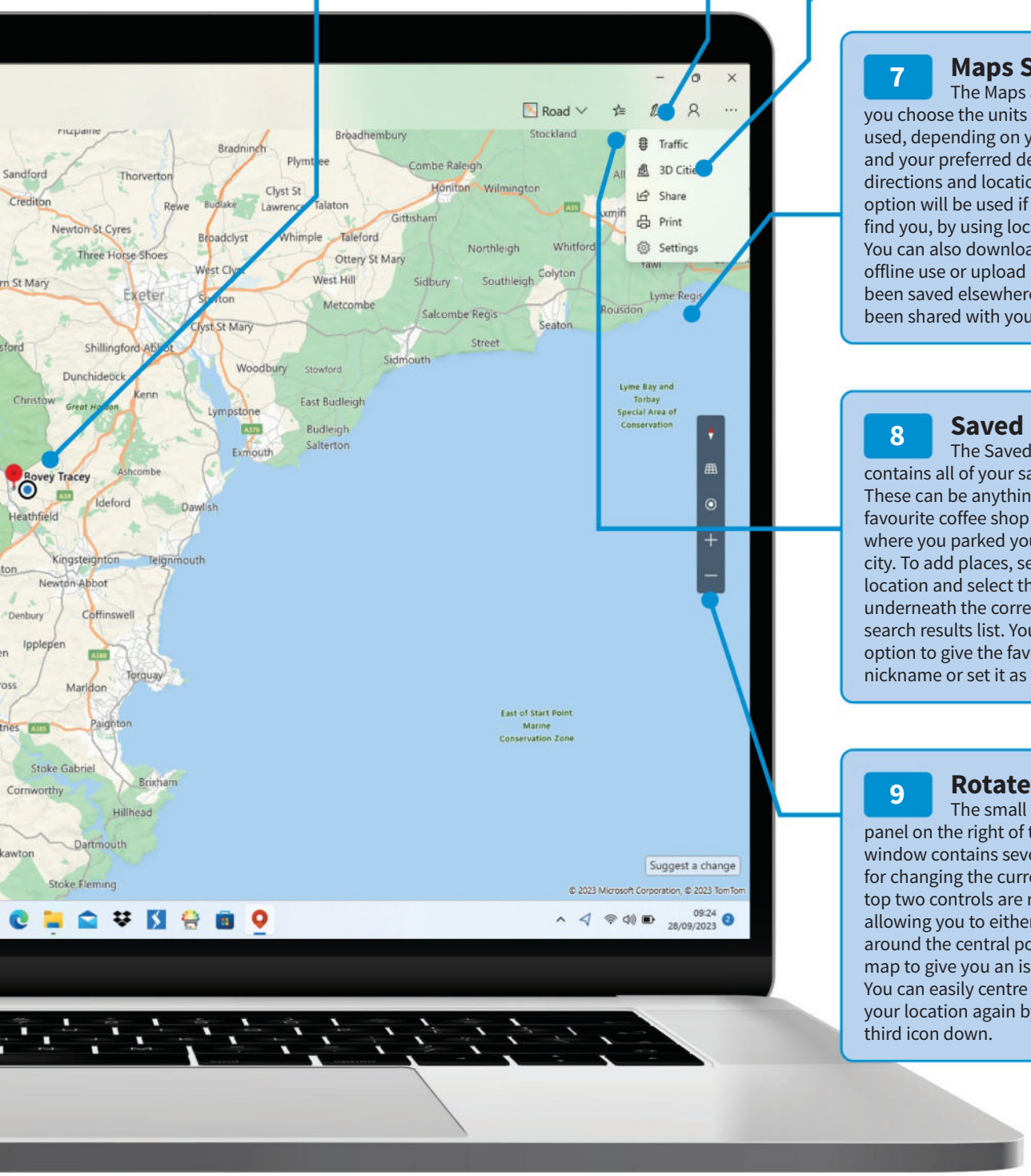
When you open the Maps app it will try to pinpoint your approximate location. You may be asked to allow this location tracking to happen. Your location will then be show on the map as a small black and grey circle. You can click on this to see more information, if available, and then save the location as a favourite by clicking the star in the pane that opens.

5 Windows Ink

Windows Ink allows you to write or draw on a map using the various pen tools (including colours). You can also use the pen to trace a route and have Maps tell you the distance of the line drawn, or even the directions for the route you marked out. You can then save the customised map. It is really very clever and fun to play around with.

6 3D Cities

The 3D Cities button should be fairly self-explanatory. Click the button to open the pane and you will see an alphabetical list of the cities with thumbnails that have been mapped in 3D. Click the Country/Region heading at the top to refine the list. Click on any of the thumbnails to load the 3D map; loading time will vary, depending on your Internet connection speed.



7 Maps Settings

The Maps app settings let you choose the units of measurement used, depending on your preference and your preferred defaults for directions and location. This last option will be used if the app can't find you, by using location services. You can also download maps for offline use or upload maps that have been saved elsewhere, that have been shared with you perhaps.

8 Saved Places

The Saved Places pane contains all of your saved locations. These can be anything from a favourite coffee shop to the street where you parked your car in a new city. To add places, search for a location and select the star underneath the correct one in the search results list. You then have the option to give the favourite a nickname or set it as Home or Work.

9 Rotate & Tilt

The small floating control panel on the right of the Maps window contains several useful tools for changing the current view. The top two controls are rotate and tilt, allowing you to either rotate the map around the central point or tilt the map to give you an isometric view. You can easily centre your view on your location again by clicking the third icon down.

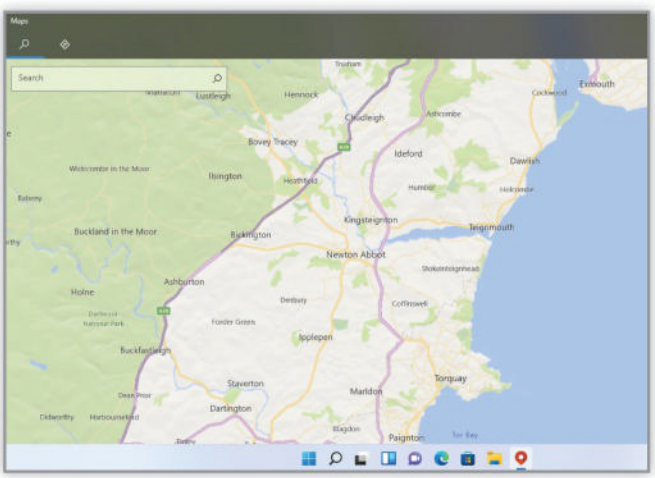
Learn How to Navigate with Maps

Boasting excellent mapping, great aerial photography, up-to-the-minute traffic and the ability to calculate directions by public transport, road or foot, the Maps app is one of the very best ways to navigate. New additions make the Maps app even more useful.

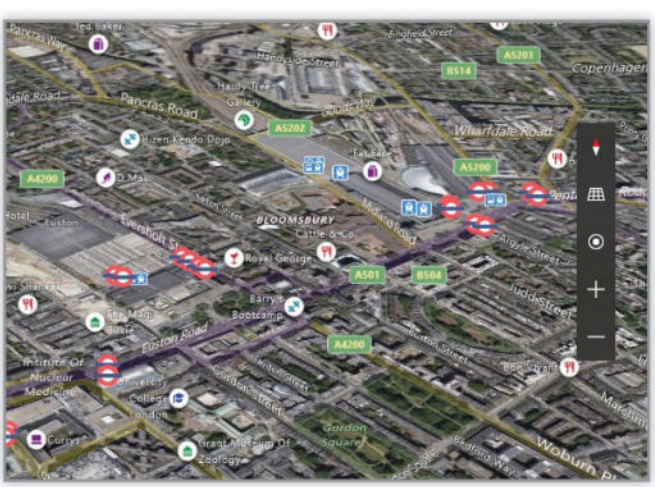
Moving Around in Maps

There are few controls in the Maps app but they allow you to do a lot of things very easily. Let's take a look at how you move around in the app.

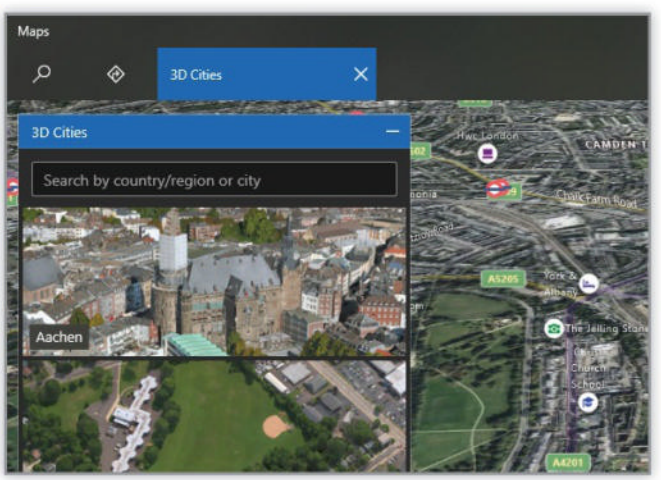
Step 1 The easiest way to move the map around is to left-click and drag it and use the mouse wheel or trackpad slider to zoom in and out. This allows you to move the map around to focus on the area you need. If you are zoomed far out of the map, double-clicking the mouse zooms in quickly.



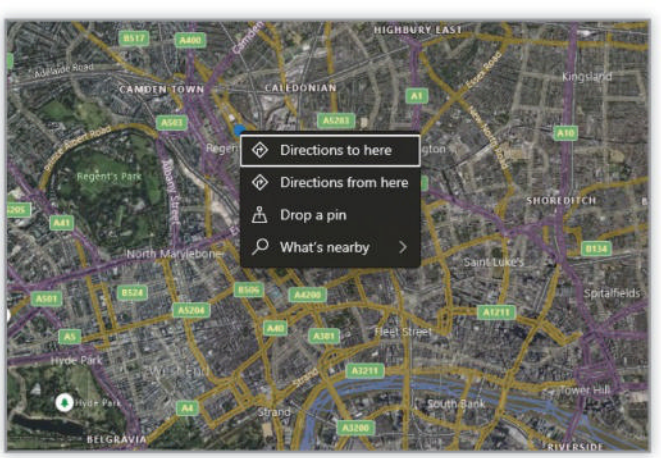
Step 2 Maps has a dedicated control panel on the side of the window containing, from top to bottom: Rotate, hold pointer on it to see; Tilt, hold pointer over to see options; Show Location; and Zoom in and Zoom out. You can also tilt by holding the right Mouse button and moving up and down.



Step 3 Clicking on things like Saved Places or 3D Cities in the top control bar, tabs will line up alongside the permanent Search and Directions buttons at the top left of the window. You can then click on them at any time to see the information contained in each pane or tab.



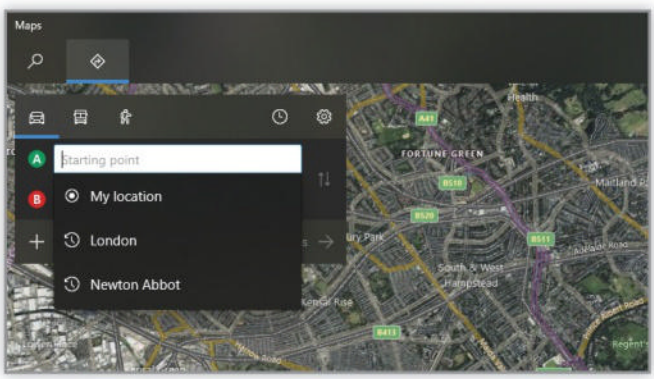
Step 4 Right-clicking on the map brings up a small action menu. This lets you set a To location, a From location (for planning a route), add a new destination and drop a pin in a specific location. When you drop a pin, a new window opens allowing you to search for things at that location, add favourites and more.



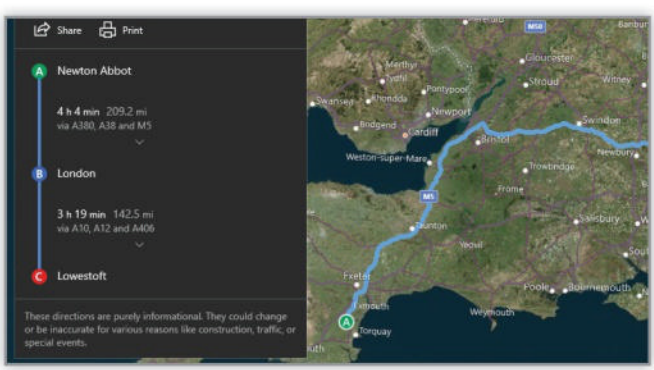
Planning a Route

Maps is great for checking out an area, looking around a city or just finding businesses local to you. It is also great for planning detailed routes.

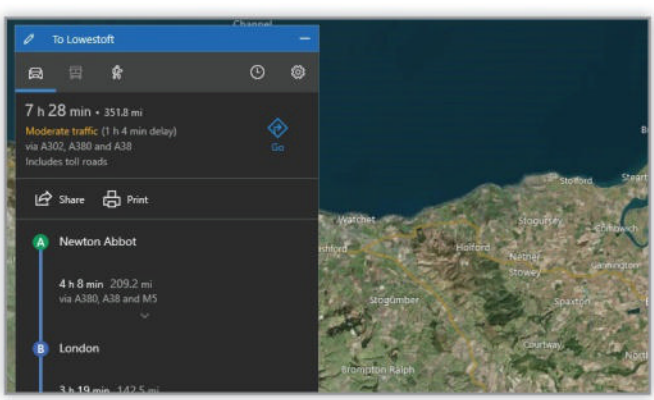
Step 1 To start planning a route, click the Directions tab at the top left of the Maps window. A small panel opens with boxes for your starting and ending location. You can either type a destination or you can choose one from the list that appears below the box when you click on it.



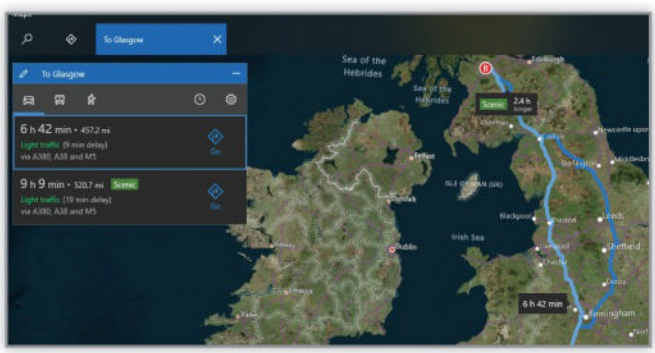
Step 2 If you need to make detours or multiple stops along your route, you can click the + button to add more destination boxes. Each one can have a destination in it, making up your complete route. When you view directions, each of the destinations you added is marked with a relevant letter.



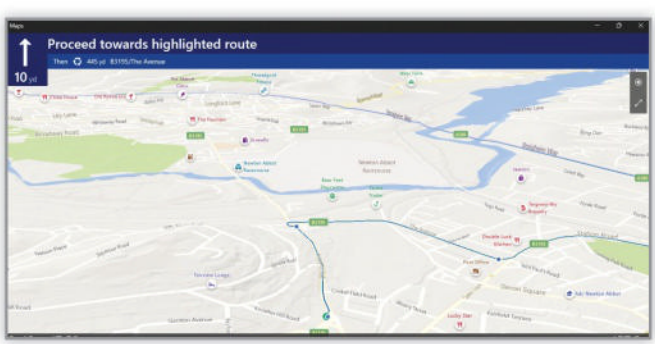
Step 3 Routes vary depending on whether you are driving, walking or need to take public transport. You can quickly flick between these options using the buttons at the top of the directions pane. When you have your start and end points entered and travel method chosen, click Get Directions.



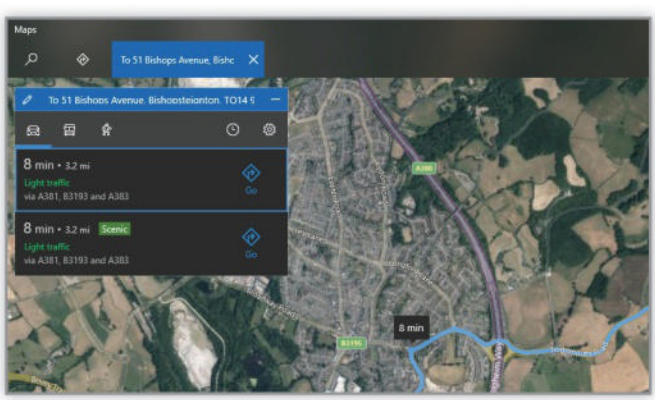
Step 4 The route is now shown on the map, with an estimated travel time readout above the destination. If alternative routes are available, they are shown as a light blue line, with the main route shown as a dark blue line. Points along the route are marked, usually where a change of direction is needed.



Step 5 If you click Go in the directions pane, Maps switches to a satnav-style view and traces your route as you continue along it. This is more for portable devices such as phones and tablets that you might use for directions in a vehicle. Click the Exit button via the three dots in the bottom-right of the screen to return to the normal maps view.



Step 6 You can also plan a route by drawing it. Click the Ink button and then the Directions tool in the menu that opens. Draw a line along the route you wish to take and Maps refines that into a proper route along roads, missing dead-ends, etc. You can save or share the route just as with any other.



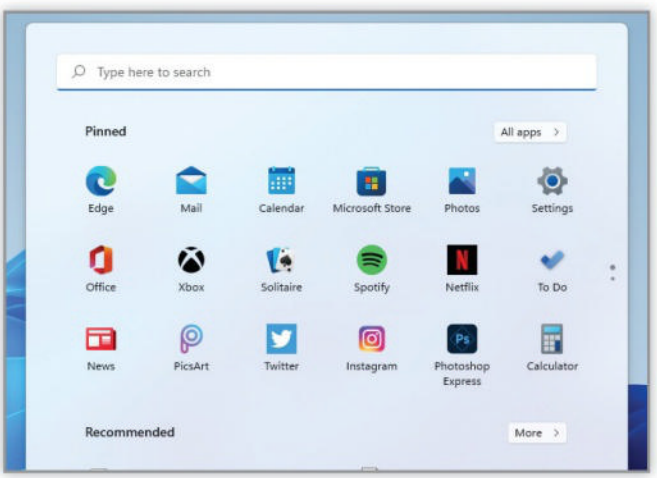
Manage Your Contacts in Windows 11

The People app has been a part of Windows 10 for some time, but in the more recent update to Windows 11, it has had an overhaul. The People app is no longer a part of the traditional taskbar, but instead Microsoft has incorporated into the Mail app.

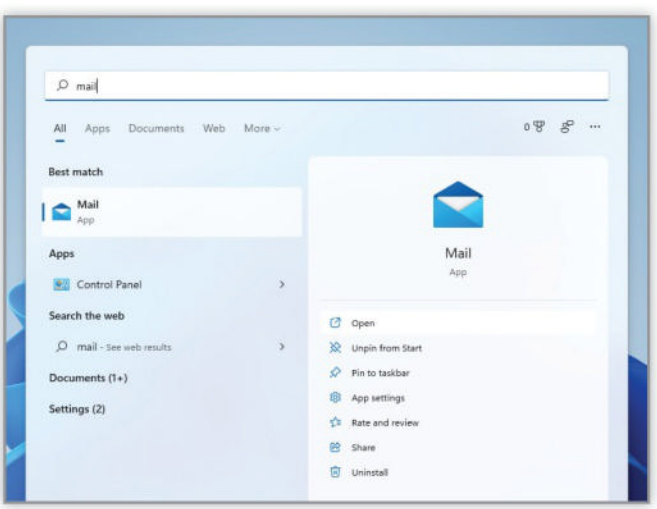
New People, New Apps

Incorporating the People button into the Mail app is probably the more logical location for it; it's just we've gotten used to it being its own app via the taskbar.

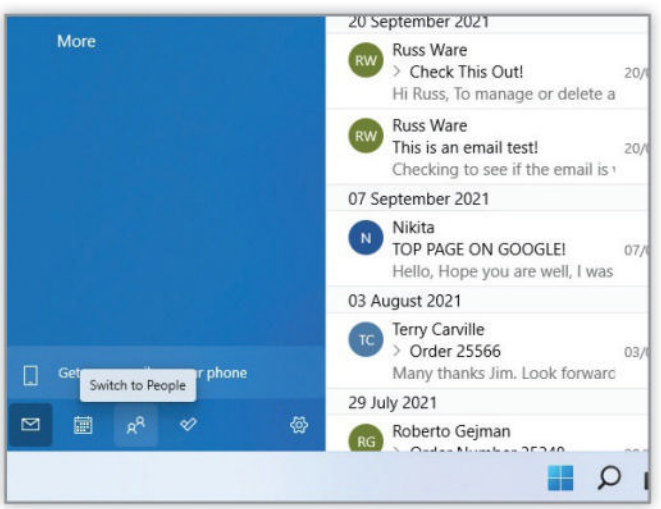
Step 1 If you've not done so already, you'll need to open the Mail app. Start the process by clicking on the Windows icon in the Windows 11 taskbar, or tapping the Windows Key on your keyboard. This will bring up the Apps menu and last used files.



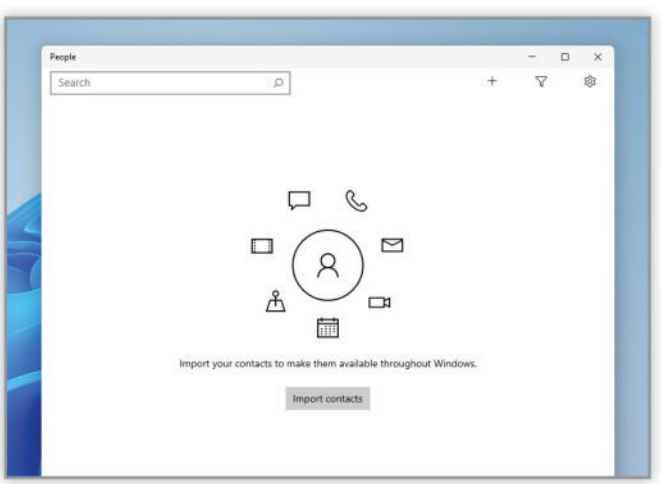
Step 2 Type 'mail' (without the quotes), and you'll see the Mail app icon appear on the list of available matching apps. Click on the Mail app to open, or click on the Open link from the list under the icon.



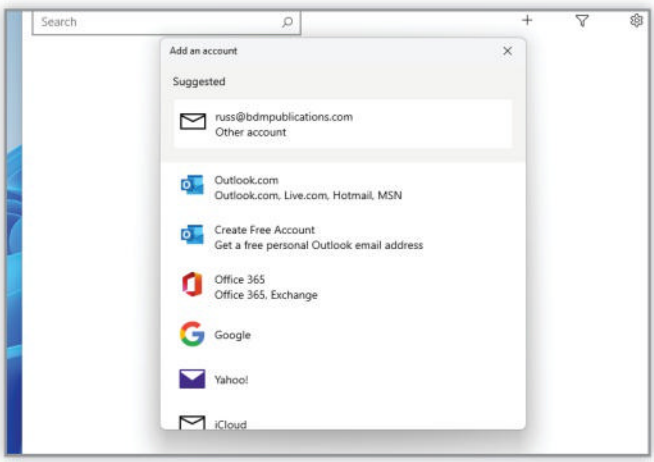
Step 3 Within the Mail app, you'll notice a row of icons along the bottom-left of the window. The third one in, from the left, is the People button. Click on it to switch the view to the new Windows 11 People app.



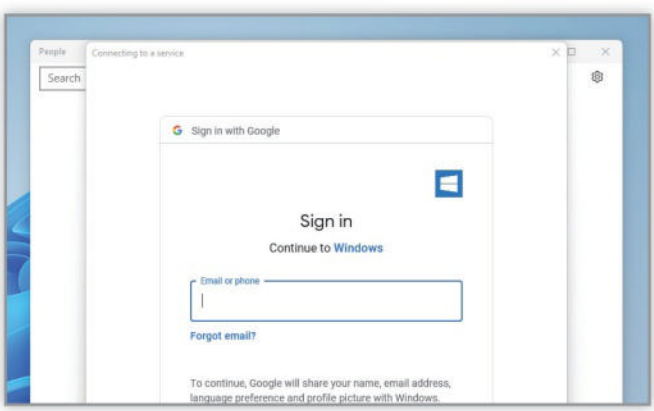
Step 4 The new People app is significantly different from its earlier appearances in Windows 10. It still connects to the various apps within Windows that utilise contacts, such as Skype, Teams and so on, but it looks and behaves radically different.



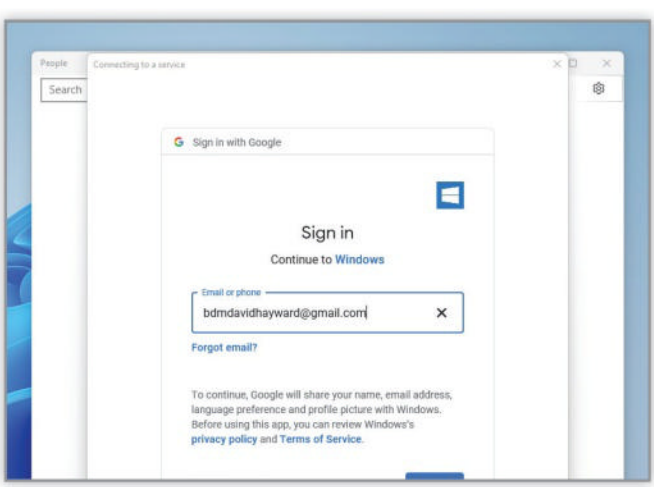
Step 5 The first things you'll probably want to do is import your contacts from other sources. As you'll no doubt notice, there's a handy Import Contacts button on the People app window. Click it, to begin the process.



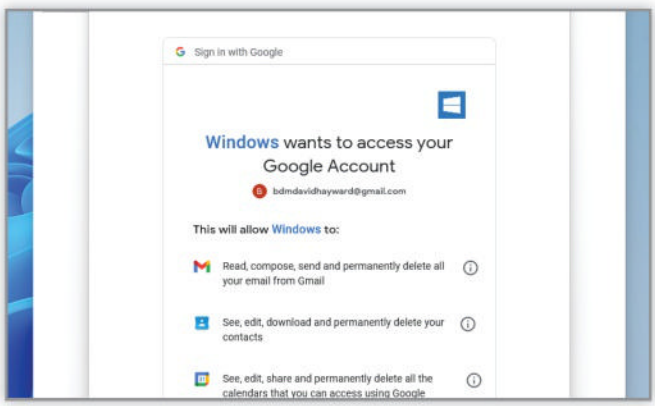
Step 6 You've got a selection of different sources from which you can import your list of contacts. From an already created account, through to Microsoft's Outlook.com, Office 365 Exchange, Google, Yahoo!, and even from your Apple iCloud. Click the source that applies to you.



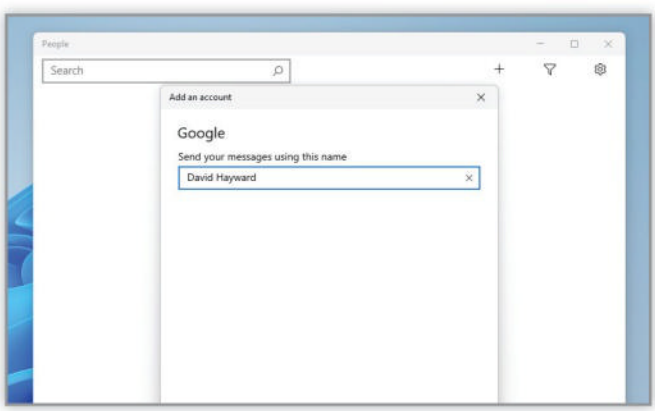
Step 7 In this example, we're connecting to a Google Account. The People app will open the connection services needed to link your Google account with the People app, all you'll need to do is enter the correct information into the available boxes to continue.



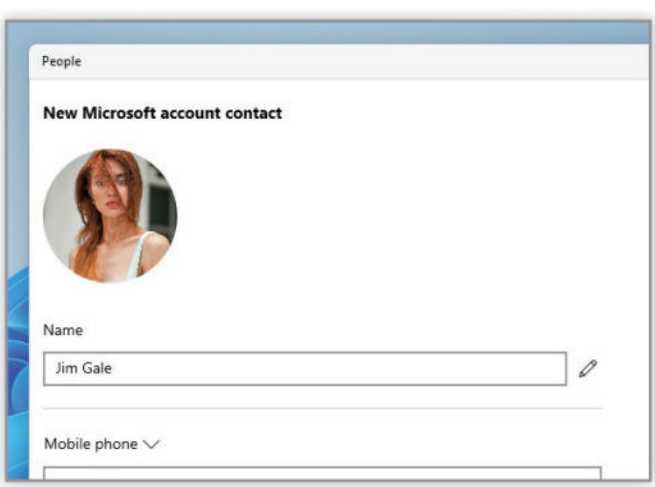
Step 8 The People app will notify you as to what access Windows 11 will need when you've setup the account. For most of us, the legal areas involved are part of the daily routine, we need access, so we have very little choice in the matter. If you want more information, though, scroll down to the Privacy Policy link to read more.



Step 9 If you're ready to go ahead with the connection to another service, then scroll down and click on the Allow button at the bottom of the page. This will open a new window, asking for the name in which to send messages as. Enter your name, then click Sign in at the bottom of the window.



Step 10 If you want to add individual contacts, click on the Plus sign in the upper-right of the People window. From there, you can their name, phone, email, address, add a photo and more. Click on the Save button when you're ready to add the new contact.



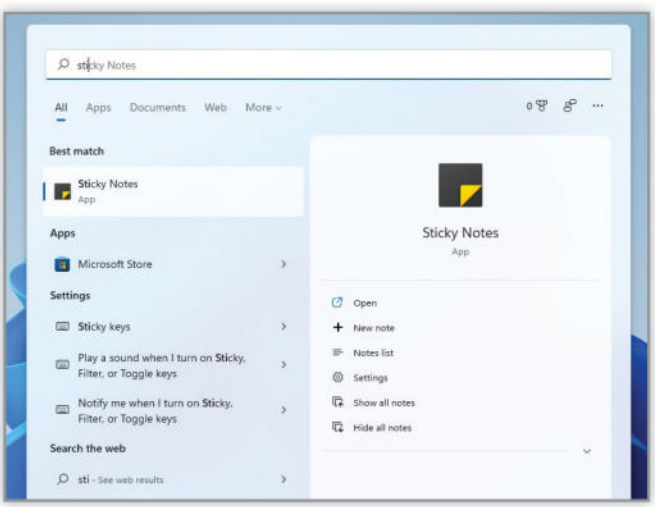
Using the Sticky Notes Tool

There are lots of Windows 11 apps for making reminder lists, but sometimes you just need a simple note to jog your memory. There is a simple, and often overlooked, piece of software in Windows that allows you to add sticky notes to your screen, quickly and easily.

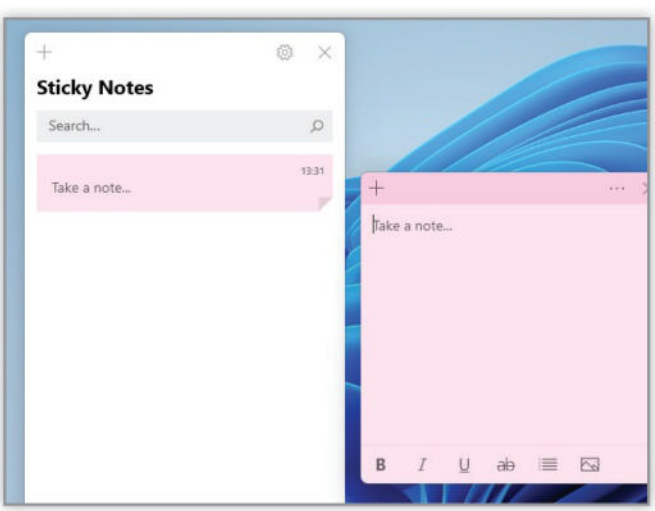
Getting Sticky

Sticky Notes has been around since the early days of Windows Vista, and has evolved over the years in line with the core operating system. It's surprisingly effective, so here's how it works.

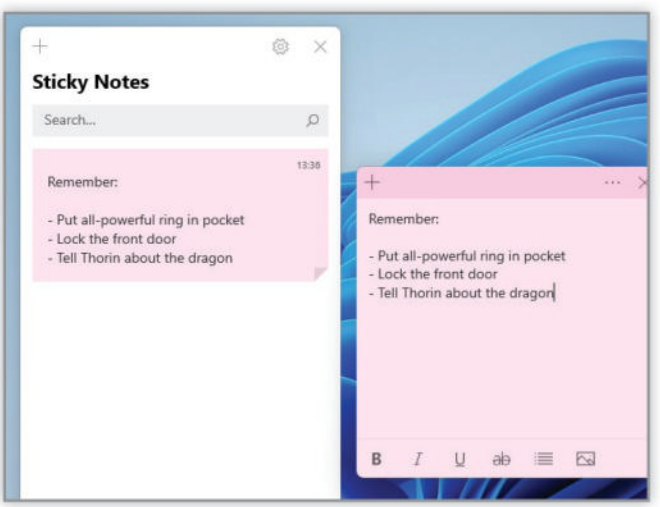
Step 1 Sticky Notes is available via the Windows Start button, or by pressing the Windows key on your keyboard, and typing in 'sticky notes' (without the quotes). Click on the Sticky Notes app that's listed in the search results.



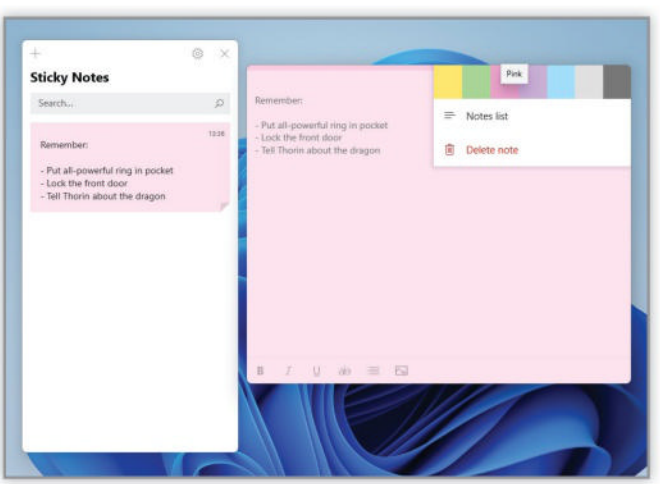
Step 2 Sticky Notes launches with two windows: one is the main Sticky Notes control window, and the other is a blank note, ready to be filled. As you create notes, these will be displayed when you start the app.



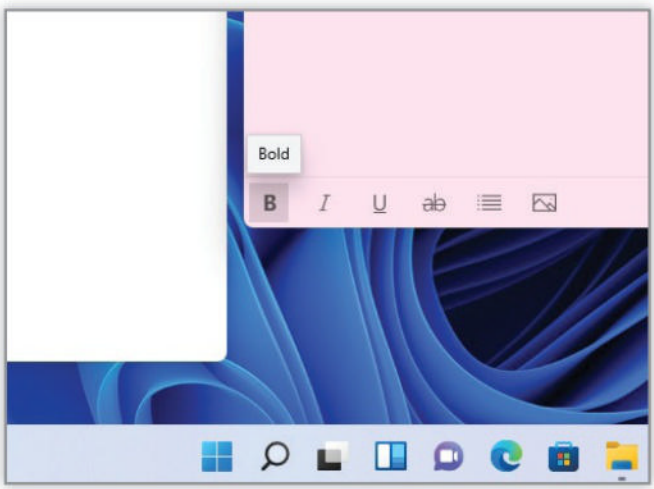
Step 3 To quickly create a new note, click on the smaller of the two windows; the new note window. The cursor will appear where the window says, 'Take a note…', and from there you can begin typing to create your note.



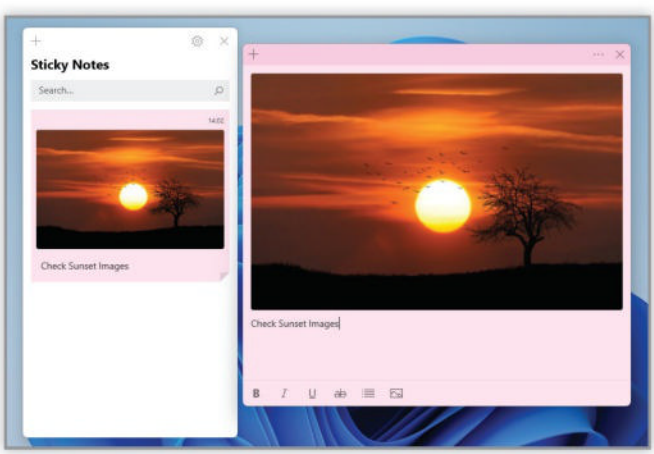
Step 4 As you type, the note will add scroll bars down the right-hand side. You can increase the size of the note by expanding the corners of the window, and you can change the colour of the Sticky Note by clicking on the three dots in the top-right corner of the note window, and choosing one of the available colours.



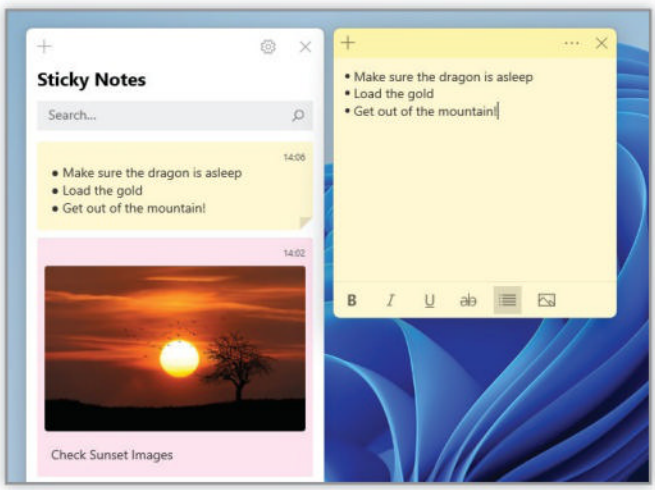
Step 5 If you look at the bottom of the note window, you'll notice a series of options. These change the text type to Bold, Italic, Underline or Strikethrough. You can also toggle bullets or even add an image.



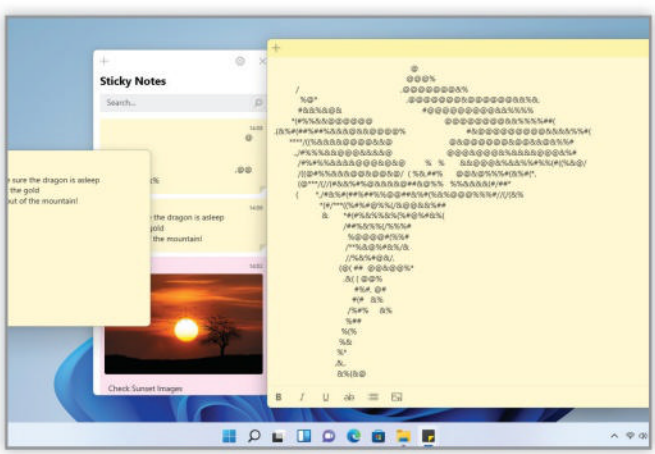
Step 6 You'll need to highlight existing text, then click on one of the text type options to apply the result, or click the option, then start new text. To add an image, simply click the image option then use the windows File Manager to locate the image. Click on the Image file itself.



Step 7 When you close the note, it will be automatically added to the Sticky Notes control window. If you want to create a new note, click on the Plus symbol in the Sticky Notes control window, located in the top-left.



Step 8 You will need to keep the app open for your notes to remain on the screen but as long as it is, you can shut down and reboot, and the notes will remain on the desktop. To close notes, you simply need to click on the trash icon in the top right corner. Close the last note and the software closes too.



Troubleshooting Sticky Notes Image Issues

While Sticky Notes for Windows 11 is a marked improvement over its predecessors, it can still yield one or two problems for those who use it. One of the main issues with Sticky Notes, and this is something that has appeared in earlier versions too, is adding images. Sometimes, Sticky Notes won't add PNG images, but JPGs will be added successfully. If this is the case, you can often get around this issue by copying the image, then pasting it directly into Sticky Notes with Ctrl+V.

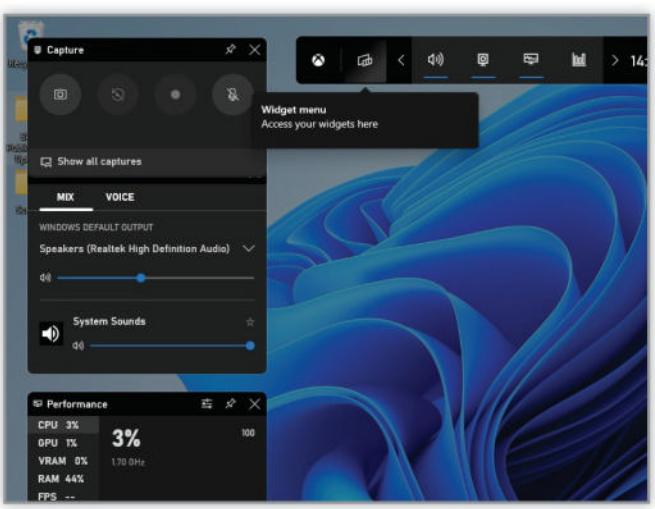
Using the Xbox Game Bar

Windows 11 has carried on the developmental work that its predecessor put in with regards to the Microsoft Xbox Game Bar. There are a wealth of sub-apps within the Game Bar app, and it's well worth looking into in more detail.

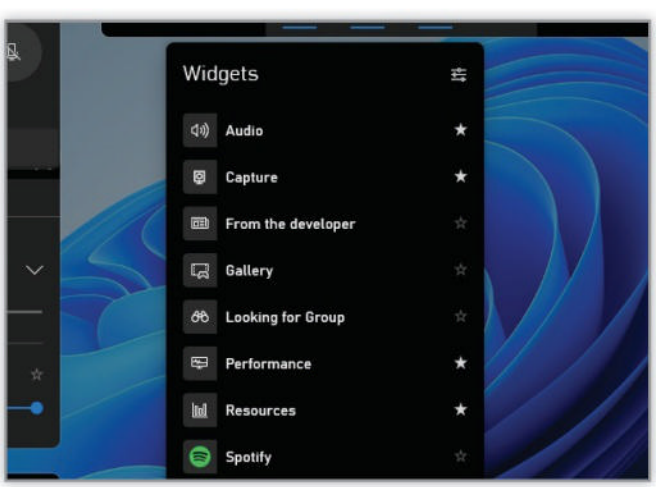
Game On!

No longer solely about gaming tools, the Game Bar now includes quick panels for volume control, resource usage and even playing music.

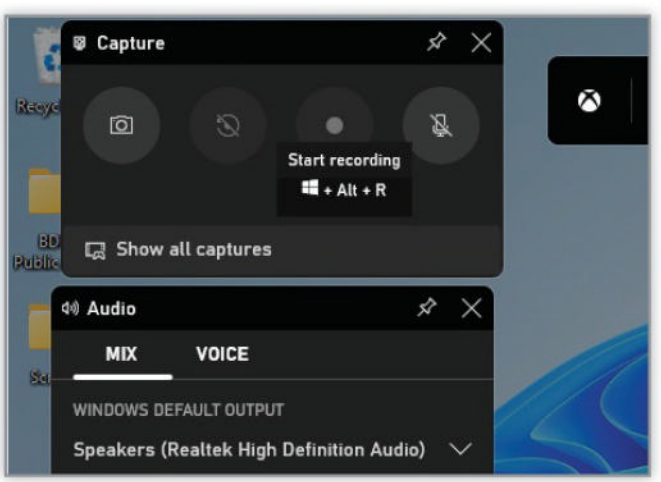
Step 1 You can open the Xbox Game Bar simply pressing the Windows Key + G, or by searching for Xbox via the Windows button on the taskbar menu. When it loads it will dim the screen and present multiple windows.



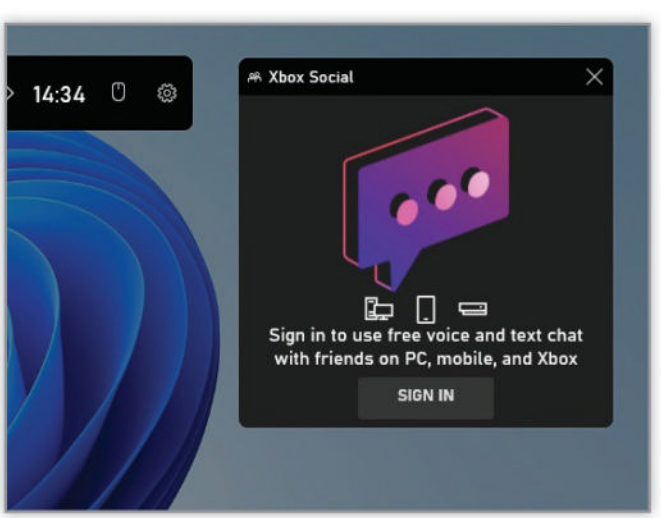
Step 2 The multiple windows can be managed by clicking on the Widgets icon; the 3D window icon located to the right of the Xbox icon on the top, thin window in the middle of the screen. Click the star next to each item to add or remove it from the Game Bar selection.



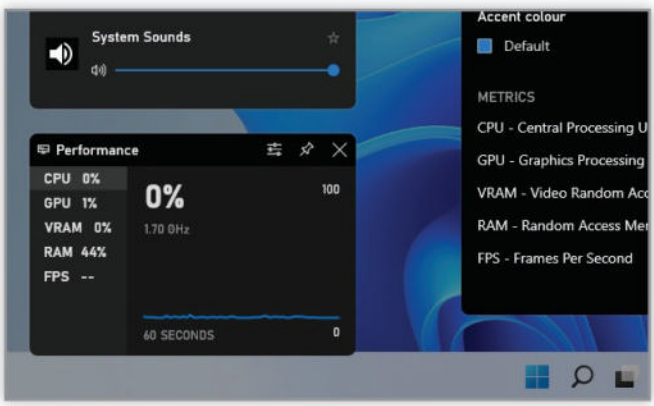
Step 3 By default, the top-left window is the Capture section. Here you can take screenshots, start recording video, record the last thirty seconds and activate the microphone during recording. You can also view any previous screen captures. All elements are displayed together with their keyboard shortcuts.



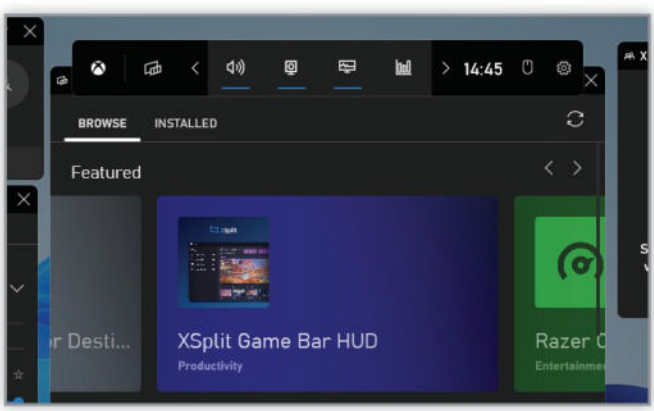
Step 4 Xbox Social is an element that lies in the top-right of the Game Bar windows. Here you can sign into your Microsoft Xbox account, and use voice and text chat across PC, mobile or Xbox with your friends.



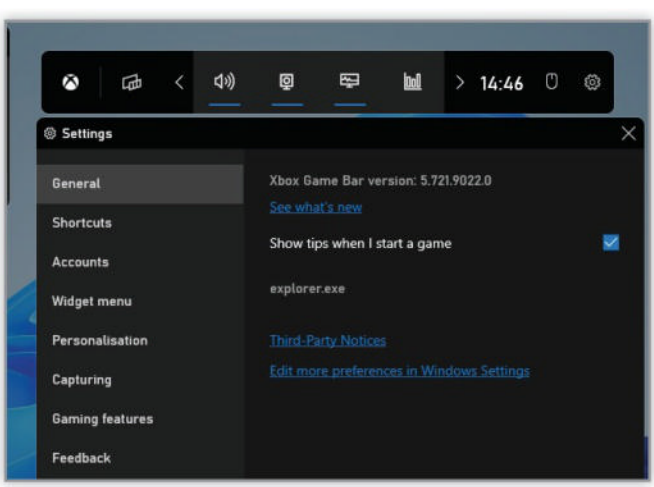
Step 5 In the bottom-left of the Game Bar windows, there's the Performance element. This is a really useful component, not just for gaming, as it details various metrics regarding your system. CPU, GPU, available memory and more can all be viewed as a handy graph. Click the icon next to the pin, within the Performance window, and you can customise the view.



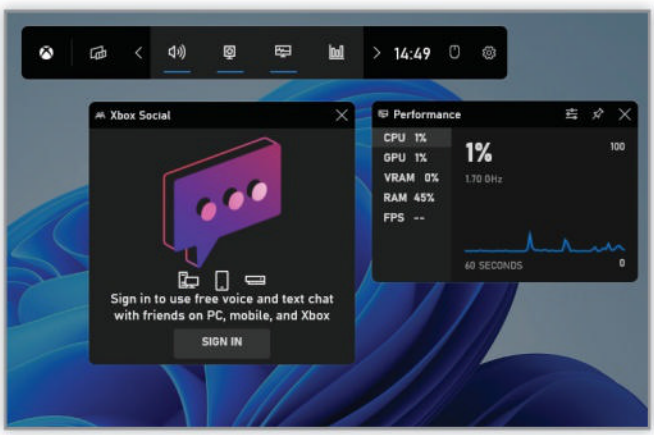
Step 6 If you want more widgets available, click on the Widget Menu, then scroll down the menu to the Widget Store. Click this, and you can choose from a selection of available widgets to install and use whenever you open the Xbox Game Bar.



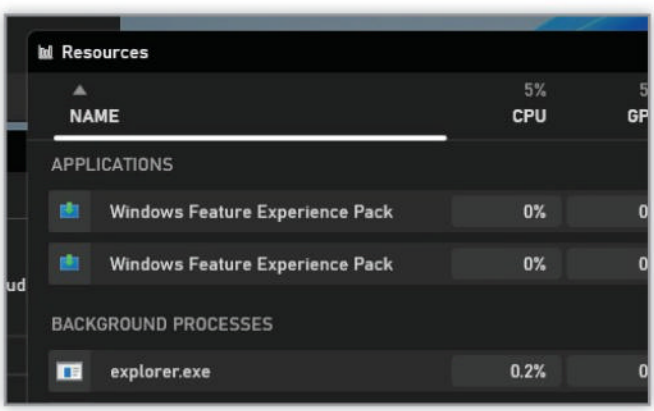
Step 7 You can fine-tune the Xbox Game Bar by clicking on the cog icon in the top, slim, main window section. This open the Game Bar's Settings page, where you can alter the shortcuts, create and sign in with different accounts and change other features of the app.



Step 8 You can rearrange the position of all of the overlay panels by clicking on their top bars and dragging them into the desired position. Several of the panels can be pinned, meaning that they will remain visible on screen even after the Game Bar is hidden. Just click the Pin icon in the top bar.



Step 9 The Resources window, found by clicking on the bar graph icon in the top, slim, window, details the currently open tasks within Windows 11. If you find the game you're playing is slowing down, you can open this and find where the majority of your system's resources are being used.



Step 10 You can close the Game Bar overlay screen by clicking anywhere else on the screen, or by pressing Windows Key + G again. If you want to disable the Game Bar completely, open the Main settings, go to the Gaming section, and use the slider to disable the tool.

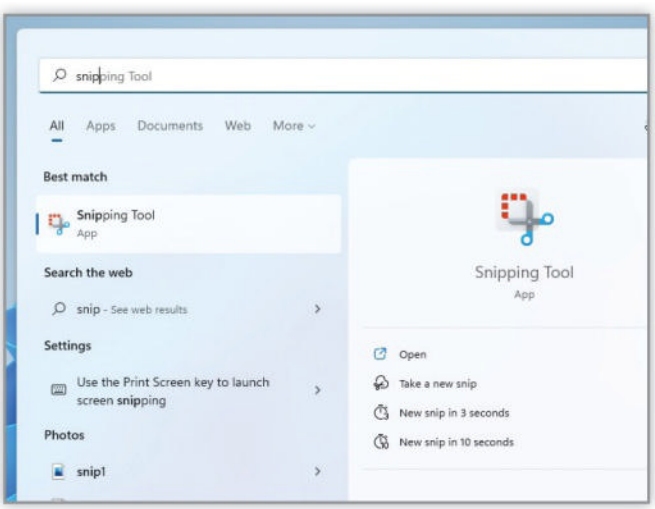
Screenshots with the Snipping Tool

In 2018 Microsoft announced that it was abandoning the much-loved Snipping Tool in favour of a new tool called Snip & Sketch. However, with Windows 11, Microsoft has reversed that decision and has merged both apps into the new Snipping Tool.

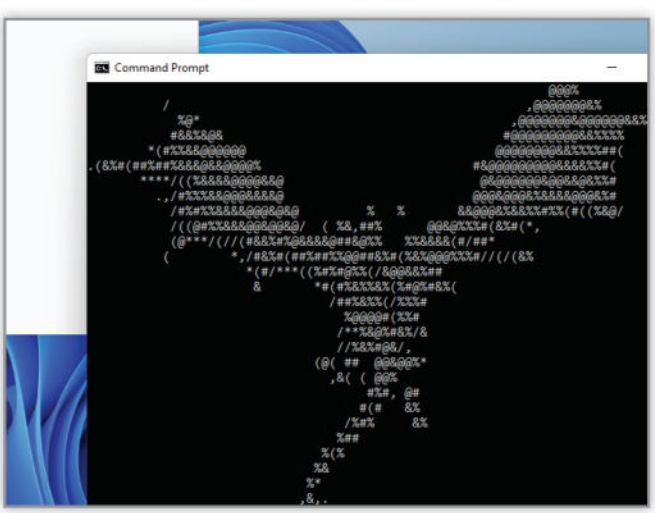
Snip, Snip!

The Snipping Tool is a surprisingly powerful ally in the Windows 11 arsenal. Capturing your screen is an important element in Windows, and the Snipping Tool does exactly that, and more.

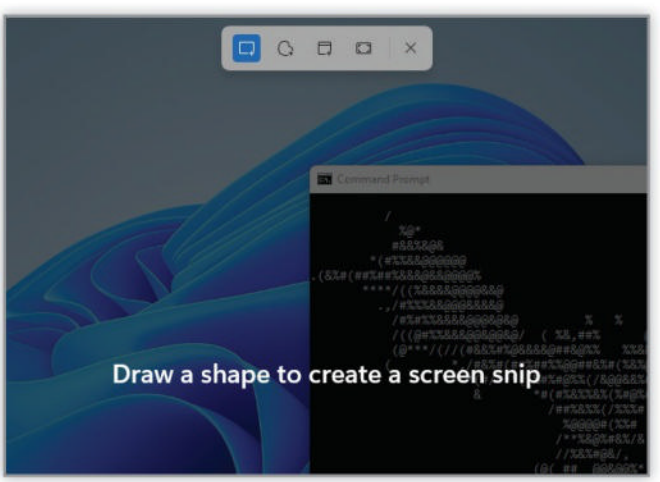
Step 1 To open the Snipping Tool, you can click on the Windows Start button and type 'snip', then click on the Snipping Tool app as listed in the results. Or, you can press the Windows Logo Key + Shift + S to start a new Snip.



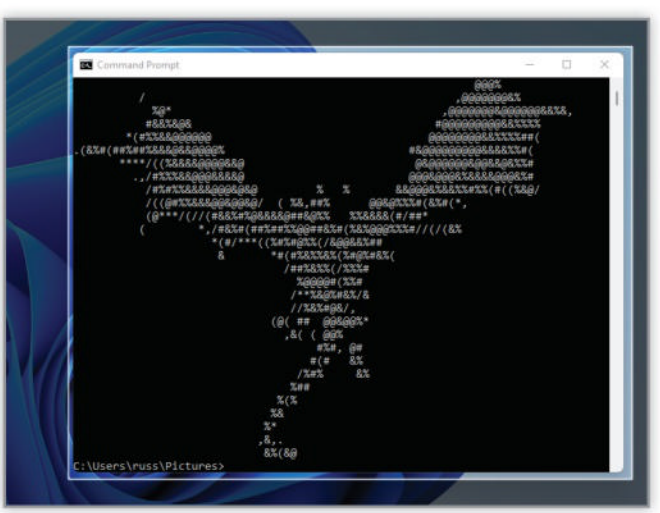
Step 2 As you will see, the Snipping Tool is a merger of the two former screenshot apps. To begin with, let's open something so we can take a screenshot of it. Remember to keep the Snipping Tool open in the background while you do this.



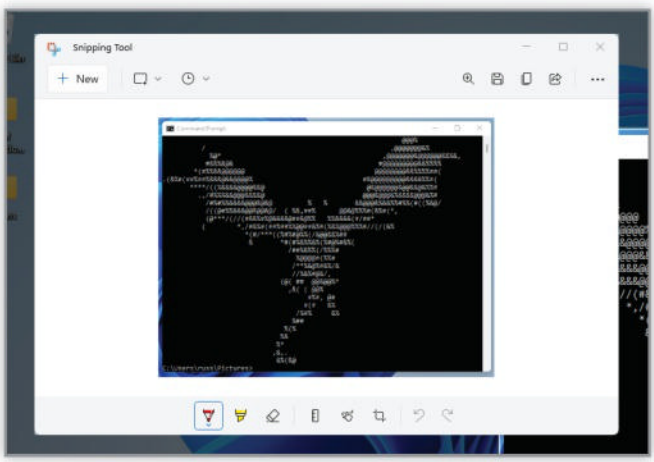
Step 3 To take a Snip screenshot, click on the +New button in the Snipping Tool window. This will darken the screen, and display an overlay reading 'Draw a shape to create a screen snip'. There are some options at the top of the screen, which represent the shape of the area you want to snip.



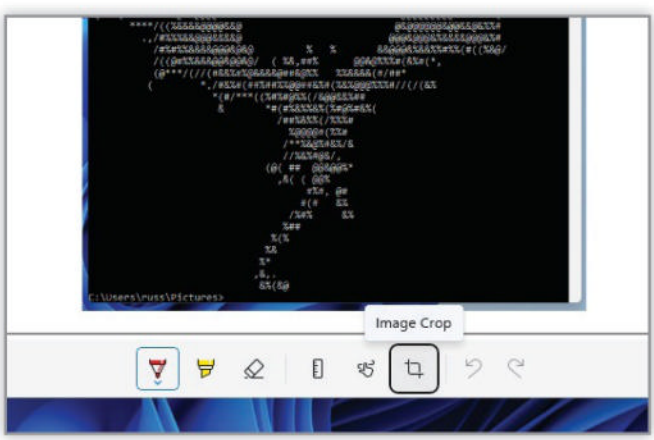
Step 4 Now, using the mouse, and assuming we're opting for the default shape of a rectangle, draw around the area where you want the screenshot to capture. Press and hold the left mouse button while you draw, and release it when you're done.



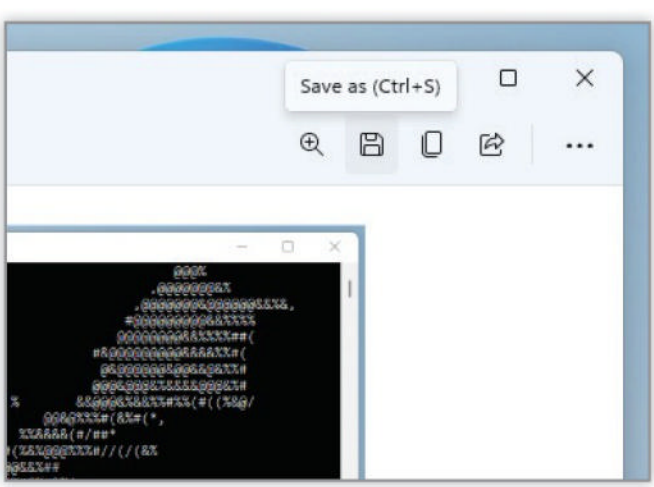
Step 5 The screen area you are capturing will be highlighted – which means it simply returns that portion of the screen back to its normal colours. This is the area that will be made available to the Snipping Tool.



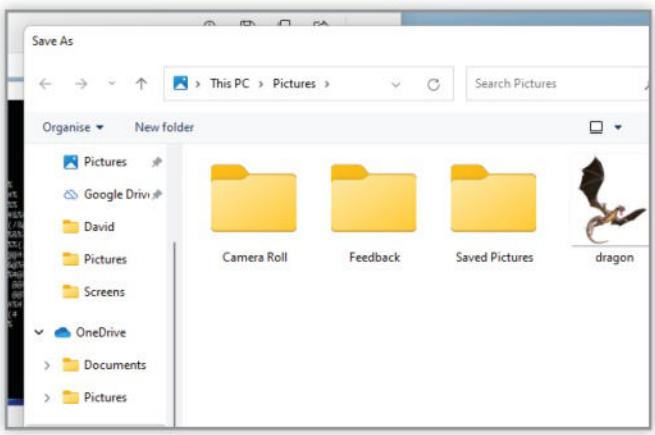
Step 6 There are a number of options available along the bottom of the Snipping Tool window to further edit the screenshot. From left to right, you'll find: Ballpoint Pen, Highlighter, Eraser, Ruler, Touch Writing, Crop, Undo and Redo.



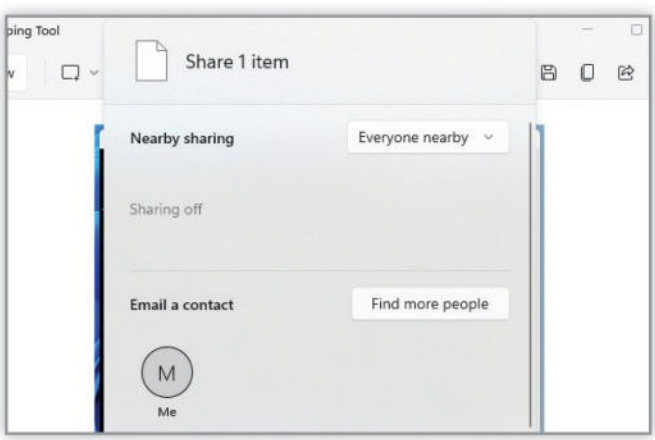
Step 7 There are also options along the top-right of the Snipping Tool window: Zoom, Save As, Copy and Share. The top-left options will have you create a New snip, change the Shape of the snipped area and create a Time Delay for when the snip will take place.



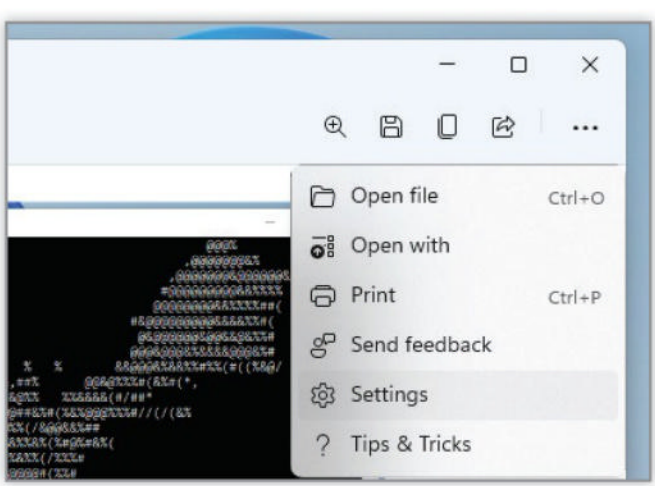
Step 8 Save the captured screenshot by clicking on the Save As button, located in the top-right of the Snipping Tool window. This will open a familiar File Manager window, where you can locate a folder or area to save the image. You can save images as PNG, JPG or GIF.



Step 9 The Share option will enable you to send the captured image as a file to a number of different sources. You can utilise Nearby Sharing, send it as an Email or share it via an installed app – such as Mail or Teams.



Step 10 Clicking on the three dots in the upper-right of the Snipping Tool window will open a sub-menu where you can open files, print, send feedback and call upon tips and tricks from the Microsoft website. There's also a Settings option, which allows to further enhance the Snipping Tool experience.



Installing a Printer in Windows 11

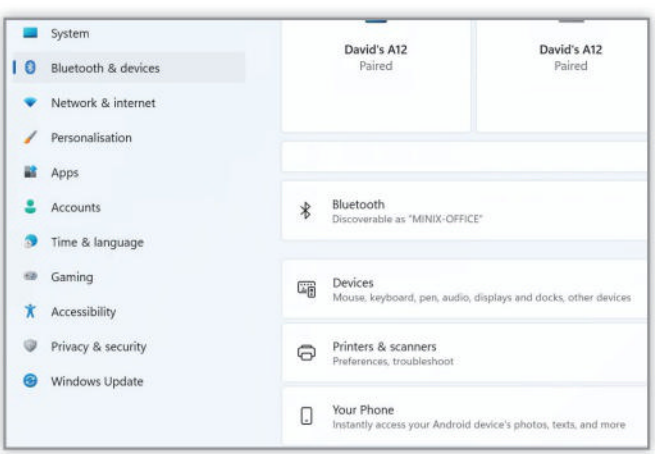
When you connect a printer to your PC or add a new one to your home network, you can usually start printing straight away. Windows 11 supports most printers, so you probably won't have to install special software. Here's how to install printers in Windows 11.

Install a Local Printer

A local printer simply means one that is physically connected to your laptop or desktop computer via a USB data cable, rather than being connected wirelessly.

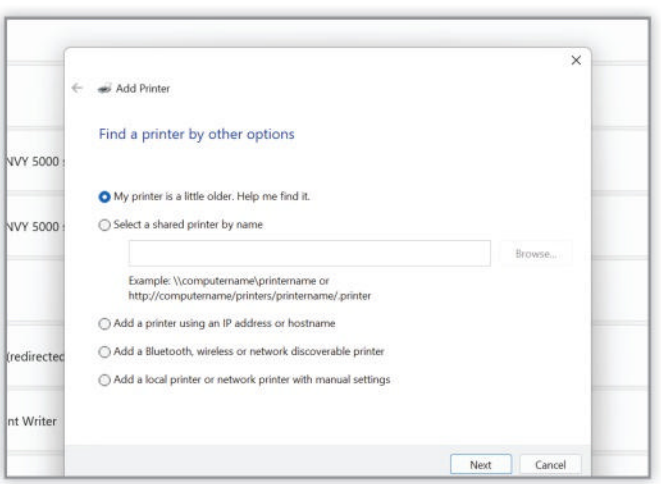
Step 1 In most cases, all you have to do to set up a printer is to connect it to your PC and let the plug and play software do its work. Plug the USB cable from your printer into an available USB port on your PC and turn the printer on. If nothing happens, try restarting your PC with the printer connected.

Step 2 If the printer does not set up automatically, you will need to do it yourself. Click the Start menu button and head into Settings. Look for Bluetooth & Devices from the list on the left-hand pane, and click it. Next, expand Printers & Scanners. You should see a list of available devices, hopefully with your printer's name shown.



Step 3 If so, click on it and then click Add Printer. The printer should then be installed and ready to use. If you don't see your device in the list, click 'Add Device' and see if the scan finds it. If it still does not appear, click the 'Add Manually' link that appears with, 'The printer I want isn't listed'.

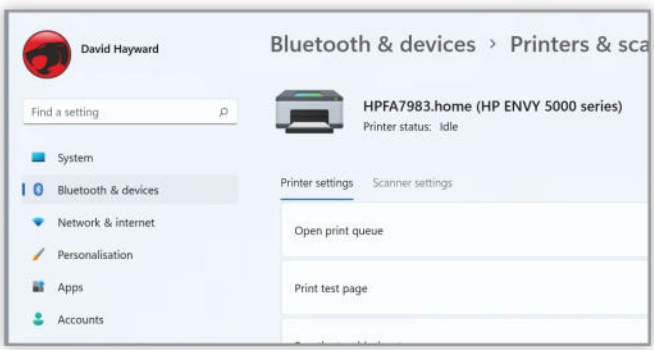
Step 4 This opens a step-by-step tool that will show you how to find and install software for an older printer, or one which is not yet supported by drivers pre-installed with Windows 11. If that still fails, try going to the printer manufacturer's website and download an installer or drivers.



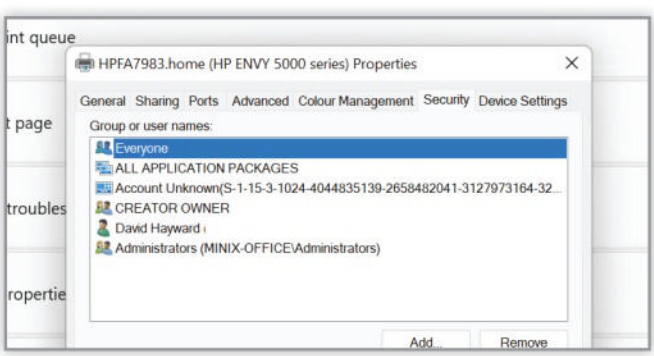
Install a Wireless Printer

A wireless printer is one that is connected via Wi-Fi, Bluetooth or by means other than a USB data cable. This can also include a printer connected to another PC on the network.

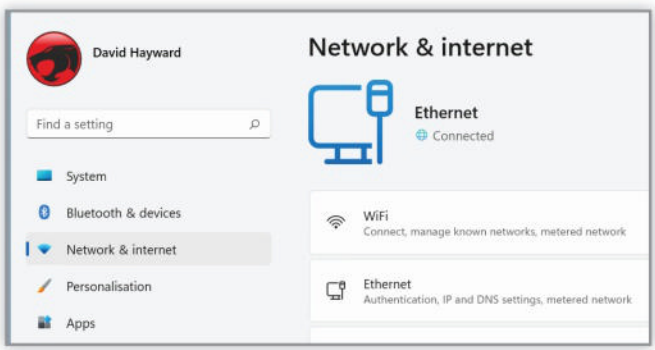
Step 1 Open the settings, followed by Bluetooth & Devices, then Printer & Scanners. Look for your printer in the list of available devices and if it is there, click on it and then click 'Add Device'. If your printer is switched on and connected to the network, Windows 11 should find it easily.



Step 2 Available printers can include all such devices on a network, such as Bluetooth and wireless printers or those that are plugged into another computer and shared on the network. You might need permission to install some printers, depending on the type of network you are connected to.



Step 3 If you use wireless access points, extenders or multiple wireless routers with separate SSIDs, you'll need to ensure that you're connected to the same network as the printer for your PC to find and install it. If the printer does not appear in the list you may need to add it manually.

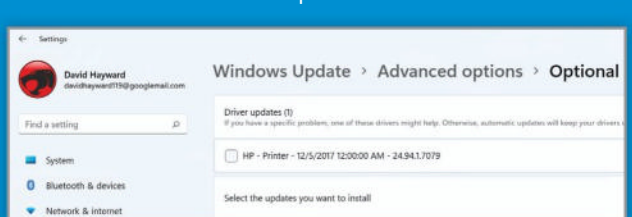


Step 4 Click on the 'Add Manually' link when 'The printer I want isn't listed' appears. This opens a tool that will show you, step-by-step, how to find and install software for an older printer, or one which is not supported by Windows 11 drivers. If this fails, try looking for the software on the manufacturer's website.

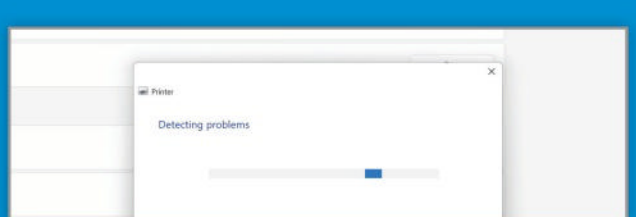
Common Printer Problems

Printers are getting easier and easier to install, thanks to plug and play software, but if you are having problems do these two things first.

Check for Old Drivers Most printers require driver software to work properly. If you recently upgraded from one version of Windows to another, it's possible that the current printer driver is for the previous version of Windows and may not work (or work well) with Windows 11. Check Windows Update for new drivers.



Run the Troubleshooter Head in to settings > Update & Security > Troubleshoot and run the Printer Troubleshooter. You can also type 'Printing problem' into the search box, select the search result labelled 'Help from Microsoft' and then select the troubleshooter to download it.



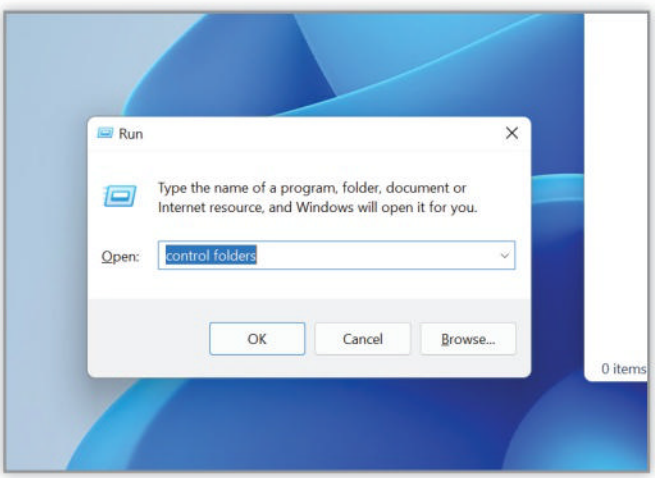
Manage Libraries in Windows 11

Libraries are virtual containers for users' content. A library can contain files and folders stored on the local computer or in a remote storage location. In Windows Explorer, users interact with libraries in ways similar to how they would interact with other folders.

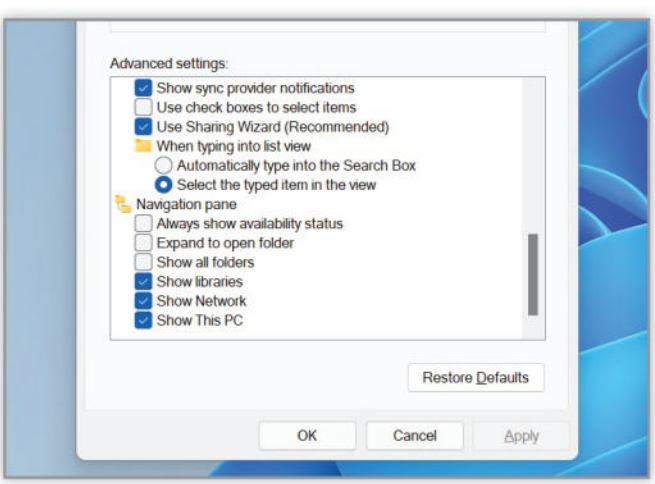
Quiet in the Library

By default, Libraries are not displayed in Windows 11 – even later versions of Windows 10 did away with the Library display – so they'll need to be reactivated for them to appear.

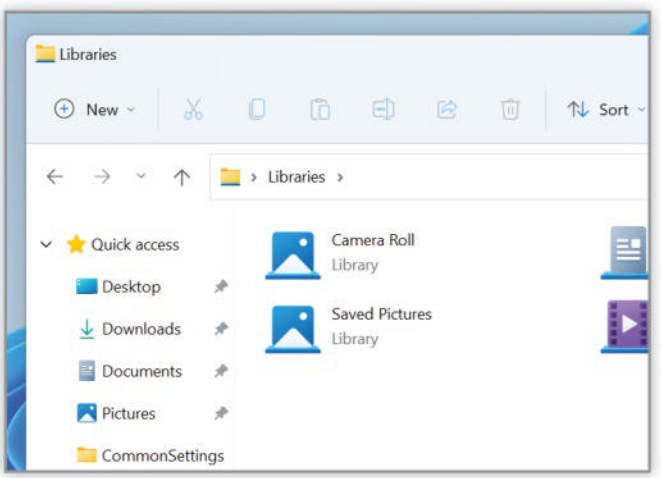
Step 1 If you open Windows 11 File Explorer, you'll notice that Libraries are no longer visible by default, which is a shame as many users rely on them. However, they can be returned, and the process is remarkably simple. Start by pressing the Windows Key and R, then enter: control folders.



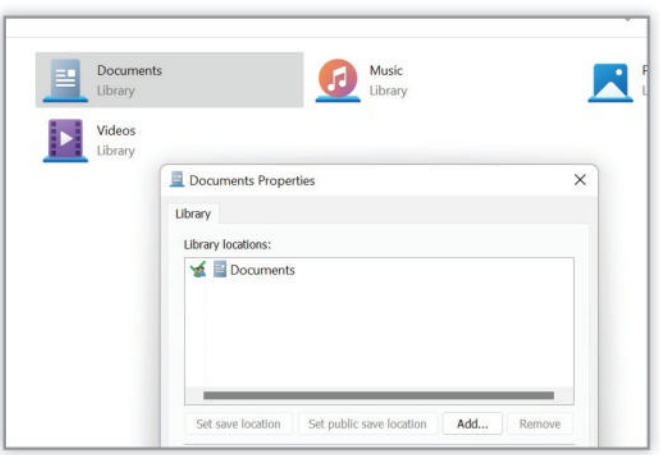
Step 2 Hit enter, or click the OK button and the File Explorer Options window will pop up. The options available in here can drastically alter the way Windows Explorer works, so be careful what you enable or disable. Head to the View tab, and scroll down to the bottom of the Advanced Settings section.



Step 3 At the bottom of the Advanced Settings section, you'll notice a box labelled Show Libraries. Click the box to tick, and re-enable the option. When you've done that, click the Apply button to activate the change and you'll see that the Libraries are now available via File Explorer.



Step 4 You can now close the File Explorer Options pop-up window. The Libraries are, by default, setup as area specific shortcuts. You can right-click each Library entry, select Properties from the menu, and create new Library locations, change the icon and much more. Restore Defaults will return the Library to its original setup.



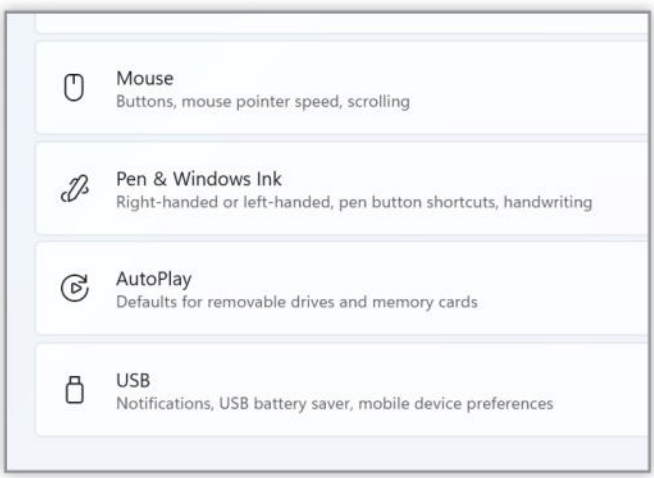
How to Use AutoPlay

Windows AutoPlay is a feature that was first introduced back in Windows 98. It allows newly discovered media, based on content such as images, video or music, to begin playing via the appropriate application.

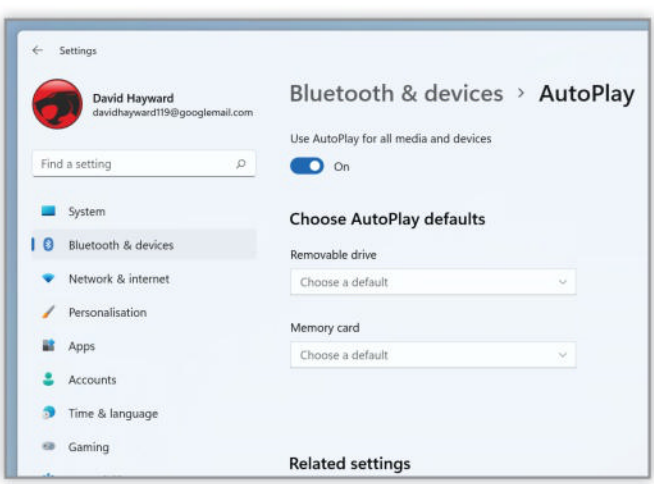
Rediscovering AutoPlay

AutoPlay has been seen as both a blessing and a curse. How we have enjoyed slipping a DVD in the computer and sitting back to enjoy it, but swore at the machine for auto playing a CD we inserted. Funny old world.

Step 1 Windows 11 seems to be having some issues with the default AutoPlay setting. At the time of writing, there's a bug that affects some but not others, in that the Windows 11 AutoPlay feature is either disabled by default, or not. To find out which you are, go to Settings > Bluetooth & Devices, and click on AutoPlay.

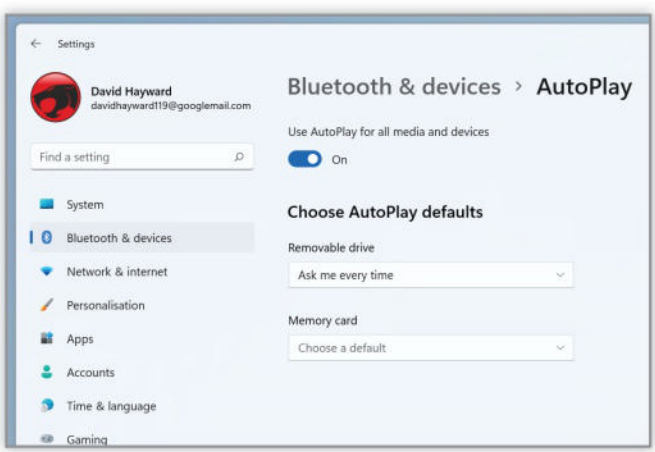


Step 2 In our example, the AutoPlay feature was enabled. This means that whenever we insert some media, be it a disc of some description or memory card, Windows 11 will auto launch the appropriate app. However, if your AutoPlay isn't working, start by clicking on the On button at the top of the screen.



Step 3 If nothing happens when you insert any media, despite the AutoPlay feature being turned on, you may need to specify an AutoPlay default. Under the On button are two options for AutoPlay defaults: Removable Drive and Memory Card – depending on your computer setup, you may have more options available. Click the Removable Drive drop-down box - Choose a default.

Step 4 Here you'll have multiple options available. These options will depend on the apps you have installed on your system, but by default they allow you to access the Storage Settings in Windows 11 for removable drives and are; Take no action when a removable drive is inserted, Open the Windows File Explorer or Ask what you want to do with the type of media inserted.



Skype in Windows 11

Although Skype took something of a backseat to Teams during the world-wide Covid-19 lockdown, it still proved immensely useful for individuals to keep in contact with loved ones and friends around the world.

1 Although it's expected for you to appear on camera when using Skype, it's always best to remember that you don't have to. You can easily connect to a session and speak or type without showing your face by simply covering the camera.

2 This is your Profile, click the image to open details about your Microsoft account, as well as manage your Skype profile. Further settings are available, along with Bookmarks and being able to add call credit in your local currency.

3 This panel details the recent chats and calls you've had with others in Skype. From here you can arrange new Skype video calls, new chats, look at your contacts and see any notifications. Click recent chats to display the contents in the main Skype window. You can also run an Echo/sound Test here, to test your microphone and camera.

4 The main Skype window is where all your video calls and chats will take place. Grouped calls split the screen depending on how many people are in the call, and chats can have attachments added and viewed – such as images and videos.

5 Skype has been redesigned in recent years to perform better, and to offer a more high-resolution experience. If you think your video is lacking in quality, then take a look at the hardware settings for the webcam and see if you can improve it.

6 The top bar details the number of participants, any images and videos included in the chat or call, and allows you to find any specific keyword for participants. You can also Start a Call, and add more contacts as you need from the two buttons in the top-right of the screen.

7 It's worth mentioning that video quality can often be degraded due to a lack of bandwidth. Skype will automatically throttle itself to keep the connection alive, often at the detriment of video quality. If you find this happening, stop any other downloads from your browser, or check your Internet settings.

8 Use this link to send to others so they can join in the conversation. They will need access to Skype, either as their own installed app on their system, or they can use the link to access the call via the Skype webpage. You can also add more people via your contacts, or create specific shared invites.

9 You'll enter your chat and video message texts in here. You can also include emoji, attach files, share contact details, create a poll, schedule a call, share your location and access your OneDrive area to collaborate with others on content.

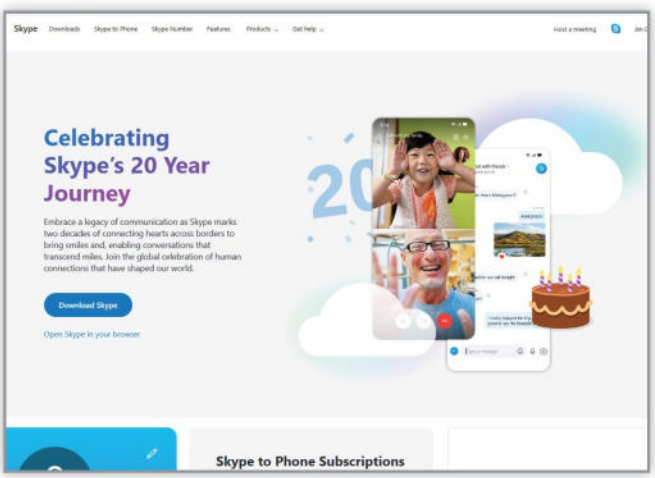
Making Calls with the Skype App

Skype is now a much bigger part of Windows 11 than it once was, and has its own app that comes pre-installed with the OS. Getting to grips with the different tools in Skype is fairly simple but learning how to use it more efficiently and easily takes a little more time.

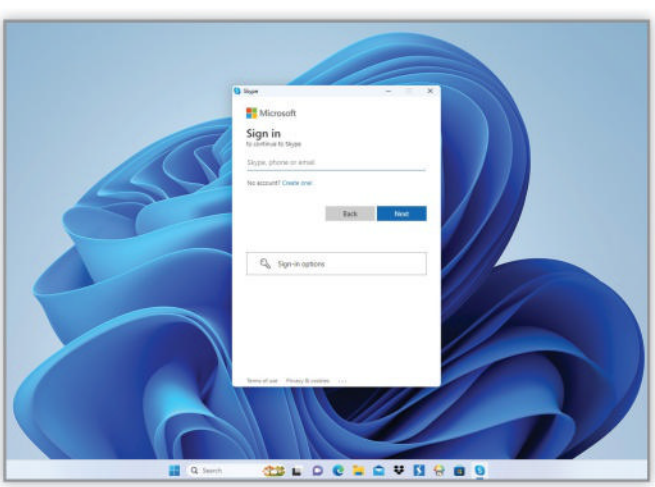
Install and Use Skype

Recently updated, Skype has now been turned into a proper Windows 11 app and follows the Windows design style more closely.

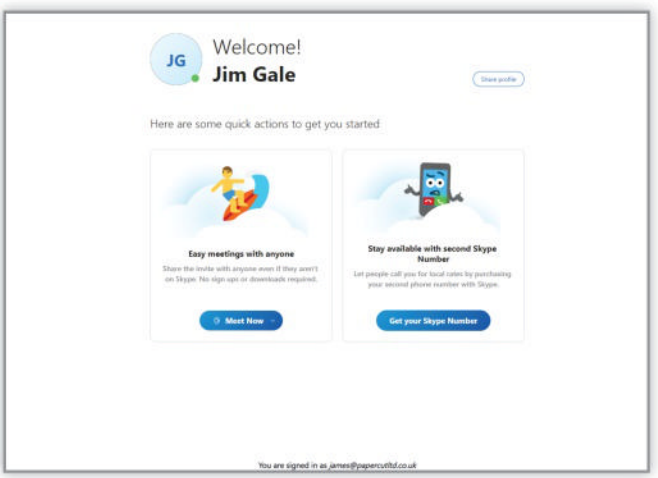
Step 1 Skype has a dedicated Windows 11 app and this may be preinstalled on your Windows PC but you might need to download it from the Internet. You can download Skype directly from www.skype.com as well as check that you have the latest version available.



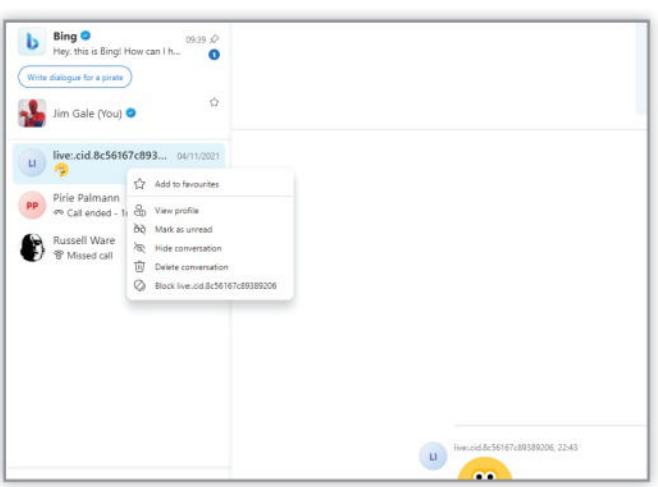
Step 2 Once installed, you will need to sign in to the Skype app. If you already have a Skype account, which is completely free to set up, just enter your login details when prompted. If not, you can go to www.login.skype.com and create a new account in just a few minutes.



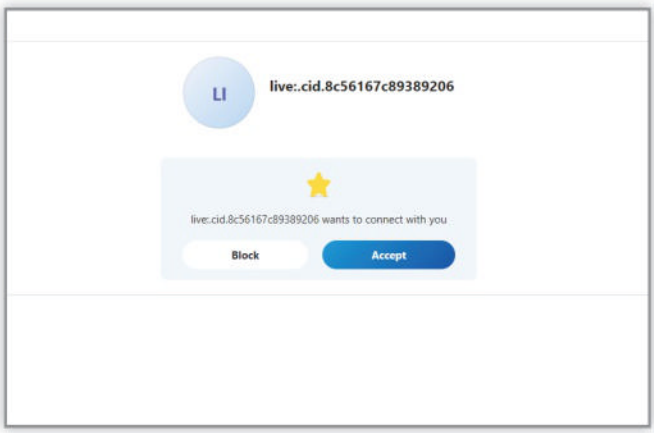
Step 3 The Skype window should now be open on screen. The default view is the Recent conversations screen but this may be completely empty if you are new to Skype. The first thing you need to do as a fresh user, is to begin adding contacts.



Step 4 Click the Contacts button (2nd button down from the top) and either select the add contact icon at the bottom of the sidebar or click directly in the search text box and type the name, Skype name or email of the person you want to add. Click Search Skype.

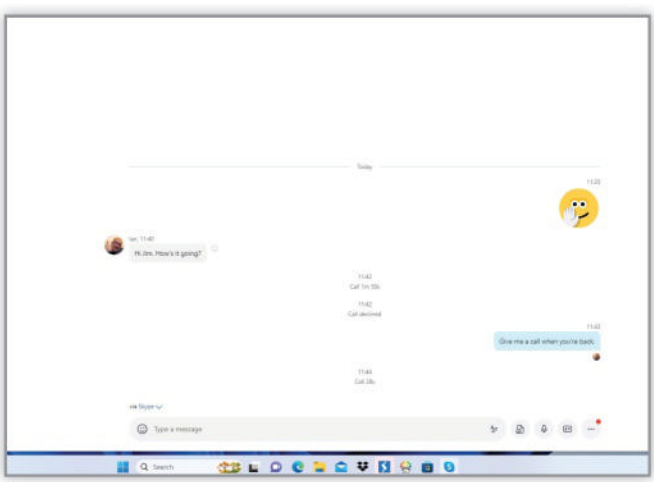


Step 5 Select your friend from the search results, assuming you can see them in the list, and click Add to Contacts. Type a quick note to introduce yourself and then click Send. They will receive a request from you, along with the message and can choose whether to accept you or not.

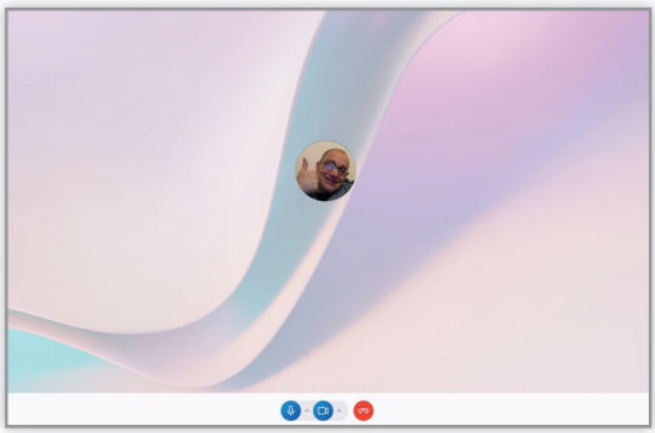


Step 6 You can select any contact from your contacts list and then either instant message them or start a voice or video call. If the contact you click on has Skype, the call option buttons will appear in the top right corner of the window. Click the relevant button to start a call.

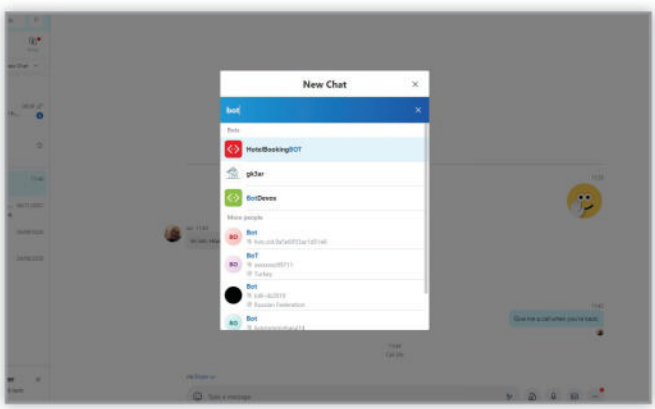
Step 7 Skype instant messaging makes it easy to keep in touch with your contacts and groups wherever they are. You can share files, photos and contacts. To instant message one of your contacts, select their name and start typing at the bottom of the main window.



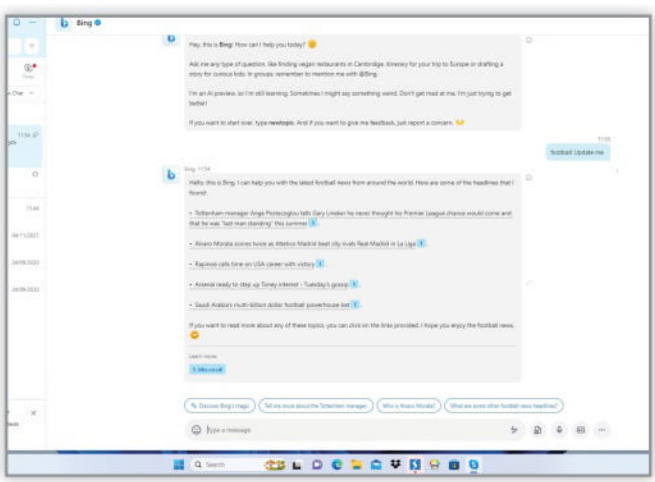
Step 8 If you want to make calls to contacts not using Skype (although you can make calls to mobiles and landlines too), you will need to add some Skype credit first. To do this, click on your profile picture in the bottom left and click the 'Add Skype credit' link.



Step 9 Skype also now includes Bots. Bots are artificially intelligent programs that can do many useful things like search for news, summarise webpages, play games and more. You can start chatting with a bot just like you chat with friends, just choose a bot and click Get started.



Step 10 Bots vary in how useful they are but some are well worth taking a look at. Take the Bing s bot for example. Add this and then type a word ("football" for example) in the conversation window. The bot will return news stories based on that subject.



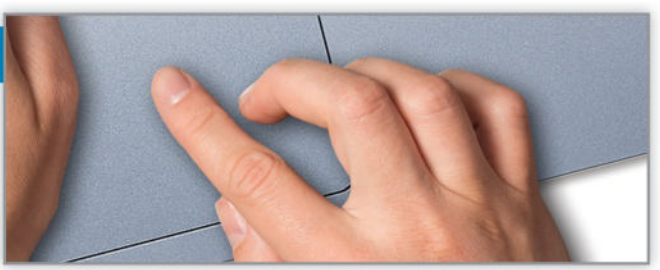
Windows 11 Touchpad Gestures

There's so much you can do with gestures, and Windows 11 has greatly improved the technology over its predecessor. Some apps have their own, unique, gestures, but the default and majority are listed here.

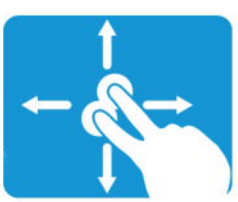
Touchy Feely

Gone are the days where we paw ineffectually at our screens, like a cat trying to capture a video of a bird. Windows 11 gestures encompass nearly every aspect of the operating system.

Touchpad Gestures

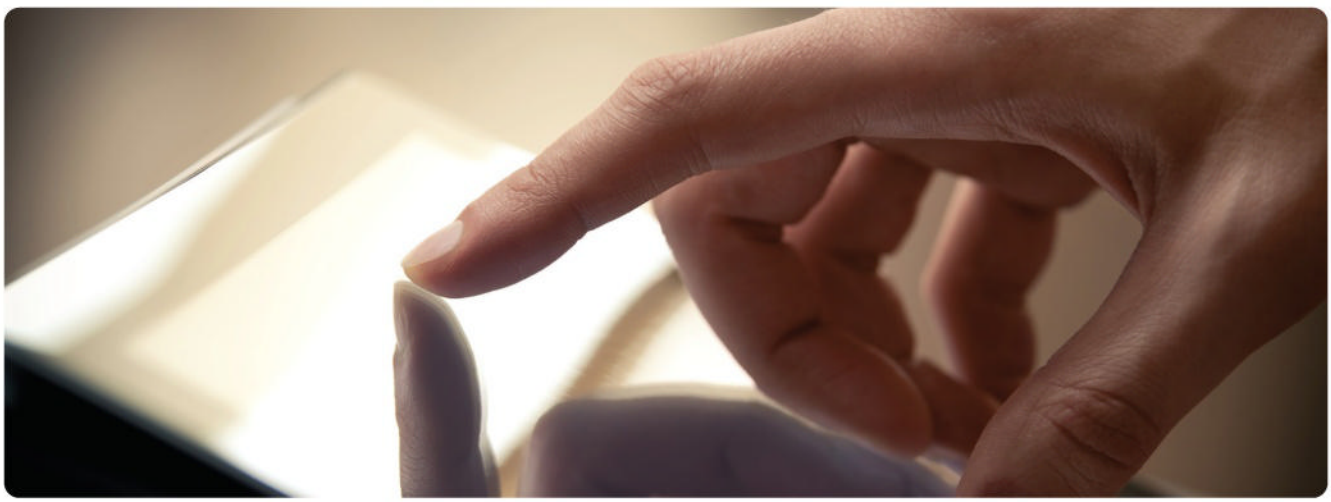


Here are the main gestures for use on Windows 11 touchpad laptops. It's worth noting that some of these gestures will only work with new precision touchpads. To find out if your laptop has one, click **Start > Settings > Bluetooth & devices > Touchpad.**

Action		Gestures	
Select an item Tap touchpad		**Show all open windows** Swipe with three fingers up on the touchpad	
Scroll Place two fingers on the touchpad and slide horizontally or vertically		**Show the desktop** Swipe with three fingers down on the touchpad	
Zoom in or out Place two fingers on the touchpad and pinch in or stretch out		**Switch open apps or windows** Swipe with three fingers left or right on the touchpad	
Show Context Menu Tap the touchpad with two fingers or press down in the lower-right corner		**Switch desktops** Swipe with four fingers to the left or right on the touchpad	

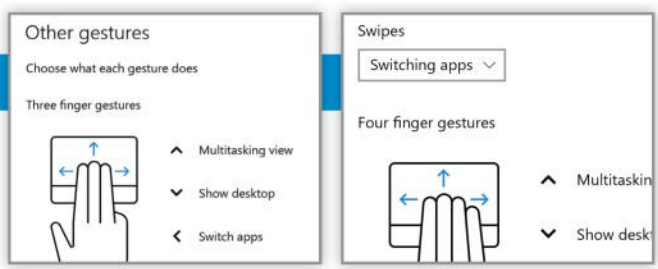
Note: Remember, some laptop manufacturer touchpads may operate differently to others. That shouldn't be the case, but for a long time there was little standardisation. This doesn't happen so much now, but if you own an older model laptop that works with Windows 11, then you may experience some problems or simply different gestures depending on the touchpad device you're using. In such circumstances, it's always best to consult the laptop manual, or see if there's an updated BIOS or driver to apply.

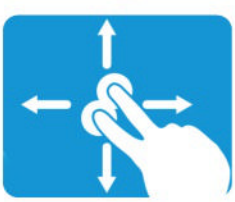
Windows 11 Touchpad Gestures



Touchscreen Gestures

You can use these gestures on the touchscreen of any of your modern Windows 11 devices. To turn touch gestures on, click **Start > Settings > Bluetooth & devices > Touch > Three- and four-finger touch gestures.**



Action		Gestures	
Select an item Tap the screen		**Show the desktop** Swipe with three fingers down on the screen	
Scroll Place two fingers on the screen and slide horizontally or vertically		**Switch to the last open app** Swipe with three fingers to the left or right on the screen	
Zoom in or out Place two fingers on the screen and pinch in or stretch out		**Open notification centre** Swipe with one finger in from the right edge of the screen	
Show Context Menu Press and hold the item		**See widgets** Swipe with one finger in from the left edge of screen	
Show all open windows Swipe with three fingers up on the screen		**Switch desktops** Swipe with four fingers to the left or right on the screen	

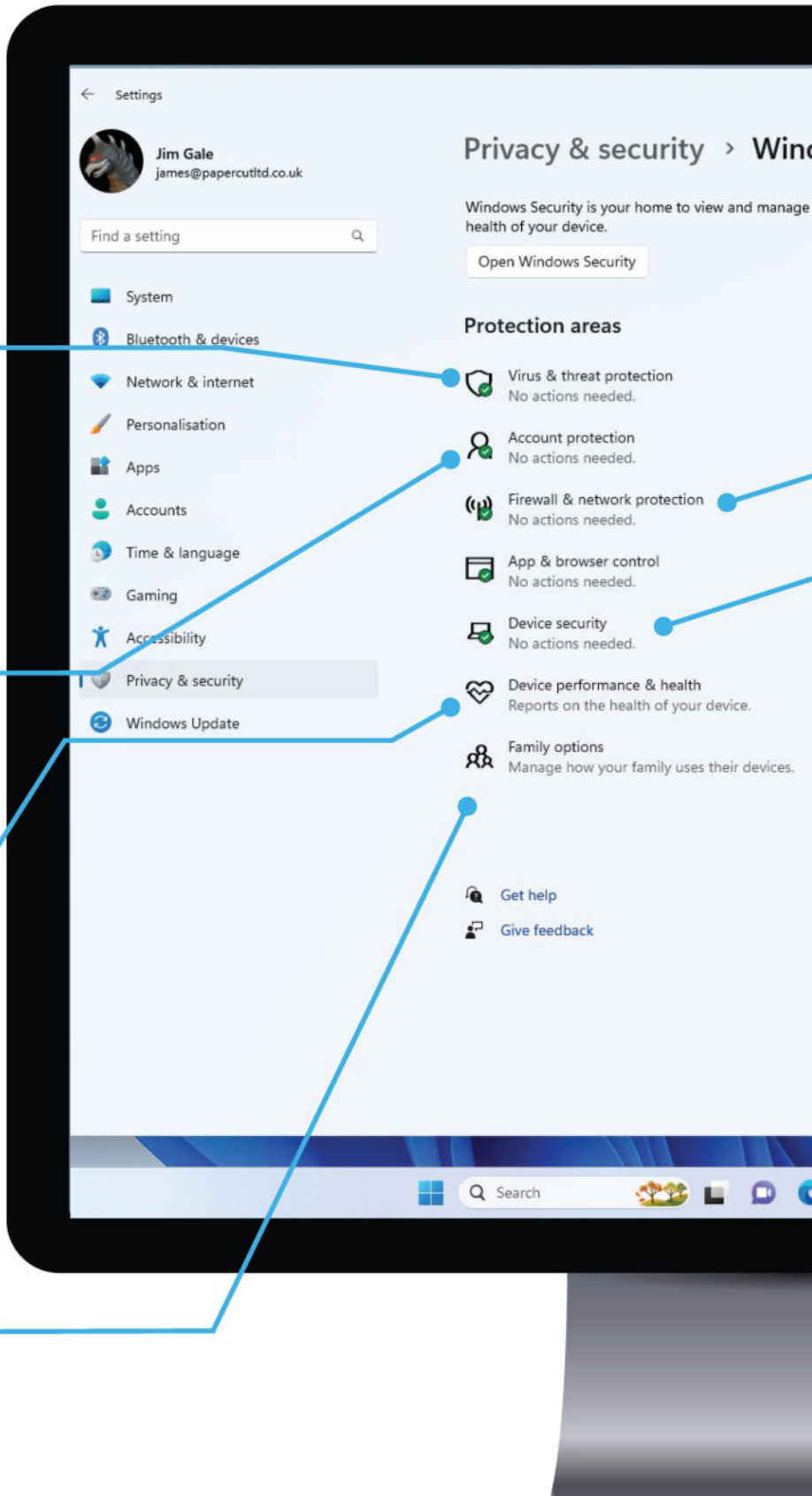
Maintain and Protect Windows 11

What do you do if you're hacked? How do you protect your devices on your home network? What is a recovery drive? These and many more questions are answered throughout this chapter, as you begin to move into the more advanced user techniques and skills needed to make Windows 11 both secure, while keeping it in tip-top shape.

"Learn how to manage your system's memory more effectively, how to create a system image, manage your privacy and get much needed maintenance and performance tips."

Using the Windows 11 Security Tools

The Windows Security's set of tools may not be quite as comprehensive as one of the bigger Anti-Malware suites, such as BitDefender, but it does a good job of protecting the average user from the wealth of nasties out in the Internet.



1 Virus & Threat Protection

This is where to check and scan for viruses and other threats to your Windows 11 security. Here you will find tools for preventing viruses and other malware from ever taking hold of your computer, as well as the tools needed to check for anything which already got through your defences.

2 Account Protection

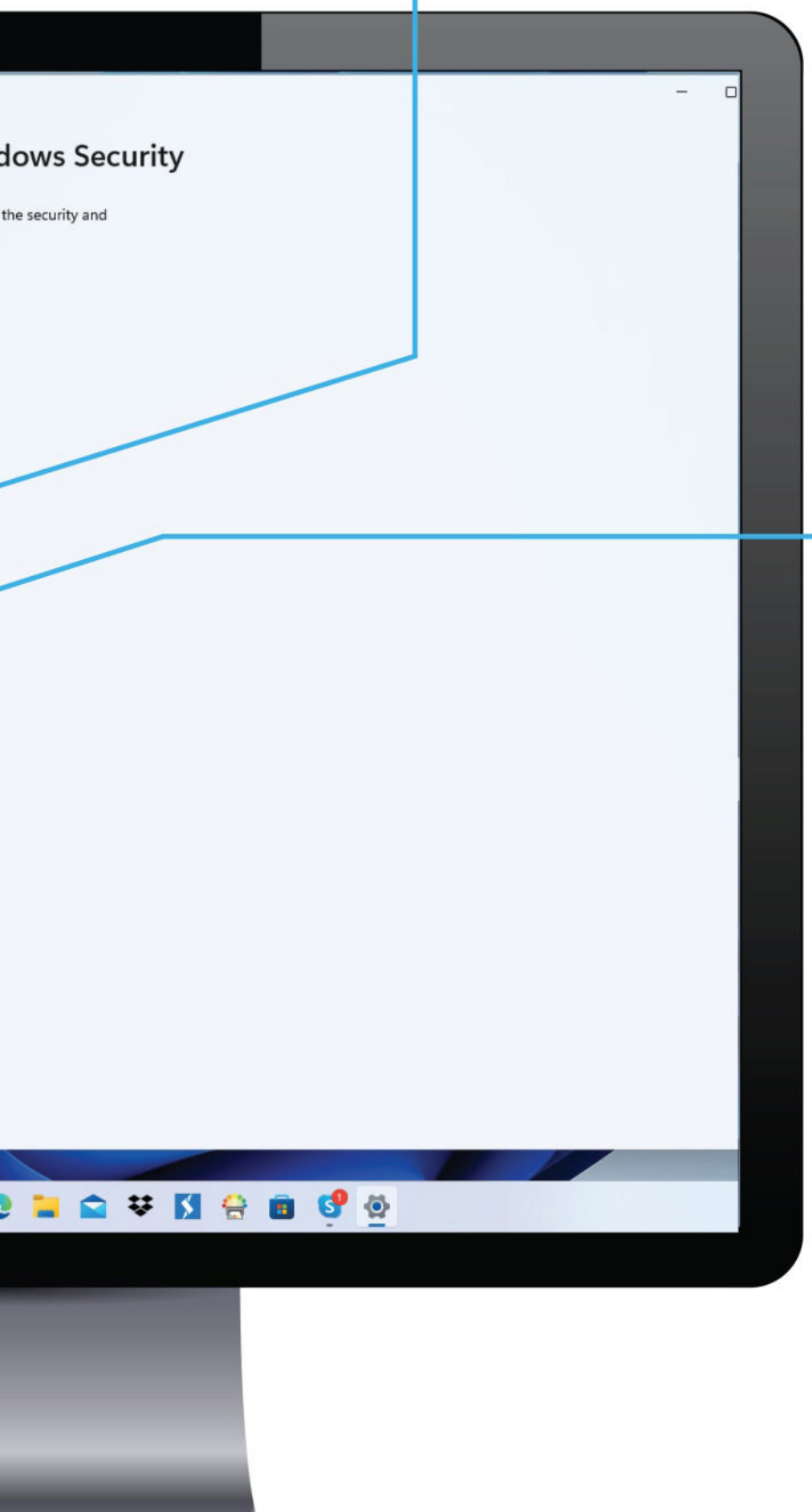
This is where you manage account and sign-in security for WIndows 11. This includes the Microsoft account you are signed in to (or the option to sign in to one), Windows Hello and Dynamic lock. Clicking on any of the options here will simply take you to the relevant area of the main settings.

3 Device Performance & Health

Displays issues with the health and performance of your computer, including the status of the Storage capacity, Apps and software and the Windows Time service. This is also where you come if you want to begin the process of performing a Fresh Start on your computer.

4 Family Options

The Family options feature in Windows Security provides you with easy access to tools for managing your children's digital life. Use Family options to help keep your children's devices clean and up to date with the latest version of WIndows 11 as well as protecting your kids when they're online.



5 Firewall & Network Protection

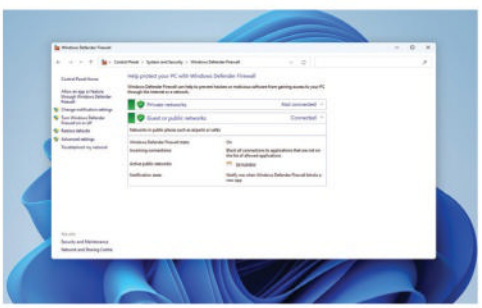
Windows Defender includes three firewalls, for: Domain network, Private network and Public network. You can turn each of these firewalls on or off at will, although you will normally only be connected to one type of network at a time (if you are at home, usually a Private network).

6 Apps & Browser Control

This section contains the settings for Windows Defender SmartScreen. This helps to protect your Windows 10 device from potentially dangerous apps, files, websites and downloads. It also includes a link to download Application Guard and lets you control Exploit protection.

7 Device Security

Despite the title, this isn't really a hub for device security. You can learn more about Core isolation (virtualisation-based security) and enable the memory-integrity feature, helping to prevent malicious attacks to core, high-security processes. Note: The exact options here can vary depending on device.



Windows Defender Dashboard

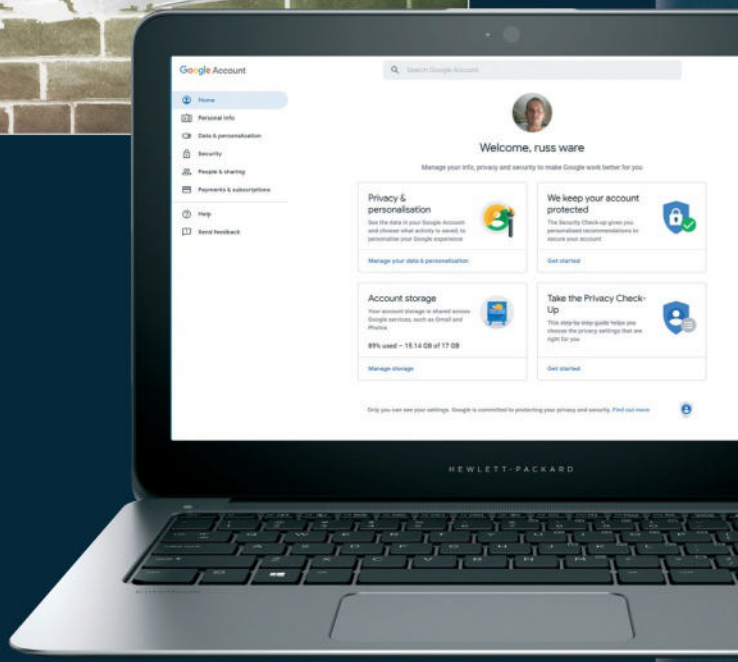
The dashboard is the main screen of Windows Defender and opens when you click the "Defender Firewall" icon in the taskbar. It lets you check the security of your computer at a glance, but doesn't really give you much information beyond whether an action is needed or not needed within the various security sections.

Ideally, you want to see a green tick on each section of the dashboard.

If you see a warning symbol, there are suggested actions that you should take a look at, while a red X means something needs your immediate attention.

What To Do if You're Hacked

There are literally hundreds of millions of email addresses and account details stolen by hackers each year, sometimes in a single massive breach, such as the Equifax attack from a few years ago, but sometimes directly from your own computer. Being the victim of a hack sounds scary to most people, but while you should take it seriously, there is often no need to panic. If you think you have been hacked, just follow the instructions here to get your online life back on track.



How Will You Know?

You may hear about a big data breach in the news, or from friends and colleagues, and if the company hacked is one you have accounts with, it is worth following all of the steps below just in case. Often, the first you will know about being hacked is a call from your credit card company or bank about unusual activity, or from friends/relatives suddenly receiving strange requests for money from you.

Many of the large email providers, such as Gmail, will alert you if there is a new login to your account from an unrecognised location or device. Or you may simply find that you have been logged out of an account and your password is no longer working.

The most important thing is not how you discover how you have been hacked, although we urge you to keep a close eye on all your online activity, but how you act immediately after you find out.

You can check if your email address has potentially been involved in a data breach by entering it in to the Have I Been Pwned website.

https://haveibeenpwned.com/

What To Do Next

Even if you think only one account has been targeted, you should still move to protect ALL of your important accounts. This is especially true if you main email account has been breached, or if you use the same email and password for all of your online accounts.

Change Your Passwords

The very first thing you need to do is change all of your passwords, especially for your email account, banking accounts, credit card accounts, PayPal, etc. Many online accounts now offer 2-step verification, which adds an extra layer of security by sending you a passcode each time you try to log in. If this is available, set it up as soon as possible.

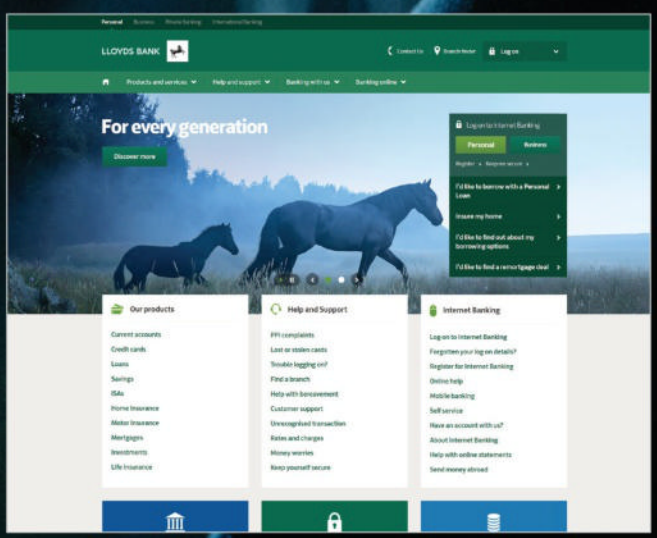
If your email account password has been changed by the hacker, you will need to contact the provider and prove you are the rightful owner of that account. For Gmail, there are instructions for recovering a hacked account on the Google support pages **(https://support.google.com)**. The other main email providers should offer similar advice.

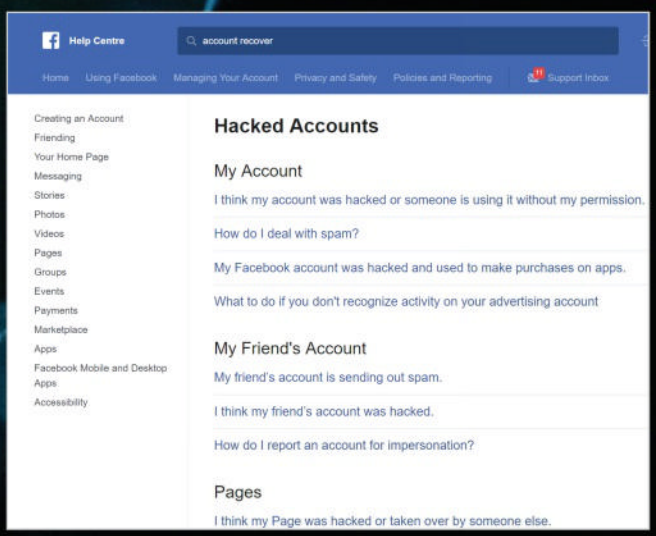
Examine All Your Accounts Carefully

This includes banking, email, online shopping accounts, especially if you use the same password for multiple logins. Check your email inbox and sent mail box for things you haven't signed up to or sent. Think about how you recover a forgotten password on almost any website: You request a password reset to your email address. If someone has got hold of access to your emails, they could do the same.

Look for any unusual activity at all, and if you spot some, contact the website or company to let them know your account may have been breached. Often, they can help you sort it out the fastest way.

If your email account has been taken over, and the password changed, you will need a way to prove that you are the rightful owner. This is why it is important to have two separate email addresses, as you can usually use a second email address as the alternate contact for the main address.





Check your bank and Credit Card Statements

Check both your bank account and credit card statement for any unusual activity (online and immediately if possible, but if not contact your bank/credit card company and ask for a statement). It is also worth informing both your bank and credit card company what has happened, so that they can be aware and alert for any unusual activity in the near future.

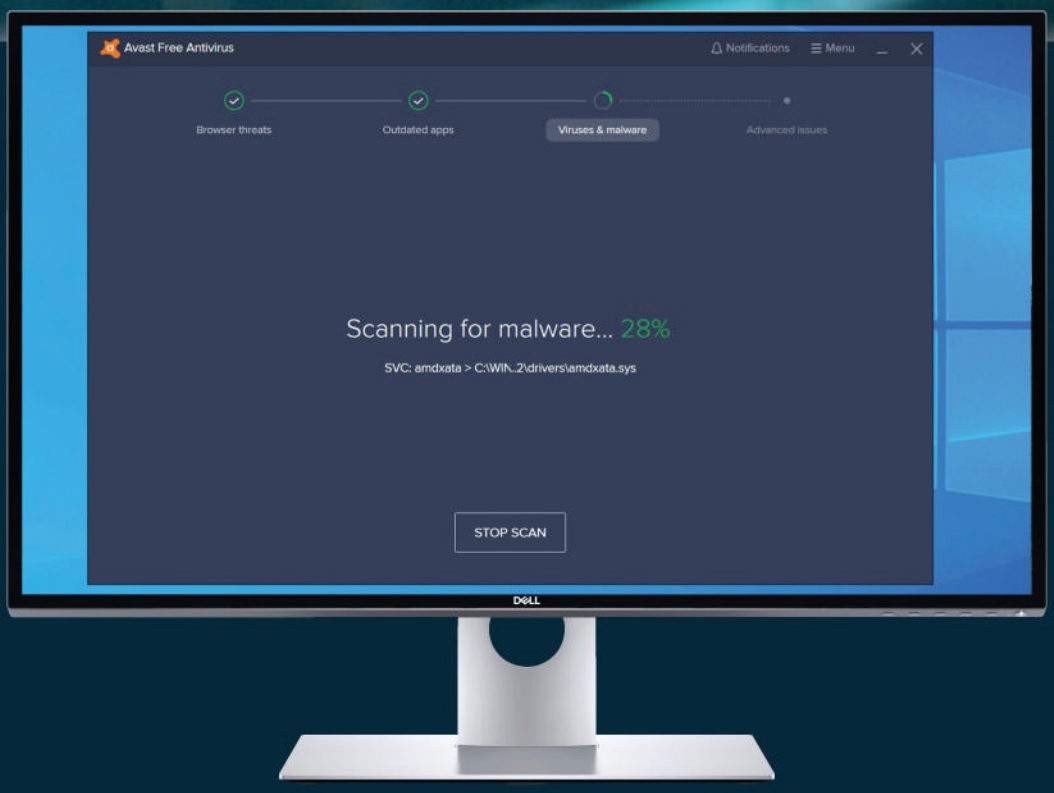
Having to get new cards issued may be a hassle, but it is less hassle than trying to sort out the mess left when a hacker starts buying things using your card details.

Recover Your Accounts

Major companies such as Google, Facebook, Twitter and Microsoft are well aware of the possibility of accounts being hacked, and most offer processes to get the account back to normal. Indeed, the company may well be the first to realise an account has been hijacked and shut it down for you. Head over to the homepage of the website in question and check the knowledge base/help desk for advice on what to do next.

Just remember that if you get an email from Facebook, Twitter, etc., telling you that your account has been breached, make sure that it is legitimate and not someone phishing for your login information.

You can read more about spotting scam emails at: https://pclpublications.com.



Scan For Viruses and Malware

If your computer has been infected with a virus or malware, this could be where the hacker got your details, so none of the steps above are any use if the underlying source of the breach is still sitting on your device waiting to send all of your updated information to the hacker. Run a complete virus scan, using reputable scanning software from the likes of Norton, Kaspersky, Panda or McAfee.

If using WIndows 11, then the Windows Defender tool offers an Offline Scan, whichcan find even particularly well-hidden malware on your computer. This scan will take at least 15 minutes to complete, but is the most in-depth scan offered by the free anti-virus software.

Contact Friends, Family and Colleagues

If you think that your email or social media account has been hacked, contact friends, family and colleagues top let them know. There have been many cases where a family member or friend has received an email supposedly from a stranded person, asking for help (in the form of money) so that they can get home. Making people aware, means they will be less likely to fall for this sort of scam.

Using the Windows 11 Task Manager

The Task Manager is a very useful tool but even if you have been using Windows for some time, you might never have looked at it before. The Task Manager contains information on PC performance, the number of running apps, how many processes are pulling power from the processor and much more.

1 Processes Tab

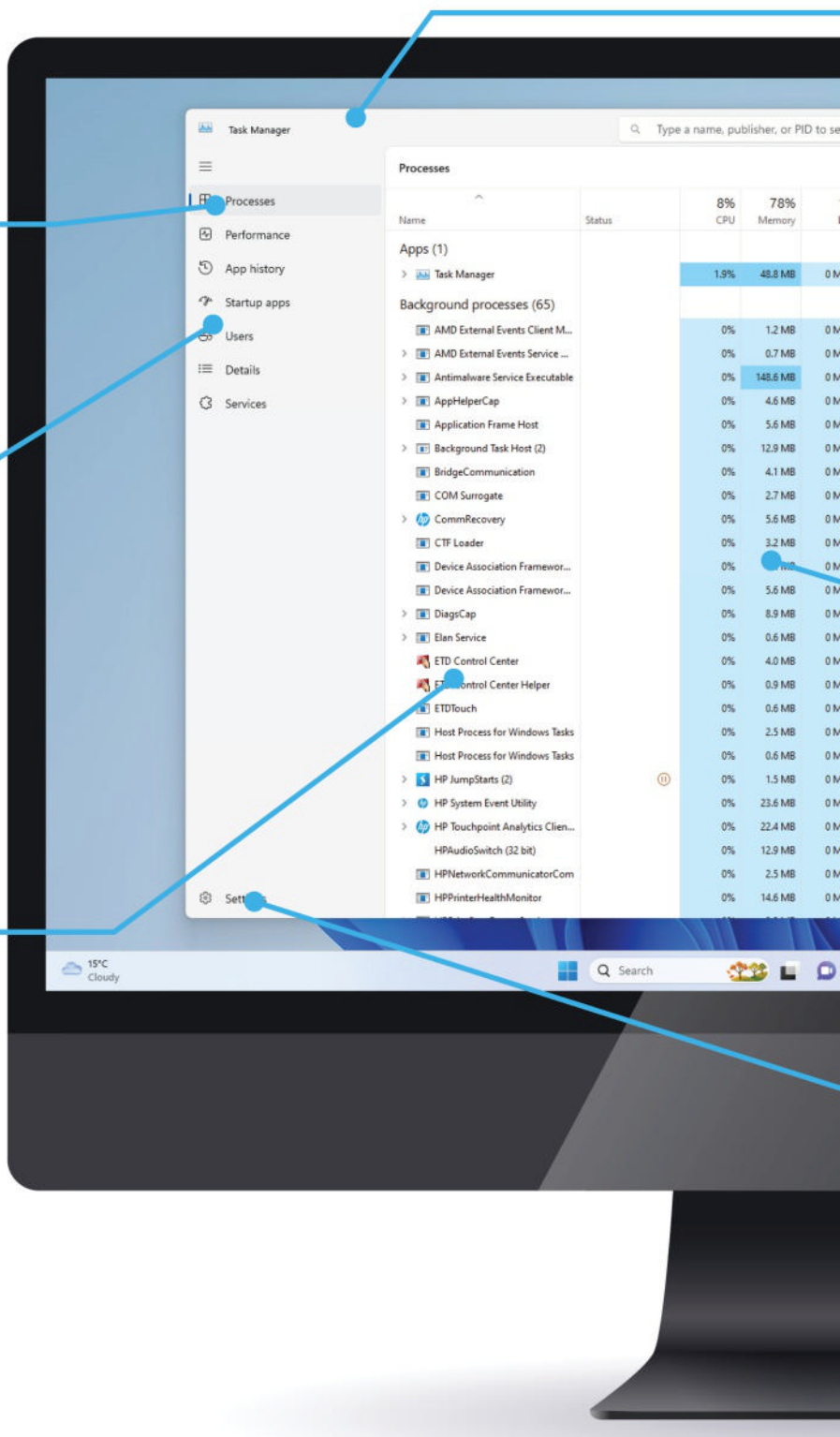
The Processes tab is the default tab when the Task Manager is opened. You can open the task manager by simply searching for it in the main search panel. Just as with any other app or piece of software in WIndows 11, you can pin a shortcut to the Task Manager, to the taskbar or as a desktop icon.

2 Start-up Tab

The Start-up tab contains a list of all the apps, programs and processes that are enabled every time you start your computer. If your computer is brand new, this list should be fairly small and filled with essential items. But as you install new apps and software, this start-up list can become bloated and slow down boot up. You can disable auto start-up here.

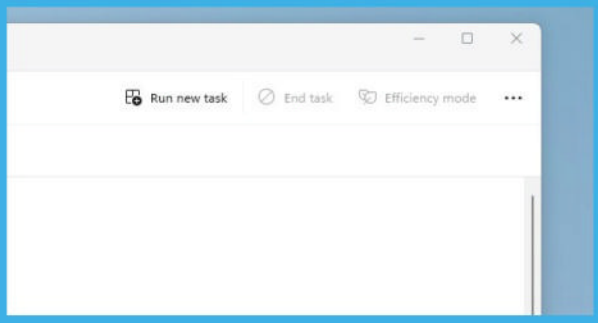
3 Process List

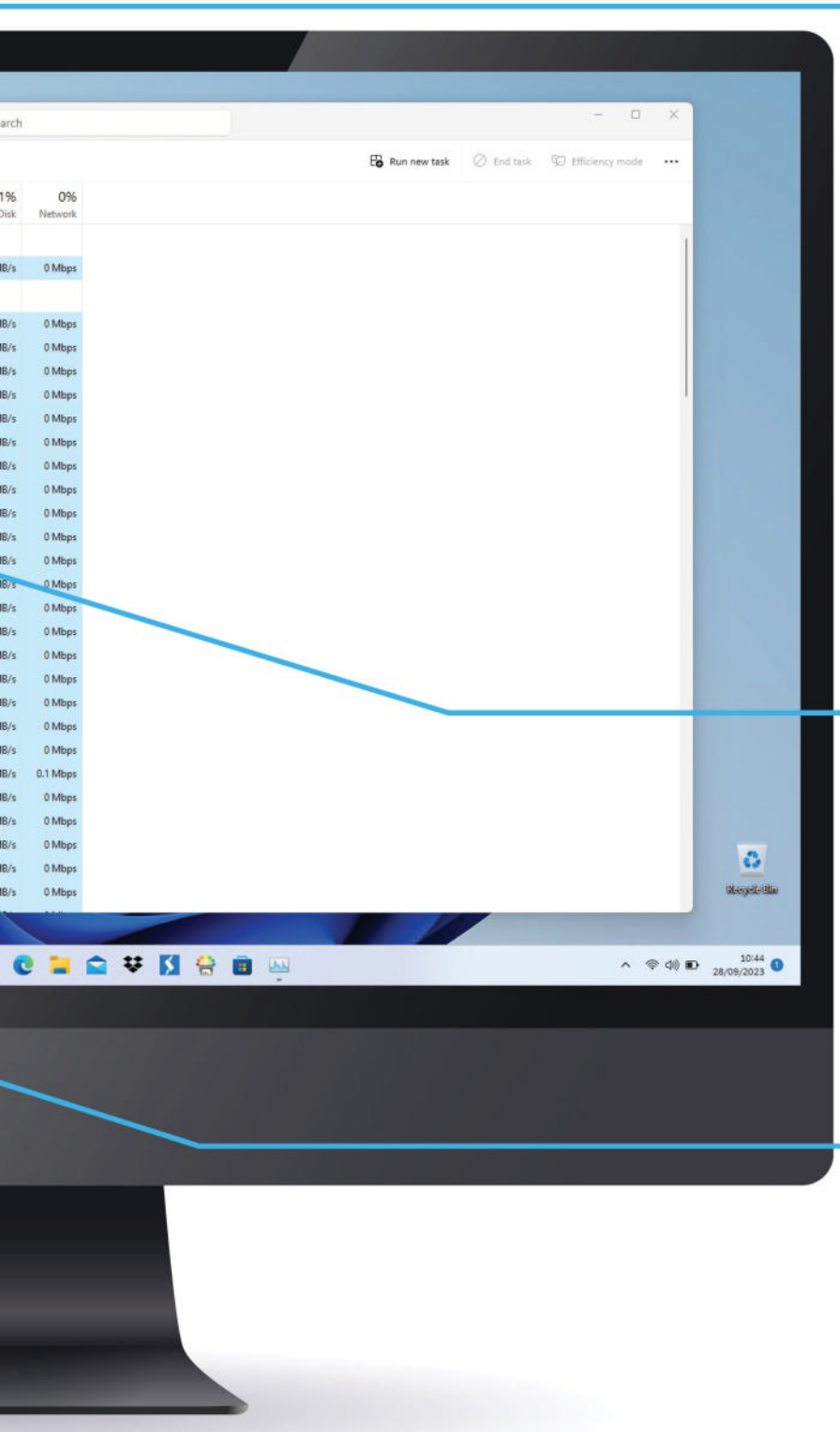
With the Processes tab selected, a list of all processes is shown. Processes are bits of software that run in the background, either running or waiting to run when a corresponding action is taken. As you can see from the list here, things like Cortana and AVG are shown; these you would obviously want to leave.



View Options

The View options at the top of the Task Manager window allows you to do several things. You can manually refresh the current tab and also change the automatic update speed. For example you can change how the processes are displayed. Either by grouping them by type, expanding or collapsing the list, or showing status values.





4 Performance Tab

Another useful tab in the Task Manager is Performance. This gives you a real-time performance overview, allowing you to pinpoint exactly how well your hardware is coping with whatever you are doing at the time. If Task Manager is the only app open, the performance chart should be very stable but if you are running several apps, it will show any power spikes.

5 Resource Usage

If you find your PC becoming slow and sluggish during normal use, you may have too many processes running. By looking at the resource usage chart, you can see exactly which apps are taking up the most processing power, physical memory, disk space and even network bandwidth. If something is particularly resource hungry, you can right-click and stop it.

6 Settings

You can view a limited version of the Task Manager by clicking on the “Settings” button at the bottom of the window. This makes the window small enough that it can be left open, in the corner of your desktop for example, but still show relevant information. You can get more information at any time by clicking “More Details”

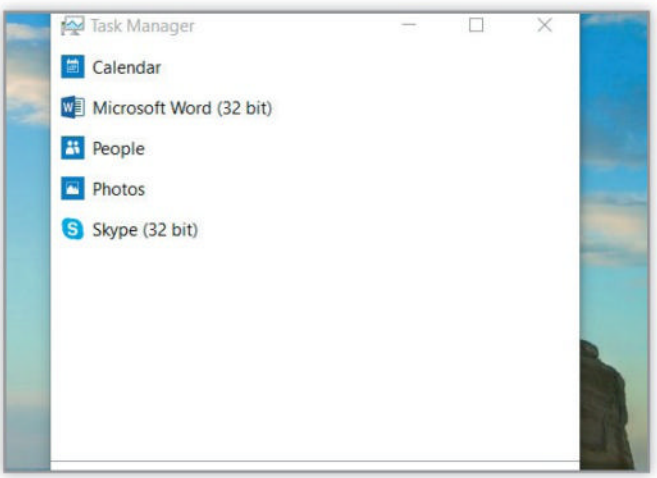
Monitor Tasks with the Task Manager

If a program isn't working, or you want to control what starts with your PC or you want to see what's running, then visit Task Manager. Access it via the Power Menu (right-click on Start) or press Ctrl+Alt+Delete and select it from the Security Options menu.

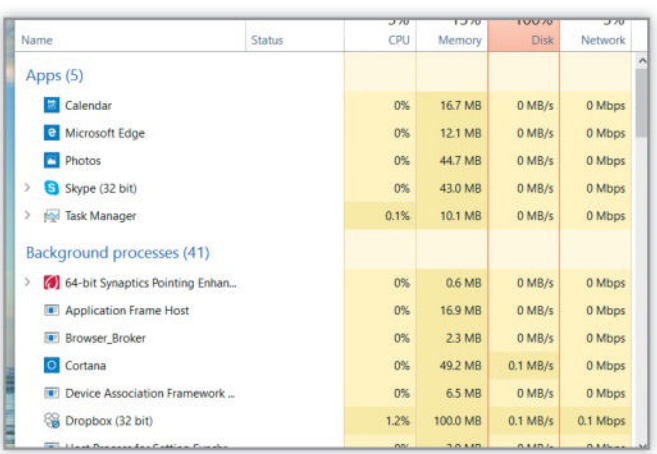
Manage Your PC

Task Manager is a lot more complex than it used to be and it's now a useful insight into your PC and app performance, allowing you to check anything from Wi-Fi usage to app crashes and much more.

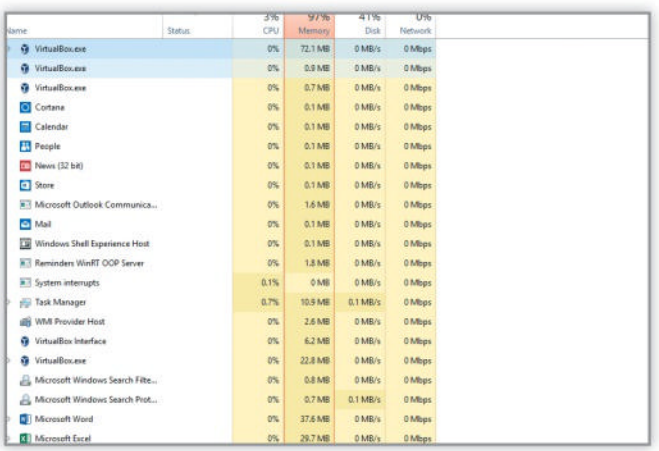
Step 1 Task Manager starts life as this fairly unassuming little window. If you have an app that is unresponsive, select it and click End Task. Beware that if you do this to an app with unsaved work in it, you will lose your work. Clicking the More Details button will expand the Task Manager window.



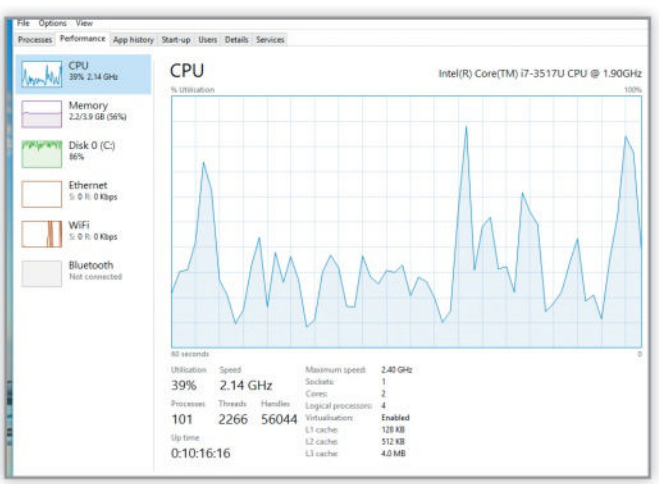
Step 2 This window is a little more complex, but the 'Apps' part of the window is essentially what we were looking at in Step 1. Now the apps have been joined by background processes. Your PC will most likely be running tens of these unless it's box-fresh. Here we've got 41. These are things such as Cortana, which runs in the background, and our trackpad software.



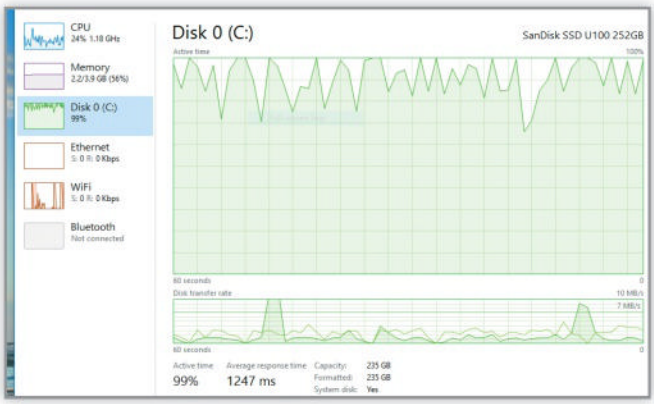
Step 3 You can see what system resources each app is using in each column. Here Excel is using around 74MB of memory, for example. Memory use is almost at its maximum, as you can see at the top of the column. Maxed out resources are no bad thing – after all your PC is there to be used – but when apps crash, they are usually using resources and not relinquishing them.



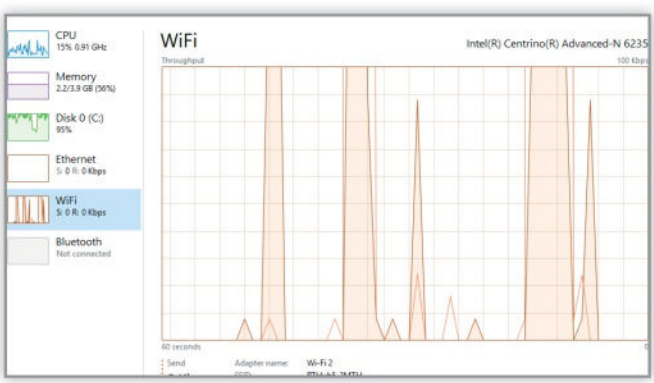
Step 4 If an app crashes, then you need to select it and click End Task as before. You should always try and give it time to recover (especially if you will lose work). Now we've clicked the Performance tab at the top of the window and we can see the usage of important elements of our PC.



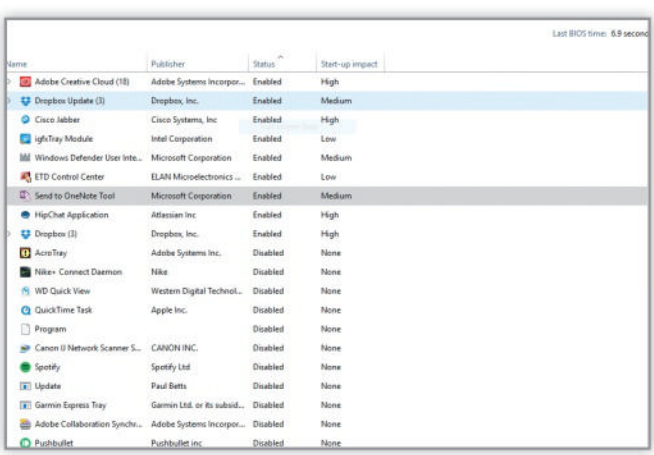
Step 5 Here's our disk usage – as you can see it's pretty active! You will also have this if you have several big apps open (we've got Edge, Spotify, Word and Excel open in this example). In the previous step you could see our processor usage, and as you may have noticed, we've only been using around 40 per cent of its capability during the last minute.



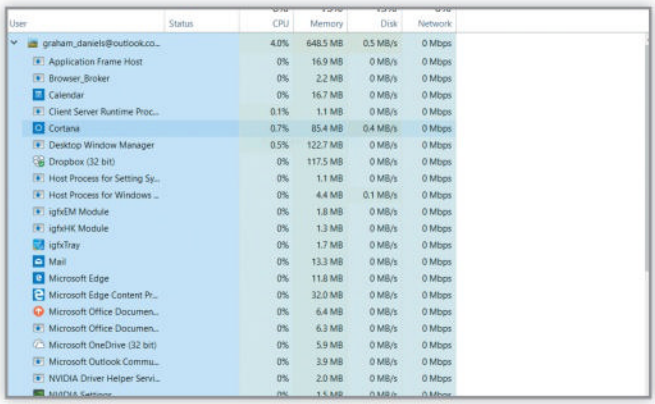
Step 6 Wi-Fi usage (you can also see wired network usage if you use that to connect) is more sporadic as the network connection tends to be used intermittently – unless you're copying files or similar. Here we're streaming music, which appears to download in chunks. Notice there's no data being received or sent right at this moment.



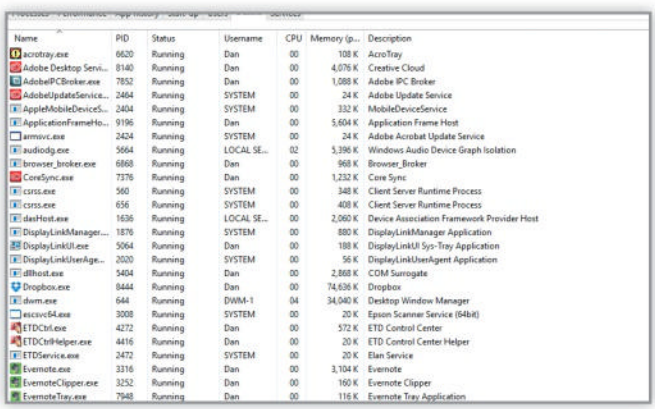
Step 7 The Start-up tab is one of the most important in Task Manager. While you can configure an app such as Skype to start-up when Windows does and disable the same within the app, some applications are sneaky and enable themselves to start when Windows does. Here you can select the app and either enable or stop this from happening.



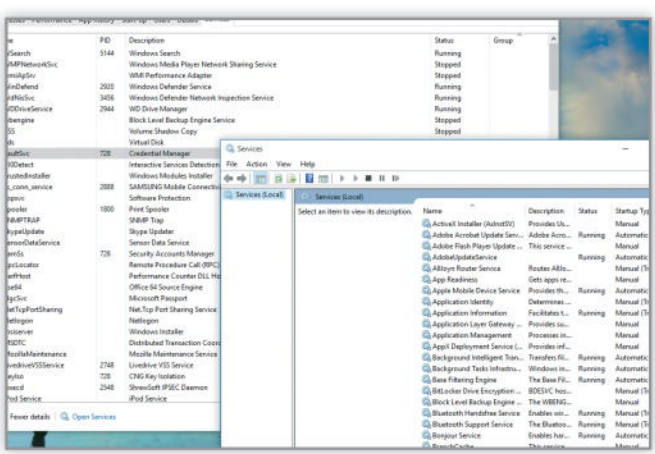
Step 8 Although it's of limited general use, the Users tab details what apps and processes are running on a per-user basis. This might be useful if your PC is running slowly and you want to see what resources someone else who is logged into the PC is hogging. They might have something wasteful running in the background, for example.



Step 9 The Details tab is really for pro users only and has full information on each running process and which user is responsible for it. You can also see how much resource the process is taking up as well as what is called a Process ID, or PID, that identifies the process on your machine.



Step 10 Services are programs that run in the background. The chances are your PC is running lots of them. For example Windows Defender, the built-in security software, runs in the background as a service. As well as viewing the active services in Task Manager, you can click the Open Services link to manage services on your PC.

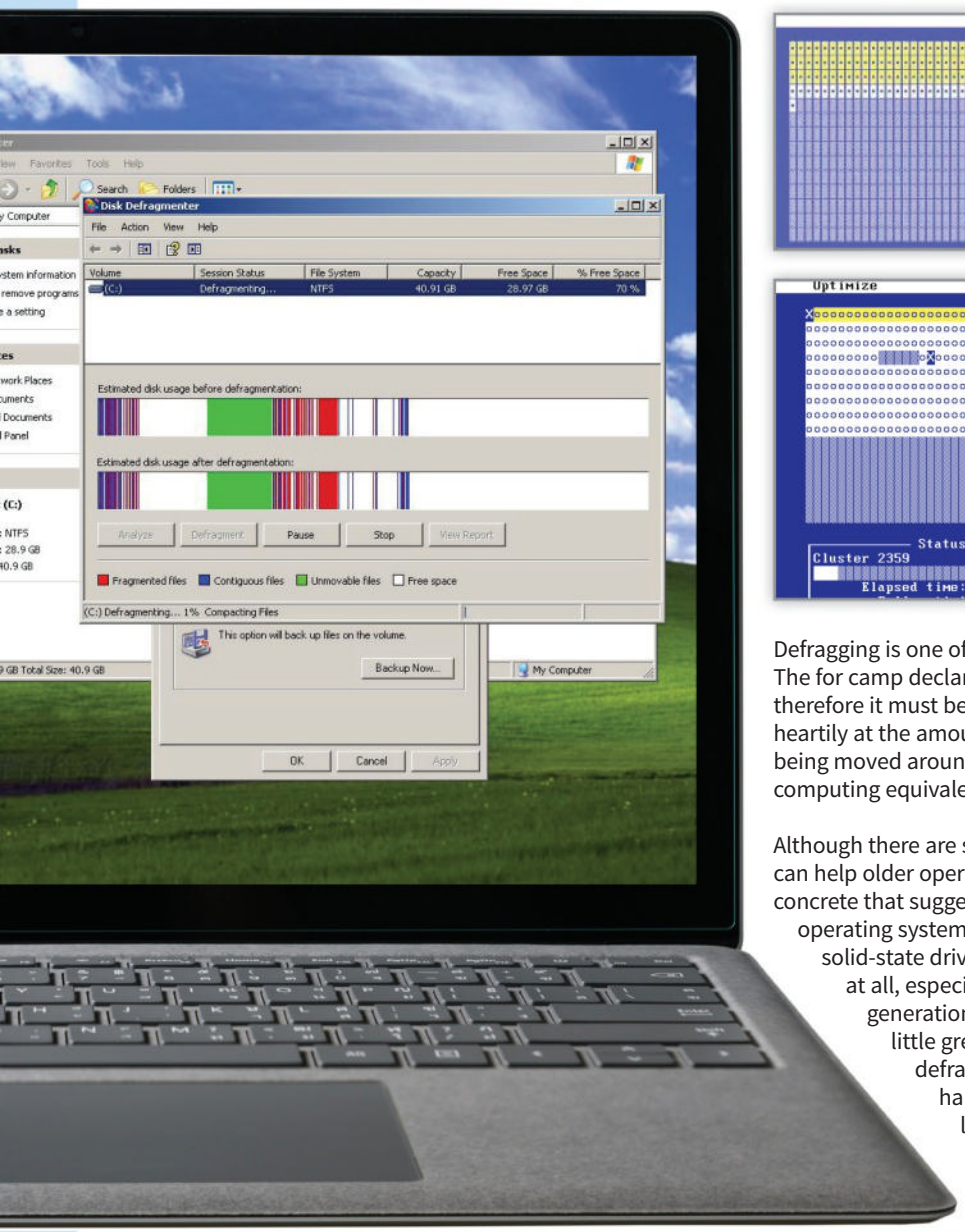


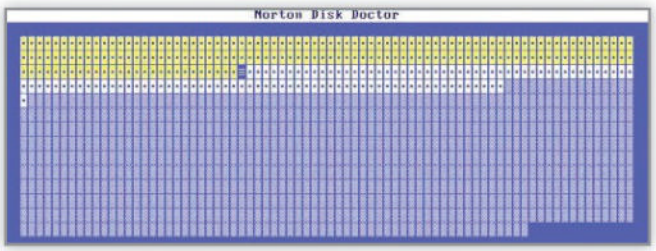
Defragment Your Hard Drive

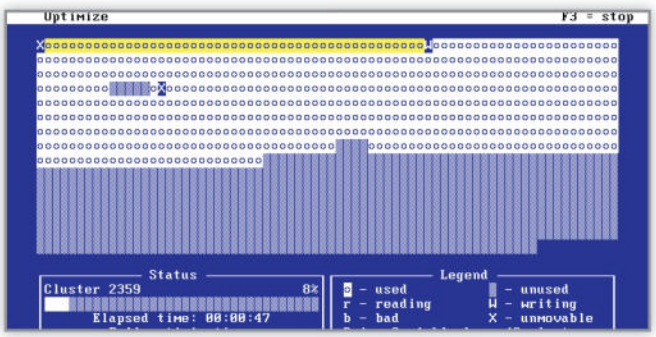
The act of Defragging your drive goes back to the early days of computing, where data was written to the drive in various sectors across the disk platters. This data could be spread all over, taking time to read, so a Defrag packs it all neatly into readable areas.

Defrag

Most of us have a modern PC with a relatively modern operating system installed on it, regardless of whether that's Windows 11, macOS or the latest distribution of Linux. These systems have been updated and tweaked in accordance with the advanced hardware technology that's now available, and will more than likely see you through a good year or so without you ever having to even look at a defrag tool.







Defragging is one of those utilities that exist to cause arguments. The for camp declare it the best thing you can do with a PC, and therefore it must be done every week. The against camp laugh heartily at the amount of time wasted, watching little blocks being moved around the screen while your hard drive has the computing equivalent of an extreme workout.

Although there are studies that show defragging every so often can help older operating systems and hardware, there's nothing concrete that suggests a weekly defrag will help out a modern operating system and hardware. In fact, if you've got a solid-state drive (SSD) installed you shouldn't be defragging at all, especially if the SSD is one of the first or second generation models. But, and here's where things get a little grey, there are also many experts who think that defragging a modern SSD won't do too much harm, and won't necessarily impede the overall lifetime of the device – since SSDs have a significantly lower read/write lifespan compared to a more traditional, mechanical hard drive.

In truth, a monthly check of the state of fragmentation of your drives is considered a good idea. If Windows 11 recommends that you perform a defrag, then go ahead and do one. Otherwise, stick to the old adage: if it ain't broke…

So, What is Defragging?

As explained in the main intro of this page, over time the operating system will write numerous files to your hard drive. Those files can be the data you're working with, your personal data, work and such, and it can be temporary files that the OS works on in the background. For example, when you browse the Internet, temporary files are created for every page you visit, sometimes many per page depending on what's going on with the page in question. Most of these files are deleted once the browser has been closed down, some aren't. This creates areas of a drive that files now exist on, and areas where files did exist, which causes fragmentation.

Each of these blocks of saved, deleted and moved data soon create fragmented sectors across the physical disk platter (we're talking about hard drives here, not SSDs). As the drive heads move along the platters to retrieve and write data – much like the needle on a vinyl record player – it has to travel more and from one end to the other to fetch the data, due to the inconsistencies created by the frequent writes and deletes.

Defragging will move all that readable data to areas at the front of the drive platter, so the drive heads don't have as far to travel to read the data. This speeds up the reading of data, and helps get rid of any unwanted leftovers from the number of times a disk is accessed.

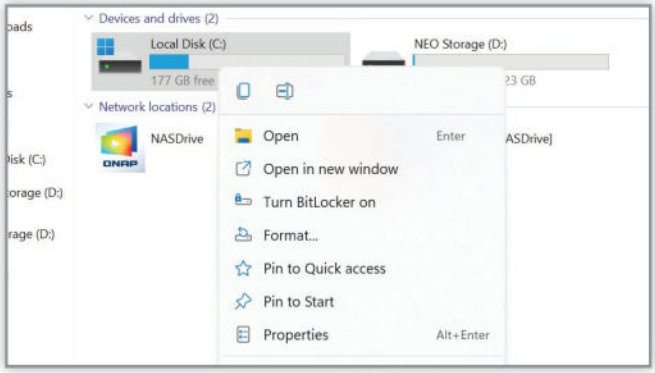
Granted it does go into further depth, but we're not going to delve too deep here. If you want to understand more, then we'd recommend you look up defragmentation online.

Do SSDs need Defragging?

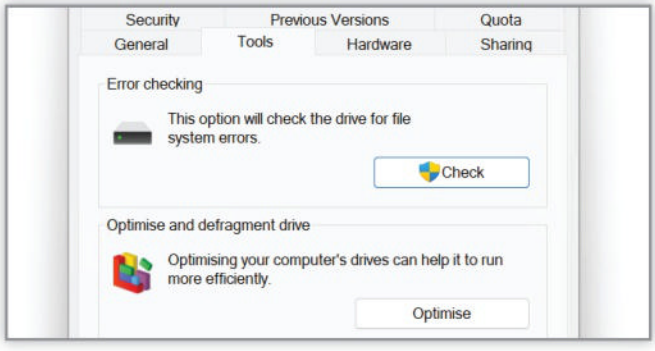
Ask most folks in the know, and they'd say no, an SSD does not need to be defragged. This is understandable, as there are no physical platters or drive heads. The data written to an SSD via a modern operating system is often put into a temporary position first, then committed to an area of the drive. If you defrag an SSD, then you're moving temporary files around before they're committed, then moving them once they are, so you're doubling the workload of the SSD. And, as we've already mentioned, an SSD has a much lower read/write lifetime than a mechanical drive.

Plus, mechanical drives have average read/access times of around 15ms, whereas an SSD has access times measuring in the 0.1ms mark. So a defrag won't make any difference in access times.

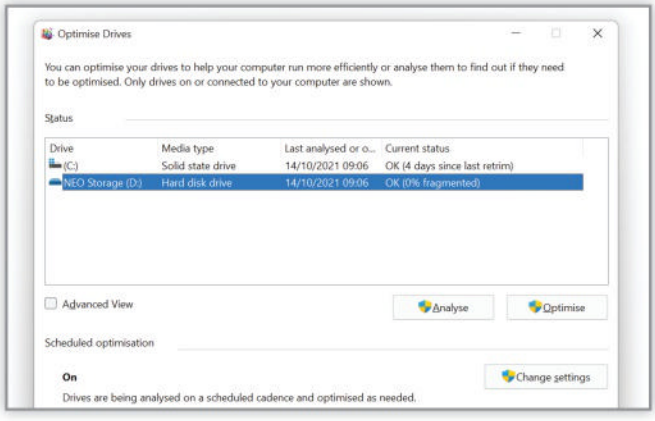
However, even ones and zeros written to solid state memory can get slightly fragmented over time. In which case, it's often best to check the state of the drive.



To do this, right-click the drive in File Manager, select Properties from the menu. Click the tools tab, and click the Optimise button in the Optimise and Defragment Drive section.



In the Optimise Drives window, click Analyse, to check the state of the drive. If Windows 11 recommends a defrag, click the Optimise button.



Conclusion

In short, checking on the health of your drive(s) is something you should factor into your monthly computer checks – updates, AV updates, drivers etc. However, you may never need to use a defrag during the lifespan of your Windows 11 PC.

Update Your Device Drivers

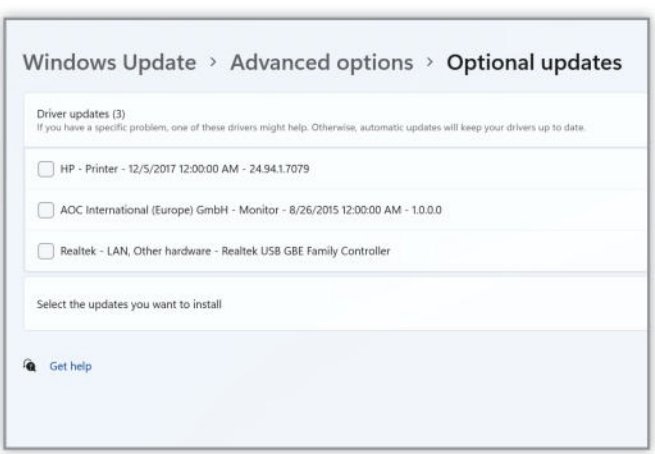
Keeping your device drivers up to date ensures that your Windows 11 computer is running at its maximum efficiency. Using the latest drivers for your peripherals and internal devices improves performance and keeps Windows 11 secure.

Updating Drivers

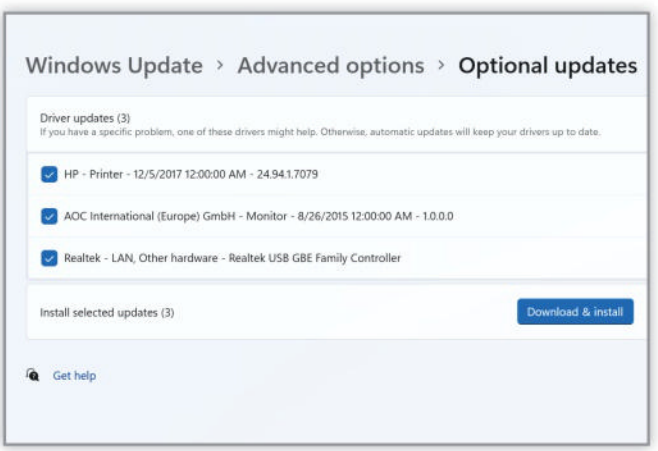
There are different ways to keep your device drivers up to date. One of the easiest is via the Windows 11 Updater. Here's how it works.

Step 1 Updating your device drivers through the Windows Update service is a perfect solution for those who don't want to trawl the manufacturer support web pages or forums for the latest drivers. To start click on the Windows button in the taskbar. Go to the Windows Update Section, and look for the Advanced Options entry.

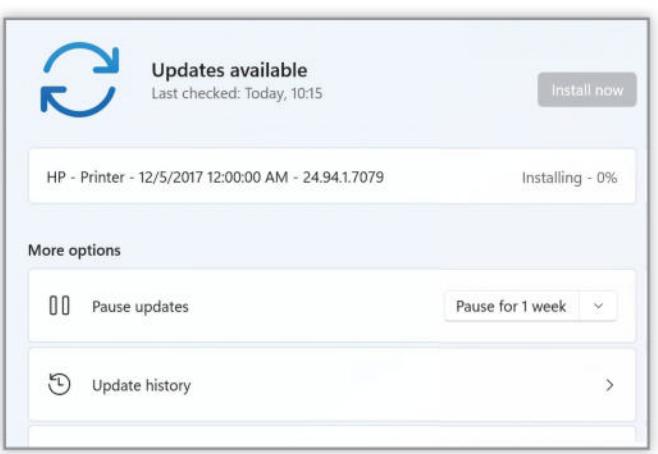
Step 2 Within the Advanced Options window, click on the Optional Updates entry. In here are where all the official Microsoft supported updates for your device drivers will be, among other specific updates for non-Microsoft related apps. You may need to click the Driver Updates entry to expand and view what's available.



Step 3 Each individual update, be it a device driver or some update to a third-party, supported product, will have a tick box to the left of its title. Click each device and update you want to have installed, then click on the Download & Install button located in the bottom-right of the current update window, to begin the update process.



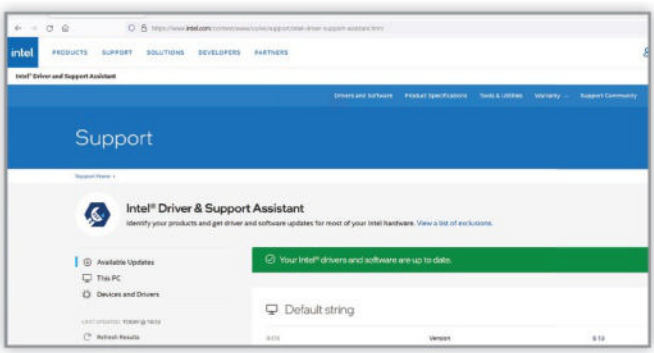
Step 4 Windows 11 will now download the install the selected updates. Depending on the size of the update and the speed of your Internet connection, it may take some time to download. Once the selected entries are downloaded, they'll automatically be installed and updated. You may need to restart your computer; Windows 11 will inform you if necessary.



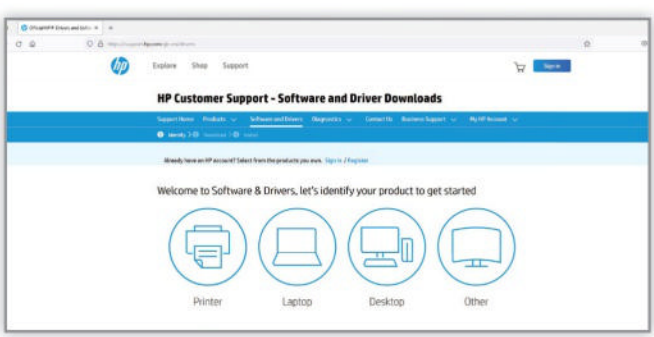
Finding Other Drivers

Good as it may be, the Windows 11 Update service doesn't pick up all the latest drivers. A graphics card driver may offer better performance in a new game, so you'll need to look elsewhere.

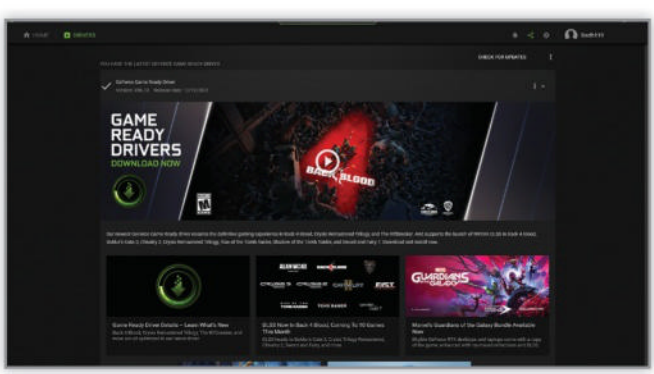
Step 1 Many device manufacturers develop their own driver update software. The major graphics card manufacturers do (Nvidia and AMD), as well as the processor manufactures, Intel and AMD. For example, Intel uses the Intel Driver and Support Assistant. Simply click the icon in the taskbar, choose Check for Drivers, and you can download the latest available.



Step 2 You may need to dig a little deeper to locate updated drivers for your devices. Printers are often covered by the Windows 11 Update service, but they can take time to filter through the service before reaching your desktop. To check on the latest drivers, go to your printer manufacturer's support page, look for drivers and find the product you have.

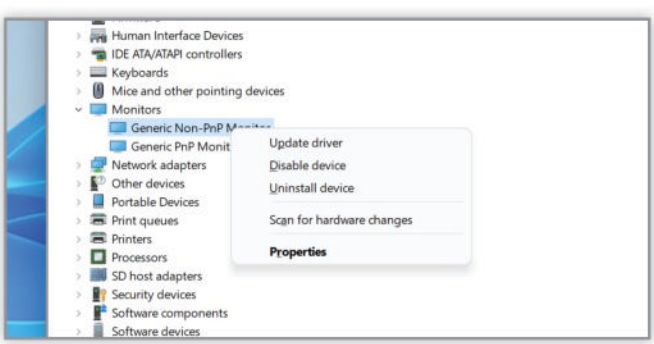


Step 3 Graphics card are devices that frequently having driver updates. This is mainly due new games being released, and tweaked for certain cards, be that an NVIDIA or AMD card. There are also security fixes, and quality updates that can be applied, as well as some performance updates over time. Windows 11 is still quite young, so expect better drivers over time.

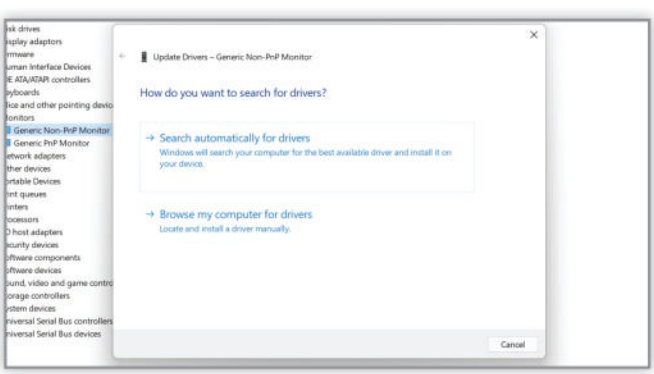


Step 4 There are times when you may need to force Windows 11 to look for an updated driver beyond the one that it's installed by default. When you connect a device, Windows 11 will automatically interrogate the device, and install the driver that fits the device signature. However, these aren't always the best drivers. Right-click the Windows Start button, and select Device Manager.

Step 5 From within Device Manager, find the newly installed device from the available list of categories. Click the arrow to the left of it to expand its details – in case there are more than one device available in the category. Right-click the device, and select Update Driver. This will open a new Update Driver window.



Step 6 The Update Driver window enables you to search for the device driver. There are two options: you can have Windows 11 automatically search your computer for updated drivers, or you can specify a location for Windows 11 to look for any drivers (such as any you've downloaded). Click the option that applies best for you.



Using the Power Menu

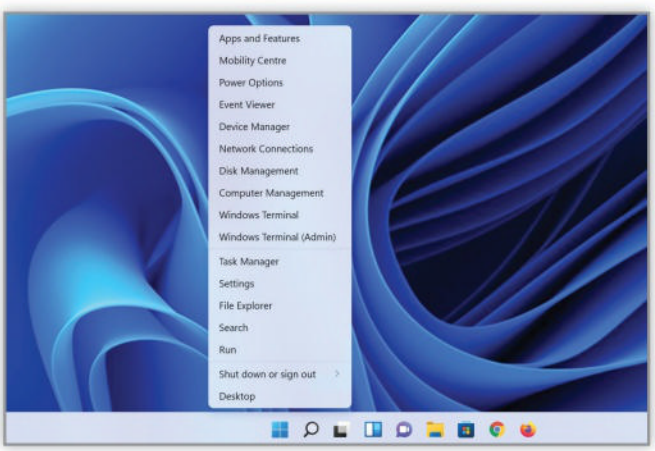
Windows 11 boasts a secret power menu, that gives you access to several useful system and maintenance tools and features. We show you how you can use it to your advantage to quickly access networking settings and extra features that power users need.

Power Up

The secret Power Menu enables the more advanced Windows 11 users among you to quickly access key settings that you probably commonly use, but are buried deeper within the system.

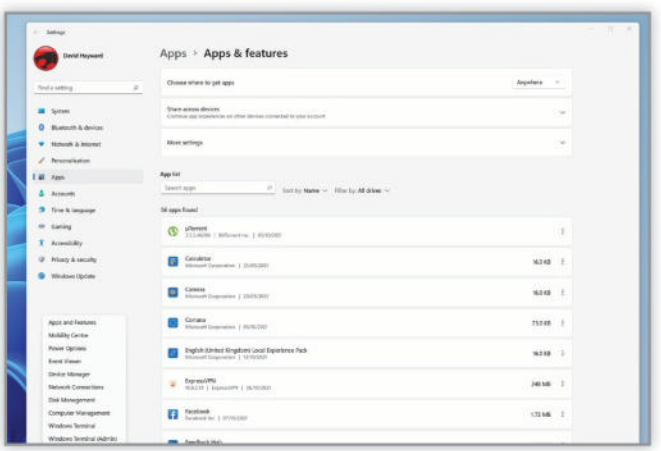
Start it Up

Open the Power Menu using the Start button, but instead of just left-clicking it to open the Start menu, right-click the button. Note that you can also shut down or sign out here, too. This menu was originally created for users who felt the old Windows 8 Start screen didn't give them access to what they needed.



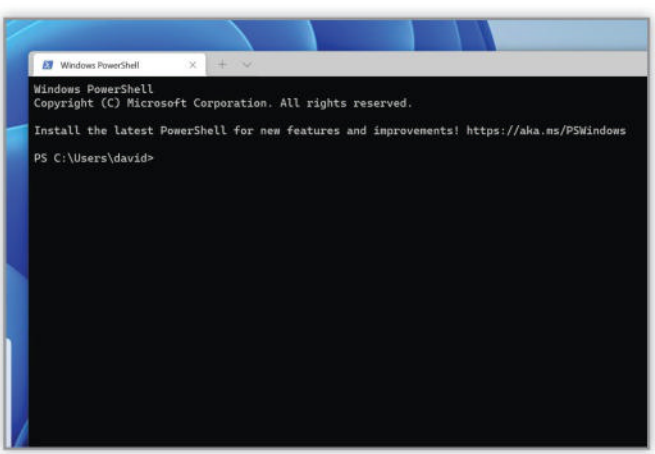
Uninstall Desktop Apps

The topmost available option within the Power Menu, Apps & Features, takes you directly to the Apps section within the Windows 11 Settings. From here, you can modify, uninstall and get to advanced options for all the apps you currently have installed on your system. It may only save a couple of clicks, but every shortcut saves time.



Command

There are numerous shortcut access options available in the Power Menu. For example, you can access the new Windows 11 Terminal, both as standard access or as an elevated, Administrator access. You can also Run commands directly from the Power Menu, Search for files or folders, and more; plus view your Windows 11 Events and logs.



Hot Keys

You can access the Power Menu by pressing the Windows key + X on your keyboard. As well as opening the Power Menu, it enables you to use hot keys to quickly launch any of the options within the menu. You can only use the hot keys if you use the Windows shortcut key to open the Power Menu – unless Microsoft change that option in a future update.

Option	HotKeys	Description
Programs (Apps) & Features	F	Opens Windows Programs & Features
Mobility Center	B	Launch Windows Mobility Center
Power Option	O	Opens Windows Power Options
Event Viewer	V	Opens Windows Events viewer
System	Y	Opens Windows Systems Properties
Network Connections	W	Opens Network Connection pane
Disk Management	K	Opens Disk Management on Windows
Computer Management	G	Opens Computer Management settings
Command Prompt	C	Opens Windows Command Prompt
Command Prompt as Admin	A	Opens the Command Prompt as Admin

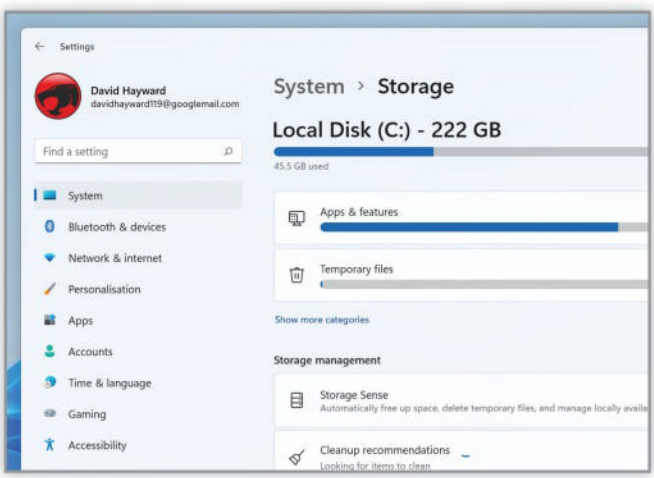
Using Storage Sense

Carrying over from Windows 10, Windows 11's Storage Sense helps keep your computer in tip-top shape by deleting unwanted content as your hard drive begins to run out of space – which it inevitably will do.

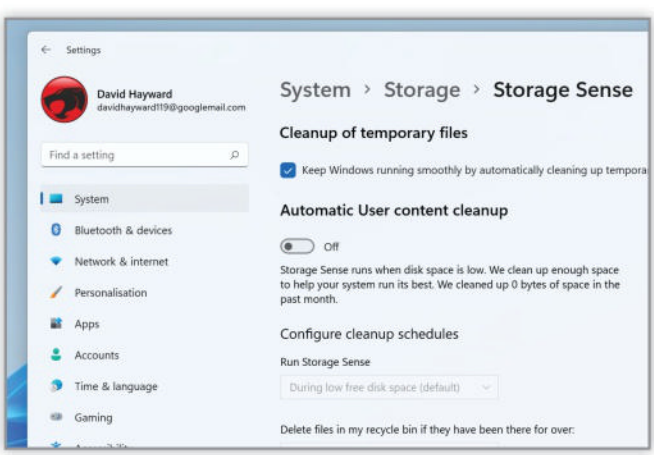
Sense and Sensibility

Storage Sense looks different in Windows 11 compared to Windows 10, so if you're used to using it, check this page out first to see how it works.

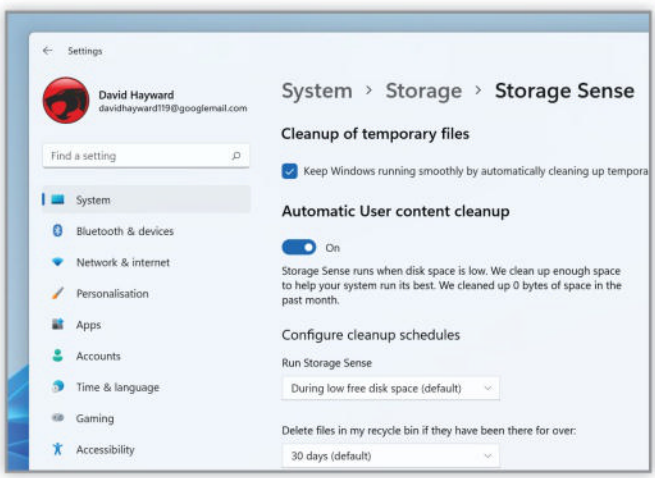
Step 1 To get to the Storage Sense options, click on the Windows Start button, and go to Settings > Storage > Storage Sense. Alternatively, you can get there via the Power Menu (right-click the Windows button, or press the Windows key + X) and choose Settings, then Storage.



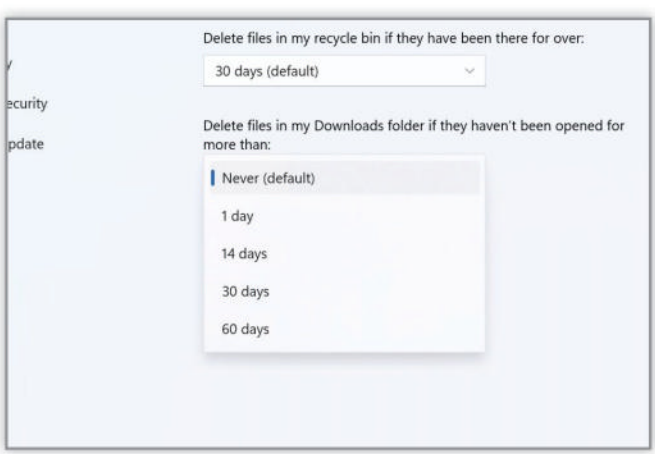
Step 2 Click the Storage Sense option within the Storage section, if you haven't already done so. Don't worry about turning on just yet, though. In Storage Sense you have a number of options available. The first is enabled by default: 'Cleanup of temporary files', which will remove unnecessary temp files from your system as you update Windows 11.



Step 3 Click the sliding button to enable Automatic User Content Cleanup. Here you can opt to configure cleanup schedules, such as removing files every day, week or month; or just when Windows 11 reports that your hard drive is running low on space.



Step 4 You can choose when to delete files in your Recycle bin. The default is 30 days, but you can opt for 1, 14 or 60 days. Files in your Downloads folder can be auto-deleted if they haven't been opened for more than 1 day, through to 60 days. However, ensure you backup your files, if Storage Sense deletes them from the Downloads folder.



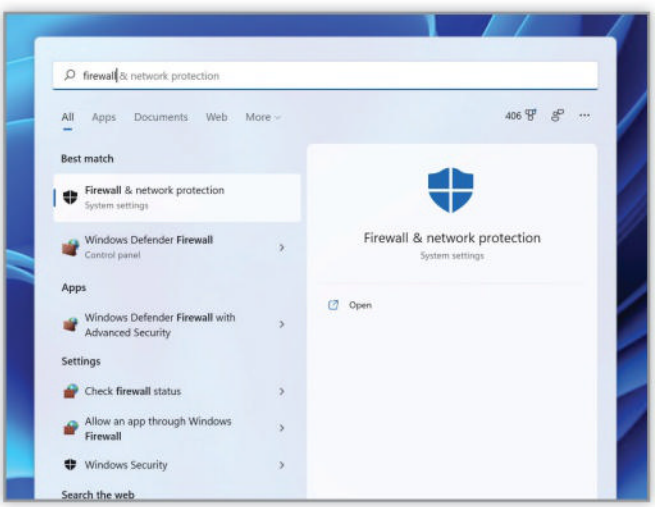
Improving the Windows 11 Firewall

The built-in Windows 11 firewall is a surprisingly good security application. While it may not be as efficient as something offered by one of the third-party security suites, it's certainly more than adequate for the average user.

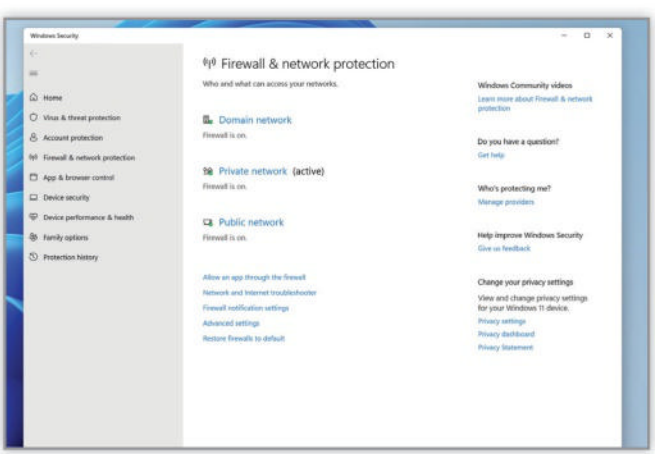
Getting to Know Your Firewall

Generally, there's little need to ever configure the Windows 11 firewall. However, getting to know how it works and improving it, is part of being more security conscious. Here's some tips on how to better manage it.

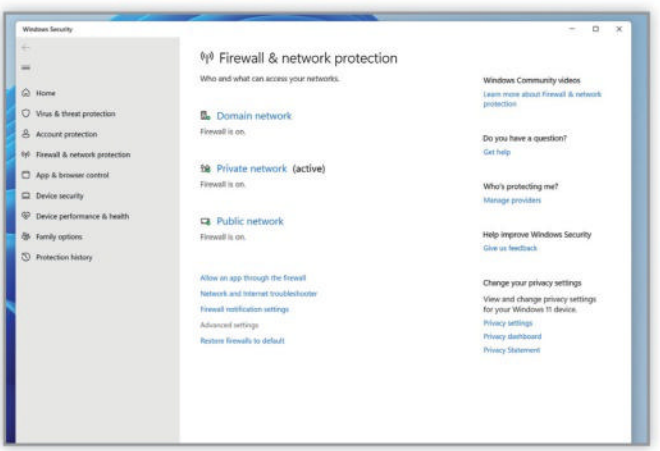
Step 1 You can open the main Windows 11 firewall console window by clicking on the Windows Start button and entering **'firewall'** into the search box. Click the returned link, Firewall & Network Protection, to launch it.



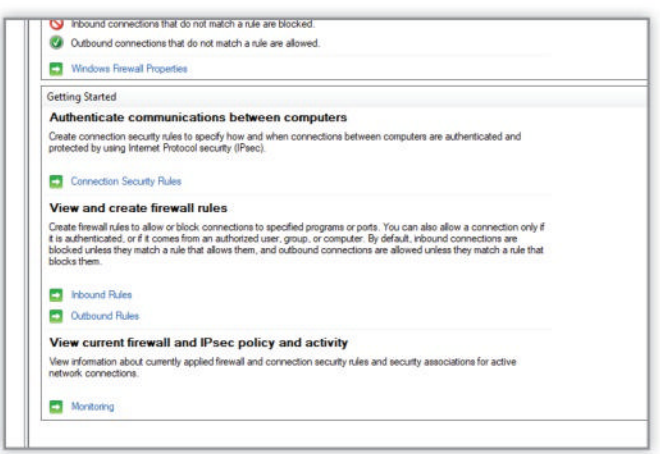
Step 2 The Windows 11 firewall console window should be On by default, unless you've installed a third-party security suite which contains its own firewall. There are two kinds of network listed: Private and Public (and Domain if you have Windows 11 Pro version). Private is for home or work, whereas Public is for cafés and the like.



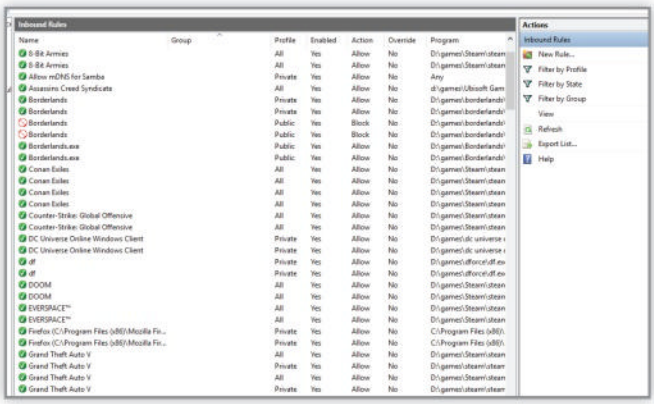
Step 3 Under the status of the networks are some links that will help you configure and improve the firewall, as well as turning it on or off (which isn't recommended under any circumstance other than the installation of an improved third-party firewall). To begin with, start by clicking on the Advanced Settings link.



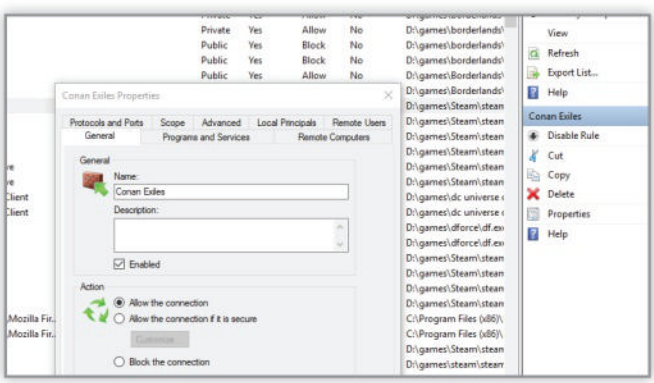
Step 4 The Advanced Settings link launches a new console window. This new console defines the inbound and outbound rules for the entire system and its installed programs and applications. You can set authentication rules between computers, view and create new firewall rules, view the current firewall policies, and even monitor what's being blocked in real-time.



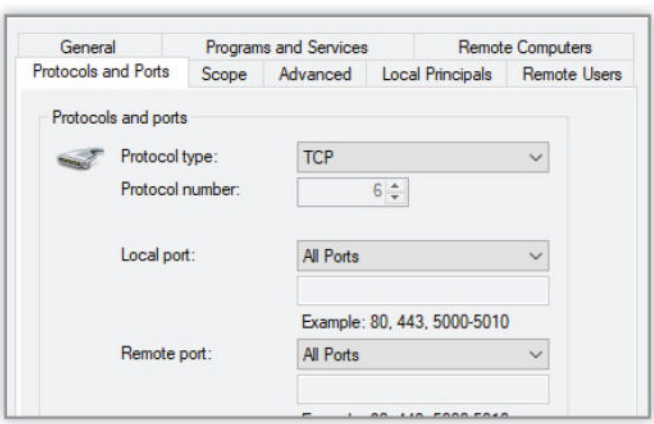
Step 5 Click on Inbound Rules to the right-hand side of the main console window. This will list the current rules that allow traffic onto your computer and to the applications that require it. For example, in this screenshot there's rules for various games that allow multiplayer interaction and the ability to 'talk' to the game server, as well as install updates.



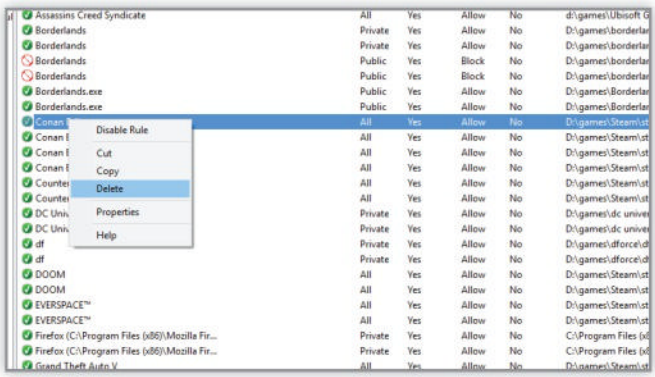
Step 6 These rules are automatically entered into the firewall when you install the program, game or app. When you install a program you're required to accept and authenticate the process, clicking on Yes to start the installation. This level of administrative access also allows entry of the program into the firewall. Pick one of the entries and double-click it.



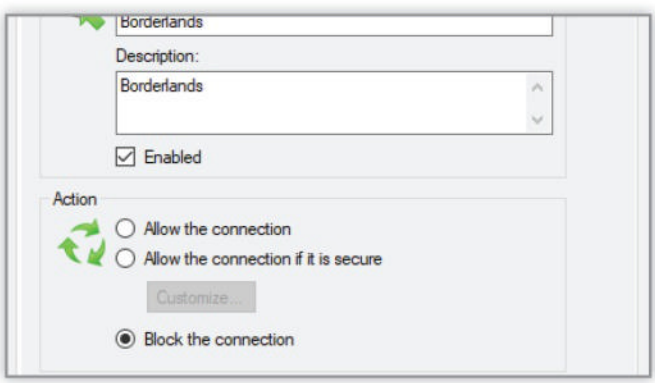
Step 7 The properties of each firewall entry allow a greater degree of control for that particular program. You can change the name of the entry, allow or block the connection, define the physical location of the program on your computer, allow access to the program from remote computers, set the protocol and port number it'll use, and even which network controller to use.



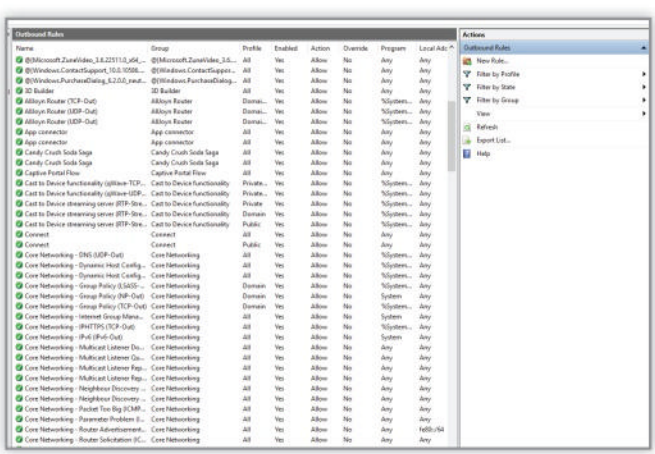
Step 8 Sometimes, uninstalling a program doesn't automatically remove it from the Windows firewall. The exact reasons why are varied, but to help improve the efficiency of the Windows firewall, whenever you remove a program from your system, it's worth checking the firewall to see if its entry has been deleted. To delete an entry, right-click then select Delete from the menu.



Step 9 You may not want to delete a rule as it could be used later, or if you re-install the program and it fails to re-create the firewall entry. The recommended process then is to block the rule from communicating with the outside world. To do this, double-click the rule, and from the General tab click the Block the connection button.



Step 10 Similarly, the Outbound Rules link will detail the various programs that are allowed to communicate from your computer to an external destination. It's good practise to familiarise yourself with the rules of the firewall, as a rogue program will need to set a rule to communicate. You can then block that rule and stop the threat from reporting out.



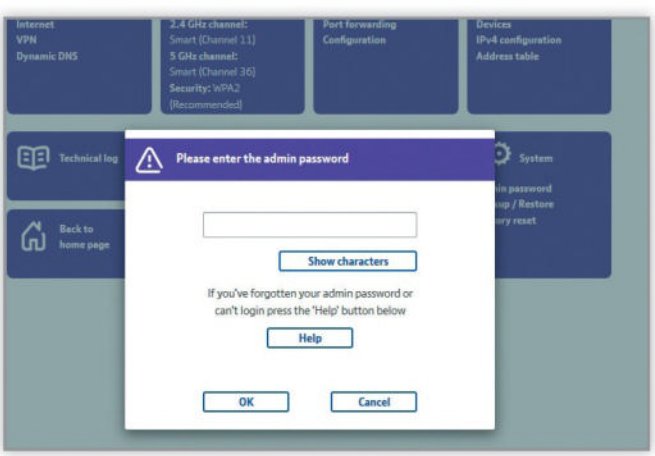
Secure Your Home Network

We've mentioned previously that an attack doesn't always come from the other side of the globe but can indeed be a little too close to home at times. Home network hacking is possible with the simplest of tools; easily found on the Internet.

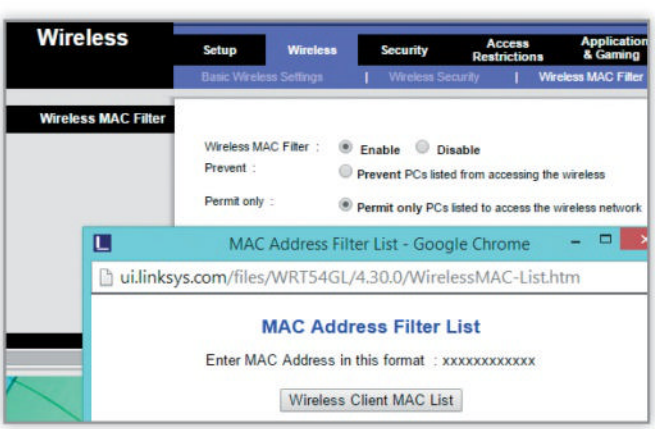
Network Protection

Without being too paranoid, it's remarkably easy to get into a neighbour's home network. If you live in a block of flats or you use powerline adapters, you may need to consider these ten steps for better network protection.

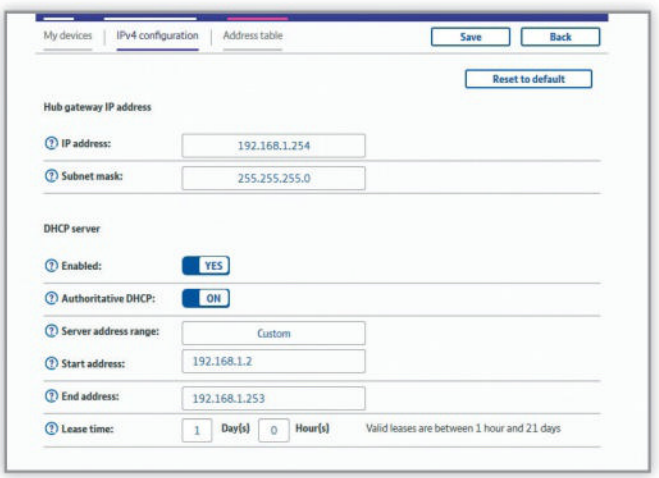
Step 1 The most common entry point to gain access to your network is via the router. The router from your ISP may well be offering the latest forms of encryption but it doesn't take a genius to trawl the less reputable sections of the Internet to obtain a list of passwords. Therefore, change the default username and password needed to access it.



Step 2 Most routers these days come with a form of authentication called MAC (Media Access Code) address filtering. Every networkable device, computers, tablets, games consoles, come with a unique MAC address. The filtering allows you to enter the MAC addresses of your devices, so only they can be used on your router. Consult your router documentation for more details if required.



Step 3 It can be a pain but try disabling DHCP on your router and opting for static IP addresses. Every device that connects to a DHCP router will receive an IP address. By eliminating that you get to specify the address range available. It's not fool proof but it's worth considering.

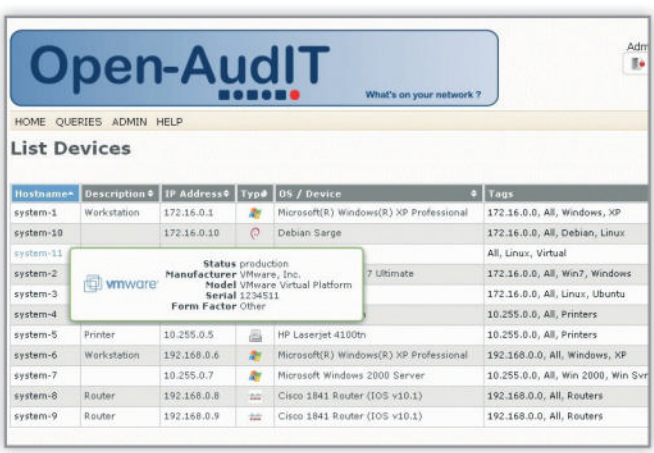


Step 4 According to Trustwave's 2013 Global Security Report, many home network hacks are conducted when the household is away or asleep. This leaves the hacker with ample opportunity to steal bandwidth and view files you may have on a NAS drive. The short, simple solution is to power off the router at night or if you go out for the day.

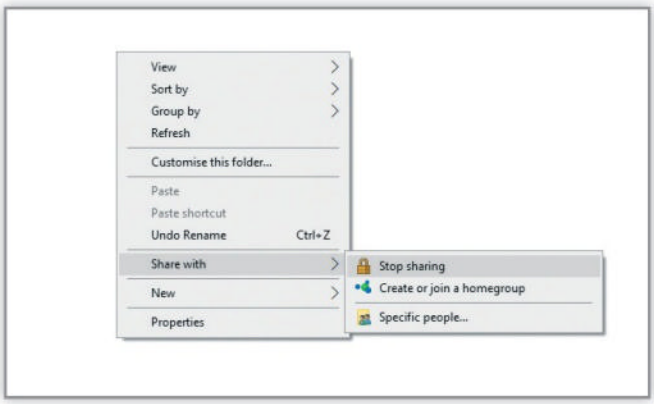
Step 5 Powerline adapters are an excellent resource for connecting wired network devices, without trailing lengths of cable around the home. However, depending on the adapter, it is possible to use another adapter to gain access to yours. In newer homes it's an easy enough task to pick up another user's network, so use the Encryption button if the adapter has one.

Step 6 Networking a home with Ethernet cables isn't a difficult project and it offers faster connection speeds than that of wireless. However, if you're living in shared accommodation or a block of flats, make sure that any unseen cable lengths can't be accessed by a neighbour. It's easy enough to splice into an Ethernet cable and steal bandwidth.

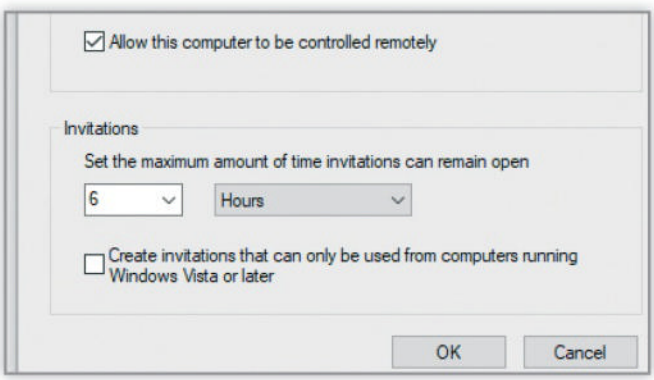
Step 7 Consider using a network mapping program, such as Open-AudIT, to gain a better understanding of what devices are attached to your network. Become familiar with the addresses, manufacturer, model IDs and so on of every connected object. That way, should anything new appear, you'll know it's not something you allowed.



Step 8 Sharing resources and files from one computer to another is perfectly fine but consider sharing less if you live in close proximity to others. Once a hacker has gained access to your network, getting to any shared folders you have will be a doddle. In extreme cases don't share anything, but generally tighten password control.



Step 9 Remote administration on both the router and computer certainly can help you out when you're not at the keyboard. Perhaps you connect to your home network from work? Whatever the reasons, it does leave a potential gap in your home network security. Consider closing it completely or double-checking the authentication is top notch.



Step 10 If you run a small office make sure that all your wall ports are located in areas where they are secure. Behind desks and generally away from where the public or any visitors may be able sneakily plug a laptop in.

How a VPN Can Improve Windows Security

We've emphasised the enhanced privacy that a VPN offers when you're connected to its services, and the heightened levels of anonymity, but what security benefits does a VPN bring to a Windows 11 computer with an antivirus program already installed?

Security Beyond Anonymity

It's a good question: how can a VPN improve Windows security? While the privacy side is well catered for, there are some good security enhancements and features a VPN brings to the table.

Feature 1 This doesn't happen often, but an ISP can become compromised and details of user activities leaked or stolen. Using a VPN can hide your browsing activity from trackers and even your ISP, enabling you to browse without the fear of having your details leaked or accessed by others.

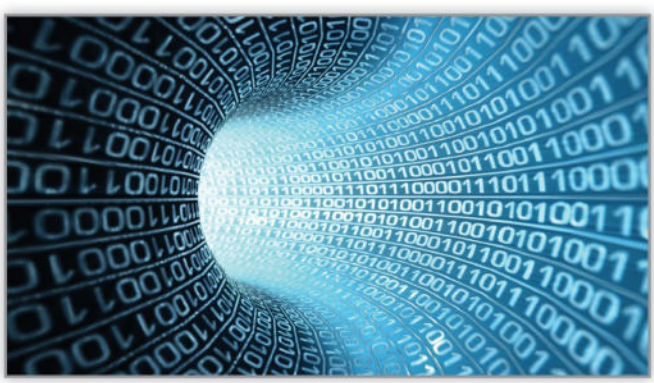
Feature 2 Many VPN providers utilise a level of antimalware into their security layers. This enhances your security by filtering any downloads through the VPN first. Should there be a virus present, then it can be removed or stopped at the VPN before it even reaches you.

Feature 3 To expand the previous feature, VPNs filter web pages that are dangerous or contain threats. Even with a good antivirus client installed, you can still access a dangerous site. Using a VPN prevents the site from even being loaded.

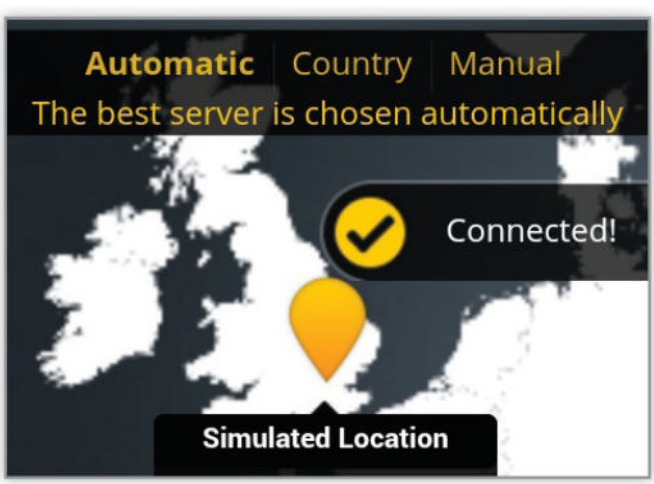
Feature 4 The connection between you and the VPN server is encrypted to the highest possible standards. This makes it near impossible for some external element to gain access to the data you're transmitting. Online banking and shopping are extremely secure with a VPN.

Feature 5 Public and free Wi-Fi hotspots are notorious when it comes to mobile security. Anyone with a little knowledge and some free tools via the Internet can intercept public Wi-Fi networks and hijack your connection, revealing all your data. A VPN encrypts the data and protects you.

Feature 6 If you're working abroad, or you're a remote worker, a VPN connection to the company's servers ensures that all the sensitive business data remains secure. It's difficult for a company to ensure 100 per cent security with mobile and off-site workers, but a VPN provides a secure tunnel straight to the company itself.



Feature 7 The availability of iOS and Android VPN clients means that your call data and data stored on your device is also secure. Mobile VPN apps use the same levels of protection and security, so your data can't be stolen when you're not even aware of it.



Feature 8 Most VPNs also add an extra layer of security whereby they actively block any advertising from websites. Internet ads are a necessary evil in some ways, as they provide much-needed funds for your favourite freely available websites. However, some contain malicious content and need to be blocked.

Feature 9 Using HTTPS instead of HTTP utilises the secure side of the Internet protocol. Sadly, it's not always implemented either in browsers or by users. Many VPNs force all websites to use the secure connection that a HTTPS site offers, thereby enhancing your browsing security.

Feature 10 In some countries, data retention laws are quite archaic, meaning governments and other bodies are able to access your data log for as long as you've been able to access the Internet. A good VPN won't detail any logs of your browsing and in most cases won't even hand over any personal information relating to you to other agencies.

How to Create a Recovery Drive

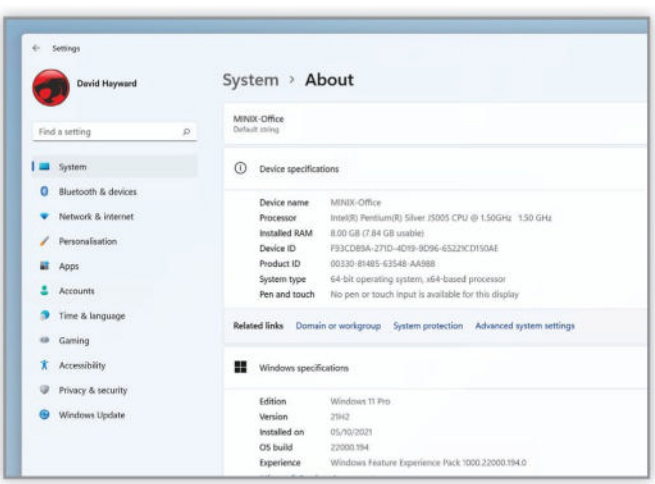
A recovery drive is a useful way to ensure that you don't lose data in the event of a critical malfunction. It can help you both troubleshoot and fix problems, even if the PC won't start as it normally would. All you need is a blank, formatted USB flash drive.

Protecting Your PC and Files

Creating a recovery drive is a relatively simple process. It does however take a bit of time to create but it's worth the effort as it could save you a lot of frustration in the future.

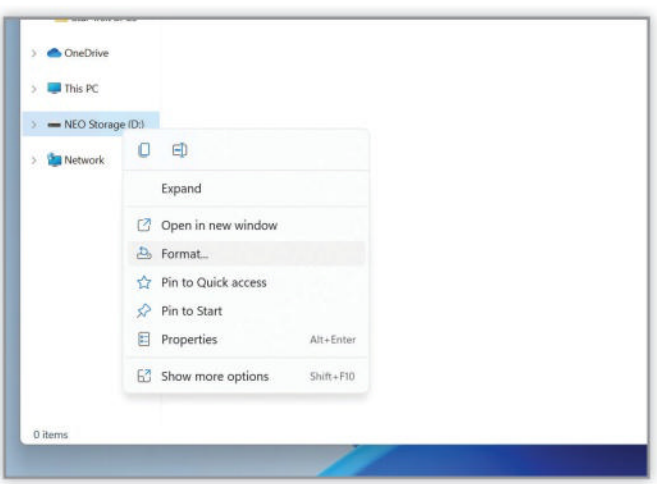
Step 1 The first thing you need to do is find a USB drive that is large enough and then make sure it is ready to be used. The USB drive you decide to use won't be able to be used for anything else like storing other files, etc. so make sure it is a spare, or bought specifically for the task.

Step 2 A basic Windows 11 recovery file will be less than 500MB but if you choose to include system files in the backup (recommended), so you can use it to reinstall Windows, you will need much more space. A basic recovery drive can be as small as 1GB but a full recovery drive needs to be at least 8GB.

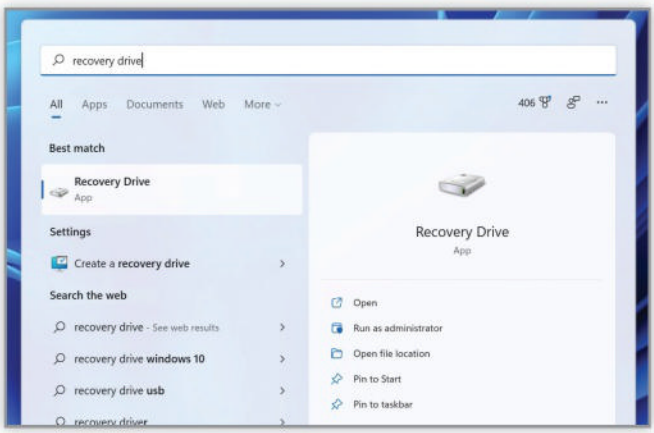


Step 3 Your USB drive needs to be wiped of everything currently on it before the recovery drive is created. You can do this during the set up process later or you can format it yourself right now: a useful thing to know how to do. Insert your USB drive into a free USB slot on in your computer.

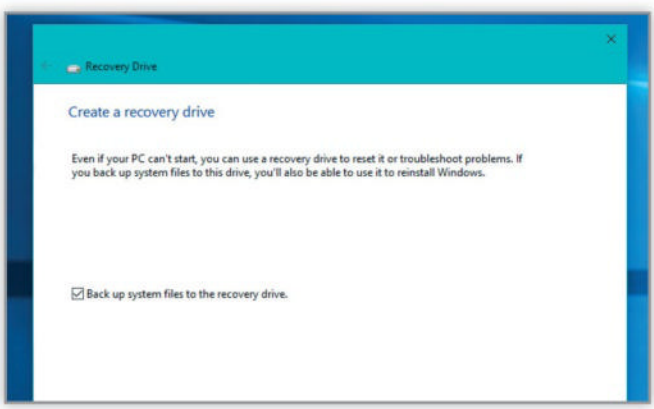
Step 4 Open the File Explorer on your computer and you should see the USB flash drive listed in the sidebar. It will probably be labelled as the (E:) or (F:) drive. Right-click on the drive label and select Format from the action menu. Leave the settings as default (should be FAT32) and then click Start.



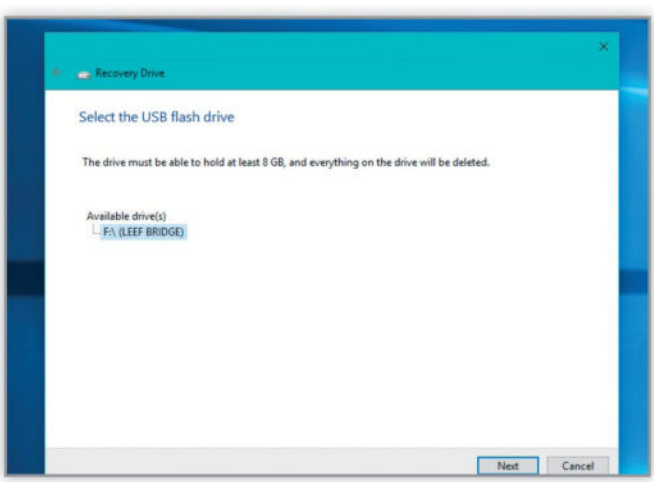
Step 5 You should now be ready to create your recovery drive. In the search field, type “Recovery Drive” and select the Recovery Drive app result. In newer versions of Windows 11, you might also be able to find the Recovery Drive in the main apps list, opened by clicking the Start menu button.



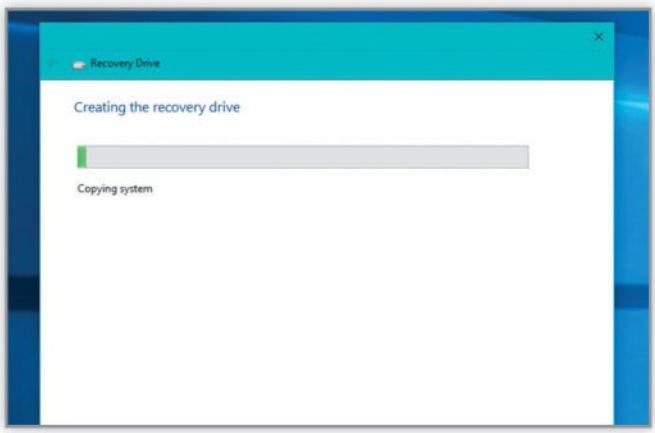
Step 6 Allow the software to “make changes to this PC” and the setup wizard will open. This first screen is where you choose whether you want to back up system files with the recovery drive, so you can use it to reinstall Windows 11. If you do, tick the checkbox and then click Next.



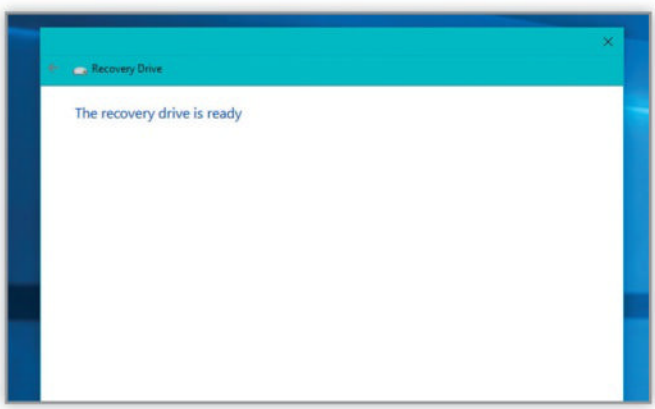
Step 7 After a few moments, you will be asked to select the USB flash drive you wish to use. If you only have one USB drive inserted, it will be the only one shown and will be automatically selected. You are reminded again how much storage space the drive needs, and that all existing data will be wiped.



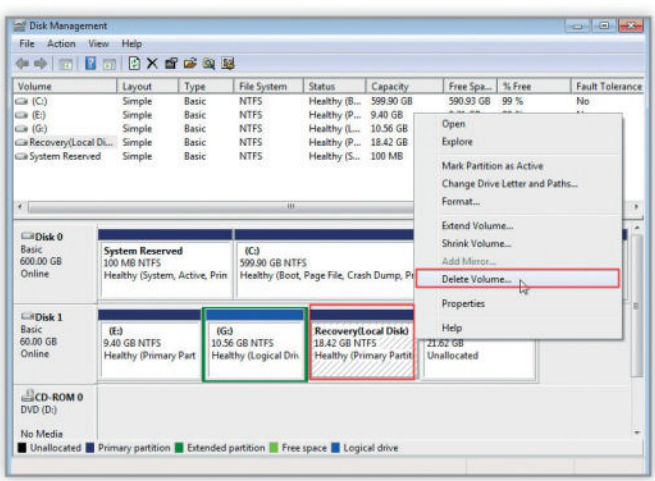
Step 8 Click Create on the next screen and the process will begin. This may take a while to complete, so go make a coffee and leave it to run. A progress bar shows how far along it is, should you need to check. Do not remove the USB drive, or turn off your computer, before the process finishes.



Step 9 When the process is complete, you should be prompted to delete the recovery partition on your PC, to save some space; as long as you plan to keep your recovery drive, this is safe to do. If you are not sure, you can leave the recovery partition in place; it can be deleted at a later date if you wish.



Step 10 If you did not already have a recovery partition on your computer, you won’t see this step. You will simply be informed that the recovery drive is ready, and to click Finish. Remove the USB drive from your computer and put it somewhere safe. It is a good idea to label the drive so it is not reused.



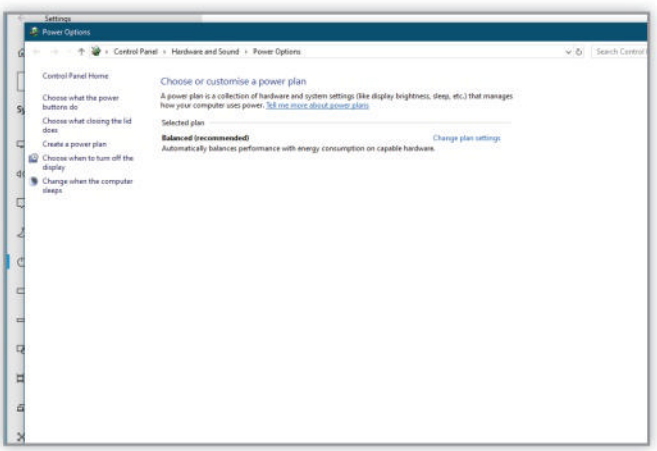
Windows 11 Power Options

If you use Windows 11 on a desktop PC, you might adjust the power options for how long the PC sleeps or when the display turns off when inactive. With a laptop, the Windows 11 power options should definitely be something with which you are more familiar with.

View, Switch and Create Power Plans

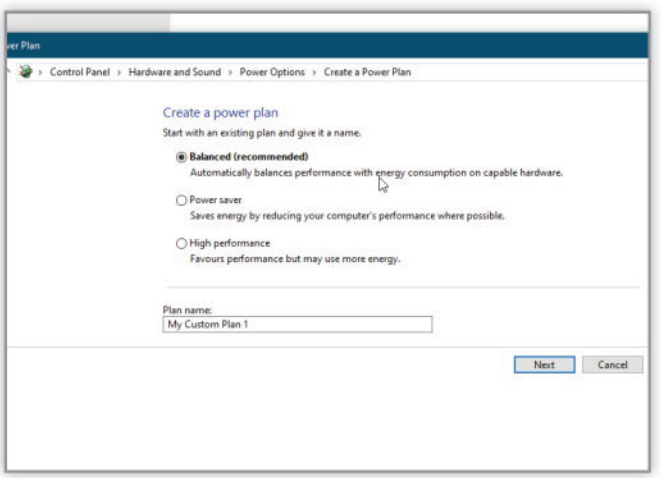
Within the Power Options panel you can choose from preset Windows 11 power plans, or you can create your own based on your computers' power requirements.

Step 1 Click on the Windows 11 Start button and enter: Control, then click the first result, Control Panel App. From there, select System and Security > Power Options. Windows 11 will, by default, have selected the Balanced power plan. This is designed to balance performance and energy consumption, and is best for PC's that are connected to the mains.

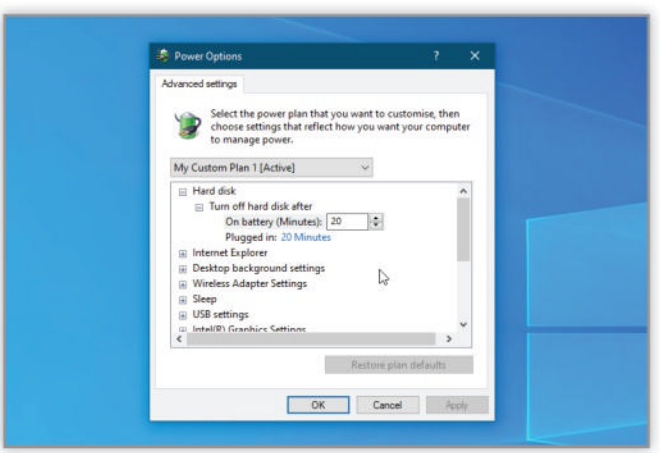


Step 2 On a laptop, you can access the power options by right-clicking on battery indicator in the taskbar tools. There are two other, default power plans alongside Balanced; Power Saver is designed to reduce energy use by scaling back performance when possible. Good for laptops using battery power.

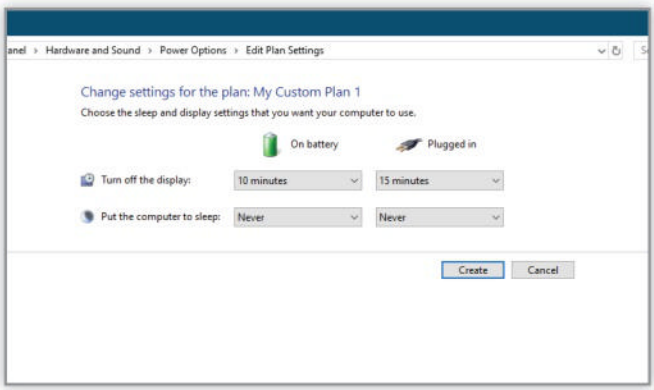
Step 3 The High Performance power plan is, as the name suggests, best for overall performance, but will use more power and is unsuitable for use on a laptop using battery power. To switch between power plans, simply select the one you want to use. For many users, this is all you will need to do.



Step 4 To customise any of the power plans, click the link next to the relevant one. The next screen will let you set when the display turns off and when the computer sleeps after inactivity. You can also click "Change Advanced Power Settings" to see settings for the hard disk, desktop, USB and processor and more.



Step 5 You should be fairly careful when changing these advanced settings, especially for things like the processor (although Windows should prevent you from making a damaging change). It is best to make small changes, and then test to see if the change has had the desired effect, before making more.

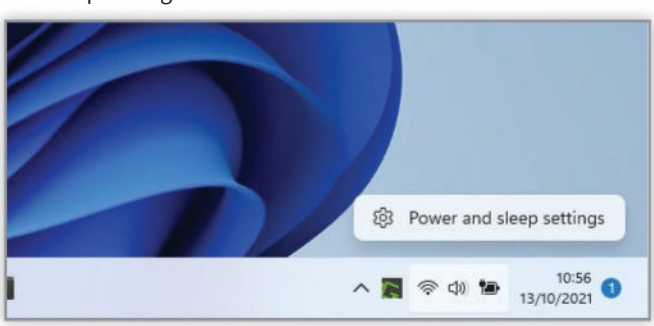


Step 6 Your laptop might have software installed that automatically switches power plans, depending on whether it is working on battery power or plugged into the mains. The settings for this can usually be found in the taskbar tools panel at the bottom right of the screen.

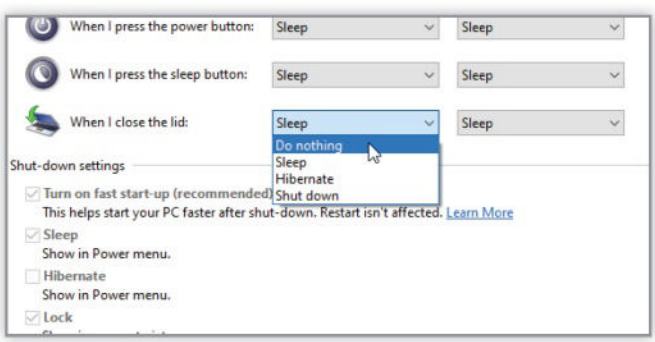
Use Your Laptop with the Lid Closed

If you want to be able to use your laptop with an external keyboard, mouse and monitor, without having to keep it on your desk and switched on, you need to change some power settings.

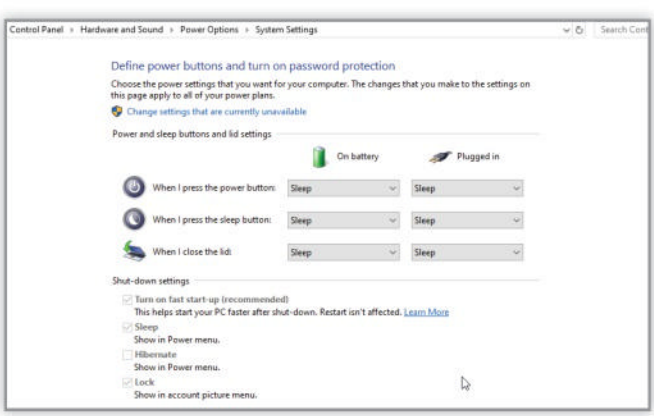
Step 1 When you close your laptop lid, the default setting will be for Windows 11 to go into low power sleep mode. This is obviously no good if you are using your laptop with an external monitor, as it will make the laptop unusable. To solve this problem, click on the Battery icon > power and sleep settings in the taskbar.



Step 3 Use the drop-down menus to select what happens when you close the lid, both when on battery and when the laptop is plugged into the mains. When you are happy with your settings, click the Save the changes button and you will be able to use the laptop as a desktop replacement with the lid closed.



Step 2 In the Power Options panel, look in the left sidebar for the option to "Choose what closing the lid does". Click this and you will see the Power button, Sleep button, and lid closing settings. You can change the settings for each individually. Settings include: Do Nothing, Sleep, Hibernate and Shut Down.



Step 4 If you also take your laptop to different locations out of the house, it is a good idea to revert these changes. If you don't, you run the risk of having the laptop continue to run while in a bag, etc., which, if the cooling vents are covered, can be damaging to the hardware.

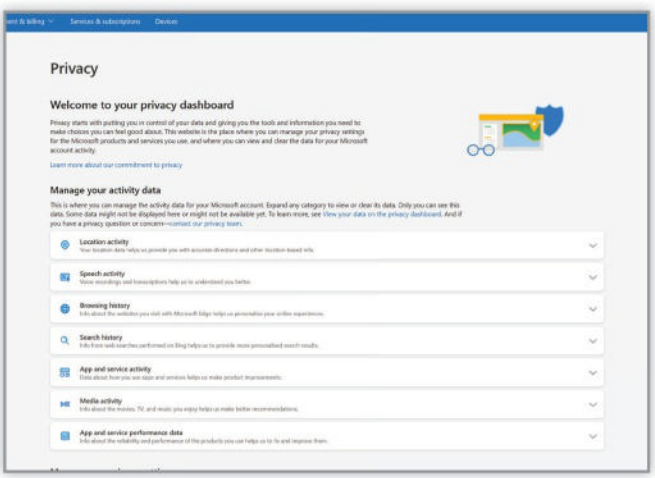
Manage Your Privacy in Windows 11

Controlling security on your computer is important but almost as important is being able to control your privacy settings. Microsoft have launched a web-based privacy dashboard tool and this great tool is available to all Windows 11 users.

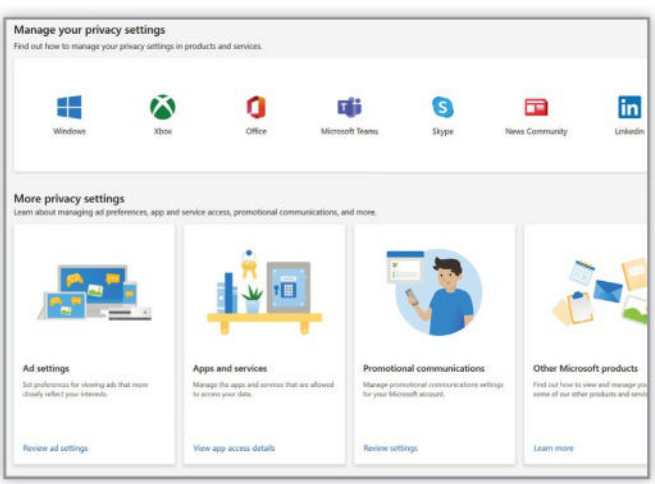
The Privacy Dashboard

The privacy dashboard is web-based rather than in the settings and it allows you to manage multiple devices from a single interface, as long as you are logged in to a single account.

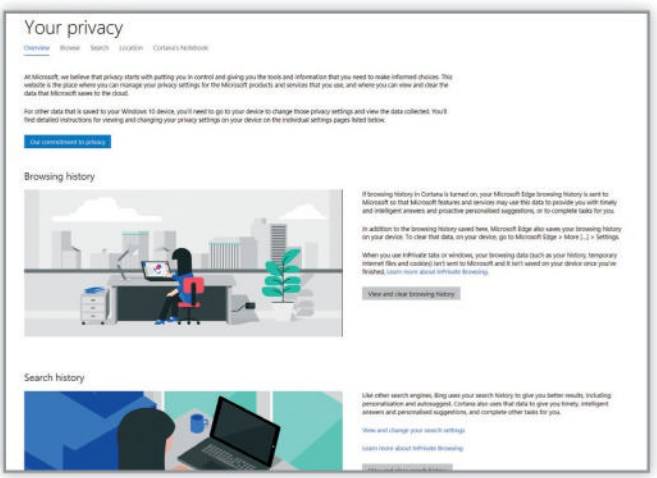
Step 1 Open your browser and navigate to www.account.microsoft.com/privacy. If prompted, use your Microsoft account details to log in. You will be logged in to the privacy overview page that lets you quickly see what privacy settings the dashboard contains and controls.



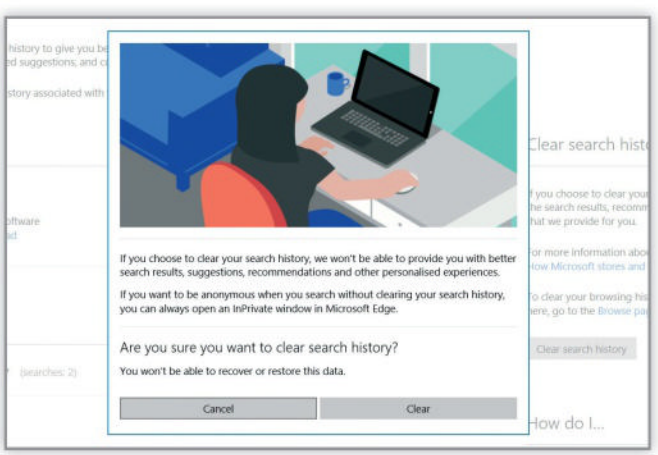
Step 2 Along with the main Search, Browsing and Location privacy categories, if you scroll down to the bottom of the page you will see entries for everything from Apps to Xbox, with simple links to take you to the settings and options for those privacy areas.



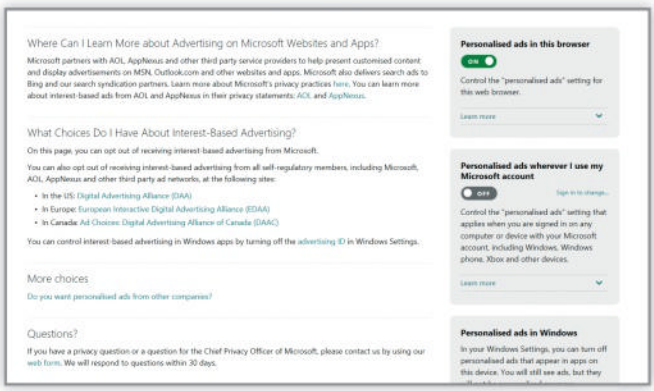
Step 3 Click on one of the main categories, Search, Browsing, Location or Cortana, and you will see more information. This could include a list of searches you have made or websites visited (in Edge only, not other browsers), interests Cortana has saved for you or locations you have been.



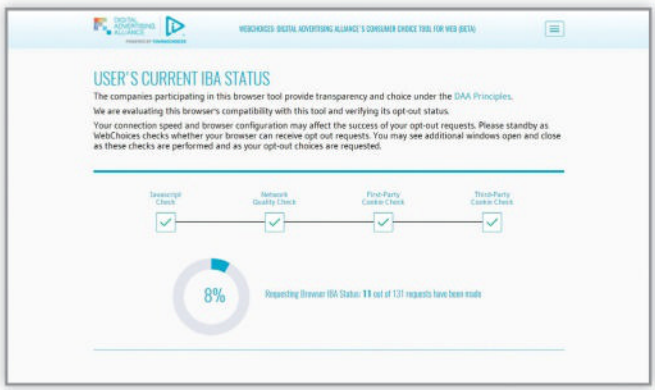
Step 4 Each section has a Clear button, whether that is clearing browsing history, search history and so on. It is next to a warning that states clearing data will stop Windows being able to provide you with accurate and relevant information. You need to decide what is more important, privacy or recommendations.



Step 5 Another useful privacy section in the dashboard is the Advertising Preferences. This lets you control whether personalised adverts are shown to you in the Edge browser. Some of the ads you may receive on Microsoft websites and apps are tailored to your previous activities and searches.



Step 6 There is also a browser tool that lets you choose if the adverts you see come from companies other than Microsoft. Click the option under More Choices and wait for the Digital Advertising Alliance scan to finish. You can then choose from the list to see adverts from different advert providers.

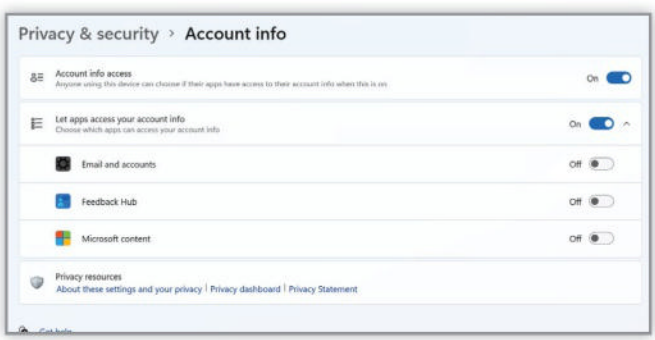


Privacy Settings

There are, of course, still privacy options in the main Settings app in Windows 11. This is generally added to and improved with each OS update.

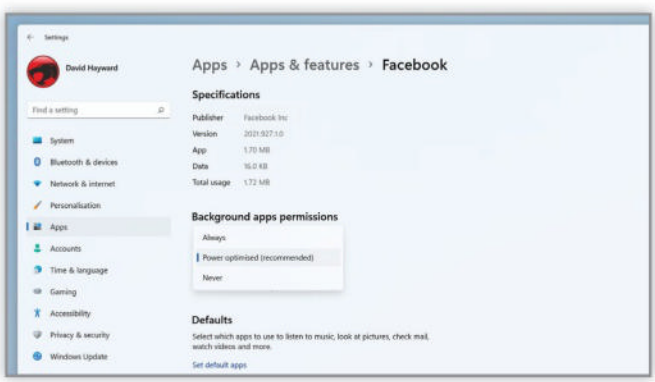
General Privacy Privacy has its own section within the settings; here there are many different categories covering everything from Location to Background Apps. Click on each of the privacy categories to see the options within that category. Use the slider switches to allow or block privacy actions.

Account Info Apps are able to access very basic personal settings such as your name and account information. This is so they can sign you in automatically to your Windows account for things like Xbox Live or the Windows Store. You can turn this off wholesale or on an app by app basis.



Messaging Apps We're using Windows 11 on a laptop here but if we had a tablet with a SIM card we would be able to get control over which apps were able to send messages over SMS and MMS. You probably want this to be restricted to just your Messaging app; most apps really shouldn't have access to your texts.

Background Apps You can control which apps you allow to run in the background. Go to the Apps section, then Apps & Features, and locate an app you don't want running in the background. Click the three dots to the right of the app, select Advanced Options and change the Background Apps Permissions via the drop-down box.



Windows 11 Maintenance Tools

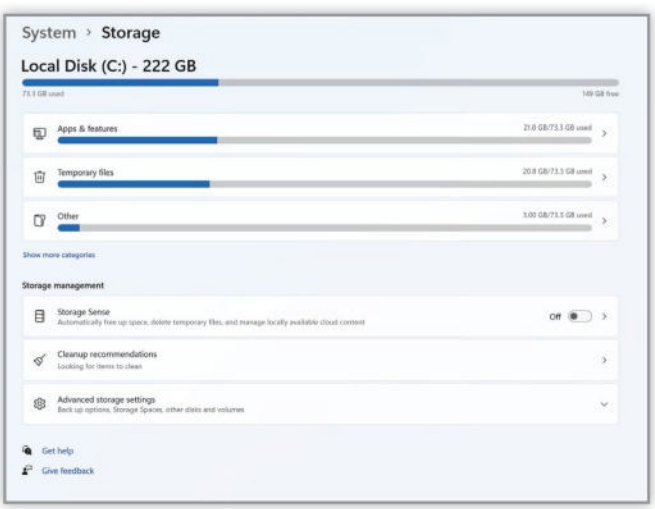
Before you start to add software to help with maintenance, it is worth checking out the numerous tools included with the OS. These are spread out over several menus but once you find them you will see that they can really help with security and performance.

Maintaining Windows 11

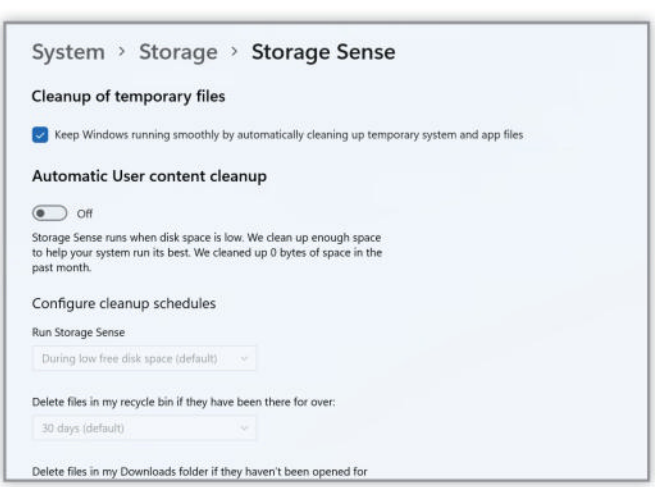
Windows 11 is a lot better at keeping you informed of problems than previous versions were. It is, however, up to you to keep on top of maintaining the OS if you want the best experience.

Storage Sense

Activating Storage Sense lets the system software automatically free up storage space by getting rid of files you no longer need. These can include temporary files such as cookies and the contents of your Recycle Bin.

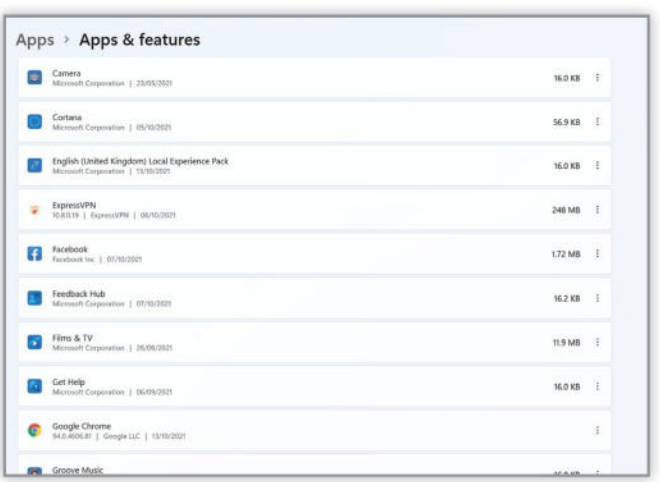


You can choose when files are deleted, e.g. after 30 days in the Recycle Bin or if apps don't use them for a certain amount of time. Alternatively you can simply click a button to Clean Now rather than setting automatic cleaning. You can find the Storage Sense option in Settings > System > Storage.

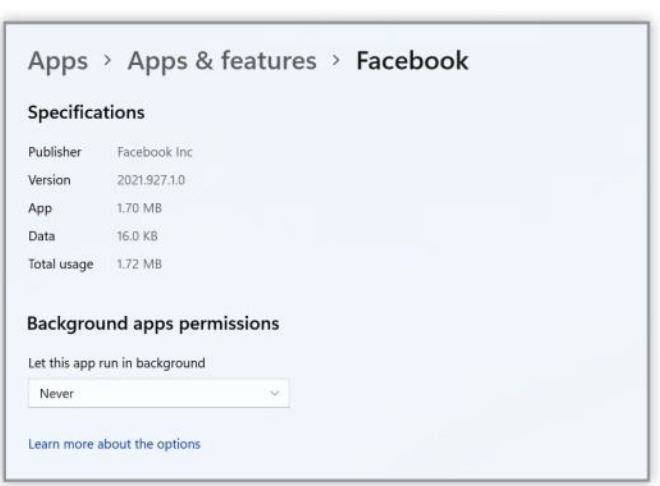


Background Apps

One of the easiest ways to conserve power (for laptop users) and reduce processor strain, is to take control of Background Apps. These are apps that are, by default, allowed to receive info, send notifications and update in the background.



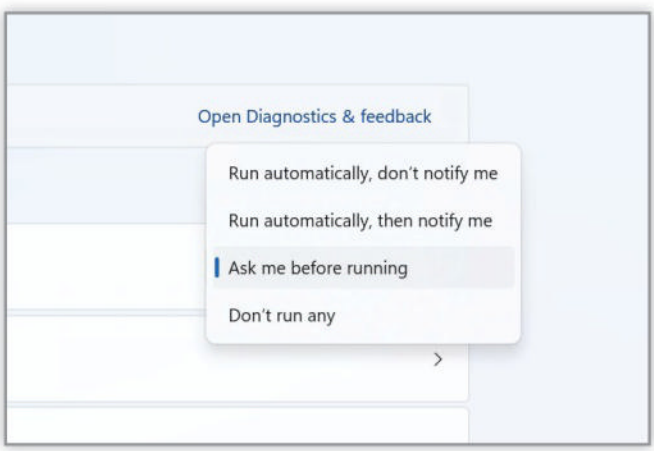
You can either stop all background apps with a single slider click or you can prevent individual apps from running in the background. Go to Settings > Privacy > Background Apps and look through the apps listed. If you see apps that you don't need notifications or updates from, click the slider to disable its background activity.



Troubleshooters

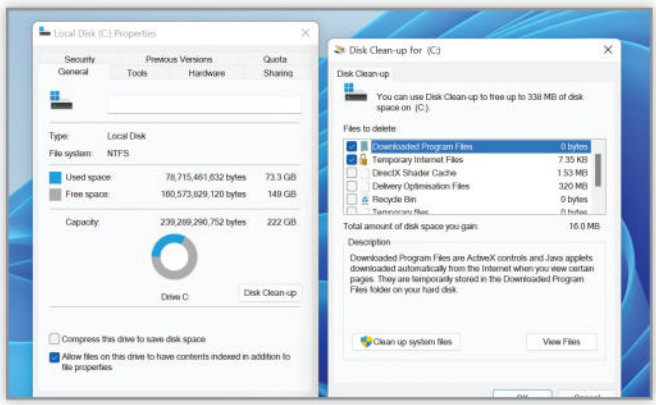
Windows 11 includes a number of troubleshooting tools, aimed specifically at certain problems such as audio loss or patchy Internet connection. This is often the best place to start when trying to solve problems with your PC and Windows 11, as the OS contains many drivers for common devices and may just need a small software update.

You simply look through the list of troubleshooters and click on the one which applies. Choose Run the Troubleshooter and then follow the instructions to try and solve the problem. You can find the troubleshooters in Settings > System > Troubleshoot.

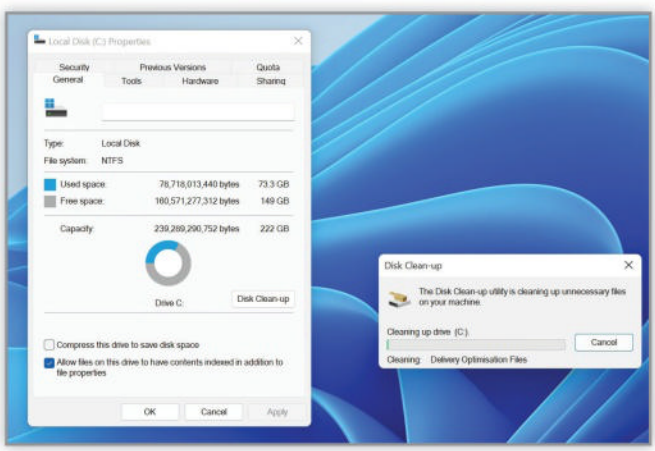


Disk Tools

There are several tools built in to Windows 11 (and also in older versions of the OS) that allow you to clean, fix and manage your hard disk. Open the File Explorer and look in the left-hand column for 'This PC'. Select it and then right-click on Local Disk (C:). In the General tab, you will see a button for Disk Clean-up that lets you get rid of temporary Internet files, old program files and so on.

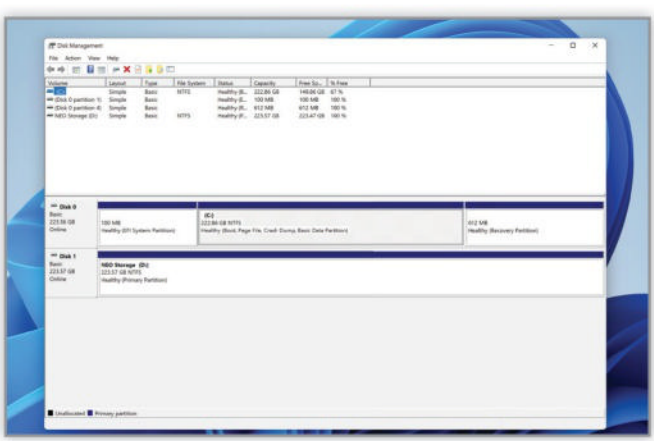


If you click the Tools tab, you can use the Error Checking tool and the Disk Defragment tool. Both of these tools can help your hard disk run more efficiently. Click on either button and follow the instructions for each tool chosen.

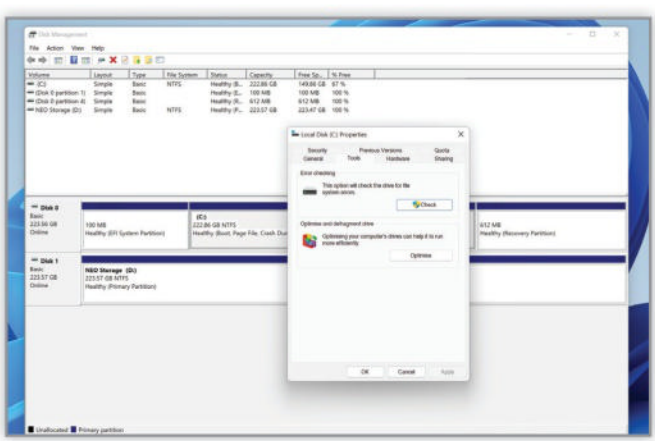


Disk Management

The Disk Management tool is more about diagnostics than actual maintenance but it is a useful way of checking whether your hard disk has space available and is healthy. The panel will show all of your disks, as well as all of the partitions.



Each column contains information about capacity, free space in MB, percentage of free space and health status. There are some further options, such as the ability to change drive letters and mark partitions as active but they are probably not worth playing around with unless you know what you are doing.



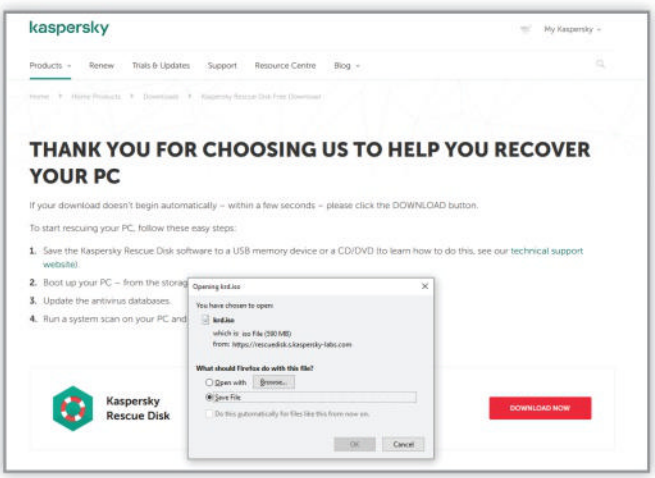
Removing Malware from Windows 11

The Windows 11 Defender and Security suite is very good, but what if you're unlucky enough to already have some form of digital infection? Thankfully, there's a way to remove malware and viruses from your computer.

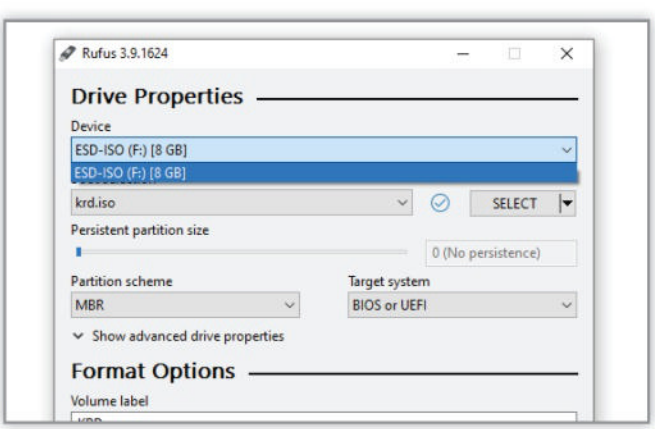
Malware Busters

For this tutorial we'll use a pre-configured rescue disk from Kaspersky. We'll need to transfer, or burn, the disk contents to a CD or a USB stick and boot into the safe environment through one of those mediums.

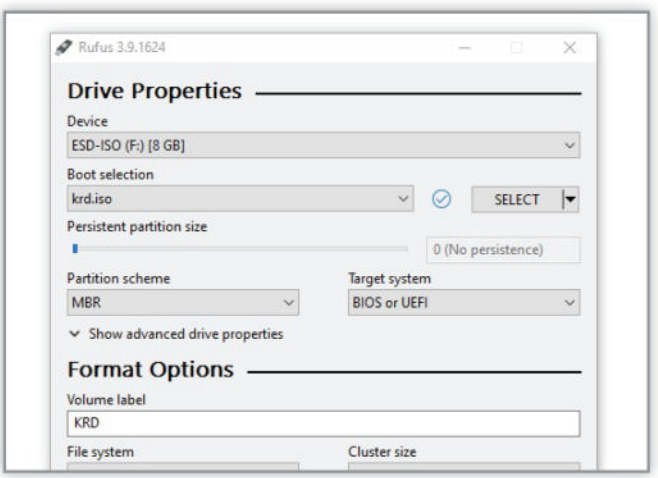
Step 1 Make sure you have a blank CD or a USB stick that's at least 1GB in size. The Kaspersky Rescue Disk is downloaded as an ISO (which is an image file containing all the disk information), and can be downloaded from https://www.kaspersky.com.au/downloads/thank-you/free-rescue-disk.



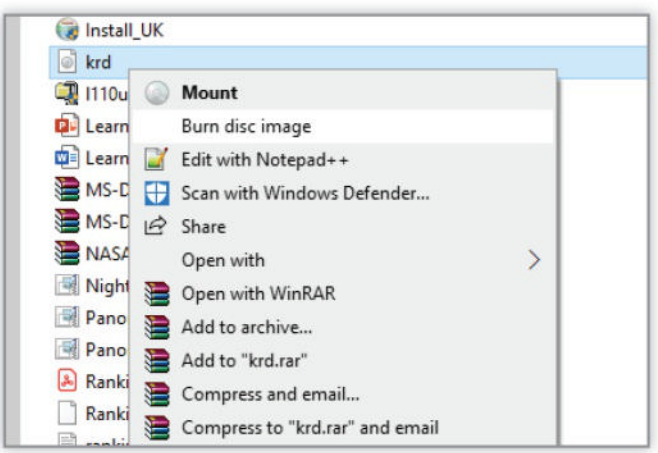
Step 2 To transfer the ISO to a USB, download Rufus; which is an executable that doesn't require any installation, from: https://rufus.ie/. Insert your USB stick and double-click Rufus. Check that the Device label is pointing to your inserted USB stick, if not then you may need to close Rufus, remove the USB, then re-insert the USB and re-start Rufus. The remaining options can be left as their defaults.



Step 3 Click the Select option, and using Windows Explorer, locate the downloaded Kaspersky Rescue ISO – it'll be called krd.iso. Click the Start button to select the image and continue with the process. This will copy the contents of the ISO to the USB while also making the USB a bootable device.



Step 4 If you're using a CD, start by inserting the CD into the drive. Locate the downloaded Kaspersky Rescue ISO, right-click it and choose Burn Disc Image from the context menu. Tick the 'Verify disc after burning' option, and click the Burn button to start the process. Once the ISO is burnt to the disc, you can power off your computer.

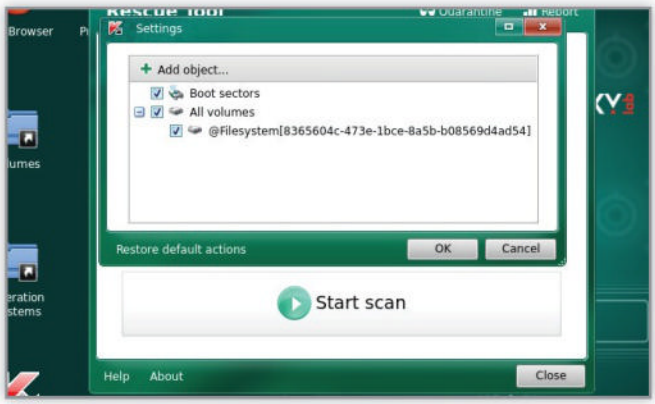


Step 5 You'll now need to allow your PC to boot up into the Kaspersky Rescue CD environment. Power up your PC and open the Boot Option Menu. This could be accessed by pressing F12 (depending on the make and manufacturer of your PC motherboard). With the boot options available, select either the CD or USB stick and press Enter.

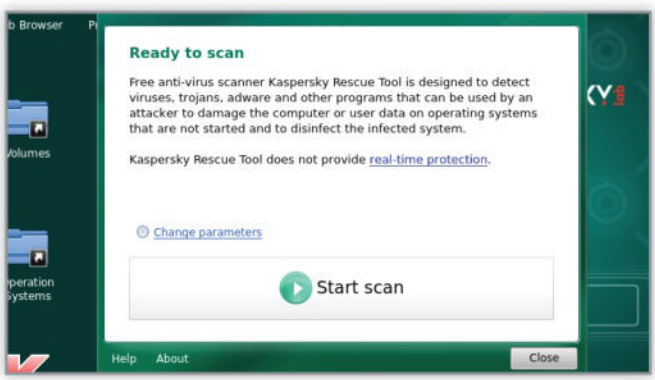
Step 6 The PC will now boot into the Kaspersky Rescue Disc environment. This is a custom Linux operating system with all the necessary security tools pre-installed. First, you'll need to choose which language to load the environment. Use the arrow keys, and press Enter for your language choice. After that, choose the Graphic Mode.

Step 7 Begin by accepting the license agreement. After that, the rescue disc will check its status and open a window asking for you to start scanning the system. However, it's best to check you've got access to the Internet in order for it to update first. Close down the Rescue Tool window, and click on the Network box in the bottom-right. Connect to Wi-Fi, or Wired as required.

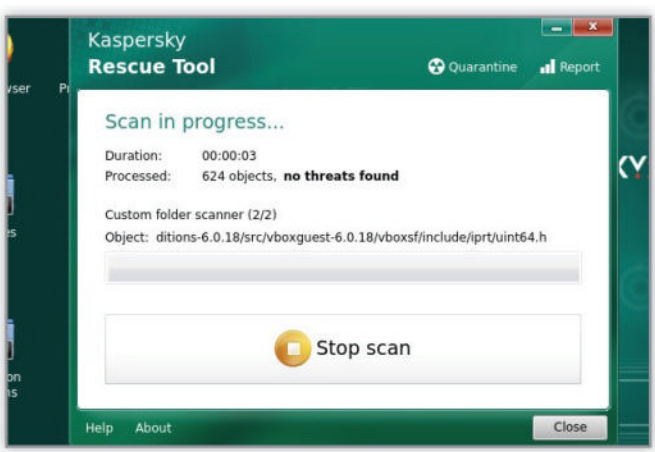
Step 8 Once connected, relaunch the Kaspersky Rescue Tool from the desktop icon, agree to the license once more. Before you begin, click on the Change Parameters link in the Kaspersky Rescue Tool window. This will enable you to choose which drives the tool can scan for infections and malware. Tick all the drives in your system.



Step 9 When you're ready to continue, click on the Start Scan button in the Kaspersky Rescue Tool window. This will begin the process of scanning all the drives selected in the previous step. Be aware, that, depending on the size of your drives and the amount of data on them, this could take quite some time.



Step 10 While the scan is working, you'll see the area that the tool is currently processing. You'll also get a brief run-down of any threats currently found, time taken, and number of files scanned. Once complete, you can view a report by clicking on Details. Hopefully, you're malware free, and you can remove the USB/disc and reboot the system.



Six Steps to a Faster PC

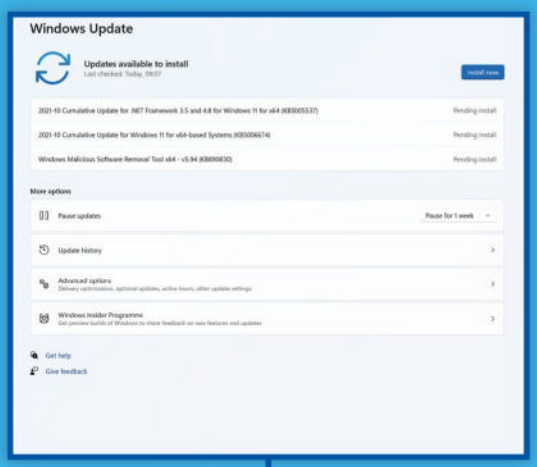
A slow computer is inconvenient and frustrating. When everything takes twice as long as it should, you might be tempted to buy a new PC. Before you do, there are several things you can try to make your Windows 11 PC run faster and smoother.

1 Update Windows 11 and Drivers

The first step along your path to a faster computer is making sure that the Windows OS and all of the various drivers installed are up to date. Simply updating drivers to the latest versions can have a noticeable effect on the overall loading speed of any PC and fortunately, this is very easy to do.

Open Settings > Update & Security > Windows Update and click "Check for updates". Windows 11 will scan for available updates (to both the OS and drivers), before displaying all those available as a list.

If no updates are available, it will say "Your device is up to date" and you can move on to the next tip. If updates are available, select those you want to download and install, then click "Install". When installation is complete, restart your PC.

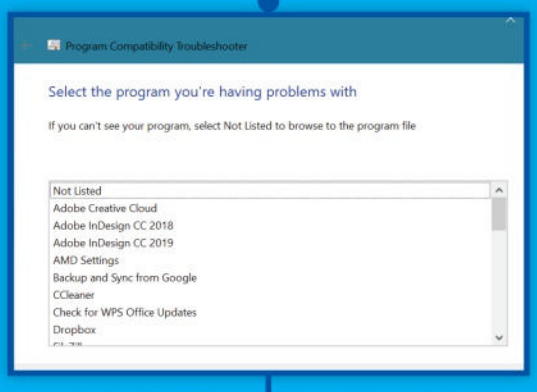


2 Check Program Compatibility

Software that is designed to run on older versions of Windows can sometimes cause Windows 11 to slow down as it struggles to manage this incompatibility issue. To find out if this is a potential problem, run the Program Compatibility Troubleshooter.

In the taskbar search field, type "program compatibility troubleshooter" and click the first result in the search panel. Run the troubleshooter; testing any software you think is causing problems.

The troubleshooter will offer you various ways to test and fix software compatibility issues.



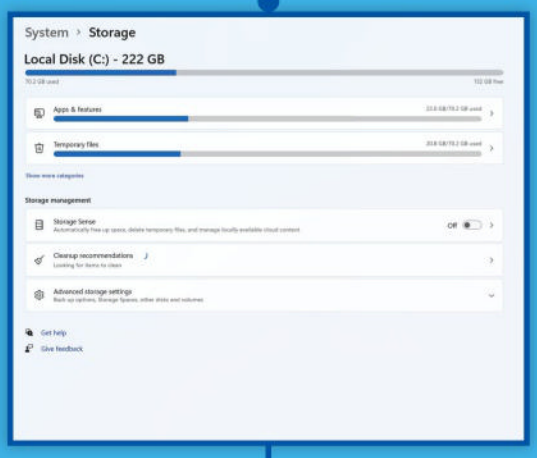
3 Check and Clear Disk Space

If your hard drive is very full, it can affect performance. To check: open Settings > System > Storage and see how much space you have left. If your storage is looking full, try the following options to make some space:

Delete Temporary Files – Click the "This PC" bar and then click the "Temporary files" bar. Select everything you want to delete, click the "Remove Files" button and then restart your PC.

Remove Unwanted Apps – Open Settings > Apps > Apps & Features, click on any app you want to remove and then click "uninstall". Repeat this for all unwanted or unused apps before restarting.

Move Files to an External Drive – Connect a removable hard drive to your PC (a small USB flash drive for example) and open the File Explorer. Select the files you want to move, click "Move to" in the Home tab at the top and select the external drive. Files will still be accessible as long as the drive is still connected.

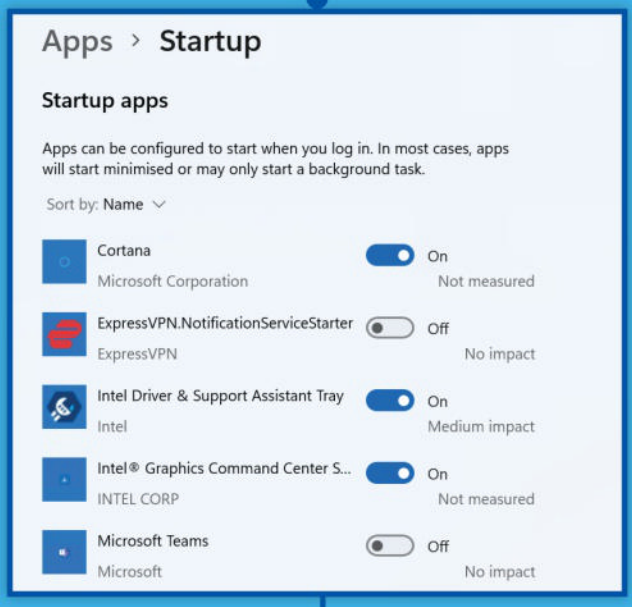


4 Disable Unneeded Startup Programs

Now that you have removed any unwanted apps and software, it is time to check if any remaining apps are running unnecessarily at startup. Many software manufacturers will set their programs to start-up in the background when WIndows 11 starts up. This helps the programs to open more quickly and makes sense for software you frequently use, but not for software you only use occasionally.

A quick way to see what software is running in the background is to look at the icons on the right side of the taskbar and open the hidden icons panel by clicking the small arrow. You can hover the mouse over icons to see what they are.

If you want to have a deeper look at which software initiates during startup, open Settings > Apps > Start-up. Here you will see a list of all startup apps, along with an estimation of their performance/speed impact and a slider to prevent each one from starting automatically.

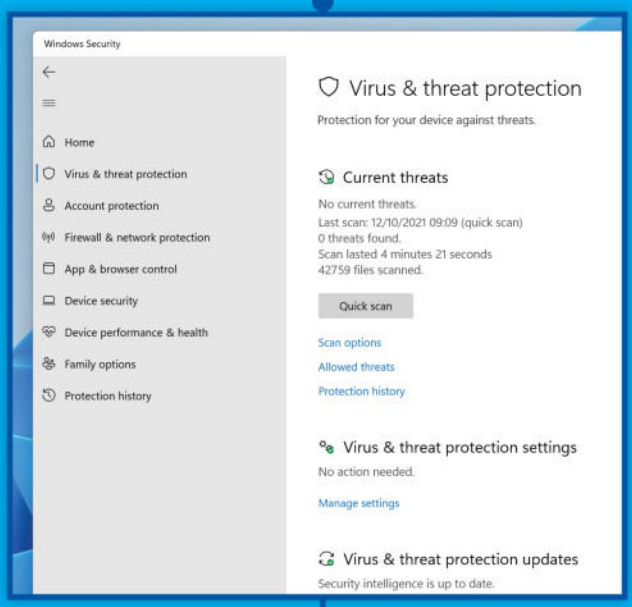


5 Scan for Viruses & Malware

Viruses, malware and other malicious software could cause your computer to run slowly or behave strangely. Things to look out for include: unexpected pop-up messages, programs that suddenly start or stop, or the sound of your hard disk constantly working.

To scan for and remove viruses, open Settings > Update & Security > Windows Security (previously Windows Defender) > Open Windows Security, click on "Virus Threats & Protection" and then click the "Quick Scan" button.

You can do a more advanced scan by clicking "Scan options" and choosing which you want to perform. If viruses or malware are found, you will be given options to quarantine and remove them.

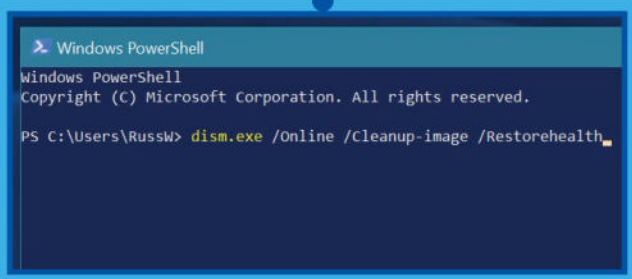


6 Check for Corrupted System Files

Occasionally, the core system files in Windows can become corrupted (for a variety of reasons) and cause performance problems. WIndows 11 includes a tool: the Deployment Image Service and Management Tool, that will check for such files and automatically replace them, either with a cached version or by downloading a new version.

Use the DISM Tool – In the Search box in the taskbar, type "powershell". Right-click on "Windows Powershell" in the results and choose "Run as Administrator" from the menu.

At the Command prompt, that opens in the blue Powershell window, type "dism.exe /Online /Cleanup-image /Restorehealth" without the quotation marks (note the space between "dism.exe" and "/" and each switch (/)).



If the tool finds and replaces any corrupted files, restart your computer and check to see if it has helped with your current performance issues.

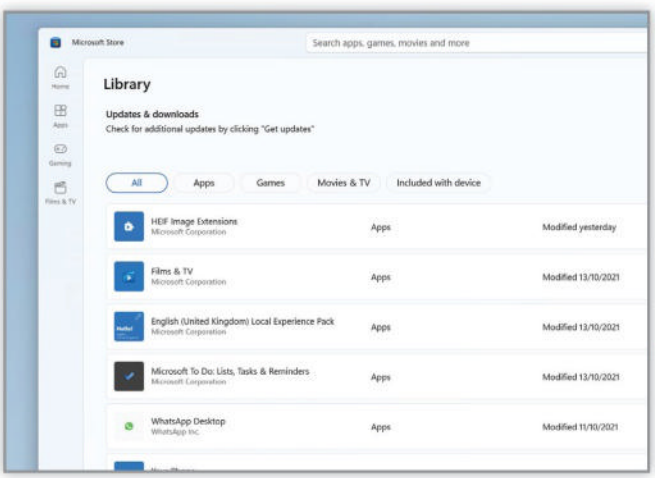
How to Reset or Fresh Start

Resetting a PC reinstalls Windows, with a choice to deletes your files, settings and apps, and main system files. Restoring will undo recent system changes, without deleting files. A Fresh Start completely removes all apps and reinstalls Windows.

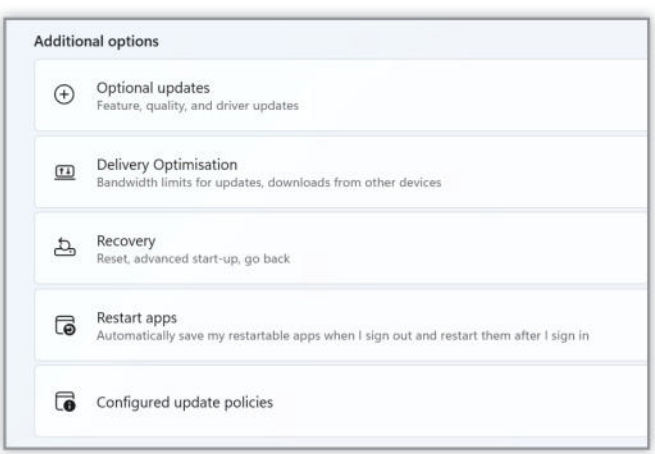
Fresh or Reset?

Refreshing and resetting your Windows 11 PC are two very different things and you should always make sure you know which is the best choice to solve your current problem.

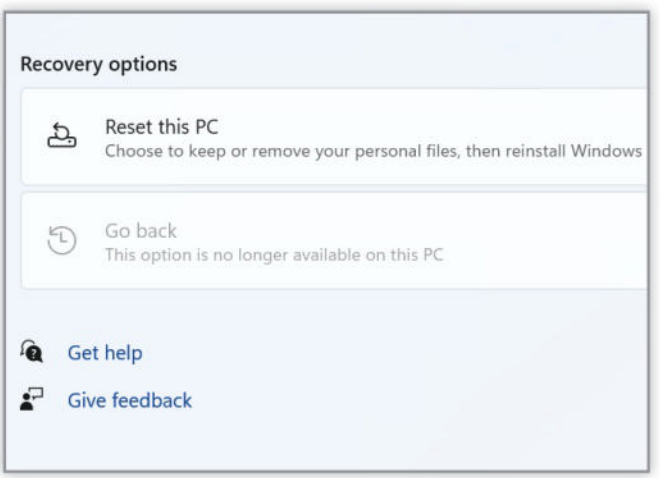
Step 1 If your PC isn't performing as well as it once did, and you don't know why, you can reset your PC without deleting any of your personal files or changing your settings. Apps or software not installed through the Store will be removed but Windows store apps will be reinstalled.



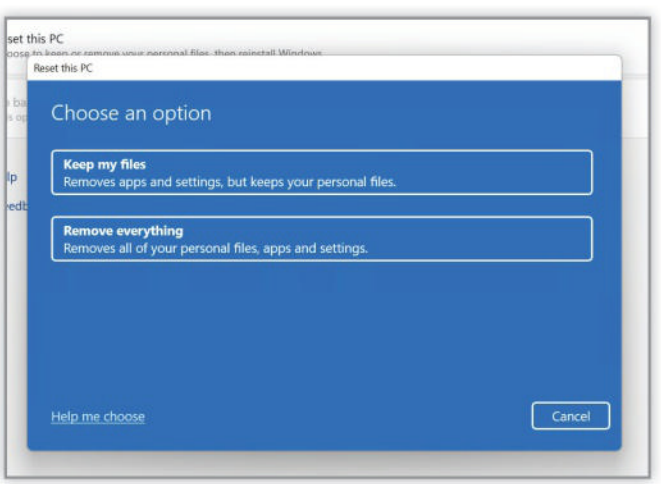
Step 2 Open the main Settings app and head into the Windows Update > Advanced Options section. Click on Recovery and you will see several options, including Reset this PC. If you can't get into Settings, you can access reset by restarting your computer while holding the Shift key; then select Troubleshoot > Reset.



Step 3 In System > Recovery, click on 'Reset PC' button to begin the process. You will now need to choose whether to keep your files (just remove apps and settings), or remove everything. If you choose Remove everything, you will then need to choose whether to 'Remove and clean the drive'.



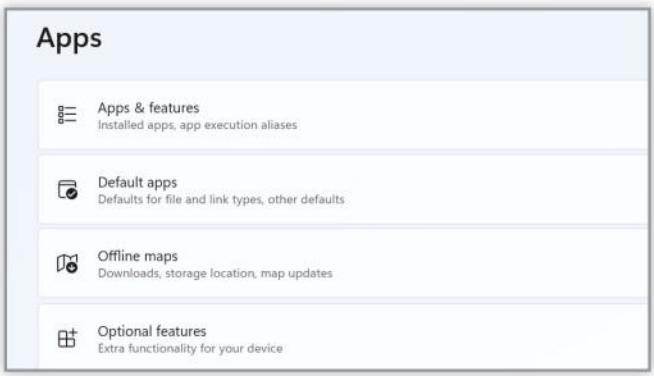
Step 4 You will be warned that you won't be able to roll back to a previous version of Windows after the reset (old Windows files will be deleted). Click Next and then Reset when prompted. Windows will restart and take several minutes to reset itself. Click Continue when promoted.



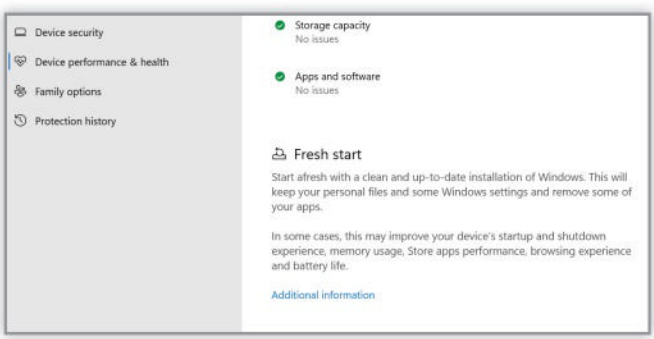
Perform a Fresh Start

Performing a Fresh Start allows you to do a clean reinstallation and update of Windows, while keeping your personal data and most Windows settings intact; an easier option than a full wipe and reinstall.

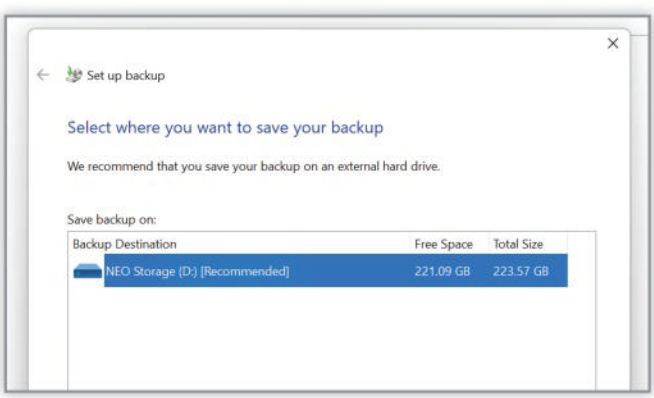
Step 1 Be aware that Fresh Start will remove most of your apps from your device, so you will have some reinstalling to do. In some cases, a clean installation may improve your device's start-up and shutdown experience, memory usage, Microsoft Store apps performance, browsing experience and battery life.



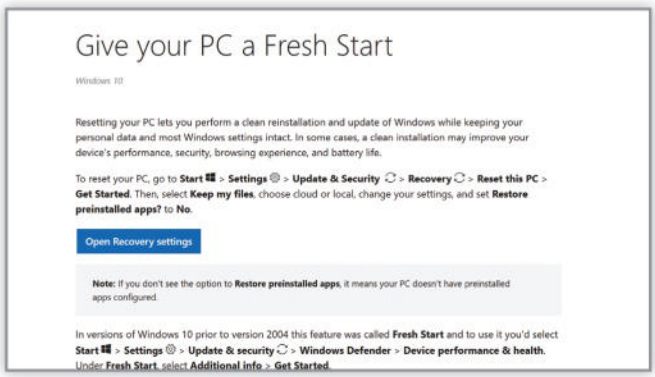
Step 2 To find the Fresh Start tool, open the Windows Defender tool (click on the shield icon in the taskbar), and then click on the Device Performance & Health section. You will need to click on Additional Info and then click Give your PC a Fresh Start. If Fresh Start has previously been performed, the date will be displayed here.



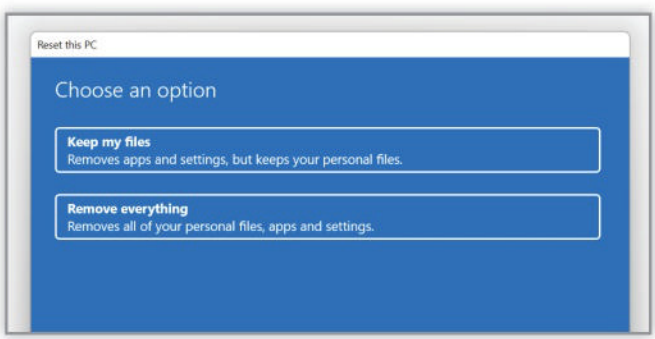
Step 3 Microsoft recommends that you back up your files before making changes like a clean installation of Windows to your device. Make sure that you have access to all reinstallation media (such as CDs), product keys, license or login information and other materials needed to manually reinstall apps.



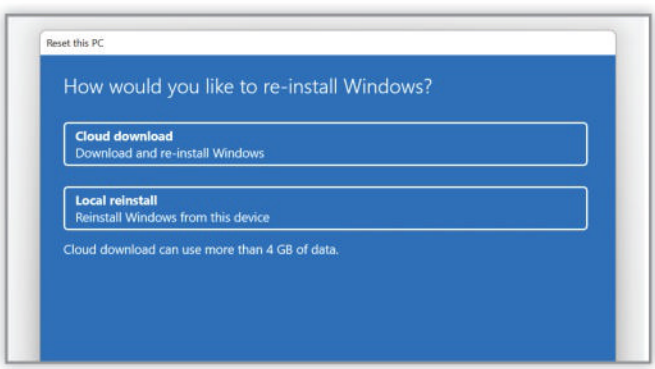
Step 4 Looking at the website that Windows 11 sends you to when you click on the Give your PC a Fresh Start link, there will be a blue Open Recovery Settings box. Click this, and you will automatically open the Recovery Settings section, or you can access it via System > Recovery.



Step 5 As you can see, all roads lead back to the Recovery section in Windows 11. To perform a Fresh Start, you'll need to click the Reset PC button. This again brings up the option pop-up window. For a Fresh Start, you'll need to click the Remove Everything button. It's worth saying again: Ensure your data is backed up before doing this.



Step 6 You'll now have the option to download Windows 11 and re-install it using the Cloud (meaning you'll download it from the Microsoft servers), or as a local reinstallation (which means you'll have a physical copy of Windows 11 either on disk or as a USB). Whichever method you prefer, click the box and the process will begin.



Troubleshooting Windows Problems

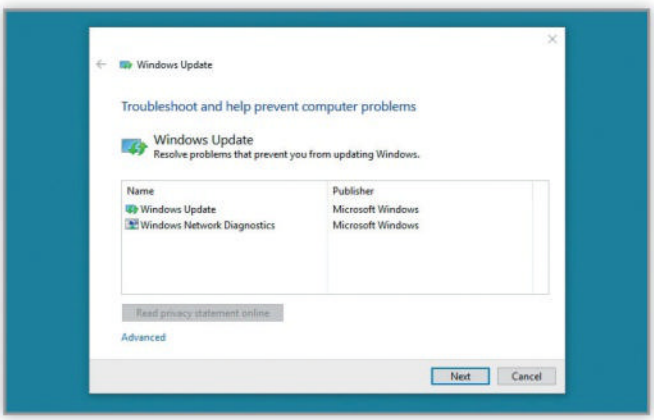
Windows 11 includes some useful tools for checking and solving problems, but sometimes you need to look a bit deeper. Occasionally you just need to go back to basics. These tips will help you solve some common problems encountered.

First Things to Check

If you're having problems with Windows Update, the Windows Update Troubleshooter might be able to automatically fix the problem. Go to Microsoft.com and search for Update Troubleshooter.

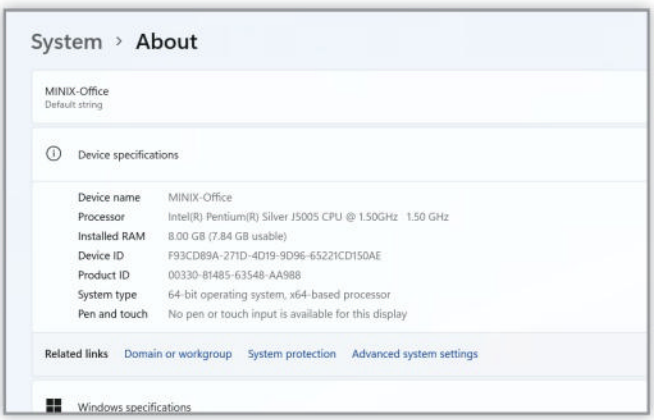
Windows Update Troubleshooter

Microsoft knows that things don't always go smoothly when updating and have provided a dedicated troubleshooting tool for use during this key task. If you're having problems with Windows Update, the Windows Update Troubleshooter might be able to automatically fix the problem. Go to Microsoft.com and search for Update Troubleshooter.



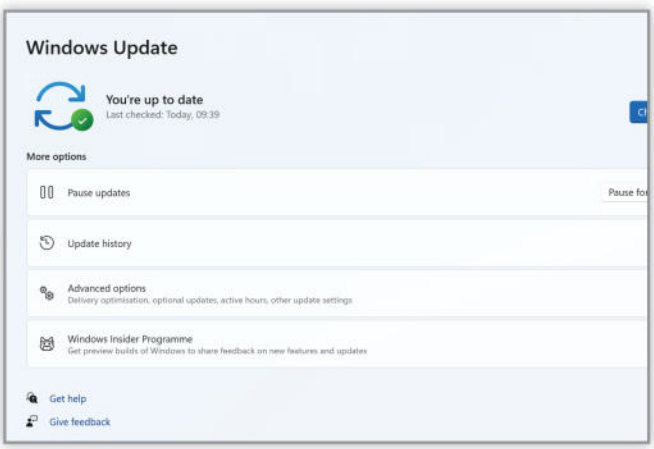
Checking System Spec

If you're having trouble installing or running a particular app or game, it may be that your PC hardware is not up to scratch. All commercial software will provide details of required and (sometimes) recommended specification needed to run it. You can check system spec at any time, just go to Control Panel and select System and Security, then System.



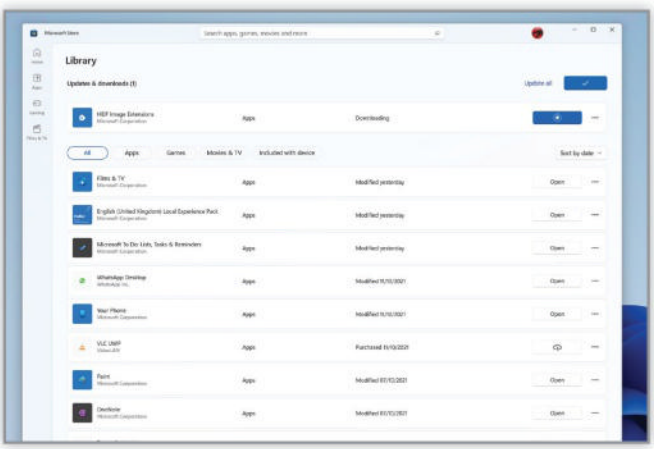
Check for Updates

Keeping your copy of Windows 11 up-to-date with the latest releases can really help to avoid problems before they happen. Press the Windows logo key and click Settings. Then choose Windows Update and then select Check for updates. Install any available updates and restart your PC if required.



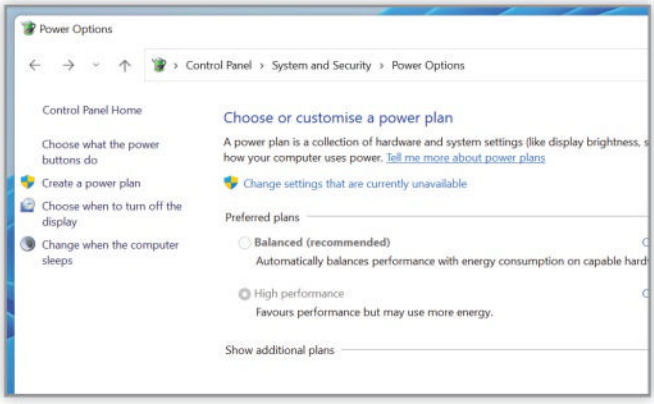
App Updates

If an app or program isn't working with Windows 11, particularly after the Anniversary update, try looking in the Windows Store for an update and if that doesn't work, delete and reinstall it. To check for available app updates on the store, click the user icon next to the search bar and select Downloads and Updates.



Slow Boot Fix

Like Windows 10 before it, Windows 11 uses a hybrid boot to enable fast boot times. It sounds great but can actually slow down boot for some users. Disable it by searching for Power Options in the Start menu and running the matching Control Panel applet, then in the settings click Choose to decide what the power buttons do.

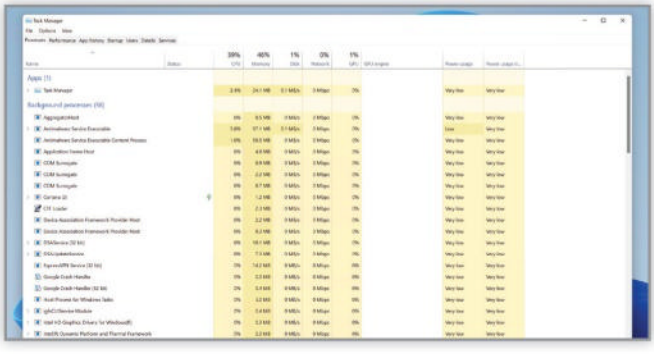


Check the Troubleshooters

Go to System > Troubleshoot > Other Trouble-shooters. This is where you'll find troubleshooter tests that can be carried out for a wide range of Windows 11 components and situations. Everything from Internet connectivity to keyboard issues, power and video playback can be run from here.

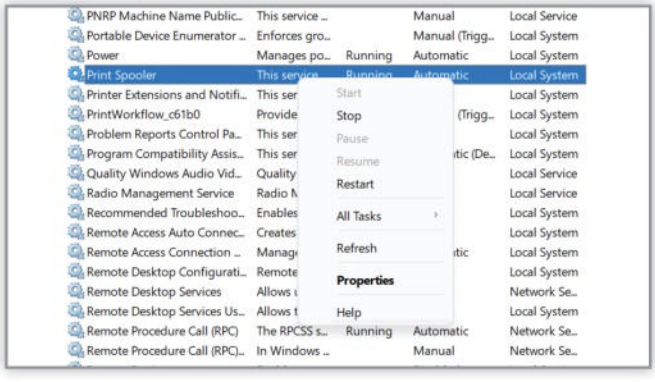
Non-Responsive PC

Windows 11 has a completely different shell than previous versions. The Explorer.exe process is still at its core but there are a few additional components as well. If you click the Start button and nothing happens or if the entire taskbar refuses to respond to an interaction, open Task Manager (press Ctrl+Shift+Esc), find Windows Explorer in the task list and click the Restart button.



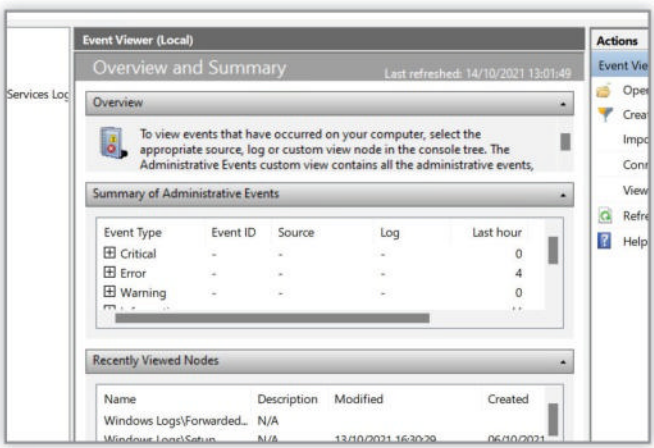
Restart Services

Often, a problem could simply be a Windows 11 service hasn't started, or failed to start. For example, a printer not printing may not be the fault of the printer, but the Print Spooler Service. Click the Start button, type 'services' and click to open the Services App. Find the service, right-click, then click Restart or Start.



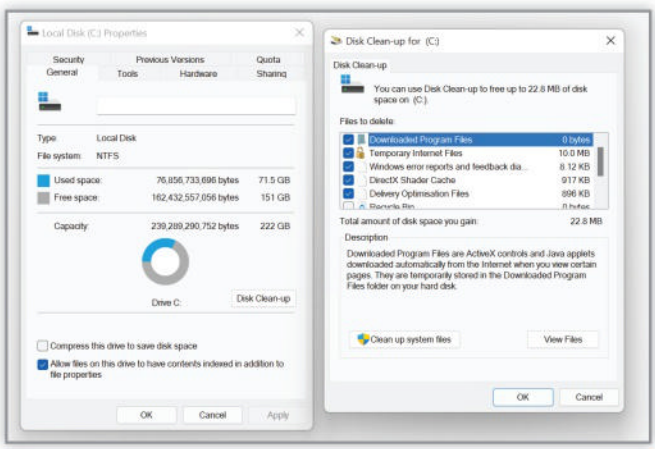
Check Event Logs

You can scrutinise the Windows 11 event logs to see if they reveal any more information regarding the problem you're having. Right-click the Windows Start button, and select Event Viewer from the list. In here you'll find everything that's happened to your system since the day you turned it on.



Free Up Disk Space

There are times when a lack of available disk space can lead to an unresponsive, or slow PC. System > Storage is a good place to start, then follow the Clean-up Recommendations. Also, right-click the C:\ drive in File Explorer, select Properties > Disk Clean-up. Finally, also check Clean up Systems Files in the same window.



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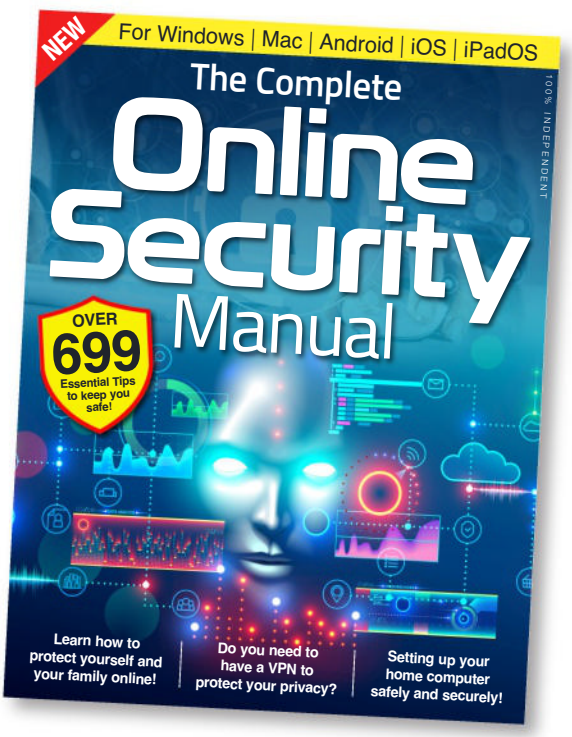

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