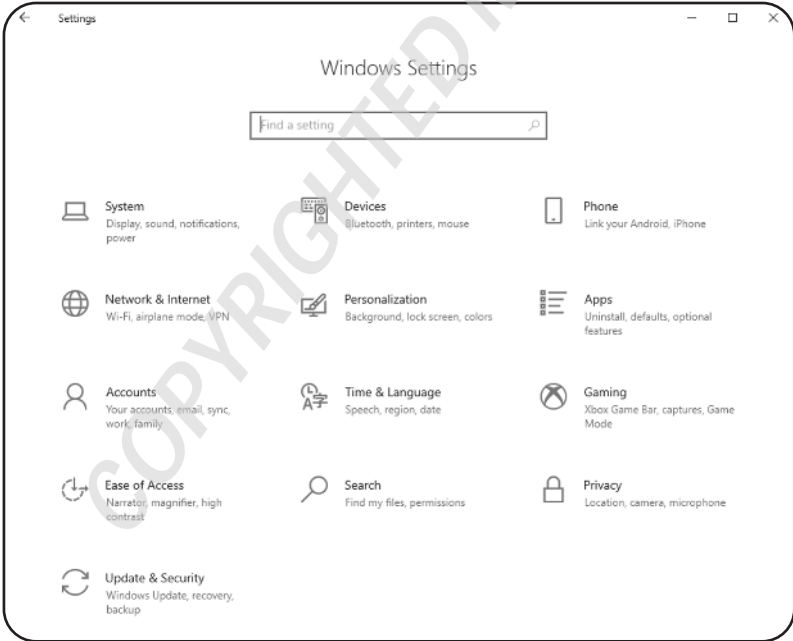


# How Do I Customize Windows?



You've probably found that Windows works pretty well right out of the box. Microsoft has configured Windows with default settings that make Windows relatively easy and efficient for most users. Ah, but your purchase of this book shows that you don't fall into the Most Users category. You are your own, unique self, and that uniqueness cries out for and deserves a correspondingly unique Windows experience. Fortunately, as you learn in this chapter, Windows is bristling with tools that enable you to customize almost every aspect of the system, including the Start menu, taskbar, and Lock screen.

<b>Working with Settings.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Customizing the Start Menu .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Customizing the Taskbar .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Customizing the Lock Screen .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Extending Your Desktop with Multiple Monitors.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Setting Up Multiple Desktops.....</b>	<b>20</b>

# Working with Settings

Most of your Windows customization work involves tweaking *settings*, which are options—usually in the form of a check box, switch, radio button, or list—that control the look and operation of either Windows itself or of a particular app that’s installed on your PC.

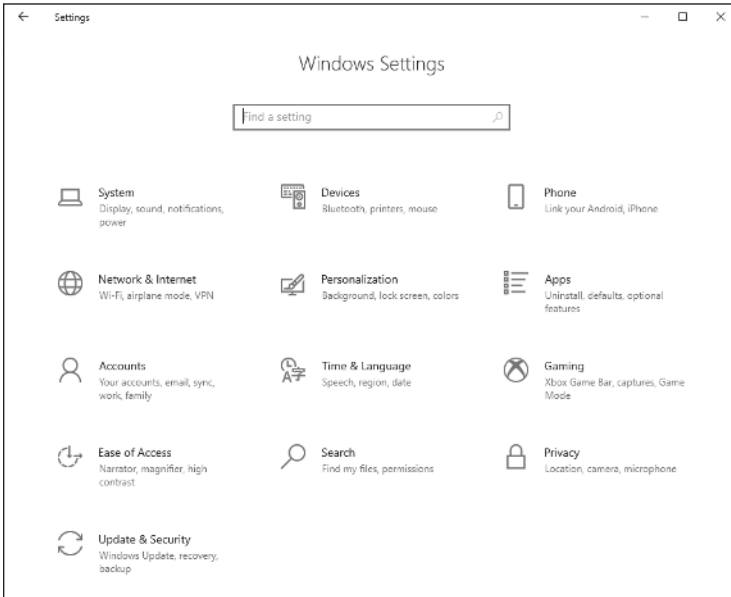
## Opening the Settings app

When you want to customize Windows, you’ll almost always need to open the aptly named Settings app, which is home to most Windows customization options. The Settings app is so important that Windows gives you a dozen or so ways to open it. Here are the six most useful methods:

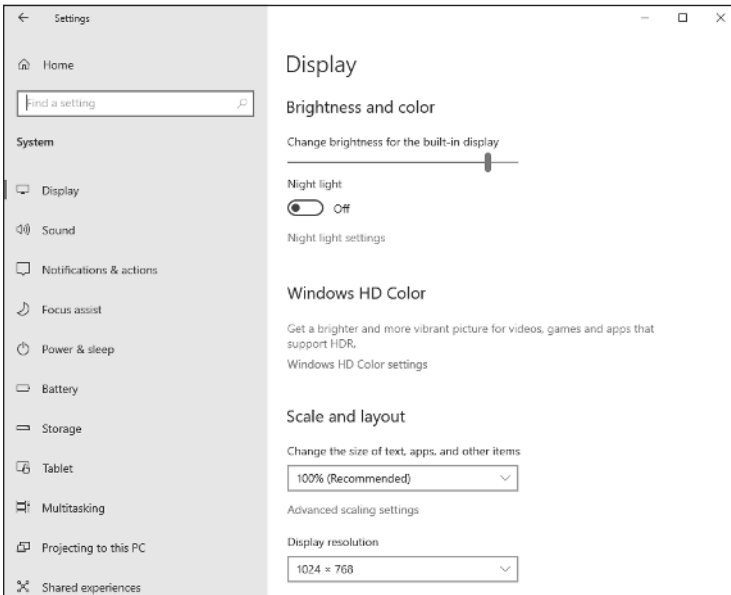
- Click Start and then click Settings (the gear icon).
- Press Windows+I. (The Windows key is the one that has the Windows logo on it; you’ll find it on the lowest row of the keyboard, to the left of the spacebar, between the Ctrl and Alt keys.)
- Click the Notifications icon on the far right of the taskbar and then click All Settings.
- In the taskbar’s Search box, type **se** (which should be enough to display the Settings app in the search results; if not, continue typing **settings** until you see Settings in the results) and then press Enter.
- If you have Cortana enabled (see Chapter 5), say “Hey Cortana” and then say “Open Settings.”
- Right-click the Start icon and then click Settings.

Whichever method you use, you see the Home screen of the Settings app, as shown in Figure 1.1.

From here, you can either use the Settings app’s Search box to locate the setting you want or click a category to see the subcategories and settings associated with that category. For example, Figure 1.2 shows the screen that appears when you click the System category. When you click a subcategory on the left, the settings for that subcategory appear on the right (such as for the Display subcategory shown in Figure 1.2). To return to the previous Settings screen, click the Back arrow in the top-left corner; to return directly to the Home screen, click Home.



1.1 The Home screen of the Settings app.



1.2 When you open a category, click a subcategory on the left to see its settings on the right.



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Use the taskbar's Search box to quickly search for the setting you want to work with. Click inside the taskbar's Search box, type **settings**, a space, and then begin typing the setting name. For example, to work with the Show More Tiles on Start setting, type **settings: show more**, then click Show More Tiles on Start from the search results that appear.

## Synchronizing settings between PCs

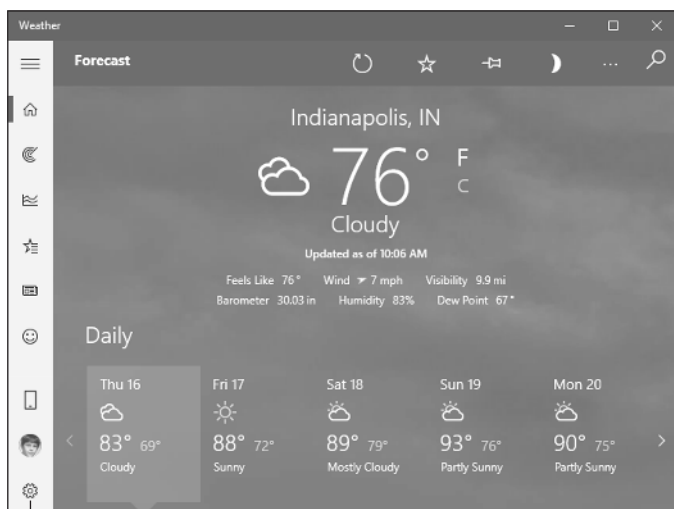
If you use the same Microsoft account to sign in to Windows on multiple devices, you can get a more consistent and more efficient experience by synchronizing your settings on all those devices. Here's how to set this up:

1. **Open the Settings app.**
2. **Click Accounts.**
3. **Click Sync Your Settings.** The Sync Your Settings screen appears.
4. **Make sure the Sync Settings switch is set to On.** Click it to toggle it On if needed.
5. **In the Individual Sync Settings section, set the switch to On for each type of setting you want synced.** The four setting types are Theme, Passwords, Language Preferences, and Other Windows Settings.

## Accessing an app's settings

Most apps also come with a collection of their own settings, which you can work with to get more out of the app or to customize the app to suit the way you work. For most Windows apps, there are two main ways to access settings:

- Open the app and click Settings (the gear icon), which usually appears in the lower-left corner of the screen (see Figure 1.3).
- In the Start menu, right-click the app, click More, and then click App Settings.



Settings

**1.3** For many Windows apps, click Settings (the gear icon) to access the app's options.

## Customizing the Start Menu

Although you can use keyboard shortcuts and features such as the taskbar to launch and work with apps and other features, to perform most of your Windows work, you need to negotiate the Start menu. Therefore, you can make your Windows chores easier and more efficient if you take a few moments to customize the Start menu to suit your needs.

### Pinning an app to the Start menu

If you have an app that doesn't appear as a tile on the Start menu, you usually open the app by first navigating the Start menu's apps list to locate the app, possibly negotiating one or more submenus along the way. For an app you use often, you can avoid this extra work by *pinning* the app so that it appears permanently on the right side of the Start menu. After you have pinned an app, you launch it by displaying the Start menu and clicking the app.

Follow these steps to pin an app to the Start menu:

- 1. Click Start.**
- 2. Locate the app that you want to pin to the Start menu.**
- 3. Right-click the app and then click Pin to Start.** A tile for the pinned app appears on the right side of the Start menu.



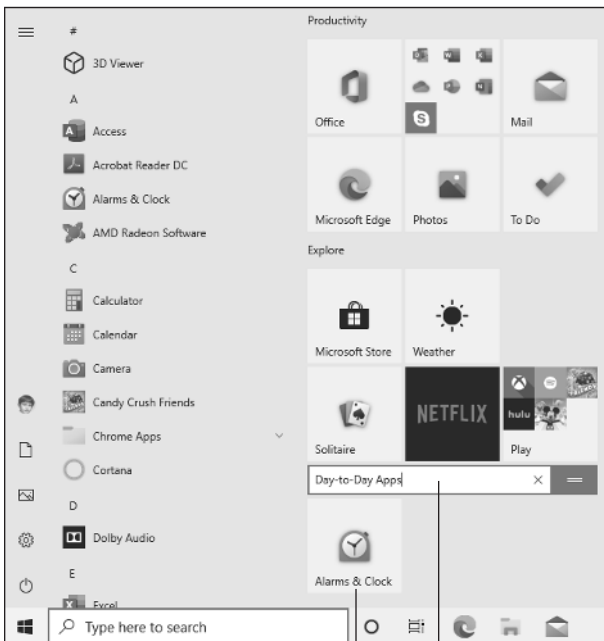
## Note

To remove an app tile from the Start menu, click Start, right-click the tile, and then click Unpin from Start.

## Arranging and sizing Start menu tiles

Here are some useful techniques for restructuring the Start menu's tiles to suit the way you work or play:

- **Move an app tile within the Start menu.** Click Start, then click and drag the app tile to its new position.
- **Group app tiles.** Move an app tile below any existing tile to create a new group. Hover the mouse pointer just above the moved app, then click the Name Group text box that appears. Type your group name (see Figure 1.4) and then press Enter. Move other apps into the new group as needed.



A new Start menu group

Type the group name here

**1.4** You can create groups to organize your Start menu apps.

- **Change the size of a Start menu tile.** Click Start, right-click the app's tile, click Resize, and then click the size you want. In all cases, you can choose either a Small or Medium square. With some apps, you can also choose either a Wide rectangle or a Large square.

## Customizing Start menu settings

The Start menu offers a few settings that you can tweak to customize how the Start menu works. Open the Settings app, click Personalization, and then click Start. This opens the Start screen (see Figure 1.5), which offers the following switches:

- **Show more tiles on Start.** Set this switch to On to expand the size of the Start menu to show more tiles.

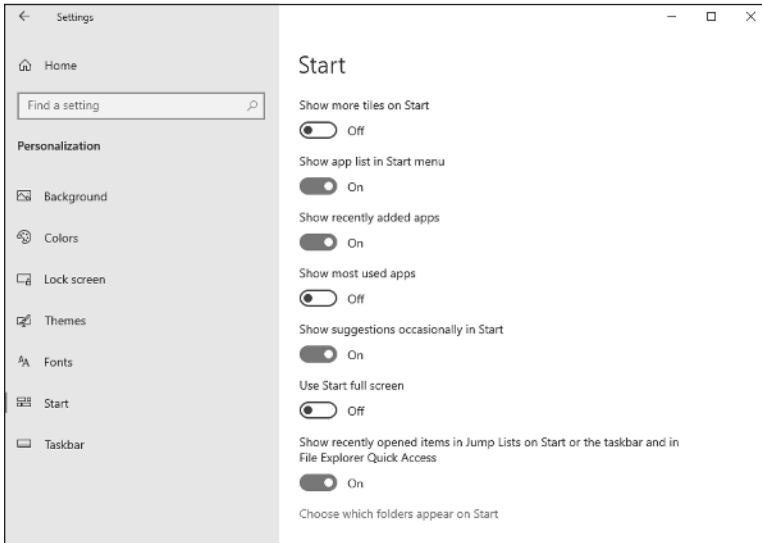


Genius

You can also widen the Start menu by dragging the right edge of the menu.

- **Show app list in Start menu.** Set this switch to Off to remove the list of installed apps from the Start menu. If you set this switch to Off, you can still access the apps by opening the Start menu and then clicking All Apps.
- **Show recently added apps.** Set this switch to On to see newly installed apps at the top of the Start menu's app list.
- **Show most used apps.** Set this switch to On to add a Most Used section to the top of the Start menu's app list. Windows uses the Most Used section to display the apps you launched most frequently.
- **Show suggestions occasionally on Start.** Set this switch to Off to prevent Windows from displaying suggestions (that is, ads) about which apps to install.
- **Use Start full screen.** Set this switch to On to have the Start menu take up the entire screen when you open it.
- **Show recently opened items in Jump Lists on Start or the taskbar and in File Explorer Quick Access.** Set this switch to On to see a Recent section when you right-click an app that enables you to open items such as documents.
- **Choose which folders appear on Start.** Click this link to open the Choose Which Folders Appear on Start screen, which includes a switch for each potential Start menu folder. For each switch, set the switch to On to display the folder, or Off to hide the folder.





1.5 Use the Start screen settings to personalize your Start menu.

## Customizing the Taskbar

The taskbar that runs across the bottom of the Windows screen gives you one-click access to the Start button, the Search box, the Cortana voice assistant, and Task View (see Chapter 5). The taskbar also enables you to switch to a running app (by clicking the app's taskbar button), access an app's recent documents (by right-clicking the app's button), and launch an app (by clicking its button; see the next section). In short, the taskbar is one of the most useful and most important features in Windows, so you need to know how to customize it to suit your needs. The next few sections tell you everything you need to know.

### Pinning an app to the taskbar

Pinning an app to the Start menu, as I discuss earlier in this chapter, is helpful because it puts the app just two clicks away. If you have an app that you use frequently, you might prefer to have that app just a single click away. You can achieve this by pinning the app to the taskbar. You can pin an app to the taskbar either from the Start menu or from the taskbar itself:

- **Pinning an app via the Start menu.** Open the Start menu, right-click the app that you want to pin to the taskbar, click More, and then click Pin to Taskbar.

- **Pinning an app via the Taskbar.** Launch the app that you want to pin to the taskbar, right-click the running app's taskbar icon, and then click Pin to Taskbar.

Either way, Windows adds an icon for the app to the taskbar.



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To change the order of the taskbar icons, drag a taskbar icon to the left or right and then drop it in the new position. Note that this technique applies not only to the icons pinned to the taskbar, but also to the icons for any running programs.



### Note

If you no longer want an app pinned to the taskbar, you should remove it to reduce taskbar clutter and provide more room for other app icons. To remove a pinned app icon, right-click the icon and then click Unpin from Taskbar.

## Customizing taskbar settings

The taskbar comes with a few settings that enable you to customize the look and operation of the taskbar, which can help you be more productive. Open the Settings app, click Personalization, and then click Taskbar. This opens the Taskbar screen, shown in Figure 1.6.

There are a ton of settings here, so here's a look at the most important ones:

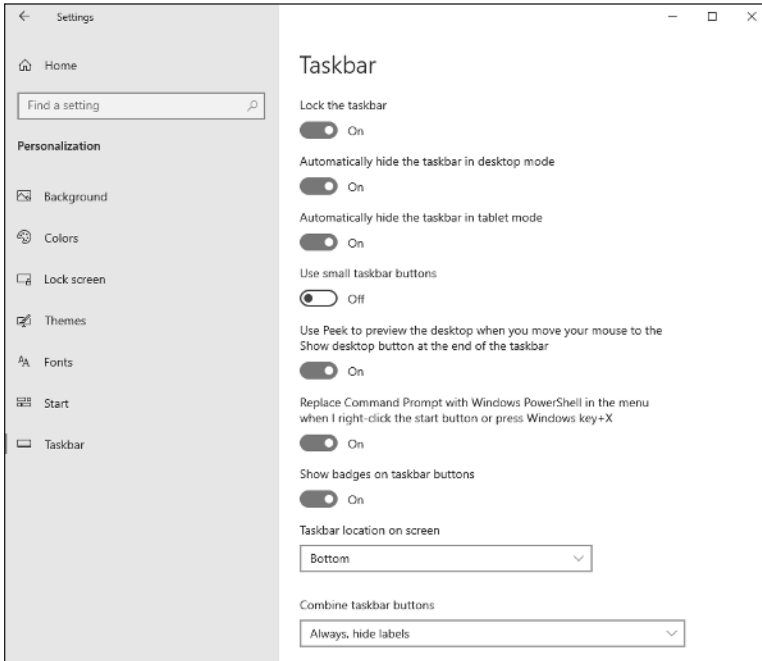
- **Lock the taskbar.** When this switch is On, you can't resize or move the taskbar, and you can't resize or move any taskbar toolbars. This is useful if you share your computer with other users and you don't want to waste time resetting the taskbar if someone else changes it.



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You can also toggle taskbar locking on and off by right-clicking an empty section of the taskbar and then clicking Lock the Taskbar.

- **Automatically hide the taskbar in desktop mode.** When this switch is On, Windows reduces the taskbar to a thin line at the bottom of the screen when you're not using it. This is useful if you want a bit more screen room for your applications. To redisplay the taskbar, move the mouse pointer to the bottom of the screen. Note, however, that you should consider leaving this option unchecked if you use the taskbar frequently; otherwise, auto-hiding it will slow you down because it takes Windows a second or two to restore the taskbar when you hover the mouse pointer over it.



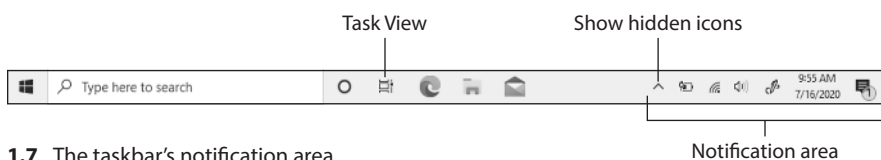
**1.6** Use the Taskbar screen to customize your taskbar.

- **Automatically hide the taskbar in tablet mode.** This is the same as the preceding switch, except it controls whether the taskbar is hidden when you use tablet mode. (To learn more about tablet mode, see Chapter 8.)
- **Use small taskbar buttons.** Set this switch to On to shrink the taskbar's program buttons. This not only reduces the overall height of the taskbar (so you get more room for the desktop and your programs), but it also enables you to populate the taskbar with more buttons.
- **Use Peek to preview the desktop.** . . . Set this switch to On to enable the Peek feature. When you have Peek activated, move the mouse pointer over the right edge of the taskbar, and Windows temporarily hides your open windows so that you can see the desktop. Move the mouse pointer off the right edge of the taskbar to restore your windows.
- **Show badges on taskbar buttons.** Set this switch to Off to prevent Windows from showing badges on taskbar buttons (such as the number of unread messages in the Mail app).

- **Taskbar location on screen.** Use this list to choose where you want to place the taskbar: Bottom, Left, Right, or Top. For example, if you want to maximize the available screen height, move the taskbar to the left or right side of the screen.
- **Combine taskbar buttons.** Use this list to choose how you want Windows to group taskbar buttons when an application has multiple windows or tabs open:
  - **Always hide labels.** Choose this option to have Windows always group similar taskbar buttons.
  - **When taskbar is full.** Choose this option to have Windows group similar taskbar buttons only when the taskbar has no more open space to display buttons.
  - **Never.** Choose this option to have Windows never group similar taskbar buttons.

## Customizing the taskbar's notification area

The notification area appears on the right side of the taskbar, to the right of the icons for the running and pinned apps, as shown in Figure 1.7.

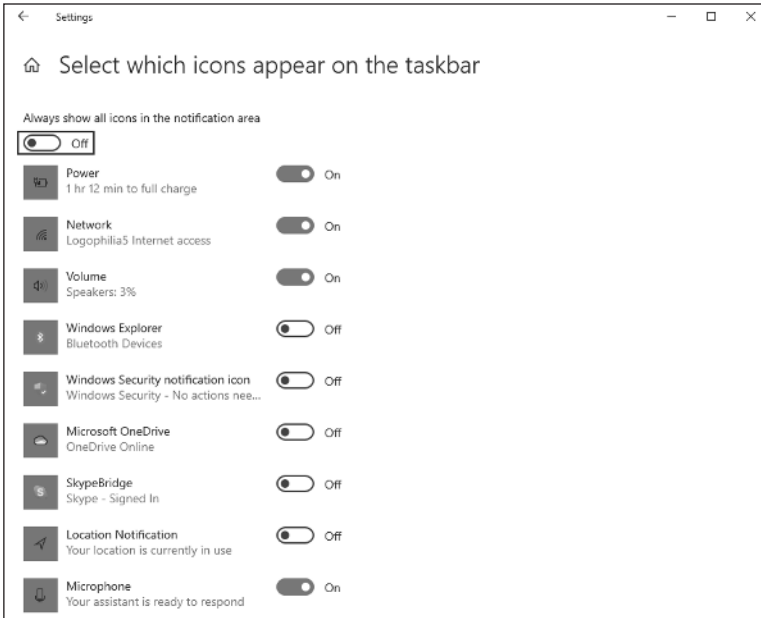


1.7 The taskbar's notification area.

You can click the Show Hidden Icons button to see your hidden icons.

The notification area shows only a few icons by default: Network, Volume, and Notifications, and notebook PCs also show the Power icon. You might want to customize the default arrangement. For example, many notification icons offer quick access to their programs' features when you right-click them. If there is an icon that you right-click frequently, you might want to configure the notification area to show the icon on the taskbar. Here are the steps to follow:

1. **In the taskbar's Search box, type select.**
2. **In the search results, click Select Which Icons Appear on the Taskbar.** The Settings app displays the Select Which Icons Appear on the Taskbar screen, as shown in Figure 1.8.



**1.8** Use the Select Which Icons Appear on the Taskbar screen to configure your notification area icons.

**3. Click the switch to On for each icon you want to display in the notification area.**



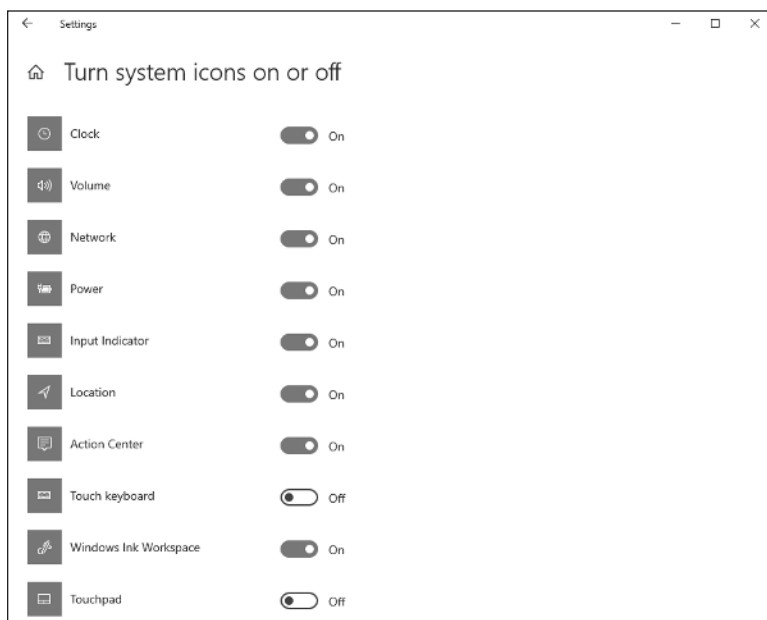
**Note**

If you want to show every icon on the taskbar, click the Always Show All Icons in the Notification Area switch to On.

**4. Click the Back arrow in the top-left corner of the Settings window.** Settings takes you to the Taskbar screen.

**5. Click Turn System Icons On or Off.** Settings opens the Turn System Icons On or Off screen, shown in Figure 1.9.

**6. Click the switch to Off for each system icon you want to prevent from appearing in the notification area.** Windows puts the new settings into effect.



**1.9** Use the Turn System Icons On or Off screen to toggle the display of system icons in the notification area.

## Customizing the Lock Screen

Locking your computer is a useful safety feature because it prevents unauthorized users from accessing your files and your network. There are two main ways to lock your computer:

- Open the Start menu, click your user icon on the left side of the menu, and then click Lock.
- Press Windows+L.

Rather than remembering to lock your computer, you can configure Windows to automatically lock the computer after it has been idle for a specified amount of time. Here are the steps to follow:

- 1. Open the Settings app.**
- 2. Click Personalization.** The Personalization settings appear.
- 3. Click Lock Screen.** The Lock Screen settings appear.

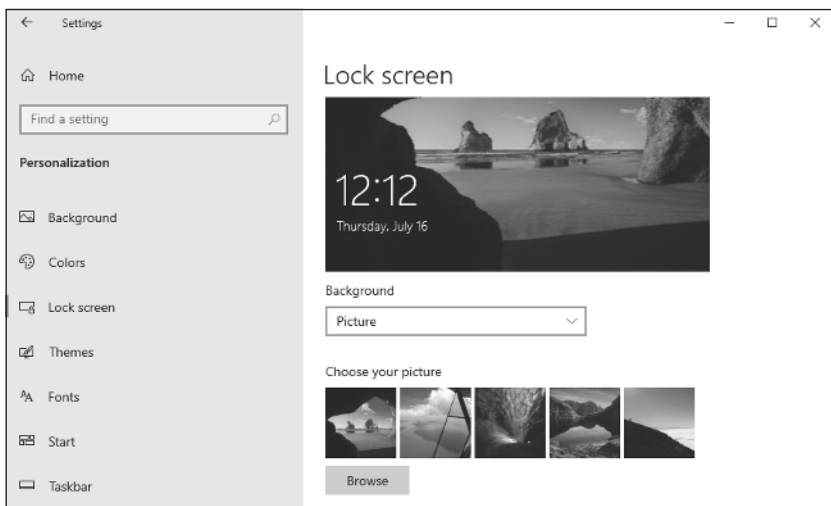
4. **Click the Screen Timeout Settings link.** The Power & Sleep settings appear.
5. **Use the Sleep list to choose the number of minutes of idle time after which Windows puts your PC to sleep (and, therefore, locks the PC).** If you have a tablet or notebook PC, be sure to set the sleep timeout both for when your PC is plugged in and when it is on battery power.

If you find yourself looking at the Lock screen frequently, you can improve the experience by customizing the Lock screen in two ways: by changing the background and by adding apps. The next two sections provide the details.

## Changing the Lock screen background

You can make your Lock screen more interesting by changing the image that appears as its background. Windows comes with several system pictures that you can use, or you can use one of your own photos. Here are the steps to follow to change the Lock screen background:

1. **Open the Settings app.**
2. **Click Personalization.** The Personalization settings appear.
3. **Click Lock Screen.** The Lock Screen settings appear, as shown in Figure 1.10.



**1.10** Use the Lock Screen settings to change the background image you see when you lock your PC.

- 4. Use the Background list to choose Picture.** If you want to use a series of Microsoft Bing photos as the Lock screen background, click Windows Spotlight, instead.
- 5. To use a system image, click the thumbnail of the picture that you want to use.** You can skip the rest of these steps.
- 6. To use one of your own pictures, instead, click Browse.** The Open dialog box appears.
- 7. Click the picture that you want to use.**
- 8. Click Choose Picture.** The image appears the next time that you lock your computer.

## Adding an app to the Lock screen

When you lock your PC, Windows displays status icons for some apps. For example, the status icon for the Mail app shows the number of unread messages. The Lock screen also shows any new notifications that appear for the Calendar app, such as an upcoming appointment. If you lock your computer frequently, you can make the Lock screen even more useful by adding icons for other apps, including ones that support notifications.

Before getting started, you need to understand the difference between a quick status and a detailed status on the Lock screen:

- **Quick status.** This means that the Lock screen shows only a small icon for an app, and that icon displays some sort of indication that you have new, unread, or pending items in the app. For example, the Mail app shows the number of unread email messages. You can display a quick status for up to seven apps.
- **Detailed status.** This means that the Lock screen shows more information from the app. For example, if you have an upcoming event in the Calendar app, the Lock screen shows the details of that event, including the event title, location, and time. You can display the detailed status for only a single app.

Follow these steps to control which applications appear on the Lock screen:

- 1. Open the Settings app.**
- 2. Click Personalization.** The Personalization settings appear.
- 3. Click Lock Screen.** The Lock Screen settings appear.



- 4. To choose which app displays its detailed status, click the button that appears under the Choose One App to Show Details Status on the Lock Screen heading, then choose an app from the list that appears.** If you don't want to see a detailed status, click None.
- 5. To set a quick status icon for an app, click a button that appears under the Choose Which Apps Show Quick Status on the Lock Screen heading, then choose an app from the list that appears.** If you don't want an app associated with the icon, you can click None.
- 6. Repeat Step 5 to set the other quick status icons.** Windows puts the new settings into effect, and the apps will now appear on the Lock screen.

## Extending Your Desktop with Multiple Monitors

If you have a second monitor or even an extra TV that's relatively modern, you can improve your productivity and efficiency by connecting that display to your PC. To work with an extra monitor, you need two things (besides the extra monitor):

- Your PC must have an unused video output port that's compatible with the video input port on the monitor.
- A compatible cable to connect the ports.

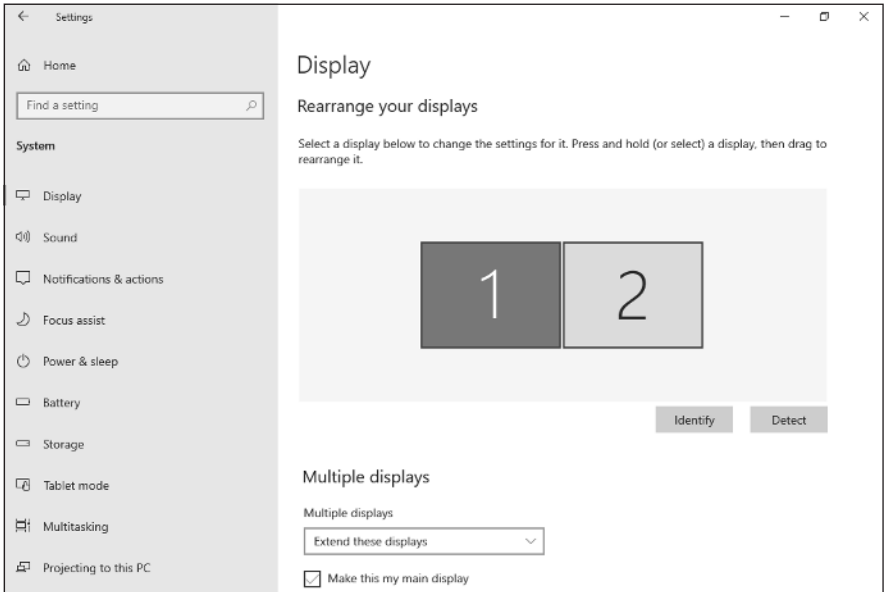
There are many different types of video ports. However, all modern PCs and monitors (including TVs) use HDMI ports connected with an HDMI cable.

After you've connected your PC and the external monitor, you then need to configure Windows to extend the desktop to the second monitor.

Here are the steps to follow to connect and set up a second monitor:

- 1. Connect the second monitor to your PC.** That is, you perform the following general steps:
  - a.** Connect one end of the cable to the compatible port on the back of the monitor.
  - b.** Connect the other end of the cable to the compatible port on the back of your PC.
- 2. Open the Settings app and click System.** The System settings appear.
- 3. Click Display.** The Display settings appear.

- 4. Use the Multiple Displays list to choose Extend These Displays, as shown in Figure 1.11.** Windows asks you to confirm the display changes.



- 1.11** Use the Multiple Displays list to choose Extend These Displays.

- 5. Click Keep Changes.**
- 6. Click the monitor that you want to set as the main display.**
- 7. Click Make This My Main Display.** Windows connects to the second monitor and uses the selected monitor as your main display.



**Genius**

After extending your desktop, you might find that your mouse pointer stops at the right edge of the left screen. This means that you need to swap the icons of the left and right monitors as they appear in the Display settings screen. To do that, drag the left monitor icon to the right of the other monitor icon (or vice versa).



## Note

If you later decide you want to stop using the external monitor, follow Steps 2 and 3 in this section to open the Display settings, then use the Multiple Displays list to choose Show Only on 1. You can also usually revert to using just the original PC screen by disconnecting the monitor from your computer.

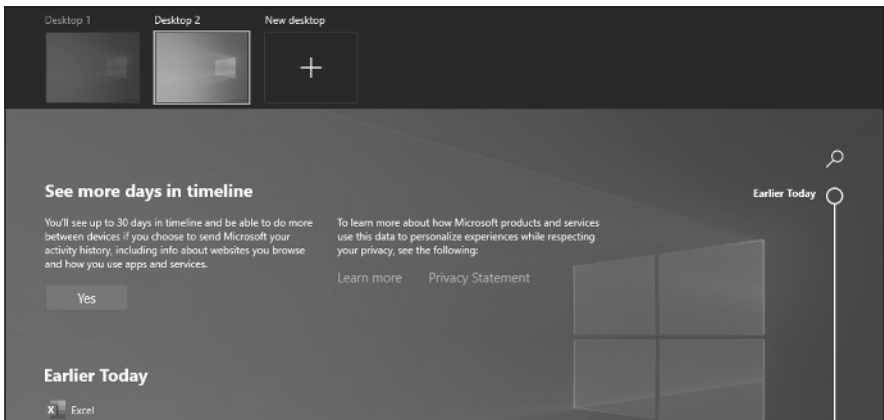
## Setting Up Multiple Desktops

You can make your PC screen easier to manage and less cluttered by organizing your running programs into two or more desktops. Each desktop includes only the windows of the programs that you've assigned to that desktop. For example, you might have a work desktop that includes only a word processor, a spreadsheet, and Microsoft Edge for research; a social desktop that includes only Mail, People, and Calendar; and a media desktop that includes only Music, Photos, and Videos. You can quickly switch from one desktop to another.

### Adding a new desktop

Here are the steps to follow to add another desktop to Windows:

1. **In the taskbar, click Task View.** I pointed out this icon earlier in Figure 1.7. You can also open Task View by pressing Windows+Tab.
2. **Click New Desktop.** Windows creates a new desktop. Windows names this Desktop 2 and your original desktop is named Desktop 1, as shown in Figure 1.12.



**1.12** In the Task View screen, your desktops appear at the top, named Desktop 1, Desktop 2, and so on.



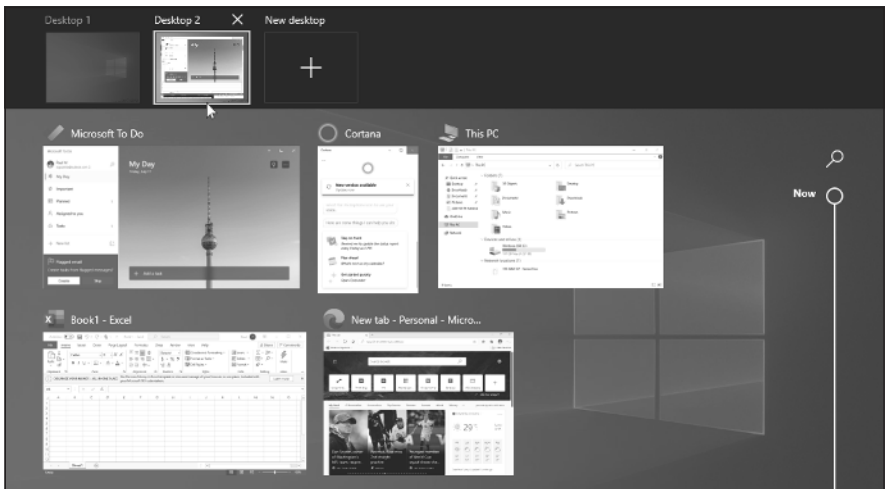
Genius

You can also create a new desktop by pressing Windows+Ctrl+D.

## Switching to another desktop

The easiest way to populate a desktop is to switch to that desktop and then open the apps you want to run. Here are the steps to follow to switch to another desktop:

1. **In the taskbar, click Task View.** I pointed out this icon earlier in Figure 1.7. You can also press Windows+Tab.
2. **If you're not sure which desktop you want, you can see the apps running on a desktop by hovering the mouse pointer over the desktop.** Task View displays thumbnails of the desktop's running apps, as shown in Figure 1.13.



**1.13** In the Task View screen, hover the mouse pointer over a desktop to see thumbnails of the desktop's running apps.

3. **Click the desktop you want to use.** Windows switches to that desktop and displays its running programs. Any new programs you launch will now appear only in the selected desktop.



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You can also navigate the desktops without using Task View. Press and hold Windows+Ctrl, then press either the left arrow or right arrow key until you see the desktop you want, and then release all keys.

## Moving an app to a different desktop

If an app is running in one desktop, but you'd prefer to have it running in a different desktop, following these steps to move it:

- 1. In the taskbar, click Task View.** I pointed out this icon earlier in Figure 1.7. You can also press Windows+Tab.
- 2. Right-click the app you want to move.**
- 3. Click Move To.**
- 4. Click the desktop to which you want the program moved.** You can also click New Desktop to move the program to a new desktop. Windows moves the program to the selected desktop.



Note

To close a desktop, click Task View (or press Windows+Tab) to display the desktop thumbnails. Position the mouse pointer over the desktop you want to close and then click Close (X). If the desktop contained running programs, Windows moves them to your original desktop.

