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1 Windows 11 interface

Windows 11 provides a user interface for modern computing needs so that you can get more done, faster. This chapter introduces the Windows 11 operating system, showing how to become familiar with its interface. It also shows how to use some of the less common but still very useful features, the Registry Editor, and the Run commands.

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Obtaining Windows 11

Windows 11 is an online service, rather than just a stand-alone operating system. This means that by default, Windows 11 is obtained and downloaded online, with subsequent updates and upgrades also provided online on a regular basis.

The main ways of installing Windows 11, for free, are:

- **Using Windows Update** – For upgrading from a previous installed version of Windows 10, retaining the installed applications and settings. This can be done through the **Settings** app (select **Windows Update** and click on the **Check for updates** button).
- **Microsoft website** – Visit the software download page on the Microsoft website (**microsoft.com/en-us/software-download/windows11**) to use the **Windows 11 Installation Assistant** to download Windows 11, as a replacement for an existing version of Windows 10.

- **Preinstalled** – Buy a new PC or laptop with Windows 11 already installed.

Some of the steps that the installation will go through are:

- **Personalize**. These are settings that will be applied to your version of Windows 11. These settings can also be selected within the **Settings** app once Windows 11 has been installed.
- **Settings**. You can choose to have express settings applied, or customize them.
- **Microsoft account**. You can set up a Microsoft account during installation, or once you have started Windows 11.
- **Privacy**. Certain privacy settings can be applied during the setup process for Windows 11.

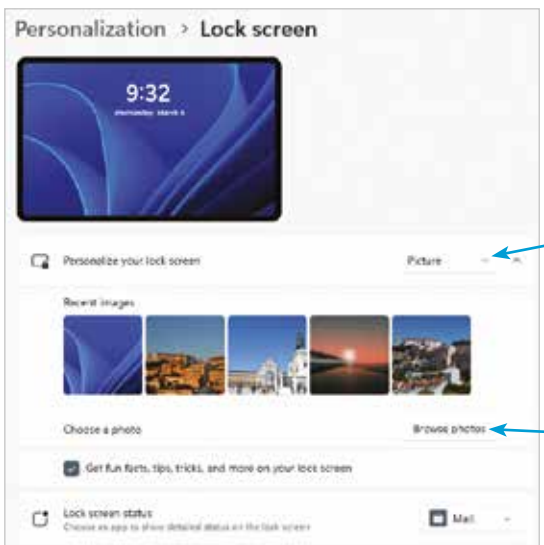
For more information about installing Windows 11, see Chapter 9.

If you do not already have Windows 10 installed on your PC, a clean copy of Windows 11 can still be installed from a DVD. However, this will have to be paid for, rather than a free online upgrade from Windows 10.

Signing in

Lock screen

The first thing you'll see when you start up is the Lock screen, which by default shows the time/date, power, and network status. The **Lock screen** is necessary because Windows 11 is a touch-supportive operating system that requires a protective barrier to prevent accidental input. Microsoft has evolved this basic function by enabling users to customize the screen by changing its background and by specifying various notifications, fun facts, tips and tricks to be displayed. This can be done within **Settings** > **Personalization** > **Lock screen**.



For details about accessing the **Settings** app, see page 11.

Click in the **Personalize your lock screen** box and select an option from **Picture**, **Slideshow** or **Windows Spotlight**, to use this on the Lock screen. Click the **Browse photos** button to select a photo on your PC to use on the Lock screen.

Sign-in screen

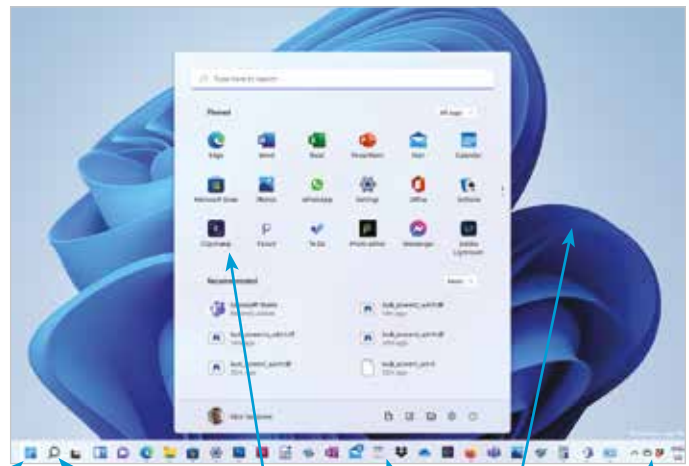
Tap or click anywhere on the Lock screen to reveal the **Sign-in screen**, where you can enter your user password or PIN to sign in.

Sign-in options can be specified in **Settings** > **Accounts** > **Sign-in options**.

Start screen

After signing in to a Windows 11 system you will see the **Start screen** in Desktop mode:

Start screen in Desktop mode



The **Start** button is where the **Start** menu can be accessed from. The **Taskbar** remains at the bottom of the screen, regardless of whichever different apps are being used, unless specified otherwise from within the Settings app.

The **system tray** notification area contains icons that give access to:

- **Battery** status and power settings.
- **Network** status and settings.
- **Volume**-level control.
- **Notification Center** for notification messages and system settings.
- **Clock** date and time settings.
- **Show hidden icons**.

Click the **Start** button to see the **Start** menu, from where you can access a full list of apps, from the **All apps** button.

Windows 11 can also be used on the Microsoft tablet, known as Microsoft Surface and Surface Pro. These have touchscreen functionality but otherwise their operation is similar to devices using the PC version of Windows 11, which is the one used throughout this book.

Quick tips for getting started

This book is full of tips and tricks for using Windows 11, but here are three that you can use to quickly get up and running:

- Click the **Start** button to access the **Start** menu for accessing all of the apps on your computer and also recently-accessed items.

- Click the **Settings** button on the Taskbar for a huge range of options for customizing the look, feel and functionality of your Windows 11 device.

- Click on these three icons in the **system tray** to access the **Quick Settings** panel, which can be used for several tasks, such as connecting to a Wi-Fi network, connecting to Bluetooth, accessing accessibility settings, setting the screen brightness and adjusting the system volume.

Items in the system tray can be customized in **Settings** > **Personalization** > **Taskbar** > **Other system tray icons**.

Start button

The **Start** button has been a significant part of Windows computing for numerous versions of the operating system. There have been various changes to the **Start** button over the years and it has again been redesigned in Windows 11, with the main difference being it occupies a more central position on the screen, as opposed to being located in the left-hand corner.

Using the Start button

The **Start** button provides access to the apps on your Windows 11 computer and also to the enhanced Start menu.

1. Click on the **Start** button at the bottom left-hand side of the Taskbar

2. The **Start** menu is displayed

3. The Start menu contains access to all of the apps on your computer, and also recommended items

4. Other items can also be accessed from the **Start** button by right-clicking on it; see page 18

Items on the Start menu can be customized from the **Personalization** > **Start** section of the Settings app. The Start menu and the Taskbar can be viewed in either **Dark** or **Light** mode, which can be selected in **Personalization** > **Colors** > **Choose your mode.**

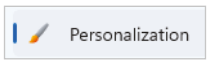
Click on the **Power** button on the Start menu to access options for **Sleep**, **Shut down** or **Restart**.

Repositioning the Start button

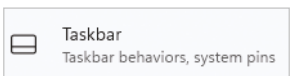
Although the **Start** button has moved into a more central position, along with the Taskbar, it is still possible to restore it to the left-hand corner, if desired. This is done by moving the whole of the Taskbar to the left. To do this:

1. Click on the **Settings** app on the Taskbar or the Start menu

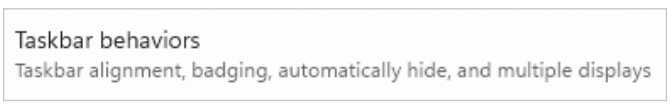
2. Click on the **Personalization** tab



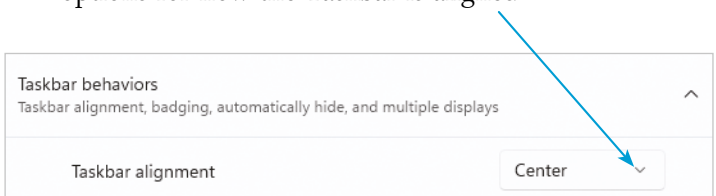
3. Click on the **Taskbar** option



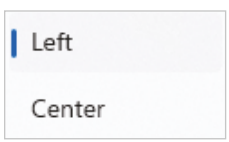
4. Click on the **Taskbar behaviors** option



5. Click here in the **Taskbar alignment** panel to select options for how the Taskbar is aligned



6. Click on the **Left** option to align the Taskbar to the left-hand side, situating the **Start** button in the left-hand corner



In Step 6, all of the icons on the Taskbar are aligned to the left, in addition to the **Start** button.

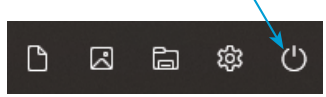
Start menu

The **Start** menu has been a permanent fixture in Windows, but its appearance and functionality have changed significantly over the years. This evolution continues with Windows 11, with a newly-designed Start menu. This is where you can access areas within your computer, perform certain functions, and also access apps from a variety of locations. To use the Start menu:

1. Click on the **Start** button to access the **Start** menu. **Pinned** apps are shown at the top of the Start menu, with **Recommended** items below. Click on an item to open it

2. Click here to access your own account settings or sign out from your account

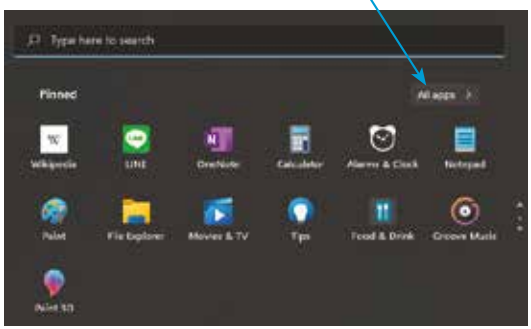
3. Click on the **Power** button for options to **Sleep** your computer, **Shut down** or **Restart**



Some of the default items on the bottom toolbar of the Start menu can be customized to a certain extent (see page 17).

The options in Step 3 can also be accessed by right-clicking on the **Start** button and clicking on the **Shut down or sign out** button.

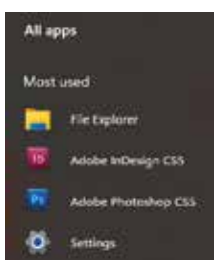
4 Click on the **All apps** button at the top of the **Pinned** section, to view all of the apps on your computer



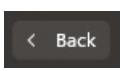
If the **Pinned** section extends beyond three rows, scroll up and down to view more items, or click on these buttons at the right-hand side of the Pinned section.

5 Scroll up and down the **All apps** section to view the available apps. Click on one to open it

At the top of the **All apps** window is a list of your **Most used** apps. This changes, depending on which apps you use most regularly.



6 Click on the **Back** button in the top right-hand corner of the **All apps** panel, to go back to the main Start menu

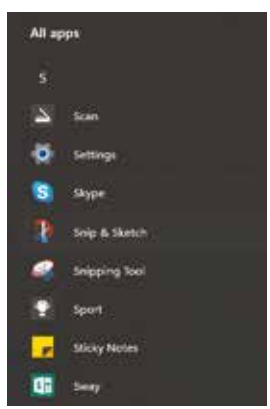


...cont'd

7 On the **All apps** screen, click on one of the alphabetic headings; e.g. B

8 An alphabetic grid is displayed

9 Click on a character on the alphabetic grid to go to the relevant section



Hot tip

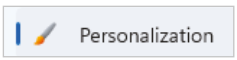
Use the Search box at the top of the Start menu to search for specific apps.

Customizing the Start menu

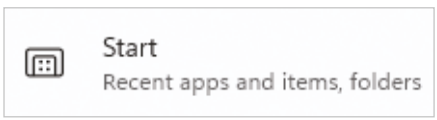
Windows 11 is very adaptable and can be customized in several ways so that it works best for you. This includes the Start menu, which can be set to behave in certain ways and have specific items added to it. To do this:

1. Click on the **Settings** app on the Taskbar

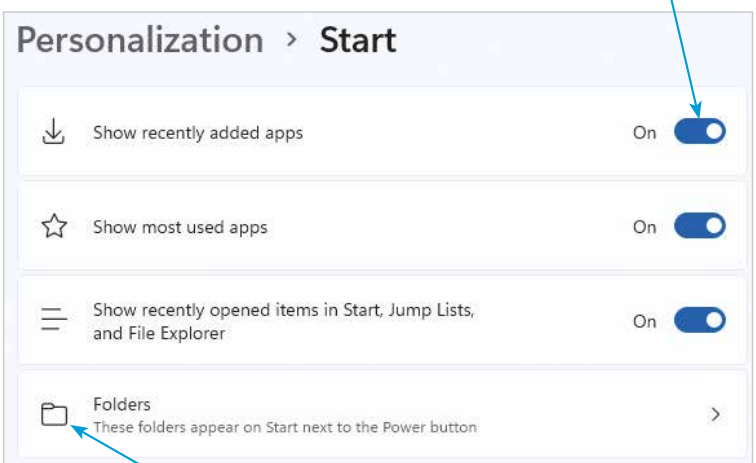
2. Click on the **Personalization** tab



3. Click on the **Start** option



4. Under **Start**, select whether to show recently-added apps, show most-used apps, or show recently-opened items, on the Start menu



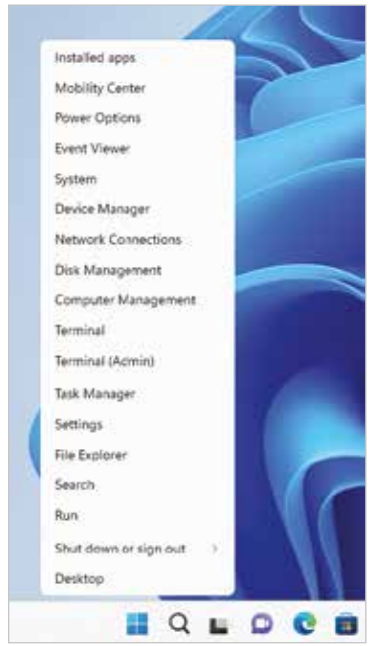
5. Click on the **Folders** option to select items that appear on the Start menu

Recently-added and most-used apps appear at the top of the **All apps** section of the Start menu, if these options are turned **On**.

More menus

Power User menu

Right-click on the **Start** button to open the Power User menu – a menu of options likely to be of interest to advanced users:



Hot tip

You can also open the Power User menu by pressing **WinKey** + **X**.

Task View

Click the **Task View** button to reveal a thumbnail of each open app on the Start screen:

Hot tip

You can also open **Task View** by pressing **WinKey** + **Tab**.

Hot tip

Windows' **Task List** can also be used to show open apps by holding down the **Alt** key then pressing the **Tab** key.

Tap or click to select the app you want to work with, or press **WinKey** + **Tab** again to close Task View.

Navigation

In its drive for Windows 11 to be all-encompassing, Microsoft has made it possible to navigate the interface in three different ways: by touchpad (touch), the mouse, and the keyboard.

Touch

Touch gestures, for devices that support this functionality, include swiping, sliding, tapping, and pinching. The best way to get to grips with these is to experiment. The following, however, will get you off to a good start:

Tap – Opens, selects or activates whatever you tap (similar to clicking with a mouse).

Tap and hold – Shows further information about an item or opens a context menu (similar to right-clicking with a mouse).

Pinch or stretch – Visually zooms in or out, like on a website, map or picture.

Rotate – Some items can be rotated by placing your fingers on them and turning your hand.

Slide to scroll – Dragging your finger across the screen scrolls through items (similar to scrolling a mouse wheel).

Slide to arrange – Drag an item around the screen with your finger to position it (similar to dragging with a mouse).

Swipe to select – A short, quick movement will select an item and often bring up app commands.

Swipe or slide from right edge – Opens the Notification Center.

Swipe or slide from left edge – Opens the Task View feature.

Swipe or slide from top edge – Enables you to view the title bar in full-screen apps.

Swipe or slide from bottom edge – Enables you to view the Taskbar in full-screen apps.

In many cases, the touch commands available are dependent on the application in use. For example, various rotational commands can be used to manipulate objects in drawing and layout applications such as Microsoft PowerPoint.

Touch gestures do not work with all touchpads, and they generally work best with precision touchpads. To check this, look in **Settings** > **Bluetooth & devices** > **Touchpad**.

Mouse

Using the mouse to get around in Windows 11 is no different from any other operating system. The trick is knowing where to position the mouse to reveal the menus and features provided by the interface.

Keyboard

Those of you who use the Start screen without the benefit of a touchscreen are well advised to get acquainted with the various keyboard commands relevant to it. In many cases, just as with keyboard commands and shortcuts in general, they are often quicker than using the mouse.

There are actually a whole bunch of these commands – a full list is shown on pages 148-150. The following are some of the more useful ones:

An important key is the Windows key, also called **WinKey**. Pressing this key instantly opens the Start screen menu regardless of where the user is. It can also be used in conjunction with other keys to perform other actions. For example, **WinKey** + **X** opens the **Power User** menu, as shown on page 18.

The **Home** and **End** keys jump to the beginning or the end of a line of text. The **Enter** key activates a highlighted action; e.g. if a button is highlighted in a dialog window.

WinKey + **Tab** opens a **Task View** list that allows the user to switch to a different app – by scrolling through thumbnails using the arrow keys, then pressing the **Enter** key to select an open app.

Holding down the **Alt** key then pressing **Tab** opens a horizontal **Task List**. You can move between thumbnails by pressing **Tab** then release **Alt** to open the selected app. Note you must have at least two apps running for **WinKey** + **Tab** and **Alt** + **Tab** to work.

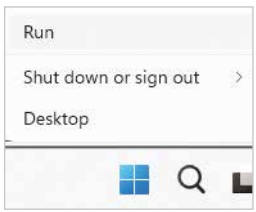
A rarely-used key known as the **Context Menu** key (usually located close to the space bar) brings up a menu of related options when pressed in an open app. The context menu typically appears at the top of the app window.

Spinning the mouse wheel while on the **Lock screen** will open the **Sign-in screen**.

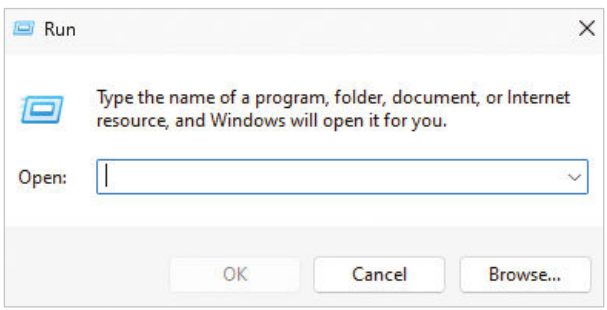
Run commands

Run commands won't concern the majority of Windows users, but if you are looking to get more out of your computing experience and delve slightly deeper into Windows 11, it is an excellent option for accessing a range of functions that you might not otherwise come across. Run commands are used at appropriate points in the book and they can be accessed as follows:

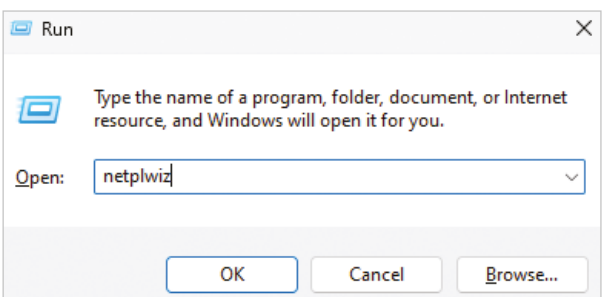
1. Right-click the **Start** button and click the **Run** button on the Power User menu



2. A **Run** dialog window appears



3. Enter the required command into the **Open** text box and click the **OK** button



The **Run** dialog window can also be accessed by pressing **WinKey** + **R** on the keyboard.

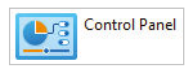
The Control Panel

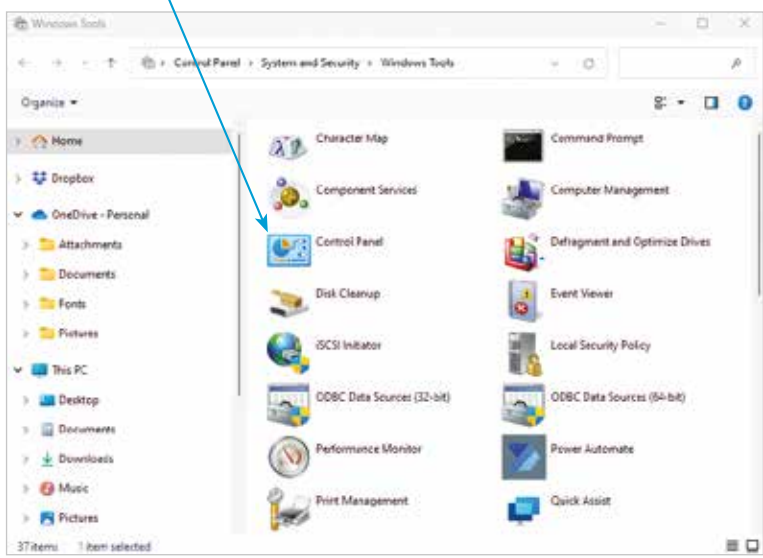
The **Control Panel** has been part of numerous versions of Windows, providing access to a range of useful functions that can be applied to the operation of a Windows PC. However, as Windows has evolved, many of the functions of the Control Panel have been moved to the Settings app, particularly with Windows 10 and then Windows 11. Despite this, the Control Panel remains a valuable resource for a number of options, particularly if you want to go a little bit deeper into the inner workings of Windows.

The Control Panel is referenced to in various places throughout the book, and it is important to be aware of it and how to get the most out of it. To do this:

1. Click the **Start** button, click the **All apps** button and click the **Windows Tools** button on the **Start** menu

2. Double-click the **Control Panel** button in the **Windows Tools** window





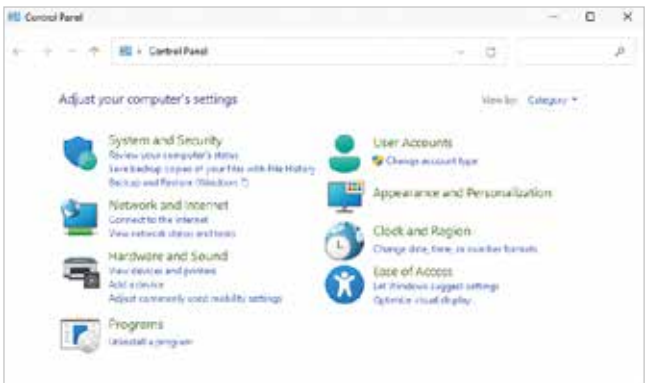
Hot tip

The **Windows Tools** option is another important one for anyone looking to develop their skills with Windows 11.

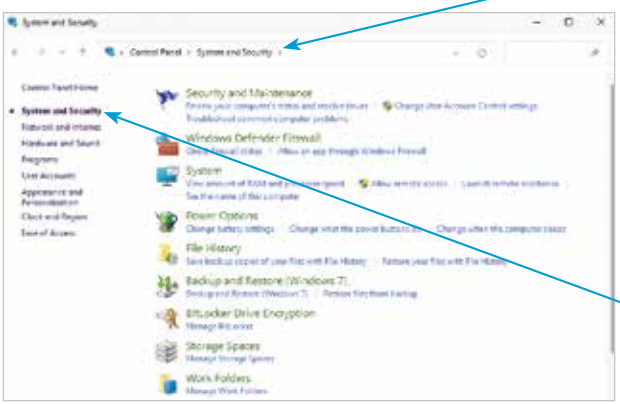
Hot tip

To make the Control Panel readily available, it can be pinned to the Taskbar so that it is always a click away. To do this, right-click on the **Control Panel** icon in Step 2 and click the **Pin to taskbar** option.

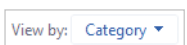
3 The main Control Panel categories are displayed, with some of the sub-categories listed below the main headings



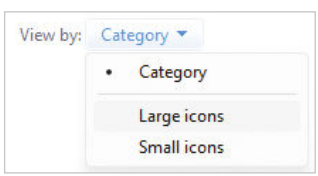
4 Click one of the main categories to view the items within it, and access their functionality by clicking on them



5 Click in the **View by** box in Step 3 to access options for how the Control Panel is displayed



6 Select an option for displaying items within the Control Panel



As you move through the categories and sub-categories of the Control Panel, the location is shown in the address bar at the top of the window.

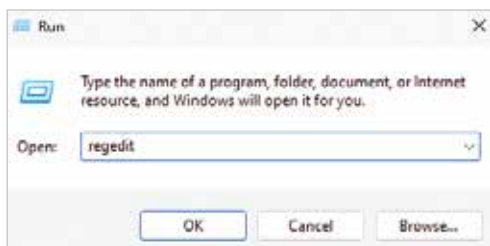
Use the left-hand sidebar to move to the other main categories within the Control Panel, or back to the homepage.

The **View by: Large icons/Small icons** option displays all items within the Control Panel, rather than just the main categories.

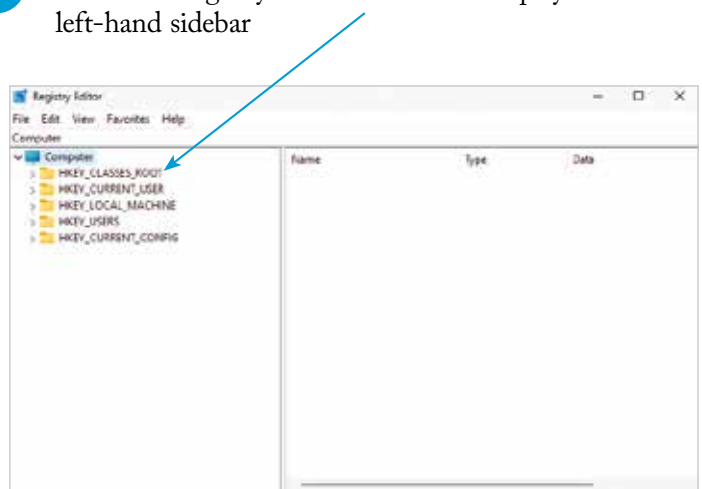
Registry Editor

Another important function that appears throughout the book is the **Registry Editor**. This is an option within Windows where more advanced users can make changes to some of the inner workings of Windows that are not immediately obvious to most general users. It can be used to make administration-level changes, such as changing permissions for users and changing various hardware and software configurations. Some of these options are listed in the book, with instructions of how to use and navigate the Registry Editor. However, it is useful to be aware of its locations and how it operates. To do this:

1. Access Windows Tools, as shown on page 22, and double-click the **Registry Editor** option, or right-click the **Start** button and click the **Run** option. In the **Run** dialog box, enter **regedit** and click the **OK** button

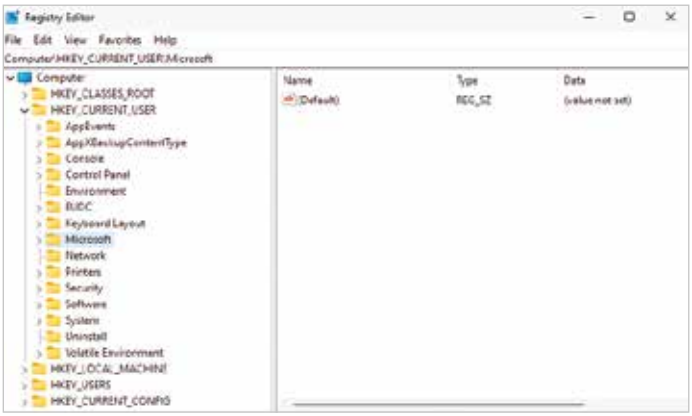


2. The main Registry Editor folders are displayed in the left-hand sidebar



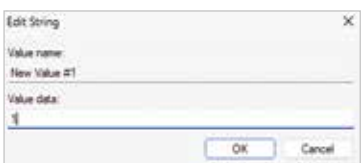
As with the Control Panel, it is a good idea to pin the Registry Editor to the Taskbar so that it is readily available. To do this, access the **Registry Editor** icon in Step 1 and click the **Pin to taskbar** option.

3 Click the main folders in the left-hand sidebar to expand them. Keep doing this with sub-folders, as required, until you can locate the folder that you need



4 To use the functionality of the Registry Editor, different strings and values usually have to be accessed or set. To do this, right-click on an item in the right-hand window and select **New** > **Key**

5 Enter a value, as required, and click the **OK** button (relevant values for the Registry Editor will be noted throughout the book, where they are required)



Apps

Windows 11 comes with a number of useful apps for productivity and entertainment. In addition, there are thousands more available from the Microsoft Store.

Many of these apps display content in real time. For example, there is a **Weather** app that shows a constantly-updated 10-day forecast and a **News** app that displays current stories and images.

These apps are user-friendly and simple. As with the Windows 11 interface itself, Microsoft has designed the apps to be clean and straightforward with the minimum of extraneous clutter – the app's content is intended to dominate. A consequence of this is that traditional navigational aids such as toolbars, menus, and preview panes are in evidence to a much lesser degree.

To use Microsoft terminology, the Universal Windows apps are "immersive applications" – which basically means they run best in full-screen mode. For users with a large, wide-screen monitor, this is definitely a restriction. However, this is mitigated to a certain extent by a feature called **Snap**. This makes it possible to have up to four apps running side by side – see pages 84-85 for details.

Traditional Windows apps, such as **Notepad**, will still work in Windows 11. It's important to be aware that Universal Windows apps are different from their traditional Windows equivalents.

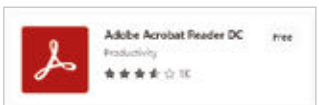
It is possible to install third-party apps on Windows 11 – see page 47.

Sourcing and installing apps

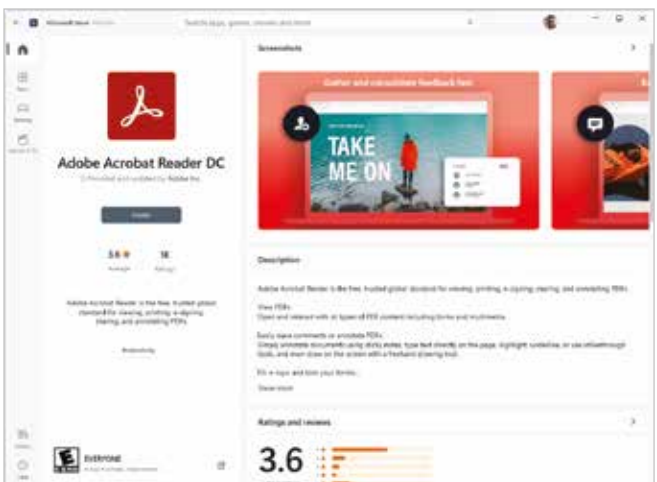
In order to provide as secure a computing environment as possible, official Windows 11 apps are only available from the Microsoft Store. This effectively "sandboxes" them and, as a result, users are much less likely to introduce viruses and malware to their computers via downloaded software.

To access the Microsoft Store, click the **Microsoft Store** icon on the Taskbar or on the Start menu. You will then be asked to sign in with your Microsoft account.

The first things you see on the **Home** screen are promoted apps and four category buttons in the left-hand sidebar for **Home**, **Apps**, **Gaming**, and **Movies & TV**.



At the top of the window is a Search box that can locate an app by keyword. Using the sections, screens or search takes you to the app's page where there are typically **Screenshots**, a **Description**, and **Ratings and reviews**. Below the app's title is an install button labeled **Free** or with the purchase price. Once you've chosen an app, and paid if required, click the install button to download the app and see it appear on the Start menu's A-Z list.



Selecting any "Top..." category in the Store provides a filter to refine your search.

Check out its **Ratings and reviews** before choosing an app.

By using the same Microsoft account, all official apps installed on your PC will also be available on any other Windows 11 devices you may have.

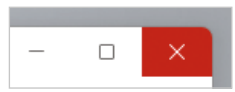
…cont'd

Closing apps

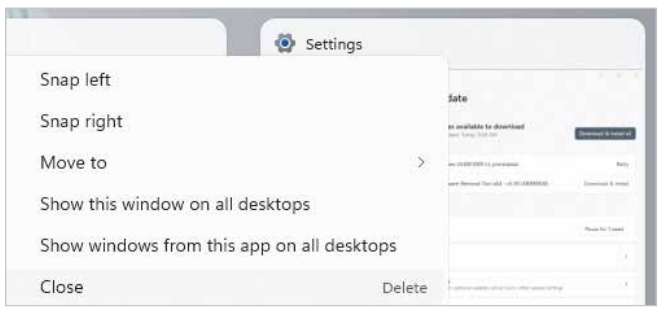
Closing an app is very simple to do, but it must be pointed out that usually it is not actually necessary to close apps. This is because when a new app is opened, other running apps are switched to a state of suspension in which they use very little in the way of system resources.

However, there may be situations in which it is desirable or even necessary to close down an app. Here are five ways to do this:

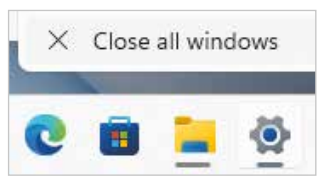
- Simply press **Alt** + **F4** – this kills the app instantly.
- Click or tap the **X** (**Close**) button on the app window's title bar.



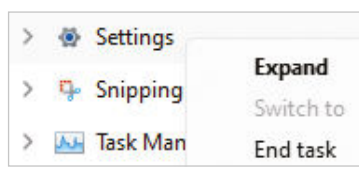
- Right-click the app in **Task View** and select **Close**.



- Right-click the app icon on the Taskbar and select **Close all windows** in the pop-up context menu that appears.



- Press **Ctrl** + **Shift** + **Esc** to open **Task Manager**, then right-click to select the app and click the **End task** option.



Windows 11 minimizes system resource usage – so, a whole bunch of apps can be open at the same time without significant performance loss.

If your Taskbar and desktop disappear unexpectedly, Windows Explorer may have crashed. Press **Ctrl** + **Shift** + **Esc** to open **Task Manager**, then click **File** > **New Task** and type **Explorer.exe** – then click **OK** to restart Windows Explorer.

You can also use **Task Manager** to troubleshoot startup problems and identify memory-hogging apps.