Computer Basics

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ABSOLUTE BEGINNER'S GUIDE

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Tenth Edition

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Part II

Using Windows

3

Getting to Know Windows 11

As you learned in Chapter 1, "How Personal Computers Work," Windows 11 is the *operating system* that makes your hardware work. An operating system does what its name implies—*operates* your computer *system*, working in the background every time you turn on your PC.

To use your new computer, you need to learn the ins and outs of operating Windows. Fortunately, it's easy to learn.

Say Hello to Windows 11

The Windows 11 desktop is what you see when you first turn on your computer, after everything turns on and boots up. Windows is your gateway to every program and app you run on your computer and to all the documents and files you view and edit.

Starting and Logging In to Windows

Starting your computer and logging in to Windows is a simple affair that starts when you push the power button on your PC.

After a few seconds (during which your system unit beeps and whirs a little bit), the Windows Lock screen appears. As you can see in Figure 3.1, the Lock screen shows today's date and time against a pretty photographic background while Windows waits for you to log on.

FIGURE 3.1

The first thing you see in Windows 11—the Lock screen.

To log on to your Windows account, all you have to do is press any key on your keyboard or click the mouse. (On a touchscreen display, you swipe your finger up the screen.) This displays the login screen, shown in Figure 3.2.

FIGURE 3.2

Enter your PIN or password to proceed.

Enter your PIN or password and then press the Enter key. After you're past the login screen, you're taken directly to the Windows desktop, and your system is ready to use.
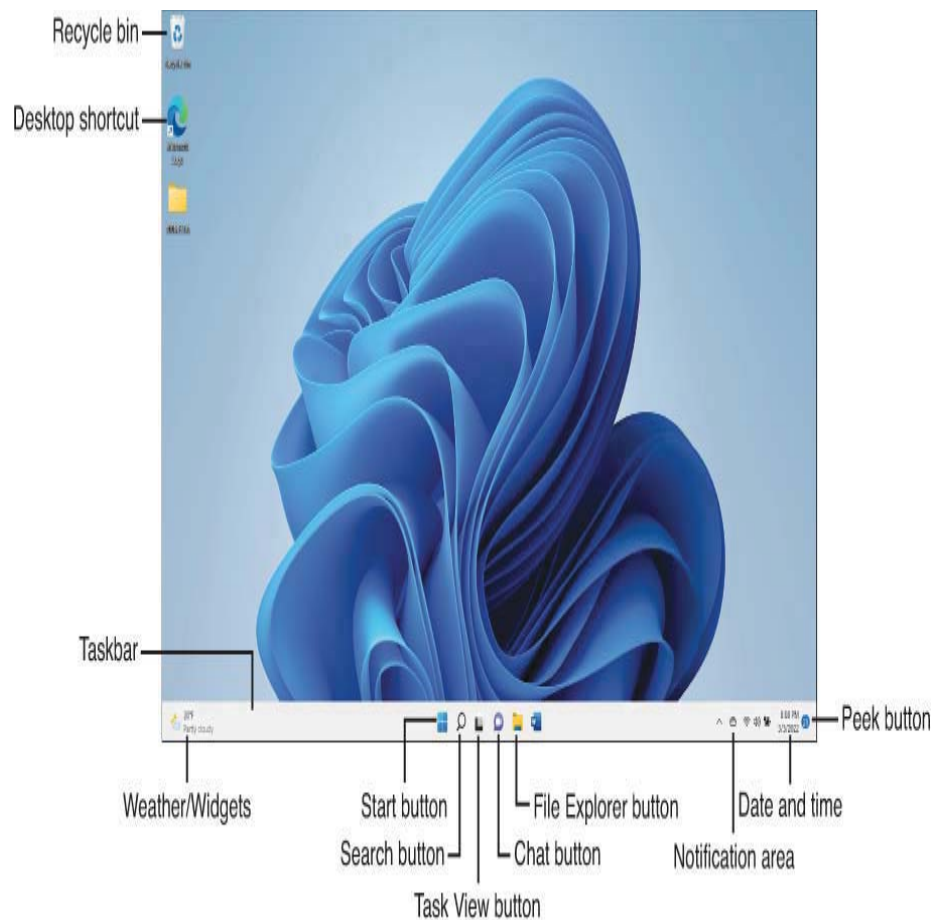
Note

It's easy to configure Windows 11 for multiple users, each with their own account and settings; I discuss that in Chapter 5, "Personalizing Windows." If you have only a single user on the machine, only one name appears from the Lock screen.

Exploring the Windows Desktop

The desktop is your home base in Windows. It's what you see when you start your computer and Windows launches; it's where all your programs and documents reside.

As you can see in Figure 3.3, the Windows 11 desktop includes a number of key elements. Get to know this desktop; you're going to be seeing a lot of it from now on.

FIGURE 3.3

The Windows 11 desktop.

Note the following elements:

- **Taskbar**—Displays icons for your favorite applications and documents, as well as for any open application. Right-click an icon to see a "jump list" of recent open documents and other operations for that application.

- **Weather/Widgets**—Displays current weather conditions and, when clicked or hovered over, displays the Widgets pane.

- **Start button**—Click or tap the Start button to display the Start menu. Right-click the Start button to display an Options menu with links to other important tools and utilities.

- **Search button**—Click or tap the Search button to open the Search pane and search for files and documents on your computer, or topics on the Web.

- **Task View button**—Click or tap the Task View button to view all open applications as thumbnail previews.

- **Chat button**—Click or tap the Chat button to open Microsoft Teams and start or join a text or video chat.

- **File Explorer button**—Click or tap this button to open the File Explorer for managing the files on your PC.

- **Notification area**—This far-right section of the taskbar displays icons for a handful of key system functions, power (on notebook PCs), networking/Internet, and audio (volume). Click or tap this area to display the Quick Setting panel to make quick system adjustments.

- **Date and time**—This displays—you guessed it—the current date and time. Click or tap to display system notifications and messages—and a handy calendar.

- **Peek button**—Hover over this slim little rectangle at the far edge of the taskbar and all open windows go transparent so that you can see what's on the desktop below. Click or tap the Peek button to immediately minimize all open windows.

- **Shortcut icons**—These are links to software programs you can place on your desktop; a "clean" desktop includes just one icon—the one for the Windows Recycle Bin.

- **Recycle Bin**—This is where you dump any files you want to delete.

Learning Basic Operations

To use Windows efficiently, you need to master a few simple operations with your mouse or touchpad, such as pointing and clicking, dragging and dropping, and right-clicking. When you use your mouse or touchpad in this fashion, you move the onscreen *cursor*—that pointer thing that looks like a little arrow.

Pointing and Clicking

The most common mouse operation is *pointing and clicking*. Simply move your computer's mouse or, on a notebook PC, drag your finger across the touchpad so that the cursor points to the object you want to select, and then click the *left* mouse or touchpad button once. Pointing and clicking is an effective way to select menu and toolbar items, icons, and the like.

Double-Clicking

In some instances, single-clicking doesn't launch or open an item; it merely selects it. In these instances, you need to *double-click* an item to activate an operation. This involves pointing at something onscreen with the cursor and then clicking the left mouse or touchpad button twice in rapid succession.

Right-Clicking

Here's one of the secret keys to efficient Windows operation. When you select an item and then click the *right* mouse or touchpad button, you often see a pop-up menu. This menu, when available, contains commands that directly relate to the selected object. So, for example, if you right-click a file icon, you see commands related to that file—copy, move, delete, and so forth.

Refer to your individual programs to see whether and how they use the right mouse button.

Dragging and Dropping

Dragging is a variation of clicking. To drag an object, point at it with the cursor and then press and hold down the left mouse or touchpad button. Move the mouse without releasing the mouse or touchpad button and drag the object to a new location. When you finish moving the object, release the mouse or touchpad button to drop it onto the new location.

You can use dragging and dropping to move files from one location to another.

Mouse Over

When you position the cursor over an item without clicking your mouse or touchpad, you *mouse over* that item. (This is sometimes called *hovering*.) Many operations require you to mouse over an item to display additional options or information.

Moving and Resizing Windows

When you have multiple windows open, your desktop can quickly become cluttered. Fortunately, there are ways to deal with this sort of multiple-window desktop clutter.

One approach is to move a window to a new position. You do this by positioning your cursor over a blank area at the top of the window frame and then clicking and holding down the left button on your mouse or touchpad. As long as this button is depressed, you can use your mouse or touchpad to drag the window around the screen. When you release the mouse or touchpad button, the window stays where you put it.
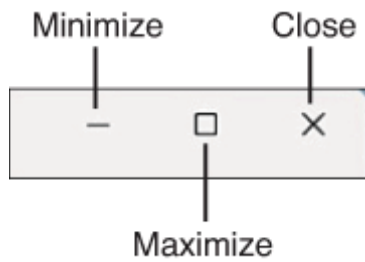
Tip

The cursor changes shape—to a double-ended arrow —when it's positioned over the edge of a window.

You also can change the size of most windows. You do this by positioning the cursor over the edge of the window—any edge. If you position the cursor on either side of the window, you can resize the width. If you position the cursor on the top or bottom edge, you can resize the height.

After the cursor is positioned over the window's edge, press and hold down the left mouse or touchpad button; then drag the window border to its new size. Release the button to lock in the newly sized window.

Maximizing, Minimizing, and Closing Windows

Another way to manage a window on the Windows desktop is to make it display full screen. You do this by maximizing the window. All you have to do is click or tap the Maximize button in the upper-right corner of the window, as shown in Figure 3.4.

Use the Minimize, Maximize, and Close buttons to manage your desktop windows.

If the window is already maximized, the Maximize button changes to a Restore Down button. When you click or tap the Restore Down button, the window resumes its previous (premaximized) dimensions.

If you would rather hide the window so that it doesn't clutter your desktop, click or tap the Minimize button. This shoves the window off the desktop, onto the taskbar. The program in the window is still running, however—it's just not on the desktop. To restore a minimized window, all you have to do is click or tap the window's icon on the Windows taskbar (at the bottom of the screen).

If what you really want to do is close the window (and close any program running within the window), just click or tap the window's Close button.

 Caution

If you try to close a window that contains a document you haven't saved, you're prompted to save the changes to the document. Because you probably don't want to lose any of your work, click Yes to save the document, and then close the program.

Snapping Windows into Position

Any open window can be "snapped" to the left or right side of the desktop so it shares the screen with another app. Windows 11 offers a variety of snapping options, including one that lets you display four different windows onscreen at the same time.

Start by mousing over the Maximize button for the first window. This displays all available snap layouts, as shown in Figure 3.5. Click or tap the position you want this window to be within the given layout.

FIGURE 3.5

The different window snap layouts in Windows 11.

The current app is sized and positioned according to the selected layout. Thumbnails of all other open apps also appear on the desktop within the next position in the layout. Click or tap the app you want to appear in this position.

For layouts with three or more apps, the remaining open apps appear in the next open layout position. Click or tap the app you want to appear in this position.

Tip

You can also "snap" a window full screen by using your mouse to drag the window to the top of the desktop. This automatically maximizes the window.

Scrolling Through a Window

Many windows, whether full screen or otherwise, contain more information than can be displayed onscreen. When you have a long document or web page, only the first part of the document or page displays in the window. To view the rest of the document or page, you have to scroll down through the window using the various parts of the scrollbar (shown in Figure 3.6).
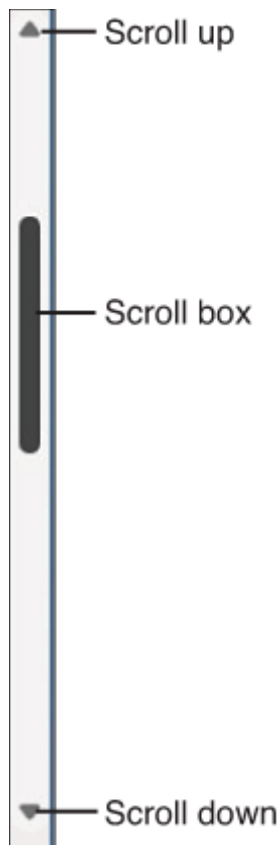
FIGURE 3.6

Use the scrollbar to scroll through long pages.

There are several ways to scroll through a window. To scroll up or down a line at a time, click or tap the up or down arrow on the window's scrollbar. To move to a specific place in a long document, use your mouse or touchpad to grab the scroll box (between the up and down arrows) and drag it to a new position. You can also click or tap the scrollbar between the scroll box and the end arrow so that you scroll one screen at a time.

If your mouse has a scroll wheel, you can use it to scroll through a long document. Just roll the wheel backward or forward to scroll down or up through a window. Likewise, some notebook touchpads let you drag your finger up or down to scroll through a window. And, if your PC has a touchscreen display, you can simply swipe your finger downward in the document to scroll down or swipe upward to scroll up. With a touchscreen display, you also can use your finger to drag or "flick" the screen up or down to scroll.

Peeking at the Desktop

Want to quickly see what's beneath all the open windows on the desktop? Have a gadget you want to look at? Then you'll appreciate the *Peek* feature. With Peek, you can, well, peek at the desktop beneath all that window clutter.

You activate Peek from the little transparent rectangular button at the far right of the Windows taskbar. Click or tap the Peek button, and all open windows are minimized so you see the open desktop.

Using the Start Menu

All the software programs and utilities on your computer are accessed via the Start menu. You display the Start menu by using your mouse or touchpad to click the Start button, located on the left side of the centered taskbar.

Navigating the Start Menu

As you can see in Figure 3.7, the Windows 11 Start menu consists of three parts:
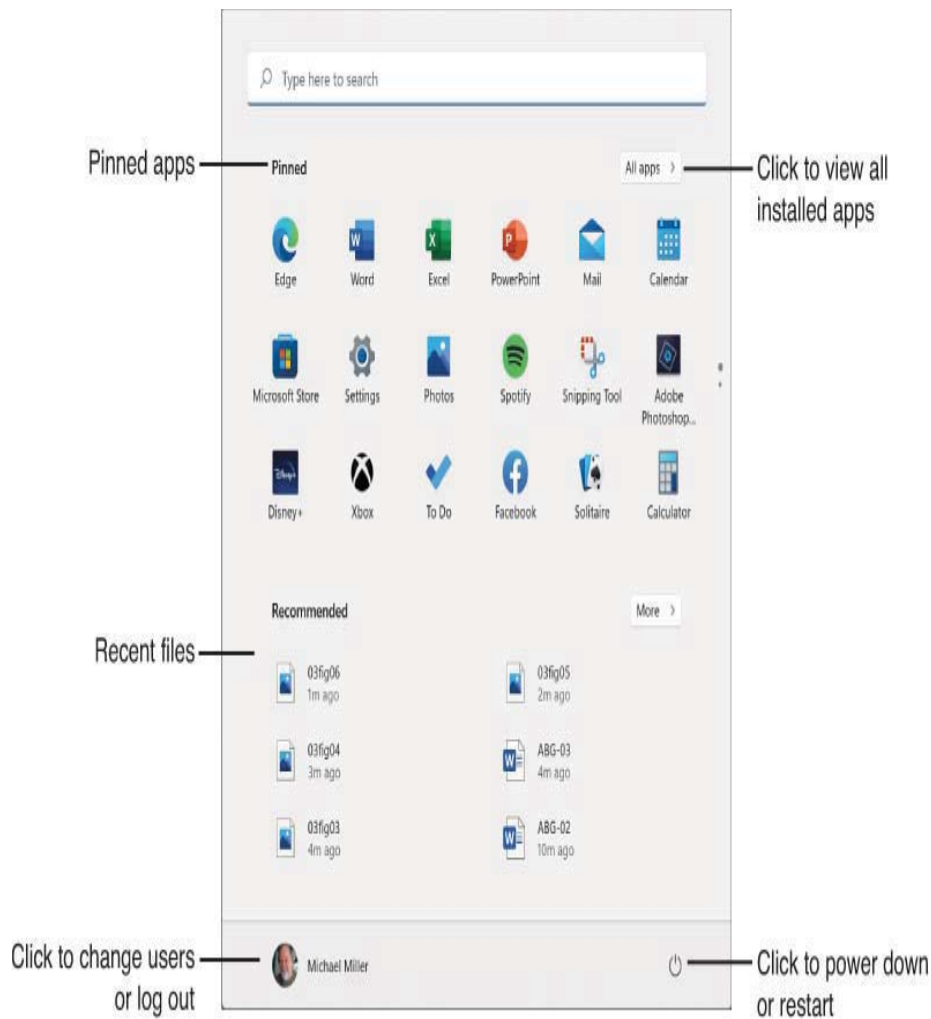
FIGURE 3.7

Access all the programs on your system from the Start menu.

- The top section consists of icons for apps that you've "pinned" to the Start menu. To view an alphabetical list of all the apps installed on your computer, click or tap All Apps.

- The bottom portion consists of icons for recently used files and (sometimes) recommended apps.

- The very bottom slice of the Start menu displays your profile name and picture on the left and a Power button on the right. Click or tap your profile name/picture to sign out of your account or change users. Click or tap the Power button to shut down or restart your PC or to put it into sleep mode.

To open a specific program or file, just click the icon for that item.

Launching a Program

Now that you know how to work the Start menu, it's easy to start any particular software program. All you have to do is follow these steps:

1. Click or tap the Start button to display the Start menu.

2. Click or tap the program's name or icon.

Another way to find a program to launch is to use the Search field at the top of the Start menu. Just start entering the program's name into the Search field, and a list of matching programs appears on the Start menu. When the program you want appears, click or tap it to launch it.
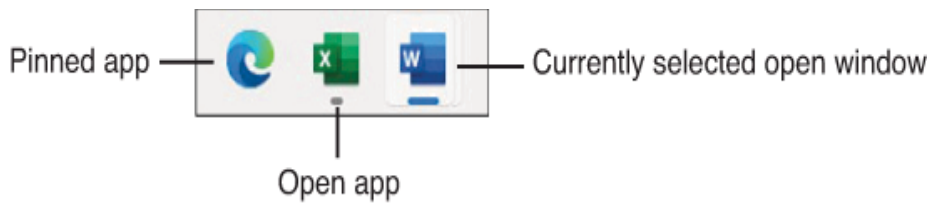
Using the Taskbar

That little strip of real estate at the bottom of the Windows desktop is called the *taskbar*. The Windows taskbar lets you open your favorite applications and documents, as well as switch between open windows. For quicker and easier launching, you can even add icons for your favorite programs to the taskbar. Click or tap an icon to launch an app or switch to an open window; taskbar icons exist for both.

Deciphering Taskbar Icons

Because of the multiple functions of the icons on the taskbar, it's difficult to look at an icon on the taskbar and determine whether it represents an open or closed application or document. Difficult, yes, but not impossible. Here's the key.

As you can see in Figure 3.8, an icon for a not-yet-open application or document—essentially a shortcut to that app or doc—appears on the taskbar with no underline. An icon for an

open window has a short underline, and the icon for the currently selected open window has a longer underline.

Pinned app — Currently selected open window

Open app

FIGURE 3.8

*The Windows taskbar with icons for a (closed) application, open application, and currently selected window.*

Opening Applications and Switching Between Windows

Using the taskbar is simplicity itself. Click or tap a shortcut icon to open the associated application or document. Click or tap an open window icon to display that window front and center.

If you click or tap an icon for an app with multiple windows open, something interesting happens: Windows displays thumbnails for each of that application's open windows. (The same thing happens if you mouse over the cursor for any open-window icon, actually.) Move the cursor over a thumbnail, and that window temporarily displays on top of the stack on your desktop, regardless of its actual position. Click a thumbnail to switch to that window, or click the X on the thumbnail to close the window.

Using Jump Lists

The Windows taskbar becomes even more useful with the addition of Jump Lists—kind of context-sensitive pop-up menus for each icon on the taskbar. To display an icon's Jump List, shown in Figure 3.9, right-click the icon.
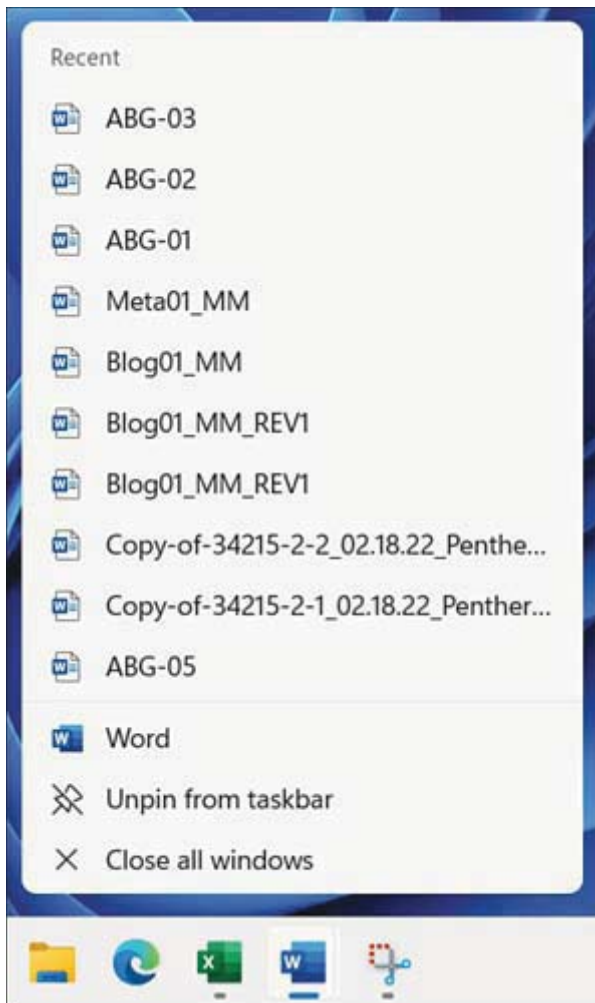
FIGURE 3.9

A Windows taskbar Jump List.

What you see in a Jump List depends to some degree on the application associated with the icon. Most Jump Lists contain the following items:

- The most recent documents opened in this application
- A link to open a new instance of this application
- An option to unpin this item from the taskbar (for shortcut icons)
- An option to close all windows (for open-window icons)

In short, Jump Lists are a lot like traditional right-click pop-up menus in Windows, but with more useful options. They make

the new taskbar icons more useful than they would have been otherwise.

Managing Taskbar Buttons

Now that you know what the taskbar does, let's look at how to manage it.

First, know that you have total control over the order of icons on the taskbar. Just drag a taskbar icon from one position to another, and there it stays.

To add an application or document shortcut to the taskbar, just navigate to that item using the Start menu or File Explorer, right-click the item's icon, and select More, Pin to Taskbar. Alternatively, you can drag an icon from any folder to the taskbar. Either approach is quick and easy.

To remove an item from the taskbar, right-click it and select Unpin from Taskbar.

Switching Between Programs

The taskbar is one way to switch between open programs, but it's not the only way. You can also do either of the following:

- Click or tap any visible part of the application's window, which brings that window to the front.

- Hold down the Alt key and then press the Tab key repeatedly until the application window you want is selected. This lets you cycle through thumbnails of all open windows, as shown in Figure 3.10. When you're at the window you want, release the Alt key.
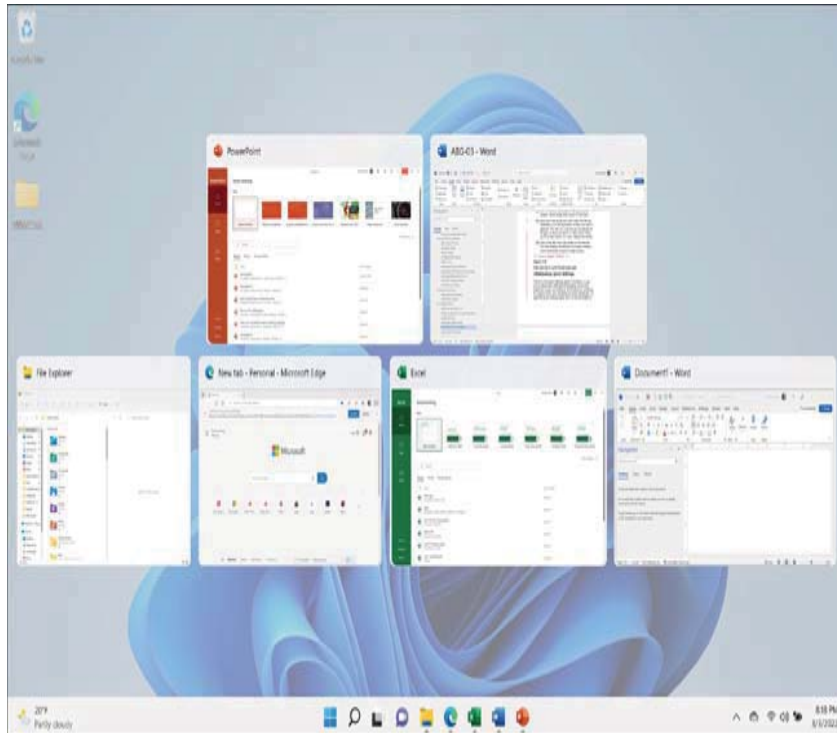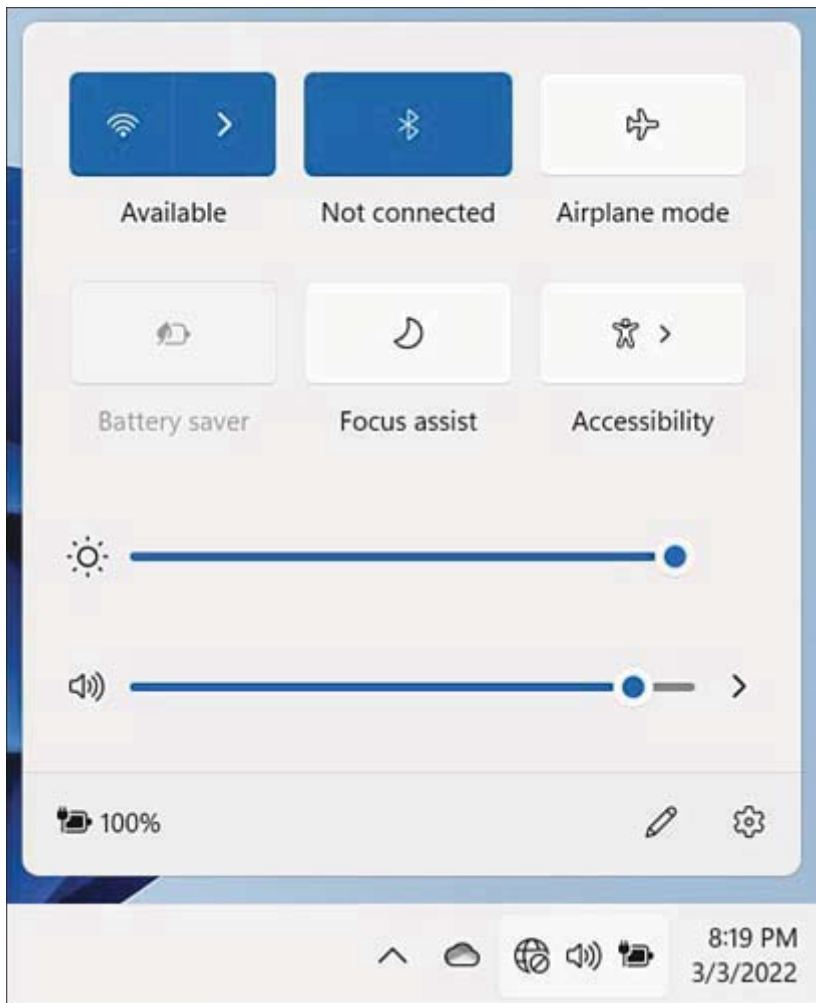
FIGURE 3.10

Press Alt+Tab to cycle through open apps.

- Click or tap the Task View button on the taskbar. This also displays thumbnails of all open windows. Click a thumbnail to switch to that window.

Adjusting Quick Settings

Windows 11 has a new Quick Settings panel you use to adjust basic settings—changing volume and brightness levels, connecting to Wi-Fi networks, switching to Airplane mode, and adjusting the screen brightness. To open the Quick Settings panel, click or tap one of the icons the middle of the notifications area on the taskbar. (Figure 3.11 shows the Quick Settings panel.)
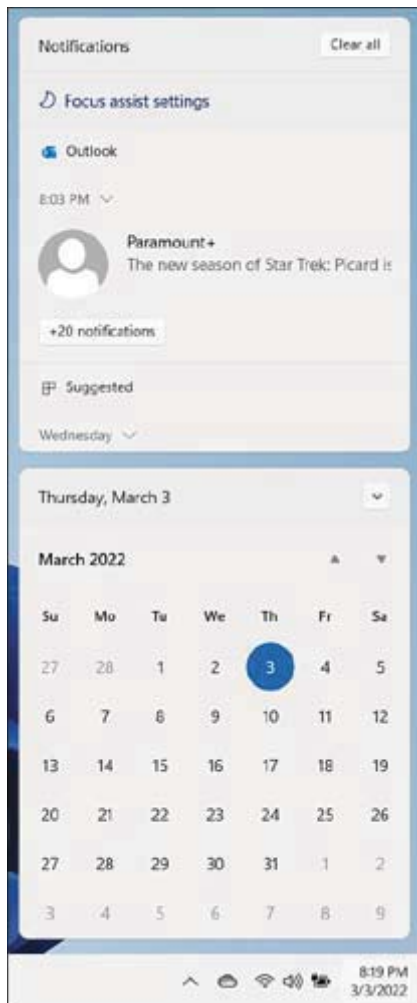
FIGURE 3.11

Adjust brightness and volume and connect to Wi-Fi networks from the Quick Settings panel.

Viewing Notifications

If you have any waiting notifications, you see a number next to the date and time area on the taskbar. Click or tap the date and time to display system notifications and notifications from selected apps. There's also a handy calendar if you need it. (Figure 3.12 shows the Notifications panel.)

FIGURE 3.12

The Notifications panel.

Learning Important Windows Shortcuts

Now that you know how to use your mouse or touchpad to get around Windows, it's time to learn some shortcuts you can use to speed up important Windows operations. Most of these actions can be initiated with either a mouse, touchpad, or keyboard, as detailed in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1 Essential Windows 11 Operations

When you want to turn off your computer, you do it through Windows. In fact, you don't want to turn off your computer any other way—you *always* want to turn off things through the official Windows procedure.

To shut down Windows and turn off your PC, follow these steps:

1. Click or tap the Start button to display the Start menu.

2. Click or tap the Power button to display the pop-up menu of options, as shown in Figure 3.13.
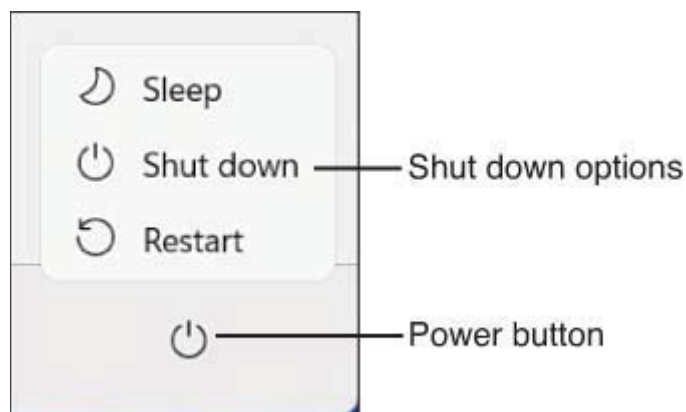
FIGURE 3.13

Shutting down Windows from the Start menu.

3. Click or tap Shut Down to shut down your computer. You also have the option of putting your computer into Sleep mode (this mode pauses all operations but still consumes some power) or restarting your PC. (This option shuts down the PC and then powers it back up.)

That's it. If you have a desktop PC, you then need to manually turn off your monitor, printer, and other peripherals.

The Absolute Minimum

This chapter gave you a lot of background about Windows 11—your new PC's operating system. Here are the key points to remember:

- You use Windows to manage your computer system and run apps and programs.

- When you start your computer, you see the Windows Lock screen; click or tap this screen to log in to your account and enter Windows.

- Click or tap the Start button to display the Start menu, where all your installed programs are listed.

- The taskbar hosts icons for all open programs, as well as any programs you've "pinned" there for future use.

- To exit Windows and turn off your computer, click or tap the Start button, click the Power button, and select Shut Down.

4

Working with Files, Folders, and Online Storage

Managing the data stored on your computer is vital. After you save a file, you might need to copy it to another computer, move it to a new location on your hard drive, rename it, or even delete it. You have to know how to perform all these operations—which means learning how to work with files, folders, and disks in Windows.

Understanding Files and Folders

All the information on your computer is stored in *files*. A file is nothing more than a collection of digital data. The contents of a file can be a document (such as a Word memo or an Excel spreadsheet), a digital photo or music track, or the executable code for a software program.

Every file has a name. A defined structure exists for naming files, and you must follow the naming conventions for

Windows to understand exactly what file you want when you try to access one. Each filename must consist of two parts, separated by a period—the *name* (to the left of the period) and the *extension* (to the right of the period). A filename can consist of letters, numbers, spaces, and characters and looks something like this: filename.ext.

Windows stores files in *folders*. A folder is like a parent file; each folder can contain both files and additional folders. The exact location of a file is called its *path* and contains all the folders leading to the file. For example, a file named *filename*.doc that exists in the system folder, which is itself contained in the windows folder on your C: drive, has a path that looks like this: C:\users*yourname*\documents\filename.doc.

Learning how to use files and folders is a necessary skill for all computer users. You might need to copy files from one folder to another or from your hard disk to a USB drive. You certainly need to delete files every now and then.

 Tip

By default, Windows hides the extensions when it displays filenames. To display extensions in Windows 11, select View, Show, File Name Extensions.

Using File Explorer

In Windows 11, all the items stored on your computer—including programs, documents, and configuration settings—are accessible from *File Explorer*. This is a desktop application that displays all the disk drives, folders, subfolders, and files on your computer system. You use File Explorer to find, copy, delete, and launch programs and documents.

Launching File Explorer

You can launch File Explorer in one of four ways:

- From the taskbar, click or tap the File Explorer icon.
- Click or tap the Start button to display the Start menu; then click or tap the File Explorer icon.
- Right-click the Start menu to display the Options menu; then click or tap File Explorer.
- Press Windows+E on your computer keyboard.

Exploring the File Explorer Window

When you open File Explorer, you see a toolbar on the top, a Path bar beneath that, a Navigation pane on the left, and a contents pane on the right. The Navigation pane is divided into several sections.

The top section, Quick Access, lists your most recently used folders, as well as several folders that are "pinned" to this section: Desktop, Downloads, Documents, Pictures, and Videos. (These are the defaults, but the specific folders listed here can vary.) Next is a OneDrive section, which lists your folders stored on Microsoft's OneDrive Internet-based storage service. Below that is a This PC section, which provides access to all the disk drives and devices connected to your computer. Next is the Network section, which lets you access all your networked computers.

Click any icon in the Navigation pane to view the contents of that item. For example, when you click This PC, you see six pinned folders, as shown in Figure 4.1: Desktop, Documents, Downloads, Music, Pictures, and Videos. There should also be an icon for your computer's C: drive. You may also see icons for any other devices connected to your computer. Double-click or double-tap an icon to view its contents.
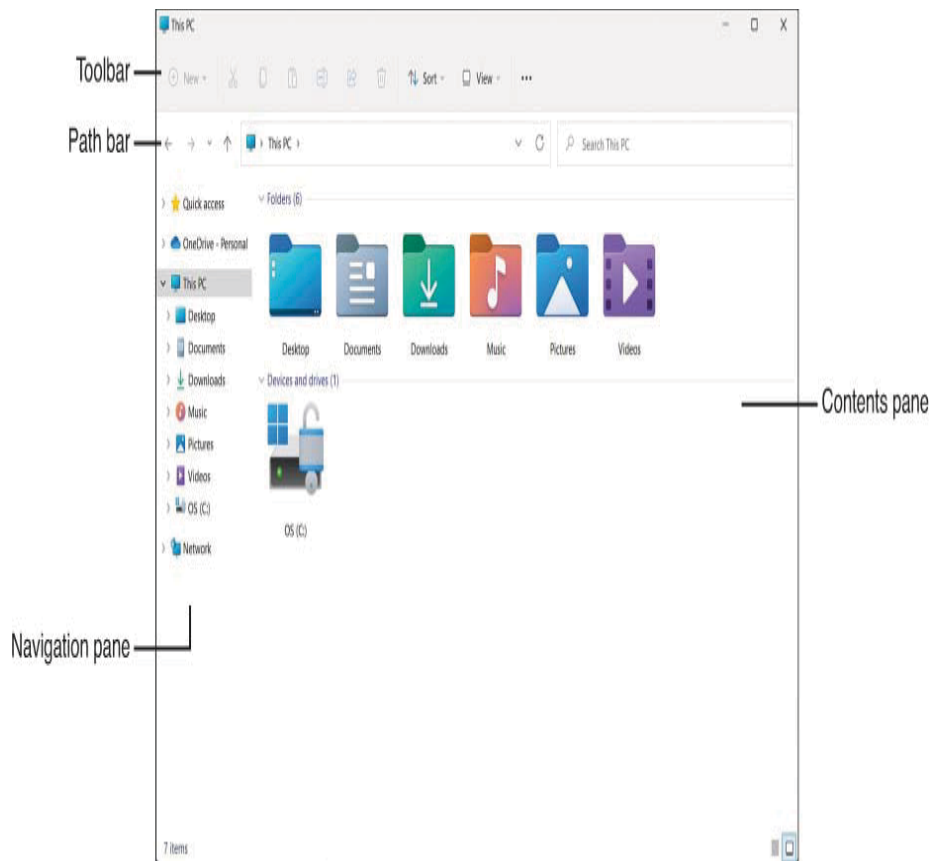
FIGURE 4.1

Navigating through your folders and subfolders with File Explorer.

Displaying File Contents and Details

You can also display a third pane within the File Explorer window. This panel can display the details or a preview of the contents of the currently selected file, depending on what options you select.

To display the Details or the Preview pane, select View, Show and then select either Details Pane or Preview Pane. (Figure 4.2 shows the Details pane in action.)
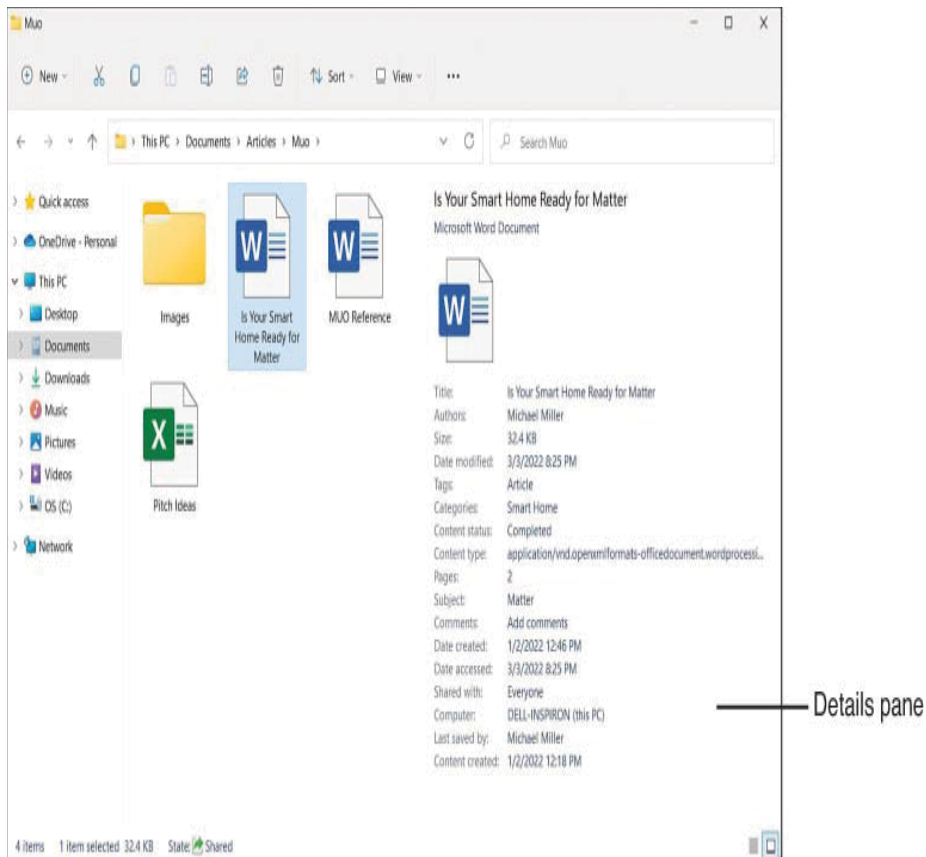
FIGURE 4.2

Displaying file details in the Details pane.

Navigating the Folders on Your PC

After you launch File Explorer, you can navigate through all your folders and subfolders in several ways:

Note

A *subfolder* is a folder that is contained within another folder. Multiple subfolders can be nested in this fashion.

- To view the contents of a disk or folder, double-click or double-tap the selected item.

- To move back to the disk or folder previously selected, click the Back button (left arrow) in the Path bar beneath the toolbar.

- To choose from the history of disks and folders previously viewed, click the down arrow in the Address box in the Path bar and select a disk or folder.

- If you've moved back through multiple disks or folders, you can move forward to the next folder by clicking the Forward button (right arrow) in the Path bar.

- Go directly to any disk or folder by entering the path in the Address box (in the format c:\folder\subfolder) and pressing Enter.

- Move backward through the "bread crumb" path in the Address box. Click any previous folder location (separated by arrows) to display that particular folder.

 Tip

Click any arrow between locations in the Address bar to view additional paths from that location.

Viewing Files and Folders

There's no set way to view the files and folders stored on your computer. In fact, File Explorer has several options to change the way your files and folders display.

Changing the Way Files Display

You can choose to view the contents of a folder in a variety of ways. To change the file view, click or tap View in the toolbar.

From here, you can select from eight available views, as shown in Figure 4.3:
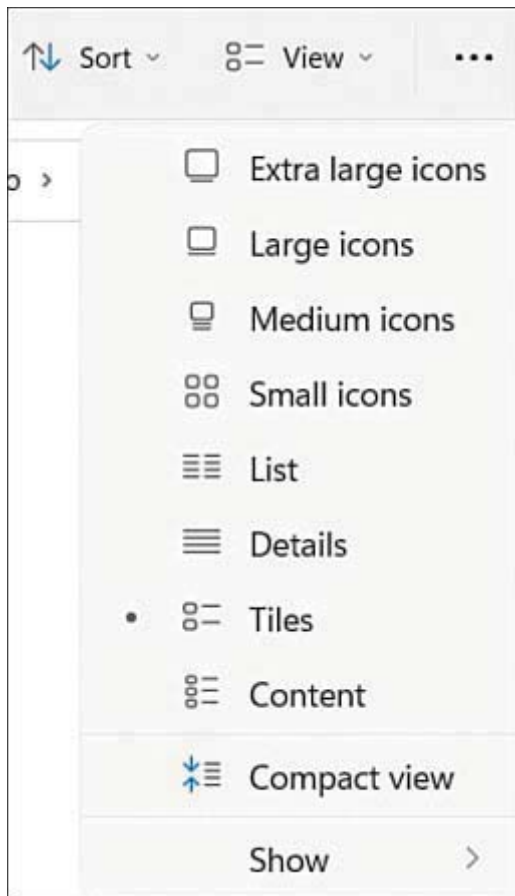
FIGURE 4.3

Use the View menu to change how files display.

- Extra large icons
- Large icons
- Medium icons
- Small icons
- List
- Details
- Tiles
- Content

There's also a Compact view that applies only to the Navigation pane. It squishes together the contents of that pane

to take up less room on screen.

 Tip

Any of the Icon views are good for working with graphics files or for getting a quick thumbnail glance at a file's contents. The Details view is better if you're looking for files by date or size.

Sorting Files and Folders

When viewing files in File Explorer, you can sort your files and folders in a number of ways. To do this, click or tap Sort in the toolbar and then select Group By. You can then choose to sort by a variety of criteria, including Name, Date Modified, Type, Size, Date Created, Folder Path, Authors, Categories, Tags, or Title.

If you want to view your files in alphabetical order, click or tap Sort in the toolbar and choose to sort by Name. If you want to sort your files by date, select Sort, Date. If you want to see all similar files sorted together, select Sort, Type. Other sort options are available by selecting Sort, More.

To change the sort order of your files, click or tap View on the toolbar and then select either Ascending or Descending.

Grouping Files and Folders

You can also configure File Explorer to group the files in your folder, which can make it easier to identify particular files. For example, if you sort your files by time and date modified, they're grouped by date (Today, Yesterday, Last Week, and so on). If you sort your files by type, they're grouped by file extension, and so on.

To turn on grouping, select View, Group By, and then select the desired parameter. File Explorer now automatically groups

your files and folders by the selected criteria.

Searching for Files

As organized as you might be, you might not always find the specific files you want. Fortunately, Windows 11 offers an easy way to locate difficult-to-find files, via the Instant Search function. Instant Search indexes all the files stored on your hard disk (including email messages) by type, title, and contents. So you can search for a file by extension, filename, or keywords within the document.

To use the Instant Search feature, enter one or more keywords into the Search box in the Path bar. Matching files display as you type; you can select one of these or finish entering the keyword(s) and then press Enter. File Explorer displays a list of items that match your search criteria. Double-click or double-tap any icon to open that file.

 Tip

You can also search for files from anywhere in Windows 11. Just click or tap the Search icon on the taskbar to display the Search panel and start searching from there.

Performing Basic File and Folder Operations

You can perform most common file and folder operations using the functions available on the File Explorer toolbar, shown in Figure 4.4. These functions include Cut, Copy, Paste, Rename, Share, and Delete; you also can create folders.

Create new item   Copy   Rename   Delete   View

Cut   Paste   Share   Sort (and Group)   More
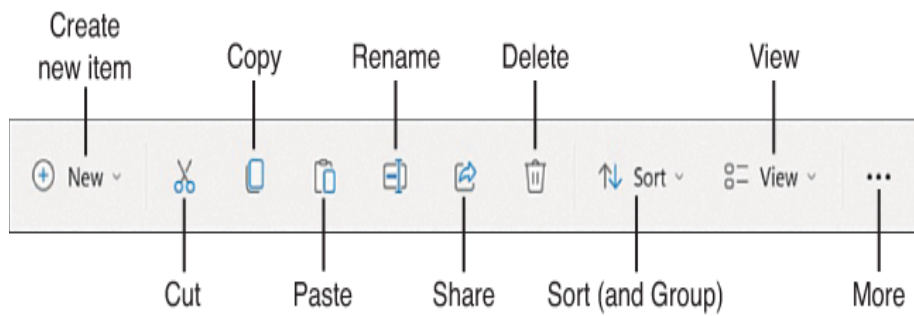
FIGURE 4.4

Use the toolbar in File Explorer to perform basic file and folder operations.

Creating New Folders

The more files you create, the harder it is to organize and find things on your hard disk. When the number of files you have becomes unmanageable, you need to create more folders—and subfolders—to better categorize your files.

To create a new folder, follow these steps:

1. Navigate to the drive or folder where you want to place the new folder.

2. On the toolbar, select New, Folder.

3. A new, empty folder appears within the File Explorer window, with the filename New Folder highlighted.

4. Type a name for your folder (which overwrites the New Folder name), and press Enter.

Caution

Folder and filenames can include up to 255 characters—including many special characters. Some special characters, however, are "illegal," meaning that you *can't* use them in folder or filenames. Illegal characters include the following: \ / : * ? " < > |.

Renaming Files and Folders

When you create a new file or folder, it helps to give it a name that somehow describes its contents. Sometimes, however, you might need to change a file's name. Fortunately, Windows makes it relatively easy to rename an item.

To rename a file (or folder), follow these steps:

1. Click or tap the file or folder you want to rename.

2. Click or tap the Rename button on the toolbar.

3. Type a new name for your file or folder (which overwrites the current name), and press Enter.

Copying Files

Copying a file lets you re-create that file in a different location, either on your computer's hard drive or on some sort of external media. Here's how to do it:

1. Select the item you want to copy.

2. Click or tap the Copy button on the toolbar.

3. Navigate to the folder where you want to copy the item.

4. Click or tap the Paste button on the toolbar.

Moving (Cutting and Pasting) Files

Moving a file (or folder) is different from copying it. Moving *cuts* the item from one location and *pastes* it into a new location. Copying leaves the item in its original location *and* creates a copy of the item elsewhere.

In other words, when you copy something, you end up with two of it. When you move something, you have only the one instance.

To move a file, follow these steps:

1. Select the item you want to move.

2. Click or tap the Cut button on the toolbar.

3. Navigate to the new location where you want to move the item.

4. Click or tap the Paste button.

Deleting Files

Too many files eat up too much hard disk space—which is a bad thing because you have only so much disk space. (Music and video files, in particular, can chew up big chunks of your hard drive.) Because you don't want to waste disk space, you should periodically delete the files (and folders) you no longer need.

Deleting a file is as easy as following these simple steps:

1. Select the file or files you want to delete. (To select multiple files, hold down the Ctrl key while clicking or tapping.)

2. Click or tap the Delete button on the toolbar.

This simple operation sends the file to the Windows Recycle Bin, which is kind of a trash can for deleted files. (It's also a trash can that periodically needs to be dumped—as I discuss momentarily.)

Working with the Recycle Bin

As just discussed, all recently deleted files are stored in what Windows calls the Recycle Bin. This is a special folder on your hard disk that temporarily stores all deleted items—which is a good thing.

Restoring Deleted Files

Have you ever accidentally deleted the wrong file? If so, you're in luck, thanks to the Recycle Bin. As you now know, Windows stores all the files you delete in the Recycle Bin, at least temporarily. If you've recently deleted a file, it should still be in the Recycle Bin folder.

To "undelete" a file from the Recycle Bin, follow these steps:

1. Double-click or double-tap the Recycle Bin icon on the desktop (shown in Figure 4.5) to open the Recycle Bin folder.

FIGURE 4.5

The Recycle Bin, where all your deleted files end up.

2. Click or tap the file(s) you want to restore.

3. From the toolbar, select More, Restore the Selected Items.

The deleted file is copied back to its original location, ready for continued use.

Emptying the Recycle Bin

Deleted files do not stay in the Recycle Bin indefinitely. When you delete enough files to exceed the space allocated for these files, the oldest files in the Recycle Bin are automatically and permanently deleted from your hard disk.

If you'd rather dump the Recycle Bin manually (and thus free up some hard disk space), follow these steps:

1. Double-click or double-tap the Recycle Bin icon on your desktop to open the Recycle Bin folder.

2. Click or tap the Empty the Recycle Bin button on the toolbar.

3. When the confirmation dialog box appears, click or tap Yes to completely erase the files; click or tap No to continue storing the files in the Recycle Bin.

Working with Compressed Folders

Really big files can be difficult to move or copy. They're especially difficult to transfer to other users, whether by email or USB drive.

Fortunately, Windows includes a way to make big files smaller. *Compressed folders* (sometimes called *zip files*) take big files and compress their size, which makes them easier to copy or move. After you transfer the file, you can uncompress the file to its original state.

Compressing a File

Compressing one or more files is a relatively easy task from within any folder in File Explorer. Just follow these steps:

1. Select the file(s) you want to compress. (Hold down the Ctrl button as you select multiple files.)

2. On the toolbar, select More (three dots), Compress to ZIP file.

Windows creates a new folder that contains compressed versions of the file(s) you selected. (This folder is distinguished by a little zipper on the folder icon.) You can copy, move, or email this folder, which is a lot smaller than the original file(s).

 Note

The compressed folder is actually a file with a .ZIP extension, so you can use it with other compression/decompression programs, such as WinZip.

Extracting Files from a Compressed Folder

The process of decompressing a file is actually an *extraction* process. That's because you extract the original file(s) from the compressed folder. Follow these steps:

1. Select the compressed folder.

2. From the toolbar, select Extract All. This displays the Select a Destination and Extract Files dialog box.

3. Accept the current location or click the Browse button and choose a different location.

4. Click or tap the Extract button.

5

Personalizing Windows

One of the nice things about Windows is that your version of Windows doesn't have to look or feel exactly like your neighbor's version. You can easily personalize various aspects of the operating system by tweaking a handful of configuration settings. Make Windows reflect your personality!

Personalizing the Windows Desktop

Windows 11 enables you to personalize the desktop in a number of ways. You can change the color scheme and the desktop background. You can "pin" your favorite programs to the taskbar or directly to the desktop. There are even special "light" and "dark" modes that completely change how Windows looks.

Changing the Desktop Background

One of the most popular ways to personalize the desktop is to use a favorite picture or color as the desktop background. Follow these steps:

1. Right-click in any open area of the desktop to display the pop-up menu; then click Personalize to display the Personalization tab of the Settings app. (Alternatively, open the Settings app and select Personalization.)

2. Click or tap Background to display the Background page, as shown in Figure 5.1.
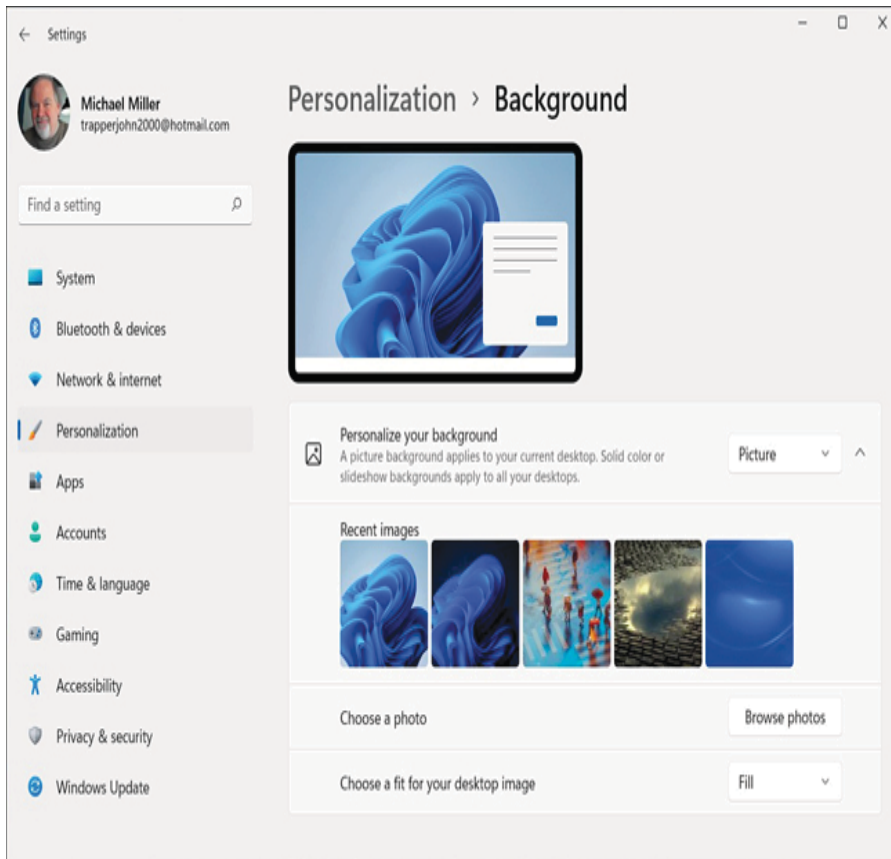
FIGURE 5.1

Choosing a desktop background.

3. Use a picture as your desktop background by clicking or tapping the Personalize Your Background control and selecting Picture. Select one of the images displayed or click Browse Photos to select another picture stored on your computer.

 Note

If the selected image is a different size than your Windows desktop, click the Choose a Fit for Your Desktop Image list and select a display option— Fill (zooms into the picture to fill the screen), Fit (fits the image to fill the screen horizontally but might leave black bars around the image), Stretch (distorts the picture to fill the screen), Tile (displays multiple instances of a smaller image), Center (displays a smaller image in the center of the screen with black space around it), or Span (spans a single image across multiple monitors, if you have multiple monitors on your system).

4. To have a solid-color desktop background instead of a picture, click or tap the Personalize Your Background list and select Solid Color. Select the color you want or click or tap View Colors in the Custom Colors section to choose from a broader palette.

5. To have your desktop background rotate through a variety of pictures in a slideshow, click the Personalize Your Background list and select Slideshow. By default, the slideshow chooses pictures from your Pictures folder; to select a different folder, click Browse. Change how long each photo is displayed by clicking the Change Picture Every list and making a new selection. Display pictures randomly by clicking "on" the Shuffle switch.

Changing to Light or Dark Mode

Windows 11 offers both Light and Dark modes. Dark mode displays a black background in the taskbar, Start menu, and many windows. Light mode displays a light gray background in these same areas.

Follow these steps:

1. Right-click in any open area of the desktop to display the pop-up menu; then click Personalize to display the Personalization tab of the Settings app. (Alternatively, open the Settings app and select Personalization.)

2. Click or tap Colors to display the Colors page.

3. Click the Choose Your Color list and select either Light or Dark.

4. To set one mode for Windows elements and the other for apps, select Custom. You can then click or tap the Choose Your Default Windows Mode list and select either Light or Dark to set the mode for the Start menu, taskbar, and other Windows elements. Click the Choose Your Default App Mode list and select either Light or Dark to set the mode for your Windows apps.

Changing the Accent Color

You can select any accent color for window borders and title bars. In Dark mode, the accent color is also for the Start menu and taskbar. Follow these steps:
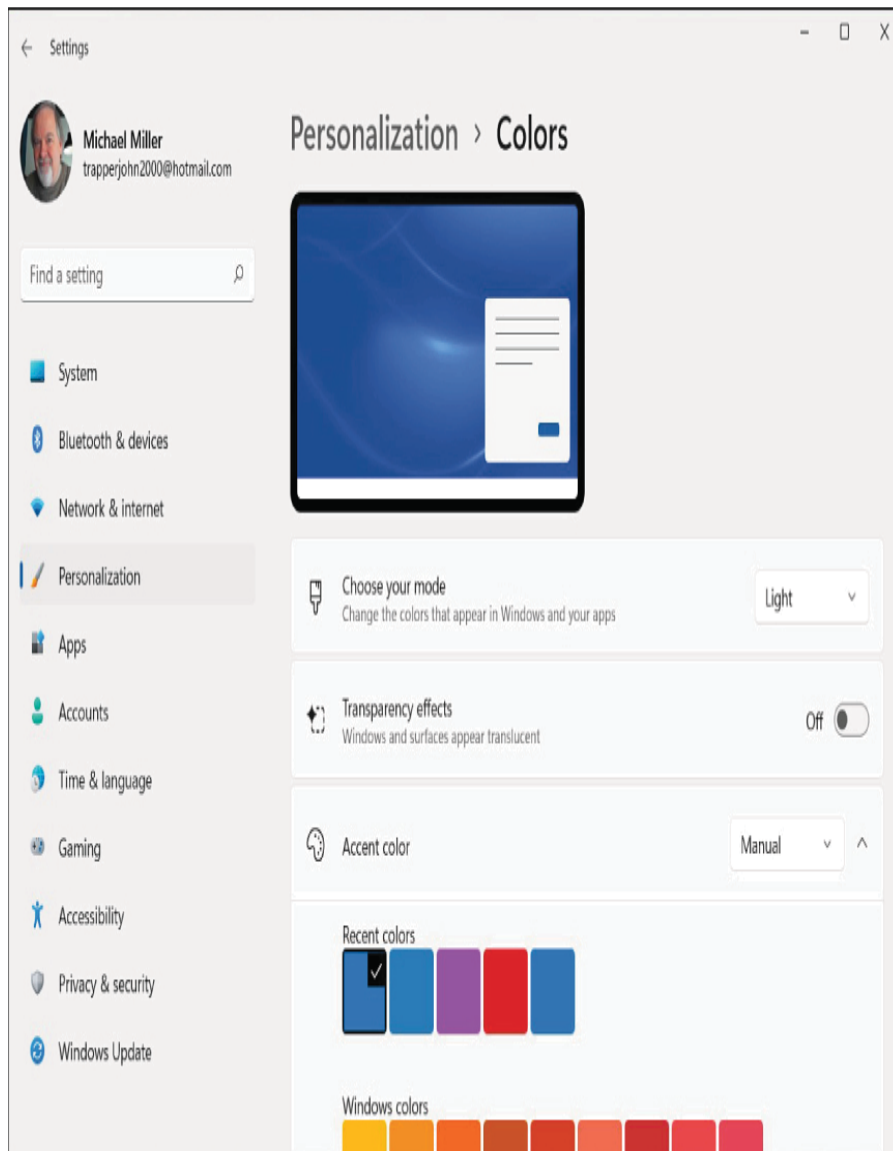
1. Right-click in any open area of the desktop to display the pop-up menu; then click Personalize to display the Personalization tab of the Settings app. (Alternatively, open the Settings app and select Personalization.)

2. Click or tap Colors to display the Colors page shown in Figure 5.2.

FIGURE 5.2

Choosing an accent color.

3. Make the Windows desktop elements transparent by clicking "on" the Transparency Effects switch.

4. To have Windows automatically choose the accent color based on the color of the desktop image, click the Accent Color control and select Automatic.

5. To manually select an accent color, click the Accent Color control and select Manual; then click to select the color you want.

6. If you're in Windows Dark mode, you can show the accent color on the Start menu and taskbar by scrolling down the

window and clicking "on" the Show Accent Color on Start and taskbar switch. Click this switch "off" to show these elements in standard system colors (gray in Light mode, black in Dark mode).

7. Show the accent color on windows' title bars and borders by clicking "on" the Show Accent Color on Title Bars and Window Borders switch. Click this switch "off" to display these elements in standard system colors.
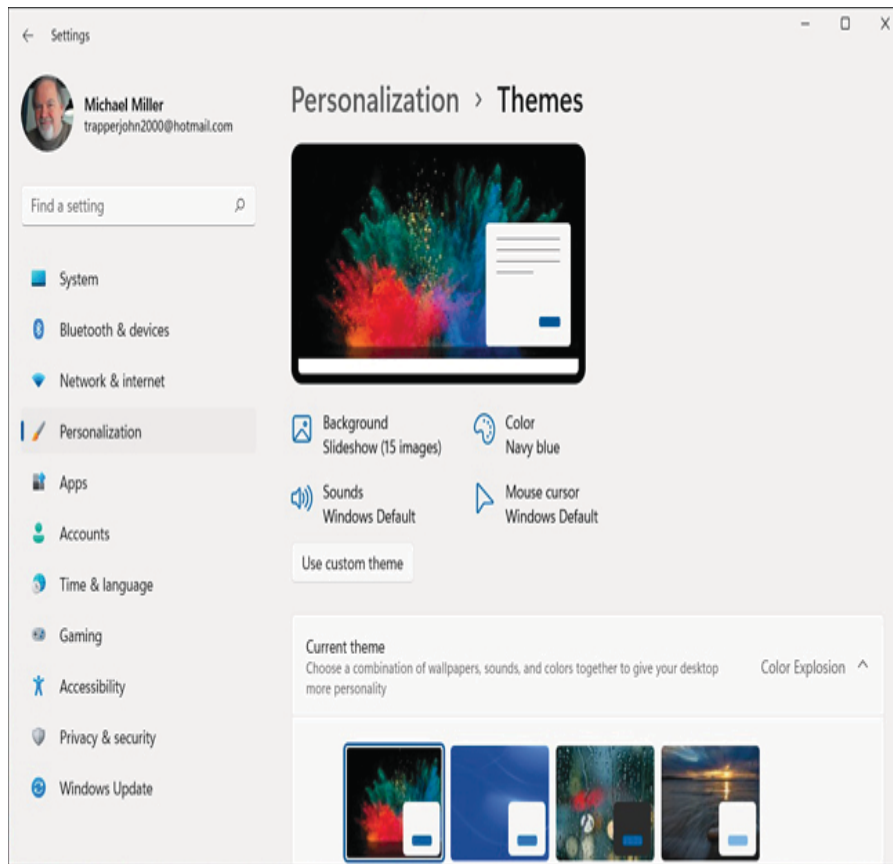
Choosing a Windows Theme

Rather than configuring each desktop element separately, you can choose a predesigned *theme* that changes all the elements in a visually pleasing configuration. A theme combines background images, color schemes, system sounds, and a screensaver to present a unified look and feel. Some themes even change the color scheme to match the current background picture.

To select a theme, follow these steps:

1. Right-click in any open area of the desktop to display the pop-up menu; then click Personalize to display the Personalization tab of the Settings app window. (Alternatively, open the Settings app and select Personalization.)

2. Click or tap Themes to display the Themes page shown in Figure 5.3.

FIGURE 5.3

Choosing a new Windows theme.

3. To save the currently selected background, color, sound, and mouse scheme as a new theme, click Save. When prompted, give this new theme a name.

4. Scroll down to the Current Theme section to view all themes installed on your PC. Click any theme to change to that theme.

5. Additional themes, most free of charge, are available from the Microsoft Store online. Click Browse Themes to view what's available and download new themes.

Customizing the Start Menu

The Windows 11 Start menu is different from the Start menu in Windows 10 in that it displays small icons for your favorite and most-used apps instead of the larger tiles in the older operating system. This makes for a leaner and more efficient

Start menu experience that you can still customize by "pinning" icons for your favorite apps.

Note

"Pinning" an app creates a shortcut to that app. You can pin programs to either the Start menu or the taskbar. Pins you add can be removed at any time.

1. Click or tap the Start button to open the Start menu.

2. "Pin" a program to the top half of the Start menu by clicking or tapping All Apps to display all the apps installed on your computer. Right-click the icon for the app you want to pin and then click or tap Pin to Start.

3. To rearrange the icons for your pinned apps, click and hold an icon and then drag it to a new position.

4. Move an icon to another page of pinned apps by clicking and dragging the icon to the top or bottom of the Pinned area until you see the previous or next page.

5. Remove a pinned app from the Start menu by right-clicking the icon and selecting Unpin from Start.

Pinning Apps to the Taskbar

Just as you can pin your favorite apps to the taskbar, you can pin apps to the taskbar. Click on an icon for a pinned app to open that app:

1. From the Start menu, navigate to the app you want to pin to the taskbar.

2. Right-click the app icon and select Pin to Taskbar.

3. Rearrange pinned apps on the taskbar by clicking and dragging an icon left or right to a new position.

Customizing the Taskbar

Windows 11 also lets you customize the way the taskbar appears on your computer. You can opt to shift the icons to the left side of the taskbar (instead of centering them) and select which icons appear in the notification area.

 Note

In previous versions of Windows, you could move the taskbar to the left, right, or top of the screen. Unfortunately, you can't reposition the taskbar in Windows 11; it's always on the bottom.

1. Right-click any open area of the taskbar; then click or tap Taskbar Settings to display the Taskbar page of the Settings app.

2. Click or tap "on" or "off" to show or not show on the taskbar the four system icons: Search, Task View, Widgets, and Chat.

3. You can also opt to show three additional icons in the corner of the taskbar: Pen Menu, Touch Keyboard, and Virtual Touchpad. Click or tap each item's switch "on" to show it on the taskbar, or click or tap it "off" to hide it.

4. There are several additional icons you can display in the corner of the taskbar by the notification area, including Microsoft OneDrive, Windows Explorer, Windows Security Notification, Microsoft Outlook, and Windows Update Status. Click or tap to expand the Taskbar Corner Overflow section and then click or tap each item "on" or "off."

5. Change the alignment of the taskbar icons by clicking or tapping to expand the Taskbar Behaviors section. Then pull down the Taskbar Alignment list and select either Center (default) or Left.

6. Hide the taskbar when you're not using it (it appears when you mouse over the bottom of the screen) by clicking or

tapping to select Automatically Hide the Taskbar.

7. Display a number counter for unread messages (called "badges") on select app icons by clicking or tapping to select Show Badges. This option is on by default; deselect this option to hide those little numbers.

8. To be able to click or tap the far-right corner of the desktop to minimize all open windows and show the desktop, click or tap to select Select the Far Corner of the Desktop to Show the Desktop.

Personalizing Widgets

Windows 11 introduces the concept of *widgets*, which are similar to the Start menu tiles found in Windows 10 (but *not* in Windows 11). A widget is a small panel that displays specific information, such as news, weather, appointments, and the like. Many apps, such as Photos and Weather, have their own related widgets. Other widget content is sourced from around the Web.

Widgets are displayed in a Widgets panel that slides in from the left side of the desktop, as shown in Figure 5.4.
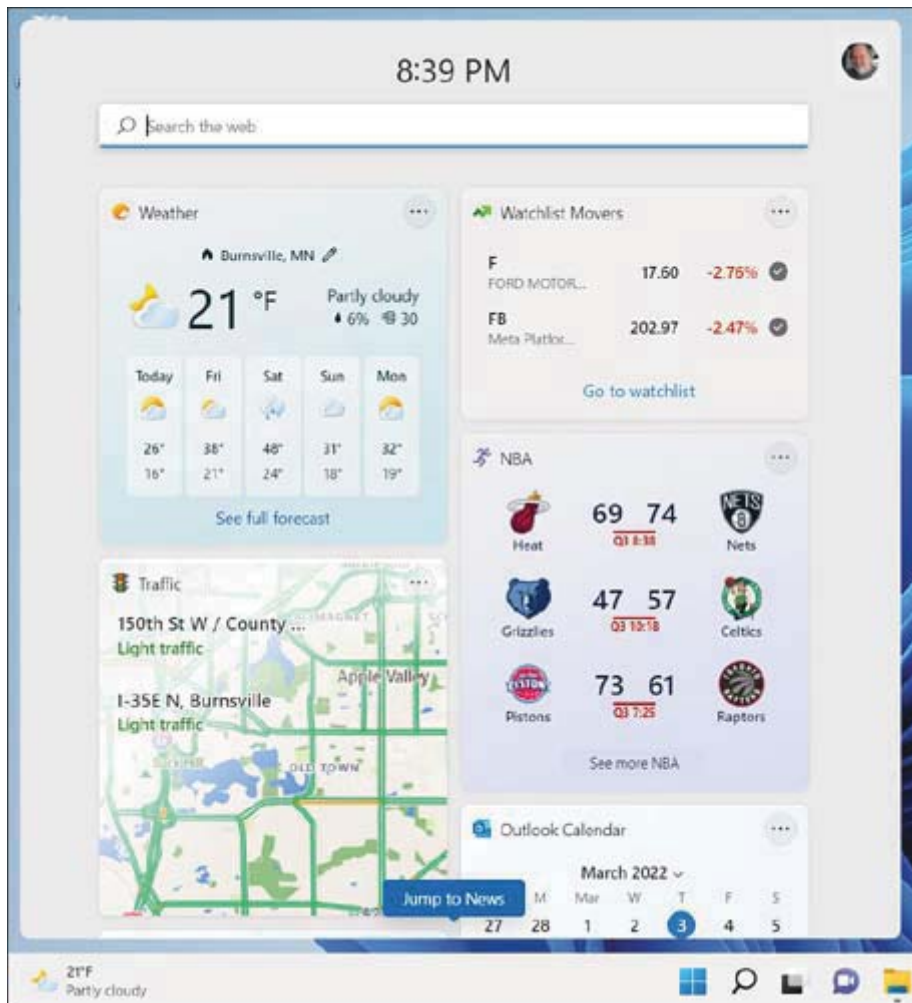
FIGURE 5.4

The Widgets panel in Windows 11.

There are two ways to open the Widgets panel. You can click, tap, or hover over the Weather section on the left side of the taskbar or, on a touchscreen display, swipe in from the left side of the screen.

With the Widgets panel displayed, scroll down to view more widgets. To open the associated app or view more information, click or tap the title of a given widget. To close the Widgets panel, click or tap anywhere else on the screen.

Customizing the Widgets Panel

You can personalize the Widgets panel by resizing, deleting, and rearranging widgets. Here's how it works:

1. Resize a widget by clicking or tapping the More Options (three-dot) button and selecting a different size.

 Note

> Not all widgets can be displayed at all available sizes. Each widget displays in just one of the two columns in the Widgets panel; small widgets are shorter, whereas medium and large ones are taller.

2. Customize the content of a widget by clicking or tapping the More Options button and selecting Customize Widget. (Each widget has its own customization options.)

3. Rearrange widgets by using your mouse or touchpad (or finger on a touchscreen device) to drag a widget to a different location.

4. Remove a widget by clicking or tapping the More Options button and selecting Remove Widget.

Adding a New Widget to the Widgets Panel

Microsoft prepopulates the Widgets panel with a selection of popular widgets. You don't have to limit yourself to these particular widgets, however; it's an easy two-step process to add new widgets to the panel at any time:

1. Scroll down the Widgets panel and click or tap Add Widgets.

2. Select the new widget(s) you want to add.

Customizing Your News Feed

As you scroll down the Widgets panel, you see tiles for news stories. These tiles are part of your News Feed, which is a permanent section of the Widgets panel. Click or tap the tile

for any story to read the story in full in the Microsoft Edge web browser.

To customize the news widgets that appear, follow these steps:

1. Scroll down the Widgets panel and click or tap Add Widgets.

2. In the Personalize Your Feed section, click or tap Personalize Your Interests. This opens Microsoft Edge to the My Interests page.

3. Select those topics you're interested in and deselect those that don't interest you.

4. Add a specific interest to your feed by entering that topic into the Discover Interests search box and then selecting the matching interest.

 Note

When you find a story that you don't like, mouse over that story's widget and click the X. You can then select that you're not interested in stories like this or you don't want to see any more stories from this particular source.
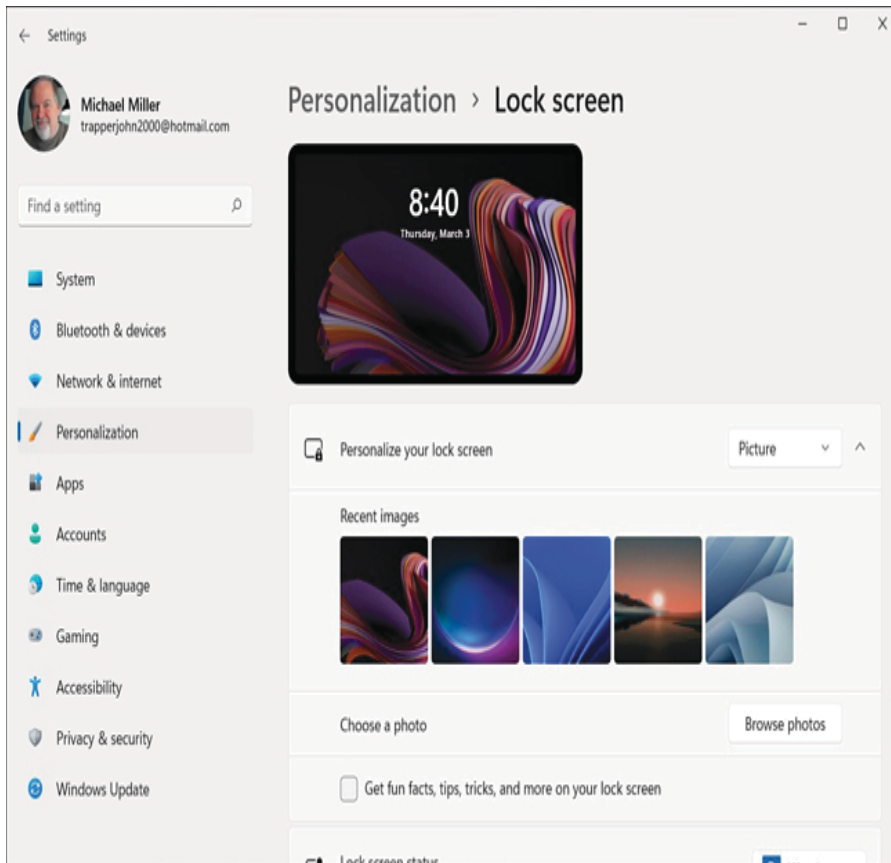
Personalizing the Lock Screen

You can also personalize the Lock screen that you see when you first start or begin to log in to Windows. You can change the background picture of the Lock screen, turn the Lock screen into a photo slideshow, and add informational apps to the screen.

Changing the Lock Screen Background

To change the background picture you see on the Lock screen, follow these steps:

1. Right-click in any open area of the desktop to display the pop-up menu; then click Personalize to display the Personalization tab of the Settings app. (Alternatively, open the Settings app and select Personalization.)

2. Click or tap Lock Screen to display the Lock Screen page, shown in Figure 5.5.

FIGURE 5.5

Personalizing the Lock screen.

3. Choose a specific picture for the Lock screen by clicking the Personalize Your Lock Screen list and selecting Picture.

4. Select the thumbnail for the picture you want to use or click or tap the Browse Photos button to choose a picture stored on your computer.

Tip

You can let Microsoft select Lock screen photos that display on a rotating basis. Just pull down the Personalize Your Lock Screen list and select Windows Spotlight.

Displaying a Slideshow on the Lock Screen

Windows 11 lets you turn your computer into a kind of digital picture frame by displaying a slideshow of your photos on the Lock screen while your PC isn't used. Follow these steps:

1. Right-click in any open area of the desktop to display the pop-up menu; then click Personalize to display the Personalization tab of the Settings app. (Alternatively, open the Settings app and select Personalization.)

2. Click or tap Lock Screen.

3. Click or tap the Personalize Your Lock Screen list and select Slideshow.

4. By default, Windows displays pictures from your Pictures folder. Click the Browse button to select a different picture folder to use for your slideshow.

5. Click Advanced Slideshow Settings to display additional options.

Changing Your Account Picture

When you first configured Windows, you may have picked a default image to use as your profile picture—or not. You can, at any time, select a new or different profile picture that's more to your liking. Follow these steps:

1. Click the Start button to display the Start menu.

2. Click your name or picture at the bottom of the Start menu to display the options menu.

3. Click Change Account Settings to display the Settings app with the Your Info page selected, as shown in Figure 5.6.
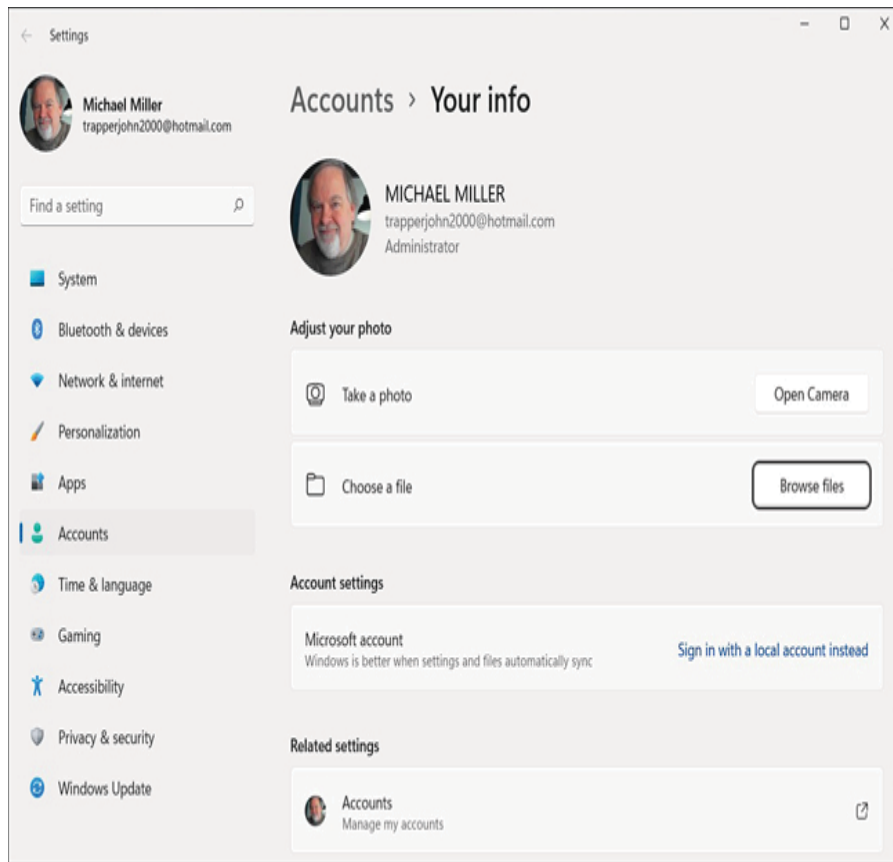
FIGURE 5.6

Changing your account picture.

4. Select a picture stored on your computer (or online at OneDrive) by scrolling to the Choose File section and clicking Browse Files. Then navigate to and select the picture you want. *Or…*

5. You can take a picture with your computer's webcam to use for your account picture. In the Take a Photo section, click Open Camera and follow the onscreen directions from there.

Setting Up Additional User Accounts