How-To Geek

HOW TO PERSONALIZE WINDOWS 10

by Walter Glenn

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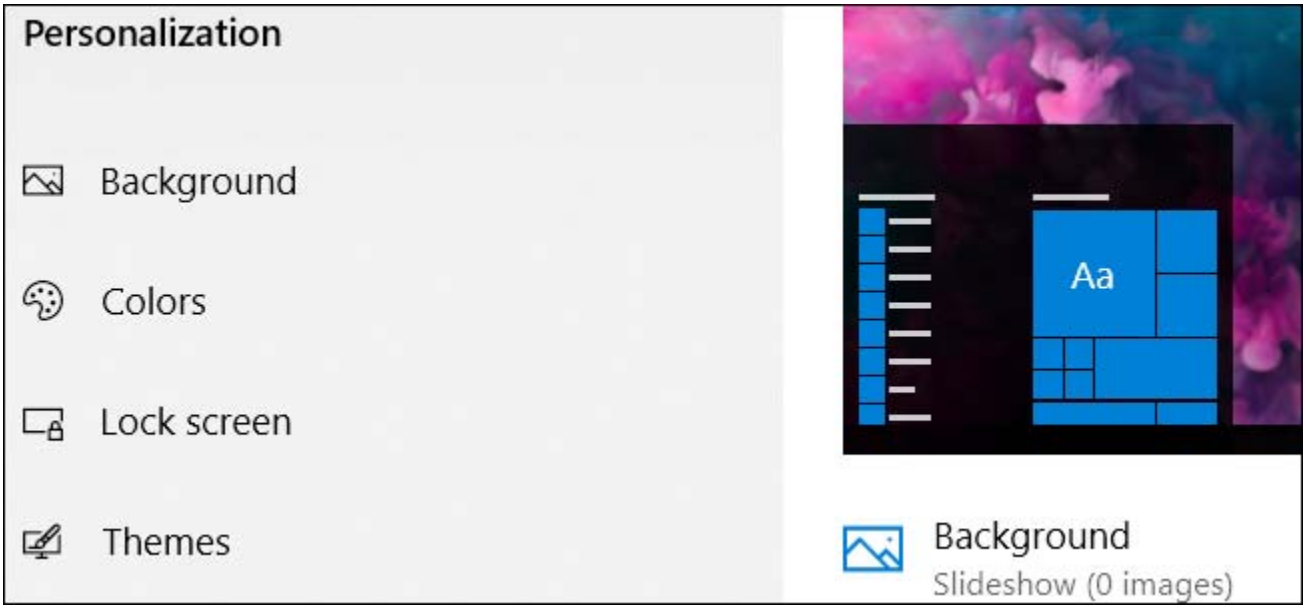
Chapter 1: How to Customize Windows 10's Appearance

Original article at: https://www.howtogeek.com/225893/how-to-personalize-windows-10s-appearance/



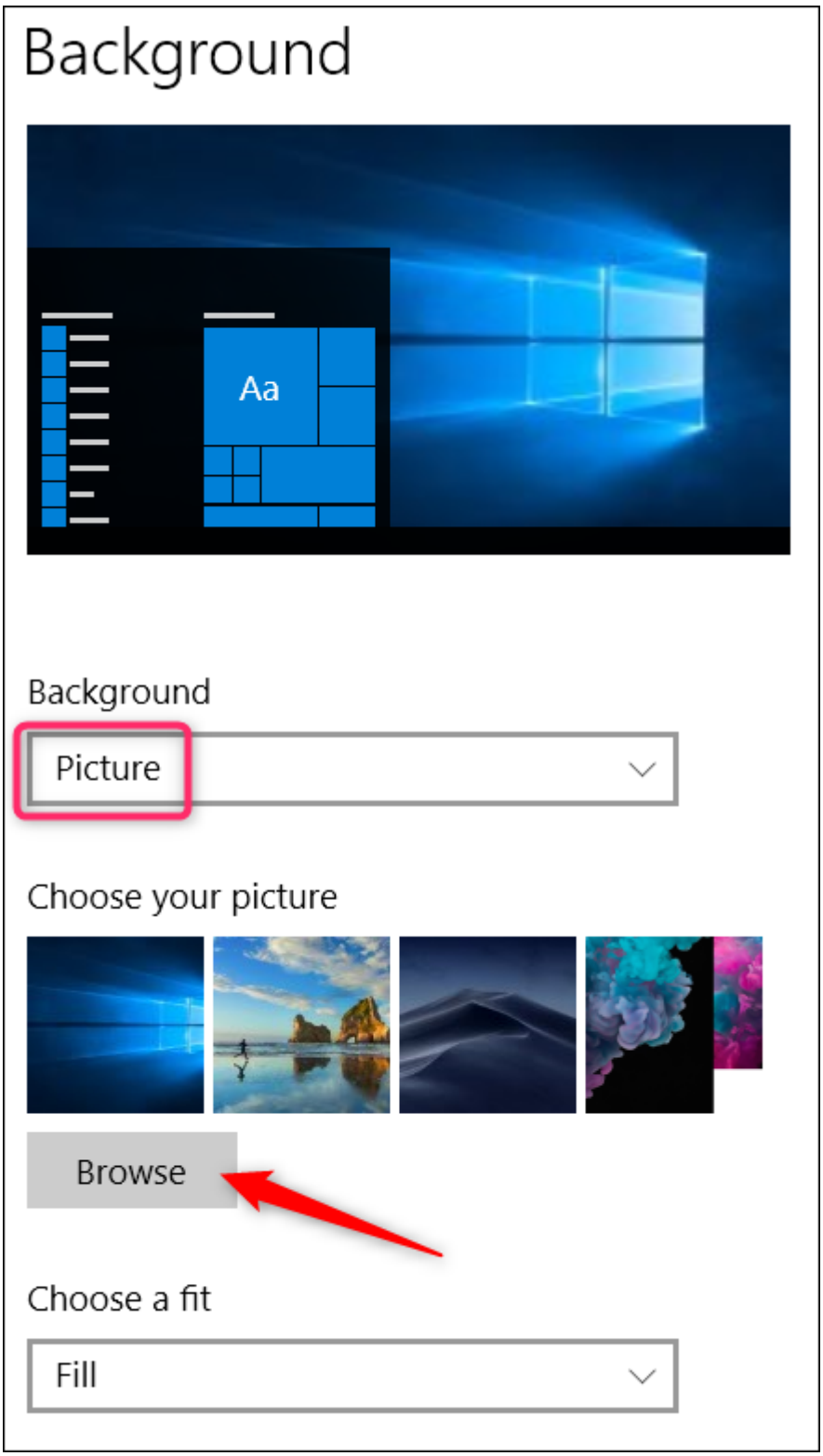
Windows 10 includes a bunch of personalization settings that let you change your desktop background, windows colors, lock screen background, and more. Here is what you need to know to get your computer looking exactly how you want it.

We're going to be talking about the Personalization settings Windows makes available at Settings > Personalization, so you might as well go ahead and fire that up now. There are other ways you can customize your computer's look, though, such as configuring folder options , or customizing the Start menu, Taskbar, Action Center, and icons however it makes sense to you.

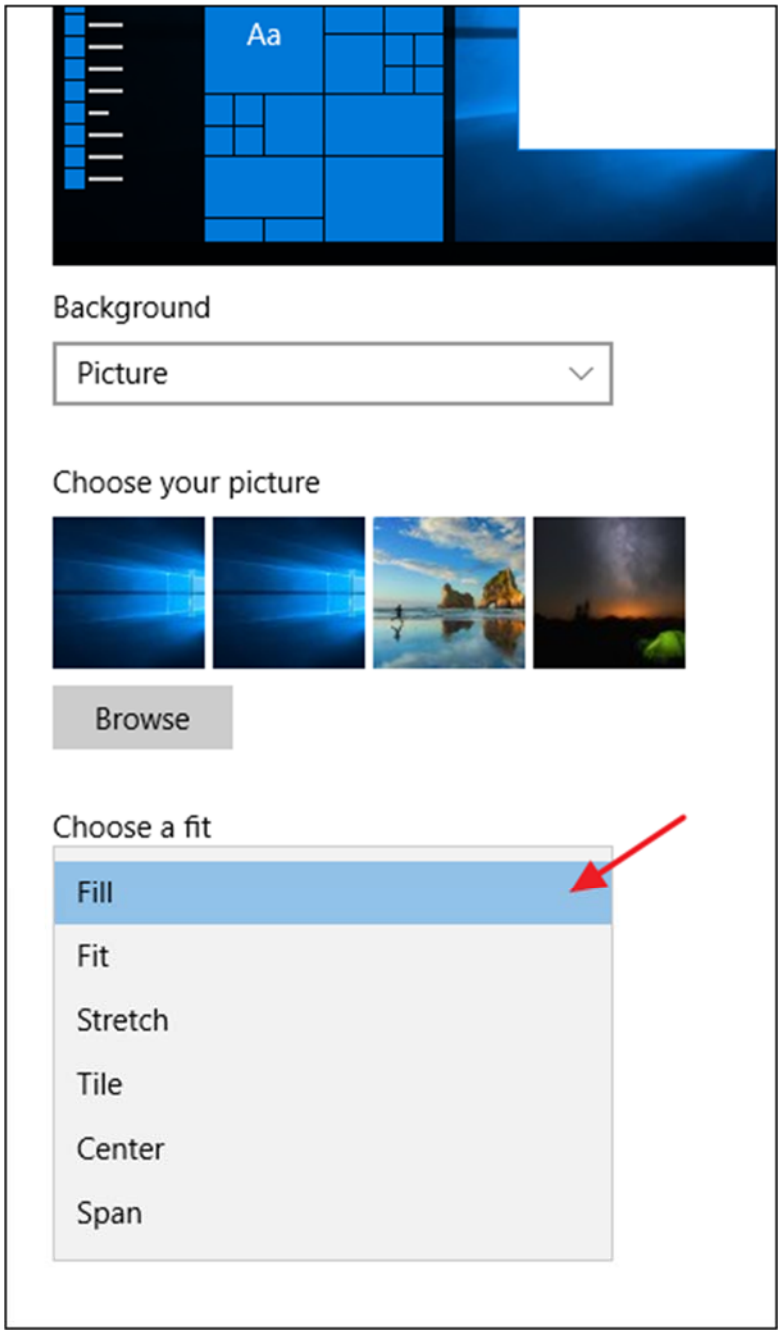
Change Your Windows Background

The first set of options—those you find in the "Background" category on the Personalization settings page—let you control your desktop background and they should look pretty familiar to you if you've been using Windows for a while.

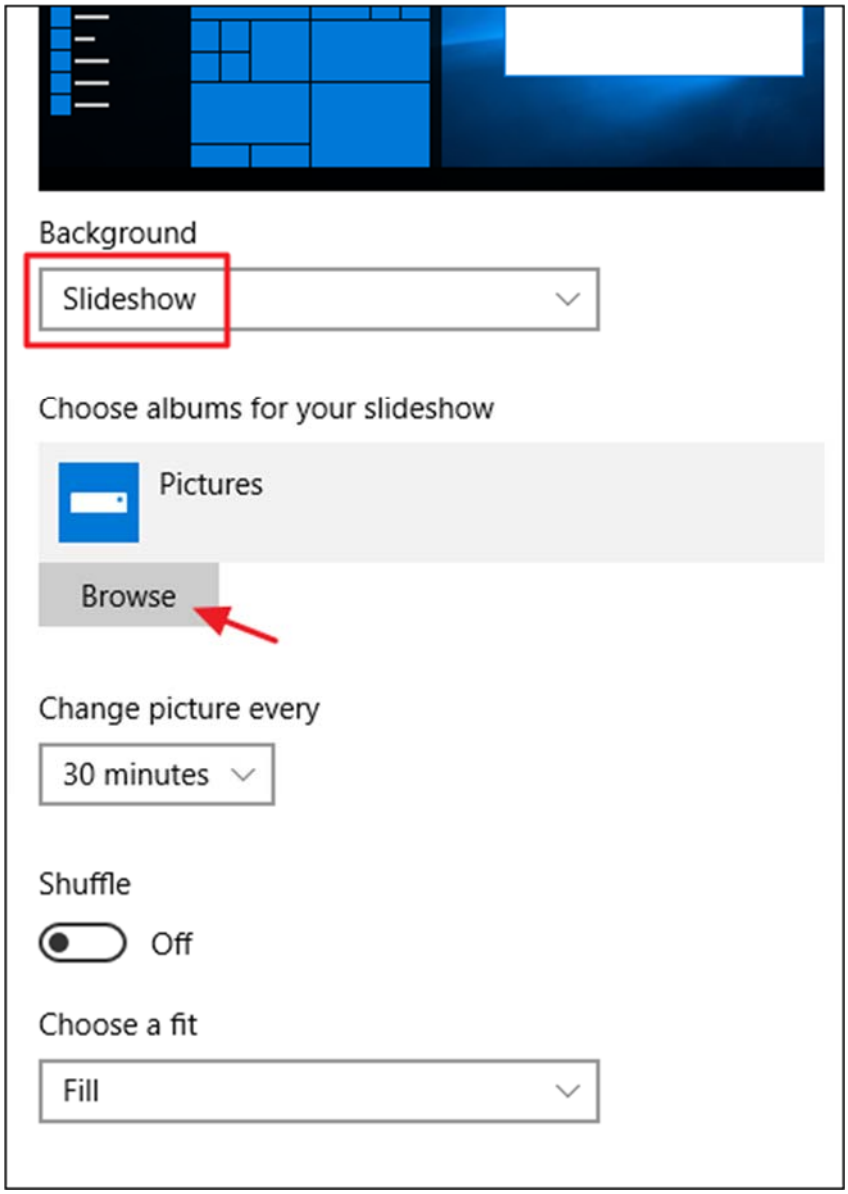
To use a picture as your background, choose "Picture" from the "Background" drop-down menu. Just like in previous versions, Windows 10 comes with a few pictures to choose from, or you can click "Browse" and locate your own picture.



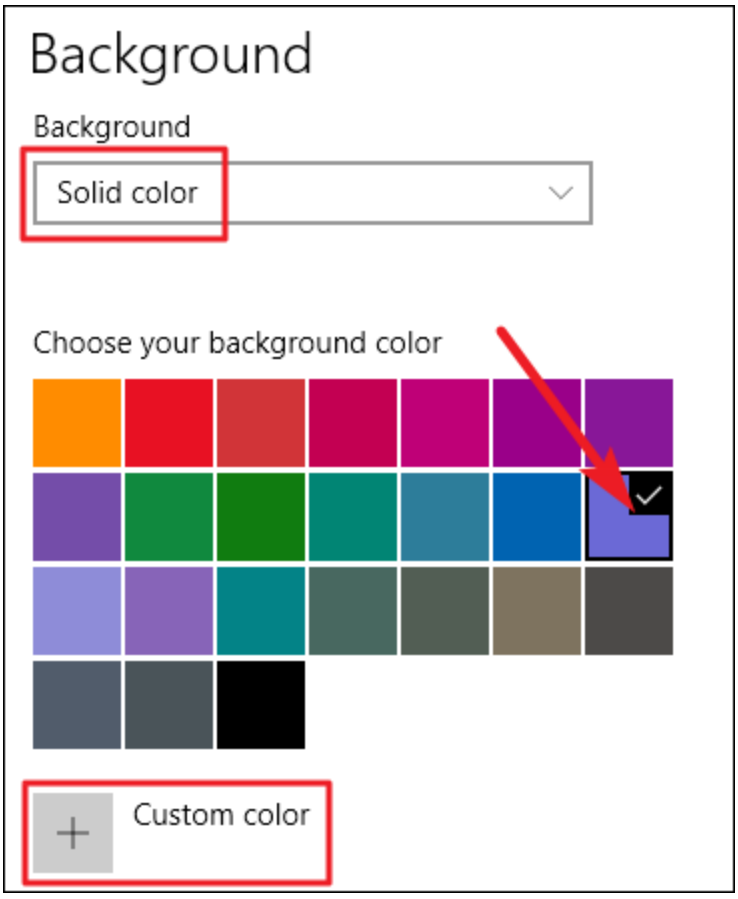
Once you choose a picture, you can decide how your picture will fit on your desktop—whether it fills, fits, stretches, tiles, and so on. If you're using multiple monitors, you can also choose a "Span" option that displays a single picture across all your monitors.



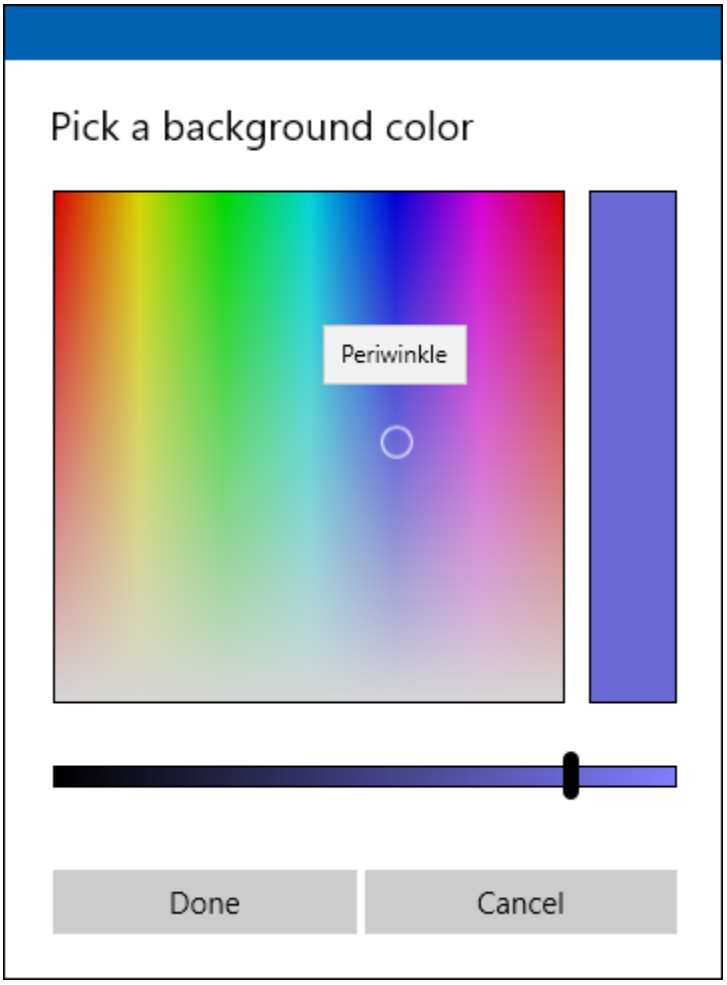
If you want to rotate through a set of pictures for your background, choose “Slideshow” from the “Background” drop-down menu. To create a slideshow, you’ll need to select a folder from which Windows can draw pictures. You can’t select individual pictures–only folders–so go ahead and set up a folder with your favorite background pictures before selecting this option. After selecting your folder, you can also specify how often Windows changes the background picture, whether it shuffles the pictures randomly, and how the pictures should fit your desktop.



And if you prefer to keep things simple, you can use a solid color as your background. Choose “Solid color” from the “Background” drop-down menu and then choose one of the offered background colors.



If you want a little more control, you can also click the “Custom Color” button on that last screen. In the popup window, use the controls to select the exact color you want, and then click “Done.”

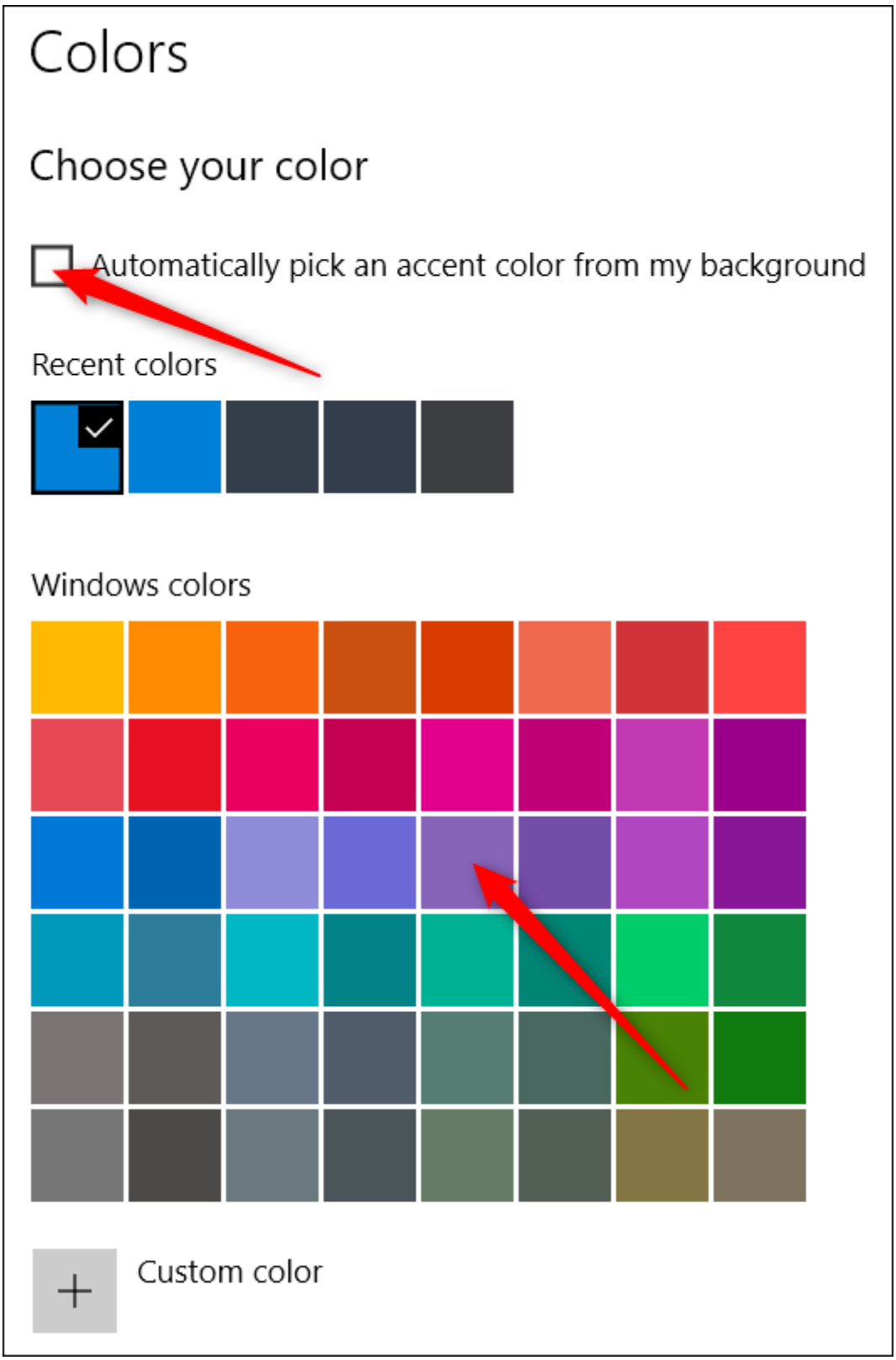


Unfortunately, the Personalization screen only lets you select one background, no matter how many monitors you have. If you do have multiple monitors, you can set a different background picture for each monitor by using File Explorer. Of course, there are also third-party utilities like John's Background Switcher and DisplayFusion, both of which can control images better on a multiple monitor setup. They also both provide more advanced tools for working with backgrounds on a single monitor.

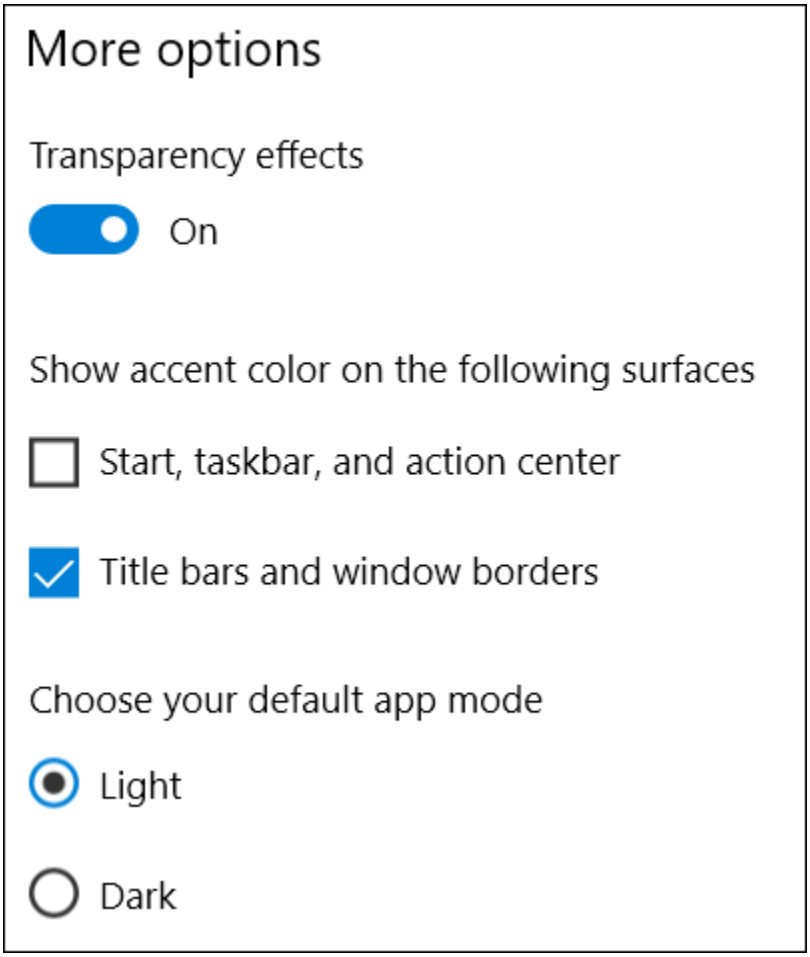
RELATED: ***How to Set a Different Wallpaper On Each Monitor In Windows 10***

Change What Colors Windows Uses and Where

The next set of personalization options—those in the "Colors" category—control how Windows uses color for various on-screen elements. You'll start by picking an accent color. You can pick an accent color from the predefined pallet of colors, or you can click "Custom Color" to get exactly the color you want. Alternatively, you can select the "Automatically pick an accent color from my background" to have Windows automatically match a color based on the picture you're using as your background.


Colors
Choose your color
Automatically pick an accent color from my background
Recent colors
Windows colors
Custom color

After picking an accent color, your next step is choosing where Windows uses that accent color. Your two options here are “Start, taskbar, and action center” and “Title bars and window borders.” The first option uses the accent color as the background for your Start menu, taskbar, and action center and also highlights certain items on those elements—such as app icons on the Start menu—with the same accent color. The second option uses the accent color for the title bar of your active window.



Unfortunately, the Start menu, taskbar, and Action Center elements are grouped for color selection, and you can’t make them different colors. We do, however, have a quick registry hack that can at least let you keep a black background on your Start menu and Action Center. The second option uses the accent color on the title bar of active windows, though we also have another hack for you if you want to use the accent color on inactive windows, as well.

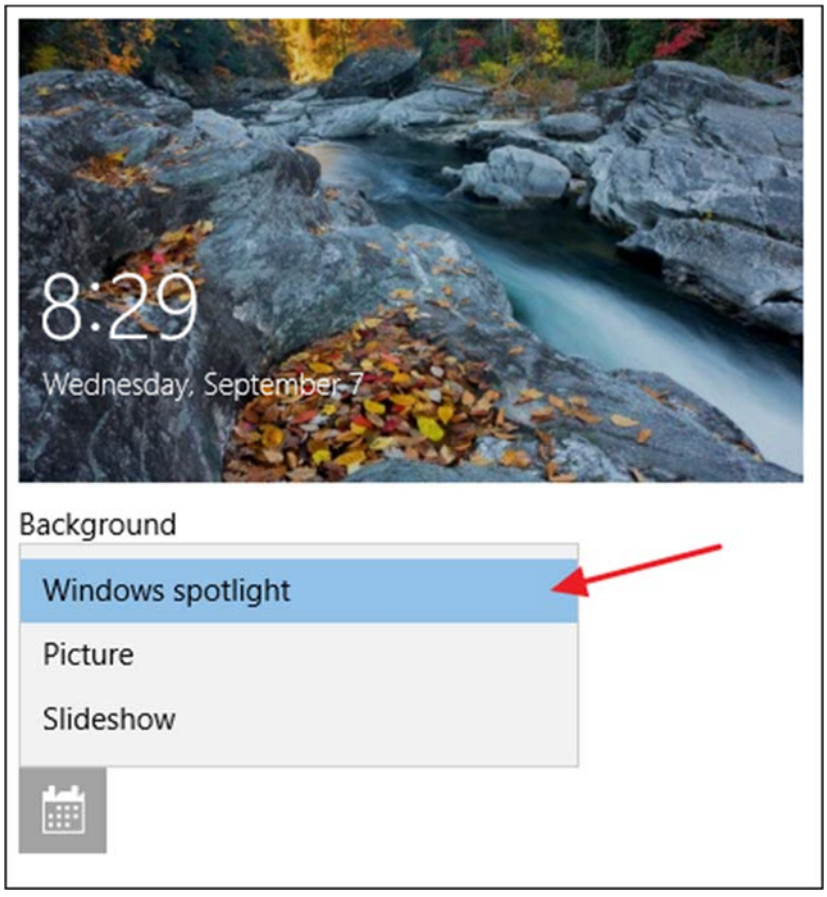
Back on the Colors personalization screen, you’ll also find a “Transparency effect” option for making your Start menu, taskbar, and Action Center transparent or not. This option does not affect the accent color if it’s used on those elements.

And finally, you can enable a dark mode for settings and apps. While this app mode setting doesn't affect every app, we do have some tricks you might enjoy for using a dark theme almost everywhere in Windows 10.

Change Your Lock Screen

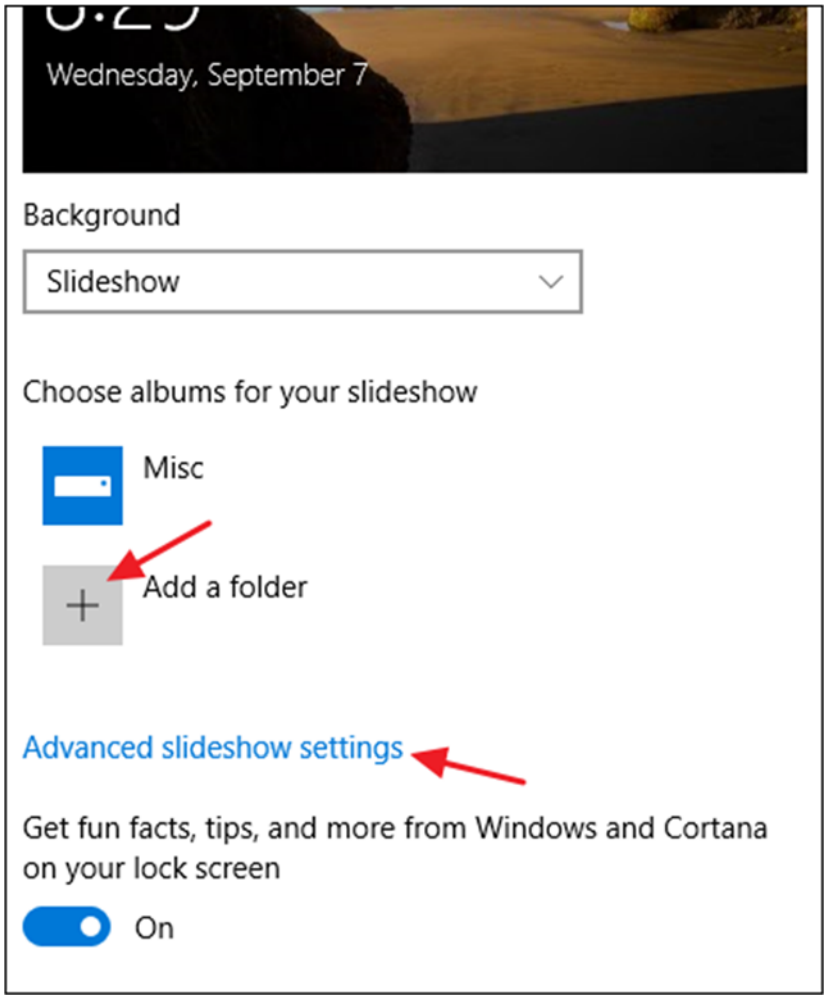
Next, we move on to the Windows lock screen settings. The lock screen, remember, is the screen you click to slide out of the way so you can get to the sign in screen where you enter your user name and password. By default, your lock screen background is set to "Windows Spotlight," which downloads and displays a rotating set of backgrounds from Microsoft.

You can also set the lock screen background to be one of your pictures or a slideshow of pictures in a folder on your computer. It works the same way as setting your desktop background. Choose the option you want from the "Background" drop-down menu. If you select a picture, just point Windows to the file you want to use.

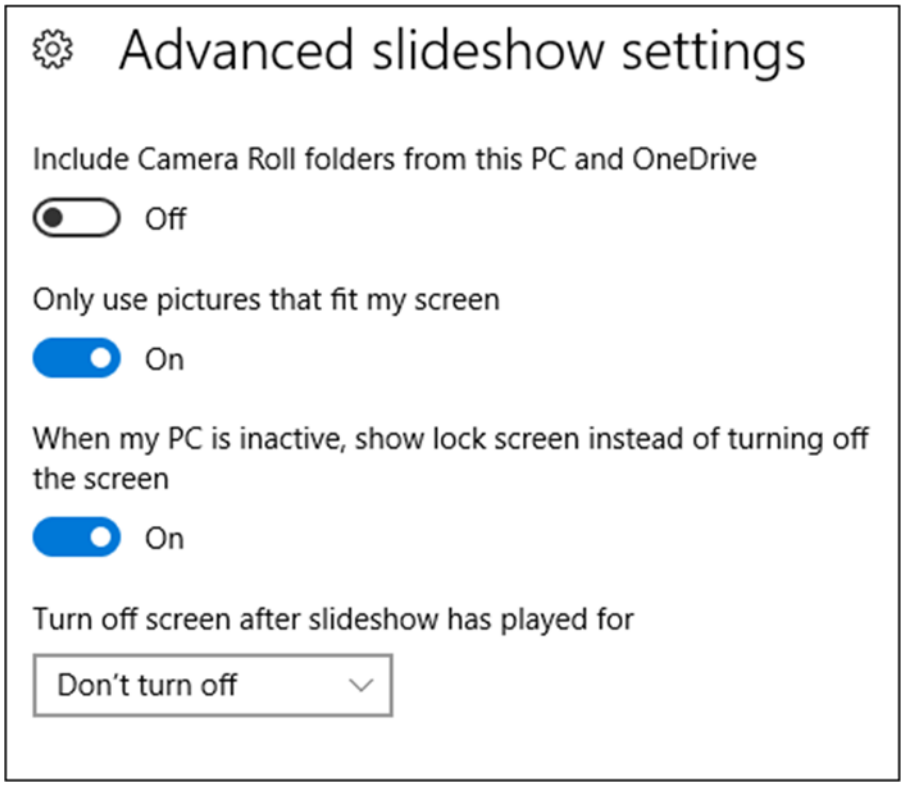


If you decide on the slideshow option, you'll first need to select one or more albums (or folders) with pictures to use for the slideshow. Click the "Add a folder" button to add new

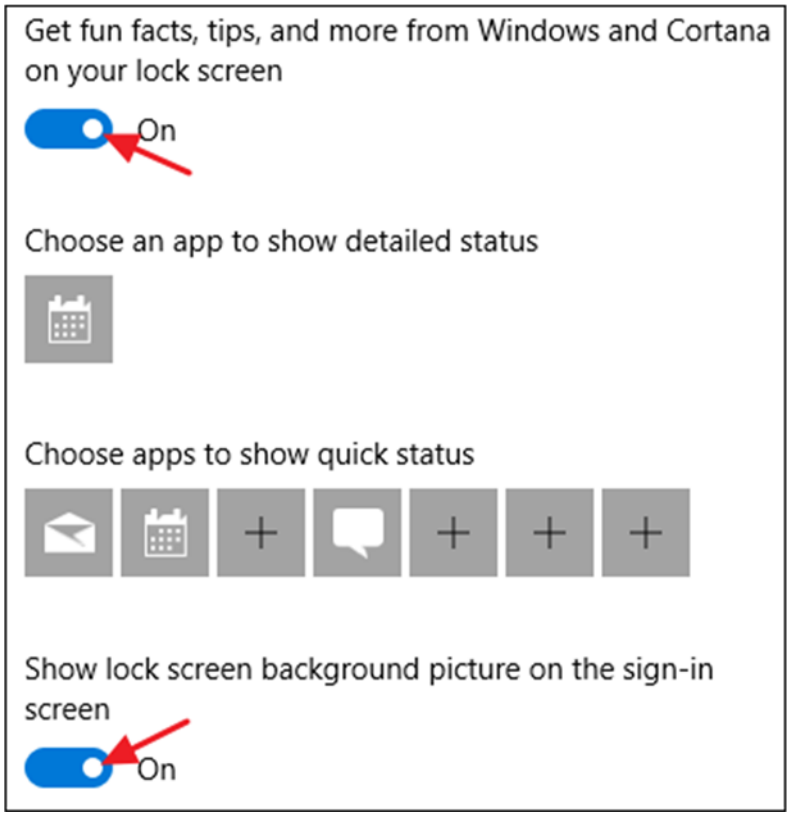
folders until you're satisfied with your selections. You can also click the "Advanced slideshow settings" link to access some additional options.



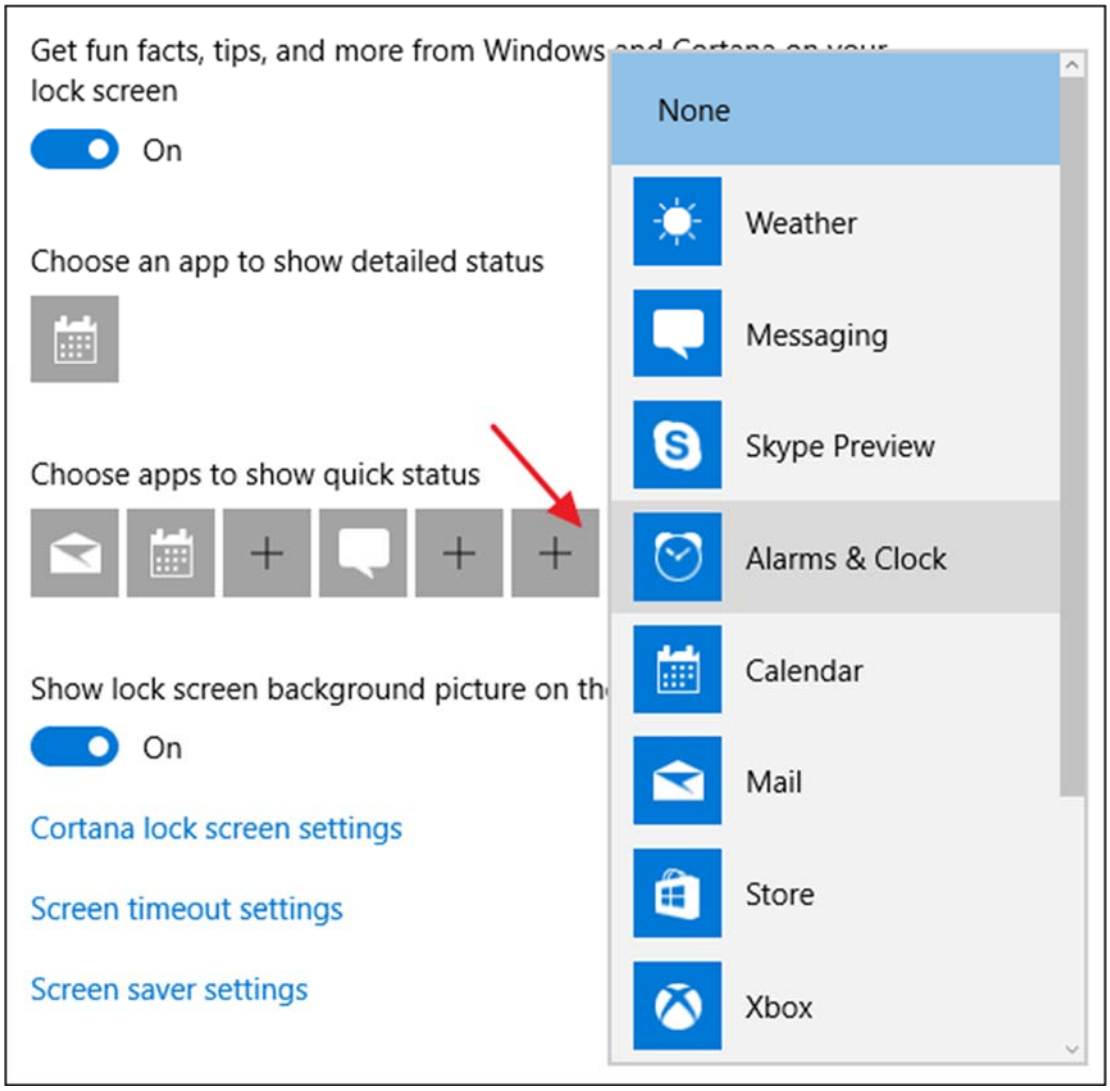
The advanced settings let you include your camera roll as a source for pictures, use only pictures that fit your screen, and select whether to show the lock screen instead of turning off the screen when the PC is inactive. If you select this last option, you can also set the screen to turn off after a set amount of time, or not at all.



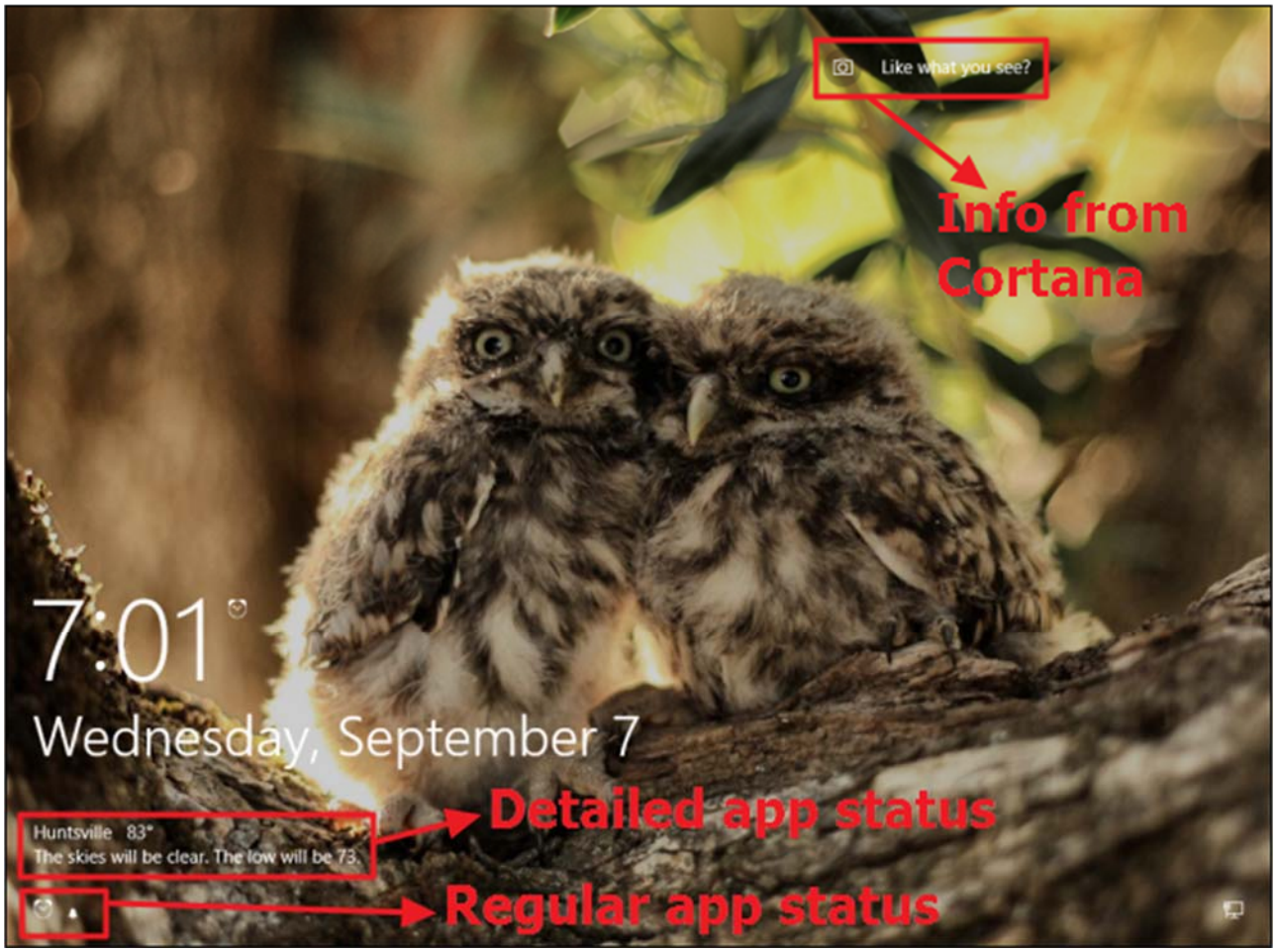
Back on the lock screen settings, you also have a few more options available. Turn off the "Get fun facts, tips, and more from Windows and Cortana on your lock screen" option if you prefer not seeing that stuff on your lock screen. You can also specify that the lock screen background picture is used as your sign-in screen background as well, though we have some other ways you might prefer to change your sign in screen background instead.



The other two settings, “Choose an app to show detailed status” and “Choose apps to show quick status,” let you control what apps provide status information on the lock screen. You can remove apps that are already there by clicking them and then choosing “None” or change them by picking any of the preselected apps from the pop-up menu. Add another app by clicking one of the plus (+) icons and choosing apps from that same menu.

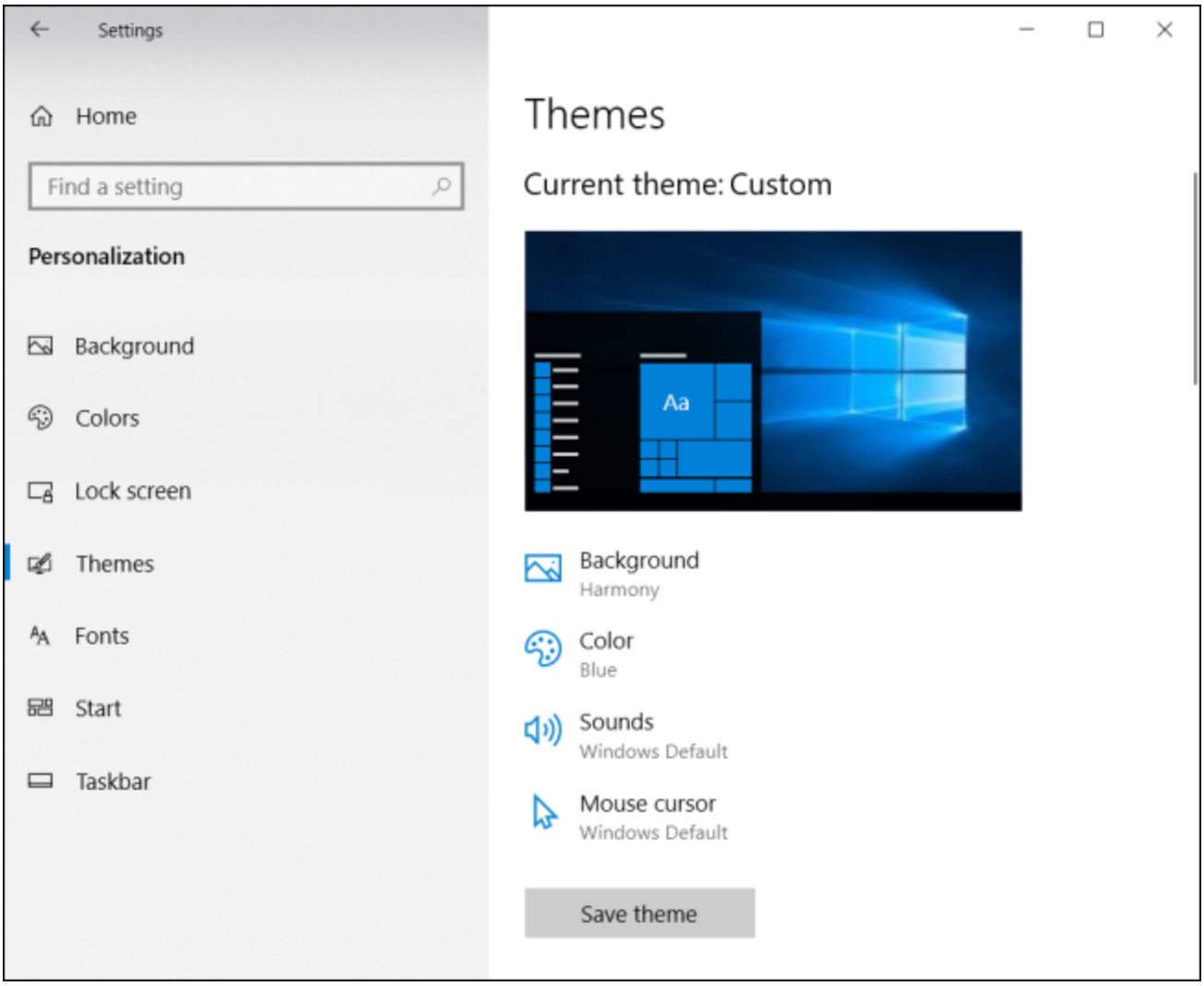


And for reference, here's where all that stuff shows up on your lock screen.



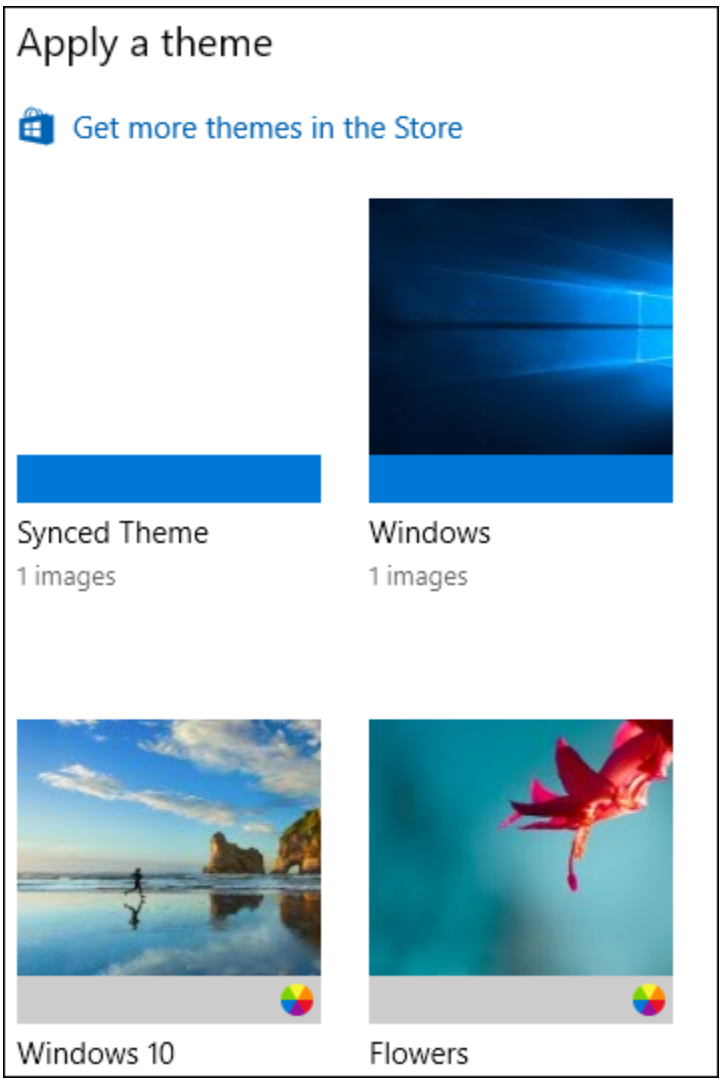
Use a Theme to Change Multiple Personalization Settings at Once

Windows 10 finally brings control of themes into the Settings app instead of the Control Panel app. Themes let you coordinate and save a desktop background, accent color, sound scheme, and mouse cursors as a set you can reload more easily.



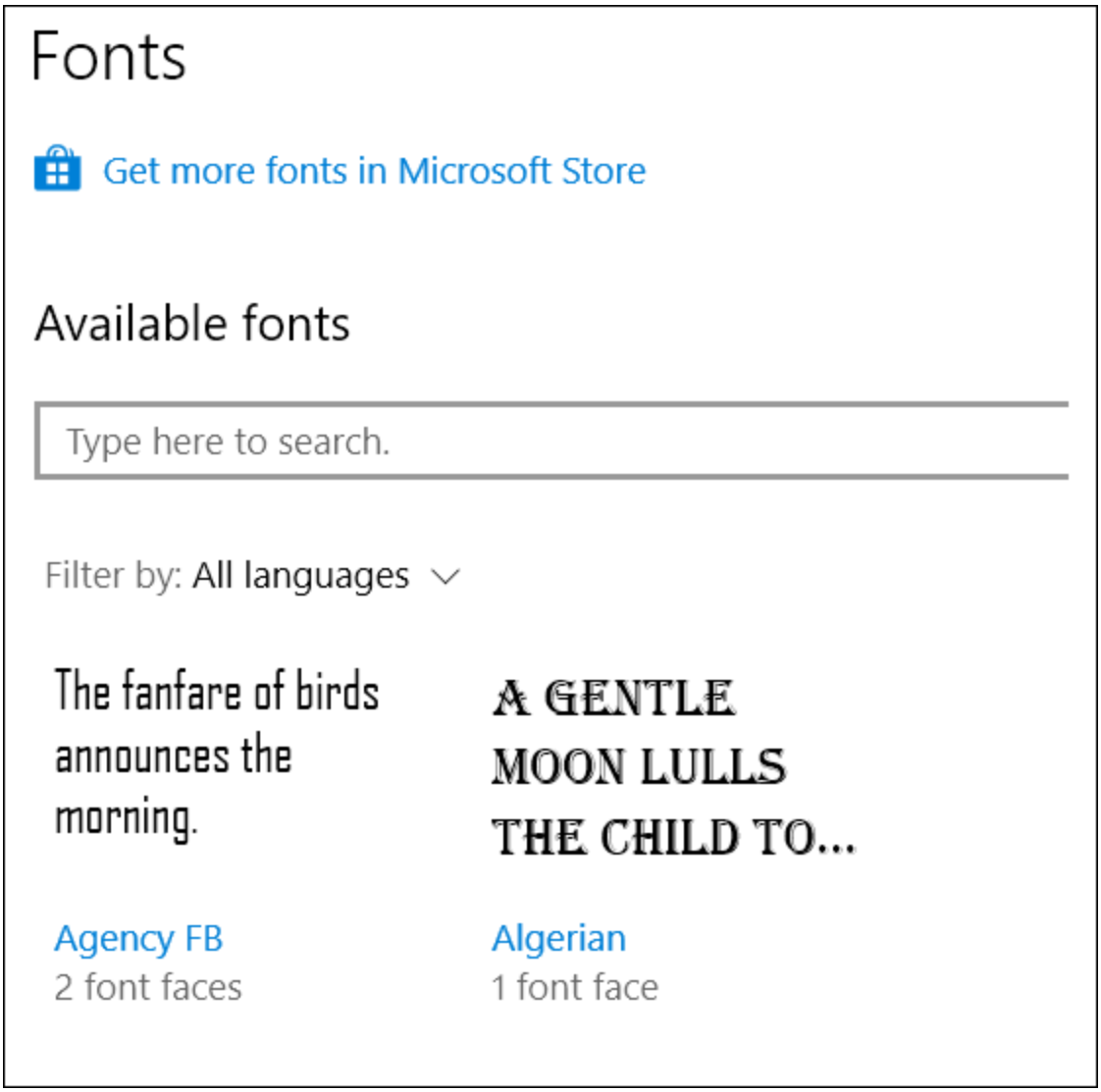
You can click each of the theme categories—Background, Color, and so on—to set what you want to use. These links really just take you to other places in the Settings app where you can make the changes. When you've got things set up the way you like, click the "Save Theme" button and give your theme a name.

If you scroll down a bit, you'll see that Windows also comes with some preselected themes and gives you the option to download more from the Windows Store. Browse through the list and pick the theme you want to use or click the "Get more themes in the Store" link to see what else is on offer.



Change Your Font Options

Windows 10 still includes the old Fonts tool in the Control Panel, but you can now also manage fonts within the Settings app. This page shows all the font families installed on your PC. It's usually a pretty long list, so there's a search box right up top to help out. The app displays a sample of each font and how many faces it includes.



You can click any font family to get more details and adjust some basic font settings, as well as uninstall the font.

Agency FB

Type here to preview font.

Change font size

24 points

Regular

Bold

Metadata

Select a font face to see its metadata.

Regular

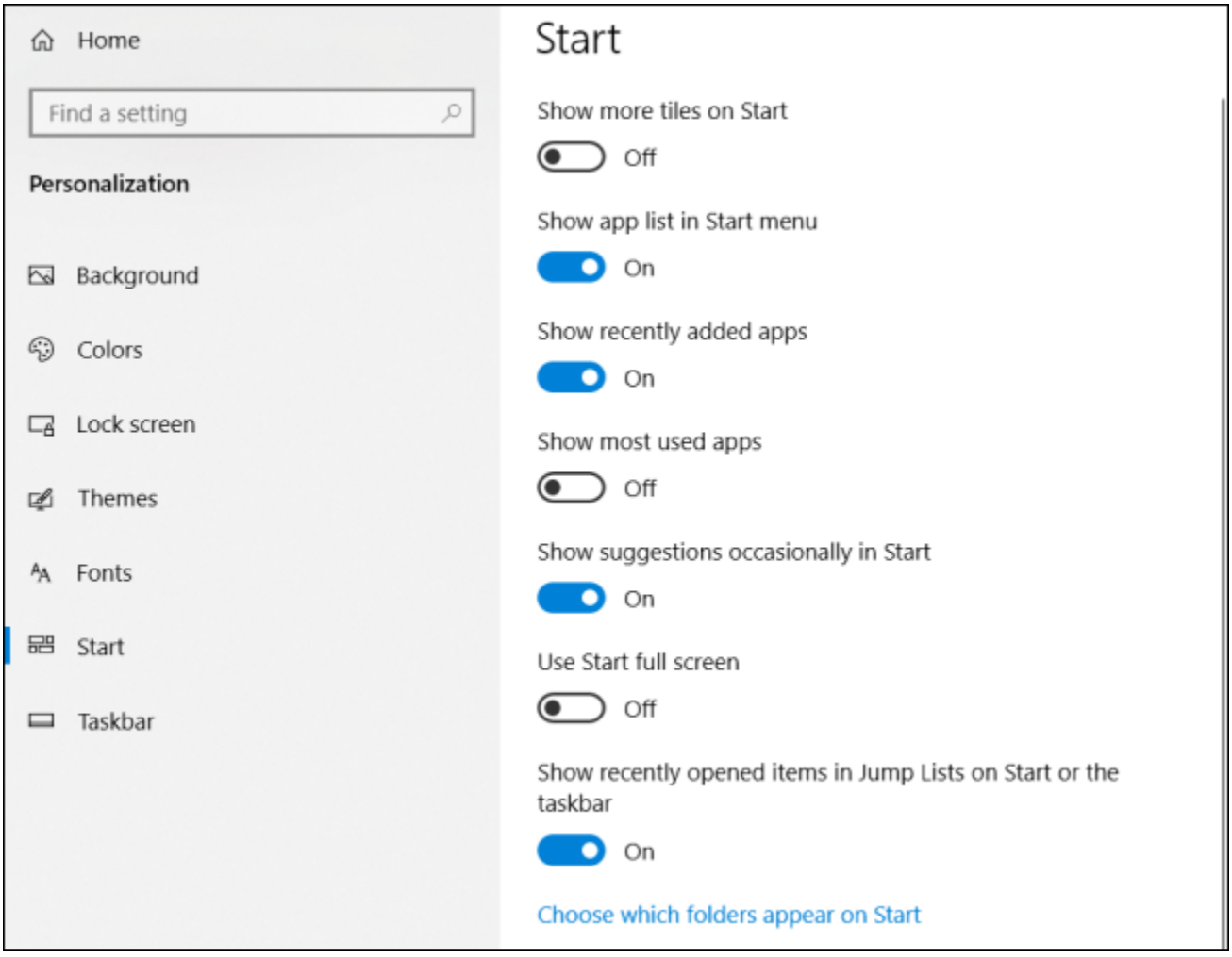
Metadata may differ between font faces within a family.

Full name	Agency FB
Font file	C:\WINDOWS\FONTS\AGENCYR.TTF
	Uninstall
Version	Version 1.01
Designer/Foundry	The Font Bureau, Inc.
Manufacturer	The Font Bureau, Inc.
Copyright	Copyright (c) 1995, The Font Bureau, Inc. 1995, reserved.
Legal trademarks	The Font Bureau, Inc.

For a more detailed explanation, check out our guide to installing and managing fonts in Windows 10's Settings app.

Change Your Start Menu Options

Next up are the Start menu options. There aren't a whole lot of options available right on the Start personalization screen. You can use them to control whether to show extra tiles on each column of tiles, whether things like your most-used and recently-added apps show up above your full list of apps, and whether to open the Start menu in full-screen mode.

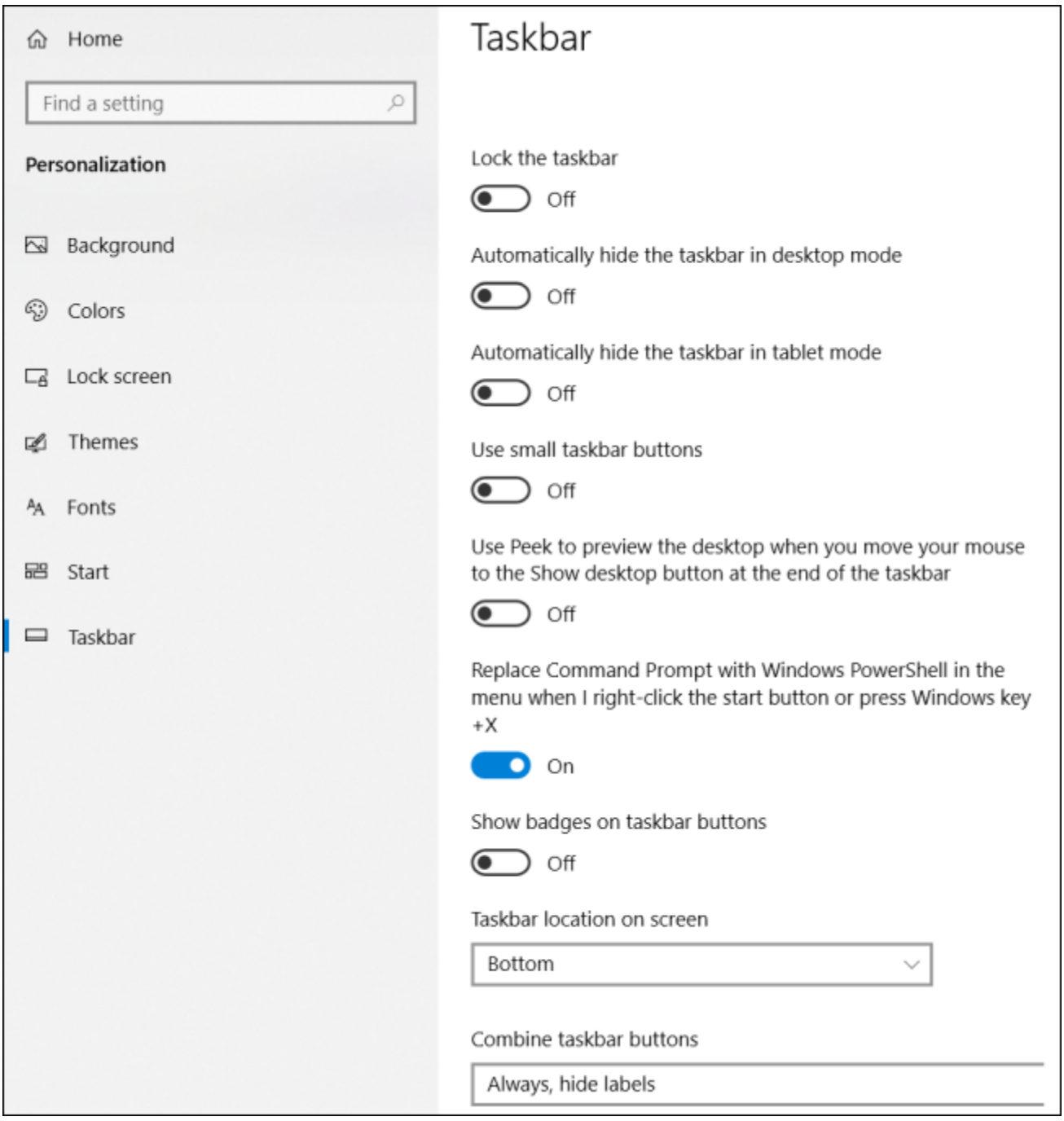


We're not going to spend a lot of time here, though, because we've already got a full guide to all the ways you can customize your Start menu in Windows 10. That includes what you can do on the Personalization screen as well as a bunch of other things you customize elsewhere in Windows.

RELATED: ***10 Ways to Customize the Windows 10 Start Menu***

Change Your Taskbar Options

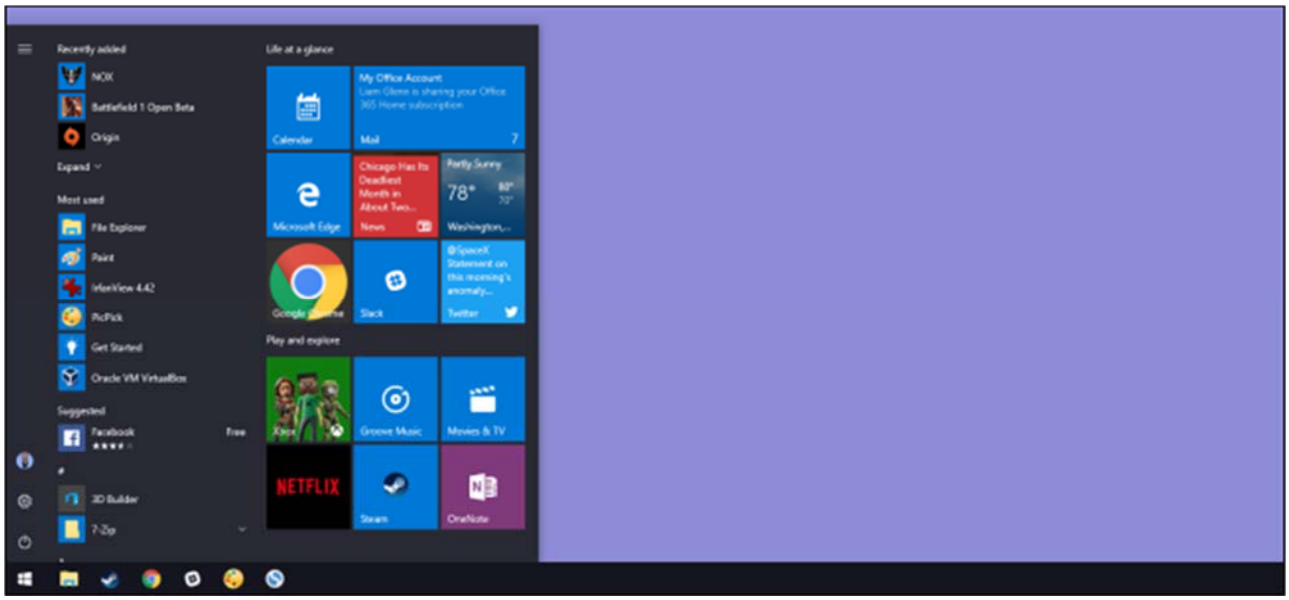
Just like with the Start menu options, we're not to going into detail about the Taskbar options available here because we've already got a full guide to customizing your taskbar in Windows 10. In short, though, this is where you'll come to customize options like whether the taskbar is locked from moving, automatically hides when you're not using it, uses small or large icons, and how the taskbar is handled if you have multiple displays.



As you can see, while Windows 10 might not provide quite the depth of customization options you had in Windows 7, it still provides enough to get Windows looking pretty good. And hey, if you can't get things just the way you want and you're willing to put in a bit more work, you can always try a tool like Rainmeter, which provides near endless customization opportunity.

Chapter 2: 10 Ways to Customize the Windows 10 Start Menu

Original article at: https://www.howtogeek.com/197836/8-ways-to-customize-the-windows-10-start-menu/

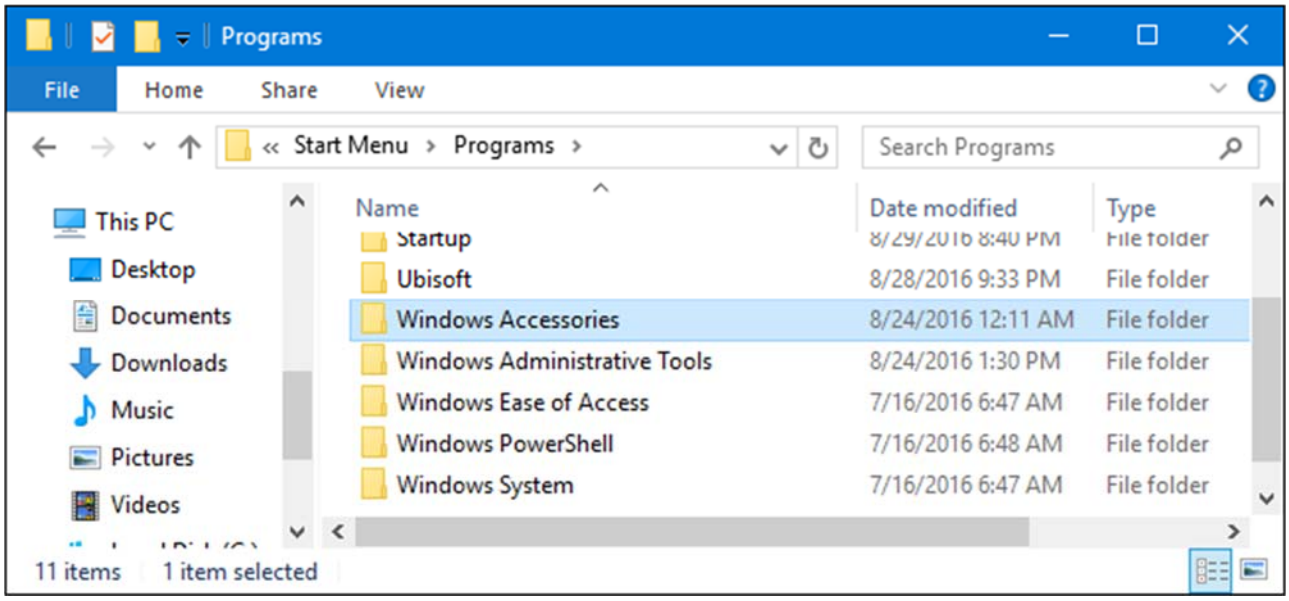


Windows 10 finally brought back the Start menu, and it's more customizable than ever. Here's a quick rundown of all the different ways that you can make the Start menu your own.

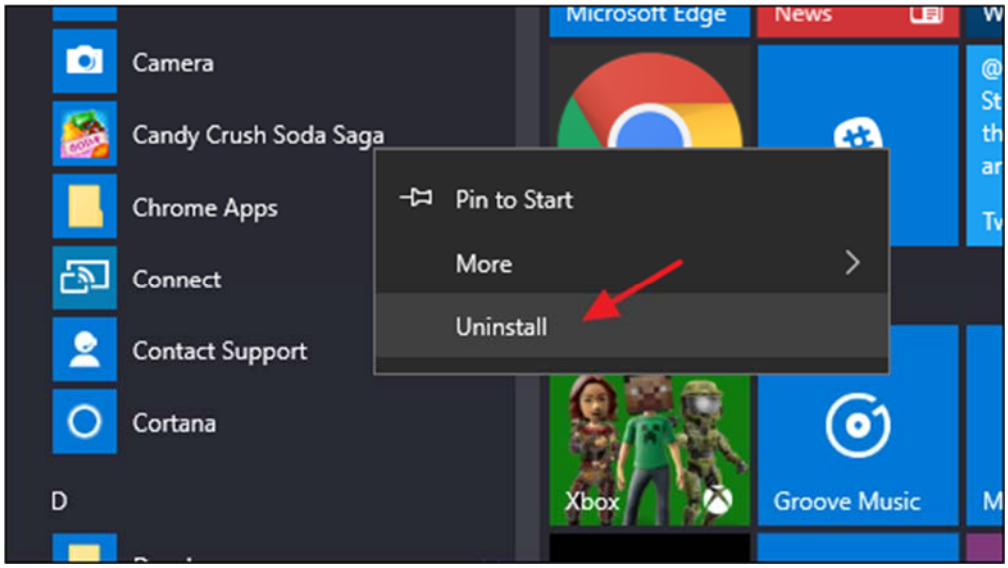
Get Started with Windows 10

Organize, Edit, Delete, or Add New Items to the Apps List

You can easily get to the Start menu's folder structure on the hard drive to edit, rearrange, or even add new items. This also gives you the benefit of being able to search for these new shortcuts that you create. And yes, you can do this by dragging items around individually on (or to) the Start menu, but rearranging via File Explorer is much quicker if you have a bunch of things you want to change.

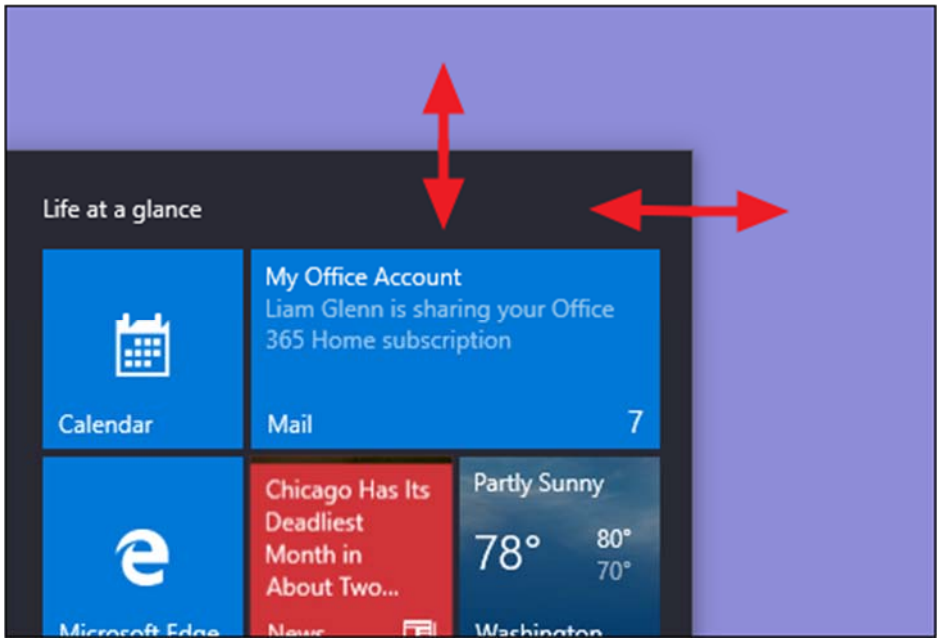


It's worth noting that the Start menu folder won't show Universal apps you have installed, so you'll need to deal with those just using the menu itself. For the most part, you can uninstall any app—except for some built-in apps—by right-clicking them in the Start menu and choosing "Uninstall."



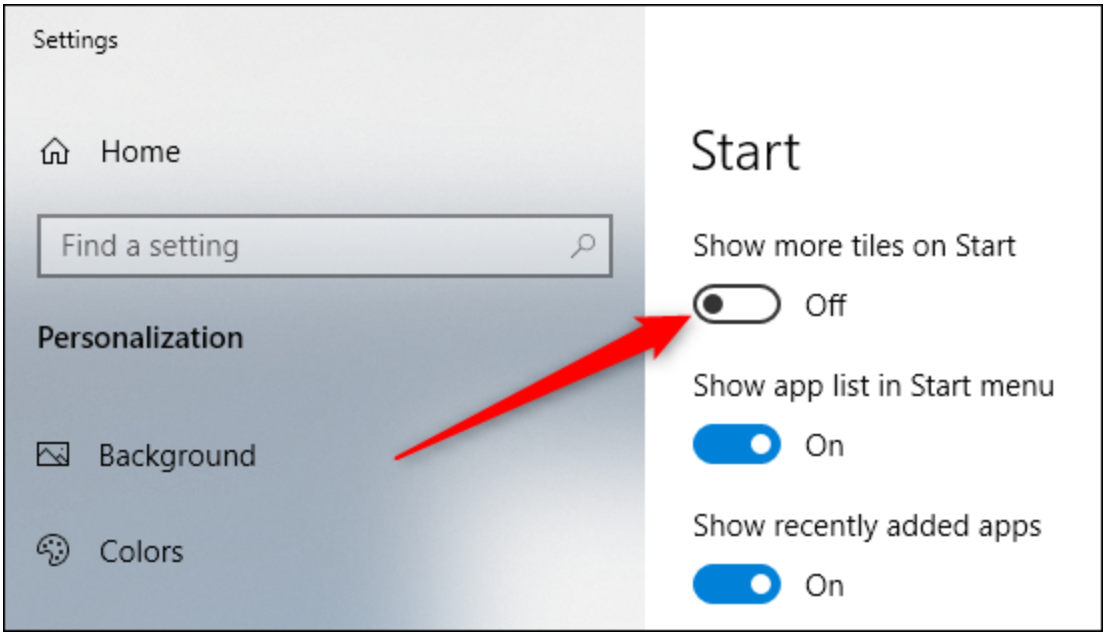
Resize the Start Menu

You can quickly resize the Start menu by dragging the top or right edge of the menu with your mouse.

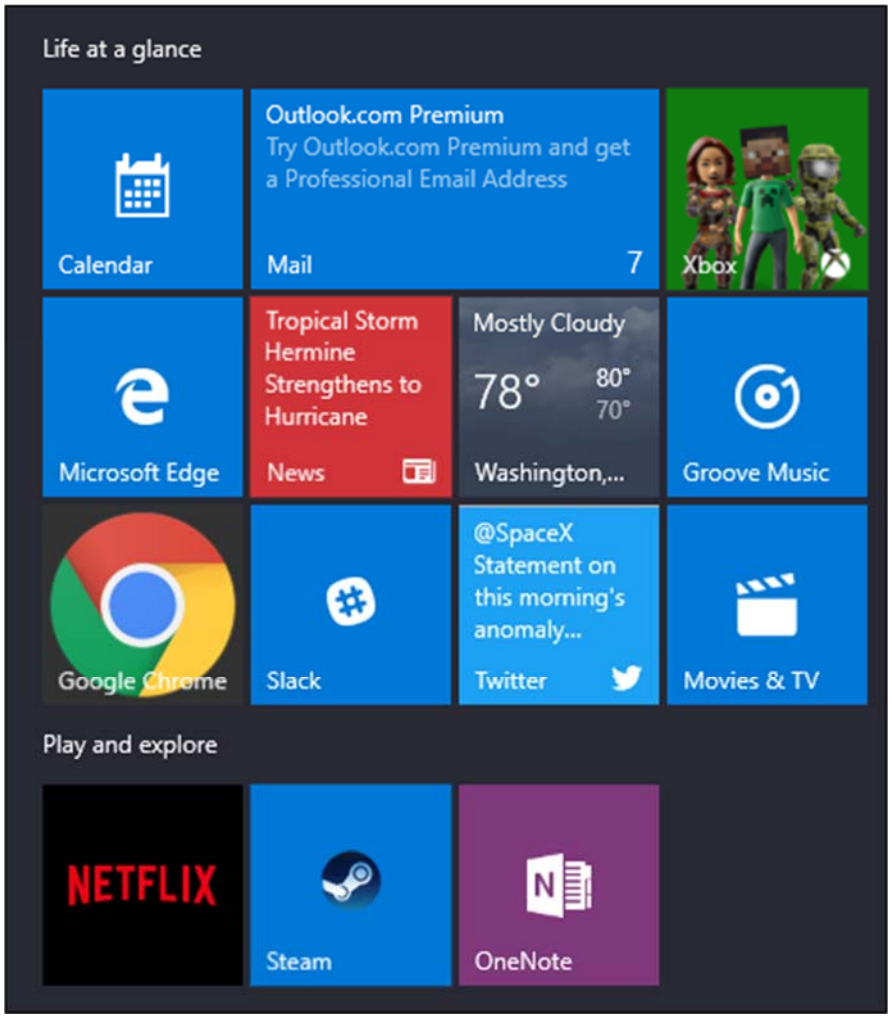


Resizing vertically works just as you'd expect. When you resize horizontally, you can increase the Start menu by one full column of icon groups at a time—up to four columns. Unfortunately, you can only narrow the menu down to one column.

You can also set Windows to show a few extra tiles in each column. Just head to Settings > Personalization > Start and turn on the "Show more tiles on Start" option.



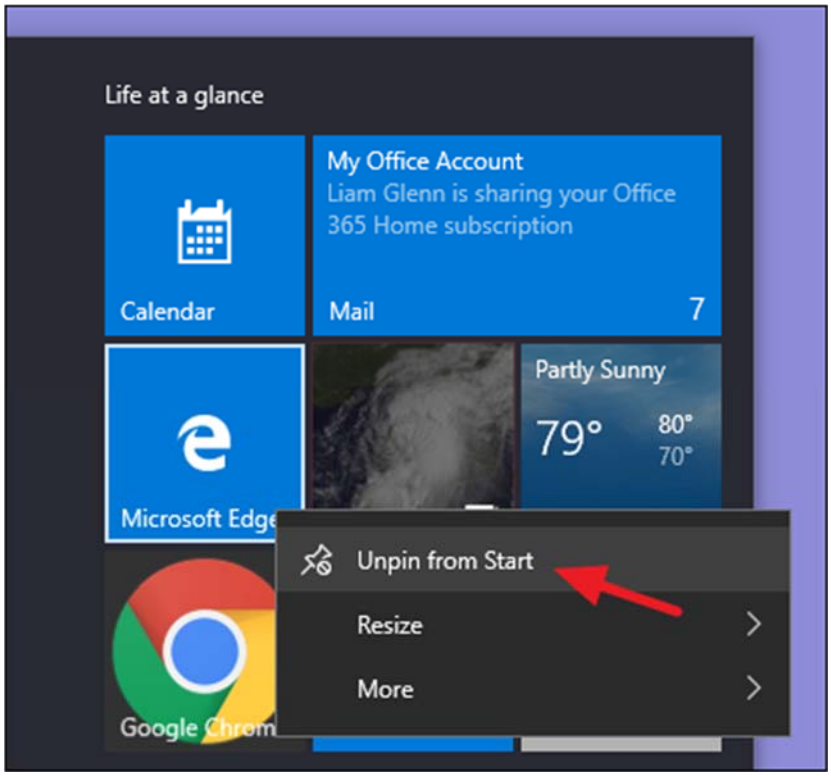
With the "Show more tiles on Start" option on, you can see that the tile column has expanded by the width of one medium-sized tile.



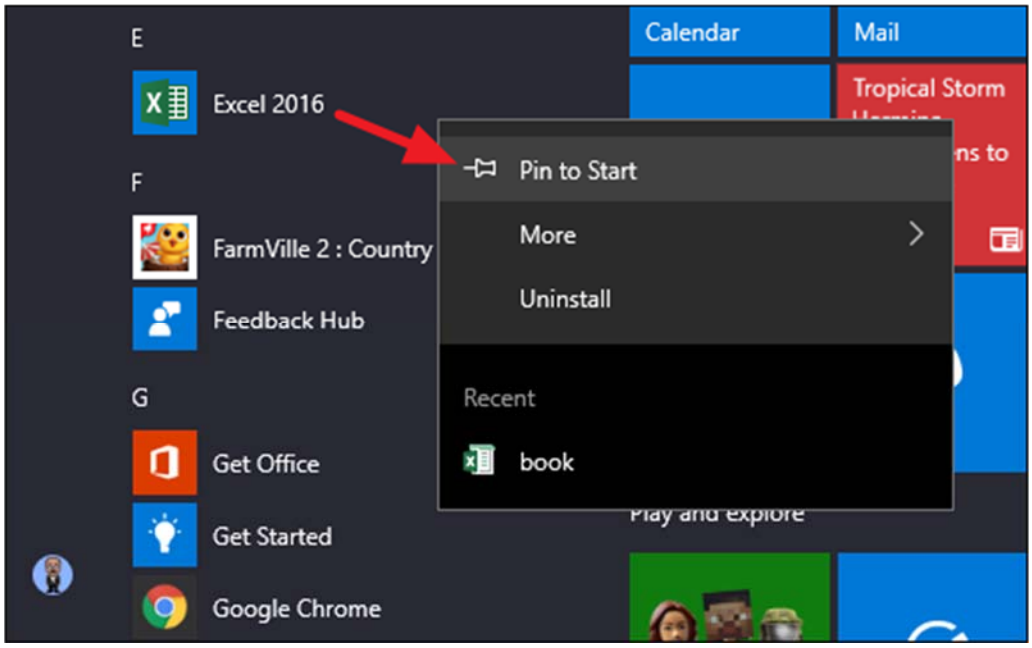
Note that if you do turn on the “Show more tiles” option, you can still resize the Start menu horizontally, but only up to three columns of icon groups instead of four.

Pin and Unpin Tiles

You can easily pin and unpin tiles by right-clicking on each one and selecting “Unpin from Start.”

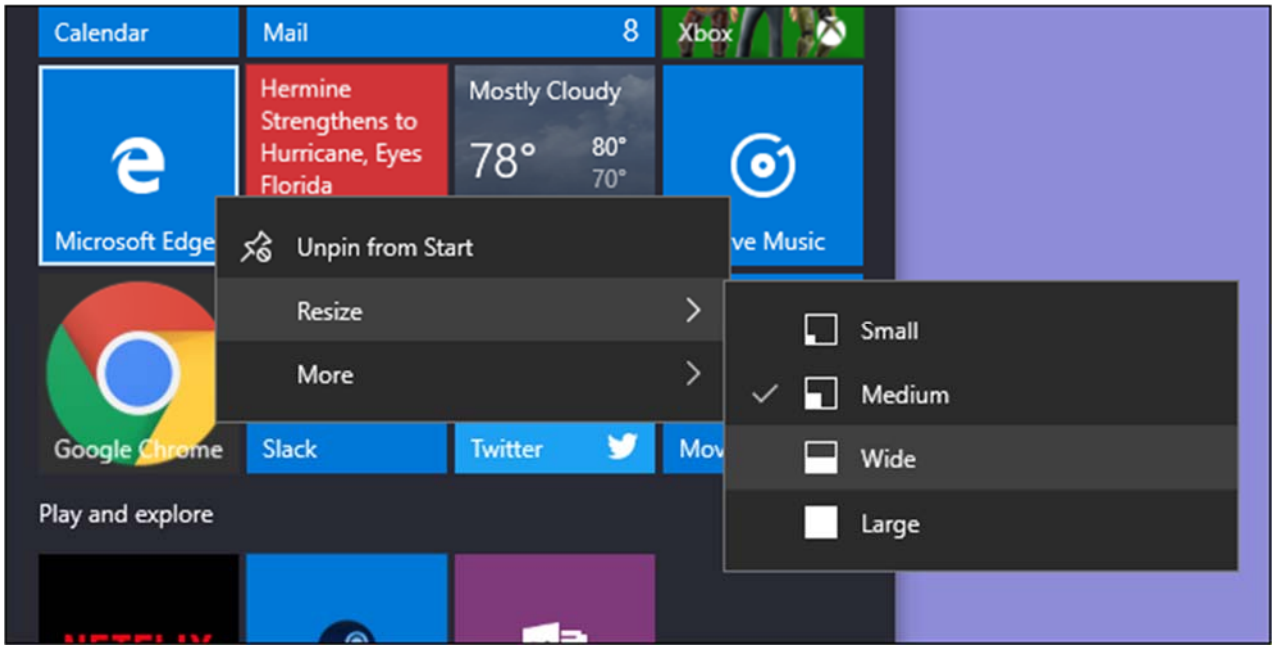


If there's an app that isn't pinned, but you want a tile for it, just browse through the list of apps on the left side of the Start menu. When you find what you're looking for, right-click the app and choose "Pin to Start."



Resize Tiles

You can change the size of a tile by right-clicking it, pointing to “Resize,” and then picking the size you want.

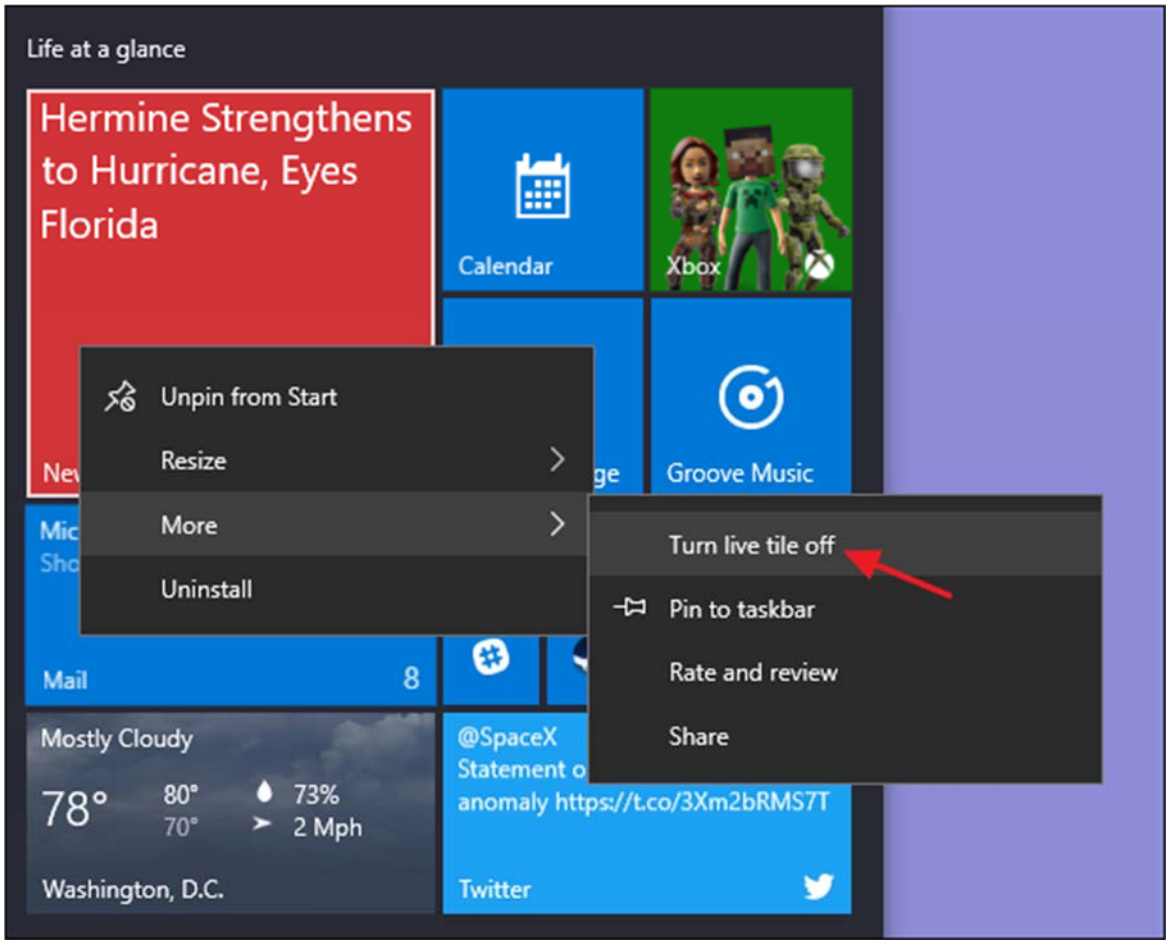


Four small tiles fit into a medium tile. Four medium tiles fit into a large tile. And a wide tile is the size of two side-by-side medium tiles.

Unfortunately, the tiling can be a little weird, so if you have an odd number of small tiles, you'll end up with blank space.

Turn Off Live Tile Updates

If all those flashing tiles end up annoying you, just right-click on them, point to "More," and then choose "Turn live tile off."

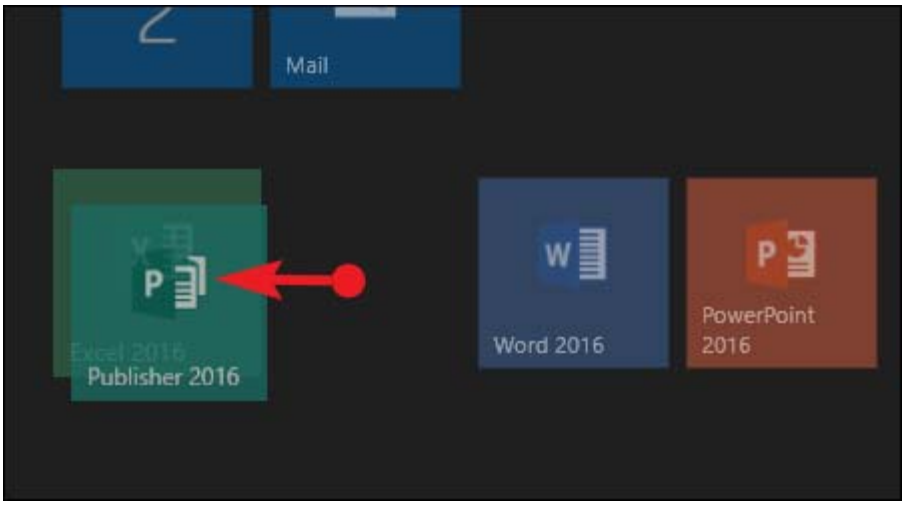


Compared to the example above, you can see that the News tile is back to being a regular tile button.

For the most part, we find live tiles a little busy for our tastes, but they can be useful for tiles like Weather or Calendar where it's nice to have some at-a-glance info.

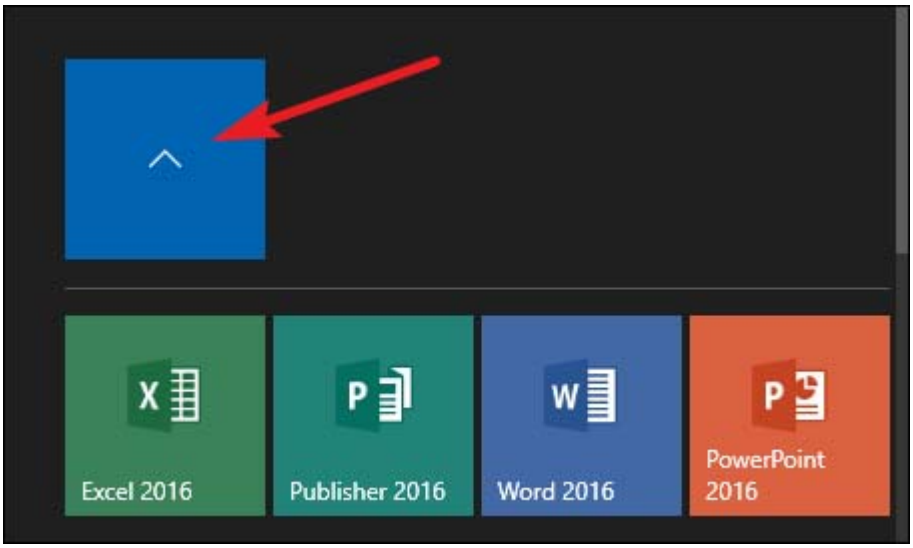
Group Tiles Into Folders

You can also group tiles on the Start menu into folders. These folders work much like app folders on a smartphone. To create a new folder, drag any tile and drop it onto another tile. Those tiles will then be grouped into a folder. You can then add other tiles to the folder by dragging them on top of the folder.



Once you have tiles in a folder, you just have to click the folder to expand it.

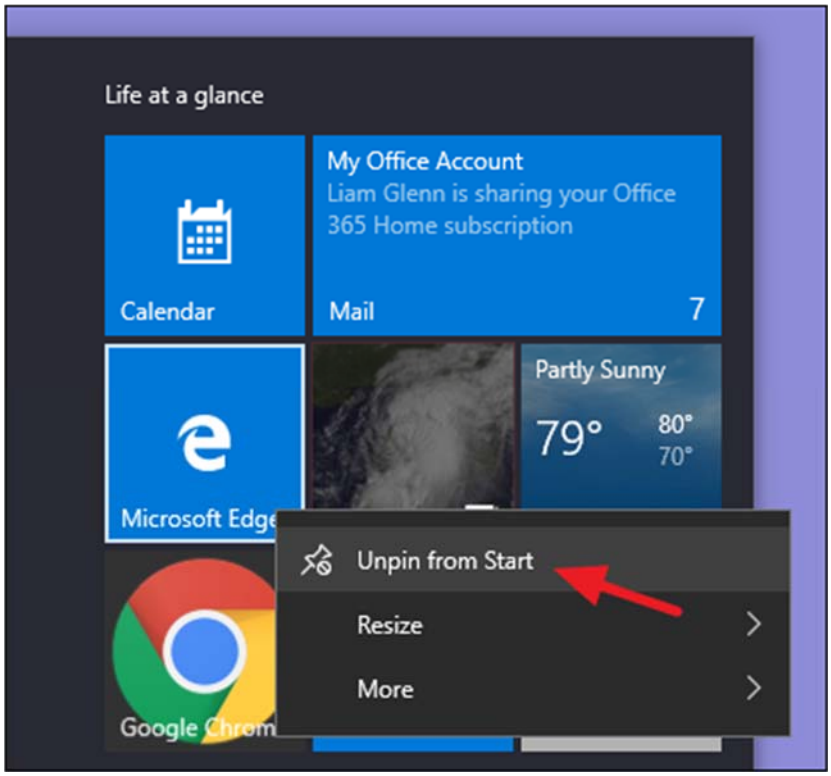
Then, you can click any tile inside to launch the app. Click the arrow above the folder to collapse it again.



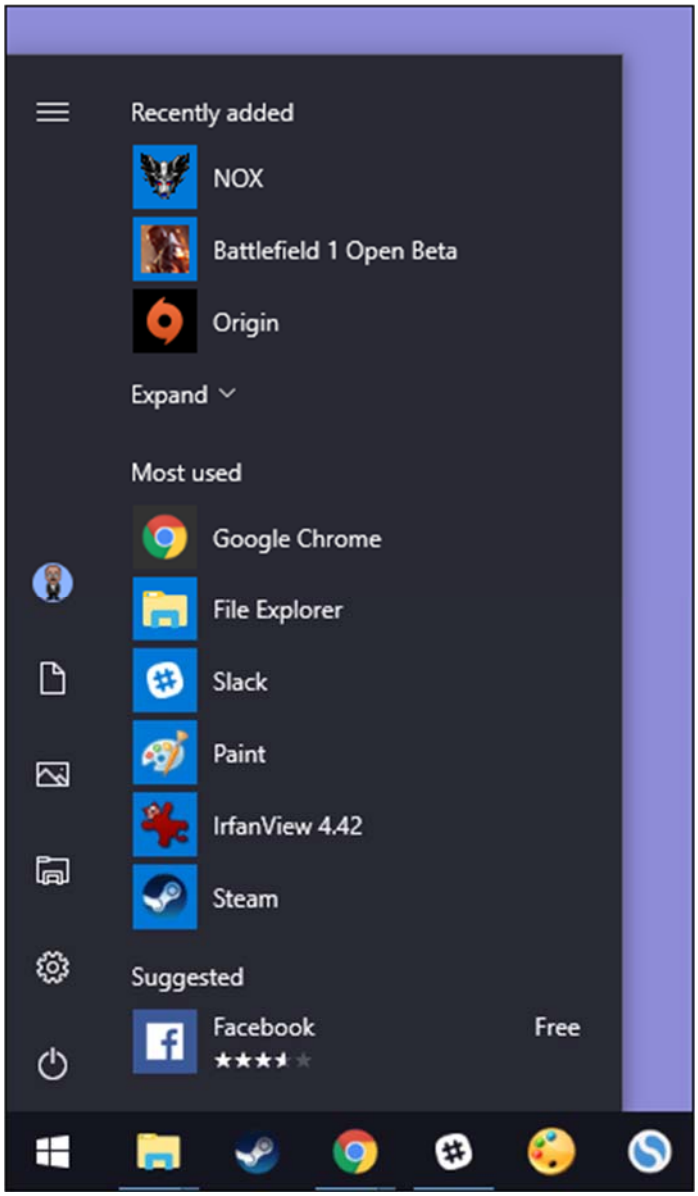
If you want to remove tiles from a folder, drag them back out of the folder and drop them directly on your Start menu. You could also unpin the tile from your Start menu and then pin it back again if dragging them out is too awkward.

Remove All Live Tiles if You Don’t Like Them

If you don’t like the tiles on your Start menu at all, you can remove them. Just right-click each one and then click “Unpin from Start” until they’re all gone.

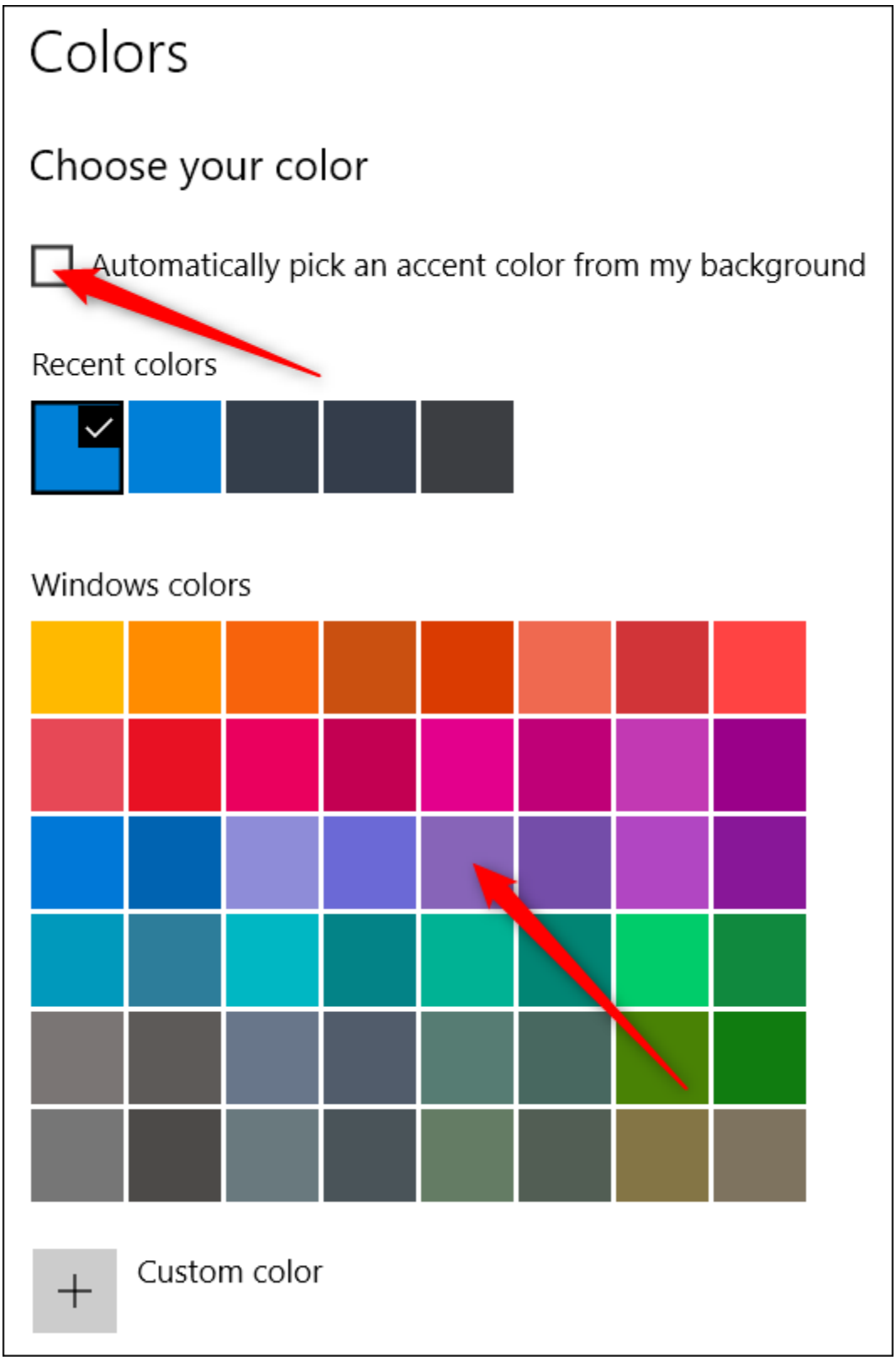


After you unpin the last tile, you can resize the Start menu horizontally by grabbing its right edge and dragging until the tile section disappears. You're then left with just a nice, trim list of apps.

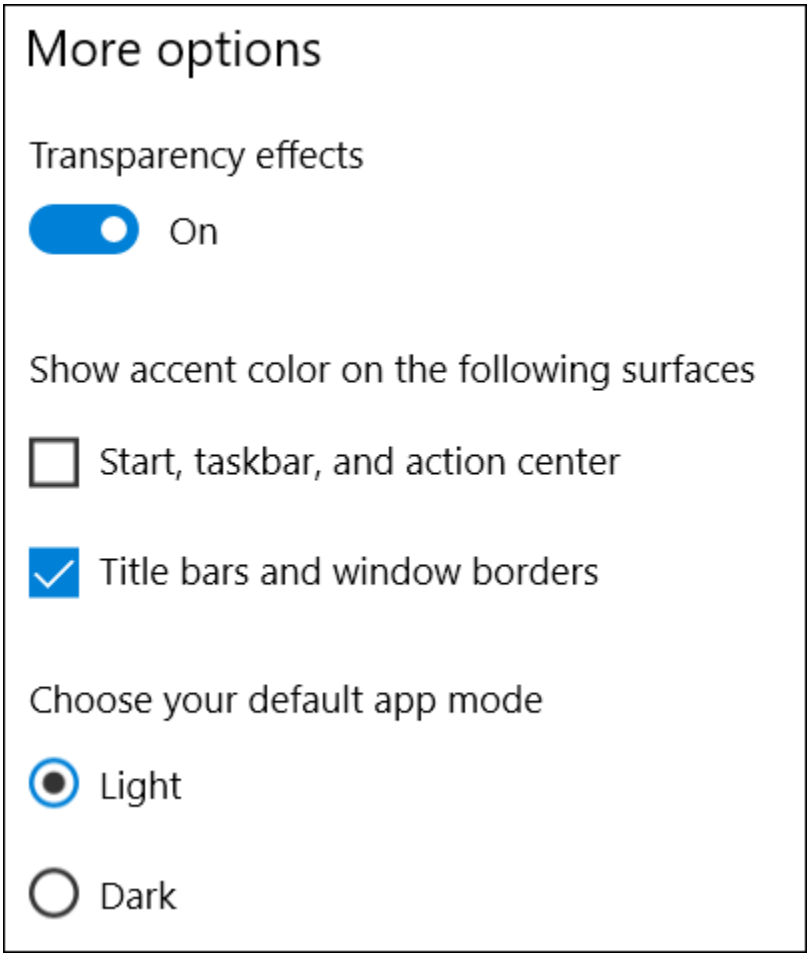


Change the Start Menu (and Taskbar) Color

You can easily change the color of your Start Menu and Taskbar. Head to Settings > Personalization > Colors to get started. Windows lets you pick a single accent color from a preselected group, or you can fine tune the accent color you want by clicking the “Custom Color” button. Just click any color you want to use. You can also let Windows pick an accent color for you based on your current background wallpaper by selecting the “Automatically pick an accent color from my background” option.


Colors
Choose your color
Automatically pick an accent color from my background
Recent colors
Windows colors
Custom color

After picking an accent color, your next step is choosing where that accent color gets used. Scroll down a bit to the “More Options” section. Your two options here are “Start, taskbar, and action center” and “Title bars.” The first option uses the accent color as the background for your Start menu, taskbar, and action center and also highlights certain items on those elements—such as app icons on the Start menu—with the same accent color. The second option uses the accent color for the title bar of your active window.



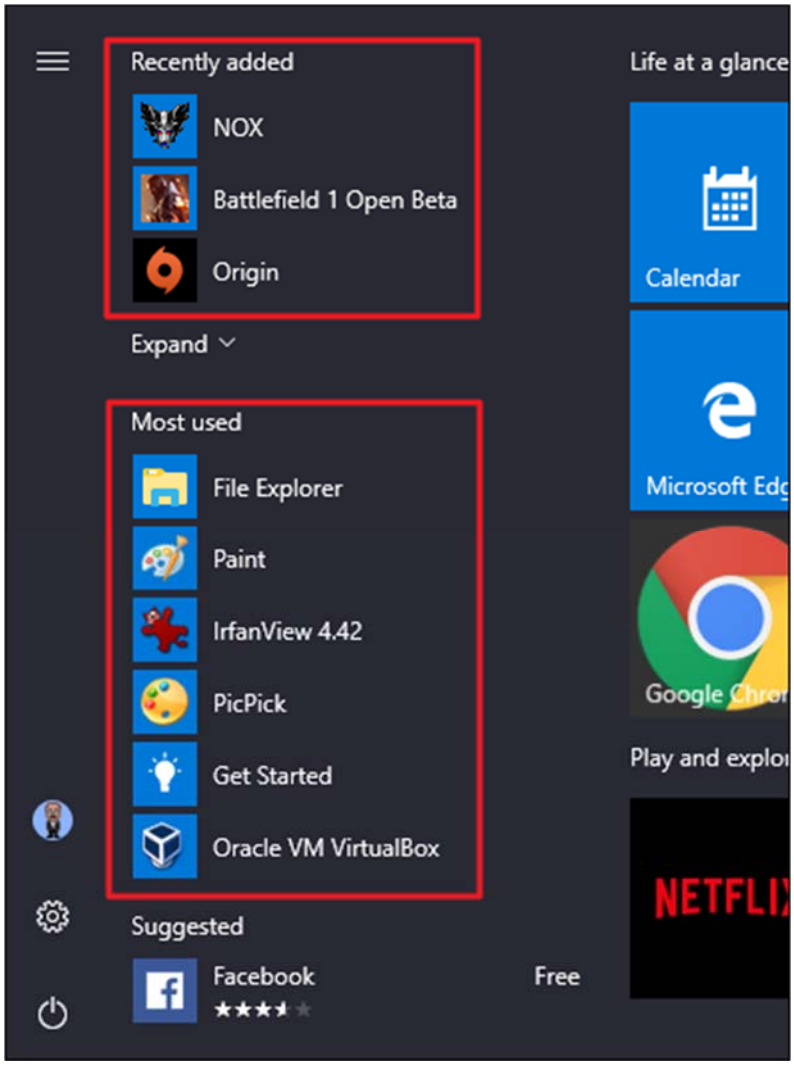
Unfortunately, the Start menu, taskbar, and Action Center elements are grouped for color selection, and you can’t make them different colors. We do, however, have a quick registry hack that can at least let you keep a black background on your Start menu and action center. The second option uses the accent color on the title bar of active windows, though we also have another hack for you if you want to use the accent color on inactive windows, as well.

Back on the Colors personalization screen, you’ll also find a “Transparency effect” option for making your Start menu, taskbar, and action center transparent or not. This option does not affect the accent color if it’s used on those elements.

And finally, you can enable a dark mode for settings and apps. While this app mode setting doesn't affect every app, we do have some tricks you might enjoy for using a dark theme almost everywhere in Windows 10.

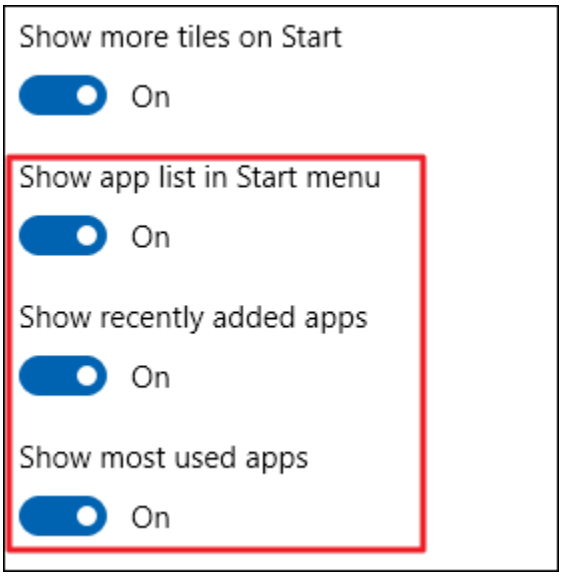
Control How Your App Lists Appear on the Start Menu

By default, your Start menu displays several of your recently installed, most used, and suggested apps, followed by a list of all the apps installed on your system.



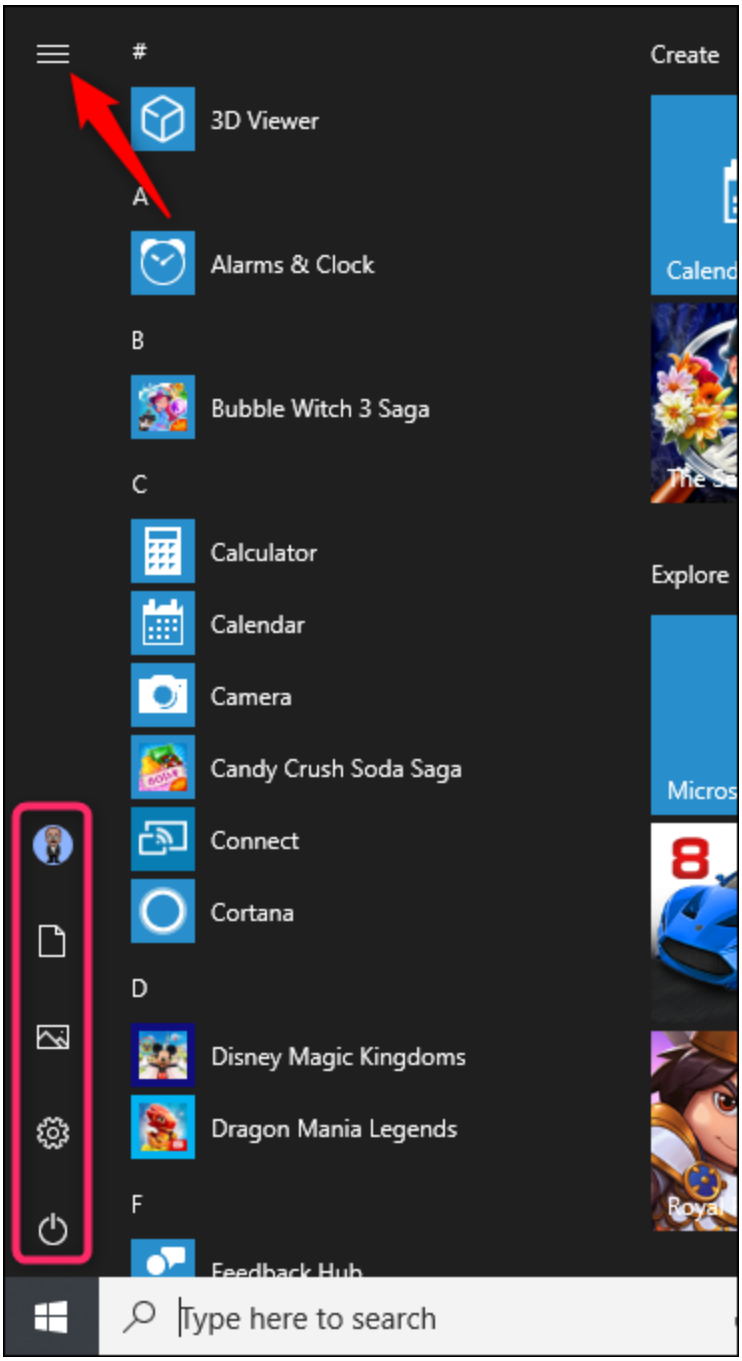
If you don't like these—say you'd rather just see your full list of apps without having to scroll for it—all three sections are easy to turn off. Head to Settings > Personalization > Start. Look for the "Show app list in Start menu," "Show recently added apps," and

“Show most used apps” options and turn off any you don’t want to see on your Start menu.

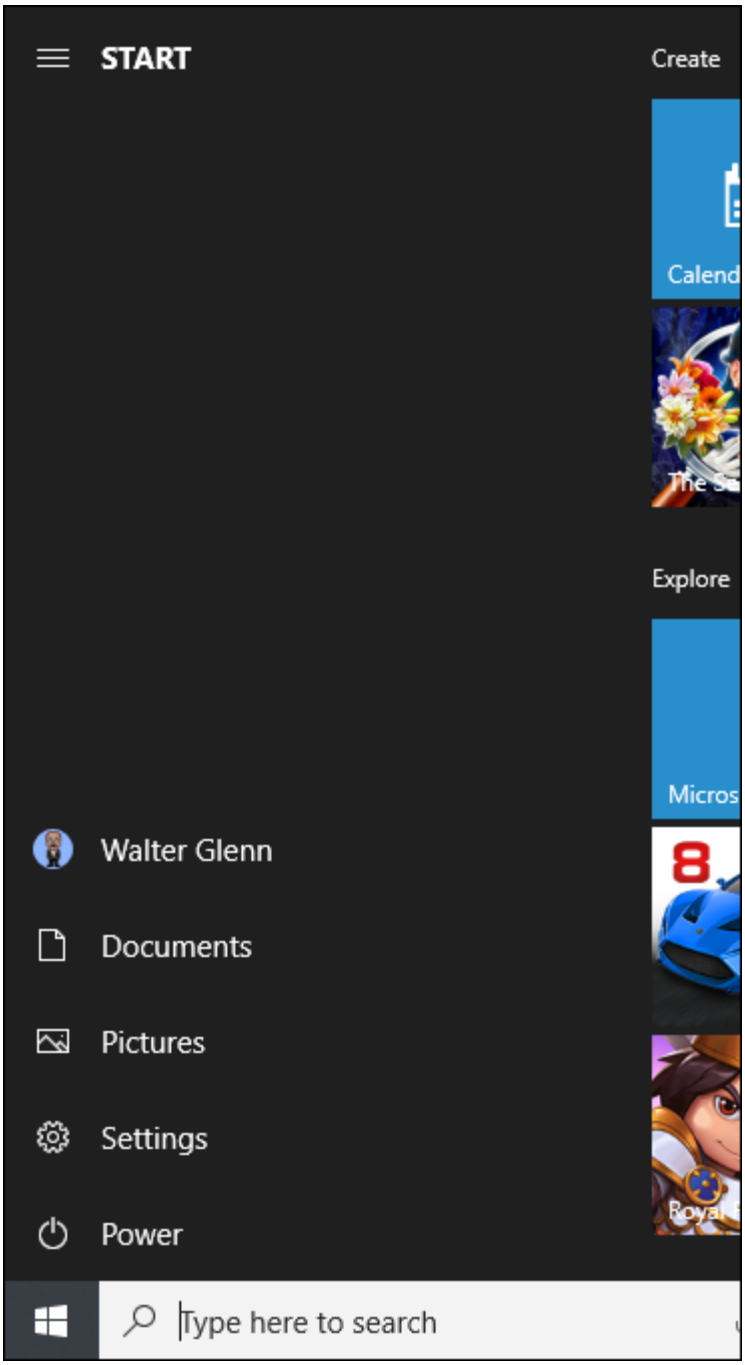


Choose Which Folders Appear on the Start Menu

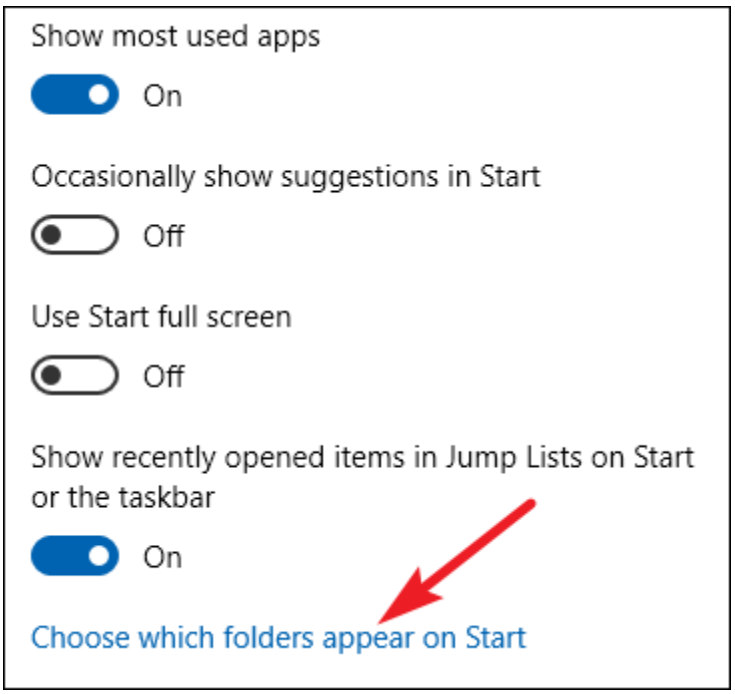
The User, Documents, Pictures, Settings, and Power options are now tucked away in a tiny column on the far left of the Start menu. Click the button at the top left of the Start menu to expand this column.



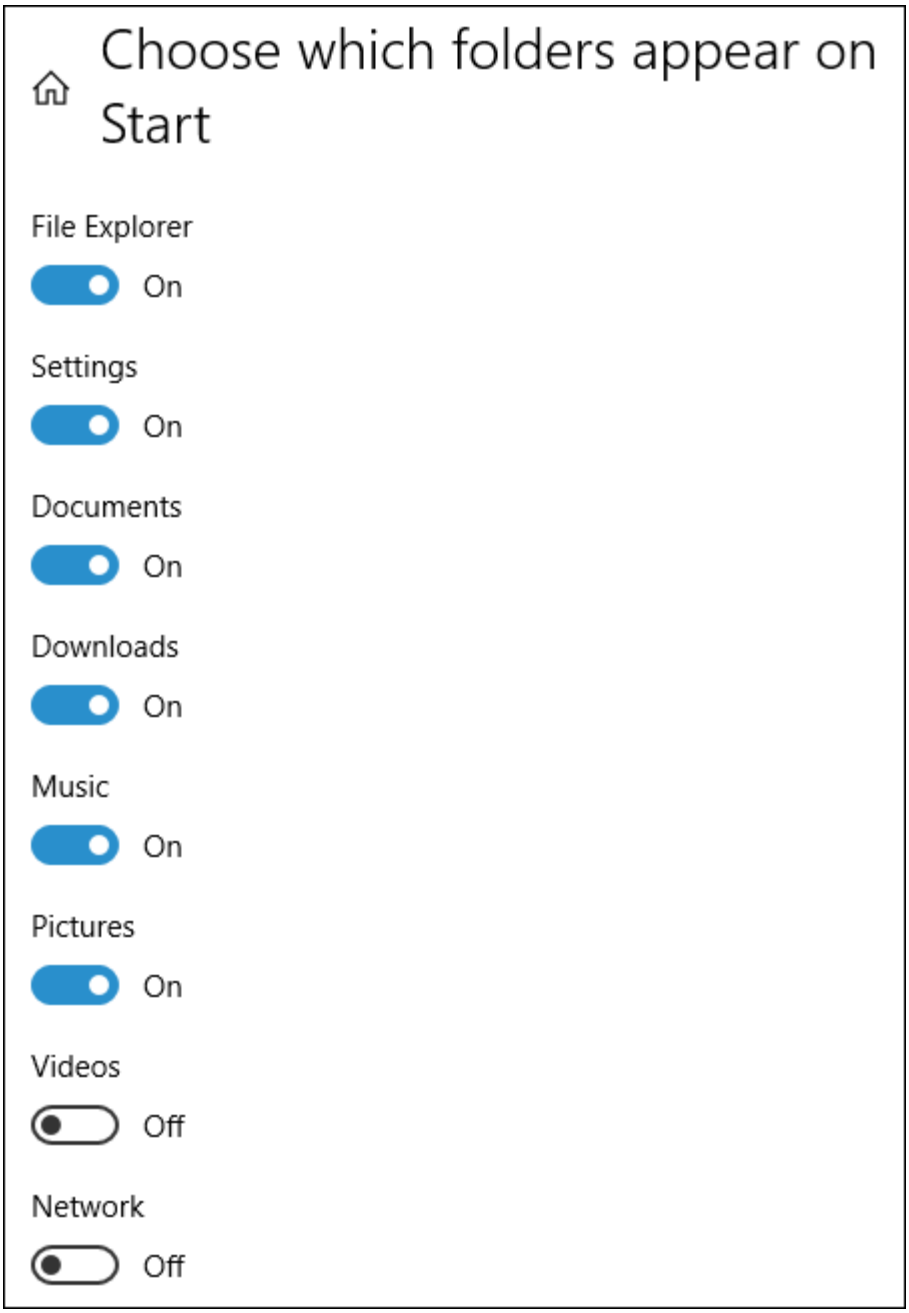
You can see those same options with their full names and also a lot of nice, inviting open space above them. You can add stuff to that space.



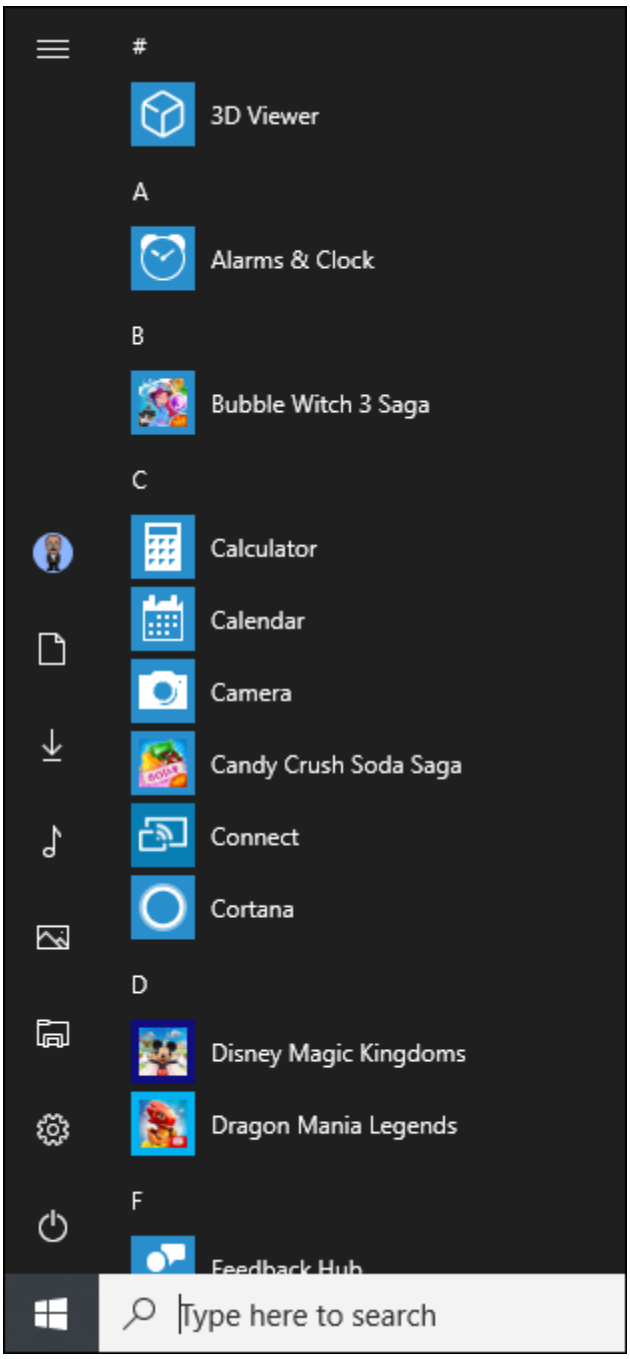
Head to Settings > Personalization > Start. On the right, scroll all the way to the bottom and click the “Choose which folders appear on Start” link.

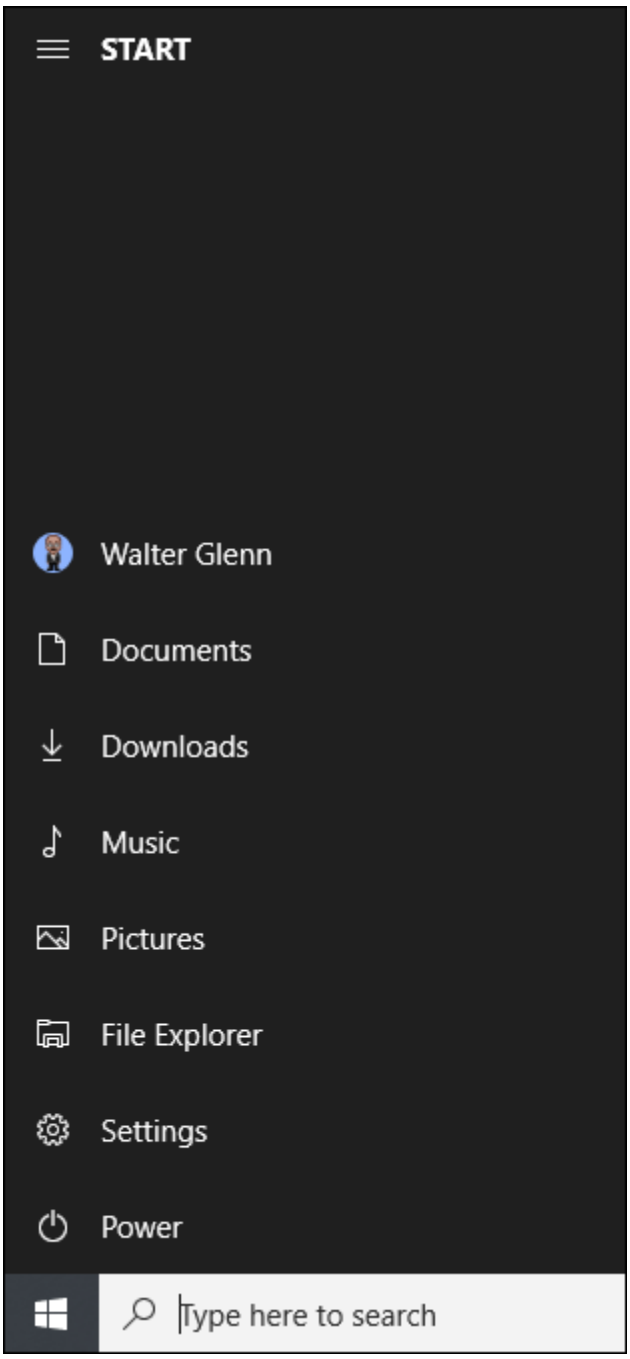


Choose whatever folders you want to appear on the Start menu.



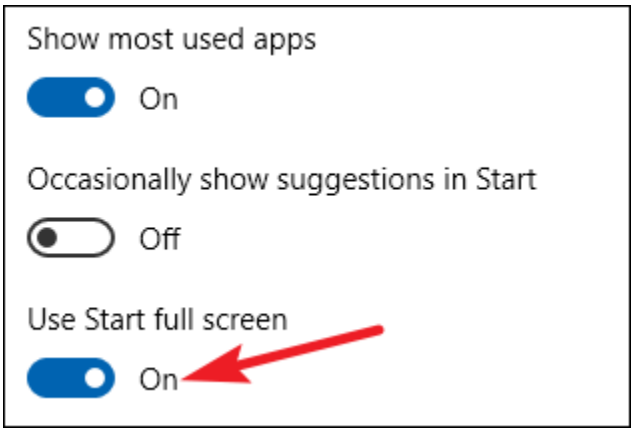
And here's a side-by-side look at how those new folders look as icons and in the expanded view.


#
3D Viewer
A
Alarms & Clock
B
Bubble Witch 3 Saga
C
Calculator
Calendar
Camera
Candy Crush Soda Saga
Connect
Cortana
D
Disney Magic Kingdoms
Dragon Mania Legends
F
Feedback Hub
Type here to search

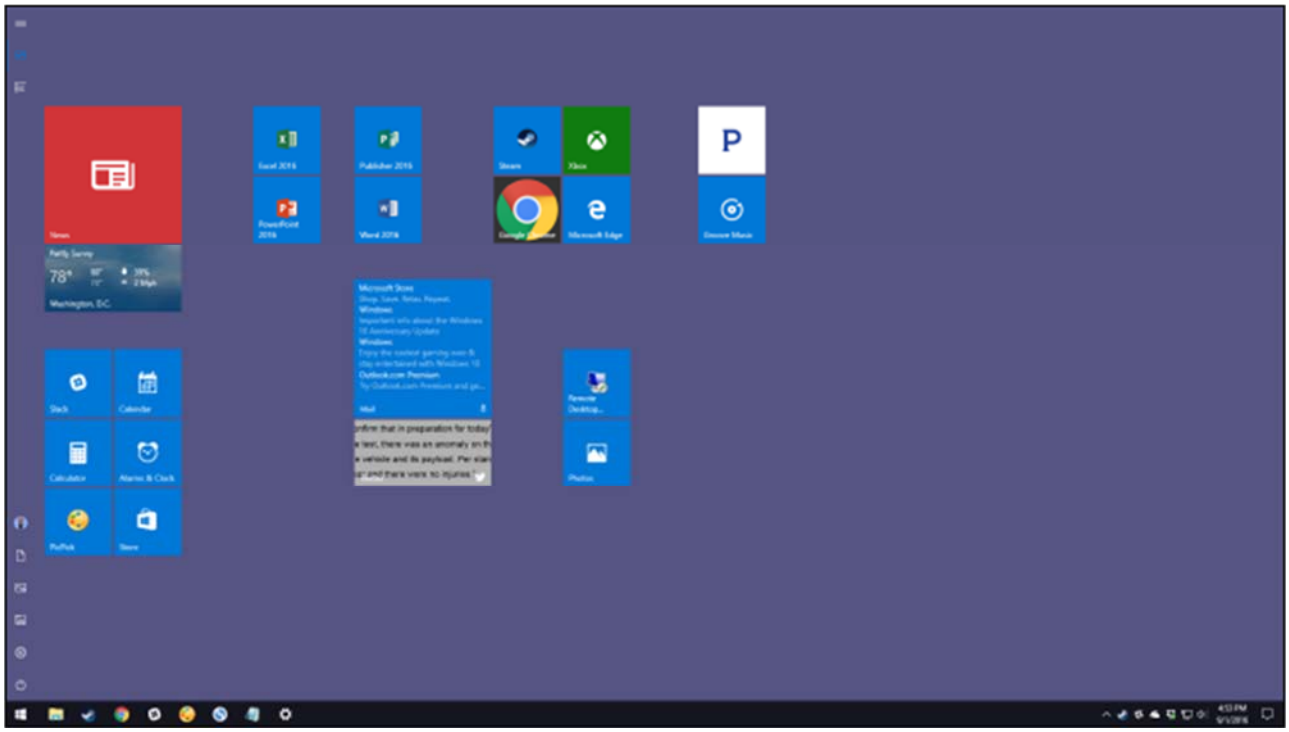


Use a Full-Screen Start Menu

On the other hand, if you really like the tiles and miss the full-screen Start experience from Windows 8, you can have the Start menu always open full screen. Head to Settings > Personalization > Start. Turn on the “Use Start full screen” option.

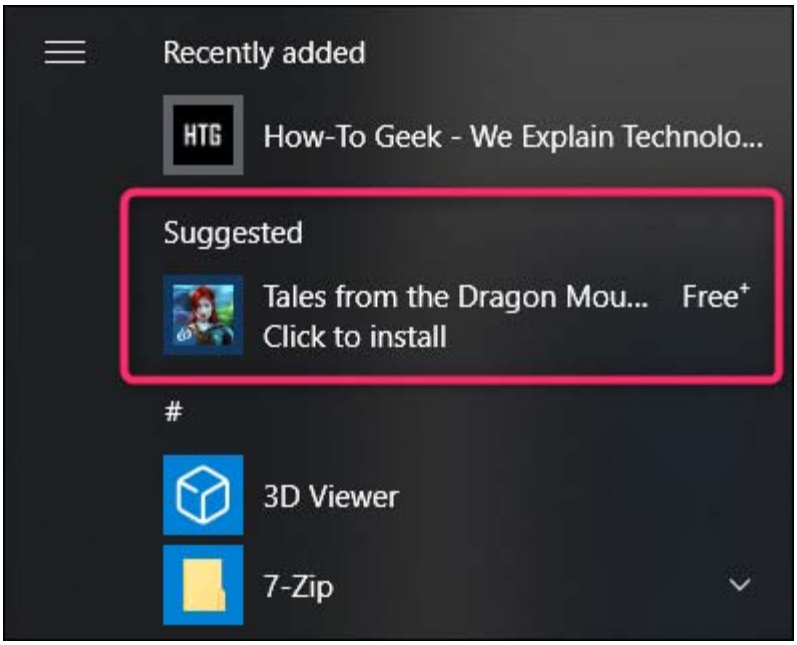


Now, whenever you open your Start menu, you will see it in all its full-screen glory.

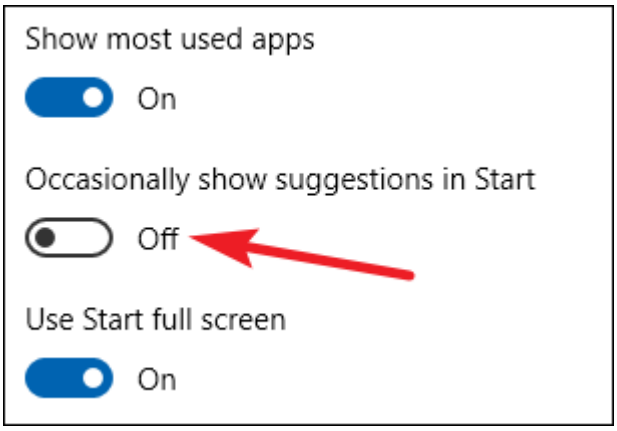


Remove Suggested Apps from Your App List

As you've used your Start menu, you've probably noticed the occasional suggestions for apps you might want to install appear in your app list.



To get rid of those, all you have to do is head to Settings > Personalization > Start and turn off the “Occasionally show suggestions in Start” option.

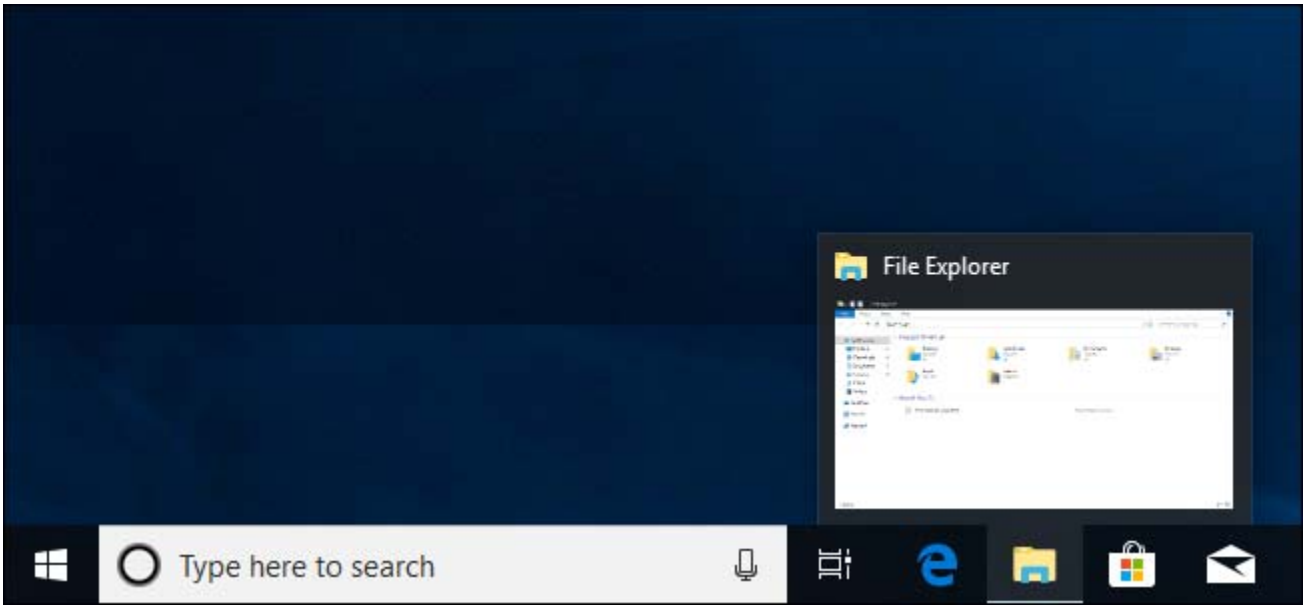


Note that these suggested apps are different than the preinstalled apps and ads—like Candy Crush—that you also likely don’t want. To get rid of those, you’ll need to right-click each one and uninstall it. And while you’re at it, you might want to look at how to disable all of Windows 10’s built-in advertising.

And don’t forget: if you don’t like the Windows 10 Start menu at all, you can return to the glory days of Windows 7—and still keep much of the Windows 10 functionality—with a Start menu replacement like Start10 or ClassicShell.

Chapter 3: How to Customize the Taskbar in Windows 10

Original article at: https://www.howtogeek.com/225568/how-to-configure-and-customize-the-taskbar-in-windows-10/

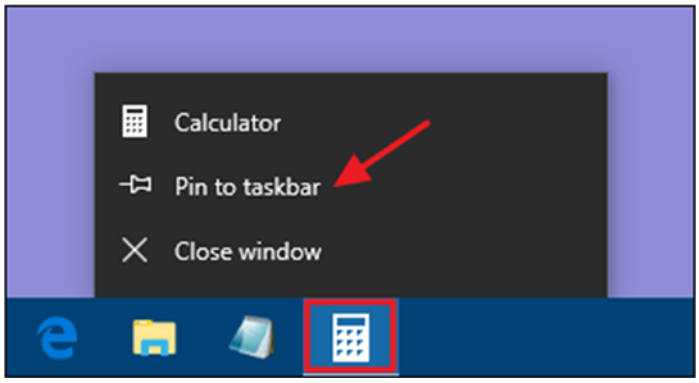


The Windows 10 taskbar works much like previous Windows versions, offering shortcuts and icons for every running app. Windows 10 offers all kinds of ways to customize the taskbar to your liking, and we're here to guide you through what you can do.

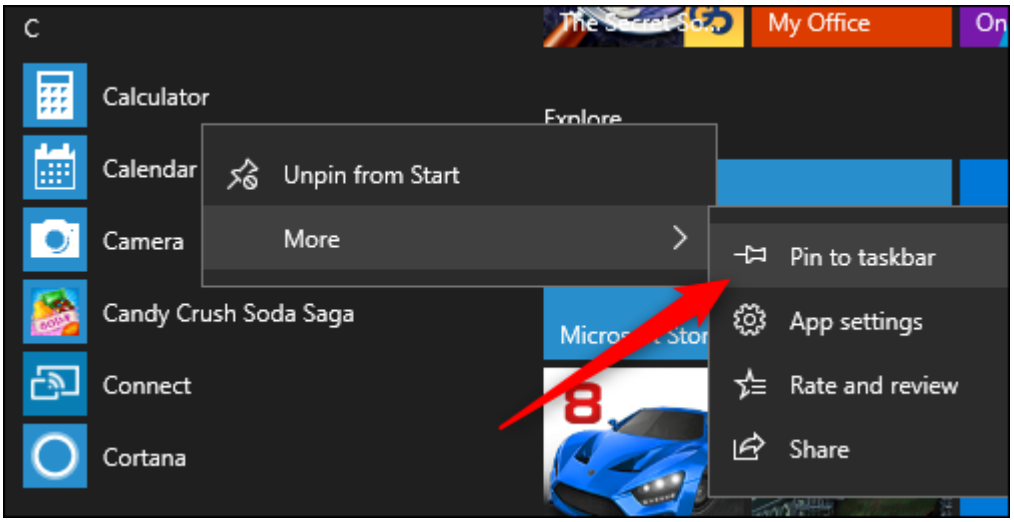
We've taken a look at customizing the Start menu and the Action Center in Windows 10. Now, it's time to tackle the taskbar. With just a little bit of work, you can tweak the taskbar to get it running just how you like it.

Pin Apps to the Taskbar

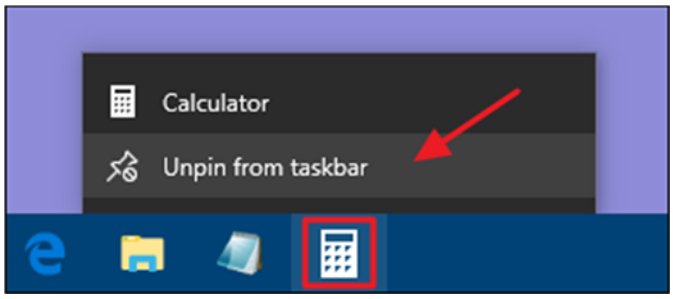
The simplest way to customize your taskbar is by pinning various apps and shortcuts to it so that you can access them more quickly in the future. There are two ways to do this. The first is to open the program, either from the Start menu or an existing shortcut. When the app's icon appears on the taskbar to indicate it's running, right-click the icon and select the "Pin to taskbar" option from the context menu.



The second way to pin an app to the taskbar does not require the app to be running first. Find the app on the Start menu, right-click the app, point to “More,” and then choose the “Pin to taskbar” option you find there. You could also drag the app icon to the taskbar if you prefer doing it that way.

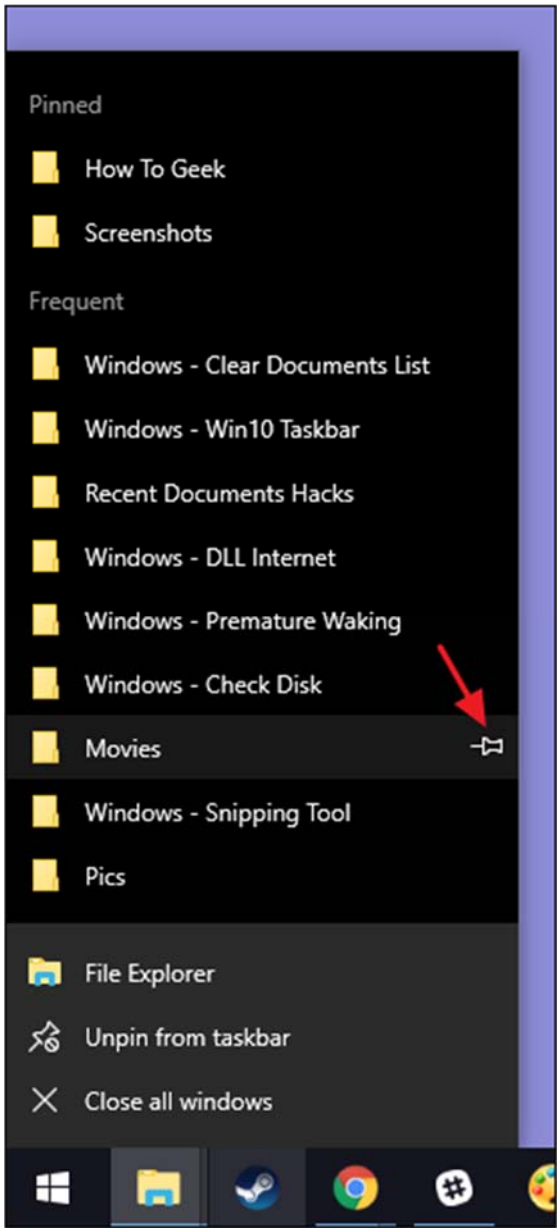


This will immediately add a new shortcut for the app to the taskbar. To remove an app from the taskbar, right-click the pinned app and choose the “Unpin from taskbar” option.



Pin a File or Folder to Taskbar Jump Lists

Windows also provides an easy way to get access to folders—and individual files—on your taskbar. Jump lists are handy context menus associated with each pinned app that show certain actions you can perform with the app and, for apps where it's applicable, also show a list of recent files and folders you've accessed. You can view an app's jump list by right-clicking an icon. For example, the jump list for the File Explorer icon lets you open a new File Explorer window and shows recent folders you've viewed and folders you've pinned. Just point your mouse at a recent item to reveal a pushpin icon to its right. Click the pushpin to pin the item to the jump list.



By the way, if you want to view the conventional context menu for an icon on the taskbar, hold the Shift key while right-clicking the icon. This is particularly useful for

configuring any folder shortcuts you've pinned there. And this is just one of the many useful keyboard shortcuts you can use with the taskbar.

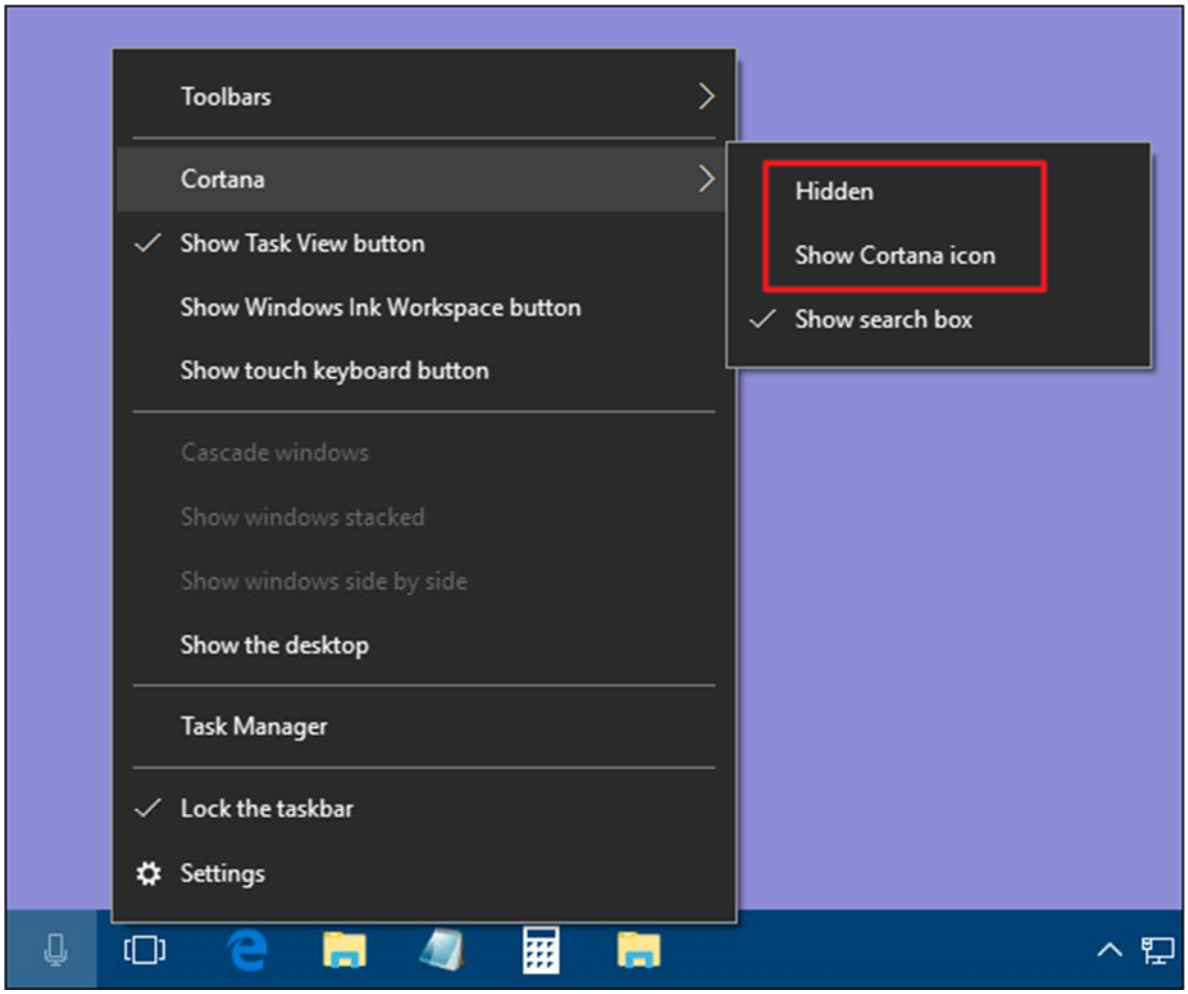
When you've pinned items to a jump list, those items appear separately from recent items. All you have to do is click one of them to open that folder. And of course, exactly what you see on a jump list depends on the app. Apps like Notepad or Microsoft Word show recently opened files. A jump list for your browser might show favorite sites and provide actions for opening new tabs or windows.

By default, Windows 10 shows about 12 recent items in jump lists. In previous versions of Windows, you could increase or decrease that number easily through taskbar properties. Windows 10, for some reason, does not have this feature easily accessible. You can, however, change the number of items shown on jump lists with a quick Registry hack.

Configure or Remove Cortana and the Search Box

The Cortana icon and search box take up a lot of room on the taskbar, and you don't need either to do your searching. Even without them, if you press the Windows key and start typing, you'll get the same search experience. If you want to perform a voice search—normally accessed by clicking the microphone icon in the search box—you just have to press Windows+C on your keyboard instead.

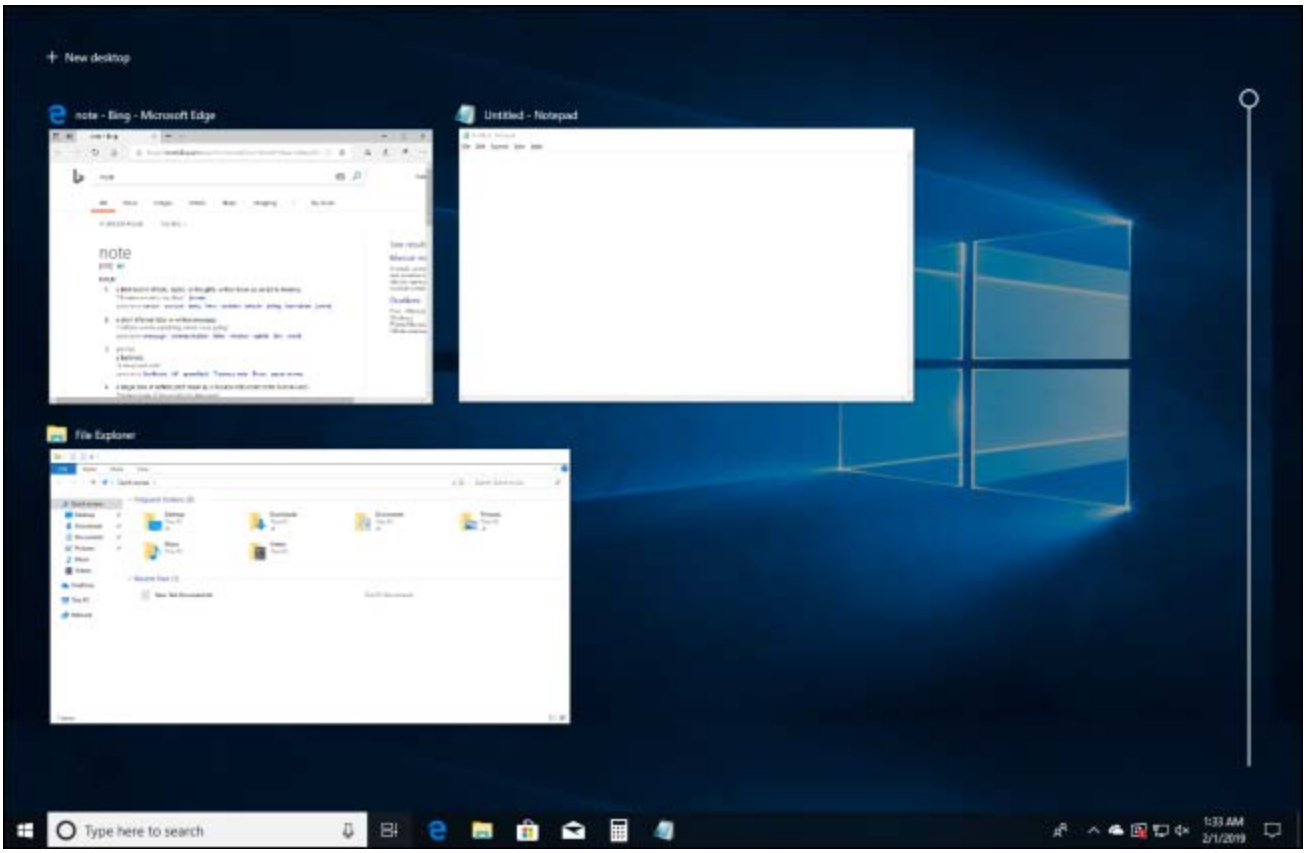
You can remove the search box and leave just the icon, or you can remove both entirely. Right-click the taskbar and choose "Cortana > Show Cortana icon" from the pop-up menu.



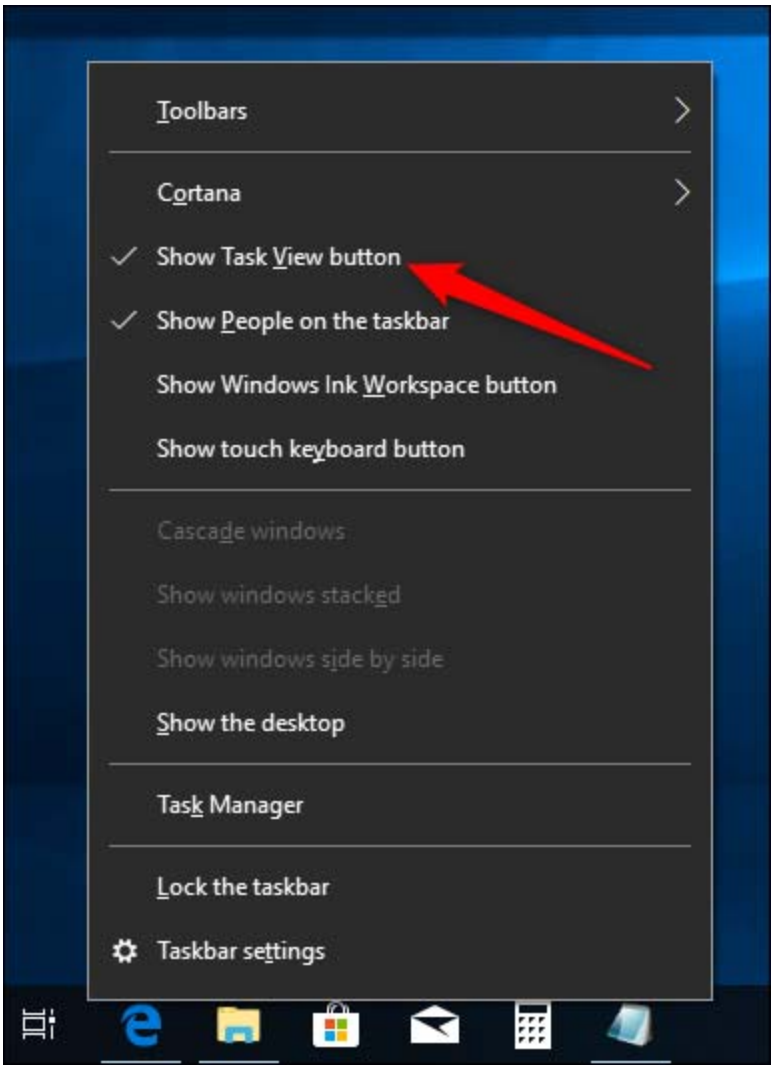
Choose the “Hidden” option to remove both the search box and icon or choose “Show Cortana icon” to have just the icon on the taskbar.

Remove the Task View Button

The “Task View” button provides access to a thumbnail view of all your open apps and windows. It also lets you work with virtual desktops and shows you your Timeline if you enabled that.

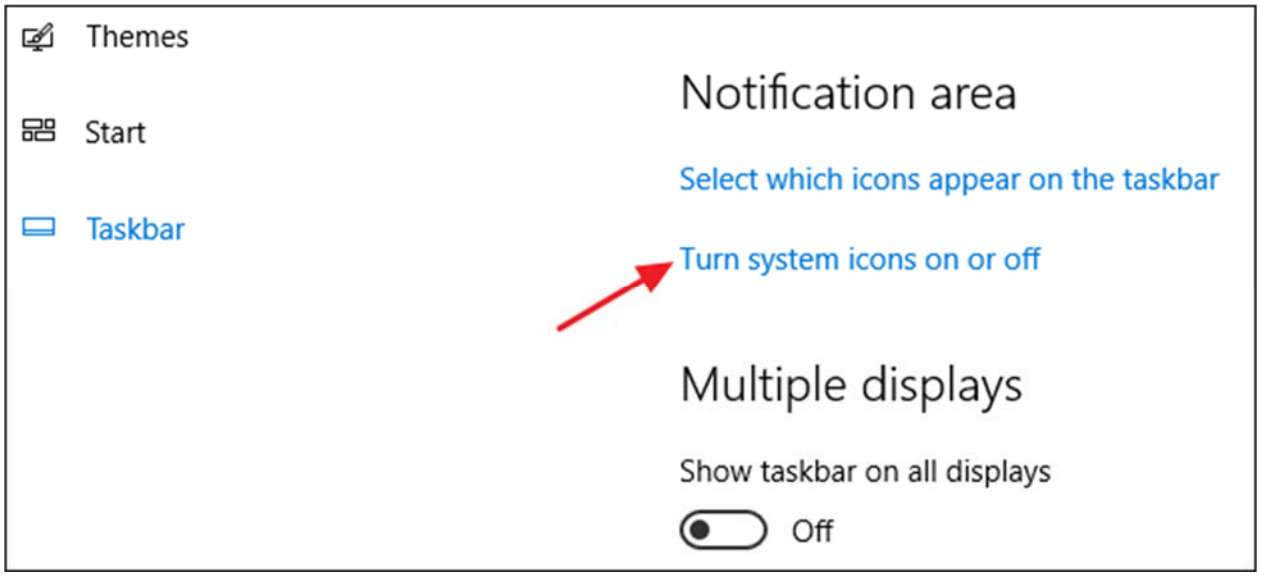


But you don't need a button to do this. Simply press Windows+Tab to access the same interface. To save a little taskbar space and get rid of the button, right-click the taskbar and turn off the "Show Task View button" option.

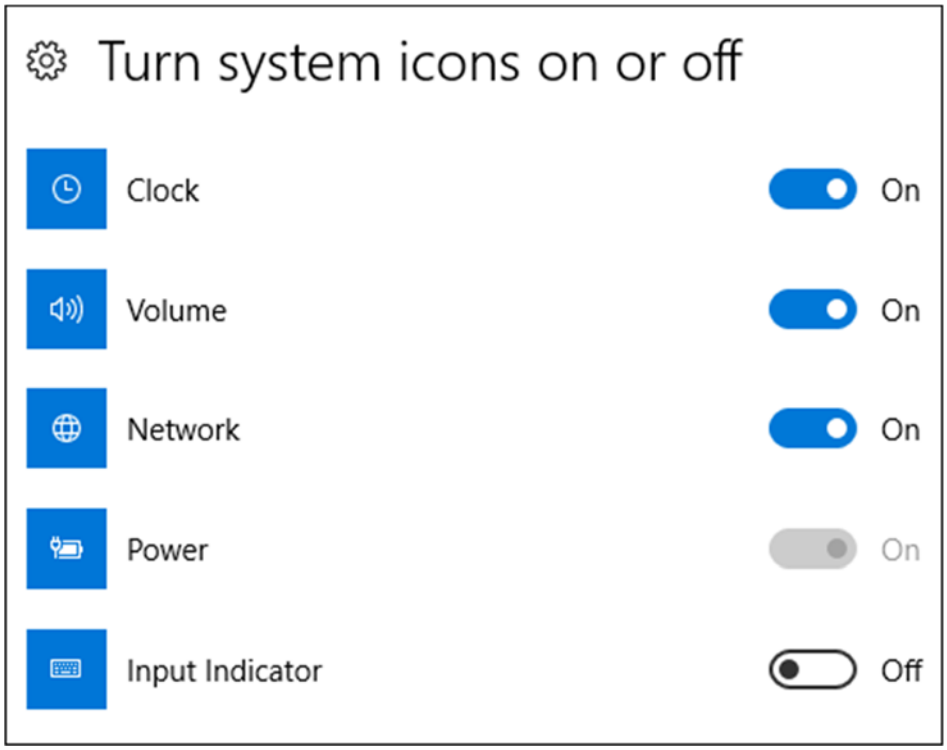


Hide System Icons in the Notification Area

The Notification Area (sometimes called the “System Tray”) holds system icons—like your Action Center and clock—and icons for various apps that run in the background. You can easily tweak which system icons appear in the Notification Area. Right-click any open area on the taskbar and then click “Taskbar Settings.” On the taskbar settings page, scroll down a bit to the “Notification Area” section and click the “Turn system icons on or off” link.



You'll see a list of system icons. Run through them and toggle each one on or off to suit your needs.



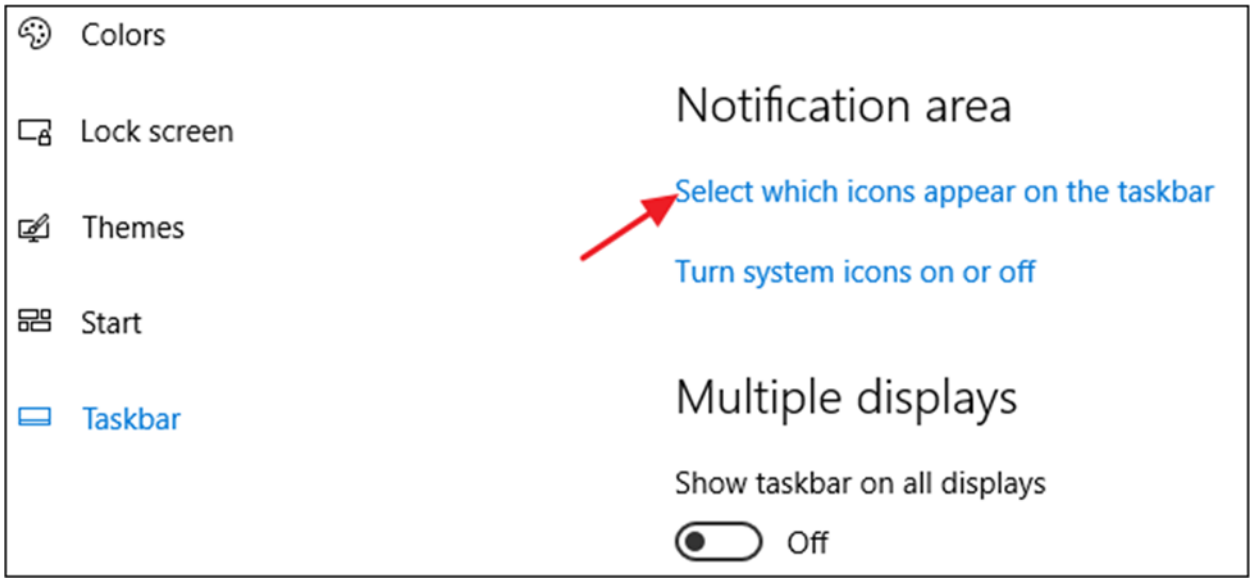
Hide Application Icons in the Notification Area

Many of the apps you install in Windows are designed to run in the background. They're not things you need to interact with regularly, so instead of appearing directly on your

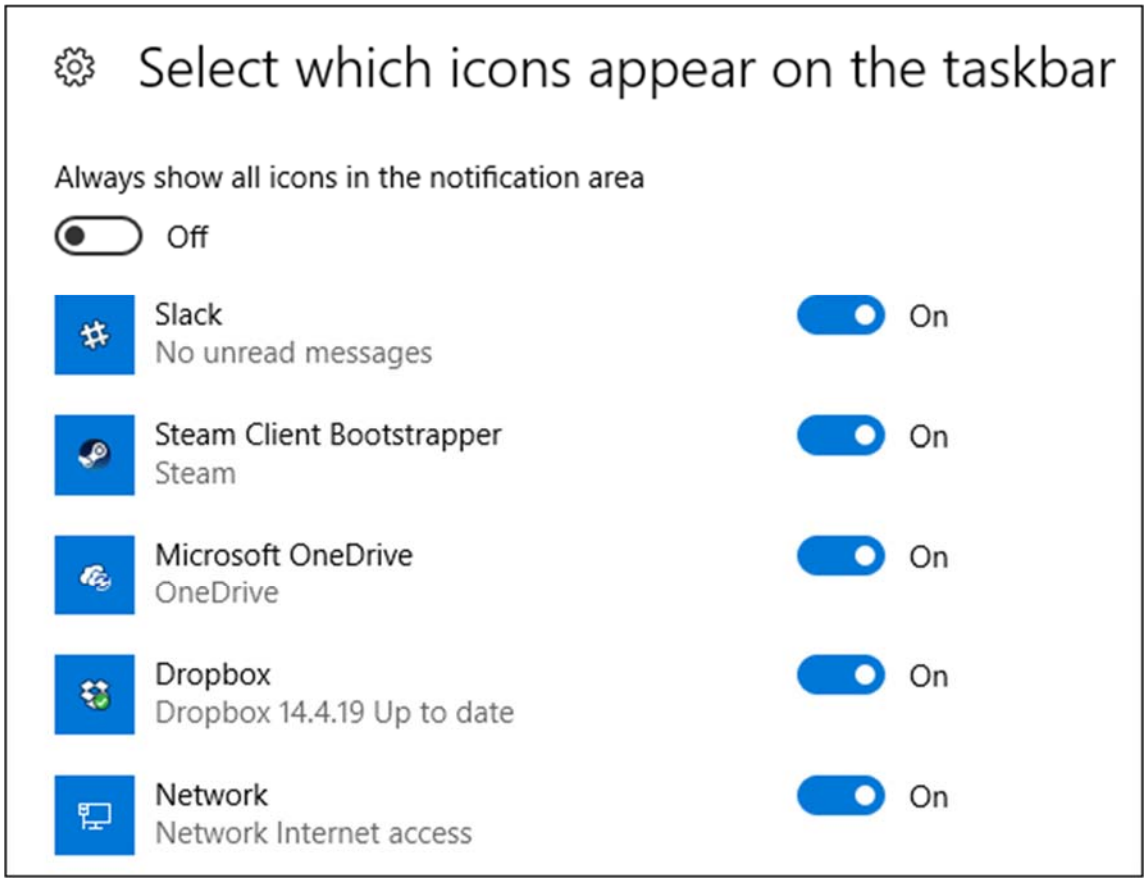
taskbar, their icons are relegated to the Notification area. This lets you know they're running and gives you quick access when you need it. A few of these appear right in the Notification Area to the left of the clock. Others are hidden, but you can see them by clicking the up arrow to the left.

You can quickly customize where these icons appear by dragging them between these two locations. For example, you might prefer that your OneDrive icon is always visible, in which case you'd drag it to the main Notification Area. You can also hide less important icons by dragging them to the hidden area.

You can also work with these icons through the settings interface. Right-click any open area of the taskbar and choose the "Settings" option. Scroll down and click the "Select which icons appear on the taskbar" link.

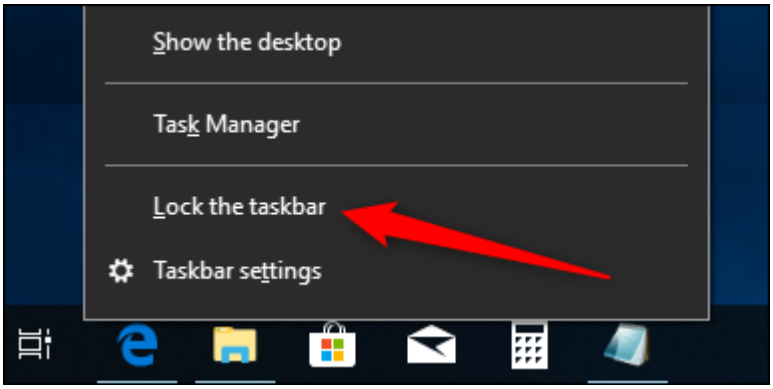


If you want to remove the hidden area and see all the icons all the time, turn on the "Always show all icons in the notification area" option. If you leave that setting off, you can also run through the list and turn individual apps on or off. Just note that turning an app off here doesn't remove it from the Notification Area altogether. When an app is turned off, it shows up in the hidden area. When it's on, it shows up in the main Notification Area.

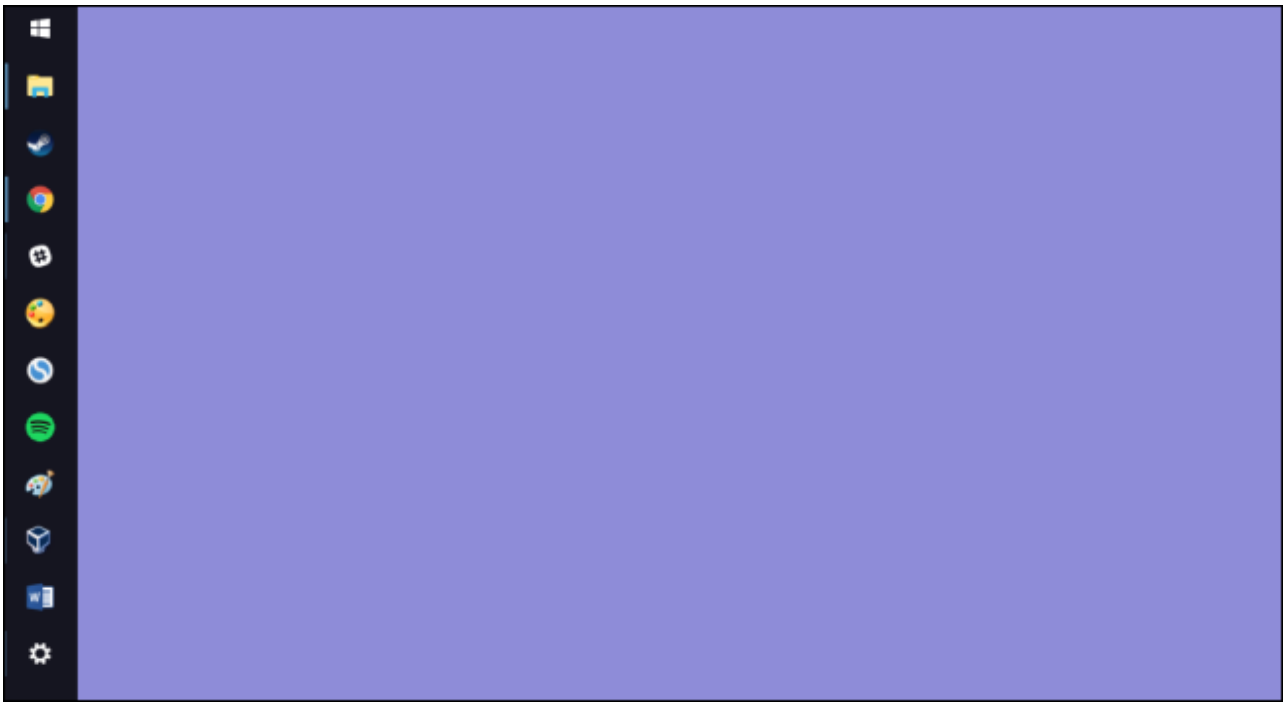


Move the Taskbar to a Different Edge of the Screen

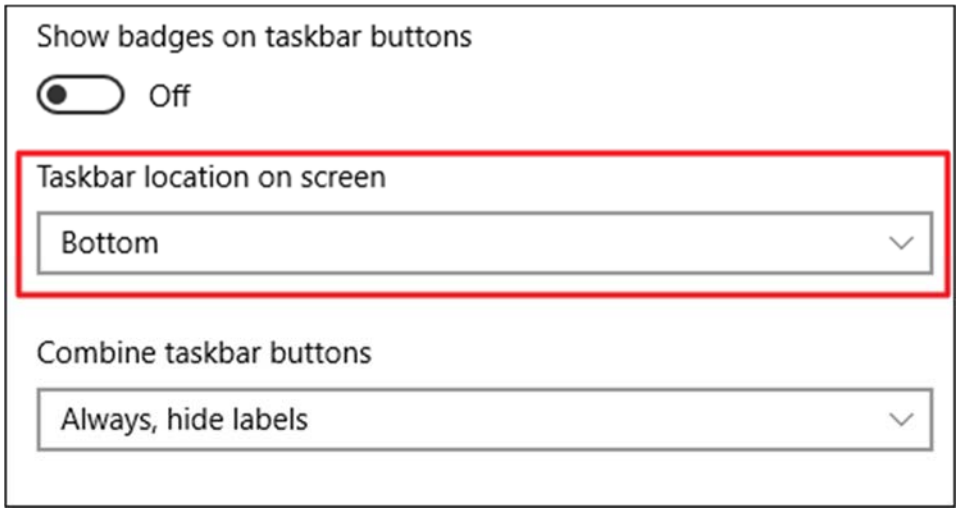
The bottom edge of the screen is the default location of the taskbar in Windows 10, but you can move it. If you've got an extra-wide display—or multiple displays—you may find it nicer having the taskbar on the right or left edge of a display. Or maybe you prefer it at the top. You can move the taskbar in one of two ways. The first is just to drag it. Right-click the taskbar and turn off the "Lock the taskbar" option.



Then, you can grab the taskbar in an empty area and drag it to any edge of your display.

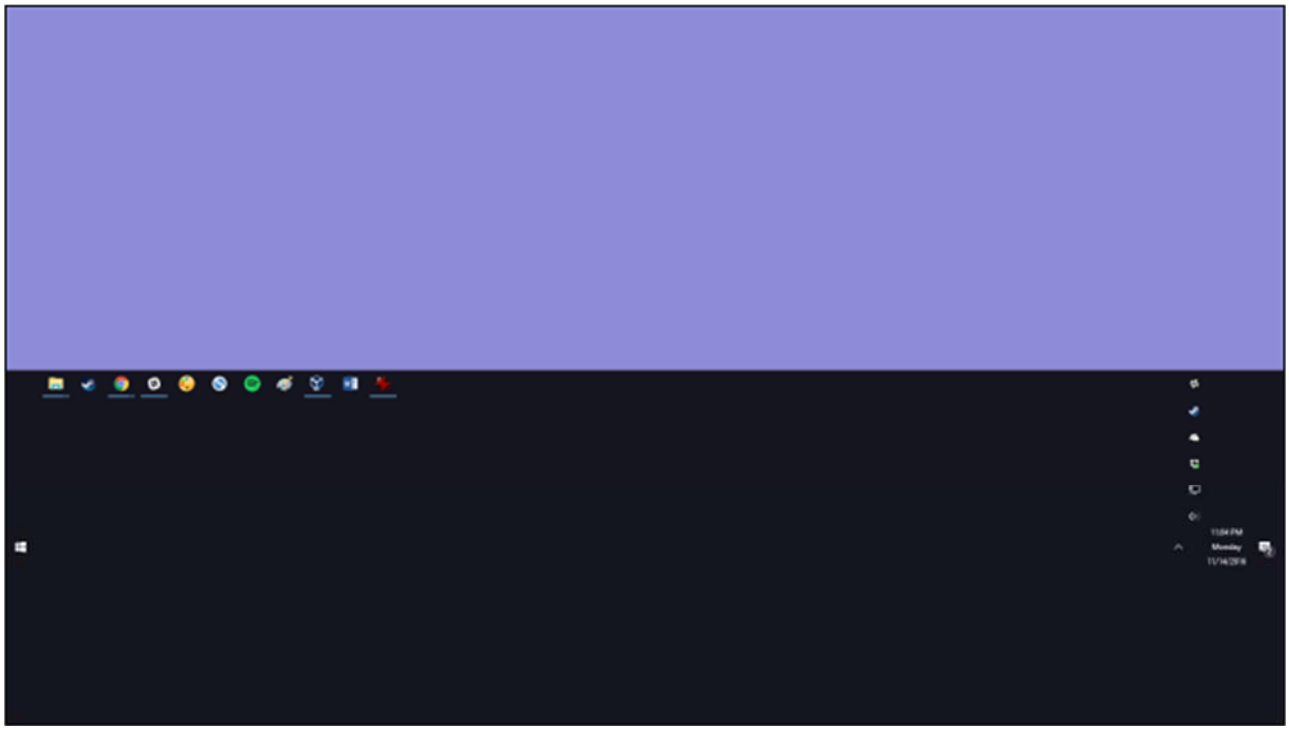


The other way to change the taskbar location is through the settings interface. Right-click on any empty area of the taskbar and choose “Taskbar Settings.” In the taskbar settings window, scroll down and find the “Taskbar location on screen” drop-down menu. You can choose any of the four sides of the display from this menu.



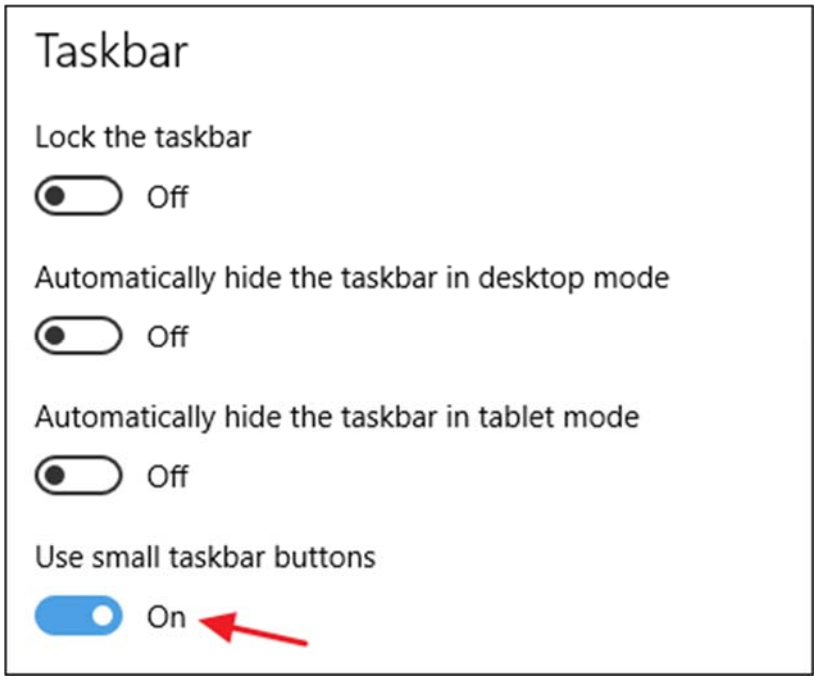
Change the Size of the Taskbar

You can also resize the taskbar to get a little additional space. This can be particularly handy if you moved it to the right or left edge of your screen, but it's also good if you just want space for loads of icons. Right-click the taskbar and turn off the "Lock the taskbar" option. Then place your mouse at the top edge of the taskbar and drag to resize it just like you would with a window. You can increase the size of the taskbar up to about half your screen size.



Use Small Icons to Fit More on the Taskbar

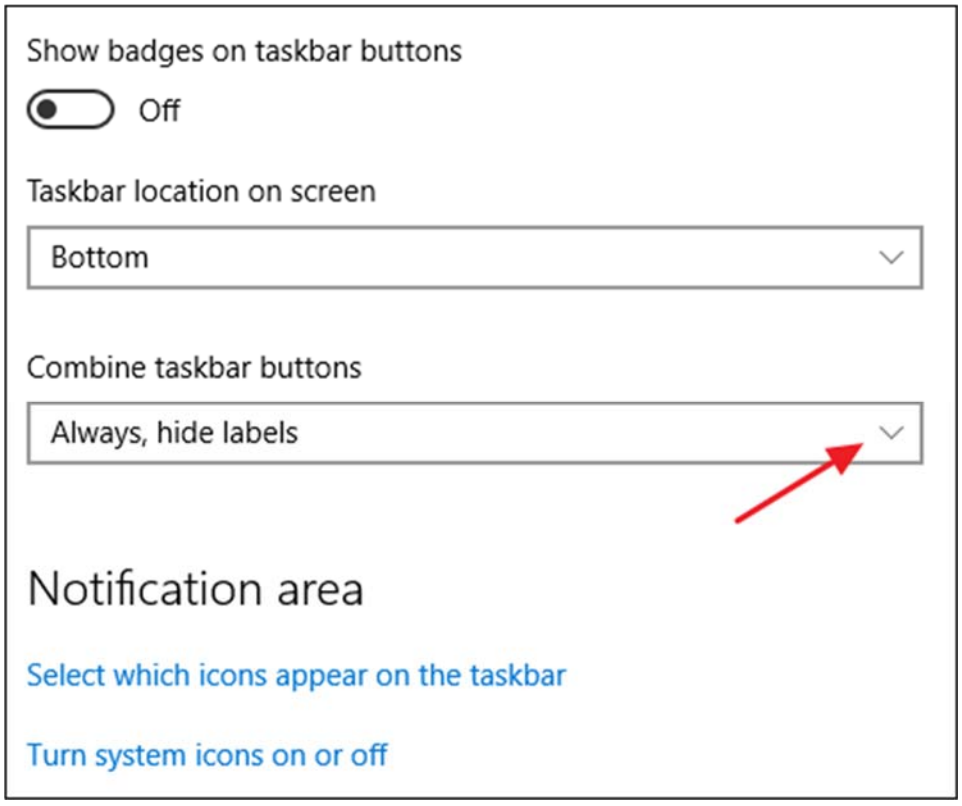
If you want a few more icons on your taskbar, but aren't keen on resizing it, you can configure Windows 10 to show small taskbar icons. Right-click on any empty area of the taskbar and click "Taskbar Settings." In the settings window, turn on the "Use small taskbar icons" option.



As you can see, almost everything is the same except that the icons are smaller and you can cram a few more into the space. One difference you should note is that when you're using the smaller icons, the taskbar itself shrinks a bit vertically. As a result, only the clock is shown and not the date as well. But you can always hover your mouse over the clock or click it to check the date.

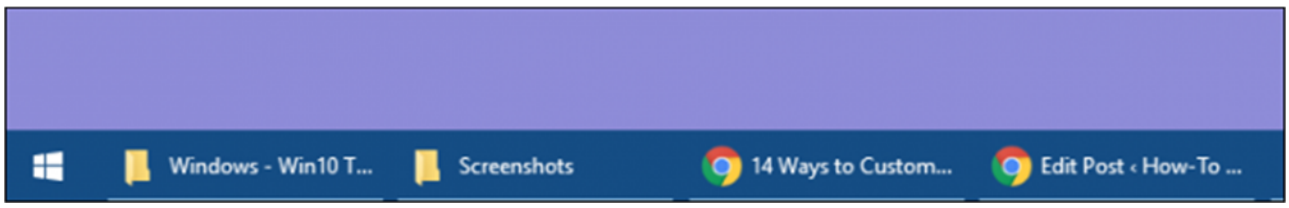
Show Labels for Taskbar Icons

By default, the taskbar groups icons for windows of the same app and doesn't show labels for those icons. This saves a lot of taskbar space but can make it difficult for newer users to recognize icons. You can have Windows show text labels, but the downside is that you also lose the grouping of related icons. To do this, right-click on an empty area of the taskbar and click "Taskbar Settings." In the settings window, look for the "Combine taskbar buttons" drop-down menu.



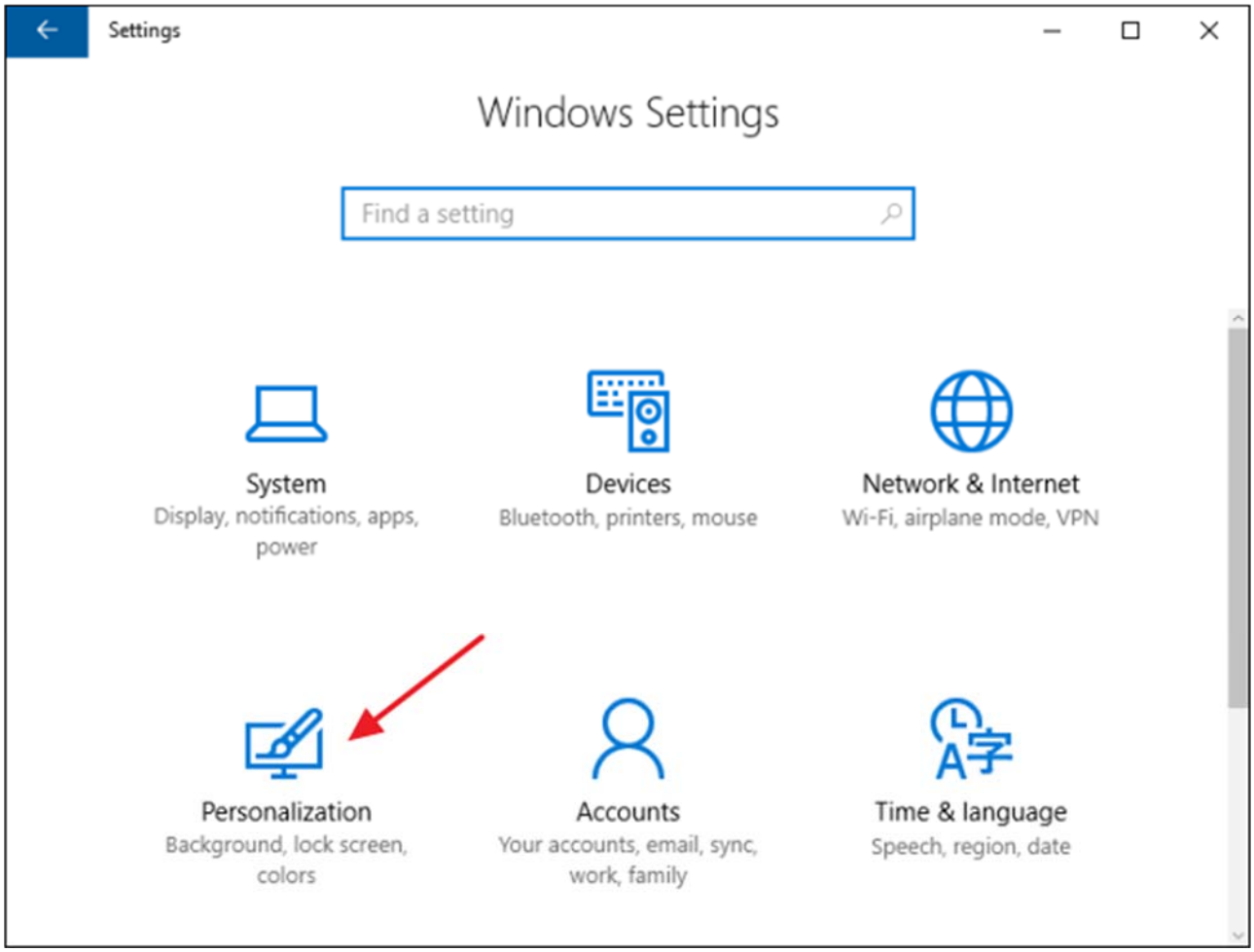
The menu gives you three choices:

- **Always, hide labels**. This is the Windows default setting. When it's selected, all windows for an app are grouped on the taskbar, and no labels are shown.
- **When taskbar is full**. This is a middle-range setting. When selected, windows are not grouped, and labels are shown unless the taskbar becomes full. When it fills up, it reverts to the "Always, hide labels" functionality.
- **Never**. When selected, windows are never grouped, and labels are always shown. You can see this setting in action below. Note that instead of a single File Explorer icon and a single Chrome icon, I now have two of each and the titles of the windows are displayed as labels.



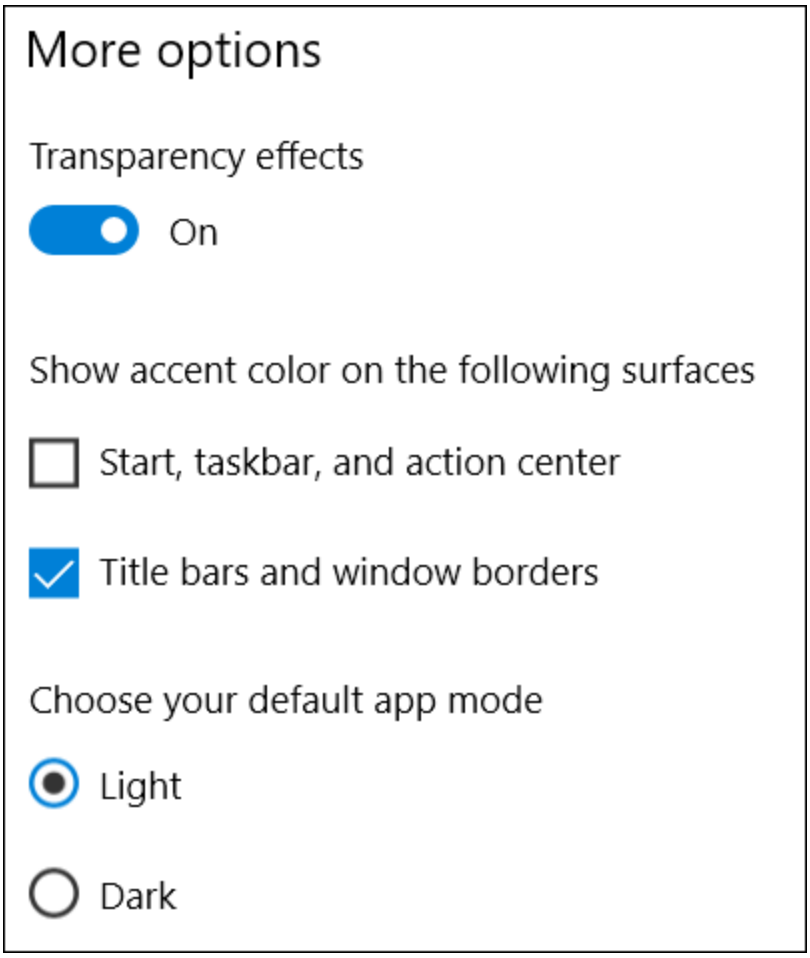
Change the Color and Transparency of the Taskbar

In Windows 10, the default color of the taskbar is black. To change the color, press Windows+I to open the settings interface. In the main Settings window, click “Personalization.”



In the Personalization window, switch to the “Colors” tab. On the right, scroll down to the “More Options” section.

You’ll see two options for controlling the taskbar—along with the Action Center and Start menu. Use the “Transparency Effects” toggle to choose whether those items should be transparent or opaque. When the “Start, taskbar, and action center” option is turned off, those items use the default black color. When you turn that option on, those items use the color you’ve picked in the color chooser at the top or, if you have the “Automatically pick an accent color from my background” option turned on, the color Windows has chosen.

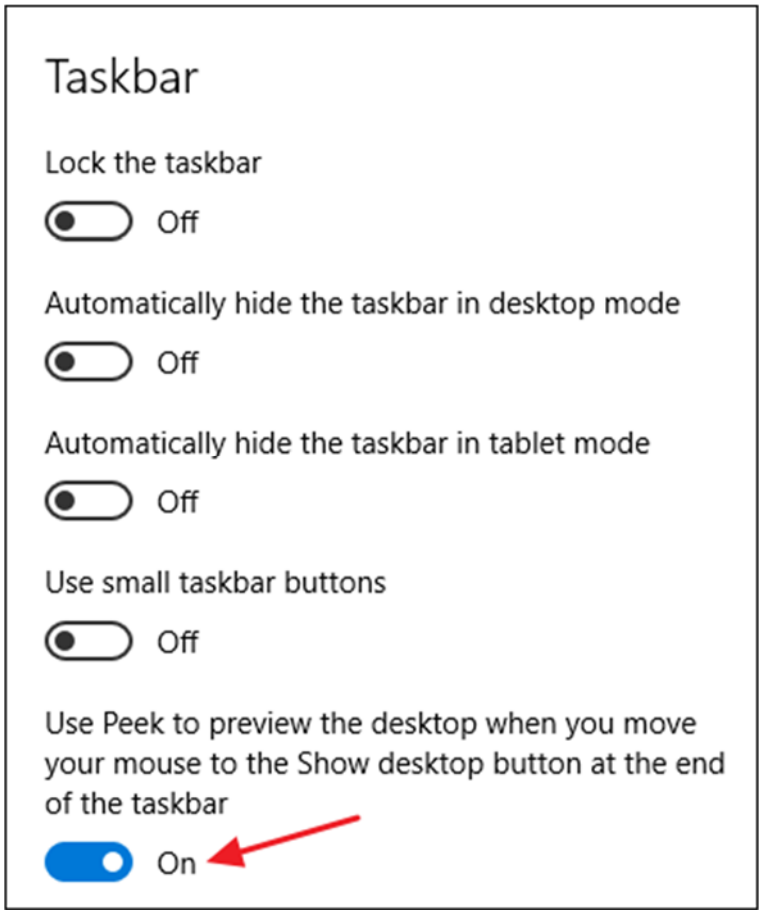


RELATED: ***How to Make the Windows 10 Taskbar More Transparent***

By the way, Windows doesn't offer any controls to adjust the transparency of the taskbar, Start menu, and Action Center. If you don't mind making a quick Registry hack, though, you can make those items a bit more transparent than the default.

Enable the Peek Feature

The Peek feature was introduced back with Windows 7 to let users quickly peek through all open applications to view the desktop. In previous versions, it was turned on by default. In Windows 10, you have to turn it on. Right-click on any empty area of the taskbar and click "Settings." In the settings window, turn on the cumbersomely named "Use Peek to preview the desktop when you move your mouse to the Show desktop button at the end of the taskbar" option.

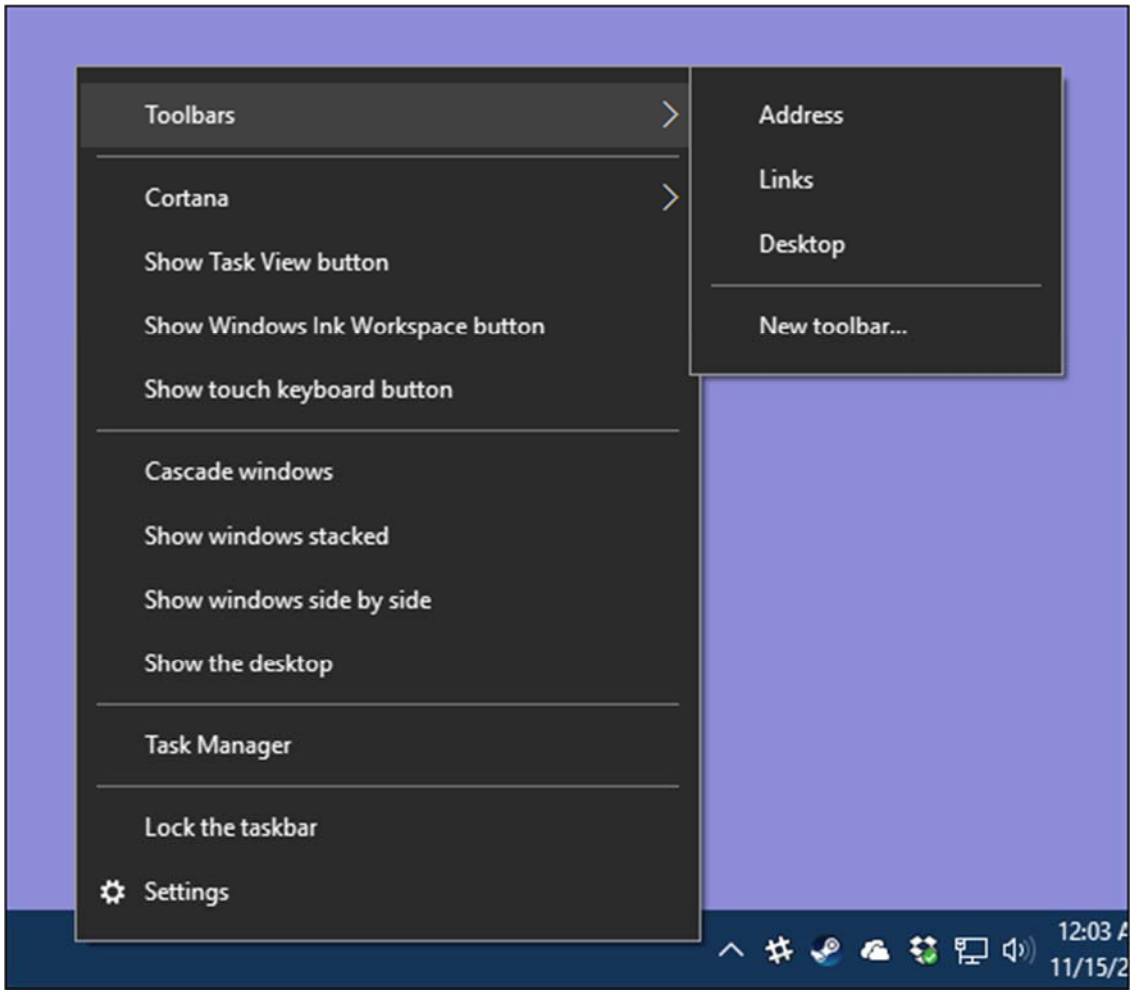


With the Peek option turned on, you can move your mouse to the tiny sliver of space at the far right of the taskbar to hide all your windows and show you your desktop. When you move the mouse away, your windows return to their previous state. You can also click this area to automatically minimize all your windows so that you can actually do things on the desktop. Click the area again to restore your windows. You can also use the Windows+D keyboard shortcut to do the same thing as clicking the Peek area.

Add a Toolbar to the Taskbar

Windows also allows you to add toolbars to the taskbar. A toolbar is essentially a shortcut to a folder on your system, but the shortcut is displayed as the same kind of

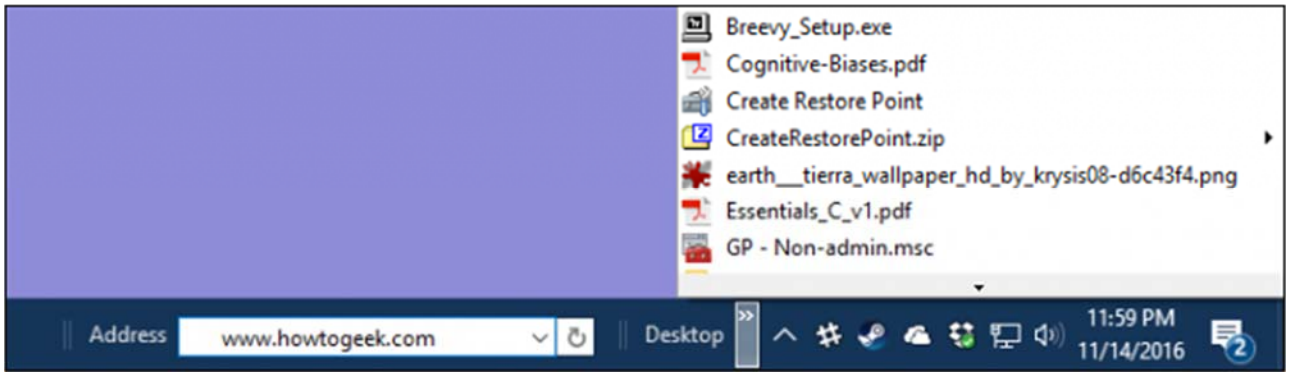
toolbar you might see in a browser or other app. You can access toolbars by right-clicking the taskbar and then pointing to the “Toolbars” submenu.



There are three toolbars built in:

- **Address**. The address toolbar adds a simple address box to your taskbar. Type an address in it just like you would in your browser and the resulting page will open in your default browser.
- **Links**. The links toolbar adds items found in your Internet Explorer favorites list.
- **Desktop**. The desktop toolbar provides access to items stored on your desktop.

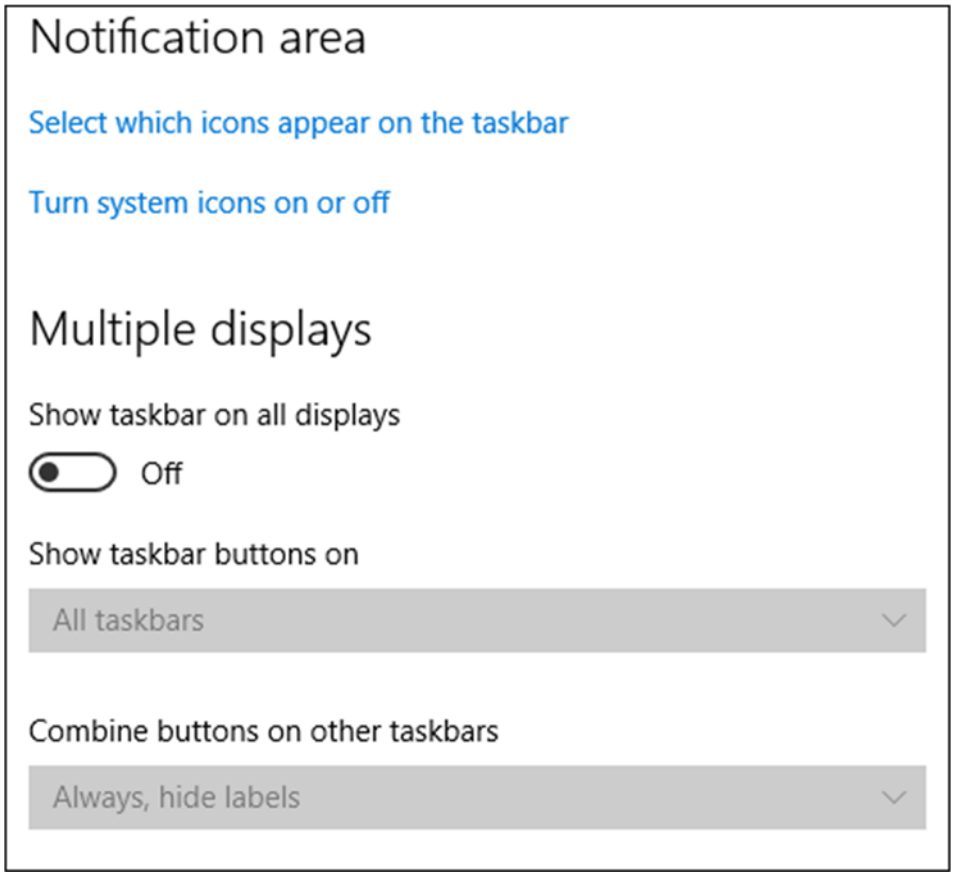
Below, you can see what the Address and Desktop toolbars look like when they’re turned on. Instead of expanding the Desktop toolbar to show any icons, I reduced its size and use the double arrow to open a pop-up menu with all the items.



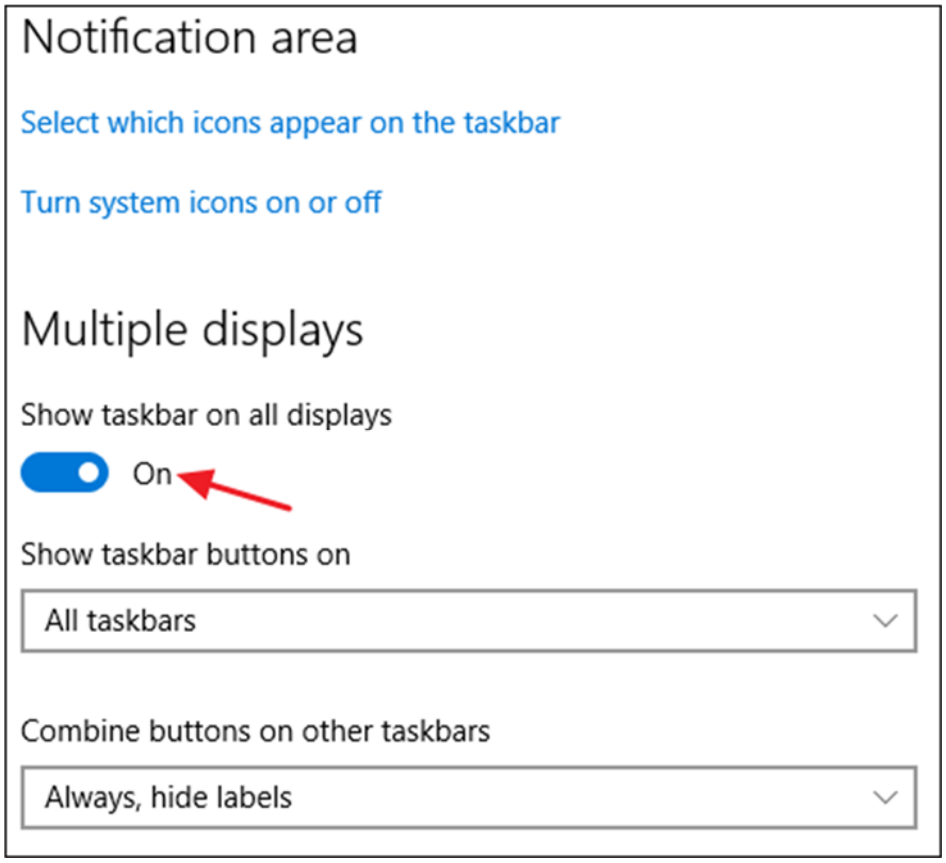
You can also add a custom toolbar that points to any folder on your system. This can be a great way of adding quick, taskbar access to items you regularly need. To create a toolbar, all you have to do is select the “New toolbar” option from the Toolbars submenu and point it to a folder.

Configure the Taskbar for Multiple Displays

If you use multiple displays, you’ll be happy to know that Windows 10 includes decent customization controls for using your taskbar across multiple monitors. You can have a taskbar shown on only one display, a single taskbar stretched across all displays and even a separate taskbar for each display that only shows the apps open on that display. To tweak all this, right-click any open area of the taskbar and choose “Taskbar Settings.” In the settings window, scroll all the way to the bottom to find the controls for multiple displays.



If you leave the “Show taskbar on all displays” option turned off—which is the default setting—then you’ll see a single taskbar on your primary monitor only. All open windows for apps are shown on that taskbar, regardless of which display the windows are open on. Turn that option on to have a taskbar shown on all your displays and also open up the other options below.



The “Show taskbar buttons on” drop-down menu contains three options:

- **All taskbars**. When you select this setting, the taskbar will be the same on every display. Each display’s taskbar will show all open windows, no matter which display they’re open on.
- **Main taskbar and taskbar where window is open**. When you select this setting, the taskbar on your primary display will always show all open windows from all displays. Each additional display’s taskbar will only show windows open on that display.
- **Taskbar where window is open**. When you select this setting, each display—including your primary display—gets its own independent taskbar. Open windows are only shown on the taskbar on the display on which the window is open.

The “Combine buttons on other taskbars” option works much like the same option we covered earlier when we talked about adding labels to taskbar icons. The reason this option is here is so that you can have one option set for your primary display and a different option set for your other displays. For example, say you had three monitors. One is a large display, and the other two are smaller. You might want to have taskbar buttons not combined on your primary display—where you have lots of space—but combined on the smaller monitors.

Hopefully, these tips should get you much closer to turning the taskbar into something that meets your individual needs.

Chapter 4: How to Use and Customize the Windows 10 Action Center

Original article at: https://www.howtogeek.com/225345/how-to-configure-the-windows-10-action-panel-with-your-own-customized-buttons/

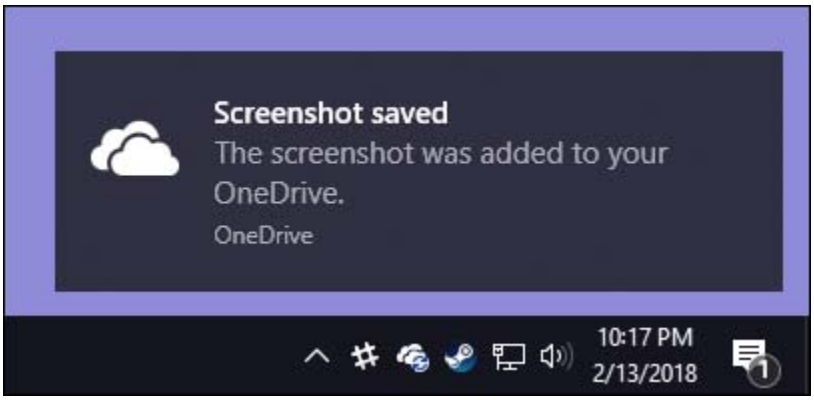
With the Action Center, Windows 10 finally provides a central place for notifications and quick actions to live. Here's how to use and customize it.

For the longest time, notifications in Windows have been something of a joke. Even in Windows 8, which finally provided toast notifications that could pop up and then expire, there was no way to see expired notifications you might have missed. Windows 10 fixes this with the Action Center, a slide-out pane that groups and displays notifications, and also provides access to quick actions like Wi-Fi, Quiet Hours, and Night Light.

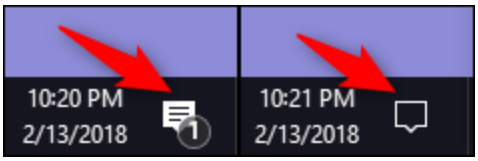
The Action Center is straightforward to use, and it's also pretty customizable.

View Notifications in the Action Center

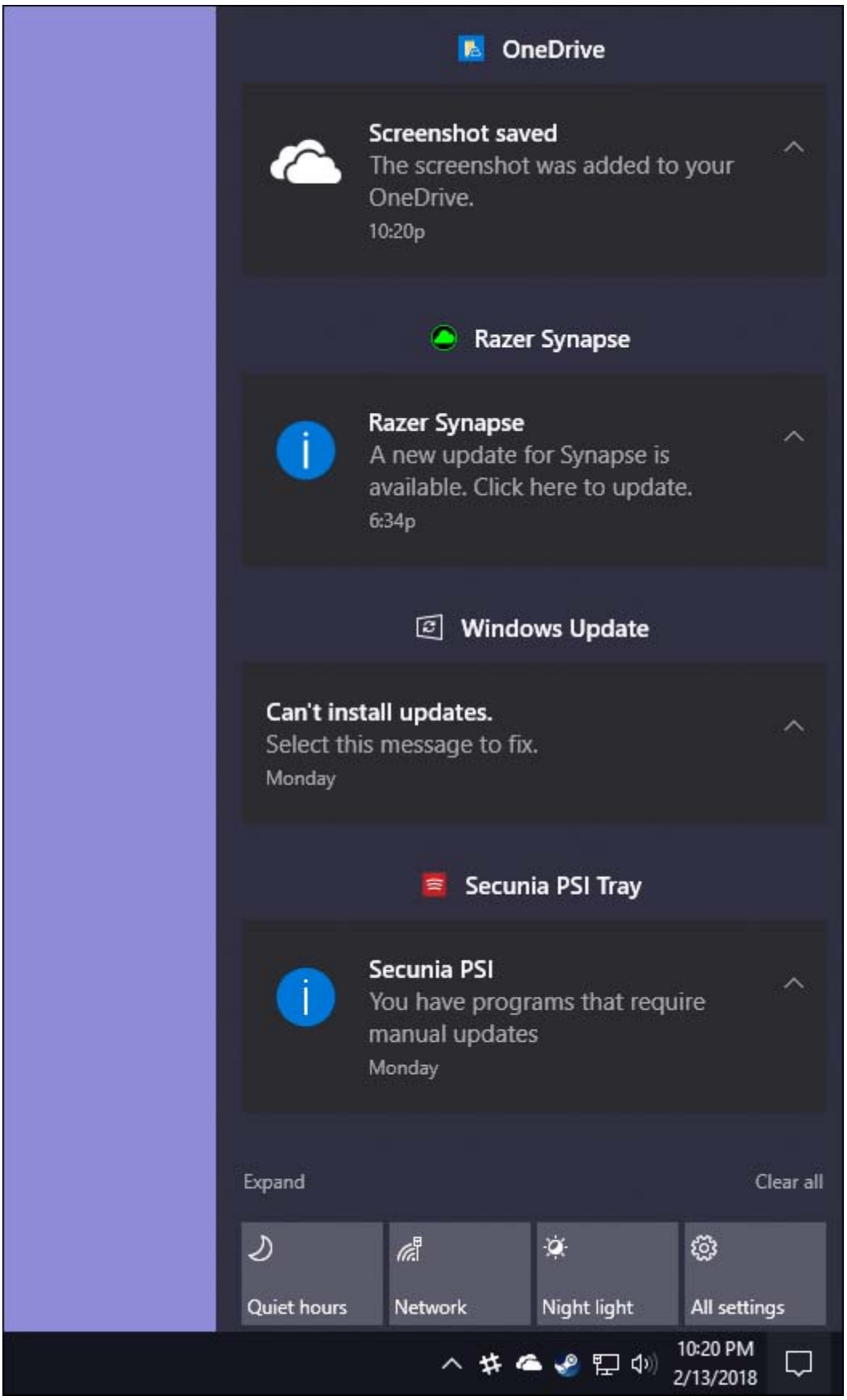
Toast notifications still reign in Windows 10, sliding out from the bottom right edge of your desktop (just above the notification area of the taskbar) whenever an app needs to let you know something.



If you don’t dismiss a notification yourself, it disappears automatically after about six seconds. Whenever you have new notifications, the Action Center icon in the notification area turns white and displays a number badge showing how many new notifications there are (on the left, below). If there are no new notifications, that icon looks empty and badge-free (on the right).



Click that icon (whatever state it’s in) to open the Action Center, a pane that slides out from the right edge of your display. The Action Center shows all your recent notifications, grouped by app.

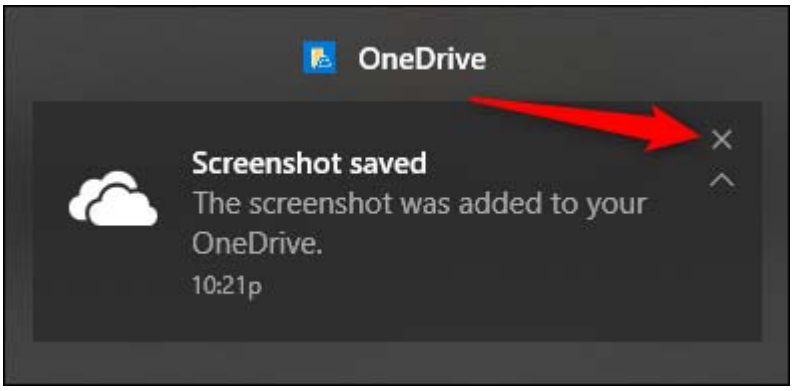

OneDrive
Screenshot saved
The screenshot was added to your OneDrive.
10:20p
Razer Synapse
Razer Synapse
A new update for Synapse is available. Click here to update.
6:34p
Windows Update
Can't install updates.
Select this message to fix.
Monday
Secunia PSI Tray
Secunia PSI
You have programs that require manual updates
Monday
Expand
Clear all
Quiet hours
Network
Night light
All settings
10:20 PM
2/13/2018

When you click a notification in the Action Center, what happens depends on the app that notified you. Most of the time, clicking a notification achieves something pertinent. For example, clicking that OneDrive screenshot notification in our example screenshot above opens OneDrive to the folder in question and highlights the particular file.

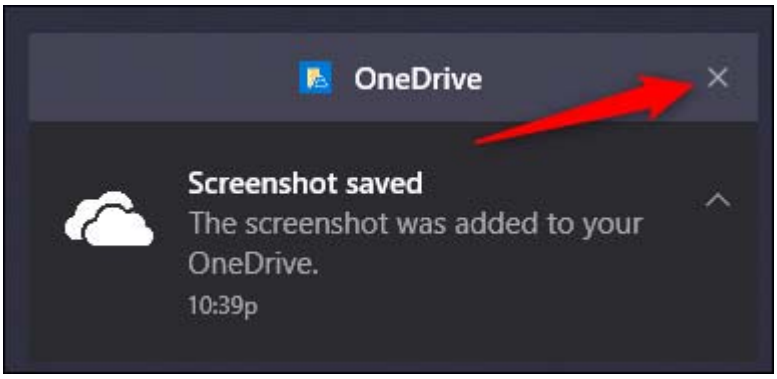
Sometimes, the notification explains the results of clicking it. In our example, clicking the notification from Razer Synapse about an available update starts that update.

Clear Notifications from the Action Center

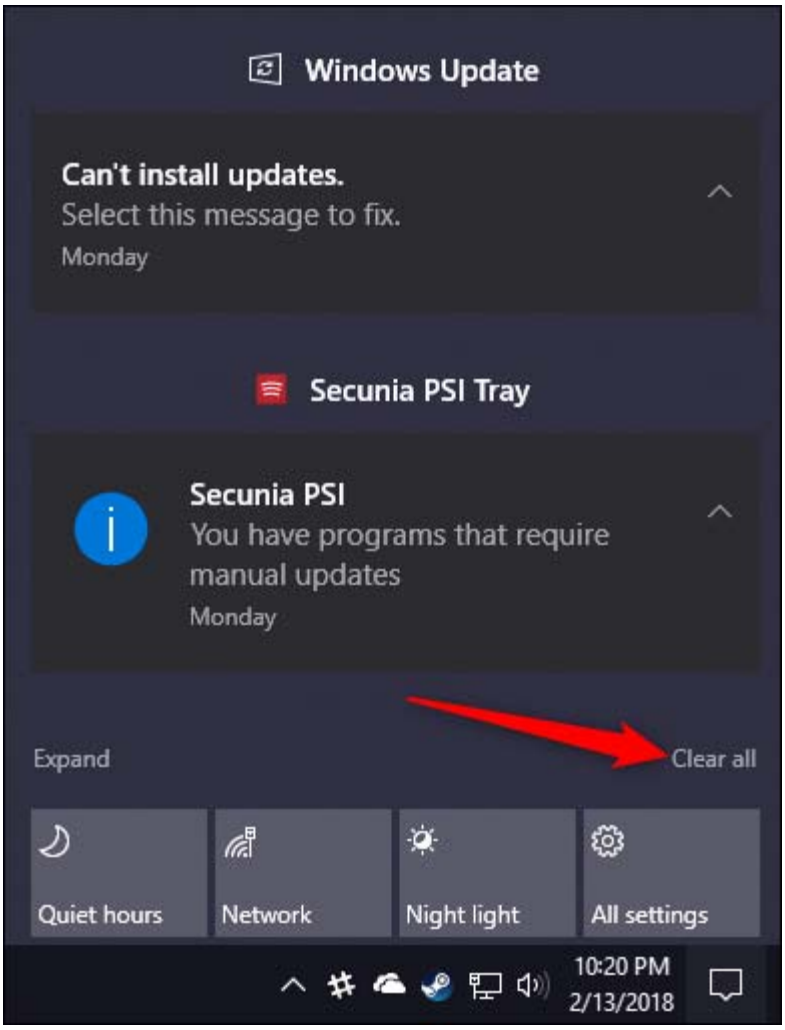
If you hover your mouse over any particular notification in the Action Pane, you can click the “Clear” button (the X) in the upper right corner to clear that notification from the display. Note that when you clear a notification, there’s no way to retrieve it.



You can clear all notifications for an app group by hovering your mouse over the name of the app, and then clicking the “Clear” button that appears there.

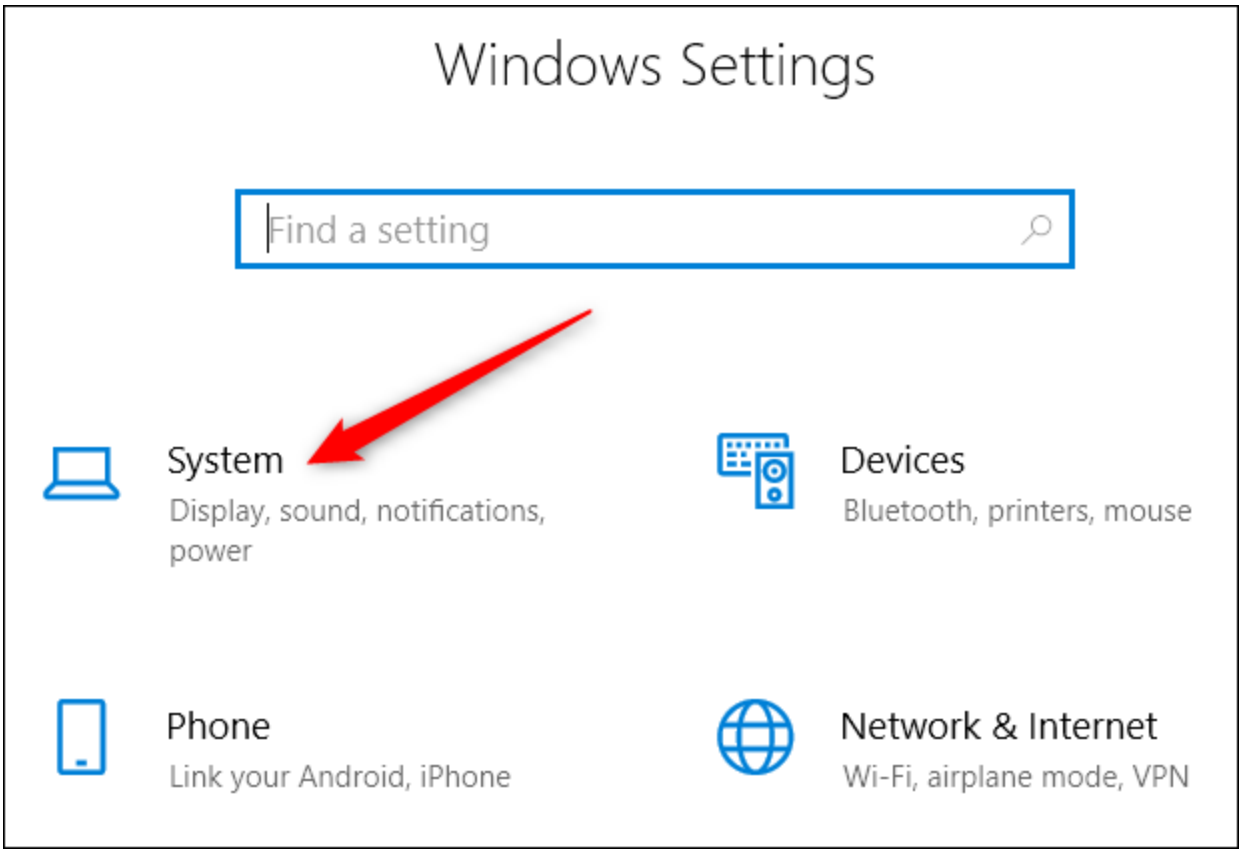


And finally, you can clear all notifications by clicking the “Clear All” text near the bottom right corner of the Action Center (just above the Quick Action buttons).

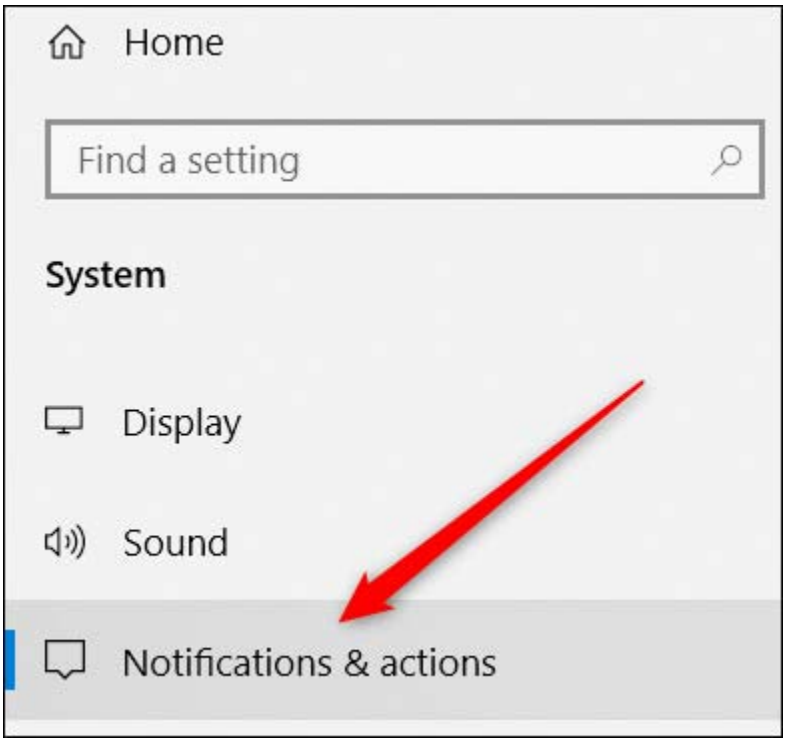


Customize Notifications

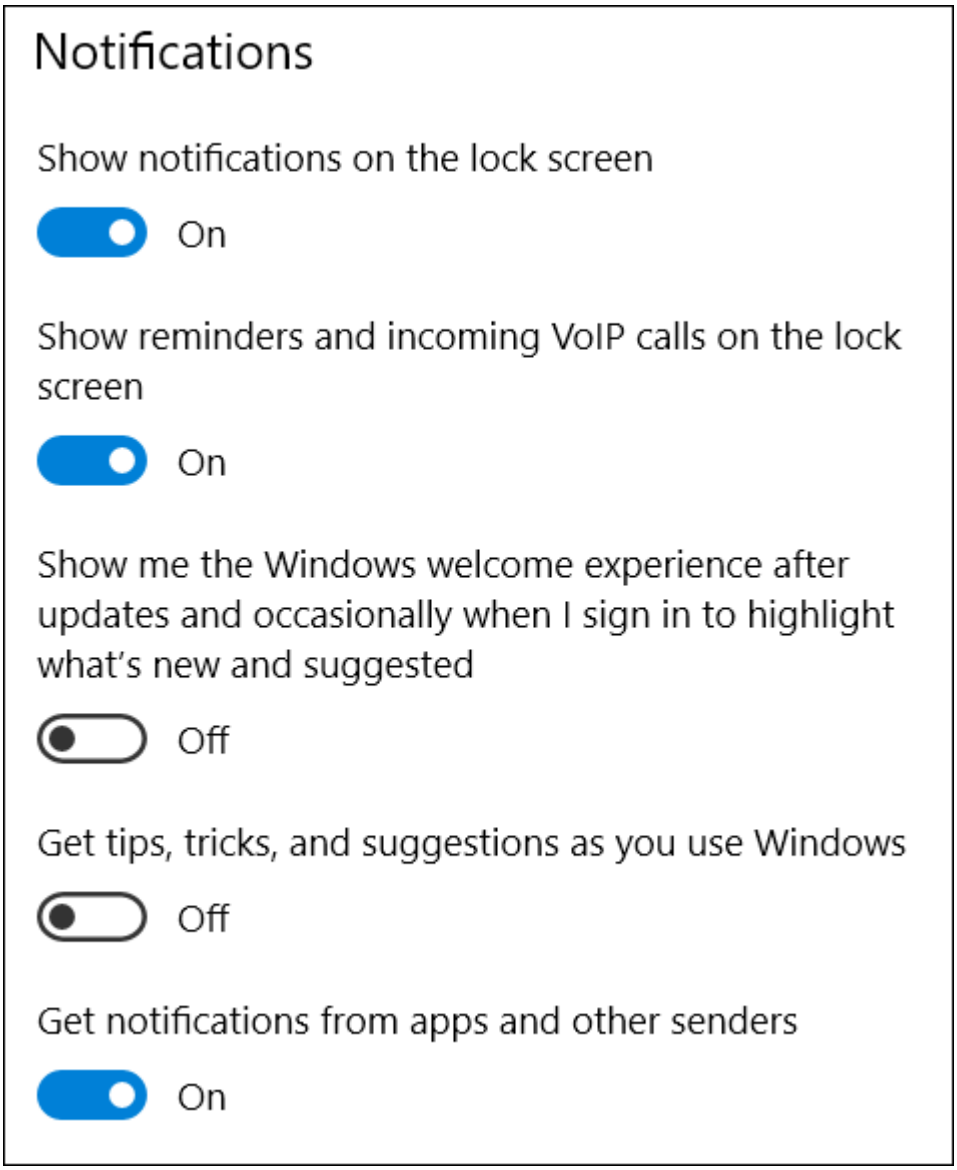
You can’t customize much about how the Action Center displays notifications, but there are ways to customize the notifications themselves. This all happens in the Settings app, so press Windows+I to fire it up and then click the “System” option.



On the “System” settings page, switch to the “Notifications & Actions” category.



In the right pane, scroll down to the “Notifications” section, and you’ll find what you need.

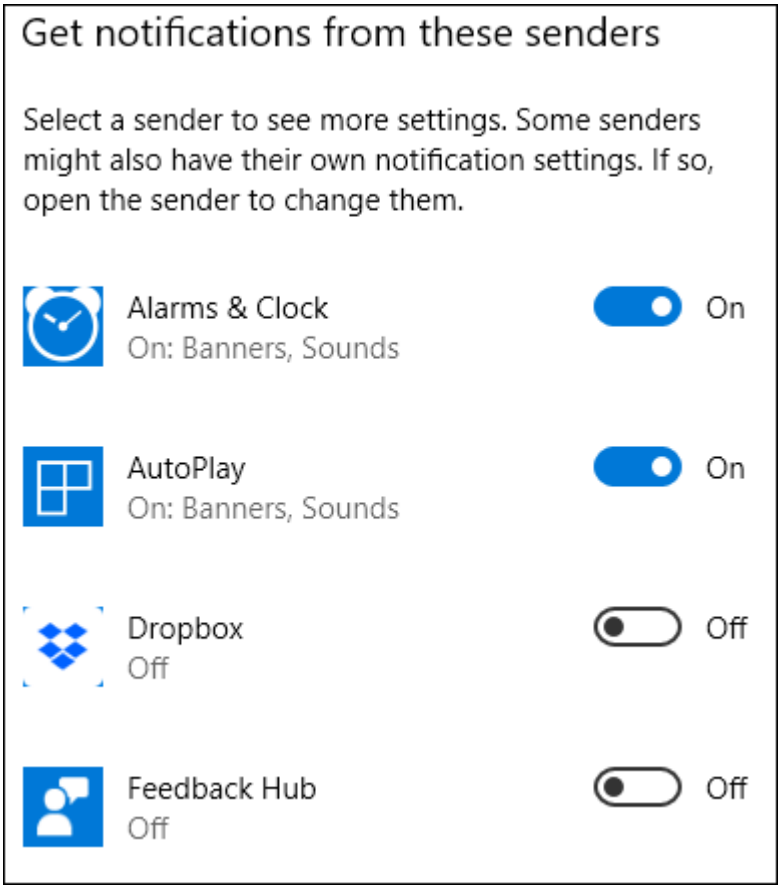


Here’s a rundown of the primary settings:

- **Show notifications on the lock screen:** Turn this off to prevent any notifications from showing up when your computer is locked.
- **Show reminders and incoming VoIP calls on the lock screen:** Turning off notifications on the lock screen still allows reminders and incoming calls to display. Turn this setting off to disable those types of notifications on the lock screen, as well.

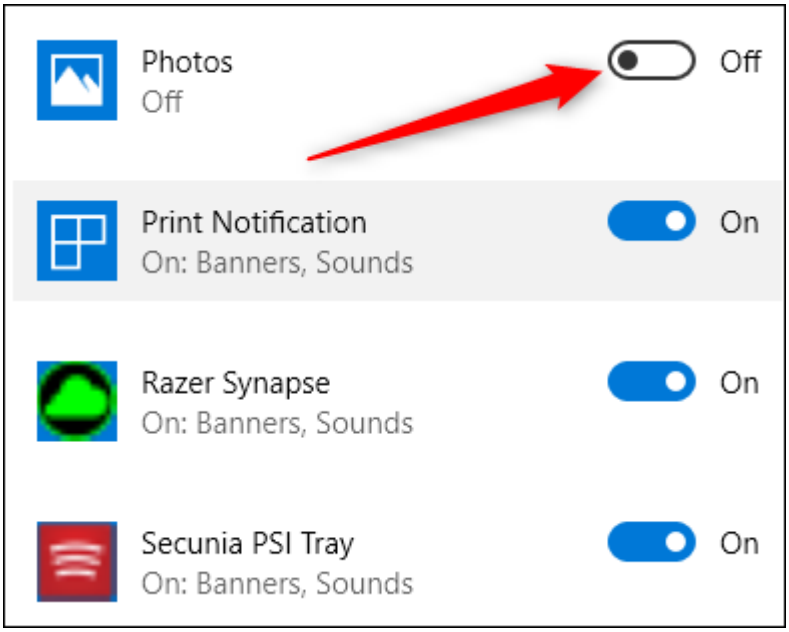
- **Show me the Windows welcome experience** and **Get tips, tricks, and suggestions**: Turn these two settings off if you're not interested in seeing tips, suggestions or ads.
- **Get notifications from apps and other senders:** Turn this setting off to disable notifications entirely.

If you scroll down just a bit further in the right pane, you'll see notification settings for individual senders ("senders" are what Windows calls apps and other sources of notifications).

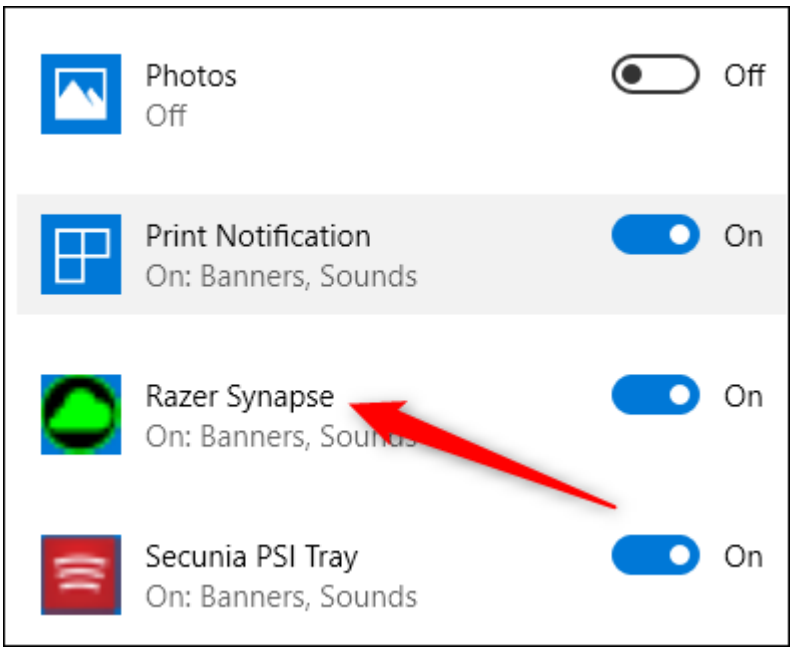


Note that you won't necessarily see every app you have installed listed here. Some apps have their own notification settings that you'll have to configure from within the app. Still, any app you get through the Windows Store, as well as many desktop apps, are configurable from this section.

Turn off the toggle next to any listed app to disable notifications from it.



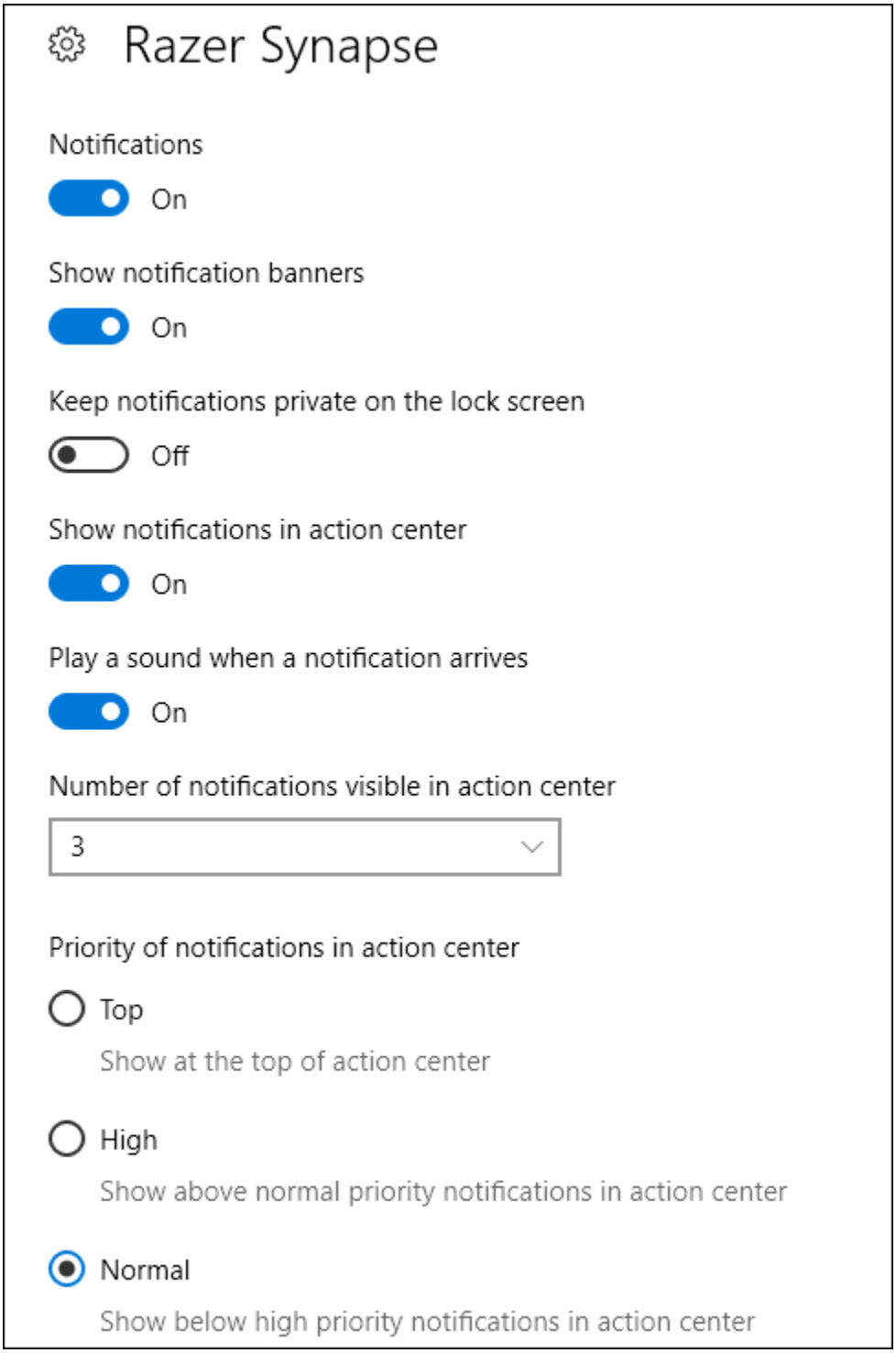
Click the name of an app to open another page that lets you customize settings for that app in greater detail.



On the settings page for an app, you can disable notifications for the app, choose whether banners are shown or sounds are played, prevent notifications from being added to the Action Center, and even control the number of notifications the app can show in the Action Center.

RELATED: ***How to Prioritize Notifications in the Windows 10 Action Center***

At the bottom of the page, you'll even find controls for controlling the priority of the app's notifications in the Action Center, letting you control (at least to some degree) where in the Action Center list those notifications appear.

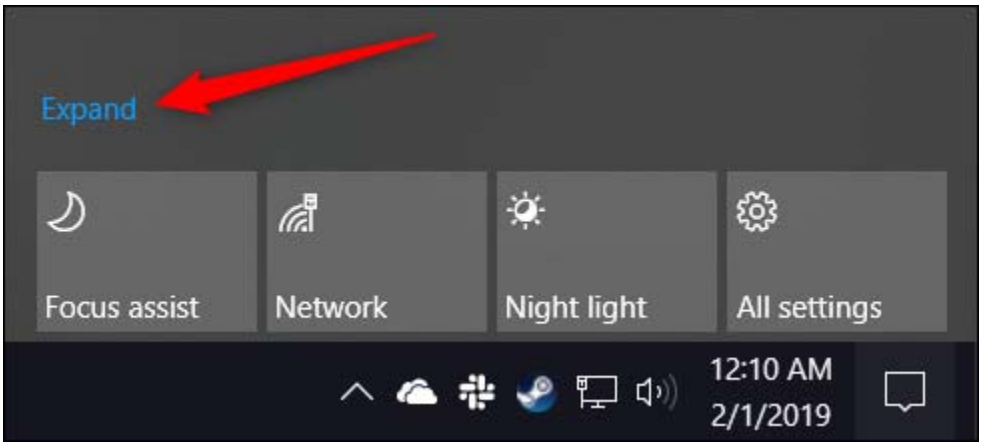


And one more tip for you: if for some reason you don't like it at all, you can disable the Action Center altogether.

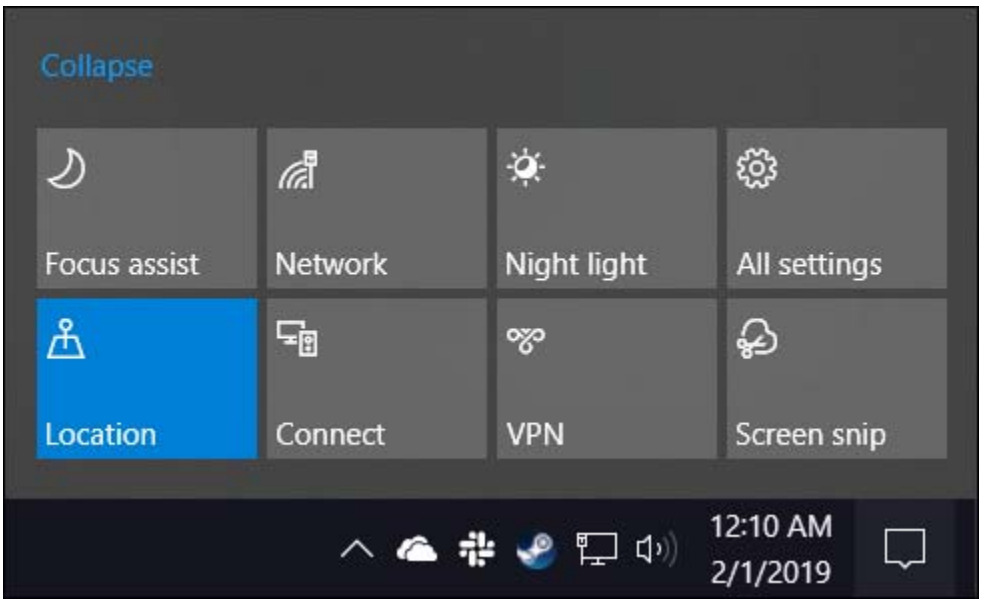
Customize Quick Action Buttons

At the bottom of the Action Center, you'll see four or eight Quick Action buttons, depending on your screen size and resolution. By default, these include buttons for Focus Assist, Network, Night Light, and All Settings on the top row. Click a button to take the associated action (i.e., turning Night Light on and off).

And if you click the "Expand" text just above those buttons…

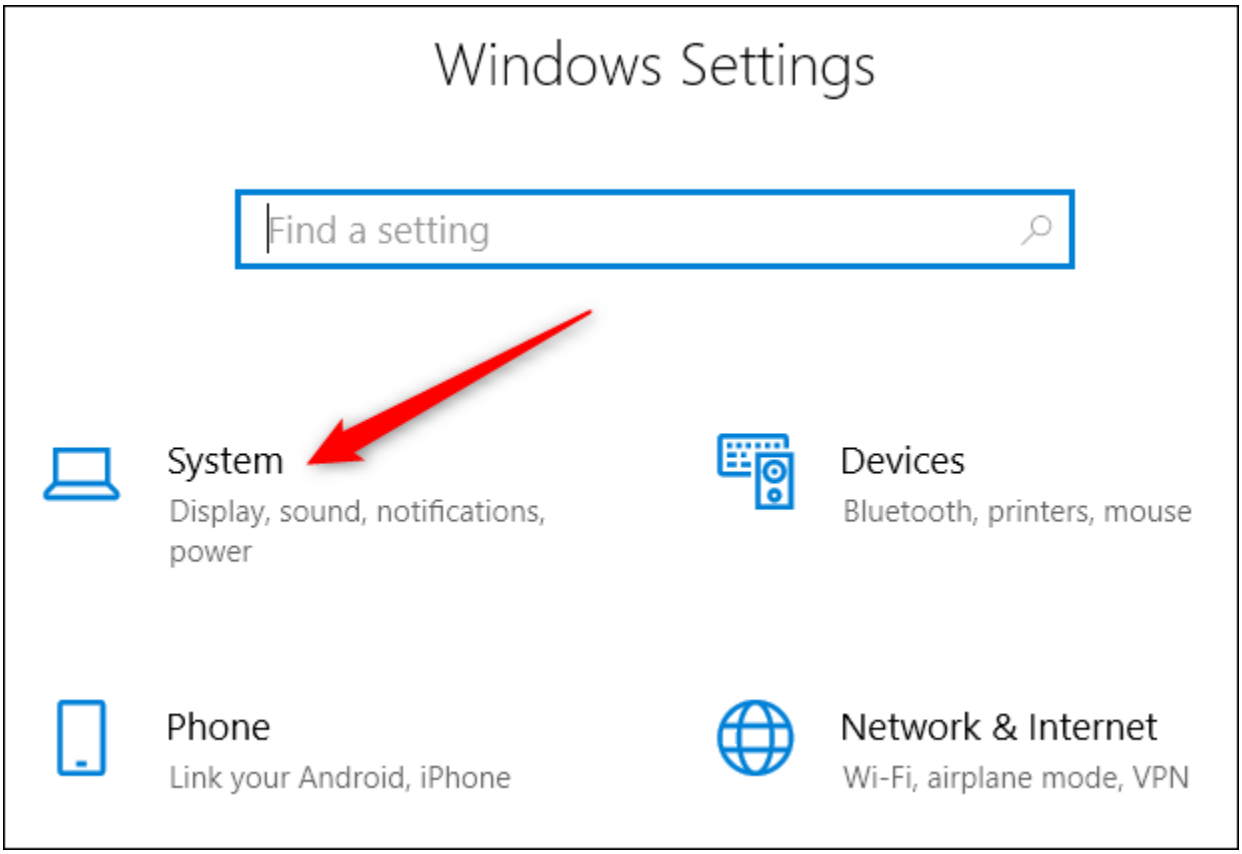


…you'll reveal all the available Quick Action buttons.

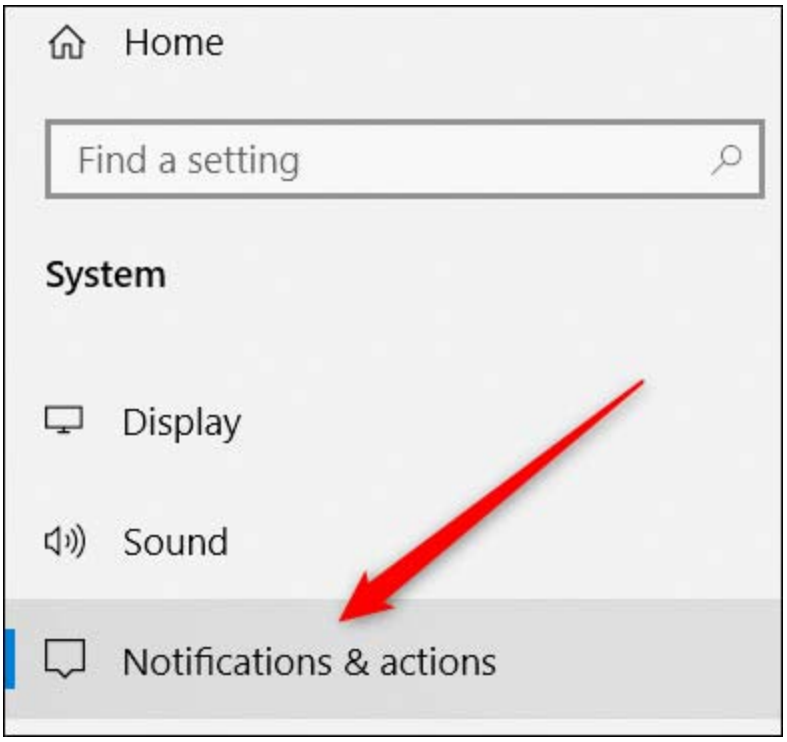


You can customize these Quick Action buttons to a modest degree. While you can't add your own, custom Quick Action buttons, you can control which buttons appear in the Action Center, and in what order.

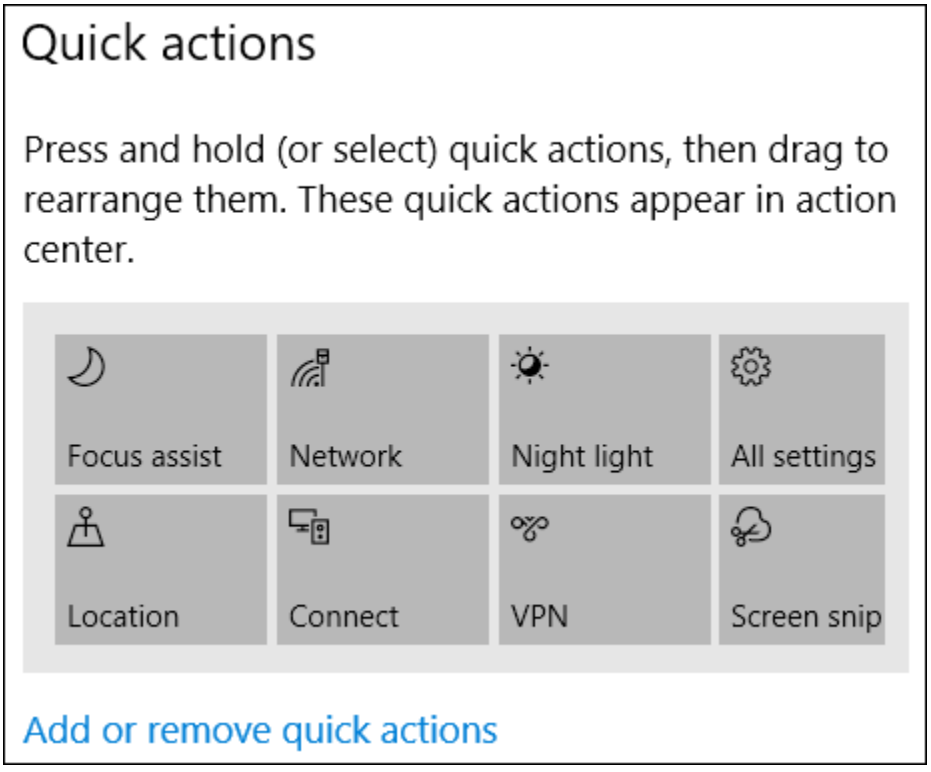
Press Windows+I to open the Settings app, and then click the "System" option.



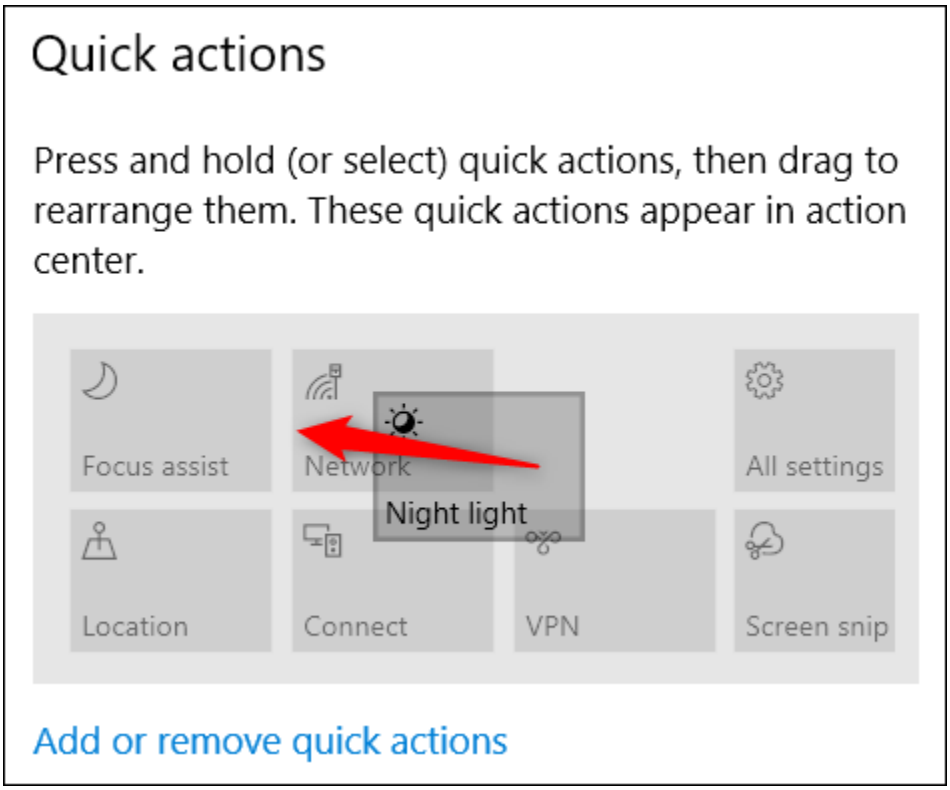
On the "System" settings page, switch to the "Notifications & Actions" category.



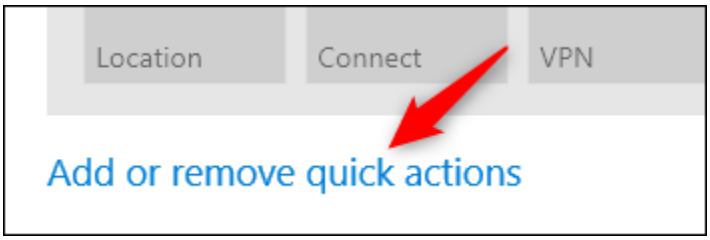
In the right pane, right at the top, you'll see the "Quick Actions" section and all the available Quick Action buttons.



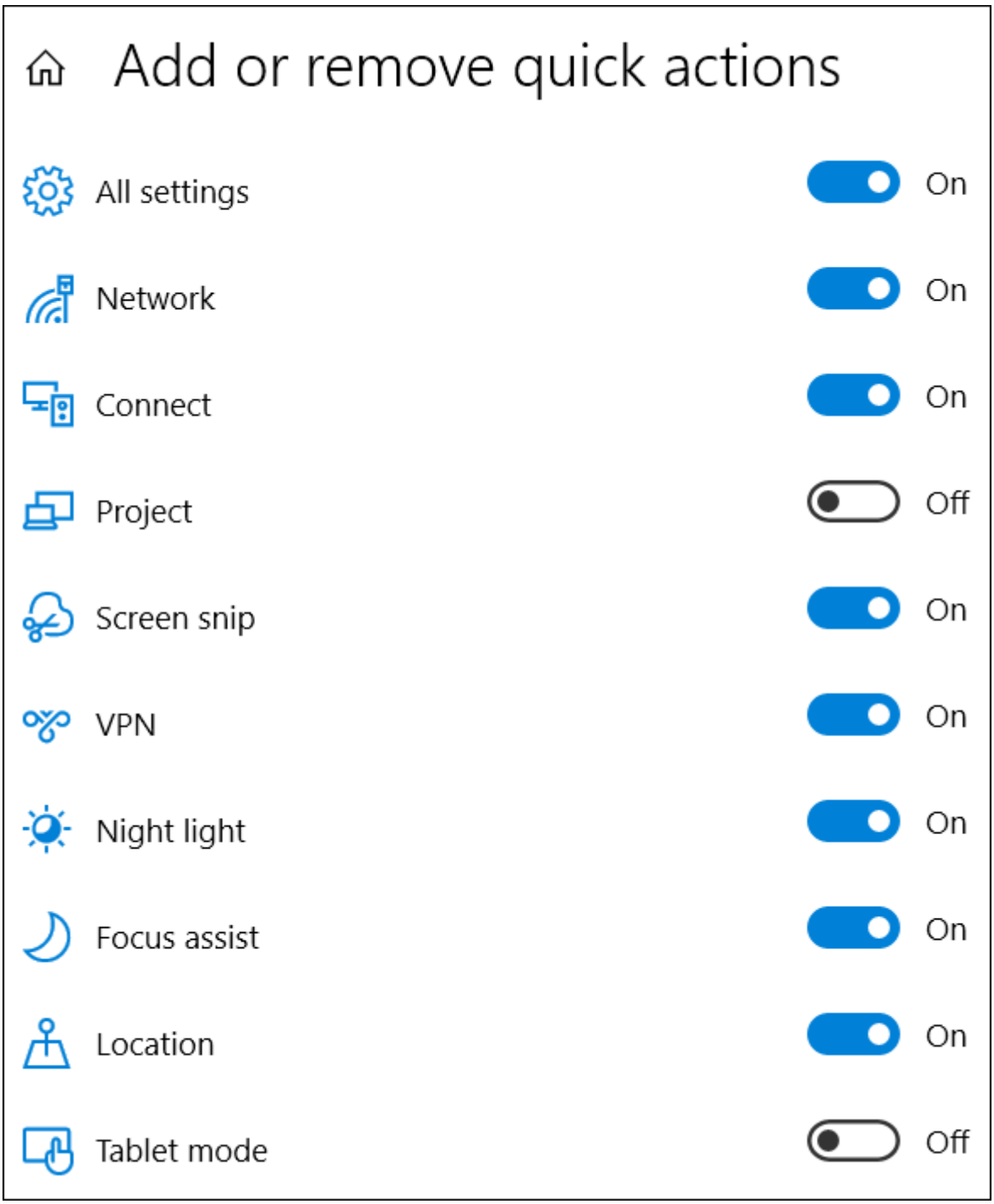
Drag any of those buttons around to adjust the order in which they appear in the Action Center.



If there are buttons you'd rather not appear in the Action Center at all, click the "Add or remove quick actions" link.



Use the toggles on the resulting page to turn specific buttons on or off.

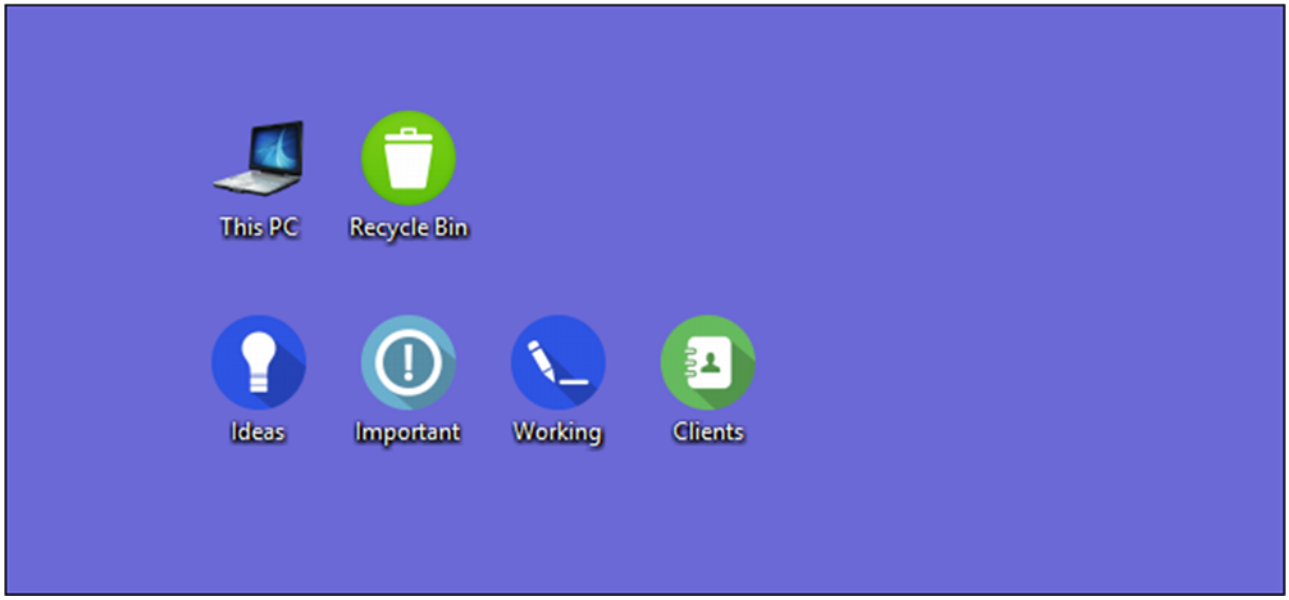


And before you know it, you'll have your Action Center looking just the way you want.

As you can see, the Action Center is a welcome addition to the Windows operating system. Finally, you have a place to see notifications you might have missed and the ability to have specific system settings right at your fingertips.

Chapter 5: How to Customize Your Icons in Windows

Original article at: https://www.howtogeek.com/howto/13631/customize-your-icons-in-windows-7-and-vista/



Personalizing your icons is a great way to make a PC uniquely yours. Let's take a look at the different ways Windows lets you customize your icons.

RELATED: ***How To Make High Resolution Windows 7 Icons Out of Any Image***

Windows has some built-in icons you can choose from, but there is also an untold number of icons you can download from sites like IconArchive, DeviantArt, and Iconfinder—all of which have loads of free icons. And if you can't find something you like, you can even make high-resolution icons out of any image.

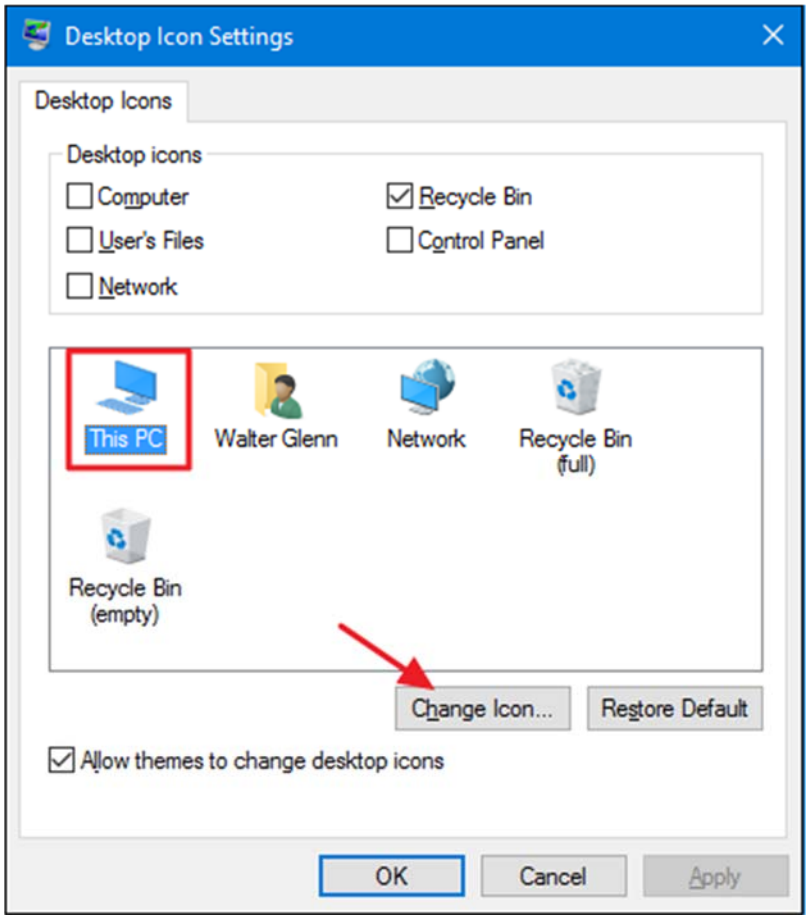
Once you have the icons of your dreams, save them in a safe place—some of these processes will require they stay in a particular location on your PC. In other cases, you'll probably want them there just in case something goes wrong and you have to re-apply them.

Change Your Desktop Icons (Computer, Recycle Bin, Network, and So On)

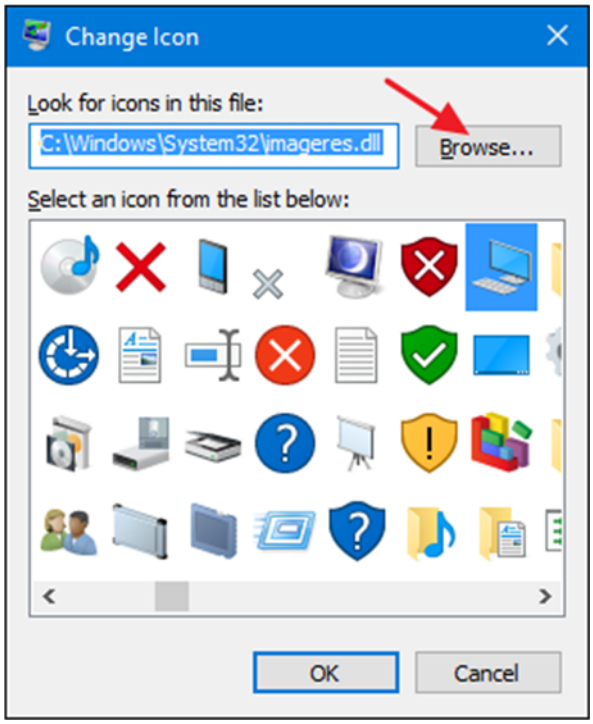
Icons like This PC, Network, Recycle Bin, and your User folder are all considered "desktop icons," even though modern versions of Windows don't show them all on the desktop. Windows 8 and 10 don't show any of the desktop icons except for Recycle Bin, and even Windows 7 doesn't show them all. For a complete rundown, check out our guide to restoring missing desktop icons in Windows 7, 8, or 10.

But you can still change how these icons appear elsewhere on your system. To do so, you'll need to access the "Desktop Icon Settings" window to turn these icons on and off or to change the associated icons. In Windows 10, you can access this window through Settings > Personalization > Themes > Desktop Icon Settings. In Windows 8 and 10, it's Control Panel > Personalize > Change Desktop Icons.

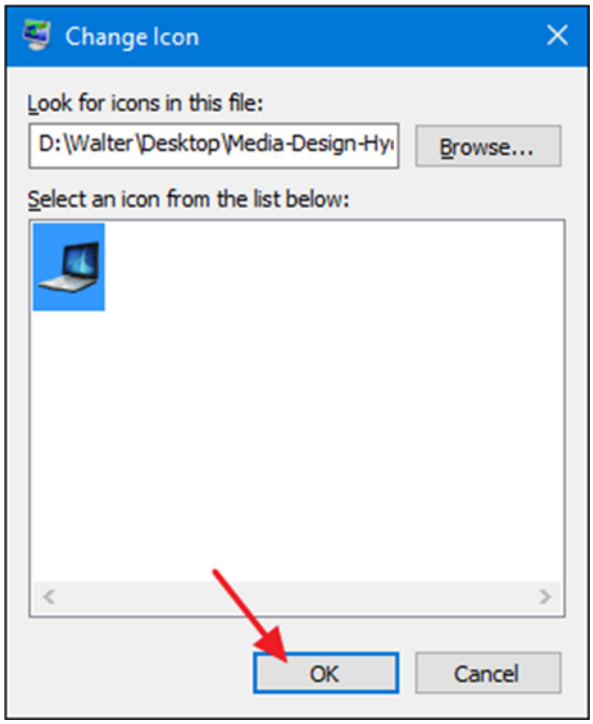
Use the checkboxes in the "Desktop icons" section to select which icons you want on your desktop. To change an icon, select the icon you want to change and then click the "Change Icon" button.



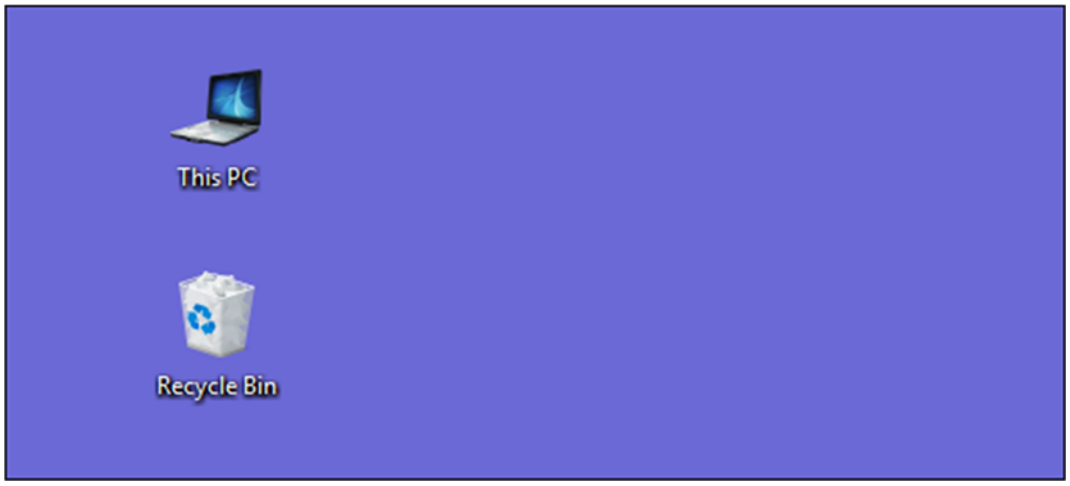
In the "Change Icon" window, you can select any icon you want from the built-in Windows icons, or you can click "Browse" to locate your own icon files.



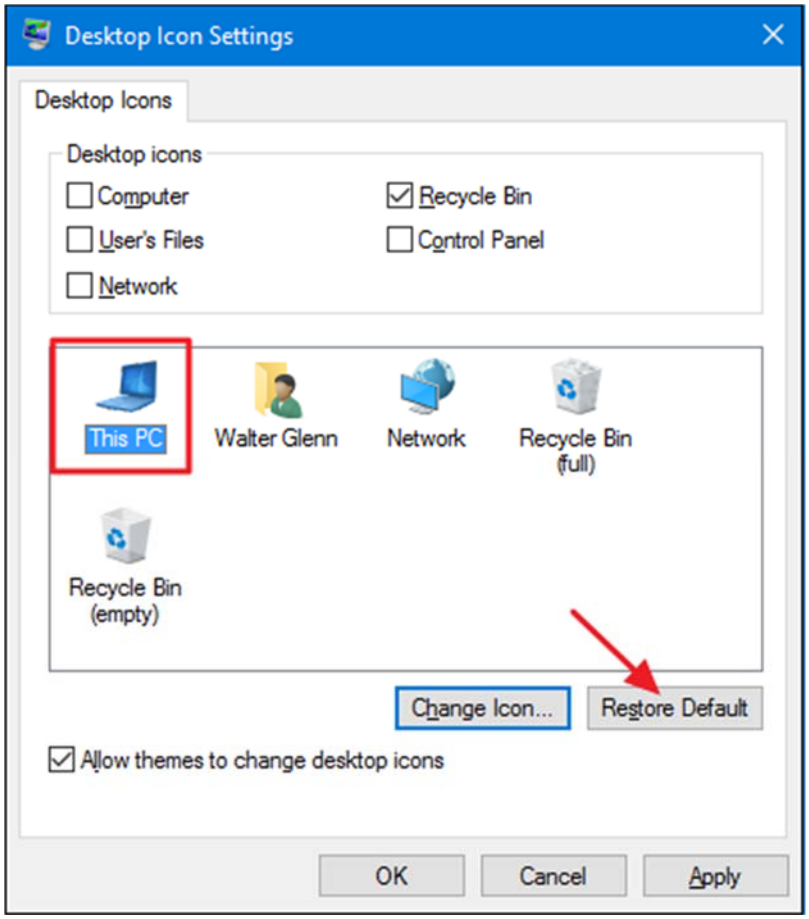
If you browse for your own icons, you can select any EXE, DLL, or ICO file. After selecting the file, the “Change Icon” window will show the icons contained in the file you selected. Click the one you want and then click “OK.” Here, we’re changing the “This PC” icon to use one that looks more like a laptop than a desktop.



After changing your icon, you should see the new icon used in File Explorer, on the Desktop, and in the taskbar when the folder is open.

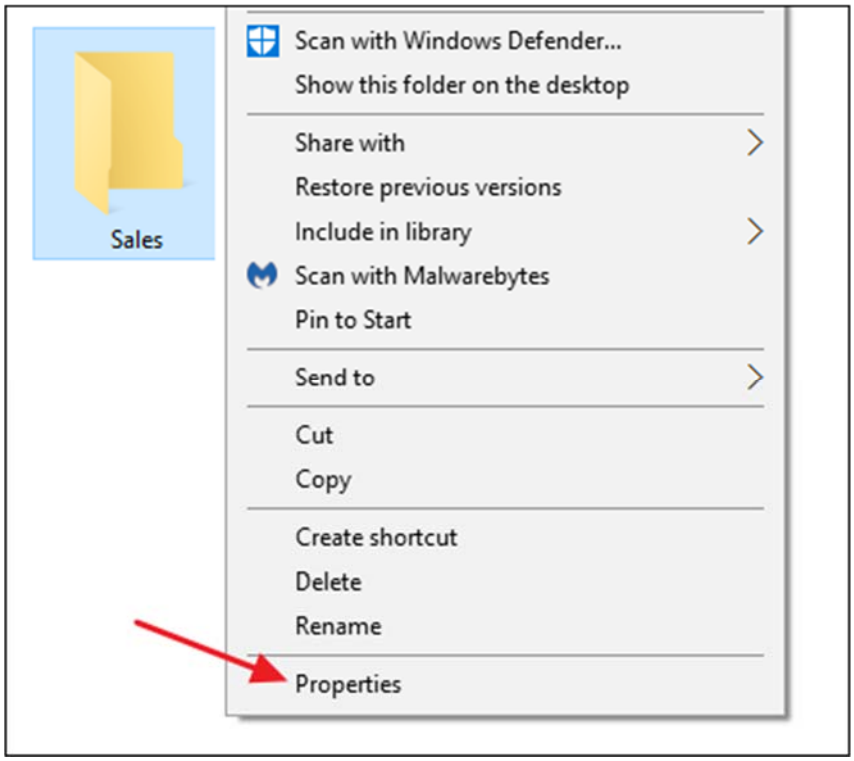


And if you want to reverse the change, you can always go back to the “Desktop Icon Settings” window, select the icon you want to change back, and then click “Restore Default.”

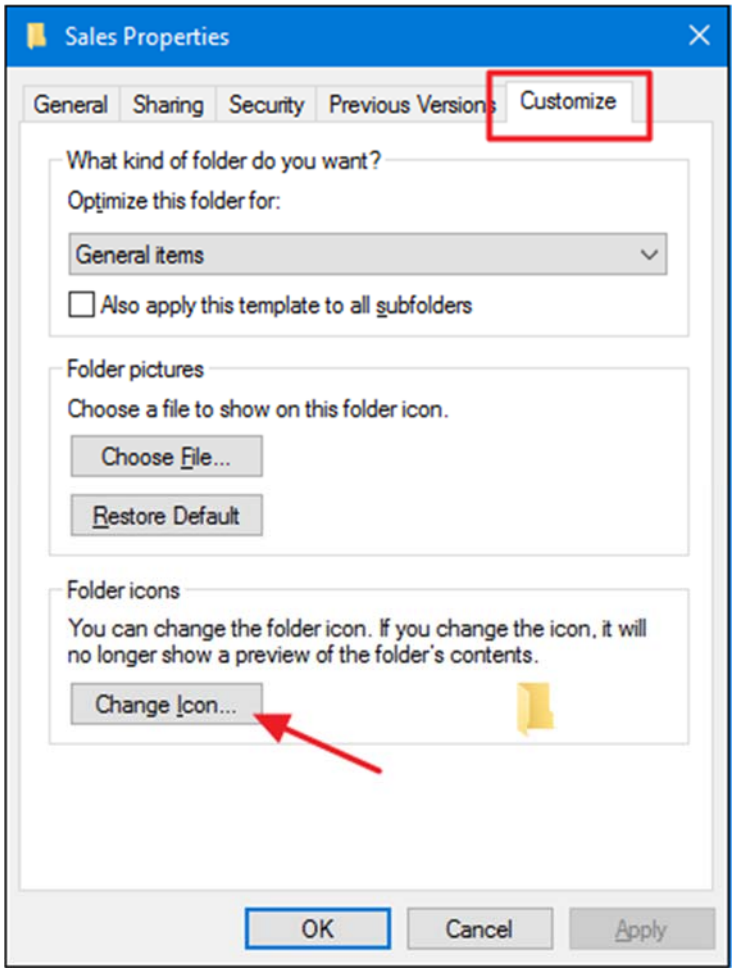


Change Folder Icons

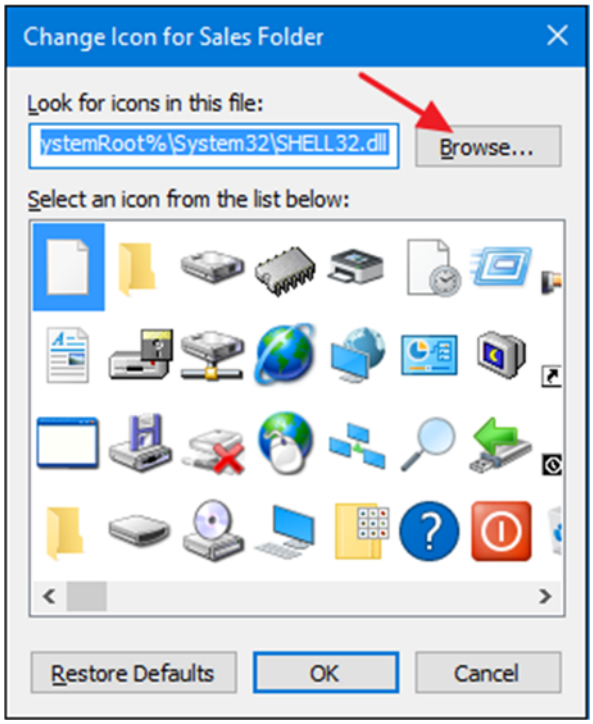
Changing the icon for a folder is not only a good way to pretty things up, but also to call attention to important items. To change a folder icon, right-click the folder you want to change and then choose “Properties.”



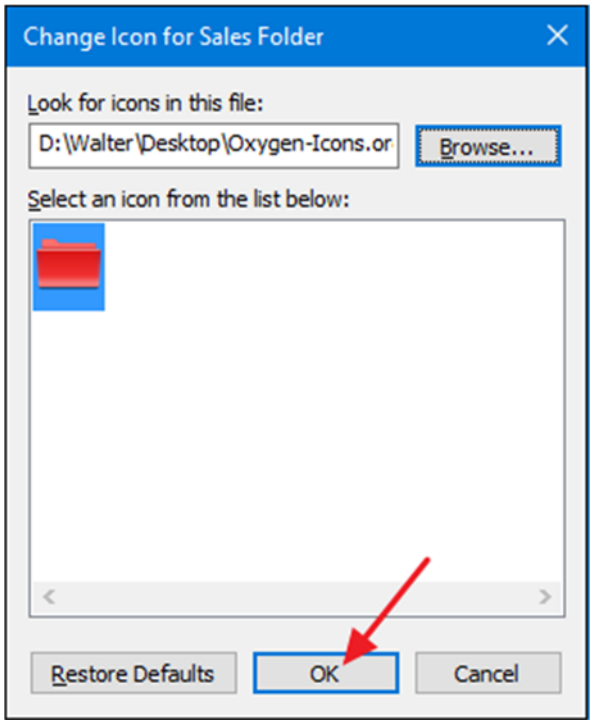
In the folder’s properties window, switch to the “Customize” tab and then click the “Change Icon” button.



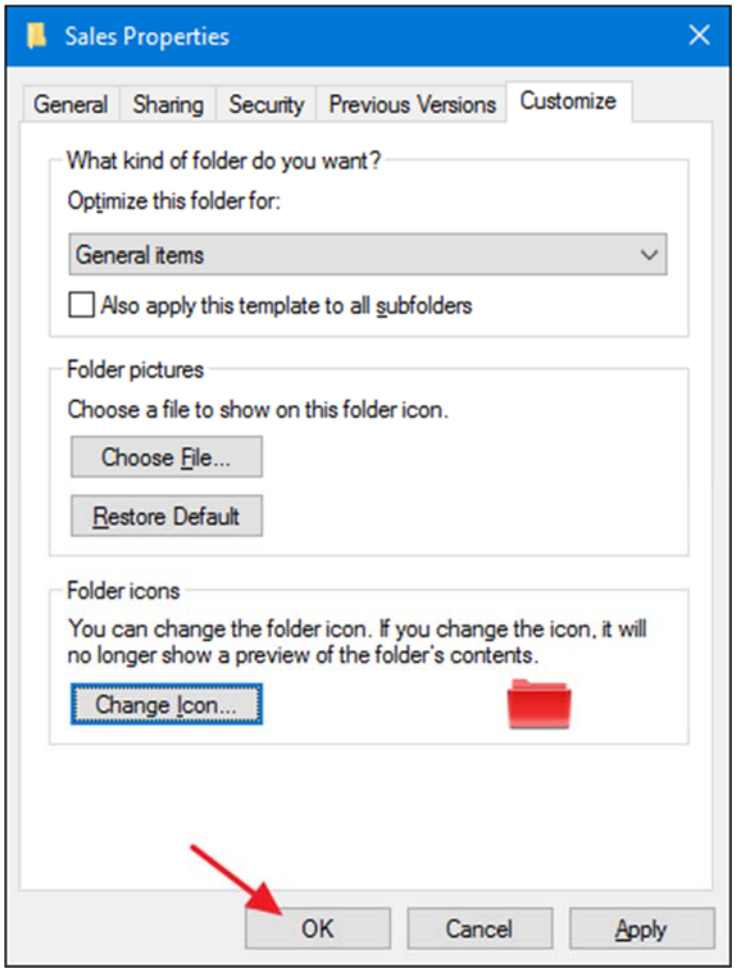
In the “Change Icon” window, you can select any icon you want from the built-in Windows icons, or you can Click “Browse” to locate your own icons.



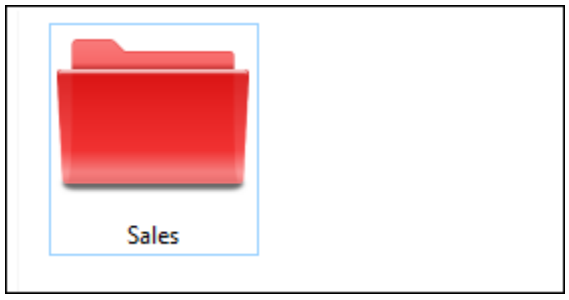
If you browse for your own icon file, you can select any EXE, DLL, or ICO file. After selecting the file, the “Change Icon” window will show the icons contained in the file you selected. Click the one you want and then click “OK.” Here, we’re changing the icon for this folder to a red one to make it stand out more.



And back in the properties window, click “OK.”



The folder should now show up with the new icon.



This feature works by creating a hidden Desktop.ini file inside the folder that contains a few lines of data something like the following:

```
[.ShellClassInfo]
```

```
IconResource=D:\Walter\Documents\Icons\Oxygen-Icons.org-Oxygen-Places-folder-red.ico,0

[ViewState]

Mode=

Vid=

FolderType=Generic
```

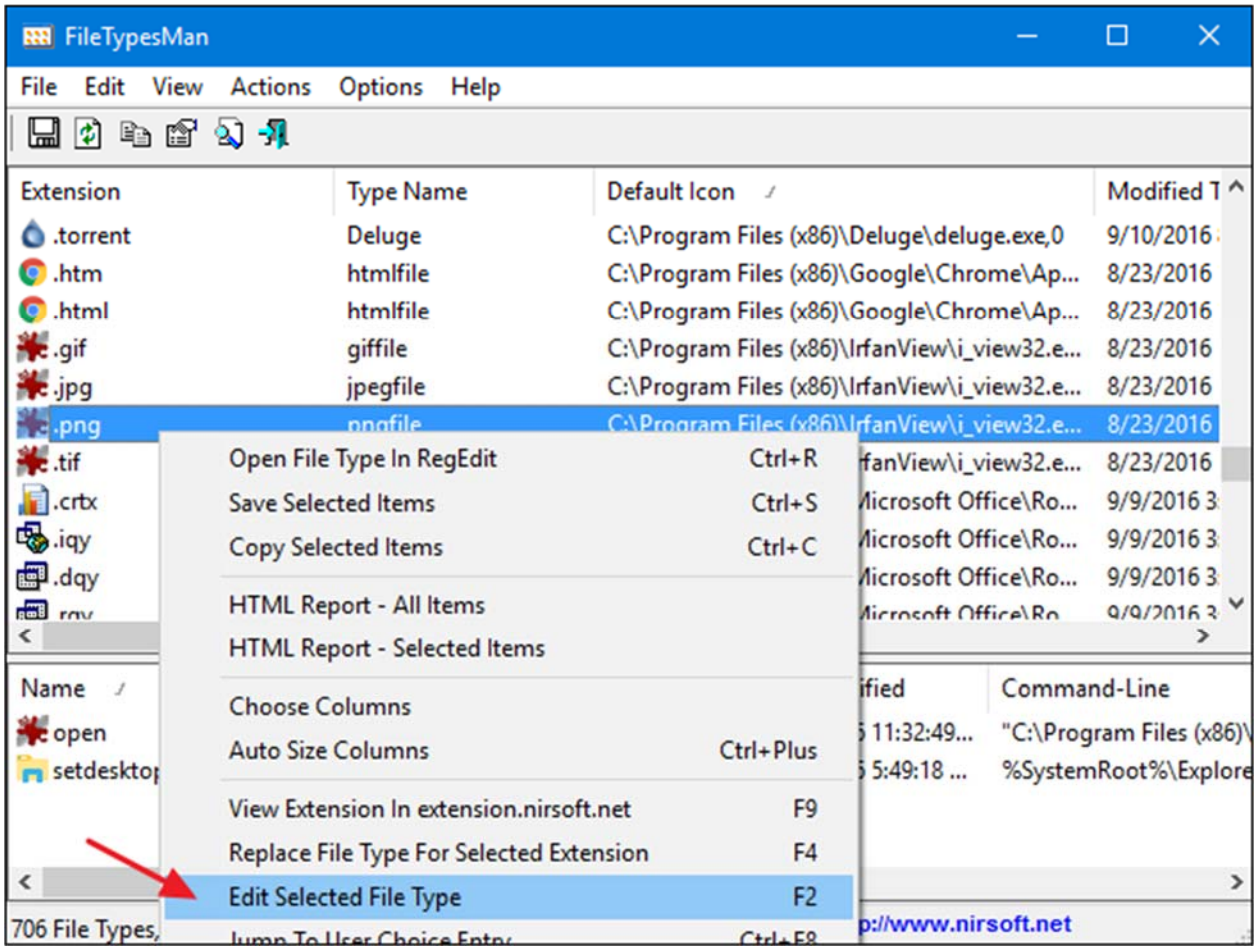
This is one of the cases where you absolutely must keep the ICO file in whatever location you had it when you applied the icon. Put it somewhere you know you won't delete it first, or make the ICO file hidden.

And if you want to fine-tune how folders look and operate on your PC, you should also explore how to customize folder views with Windows' five templates and how to customize folder view settings in Windows.

Change the Icon for a Type of File

You can also change the icon for specific file types (those that end in certain extensions) so that all files of that type use the new icon. Why bother to do this? Suppose, for example, you use an image editing program that uses essentially the same icon for all the different types of image files it supported—PNG, JPG, GIF, and so on. You might find it more convenient if each of those file types used a different icon, so they were easier to distinguish—especially if you keep multiple file types in the same folder.

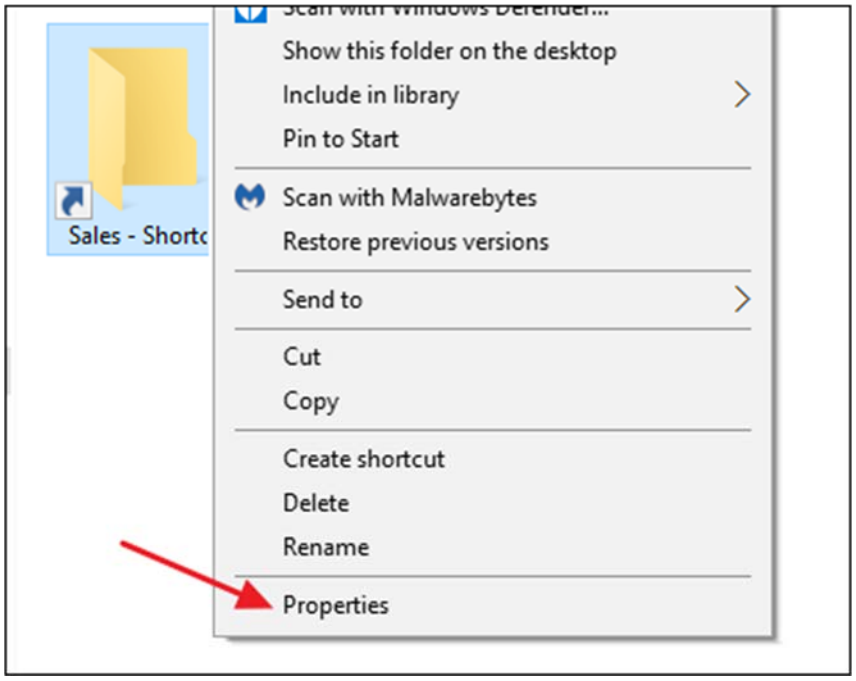
Unfortunately, there's no built-in way to do this in Windows. Instead, you'll need to download a free tool to do the job: File Types Manager by Nirsoft. We've got a complete guide to using File Types Manager to change the icon for a certain file type, so if you think this would be useful for you, give it a read!



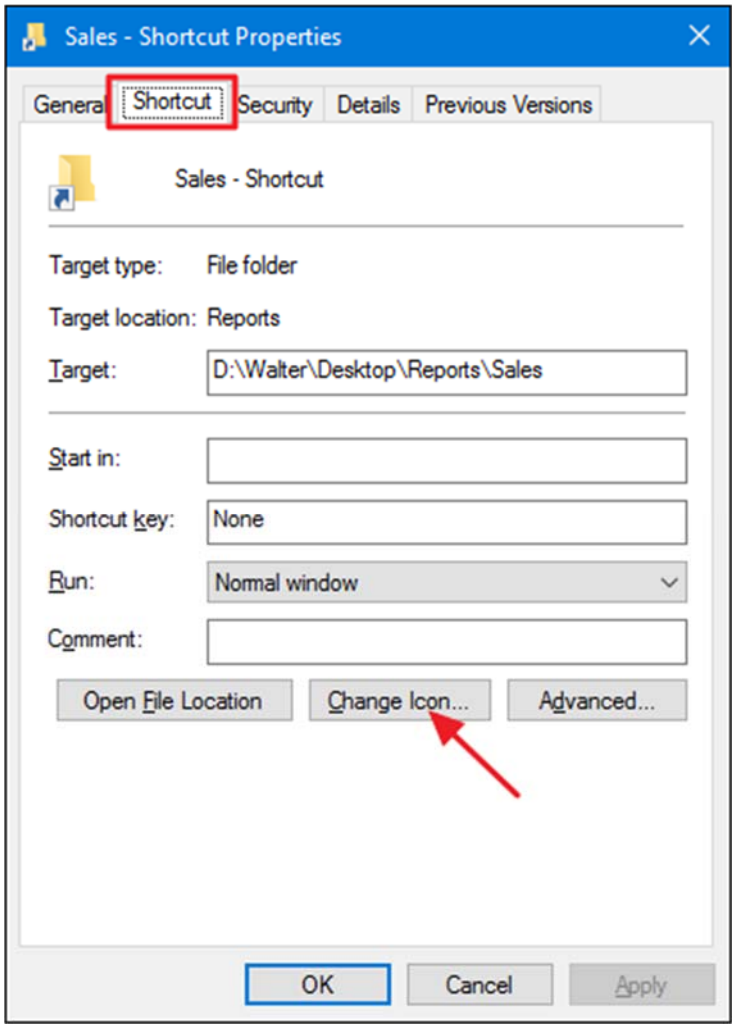
The one type of file that File Types Manager is not good at handling, though, is executable (EXE) files. For that, we've got another free tool recommendation: Resource Hacker. And of course, we also have a guide on using it to modify the icon for an EXE file.

Change the Icon of Any Shortcut

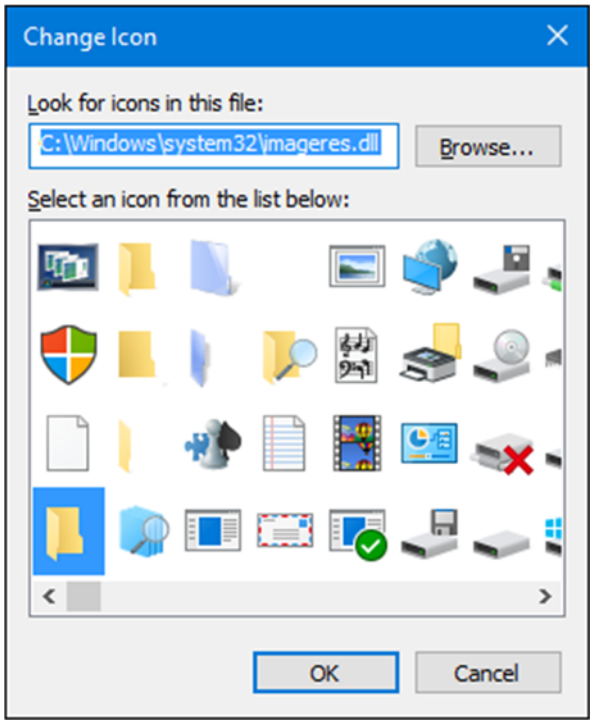
Changing the icon for a shortcut in Windows is also pretty simple and works the same whether it's a shortcut to an app, folder, or even Command Prompt command. Right-click the shortcut and choose "Properties."



On the “Shortcut” tab, click the “Change Icon” button.



This opens the standard “Change Icon” window we’ve seen a couple of times already. Choose one of the default icons or browse to any EXE, DLL, or ICO file that contains icons. After making and applying your selection, you’ll see the new icon in File Explorer, on the Desktop, or on the taskbar if you have your Shortcut pinned there.

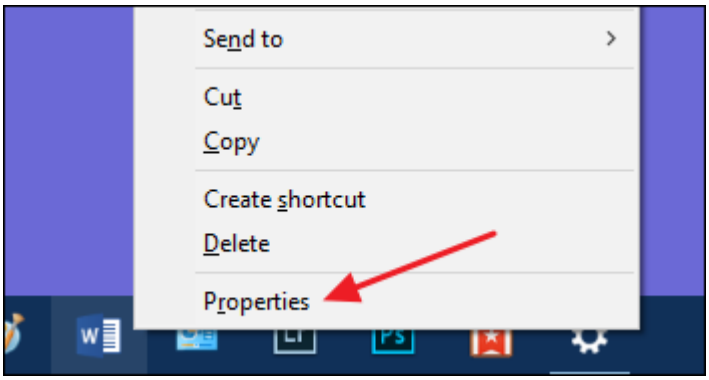


If you want, you can even customize those shortcut icons further by removing (or changing) the arrow overlays or preventing Windows from adding the "- Shortcut" text.

Change the Icon of Apps that Are Pinned to the Taskbar

Icons that are pinned to your taskbar are really shortcuts—they just don't have the arrow overlay and "- Shortcut" text normally associated with shortcuts. As such, you can customize their icons in nearly the same way that you customize any shortcut icon. You just need to keep a few things in mind:

- You can only customize the icons of apps that are actually pinned to the taskbar. If the icon is only on the taskbar because the app is currently running and it isn't pinned there, you can't customize it. So, pin it first.
- If an app is pinned, but is currently running, you'll need to close the app before you can change the shortcut icon.
- Just right-clicking a pinned app shows you the app's jumplist. To access the regular context menu instead, hold the Shift key down while right-clicking the icon. Choose "Properties" from that menu and then the rest of the process will be familiar to you from the previous section.



Change the Icon of any Drive in File Explorer

There's no simple built-in way to change the icons for drives in Windows. That doesn't mean you can't do it though. The easy way is to use a free app named Drive Icon Changer. There's also a way that works a bit differently and involves a little Registry editing. You can read all about both methods in our guide to changing drive icons in Windows.

Drive Icon Changer is the easiest way, though you can do it from the registry if you'd prefer not to use extra software.

Hopefully, this gives you enough information about changing icons that you can make things look just the way you want them.