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Microsoft

SECOND EDITION

Plain & Simple

Windows 10

Nancy Muir Boysen
Michael Miller

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

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Customizing the appearance of Windows 10

4

Windows 10 is an environment in which you'll spend a lot of time, so being able to set up the appearance of its various elements in ways that please you is a great benefit. You can change the background image for the desktop, colors, the size of text, and more. You can also work with the size and placement of tiles in the Start menu.

Some of these settings customize the desktop appearance, whereas others make working with apps a lot easier. For example, you can arrange open windows on the desktop so that you can view more than one app at a time, which helps when you need to copy and paste contents from one app to another or reference information in one document while working in another. You can customize the taskbar contents such that the icons you need most often are always close at hand. And, of course, you can change the colors and background picture for your desktop.

In this section:

- Changing the desktop background
- Customize the Lock screen
- Using themes
- Adjusting colors and transparency
- Changing to the Dark Theme
- Making timeout settings
- Enlarging text
- Changing screen resolution
- Customizing the taskbar
- Adding tiles to the Start menu
- Moving tiles
- Resizing tiles
- Using Snap to arrange apps on the Desktop

Changing the desktop background

We all like to personalize our work environment, from pinning photos to the wall of a cubicle at work to decorating the walls of our home office. In the same way, Windows 10 provides images that you can use to add visual appeal to your Desktop.

To customize your Windows experience, you can change which Windows images appear as backgrounds, and even use your own images.

Choose a new background picture

1 Click the Start button.

2 Click Settings.

3 Click Personalization.

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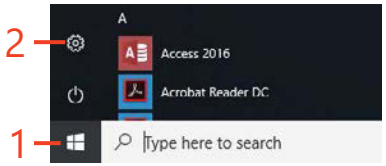
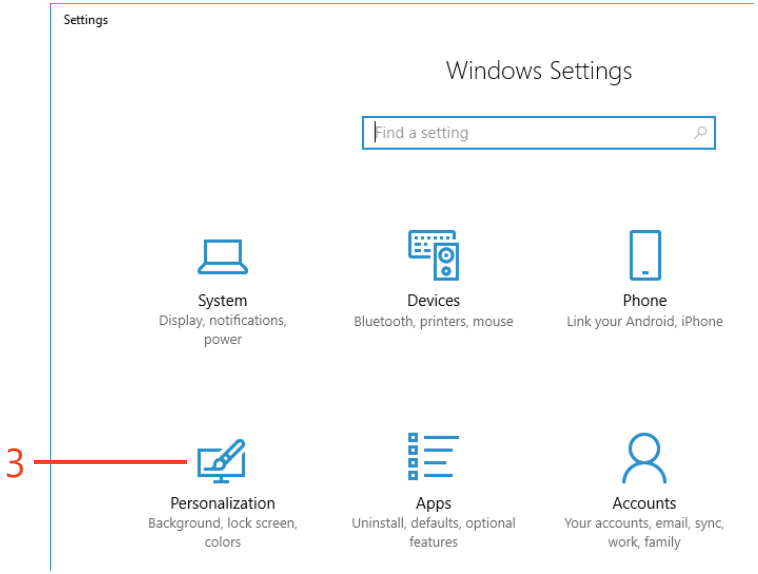




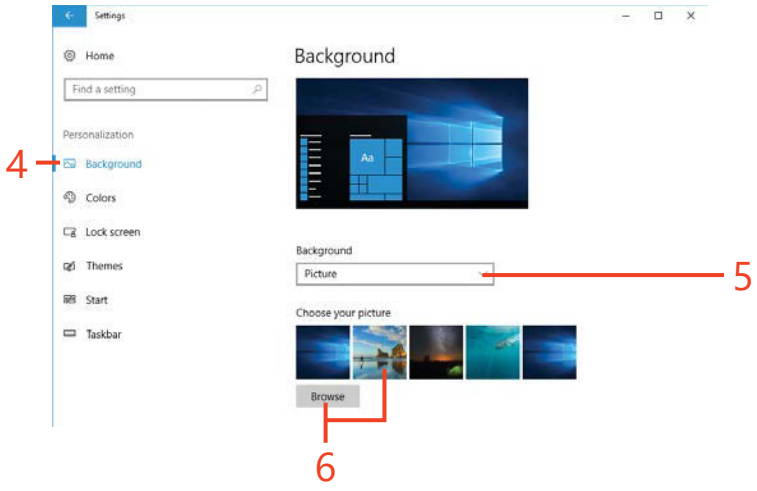
TIP To select your own picture as your background in step 6, click the Browse button and then locate a picture of your own using File Explorer. When you've found the picture you want, click the Choose Picture button to select the image.

Choose a new background picture *continued*

4 Make sure Background is selected. (It should be, by default.)

5 Open the Background list and select Picture.

6 In the Choose Your Picture section, select an existing picture or click Browse to select another picture stored on your computer or OneDrive.



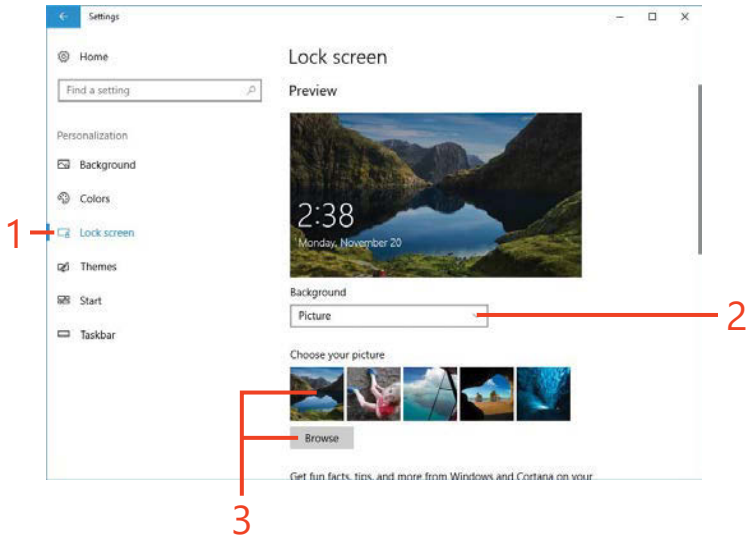
TIP If you prefer a solid color background to a picture, click the Background drop-down list and choose Solid.

Customize the Lock screen

The Lock screen appears whenever your computer goes to sleep. When you want to wake up your computer and begin using it again, you see the Lock screen image, which you then click to display a sign-in screen to access Windows 10. You can choose what type of background image appears on the Lock screen: Windows Spotlight, which shows images from the Bing search engine; a Microsoft provided picture; or a slide show of images from your Picture folder or Windows Spotlight.

Choose a new Lock screen background

1. In Settings, choose Personalization, and then click Lock Screen.
2. Click the Background drop-down list and click Picture.
3. In the Choose Your Picture section, click an image or click Browse to select another image stored on your computer or OneDrive.



TIP Another option is to let Windows choose your Lock screen pictures for you by selecting Windows Spotlight in step 3. The next time the Lock screen is displayed, in the top-right corner, move your pointer over Like What You See?, and then click either I Like It! or Not a Fan? to cast your vote. The next time you go to Spotlight, you'll see images more like those that you've endorsed. Spotlight can also learn about you and the services and features you use in Windows 10 to make suggestions on the Lock screen about other features or apps that you might enjoy.

Adjusting colors and transparency

The colors that appear on various elements of your screen (for example, the taskbar and open window borders) have two functions. First, they can appeal to your personal color sense and make your computing environment more attractive. Second, they help make the content on the screen easier to see. You can configure Windows 10 to pick a color scheme that matches the background image you've chosen, select your own custom colors, or make the Start menu transparent. You can also choose from among several high-contrast color schemes that are especially helpful for those who have poor vision.

Control colors and transparency

1. In Settings, choose Personalization, and then click Colors.
2. To select a specific color for selected screen elements, click a color from the Windows Colors palette.
3. To let Windows choose an appropriate color, enable the Automatically Pick an Accent Color from the My Background check box.
4. If you want the taskbar and other elements to change color (rather than remaining black), scroll down to the Show Accent Color on the Following Surfaces and check the Start, Taskbar, and Action Center and/or Title Bars options.
5. Click to turn on or off the Transparency Effects option.
6. Click High Contrast Settings to choose a color scheme in the Ease of Access settings.

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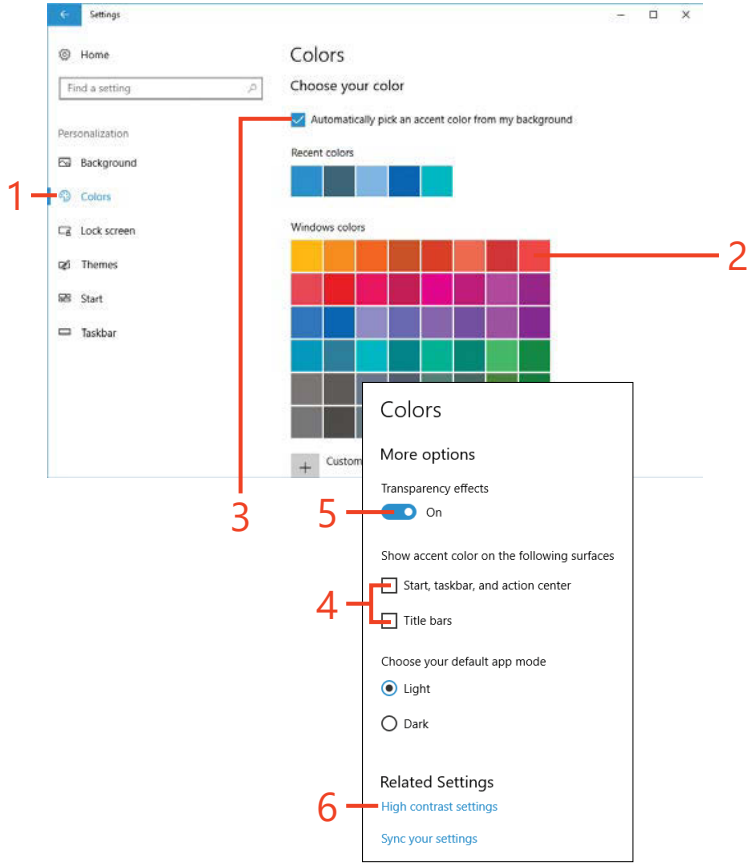


Control colors and transparency *continued*

7 In the High Contrast section, click the Choose a Theme list to display available themes.

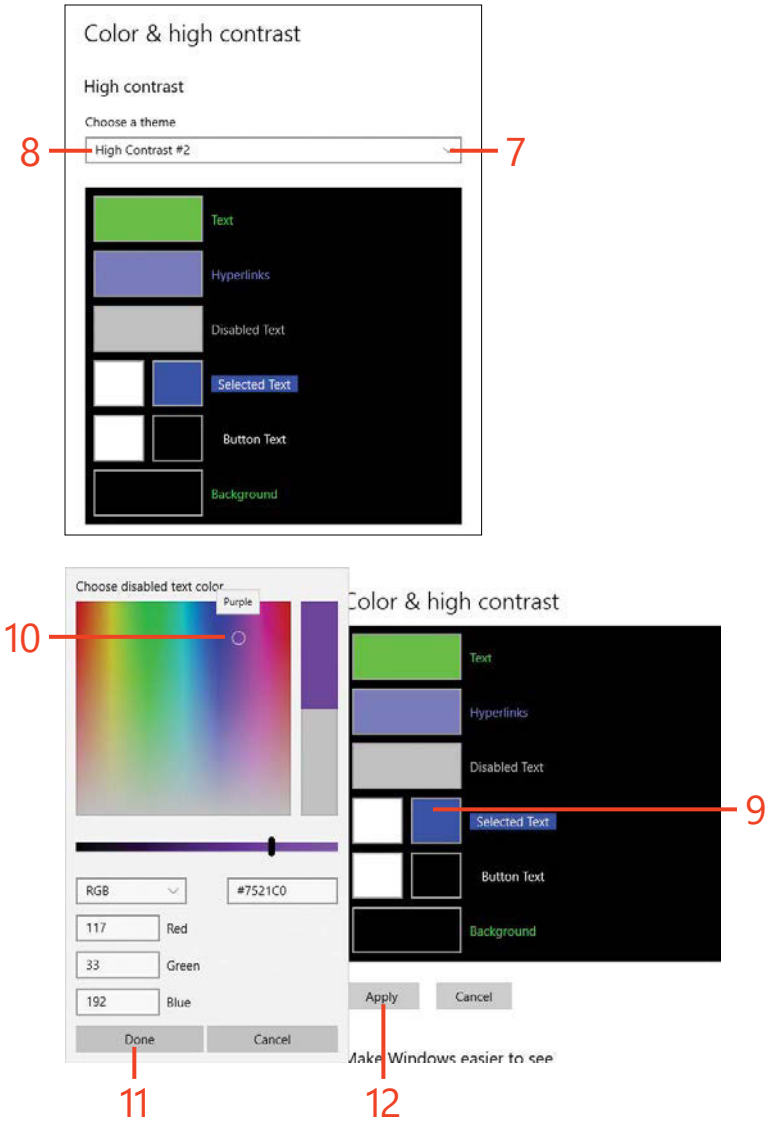
8 Click a theme.

9 To customize your own theme, click any screen element, then

10 From the palette that opens, choose a color.

11 Click Done.

12 Click Apply.

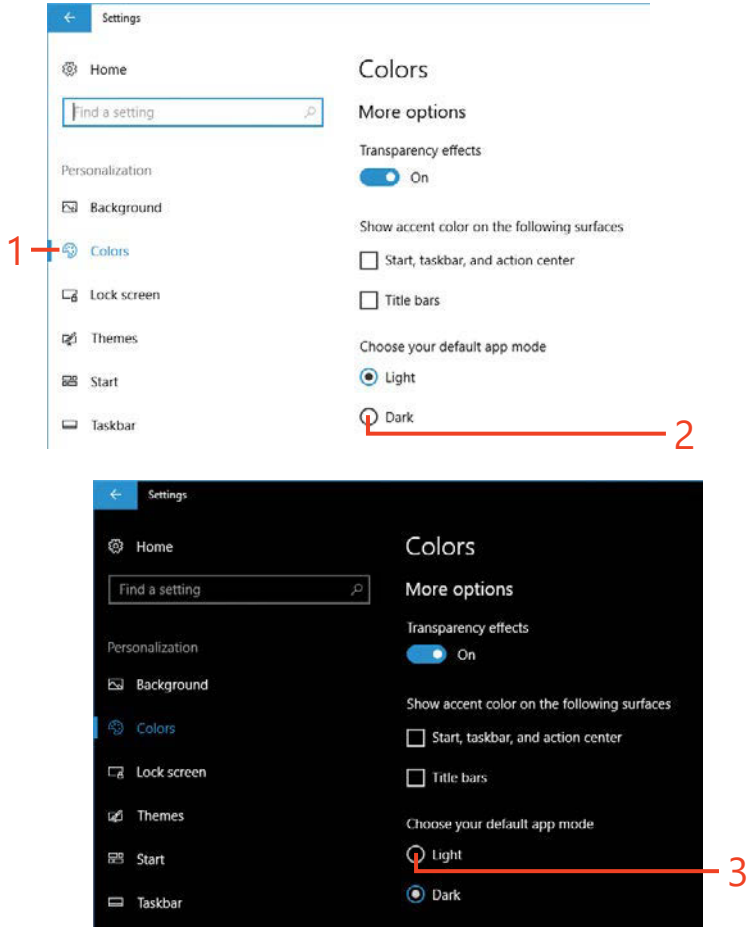


Changing to Dark Mode

By default, Windows 10 displays most system windows and dialog boxes in Light mode, with black or darker colored text against a white background. Many users prefer the new Dark mode, which reverses that scheme, with white or lighter colored text against a black background.

Enable Dark Mode

1. In Settings, choose Personalization, and then click Colors.
2. In the Choose Your Default App Mode section, click to select Dark.
3. To return to Light mode, click to select Light.

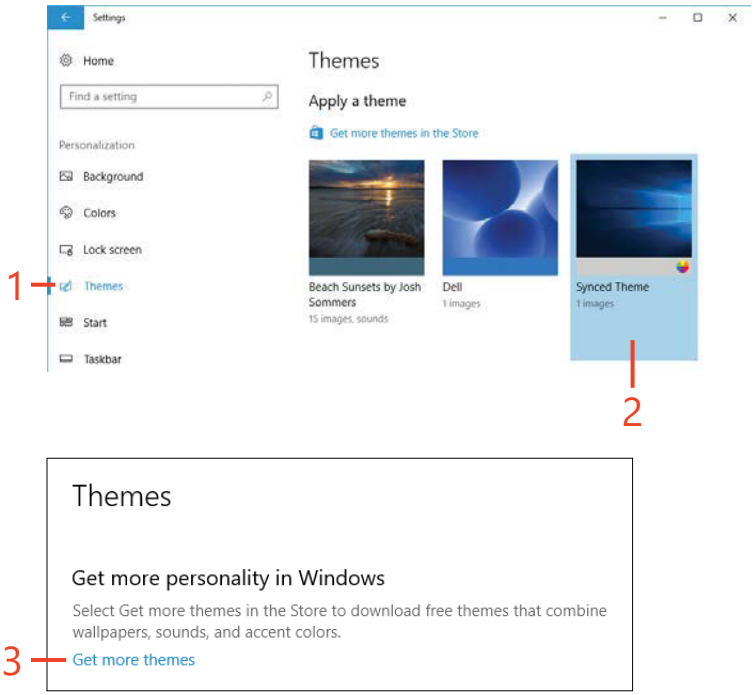


Using themes

Windows 10 includes several themes that control the appearance of your screen. These themes provide an easy way to apply a variety of settings such as colors, font, and background images to the computer interface.

Select a theme

1. In Settings, choose Personalization, and then click Themes.
2. In the Apply a Theme section, click to select an available theme.
3. To discover additional themes in the Microsoft Store, scroll to the Get More Personality in Windows section and click Get more Themes.



TIP You can create your own themes. In the Current Theme section, click Background, Color, Sounds, and Mouse Cursor to select different options. Click Save Theme to save these settings as a new theme.

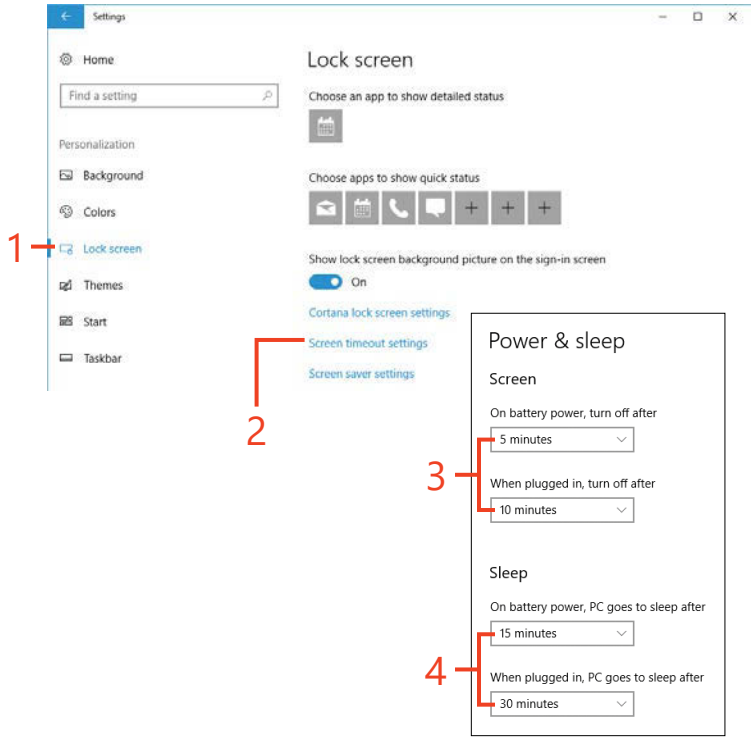
Adjusting timeout settings

After a certain interval of inactivity, Windows will go to sleep. When your computer is asleep, you must click the Lock screen and then type a password or PIN on the subsequent sign-in screen to access your computer. You might find it disruptive if this happens after a very short interval. Conversely, if Windows waits a long time before it goes to sleep, you might end up draining your laptop battery of power unnecessarily.

You can control how quickly your computer goes to sleep or turns off when it's running on battery power or plugged into a power outlet. Another way in which you can conserve power is by turning your screen off while still leaving the computer on. Although this doesn't save as much energy as when the computer goes to sleep, one benefit of turning off the screen is that it doesn't stop existing apps (such as the Groove Music app) from working, whereas putting your computer to sleep stops apps from running and requires you to sign in again.

Choose when your screen times out

1. In Settings, choose Personalization, and then click Lock Screen.
2. Scroll down and click Screen Timeout Settings.
3. Click a drop-down list to choose a time interval for when the screen turns off while running on battery or when plugged in.
4. Click a drop-down list to choose a time interval for when the computer goes to sleep while running on battery or when plugged in.



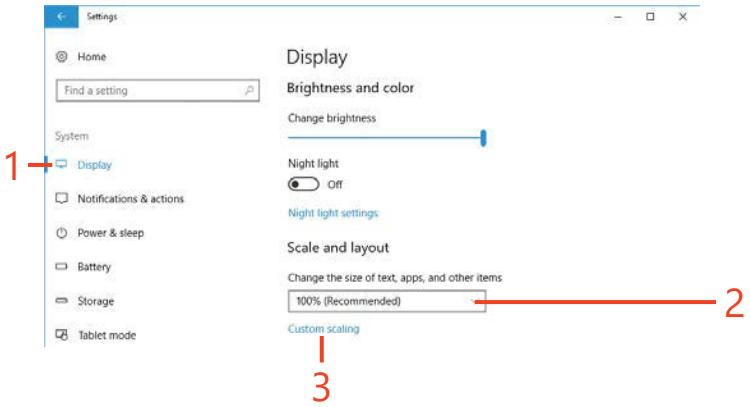
CAUTION Setting up too long an interval before your computer turns off the screen or goes to sleep can drain a laptop battery. Default settings are often suitable for most people, but if you do choose a lengthier interval, you should be aware of your power consumption trade-offs.

Enlarging text

If you want Windows interface text to be displayed in a larger size to help you read things more easily, you can use a System setting to choose a new text size. This setting affects the text in Windows elements: dialog boxes, Settings windows, the taskbar, the Start menu, and so forth. It does not control text size in individual apps.

Make text larger

1. In Settings, choose System, and then click Display.
2. Go to the Scale and Layout section, pull down the Change the Size of Text, Apps, and Other Items list, and select the setting you desire.
3. To select a different size for text and other items, click Custom Scaling and enter a custom amount.



TRY THIS If you have a touchscreen computer, you can use your fingers to expand or reduce the display of many apps, including the Microsoft Edge browser. To enlarge the display, simply put two fingers together on the screen and spread them apart. To reduce the size of the display, place your fingers apart and pinch them toward each other.

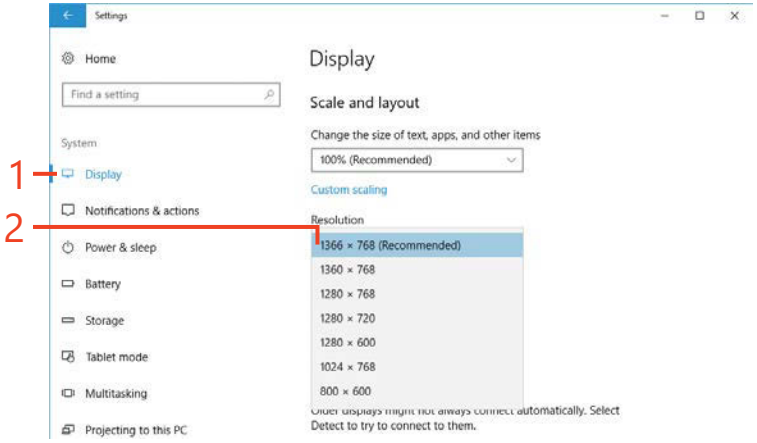
TIP If you have vision issues, use the Magnifier Ease of Access feature to zoom in on areas of your screen; it works as if you're holding a magnifying glass to the screen. See "Using Magnifier" on page 90 for more about using this feature.

Changing screen resolution

The monitor on your computer or laptop displays your desktop and its contents at a certain resolution, expressed in pixels in a ratio of height to width, such as 1366 x 768. Resolutions containing higher numbers provide a crisper screen, though onscreen elements might be smaller. Resolutions with a lower number provide a less crisp image, but onscreen elements are larger, which might make the screen more readable for some. If you ever share images of your desktop, you might be asked to shoot those images at a certain resolution, so it's useful to know how to change this setting.

Choose a screen resolution

1. In Settings, choose System, and then click Display.
2. Click the Resolution drop-down list, and then select the setting you want.



TIP Not all computers offer the same resolution options, because these depend on the individual monitor used. Newer computers with higher-quality displays and better-quality graphics cards will typically offer higher resolution settings.

TIP If you have a notebook computer, most manufacturers have a recommended screen resolution that will appear as such in the Resolution drop-down list. Choose this setting for the best display.

Customizing the taskbar

You can customize the taskbar that runs along the bottom of the Windows desktop in several ways. First, you can control whether the taskbar is locked in place so that it can't shift to a different position. You can also control whether your taskbar is automatically hidden so that you can view the full screen without it until you move your pointing device near its position on the screen. You can move the taskbar to the top, bottom, right, or left of the screen. You can also change which Quick Action buttons, such as those that control volume, power, network connections, and so forth, appear on the right side of the taskbar.

Choose taskbar settings

1. Right-click the taskbar.
2. Click Taskbar Settings.
3. Click on any of the settings switches, such as Lock the Taskbar or Automatically Hide the Taskbar in Desktop Mode, to apply that setting.

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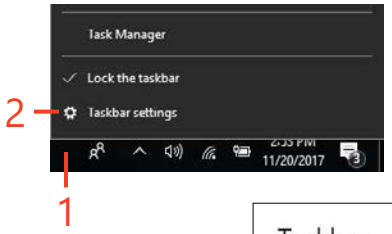
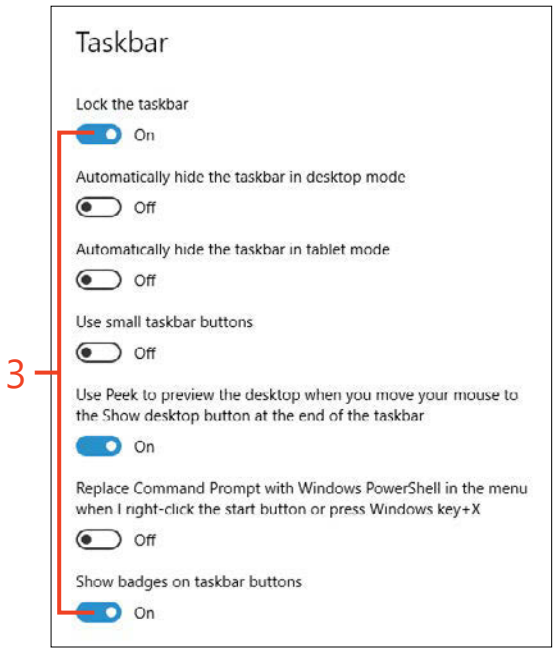


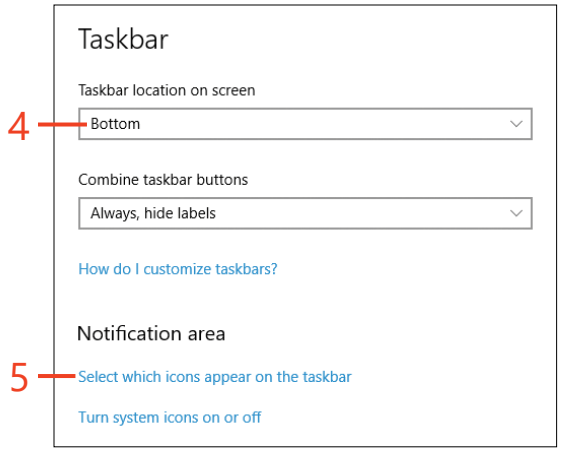


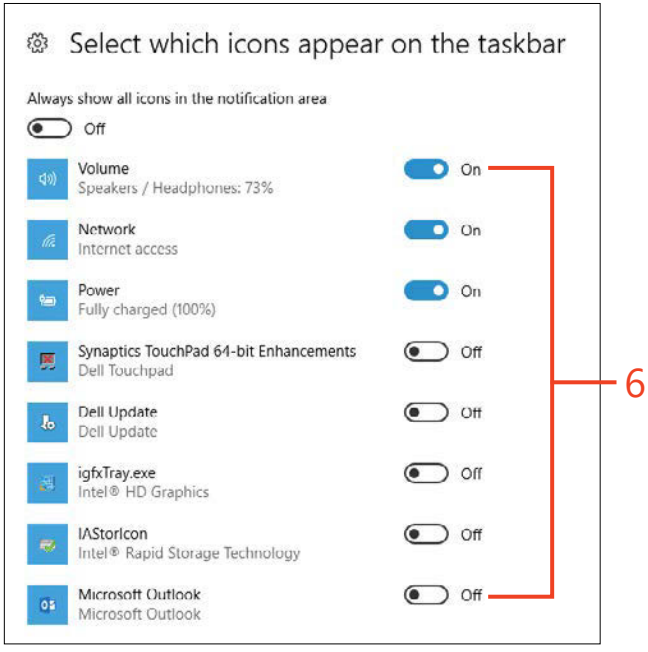
Choose taskbar settings *continued*

4 Scroll down to and click the Taskbar Location On Screen drop-down box and click a location.

5 To change which icons appear on the taskbar, scroll to the Notification Area section, and click Select Which Icons Appear on the Taskbar.

6 Move the slider to the On or Off position next to each individual icon listed.



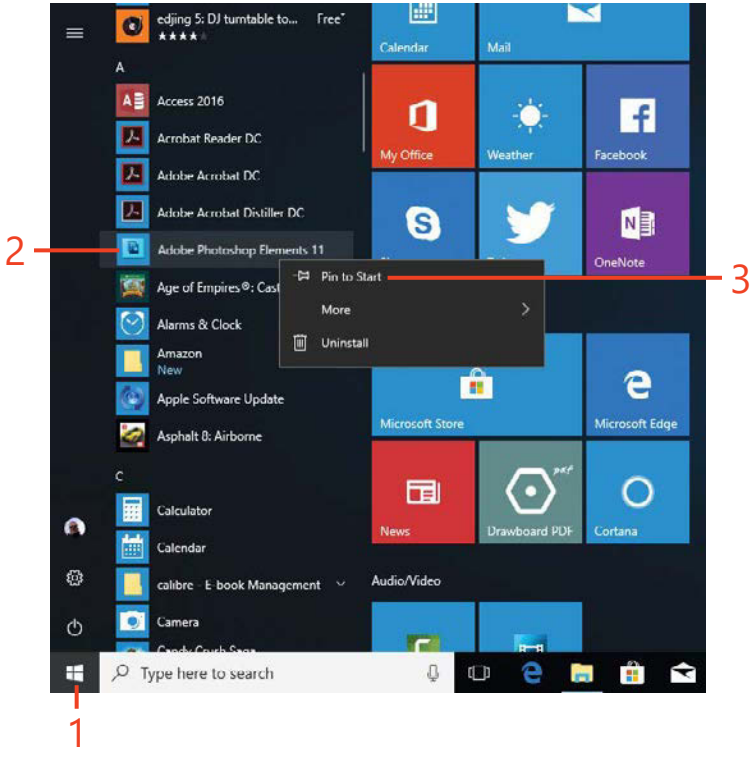


Adding tiles to the Start menu

There are several apps tiles included in the Start menu when you first turn on your Windows 10 computer. In designing Windows 10, Microsoft bet that these would be the most commonly used and useful tiles, but you can also choose which apps you prefer to pin to the Start menu.

Add a new tile to the Start menu

1. Click the Start button.
2. Right-click an app in the apps list.
3. Click Pin to Start.



TIP Don't need an app tile on your Start menu anymore? You can remove an app tile by right-clicking it in the Start menu, and then, in the shortcut menu that opens, click Unpin From Start.

Moving tiles

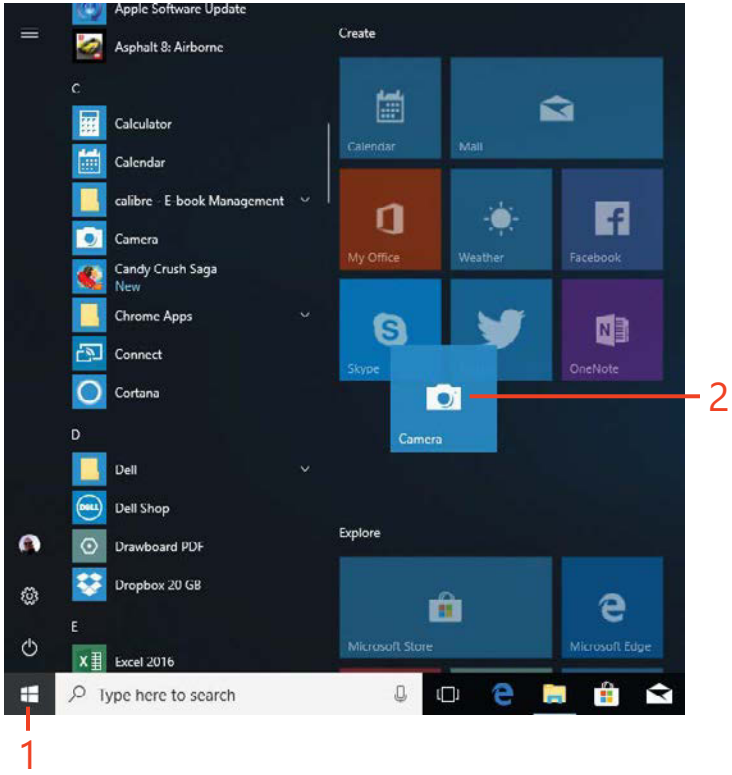
The position of a tile on your Start menu can make it easier to find. For example, you might want to place your most commonly used app tiles along the top, and less-used tiles at the bottom.

Or, you might decide to move a tile from one group of tiles to another. You can easily move tiles around on the Start menu by dragging them from place to place.

Move a tile

1 Click the Start button.

2 Click and drag a tile to a new location on the Start menu, and then release the mouse button.



TRY THIS When you add tiles to the Start menu, they appear in a new group. Add a couple of tiles and then click above them and type a name for the new group. Try moving a tile from one group to another using the procedure described here.

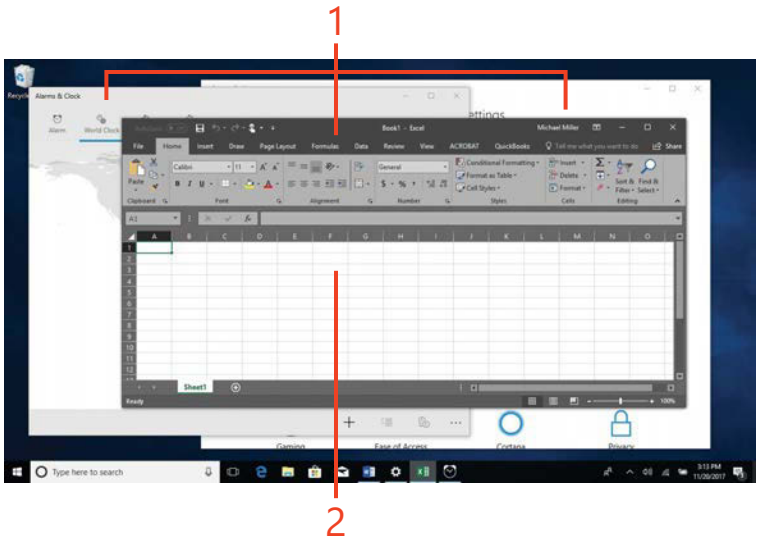
Using Snap to arrange apps on the desktop

Snap is a feature that has been around for several versions of Windows. Snap helps you to quickly arrange open windows on the right or left side of your screen. Windows 10 adds a vertical snap functionality that makes it possible for you to move an open but not maximized app window to the top or bottom of your screen. The Snap feature works by selecting an app and dragging it, by using shortcut keys, or, with a touchscreen, by swiping an open app with your finger.

Snap apps

1. Using the Start menu, open several apps on the desktop.
2. Click the title bar of an open app and quickly drag it to the left side of the screen.

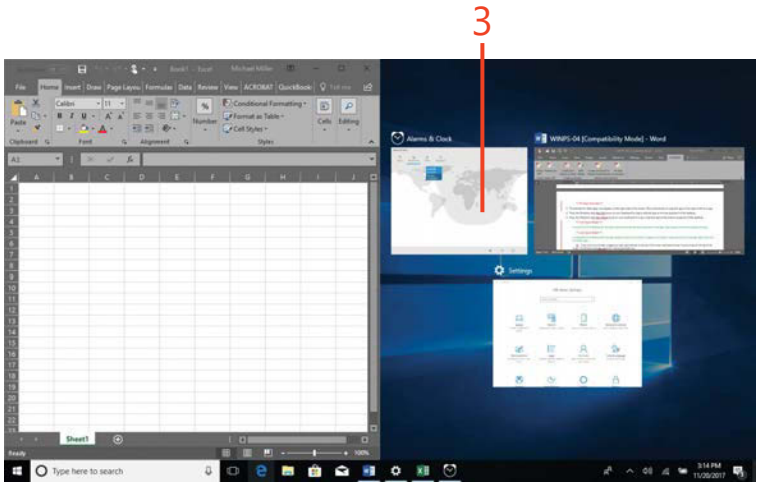
(continued on next page)

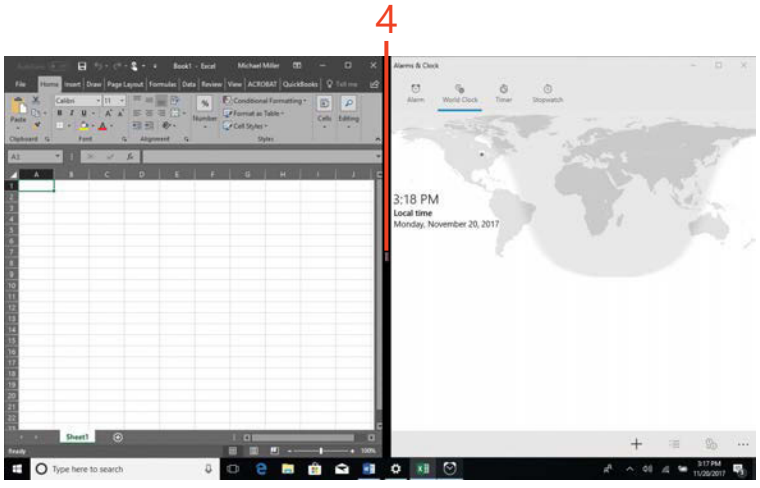


Snap apps *continued*

3 Thumbnails for other apps now appear on the right side of the screen. Click a thumbnail to snap this app to the right of the first app.

4 The two apps now display side-by-side, each taking up half the screen. Click and drag the border between the two apps to resize the two of them.





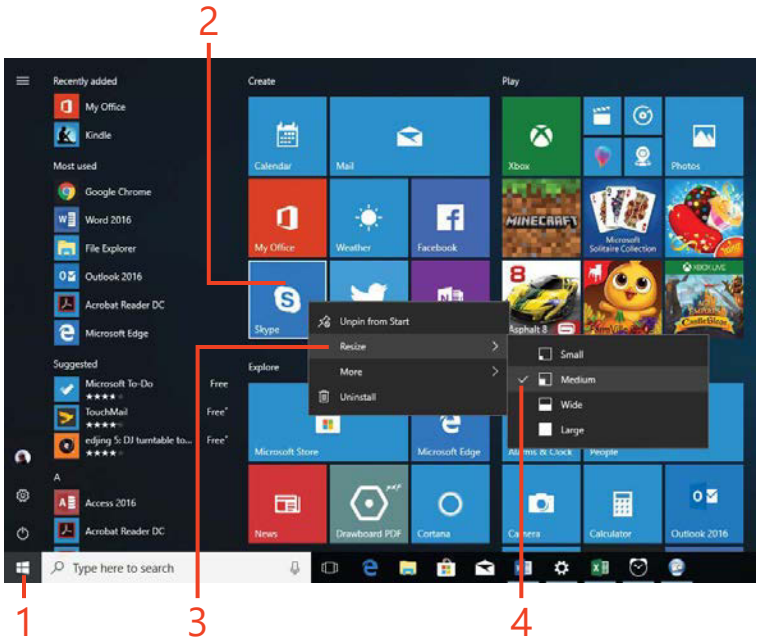
TIP If you have a touchscreen, dragging an open app's title bar to the top of the screen maximizes the app.

Resizing tiles

Your Start menu can become crowded with tiles as you continue to add apps to it. One way to relieve the clutter and view more tiles in the menu is to reduce the size of some tiles. You might also want to enlarge a tile that you want to more easily find. There are four sizes for tiles: Small, Medium, Wide, and Large.

Change tile size

1. Click the Start button.
2. Right-click a tile.
3. Click Resize
4. Click Small, Medium, Wide, or Large.



TIP You might have noticed that some tiles have specific content such as a news story displayed on them, whereas others only sport a solid background and an icon. Tiles with content in them are called *live tiles*. If the live content in a tile distracts you, right-click that app tile in the Start menu, and then, in the shortcut menu that opens, choose Turn Live Tile Off.

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