LEARNING MADE EASY

Windows® 11

for dummies®

A Wiley Brand

Learn the Windows® stuff they didn't teach in school

Customize your Windows PC to your own preferences

Connect to the internet and connect with friends

Andy Rathbone

Best-selling tech author,
bird watcher, and ukulele player

Windows® 11

by Andy Rathbone

for dummies®
A Wiley Brand

Windows® 11 For Dummies®

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.,** 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2021948051

ISBN 978-1-119-84647-5 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-119-84648-2 (ePDF); ISBN 978-1-119-84649-9 (epub)

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Introduction

Welcome to *Windows 11 For Dummies*, the world's best-selling book about the latest Windows version, Windows 11!

This book's popularity probably boils down to this simple fact: Some people want to be Windows whizzes. They love interacting with dialog boxes. Some randomly press keys in the hope of discovering hidden, undocumented features. A few memorize long strings of computer commands while washing their hair.

And you? Well, you're no dummy, that's for sure. But when it comes to Windows and computers, the fascination just isn't there. You want to get your work done, stop, and move on to something more important. You have no intention of changing, and there's nothing wrong with that.

That's where this book comes in handy. Instead of making you a whiz at Windows, it merely dishes out chunks of useful computing information when you need them. Instead of becoming a Windows expert, you'll know just enough to get by quickly, cleanly, and with a minimum of pain so that you can move on to the more pleasant things in life.

TIP

HOW I WROTE THIS BOOK

How did this book arrive in your hands so quickly after Microsoft released the latest version of Windows, Windows 11? No, I didn't crank it out in two weeks. While creating Windows 11, Microsoft shipped early releases to people who signed up for its Windows Insider's program (`https://insider.windows.com`). This gave Microsoft a way to test new features before shipping them to the public. And it gave me a chance to write about features before they were released.

I pored over each early release, writing sections of the book in advance. Then, when Microsoft released its final, approved version to the Windows Insider members, I went over every section, screenshot, and step-by-step instruction to make sure the book's instructions matched Microsoft's final release.

A few weeks later, when Microsoft released Windows 11 to the public, the publisher was able to release this book, as well.

And you'll be able to do that whether you're dealing with a touchscreen tablet, laptop, or desktop computer.

About This Book

Don't try to read this book in one sitting; there's no need. Instead, treat this book like a dictionary or an encyclopedia. Turn to the page with the information you need and say, "Ah, so that's what they're talking about." Then put down the book and move on.

Don't bother trying to memorize all the Windows jargon, such as Select the Menu Item from the Drop-Down List Box. Leave that stuff for the computer enthusiasts. In fact, if anything technical comes up in a chapter, a road sign warns you well in advance. Depending on your mood, you can either slow down to read it or speed on around it.

Instead of fancy computer jargon, this book covers subjects like these, all discussed in plain English:

- Keeping your computer safe and secure
- Making sense of the new Windows 11 Start menu
- Finding, starting, and closing programs and apps
- Locating the file you saved or downloaded last week
- Setting up a computer or tablet for the family to share
- Copying information to and from a disc or flash drive
- Saving and sharing files from your smartphone or digital camera
- Printing or scanning your work
- Linking two or more computers with a network to share the internet, files, or a printer
- Fixing Windows when it's misbehaving

There's nothing to memorize and nothing to learn. Just turn to the right page, read the brief explanation, and get back to work. Unlike other books, this one enables you to bypass the technical hoopla and still complete your work.

How to Use This Book

Windows 11 will most definitely leave you scratching your head at some point. It's the most complicated version of Windows ever released to the public, so take pride in the fact that you're strong enough to persevere.

When something in Windows leaves you stumped, use this book as a reference. Find the troublesome topic in this book's table of contents or index. The table of contents lists chapter and section titles and page numbers. The index lists topics and page numbers. Page through the table of contents or index to the spot that deals with that particular bit of computer obscurity, read only what you have to, close the book, and apply what you've read.

If you're feeling adventurous and want to find out more, read a little further in the bulleted items below each section. You can find a few completely voluntary extra details, tips, or cross-references to check out. There's no pressure, though. You aren't forced to discover anything that you don't want to or that you simply don't have time for.

If you have to type something into the computer, you'll see easy-to-follow bold text like this:

> Type **Mail** into the Search box.

In the preceding example, you type the word *Mail* and then press the keyboard's Enter key. Typing words into a computer can be confusing, so a description follows that explains what you should be seeing on the screen.

When I describe a key combination you should press, I describe it like this:

> Press Ctrl+B.

That means to hold down your keyboard's Control key while pressing your keyboard's B key. (That's the shortcut key combination that applies bold formatting to selected text.)

Whenever I describe an email address or filename, I present it this way:

```
notepad.exe
```

And website addresses appear like this:

> `www.andyrathbone.com`

This book doesn't wimp out by saying, "For further information, consult your manual." Windows doesn't even come with a manual. This book also doesn't contain information about running specific Windows programs, such as Microsoft Word or Excel. Windows is complicated enough on its own! Luckily, other *For Dummies* books mercifully explain most popular programs.

Don't feel abandoned, though. This book covers Windows in plenty of detail for you to get the job done. Plus, if you have questions or comments about *Windows 11 For Dummies*, feel free to drop me a line on my website at `www.andyrathbone.com`. I answer a reader's question each week, either personally or online.

Finally, keep in mind that this book is a *reference.* It's not designed to teach you how to use Windows like an expert, heaven forbid. Instead, this book dishes out enough bite-sized chunks of information so that you don't *have* to learn Windows.

Touchscreen Owners Aren't Left Out

Although Windows 11 comes preinstalled on all new Windows desktop PCs and laptops, Microsoft also aims Windows 11 at owners of *touchscreens.* Tablets, some laptops, and desktop monitors come with screens you can control by touching them with your fingers.

If you're a new touchscreen owner, don't worry. This book explains where you need to touch, slide, or tap your fingers in all the appropriate places.

If you find yourself scratching your head over explanations aimed at mouse owners, remember these three touchscreen rules:

- **When told to *click,* you should *tap.*** Quickly touching and releasing your finger on a button is the same as clicking it with a mouse.
- **When told to double-click, *tap twice.*** Two touches in rapid succession does the trick.
- **When told to *right-click* something, *hold down your finger on the item.* Then, when an icon appears, *lift your finger.*** The right-click menu appears onscreen. (That's what would have happened if you'd right-clicked the item with a mouse.) While you're looking at the pop-up menu, tap any of its listed items to have Windows carry out your bidding.

REMEMBER

If you find touchscreens to be cumbersome while you're sitting at a desk, you can always add a mouse and keyboard to your touchscreen tablet. They work just fine. In fact, a mouse and keyboard almost always work better than fingers on the Windows desktop, even in Windows 11. (They're almost mandatory on small Windows tablets.)

And What about You?

Chances are good that you already own Windows 11. You know what *you* want to do with your computer. The problem lies in making the *computer* do what you want it to do. You've gotten by one way or another, perhaps with the help of a computer guru — for instance, a friend at the office, a relative, or perhaps a neighbor's teenager.

But when your computer guru isn't around, this book can be a substitute during your times of need.

Icons Used in This Book

It just takes a glance at Windows to notice its *icons*, which are little push-button pictures for starting various programs. The icons in this book fit right in. They're even a little easier to figure out.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Watch out! This signpost warns you that pointless technical information is coming around the bend. Swerve away from this icon to stay safe from awful technical drivel.

TIP

This icon alerts you about juicy information that makes computing easier: a new method for keeping the cat from sleeping on top of your tablet, for example.

REMEMBER

Don't forget to remember these important points (or at least dog-ear the pages so that you can look them up again a few days later).

WARNING

The computer won't explode while you're performing the delicate operations associated with this icon. Still, wearing gloves and proceeding with caution is a good idea.

NEW

This icon alerts you to areas where Windows 11 behaves quite differently from the previous version, Windows 10.

Beyond the Book

Like every *Windows For Dummies* book, this one comes with a free Cheat Sheet that brings together some of the most commonly needed information for people struggling with Windows. It describes how Microsoft changes Windows 11 after its release, and it offers keyboard shortcuts as well as tips on using Windows 11 on a touchscreen. To get the Cheat Sheet, head for `www.dummies.com` and, using the Search box, search for **Windows 11 For Dummies Cheat Sheet.**

Where to Go from Here

Now you're ready for action. Give the pages a quick flip and scan a section or two that you know you'll need later. Please remember, this is *your* book — your weapon against the computer nerds who've inflicted this whole complicated computer concept on you. Please circle any paragraphs you find useful, highlight key concepts, add your own sticky notes, and doodle in the margins next to the complicated stuff.

REMEMBER

The more you mark up your book, the easier it will be for you to find all the good stuff again.

1 Windows 11 Stuff Everybody Thinks You Already Know

IN THIS PART . . .

Understand the changes in Windows 11.

Navigate and customize the new Start menu.

Store files in the cloud with OneDrive.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting to know Windows 11
- Discovering the new features in Windows 11
- Figuring out what's missing from Windows 11
- Keeping up with updates to Windows 11 and its apps
- Understanding why Windows 11 often changes
- Deciding whether your PC is powerful enough to run Windows 11
- Knowing which version of Windows 11 you need

Chapter 1

What Is Windows 11?

Chances are good that you've heard about *Windows:* the boxes and windows that greet you whenever you turn on your computer. In fact, millions of people worldwide are puzzling over Windows as you read this book. Most new computers and laptops sold today come with Windows preinstalled, ready to toss colorful boxes onto the screen.

This chapter helps you understand why Windows lives inside your computer, and I introduce Microsoft's latest Windows version, *Windows 11.* I explain how Windows 11 differs from previous Windows versions, and why parts of Windows 11 and its gang of apps can change behind your back.

What Is Windows, and Why Are You Using It?

Created and sold by a company called Microsoft, Windows isn't like your usual software that lets you calculate income taxes or send angry emails to politicians. No, Windows is an *operating system*, meaning it controls the way you work with your computer. It's been around since 1985, and the latest incarnation is called *Windows 11*, shown in Figure 1-1.

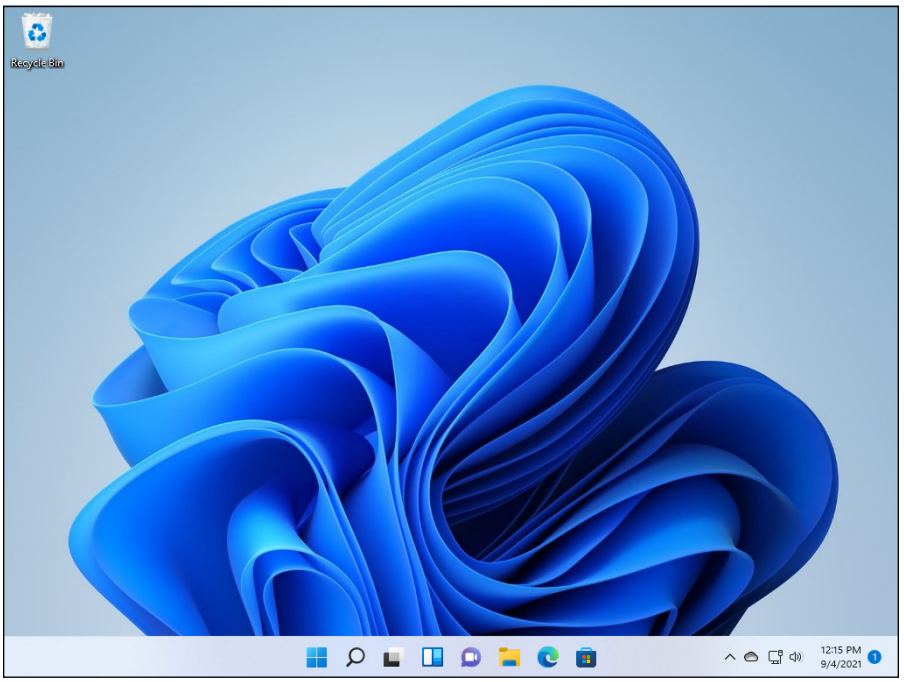

FIGURE 1-1: Although Windows 11 looks different on different PCs, it usually looks much like this.

The name *Windows* comes from all the little windows it places on your computer screen. Each window shows information, such as a picture, a program, or a baffling technical reprimand. You can place several windows onscreen simultaneously and jump from window to window, visiting different programs. Or you can enlarge one window to fill the entire screen.

When you turn on your computer, Windows jumps onto the screen and begins supervising any running programs. When everything goes well, you don't really notice Windows; you simply see your programs or your work. When things don't go well, though, Windows often leaves you scratching your head over a perplexing error message.

In addition to controlling your computer and bossing around your programs, Windows comes with a bunch of free programs and *apps* — mini-programs. These programs and apps let you do different things, such as write and print letters, browse the internet, play music, and send your friends dimly lit photos of your latest meal.

TIP

SEPARATING THE ADS FROM THE FEATURES

Microsoft touts Windows as a helpful companion that always keeps your best interests in mind, but that description isn't really true. Windows always keeps *Microsoft's* interests in mind.

For example, Microsoft uses Windows to plug its own products and services. *Microsoft Edge*, the new Windows web browser, opens with links to Microsoft's own websites. The browser's Favorites area, a place for you to add *your* favorite web destinations, comes stocked with *Microsoft* websites.

Windows 11 places a link to OneDrive, its online storage service, in every folder. But Microsoft isn't as quick to mention that you must pay a recurring fee when you reach your storage limit.

Advertisements appear on the Start menu, as well as the Windows *lock screen,* the screen that appears when you haven't used your PC for a while.

The Maps app uses the Microsoft Bing mapping service, rather than Google Maps or another competitor.

Microsoft also wants you to start buying *apps* rather than traditional programs. Apps are sold only through the bundled Microsoft Store app, and Microsoft takes a cut of each sale.

Simply put, Windows not only controls your computer but also serves as a Microsoft advertising vehicle. Treat these built-in advertising flyers as a salesperson's knock on your door.

And why are you using Windows 11? Well, you probably didn't have much choice. Nearly every computer, laptop, or Windows tablet sold after October 2021 comes with Windows 11 preinstalled. A few people escaped Windows by buying Apple computers (those nicer-looking computers that cost a lot more). But chances are good that you, your neighbors, your boss, and millions of other people around the world are using Windows.

- Microsoft wants Windows 11 and its gang of apps to run on nearly *everything:* PCs, laptops, tablets, video game consoles, and even yet-to-be-invented gadgets. That's why Windows 11 includes many large buttons for easier poking with fingers on touchscreens. Windows 11 can also run *apps,* small programs usually found on smartphones and tablets, in windows on a desktop PC.
- To confuse everybody, Microsoft never released a Windows 9. Microsoft skipped a version number when moving from Windows 8.1 to Windows 10.
- To confuse everybody even *more*, Microsoft said Windows 10 would be the last version of Windows. Six years later, Microsoft began pushing Windows 11.

NEW

- For years, the desktop's Start menu lived in your screen's lower-left corner. Windows 11 moves the Start menu, as well as the Windows key that launches it, to the screen's bottom center. (I explain how to change it back to its old, lower-left corner home in Chapter 2.)

What's New in Windows 11?

Microsoft views Windows 11 as a one-size-fits-all computing solution that runs on laptops and desktop PCs (shown earlier in Figure 1-1) as well as on touchscreens, including tablets, shown in Figure 1-2.

Windows 11 looks and behaves almost identically on each device, and it brings a bonus: Its apps and programs will run on a Windows 11 tablet, PC, and laptop.

NEW

Besides aiming to run on everything but clock radios, Windows 11 brings these changes to your computer:

- **Start button and menu:** Windows 11 moves the Start button and menu from its traditional lower-left corner to the center of the screen. The revamped Start menu sports a few rows of icons, but leaves out the animated tiles found in Windows 10. Look closely, and you'll notice the Start menu now sports rounded corners, as do all other desktop windows. Flip ahead to Chapter 2 for more information on the Start button and menu.

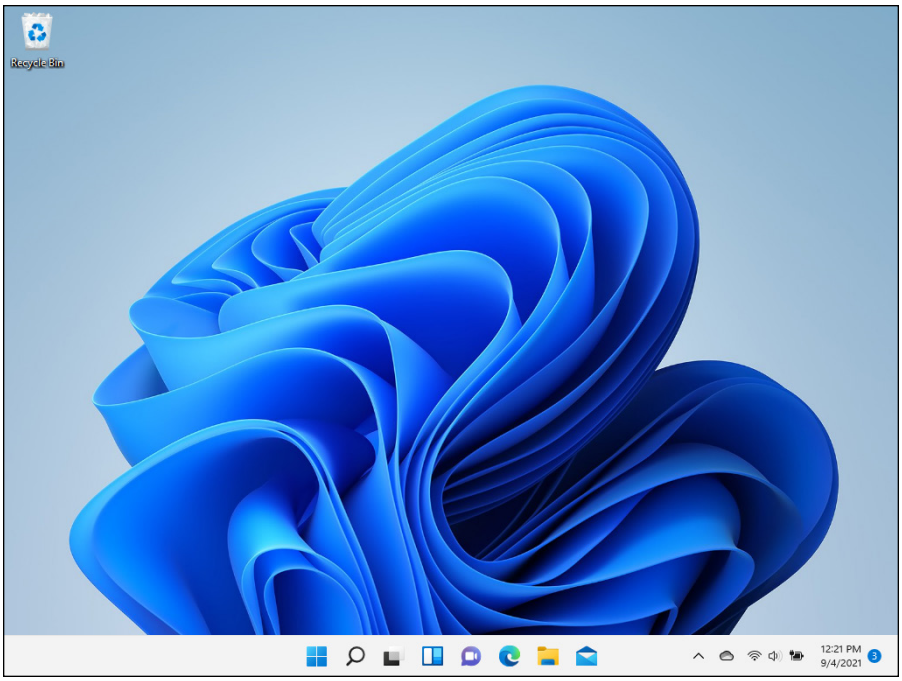

FIGURE 1-2: Windows 11 drops the Tablet mode found in Windows 10.

- **Hardware requirements:** Previous Windows versions worked fairly well on older PCs, even those up to ten years old. Windows 11 breaks that model, unfortunately. If your computer is older than three years, you probably won't be able to upgrade it to Windows 11. I explain how to see if your PC can upgrade to Windows 11 in Chapter 22.
- **Settings app:** Have you mastered Windows 10's Settings menu? Erase that memory, because the new Settings app contains a new layout with new switches in new places. Head for Chapter 12 for oodles of Settings menu tips and tricks.
- **Apps on the desktop:** *Apps,* which are small programs from the world of phones and tablets, consumed the full screen in Windows 8 and 8.1. Windows 11 lets you choose whether to run apps full screen or within desktop windows. (Microsoft says Windows 11 will let you download and run apps designed for Android smartphones sometime in 2022.) I cover apps and programs in Chapter 6.
- **File Explorer:** File Explorer, which lets you find, store, and manage files, receives a new, slimmed down look. The ribbon of menu options across the top has vanished, replaced by a single row of unnamed icons. I cover the new File Explorer in Chapter 5.

- **Teams Chat:** When everybody jumped onto Zoom for video chats during the pandemic, Microsoft decided to push its own Teams app for people to hold online meetings. The chat portion of Microsoft's Teams program now comes built into Windows 11, and I cover it in Chapter 10.

NEW

- **Your Phone:** The newly revamped Your Phone app lets you send and receive your phone's messages from the keyboard of your desktop PC, all wirelessly. You can browse your phone's latest photos from your desktop, make phone calls, and even run apps. I cover the Your Phone app in Chapter 17.
- **Widgets:** *Widgets* are simply a strip of little windows that update automatically to show the latest news, weather, or other informational tidbits. They leap onto the screen with a click on its taskbar icon, a process I cover in Chapter 3.

Unlike previous Windows versions, Windows 11 no longer feels like two operating systems crammed into one computer. It feels like a single operating system that can handle both tablets and desktop PCs.

TIP

Windows 11 is a free upgrade for people owning fully patched Windows 10 computers that meet the stringent new hardware requirements required to run it. To see if your current PC qualifies, download and run Microsoft's PC Health Check app at `https://aka.ms/GetPCHealthCheckApp`. Chances are, you'll need to buy a new PC with Windows 11 preinstalled.

What's Missing from Windows 11?

Windows 11 offers many new features, described in the previous section and covered throughout this book. However, it dropped just as many features found in Windows 10. Here's the rundown on the features left behind from Windows 11:

- **Compatibility:** Windows 10 could run on many older PCs, making it popular with owners of old Windows 7 PCs. Windows 11, by contrast, requires newer PCs with the latest technology. Chances are, you'll have to buy a new PC. (I had to buy a new PC just to write this book!)
- **Timeline:** Windows 10 kept track of which programs and files you worked with for the past 30 days. A click of the Timeline button let you jump back to see them all, letting you quickly and easily jump back to, say, an unfinished file from last week. Windows 11 removes the feature, offering no replacement.
- **Movable taskbar:** The Windows taskbar normally lives along the screen's bottom edge. Previous Windows versions let you move that taskbar to any edge you wanted. With Windows 11, the taskbar now remains affixed to the bottom of your desktop, with no option to move it.

- **Synced wallpaper:** In Windows 10, owners of Microsoft accounts see their wallpaper appear whenever they log onto a Windows 10 PC. To the dismay of computer decorators, Windows 11 killed that feature.
- **Tablet mode:** Designed specifically for tablets with touchscreens, Tablet mode quickly spaced your icons farther apart to accommodate thick fingertips. The Start screen and programs always filled the entire screen. Windows 11 dumps Tablet mode because Windows 11 is automatically finger-friendly.
- **Live Tiles on the Start menu:** In Windows 10, the Start menu sometimes resembled a moving marquee, with animated tiles that changed to show different things. Windows 11 ditches the animated tiles in favor of a simpler menu that merely shows static icons. You can no longer create folders on the Start menu for storing related items, either.
- **Internet Explorer:** Microsoft's elderly browser, Internet Explorer, disappeared completely from Windows 11, replaced by the new browser, Microsoft Edge.
- **Cortana:** Microsoft fired its little robot that tried to help you work but mostly got in the way. You can still launch the Cortana app from the Start menu, should you miss it, but otherwise, Cortana won't bother you.
- **Paint 3D:** Paint 3D let you design three dimensional models for 3D printers to create using layers of plastic. Few people used it, and even fewer will notice that it's missing.
- **Skype:** Microsoft paid billions for Skype, an app for making inexpensive (or free) phone calls using the internet. But Microsoft let the app languish. Now, it's replaced by Teams, a program for creating online meetings. Microsoft added the chat portion of Teams into Windows 11 to compete with Zoom, which zoomed in popularity during the pandemic.

WHAT'S A TPM CHIP?

Short for Trusted Platform Module, TPM is a computer chip that places an extra layer of security over your PC. However, most older PCs lack a TPM chip, meaning they can't be upgraded to Windows 11.

Some older PCs come with TPM chips, but the manufacturer left them turned off. To see if your PC has a compatible TPM chip and whether it can be turned on, download Microsoft's PC Health Check app, available at `https://aka.ms/GetPCHealthCheckApp`.

» **OneNote:** Windows 10 came with OneNote, an app for taking notes much like a virtual school notebook. OneNote vanished from Windows 11, but compulsive note takers like me can still install it for free from the Microsoft Store.

Why Does Windows 11 Keep Changing?

Windows 10 updated itself seemly at whim, much to the detriment of people who preferred their PCs to look and behave the same whenever they sat at the keyboard. Who wants a computer with a confusing new doodad tossed in overnight?

Microsoft aims to ease that confusion by updating Windows 11 only once a year, thank goodness.

Apps, by contrast, can still be updated whenever the app's creator decides that it's time for a change.

Microsoft sends many of these updates automatically to your computer through Windows Update; you don't need to jump through hoops to find and install them.

Similarly, your apps update themselves automatically through the Microsoft Store. They constantly add features, squash bugs, and sometimes even change their names.

You may not notice these changes in the apps, as well as in Windows 11 itself. Indeed, most of them just fix hundreds of annoying bugs, making Windows 11 run and install more smoothly and safely.

So, when Windows 11 or its apps change overnight, don't think it's your fault. Microsoft constantly tweaks Windows 11, and Windows and its apps will keep changing for years to come.

Can My Current PC Run Windows 11?

If you want to upgrade to Windows 11, your old computer will probably complain. Unlike Windows 10, Windows 11 usually requires a PC sold within the past two or three years.

If you have a technogeek in your family, have him or her translate Table 1-1, which shows the Windows 11 hardware requirements you can find written in the fine print for new computers.

TABLE 1-1 The Windows 11 Hardware Requirements

Architecture	x86 (64-bit)
Processor	1 gigahertz (GHz) or faster with 2 or more cores on a compatible 64-bit processor or System on a Chip (SoC). (Unlike previous Windows versions, Window 11 no longer comes in a 32-bit version.)
Memory (RAM)	At least 4GB
Graphics Card	DirectX 12 graphics device with Windows Display Driver Model (WDDM) 2.X driver
HDD free space	At least 20GB
Firmware	Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI) with secure boot enabled
Internet connection and Microsoft account	Windows 11 Home edition requires internet connectivity and a Microsoft account to set up and use some features.

In common language, Table 1-1 simply says that most computers sold in the past two or three years can be upgraded to Windows 11 with little problem. If your computer is older than that, you're out of luck.

Don't know what version of Windows runs on your current PC? If clicking the Start button brings a Start menu, right-click the menu's Computer entry, and choose Properties. The screen that appears lists your Windows version.

If there's no Start button, you're running Windows 8. And if clicking your Start button fills the screen with a bunch of colorful tiles, you're running Windows 8.1.

Finally, if *right-clicking* your Start menu brings a large pop-up menu, you're running Windows 10 or 11. Choose the menu's Settings entry, and scroll down to the About section. Your version of Windows, either Windows 10 or Windows 11, is listed in that section's Windows Specifications area.

SHOULD I BOTHER UPGRADING TO WINDOWS 11?

Most people won't have a choice: Their current PCs won't be able to run Windows 11 because of its stringent new hardware requirements. Some say that Windows 11 is Microsoft's attempt to jumpstart the PC economy by making everybody buy new PCs.

But there's no reason to rush out and buy a shiny new PC. Microsoft will continue to support Windows 10 until October 14, 2025. After that date, Microsoft won't offer security patches for Windows 10, leaving it open to malware and cybercriminals.

When you buy your new PC, it will come with Windows 11 installed. Actually, if you wait long enough, it may come with Windows 12 installed, letting you avoid Windows 11 altogether!

The Different Flavors of Windows 11

NEW

Microsoft offers several versions of Windows 11, but you'll probably want only one: the aptly titled "Home" version.

Small businesses will choose Windows 11 Pro, and large businesses will want Windows 11 Enterprise.

Here are some guidelines for choosing the version you need:

- If you'll be using your PC at home or in your small business, pick up **Windows Home.**
- If you need to connect to a domain through a work network — and you'll know if you're doing it — you want **Windows Pro.**
- If you're a computer tech who works for businesses, go ahead and argue with your boss over whether you need **Windows Pro** or **Windows Enterprise.** The boss will make the decision based on whether it's a small company (Windows Pro) or a large company (Windows Enterprise).
- If you're a daring soul at a business, watch for Microsoft to release **Windows 365.** This program represents a daring experiment where Windows runs speedily in the cloud, bypassing the limits of your slow and aging PC.

For more details about upgrading to Windows 11, visit Microsoft's Windows website at `www.windows.com`.