

WINDOWS® 10

PORTABLE GENIUS

PAUL MCFEDRIES

WILEY

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Paul McFedries

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Published simultaneously in Canada

ISBN: 978-1-119-76357-4

ISBN: 978-1-119-76507-3 (ebk)

ISBN: 978-1-119-76360-4 (ebk)

Manufactured in the United States of America

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Paul McFedries is a technical writer who has been authoring computer books since 1991 and has nearly 100 books to his credit. Paul's books have sold more than four million copies worldwide. These books include the Wiley titles *Teach Yourself VISUALLY Windows 10,*Third Edition, *G Suite For Dummies, iPhone Portable Genius,* Sixth Edition, and *iPad Portable Genius,* Fourth Edition. You can visit Paul on the web at `www.mcfedries.com` or on Twitter at `www.twitter.com/paulmcf`.

Acknowledgments

The only thing more fun than using Windows is writing a book about it! That's particularly true for an interesting project such as this book, which was made all the more pleasant by the great people I got to work with. They include Associate Publisher Jim Minatel, who was kind enough to ask me to write the book; Project Editor Kezia Endsley, whose just-so suggestions and penetrating questions made this a better book; Copy Editor Kim Cofer, whose eagle-eye for all things ungrammatical made me look like a better writer than I am; and Technical Editor Vince Averello, whose knowledge of the Windows world is nothing short of amazing. Many thanks to all of you for outstanding work on this project.

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Introduction

If you head down to your local bookstore (assuming, of course, that by the time you read this, the entities known as "local bookstores" still exist) and peruse the Computer Books section, you'll almost certainly see several Windows books that are nothing less than gargantuan. We're talking here about books that weigh in at well over a thousand pages and make even the thickest phone book (again, assuming such a thing exists in your time) look like a mere pamphlet.

Who would want to read such a book, much less *write* one? Well, as someone who has written more than one of them, I can tell you the answer with some authority: Windows is a sprawling, complex beast that some say is easily the most complicated piece of software ever created. If you want to teach people everything there is to know about Windows, then the resulting tome is going to be big—*very* big.

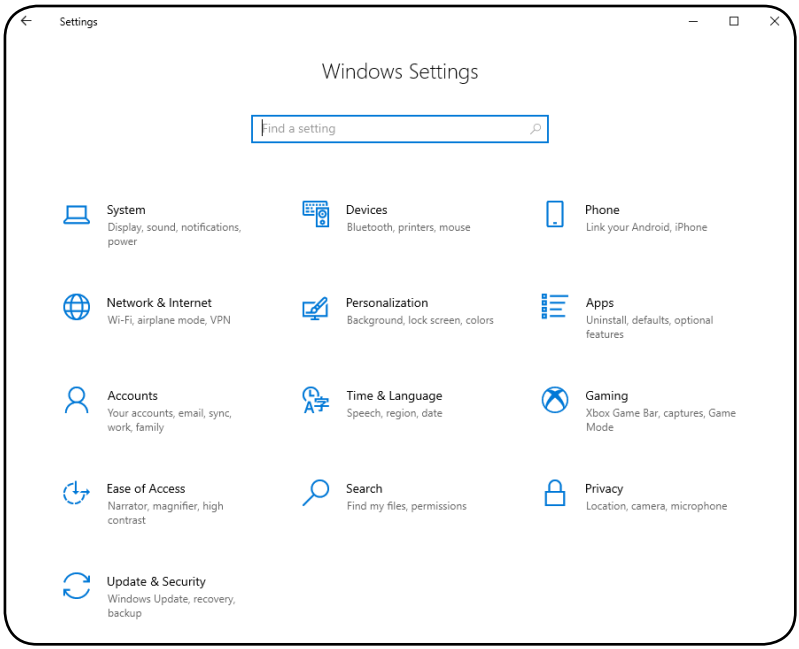
Ah, but there's the rub: How many people want or even *need* to learn everything there is to know about Windows? That's right: very few. The rest of us just want to know how to get things done using Windows with a minimum of fuss and as little bother as possible. The rest of us aren't members of the Windows Fan Club; we're not Windows geeks; we don't want to look under the hood to see what makes Windows run. The rest of us have a job to do—a job that means using a Windows PC—and we just want Windows to help as much as it can and then get out of our way. The rest of us, in short, don't need a massive, encyclopedic guide to all things Windows. What we Windows users really need is a reference that's easier to read, more convenient, and doesn't require a regular weight-training regimen to lift. What we really need is a *portable* reference that enables us to be more productive and solve problems wherever we and our PCs happen to be.

Welcome, therefore, to *Windows 10 Portable Genius*. This book is a Windows guide that's presented in an easy-to-use, easy-to-access, and eminently portable format. In this book, you learn how to get more out of Windows by learning how to access all the really powerful and timesaving features that aren't obvious at a casual glance. In this book, you learn how to avoid the more annoying character traits of Windows and, in those cases where such behaviors can't be avoided, you learn how to work around them. In this book, you learn how to prevent Windows problems from occurring, and just in case your preventative measures are for naught, you learn how to fix many common problems yourself.

A few special elements provide guardrails and inspiration. Notes help you delve a bit deeper into some topics, Cautions give advice and help you steer clear of problems, and Genius boxes convey the pro tips that will make you more efficient, more productive, and more impressive in the results that you crank out from Windows.

This book is for Windows users who know the basics but want to take their Windows education to a higher level. It's a book for people who want to be more productive, more efficient, more creative, and more self-sufficient (at least as far as their Windows life goes, anyway). It's a book for people who use Windows every day but want to incorporate Windows into more of their day-to-day activities. It's a book for people who pooh-pooh the notion that you have to be a geek, a nerd, or a computer scientist to get the most out of Windows. It's a book I had a blast writing, so I think it's a book you'll enjoy reading.

How Do I Customize Windows?



You've probably found that Windows works pretty well right out of the box. Microsoft has configured Windows with default settings that make Windows relatively easy and efficient for most users. Ah, but your purchase of this book shows that you don't fall into the Most Users category. You are your own, unique self, and that uniqueness cries out for and deserves a correspondingly unique Windows experience. Fortunately, as you learn in this chapter, Windows is bristling with tools that enable you to customize almost every aspect of the system, including the Start menu, taskbar, and Lock screen.

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Working with Settings

Most of your Windows customization work involves tweaking *settings*, which are options—usually in the form of a check box, switch, radio button, or list—that control the look and operation of either Windows itself or of a particular app that's installed on your PC.

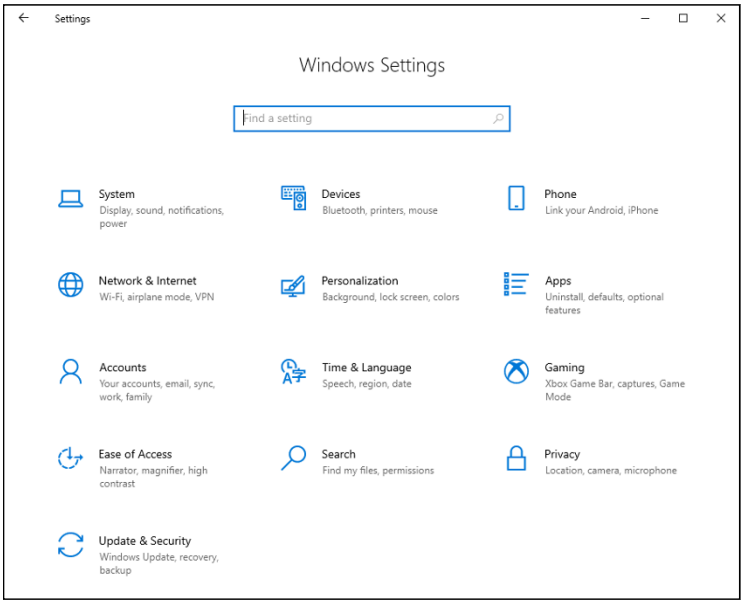
Opening the Settings app

When you want to customize Windows, you'll almost always need to open the aptly named Settings app, which is home to most Windows customization options. The Settings app is so important that Windows gives you a dozen or so ways to open it. Here are the six most useful methods:

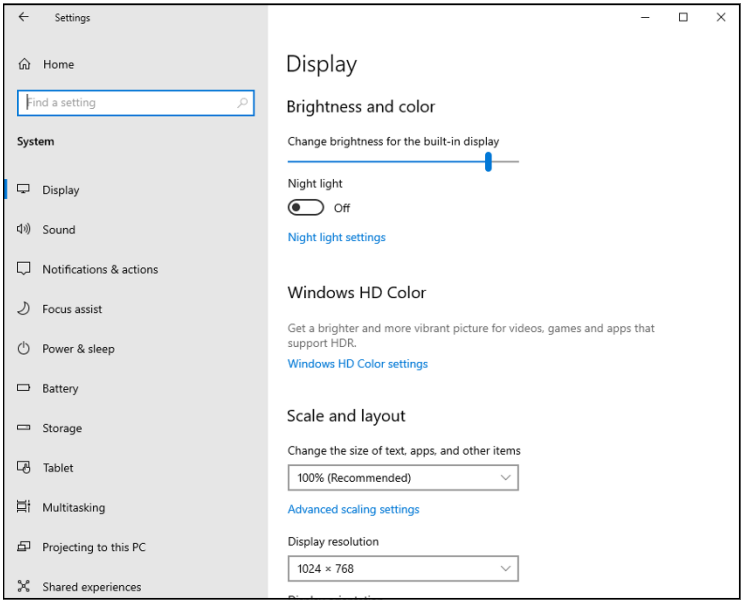
- Click Start and then click Settings (the gear icon).
- Press Windows+I. (The Windows key is the one that has the Windows logo on it; you'll find it on the lowest row of the keyboard, to the left of the spacebar, between the Ctrl and Alt keys.)
- Click the Notifications icon on the far right of the taskbar and then click All Settings.
- In the taskbar's Search box, type **se** (which should be enough to display the Settings app in the search results; if not, continue typing **settings** until you see Settings in the results) and then press Enter.
- If you have Cortana enabled (see Chapter 5), say "Hey Cortana" and then say "Open Settings."
- Right-click the Start icon and then click Settings.

Whichever method you use, you see the Home screen of the Settings app, as shown in Figure 1.1.

From here, you can either use the Settings app's Search box to locate the setting you want or click a category to see the subcategories and settings associated with that category. For example, Figure 1.2 shows the screen that appears when you click the System category. When you click a subcategory on the left, the settings for that subcategory appear on the right (such as for the Display subcategory shown in Figure 1.2). To return to the previous Settings screen, click the Back arrow in the top-left corner; to return directly to the Home screen, click Home.



1.1 The Home screen of the Settings app.



1.2 When you open a category, click a subcategory on the left to see its settings on the right.



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Use the taskbar's Search box to quickly search for the setting you want to work with. Click inside the taskbar's Search box, type **settings:**, a space, and then begin typing the setting name. For example, to work with the Show More Tiles on Start setting, type **settings: show more**, then click Show More Tiles on Start from the search results that appear.

Synchronizing settings between PCs

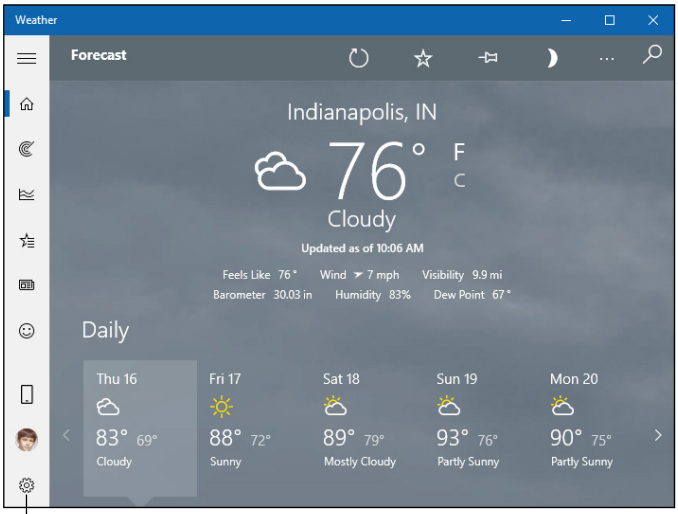
If you use the same Microsoft account to sign in to Windows on multiple devices, you can get a more consistent and more efficient experience by synchronizing your settings on all those devices. Here's how to set this up:

1. **Open the Settings app.**
2. **Click Accounts.**
3. **Click Sync Your Settings.** The Sync Your Settings screen appears.
4. **Make sure the Sync Settings switch is set to On.** Click it to toggle it On if needed.
5. **In the Individual Sync Settings section, set the switch to On for each type of setting you want synced.** The four setting types are Theme, Passwords, Language Preferences, and Other Windows Settings.

Accessing an app's settings

Most apps also come with a collection of their own settings, which you can work with to get more out of the app or to customize the app to suit the way you work. For most Windows apps, there are two main ways to access settings:

- Open the app and click Settings (the gear icon), which usually appears in the lower-left corner of the screen (see Figure 1.3).
- In the Start menu, right-click the app, click More, and then click App Settings.



1.3 For many Windows apps, click Settings (the gear icon) to access the app's options.

Customizing the Start Menu

Although you can use keyboard shortcuts and features such as the taskbar to launch and work with apps and other features, to perform most of your Windows work, you need to negotiate the Start menu. Therefore, you can make your Windows chores easier and more efficient if you take a few moments to customize the Start menu to suit your needs.

Pinning an app to the Start menu

If you have an app that doesn't appear as a tile on the Start menu, you usually open the app by first navigating the Start menu's apps list to locate the app, possibly negotiating one or more submenus along the way. For an app you use often, you can avoid this extra work by *pinning* the app so that it appears permanently on the right side of the Start menu. After you have pinned an app, you launch it by displaying the Start menu and clicking the app.

Follow these steps to pin an app to the Start menu:

1. **Click Start.**
2. **Locate the app that you want to pin to the Start menu.**
3. **Right-click the app and then click Pin to Start.** A tile for the pinned app appears on the right side of the Start menu.



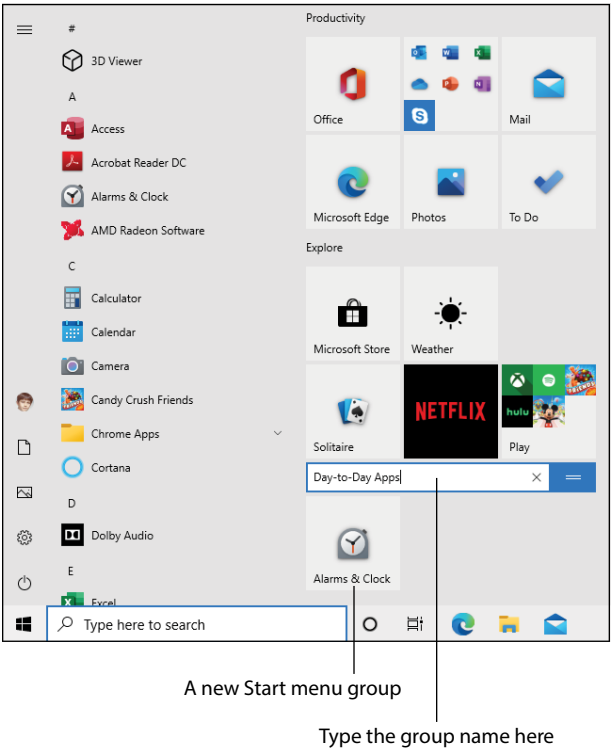
Note

To remove an app tile from the Start menu, click Start, right-click the tile, and then click Unpin from Start.

Arranging and sizing Start menu tiles

Here are some useful techniques for restructuring the Start menu's tiles to suit the way you work or play:

- **Move an app tile within the Start menu.** Click Start, then click and drag the app tile to its new position.
- **Group app tiles.** Move an app tile below any existing tile to create a new group. Hover the mouse pointer just above the moved app, then click the Name Group text box that appears. Type your group name (see Figure 1.4) and then press Enter. Move other apps into the new group as needed.



1.4 You can create groups to organize your Start menu apps.

- **Change the size of a Start menu tile.** Click Start, right-click the app's tile, click Resize, and then click the size you want. In all cases, you can choose either a Small or Medium square. With some apps, you can also choose either a Wide rectangle or a Large square.

Customizing Start menu settings

The Start menu offers a few settings that you can tweak to customize how the Start menu works. Open the Settings app, click Personalization, and then click Start. This opens the Start screen (see Figure 1.5), which offers the following switches:

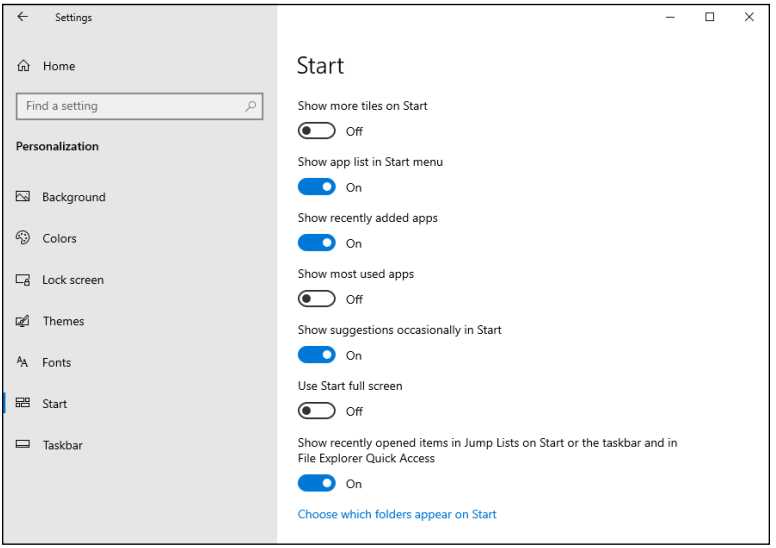
- **Show more tiles on Start.** Set this switch to On to expand the size of the Start menu to show more tiles.



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You can also widen the Start menu by dragging the right edge of the menu.

- **Show app list in Start menu.** Set this switch to Off to remove the list of installed apps from the Start menu. If you set this switch to Off, you can still access the apps by opening the Start menu and then clicking All Apps.
- **Show recently added apps.** Set this switch to On to see newly installed apps at the top of the Start menu's app list.
- **Show most used apps.** Set this switch to On to add a Most Used section to the top of the Start menu's app list. Windows uses the Most Used section to display the apps you launched most frequently.
- **Show suggestions occasionally on Start.** Set this switch to Off to prevent Windows from displaying suggestions (that is, ads) about which apps to install.
- **Use Start full screen.** Set this switch to On to have the Start menu take up the entire screen when you open it.
- **Show recently opened items in Jump Lists on Start or the taskbar and in File Explorer Quick Access.** Set this switch to On to see a Recent section when you right-click an app that enables you to open items such as documents.
- **Choose which folders appear on Start.** Click this link to open the Choose Which Folders Appear on Start screen, which includes a switch for each potential Start menu folder. For each switch, set the switch to On to display the folder, or Off to hide the folder.



1.5 Use the Start screen settings to personalize your Start menu.

Customizing the Taskbar

The taskbar that runs across the bottom of the Windows screen gives you one-click access to the Start button, the Search box, the Cortana voice assistant, and Task View (see Chapter 5). The taskbar also enables you to switch to a running app (by clicking the app's taskbar button), access an app's recent documents (by right-clicking the app's button), and launch an app (by clicking its button; see the next section). In short, the taskbar is one of the most useful and most important features in Windows, so you need to know how to customize it to suit your needs. The next few sections tell you everything you need to know.

Pinning an app to the taskbar

Pinning an app to the Start menu, as I discuss earlier in this chapter, is helpful because it puts the app just two clicks away. If you have an app that you use frequently, you might prefer to have that app just a single click away. You can achieve this by pinning the app to the taskbar. You can pin an app to the taskbar either from the Start menu or from the taskbar itself:

- **Pinning an app via the Start menu.** Open the Start menu, right-click the app that you want to pin to the taskbar, click More, and then click Pin to Taskbar.

- **Pinning an app via the Taskbar.** Launch the app that you want to pin to the taskbar, right-click the running app's taskbar icon, and then click Pin to Taskbar.

Either way, Windows adds an icon for the app to the taskbar.



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To change the order of the taskbar icons, drag a taskbar icon to the left or right and then drop it in the new position. Note that this technique applies not only to the icons pinned to the taskbar, but also to the icons for any running programs.



Note

If you no longer want an app pinned to the taskbar, you should remove it to reduce taskbar clutter and provide more room for other app icons. To remove a pinned app icon, right-click the icon and then click Unpin from Taskbar.

Customizing taskbar settings

The taskbar comes with a few settings that enable you to customize the look and operation of the taskbar, which can help you be more productive. Open the Settings app, click Personalization, and then click Taskbar. This opens the Taskbar screen, shown in Figure 1.6.

There are a ton of settings here, so here's a look at the most important ones:

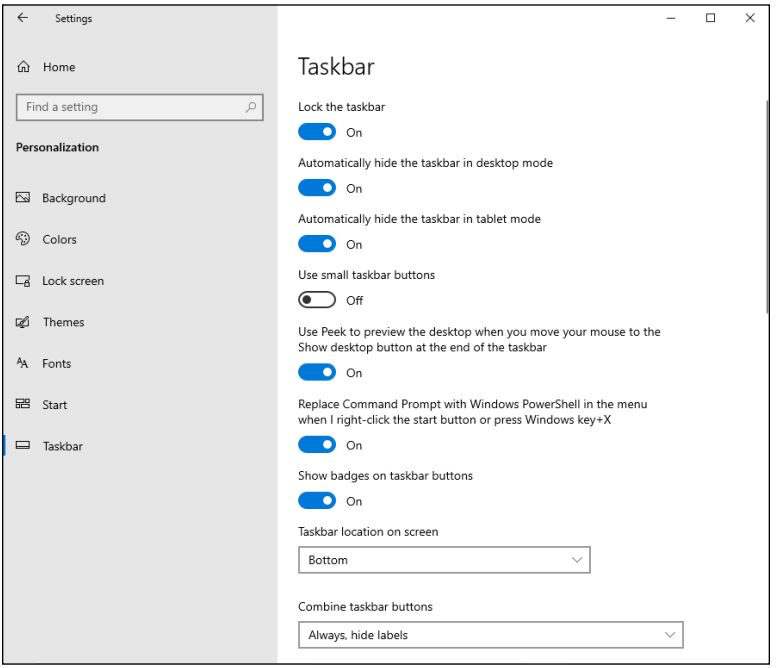
- **Lock the taskbar.** When this switch is On, you can't resize or move the taskbar, and you can't resize or move any taskbar toolbars. This is useful if you share your computer with other users and you don't want to waste time resetting the taskbar if someone else changes it.



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You can also toggle taskbar locking on and off by right-clicking an empty section of the taskbar and then clicking Lock the Taskbar.

- **Automatically hide the taskbar in desktop mode.** When this switch is On, Windows reduces the taskbar to a thin line at the bottom of the screen when you're not using it. This is useful if you want a bit more screen room for your applications. To redisplay the taskbar, move the mouse pointer to the bottom of the screen. Note, however, that you should consider leaving this option unchecked if you use the taskbar frequently; otherwise, auto-hiding it will slow you down because it takes Windows a second or two to restore the taskbar when you hover the mouse pointer over it.



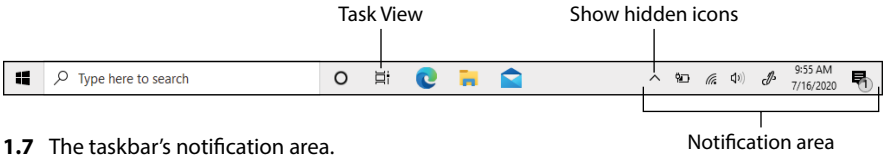
1.6 Use the Taskbar screen to customize your taskbar.

- **Automatically hide the taskbar in tablet mode.** This is the same as the preceding switch, except it controls whether the taskbar is hidden when you use tablet mode. (To learn more about tablet mode, see Chapter 8.)
- **Use small taskbar buttons.** Set this switch to On to shrink the taskbar's program buttons. This not only reduces the overall height of the taskbar (so you get more room for the desktop and your programs), but it also enables you to populate the taskbar with more buttons.
- **Use Peek to preview the desktop. . .** Set this switch to On to enable the Peek feature. When you have Peek activated, move the mouse pointer over the right edge of the taskbar, and Windows temporarily hides your open windows so that you can see the desktop. Move the mouse pointer off the right edge of the taskbar to restore your windows.
- **Show badges on taskbar buttons.** Set this switch to Off to prevent Windows from showing badges on taskbar buttons (such as the number of unread messages in the Mail app).

- **Taskbar location on screen.** Use this list to choose where you want to place the taskbar: Bottom, Left, Right, or Top. For example, if you want to maximize the available screen height, move the taskbar to the left or right side of the screen.
- **Combine taskbar buttons.** Use this list to choose how you want Windows to group taskbar buttons when an application has multiple windows or tabs open:
  - **Always hide labels.** Choose this option to have Windows always group similar taskbar buttons.
  - **When taskbar is full.** Choose this option to have Windows group similar taskbar buttons only when the taskbar has no more open space to display buttons.
  - **Never.** Choose this option to have Windows never group similar taskbar buttons.

Customizing the taskbar's notification area

The notification area appears on the right side of the taskbar, to the right of the icons for the running and pinned apps, as shown in Figure 1.7.

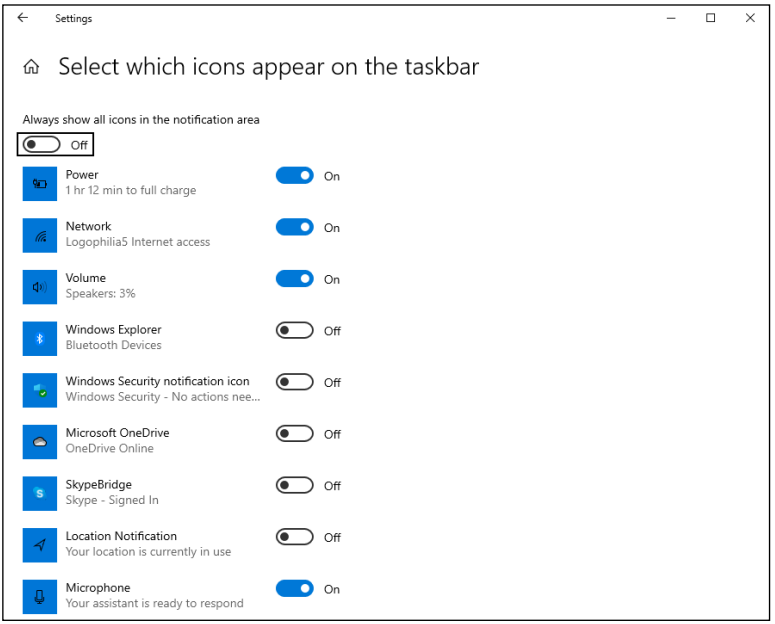


1.7 The taskbar's notification area.

You can click the Show Hidden Icons button to see your hidden icons.

The notification area shows only a few icons by default: Network, Volume, and Notifications, and notebook PCs also show the Power icon. You might want to customize the default arrangement. For example, many notification icons offer quick access to their programs' features when you right-click them. If there is an icon that you right-click frequently, you might want to configure the notification area to show the icon on the taskbar. Here are the steps to follow:

1. **In the taskbar's Search box, type** select**.**
2. **In the search results, click Select Which Icons Appear on the Taskbar.** The Settings app displays the Select Which Icons Appear on the Taskbar screen, as shown in Figure 1.8.



1.8 Use the Select Which Icons Appear on the Taskbar screen to configure your notification area icons.

3. **Click the switch to On for each icon you want to display in the notification area.**

Note

If you want to show every icon on the taskbar, click the Always Show All Icons in the Notification Area switch to On.

4. **Click the Back arrow in the top-left corner of the Settings window.** Settings takes you to the Taskbar screen.
5. **Click Turn System Icons On or Off.** Settings opens the Turn System Icons On or Off screen, shown in Figure 1.9.
6. **Click the switch to Off for each system icon you want to prevent from appearing in the notification area.** Windows puts the new settings into effect.