

Top 10 Windows productivity tips

Chris Hoffman, Windows Intelligence Newsletter, Jun 19, 2024

Windows Intelligence readers agree: Every PC user should know these tips and tricks.

Each week, I ask Windows Intelligence readers to share their favorite Windows PC tips with me. There are some I see submitted over and over — the top productivity tips many of my most enthusiastic readers think everyone should know.

Now, I want to share them with *you*, bringing them into one place for an easily skimmable guide filled with tweaks and upgrades you can put straight to work.

There are more PC tips where these came from! Sign up for my free Windows Intelligence newsletter to get free Windows Field Guides and three new things to try every Friday.

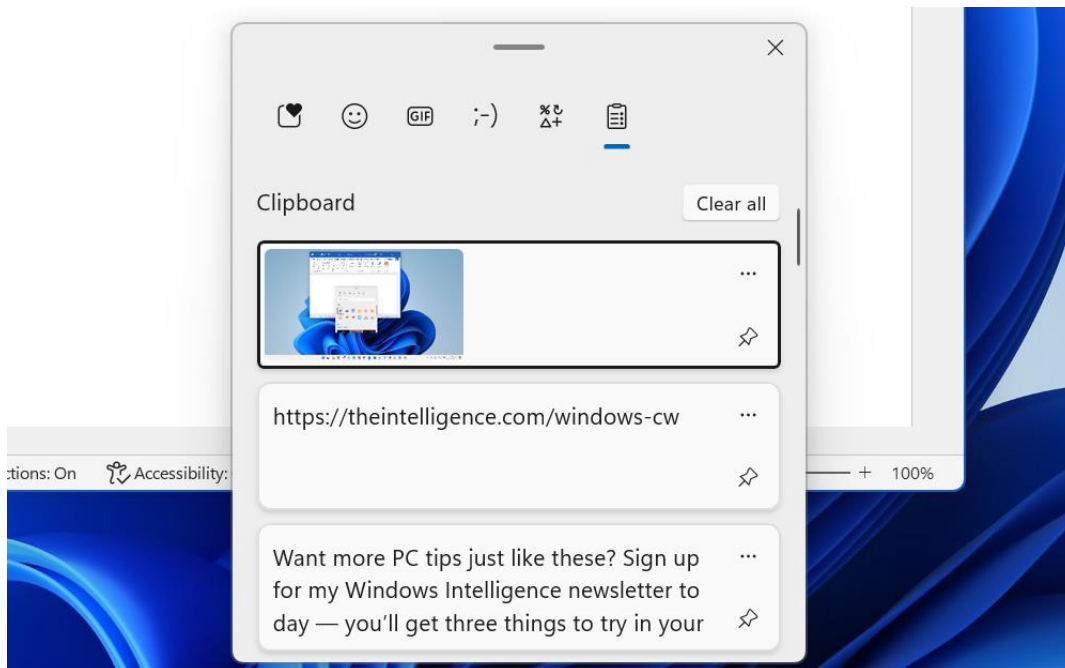
Windows productivity tip #1: Clipboard history

Windows has a built-in [clipboard history](#). Just press Windows+V to find it. If you haven't activated it, you can turn it on in one click from there.

You can copy multiple things and access both text and images you've recently copied within it. Or, if you find yourself pasting the same things again and again, you can “pin” items to your clipboard history for easy future access.

The clipboard history tool can help you perform other advanced tasks, too: You can sync your clipboard between PCs with your Microsoft account, for example, or paste items as plain text.

To configure the clipboard history, head to Settings > System > Clipboard. It's available on both Windows 10 and Windows 11.



Windows productivity tip #2: The power user menu

The “[power user menu](#)” was added during the Windows 8 days, when Microsoft removed the Start menu. It's still useful today, offering a quick way to access a variety of useful system options and administrative tools. Whether you want to shut down your PC, launch File Explorer, or open a Terminal window, you can do it from the power user menu.

To open it, right-click your Start button on the taskbar or press Windows+X on your keyboard. You can then select an item in the menu with one more click.

Windows productivity tip #3: Plain-text pasting

Copy-pasting text on a PC can be a pain. You often end up copying formatting — fonts, colors, links, and other junk — when you just want plain old text.

You can paste just the plain text in nearly any application — if you use the right shortcut. Just press Ctrl+Shift+V instead of Ctrl+V to paste. This works in most applications, including web browsers like Google Chrome. (It now even works in Microsoft Word by default, too.)

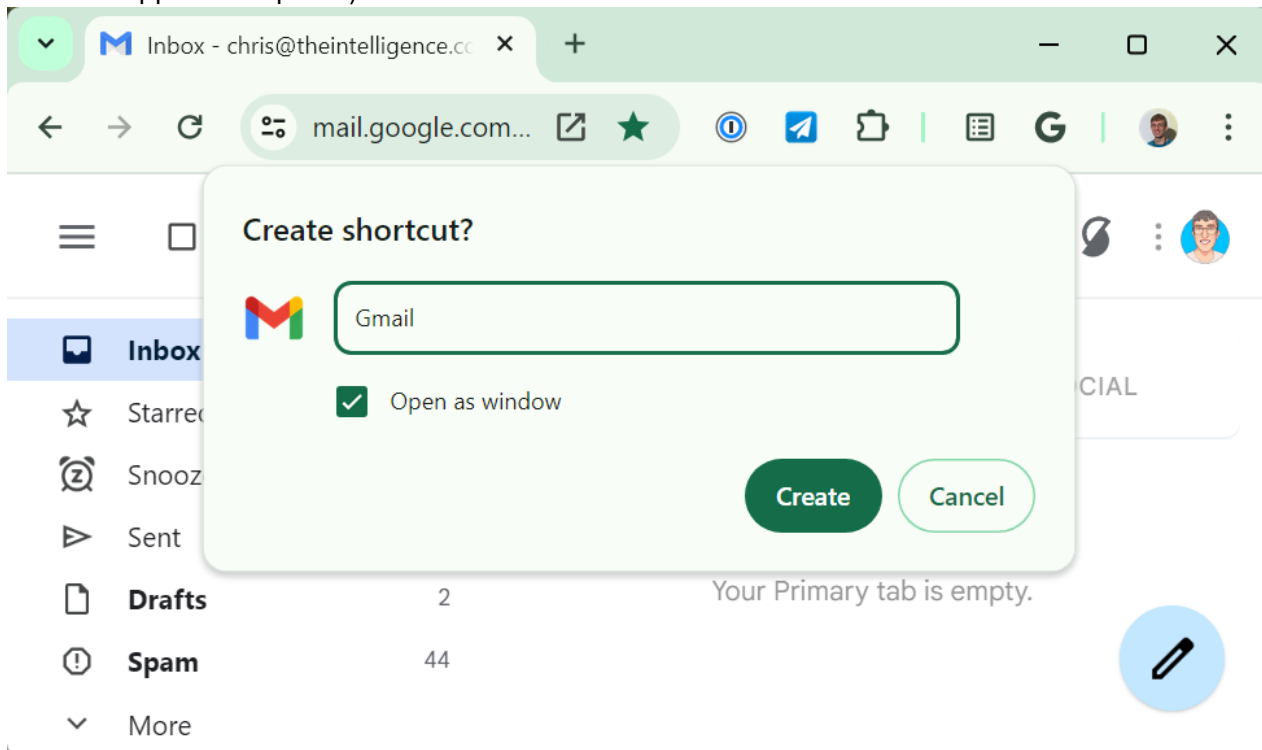
Windows productivity tip #4: A website as an app

If you frequently use web apps, you might want to install them as applications, giving them their own separate windows, shortcuts, and taskbar icons for convenient access.

To do this in Google Chrome, visit the website you want to turn into an “app” — like Gmail, for example. Then, click the menu button on Chrome’s toolbar and select Save and Share > Create shortcut. Name it whatever you like, check “Open as window,” and you’re done.

If the website offers a Progressive Web App (PWA), you will see an “Install” button in the menu. You can use that instead.

This works in Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, and other Chromium-based browsers. (Firefox, unfortunately, doesn’t support the option.)



Windows productivity tip #5: Ctrl key shortcuts

There’s a good chance you already know some basic text-editing keyboard shortcuts. For example, you can hold Shift and use the left and right arrow keys to select text. But the Ctrl key makes all those keyboard shortcuts work with entire words and not individual characters.

Here’s how the Ctrl key upgrades other keyboard shortcuts while working with text in nearly any application, from your web browser and email client to Microsoft Word:

- Ctrl+Backspace: Backspace entire words to the left of the cursor at once — not just individual letters.
- Ctrl+Delete: Delete entire words to the right of the cursor at once — not just individual letters.
- Ctrl+Left arrow or Ctrl+Right arrow: Move the cursor to the previous word or the next word.
- Ctrl+Shift+Left arrow or Ctrl+Shift+Right arrow: Select entire words at once.

Windows productivity tip #6: Window snapping

The Snap feature is an incredibly useful way to quickly arrange multiple windows on your screen. In addition to clicking a window title bar and dragging it to the left or right edge of your screen, you can also use shortcuts such as Windows+Left arrow and Windows+Right arrow to snap windows to one side of your screen or the other. On Windows 11, you have access to Snap Layouts for even more options — press Windows+Z to open Snap Layouts. (Here's [my ultimate guide to the Windows Snap feature](#) to learn all the tricks you need.)



Windows productivity tip #7: A Task Manager time-saver

The Windows Task Manager is a critical tool for all PC users. You might want to open it to see what applications are using resources, close an application that's frozen, or just manage the startup applications that launch when you sign into your PC.

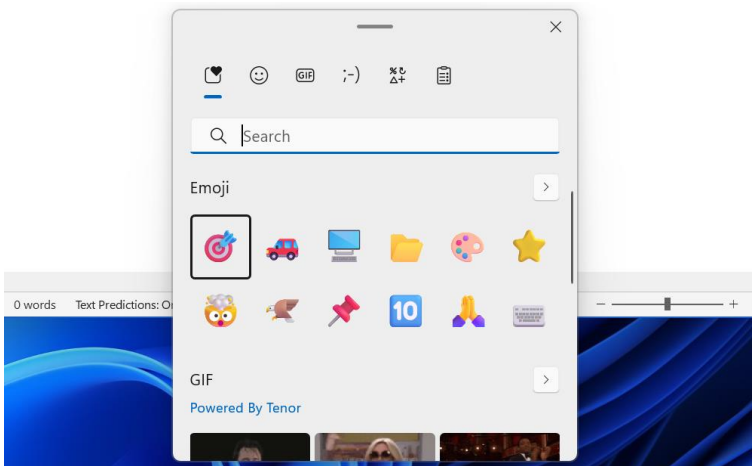
There's no need to press Ctrl+Alt+Delete and click "Task Manager" to open it. Just press Ctrl+Shift+Esc, and [the Task Manager will appear immediately](#). You can also right-click an empty spot on your taskbar and select "Task Manager" to launch it on either Windows 11 or Windows 10.

Windows productivity tip #8: Easy emoji insertions

Like it or not, emoji are part of modern communication. You can insert them anywhere on your PC — type them in emails, place them in Word documents, or even use them in file names.

To [open the emoji picker on Windows](#), press Windows+. or Windows+; (that's the Windows key along with a period or a semicolon).

You can then start typing to search for an emoji or browse through them. This works on Windows 10 and 11. You'll also find other things you can insert in this pane — like special characters, for example.



Windows productivity tip #9: Pinned app shortcuts

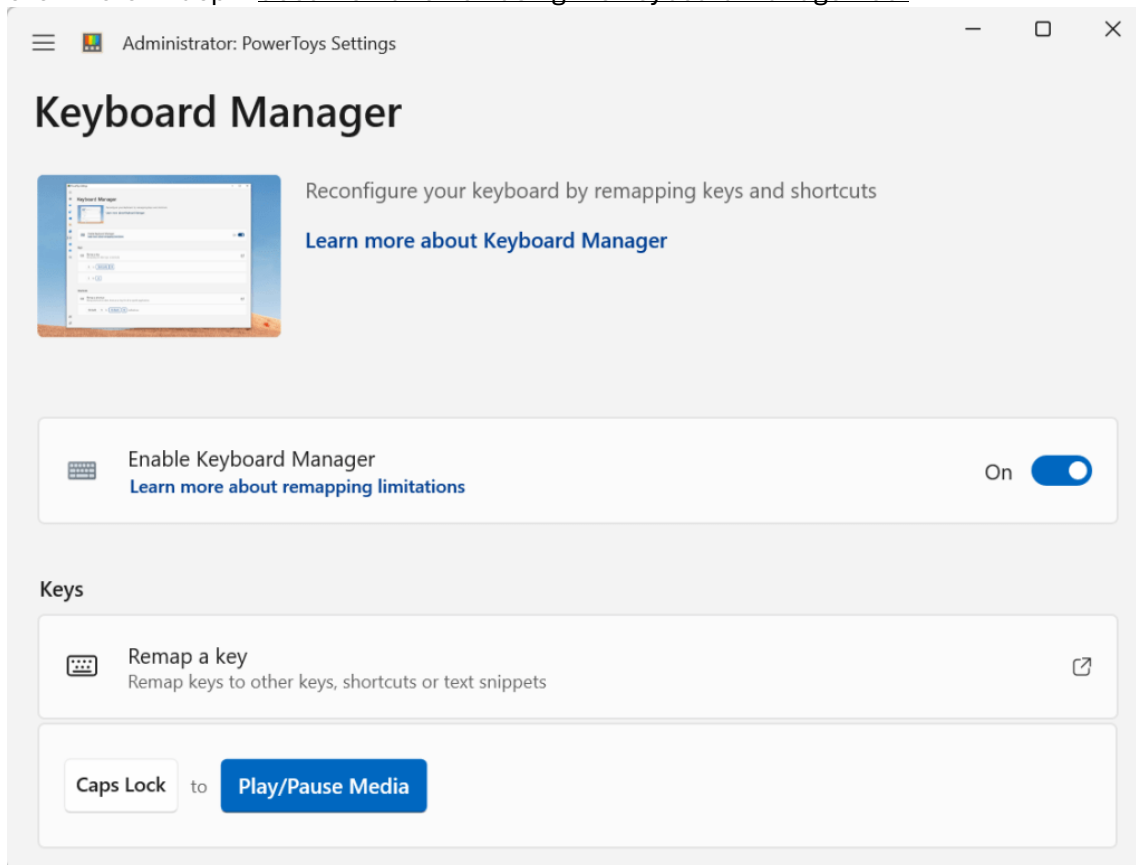
The Windows key opens the Start menu, Windows+Tab launches Task View, and Windows+C opens [Copilot](#). But you can activate the favorite apps you have pinned to your taskbar using the keyboard, too. Just press Windows+1, Windows+2, or the Windows key along with any other number — 1 through 0. For example, if you press Windows+1, Windows will activate the first application shortcut from the left on your PC's taskbar. (Since 0 appears to the right of 9 on the number row on your keyboard, the 0 key will activate the 10th shortcut from the left.)

Windows productivity tip #10: Instant key transformation

Want to put your keyboard to better use? You can turn a key into any other key. For example, many people transform their Caps Lock key into something else. Here's one idea: If your keyboard doesn't have a convenient Play/Pause key, you could "remap" the Caps Lock key into a Play/Pause key.

There are a variety of ways to remap a key; my favorite is the Keyboard Manager included with Microsoft's free PowerToys package.

To use it, install [Microsoft PowerToys](#) on your PC. Launch PowerToys from your Start menu or system tray, select "Keyboard Manager," and use the "Remap a key" tool here to make a key function as another key. Microsoft has even more in-depth [documentation on using the Keyboard Manager tool](#).



WITH A FEW CLICKS, YOU CAN TRANSFORM A KEY ON YOUR KEYBOARD INTO ANOTHER KEY.

Microsoft's PowerToys package is packed with useful tools, too — Keyboard Manager is just scratching the surface of what you can do with it. For example, it has a convenient Always on Top tool for [making any window "always on top" of all other windows](#). That can be a big productivity boost in the right situation.

How to check Microsoft Word documents for plagiarism

By [Roland Freist](#), pcworld.com, JUN 19, 2024

Microsoft Word can check how closely a document resembles publications on the web, available in both online and desktop versions.

It's actually really simple! Here's how to use Microsoft Word to check if a document might've been copied from the internet:

Load the document into Word and open the **Review** tab in the ribbon. On the far left side of the ribbon, you should see an **Editor** button. Clicking on that will open a sidebar with various editorial insights.

Scroll down to the section labeled **Similarity**, then click on the button labeled **Check for similarity to online sources** to initiate plagiarism checking. Word will switch on Bing and search the internet for similar texts. This search could take a while.

Once the plagiarism check is done, questionable parts of the text that match online sources will be highlighted in the document. Plus, an info window will show a link to the source of the original.

This feature is also useful for citing quotations. If the Editor finds similarities with online sources, you can click on **Similarities reviewed** to see a list of them. For each one, you can optionally insert a citation.

This article originally appeared on our sister publication [PC-WELT](#) and was translated and localized from German.

Windows 11 Shows Start Menu Ads Now: Here's How to Turn Them Off

BYBRAD MORTON, howtogeek.com, PUBLISHED JUN 3, 2024

Windows 11 has started displaying ads in the Start menu. While we don't really like to put companies on blast, nobody wants this, and it's a terrible idea. While ads aren't yet showing to all users, the roll-out will reach you eventually, so here's how to turn them off.

The Windows 11 Start Menu Now Has Ads



Ads in the Windows start menu are disguised as app 'recommendations'. Apps you have never used will appear in the menu, taking space away from the apps you actually use, and potentially luring your young friends or family members into clicking on them and purchasing them through the [Windows Store](#).

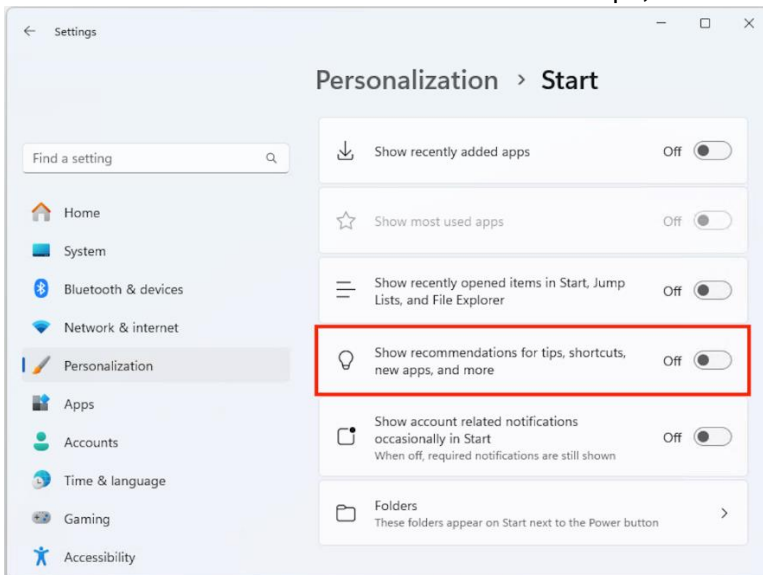
Currently, app recommendations and ads appear below your pinned apps in the Windows 11 Start menu:

Jerome Thomas / How-To Geek

Steps to Disable Ads in the Windows 11 Start Menu

Thankfully, disabling these ads is easy, just follow these steps:

1. Open the Windows Settings App from the Start menu or by pressing Windows+i.
2. Click on "Personalization" in the sidebar.
3. Click on "Start" on the Personalization screen.
4. Un-check "Show recommendations for tips, shortcuts, new apps, and more."



Brad Morton / How-To Geek

While this setting has existed in some form for a while, turning it off will make sure that any new ads don't appear in your Start menu, regardless of their format.

Unfortunately, this isn't the only annoying 'Feature' being introduced to Windows 11. Ads have become pervasive throughout the operating system, so many users prefer to de-bloat Windows 11 after installing it to disable as many ads and unnecessary or annoying features as possible. Many also opt to bring back as much of [Windows 10's visual appearance](#) as possible.