

PRINTABLE GUIDE

Find your way around the Windows desktop

The desktop is the main workspace after sign-in. The taskbar holds controls and apps. Layouts can be customised, so computers may look different.

Windows 11 | 2 min read | 5 steps

Before you start

- ☐ A signed-in Windows computer
- ☐ A few minutes to explore without changing settings

1. Find the taskbar

Look along the bottom of the screen for app icons and the clock. The taskbar may hide until you move the pointer to the edge. Icons can be pinned shortcuts or represent open windows, so an icon does not always mean an app is running.

- ☐ Done this step

2. Open Start

Select the Windows-shaped Start button or press the Windows key. Start helps you find apps, search, open Settings and reach the power options. Press the Windows key again or click outside to close it.

- ☐ Done this step

3. Try an app search

With Start open, type Calculator and select the installed app. Search can also show files, settings and web results. Read the result's label so you understand what will open before selecting it.

☐ Done this step

4. Find everyday controls

Look near the clock for network, sound and battery controls where supported. They offer quick access to common settings. Clicking an app icon returns to its window; hover over grouped icons to see choices.

☐ Done this step

5. Recognise desktop items

A desktop shortcut points to something elsewhere, while a file may actually be stored there. Avoid deleting or rearranging unfamiliar items. Use File Explorer for organised file work, and keep your desktop simple enough to navigate comfortably.

☐ Done this step

Try it for yourself

Identify Start, the clock and the icon for one open app.

☐ I tried the task.

My notes

Where is Start if it is not in the centre?

Taskbar alignment can differ. Look for the Windows symbol, or use the Windows key to open Start directly.

Official help and the online guide

Windows 11 basics - <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/meet-windows-11-easily-switch-to-windows-11-3a2aa0a7-9559-431f-91a0-d9ca0a1eb0a5>

Read online: <https://plaintech-guides.pages.dev/guides/find-windows-desktop-controls/>