

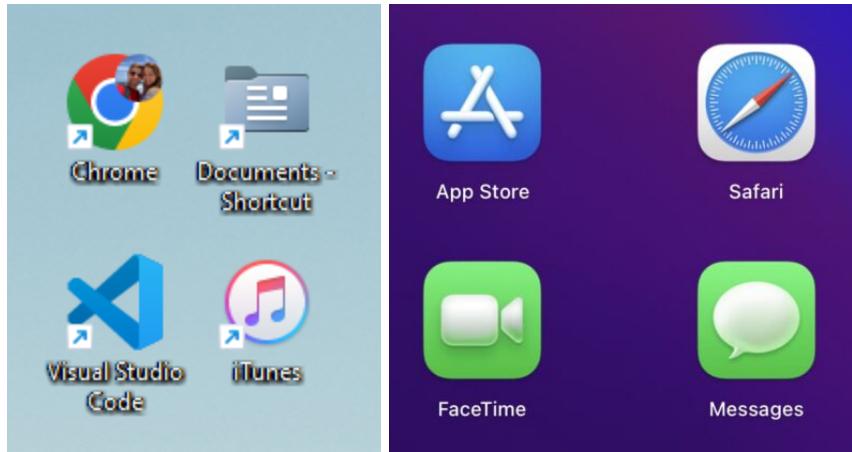
The User Interface (Navigation Basics)

The goal of a user interface is to make software and hardware more intuitive and user-friendly. Both **Windows** and **macOS** have their own unique user interface design, with different visual elements, organizational structures, and input methods, but they share common features and achieve the same goal.

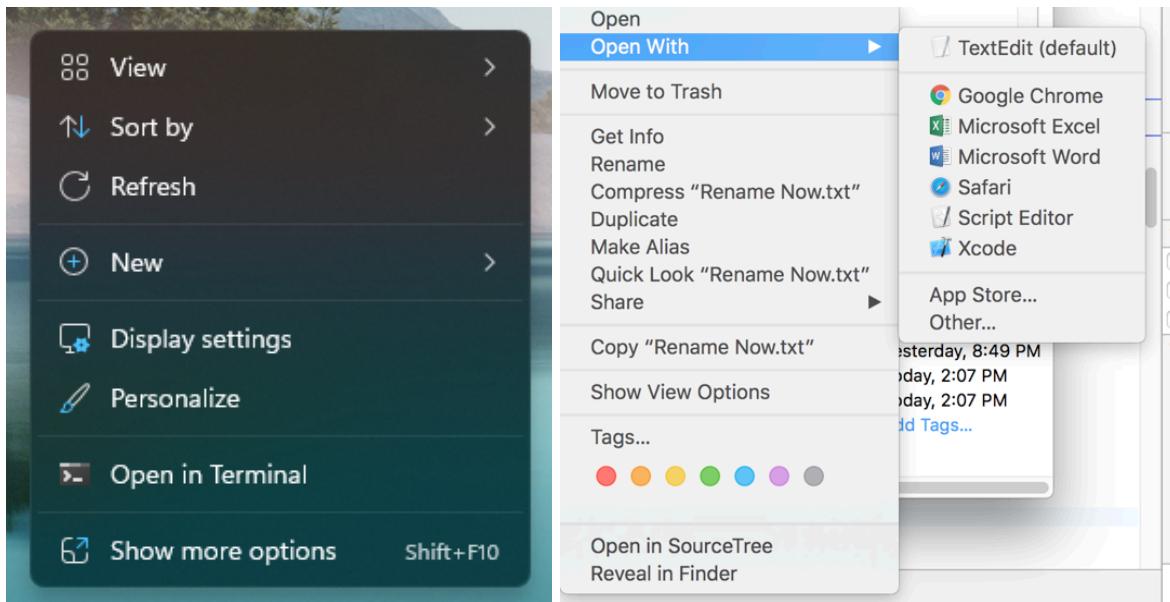
Desktop



The **Desktop** is the main screen of your operating system, and you'll see icons representing files, folders, and applications. You can customize the Desktop by adding, removing, or rearranging icons with the mouse, changing the background, and adjusting the display settings. You can click and drag to draw a box around multiple icons to move them all at once.



Icons are graphical representations of files, folders, or apps. They provide a visual cue that helps you identify what the item represents. You can double-click on an icon to open a file or folder or launch an application.



Right-clicking a blank area on the desktop will open a **context-sensitive menu** with various options. These options will vary depending on your OS. Some common examples:

- **View:** Allows you to change the size and arrangement of icons on both Windows and macOS. On Windows, "Sort by" automatically sorts app icons.
- **Refresh:** Refreshes the desktop and updates any changes or newly added icons.

- **New:** Allows you to create a new folder, shortcut, or text file directly on the desktop.
- **Personalization / Display settings:** Provides access to personalization settings to customize the desktop background, screensaver, resolution, color profile, and other display settings.

You can also right-click on files, folders, and apps to see different options that you may not have even known were there. Experiment by exploring different settings to see what your computer can do!



The **Recycle Bin** ([Windows](#)) or **Trash** ([macOS](#)) is where deleted files and folders are temporarily stored. When you delete something on your computer, it is moved to the trash rather than immediately being permanently deleted. To recover a file from the trash, you can open it, select what you want to recover, and click "Restore." If you want to permanently delete files from the trash, you can select the files and click "Empty Recycle Bin" or "Empty Trash". It's important to note that files in the trash take up space on your hard drive until they are permanently deleted. It's good practice to regularly clean it out, or set up **Storage Sense** ([Windows](#)) or **Optimize Storage** ([macOS](#)) to clean it out automatically on a weekly or monthly basis.

Taskbar / Dock



The **Taskbar (Windows)** or **Dock (macOS)** is the bar that appears at the bottom of the screen. It provides quick access to frequently used applications. You can rearrange the icons on the Taskbar or Dock by clicking and dragging them.

The **Start Menu (Windows)** is accessed by clicking on the Windows logo (which looks like this ☰) in the lower-left side of the screen. It provides access to installed applications, settings, power options, and more.

To add a program to the Taskbar on **Windows**, open the Start Menu and find the program you want to add. Right-click on the program and select "Pin to Taskbar" or "Pin to Start" (which will also add the program to the Start Menu). To add a program to the Dock on **macOS**, find the app in **Finder**, then click and drag its icon to the right side of the Dock.

The **Search Box (Windows)** is located next to the Start Menu and **Spotlight (macOS)** can be accessed by clicking the magnifying glass button or by pressing Command + Spacebar. Type in your query to find files, programs, and settings quickly.

To change your account password or PIN on **Windows**, go to Settings > Accounts > Sign-in options. On **macOS**, go to System Preferences > Users & Groups, click on your user account, and then click "Change Password" or "Reset Password."

To check for updates on **Windows**, go to Settings > Update & Security > Windows Update, and click "Check for updates." On **macOS**, go to System Preferences > Software Update, and click "Update Now" if updates are available.

Installing and Uninstalling Software

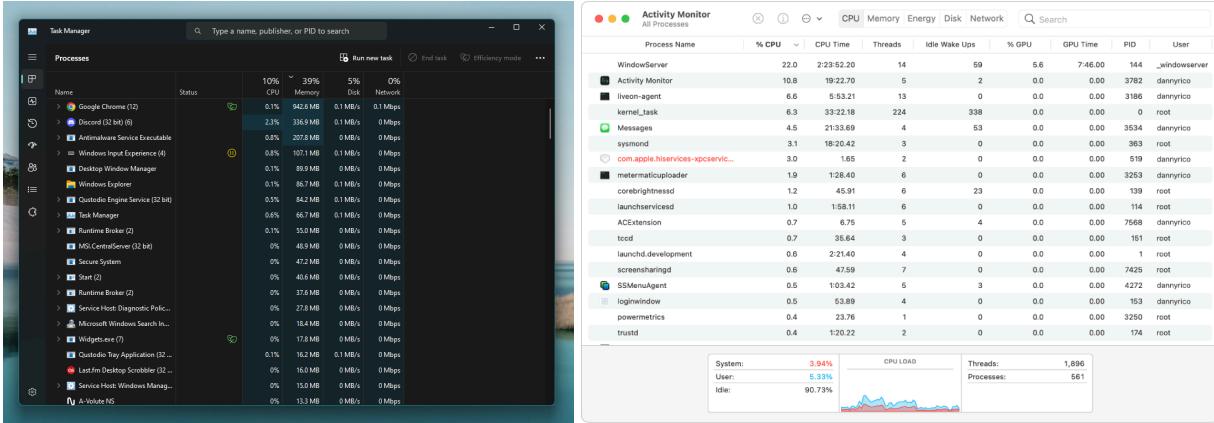


Software can be downloaded from official app stores as well as third-party websites. Open the **Microsoft Store (Windows)** by clicking its icon in the Taskbar. Search for the app you want to install using the search bar, then click "Install" or "Get" to download and install the app. Open the **App Store (macOS)** by clicking its icon in the Dock. Search for the app using the search bar, then click "Get" or the price button to download and install the app.

Third-party software must be downloaded from the developer's website or a trusted source. Locate the downloaded file, usually in the "Downloads" folder, and double-click it to start the installation process. Follow the on-screen prompts to complete the installation. Remember, when installing software from third-party sources, always make sure to download from trusted websites and verify the source to avoid potential security risks, such as malware or viruses. Also be sure that the software is compatible with your OS; a program designed to run on Windows will not run on a Mac.

To uninstall a program on **Windows**, go to Settings > Apps > Apps & features. Find the program you want to uninstall, click on it, and then click "Uninstall." Follow the on-screen prompts to complete the uninstallation. On **macOS**, open the "Applications" folder in Finder, locate the app you want to uninstall, and drag it to the Trash. Alternatively, you can right-click the app and select "Move to Trash." Empty the Trash to permanently remove the app from your computer.

Task Manager / Activity Monitor

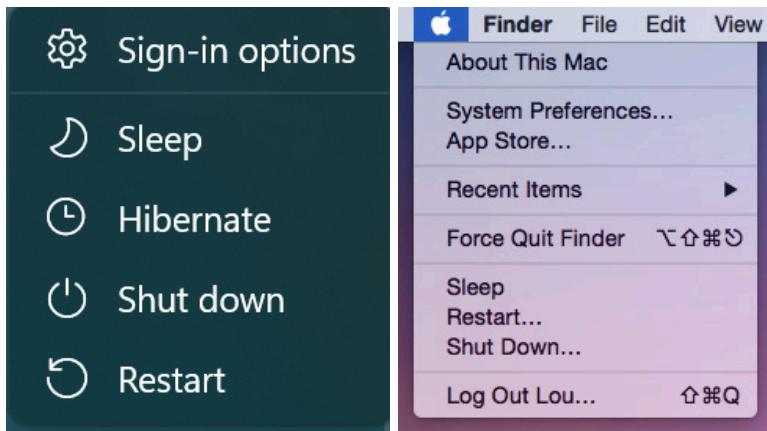


Task Manager and Activity Monitor provide information about the computer's performance, running processes, and active programs. It allows users to monitor system performance, manage startup programs, and end unresponsive processes.

To open **Task Manager** (**Windows**), press **Ctrl + Shift + Esc** or right-click on the Taskbar and select "Task Manager" from the context menu. Task Manager will display running applications, background processes, and system performance metrics. To end an unresponsive task or application, select it from the "Processes" tab and click "End Task". The "Startup" tab allows you to manage which programs launch automatically when your computer starts up.

To open **Activity Monitor** (**macOS**), press **Command + Space** to open Spotlight, type "Activity Monitor," and press Enter, or navigate to Applications > Utilities > Activity Monitor. To end an unresponsive process or application, select it from the list, and click the "X" button in the upper-left corner of the window. Confirm by clicking "Quit" or "Force Quit" in the dialog box that appears. The "Memory" and "CPU" tabs provide more detailed information about your system's hardware resources and help you identify processes that may be consuming excessive resources.

Power-Off Options



Safely shutting down or restarting your computer ensures that your data is saved, apps are closed properly, and the OS can perform necessary tasks before powering off. There are many different options and it can be confusing trying to figure out what they all mean, so let's go over them:

- ⚡ **Shut down:** Completely turns off your computer; closes all programs and files, logs you out of your user account, and powers off the hardware. Shutting down your computer regularly can help prevent performance issues and keep your system running smoothly. On newer versions of Windows, what actually happens is a little more complicated; “shut down” doesn’t technically perform a full power cycle, but “restart” does. Watch [this video](#) to learn more.
- ⚡ **Restart:** Performs a full shutdown followed by a power-on. Useful when installing updates, troubleshooting issues, or refreshing the system after prolonged use. Restarting your computer can help clear out any temporary files or processes that may be causing issues.
- 🌙 **Sleep:** Conserves energy by putting your computer into a low-power state while keeping your session active, allowing you to quickly resume your work when you return to the computer. Good for short breaks. **Warning:** leaving a laptop in a closed case or backpack for an extended period while in Sleep mode can cause it to overheat.

Either completely shut down your laptop or use Hibernate / Safe Sleep before storing it in a closed case or backpack.

- ⏪ **Hibernate (Windows) / Safe Sleep (macOS)**: Similar to Sleep mode, but it saves your work and settings to your hard drive instead of memory, and then powers off. When you turn the computer back on, your session is restored to its previous state. Ideal for conserving energy during longer breaks or overnight without losing your current work session. Saves more energy than Sleep, but takes longer to turn back on.

To access power-off options on **Windows**, click the Start button. Then click the power icon and select the desired option (Shut Down, Restart, or Sleep). To access Hibernate mode, open Control Panel > System and Security > Power Options > Choose what the power buttons do.

On **macOS**, click the Apple logo in the upper-left corner of the screen. Select the desired option from the drop-down menu (Shut Down, Restart, or Sleep). Safe Sleep is enabled by default when you close the lid of a MacBook or select Sleep from the Apple menu.