

**William Henry Gates III** (born October 28, 1955) is an American [business magnate](#), software developer, investor, and philanthropist. He is best known as the co-founder of [Microsoft Corporation](#).<sup>[2][3]</sup> During his career at Microsoft, Gates held the positions of [chairman](#), [chief executive officer](#) (CEO), [president](#) and [chief software architect](#), while also being the largest individual [shareholder](#) until May 2014. He is one of the best-known entrepreneurs and pioneers of the [microcomputer revolution](#) of the 1970s and 1980s.

Born and raised in [Seattle, Washington](#), Gates co-founded Microsoft with childhood friend [Paul Allen](#) in 1975, in [Albuquerque, New Mexico](#); it went on to become the world's largest [personal computer](#) software company.<sup>[4][a]</sup> Gates led the company as chairman and CEO until stepping down as CEO in January 2000, but he remained chairman and became chief software architect.<sup>[7]</sup> During the late 1990s, Gates had been [criticized for his business tactics](#), which have been considered [anti-competitive](#). This opinion has been upheld by numerous court rulings.<sup>[8]</sup> In June 2006, Gates announced that he would be transitioning to a part-time role at Microsoft and full-time work at the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), the private charitable foundation that he and his wife, [Melinda Gates](#), established in 2000.<sup>[9]</sup> He gradually transferred his duties to [Ray Ozzie](#) and [Craig Mundie](#).<sup>[10]</sup> He stepped down as chairman of Microsoft in February 2014 and assumed a new post as technology adviser to support the newly appointed CEO [Satya Nadella](#).<sup>[11]</sup>

Since 1987, he has been included in the [Forbes list of the world's wealthiest people](#).<sup>[12][13]</sup> From 1995 to 2017, he held the [Forbes](#) title of the richest person in the world all but four of those years.<sup>[1]</sup> In October 2017, he was surpassed by [Amazon](#) founder and CEO [Jeff Bezos](#), who had an estimated net worth of US\$90.6 billion compared to Gates' net worth of US\$89.9 billion at the time.<sup>[14]</sup> As of November 2019, Gates had an estimated net worth of US\$107.1 billion, making him the second-wealthiest person in the world, behind Bezos.<sup>[b]</sup>

Later in his career and since leaving day-to-day operations at Microsoft in 2008, Gates pursued a number of philanthropic endeavors. He donated large amounts of money to various charitable organizations and scientific research programs through the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), reported to be the world's largest [private charity](#).<sup>[16]</sup> In 2009, Gates and [Warren Buffett](#) founded [The Giving Pledge](#), whereby they and other billionaires pledge to give at least half of their wealth to philanthropy.<sup>[17]</sup> The foundation says that it works to save lives and improve global health, and is working with [Rotary International](#) to eliminate [polio](#).<sup>[18]</sup>