

Microsoft is turning Progressive Web Apps into Windows apps

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If you use Android, you might have come across a Progressive Web App or two in your Chrome journeys. Progressive Web Apps (not to be confused with Androids native Instant Apps) use relatively fresh new web technologies to make websites work better offline or with intermittent connections, and often mimic native features like push notifications. For instance, Twitter and Flipboard both have PWAs that you can put on your Android home screen, and which behave like lightweight apps without the installation hassle.

Well, Microsoft wants to get into the action. Its bringing Progressive Web Apps (not to be confused with Universal Windows Platform apps, many of which are glorified websites) to Windows 10 with a new version of Edge that supports the necessary web technologies. Microsoft will also start adding high quality PWAs to the Microsoft Store, and developers can also submit their PWA for consideration.

Unlike Electron apps, such as Microsofts own Visual Studio Code, PWAs cant include native OS-dependent code. Theyre still just websites, just with better caching, notifications, and background functionality. However, a lot of Electron apps are simply a website wrapped in an OS-native launcher, and its possible that many of these could switch over to PWAs in the future.

Progressive Web Apps work now on recent Windows Insider Program builds of Windows 10, and they should ship as a default to everyone later this year.

If you dont want to go all Windows Insidery, you can already get most of these perks from desktop Chrome already, and Apples WebKit engine which powers Safari is in the process of adding the necessary tech to support PWAs as well.

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