Docker Desktop WSL 2 backend on Windows

Windows Subsystem for Linux (WSL) 2 is a full Linux kernel built by Microsoft, which allows Linux distributions to run without managing virtual machines. With Docker Desktop running on WSL 2, users can leverage Linux workspaces and avoid maintaining both Linux and Windows build scripts. In addition, WSL 2 provides improvements to file system sharing and boot time.

Docker Desktop uses the dynamic memory allocation feature in WSL 2 to improve the resource consumption. This means, Docker Desktop only uses the required amount of CPU and memory resources it needs, while enabling CPU and memory-intensive tasks such as building a container, to run much faster.

Additionally, with WSL 2, the time required to start a Docker daemon after a cold start is significantly faster. It takes less than 10 seconds to start the Docker daemon compared to almost a minute in the previous version of Docker Desktop.

Prerequisites

Before you turn on the Docker Desktop WSL 2, ensure you have:

* WSL version 1.1.3.0 or above.
* Windows 10, version 21H2 or higher, or Windows 11, version 21H2 or higher. For more information, see [System requirements](https://docs.docker.com/desktop/install/windows-install/#system-requirements).
* Enabled WSL 2 feature on Windows. For detailed instructions, refer to the [Microsoft documentation](https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/wsl/install-win10).
* Downloaded and installed the [Linux kernel update package](https://docs.microsoft.com/windows/wsl/wsl2-kernel).

Turn on Docker Desktop WSL 2

1. Download [Docker Desktop for Windows](https://desktop.docker.com/win/main/amd64/Docker%20Desktop%20Installer.exe).
2. Follow the usual installation instructions to install Docker Desktop. If you are running a supported system, Docker Desktop prompts you to enable WSL 2 during installation. Read the information displayed on the screen and enable WSL 2 to continue.
3. Start Docker Desktop from the **Windows Start** menu.
4. From the Docker menu, select **Settings** and then **General**.
5. Select the **Use WSL 2 based engine** check box.

If you have installed Docker Desktop on a system that supports WSL 2, this option is enabled by default.

1. Select **Apply & Restart**.