BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 2354

Updated November 2026

10 Windows 11 Settings to Change on Day One

Small, safe tweaks that make a new PC calmer, more private, and truly yours

Plain-English Windows help from:

Bill's Home Tech

Portage County, Ohio

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

The 60-Second Version 3

The Short Version 3

A Note Before You Begin 4

1. Turn Down the Interruptions (Notifications) 4

2. Clear the Ads Out of the Start Menu 5

3. Make Your Privacy Choices 5

4. Point It at a Better Web Browser 6

5. Set Up OneDrive Backup — On Purpose 7

6. Fix the Taskbar and Start Button Position 7

7. Remove the Programs You'll Never Use 8

8. Tame What Starts Automatically 8

9. Make Things Easier to See and Use 9

10. Set It Up to Lock Safely 10

A Few More Worth Knowing About 10

If a Setting Looks Different Than Described 11

When to Call Bill 12

Everyday Cheat Sheet 13

A Note From Bill 14

Your Visit — and My Promise 15

SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A new Windows 11 PC is set up Microsoft's way, but a few safe, reversible changes in the Settings app (the gear icon) make it calmer and more yours. Quiet the notifications and turn off the 'tips and suggestions'; remove the 'recommended' ads from the Start menu; review your privacy settings and turn off the advertising ID; set Chrome or Firefox as your default browser if you prefer it; move the Start button back to the left if the centered look bothers you; trim the programs that launch at startup to speed things up; and set up a PIN or fingerprint sign-in.

Pick the ones that matter to you — there's no need to do all ten, and the search box at the top of Settings finds each quickly.

- Tip: use the search box at the top of the Settings app to jump straight to any setting by name.

1 The Short Version

A brand-new Windows 11 computer, or a fresh upgrade to it, comes set up the way Microsoft prefers — which is not always the way that suits you. A handful of small settings changes on day one make the computer calmer, more private, less cluttered with ads, and much more like your own. None of them are risky, and all of them are easy to undo.

This guide walks through ten worthwhile changes, each in plain steps, explaining what it does and why you might want it. You do not have to make all ten — pick the ones that matter to you. Think of it as settling into a new home: a few adjustments and it feels like yours.

- Windows 11's default setup favors Microsoft's preferences, not necessarily yours.
- Ten small, safe changes make it calmer, more private, and less cluttered.
- Every one is easy to reverse if you change your mind.
- Pick the ones that matter to you — there's no need to do all ten.

TIP

If the Settings app feels like a maze, remember there's a search box at the top of it — type a word like 'startup' or 'notifications' and it jumps you straight to the right place. That one trick makes all of these changes much easier to find.

2 A Note Before You Begin

Everything in this guide lives in the Settings app — the one with the little gear icon, reached from the Start menu. Nothing here can harm your computer or your files; these are preference changes, like adjusting the seat and mirrors in a new car. If a menu looks slightly different from the description, that is normal — Windows updates its layout over time — so use the search box at the top of Settings to find things by name.

GOOD TO KNOW

Microsoft moves settings around between updates, so exact wording can shift. That's why this guide describes what to look for in plain terms rather than promising an exact sequence of taps — the thing you want will be there, perhaps named slightly differently.

3 1. Turn Down the Interruptions (Notifications)

Out of the box, Windows 11 pops up a lot of notifications — reminders, tips, suggestions, and nudges toward Microsoft's own features. Quieting these makes the computer far less distracting and stops it nagging you about things you did not ask about.

1. Open Settings, then go to System, then Notifications.
2. Turn off notifications for any app you don't want interrupting you.
3. Lower down, turn off the 'tips and suggestions' and 'welcome experience' options — these are mostly Microsoft advertising its own features.

4. Leave on notifications you genuinely want, like calendar reminders.

> **TIP**
> Turning off the 'suggestions,' 'tips,' and 'welcome' notifications removes a lot of the gentle nagging people find annoying, without missing anything important. You can always turn a specific app's notifications back on later.

4 2. Clear the Ads Out of the Start Menu

The Start menu in Windows 11 often shows 'recommended' items and suggested apps you never installed — effectively advertisements. You can tidy these away so the Start menu shows only your own things.

1. Open Settings, then Personalization, then Start.
2. Turn off 'Show recommendations for tips, app promotions, and more' (or similarly worded options).
3. Turn off showing recently added and most-used apps if you'd rather keep it tidy.
4. Open the Start menu afterward to see the cleaner result.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> These 'recommendations' are a form of advertising built into Windows. Switching them off is completely safe and makes the Start menu feel like your own desk rather than a shop window.

5 3. Make Your Privacy Choices

During setup, Windows asks a flurry of privacy questions and most people click through them quickly. It is worth revisiting these calmly, because they control how much the computer tracks what you do and shows you targeted suggestions. Turning the chattier ones off is private and perfectly safe.

1. Open Settings, then Privacy & security.
2. Under 'General,' turn off the advertising ID and personalized-ads options.

3. Review which apps can use your location, camera, and microphone, and turn off any that don't need them.
4. Turn down the amount of diagnostic data sent to Microsoft if you prefer.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Be thoughtful rather than switching everything off blindly — some apps genuinely need the camera or microphone to work (video calls, for instance). The safe approach is to turn off access for apps that have no reason to need it, and leave it on for the ones you use.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

6 4. Point It at a Better Web Browser

Windows 11 pushes its own browser, Edge, and sometimes reopens it even when you prefer another. If you like Chrome or Firefox, you can set your preferred browser as the default so links open where you expect, and stop the nudges toward Edge.

1. Install your preferred browser (Chrome or Firefox) from its official website if it's not already there.
2. Open Settings, then Apps, then Default apps.
3. Find your preferred browser in the list and set it as the default for web links.
4. Ignore any pop-ups from Edge trying to win you back.

> **WATCH OUT**
> You don't have to switch browsers at all — Edge is perfectly capable. But if you've used Chrome or Firefox for years, setting it as the default means your bookmarks, habits, and saved passwords all stay where you're comfortable.

7 5. Set Up OneDrive Backup — On Purpose

Windows 11 often turns on OneDrive, Microsoft's cloud storage, and quietly starts backing up your Documents, Pictures, and Desktop. This is genuinely useful — a copy of your files online means they survive if the computer dies — but it is worth understanding so it does not surprise you, and so you know your free space limits.

- OneDrive backing up your files is a real safety net — a good thing, used knowingly.
- The free amount of online space is limited; lots of photos can fill it and prompt paid upgrades.
- You can choose which folders it backs up in OneDrive's settings.
- If you'd rather not use it, you can turn the backup off — but have another backup plan if you do.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The key is to use OneDrive on purpose rather than by accident. Knowing it's protecting your files is reassuring; being surprised by a 'storage full' message a year later is not. A two-minute look at its settings now saves that surprise.

8 6. Fix the Taskbar and Start Button Position

Windows 11 centers the taskbar icons and the Start button in the middle of the screen, which many long-time users find disorienting. If you prefer the Start button back in its traditional bottom-left corner, that is a quick change.

1. Open Settings, then Personalization, then Taskbar.
2. Open 'Taskbar behaviors.'
3. Change the taskbar alignment from 'Center' to 'Left.'
4. The Start button and icons move back to the familiar bottom-left corner.

> **TIP**
> This one is pure comfort — there's no right answer, only what feels natural to you. If the centered layout bothers you, moving it left instantly makes Windows 11 feel more like the computer you're used to.

9 7. Remove the Programs You'll Never Use

A new Windows 11 computer usually arrives with extra apps pre-installed — games, trial versions, and promotional apps you didn't choose. Clearing out the ones you'll never use declutters the computer and can even speed it up. (There's a whole companion guide on this if your PC is especially crowded.)

1. Open Settings, then Apps, then Installed apps.
2. Scroll through and spot anything you don't recognize or won't use.
3. Click the three dots next to an unwanted app and choose Uninstall.
4. Leave anything you're unsure about — when in doubt, don't remove it.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Only remove apps you clearly recognize as unwanted extras. If you're not sure what something is, leave it alone — a few of the pre-installed items are parts of Windows itself. My bloatware guide, or a quick call, helps you tell the junk from the essentials safely.

10 8. Tame What Starts Automatically

Many programs quietly set themselves to launch every time you turn the computer on, which slows down startup and clutters the background. Trimming this list to only what you actually need makes the computer start faster and feel snappier.

1. Open Settings, then Apps, then Startup.
2. Look at the list of programs set to start automatically.

3. Turn off anything you don't need running the moment the computer turns on (a note often shows its 'impact' on startup).
4. Leave on anything related to security or that you rely on immediately.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Programs love to add themselves to startup so they're always 'ready,' but most don't need to be. Turning off the ones you don't use is one of the most effective ways to make an ordinary computer feel noticeably faster, and it's completely safe.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

11 9. Make Things Easier to See and Use

Windows 11 has excellent built-in tools to make the screen easier to read and the computer easier to use, tucked away under Accessibility. Even if you don't think of yourself as needing them, a larger text size or a bigger mouse pointer can make everyday use far more comfortable.

- Make text bigger everywhere with the text-size slider.
- Enlarge and recolor the mouse pointer so it's easier to find.
- Turn on Night Light to warm the screen's color in the evening and ease eye strain.
- Use the magnifier to zoom into any part of the screen when needed.

1. Open Settings, then Accessibility.
2. Open 'Text size' and drag the slider until text is comfortable, then apply.
3. Open 'Mouse pointer and touch' to make the pointer bigger or a bolder color.
4. Explore the other options — none of them harm anything and all are easy to undo.

12 10. Set It Up to Lock Safely

Finally, a small security setting worth getting right: how the computer signs you in and locks itself. A quick, convenient sign-in (a PIN, or your fingerprint or face if the computer supports it) protects your computer without the hassle of a long password every time, and having it lock when idle keeps your information private.

1. Open Settings, then Accounts, then Sign-in options.
2. Set up a PIN — a short number you choose, easier and safer than typing a password each time.
3. If your computer has a fingerprint reader or face camera, set that up for instant, secure sign-in.
4. Set the computer to lock itself after a few minutes of inactivity for privacy.

WATCH OUT

A PIN or fingerprint is both easier and safer than a scribbled-down password, and it protects you if the computer is ever lost or stolen. If setting up sign-in options or understanding Microsoft accounts feels confusing, that's a common thing I sort out so your computer is both convenient and secure.

13 A Few More Worth Knowing About

Beyond the main ten, a handful of smaller settings are worth a glance while you're in the mood to make the computer yours. None are essential, but each one smooths a little rough edge.

- Set the clock and time zone correctly if they're off (Settings Time & language).
- Choose a desktop background and color you like (Personalization Background).
- Turn on automatic backup of your files to OneDrive, deliberately, if you want that safety net.
- Set your preferred default apps for email, music, and photos (Settings Apps Default apps).

- Check that Windows Security (the built-in protection) is turned on (Settings Privacy & security).

> **TIP**
> These are the finishing touches — small comforts that make the computer feel settled. Spend five minutes on the ones that appeal and skip the rest; there's no obligation to touch any of them.

14 If a Setting Looks Different Than Described

Windows updates itself over time, and Microsoft rearranges and renames settings as it goes. So now and then a menu may not look quite like the description here. That's completely normal and nothing to worry about — the setting you want still exists, perhaps in a slightly different spot or under a slightly different name.

1. Open Settings and use the search box at the very top.
2. Type a plain word for what you want — 'notifications,' 'startup,' 'default browser,' 'lock screen.'
3. Pick the closest result it offers; it jumps you right to the setting.
4. If the wording differs from this guide, trust the search — it follows the current layout.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> The search box at the top of Settings is your friend through every Windows change. Rather than memorizing menu paths that may shift, just search for what you want in plain words and let Windows take you there.

15 When to Call Bill

Every change in this guide is safe and reversible, and I'd encourage you to try the ones that appeal to you. But a brand-new computer is also the perfect moment to have everything set up properly in one go — the junk removed, the privacy and ad settings dialed in, your browser and files and sign-in all arranged the way you like — so you start off on a clean, calm, fast machine rather than fighting it for months.

I come to you here in Portage County, go through these settings with you, clear out the pre-installed clutter safely, make sure your files are backed up, and leave the computer feeling genuinely like yours. A new-computer setup visit turns a slightly bewildering box into a friendly, familiar tool.

- You've got a new Windows 11 PC and want it set up cleanly from the start.
- You're unsure which pre-installed apps are safe to remove.
- You want your privacy and ad settings handled thoroughly, not guessed at.
- You'd simply like it to feel like your computer, not Microsoft's.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. All changes live in Settings (the gear icon) and are easy to undo. Tip: use the search box at the top of Settings.

I want to...	Do this...
Stop the nagging	System Notifications turn off tips, suggestions, welcome experience
Remove Start-menu ads	Personalization Start turn off 'recommendations'
Protect my privacy	Privacy & security turn off advertising ID; review app camera/mic/location
Use my own browser	Apps Default apps set Chrome or Firefox as default
Move Start back to the left	Personalization Taskbar Taskbar behaviors alignment Left
Speed up startup	Apps Startup turn off programs you don't need at boot
Make it easier to see	Accessibility Text size, Mouse pointer, Night Light
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

Call or text (330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.