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Turn Off the Ads & Nags in Windows 11

Quiet the suggestions, pop-ups, and promotions — safely, one switch at a time

Plain-English Windows help from:
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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Most of Windows 11's 'nagging' — suggested apps, pop-up tips, Edge prompts, lock-screen facts — is built-in advertising, not errors, and nearly all of it switches off safely in the Settings app. Turn off Start-menu 'recommendations' under Personalization Start; turn off tips, suggestions, and the welcome experience under System Notifications; set the lock screen to a plain picture; turn off File Explorer's 'sync provider notifications'; set your preferred browser as default to quiet Edge; turn off the advertising ID under Privacy & security; and turn off the Widgets button if its news popup bothers you.

None of this removes a feature you use — it just gives you a calmer, quieter computer. Switch off whichever ones annoy you.

1 The Short Version

Windows 11 can feel surprisingly pushy. The Start menu suggests apps you never installed, notifications nudge you toward Microsoft's own features, Edge pops up asking to be your browser, and little prompts keep appearing to sign up for this or try that. None of it means anything is wrong — it is advertising and promotion built into the system — and nearly all of it can be switched off with a handful of safe settings changes.

This guide gathers every common nag in one place and shows you exactly how to quiet each one. Your computer keeps working perfectly; it just stops pestering you. Make the changes that bother you most and leave the rest — it is entirely your call.

- Most 'nags' in Windows 11 are built-in advertising, not errors.
- Nearly all of them can be turned off with safe, reversible settings.
- Turning them off doesn't harm the computer or remove any feature you use.
- Tackle the ones that annoy you most; you don't have to do everything.

TIP

The Settings app has a search box at the very top — type a word like 'suggestions' or 'notifications' and it jumps you straight to the right switch. That single trick makes hunting down these nags far quicker.

2 Why Windows Nags You

It helps to know that none of this is a malfunction. Microsoft wants people using its own services — its browser, its cloud storage, its app store, its account — so it builds gentle (and sometimes not so gentle) prompts into Windows to steer you that way. Understanding that these are promotions, not warnings, takes the worry out of them and makes it easy to switch them off with a clear conscience.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because these are advertising rather than faults, turning them off changes nothing about how your computer works — it simply stops the sales pitches. You lose no feature you were actually using; you just reclaim a quieter, calmer machine.

3 Quiet the Start Menu Suggestions

The Start menu's 'Recommended' section often shows apps and files Windows thinks you might want — frequently things you never installed. These suggestions are among the most noticeable nags, and they are easy to remove.

1. Open Settings (gear icon), then Personalization, then Start.
2. Turn off 'Show recommendations for tips, app promotions, and more.'
3. Turn off showing recently added apps if you'd prefer a tidier menu.
4. Open the Start menu to confirm it's cleaner.

TIP

This is one of the most satisfying changes to make — the Start menu goes from feeling like a shop window to feeling like your own. It's completely safe and reversible if you ever want the suggestions back.

4 Turn Off Tips, Suggestions, and 'Welcome' Prompts

Windows regularly shows 'tips,' 'suggestions,' and a 'welcome experience' after updates — pop-ups encouraging you to try Microsoft features or finish setting up your account. These are easy to silence in the notification settings.

1. Open Settings, then System, then Notifications.
2. Scroll to the bottom and turn off 'Offer suggestions on how I can set up my device.'
3. Turn off 'Get tips and suggestions when using Windows.'
4. Turn off 'Show the Windows welcome experience' after updates.

GOOD TO KNOW

These three switches remove most of the gentle 'have you tried…' nagging that appears out of nowhere. None of them is a useful alert — they're promotions — so turning them off loses you nothing.

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5 Stop the Lock Screen Ads

The lock screen — the picture you see before signing in — can show 'fun facts,' tips, and promotions through a feature called Windows Spotlight. If you'd rather a clean picture with no text nudges, you can switch to a simple photo background.

1. Open Settings, then Personalization, then Lock screen.
2. Change 'Personalize your lock screen' from 'Windows spotlight' to 'Picture' or 'Slideshow.'
3. Turn off 'Get fun facts, tips, and more on your lock screen.'
4. Pick a photo you like as the background if you wish.

TIP

Switching the lock screen to your own photo is a nice personal touch as well as a way to kill the ads — a favorite picture greets you instead of a sales message.

6 Clear Ads Out of File Explorer

Even the file-browsing window — File Explorer, where you look through your folders — can show occasional promotional banners for Microsoft services. A single setting turns these off so your folders stay strictly business.

1. Open any folder window (File Explorer).
2. Open its options/settings (the three dots menu, then 'Options').
3. Go to the 'View' tab and scroll the list of settings.
4. Turn off 'Show sync provider notifications,' which is what produces those banners.

GOOD TO KNOW

Despite the technical-sounding name, 'sync provider notifications' is just the setting that lets Microsoft advertise inside your folder windows. Turning it off is safe and simply keeps File Explorer clean.

7 Stop Edge From Nagging You

Microsoft's Edge browser is persistent about wanting to be your default and about its own features — pop-ups to import from other browsers, offers, and prompts. If you use Edge, you can quiet these; if you prefer another browser, setting that as default stops most of them.

- If you prefer Chrome or Firefox: set it as your default in Settings Apps Default apps, which stops Edge grabbing links.
- If you use Edge: open its own Settings (three dots Settings) and turn off the various 'show me offers / shopping / recommendations' switches.
- Decline Edge's repeated 'set as default' and 'import' pop-ups — they'll eventually ease off.

WATCH OUT

Edge is harmless and quite good — the nags are the only real annoyance. Don't feel you must remove it; just set your preferred browser as default and switch off Edge's promotional settings. Uninstalling Edge entirely is fiddly and rarely worth it.

8 Turn Off Personalized Ads

Windows assigns an 'advertising ID' that lets apps show you targeted ads based on what you do. Turning it off doesn't remove ads entirely but makes them generic rather than tailored, and it's a sensible privacy step as well as a way to reduce nagging.

1. Open Settings, then Privacy & security.
2. Open 'General.'
3. Turn off 'Let apps show me personalized ads by using my advertising ID.'
4. Turn off the other suggestion-related options on that screen while you're there.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is as much a privacy win as an anti-nag one. With the advertising ID off, apps can't build a profile of you to target ads — a small, safe step toward a more private computer.

9 Quiet the Account and OneDrive Prompts

Windows often nudges you to 'finish setting up' your Microsoft account or to back everything up to OneDrive, sometimes with a full-screen prompt after an update. You can dismiss and reduce these once you've made a deliberate choice about whether you want them.

- The 'finish setting up your device' full-screen prompt can be declined with the 'skip for now' or small 'remind me later / no thanks' option — look carefully for it.
- Decide deliberately whether you want OneDrive backing up your files (it's genuinely useful) rather than being nagged into it.
- Turning off the 'suggestions' notifications (earlier chapter) reduces how often these appear.

WATCH OUT

That full-screen 'let's finish setting up your device' page trips a lot of people up because the 'skip' option is deliberately small and faint. If you keep getting pushed into things you didn't want, I can set your account and backup choices cleanly so the prompts stop — a common new-computer tidy-up.

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10 Silence the Widgets and Weather Nags

Windows 11 has a 'widgets' panel — often a weather or news button on the taskbar — that can pop open news, ads, and clickbait when you brush the mouse past it. If you find it intrusive, you can turn it off entirely.

1. Open Settings, then Personalization, then Taskbar.
2. Turn off the 'Widgets' button so it no longer appears on the taskbar.
3. If you'd rather keep weather but lose the news clutter, you can instead open the widgets panel and remove the news feed from its settings.

> **TIP**
> The widgets panel popping open by accident and filling the screen with news headlines is a common frustration. Turning the button off entirely is the cleanest fix, and you won't miss it unless you actually used it.

11 A Quick Round-Up Checklist

Here's the whole guide at a glance. Run down it and switch off whichever nags bother you — each one is safe and reversible.

Nag	Where to turn it off
Start menu suggestions	Personalization Start turn off recommendations
Tips & welcome pop-ups	System Notifications turn off tips/suggestions/welcome
Lock screen ads	Personalization Lock screen Picture; turn off fun facts
File Explorer banners	Folder options View turn off sync provider notifications

Edge nags	Set another default browser; turn off Edge's offer settings
Personalized ads	Privacy & security General turn off advertising ID
Widgets/news popups	Personalization Taskbar turn off Widgets

12 Will They Come Back After an Update?

A fair question: once you've switched these nags off, do Windows updates turn them back on? Mostly, no — your choices stick. Occasionally, a big feature update introduces a new setting or resets one, so a nag you thought you'd banished reappears. This is easily dealt with, and knowing to expect it means it won't frustrate you.

- Most of your off-switches survive updates untouched.
- A major update may add a new type of prompt or occasionally reset one.
- If an old nag returns, just revisit the chapter here and flip it off again — it takes seconds.
- Keeping this guide handy means you're never hunting for how you did it last time.

> **TIP**
>
> Think of it as the occasional weed in a tidy garden, not a flood. If a nag reappears after an update, it's a thirty-second fix with this guide beside you — no need to start from scratch.

13 The Difference Between Ads and Real Alerts

As you switch off the promotions, it's worth being able to tell them apart from genuine alerts you should pay attention to — because not every pop-up is a nag to silence. A little discernment keeps you safe without being pestered.

Safe to ignore / turn off	Worth paying attention to
'Try Microsoft 365' and app suggestions	Windows Security warning about a real threat
'Finish setting up your device'	A genuine 'updates ready, please restart' prompt
Edge 'set me as default' pop-ups	Low battery or low disk space warnings
Start-menu 'recommended' apps	Your antivirus flagging a specific file

WATCH OUT

The one place to be careful is that scammers imitate real alerts, making fake 'virus detected' pop-ups that look official. A genuine Windows Security alert never gives you a phone number to call — if a scary pop-up tells you to phone someone, it's a scam, not an alert. Close it and, if unsure, call me.

14 When to Call Bill

Every switch in this guide is safe, and I'd encourage you to turn off whatever bothers you. But if Windows feels like it's constantly selling to you and you'd just like it all handled at once — the ads off, the prompts quieted, your account and backup set up the way you actually want — that's a quick, satisfying visit that leaves the computer calm and genuinely yours.

I come to you here in Portage County, go through every one of these settings, make deliberate choices with you about your account and OneDrive so the prompts stop for good, and leave you with a computer that works for you instead of pestering you. It's one of the changes people are most pleasantly surprised by.

- Windows feels like it's constantly nagging and you'd like it all quieted at once.
- You keep getting pushed into account or backup prompts you didn't want.
- You're unsure which settings are safe to change.
- You'd simply like a calm, ad-free computer set up properly.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. These are promotions, not errors — turning them off is safe and harms nothing. Use the search box at the top of Settings.

I want to…	Do this…
Clear Start-menu suggestions	Personalization Start turn off recommendations
Stop tips & welcome pop-ups	System Notifications turn off tips, suggestions, welcome
Remove lock screen ads	Personalization Lock screen set to Picture; turn off fun facts
Clean File Explorer banners	Folder Options View turn off sync provider notifications
Stop Edge nagging	Set another default browser; turn off Edge's offer/shopping settings
Turn off personalized ads	Privacy & security General turn off advertising ID
Kill the widgets/news popup	Personalization Taskbar turn off Widgets
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

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KEY SPECS

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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

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