



An Extended Guide · No. 1949

"Why Is Everything So Tiny?" — Resolution & Scaling on a New Monitor

Make text both sharp and
large — on Windows and Mac

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★ Read this first — you really can't break anything

Before we start, a promise: you cannot break anything just by reading, looking, or trying a setting. Screens, keyboards, and cables are made to be plugged and unplugged, and almost anything you change can be changed right back. Go at your own pace, skip to the page you need, and if you ever feel stuck, that is exactly what I am here for — there is no such thing as a silly question. If a new screen made everything look tiny, nothing is wrong — and nothing is broken. This guide fixes it in two minutes and explains, plainly, why it happened.

"Why is everything so tiny on my new screen?"

It's one of the most common surprises I hear about: a shiny new monitor arrives, and suddenly the text looks smaller than on the old one. Take a breath — the screen is fine, and the fix is quick and free.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping folks get comfortable with their computers, patiently and in plain language. This little mystery sends perfectly good screens back to the store every day, and it shouldn't. Let me show you what's really going on.

The secret is two settings that sound technical but aren't: resolution and scaling. Get them working together and you'll have text that's both large and crisp. We'll do it step by step, on Windows and on a Mac, and you won't need to remember a thing afterward.

★ You truly can't break anything here

Every setting in this guide can be changed right back in seconds. Poke at them, try them, change your mind — it's all reversible. And if you'd rather I just set it to a comfortable size for you, call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — often I can do it right on your screen.

The whole fix, on one page

If you remember only these things, you'll have large, crisp text and never fear a 'tiny' new screen again.

- ❑ A sharper screen packs in more dots, so it draws everything smaller out of the box. That's normal — not a defect.
- ❑ Leave the resolution at the sharpest (native, 'Recommended') setting. That's what keeps text crisp.
- ❑ To make things bigger, use the text-size setting — called scaling. It enlarges text while keeping it clean.
- ❑ On Windows, look for 'Scale' or 'Make text bigger.' On a Mac, look for 'Larger Text' in Displays.
- ❑ Do NOT lower the resolution to enlarge things — that makes everything blurry instead of bigger-and-crisp.
- ❑ You can also zoom a single web page or document with a quick keystroke, on top of the main setting.

✓ The one sentence to remember

Leave the sharpness alone; turn up the text size. That's the whole trick — large and crisp, instead of big and blurry.

Why a new screen makes text look smaller

Let's clear up the mystery first, slowly, because once you understand it the fix makes perfect sense.

Think of a screen as a window made of tiny dots. A newer, sharper screen has many more dots packed into the same space than an older one. That's a good thing — it means smoother pictures and cleaner letters. But out of the box, the computer draws each letter using the same small number of dots it always did, so on a denser screen each letter ends up physically smaller.

So the sharpness that makes a new screen so nice is the very thing that makes text look tiny at first. Nothing is wrong. The computer just needs to be told, 'draw everything bigger' — and that's the scaling setting we're about to use.

✓ Sharpness is a gift, not a problem

A sharp screen is exactly what lets you enlarge text and keep it crisp. On a less sharp screen, big text turns blocky. So the 'tiny text' surprise is really a sign you bought a good screen.

The two settings, and what each one does

Almost all the confusion comes from mixing these two up. Keep them straight and the rest is easy.

Resolution — the sharpness

Resolution is how many of those tiny dots the screen uses. The sharpest setting — often marked 'Recommended' or 'native' — lines the computer's dots up perfectly with the screen's dots, so everything looks clean. You want to leave it there and not touch it.

Scaling — the size of everything

Scaling (also called text size) tells the computer how big to draw text, buttons, and icons. Turn it up and everything grows — while staying crisp, because the screen is still at its sharp setting underneath. This is the knob you actually want for 'make it bigger.'

✓ Resolution = sharpness. Scaling = size.

Write that on a sticky note if it helps. Resolution is how sharp; scaling is how big. Leave sharpness at its best, and turn size up to suit your eyes. They are two different knobs, and only one of them should move.

Why not just lower the resolution?

It's the natural first instinct — drop the resolution and everything gets bigger. It works, in a way, but it comes at a real cost.

When you lower the resolution, the screen stops using all its dots. To fill the glass, the computer has to stretch a smaller picture across a bigger surface, blurring and softening everything — a bit like blowing up a small photo until it goes fuzzy. Text gets bigger, yes, but also smeary and tiring to read.

Scaling avoids all that. It keeps the screen at its sharpest and simply redraws text larger using all those dots. The result is big and clean, not big and blurry. That's why, for comfortable reading, scaling wins every time.

! The single most common mistake

Lowering the resolution to enlarge text is the number-one way people make a good screen look bad. If your screen looks soft or fuzzy, check the resolution first — put it back to 'Recommended,' then use scaling to get the size you want.

Making text bigger on Windows

Here's the plain path on a Windows computer. The exact words can vary a little by version, so I'll describe what to look for rather than a single magic phrase.

Open the computer's Settings, then go to the display settings — the section about the screen. A quick shortcut: right-click an empty spot on the desktop and look for a 'Display settings' choice.

In there, look for a setting called 'Scale' or 'Make text bigger' (some versions show a percentage, some a slider). Nudge it up a step and watch the text grow. Keep going until reading feels easy — there's no prize for leaving it small. While you're there, make sure the resolution just below is set to whatever is marked 'Recommended.'

✓ Watch for a 'sign out to apply' note

On Windows, a few programs don't resize until you sign out and back in (or restart). If some windows look right and others don't, a quick sign-out usually tidies it up. It's harmless.

Making text bigger on a Mac

A Mac does the same job with slightly different words. Again, I'll describe what to look for so you can find it whatever your Mac's version.

Open System Settings (on older Macs it's called System Preferences) from the Apple menu in the top-left corner, then open 'Displays.'

In Displays, look for a row of preview choices or a setting for text size — often shown as options running from 'Larger Text' to 'More Space.' Choose toward 'Larger Text' and everything grows while staying crisp. The Mac handles the sharp underlying setting for you, so you don't have to fuss with resolution the way you might on Windows.

✓ 'Larger Text' is the one you want

On a Mac, the choice nearest 'Larger Text' is the comfortable end. 'More Space' shrinks everything to fit more on screen — the opposite of what most folks want. When in doubt, slide toward Larger Text.

If you can't find the setting

Menus move around between versions. Here are a few reliable ways to land on the right place without hunting.

- **On Windows:** right-click a blank part of the desktop and choose the display option, or open Settings and type 'scale' or 'text size' in its search box.
- **On a Mac:** open the Apple menu in the top-left, choose System Settings, and type 'display' or 'text' in its search box.
- **Either one:** search the Settings window for the words 'text size,' 'scale,' or 'display' — the search usually jumps you right to it.
- **Still stuck?** The words change, but the idea doesn't: you're looking for where the screen's size-of-everything is set. Take your time; you can't break anything by looking.

★ I can find it with you in two minutes

If the menus are playing hide-and-seek, this is the perfect quick thing to do together on your screen — often for \$49 without a visit. We'll find the setting, get the size comfortable, and you'll know where it lives. Call (330) 200-8042.

Zooming just one thing at a time

Sometimes you don't want everything bigger — just this one web page or document. There's a quick, free trick for that, on top of the main setting.

Most programs let you zoom in and out on their own, without changing anything system-wide. In a web browser, hold the Ctrl key (or the Command key on a Mac) and tap the plus key to enlarge the page, the minus key to shrink it, and the zero key to return to normal. The same trick works in many document and email programs.

This is wonderful for a page with stubbornly small print — blow it up just for that page, read in comfort, and it won't affect anything else. Think of the main scaling setting as your everyday size, and per-app zoom as a magnifying glass you pick up when you need it.

✓ Three keys worth remembering

Ctrl and + to enlarge, Ctrl and - to shrink, Ctrl and 0 to reset (use Command instead of Ctrl on a Mac). That little trio rescues many a tiny web page, and it undoes itself the moment you want it to.

Two ways people come to this

This fix is the same on both kinds of computer: leave the sharpness alone and turn up the size. Only the menu wording differs. Find your side below.

If you're on Windows

On a Windows computer, you'll set the size yourself and glance at the resolution to be sure it's on 'Recommended.' A little hands-on, but straightforward once you know the two knobs.

- Open Settings, then the display section (or right-click the desktop for 'Display settings').
- Set 'Scale' or 'Make text bigger' up a step at a time until reading is easy.
- Check that the resolution just below is set to 'Recommended.'
- If some windows lag behind, sign out and back in to apply it everywhere.

If you're on a Mac

On a Mac, it's even simpler — the Mac looks after the sharp setting for you, so you just slide toward larger text and you're done.

- Open the Apple menu, then System Settings (or System Preferences), then Displays.
- Choose the option toward 'Larger Text' rather than 'More Space.'
- Let the Mac handle the underlying sharpness — no resolution fiddling needed.
- Use Command and + to zoom a single page further when you want to.

★ Not sure which you have, or where to click?

Windows and Mac both get you to the same comfortable place. If you're unsure which you've got or the menus look different from this guide, that's a two-minute thing we can do together on your screen for \$49. Call (330) 200-8042.

How big should you make it?

There's no single right number — the right size is simply the one that lets you read without leaning in or squinting.

Turn the size up a step, then sit back the way you normally would and read a line or two. If you're still leaning in, turn it up another step. Keep going until reading feels relaxed and easy. Many folks stop too soon out of a feeling they 'shouldn't' make it that big — there's no such rule.

Your comfortable size can change over the years, and that's fine. Come back and nudge it up whenever reading starts to feel like work. The setting is there to serve your eyes, not the other way around.

✓ Bigger is allowed

Some people feel they ought to keep text small to fit more on screen. You don't owe the screen anything. Make it as large as is comfortable — your ease of reading is the entire point.

What if I have two screens of different sizes?

If you run a laptop next to a monitor, or two monitors, you may notice text looks fine on one and tiny on the other. There's a reason, and a fix.

Different screens often have different dot densities, so the same scaling setting makes text a comfortable size on one and small on the other. The good news: both Windows and Mac let you set the size separately for each screen. Click the screen you want to adjust in the display settings first, then set its size.

Set each screen so text is comfortable on that screen, and don't worry if the numbers differ — matching comfort matters more than matching settings. Our guide on using a TV as a computer screen and the docks guide touch on multi-screen setups too.

✓ Adjust each screen on its own

In the display settings, click a screen first to select it, then change its size. That's the step people miss — they change one and expect both to follow. Each screen has its own size setting.

More ways to enlarge, if you want them

Beyond the main size setting, computers have extra tools for folks who want text even larger or easier to see.

- **A dedicated text-size slider:** both Windows and Mac have an accessibility setting that enlarges just the text in many places, on top of the main scaling.
- **A magnifier:** a built-in tool that zooms into part of the screen like a magnifying glass, handy for the occasional tiny label.
- **Bigger mouse pointer:** you can enlarge the on-screen arrow so it's easy to find — a small comfort that helps a lot.
- **Higher-contrast or 'dark' modes:** some find light text on a dark background, or bolder contrast, easier on the eyes.

You don't need any of these to be comfortable — the main scaling setting does the heavy lifting. But they're there, they're free, and they're worth knowing about as your needs change.

✓ Start simple, add as needed

Get the main text size comfortable first. If you still want more in certain spots, reach for the accessibility text slider or the magnifier. No need to turn everything on at once.

If something still looks off

A handful of things can make a screen look wrong even after you've set the size. Here's how to sort each one out.

Q: Everything is bigger now, but it looks a little fuzzy.

Check the resolution — it may have been lowered. Put it back to 'Recommended' (the sharpest setting), then use scaling for size. Sharpness comes from resolution; size comes from scaling.

Q: I turned up the size but some windows didn't change.

On Windows, a few programs only resize after you sign out and back in or restart. Do that and they'll catch up. It's harmless.

Q: The text is huge now and things run off the edge of the screen.

You've gone a step too far — turn the size down one notch. The aim is comfortable, not enormous. Buttons should all still fit on screen.

Q: One screen is fine but my second screen is tiny.

Each screen has its own size setting. Click the small screen in the display settings to select it, then turn its size up on its own.

✓ Change one thing, then look

When something's off, change a single setting and look at the result before touching another. It's the easiest way to tell what helped — and to put it back if it didn't.

Size is only part of comfort

Getting the text big and crisp is the biggest step, but a few companions make reading even easier on the eyes.

Dim the screen's brightness to roughly match the light in the room — a screen glowing far brighter than its surroundings is tiring no matter how big the text. Many screens also have a warmer, evening color mode that takes the harsh edge off the light later in the day.

Position matters too: the top of the screen near eye level, about an arm's length away. And tell your eye doctor how far you sit from the screen and how long you're at it — there are lenses made for exactly that distance. Our guide on choosing a monitor for aging eyes covers the comfort side in more depth.

✓ Big text plus the right light

Large, crisp text and a screen dimmed to match the room are the two comforts that do the most together. Get both and reading stops being a chore.

Before you send a 'tiny' screen back

If a new screen has you reaching for the return label because everything looks small, please read this first — it may save you the trip.

A brand-new screen that makes text look smaller is almost never defective. It's the sharpness-makes-text-small surprise we've been talking about, and it's fixed in the two minutes it takes to turn up the scaling setting. I've seen plenty of perfectly good screens returned for exactly this — a shame, because a quick setting would have made them wonderful.

So before you box it up: leave the resolution on 'Recommended,' turn the text size up until reading is easy, and live with it for an evening. Judge it after it's set up properly, not straight out of the box.

★ Let me check before you give up on it

If a new screen seems wrong, text me a photo or call me before you return it. Nine times out of ten it's a two-minute setting, not a bad screen, and I can often sort it right on your screen for \$49. Call (330) 200-8042.

The whole idea, start to finish

Let's lay the whole thing out in order, so it's clear as a bell. This is the summary the other guides point you here for.

- **A sharper screen draws text smaller** out of the box — that's normal, not a fault.
- **Resolution controls sharpness.** Leave it on 'Recommended' (native) so everything stays crisp.
- **Scaling controls size.** Turn it up to make text, buttons, and icons bigger while staying clean.
- **Never lower the resolution to enlarge** — that blurs everything instead of sharply enlarging it.
- **Windows:** look for 'Scale' or 'Make text bigger' in display settings. **Mac:** slide toward 'Larger Text' in Displays.
- **Per-app zoom** (Ctrl or Command with + and -) enlarges a single page on top of all that.

✓ If you keep one page, keep this one

This is the heart of it: sharpness from resolution, size from scaling, and never trade one for the other. Everything else is just where the buttons live.

Common mistakes people make

A few predictable slip-ups cause almost all the 'my screen looks wrong' calls. Now you'll sidestep them.

- **Lowering the resolution to enlarge text**, making everything blurry instead of bigger-and-crisp.
- **Leaving the text too small** out of a feeling you shouldn't make it big. You should — comfort is the point.
- **Returning a 'tiny' new screen** that just needed its scaling turned up.
- **Changing one screen and expecting both to follow** on a two-screen setup. Each has its own size.
- **Forgetting to sign out** on Windows when some windows won't resize.

! Fuzzy almost always means the resolution moved

If your screen looks soft or smeary, the resolution was very likely dropped below its sharpest setting. Put it back to 'Recommended' and use scaling for size. That one check fixes most fuzzy-screen complaints.

Setting this up for someone else

Often it's an adult child fixing a 'tiny' screen for a parent over the phone or on a visit. A few tips make that go smoothly.

Set the size more generously than you would for yourself — what looks big to younger eyes is often just right for older ones. Leave the resolution on 'Recommended,' turn the scaling well up, and then sit the person down to check it reads easily from where they actually sit.

Show them, slowly, where the size setting lives and that it's theirs to turn up further any time. Reassure them they can't break anything. A parent who knows how to make their own text bigger — and knows it's allowed — is a parent who'll keep using the computer happily.

✓ Leave them able to adjust it

The best gift isn't just big text today — it's showing them the one setting so they can make it bigger tomorrow. Write the steps on a large-print sticky note and leave it by the screen.

How this fits with the other guides

This is the deep dive the rest of the monitor guides point to. Here's where to turn next, depending on what you're after.

- **Choosing a monitor for aging eyes** — picking a screen that's easy to read: size, sharpness, matte finish, and stands.
- **Setting up a parent's computer desk** — the whole desk, with this scaling fix as one key step.
- **Using a TV as a computer screen** — the same leave-sharpness, raise-size rule applies to a TV.
- **Large-print keyboards and easy mice** — for when the typing and clicking need to be easier too.

Whatever brought you here, the core idea travels with you: leave the sharpness at its best, and turn the size up to suit your eyes. That one habit makes every screen you ever own more comfortable.

★ One idea, every screen you own

Once you've got this, you've got it for life — every new phone, tablet, and computer has the same two knobs. If you'd like me to walk you through it once so it sticks, call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about tiny text and these two settings, answered plainly.

Q: Why does my new screen make everything so small?

Because it's sharper — it packs in more dots, so the computer draws things smaller out of the box. Nothing is wrong. Turn up the text-size (scaling) setting and it'll be large and crisp.

Q: Should I lower the resolution to make text bigger?

No — that makes everything blurry. Leave the resolution on the sharpest 'Recommended' setting and use scaling (text size) to enlarge. That keeps text big and clean.

Q: Where is the setting on Windows versus a Mac?

On Windows, open display settings and look for 'Scale' or 'Make text bigger.' On a Mac, open Displays and slide toward 'Larger Text.' The words vary a little by version, but that's what to look for.

Q: Can I make just one web page bigger without changing everything?

Yes. Hold Ctrl (or Command on a Mac) and tap the plus key to zoom that page in, the minus key to zoom out, and the zero key to reset. It affects only that page.

★ Still looks tiny? Let's fix it together

Tiny text is one of the quickest things I help with, and it's deeply satisfying to make a screen comfortable in a couple of minutes. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — often I can do it right on your screen.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made getting your screen's text both sharp and large feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. For anything that calls for licensed electrical work, I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

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The Two Knobs, Kept Straight

Only one of them should move

	What it controls	What to do
Resolution	Sharpness	Leave on Recommended
Scaling	Size of all	Turn it up to suit you
Per-app zoom	One page's size	Ctrl/Cmd and + or -

Sharpness from resolution, size from scaling -- never trade one for the other.

Making Text Big and Crisp

The calm order that works every time



Leave the sharpness alone and turn the size up -- that's the whole fix.

Big-and-Crisp vs. Big-and-Blurry

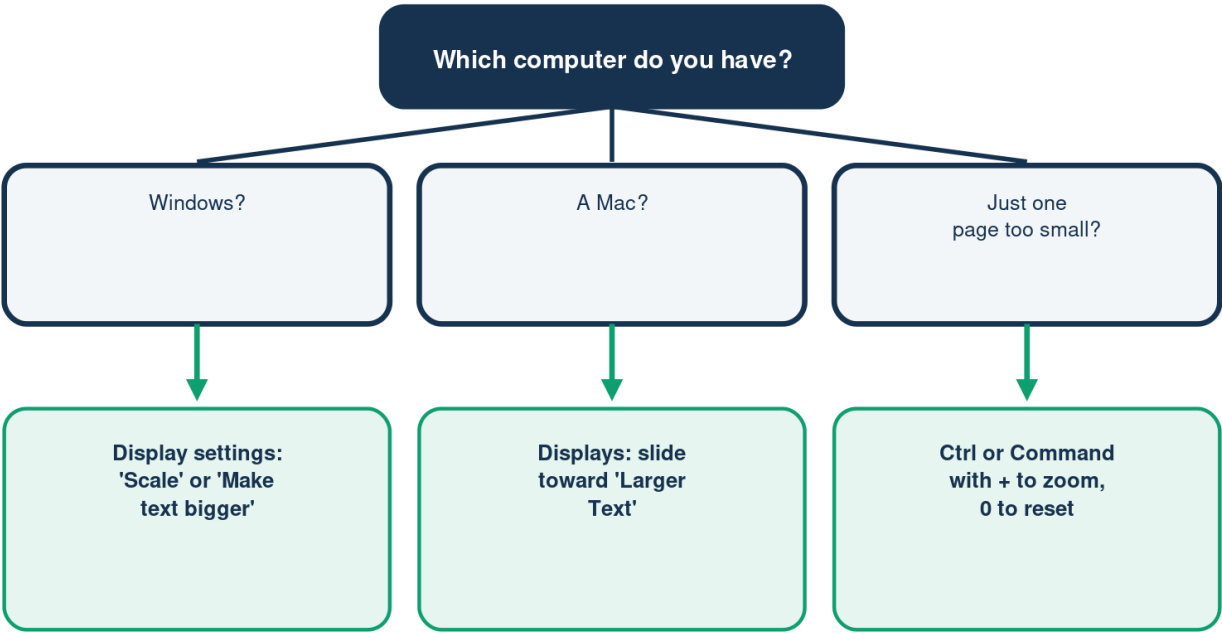
Why the method matters

	Turn up scaling	Lower resolution
Text size	Gets bigger	Gets bigger
Sharpness	Stays crisp	Goes blurry
On the eyes	Easy to read	Tiring, soft
Verdict	Do this	Avoid this

Both enlarge text; only scaling keeps it clean. Choose scaling.

Where's the Size Setting?

Same idea, different words on each computer



Never lower the resolution to enlarge -- it only makes things blurry.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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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 comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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