



Windows 11 Made Easy

Getting Started and Making It Work for You

Mike Halsey

Apress®

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About the Author



Mike Halsey is a recognized technical expert. He is the author of help and how-to books for Windows 7, 8, and 10, including accessibility, productivity, and troubleshooting. He is also the author of *The Green IT Guide* (Apress). Mike is well versed in the problems and issues that PC users experience when setting up, using, and maintaining their PCs and knows how difficult and technical it can appear.

He understands that some subjects can be intimidating, so he approaches each subject area in straightforward and easy-to-understand ways. Mike is originally from the UK, but now lives in the south of France with his rescue border collies, Evan and Robbie. You can contact Mike on Twitter at @MikeHalsey.



About the Technical Reviewer



Carsten Thomsen is a back-end developer primarily but working with smaller front-end bits as well. He has authored and reviewed a number of books and created numerous Microsoft Learning courses, all to do with software development. He works as a freelancer/contractor in various countries in Europe, using Azure, Visual Studio, Azure DevOps, and GitHub as some of the tools he works with. Being an exceptional troubleshooter, asking the right questions, including the less logical ones, in a most logical to least logical fashion, he also enjoys working with architecture, research, analysis, development, testing, and bug fixing. Carsten is a very good communicator with great mentoring and team-lead skills and great skills in researching and presenting new material.

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CHAPTER 1

Finding Your Way Around Windows 11

It can be daunting when Microsoft release a new version of Windows, especially when, as they did with Windows 10 and now again with Windows 11, it's offered for free and is delivered to your PC by Windows Update. One day you're happily using Windows 10, and then the next morning, bleary-eyed and starting your first cup of coffee, you suddenly realize that everything is *not* where it used to be.

The Start button has moved, the Start Menu has changed, you don't know where all your apps are, and there's lots of new icons at the bottom of your screen and you have no idea what they are. Fear not weary traveler, as this is the book to bring you up to speed.

In fact, tell you what, let's do better than that. What I'll do, seeing as it's you, is to show you how to get the very best experience from Windows 11, whether you use it for play, shopping, work, or school.

I'll show you how to connect to your company systems so you can work from home. We'll look at how you can be more productive and get stuff done. I'll show you how to make Windows 11 easier to use for everybody from those who are colorblind to elderly parents with shaky hands, and we'll also get you connected to your Xbox and playing games online.

Most importantly though, I'll show you how to do all of this safely. You don't want to have to constantly worry about being infected with malware, or having your identity stolen, and you want to make sure too that Microsoft, Google, Facebook, Amazon, and all the other companies whose products and services you use on your PC aren't invading your personal privacy.

Windows 11 Primer

Let's dive straight in with some of the most useful information about Windows 11 and what you'll need to know not just as you use your PC today, but for when you continue to use it into the future. You will have questions, so let's deal with them one at a time.

What Is Windows 11 Anyway?

Windows 11 is the evolution of Windows 10. In fact, it really *is* just the same as Windows 10; it just looks different. Underneath, Windows 10 and Windows 11 are exactly the same operating systems, so work and operate in the same way. This means that any apps and hardware that worked with Windows 10 are guaranteed to work with Windows 11.

Windows 10 Kept Changing, Will Windows 11?

Over its life, Windows 10 went through quite a few changes. You can see in Figure 1-1, which shows Windows 10's Settings panel when it was first launched in 2015 (left) and the Settings panel six years later in 2021 (right).

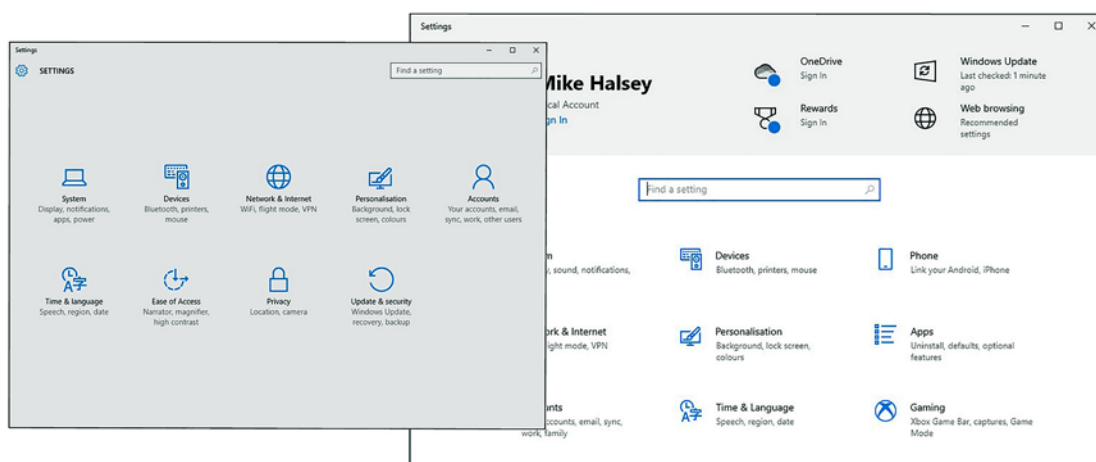


Figure 1-1. *Windows 10 changed quite a bit over its life*

The same will happen with Windows 11 over its life, and you might find that in a few years something I refer to in this book looks different than it does in the images here or is in a slightly different place. Don't worry though as, if this is likely to happen, I'll detail it in the chapter and show you how to find things that might have moved.

How Long Will Windows 11 Be Around For?

Another good question, as it was widely thought Windows 10 would be the last major version of the operating system. In fairness, this was a quote from a Microsoft executive at a conference back in 2015, but Microsoft never actually said it themselves in a formal way. It wasn't in a blog post, it wasn't in a press announcement, but because they never said the quote was wrong either, everybody just assumed it was true.

In late 2019, Microsoft began working on a new version of Windows called Windows 10 X. This was intended to make the PC experience significantly more secure and used advanced technologies to create what was intended to be the future of modern computing, but they could never get it working in a reliable way. As part of that development though, they devised a new look for Windows and, not wanting to waste it, decided to launch Windows 11 to give the PC market a bit of a kick-start as the world started to come out of the pandemic.

Officially, Windows 11 will be supported for about ten years, meaning you can be certain of continuing using it until 2031, but we don't have an exact date yet. Each *Feature Pack* for Windows 11, which I'll talk about in a minute, will be supported for two years, and then you'll have to upgrade to the latest feature pack.

Okay, What's a Feature Pack?

A Feature Pack (we used to call them Service Packs) are the big updates to Windows. These bring all the new features and sometimes a few changes to the operating system. They're not like the stability, security, and cumulative updates you get, which are there to keep Windows stable and secure.

Microsoft will release a Feature Pack once a year, usually in the autumn (fall for those in the United States). These will be delivered to you automatically, but if you'd rather wait and see if there are any problems with the first releases (as there can sometimes be), I'll show you how to do this in [Chapter 11](#).

Why Do I Have to Use a Microsoft Account?

This is the elephant in the room, and lots of people are unhappy with it. We use accounts to sign into everything these days – a Facebook account to sign into Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp, an Amazon account to shop online, a Google or an Apple account to get our smartphones working, and a Microsoft Account to sign into Windows – but is it worth it on your PC?

Some people are “old-school” and just have a stand-alone PC sitting in a corner of the living room or spare room, on which you type documents, do calculations on spreadsheets, do a little online banking, and do some shopping. This is fine if you only ever have one PC, don’t really keep Internet bookmarks for websites, have all your passwords written down or use a password manager like LastPass, and keep a regular backup copy of your files and documents on other devices.

Where a Microsoft Account comes in useful is both for automatically saving all your files, documents, and photos to Microsoft’s OneDrive cloud backup service and for synchronizing all your documents, photos, settings, website logins and passwords, Internet bookmarks, and more, not just between all your PCs, but your smartphone too if you use the Microsoft Edge web browser on it.

This is also useful should your PC need replacing, as everything will be automatically resynced to your new desktop PC or laptop.

If you want to use a local account instead, you will need a copy of Windows 11 Pro. You can search in Settings, in *System* ➤ *About* to see which version you have, see Figure 1-2, and I’ll show you how to find settings later in this chapter.

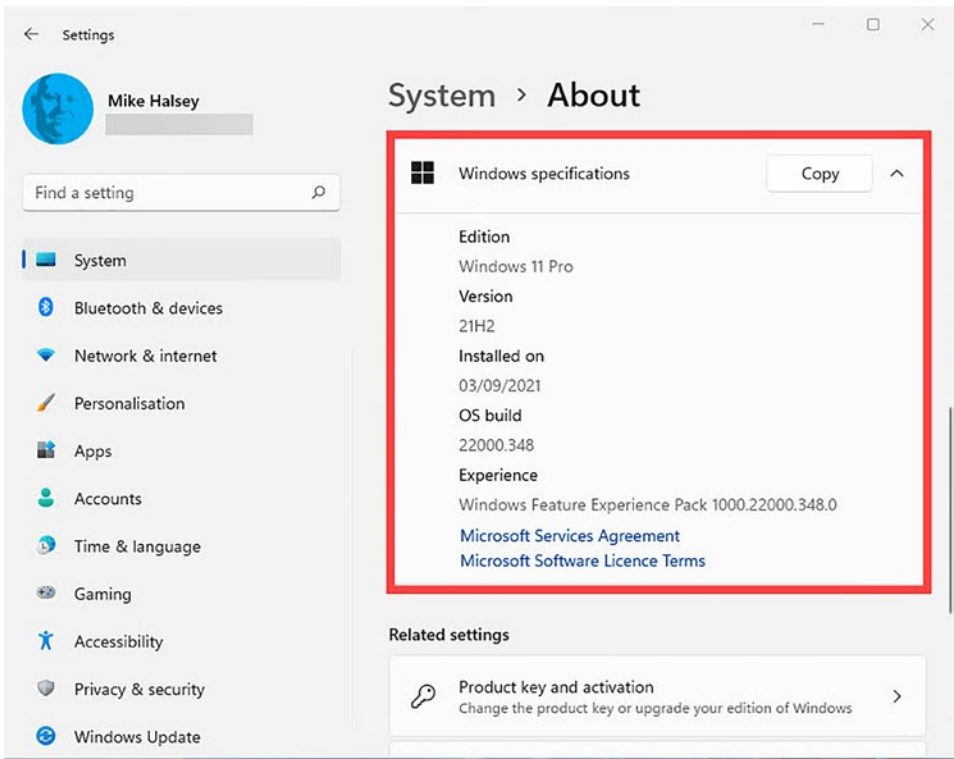


Figure 1-2. You need Windows 11 Pro to use a local account

If you're concerned about privacy and security though, don't be. In Chapter 9, I'll show you how to configure and manage your privacy in Windows 11.

Let's Get Started!

When you start Windows 11, you'll first get to what's called the Lock Screen, see Figure 1-3. This is where you'll be asked for your password or pin. (I'll show you how to set these up and how to use a fingerprint reader or your webcam to sign in automatically in Chapter 9.)

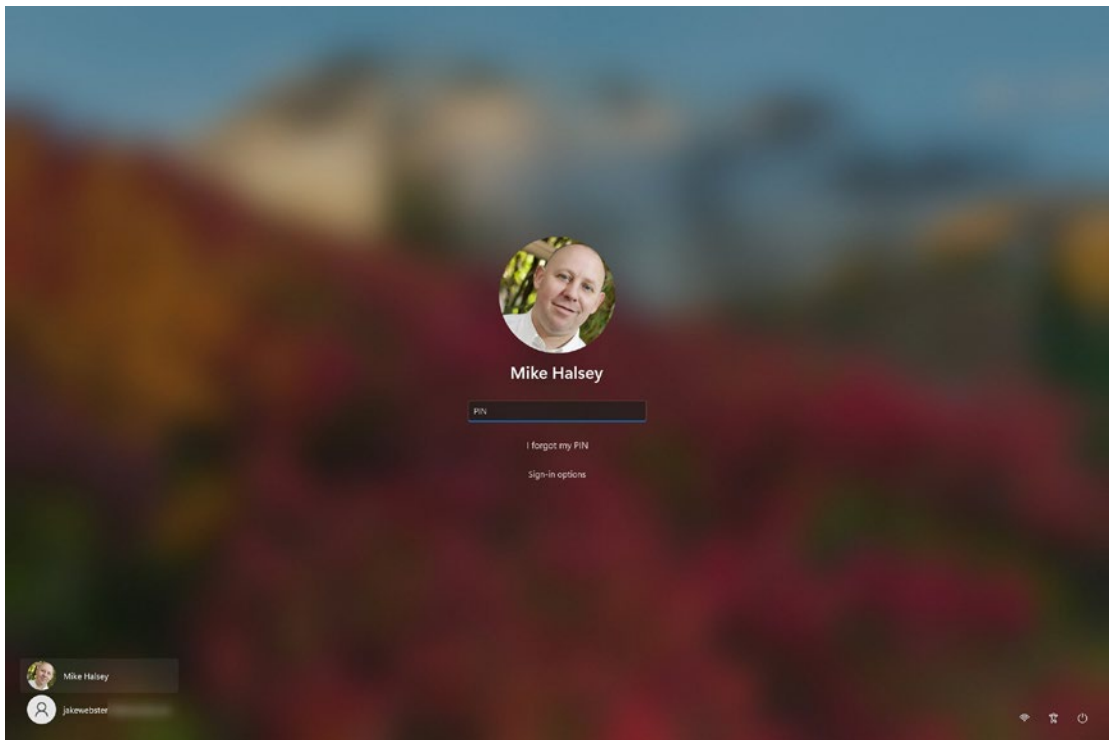


Figure 1-3. *The Lock Screen is the first thing you see in Windows 11*

In the front and center is your picture (sometimes called an avatar) and a box in which you can type your password or pin code. Below that is/are options to change how you sign in, that is, switching between a password, pin, and Windows Hello via your camera.

In the bottom left are buttons for all the user accounts on your PC. You will only see this if there is more than one account on the PC, and I'll show you how to add and manage accounts for your family and other people in Chapter 2.

In the bottom right are buttons for connecting to a Wi-Fi network, open the *Ease of Access* settings (which I'll detail in full in Chapter 6), and then there's a button in the bottom-right corner to either restart or shut down the PC.

The Windows 11 Desktop and Start Menu

Once you're past the Lock Screen, you'll see the new Windows 11 desktop. It's a little different from previous versions of Windows, but this is because improvements have been made.

The first thing you'll notice is that the Start button is no longer in the far-left corner of the Taskbar (the colored bar that runs along the bottom of the screen), but don't worry as if you want it put back there, I'll show you how in Chapter 2.

Clicking the Start button opens the new Start Menu, see Figure 1-4, and this too has changed, so let's take a couple of minutes looking around the desktop and Start Menu to see what's what and what's where.

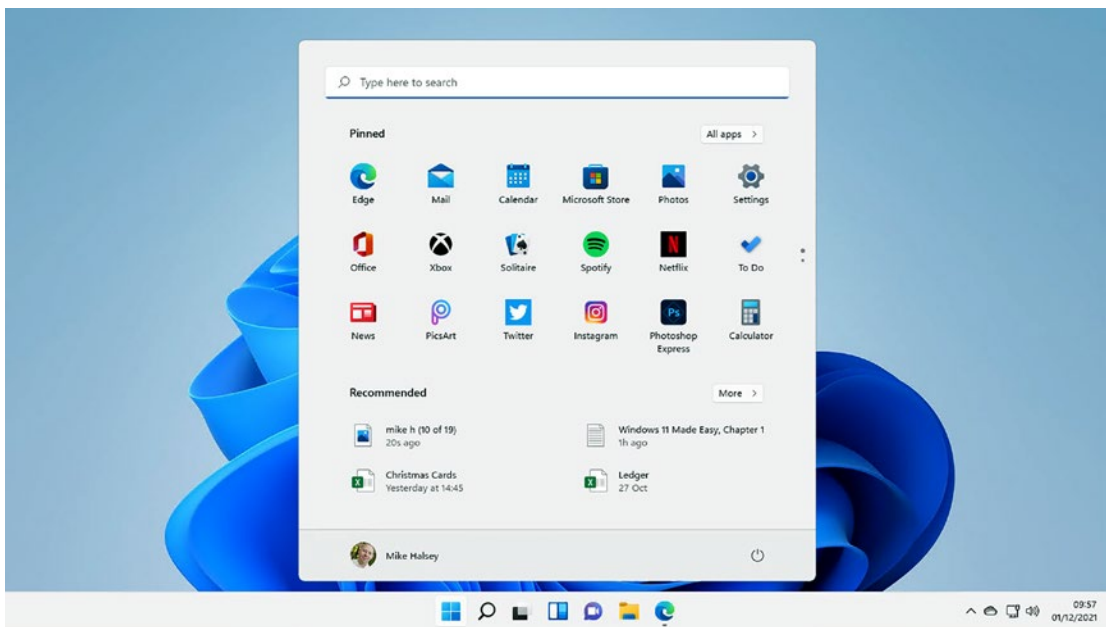


Figure 1-4. *The desktop and Start Menu have changed slightly in Windows 11*

As we've already seen, the Start button and your icons for pinned and open apps can now be found in the center of the Taskbar. Any app that's open will have a blue dot underneath it, and the app that's currently in use (sometimes called in focus) on the desktop will have a blue line, see Figure 1-5.



Figure 1-5. Taskbar icons and the Start button now sit in the center of your screen

At the right side of the Taskbar are two areas. One is called the *System Tray*, and it displays icons you might need for running apps (like OneDrive or your antivirus software) and for Windows features such as connecting to a Wi-Fi network or changing the volume, see Figure 1-6.

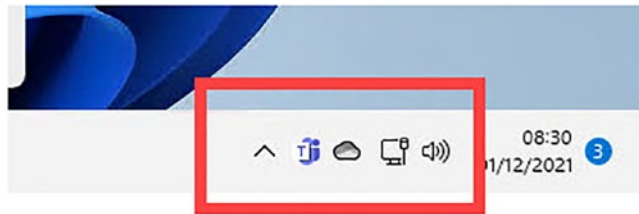


Figure 1-6. The System Tray sits on the right side of the Taskbar

To their left is a small up arrow (^) which you can click to display hidden icons. Any hidden icon that's important to you can be dragged back to the Taskbar to always show it, and any you don't need can be dragged onto the arrow to hide them.

At the right end of the Taskbar is the clock, date, and notification icon. If you have any notifications, as seen in Figure 1-6, there will be a small circle with a number in it. Clicking this icon or the clock will pop up a panel on the right of your screen with notifications at the top and your calendar below, see Figure 1-7. I will show you how to manage notifications later in this chapter.

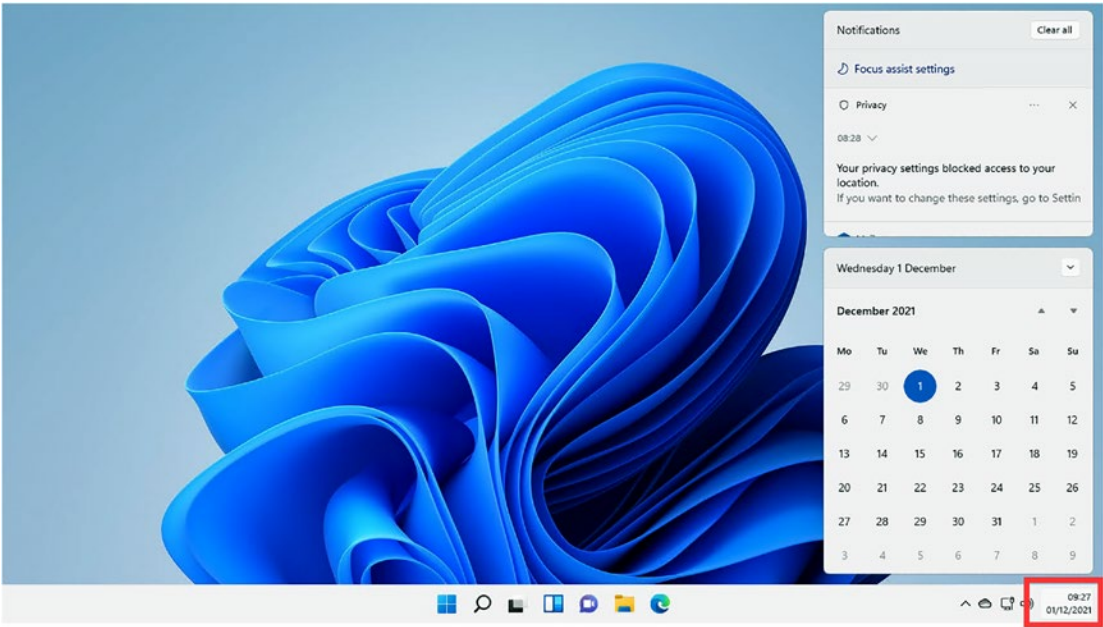


Figure 1-7. *You can display your notifications by clicking the clock to the right of the Taskbar*

Then we move to the Start Menu, which has four main sections. At the very top of the Start Menu is a search box. You can type in here to search for everything from your installed apps to files, documents, pictures, and any music or video files you have on the PC, and you can even search the Internet from here, see Figure 1-8. I will show you how to use search later in this chapter.

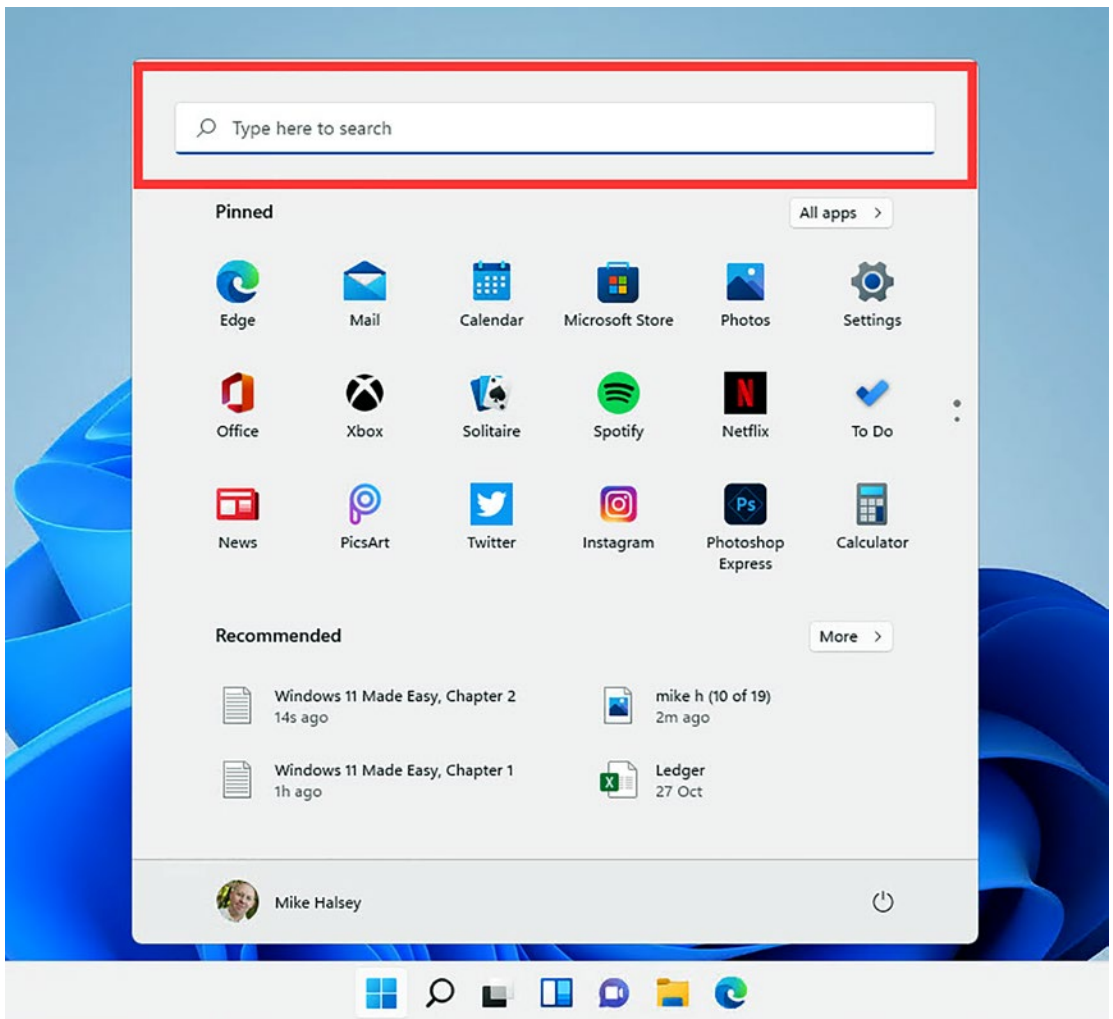


Figure 1-8. You can search for anything from the Start Menu

Below this is the list of your pinned apps, you can change these, and I will show you how later in the chapter. In the top right of this section is an *All apps* button that you can click to display a scrollable list of all the apps installed on your PC, see Figure 1-9.

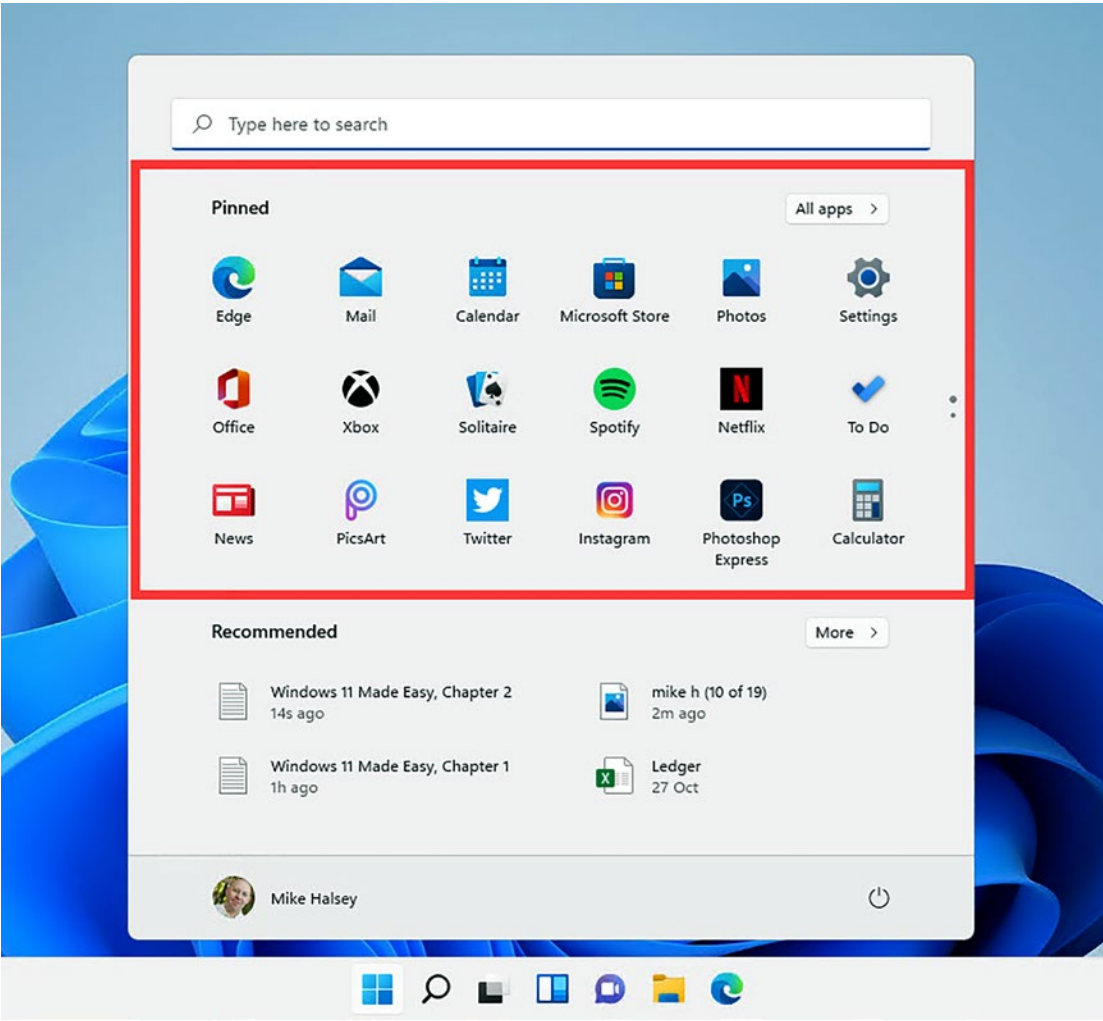


Figure 1-9. You access your pinned and installed apps from the Start Menu

Below the apps list is a section called *Recommended* (note this may get a different name in a future update to Windows 11), and this is where you'll see a list of all your most recently used and accessed files and documents, see Figure 1-10. This can make it really easy to find that document you were working on yesterday.

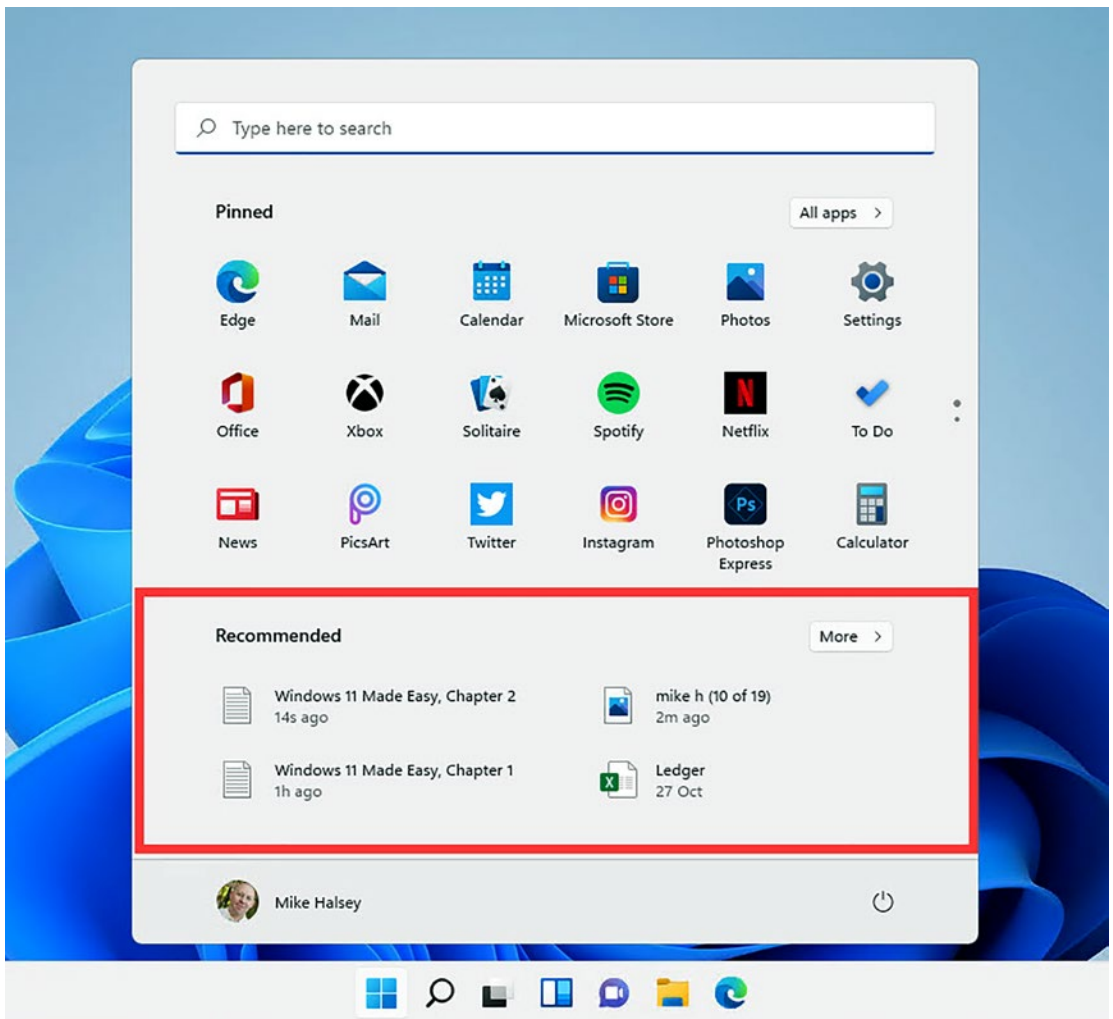


Figure 1-10. *Your most recently used documents will appear in the Start Menu*

If you have a lot of recent files and documents, you will also see a *More* button in the top-right corner of this section. You can click this to display a complete list of all the files and documents you have accessed most recently. I will show you more about managing files and documents in Chapter 5.

Lastly, at the bottom of the Start Menu are two buttons. On the left is your user avatar. You can click this to switch between different user accounts on the PC if you have more than one, lock the PC if you're going away from it for a while (perhaps to lunch), and access your account settings, which we will look at in Chapter 2, see Figure 1-11.

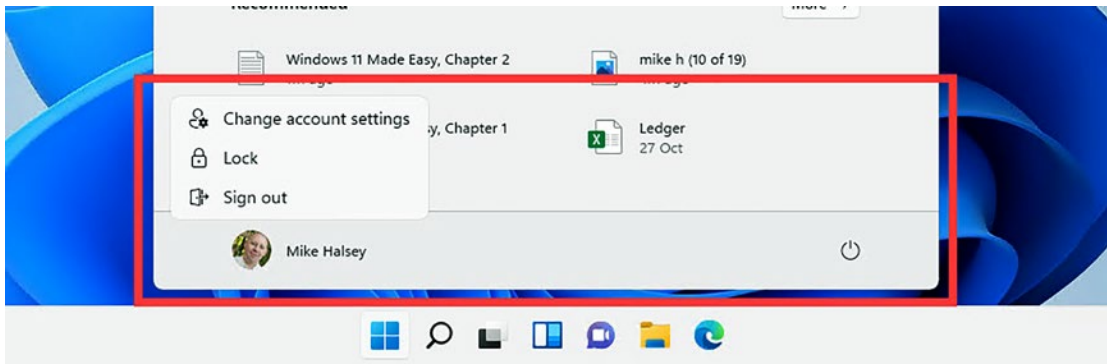


Figure 1-11. You can sign out of your account and restart the PC from the Start Menu

In the bottom-right corner of the Start Menu is a power button, and clicking this will display options to shut down and restart the PC, as well as putting it into a sleep state.

Running and Finding Apps

Windows 11 comes with a lot of apps already installed, including Microsoft Office, and apps for playing music and video. Many are pinned to the Start Menu already and all of them are available by clicking the *All apps* button as I detailed earlier.

You can move apps around in the Start Menu by dragging their icon with your mouse or finger (if your PC has a touch screen) to arrange them how you like. Right-clicking (touching and holding with your finger) an icon will display a menu of options. These include unpinning the app from the Start menu if you don't want to see it there, pinning it to the Taskbar instead (more on this in Chapter 7), or uninstalling it, see Figure 1-12.

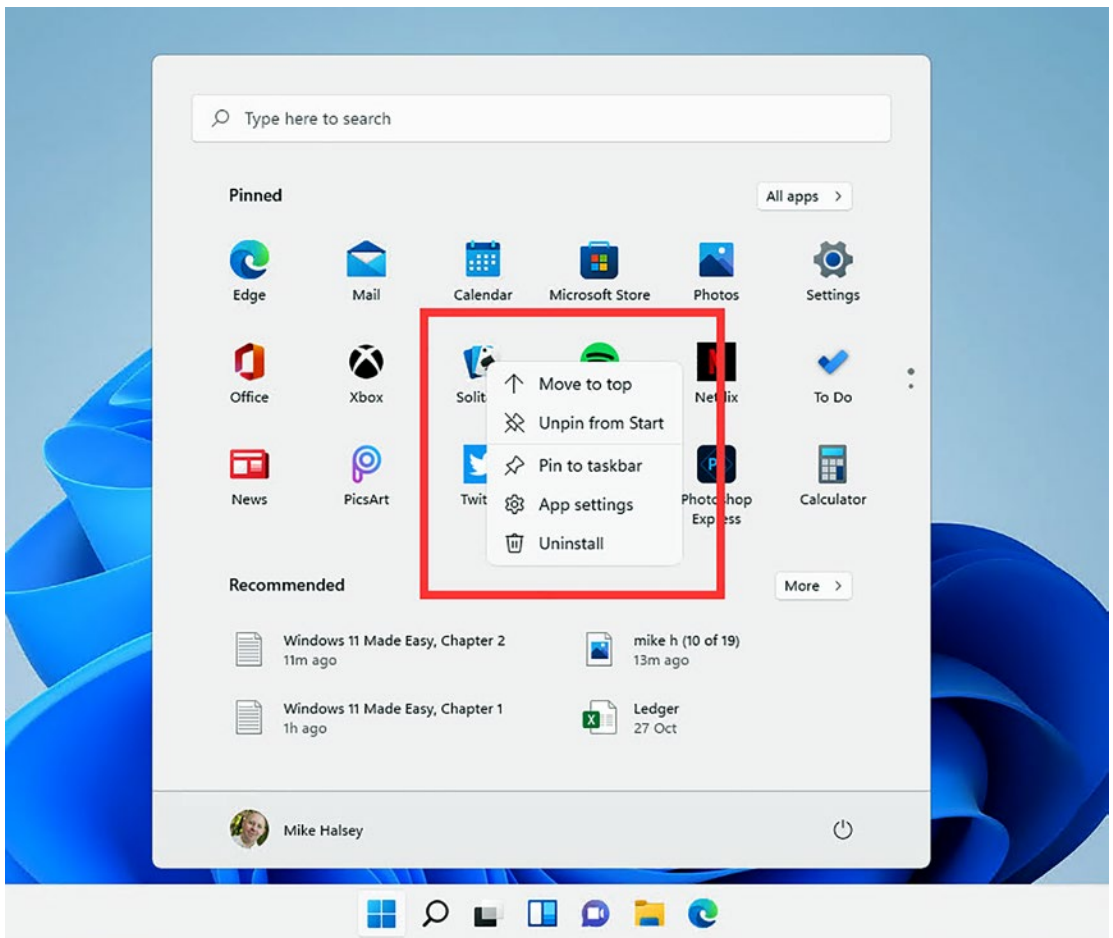


Figure 1-12. You can right-click an app icon to get rid of it

When you're in the *All apps* view, you can also right-click (touch and hold) an app to display a menu of options which include pinning it to the Start Menu and uninstalling it, see Figure 1-13.