

LEARNING MADE EASY



3rd Edition

Chromebook[®]

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Select and set up
your Chromebook

Master the latest features in the
ChromeOS operating system

Increase your productivity
with Google apps

Peter H. Gregory

CISA, CISSP, CRISC, CISM, CIPM,
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trainer, and author of dozens of books

Chromebook[®]

**for
dummies[®]**
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Chromebook[®]

3rd Edition

by Peter H. Gregory

**for
dummies[®]**
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Introduction

Laptop sales have been declining for years. This decline is mainly due to the rise in popularity of smartphones and tablets in the consumer market. Technology is getting smaller, faster, and more portable, so the world's dependence on full-size, full-featured (and some would say bloated) computers with fixed connections has begun to decrease.

However, in this declining market, the rising star is the *Chromebook* — a low-cost, portable computer powered by Google's ChromeOS, the first popular operating system inspired by and designed specifically for the internet. Unlike Windows PCs and the Mac, which were designed for general computer use with several large applications and local storage, Chromebooks are designed *primarily* for internet use. Instead of a gigantic hard drive, Chromebook relies mainly on cloud-based storage. Instead of lots of expensive memory, Chromebook uses the Chrome browser that doesn't use a lot of memory. And instead of resident applications, Chromebook uses mainly web-based applications that are accessed and bookmarked through the Chrome Web Store and the Google Play store.

By offloading the bulk of the functionality to the cloud, Google made it possible for hardware manufacturers to create computers with hardware configurations designed specifically for life on the web. The result is an accessible, user-friendly computer with a much lower price point, making it an excellent option for schools, students, companies, and budget-conscious people needing modern computing power.

It's paying off. With sales in the tens of millions worldwide, Chromebooks make up almost two-thirds of all computers sold to K-12 schools in the United States and over half of those sold in Australia, and they're gaining traction worldwide. This market share — which is expected to keep growing in the education, business, and consumer sectors — means that the future of Chromebooks is bright. What students use in school today, they'll use at home and work tomorrow.

Similarly, more corporations are offering Chromebooks to employees for their corporate workstations. Chromebooks have a lower price point, are easier to manage, and don't have the security problems experienced by Windows (mostly) and Macs (a little, and growing).

Although Chromebooks use Google's ChromeOS operating system, by no means are Chromebooks "Google only" computers. Tools from Microsoft, Apple, and Amazon work on Chromebooks, too. And because Chromebooks are browser-centric, the entire world of the internet is your oyster!

About This Book

Sometimes the greatest obstacle with new technology is the fear that you won't be able to grasp it fast enough for it to be of use. The good news is that this book is designed to remove all the guesswork. *Chromebook For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, is designed to give you all the tips and tools you need to excel with your Chromebook.

You don't need to have any preexisting experience with Chromebooks, ChromeOS, Android, or the Chrome browser to use *Chromebook For Dummies*, 3rd Edition. You don't even have to own a Chromebook: This book can help you choose the right Chromebook! (See Chapter 1 for an overview of features and Chapter 20 for details on selecting the right Chromebook for your needs.) If you have a Chromebook, this book guides you from the initial setup phase to the features that make Chromebooks unique and easy to use. Later sections of the book give you step-by-step instructions on using popular apps that can make you productive (or entertain you) on day one. By the time you hit the book's advanced settings and features section, you'll probably consider yourself an advanced Chromebook user. It doesn't take long!

Many computer books get bogged down with technical jargon and mumbo jumbo. This book, however, isn't written for the technological elite; it's written for the 99.9 percent of the population who just want a no-nonsense approach to using an easy-to-use computer.

Currently, several hardware manufacturers make Chromebooks. You've probably heard of many of them: HP, Samsung, Lenovo, Dell, Acer, Toshiba, and Asus, to name a few. Google even has its own branded Chromebook, the Google Pixelbook Go. The only difference between these devices is the hardware — not the operating system. For that reason, *Chromebook For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, doesn't reference any specific device or manufacturer. ChromeOS is the same across all of these brands.

Chromebooks are great devices, and their intuitive design makes for a very short learning curve. This book can help ensure that you have all the info you need to use your Chromebook like a rock star.

Foolish Assumptions

Chromebook For Dummies, 3rd Edition, requires no prior computer knowledge or experience. Of course, if you have experience using PCs or Macs, you'll already be familiar with many of the Chromebook's features. If you've never used a laptop before but have used smartphones, you'll find that many concepts carry over. You'll be fine!

This book makes no assumptions about your skill level. Although it's primarily an introductory guide to the Chromebook and ChromeOS, you can also consider it an essential guide to personal computing.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, icons in the margins highlight certain types of valuable information that call out for your attention. Here are the icons you'll encounter and a brief description of each.



TIP

The Tip icon marks tips and shortcuts that you can use to make your Chromebook experience easier. The tips in this book are timesaving techniques or pointers to resources that you should try so that you can get the maximum benefit from your Chromebook.



REMEMBER

Remember icons mark the information that's especially important to know. This icon reminds you of meaningful content you should file away because it may be useful again.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

Whenever you see this icon, think advanced tip or technique. You may find these tidbits of useful information to be just too boring for words, or they may contain the solution you need to get your Chromebook working just the way you want. Skip these bits of information whenever you like.



WARNING

At the risk of sounding like an alarmist, I use a warning icon to point out something you should pay close attention to. Proceed with caution if you must proceed at all.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you are reading now, this book also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet that gives you access to extra content, including quick-reference information that may come in handy when you're in a pinch. Check out this book's online Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com and search for Chromebook For Dummies in the Search box.

Where to Go from Here

The time has come to dive into the world of Chromebooks and ChromeOS. If you're entirely new to computers or maybe just a little timid with them, start with Chapter 1. The first chapters of the book are designed to guide you through the process of powering on your device, logging in, navigating your new computing environment, and even getting familiar with some keyboard and touchpad features unique to the Chromebook.

If you're a little more daring than others, you may skip the book's first few chapters and head directly to the chapter on the Chrome browser. If you already have a Chromebook, you can read this book from cover to cover to pick up knowledge here and there, or go to the table of contents or the index to look up specific information you need. Regardless of how you fancy yourself, this book can serve as an excellent primer for life with a Chromebook. And what a great, easily-managed life it can be!

1

Getting Started with Chromebook

IN THIS PART . . .

Identify the Chromebook that meets your needs.

Get familiar with the Chromebook Launcher and desktop.

Unleash the Chrome browser's advanced features.

Work with and customize the keyboard and touchpad.

Get acquainted with powerful apps.

Set up web-based email with Gmail.

Find and access your files.

- » Understanding what makes a Chromebook tick
- » Selecting your very own Chromebook
- » Using your Chromebook for the first time
- » Switching to Chromebook from Windows, Mac, or Linux

Chapter **1**

Choosing and Setting Up Your Chromebook

Google rocked the computer world in 2011 with the introduction of the Chromebook because there was nothing on the market quite like it. It was, and still is, an affordable laptop that offers an internet-centric platform. Today, more than 50 million Chromebooks are used in classrooms by teachers and students in blended learning environments that allow students to have unlimited access to educational resources. Chromebooks are also increasingly being used by businesses, remote workers, and digital nomads that need an inexpensive laptop that allows them to work from the office, home, or the nearest coffee shop. The Chromebook has evolved far from its humble beginnings and will likely be the only laptop you need.

In this chapter, I discuss what makes the Chromebook so compelling compared to other personal computers on the market. I also take an in-depth look at how to set up your Chromebook and prepare you to transition to Chromebook from Windows, Mac, or Linux.

A Chromebook is very easy to use and understand. Easier, I'd say, than a Windows computer or even a Mac. In fact, a Chromebook is about as easy to use as an iPhone, iPad, or Android.

Checking Under the Hood of the Chromebook

In short, a Chromebook is a laptop computer running Google's proprietary operating system, ChromeOS.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

The *operating system* (OS) is the software that manages and schedules your computer's primary tasks and functions. You may have a little experience with other popular operating systems such as Windows, Linux, or macOS. Smartphones and tablets also have operating systems; Apple's iPhone OS is called iOS, iPadOS runs on Apple iPads, and the OS that runs on Android tablets and phones is called, um, Android.

ChromeOS is an operating system developed by Google to work primarily with web-based software on laptop and tablet computers. Your experience using your Chromebook will be very similar to previous experiences you may have had surfing the web with the Chrome web browser (or any browser). The Chrome web browser shares many similarities with other web browsers on the market, like Firefox, Edge, and Safari. (See Figure 1-1.)

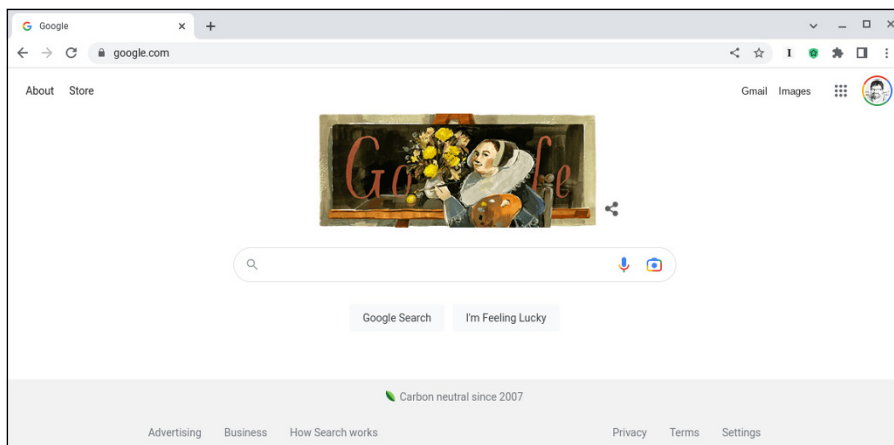


FIGURE 1-1:
The Google
Chrome web
browser.

Illustration courtesy of Peter H. Gregory

Except for the Chromebook Pixel Go, Google isn't manufacturing Chromebooks directly. Instead, Google has licensed several major laptop manufacturers to create them. Manufacturers such as Acer, ASUS, HP, Lenovo, Dell, Toshiba, and Samsung are all making their own Chromebooks with their own technical specifications. They all come with ChromeOS pre-installed.

The software

Much of what you will do on your Chromebook happens in the Chrome web browser. This is because many of the applications you will use on your Chromebook actually reside on the internet. This is one of the things that sets Chromebook apart from other computers: You don't need to install most applications on a Chromebook; instead, you access them from the internet. You find applications through the Chrome Web Store (dubbed CWS) and add them to your Launcher, which, in many cases, means nothing more than creating a bookmark for quick access through your Chrome web browser. This approach can be limiting in some cases, but these cases are rare. Thanks to the vast nature of Google's global computing ecosystem, thousands of great applications are at your fingertips.



REMEMBER

Although some Chromebook applications offer offline features and functionality, you need an internet connection to initially set up your Chromebook and be able to take advantage of everything your Chromebook has to offer. You may assume that Chromebooks are designed for an “always online” lifestyle, but once you have set up your Chromebook, you can definitely do things with it while offline as well.

The hardware

Unlike all other computers on the market that run macOS, Windows, or Linux, not much software is installed on your Chromebook, which means that your Chromebook doesn't need to have vast amounts of hard drive space, memory, or processing power. Most Chromebooks have 4 gigabytes (GB) of memory, at least 80GB of hard drive space, and a low-power processor.

The reduced technical features mean that Chromebooks use less power, which means longer battery life. It also means that Chromebooks have a drastically lower price tag than other computers. This explains why Google is gaining such a large share of the laptop market. For the things that most people do, a Chromebook is more than adequate and far less costly.

If you prefer a desktop computer running ChromeOS, plenty are available. These computers are called *Chromeboxes*. If you own or are thinking about getting a Chromebox instead of a Chromebook, 99 percent of everything you read in this book will still apply to you because most of what's in this book is about ChromeOS — the same OS that runs on Chromebooks and Chromeboxes.

Choosing a Chromebook

Given the online nature of ChromeOS, Chromebooks do not require extremely high-powered hardware to provide an excellent user experience. Even so, the great variety of manufacturers, models, and hardware specifications available can make choosing a Chromebook somewhat tricky.

If you are not yet familiar with computer terms like hard drives, RAM, SD card slots, or HDMI ports, you don't really need to understand any of these things to buy a Chromebook that will work for you. If you are shopping for your first Chromebook (even if it's the first computer you have ever purchased), go to a store with a good selection (three or more models) of Chromebooks and knowledgeable salespeople. If you buy the least expensive model with a screen size you can live with, you probably won't be disappointed. If you *do* want to understand the inner details of Chromebooks and make your purchase decision based on RAM, hard drive size, and ports, flip over to Chapter 20 for all those details.



TIP

Another helpful way to decide which Chromebook to purchase is to research models online. *PC Magazine* and other well-known publications have good reviews on Chromebook models that can help you pick one.

Setting Up Your Chromebook



TIP

You should have a wireless internet service when setting up your Chromebook. If you're using a stationary (home or public) wireless internet network or a portable device with an internet hotspot, you probably need to know the following:

- » The network name (like Smith Family Wi-Fi or ATT034)
- » The network password (usually a bunch of random letters and numbers, often printed on a sticker on your internet router)

If you don't already have a Google Account, you'll also need a landline phone or smartphone handy to verify your new account while you set up your Chromebook.

Turning on your device

Regardless of the brand you choose, the Chromebook is built for speed — and you'll notice this speed the first time you turn on your device! To turn on your Chromebook, you may simply need to plug in the power cord and open the laptop. If your Chromebook doesn't turn on automatically, locate the Power button, which may be found on the top-right corner of the keyboard itself, or on the side or back

of the Chromebook. Look for the familiar power logo consisting of a circle with an intersecting vertical line. Figure 1-2 shows the Power button on the Lenovo C330 and the Samsung 303C. The Power button on your Chromebook is probably similar to one of these.

FIGURE 1-2:
The Power button
on two different
Chromebook
models: the
Lenovo C330 (a)
and the Samsung
303C (b).



Power button



Power button

Photos courtesy of Peter H. Gregory

When you turn on the device for the first time, a Chrome logo pops up on the screen, and within seconds, the computer powers on and displays the Welcome window. Click Get Started to begin setup.

I recently unboxed an HP Flagship 14 Chromebook and went through the setup. In addition to guiding me through the setup visually, it also spoke to me in a friendly, mechanical voice.

Selecting a language

When the Welcome window appears, it will most likely say Welcome in the English language. If you want to change your Chromebook to work in your language, click on the current language. The Choose Language and Keyboard window displays. When you click on Language, a list of available languages appears, and when you click on Keyboard, a list appears. (I wish it had an option for Pirate English. “Select your languaaaarge, matey!”)

Connecting to the internet

Next, you need to select a network to connect to the internet. If no network is available, I suggest holding off on attempting to set up your Chromebook until you can connect to an internet source.



TIP

If you're using a mobile device that can provide an internet hotspot, it's time to turn on the hotspot and find the network name and password.

You need to know the network name and possibly the password to connect your Chromebook to the internet for the first time. Just follow these steps:



REMEMBER

1. Select your network from the list of networks shown.

Your Chromebook may detect and display several other nearby home or business networks. You can ignore them.

2. If your Chromebook requests it, enter your network password.

After you select the network and enter a password, if applicable, the Wi-Fi bars onscreen fluctuate as your computer tries to connect. (Figure 1-3 shows the Wi-Fi signal icon.) After the connection is successfully established, the Continue button at the bottom of the dialog window becomes active.

If your Chromebook does not successfully connect to the Wi-Fi network, you'll see the error message `bad password` and you can try entering the password again. You can also select a different Wi-Fi network if you prefer.



TIP

3. Click the Connect button.

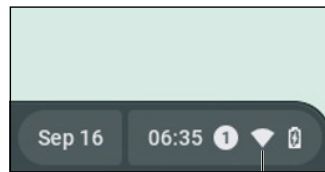


FIGURE 1-3:
The Wi-Fi signal icon.

Wi-Fi Signal Indicator

Photo courtesy of Peter H. Gregory

Agreeing to the Terms of Service

You may see a message that says `Your Connection is Not Private`. This issue is not something to worry about at this point.

If you've installed software or activated a device within the last ten years, you've likely seen a terms-of-service agreement. You can accept it by following these steps: