

Bits of Bytes

Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colorado Springs, CO

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Issue 1



The Prez Sez

by John Pearce,
President,
P*PCompAS

Many thanks to Paul Godfrey for serving as President (2024-25) and to Cary Quinn for his prior and future service as Vice President and program chair. Also, thanks to the officers and volunteers who are continuing to serve.

P*PCompAS is no longer having in-person monthly meetings and is eliminating annual dues. The monthly meetings (first Saturday of the month) are via Zoom. These changes are effective January 1, 2026. The decision to eliminate in-person meetings is due to fewer people attending in-person and individuals that plan to stop attending in-person. This makes it difficult to justify the room rental fee at the church. Monthly meetings will continue to be 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Without in-person meetings we have some equipment that we no longer need including: projector, two wireless microphone systems, wireless router, and possibly one coffee pot. It has been suggested we offer this equipment to Springs Community Church. During the January meeting I would like to discuss the disposition of this equipment and any other items we no longer need.

Stay safe in 2026 and Happy New Year!! ☺

Remember: We start Zooming our meetings in 2026 starting in January. A link will be e-mailed to members.

Next P*PCompAS meeting: Saturday, 3 January 2026

The meeting is being held via Zoom.

No presentation topic has been announced.

Meeting Minutes

by Greg Lenihan,
P*PCompAS Secretary

The 6 December 2025 membership meeting was started at 9:00 am by Greg Lenihan until the arrival of President Paul Godfrey. There were no guests, eight physically attending, and three calling in via Zoom. The meeting minutes from last month were approved. David George made our coffee and Greg Lenihan brought doughnuts.

OFFICER REPORTS

VP Cary said he would begin planning on the presentation for next month.

Treasurer Toni Logan reported we had \$1301.83 in savings, \$36.47 in checking, for a total of \$1338.30. Toni is looking into why two checks went to the church in December. Our last payment for the year will be to APCUG for \$50.

Membership Chair Ann Titus sent messages to those she needed to hear from and did not get a response. She heard from some after calling. Three she could not contact were Charles Richard, Dave Richard, and Jerry Stroud. Ann can account for 20 members.

Newsletter editor Greg Lenihan said the deadline for the December newsletter was 20 December.

Librarian Paul Godfrey was not present for the report.

Hospitality Chair Toni Logan mailed a condolence letter to Harvey McMinn for the passing of his wife Barbara.

APCUG Rep/Webmaster Joe Nuvolini was not present. It was reported that he wishes to resign from these positions. Joe has not been able to update our website for this month.

BOD Chair John Pearce had nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion was resumed on the merits of meeting physically or meeting with Zoom. The consensus was pretty much unanimous to go to Zoom, with details to be worked out.

NEW BUSINESS:

By acclamation, officers for the year 2026 were voted in. These were President, John Pearce; Vice President, Cary Quinn; Treasurer, Toni Logan; Secretary, Greg Lenihan; Board of Directors, Paul Godfrey.

Continued on page 3

In This Issue

Articles

Changing Your Email Address.....	5
Don't Shop at TJ Maxx, Marshalls or Best Buy.....	9
Gemini Access YouTube and Google Maps Directly.....	6
Switch to an AI Browser?	7
Tip: Snap Your Windows Layout.....	9
What Win11 Taskbar Icons Mean....	3

P*PCompAS

Meeting Minutes	1
Prez Sez.....	1



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Editor: Greg Lenihan
Librarian: Paul Godfrey
Membership: Ann Titus
Webmaster: Greg Lenihan

Committees

Hospitality: Antoinette Logan
Programs: Cary Quinn
Publicity: Vacant
Nominating: Vacant

Board of Directors

Bob Logan
David George
Greg Lenihan
Joe Nuvolini
Paul Godfrey



President Paul Godfrey presiding over the December 2025, and last meeting for those physically attending. A few members are in the background attending via Zoom (which will be our only option starting in January).



Members physically attending the December 2025 meeting.



Digerati at the December breakfast

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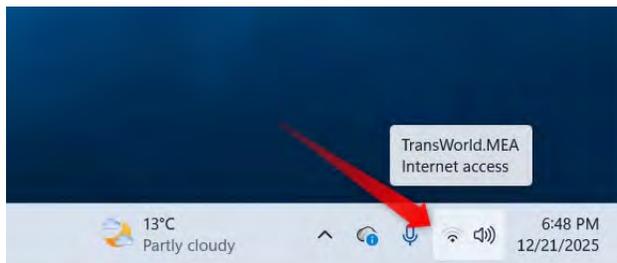
P*PCompas welcomes any comments, letters, or articles from members and non-members alike. Please send any articles to the editor (see last page for address). The editor reserves the right to reject, postpone, or edit for space, style, grammar, and clarity of any material submitted.

Here's What These Windows 11 Taskbar Icons Mean

by Shan Abdul, reprinted with permission from [HowToGeek.com](https://www.howtogeek.com)
Original article at <https://www.howtogeek.com/taskbar-icons-meaning/>

Ever noticed an unfamiliar icon on the taskbar—or a familiar one that suddenly looks different? Each icon—and its variation—has a specific meaning, and knowing them helps you quickly spot issues. Here's what each familiar taskbar icon means, when it appears, and whether you should care about it.

Wi-Fi or Ethernet



The Wi-Fi or Ethernet icon gives you an instant view of your internet connection. A solid Wi-Fi or wired (Ethernet) icon means your PC is connected and online. A globe icon appears when you're [connected to a network but don't have internet access](#)—often due to an ISP outage, a captive public Wi-Fi sign-in, or misconfigured network settings.

You may also see a warning triangle on the network icon. This usually means Windows has detected limited connectivity, such as an unstable, slow, or partially working connection. Understanding these indicators makes it easier to tell when your PC can't reach the internet and quickly narrow down the cause—without digging into deep troubleshooting.

Continued on page 4

Meeting Minutes (Cont. from pg 1)

A motion was made to move our meetings to Zoom-only starting 3 January 2026. The motion passed. Toni Logan will make sure the credit union stops payment for the room. John Pearce will take home the club laptop. John also volunteered to take the storage box home until we decide how to donate club assets. Toni Logan will ask the church if they want the items we will not use for Zoom (projector, coffee pot, microphones, etc.).

John Pearce scheduled our meetings for Zoom via APCUG through the next year.

Paul Godfrey was assigned to make arrangements for the Volunteer's Luncheon. January 31st was suggested for the date.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next social breakfast meeting will be on Saturday, 20 December, at the Golden Corral, starting at 8:00 am.

Our next membership meeting is on Saturday, 3 January 2026.

AROUND THE ROOM

Cary Quinn offered to show anyone how to use Zoom on their smartphone. He has a computer that won't charge and got a charging brick at Goodwill. It has a bent pin, and he asked if anyone had a mechanical pencil he could use to straighten the pin.

John Pearce has been working on a project to convert printed paper to digital files. One institution told him that in February he will be charged \$60/year to receive paper mailings. John will start downloading statements, and asked how others file their digital statements. People responded they just store them in folders on their computer and ensure they are backed up. John wanted his documents to be searchable, which would require optical character recognition (OCR). Greg Lenihan says he uses PDFgear. John shares a Google calendar with his wife, and wanted to go back and find a date in 2022. He discovered it wasn't in the calendar and suspects Google drops that info after a certain time.

He exported the calendar to an ICS file and thought he could convert that data to an Excel spreadsheet, but was unsuccessful. He wondered what would be a good calendar to use. John's goal is get off of Windows and use Linux in the future. No one had a good answer.

Toni Logan got spooked about a title theft commercial on TV. The county clerk/recorder has a new recording notification service. They will let you know if someone is trying to change deeds or mortgages on your property.

Greg Lenihan said if anyone was planning on buying a computer for Christmas, pay attention to the price of memory and SSDs. The Crucial company is getting out of the consumer memory business.

PRESENTATION

Cary Quinn showed two videos from Tech for Senior episode 295: "Unlocking Windows Clock" and "Gmail's Big Change." ☺

*Taskbar Icons (Cont. from page 3)***Pinned apps & status indicators**

Pinned apps occupy much of the taskbar, and Windows uses subtle visual cues to indicate their current state. When you open a pinned app, you'll notice a line beneath its icon. A thin line means the app is running in the background, while a thicker line indicates it's currently in focus. If several windows of the same app are open, multiple dots may appear under the icon.

If an app needs your attention—because of a notification, alert, or permission request—its icon may flash or pulse. When an app is busy with a task such as downloading, copying files, or installing updates, a progress bar appears on the icon to indicate its progress. These visual cues let you quickly understand what an app is doing without opening it.

Battery

The battery icon on the taskbar provides a quick view of your laptop's power status. A plug symbol means the device is connected to a power source and is charging. A lightning bolt icon indicates that fast charging is active on supported hardware, allowing the battery to recharge more quickly. You may also see a warning symbol, which can mean different things.

In some cases, this warning indicates that the battery level is critically low and that you should plug in immediately. Other times, it can indicate that the charger isn't delivering enough power, or that the [device is plugged in but not charging](#). A triangle with an exclamation mark may also appear if the battery itself is failing and needs replacement.

An update icon showing a dot

Another taskbar indicator worth noting is the loading bar with a dot. It appears when Windows has finished installing a background update, and a restart is required to complete the process. If you ignore it and keep using your computer, you

may notice sluggish performance and instability. If you leave it too long, Windows may automatically restart to complete the update at an inconvenient time.

Either restart immediately or [schedule a restart](#) to complete the changes. Doing so applies bug fixes, security patches, and any new features included in the update.

Notification & alert

Even after years of using Windows and knowing how critical some alerts can be, I still tend to ignore notification pings without realizing it. While many notifications are purely informational, some—such as security warnings, update issues, calendar reminders, or app alerts—require prompt attention and shouldn't be dismissed.

The notification icon appears at the far right of the taskbar as a bell. When there are no pending alerts, it shows up as a plain bell with no indicator. When you have unread notifications or alerts, the bell icon shows a dot or badge indicating the number of unread items. A quick glance at this icon is enough to tell whether something needs your attention.

Microphone, camera, or location

The taskbar icons can also act as privacy indicators. When an app accesses hardware such as your microphone or webcam, Windows displays a small microphone or camera. Whenever an app

Continued on page 5

The Wrong Way to Change Your Email Address

The easy way is the wrong way.

By Leo A. Notenboom, <https://newsletter.askleo.com/>; published under the Creative Commons License

Emailing your entire contact list with a notice that you've changed your email address is NOT the way to change your email address. I'll show you what to do instead.

From time to time, I get emails like this one:

```
Hello everyone,
Just letting you know we have changed our email address t
Our old address, {email address removed}, was compromis
We will stop using our old address immediately.
Thanks,
{name removed}
{new email address removed}
```

On one hand, this is an easy way to let your friends and family know that your email address has changed.

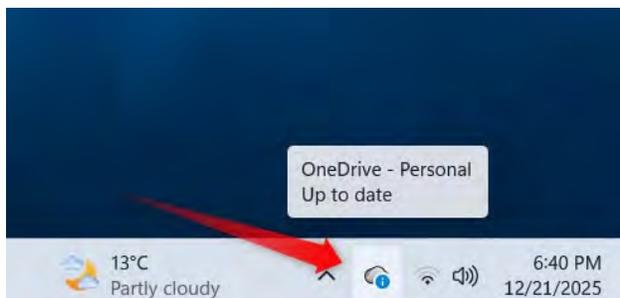
On the other hand, there are serious drawbacks to this approach. Let's review the most common and what you should do instead.

Taskbar Icons (Cont. from page 4)

uses your location, a location arrow icon appears. Clicking it reveals which app is using that feature, making it easier to detect suspicious activity and revoke permissions quickly.

That said, not every appearance is a red flag. For example, a location icon may indicate that a weather app is tracking your location; review the app before disabling location access.

Sync status



When an app is actively syncing files or settings, Windows displays a sync status indicator on the taskbar, shown as the app's icon with an overlaid symbol. You'll mostly notice it with cloud services like

In Short

Changing your email address

Emailing everyone about your new address seems easy, but you risk exposing contacts, wasting effort, and being ignored by companies and mailing lists. Instead, tell friends privately (using BCC) and change your email directly in each online account. It's slower, but it works.

Problem #1: CCing everyone

You can't see it in my example above, but the individual who sent that message included all the recipients on the CC line... all 68 of them.

Honestly, I'm surprised their email provider

Continued on page 6

OneDrive, but other apps can display it too. A spinning arrow or circular sync icon means the sync is in progress, while a checkmark on the icon indicates the process is complete.

If you see a warning symbol, it indicates that [syncing has been paused due to an issue](#). This visual cue helps you quickly know when your data is synced and when you need to intervene.

Note

Some of the icons mentioned above may be [hidden in the system tray](#), represented by the small arrow icon. To make them visible directly on the taskbar, you'll need to unpin them from the tray.

Windows 11's taskbar icons may be small and understated, but they convey a wealth of information. They let you see what your system and apps are doing in real time and alert you when something requires your attention. Understanding what each icon represents turns the taskbar into a handy tool for troubleshooting—without constantly opening settings or apps. ☺

Change Email Address (Cont. from page 5)

allowed them to do that.

Not only will the message be difficult to read in some email clients (long lists of email addresses sometimes take up a majority of the space above the message itself), but the sender exposed everyone's email address to everyone else, whether or not they were okay with that.

Email addresses are funny things. While many people think them unimportant, to others, **giving out someone's email address without permission is an inconsiderate [breach](#) of privacy.**

Problem #2: Using this for companies

Since I could see them all, I reviewed the list of additional recipients. I saw many email addresses for companies that this person had done business with, including major drugstore chains, bookstores, and more. That may not be information this person wanted to expose to everyone.

The good news is that companies don't pay attention to this kind of email. They don't have time to handle individual email address changes this way. They won't see the lengthy list of CC'ed email addresses.

The bad news is that *companies don't pay attention to this kind of email*. They don't have time to handle individual email address changes in this manner. The email was probably ignored completely. More importantly, your email address with that company will not be changed.

There could be more bad news. A less-than-honest company could pay just enough attention to harvest the email addresses from the CC line and start spamming all your friends.

But they still won't change your email address.

Problem #3: Using this for mailing lists

I got this email because this person subscribes to one or more of my mailing lists.

Once again, just **sending email to the mailing list owner isn't the way to change your email address**. I have perhaps a dozen different lists across three different providers. I don't even know which list that email address is on.

Somewhat ironically, several of the addresses on the CC line were "do not reply" email addresses. Sending a reply to a "do not reply" email address is pointless for obvious reasons.

The solution: Take the time to do it right

Changing your email address with all the organizations, accounts, lists, and people you communicate with takes time. That's one reason that changing an email address can be painful.

But the steps are pretty simple.

For real people

Send that email as above, but:

- Send it only to **actual people**, meaning friends, family members, and other individuals.
- Use [BCC](#) to hide everyone's email addresses from each other.

For online accounts

Log in to your account at each of those services and **change your email address yourself**.

If you no longer have access to an old email address associated with the account, or you've lost your password, look up the customer support options and follow those. Do not just send email to a random email address and expect results; you won't get any.

For mailing lists

Check the most recent email you received from that list for instructions on how to change your email address, and **change your email address yourself**.

If there are no instructions, find the site or service where you signed up in the first place for instructions. Only if you can't find instructions to change your email address yourself should you then look for support options relating to that mailing list to ask for help. (Here's [one example](#).)

Do this

Just sending out an email blast to everyone you can think of won't work. Instead, tell your friends, and change your email address yourself everywhere else. ☺

Access Google Maps and YouTube Directly with Gemini

Gemini has improved its integration with Google Maps and YouTube to make it easier to get information from these services.

Previously, you needed to type the commands `@GoogleMaps` and `@YouTube` to access the respective tools.

Now you can phrase your queries in natural language, such as "How do I get to the nearest library?" or "Show me a video review of the latest iPhone." With maps, Gemini will provide a zoomable map from Google Maps, accompanied by driving and walking directions.

With video requests, it will source relevant videos from YouTube and let you play them within your chat.

Should You Switch to an AI Browser?

By Bob Rankin, <http://askbobrankin.com>, published through the APCUG

Back in the 80s, when I was a young computer programmer at IBM, we had an “all hands” meeting with the General Manager. I don’t remember much about that meeting, except that he said “I just found out what a paradigm is, and now I need a new one!” Switching to an AI browser is a paradigm shift -- a new way of interacting with a world of information. Read on to find if you need an AI browser...

AI Browsers: The Future of a Smarter Web Experience?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has permeated nearly every aspect of technology, and is popping up in the software we use on a daily basis. One of the most intriguing and rapidly developing areas of AI integration is the web browser. Long considered an essential tool for accessing the internet, browsers are now being enhanced with advanced AI capabilities. “AI browsers” go beyond being simple gateways to the web; they are evolving into intelligent companions that help users navigate, process, and personalize their online experiences.

As these tools grow in popularity, it’s worth examining what makes AI browsers different, how they can improve productivity, and what cautions users should keep in mind before switching.



What is an AI Browser?

An AI browser is a web browser that integrates artificial intelligence technologies directly into its interface, either natively or through add-on features. Unlike traditional browsers that primarily offer search and navigation, AI browsers incorporate features like natural language processing, real-time summarization, conversational assistance, predictive recommendations, and automated workflows.

Some examples include browsers that can automatically summarize long articles, highlight key points, answer follow-up questions, or even draft emails and documents directly in the interface. Instead of manually hopping between apps, extensions, and search engines, users increasingly rely on the browser as a central productivity hub powered by AI.

Let’s look at some benefits of AI browsers:

Time-Saving Through Summarization - One of the standout features of AI browsers is the ability to condense long articles, research papers, or news reports into concise, easy-to-digest summaries. Instead of spending 15 minutes reading a lengthy document, a user can quickly access the highlights to determine whether further exploration is necessary. This feature is especially powerful for students, researchers, and busy professionals juggling large amounts of information.

Enhanced Search Through Natural Language Queries - Traditional search engines often require precise keyword input. AI browsers, however, are designed to interpret natural language questions. You can type or even speak queries like, “What are the

key differences between Linux and Windows?” and receive structured, human-readable explanations rather than just a list of links. This makes the browsing experience more intuitive and accessible to users who may not be experts in formulating technical queries.

Task Automation and Productivity Tools - AI browsers can automate repetitive tasks. For example, they can draft replies to emails, auto-fill forms intelligently, summarize meeting notes, and even manage schedules by connecting with productivity apps. This turns the browser into a powerful assistant rather than just a passive tool.

Automatic Personalization - AI browsers can learn a user’s browsing habits, interests, and working style to deliver more relevant results. Instead of generic news feeds, users see articles, videos, and resources curated specifically for them. For instance, a software developer may see tailored programming tutorials, while a marketer may find personalized insights about industry trends.

Improved Accessibility Features - For individuals with disabilities, AI browsers can provide features such as text-to-speech, voice-based navigation, and adaptive reading levels. AI can also translate web pages seamlessly into multiple languages, expanding accessibility to global information sources.

Ready to Switch to an AI Browser?

The decision to switch to an AI-driven browser ultimately comes down to efficiency, personalization, and future readiness. Consider these convincing reasons:

Continued on page 8

AI Browser (Cont. from page 7)

Boosted Productivity: Traditional browsers can be cluttered with multiple tabs, countless bookmarks, and distracting notifications. AI browsers streamline this chaos by helping users prioritize key content and automating repetitive tasks.

Smarter Research: Students, writers, and professionals can save hours by using AI-powered summarizations and natural language queries instead of manually sifting through large volumes of web content.

Convenience: Rather than installing numerous extensions for everything from note-taking to translation, AI browsers integrate many of these features seamlessly.

Adaptability for the Future: The web is becoming more complex, with new technologies such as Web3, immersive experiences, and decentralized platforms emerging. AI browsers are designed to adapt quickly, offering smart tools that evolve alongside internet trends.

Switching to an AI browser is not just about accessing the internet. It's about doing so in a way that boosts your effectiveness, saves time, and feels more intuitive.

Cautions and Considerations of AI Browsers

While the promise of AI browsers is exciting, I recommend that you should approach them with awareness of potential downsides.

Privacy Concerns - AI browsers require analyzing your browsing habits and personal data to offer personalized recommendations. This raises questions about data collection, storage, and third-party use. Users should review privacy policies carefully and opt for browsers that offer strong transparency and control over personal information.

One recent story highlighted the issue of [“prompt injection” as a potential privacy or security](#)

[issue in AI browsers](#). Researchers found that malicious instructions embedded in a website, but invisible to humans, could trick the browser into taking actions without the knowledge or consent of the user. Something as simple as white text on a white background could enable this vulnerability.

Over-Reliance on Automation - Just as spell checkers sometimes make mistakes, AI-generated summaries or answers may be inaccurate or biased. Relying too heavily on AI assistance could lead to oversights, particularly in academic research or professional work. Users still need to apply critical thinking and verify sources.

Resource Intensiveness - AI models require more computing power than traditional browsing functions, which can lead to increased memory usage or slower performance on lower-powered devices. Over time, this could impact both user experience and device longevity.

Subscription Models and Costs - While traditional browsers are usually free, many AI browsers come with premium subscription models. Users must weigh whether the productivity gains justify ongoing costs.

Taking an AI Browser For a Test Drive

Here are some of the popular AI browsers you can try:

[Perplexity Comet](#): Excels in academic, research, and professional use with real-time AI-powered search, source attribution, and an interface designed for follow-up questions without tab overload or SEO clutter.

[Opera \(Aria\)](#): Aria is integrated into the Opera browser. It delivers real-time answers, recognizes and generates AI images, manages your

tabs and more. Aria's Page Context mode will provide a summary of the page you're viewing.

[Brave's AI assistant Leo](#), has become a sophisticated, privacy-focused AI companion integrated directly into the browser. Leo can answer questions, summarize content, and translate text. Brave is working on “agentic” features, that will let you use natural language to ask the browser to do tasks on your behalf. You'll be able to say things like “Book me a table for two at Luigi's for next Friday at 7pm.”

[Microsoft Edge with Copilot](#) - Copilot Mode is built into the Edge browser, ready to answer questions, create images, summarize content, help you make plans, or write on any topic.

AI browsers represent a major leap forward in how we interact with the internet. By offering personalized, intelligent, and time-saving features, they can transform browsing from a manual, fragmented experience into a more seamless and productive one. Whether you're a student looking to digest research faster, a professional juggling multiple tasks, or an everyday user seeking a smoother online experience, AI browsers hold significant promise.

That said, the transition should be made with awareness. Privacy risks, potential inaccuracies, cost considerations, and ethical concerns remind us that AI browsers are not flawless replacements but powerful tools requiring mindful use.

As technology accelerates, AI browsers are likely to become standard over the coming years. Making the switch now may give you a head start on embracing the future of the web, so long as you remain careful about how you integrate AI into your daily life. ☺

Don't Shop at TJ Maxx, Marshalls or Best Buy

from The Current Newsletter at Komando.com (tip from 12/8/25)

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You're walking through the clearance aisle at T.J. Maxx or Marshalls, or scanning Best Buy's discount shelves. A sleek smart thermostat or a security camera kit catches your eye. It looks brand new, and the price tag looks even better.

Original price: \$249. Your price: \$49. It feels like you're getting away with something. Not so fast, deal hunter!

Old stock is a problem

Retailers are sitting on piles of old unsold gadgets. The wrap is crisp, and the hardware looks fresh. What you don't see is the support life. Smart home devices work only as long as the company keeps the cloud service alive. Once support ends, the gadget loses its brain.

We watched Google do this with the Nest Secure alarm system. Everything still powered on, but the cloud service vanished and the device became decorative. And when Apple retired the iPhone SE this month, owners got a reminder that update clocks eventually run out.

Even if the gadget turns on, old smart devices often stop receiving security patches. Hackers love abandoned tech because it stays vulnerable forever.

How to avoid dead tech

Step 1: Check support status

Head to <https://endoflife.date>. This site tracks support timelines for thousands of products, and not only tech. If the model in your hand is listed as unsupported or nearing end of life, put it back. Or go AI fancy. Take a pic and ask your favorite AI chatbot what year it was made and whether it's still supported.

Step 2: Look at the generation number

If the current version online is Gen 5 and the one you are holding is Gen 1 or Gen 2, support is dead or ending soon.

Step 3: Inspect the companion app

Open your app store and search for the device's control app. Tap the version history. Look at the date of the last update. Updated within the past six months is good. The latest update in 2023 means it's living in the past.

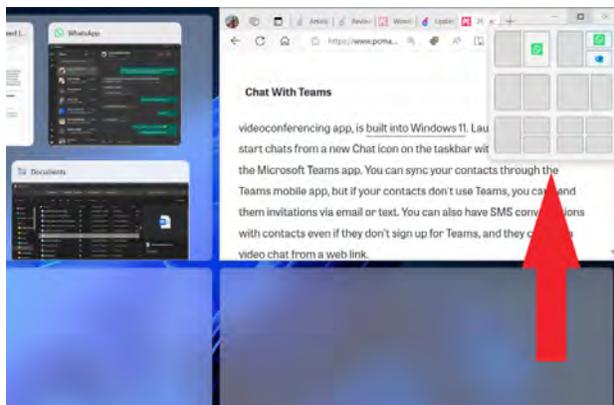
Step 4: Follow the 70% rule

If a smart home gadget is discounted more than 70%, it's almost never a bargain. It's usually an end-of-life dump.

Saving a few bucks is great. Bringing home a gadget that quits the moment you set it up is not. ☹️

Tip: New Ways to Snap Your Windows Layouts

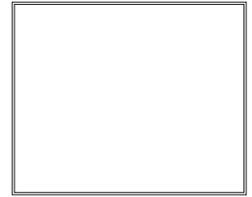
Microsoft has supported snap-and-resize since Windows 7, but it gets a boost in Windows 11 with Snap



Layouts. You can still drag windows to the sides and corners for half- and quarter-screen layouts, but Windows 11 adds a hover menu over the Maximize button that offers layout options. You can choose one large window on the left and two on top of each other on the right, or three in a row, for example. Your choices depend on the size of your display. The feature continues to get updates with more layout options and thumbnails for running apps in the layout choices.

Click to select your preferred formation and then move your apps into place. You can turn off this behavior in Settings. Some keyboard shortcuts let you quickly snap windows, such as Windows Key-Left Arrow, to snap a window to the left half of the screen. ☺️

P*PCompAS Newsletter
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Coming Events:

Next Membership Meeting: 3 January 2026 beginning at 9 am. Zoom links will be e-mailed out to all members on the roster.

Next Breakfast Meeting: 17 January @ 8:00 am, Golden Corral, 1970 Waynoka Road

Newsletter Deadline: 24 January

Volunteer's Luncheon: 31 January

Check out our Web page at: <http://ppcompas.apcug.org>



Created by ChatGPT