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Windows 11

Inside **OUT**

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Windows 11 Inside Out

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Inside OUT

Use the `edge://` syntax for quick shortcuts

Google's Chrome browser allows you to access a plethora of options using the `chrome://` prefix, followed by specific keywords. Using the same Chromium codebase, Microsoft Edge implements a similar feature, but uses (naturally) a different prefix: `edge://`

You can see a sampling of these shortcuts just by choosing options from the Edge Settings And More menu (Alt+F) and then looking in the address bar. For example, clicking Settings opens the main Settings page, whose shortcut is (expectedly) `edge://settings`. Other useful shortcuts include `edge://extensions`, where you can view and manage extensions, and `edge://newtab`, which (again, quite naturally) opens the new tab page, and `edge://version`, which tells you more than you probably wanted to know about the currently installed browser.

Every option you select in Edge Settings has a corresponding custom URL in this format, which you can add as a favorite and revisit later. For a complete listing of the many `edge://` options that are available, type `edge://about`. The resulting list includes dozens of options, many useful only to a web developer. But you might find a shortcut in there worth saving for future use.

Changing the browser's appearance

The Edge user experience is, by design, extremely simple, with a limited number of controls surrounding the main window that contains content from the web. But that doesn't mean the Edge interface is fixed in stone. You can adjust the following aspects using the controls available at `edge://settings/appearance`.

Under the Overall Appearance heading, as shown in Figure 7-11, you can choose between Dark and Light modes, or instruct Edge to match the mode you've chosen for Windows. Options under the Theme heading allow you to choose a pair of complementary colors for tab headings and toolbars. The final option in this section, Discover More Themes, takes you to the Edge Add-ons market, where you can download custom themes that include colors and a background image for new tab pages.

You find more practical customization options under the Customize Toolbar heading, shown in Figure 7-12. The toolbar is the region just below the tab headings; you can show or hide the Home button to the left of the address bar and curate the collection of toolbar buttons to highlight features and extensions you use regularly.

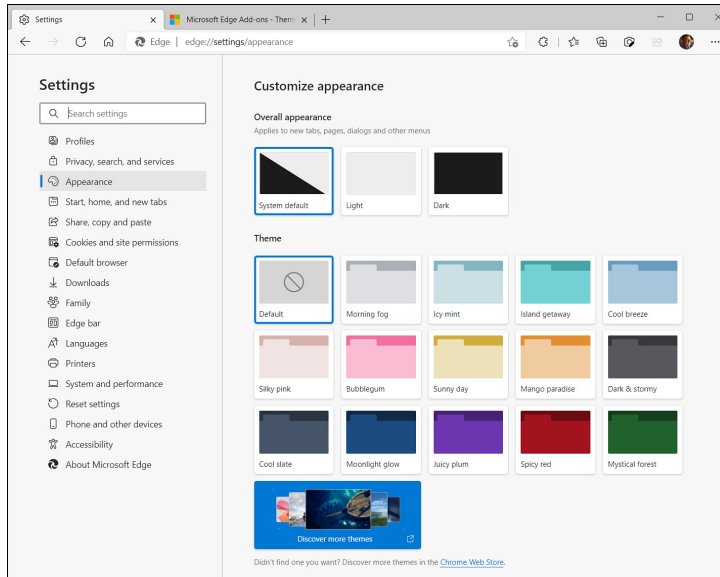


Figure 7-11 Use themes to color-code different profiles for easy recognition. Watch out, though: Some of the bolder color choices can make text difficult to read.

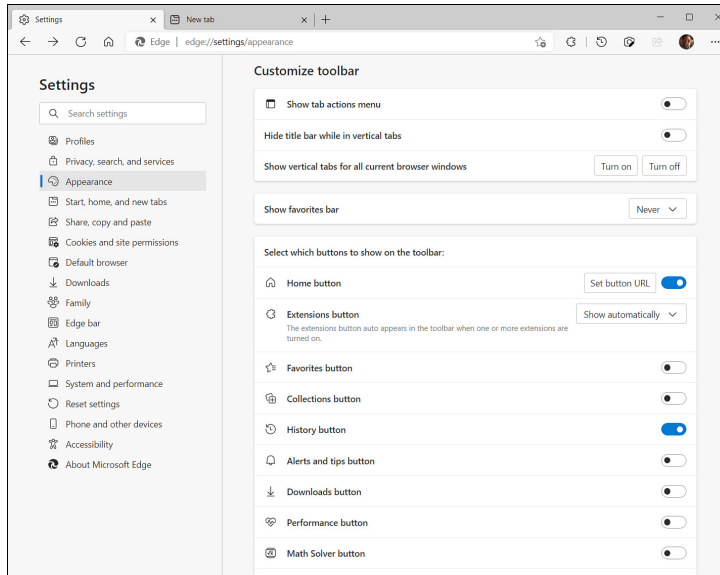


Figure 7-12 Customizations you make here can improve your productivity by making frequently used features more easily accessible while hiding those you rarely use.

The top two groups of options control the vertical tabs feature and show or hide the favorites bar. You can read more about those features later in this chapter. Under the Select Which Buttons To Show On The Toolbar heading is a lengthy list of buttons you can add to (or remove from) the toolbar to make built-in functions easier to access. Resist the urge to make all those buttons available; on all but the largest displays, adding too many toolbar buttons can compress the address bar to a width that's barely usable.

Installing and managing browser extensions

From the earliest days of the World Wide Web, browsers have supported ways to extend their functionality with third-party add-ons. The original Windows web browser, Internet Explorer, supported ActiveX controls, a powerful but notoriously insecure way to make the browser perform new tricks.

By contrast, modern browsers use *extensions*—built with JavaScript and HTML and distributed through a managed store—to add new capabilities securely to the browser. Over the past decade, third-party developers have built a thriving ecosystem of extensions for Google Chrome. Password managers, ad blockers, writing tools, and research aids are among the most popular categories, but the sheer breadth of extensions is staggering. Almost all of those extensions work, unmodified, in Microsoft Edge (the exceptions mostly require access to a Google account or to Google services), and many of them have been adapted for distribution in Microsoft's Edge Add-ons store.

Figure 7-13, for example, shows the OneNote Web Clipper extension in action. Clicking its button on the Edge menu bar reveals the four options shown here, reformatting the page for use in a OneNote notebook. This task would be tedious or impossible to accomplish manually.

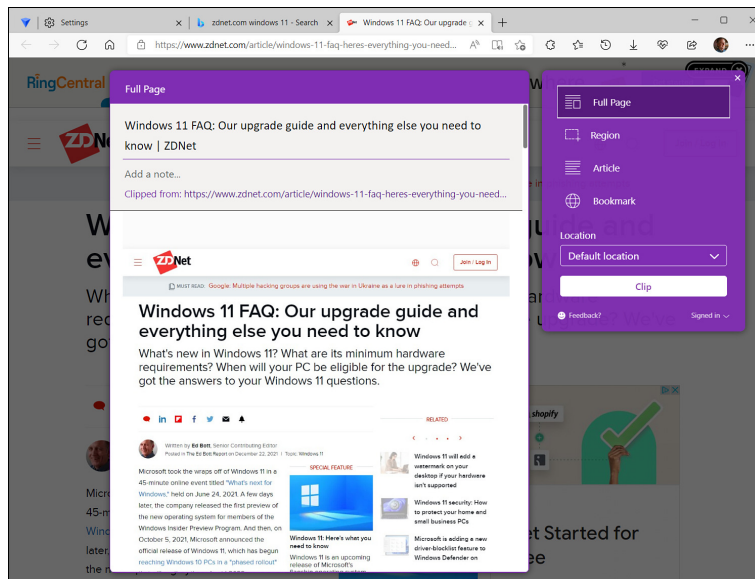


Figure 7-13 Extensions like the OneNote Web Clipper can reformat pages on the fly to make them easier to save as part of a OneNote notebook.

Developers can make a few small modifications to a Google Chrome extension and submit it to the Edge Add-ons store. You can browse through the full selection by categories or search for a specific extension at <https://microsoftedge.microsoft.com/addons>.

If the extension you need isn't available from Microsoft, chances are you can get it from Google's Chrome Web Store. To install extensions from that source, you need to enable the Allow Extensions From Other Stores setting in Edge on the Extensions page, as shown in Figure 7-14. That's also where you go to manage installed extensions.

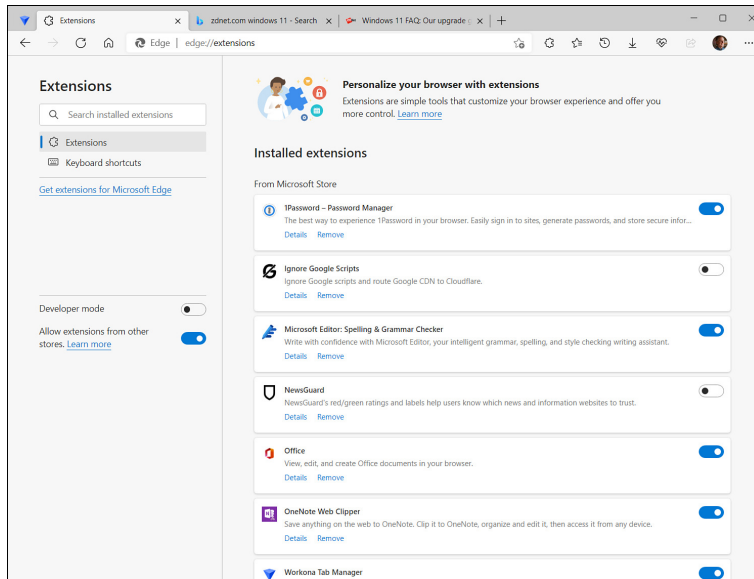


Figure 7-14 Installed extensions show up on this list. Click the Details button to see any additional settings, including the option to show the extension's button or uninstall it.

The on/off switch next to each installed extension allows you to enable or disable it on the fly. Most extensions are designed to run at all times, but you might have special-purpose add-ons that you turn on only when they're required.

By default, a button for each extension shows up on the Edge toolbar, to the right of the address bar. That's preferred for extensions that require interaction to do their magic. For extensions that work mostly in the background, consider cutting down on clutter by right-clicking the button and choosing the Hide From Toolbar option. (You can move the button back by choosing More Actions > Extensions and choosing Show In Toolbar from the More Actions menu for that extension.)

Finally, take advantage of keyboard shortcuts to expand the utility of extensions. On the Extensions page, click Keyboard Shortcuts (or go to <edge://extensions/shortcuts>). Click in the box to the right of any extension and press a shortcut that consists of either Ctrl or Alt plus a letter or number.

Customizing the new tab page

When you set up a new profile for the first time, you're prompted to choose a design for the page you see each time you open a new tab. If you're signed in with a Microsoft account or a local account, your options include a search box, with the option to add Microsoft news headlines, a fresh background image, or both. Figure 7-15 shows a Custom layout, with a search box and a background image, but no news headlines.

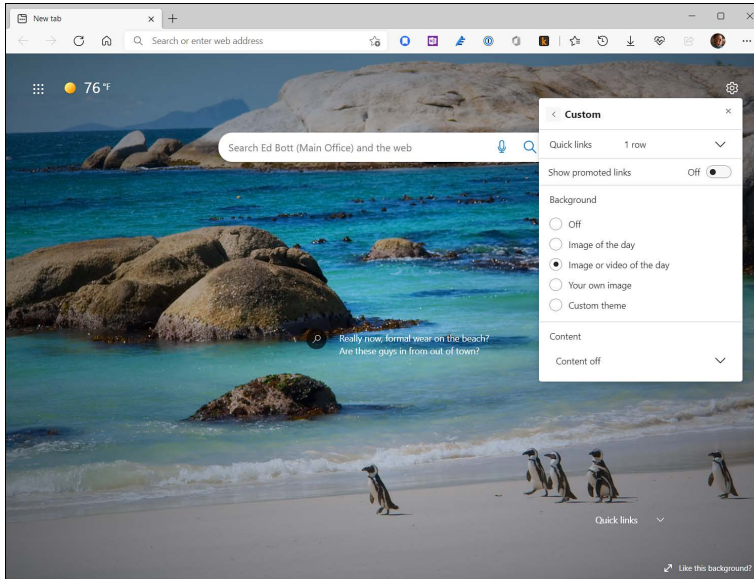


Figure 7-15 The Custom option creates a new tab page that combines a search box with an image that changes daily. Note that the Content selection, which shows MSN news headlines, is off.

If your Edge profile uses an Azure AD account associated with a Microsoft 365 business subscription, you get a few additional options that include links to online apps and documents you've worked with recently. In either case, you can change the layout any time by opening a new tab and clicking the gear icon in the upper-right corner.

In either page layout, the new tab page also includes a row of seven quick links, each shown as a tile with a name and a favicon (that's the formal name of the icon that appears alongside the page title in each browser tab). Click in the upper-right corner of any of these quick links to edit the name or remove the tile.

If none of these options meet your requirements, you need to find a browser extension that can take over the new tab page.

Customizing the startup page

If you prefer to start each new browser instance in a predictable way, go to Edge Settings > Start, Home, And New Tabs (*edge://settings/startHomeNTP*), and choose one of the alternatives there:

- Open The New Tab Page, the default setting, opens each new instance of Microsoft Edge to the new tab page, as described in the previous section.
- Open Tabs From The Previous Session restores the tabs that were open the last time you shut down Edge.
- Open These Pages starts each session by reviewing a specific group of sites.

In Figure 7-16, for example, Edge is configured to open two news sites and the local forecast from the National Weather Service at startup.

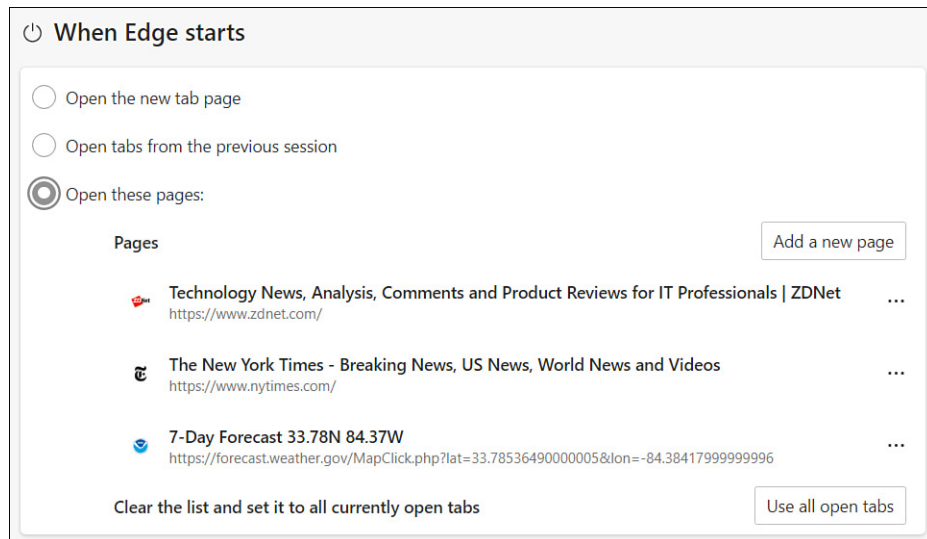


Figure 7-16 Choose this option if you want to start each day by checking your favorite news and weather pages.

The easiest way to specify that you want multiple pages to open at startup is to open those pages (and only those pages) in separate tabs in the current browser session. Then, in a new tab, go to the When Edge Starts section, choose Open These Pages, and click Use All Open Tabs. To add another page to the current selection, copy its URL, click Add A New Page, and paste the Clipboard's contents into the Enter A URL box.