

Chromebook 101: how to customize your Chromebook's desktop

Chrome OS isn't the most option-packed operating system around, but there are some things you can do to make your Chromebook's desktop look and work the way you want.

Ready?

Customize your Chromebook's wallpaper

First, let's tackle your desktop's basic appearance:

- Right-click anywhere on your Chromebook's desktop and select "Set wallpaper" from the menu that appears.
- Click through Google's categories to select an image, or click the "My Images" option at the bottom of the list to choose an image from your own local storage.
- If you want your wallpaper to change to a new image every day, click the "Daily Refresh" toggle that's available on the first thumbnail of any of Google's categories. (That option, unfortunately, isn't currently available with your own images.)

Customize your browser's background

You can also personalize the page that comes up every time you open a new tab in your browser:

- Open a new tab in Chrome and click the “Customize” button (or the pencil icon) in the browser’s lower right corner.
- Select “Chrome backgrounds” to choose an image from Google’s collection or “Upload an image” to pick an image from your own local storage, then follow the prompts to find and confirm the image you want.

Customize your browser’s theme

Google has promised that soon you’ll be able to click that same “Customize” button and pick a custom theme that’ll change the colors of your browser’s tab and toolbar area. Until then, however, if you want a theme for your browser, you’ll have to download it from the Chrome Web Store.

For now:

- Open the “Themes” section of the Chrome Web Store.
- Find a theme you like, click it, and then click the “Add to Chrome” button.

Customize your Chromebook’s shelf

Last but not least, take control of the Chrome OS shelf – the dock-like row of shortcuts at the bottom of your screen. Start by selecting exactly what icons appear in that area:

- Open your app drawer (by clicking the circle icon in the lower-left corner of the screen and then clicking the upward-facing arrow on the partial drawer that appears).

Right-click any item in the list and select “Pin to shelf.”

- If you want to add a website, open the site, click the three-dot menu icon in Chrome’s upper right corner, and then select “More tools” followed by “Create shortcut.”

If you want the site to open in an app-like window, without the usual browser elements on top, click the “Open as window” option in the “Create shortcut?” pop-up window that appears. Then click the blue “Create” button.

- Drag and drop any of the icons in the shelf to change their position.
- Have you decided that you don’t want the icon in your shelf after all? Right-click on the icon and select “Unpin.”

And one final pair of possibilities: If you want your shelf to appear on the left or right side of your screen instead of at the bottom, right-click anywhere inside it, select “Shelf position,” then select “Left” or “Right.” And if you want your shelf to remain hidden by default and appear only when you mouse over it, right-click the shelf and select the “Autohide shelf” option.

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