Silencing Windows 11

Windows 11 pops up nags and reminders like groundhog movies in February. They're not useful; they're advertising. And yet our computers are loaded with popups--they're called notifications now, and the short and grungy truth is that many of them are part of Windows, and they're on by default. Let's turn them off.
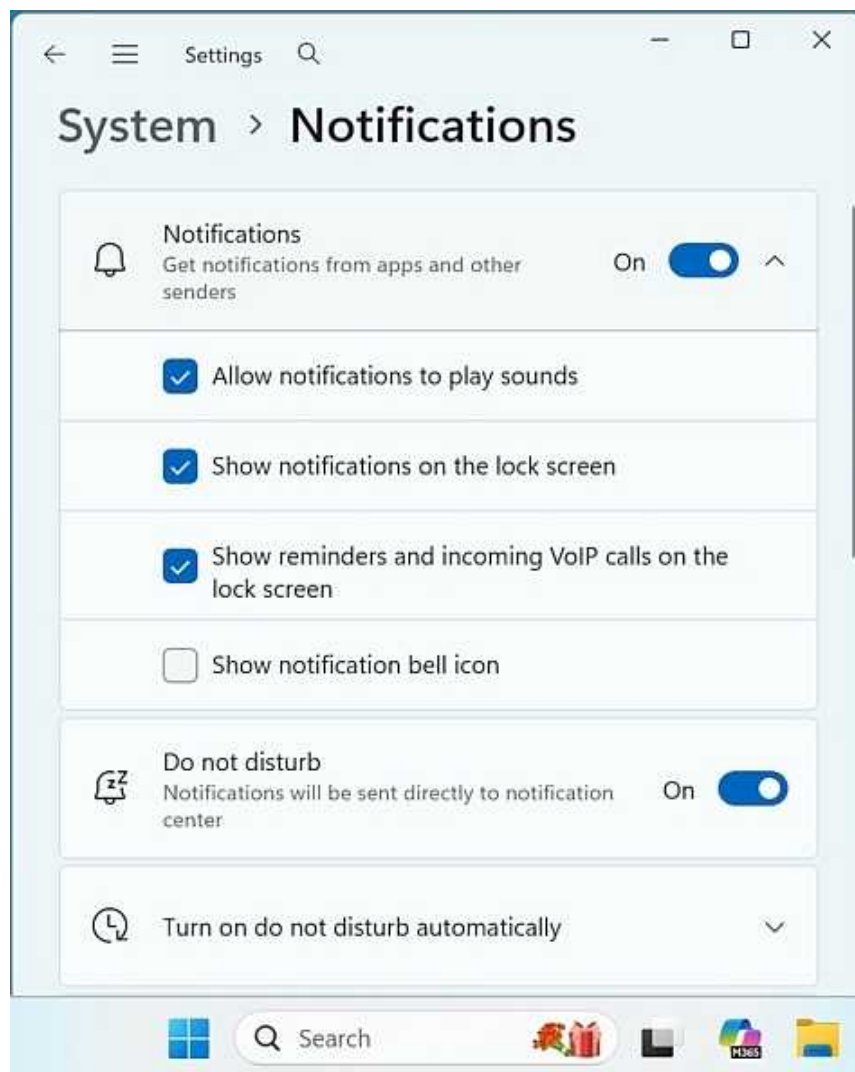
Notifications

Notifications have some good uses. Not many. There are tornado alerts, your-favorite-airline fare alerts, and a few others. My take on weather alerts is that they work best on cell phones. Outlook (Classic) can pop up a notification when new email arrives, so there's a mix of urgent, budget, and mercenary interruptions that count as notifications. (Your mileage may vary.)

Most Windows notifications slide into the bottom-right of the screen, are generally text-only, and are advertising features that, if you use them, benefit

Microsoft by encouraging your usage of their paid services, or making Windows 'sticky.' That means making it more difficult to move to Mac or Linux or even to an Android tablet. Market share incentives aside, making a decision to choose a backup location based on an advertising popup is not smart.
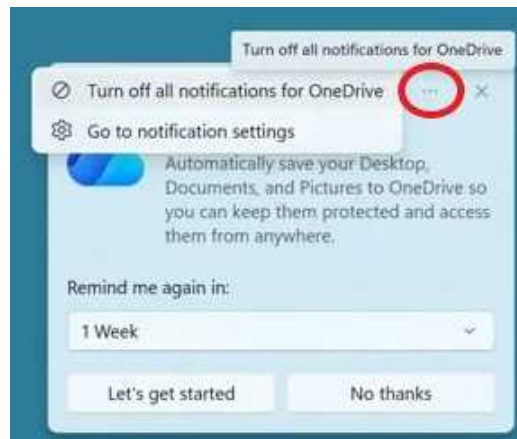
Turn Off Windows Notifications

To turn off or reduce Windows notifications, first click Start (that blue logo key), and click the gear for the Settings app. In the top bar, type the first few letters of what you are looking for, in this case 'notifications.' In the search result, go to 'Notifications & actions' and then click the top item, 'Notifications.' The default settings are noisy. Click the downwards arrow at the right to show the options. For the fewest interruptions, uncheck all four checkboxes, or at least reduce the list to only interruptions that should be allowed. For most users, that 'Do not disturb' option should be 'On.'

OneDrive Nagging

Microsoft wants you to use OneDrive. For backup, for storage, for everything. The conspiracy theorists out there, so far not proven wrong, will tell you that allows data mining and AI programming with your data. I have not seen actual evidence of that, but proving a negative is logically impossible. What I see is that using OneDrive in the free 2Gb account given away to everyone that asks for it is dangerous; it attempts to upload your data, your pictures, your email, everything, and because it is 2Gb, it always breaks, and generates a 1or 2 hour data recovery bill with me. If you have a paid version of Office 365 that includes 100Gb or 1Tb of storage, then yes, it can be one of your backups, IF you are not subject to legal compliance requirements–it is NOT SUITABLE for storing data subject to HIPAA, PCI, or most other compliance statues. So most users should consider carefully if it is a sane backup location.

Here's how to turn off OneDrive nagging popups: In the popup notice, click the three dots icon at the top, left of the x or Close icon. Choose 'Turn off all notifications for OneDrive.' Clicking the X or the 'No Thanks' button means 'ask me again' so don't do that.
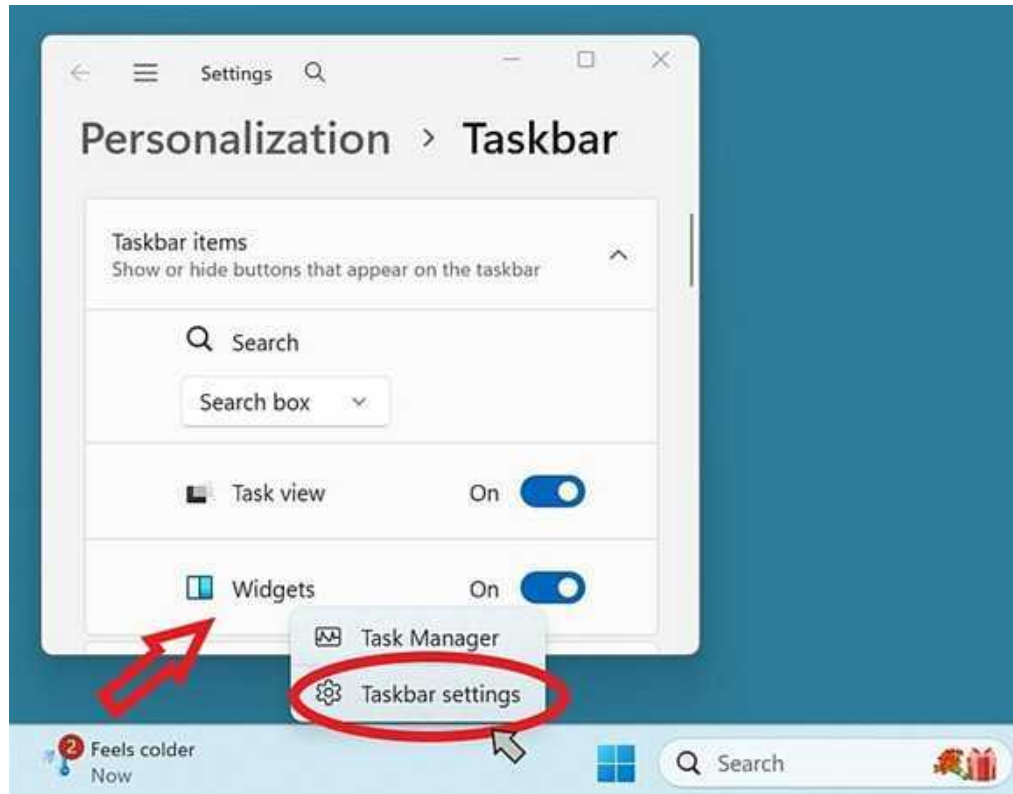

Here's how to uninstall OneDrive: Click the Start (logo) key, type 'con' to find and select Control Panel. Click 'uninstall a program', which is usually the bottom-left item. Find and click only once on each entry starting with 'Microsoft OneDrive' and click the uninstall option at the top of the list. Important: OneDrive is installed for each user, so for multi-user computers, uninstall OneDrive for each user separately. OneDrive does reinstall itself, so after some Patch Tuesday monthly updates, OneDrive will return.

The Widget News Notification

In the bottom-left of the Windows 11 screen there lives a news 'widget' button. If your mouse gets too close to that button, without even a click, there's a half-
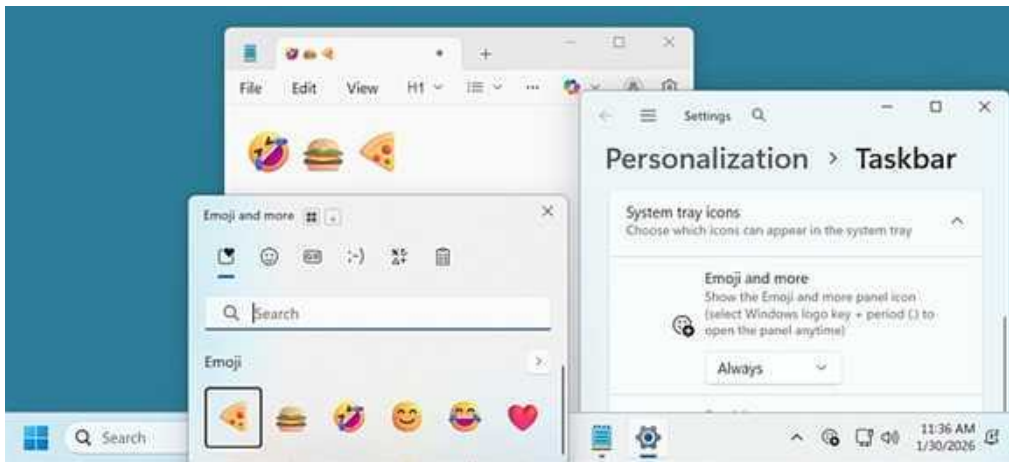
page popup of news. No, there's no customization of what news site provides that, or what is there. In Windows 10, there was an option to require a click to show the news, but that's gone now.

Here's how to turn off Widgets: Right-click any blank section of the task bar, and from the popup menu, choose 'Taskbar settings.' In the menu, turn off Widgets. Task View is that gray icon that no one uses to show a second virtual screen, for more desktop. If you are using multiple monitors, also turn off Task View, as it's too confusing to combine those features. Or if you just won't use that, turn it off and the task bar can reclaim space from the icon.
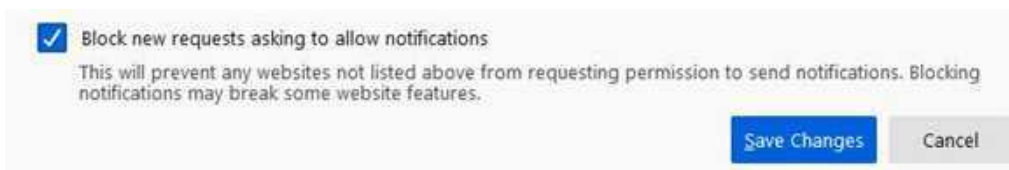

Emojis

Finally, something worth turning ON, if you'll use it. In the same menu as Widgets, scroll down and check on the 'Emoji and more' setting. If set to 'On' or 'While Typing', it displays a smiley face icon in the system tray (near the clock), which allows you to insert not just funny faces and cheeseburger icons, but also international characters, mathematical symbols, and punctuation that does not appear on standard keyboards. It's both useful and well-behaved. Below, I typed those symbols into Notepad, but they will work in most Office software as well.

Browser Notifications

Browser notifications, specifically, are popups that are allowed to happen when you are NOT visiting the site that sends them, or not even using a web browser program. So nearly all notifications are advertising, and many are fraudulent. They're repeated popups, and they get into your computer as a browser option after showing a message like this, and you clicked on the 'go away' button, which is usually 'allow' or 'ok' or 'sign me up'. No, this is not an offer to show you news WHILE ON THAT SITE, it's permission for your browser to show you their ads at the time they choose. Always say no.

In Firefox, you can turn off Notification requests in Settings, then search for Notifications in the top box, Permissions, Notifications, Settings, and then add a check in the box 'Block new requests asking to allow notifications.' From the same page, you can see websites that have already collected permission to ad-spam you, and can change 'allow' on each listing to 'block'.

In Microsoft Edge, go to Settings, 'Privacy, search, and services,' Site

permissions, All permissions, and set 'Quiet notification requests' to On.

In Google Chrome, go to Settings, 'Privacy and security,' Site settings, Notifications, and choose 'Don't allow sites to send notifications.'

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