

Special Settings for Our Old Eyes

Most likely, things will look smaller, crisper, and move faster. Using default display settings has a positive effect on overall system performance because few resources are diverted to accommodating custom display settings.

But default display settings may be hard on your unique eyesight. So now let's see what we can tweak to make the screen easier to view and navigate.

A favorite tweak is easy to implement. Hold down the Ctrl key while rolling the mouse wheel forward, away from you. All text in browsers, word processors, PDF readers, and other document display apps gets bigger! Reverse the wheel's motion and everything gets smaller. A page's left and right edges will expand or contract accordingly. This trick gives you pretty fine control over text size, and text size can be different from one window to another.

If you don't have a mouse with a wheel, you can do the same thing by pressing Ctrl and the "+" or "-" keys. You can quickly return to the default magnification setting by pressing Ctrl and "0" (zero).

But you will notice that parts of the screen do not change size. Menu bars and other fixed objects that surround text remain the same size. In some apps, the window that confines text will not change size and enlarged text overflows the edges of the window, getting lost from sight.

To avoid this problem, return to the Windows 10/11 "Change Display Settings" app. In the "Scale and Layout" section you will find the option to "Change the size of text, apps, and other items." The dropdown menu allows settings of 100% of the default (recommended), 125% and 150%. Play with those, logging out and back in after each change.

Notice that as you enlarge things they may no longer fit on your screen entirely. The bottom of the display settings page drops down out of sight beneath the edge of the screen. You will need to PgDn to see what you are missing, which may include important options for the app you are using. (On a related note, you may want to visit the Settings -> Ease of Access page and UNcheck "Automatically hide scroll bars in Windows." By default, Windows hides the scroll bars on some screens, making it hard to tell if there's more on the page.)

The brightness and “night light” options on the display settings page change the hue of light, mostly by adding or removing some of the blue spectrum. A warmer, less-blue hue is often easier on the eyes and can help prepare your body for sleep, so try the “night light” toggle switch. Click on “Night light settings” to see how finely you can control the warmth of light.

Back up under “Scale and Layout” you see “Advanced scaling settings”. Toggle on the switch that promises to “Fix scaling for apps”. It can make text look less blurry when it’s enlarged or shrunk. Custom scaling percentages can also be set on this page; they will be indicated back on the main page when they are in effect. Don’t neglect to click on the “Apply” button at the very bottom of this page or your custom settings will not take effect.

The resolution of your display should be left at its recommended maximum. If it’s changed, there will be fewer pixels available and everything will look less sharp, blurry. The advantage of using a coarser resolution is that those tiny border items will look bigger, but blurrier. Leave “orientation” alone unless you switch to a monitor that is taller than it is wide.