

Why I switched from Windows to Chromebook and haven't looked back

By Dave Parrack, pcworld.com Contributor Nov 1, 2024

These days, I mostly use ChromeOS and only boot up Windows when I absolutely need to.

I'm not saying Windows is a terrible operating system, but it's definitely no longer the one I choose to use on a day-to-day basis.

After 30+ years of using Windows in its various forms (starting with Windows 95), I have moved on — but not to macOS! In fact, I've switched from Windows to ChromeOS and I'm loving every minute of it.

Now, I want to be fully transparent: I admit that I still own an all-in-one Windows PC (currently running Windows 10 because [Microsoft doesn't think it's capable of Windows 11](#)), and I'm also likely to buy a new Windows PC before [support for Windows 10 officially ends](#).

However, my Windows PC only exists as a backup for those increasingly rare times when my Chromebook isn't right for the task. Most days, my Chromebook is more than sufficient. Here's why I switched and why I now love Chromebooks more than Windows laptops.

Why I switched to a Chromebook

Why did I switch from Windows to ChromeOS? There were several factors that influenced my decision. Some may resonate with you, while others may differ from your own experiences.

Reason 1: A simpler, less frustrating operating system

After decades of using Windows in its various forms, I grew tired of how frustrating it has become to use. It feels bloated and slow more often than not, even with a decently specced machine and everything updated.

I don't want to wait minutes for an operating system to fully boot and be ready to use, I don't want it to constantly grind away in the background doing God knows what, and I don't want to be troubleshooting it all the time when things inevitably go wrong.

I want an operating system that boots on demand in seconds and simply works without fuss or obstacles. I just want to get on with my day and do what I need to do. That's what I found in ChromeOS.

Reason 2: Less stress about malware and security issues

Windows has always been the favorite target of scammers and hackers due to its mainstream popularity and the many vulnerabilities that continue to pop up even as older ones are fixed.

In other words, while [Microsoft has admittedly improved in this area](#), malware is more likely to hit and infect a Windows machine than a Chromebook. (Windows is riskier to use than macOS and Linux, too.)

ChromeOS is especially safe and secure thanks to a range of built-in security features, including Verified Boot (which checks for unexpected changes on startup), Sandboxing at all levels (which ensures any issues are kept isolated), and the inability to run random executables.

All of this, combined with the fact that malware creators are less likely to target ChromeOS, means I can use my Chromebook without worrying as long as I'm mindful of [best practices for digital security](#).

Reason 3: No system updates that take hours to complete

Another constant frustration of using Windows that made me look around for an alternative is the seemingly never-ending updates that Microsoft pushes onto users — updates that aren't seamlessly applied in the background but disruptive to daily productivity.

I've often heard my PC chugging away as it downloads a massive Windows update, which then prompts me to restart my computer in order to install it. That can sometimes take upwards of an hour.

ChromeOS, on the other hand, is such a lightweight operating system that its regular updates are fast, silent, and without fuss. It takes the hassle out of maintaining an operating system.

Reason 4: Productivity without spending a fortune

As a freelance writer and editor, I have the privilege to work anywhere — at home, at an office, at a coffee shop, or even while on vacation. But only if I have a machine that's light, portable, and user-friendly enough.

Sure, there are plenty of Windows laptops and MacBooks out there that fit the profile, but they generally come with higher price tags than Chromebooks. For me, a Chromebook strikes the right balance between usability, performance, and affordability.

Related: [Don't go below these specs in a budget laptop](#)

Reason 5: I'm already embedded in Google's ecosystem

The final reason why I made the switch away from Windows to ChromeOS is the fact that I'm already embedded in Google's ecosystem.

I own an Android phone and I use most of Google's apps (including Gmail, Meet, Calendar, Maps, Photos, etc.), so it wasn't a huge leap to ditch Windows and go (almost) all-in on ChromeOS.

In fact, the switch has made things easier for me as I now have full access to all of my data across my phone, Chromebook, and other devices.

Why I don't regret making the switch

I have no regrets about buying a Chromebook and I have no shame in preferring ChromeOS over Windows. Here are three big ways in which the switch has left me in a better place than before.

I'm actually more productive

The most obvious benefit I've felt after switching is a boost to my productivity, and that in turn has improved my work-life balance.

As a writer who works from home but also needs the option to work outside of the home at times, a Chromebook offers the perfect blend of power and portability. I can get my work done with little fuss and I can do it from anywhere, without the operating system bogging me down.

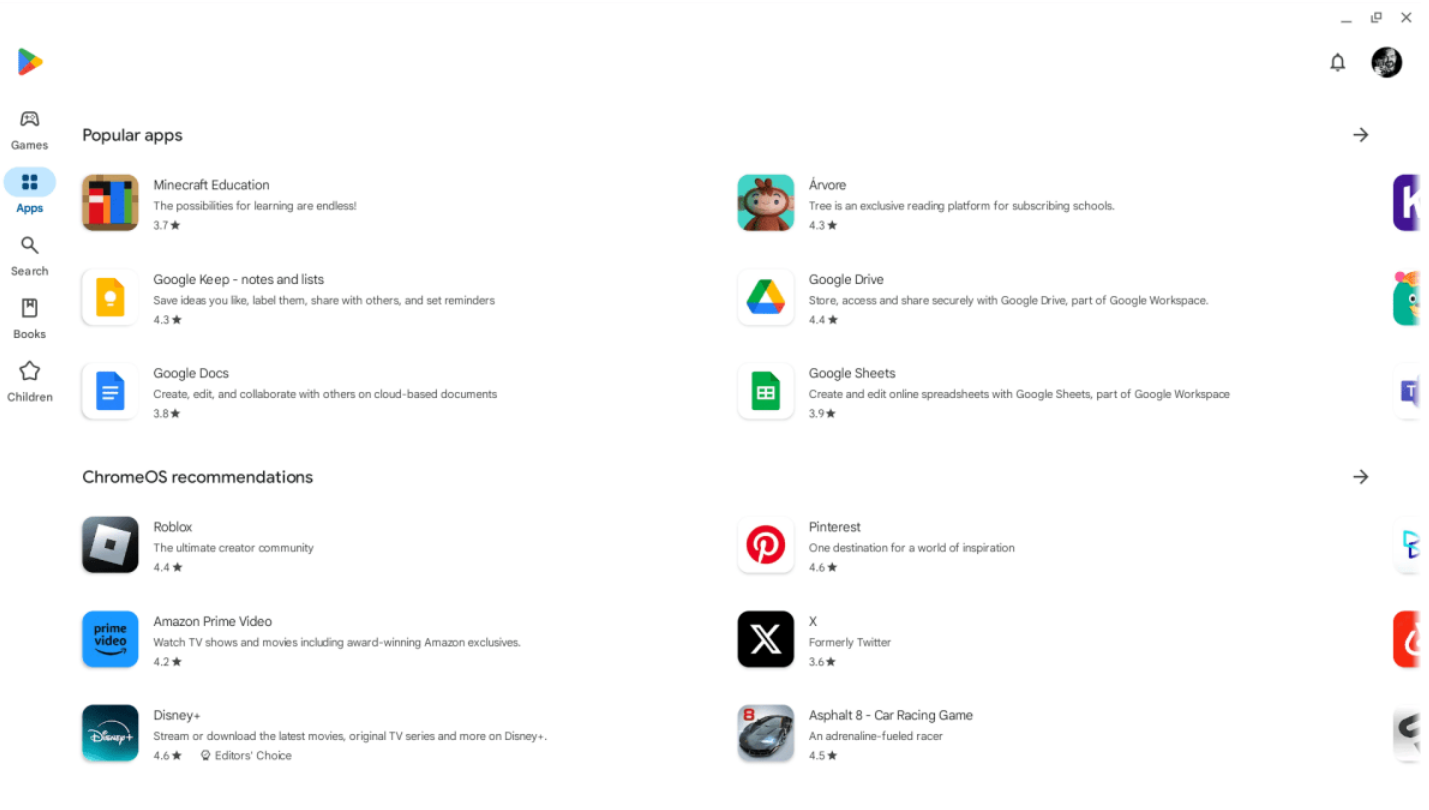
ChromeOS boots instantly and is ready when I need it

Despite being a desk worker, I don't actually have to be sat at a desk for 8 straight hours every day. I have flexibility in my schedule, and that's why I need a machine that's always ready to use on demand.

Sure, I could leave my Windows laptop running all day and jump on/off as required, but I don't like the idea of needless idling. Sleep and hibernation modes are also options, but Windows is too sluggish for me when it comes to waking up.

ChromeOS offers a more practical and environmentally friendly alternative. Given how lightweight Google's OS is, it's no surprise that it boots instantly and can be used at a moment's notice.

Web and Android apps are enough for me



Dave Parrack / IDG

One of the bigger worries I had when leaving Windows was losing access to all the Windows programs I'd been using for years. However, those fears proved (mostly) unfounded as there are adequate Android apps and web apps to replace the ones I used on Windows.

What you may not know is that Chromebooks aren't just limited to websites and Chrome extensions. A few years ago, Google added the ability to [natively run Android apps on Chromebooks](#), and most apps in the Google Play Store are compatible with ChromeOS.

Some work better than others, of course, and there was a lot of trial and error as I sought apps that most closely matched my needs and preferences. But these days, web and Android apps are pretty darn good and you can easily get by except in very specific situations.

What you might miss if you switch from Windows to Chromebook

ChromeOS works perfectly for me 99 percent of the time, but if you decide to follow suit and switch from Windows to Google's operating system, there are some things you may miss — and I'd be remiss if I didn't at least mention them.

Access to your full-featured desktop applications

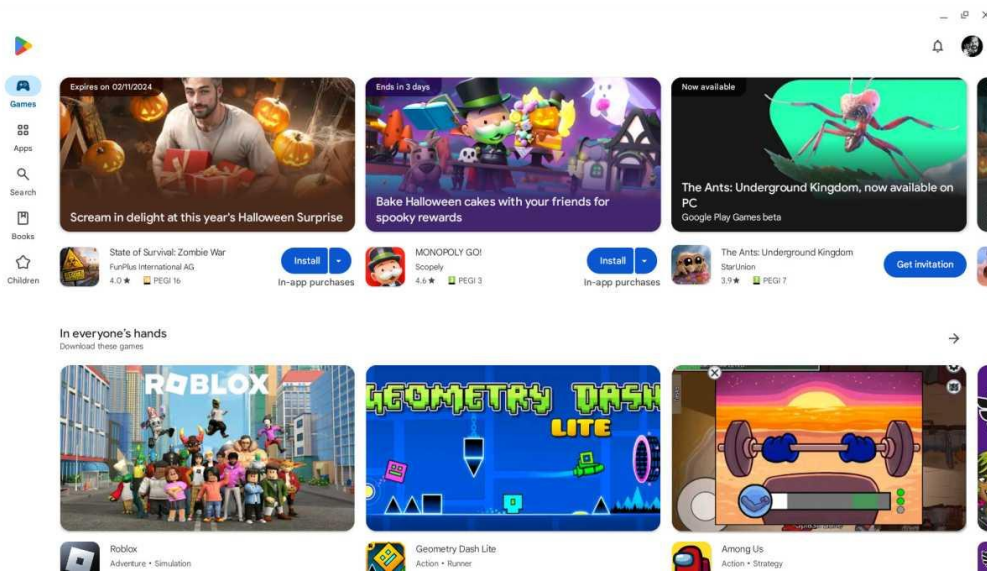
While I was able to find suitable web and Android apps to replace most of the Windows programs I previously relied on, some niche programs simply don't have viable web or Android alternatives.

For example, if your job requires that you use a particular Windows-only app — maybe even an in-house app that's specific to your company — then you may not have a choice.

Another example is software that comes in web and Windows versions, with the Windows version being more full-featured or more performant. In that case, switching to the web version might be an obvious downgrade that seriously harms productivity or usability.

Therefore, you really have to do your research *before* making the switch, whether you're switching to ChromeOS or some other operating system like macOS or Linux. Windows-only apps are a valid deal-breaker.

PC games without needing to rely on cloud gaming



Dave Parrack / IDG

Contrary to popular belief, you *can* game on a Chromebook — and the experience is far better than you'd probably expect it to be. The caveat is that you can't just install Steam and play all the same PC games that you can enjoy on a Windows machine.

Yes, you can install Steam on Chromebooks now, but not all games on Steam are compatible with ChromeOS. You can also install most Android games on ChromeOS, which opens up a whole world of casual gaming opportunities (along with mobile ports of popular games like *Stardew Valley*, *Dead Cells*, and *Hollow Knight*).

Otherwise, you have to [rely on cloud gaming services](#) if you want to play mainstream AAA games on a Chromebook. Using platforms like Xbox Cloud Gaming, Nvidia's GeForce Now, and Amazon Luna, you can stream gameplay to your Chromebook... but it's notably not the same as playing games locally on a high-end machine.

If these limited gaming options are a problem for you, then you should probably skip the Chromebook. (Or keep a separate gaming PC.)

System upgradeability and customizations

If you're a fan of either customizing your system to your heart's content or upgrading your hardware to stay ahead of the curve, then ChromeOS probably won't be for you.

It's meant to be a lightweight operating system that works out of the box, not something for tinkering and customizing and messing around in. And while that suits me perfectly, it won't suit everyone. The same goes for the hardware, as you're pretty much stuck with what you buy.

Thankfully, ChromeOS isn't at all heavy on resources, so as long as you buy smart to begin with, the hardware should last.