The Ultimate Guide to Tabs in Windows 11 File Explorer

Why Tabs in Windows Are a Game-Changer

If you've ever found yourself drowning in a sea of open File Explorer windows, constantly Alt-Tabbing just to copy a file from one folder to another, there's good news — **Windows finally caught up with the modern tabbed experience.**

With the introduction of **tabs in File Explorer** in Windows 11, Microsoft brought a long-requested productivity feature that changes how we navigate our files. Much like browser tabs revolutionized how we surf the web, **tabs in File Explorer let you work smarter, not harder** — reducing clutter, saving time, and keeping your desktop cleaner and more organized.

But there's more to tabs than just opening multiple folders in one window. **Mastering a few key shortcuts and tricks can turn**

you into a multitasking power user. Whether you're managing a complex project, sorting photos, or just trying to keep things tidy, tabs can streamline your workflow in ways you didn't even realize you needed.

In this tutorial, you'll learn how to:

- Open, close, and switch between tabs quickly
- Drag and drop files across tabs
- Use File Explorer tabs with Snap layouts and other Windows features
- Supercharge your experience with advanced tools and shortcuts

Let's dive in and take full control of your workspace — one tab at a time.

Let me know if you'd like to tailor this introduction for a specific audience (e.g., beginners, power users, IT professionals) or platform (blog post, company wiki, training guide, etc.)!

Opening Tabs in File Explorer

Method 1: Using Keyboard Shortcuts

- **Open a new tab**:
  Ctrl + T

- **Close the current tab**:
  Ctrl + W

- **Switch to the next tab**:
  Ctrl + Tab

- **Switch to the previous tab**:
  Ctrl + Shift + Tab

- **Open a folder in a new tab (right-click)**:
  Right-click on a folder → Open in new tab

Managing Tabs

Reordering Tabs

- Simply **click and drag** a tab left or right to rearrange them.

Closing Tabs

- Click the **X** icon on the tab, or use Ctrl + W to close the currently active tab.

Opening Tabs from Different Drives

You can open tabs from:

- Local drives (C:, D:)

- Network drives

- Cloud storage folders (OneDrive, Dropbox, etc.)

This allows for **quick side-by-side comparison** or easy file transfers between locations without opening new windows.

Productivity Tips

Set Your "Home" Tabs

Want to start every day with your most-used folders open?

- Open the folders you use most in tabs.

- Pin File Explorer to the taskbar.

- Next time, right-click the taskbar icon → Click your desired folder from the **Recent or Pinned** list.

Combine with Snap Layouts

- Use **Snap Assist** (Win + Z) to split the screen with another app while keeping your tabs in one File Explorer window.

- Example: Compare Excel files side by side with file locations in different tabs.

Drag and Drop Across Tabs

You can **drag files from one tab and drop them into another**:

1. Click and drag a file.
2. Hover over the destination tab until it opens.
3. Drop the file into the target folder.

Bonus: Use Tabs in Windows Terminal Too!

Windows Terminal also supports tabs:

- **New tab**: Ctrl + Shift + T

- **Close tab**: Ctrl + Shift + W

- **Switch tab**: Ctrl + Tab / Ctrl + Shift + Tab

Great for developers or sysadmins managing multiple shells (PowerShell, Command Prompt, Ubuntu, etc.).

Coming Soon / Advanced Features

While tab support is limited to File Explorer and Terminal for now, Microsoft may expand it to other areas. In the meantime, you can enhance your experience with third-party tools:

Recommended Tools

- **Groupy 2 (by Stardock)** — Add tabs to almost any Windows application (including Microsoft Office).

- **QTTabBar** — Adds advanced tab features to older versions of File Explorer.

Summary Table of Shortcuts

Action	Shortcut
Open new tab	Ctrl + T
Close current tab	Ctrl + W
Switch to next tab	Ctrl + Tab
Switch to previous tab	Ctrl + Shift + Tab
Open folder in new tab	Right-click → Open in new tab

Action	Shortcut
New tab in Terminal	Ctrl + Shift + T
Close tab in Terminal	Ctrl + Shift + W

Absolutely! Here's a strong and thoughtful closing statement to wrap up your tutorial:

Final Thoughts: Master Your Workflow, One Tab at a Time

Tabs in Windows might seem like a small addition at first, but once you start using them, it's hard to imagine going back. Whether you're organizing files, comparing folders, or just trying to stay focused with fewer open windows, **tabs make File Explorer more powerful, efficient, and intuitive**.

By learning the keyboard shortcuts, combining tabs with features like Snap Assist, and adopting some simple habits, you can **shave minutes off your daily routine** — and over time, that adds up to serious productivity gains.

As Microsoft continues to refine the Windows experience, mastering tools like tabs today means you're already ahead of the curve tomorrow.

So go ahead — experiment, personalize, and make tabs work for you. A cleaner, smarter workspace is just a few keystrokes away.

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