

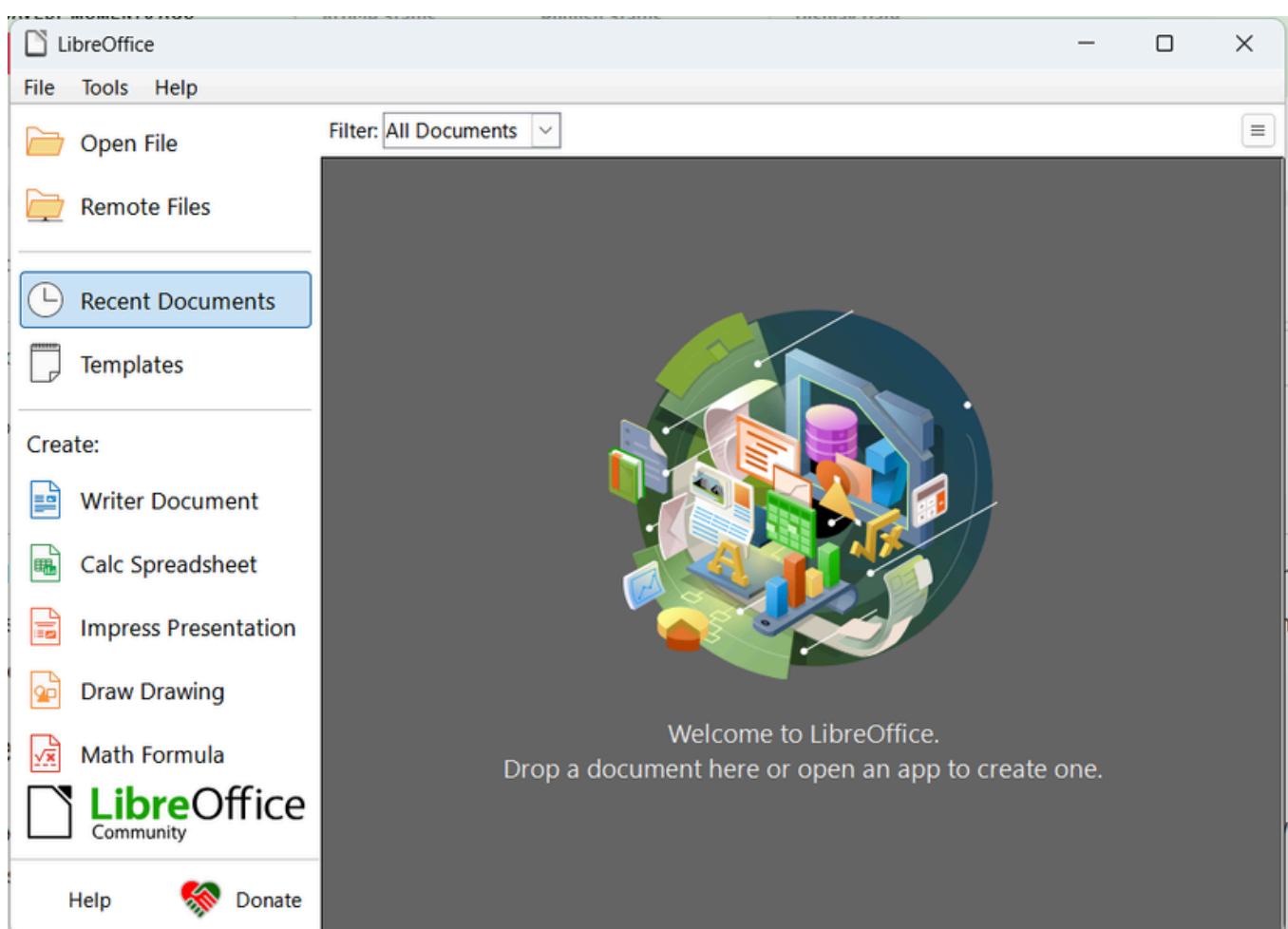
10 Portable Apps That I Always Keep On a Flash Drive

October 13, 2025

You never know when a certain Windows app can help solve an immediate problem. You may not always have time to download and install what you need. But luckily, there are several useful ones with portable versions that can fit on your thumb drive.

Portable applications run directly from a USB drive without installation, offering flexibility and convenience. These programs can maintain your settings across different computers by storing them on your USB drive, leaving no trace on the system. Here's a collection of 10 powerful portable applications, from productivity suites to troubleshooting utilities.

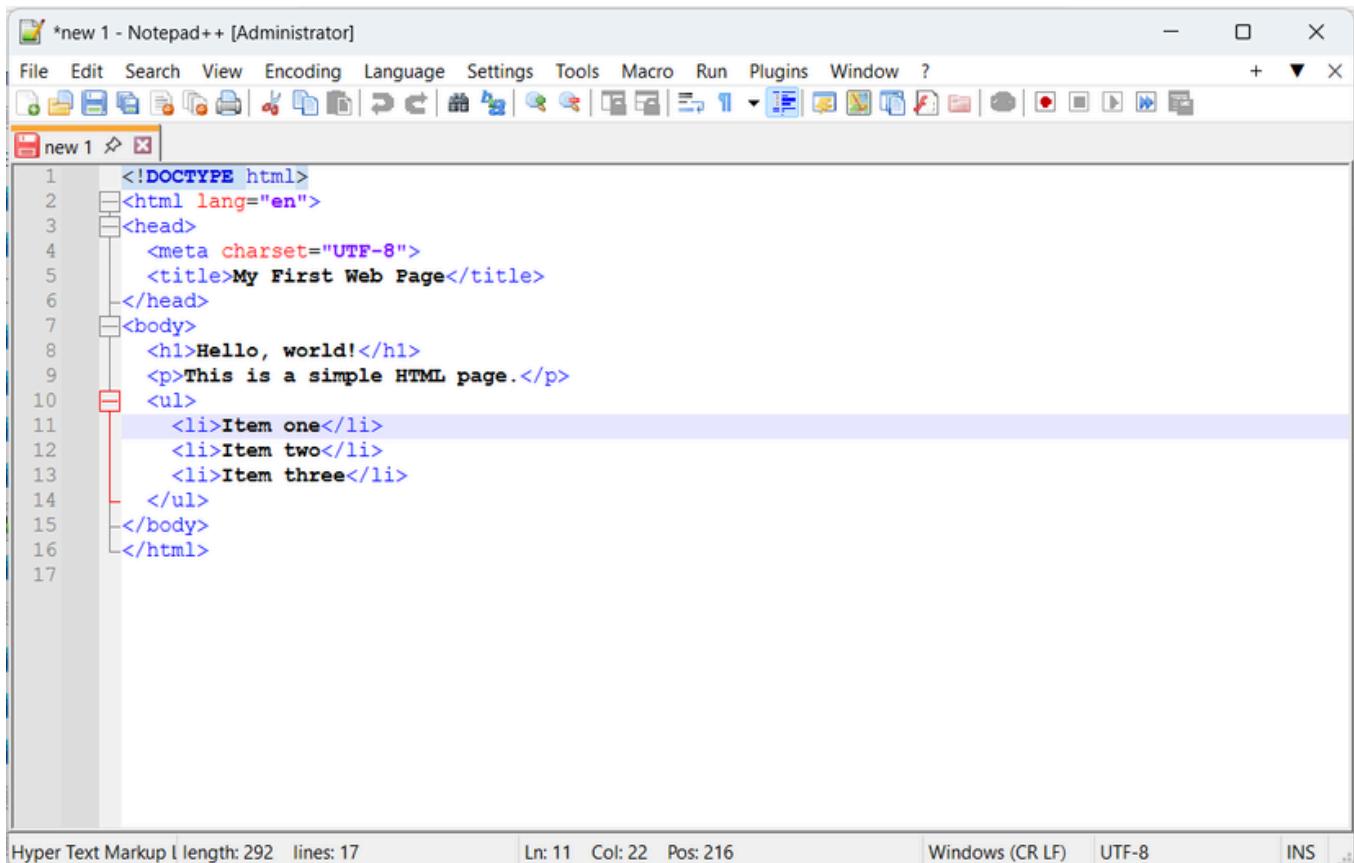
LibreOffice Portable



When you need a portable office suite, [LibreOffice](#) is one of the [best open-source apps](#) you'll come across. It includes a word processor, a spreadsheet app, and a presentation tool, making it a cost-effective replacement for Microsoft Office.

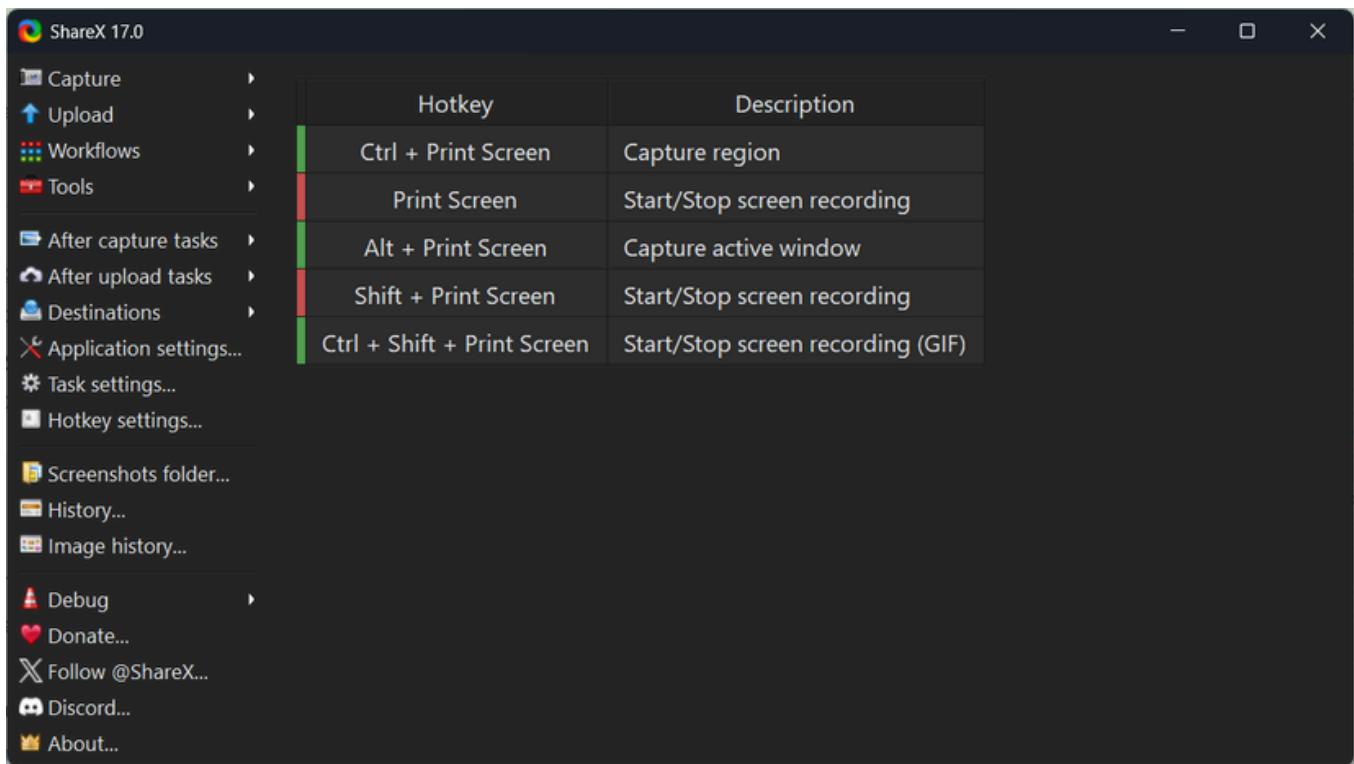
LibreOffice also has a drawing application, a database management, and a math formula writing tool. In addition to the open document format (ODF), it supports various other popular file formats (e.g., DOCX, XLSX, PPTX, and PDF), ensuring that you can work on almost any document anywhere.

Notepad++



The portable version of [Notepad++](#) offers a great way to quickly write Markdown, edit configuration files and scripts, or debug some code. Right out of the box, you get important features like syntax highlighting for dozens of programming languages, multi-tab editing for working with multiple files simultaneously, and macro recording to automate repetitive tasks. In addition to having a tiny file size, Notepad++ is known for its great performance, which is particularly useful when working with low-spec computers.

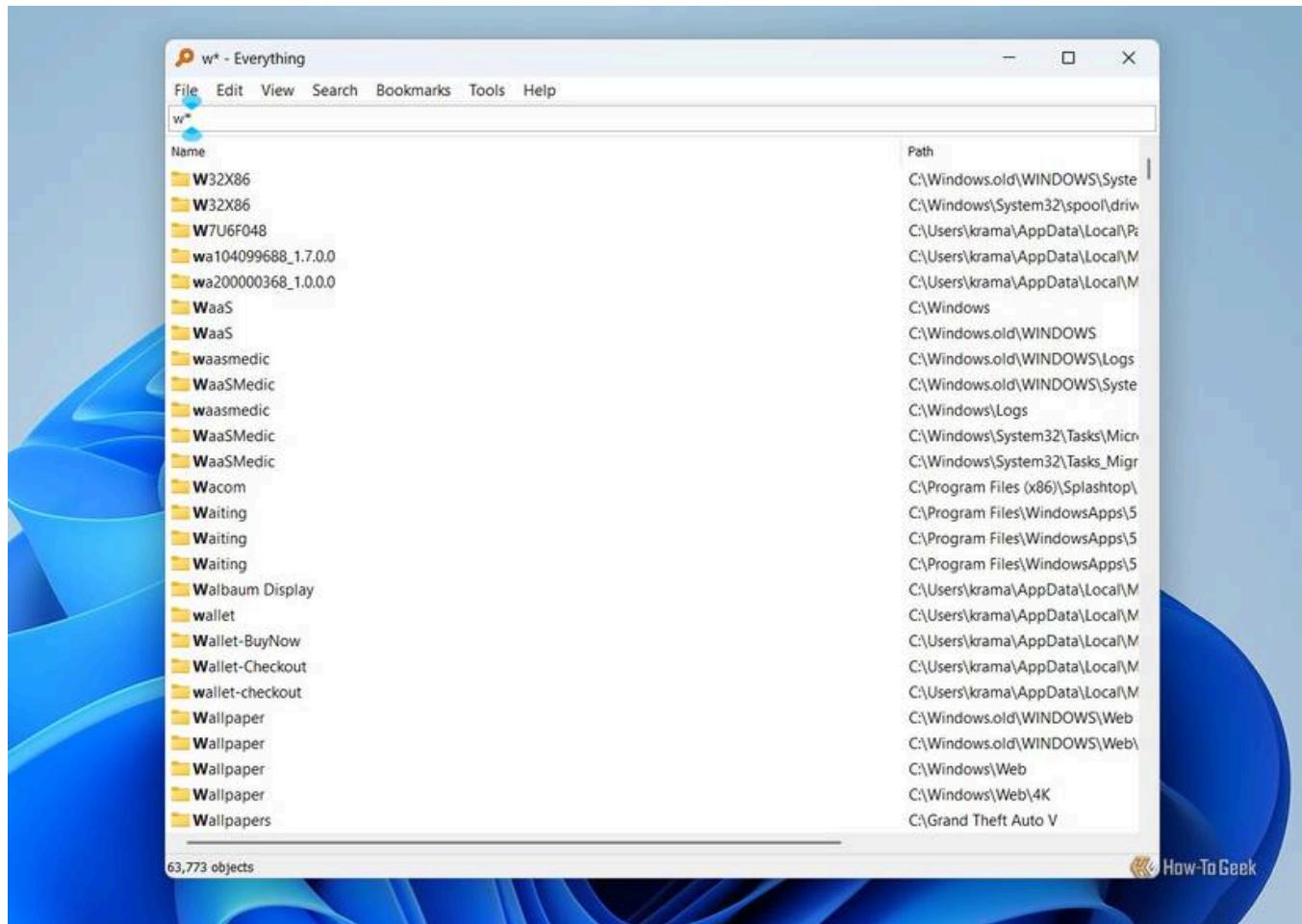
ShareX



[ShareX](#) is a great app for capturing your screen, whether you're grabbing the whole screen, a specific window, or a custom section. It also lets you quickly annotate your captures with arrows, text, and shapes—it's what I use when writing guides.

ShareX also allows you to upload your screenshots or recordings to a wide range of platforms like Imgur, Dropbox, and Google Drive with a single click. You can even automate the process if you want to save some time.

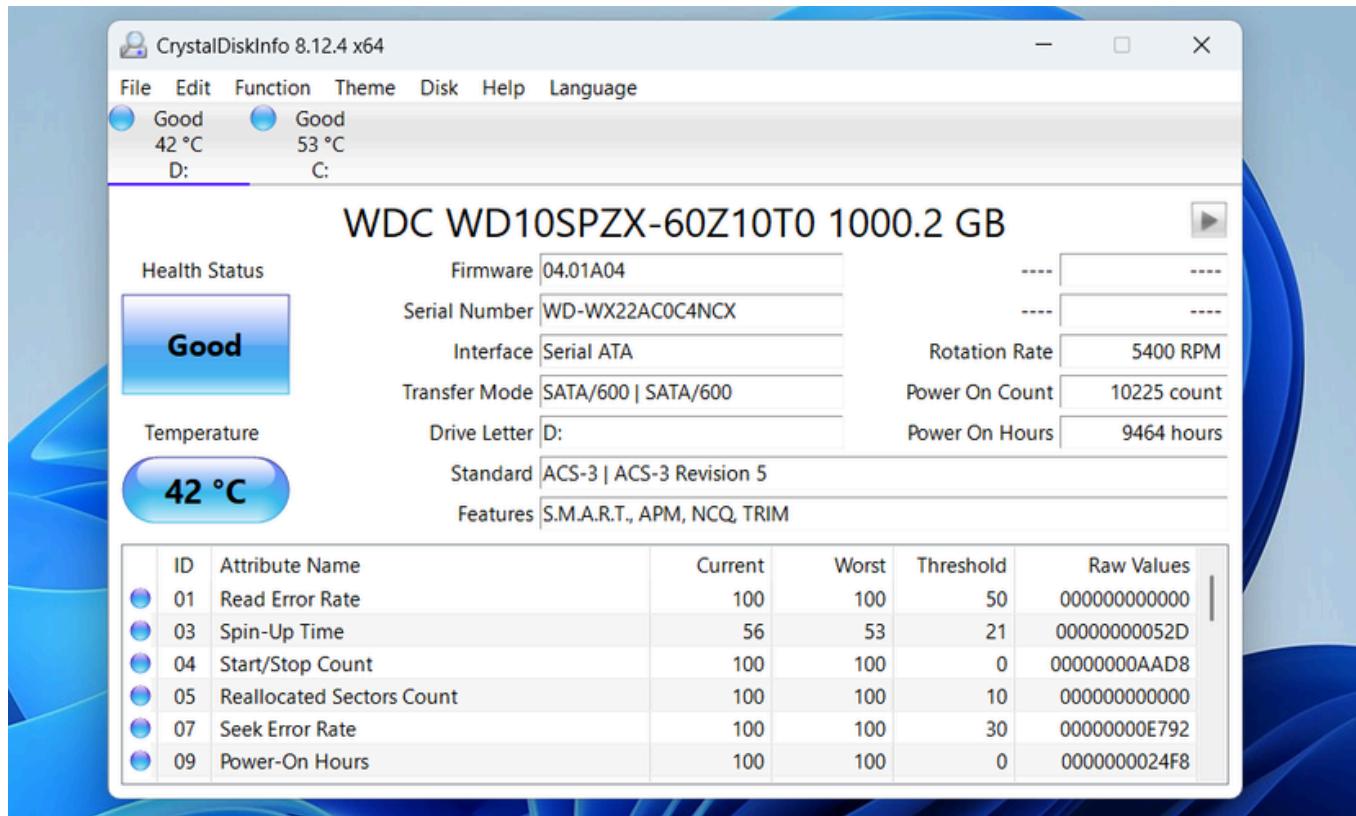
Everything



Windows search can be slow at times, and [Everything](#) is a faster alternative that indexes files instantly on any Windows computer—no installation required. The fact that it saves your custom filters, bookmarks, and search history is what I like most about it because it allows me to immediately jump into my flow wherever I go.

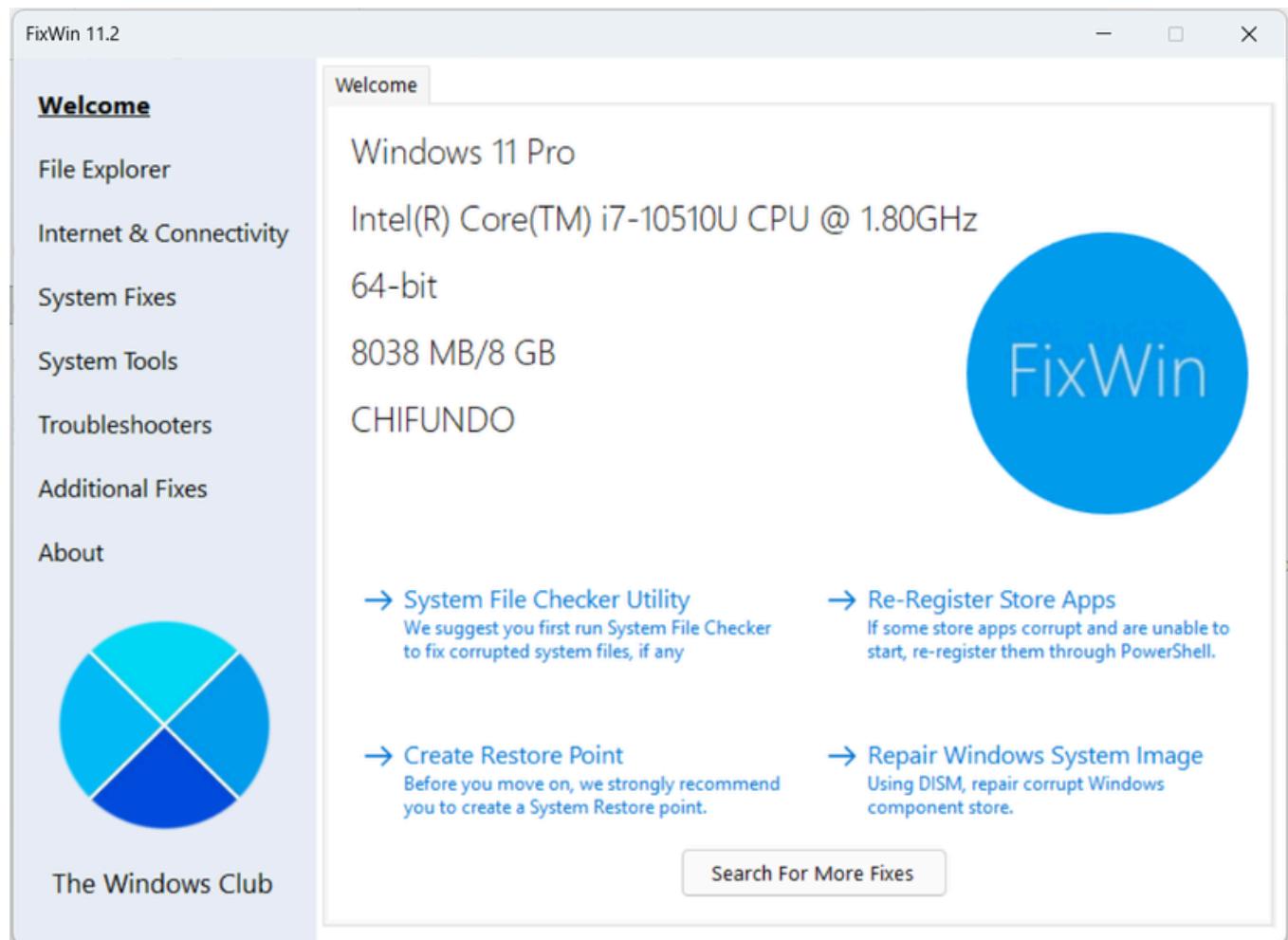
I also use Everything when I need to quickly check for a file on unfamiliar PCs or help a friend find lost files. I can [use Command Palette](#) just fine, but not everyone has PowerToys installed on their computer. This is why I always keep it on a portable drive.

CrystalDiskInfo



If a friend is having trouble with a failing HDD or worn-out SSD, [CrystalDiskInfo](#) can provide a reliable diagnosis of what is really going on. It can identify drives that are in good condition and those that are at risk of failure through S.M.A.R.T. (Self-Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Technology) data. CrystalDiskInfo even allows users to set up an alert email or system warning of impending failure.

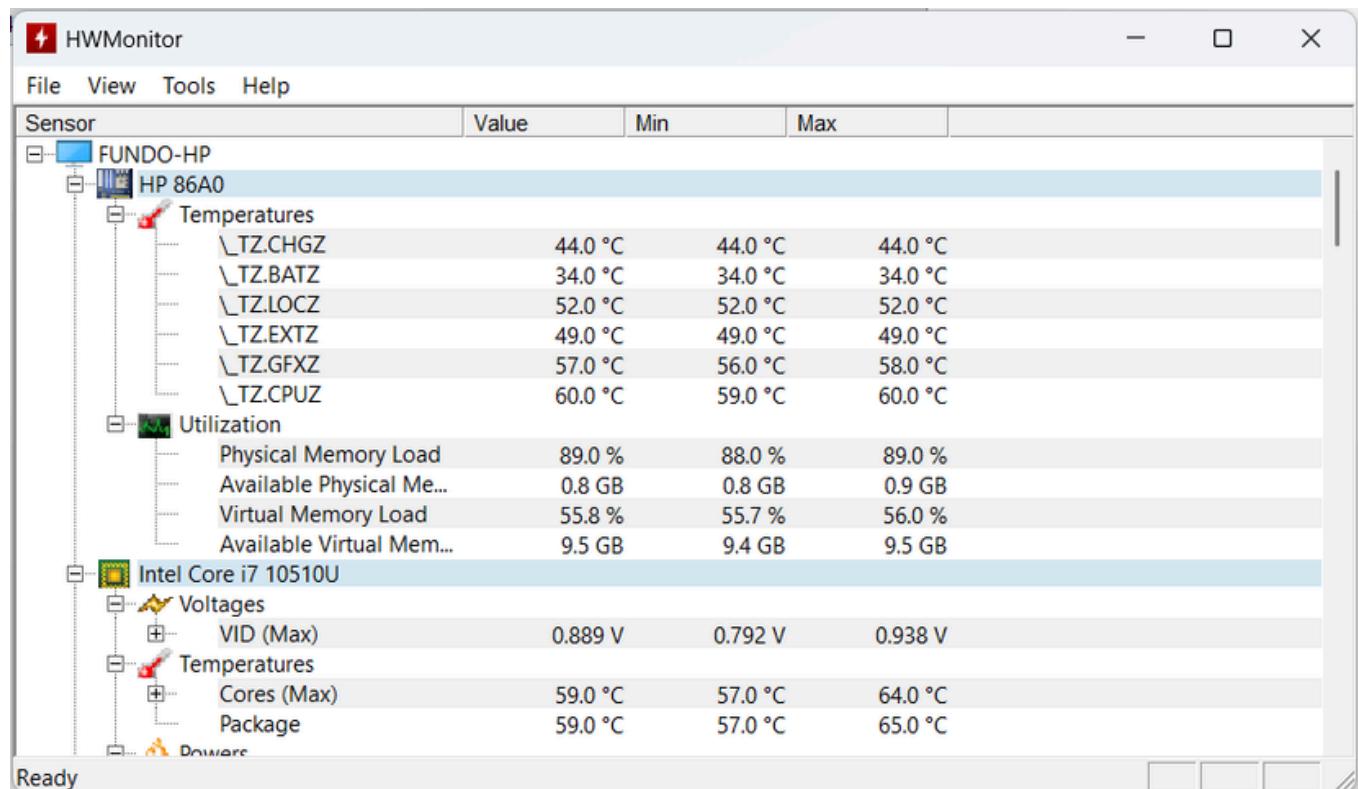
FixWin11



Are you experiencing issues with File Explorer, internet connectivity, and various system components? Do you need to use a specific troubleshooter or reset something (e.g., Notepad, Microsoft Defender, Microsoft Edge, or Group Policy settings)?

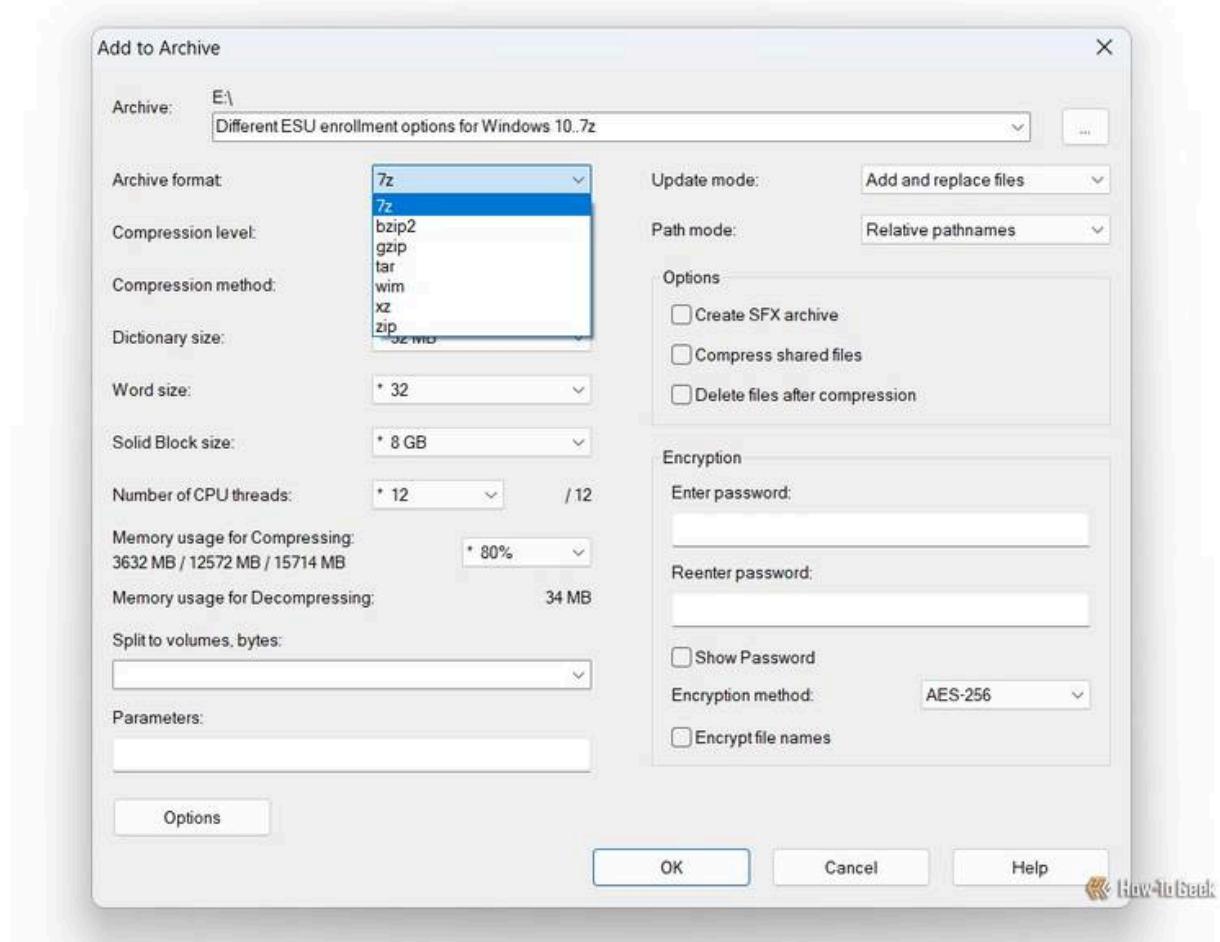
[FixWin11](#) is a handy, lightweight app that can help apply a variety of quick fixes or access Windows' built-in tools with a click of a button. You never know what problems you'll run into on another person's computer, so it's great to always have a tool like this on hand.

HWMonitor



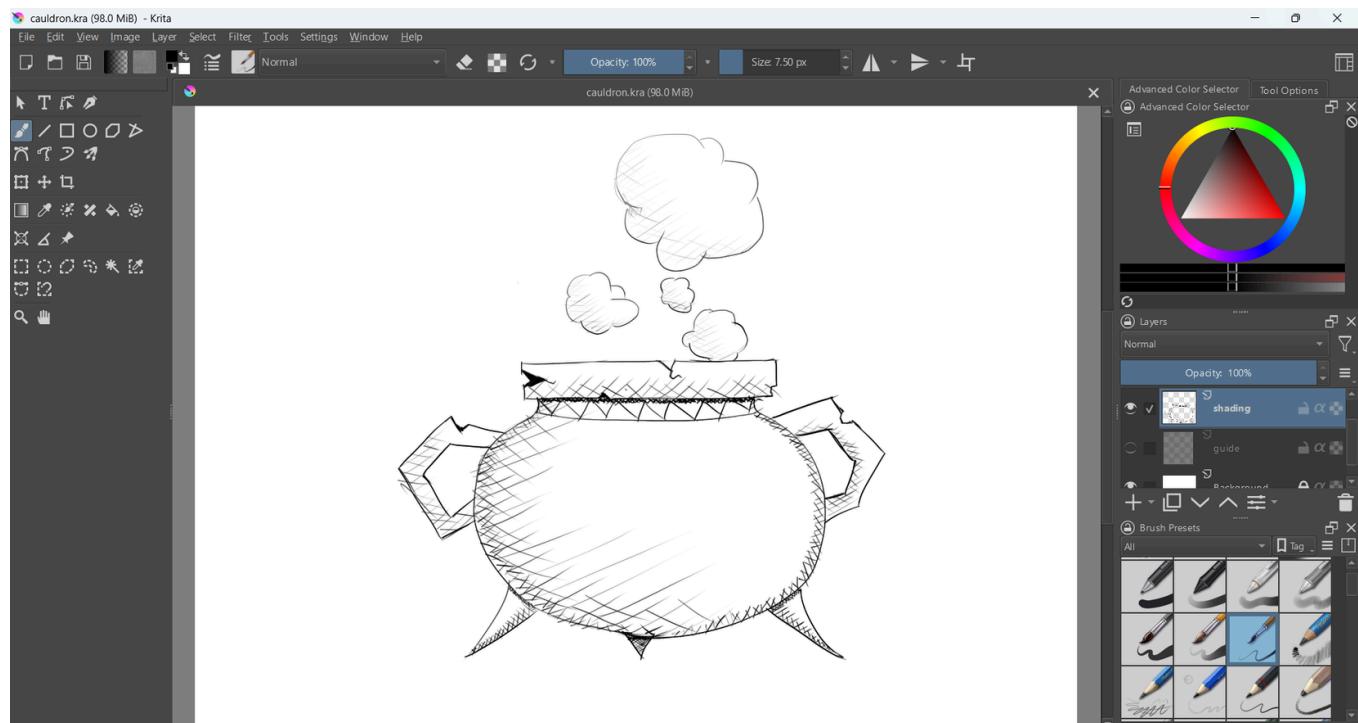
The Windows Task Manager can provide some important information about the hardware installed on your computer, but it's limited. [HWMonitor](#), on the other hand, provides more detailed key insights, including CPU temperature, voltage, fan speeds, GPU statistics, and battery levels. It's a great tool for peeking under the hood if you're curious about the PC or need to quickly diagnose problems.

7-Zip



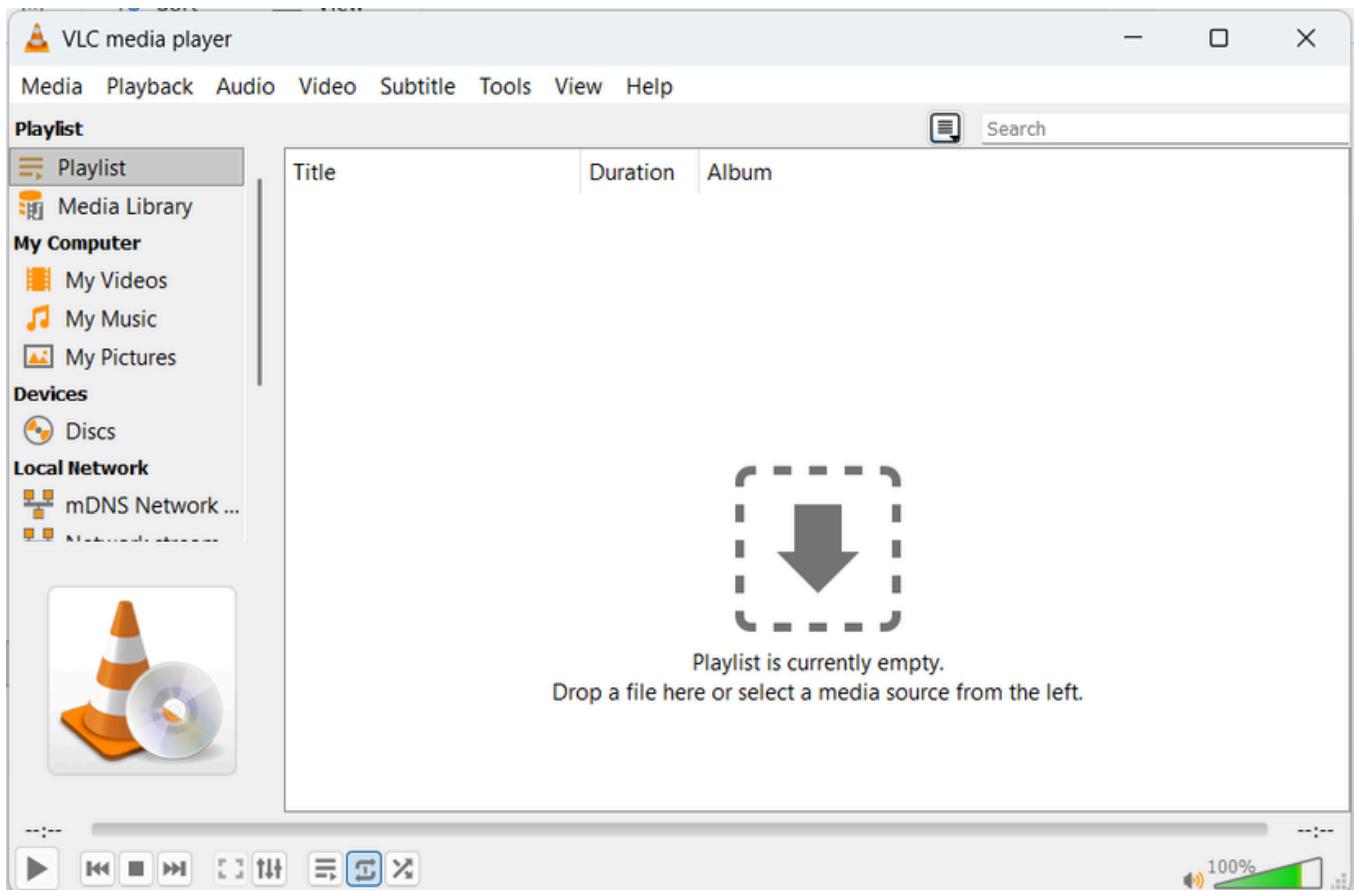
[7-Zip](#) offers superior compression and extraction to Windows' default option. It supports a wide range of formats, including obscure ones like 7z, XZ, BZIP2, GZIP, TAR, WIM, and AR. It also has file encryption and can handle large files more efficiently compared to Windows' built-in compression tool.

Krita



[Krita](#) is a powerful 2D drawing app that has elevated my sketching and line art over the years. It has hundreds of brushes (100 preloaded and others you can download), as well as advanced drawing and animation tools. [Krita is also a great alternative to paid drawing apps](#), and when I'm not drawing, I use it to edit images, taking advantage of the same features that make it a powerful digital art tool, such as layers, selection tools, and CMYK support.

VLC



The [VLC media player](#) is known for its ability to play virtually any media you can think of, making it a handy app to keep on your thumb drive. You don't need to install codecs or convert your audio and video files—it can even handle high definition streams and partial downloads. The portable version maintains all these capabilities while also preserving your custom settings and playlists as you move between different computers.

Having a thumb drive with all your favorite portable apps ensures you can get to work immediately on any Windows computer. You should also [consider having a bootable drive with you](#) at all times. It can help during emergencies, especially one that renders your computer unstable and requires troubleshooting, repair, or reinstallation of Windows.

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