

Sidebar

Programming · VS Code Profiles and Workspaces Cheat Sheet

How VS Code organises your setup: profiles, multi-root workspaces, where settings live, Workspace Trust, Settings Sync, extensions and windows. Exact name, what it does, and its default. Sheet 11 in the VS Code series.

PROFILES

- File > Preferences > Profiles Opens the Profiles editor (also under the gear button in the Activity Bar)
- What a profile holds Settings, keyboard shortcuts, snippets, tasks, extensions, MCP servers and UI layout
- Profiles: Switch Profile Change the profile for the current window
- Profiles: Create a Temporary Profile A throwaway profile that disappears when VS Code closes
- Default profile The profile you already have; it follows your current configuration
- Apply Setting to all Profiles Gear icon on a setting: share that one setting across every profile
- Apply Extension to all Profiles Make an extension available in every profile
- Profile templates Python, Data Science, Doc Writer, Node.js, Angular, Java General, Java Spring
- code ./project --profile "Web Development" Open a folder with a named profile from the command line
- %APPDATA%\Code\User\profiles Where profile data is stored on Windows

WHERE SETTINGS LIVE (LOW TO HIGH PRIORITY)

- Default Built-in values: read-only, see *Open Default Settings (JSON)*
- User %APPDATA%\Code\User\settings.json , for every project (per profile)
- Workspace .vscode/settings.json or the settings block of a .code-workspace file
- Workspace folder .vscode/settings.json inside one folder of a multi-root workspace
- [language] block Overrides for one language, at user or workspace level
- Machine / window scope A few settings (for example window.*) are ignored at folder level

MULTI-ROOT WORKSPACES

- File > Add Folder to Workspace Put several folders in one window
- File > Save Workspace As Writes the .code-workspace file (VS Code makes the folder relative)
- File > Open Workspace / Open Recent Reopen a saved workspace; recent ones are marked as Workspace
- code --add folder1 folder2 Add folders to the last active window from the command line
- folders In the file: [{ "name": "Site", "path": "astro-site" }]
- settings / launch / tasks Sections inside the .code-workspace file that apply to the workspace
- extensions.recommendations Extension IDs suggested to anyone who opens this workspace
- \${workspaceFolder:Name} In launch.json and tasks: refer to one folder of the workspace by name

WORKSPACE TRUST

- security.workspace.trust.enabled Turns the feature on or off (default true)
- security.workspace.trust.startupPrompt once (default), always , never : when workspace is opened
- security.workspace.trust.banner untilDismissed (default), always , never : the banner is shown
- security.workspace.trust.untrustedFiles prompt (default), open , newWindow : the workspace is opened from untrusted places
- security.workspace.trust.emptyWindow Trust empty windows (default true)
- Workspaces: Manage Workspace Trust Command Palette: see or change whether this folder is trusted
- extensions.supportUntrustedWorkspaces Per-extension override of whether it runs in Focused Mode

SETTINGS SYNC

- Settings Sync: Turn On...** Command Palette: sign in and choose what to sync across your machines
- What can sync** Settings, keyboard shortcuts, extensions, snippets, tasks, profiles and UI state
- settingsSync.ignoredSettings** Setting IDs never synced, e.g. `["window.zoomLevel"]` (default `[]`)
- settingsSync.ignoredExtensions** Extension IDs never synced (default `[]`)
- Settings Sync: Show Synced Data** Command Palette: view the stored copy and restore an earlier version

WINDOWS & OPENING FILES

- window.openFilesInNewWindow** `off` (default), `on`, `default`: where a double-clicked file opens
- window.openFoldersInNewWindow** `default` (default), `on`, `off`
- window.openWithoutArgumentsInNewWindow** Opening VS Code with nothing specified: `on` (default on Windows/Linux) or `off`
- window.titleBarStyle** `custom` (default) or `native`: VS Code's own title bar or the system's
- window.doubleClickIconToClose** Double-clicking the title bar icon closes the window (default `false`)
- code .** Open the current folder in VS Code from a terminal
- code -n / code -r** Open in a new window / reuse the last window
- code -g file:line** Open a file at a line number
- code --diff a b** Open the diff editor on two files

A REASONABLE STARTER SET (MY SUGGESTIONS, NOT DEFAULTS)

- One profile per kind of work** For example Web, Python and Writing, so each has only the extensions it needs
- A saved workspace file** For projects that always open together, such as a site and its content folder
- "workbench.settings.editor": "json"** Straight to `settings.json` when you prefer text to the UI
- "settingsSync.ignoredSettings": ["window.zoomLevel"]** Keep per-machine settings like zoom out of sync
- "extensions.autoUpdate": "on"** The default; leave it unless an update broke something

EXTENSIONS HOUSEKEEPING

- Ctrl+Shift+X** Open the Extensions view
- extensions.autoUpdate** `on` (default) or `off`: update extensions automatically
- extensions.autoCheckUpdates** Check for updates in the background (default `true`)
- extensions.ignoreRecommendations** Stop suggesting extensions (default `false`)
- .vscode/extensions.json** Project file: `{ "recommendations": [...], "unwantedRecommendation"`
- code --list-extensions** Print the IDs of installed extensions
- code --install-extension id** Install an extension from the command line (`--uninstall-extension` removes it)
- Disable (Workspace)** Turn an extension off for this project only

SETTINGS EDITOR & UPDATES

- workbench.settings.editor** `ui` (default) or `json`: what *Open Settings* opens
- workbench.settings.openDefaultSettings** Show the defaults beside your `settings.json` (default `false`)
- workbench.settings.useSplitJSON** Edit user settings in a split JSON view (default `false`)
- workbench.settings.settingsSearchTocBehavior** `filter` (default) or `hide`: the sidebar searching
- workbench.settings.enableNaturalLanguageSearch** Search settings in plain language (default `true`)
- update.mode** `default` (default), `start`, `manual`, `none`: how VS Code updates itself
- update.showReleaseNotes** Show the release notes after an update (default `true`)

PROFILE OR WORKSPACE? THEY SOLVE DIFFERENT PROBLEMS

A **profile** is *your tools*: settings, extensions, shortcuts and snippets that follow you into any folder you open with it. A **workspace** is *a project*: which folders belong together and the settings that apply to them. You can use both: open a project's `.code-workspace` file while using the profile that suits that kind of work.

WHY ARE TASKS, DEBUGGING AND SOME EXTENSIONS DISABLED? RESTRICTED MODE

In a folder you have not trusted, VS Code runs in *Restricted Mode*: tasks, debugging, workspace settings and extensions that run code are limited. Choose *Yes, I trust the authors* in the prompt, or run *Workspaces: Manage Workspace Trust*, when you know the folder is safe.