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Windows 10

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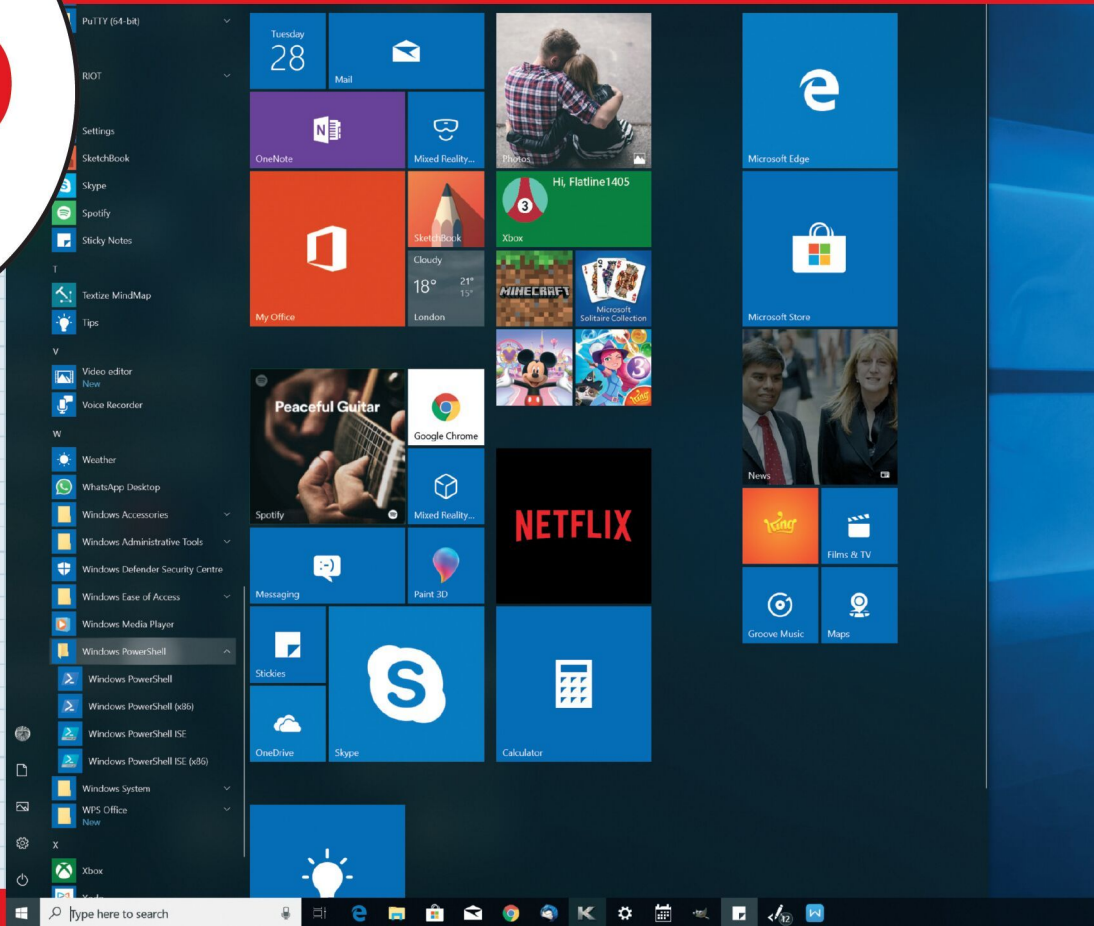

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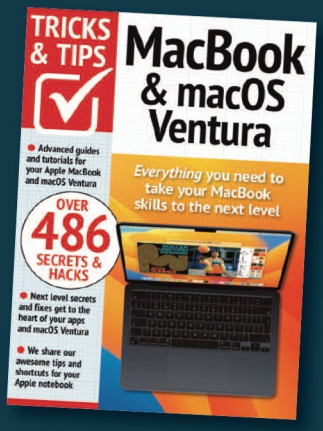

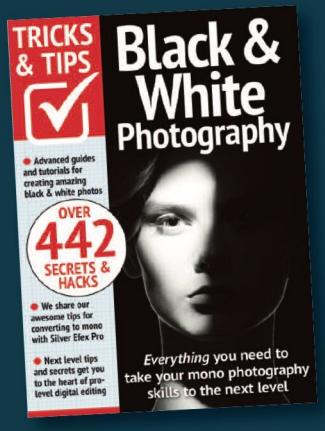

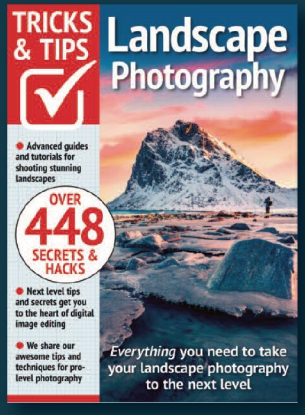

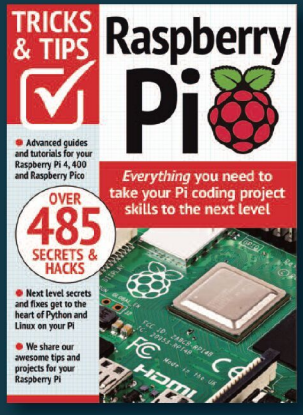

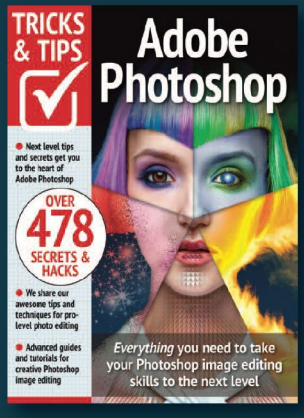

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TRICKS & TIPS

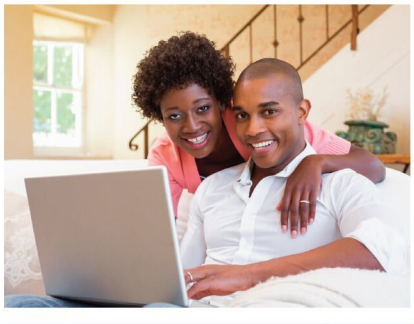
Windows 10

Windows 10 Tricks and Tips is the perfect digital publication for the user that wants to take their skill set to the next level. Do you want to enhance your user experience? Or wish to gain insider knowledge? Do you want to learn directly from experts in their field? Learn the numerous short cuts that the professionals use? Over the pages of this new advanced user guide you will learn everything you will need to know to become a more confident, better skilled and experienced owner. A user that will make the absolute most of their Windows 10 use and ultimately your home computer itself. An achievement you can earn by simply enabling us to exclusively help and teach you the abilities we have gained over our decades of experience.

Over the page our journey continues, and we will be with you at every stage to advise, inform and ultimately inspire you to go further.

Contents

"…your guide to getting the best from the most popular operating system, powering over 700 million PC's around the world…"



Windows 10 Advanced Guides

Using Windows successfully is all about knowing the little tips and tricks which make seemingly difficult tasks easier. With every page filled to bursting with great advice and invaluable security shortcuts, this is *the* guide to helping you go from Windows novice to Windows expert!

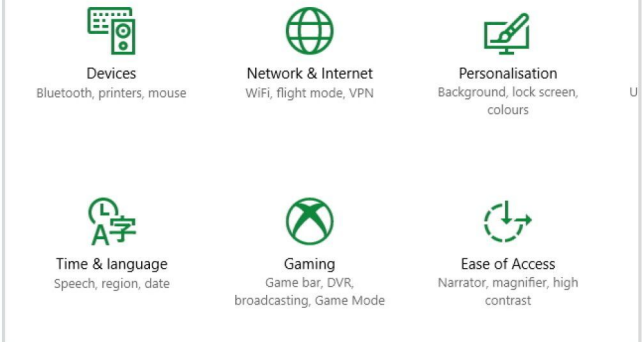
Limiting Data Usage when Tethering

If you are out and about with your Windows 10 laptop and need access to the Internet, you have the option of connecting through your smartphone, using a tethered connection. Tethering means connecting your phone to the mobile data network and then connecting a second device via Wi-Fi to the phone to make use of that connection. Windows 10 can be data-heavy; a problem if your phone has limited mobile data allowance.

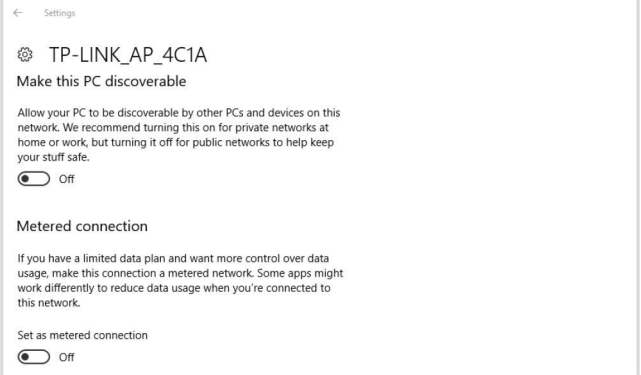
Set Your Tethered Connection to Metered

Windows 10 can be quite data-heavy, as mentioned, especially if an update happens to become available when tethered. Luckily, you can tell Windows to automatically limit data use.

1 Cellular data connections are set as metered by default. Wi-Fi and Ethernet network connections can be set to metered but aren't by default. Some apps might work differently on a metered connection to help reduce your data usage. Some updates for Windows won't be installed automatically either.

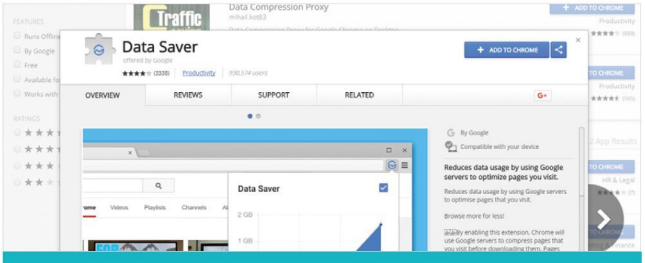


2 To set a Wi-Fi network connection as metered, click Start > Settings > Network & Internet > Wi-Fi > Manage known networks. Select the Wi-Fi network > Properties > turn on Set as metered connection. Unfortunately, many Windows apps completely ignore the metered connection setting.



CHECK NETWORK USAGE DETAILS

You can also view a log of how much data applications on your PC have used in the last 30 days. This can help you identify applications that might be using data in the background. To check this, head to Settings > Network & Internet > Data usage and click the graph to see more details.



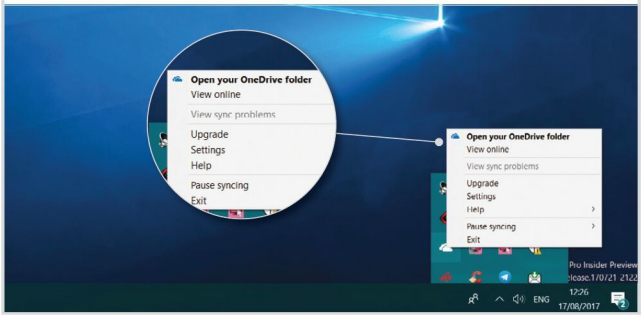
MANAGE BROWSING DATA

You should now have reduced background data use, including updates and cloud syncing, so data use will be in the apps you use; for example, Google Chrome. You can install a handy extension for Chrome which limits data. Go to www.chrome.google.com/webstore/ and search for Data Saver.

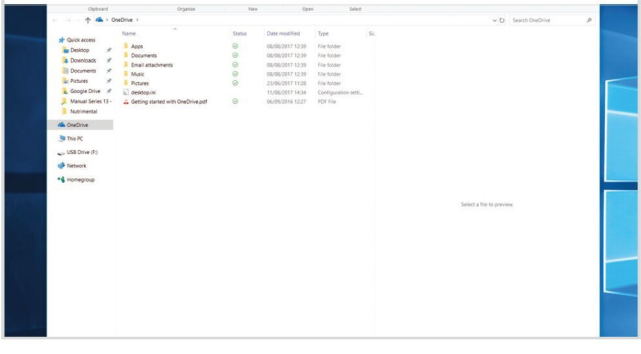
Pause or Disable OneDrive

If you use OneDrive to backup images etc., pausing it while you are tethering can help to reduce data use. If you never use OneDrive, you can even completely disable it.

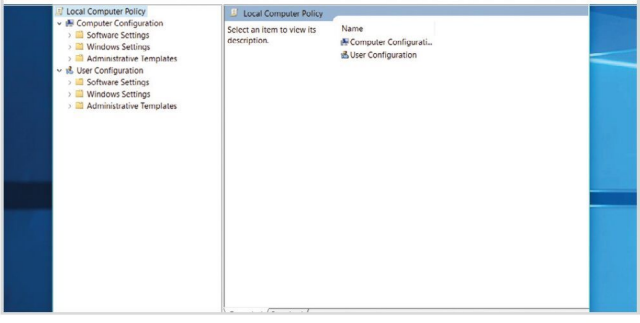
1 Stopping OneDrive just for the duration of your tethering is easy. Click the Hidden Icons arrow in the taskbar, bottom right of the screen, and right-click on the OneDrive icon (the cloud). From the Action menu, either click on Pause Syncing" (you can choose a duration) or click Exit.



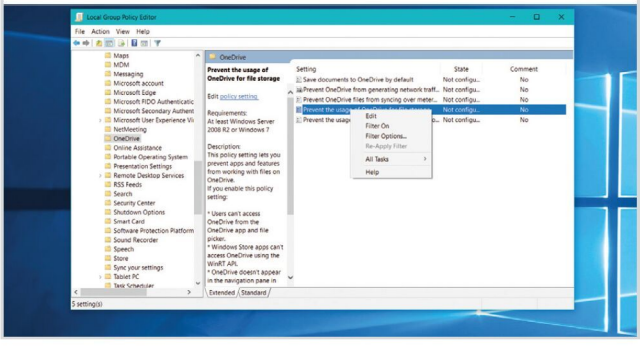
2 OneDrive in Windows 10 can be disabled through your computer's Local Group Policy Editor. This doesn't remove OneDrive from your PC but it stops it from syncing with the cloud or connecting with other apps, and removes it from the navigation pane in File Explorer.



3 Press the Windows key + R to open the Run box. Type `gpedit.msc` and click OK. In the Local Group Policy Editor, in the folder list under Local Computer Policy, navigate the folders to Local Computer Policy > Computer Configuration > Administrative Templates > Windows Components > OneDrive.

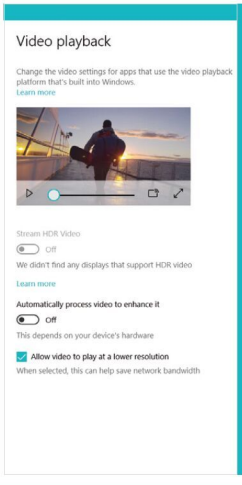


4 On the OneDrive screen, under Settings, click Prevent the usage of OneDrive for file storage. In the Prevent the usage of OneDrive for file storage box, select Enabled, then click OK. Be aware that disabling OneDrive like this will disable it for all users of the PC, not just you.



CHECK TASK MANAGER

The Task Manager is a great tool for checking to see which apps or services are using a lot of data at any time. To open the Task Manager, press Ctrl+Shift+Esc or search for it in the Start menu search field. Click at the top of the Network tab to display high usage services at the top.



REDUCE STREAMING VIDEO QUALITY

Streaming or downloading videos is a surefire way to burn through your data quickly and is best avoided when tethering. However, if you need to view video over a tethered connection, you can tell Windows to reduce quality in Settings > Apps > Video Playback. Click 'Allow video to play at low res'.

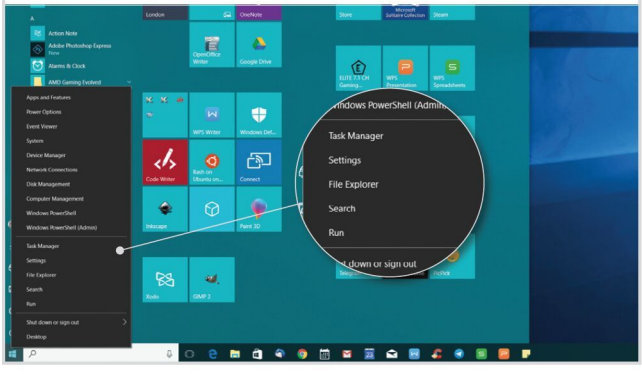
Manage Disk Partitions in Windows 10

Disk partitioning is the creation of one or more separate regions on a PC hard disk (hard drive) and all modern drives need at least one partition to begin storing files. A partition could be the size of the whole drive or just a tiny part of it. There are several reasons why you might need to create a new partition on an existing hard drive and Windows 10 now allows you to do that relatively easily.

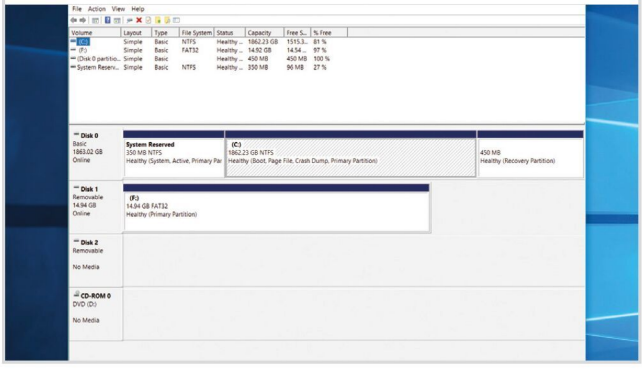
The Disk Management Tool

There are several free programs available for creating partitions but the Disk Management tool is just as good and built right in to Windows 10.

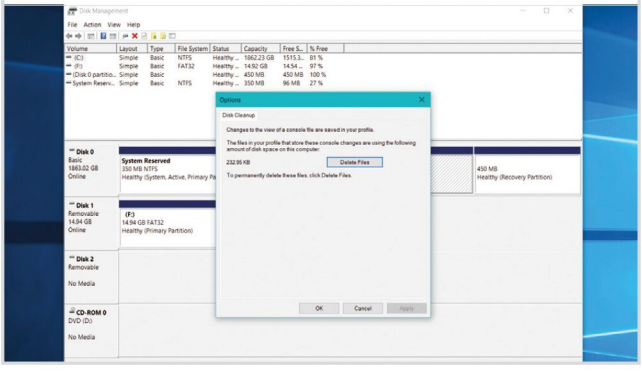
1 The first thing you need to do is find the Disk Management tool. The easiest way to open the tool is to use the hidden Start button menu. Right-click on the Start menu button and select Disk Management from the menu that appears. There are several system tools here, so it is a useful trick to know.



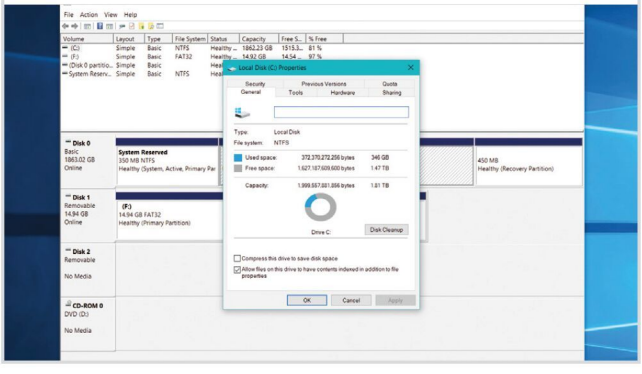
2 The Disk Management tool shows all of your internal and removable drives (even USB flash drives, etc.) along with details of the capacity and current amount of space being used. Depending how your hard drive was initially configured, you will see one or more partitions in place.



3 You can use the seemingly simple Disk Management tool to resize, create, delete and format partitions and volumes, as well as change their drive letters and all without downloading or paying for any other software. You can also simply use it to check the health of your disks.



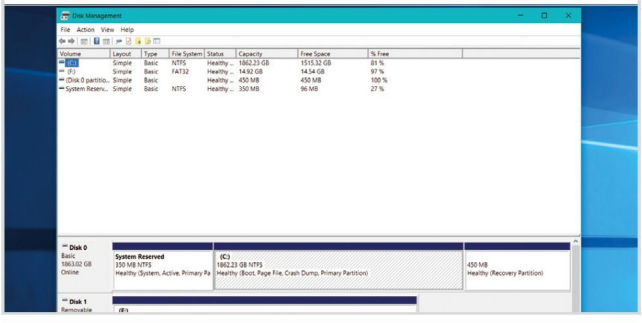
4 The tool shows partitions and volumes, which are similar but different. A partition is space that's set aside on a disk separate from the other space on that disk. A volume is a partition that's been formatted with a file system. We will mainly be talking about volumes in this guide.



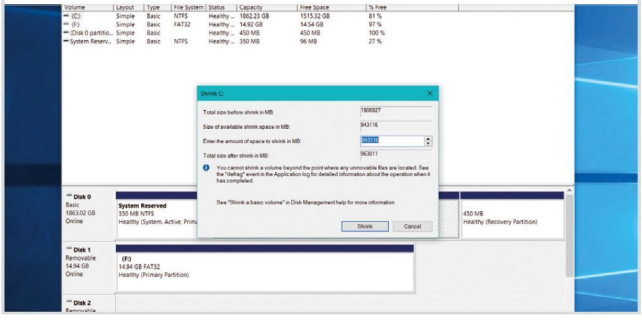
Resizing a Volume

If your disk is set up as one big volume and you want to create an extra partition for a second volume, you will need to know how to resize the existing one.

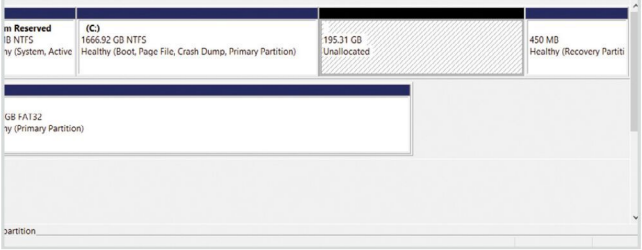
1 You will need to make sure that there is enough free space on the drive before you can shrink a volume. For example, if you have a 500GB volume which has 200GB of data already stored on it, you will only be able to shrink it by a maximum of 300GB, the amount of remaining space.



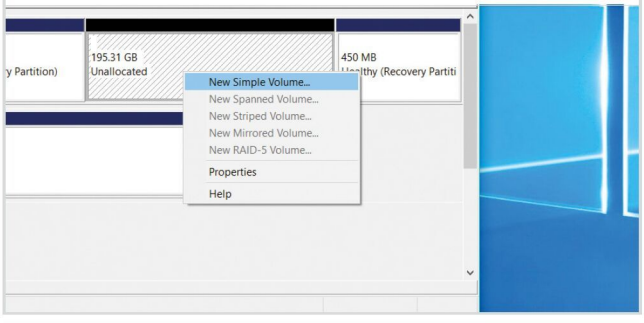
2 Right click on the volume you want to shrink in either the top panel or the bottom one and click 'Shrink volume' from the Action menu. You will then need to enter the amount you want to shrink the volume by in MB. So if you wanted to shrink it by approximately 500GB, you enter '500000MB'.



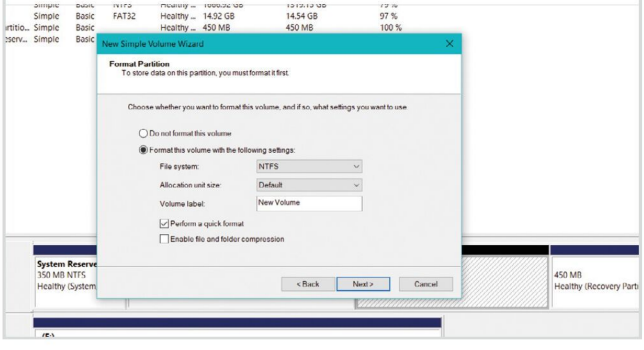
3 When you have clicked the Shrink button, you should see that the disk now contains the shrunken volume and some new, unallocated space. If desired, you could now extend the volume back into that space, by right-clicking and selecting 'Extend volume' from the Action menu.



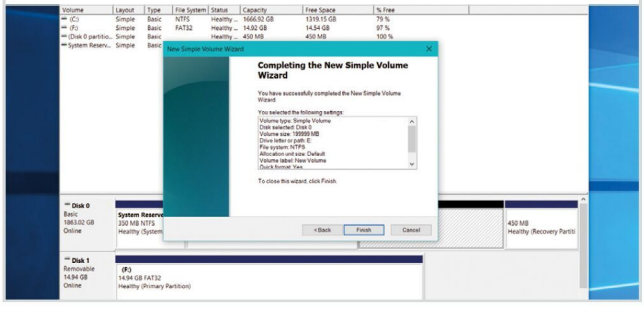
4 To create a new volume in that unallocated space, right-click on it and select New Simple Volume from the Action menu. In the New Simple Volume Wizard window, click Next to get started. Specify the volume size you want to create and then assign it a drive letter on the next screen.



5 You will then need to decide whether to format the partition. You will need to format it before you can begin using it but if you are planning on installing a second operating system, in order to dual-boot, you will need to let the new OS format the partition during its installation.



6 Otherwise, go ahead and format the disk; pick a file system to use and assign a volume label. Click Next when you're ready and then click the Finish button; Windows will now start to create the volume and, if you chose to, format it. When finished, you will see your new volume listed.



Disable Adverts and Annoyances

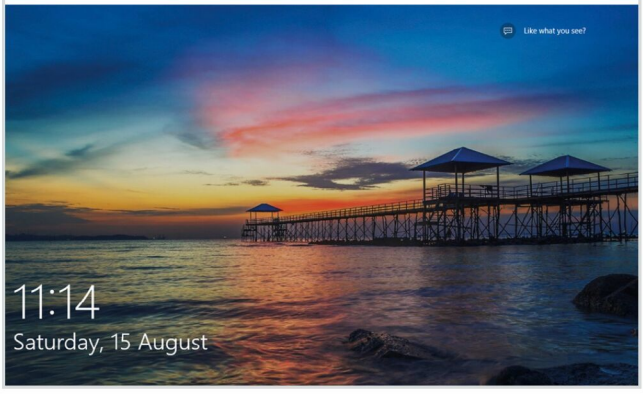
Windows 10 has a lot of built-in advertising. This is part of the business model and is to be expected in some respects. That doesn't stop them being really annoying at times. Thankfully, if you know what you are doing, you can disable most of the advertising that Windows tries to slip in front of you.

Disabling Annoyances

Windows 10 is pretty good at putting adverts in front of you and certainly, some of the adverts may not even seem like adverts until you start to take notice of them.

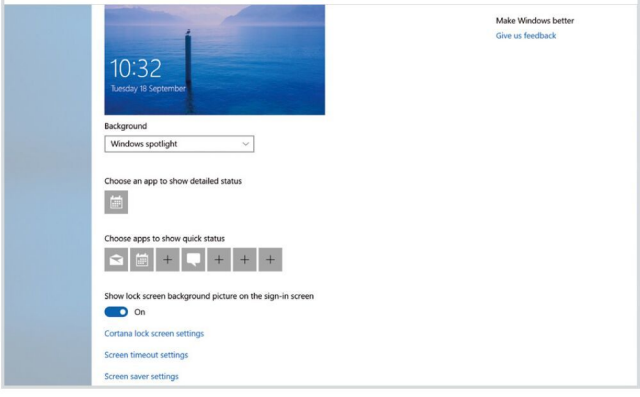
Lock Screen Ads

Shortly after you enable Windows Spotlight for the lock screen, you will soon start to see the occasional advert for games like Tomb Raider appear among the pretty images. To disable the adverts, simply switch to the Picture or Slideshow options in the Personalisation settings.



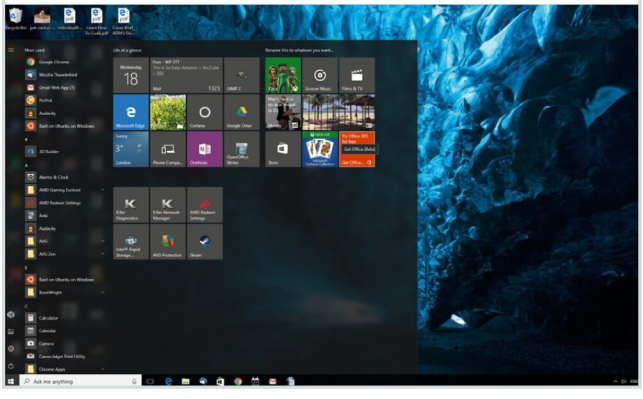
Get Rid of Fun Facts

Although Cortana will occasionally provide you with an interesting fact when you click the search bar; often they are interspersed with adverts too. You can disable 'Get fun facts, tips, and more from Windows and Cortana on your lock screen' in Settings > Personalisation > Lock Screen.



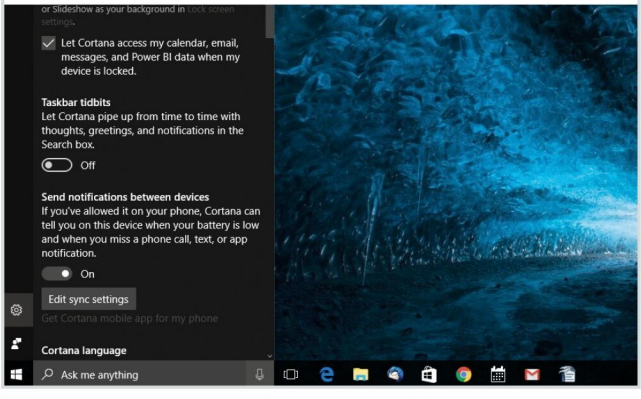
Suggested Apps

Windows 10 will occasionally show suggested apps in your Start menu. Sometimes these are free apps but often they are paid apps and games. Essentially, these are adverts. Head to Settings > Personalisation > Start and set the 'Occasionally show suggestions in Start' setting to Off.



Calm Cortana Down

Following on from the previous tip, you can also stop Cortana from doing that annoying thing when it bounces around in the taskbar to get your attention. If you don't want Cortana nagging you, click the Cortana search bar, click Settings, scroll down and disable the 'taskbar Tidbits' option.

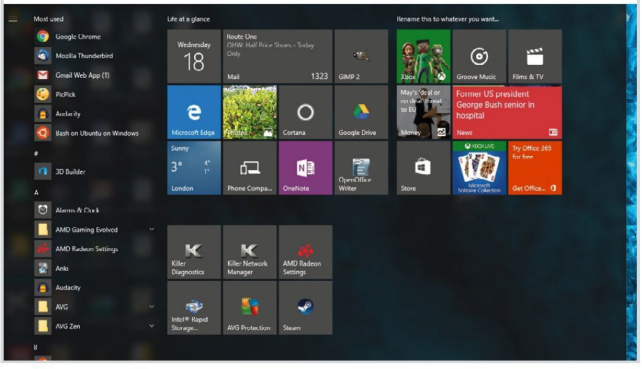


Microsoft Tips

Okay, so this might be classed as borderline as far as it being advertising but if you are fed up of being advised to 'Use Edge to save battery life', head to Settings > System > Notifications & Actions and disable the 'Get tips, tricks and suggestions as you use Windows' option.

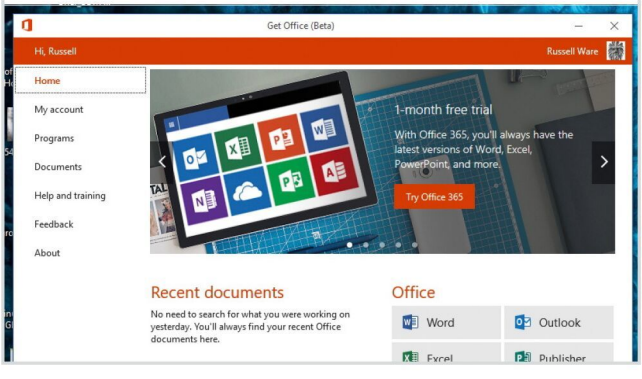
Disable Live Tiles

While you can remove the apps that are installed as part of the Microsoft Consumer Experience program, Windows 10 also includes a few apps you can't uninstall but will use the Live Tiles to advertise. To disable live tiles that annoy you, right-click a tile and select More > Turn live tile off.



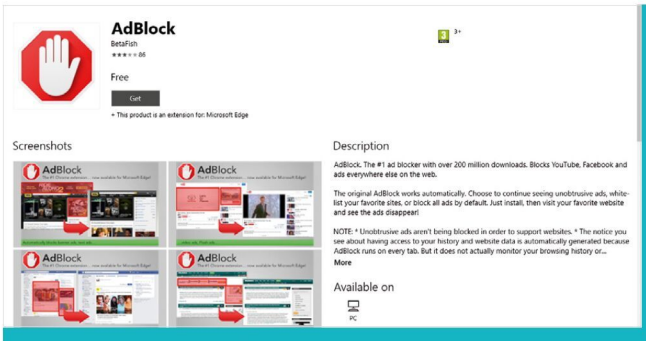
Get Office Notifications

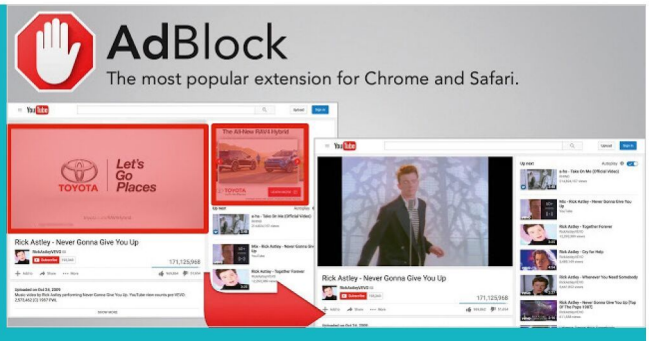
Windows 10 includes a 'Get Office' app that sits there, suggesting you download the software for a free trial period. Head to Settings > System > Notifications & Actions, scroll down and turn it off. You could also find the Get Office app in your Start menu, right-click it, and select 'Uninstall'.



Unpinning Windows Apps

Rather than turning live tiles off, you can simply unpin the tile from the Start menu. Right-click a tile and select 'Unpin from Start' to get rid of the tile entirely. If you prefer a less cluttered Start menu, you can even choose to unpin all the tiles and only use the All Apps list to launch apps.





AD BLOCKING SOFTWARE

The tips above will allow you to block many of the adverts Microsoft has added to the Windows 10 interface but what about the adverts you see on your favourite websites. Unfortunately, there isn't a Windows 10 setting to turn these off, but there is bit of software that can help.

AdBlock, with over 200 million downloads, blocks YouTube, Facebook ads and others in most places on the web. AdBlock works automatically but lets you choose to continue seeing unobtrusive ads, white-list your favourite sites or block all ads by default.

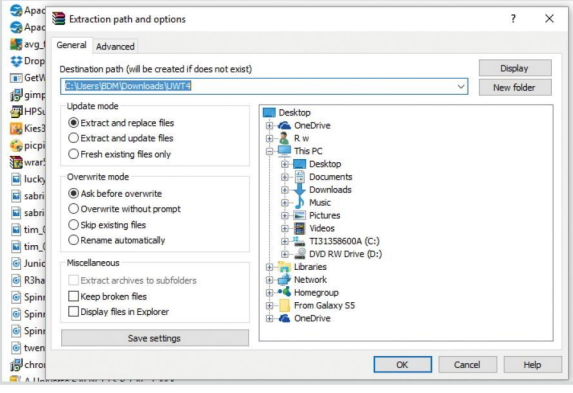
Tweak and Modify Windows 10

There are plenty of ways to customise Windows 10 built right in to the operating system. However, if you really want to tweak and modify the system, you will need to resort to external software. Ultimate Windows Tweaker 4.1 allows you to modify the appearance, security and performance of Windows 10.

Set Up Windows Tweaker

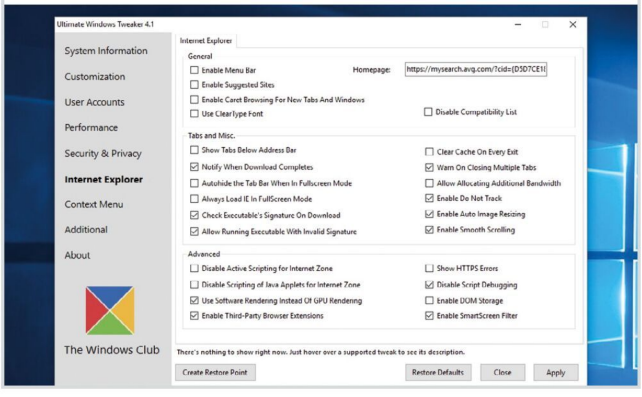
The Ultimate Windows Tweaker software is not available as an app, so you will need to download the file from **http://www.thewindowsclub.com/ultimate-windows-tweaker-4-windows-10**.

1 Once you have downloaded the zip file, extract its contents and move the program folder to your desired location. Pin its executable file to your Start menu for easy access. Do not separate out the contents of the download as it is important that the contents stay in the same folder.

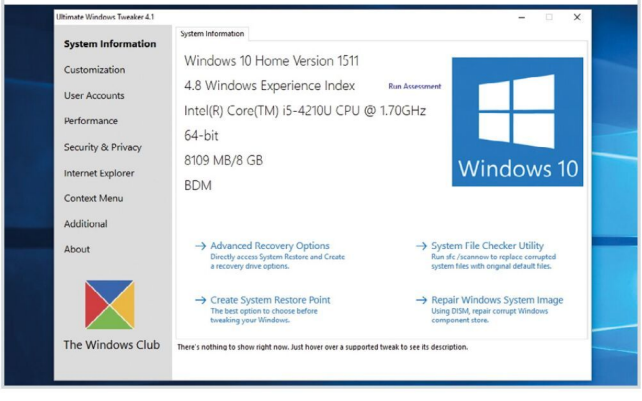


2 As when making any large system changes to your computer, you should create a system restore point first. You can use the Create Restore Point button that UWT offers. The software prompts you to create one, before using the tweaks, so that you can revert back should you feel the need to.

3 These tweaks are not really meant for beginners. It is recommended that you do not over tweak your system in one go. We suggest you apply tweaks for only 1 category every day, see how your system performs, before moving on to apply more tweaks if you don't see problems.



4 To apply a particular tweak, check or uncheck the boxes or use the sliders provided. Once you have selected one or more tweaks, click on the Apply button. Some tweaks may apply instantaneously. If a system restart is required, you will be reminded to restart your computer when you exit.

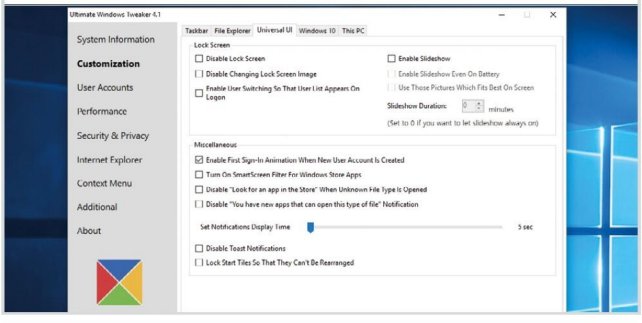


Tweak and Mod Menus

Each of the menus in UWT4 contains lots of different settings and options, from simple appearance tweaks to more complicated performance mods.

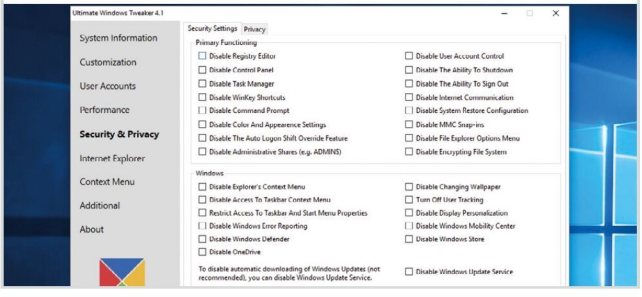
Customisation Menu

Under this category you will be able to tweak the settings of your taskbar, Thumbnails, File Explorer and the Modern UI. You can opt to use Light or dark theme for OS or apps, disable Start animations, use default or change Battery Date & Time flyouts or change the Volume Control.



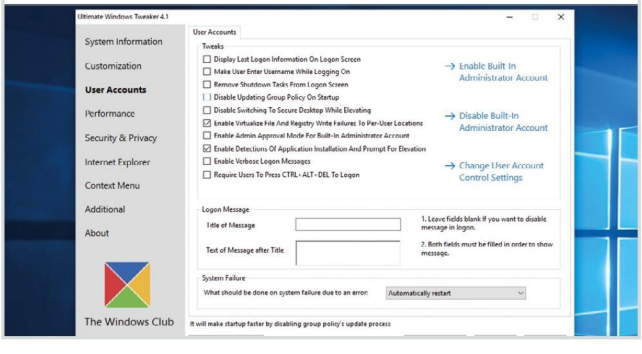
Security & Privacy Menu

If you want to restrict access to some Control Panel applets like Windows Updates you can do so easily. You can disable Telemetry, Biometrics, Advertising ID, Cortana, Windows Update sharing, Feedback requests, password Reveal button, Steps Recorder, disable Wi-Fi Sense and Application Telemetry.



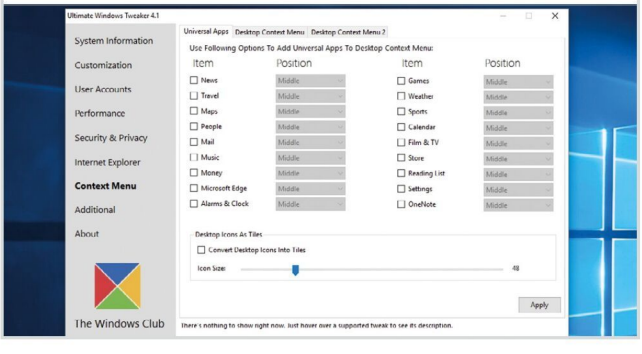
User Accounts Menu

Under the User Accounts tab, you will be able to change your User Account settings, Logon information and sign in options. You can also change the User Account Control settings here.



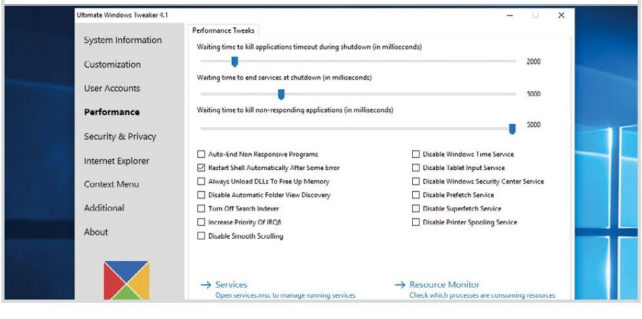
Context Menu

Add Windows Store apps, features and useful functions to the right-click context menu and Scan with Windows Defender, Clear Clipboard, all built-in default Windows Store apps and more to the context menu.



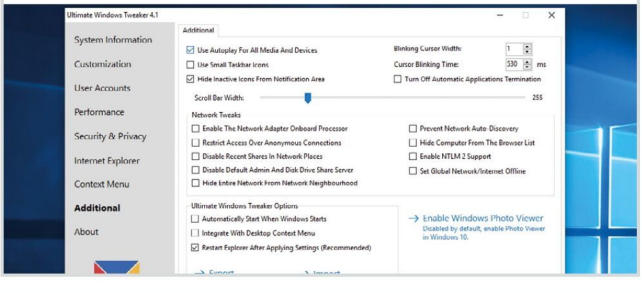
Performance Menu

The Performance tab offers tweaks to optimise Windows 10 to best suit your requirements. While most of these settings are best left at their default values, this panel gives you quick access to change them, should you wish to. Tweak these settings VERY carefully at first.



Additional Tweaks Menu

Under this category, you will see some additional system and Network tweaks. You can also set UWT to behave the way you want it too. By default, when you apply a tweak and click Apply, UWT4 will automatically restart explorer.exe to apply the tweak. Change its behaviour if you wish.



Using the Power Menu

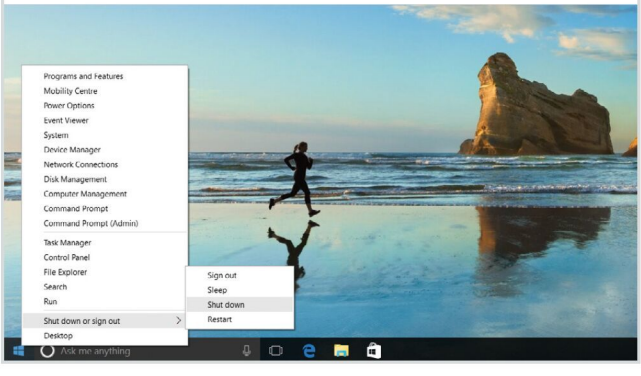
Windows 10 boasts a secret power menu (as did the version of Windows before it), that gives you access to several useful system and maintenance tools and features. Here we show you how you can use it to your advantage to quickly access networking settings and extra features that power users need.

Power Up

The secret Power Menu enables the more advanced Windows 10 users among you to quickly access key settings that you probably commonly use, but are buried deeper within the system.

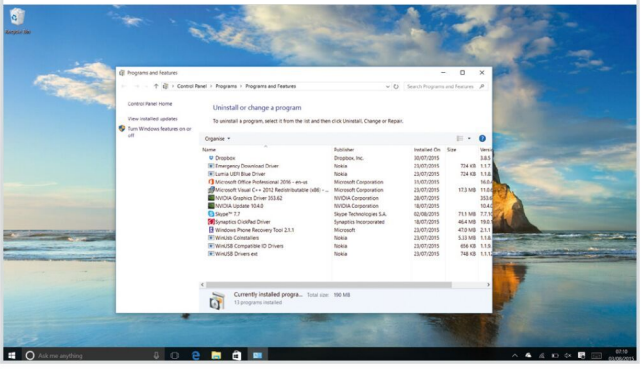
Start it Up

You open the Power Menu using the Start button, but instead of just clicking it to open the Start menu, right-click the button. You'll see this menu appear. Note that you can also shut down or sign out here, too. This menu was created for users who felt the Windows 8 Start screen didn't give them access to what they needed.



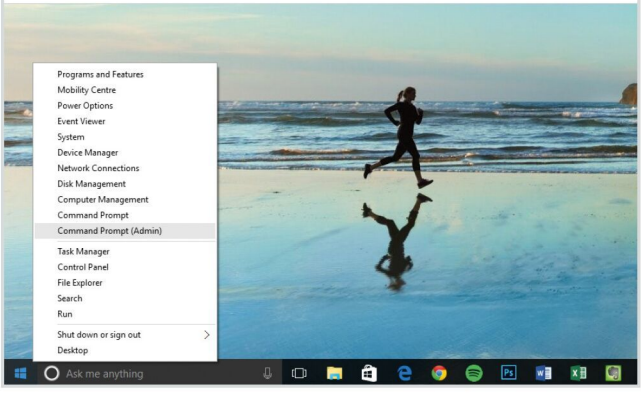
Uninstall Desktop Apps

The Power Menu is also a quick route to getting to the part of Control Panel that enables you to uninstall desktop apps. Now Windows 10 enables you to uninstall any application by right-clicking it and selecting Uninstall from the context menu that appears – but this is the best route if you need to uninstall several things.



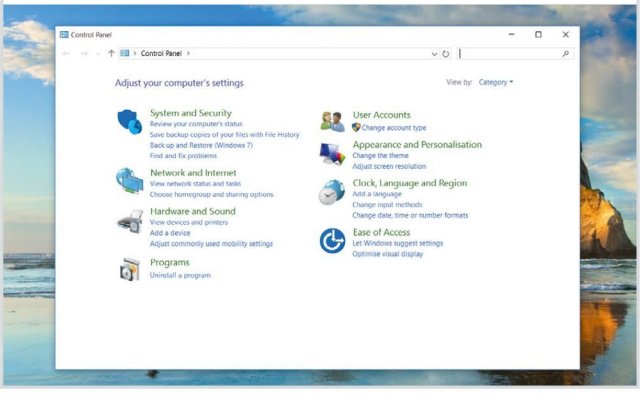
Command

We'll look at the Command Prompt on the next page. You can access it from the Power Menu. If you're an administrator on your PC, you can start what's called an Elevated Command Prompt that enables you to get deep access into files and programs, rather than just basic access.



Control Panel

The Power Menu is also the best way to get to Control Panel. The Settings app may be the new user-friendly method to change things in Windows 10, but Control Panel still contains a lot of advanced settings – not least hardware troubleshooting, themes, backup, restore and network sharing options.



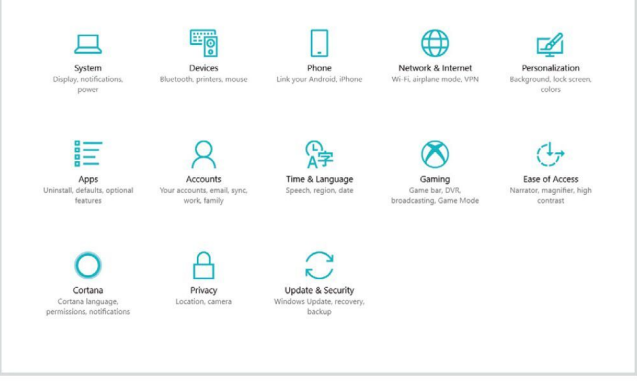
Using Windows 10 Storage Sense

When your Windows 10 computer begins to run out of space, typically you manually empty the recycle bin and delete temporary files to free up storage space; then use different tools, such as the built-in Disk Cleanup utility. You can now use Storage Sense to automatically get rid of junk files.

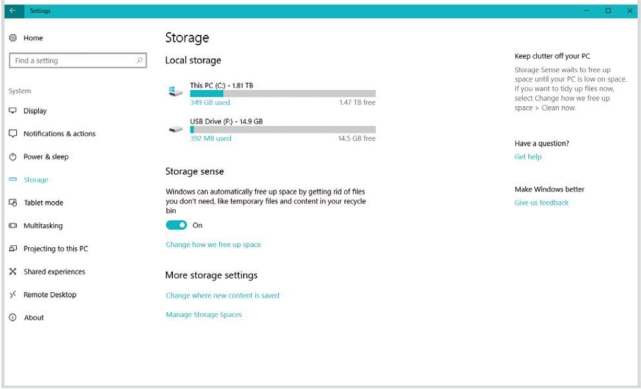
Updated Storage Sense

Storage Sense has been a part of Windows 10 for some time but it has been updated and added to in the Creators update. If you don't see the options mentioned here, make sure your OS is up to date.

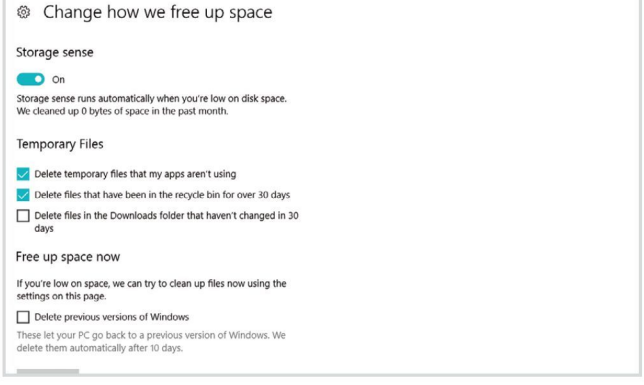
1 To enable Storage Sense on Windows 10, open Settings > System > Storage. Click on the Storage Sense toggle switch. Once you enable the option, Windows 10 will automatically delete junk files from your PC, including some temporary files and items in the recycle bin older than 30 days.



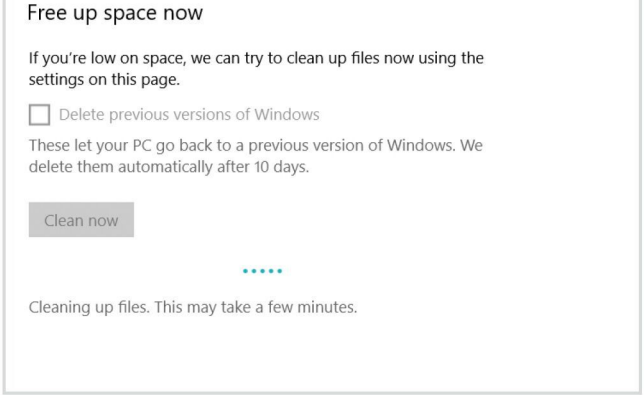
2 Storage Sense isn't a manual storage wipe. If you need to clear out space right now, and you have large files in the recycle bin that aren't 30 days old, you will need to delete them manually. Things like old versions of Windows, installation files and update logs will also need to be removed manually.



3 You can, within certain limitations, select which items Storage Sense should remove automatically. In Settings > System > Storage, click on the 'Change how we free up space' link below the Storage Sense slider. You can see that there are three different options, which can be combined in any way you like.



4 You can also see the option to 'Delete previous versions of Windows'. These are deleted anyway, but not for several days after an update. If you really need to clear some space, select the option and then just click the Clean Now button and wait for the process to complete.



Ten Things to Disable in Windows 10

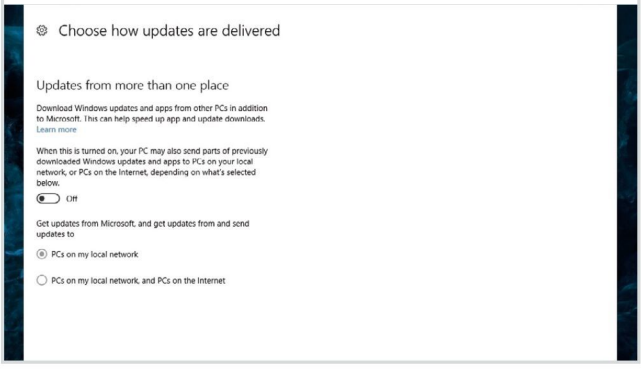
When you install Windows 10 you will possibly activate several features that you won't use or need. Some of these cause no real problems but some can mean a reduction in computing speed and a reduction in security, especially if you're not really aware of what is going on in the background.

Applying Changes

You may not need to apply all of these tips to see an improvement in system speed, and it is actually a good idea to apply one at a time and test the results before trying the next.

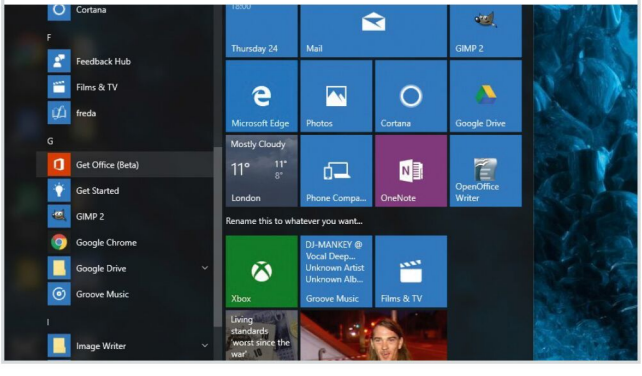
File Sharing Updates

Windows 10 features an improved way to receive updates. More specifically, it allows you to get updates from sources other than Microsoft in a sort of file-sharing network. The catch is that your computer is also sharing files. Turn this off in Settings > Update & Security > Advanced options > Choose how updates are delivered.



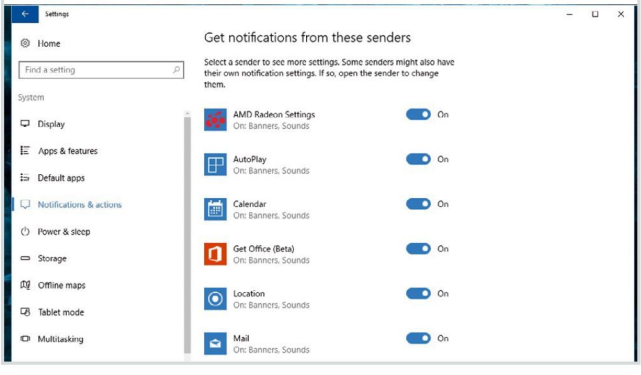
Start Menu Adverts

Part of Microsoft's business model for Windows 10 seems to be selling its apps through the OS. Suggestions for apps you might like will appear in the Start menu and although you can just ignore them, you can also turn them off. Settings > Personalisation > Start > Occasionally show suggestions in Start.



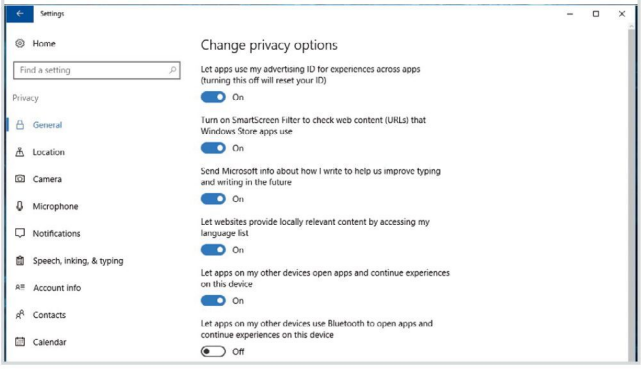
Unwanted Notifications

Notifications are generally, but not always, a good thing. Windows 10 does a good job of letting you know what is going on with your PC but sometimes you can get notification overload. You can turn some of the less useful ones off in Settings > System > Notifications & actions. Turn off things like: Show me tips about Windows.



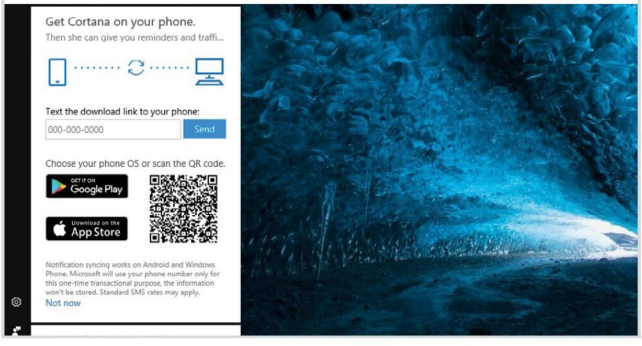
Targeted Adverts

Every Microsoft account now has an advertiser ID tied to it, allowing Microsoft and third-party partners to deliver targeted adverts. You can turn this information sharing off by going to Settings > Privacy > General > Let my apps use my advertising ID for experiences across apps (turning this off will reset your ID).



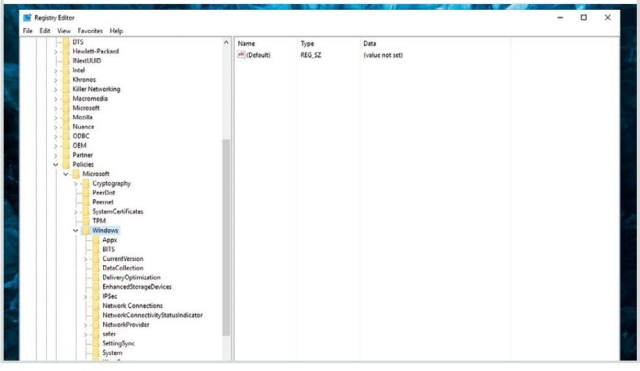
Getting to Know You

To better answer your queries, Cortana is constantly learning about you in a process called Getting to Know You. This includes typing history and speech patterns. If you find this invasion of privacy a little creepy, you can turn it off in Settings > Privacy > Speech, inking & typing, and clicking Stop getting to know me.



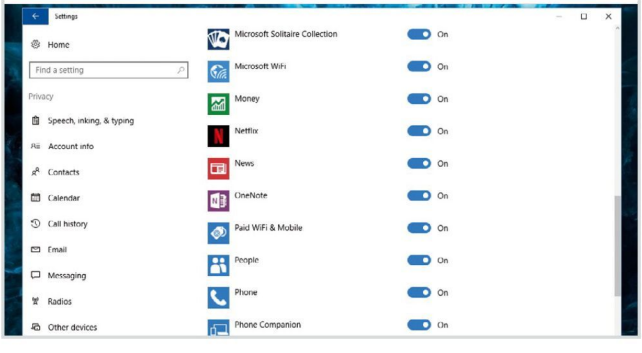
The Lock Screen

The lock screen in Windows 10 can be a useful feature but it also has the potential of getting in the way and slowing you down. You can disable the lock screen but it does mean delving into the Windows Registry. To access the registry, press the Windows key + R and enter 'regedit'.



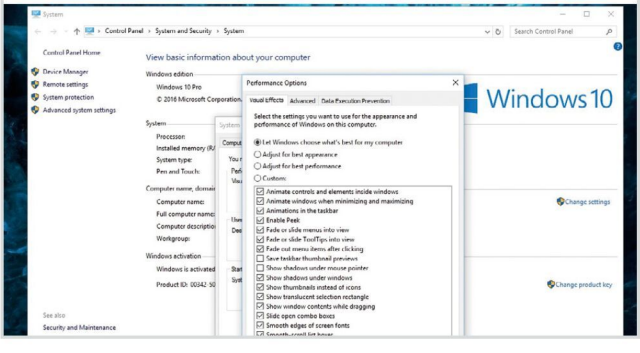
Background Apps

In Windows 10 many apps will run in the background. These apps can receive information, send notifications, download and install updates and otherwise eat up your bandwidth and your battery life. You can, however, disable this feature in Settings > Privacy > Background apps. You can turn off each app individually.



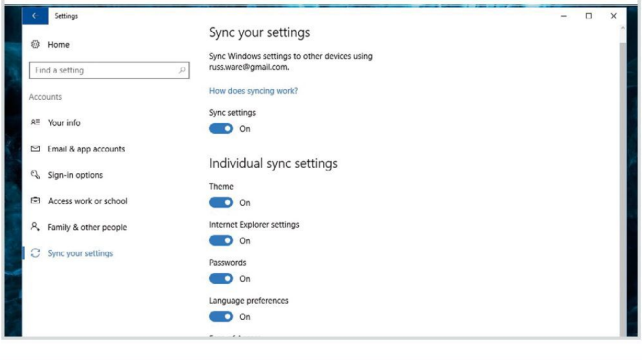
The Visual Interface

The visual effects in Windows 10 go a long way towards making the OS look modern and smooth. However, every pretty visual element has an effect on the running of your computer. Right-click the Start button and go in to System > Advanced system settings. Under the Advanced tab, go to Performance and click Settings.



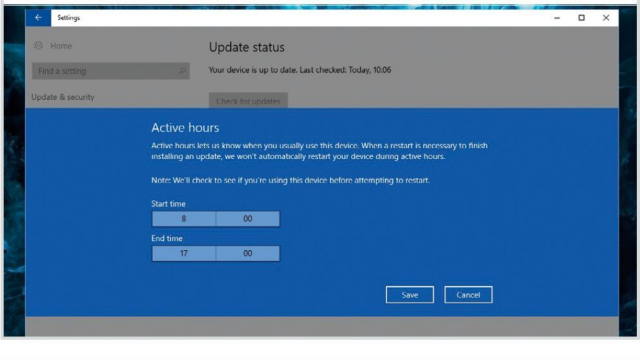
Windows 10 Syncing

Windows 10, upon the default install, does a lot of syncing with your other Windows devices. If you use several different Microsoft devices and don't want everything shared between them, you can disable syncing in Settings > Accounts > Sync your settings. You can selectively turn off specific sync settings.



Automatic Updates

Windows 10 will download and install updates automatically and you can't really turn them off; but you can choose to stop the updates happening whilst you are using your computer. Head into Settings > Update & Security and click on Change Active Hours. You can then set a time frame in which updates won't happen.



Using the Task Scheduler

The Task Scheduler in Windows 10 is, in many ways, very similar to that found in older versions of the OS. However, in Windows 10, Battery Saver Mode can impact on how it operates (if using a laptop). This guide looks at how the new scheduler works and how we can modify its use.

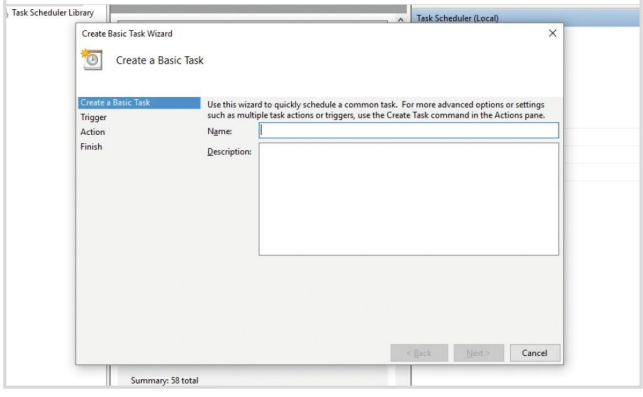
Scheduling New Tasks

The Task Scheduler can be a very powerful tool for increasing automation in Windows 10. Let's take a quick look at exactly how to use the Windows 10 Task Scheduler in normal day-to-day PC operation.

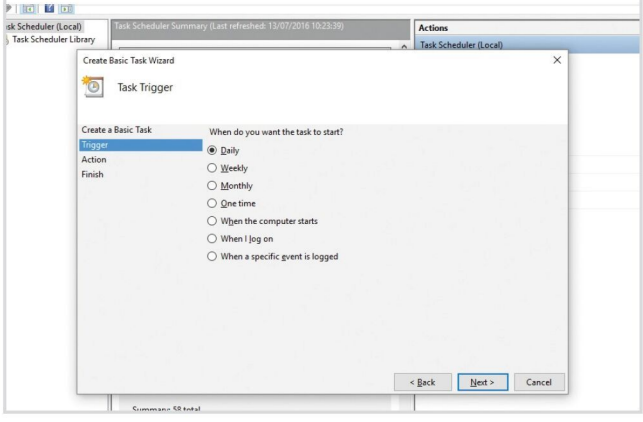
1 Search for "Task Scheduler" in the Cortana search pane or navigate to it in Start menu > All Apps > Windows Administrative Tools > Task Scheduler. The simple scheduler window will now open. This is split into three sections: Scheduler Library, Scheduler Summary and Actions.

2 You have three main options for adding new tasks to the schedule: Create Basic Task, Create Task and Import Task. For now we will stick to creating a Basic Task. You can start the process by clicking in the Action panel or using the Action menu in the menu bar of the window.

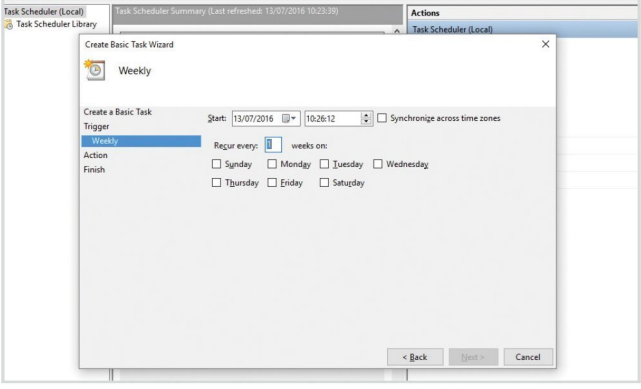
3 The Basic Task wizard will now open. Give your task a name and description (optional) and click Next. You now need to choose the trigger. This can be set to happen daily, weekly or monthly, to happen just once. You can choose starting or logging on to your PC as a trigger also.



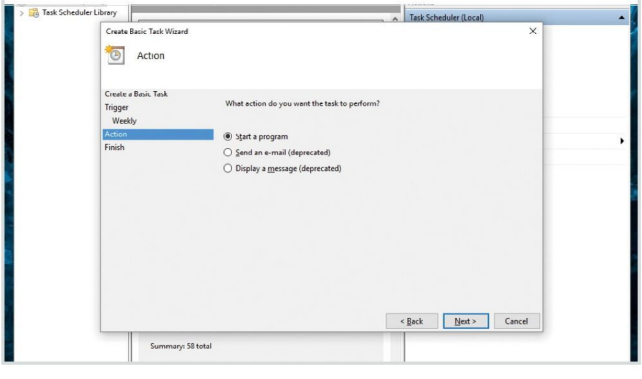
4 If you choose daily, weekly, etc. you will need to set further time options when you click Next. If you chose the final trigger option, When a specific event is logged, you will see a set of drop down menus. Here you can choose the event log, source and give the event an ID.



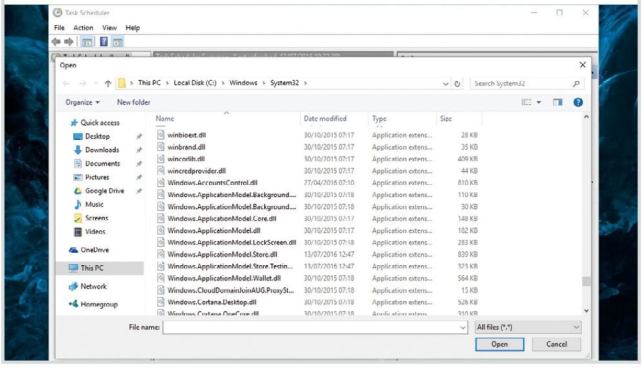
5 For now let's stick to a timed trigger. Choose Weekly and click Next. Use the various boxes to choose when the task starts and how it should recur from then on. Click Next to continue. You now need to choose the Action being triggered by your choices in the previous steps.



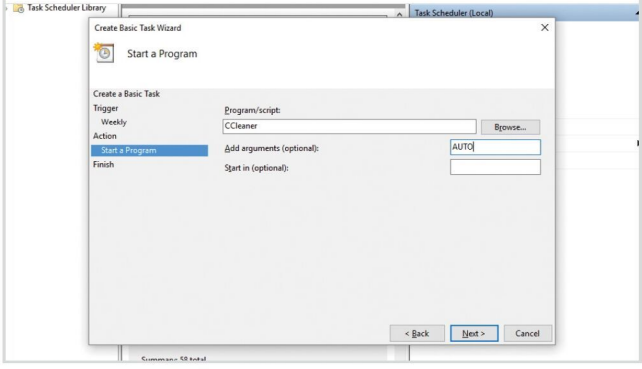
6 The main action is Start a Program or app but you can also choose to send an email or display a message. If you choose to send an email, you will then need to complete things like recipient address and the message itself. If you choose to display a message, you will need to write it.



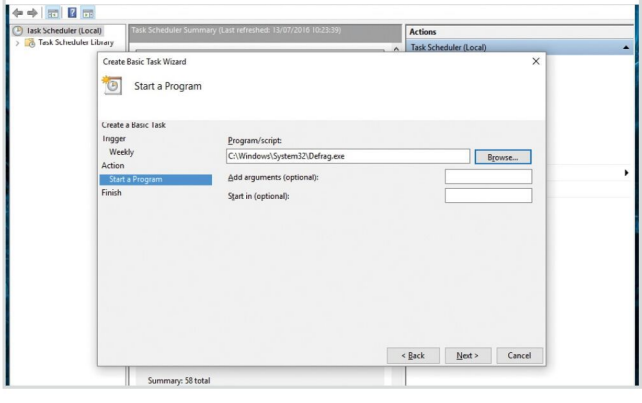
7 For this guide, we will look at starting a program. You can now type the name of the program or script in the Program/Script field. If you prefer you can click Browse and search through available programs to find the one you want to start. You are looking for .exe (executable) files here.



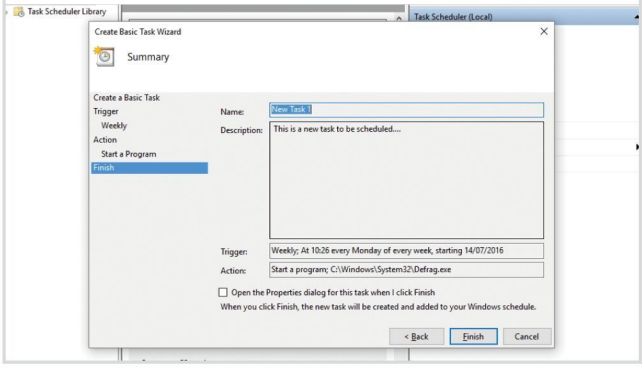
8 You can also add optional arguments, which some programs support. For example you can specify the /AUTO argument with CCleaner to automatically run CCleaner on a schedule. The exact arguments supported will differ between programs and if you're not sure, it is best to check.

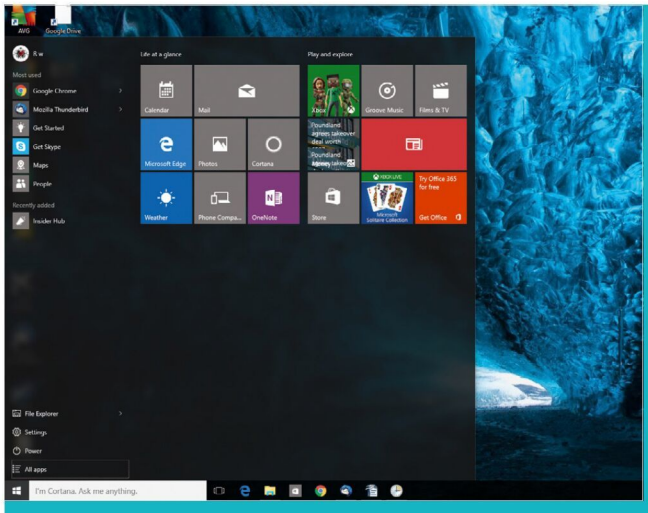


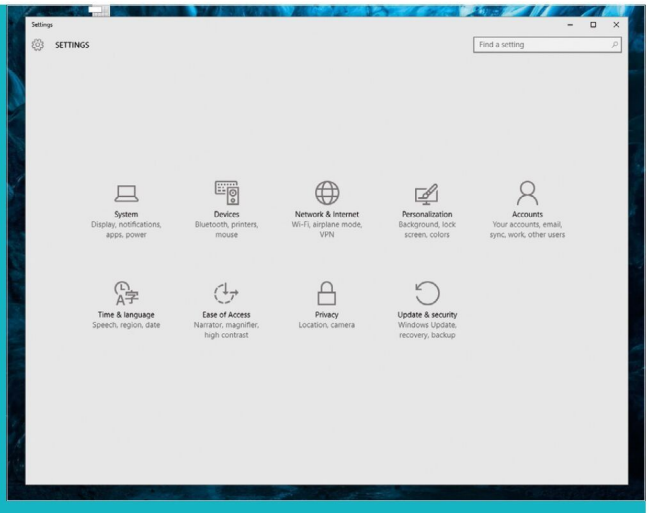
9 Get creative. Task Scheduler doesn't just need to be used to run CCleaner or Defrag. If you use a specific program on a regular basis, you can use the Task Scheduler wizard to create a task that opens the program for you automatically according to the schedule you choose.



10 You can now review the completed task creation by clicking Finish once. If you are happy with all of the settings, etc. click Finish again. If you want to change anything, use the Back button to navigate to the relevant section. You can also choose to open the Properties after finishing.







TASK SCHEDULER IN WINDOWS 10

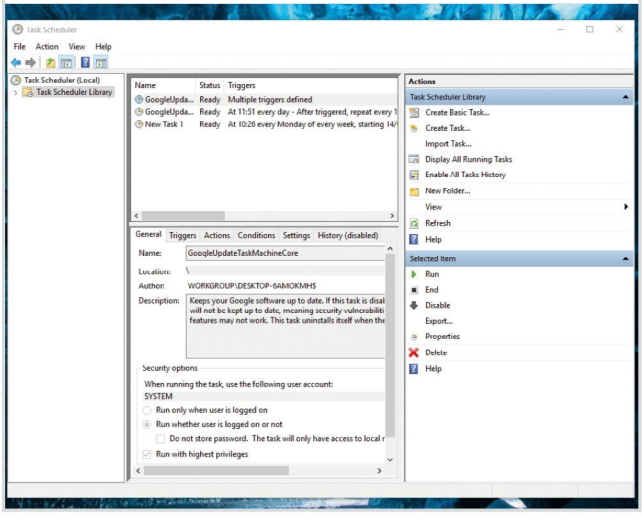
Although the method of creating and managing tasks manually is the same in Windows 10 as it was in 7 and XP, if you are using a portable device, the way the OS prioritises tasks has changed. This change is due to the new Battery Saver mode, which is able to postpone certain tasks if they meet certain criteria.

If Windows 10 detects that the user isn't using their computer, it considers the system idle. This means that some scheduled processes won't execute. For example, disk optimisation runs at set intervals when the computer idles. However, when operating on battery power, running disk optimisation on a spin-up Hard Disk Drive (HDD) could negatively affect your system's uptime.

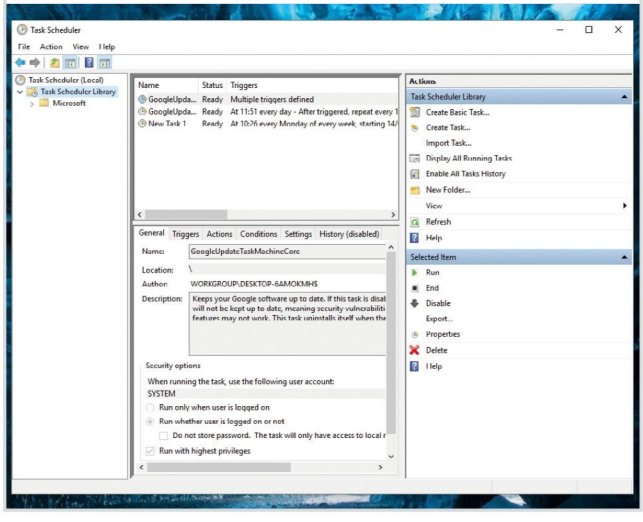
Modifying or Deleting Tasks

You may want to modify existing Windows 10 tasks or even delete them altogether. This should always be done with care and research beforehand.

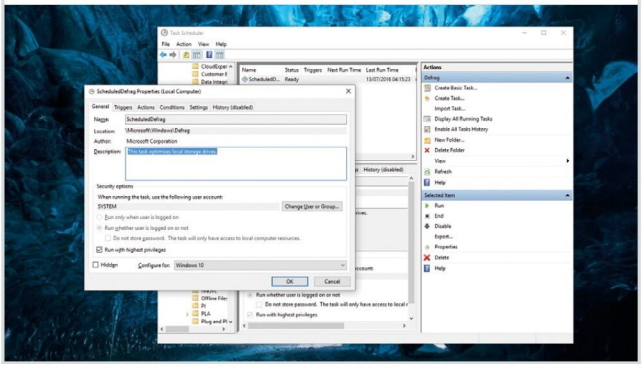
1 If you are looking to modify or disable any scheduled task, open the Task Scheduler. You can just type "Task Scheduler" into Windows Search and it should show up in the results. If you are creating or modifying a lot of tasks, it might be worth pinning the Task Manager to the Start menu.



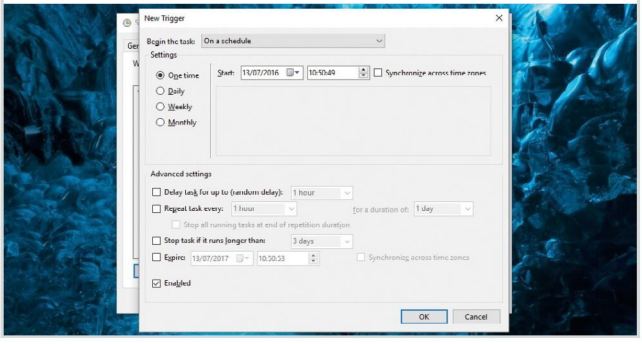
2 Looking at the left-hand panel in the Task Scheduler will allow you to see all of the existing scheduled tasks (Task Scheduler Library). Click on the folder and the tasks will be displayed in the middle panel. You can dig down further into the folder structure using the arrow toggles.



3 For example, click on the left facing arrow for Microsoft. Then click on the left facing arrow for Windows. From the list of entries that appear, find the Defrag option and click on it. In the centre panel, double-click on ScheduleDefrag. This will open a new properties pane.



4 The properties pane shows the triggers and conditions that control the Defrag utility's behaviour. If you want the process to run regardless of Battery Saver, you'll need to make sure that none of the triggers are idle state, or are part of auto maintenance. They must run though when logged out.

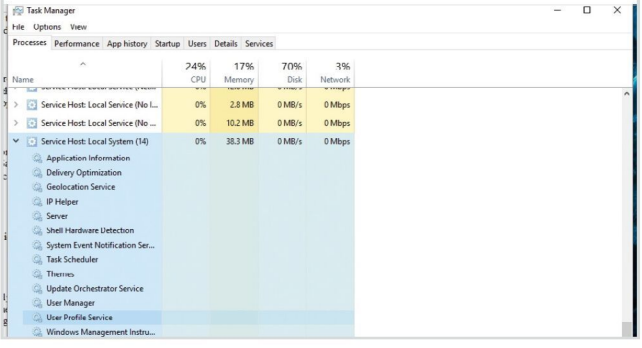


Turn Off Task Scheduler

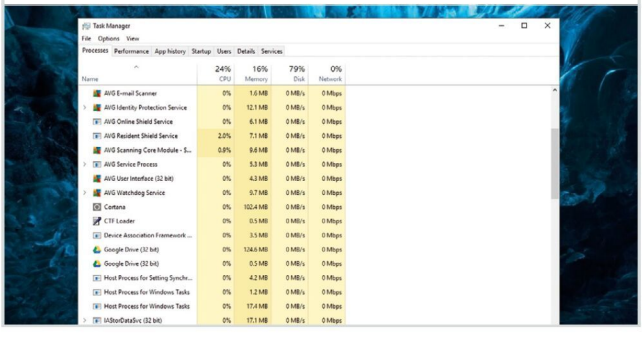
Although there is no simple switch to turn off individual tasks or to turn off the Task Scheduler as a whole, you can disable it in another way.

1 To turn off or disable the Task Scheduler temporarily whilst in Battery Saver Mode, as turning it off all the time could adversely affect performance, you need to open the Task Manager. You can search for this using the Cortana search field or by looking in Start menu > All Apps.

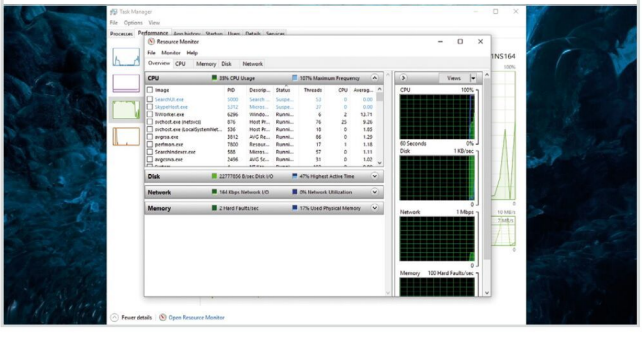
3 You should see the Task Scheduler in this list. Right-click on the entry and choose Disable from the contextual menu. To re-enable it, simply right-click and choose Enable from the contextual menu. Remember to turn this service back on after leaving Battery Saver Mode.



2 You can also open the Task Manager by pressing the key combination Ctrl + Shift + Esc. Next locate the entry for Service Host: Local System (followed by a number) on the processes tab and click on the left facing arrow to show the full list of processes inside.



4 The Task Scheduler offers much more than optimized battery performance. It can automate boring processes, including suspend and sleep. For anyone looking to shave a few precious minutes off their work routine, the Task Scheduler is a must have tool.



Managing Your Notifications

If you've used a modern smartphone, you'll be all too familiar with Notifications, those urgent little messages that tell you something has just happened. Windows 10 seems to have embraced notifications in a much bigger way than older versions. This is how to manage those pop-ups.

It's a feature of modern life in the digital age that we don't have to remember things anymore. Just a decade or so ago we used to have to remember dozens of phone numbers but with mobile phones now storing all our contacts we're lucky if we can remember our own number. We used to have to remember facts but today we have Wikipedia constantly at our fingertips. We used to have to remember appointments and tie a knot in a hanky to remember to buy a pint of milk but these days we have Notifications to remind us of everything. These changes in the ways that we find and use knowledge is actually changing the ways that our brains work; as we rely more on machines to store and recall everyday information, our memories are becoming less efficient, although our critical faculties may be improving to help us weed out false information. Whether this is a good thing or not, only time will tell.

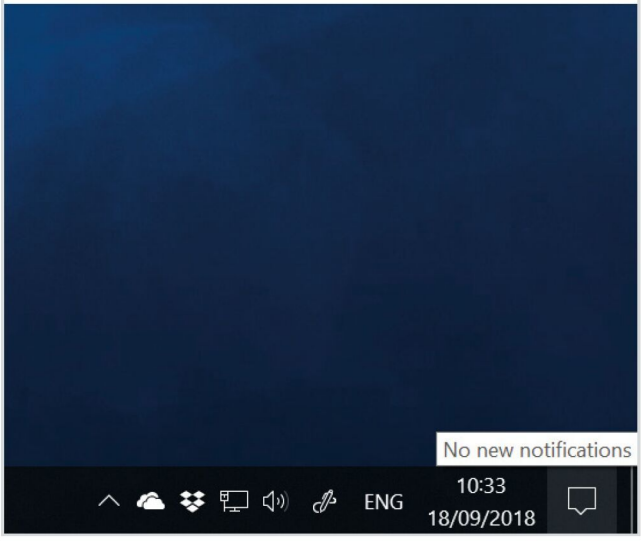
Notifications have become an everyday fact of life for anyone who uses a smartphone, tablet or personal computer. All through the day you'll hear that insistent little "ping" that lets you know that you've received an email, or one of your friends has posted another cat picture on Facebook and that you've only got 15 minutes to get to the dentist. While they can certainly be useful for anyone trying to juggle a job, family and busy social life, if you don't manage your notifications you'll never get a moment's peace. The same is true of Windows Notifications; if you don't set them up properly you'll be constantly notified about things that you just don't need to know about.

First introduced with Windows 8, Notifications are the messages that pop-up in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen, reminding you of calendar events, letting you know that you've got emails and generally keeping you informed about what's going on with your life and your computer. There's no doubt that Notifications are useful, especially when they remind you of a forgotten appointment or signal the arrival of an important email. However if you don't take a firm hand with them you can be overwhelmed with pop-up messages about trivial Twitter posts or friends' Facebook status updates.

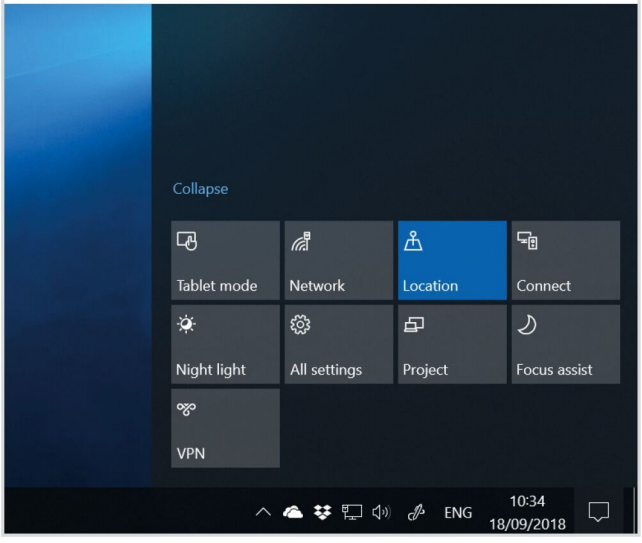
Notification Settings

In Windows 10 you can choose what sort of Notifications you receive and even decide which apps can post Notifications and what type of Notifications each app can use. Read on to find out how you can manage your notifications.

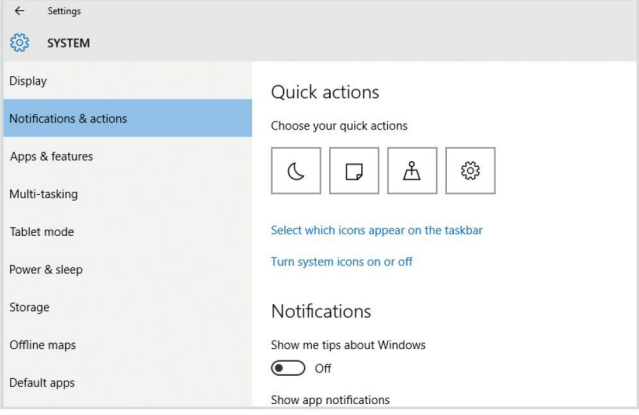
1 To view your recent Notifications, click on the Action Center icon in the System Tray area of the Taskbar, at the bottom right of the screen. It's the one that looks like a rectangular speech bubble.



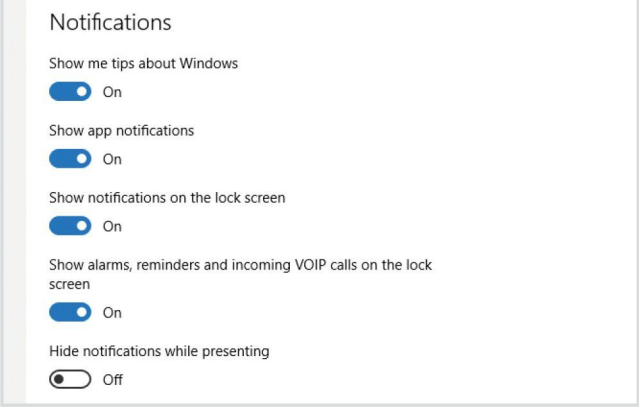
2 The Action Center sidebar will open, showing all your recent Notifications, as well as a panel of buttons at the bottom of the screen. Click on All Settings to open the Settings screen.



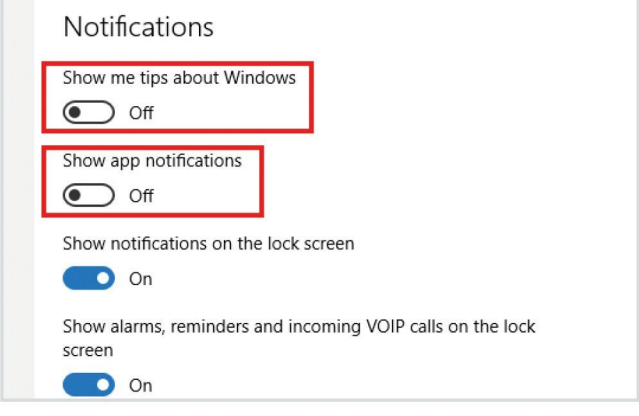
3 On the Settings screen, click on System and then in the sidebar menu on the left of the System screen, click on Notifications & Actions.



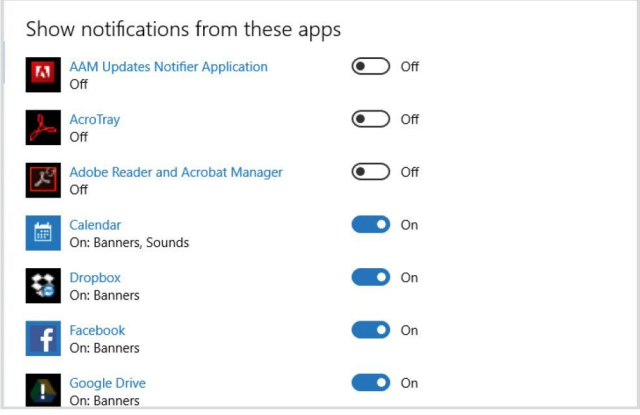
4 Under the Notifications header you'll see a row of five switches controlling general Notifications options. By default they're all set to on except "Hide notifications while presenting".



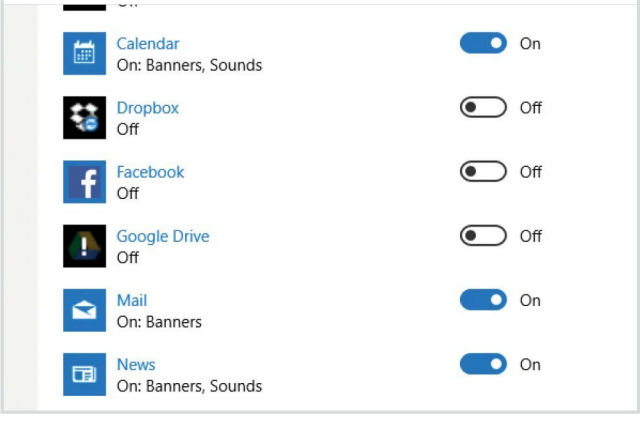
5 If you don't want any of your installed apps to be able to send you Notifications, set the switch for "Show app notifications" to off. You can also turn off "Show me tips about Windows".



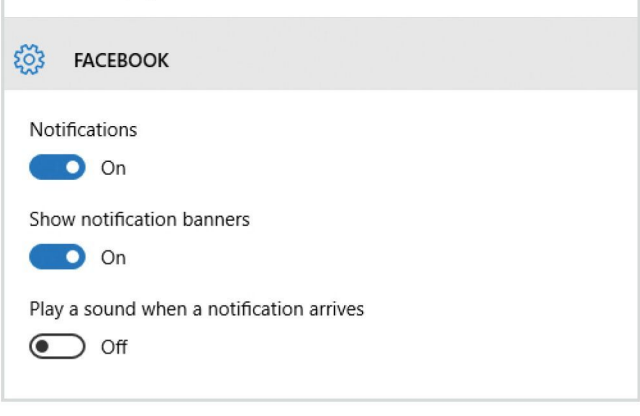
6 Scroll down further and you'll find a list of installed apps that can send Notifications, each one with a switch. To disable Notifications from individual apps, flip that app's switch to off.



7 If you just want to see important Notifications, try setting everything except Mail, Calendar, News and Windows Explorer to off.



8 If you click on the list entry for a particular app you see further options, allowing you to turn off Notifications for that app, just turn off the on screen banner notifications and also toggle whether the notification plays a sound.



Disable Unneeded Start-up Items

Windows 10 launches pretty quickly when it's newly installed but as you install more apps it may slow down over time. Any app that starts and runs automatically in the background will be using up precious processor resources. Here's how to keep that initial fast launch speed.

CUSTOMISING START-UP

If you first installed Windows 10 on a clean hard drive you probably notice that it launched much more quickly than Windows 8.1 ever did. However over time, as you've installed more programs, you may have noticed that the once sprightly boot-up time now takes noticeably longer. The reason for this is that many programs add files to the Windows start-up process, which are run as Windows launches, slowing down the launch process.

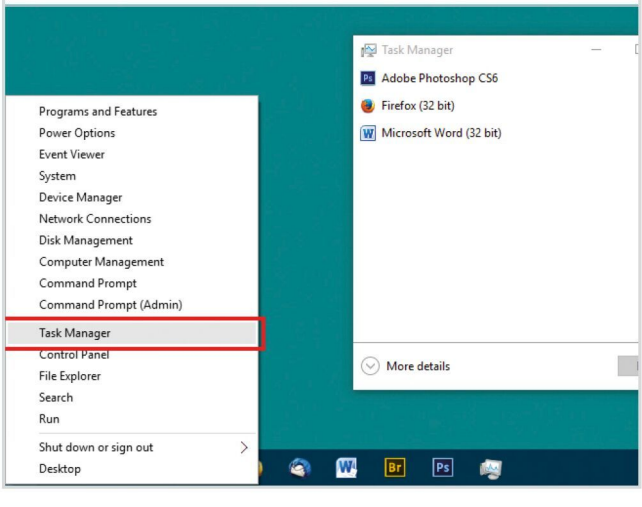
Some of these files are genuinely useful, doing things like updating your anti-virus software or launching and synchronising Dropbox, OneDrive and Google Drive; others are simply checking for software updates or initialising drivers for seldom used hardware. Some software manufacturers, notoriously Apple and Adobe, often install several start-up files at once and even if you disable them as we're about to show you, any subsequent software updates will re-activate the start-up files. This is particularly annoying, since the more of these start-up items there are, the slower Windows will launch.

You may have looked at these start-up items before and wondered whether or not it's safe to remove them. The simple answer is yes, it's perfectly safe; none of the start-up files are vital to the running of your PC and all of them can safely be disabled. Disabling a start-up file will not uninstall the software that it launches; all the apps that they affect can be started manually when needed and Windows will start-up completely safely without them. The only one you really need to leave in place is the one that starts up your anti-virus software, unless you're relying on Windows Defender, since you do need your PC to be protected from the moment it starts. In some cases the anti-virus software launcher will not even appear in the list to prevent you from accidentally disabling it.

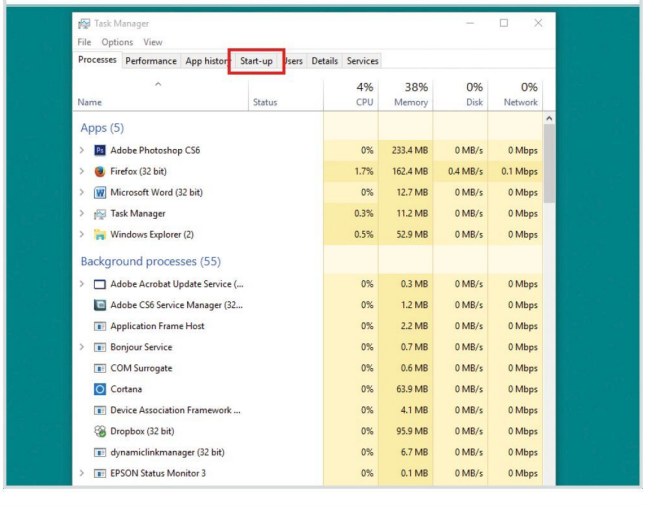
If you regularly use a cloud storage service such as Dropbox, OneDrive or Google Drive you might also want to leave the start-up files for these active, since they ensure that your files will be synchronised automatically as soon as your PC boots up and you won't miss any important updates the day before an important deadline!

Fortunately there's a very simple way to check and if necessary disable these start-up items, restoring your Windows launch speed to its former brisk pace. Here's what you need to do:

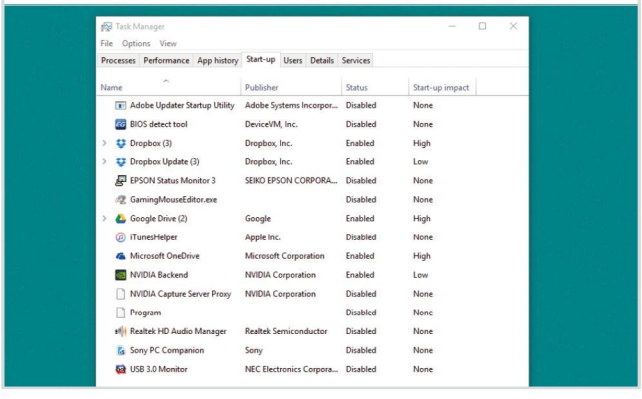
1 To get started, right-click on the Start button and select Task Manager from the power menu. This shows you a list of your currently running apps. To see more, click on the "More details" button at the bottom of the screen.



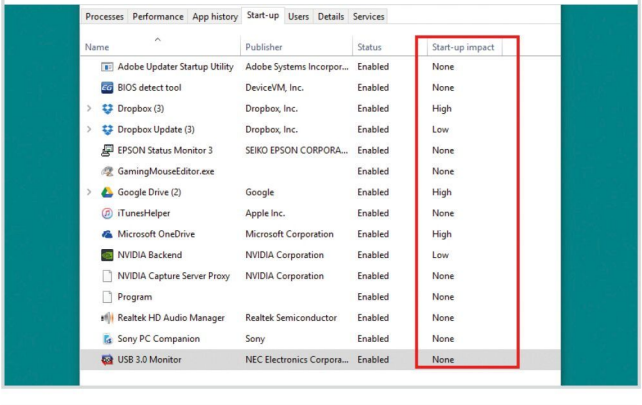
2 The More details view shows you not just running apps but all the other services and routines that Windows is currently running, and there are a lot of them! However what we're interested in is found on the Start-up tab, so click on that.



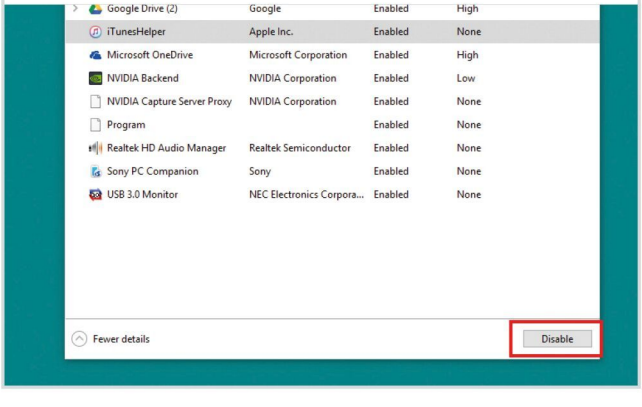
3 The Start-up tab shows you a list of the apps that run every time you launch Windows. On the left column is the name of the app, followed by the manufacturer's name, then the status: enabled or disabled. The right column shows the impact on start-up speed.



4 Next you need to look through the list and decide which programs you really need to have starting up at launch, paying particular attention to any high impact apps. Things like iTunes Helper and cloud storage apps are prime examples.

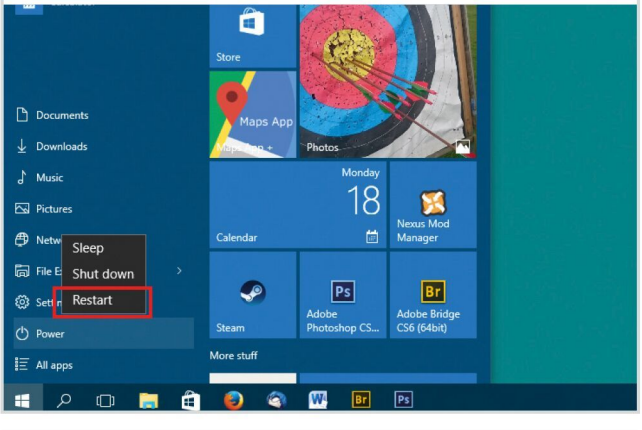


5 To disable an app, select it and click on the Disable button at the bottom of the window. If you're wondering which apps it's safe to disable, the answer is all of them; Windows will still run, however it's best to leave your security app as an enabled start-up item.

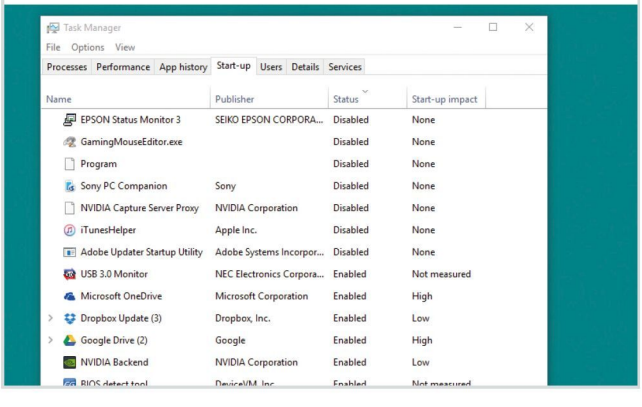


6 Note that disabling an app in the start-up menu doesn't uninstall the app from your system, and you can always start any app you need manually. All disabling an app in the start-up list does is to prevent it from starting on launch.

7 Once you've been through the list and disabled any apps that don't need to start on launch, close the Task Manager and try restarting your PC. You should find that it now boots up more quickly.



8 Whenever you install a new app it's a good idea to check the start-up list again to make sure that it hasn't added itself to your launch process; if it has, simply disable it to maintain your fast boot-up time.



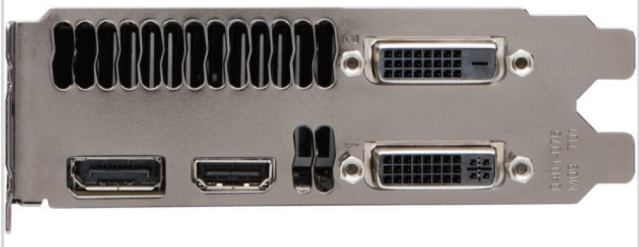
Working on Dual Monitors

With a second monitor and the required connectors on your PC, setting up Windows 10 to display over two screens is easier than ever. Aside from looking pretty cool, having a second monitor can really help to increase productivity, and allow you to stay more organised when you are at your computer.

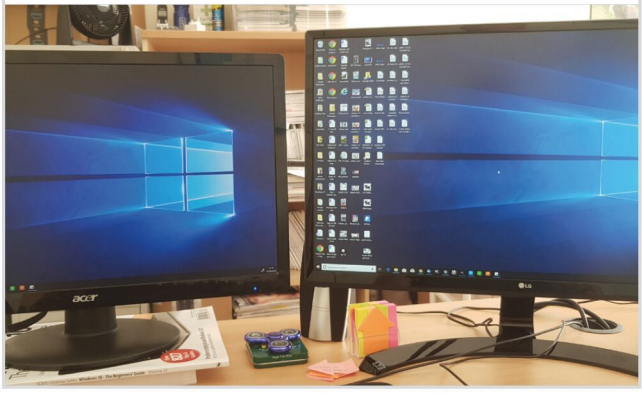
Setting Up Dual Display

Matching up the resolution and size of your two chosen monitors will give the best results but even mismatched monitors can work really well in dual format.

1 You will obviously need to ensure that your PC has the requisite connections for two monitors (two HDMI, VGA or DVI ports, or a combination of these). Check the back of your PC tower or the side of your laptop to find out. With your PC turned off, connect both monitors to the available ports.



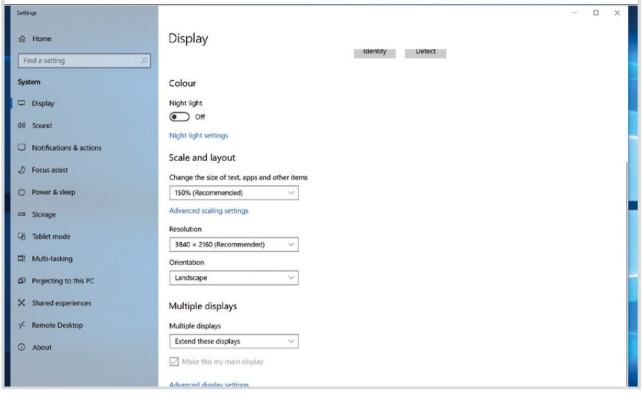
2 Boot up the computer and log in. Windows should automatically detect that two displays are connected and you should see both of them displaying a desktop. Your main display will have all of your icons on it, whilst the new second display will be blank apart from the taskbar along the bottom.



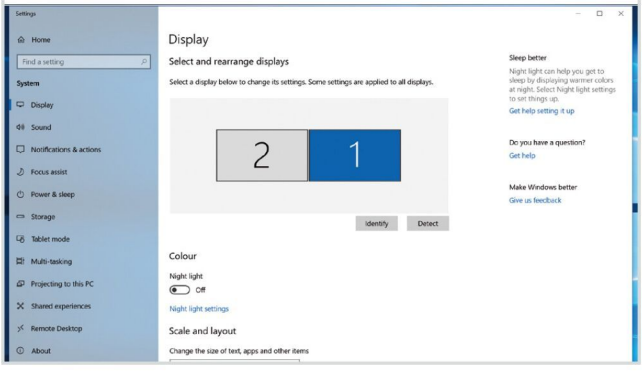
3 You will now need to configure the dual monitor setup to your liking. Windows 10 allows you to easily choose how the dual monitors display. Press Windows Key + P to see the Project side panel. Here you can choose from PC Screen Only, Duplicate, Extend or Second screen Only options.

4 PC screen Only and Second Screen only are fairly self-explanatory, displaying an image on one or the other screens. Duplicate is also fairly easy to understand, showing exactly the same display on both screens. Extend turns the two monitors to one long screen that you can spread out across.

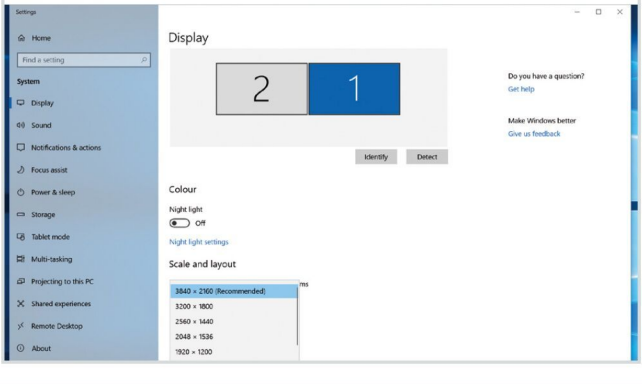
5 The Extend option is the one which needs the most setting up. On the main display, right-click anywhere on the desktop and choose Display settings from the Action menu. Scrolling to the bottom of the display settings gives you another way to choose the display mode.



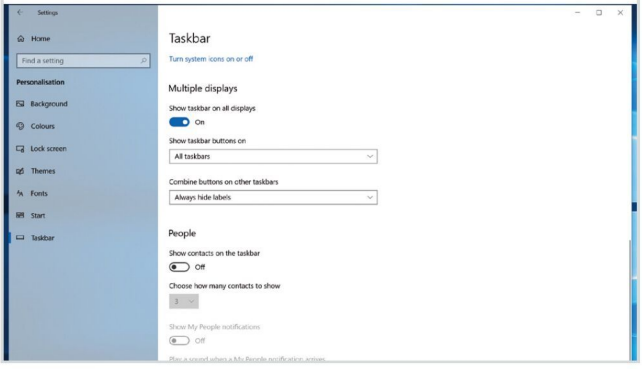
6 At the top of the display settings are the two displays side-by-side. 1 is your main display and 2 is the secondary display. Which side of the screen the two monitors "join" at (which side allows you to move on to the second monitor) is controlled by dragging the display boxes here to the left or right.



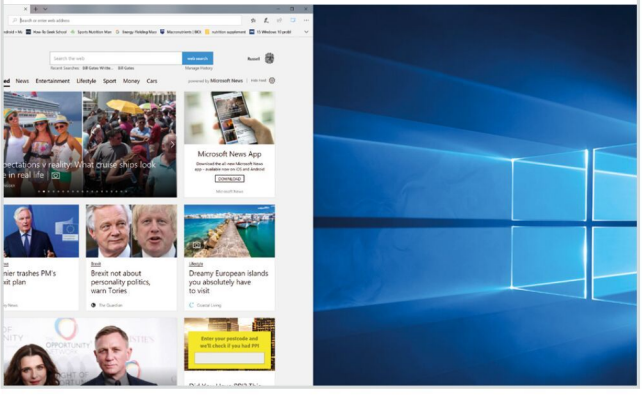
7 You can view settings for each display independently, by clicking on one you want to see, and then scrolling down. You can change the scaling, orientation and resolution of each display to best suit the specification of the monitor, if it is the case that the two monitors have different maximum resolutions.



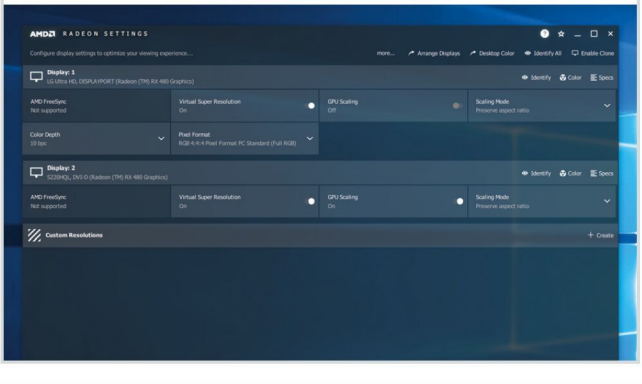
8 If you don't want to see the taskbar on both displays, go to Settings > Personalisation > Taskbar, and scroll down to Multiple displays. You can then choose to turn off the taskbar on the second display. You can also spread a single wallpaper across both screen by selecting Span in Background settings.



9 Spreading out across the two monitors in Extend mode is as easy as clicking and dragging a window, be that a browser window, app or anything else, to the "joined" side of the main screen. Just keep the mouse pointer moving and it will continue on to the second screen seamlessly.



10 Depending on the graphics card software you have installed (Radeon for example), you will usually have further display options for the second monitor in the graphics adapter settings. This might include Virtual Super Resolution and GPU scaling, helping you match up resolution settings.



Windows 10 Registry Tweaks

The Windows Registry can be a scary place to visit if you don't understand how things work. It is true that there are often simpler ways to action some of the changes shown below but understanding the inner workings of your Windows 10 PC is key to understanding how to accomplish more with your screen time.

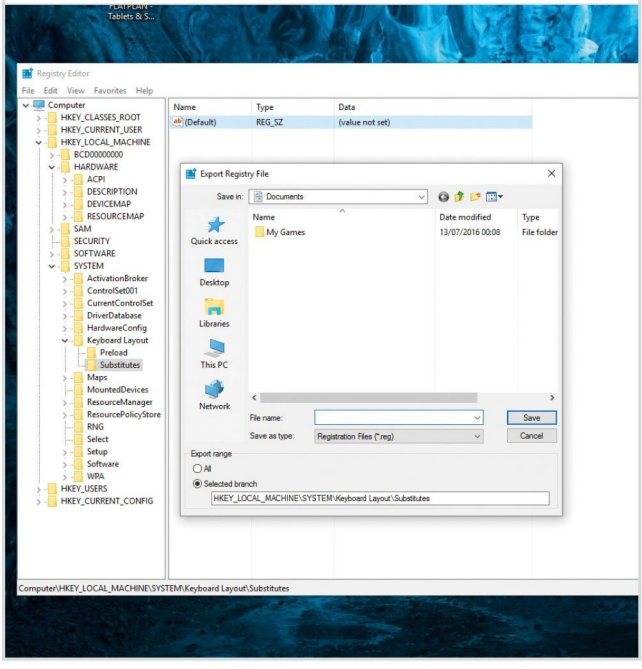
WHAT IS THE REGISTRY?

The Windows Registry is a hierarchical database that stores low-level settings for the Microsoft Windows operating system and for applications that opt to use the Registry. The kernel, device drivers, services, Security Accounts Manager (SAM) and user interface can all use the Registry. The Registry also allows access to counters for profiling system performance. Prior to the Windows Registry .INI files stored each program's settings as a text file, often located in a shared location that did not provide user specific settings in a multi-user scenario. By contrast the Windows Registry stores all application settings in one logical repository, a number of discrete files, and in a standardised form.

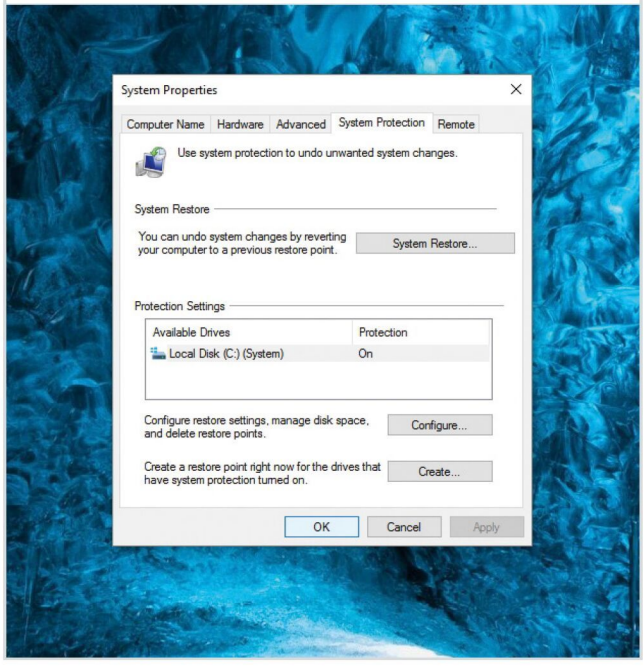
Backing Up Your Registry

Before you edit any part of your system registry, it is always a good idea to make a backup of all keys that you intend to edit. Here we will look at the simple and quick method of backing up Windows Registry keys.

1 You can back up any of the keys in the registry by right-clicking on any of them in the editor and then selecting Export. This will save into a .reg file that can be run to reapply the old value of that key at a later date. This is the minimum backup step you should take before editing.



2 An easier backup method is to make a System Restore point that includes a snapshot of the registry. Go to Start, type restore, select Create a restore point, select a drive and click Configure. . .; then pick Turn on system protection, set the Max Usage space and click OK.

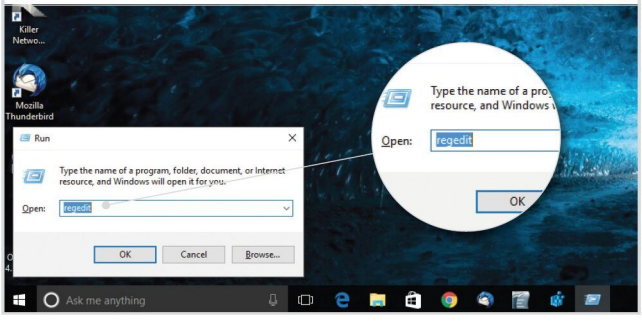


Registry Tweaks

So let's get down to tweaking some registry keys. Registry keys always start with HKEY, followed by the location in the file system. Once you find and select the HKEY you want, you will see that further options are available.

1. Access the Editor

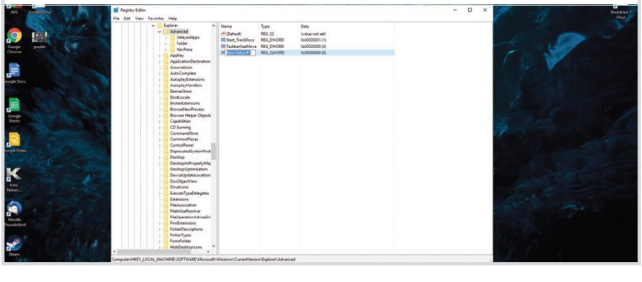
To open the registry editor, all you have to do is open the Run prompt with Windows Key + R, then type in `regedit` and hit Enter. If you know a certain value you want to change, you can navigate through the registry to find it by clicking the + sign next to each registry key.



2. Increase Taskbar Transparency

In Registry Editor, go to following key: `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced`

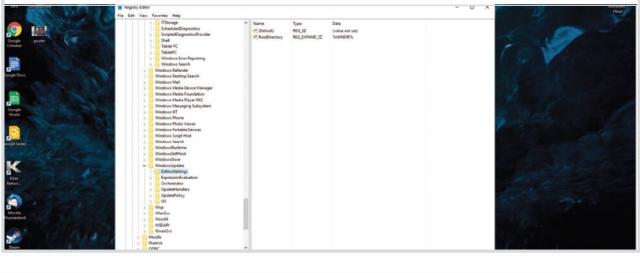
In the right side pane, create new DWORD `UseOLEDTaskbarTransparency` and set its value to 1.



3. Prevent Windows Update from Automatically Restarting

In Registry Editor, go to following key: `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\WindowsUpdate\AUkey`

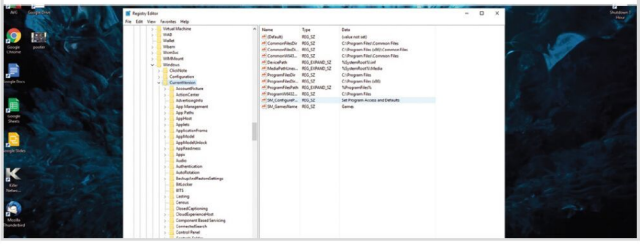
Right-click in the right pane and create a new 32-bit DWORD value named: `NoAutoRebootWithLoggedOnUsers`. Set its value to 1.



4. Disable System Tray Notification Balloon Pop-ups

In Registry Editor, go to following key: `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced`

Create a new DWORD value, name it `EnableBalloonTips` and set its value to 0.disable Wi-Fi Sense and Application Telemetry.

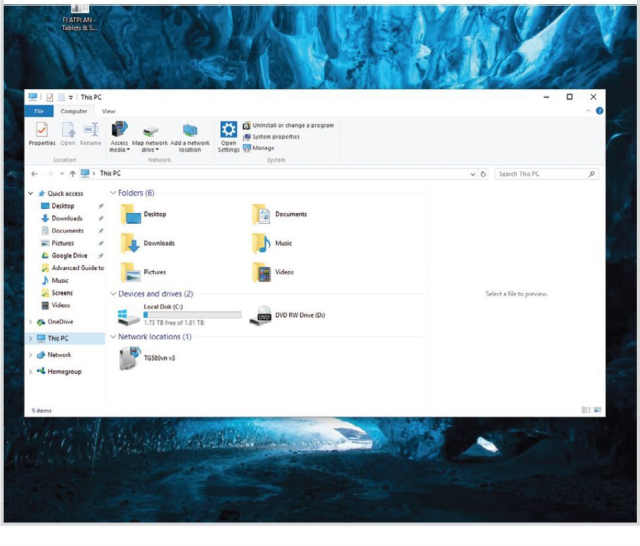


5. Hide Folders from This PC

In Registry Editor, go to following key: `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\FolderDescriptions\<FOLDER-GUID>\PropertyBag`.

Substitute the **<FOLDER-GUID>** above with one of these:
Desktop: {B4BFCC3A-DB2C-424C-B029-7FE99A87C641}
Documents: {f42ee2d3-909f-4907-8871-4c22fc0bf756}
Downloads: {7d83ee9b-2244-4e70-b1f5-5393042af1e4}
Music: {a0c69a99-21c8-4671-8703-7934162fcf1d}
Pictures: {0ddd015d-b06c-45d5-8c4c-f59713854639}
Videos: {35286a68-3c57-41a1-bbb1-0eae73d76c95}

If **ThisPCPolicy** is set to **Show**, then the folder is visible. If you change it to **Hide**, then the folder will be invisible.



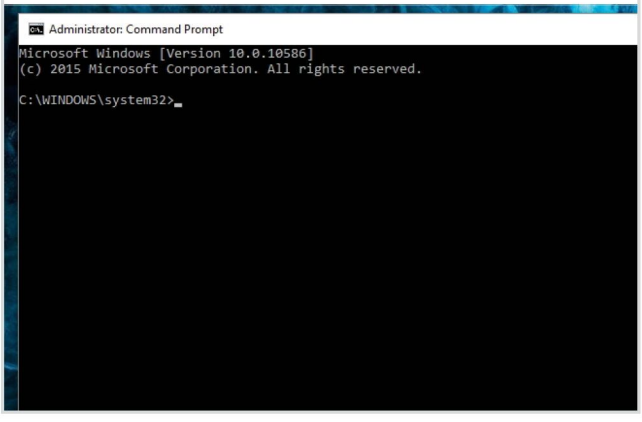
Add a Shutdown Timer to the Desktop

A shutdown timer allows you to delay the shutdown of your computer in the event that you need to leave it on while it completes a particular function, software updates for example, but can't stay around to shut it down manually. The process is fairly straightforward and the timer is unobtrusive.

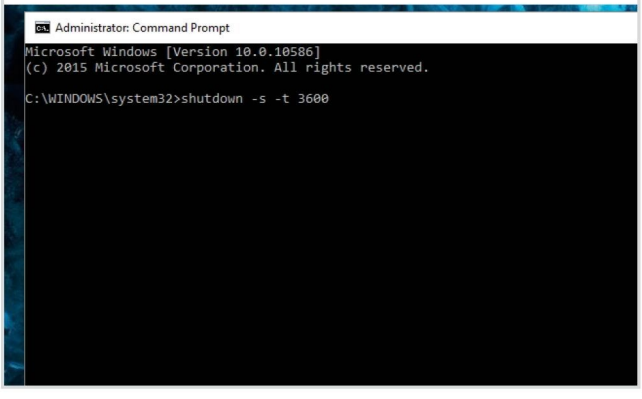
Adding the Timer

Before you can add a shutdown timer to the desktop, you need to understand how to create one using the Command Prompt tool. The initial set up might seem slightly complicated but is much easier after the first time.

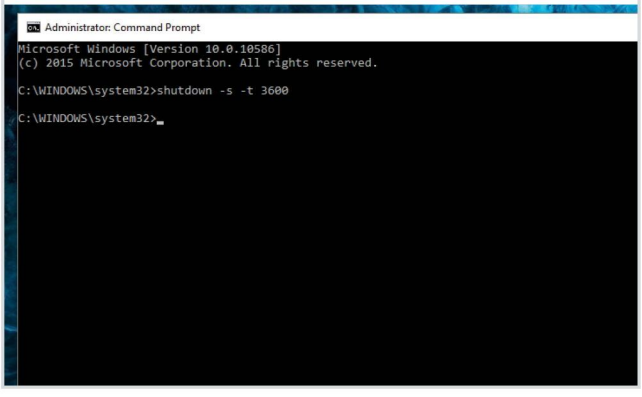
1 The first thing you need to do to create a shutdown timer manually, is open the Command Prompt. You can do this easily by pressing Windows + X and then selecting "Command Prompt" or "Command Prompt (Admin)" from the menu that appears.



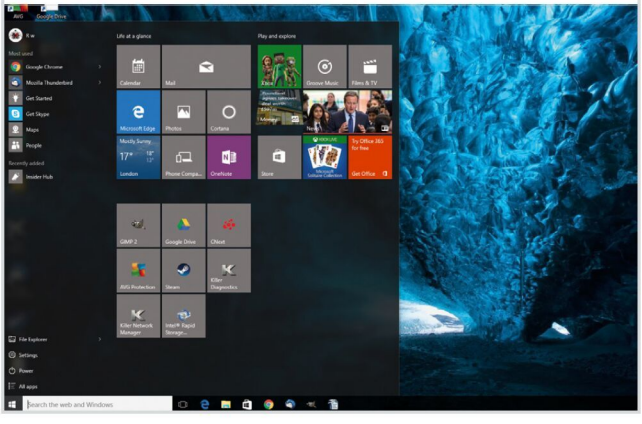
2 In the Command Prompt, type the command `shutdown -s -t XXXX`. The "XXXX" should be the time in seconds you want to elapse before the computer shuts down. For instance if you want the computer to shut down in one hour, the command should look like `shutdown -s -t 3600`.



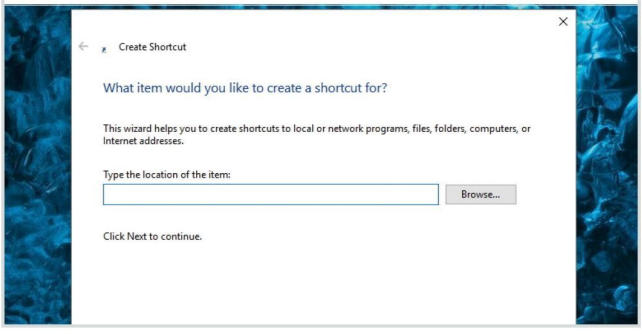
3 Press Enter to complete the command and set the timer going; you won't see anything on screen just yet, that part comes in a moment. If you input the wrong time or entered the command by mistake, you can cancel the timer by typing `shutdown -a` in Command Prompt.



4 You can do this each time you need to use a shutdown timer, which is not really a problem if you only rarely use it, or you can create a shutdown timer shortcut that can be placed on the desktop. The only real problem with a shortcut is that the shutdown time is fixed.



5 Right-click on the desktop, hover over New and select Shortcut in the side menu. In the path field type `shutdown.exe -s -t XXXX` (where "XXXX" is the time in seconds) and click Next. Enter a name for the shortcut, for example "Shutdown 1 Hour", and click Finish.



6 Place the shortcut out of the way on your desktop. Every time you double-click the shutdown timer shortcut, the timer will start. To cancel the timer, you can create a second shortcut using `shutdown.exe -a` or enter the `shutdown -a` command in Command Prompt.

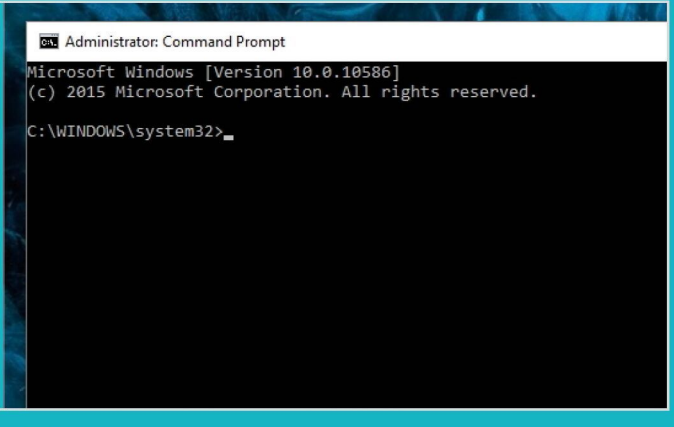
COMMAND PROMPT TRICKS

Using the Command Prompt to start a shutdown timer is just one of hundreds of ways this admin tool can be used. Let's take a look at a few other ways.

1. Command Prompt Function Keys

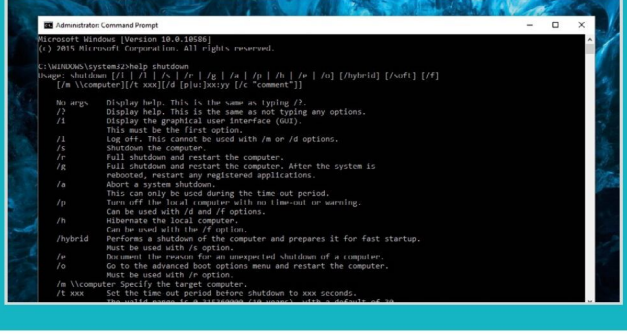
If you are finding yourself using the Command Prompt tool a lot, these F Key shortcuts can come in very handy.

F1: Pastes the last executed command (character by character)
F2: Pastes the last executed command (up to the entered character)
F3: Pastes the last executed command
F4: Deletes current prompt text up to the entered character
F5: Pastes recently executed commands (does not cycle)
F6: Pastes ^Z to the prompt
F7: Displays a selectable list of previously executed commands
F8: Pastes recently executed commands (cycles)
F9: Asks for the number of the command from the F7 list to paste



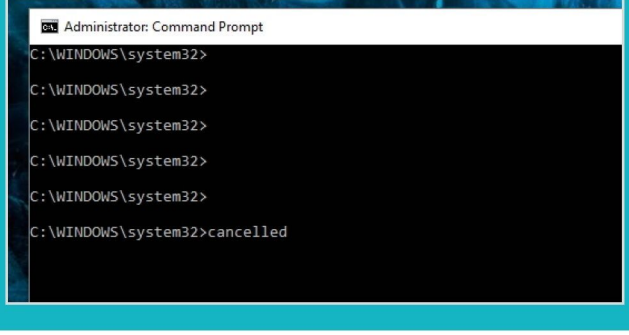
2. Command Prompt Help

The help command (type "`help [command]`") does not provide help for every Command Prompt command. However, any command can be suffixed with the /? option, usually called the help switch, to display detailed information about the command's syntax and even some examples.



3. Abort a Command

Just about any command can be stopped in its tracks with the abort command: Ctrl-C. If you haven't actually executed a command, you can just erase what you've typed but if you've already executed it then you can use Ctrl-C to stop it. Remember that even Ctrl-C can't undo things that aren't undoable.



Run Ubuntu on a Windows 10 PC

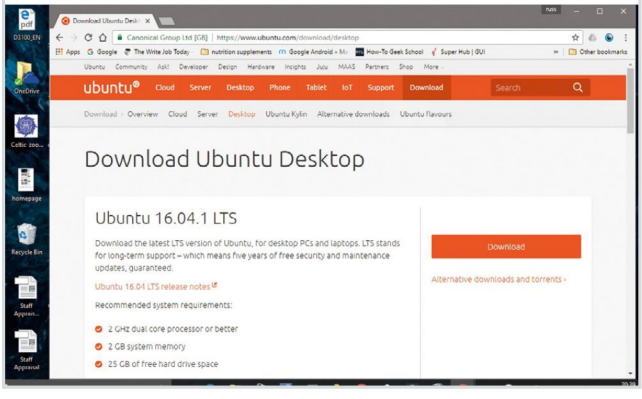
It is possible to run a full Linux distribution, like Ubuntu, on a Windows PC without installing it. This is useful for a number of reasons but initially it is a great way to try out Linux itself, or even a new distribution, before you commit to installing and using it on your computer.

Creating a Bootable USB Drive

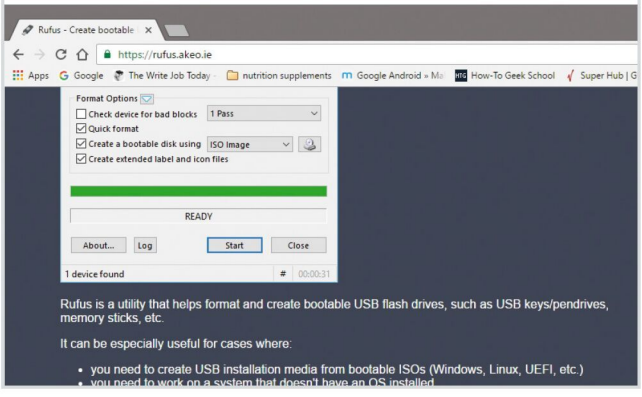
You can try Ubuntu and other distributions from a bootable DVD but it is usually easier and more convenient to use a USB flash drive, and that is what we will create here.

1 To run Ubuntu from a USB stick, you will need one which has at least 2GB capacity and preferably more than that (4 to 8GB is recommended). You can buy a 4GB USB stick very cheaply and as it can be used again for different purposes, it is a useful thing to have if you don't already.

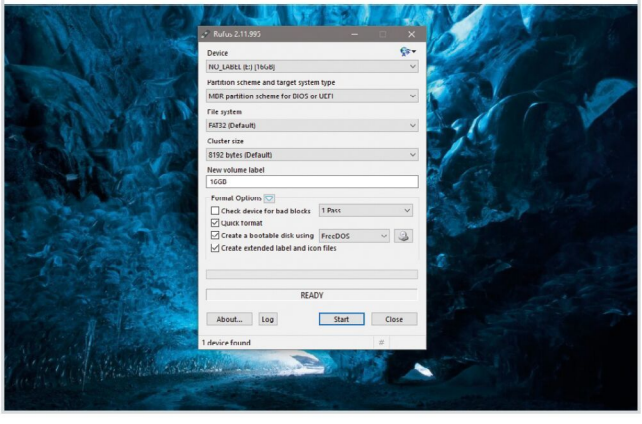
2 To create a bootable USB from within Windows, the next thing you need to do is download the Linux distribution you want to use. We are using Ubuntu 16.04.1 LTS (Long-Term Support), that can be downloaded from the Ubuntu download page: www.ubuntu.com/download/desktop.



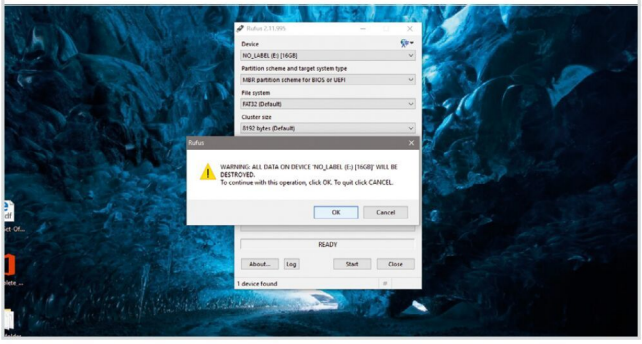
3 You now need to get Ubuntu onto the USB stick. This can't be done by simply dragging and dropping the file onto the drive, as if you were copying a photo over. You'll need to make the stick a Bootable Drive. One of the best tools for doing this is called Rufus 2.11: https://rufus.akeo.ie/.



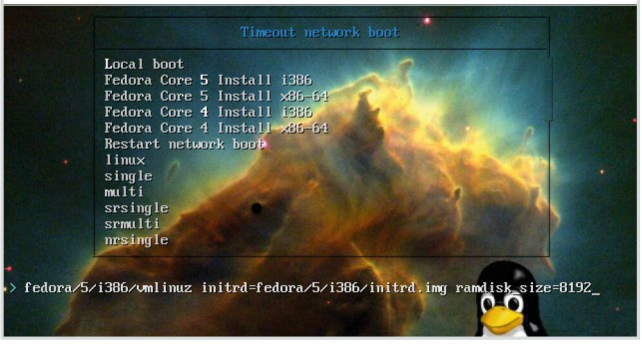
4 Once downloaded and installed on your PC, click the icon to open Rufus and select your USB stick in the Device dropdown. Click the CD Rom icon next to the FreeDOS dropdown, then find your downloaded Ubuntu ISO and click Open and then Start.



5 Click 'Yes' when you're asked to download Syslinux software and then 'OK' to write in ISO Image mode. Confirm that your USB stick is selected and then 'OK' to continue. The process may take a few minutes, so be patient and wait for the message to tell you it is completed.



6 If you are wondering, Syslinux is a boot loader for the Linux operating system that runs on an MS-DOS/Windows FAT filesystem. It is intended to simplify first-time installation of Linux and for creation of rescue and other special purpose boot disks.

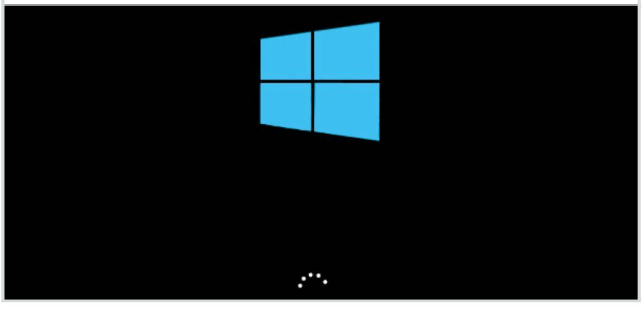


Booting from a USB Drive

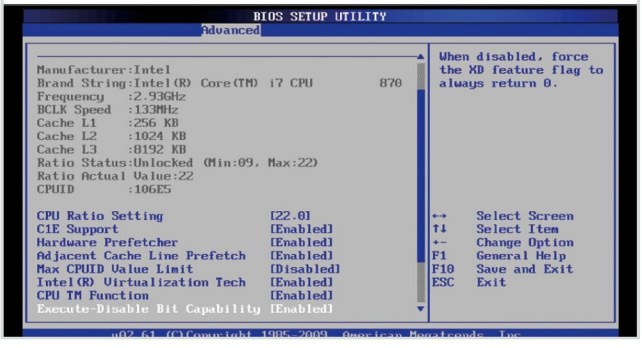
Now you have the Linux ISO file (in our case, Ubuntu) copied onto your bootable flash drive, you are ready to boot into the OS. Here is the exact process you will need to follow to change the boot order.

1 Turn off your Windows computer and insert the USB drive with the Ubuntu ISO file on it. You now need to tell your computer to boot from that USB stick and not from the hard drive, and therefore Windows, as it normally would. Some newer computers can start-up automatically from USB.

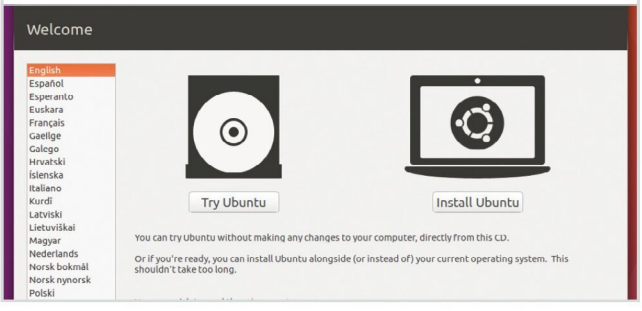
2 If your computer does not automatically do this, you will need to change the device from which the computer starts up to the USB. You can usually do this by watching for an 'Enter Setup' message appearing before Windows starts and pressing the key shown (this varies between devices).



3 Once into the Set up/BIOS screen, look for the option to change the 'Boot Device'. This may be on the main screen, or within the System tab/section. Depending on your computer and how your USB key was formatted, you should see an entry for 'removable drive' or 'USB media'.



4 Move this to the top of the list to force the computer to start from USB rather than the hard disk; save your changes and continue. Choose your preferred language and click on Try Ubuntu. Your live desktop should appear. If you then want to, double-click on 'Install Ubuntu 16.04 LTS'.



Defragment Your Hard Drive

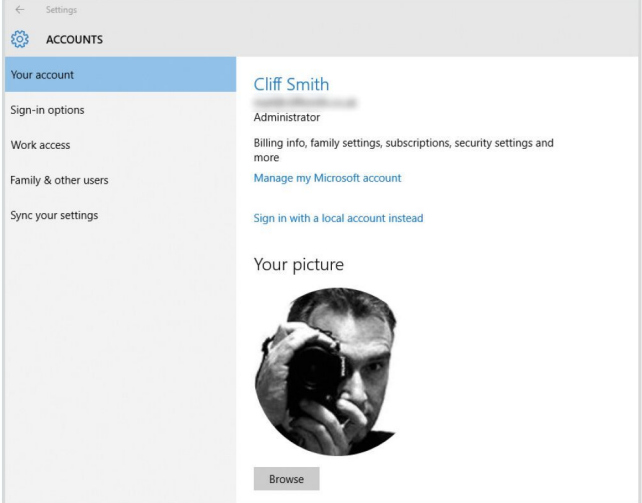
Over time the data stored on your hard drive may get fragmented and become slower for your system to access. Windows has always included tools to clean up these fragments and Windows 10 is no different. Using the built-in Windows utility to tidy up can greatly improve performance.

HARD DRIVE HEALTH

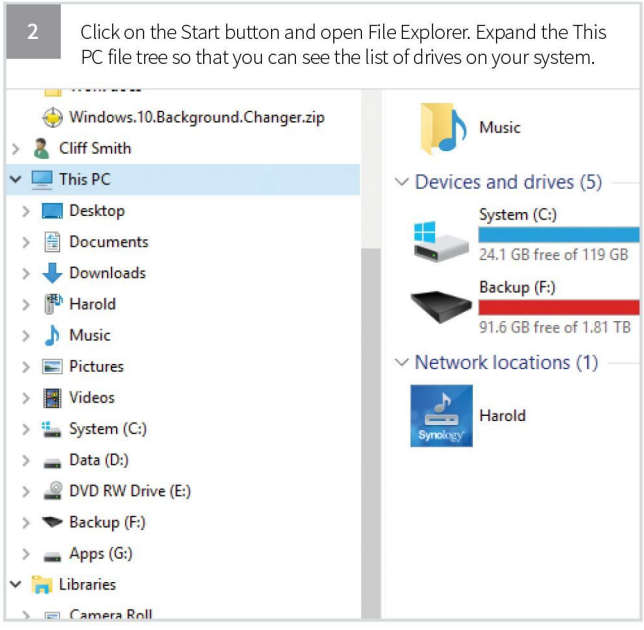
While hard disk drives provide cheap, fast and reliable bulk storage for digital data, they do suffer from one major problem. Using protocols that date back to the days when computer data was stored on big reels of magnetic tape, data is written onto the hard drive sequentially, so that it's faster to read off again. This is fine at first since the data is stored in neat blocks or sectors that it's easy for the system to find. A brand new hard drive will use its storage space efficiently for optimum performance, saving files in a neat orderly sequence. However over time you'll inevitably delete some files, or replace others with larger ones, and the hard drive tries to cope with these changes by splitting data files up to fit into available empty space on the drive. This can mean that your files are broken up into pieces scattered all over the drive, which can radically slow down access times both when saving data and when you come to read the data from the drive. The system doesn't lose the data but a hard drive is a mechanical device with moving parts, and the physical process of moving the read-write head to and fro over the drive platter from one sector to another takes a finite amount of time, and the more the head has to move the slower the access time will be. After a few years of heavy use a hard disk drive can become so fragmented that it slows to a near crawl as the system struggles to access the scattered chunks of data. This is one of the reasons why solid state drives (SSDs) are becoming more popular. Since they don't have any moving parts their data retrieval speeds should remain consistently high regardless of how much data is stored or how often it is changed. See the previous sections of this publication if you'd like to upgrade your system to use an SSD.

Fortunately Windows includes an option to "defragment" your drive. This is an automatic process that reorganises the data on your HDD back into easily accessible contiguous sectors, making the most of the available space and greatly speeding up access times. In earlier versions of Windows this was a manually selected process that you had to remember to perform on a regular basis, but Windows 10 includes an option to automatically perform an optimisation and defragmentation procedure on all attached drives on a regular basis. If your system uses a hard disk, as most do, it's worth performing at least the first five steps of this guide, just to see if your system would benefit from defragmentation. If you're using an SSD it won't need to be defragmented, since SSDs store data in a different way to HDDs but it can still benefit from optimisation.

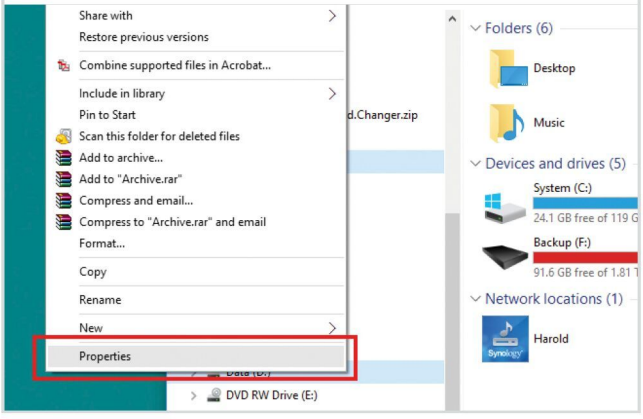
1 Log on to your PC as Administrator. You'll need to be using an Administrator account in order to perform the disk defragmentation process.



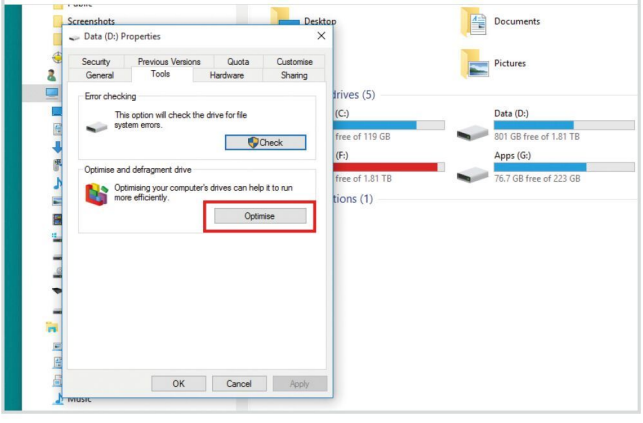
2 Click on the Start button and open File Explorer. Expand the This PC file tree so that you can see the list of drives on your system.



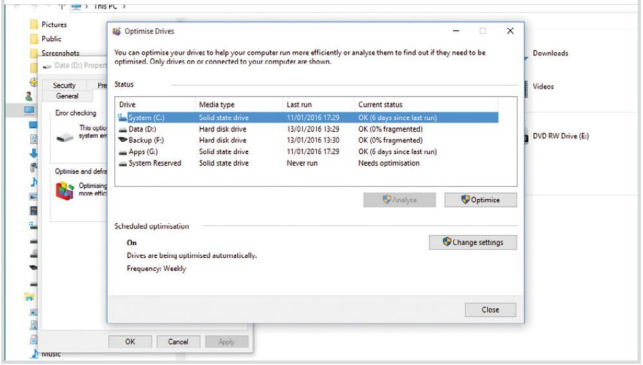
3 Right-click on any drive in the list and select Properties. You'll see in a moment that it doesn't matter which drive you select at this stage.



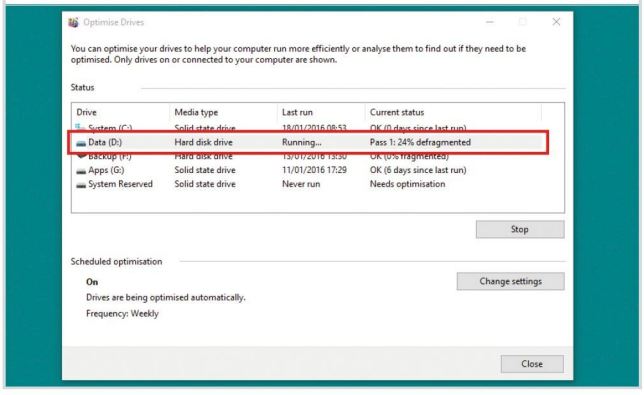
4 In the Properties window, click on the Tools tab. You'll see that there are two options available. Click on the button for the second one, "Optimise".



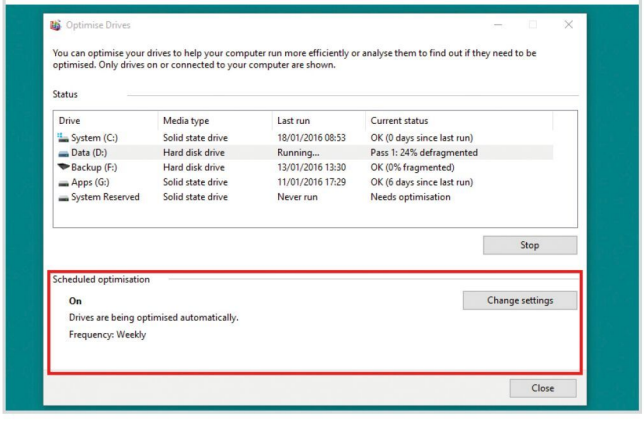
5 This will open the Optimise Drives window. Here you'll see another list of all the drives attached to your system, when the optimisation routine was last performed on each one, and how fragmented it currently is. If your system is operating at peak efficiency they should all be at 0%.



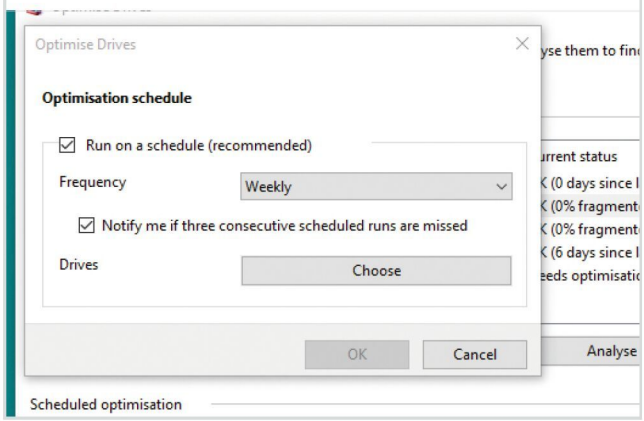
6 If any of your hard disk drives are fragmented, click on it and then click on the Optimise button. If it's a large drive and very fragmented the process could take a long time, so only do it if you're not going to be using your PC for a couple of hours.



7 In the lower part of the Optimise Drives window you'll see Scheduled Optimisation. This should be set to On by default but if it isn't click on the Change settings button.



8 You can set your drives to be automatically optimised by ticking the Run on a schedule check box and select the interval; for systems used every day a weekly check is recommended.



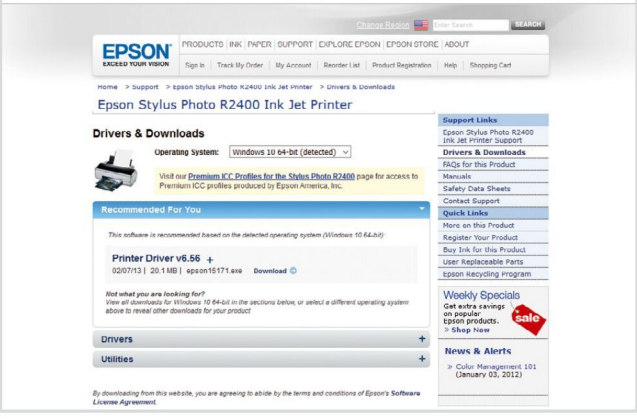
Updating Your Device Drivers

Keeping your device drivers up to date ensures that your computer delivers optimum performance under Windows 10 and makes your whole system more stable and reliable. Once you have updated the drivers for one device, doing the same for any others is relatively easy and quick.

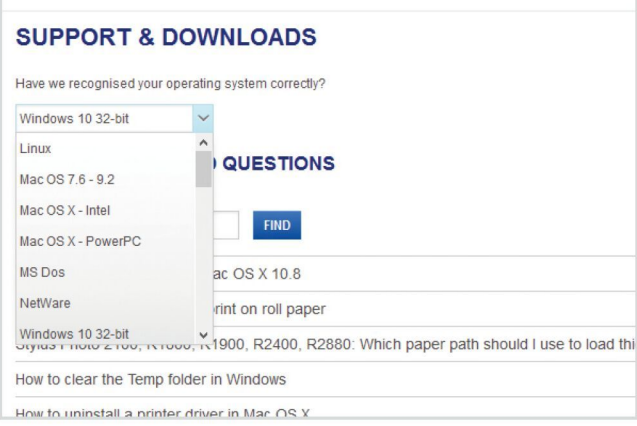
Finding Device Drivers

Windows 10 comes with default generic drivers that will let it talk to most common peripherals but for optimum performance it's a good idea to download and install the latest custom made drivers for your hardware.

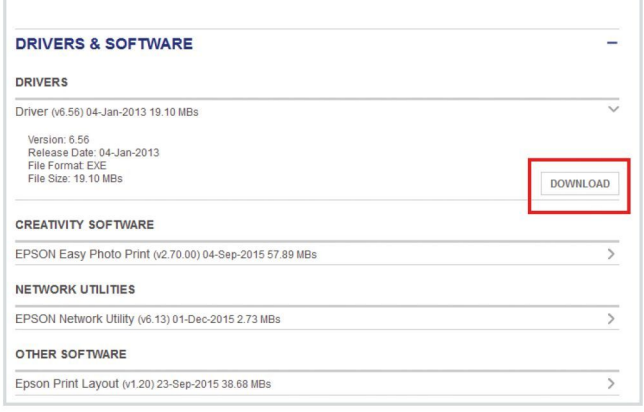
1 Go to the website of your peripheral manufacturer. In this case we're looking at the website for Epson printers, to install an update for an R2400 photo printer. Click on the link for product support and enter the model name and/or number.



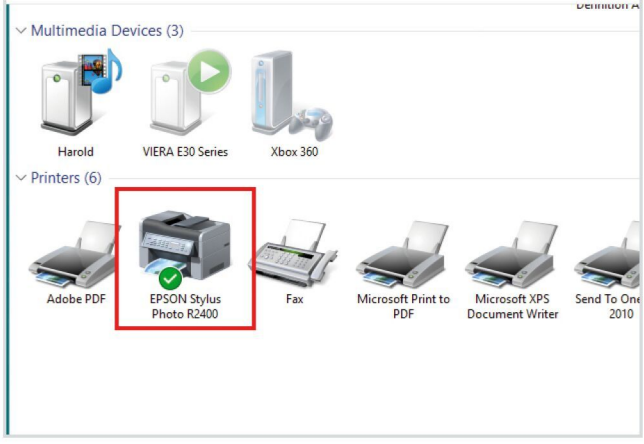
2 Some websites (such as Epson's) can automatically detect the operating system you're using and immediately offer you the latest recommended driver. In other cases you will have to tell the site that you're using Windows 10.



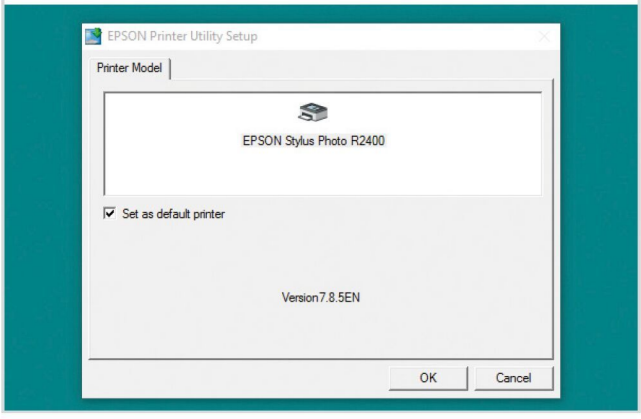
3 Once you've entered the model name and told the site that you're looking for Windows 10 drivers, you should be offered a link to download the latest driver. Click on the link and download the driver file to your desktop.



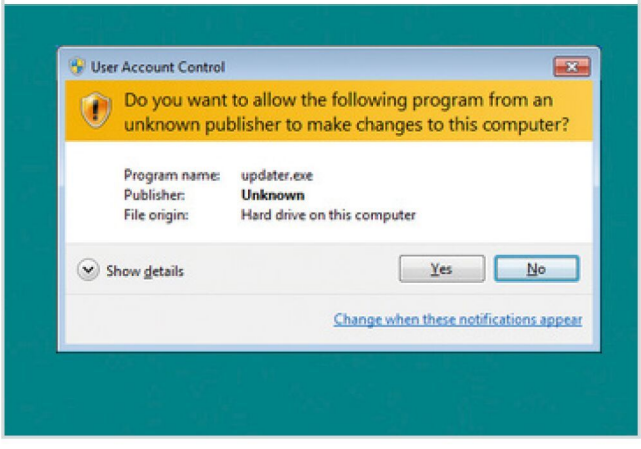
4 If you're installing a driver for a device that has to be plugged in and switched on in order to work, such as a printer, make sure that the device is connected and powered up before proceeding.



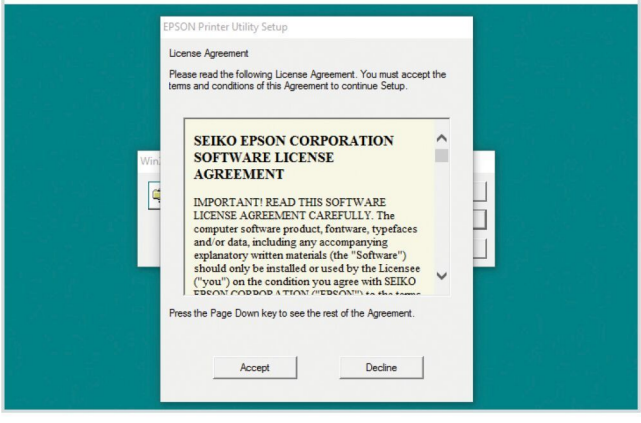
5 Once the driver download is complete, go to your desktop and locate the newly downloaded file. Double-click on it to begin installation.



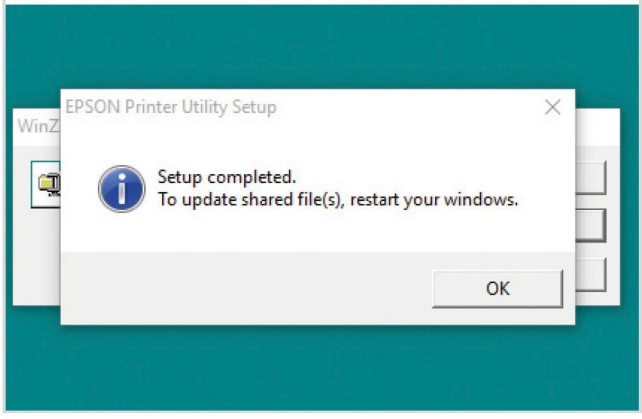
6 You'll see a message from Windows asking if you want to proceed with software installation. Click OK to proceed.



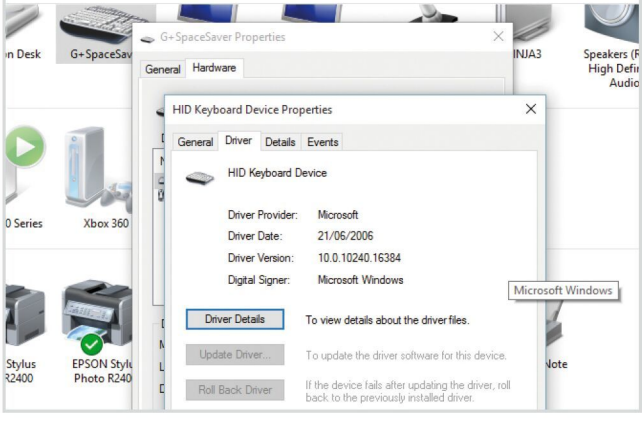
7 From here on the process is mostly just clicking OK on a series of windows. Do check that the device driver you're installing matches the device connected to your PC.



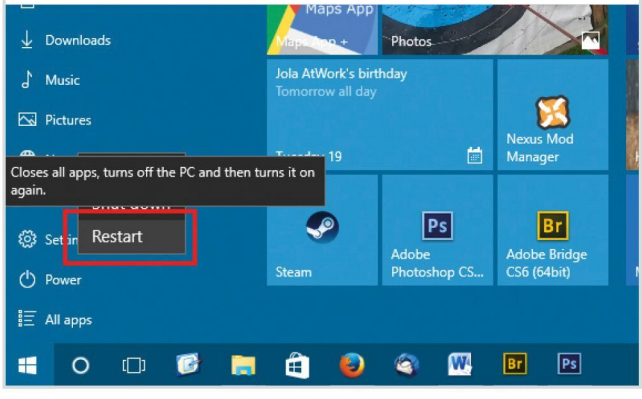
8 The driver installation should only take a few seconds. When it's complete you'll receive a notification telling you that the installation was successful.



9 Repeat this process for any other peripherals that are connected to your system. You don't need to restart between installations for different types of devices.



10 Once you've finished updating your drivers, it's a good idea to restart your machine, since this should clear out any temporary files created during the installation process, as well as finalising the deletion of any old drivers.

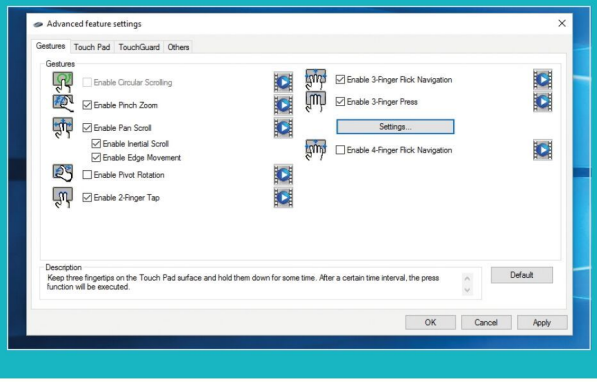


Windows 10 Touchpad Gestures

If you are familiar with using a laptop, you will no doubt also be familiar with using a touchpad or trackpad to control it. However even if you are used to controlling your laptop with the touchpad, it can be some time before it feels as familiar as using a traditional mouse. Luckily Windows 10 allows for several very useful touchpad gestures which, when combined with hotkeys, make using a laptop much quicker and easier.

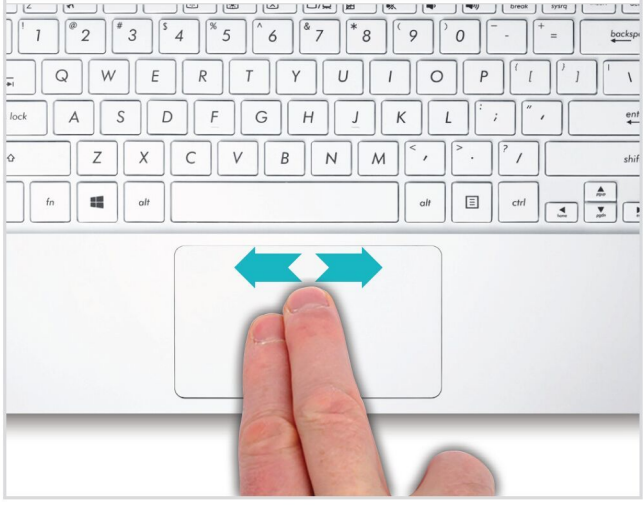
TOUCHPAD SETTINGS

Windows 10 contains some basic touchpad settings when used on a laptop but you may also need to get into the hardware settings for your particular laptop. You can usually find this in the taskbar menu. If not, use the universal search to find "Touch Pad Settings" and click on "Additional Settings".



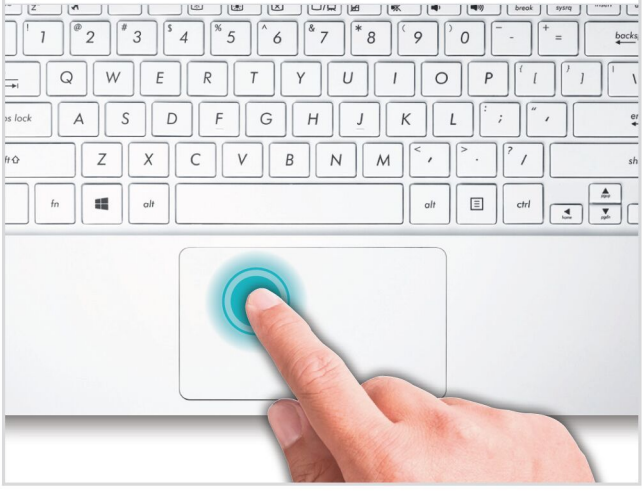
Horizontal Scroll

Place two fingers on the touchpad and slide horizontally. This gesture will work in any app that allows horizontal scrolling, such as the Internet browser.



Select Item

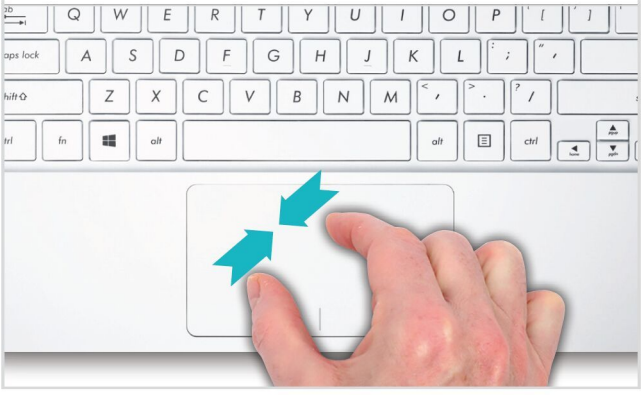
Tap the touch pad with one finger when over the item you want to select. You can also tap twice to select items that need a double-click.



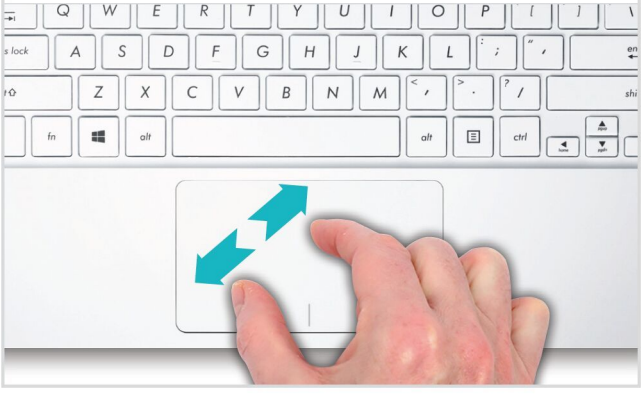
Vertical Scroll

Place two fingers on the touchpad and slide vertically. This gesture is useful for scrolling down through web pages or when reading long text documents such as Word docs.

Zoom In Place two fingers on the touchpad and pinch in diagonally. This gesture will be familiar to anyone who uses a smartphone or tablet. Can be used in several core apps, including Photos.



Zoom Out Place two fingers on the touchpad and spread out diagonally. When you change zoom in a browser, a pop-up will usually appear as you zoom, showing you the change from the default 100%.

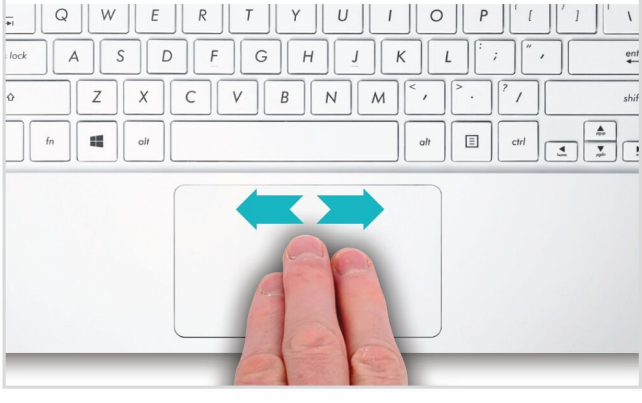


Context Menu Tap the touchpad with two fingers or press in the bottom right corner. This gesture results in the same as right-clicking with a traditional mouse, usually opening a contextual menu.

Task View Place three fingers on the touchpad and swipe them away from you. This is one of the new gestures that may not work on your device if it does not have a precision touchpad.

Show Desktop Place three fingers on the touchpad and swipe them towards yourself. Again, this requires a precision touchpad to work. This can also be achieved by pressing Windows Key + D.

Switch Windows Place three fingers on the touchpad and swipe right or left. Requires precision touchpad. You can also switch between open windows easily by holding Alt and tapping Tab.



Windows 10 Hotkeys

Hotkeys, or keyboard shortcuts, are a useful way to speed up navigating your way around Windows 10, especially if you are using a laptop and touch pad. Many users know basic Hotkey combinations, such as Ctrl + C and Alt + Tab, but there are literally hundreds more to learn. These let you do everything from Snap windows left or right, to switching between Virtual Desktops. Here are some of the most useful Hotkeys for everyday use.

Basic Hotkeys

Ctrl+C : Copy the selected item
Ctrl+X : Cut the selected item
Ctrl+V : Paste the selected item
Ctrl+Z : Undo an action
Alt+Tab : Switch between open apps
Alt+F4 : Close an active item, or exit an app
Windows key + L : Lock your PC or switch accounts
Windows key + D : Display and hide the desktop
Shift+Delete : Delete item without moving to Recycle Bin

Snap Hotkeys

Windows key + Up Arrow : Maximise current window
Windows key + Down Arrow : Restores window size
Windows key + Left Arrow : Snaps current window to the left
Windows key + Right Arrow : Snaps current window to the right
Windows key + 2 Arrow Keys : Snaps current window into one corner

Typing Hotkeys

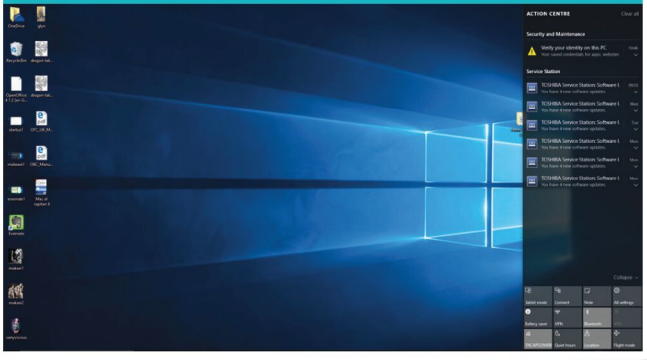
Ctrl + C : Copy the selected item
Ctrl + D : Delete the selected item and move it to the Recycle Bin
Ctrl + R : Refresh the active window
Ctrl + V : Paste the selected item
Ctrl + Y : Redo an action
Ctrl + Z : Undo an action
Ctrl + Right arrow : Move the cursor to the beginning of the next word
Ctrl + Left arrow : Move the cursor to the beginning of the previous word
Ctrl + Down arrow : Move the cursor to the beginning of the next paragraph
Ctrl + Up arrow : Move the cursor to the beginning of the previous paragraph
Ctrl + Shift with an arrow key : Select a block of text

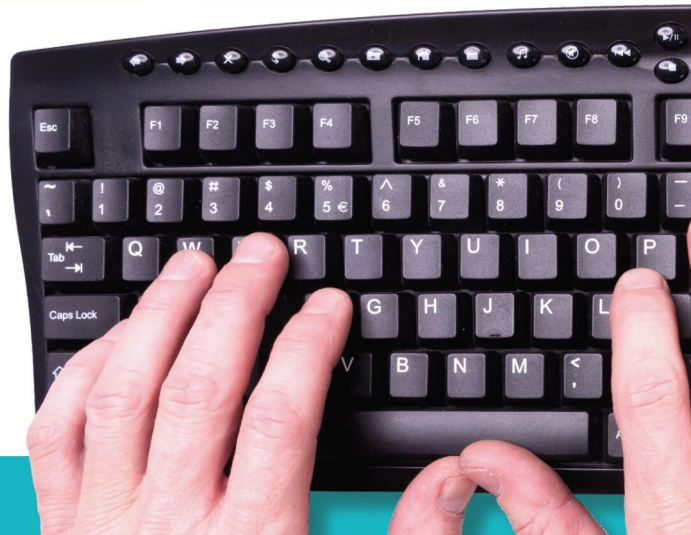
Taskbar Hotkeys

Shift + click a taskbar button : Open an app or quickly open another instance of an app
Ctrl + Shift + click a taskbar button : Open an app as an administrator
Shift + right-click a taskbar button : Show the window menu for the app
Shift + right-click a grouped taskbar button : Show the window menu for the group
Ctrl + click a grouped taskbar button : Cycle through the windows of the group

NEW WINDOWS HOTKEYS

Windows key + A : Open Action Center
Windows key + S : Open search
Windows key + C : Open Cortana in listening mode
Windows key + I : Opens the new Windows 10 Settings menu.
Windows key + X : Opens a system context menu.
Windows key + H : Open the Share charm
Windows key + T : Cycle through apps on the taskbar
Windows logo key + comma : Peek at the desktop
Windows key + Tab : Open Task View
Windows key + Ctrl + D : Add a virtual desktop
Windows key + Ctrl + Right Arrow : Switch to virtual desktop on the right
Windows key + Ctrl + Left Arrow : Switch to virtual desktop on the left
Windows key + Ctrl + F4 : Close the virtual desktop you're using





File Explorer Shortcuts

File Explorer is your main interface for organising the files you store on your PC. Here are some useful shortcuts to speed up operations.

Alt + D : Selects the address bar
Ctrl + E and Ctrl + F : Select the search box
Ctrl + N : Open a new window
Ctrl + W : Close the current window
Ctrl + mouse scroll wheel : Toggles through folder size and layout options
Ctrl + Shift + E : Display all the folders above the selected folder
Ctrl + Shift + N : Create a new folder
Num Lock + asterisk (*) : Display all sub-folders under the selected folder
Num Lock + plus (+) : Display the contents of the selected folder
Num Lock + minus (-) : Collapse the selected folder
Alt + P : Display the preview pane
Alt + Enter : Opens the Properties dialogue box
Alt + Right arrow : View the next folder
Alt + Up arrow : View the folder in which the current folder is contained
Alt + Left arrow or Backspace : View the previous folder
Right arrow : Display the current or select the first sub-folder
Left arrow : Collapse the current selection or select the folder it was in
End key : Display the bottom of the active window
Home key : Display the top of the active window
F11 : Maximise or minimise the active window

DESKTOP HOTKEYS

Windows key + Home : Minimise all but the active desktop window
Windows key + Shift+Up arrow : Stretch the desktop window to the top and bottom of the screen
Windows key + Shift+Down arrow : Restore desktop windows vertically, maintaining width
Windows key + Shift + L arrow or R arrow : Move window from one monitor to another
Windows key + Spacebar : Switch input language and keyboard layout
Windows key + Ctrl + Spacebar : Change to a previously selected input
Windows key + Enter : Open Narrator
Windows key + forward slash : Initiate IME reconversion
Windows key + plus or minus : Zoom in or out using Magnifier
Windows key + Esc : Exit Magnifier

Dialog Box Shortcuts

Sometimes you may need to open and use a Windows dialog box when you don't have access to the mouse or trackpad. For these times there are keyboard shortcuts to help.

Ctrl + Tab : Move to the right through tabs
Ctrl + Shift + Tab : Move to the left through tabs
Ctrl + number (1-9) : Move to the corresponding tab
Tab : Move forward through the dialogue options
Shift + Tab : Move backwards through the options
Alt + underlined letter : Perform the command corresponding to that letter
Spacebar : Select or clear a checkbox Arrow keys: Select a button

Cortana Hotkeys

Windows Key + Q: Open up Cortana ready for voice input.
Windows Key + S: Open up Cortana ready for typed input.
Windows Key + I: Open up the Windows 10 settings pane.
Windows Key + A: Open up Windows 10 notifications (Action Center).
Windows Key + X: Open the Start button context menu (the one with easy access to Command Prompt, etc.)

Display Hotkeys

Windows Key + PrtScr: Take a screenshot saved to your Pictures folder.
Windows Key + G: Open the Game DVR recorder (if supported by your graphics card).
Windows Key + Alt+G: Start recording activity in the current window.
Windows Key + Alt+R: Stop recording in the Game DVR.
Windows Key + P: Switch between display modes (with a secondary display connected).
Windows Key + plus: Zoom in using the Magnifier utility.
Windows Key + minus: Zoom out using the Magnifier utility.

Windows 10 Security and Maintenance Guides

Learn how to keep your Windows 10 PC running smoothly and safe from malware and viruses. Master Windows 10 security and maintenance, including privacy settings, ease of access, folder and file manipulation and online safety. These guides will explain the workings of the OS and show you how to get started with key features.

Windows 10 Security

Microsoft is often accused of developing insecure and 'broken' operating systems. However, what the Redmond company delivers is an easy to use system that's as secure as it can be without compromising its use. It's a difficult balance to maintain and security can suffer in the long run.

Security leaks, holes and flaws in development code appear all the time, for every operating system. Windows 10 has the bad luck of

> *Windows 10 Security Improvements*

being at the top of the security flaw news pile. However, here are ten reasons why it's actually a secure OS to use.

Virtualisation-based Security

VBS is an improvement to the core Windows security, it stands for Virtualisation-based Security and uses a mixture of hardware and software enforced developments to create an isolated, hypervisor restricted subsystem for securing the OS core data. Nothing unsigned by Microsoft is allowed to be injected into the kernel or executed.

Secure Booting

Secure Booting utilises the new UEFI (Unified Extensible Firmware Interface), the replacement for the older and more vulnerable BIOS, along with Windows Trusted Boot code integrity and ELAM (Early Launch Anti-Malware) capabilities, to protect the computer as soon as you power it up.

Windows Hello

Windows Hello may seem like a glamorous feature rather than a security feature but it's really quite an impressive layer of protection. Hello supports passwordless biometric authentication methods, such as iris, facial and fingerprint, together with a PIN code to help protect access to Windows 10.

Microsoft Passport

Windows 10 uses the Microsoft Passport single sign on solution that supports the open FIDO Alliance security authentication standard (www.fidoalliance.org) and utilises cryptographic keys to secure access to network and local resources.

Trusted Platform Module

If your computer has a TPM chip (Trusted Platform Module), Windows 10 can utilise the hardware cryptographic key therein to link Passport and Windows Hello to authenticate the user and operating system with local, network and Internet resources.

Credential Guard

Windows 10 Credential Guard protects the user details and Windows authentication keys within the VBS layer. This isolates the authentication service against network and local attacks, stopping keyloggers and other worms from gaining your login details.

Device Guard

Windows 10 has introduced Device Guard, a highly secure tool that determines which programs and scripts should be allowed to run on the computer. It utilises the VBS layer to protect the core system files and with a list of what's allowed and not allowed to run it can prevent most malicious content from being executed on your system.

Rolling Upgrade

Windows 10's unique method of upgrades now ensures that the latest versions to software, tools and applications are continually upgraded on the computer. The new rolling upgrade process has been widely criticised by many, as there's no opt-out for upgrades available. On the flip side, you're always up to date.

Windows Defender Security Centre

Windows Defender Security Centre is significantly improved over previous versions of the software. The new Fall Creators Edition version offers virus, ransomware and threat protection, device health, firewall protection, app and browser control and family options all under the one roof.

Protection Features

Among the aforementioned security elements, Windows 10 offers User Account Control, Kerberos Armouring, Smartscreen, TPM Key Attestation, Advanced Auditing Settings, Mandatory Integrity Controls, Virtual Smartcards, EMET enabled protection and many more impressive protection features.

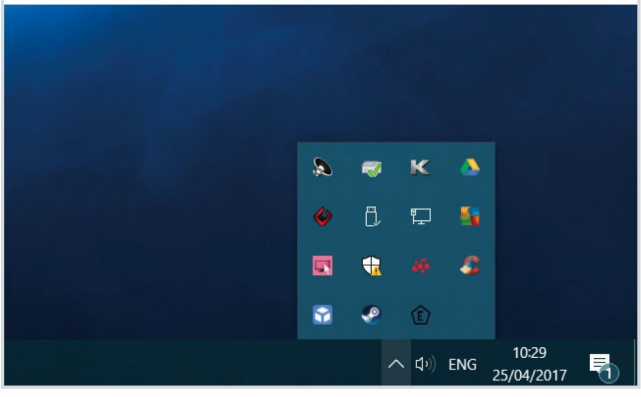
Protect Your PC with Windows Defender

Thanks to a fairly recent update, Windows Defender, the preinstalled security tool for Windows 10, is better than ever. Defender now includes cloud-based protection and automatic analysis of suspicious software or files. You can even run a powerful offline scan that can pick up nasties that a normal scan may not.

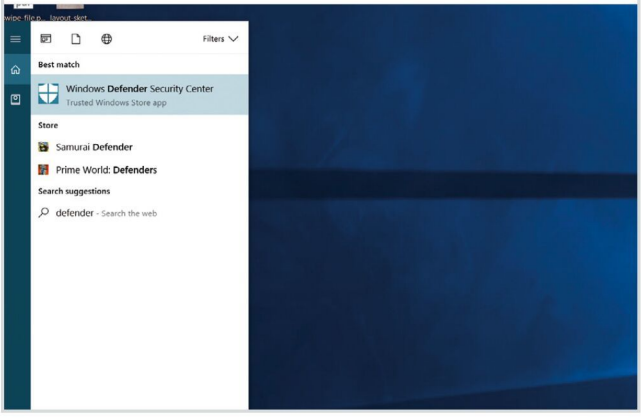
Set Up Defender

By default, Windows Defender should already by running but if you are using a PC that has had anti-virus software on in the past, parts of it may have been disabled.

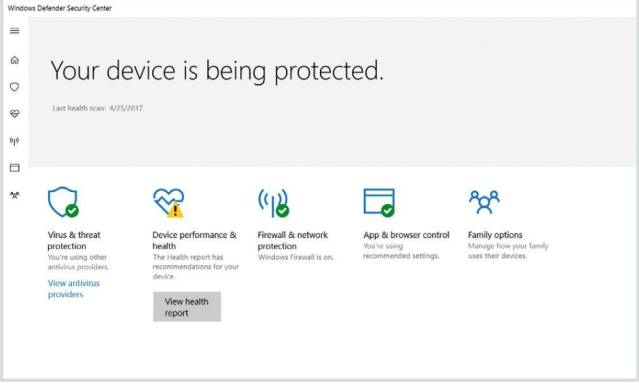
1 The first thing to do is check that Defender is already running. You can quickly check this by clicking on 'Show hidden icons' (the small arrow button) at the right hand end of the taskbar. If you see the Defender shield logo, you are protected. At least, you are protected partially.



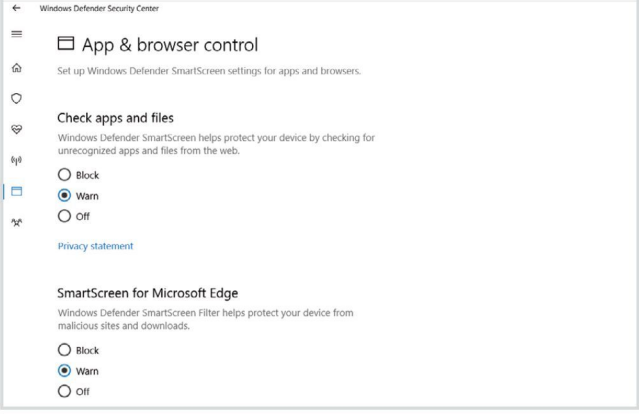
2 Now it's time to check out the Defender settings and features. You can right-click on the icon in the hidden icons pop-up, and then click Open. You can also, in the search box on the taskbar, type Defender and then select Windows Defender from the list of results.



3 Since the Creators update of April '17, Defender is much more in keeping, design-wise, with the rest of the Windows 10 interface, although it still opens in a separate window. The Defender Security Center is split into several sections, including anti-virus, firewall and device performance.



4 Below each of the section icons, you can see basic info about that section, including whether it is currently enabled or not. Click on any of the section titles and you are able to see more information, along with any options available for that particular part of Defender.

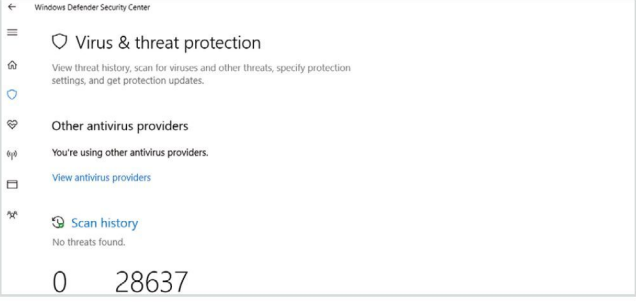


Running a Virus Scan

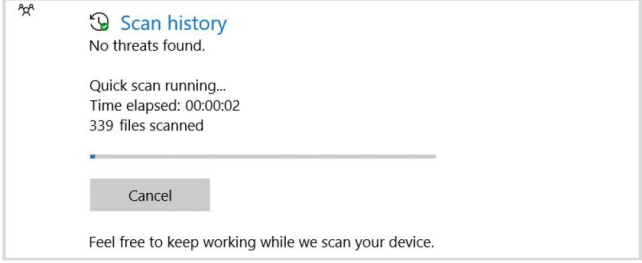
You can scan your PC for viruses in a couple of different ways with Windows Defender. Click the Virus & Threat Protection icon to get started.

1 If you are using a third-party antivirus program, such as Kaspersky or AVG, it will say so at the top of the window. If you want to check exactly which, click the link 'View antivirus providers'. This opens the Windows Control Panel. Click Security to open the panel and look for Virus Protection.

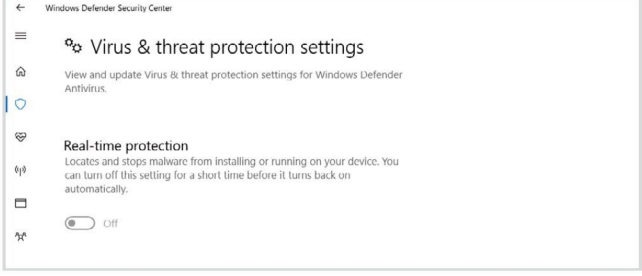
2 You can still use Defender to scan for viruses, with or without other anti-virus software present. Back in the Virus & Threat Protection window, click the Quick scan button to get started. A progress bar appears, along with some details of files scanned and time elapsed.



3 You can, if you are not sure the Quick scan is enough, perform an offline scan. This is a much deeper scan and certainly takes longer to perform. It is, however, much more likely to find some of the more devious viruses and other threats. Click Advanced scan and select offline scan > Scan now.



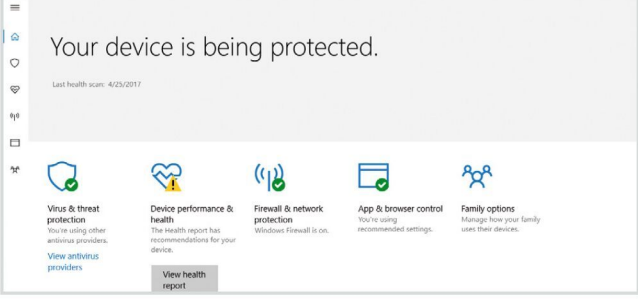
4 The other options here let you check for protection updates, as well as change the Virus & Threat protection settings; for example whether real-time protection is on. You can also choose files or software to exclude from scans and change the notification settings for Windows Defender.



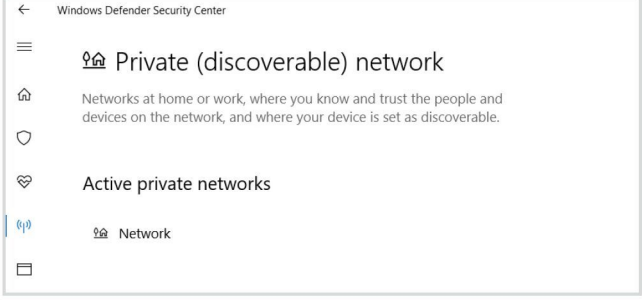
Windows Firewall

A firewall is often the first defence against viruses and other Internet nasties, so make sure you at least use the one provided by Windows 10.

1 You should always run Windows Firewall even if you have another firewall turned on. Turning off Windows Firewall might make your device, and your network if you have one, more vulnerable to unauthorised access.



2 To turn Windows Firewall on or off, select the Start button, open Windows Defender Security Center > Firewall & network protection, choose a network profile and then under Windows Firewall, turn it on or off.



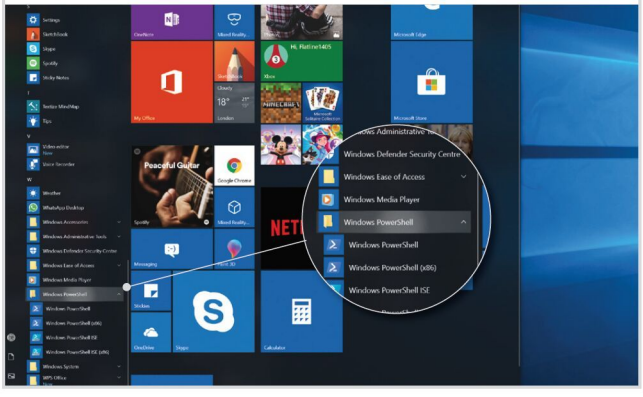
Blocking PUPs with Windows Defender

PUPs, Potentially Unwanted Programs, are bits of software that can sometimes be stealthily installed when you install other free software, usually by making it a default installation option with the choice to opt out. Windows Defender has the ability to block these sneaky software installs but it isn't enabled (or even visible) by default.

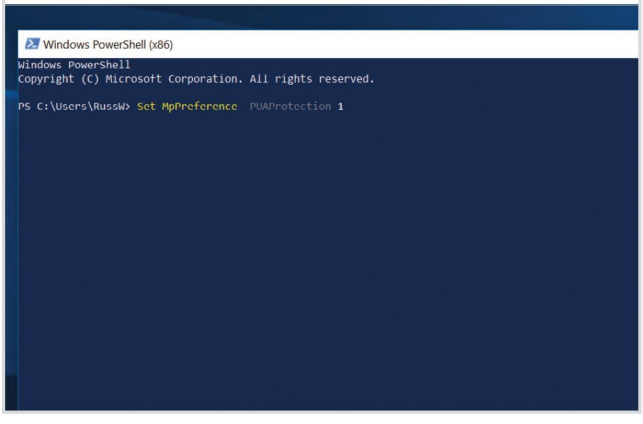
Enable PUP blocking

PUP's can include toolbars, browser extensions, adware and other unwanted software. In almost all cases, this software should be called DUPs (Definitely Unwanted Programs).

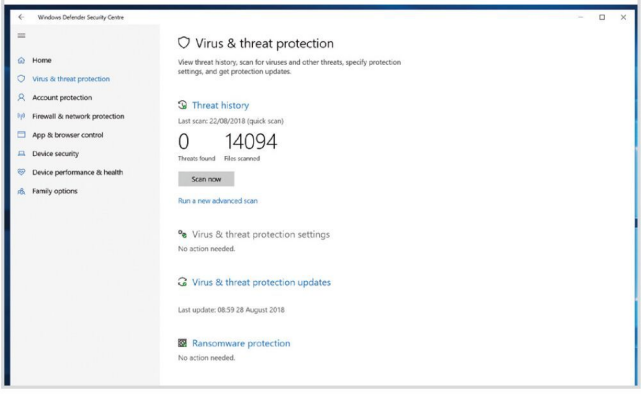
1 You can enable PUP protection with System Centre Config Manager, PowerShell or Microsoft Intune. For this guide, we'll be using the PowerShell, as this is available within Windows 10 without installing any additional software; as long as you follow the instructions carefully, it isn't as scary as it sounds.



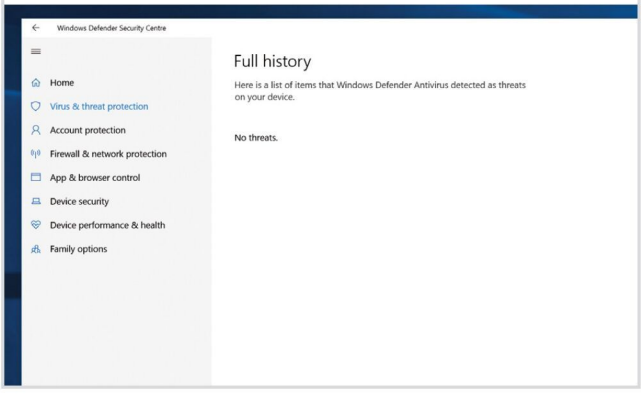
2 To access the PowerShell interface, right-click the Start button or press Windows+X and click Windows PowerShell (Admin) to open a window. Type the following command at the prompt (without the quotation marks) "Set-MpPreference -PUPProtection 1" and press Enter.



3 The PUP blocker is now enabled on your PC. You will not see any new options displayed in Windows Defender but you will see "Potentially unwanted software" listed once something is blocked. If you want to disable it in the future, just run the above command again, replacing the 1 with a 0.



4 PUPs are blocked when a user attempts to download or install a suspicious file or if the file meets one of these conditions: the file is being scanned from the browser, it is in a folder with "downloads" in the path; or it is in a folder with "temp" in the path. The file is placed in the quarantine section.



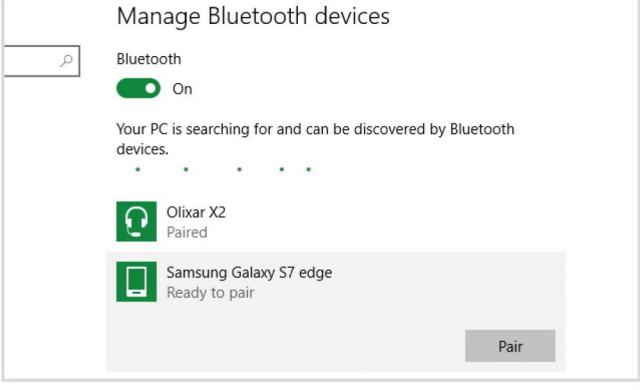
Using Windows 10 Dynamic Lock

The Creators update for Windows 10 introduces several new tools and features, including Dynamic Lock. This allows you to have more control over the security of your Windows device, with even less effort. It is designed to detect a trusted device nearby and lock and unlock the computer as it moves away or comes close.

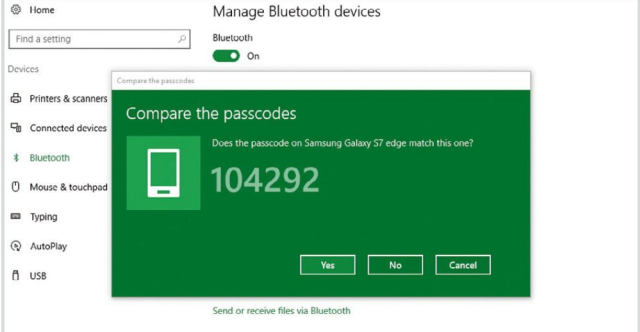
Setting Up Dynamic Lock

Dynamic Lock works by sensing the proximity of a paired device, such as the smartphone you have in your pocket. In this example, the first thing we need to do is pair with our phone. Pairing with other Bluetooth devices will be almost exactly the same as shown here.

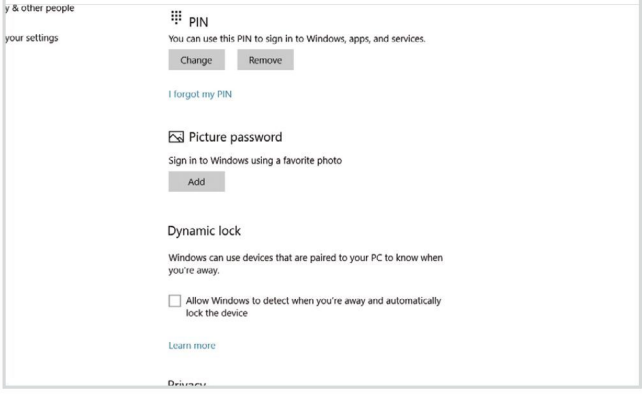
1 Dynamic Lock will only work if your PC has Bluetooth connectivity. This usually means a laptop, which makes sense as these more portable devices are more in need of security measures. Open Settings > Devices > Bluetooth & Other devices. Turn Bluetooth on using the slider switch and do this on your phone as well.



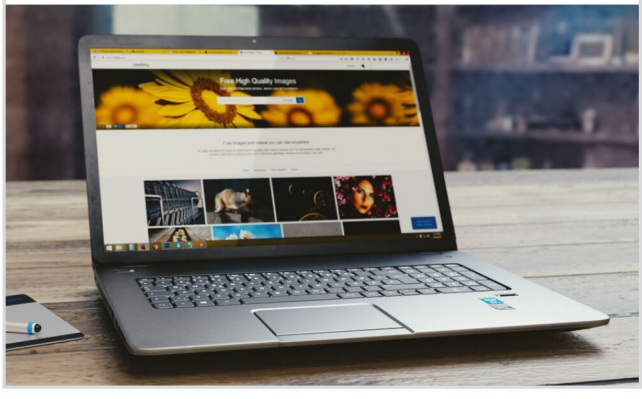
2 Once you see the phone listed under available devices, select it and pair to it. If you can't see your device listed, you may need to update your USB drivers for your PC: look for Bluetooth USB Module in Device Manager. Once paired successfully, you are ready to begin setting up and using Dynamic lock.



3 Go to Settings > Accounts > Sign-in Options and scroll down to see the Dynamic Lock section. Check the box that says 'Allow Windows to detect when you are away and automatically lock the device'. Hopefully, assuming Bluetooth is working, that is all you need to do to start using the feature.



4 Dynamic Lock does have some limitations at the moment, although these might be ironed out. The lock will not kick in until 30 seconds after it detects the Bluetooth signal has moved away, and if someone jumps on your computer within that time and starts to use it, it doesn't activate at all.



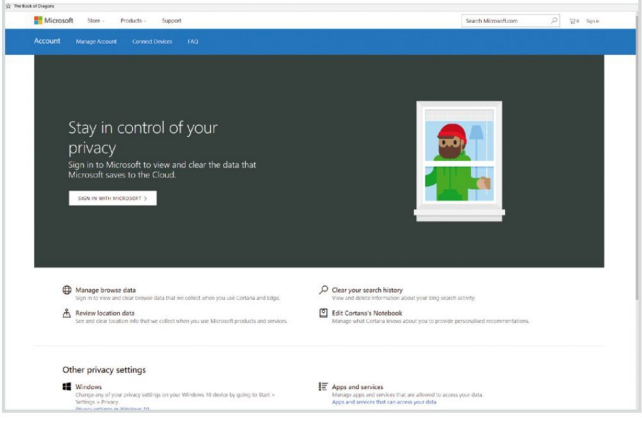
Manage Your Privacy in Windows 10

Being in control of security on your computer is important but almost as important is being able to control your privacy. Microsoft recently launched a web-based privacy dashboard and this has now become available to everyone in the Creators update. Manage privacy settings across multiple devices using a single account.

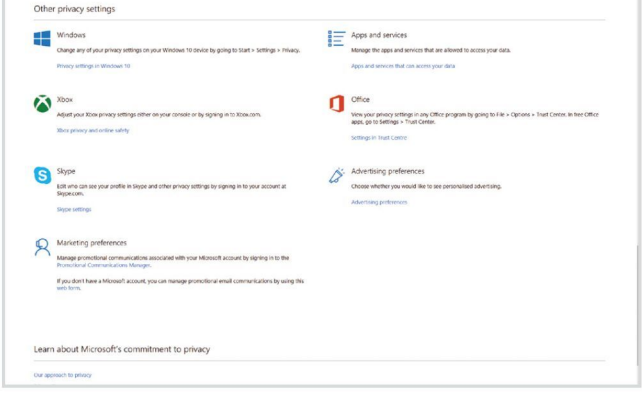
The Privacy Dashboard

The privacy dashboard is web-based rather than in the settings and it allows you to manage multiple devices from a single interface, as long as you are logged in to a single account.

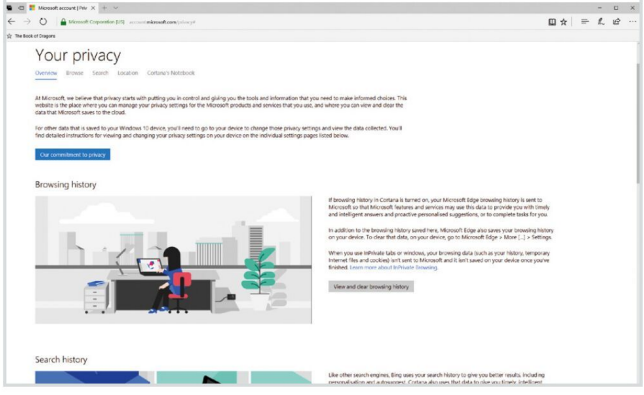
1 Open your browser and navigate to www.account.microsoft.com/privacy. If prompted, use your Microsoft account details to log in. You will be logged in to the privacy overview page that lets you quickly see what privacy settings the dashboard contains and controls.



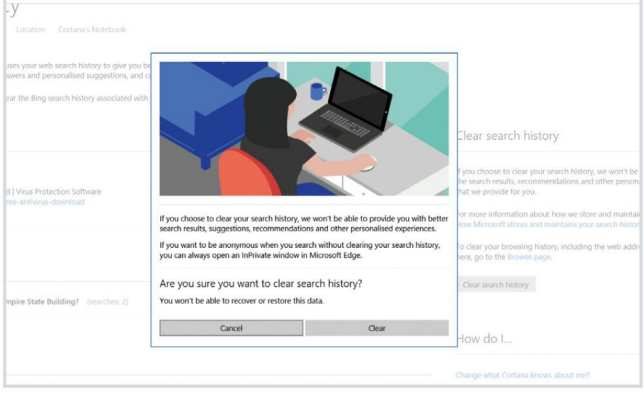
2 Along with the main Search, Browsing and Location privacy categories, if you scroll down to the bottom of the page you will see entries for everything from Apps to Xbox, with simple links to take you to the settings and options for those privacy areas.



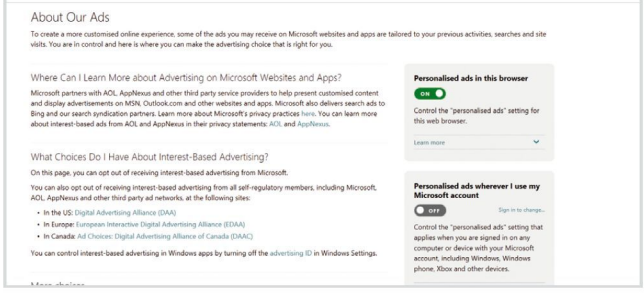
3 Click on one of the main categories, Search, Browsing, Location or Cortana, and you will see more information. This could include a list of searches you have made or websites visited (in Edge only, not other browsers), interests Cortana has saved for you or locations you have been.



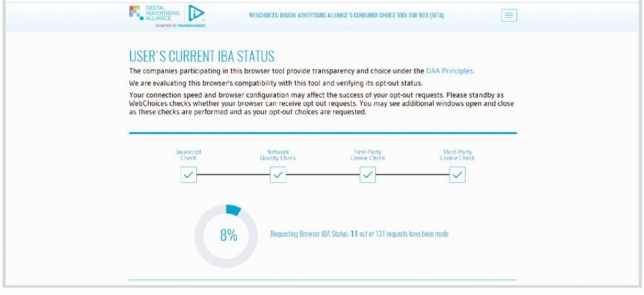
4 Each section has a Clear button, whether that is clearing browsing history, search history and so on. It is next to a warning that states clearing data will stop Windows being able to provide you with accurate and relevant information. You need to decide what is more important, privacy or recommendations.



5 Another useful privacy section in the dashboard is the Advertising Preferences. This lets you control whether personalised adverts are shown to you in the Edge browser. Some of the ads you may receive on Microsoft websites and apps are tailored to your previous activities and searches.



6 There is also a browser tool that lets you choose if the adverts you see come from companies other than Microsoft. Click the option under More Choices and wait for the Digital Advertising Alliance scan to finish. You can then choose from the list to see adverts from different advert providers.

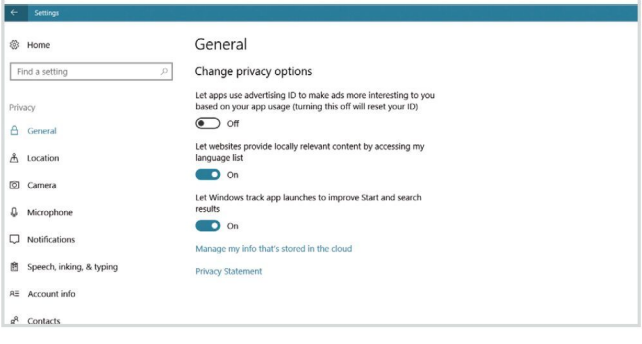


Privacy Settings

There are, of course, still privacy options in the main settings app in Windows 10. This is generally added to and improved with each OS update.

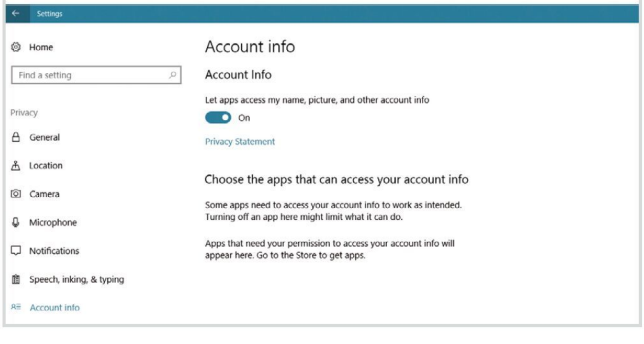
General Privacy

Privacy has its own section within the settings; here there are many different categories covering everything from Location to Background Apps. Click on each of the privacy categories to see the options within that category. Use the slider switches to allow or block privacy actions.



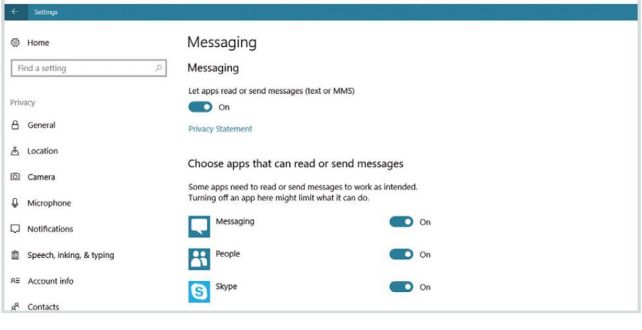
Account Info

Apps are able to access very basic personal settings such as your name and account information. This is so they can sign you in automatically to your Windows account for things like Xbox Live or the Windows Store. You can turn this off wholesale or on an app by app basis.



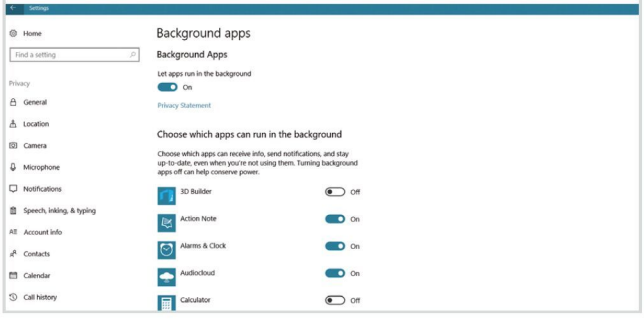
Messaging Apps

We're using Windows 10 on a laptop here but if we had a tablet with a SIM card we would be able to get control over which apps were able to send messages over SMS and MMS. You probably want this to be restricted to just your Messaging app; most apps really shouldn't have access to your texts.



Background Apps

You can control which apps you allow to run in the background. If you're on a laptop or desktop this probably won't be that big an issue, but you may want to turn these off on tablet devices to conserve power. Some apps you may not use, like Get Office, really don't need to run in the background.

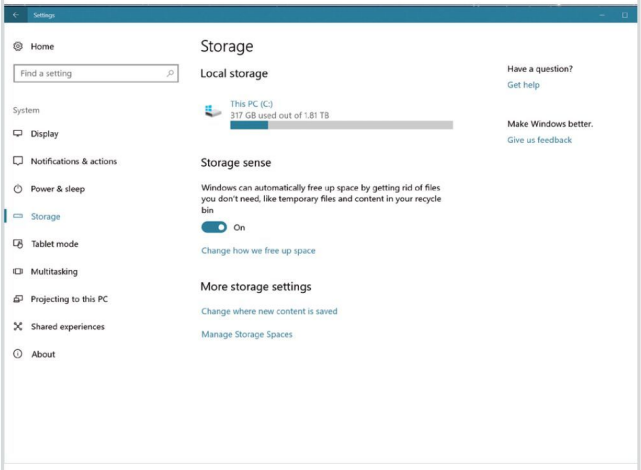


Windows 10 Maintenance Tools

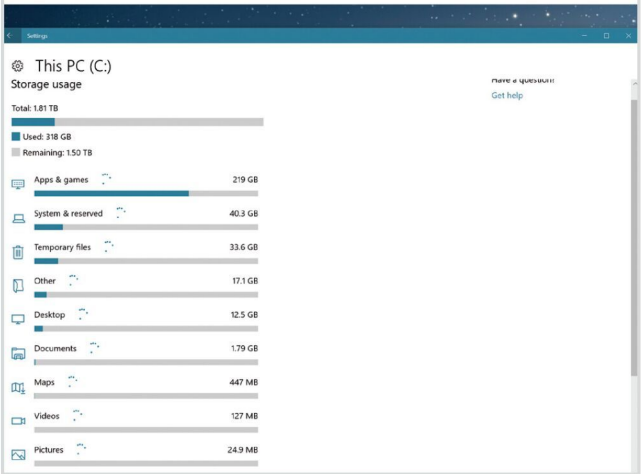
Before you start to add software to help with PC and Windows 10 maintenance, it is worth checking out the numerous tools included with the OS. These are slightly spread out over several different settings menus and tool folders but once you know where to find them, you will see that they can really help with system security and performance.

Storage Sense

Activating Storage Sense lets the system software automatically free up storage space by getting rid of files you no longer need. These can include temporary files such as cookies and the contents of your Recycle Bin.

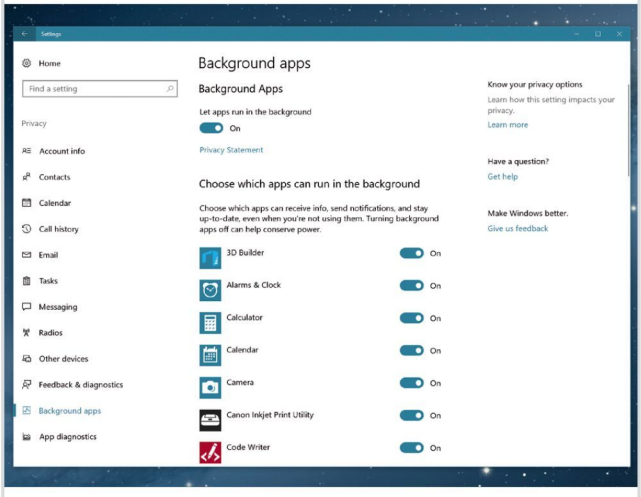


You can choose when files are deleted, e.g. after 30 days in the Recycle Bin or if apps don't use them for a certain amount of time. Alternatively you can simply click a button to Clean Now rather than setting automatic cleaning. You can find the Storage Sense option in Settings > System > Storage.

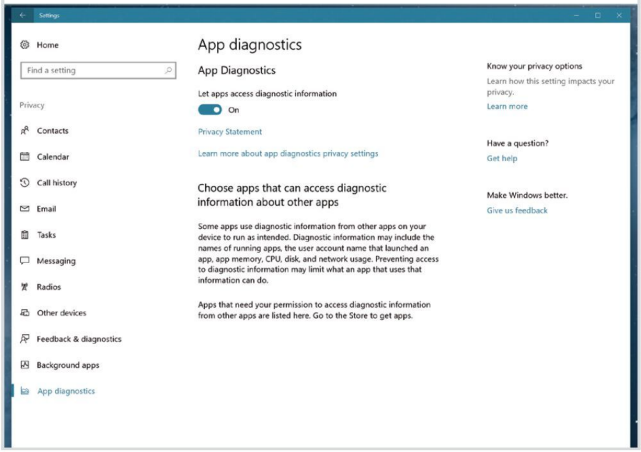


Background Apps

One of the easiest ways to conserve power (for laptop users) and reduce processor strain, is to take control of Background Apps. These are apps that are, by default, allowed to receive info, send notifications and update in the background.

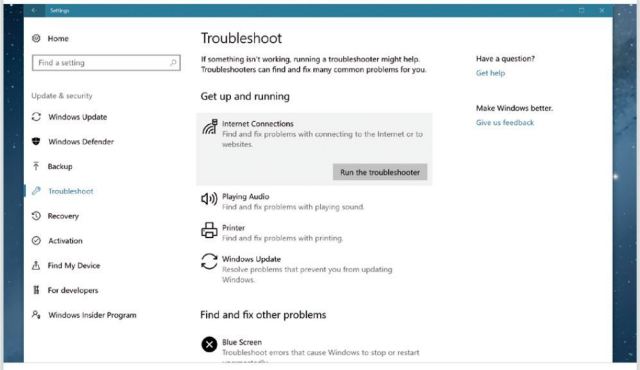


You can either stop all background apps with a single slider click or you can prevent individual apps from running in the background. Go to Settings > Privacy > Background Apps and look through the apps listed. If you see apps that you don't need notifications or updates from, click the slider to disable its background activity.

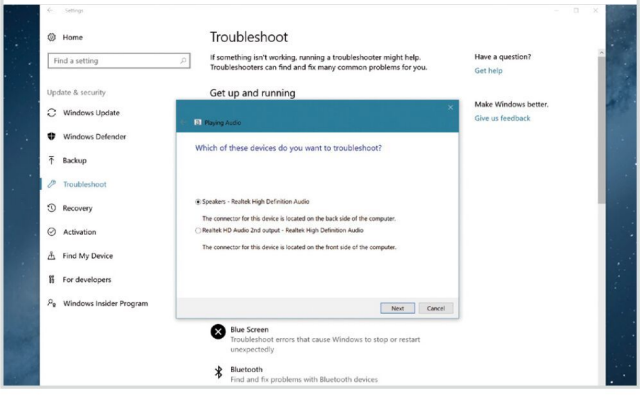


Troubleshooters

Windows 10 includes a number of troubleshooting tools, aimed specifically at certain problems such as audio loss or patchy Internet connection. This is often the best place to start when trying to solve problems with your PC and Windows 10, as the OS contains many drivers for common devices and may just need a small software update.

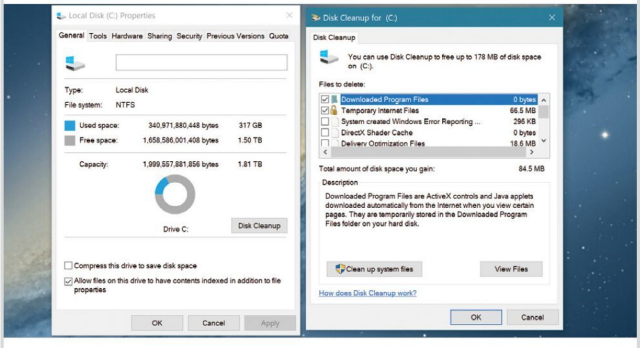


You simply look through the list of troubleshooters and click on the one which applies. Choose Run the Troubleshooter and then follow the instructions to try and solve the problem. You can find the troubleshooters in Settings > Update & Security > Troubleshoot.

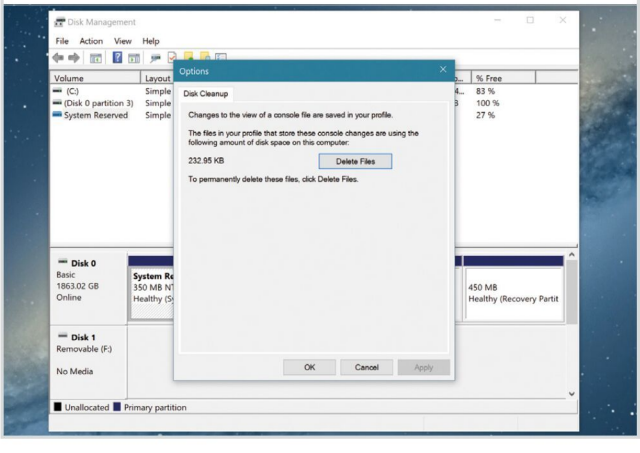


Disk Tools

There are several tools built in to Windows 10 (and also in older versions of the OS) that allow you to clean, fix and manage your hard disk. Open the File Explorer and look in the left-hand column for 'This PC'. Select it and then right-click on Local Disk (C:). In the General tab, you will see a button for Disk Cleanup that lets you get rid of temporary Internet files, old program files and so on.

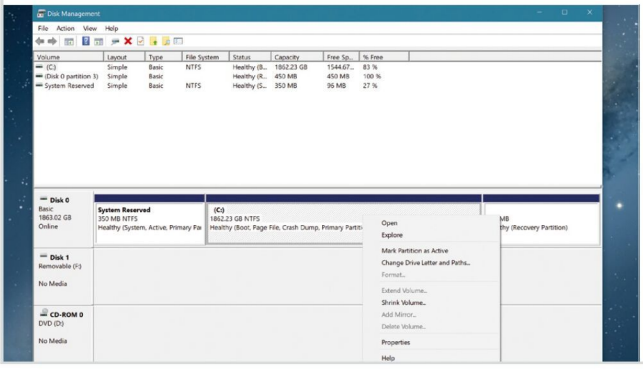


If you click the Tools tab, you can use the Error Checking tool and the Disk Defragment tool. Both of these tools can help your hard disk run more efficiently. Click on either button and follow the instructions for each.

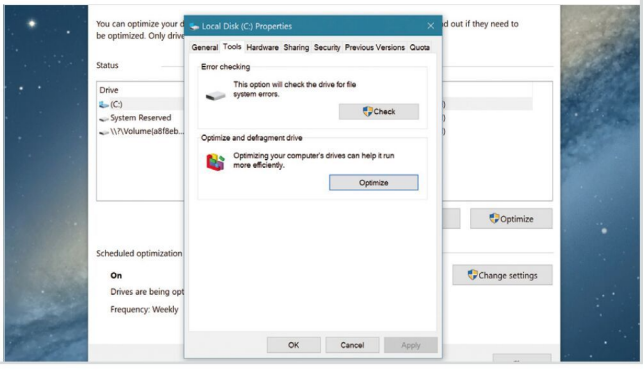


Disk Management

The Disk Management tool is more about diagnostics than actual maintenance but it is a useful way of checking whether your hard disk has space available and is healthy. The panel will show all of your disks, as well as all of the partitions.



Each column contains information about capacity, free space in MB, percentage of free space and health status. There are some further options, such as the ability to change drive letters and mark partitions as active but they are probably not worth playing around with unless you know what you are doing.



Types of Security Risk

There are more security risks for your computer than just the common, run-of-the-mill virus. The amount of digital use the average person has over the course of a week has increased significantly in just a few years, and with it comes a legion of security related issues.

Here Be Dragons

This isn't a definitive list of the possible threats available for the Windows user but here are ten modern risks that you face every time you power up your PC.

01 Viruses

Viruses have been around for as long as computers. They've moved on from simply displaying the name of the coder on the monitor, a kind of virtual vandalism, and now can disable and wipe the data off a hard drive in mere seconds.

02 Ransomware

In early 2017, the UK was gripped in the clutches of the WannaCry ransomware infection. This particular infection exploited a vulnerability in Windows, and quickly spread throughout the NHS and other organisations, locking and encrypting the data on a computer until money was sent to those who unleashed it to the world.

03 Worms

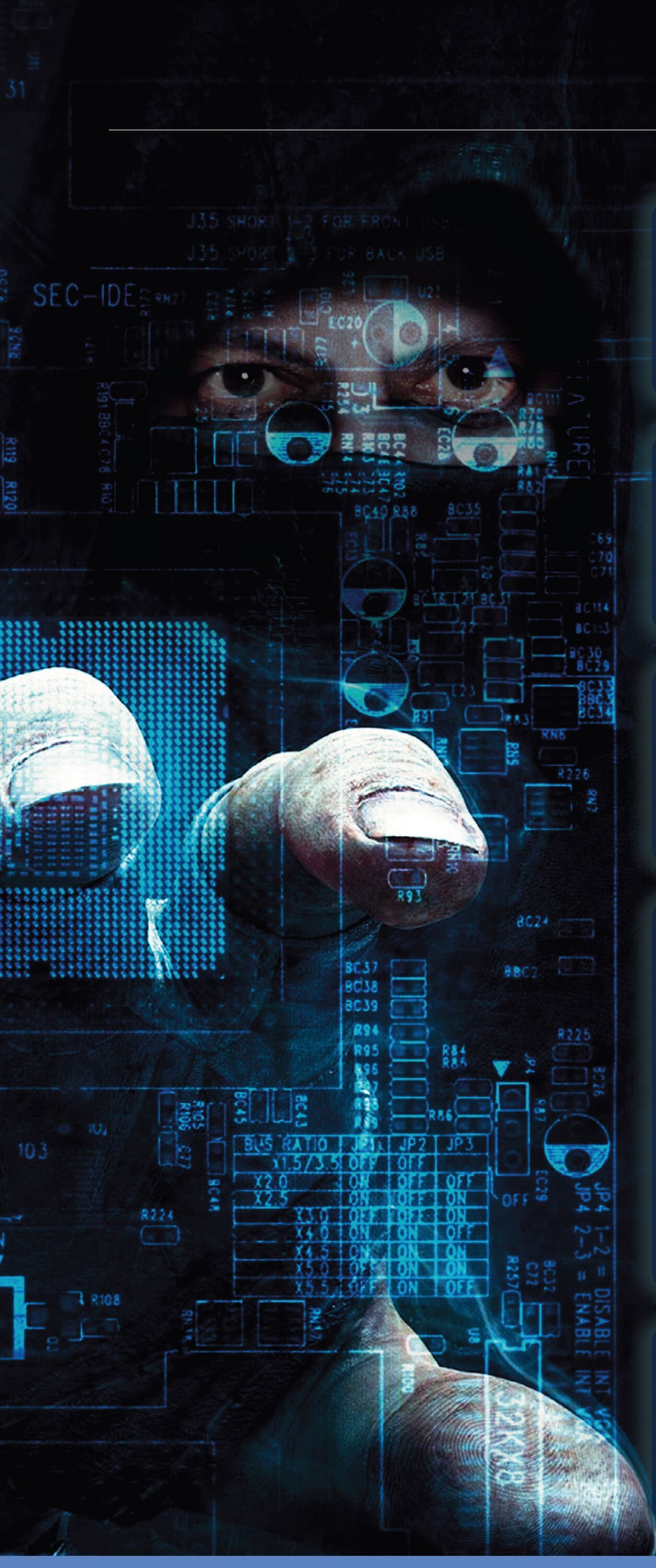
Although a worm is a type of virus, it behaves differently in that it's goal isn't to alter or destroy system files. Rather, it's designed to replicate itself continuously until all the resources and space on the system are consumed. A bit of a nightmare for the system administrator.

04 Trojans

The Trojan horse, as the name suggests, is a program that masquerades as a legitimate application but in actual fact contains code that allows a hacker remote access to your computer. Like the legend of the wooden horse the Greeks used to gain access to Troy, once inside your computer it opens and creates an opening for the hacker.

05 Spyware

Spyware invades computers usually through freeware or shareware downloads, which is why you should always download a program from a reputable source. The intent of spyware is to collect information about the user and report it back to those who wrote it.



06 Adware

Adware is very similar to spyware, in that one of its goals is to monitor the user. However, adware usually goes one step further and bombards the user with Internet pop-up advertising, usually when they open their browser or a new tab. The advertising can be tame, such as gardening equipment, or it can be extremely offensive.

07 Hacking

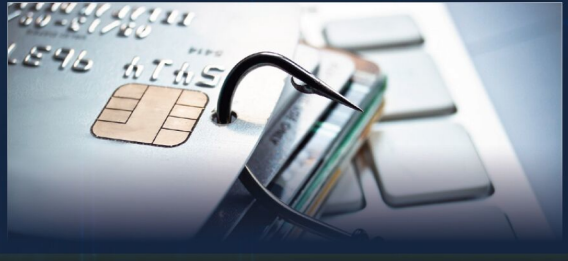
While Hollywood would have you visualise the lifestyle of a hacker as something that's quite alluring, in truth it's quite the opposite. The average user is generally under the radar where a hacker is concerned. They're mostly after the corporations, or famous people, but you can have your computer hacked by a neighbour, for example.

08 Social Engineering

A relatively modern term in the history of computer security, social engineering will have the user deceived into giving away personal information or allowing a scammer into their systems. The recent spate of calls from people claiming to be from the likes of Microsoft or a security firm are a prime example.

09 Phishing

Much in the same vein as social engineering, phishing is the act of obtaining sensitive information (bank details usually) about a user by being disguised as a trustworthy source. Phishing on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. is on the rise.



10 Rootkits

Rootkits are virus-like programs that are activated before the computer's anti-virus and security suites are started when booting Windows. They can change the way a security suite looks at files, allowing a virus to hide in plain sight and not be detected by the system's security measures.

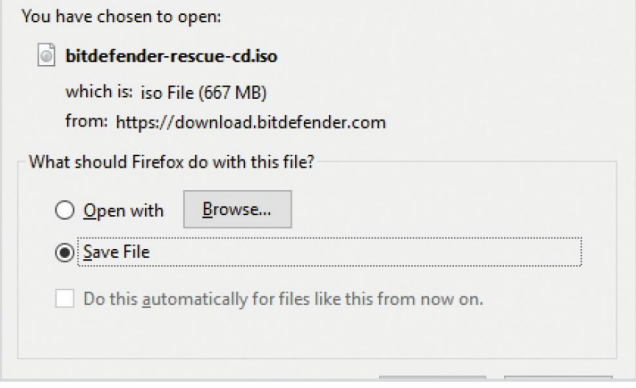
How to Remove Malware from Windows 10

Previously we have looked at ways to prevent being scammed or indeed getting malware on your system but what if you're unlucky enough to already have some form of digital infection? Thankfully there's a way to remove malware and viruses from your computer.

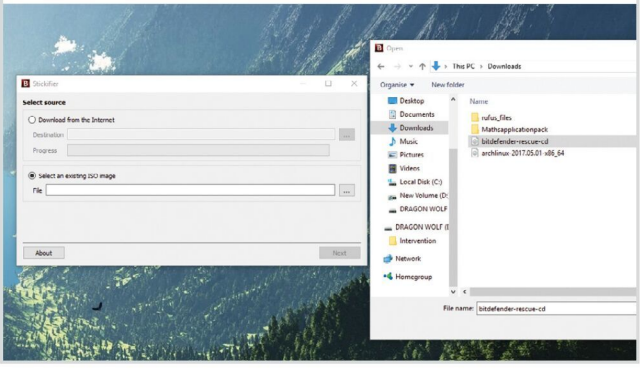
Malware Busters

For this tutorial let's use a preconfigured rescue disk from Bitdefender. You need to transfer or burn the disk contents to a CD or a USB stick and boot into the safe environment through one of those mediums.

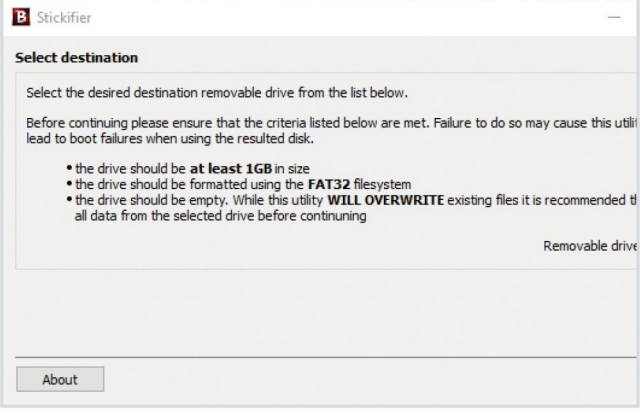
1 Make sure you have a blank CD or a USB stick that's at least 1GB in size. The Bitdefender Rescue Disk is downloaded as an ISO, which is an image file containing all the disk information, and can be downloaded from **www.download.bitdefender.com/rescue_cd/latest/bitdefender-rescue-cd.iso**.



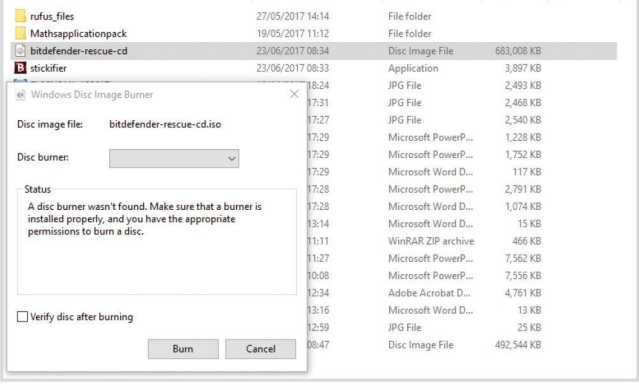
2 To transfer the ISO to USB, download Stickifier, which is an executable that doesn't require any installation. Insert your USB stick and double-click Stickifier. Click the Select an Existing ISO Image option followed by the three full-stops and using Windows Explorer, locate the downloaded Bitdefender Rescue ISO. Click the Open button to select the image and continue with the process.



3 Click the Next button and using the drop-down menu next to Removeable Drive choose the drive letter of your USB stick. Click Next to start the transfer of the image. Once the image is transferred, click the Finish button, remove the USB stick and power off your computer.



4 If you're using a CD, start by inserting the CD into the drive. Locate the downloaded Bitdefender Rescue ISO, right-click it and choose Burn Disc Image from the context menu. Tick the Verify disc after burning option and click the Burn button to start the process. Once the ISO is burnt to the disc, you can power off your computer.

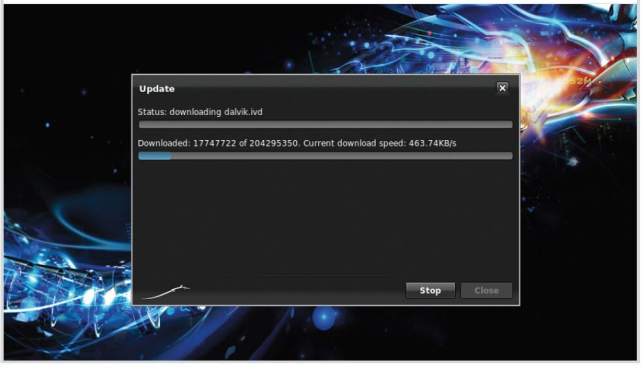


5 You now need to allow your PC to boot up into the Bitdefender Rescue CD environment. Power up your PC and open the Boot Option Menu; this could be accessed by pressing F12, depending on the make and manufacturer of your PC motherboard. With the boot options available, select either the CD or USB stick and press Enter.

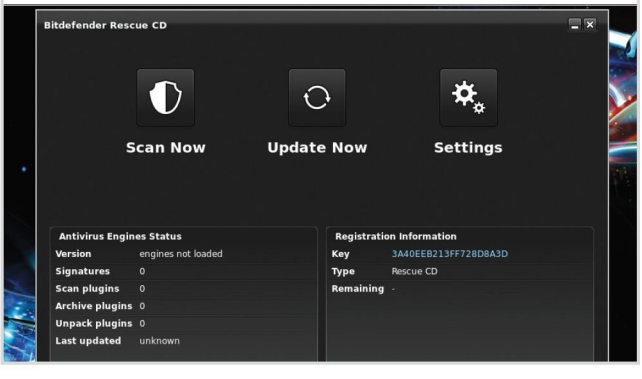
6 The PC will now boot into the Bitdefender Rescue Disc environment. This is a custom Linux operating system with all the necessary Bitdefender security tools preinstalled. First, you need to choose which language to load the environment. Use the arrow keys and press Enter for your language choice.

7 Ideally you should use a wired Internet connection but if you're on wireless, click on the network icon in the bottom right of the desktop to establish a connection with your router. Once you're connected to the Internet, double-click the red Bitdefender icon on the desktop, labelled Antivirus Scanner.

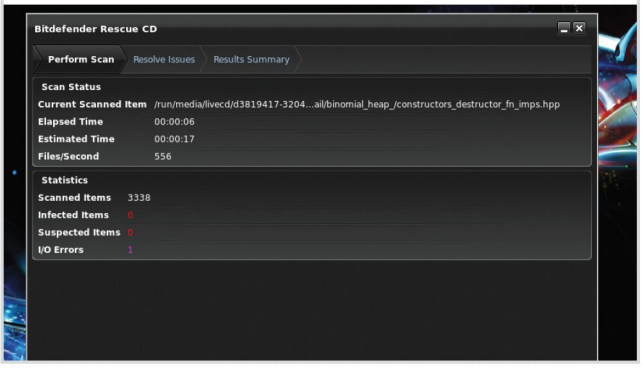
8 You need to accept the license agreement notification first, so tick the 'I agree' box, followed by the Continue button. The virus scanning software will then start to automatically update itself with the latest virus definitions from the Bitdefender servers. The process won't take too long, so let it run through the update.



9 Once the update is complete you're taken to the main Bitdefender Rescue CD antivirus interface. The three main options: Scan Now, Update Now and Settings are fairly self-explanatory; the Settings allows you to set a few more options regarding the scan but the defaults will suffice.



10 To remove a virus on your PC, click on the Scan Now button. Select the drive you wish to scan and click the Open button to commence scanning the system. Any viruses found will be detailed along with options for removal. The process may take some time, so be prepared for a lengthy wait.



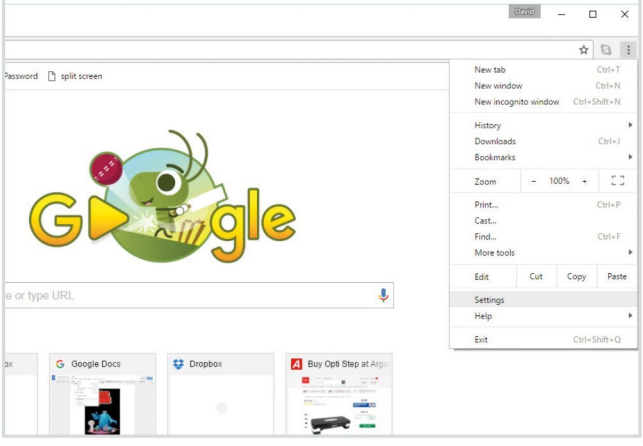
Secure Your Web Browser

The web browser is possibly the weakest link in the entire Windows 10 security chain. It's the software product that's on the front line, the one that will inevitably bear the brunt of any Internet attacks and as such, attackers focus a lot of effort on making the browser a portal into your system.

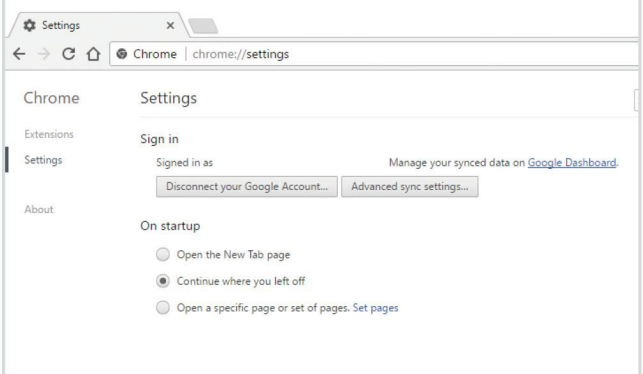
Safer Surfing

Securing your web browser isn't too difficult. There are plenty of options available, including some third-party add-ons you can use to improve things. For this tutorial, we're using Chrome.

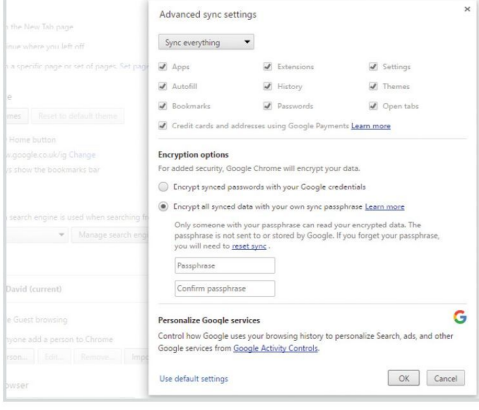
1 Start by opening Chrome and clicking on the three vertical dots in the top right of the browser window. This is the link to the available options; from the list choose Settings.



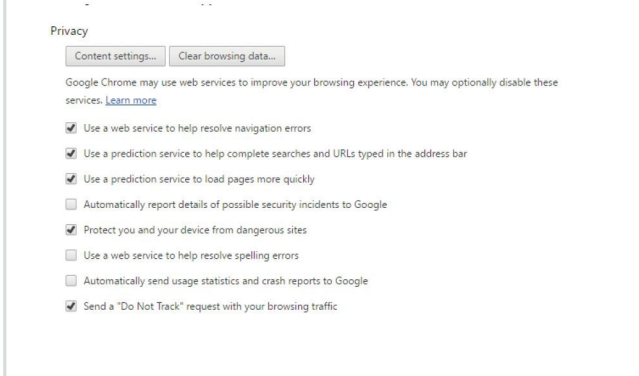
2 It's generally recommended that you sign into Chrome using a Google account, as this can greatly improve the overall security of the browser. For example, when you sign in, click on the Advanced Sync Settings button, found under the Sign In section of Settings, and the first option available.



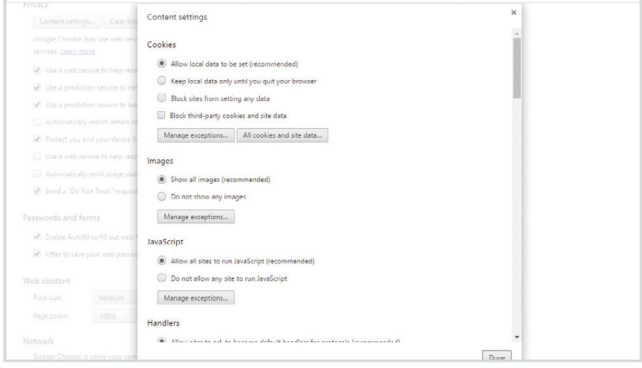
3 With the Advanced Sync Settings box open, select the option for Encrypt all synced data with your own sync passphrase. Enter a secure, memorable passphrase in the boxes provided and this will enhance the security of all data synced between Chrome and the Internet.



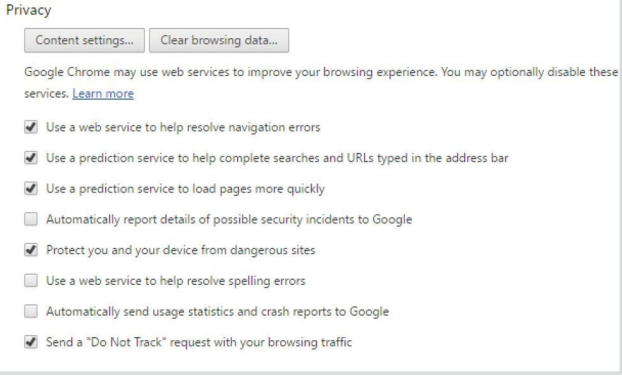
4 Look to the bottom of the Settings page and click the link for Show Advanced Settings. The first new section to appear under the Advanced settings is Privacy. Start by clicking on the Content Settings button.



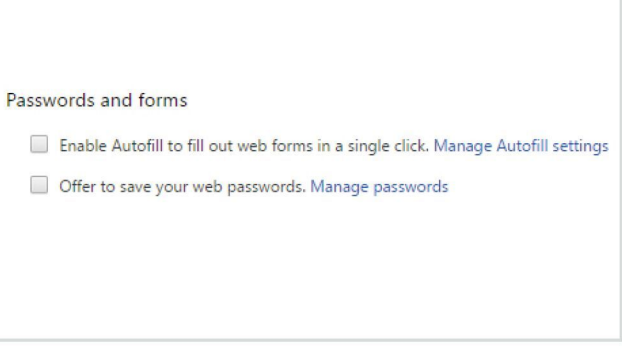
5 Content Settings allows a greater degree of control over Cookies, JavaScript, Flash, Pop-ups, your computer's microphone and even the webcam. It's an extensive list so we can't go into all the options within this limited space. For maximum security, disable JavaScript and Flash and make sure the mic and webcam are protected too.



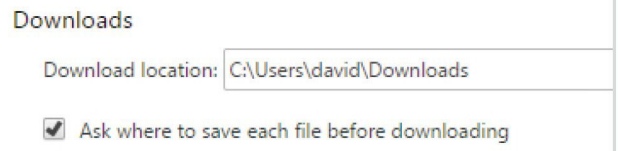
6 Click the Done button when you're finished with Content Settings, to return you to the Chrome Settings page. While still in Privacy, ensure the last option, Send a "Do Not Track" request, is ticked. This will stop any tracking elements from monitoring your browsing activities.



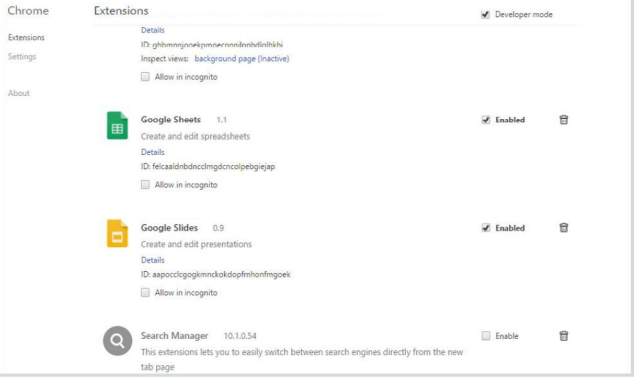
7 Just under the previous step's tick box, it's also recommended that you untick the two Passwords and Forms boxes that offer to enable Autofill and Save your Passwords. Whilst it's a pain to constantly enter passwords, this will stop any hijack Chrome attacks from gaining your usernames and passwords.



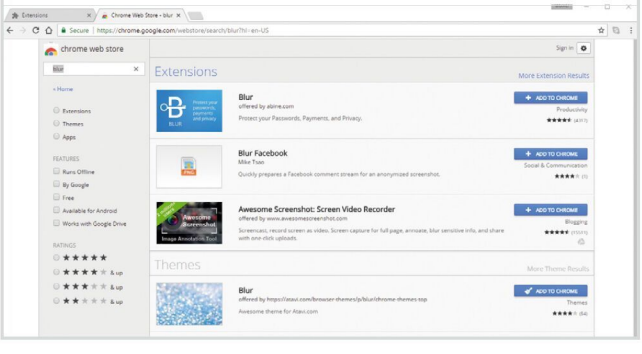
8 Under the Downloads section, it's an idea to tick the box Ask where to save each file before downloading. Again this can be a bit of a pain for the user; however it stops malicious background downloads from infecting your system, giving you more control and the ability to stop the process.



9 To the left of the Chrome Settings page you can see links for Extensions, Settings and About. Click the Extensions link and with the Extensions page open, scroll down to the bottom and click the Get More Extensions link.



10 With the Chrome Web Store launched, via the Extensions link, search for Adblock Plus. Within the results, click on the Add to Chrome button on the first option for Adblock Plus. This will install an advertising blocker within Chrome, securing you from any threats from Internet advertising. Do the same for Blur (an anti-tracking add-on) and HTTPS Everywhere.



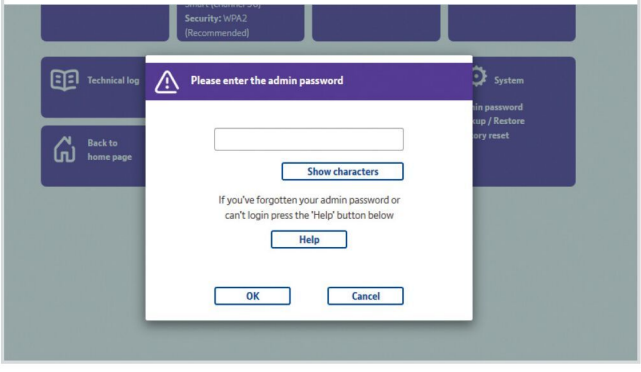
Secure Your Home Network

We've mentioned previously that an attack doesn't always come from the other side of the globe but can indeed be a little too close to home at times. Home network hacking is possible with the simplest of tools, available on the Internet, and often could just be tapping into a cable.

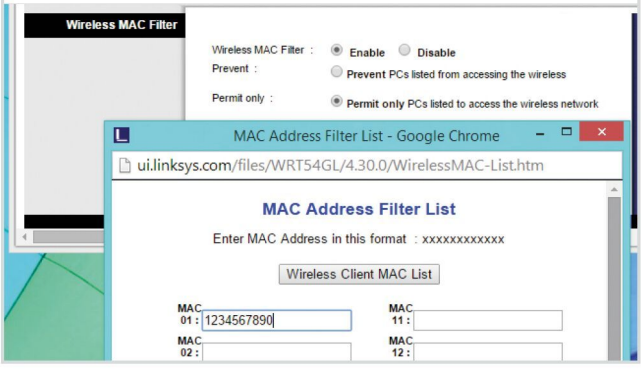
Network Protection

Without being too paranoid, it's remarkably easy to get into a neighbour's home network. If you live in a block of flats or you use powerline adapters, you may need to consider these ten steps for better network protection.

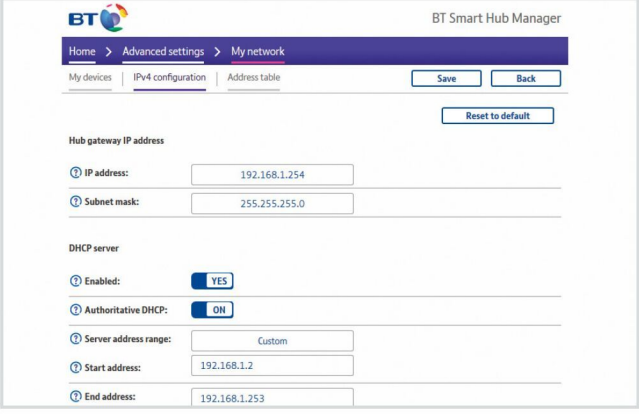
1 The most common entry point to gain access to your network is via the router. The router from your ISP may well be offering the latest forms of encryption but it doesn't take a genius to trawl the less reputable sections of the Internet to obtain a list of passwords. Therefore, change the default username and password needed to access it.



2 Most routers these days come with a form of authentication called MAC (Media Access Code) address filtering. Every networkable device, computers, tablets, games consoles, come with a unique MAC address. The filtering allows you to enter the MAC addresses of your devices, so only they can be used on your router. Consult your router documentation for more details.



3 It can be a pain but try disabling DHCP on your router and opting for static IP addresses. Every device that connects to a DHCP router will receive an IP address. By eliminating that you get to specify the address range available. It's not fool proof but it's worth considering.



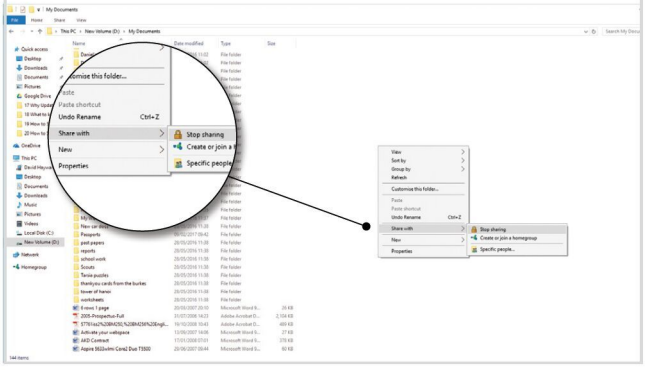
4 According to Trustwave's 2013 Global Security Report, many home network hacks are conducted when the household is away or asleep. This leaves the hacker with ample opportunity to steal bandwidth and view files you may have on a NAS drive. The short, simple solution is to power off the router at night or if you go out for the day.

5 Powerline adapters are an excellent resource for connecting wired network devices, without trailing lengths of cable around the home. However, depending on the adapter, it is possible to use another adapter to gain access to yours. In newer homes it's an easy enough task to pick up another user's network, so use the encryption button if the adapter has one.

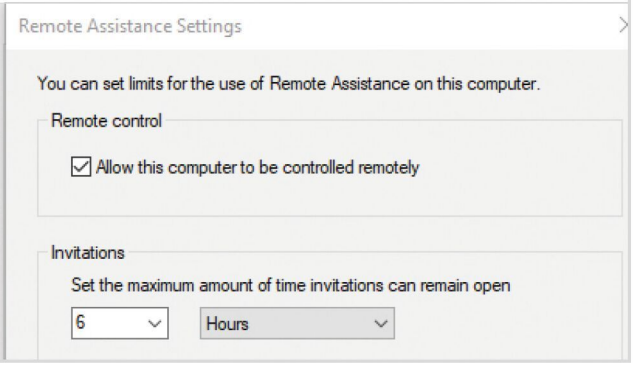
6 Networking a home with Ethernet cables isn't a difficult project and it offers faster connection speeds than that of wireless. However, if you're living in shared accommodation or a block of flats, make sure that any unseen cable lengths can't be accessed by a neighbour. It's easy enough to splice into an Ethernet cable and steal bandwidth.

7 Consider using a network mapping program, such as Open-AudIT, to gain a better understanding of what devices are attached to your network. Become familiar with the addresses, manufacturer, model IDs and so on of every connected object. That way, should anything new appear, you'll know it's not something you allowed.

8 Sharing resources and files from one computer to another is perfectly fine but consider sharing less if you live in close proximity to others. Once a hacker has gained access to your network, getting to any shared folders you have will be a doddle. In extreme cases don't share anything, but generally tighten password control.



9 Remote administration on both the router and computer certainly can help you out when you're not at the keyboard. Perhaps you connect to your home network from work? Whatever the reasons, it does leave a potential gap in your home network security. Consider closing it completely or double-checking the authentication is top notch.



10 If you run a small office make sure that all your wall ports are located in areas where they are secure. Behind desks and generally away from where the public or any visitors may be able sneakily plug a laptop in.

Using the Windows 10 Task Manager

The Task Manager is a very useful tool but even if you have been using Windows for some time, you might never have looked at it before. The Task Manager contains information on PC performance, the number of running apps, how many processes are pulling power from the processor and much more.

Start-up Tab

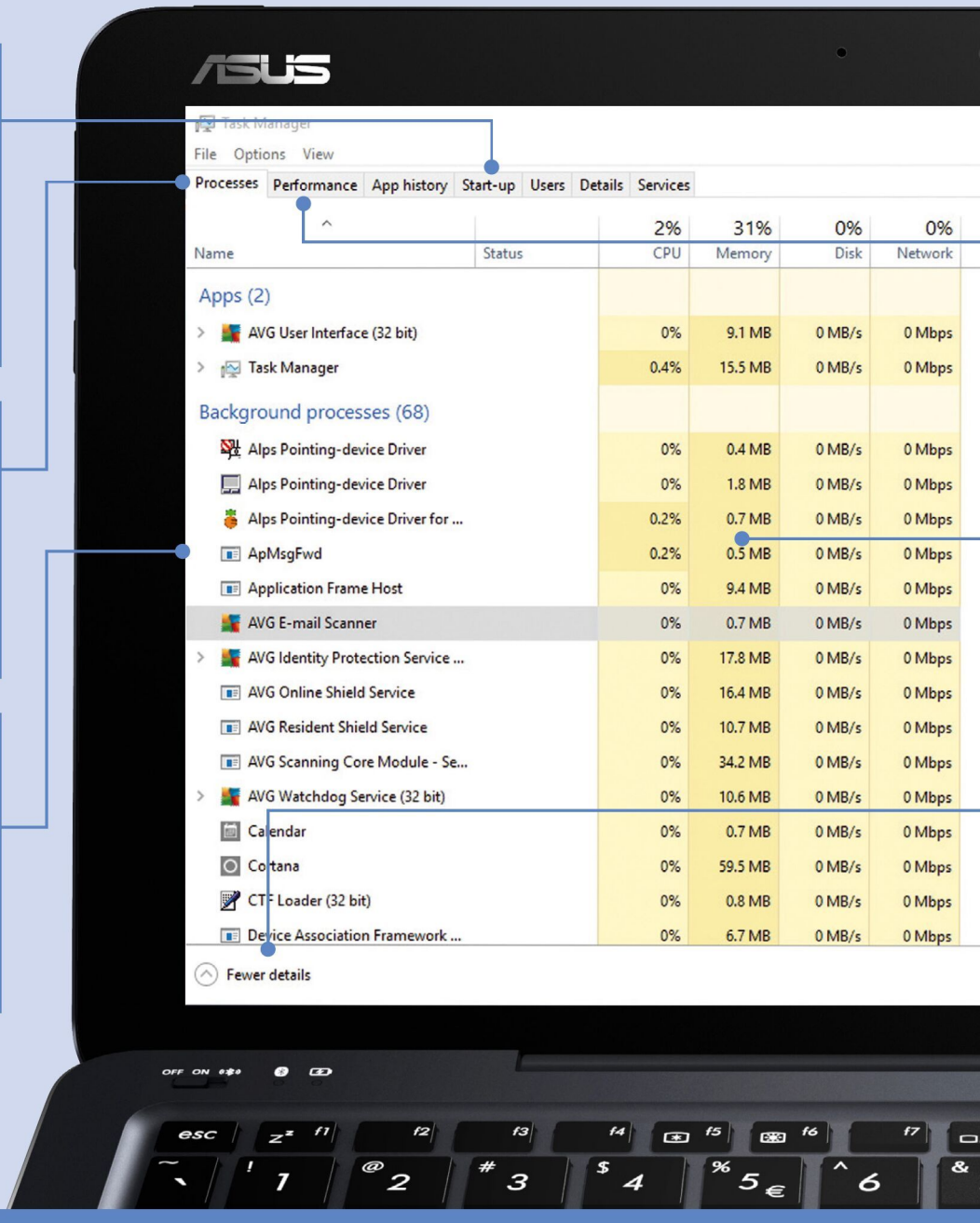
The Start-up tab contains a list of all the apps, programs and processes that are enabled every time you start your computer. If your computer is brand new, this list should be fairly small and filled with essential items. But as you install new apps and software, this start-up list can become bloated and slow down boot up. You can disable auto start-up here.

Processes Tab

The Processes tab is the default tab when the Task Manager is opened. You can open the task manager by simply searching for it in the main search panel. Just as with any other app or piece of software in Windows 10, you can pin a shortcut to the Task Manager, to the taskbar or as a desktop icon.

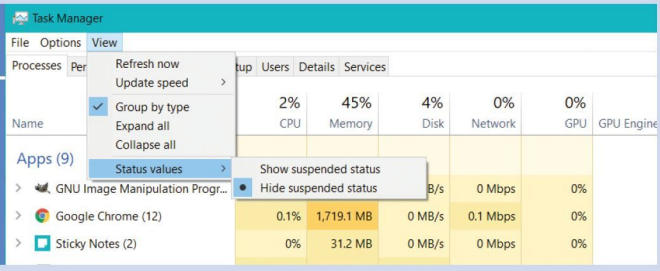
Process List

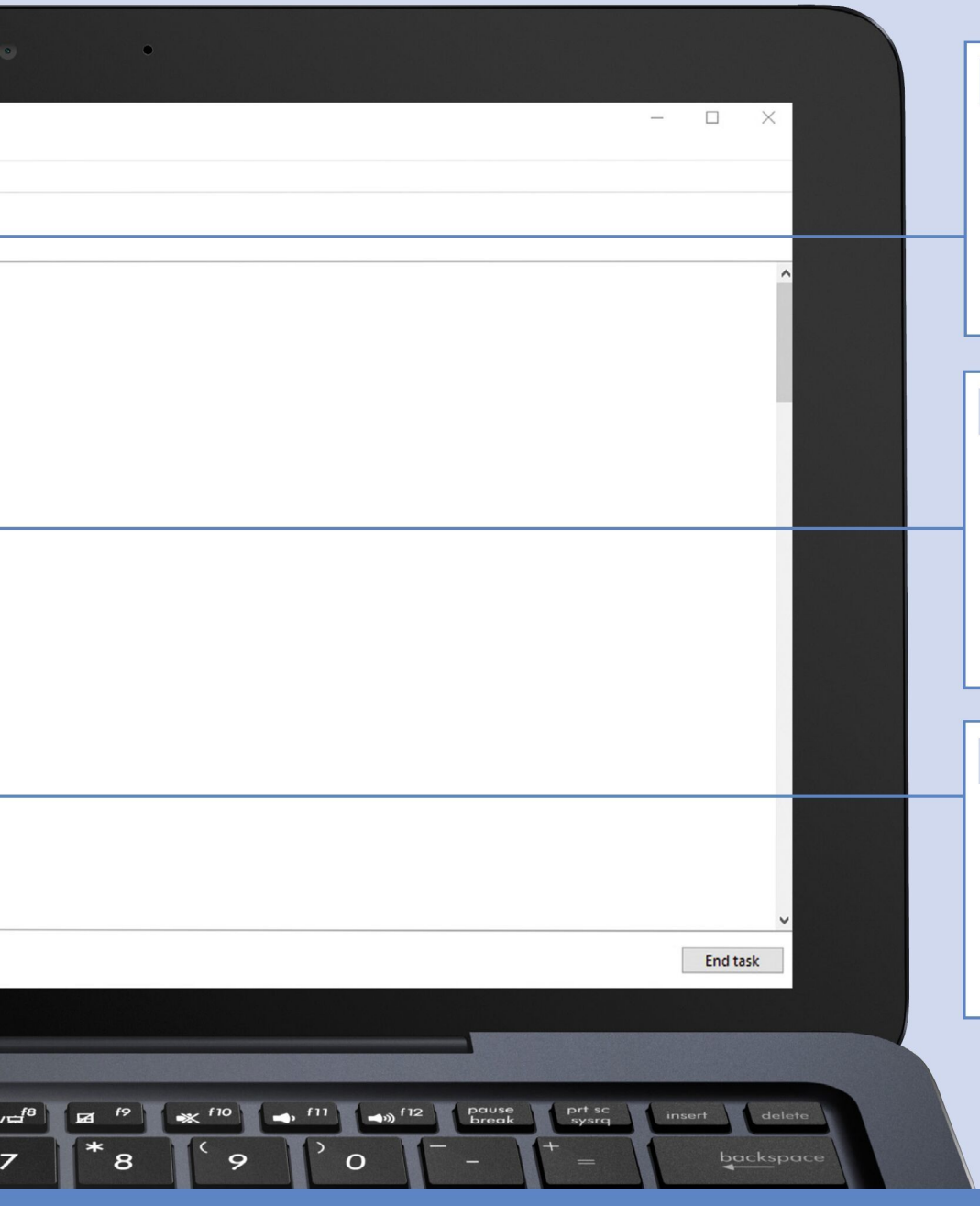
With the Processes tab selected, a list of all processes is shown. Processes are bits of software that run in the background, either running or waiting to run when a corresponding action is taken. As you can see from the list here, things like Cortana and AVG are shown; these you would obviously want to leave.



VIEW OPTIONS

The View options at the top of the Task Manager window allows you to do several things. You can manually refresh the current tab and also change the automatic update speed. For example you can change how the processes are displayed. Either by grouping them by type, expanding or collapsing the list, or showing status values.





Performance Tab

Another useful tab in the Task Manager is Performance. This gives you a real-time performance overview, allowing you to pinpoint exactly how well your hardware is coping with whatever you are doing at the time. If Task Manager is the only app open, the performance chart should be very stable but if you are running several apps, it will show any power spikes.

Resource Usage

If you find your PC becoming slow and sluggish during normal use, you may have too many processes running. By looking at the resource usage chart, you can see exactly which apps are taking up the most processing power, physical memory, disk space and even network bandwidth. If something is particularly resource hungry, you can right-click and stop it.

Fewer Details

You can view a limited version of the Task Manager by clicking on the “Fewer Details” button at the bottom of the window. This makes the window small enough that it can be left open, in the corner of your desktop for example, but still show relevant information. You can get more information at any time by clicking “More Details”

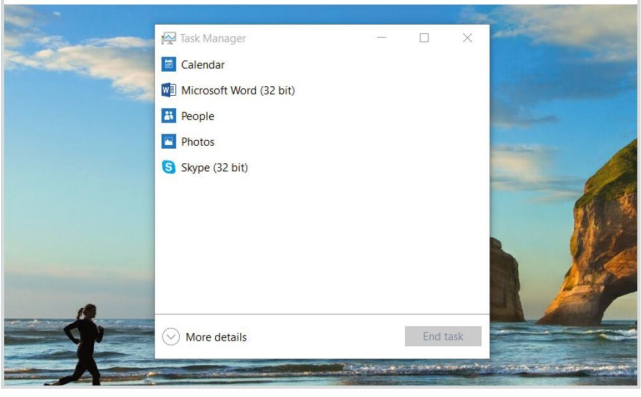
Monitor Tasks with the Task Manager

If you have a program that isn't working, want to control what starts up when your PC does or you want to see what's running on your PC, then Task Manager is the place to go. Access it via the Power Menu (right-click on Start) or by pressing Ctrl+Alt+Delete and selecting it from the Security Options menu.

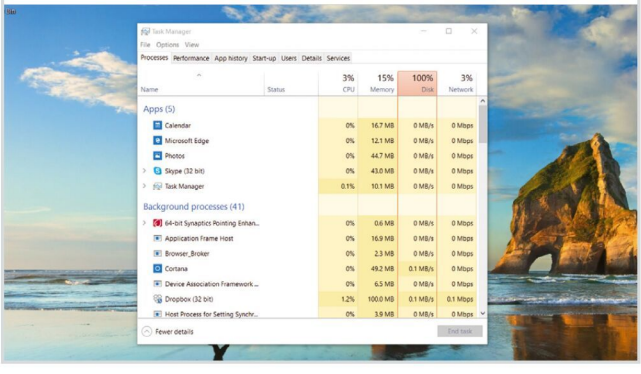
Manage Your PC

Task Manager is a lot more complex than it used to be and it's now a useful insight into your PC and app performance, allowing you to check anything from Wi-Fi usage to app crashes and much more.

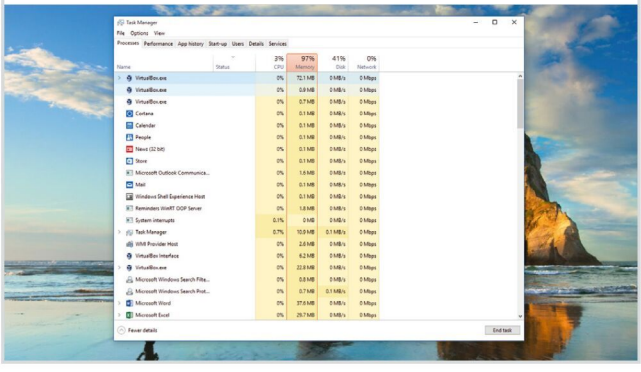
1 Task Manager starts life as this fairly unassuming little window. If you have an app that is unresponsive, select it and click End Task. Beware that if you do this to an app with unsaved work in it, you will lose your work. Clicking the More Details button will expand the Task Manager window.



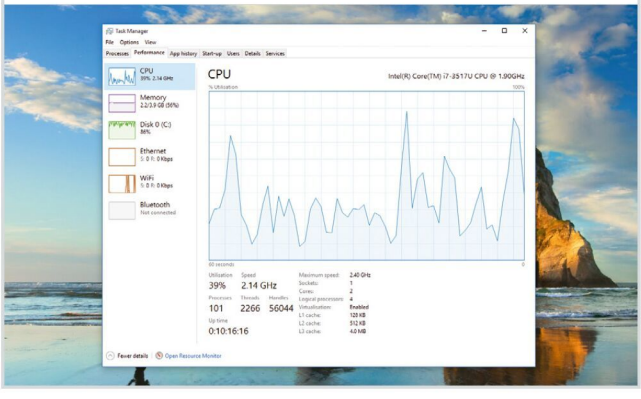
2 This window is a little more complex, but the 'Apps' part of the window is essentially what we were looking at in Step 1. Now the apps have been joined by background processes. Your PC will most likely be running tens of these unless it's box-fresh. Here we've got 41. These are things such as Cortana, which runs in the background, and our trackpad software.



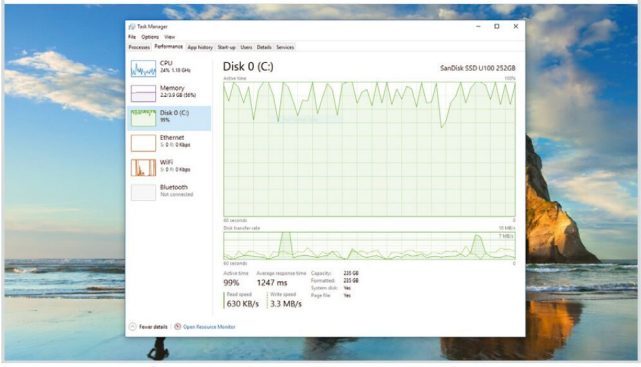
3 You can see what system resources each app is using in each column. Here Excel is using around 74MB of memory, for example. Memory use is almost at its maximum, as you can see at the top of the column. Maxed out resources are no bad thing – after all your PC is there to be used – but when apps crash, they are usually using resources and not relinquishing them.



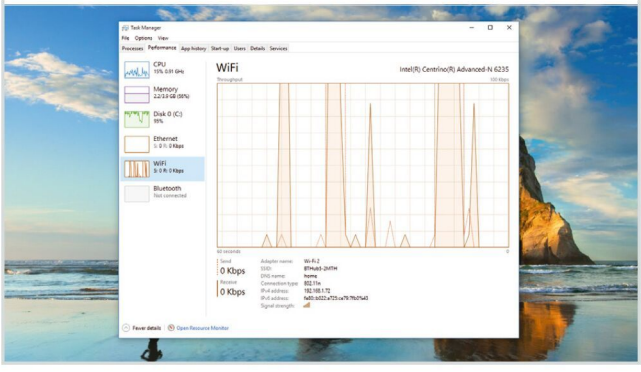
4 If an app crashes, then you need to select it and click End Task as before. You should always try and give it time to recover (especially if you will lose work). Now we've clicked the Performance tab at the top of the window and we can see the usage of important elements of our PC.



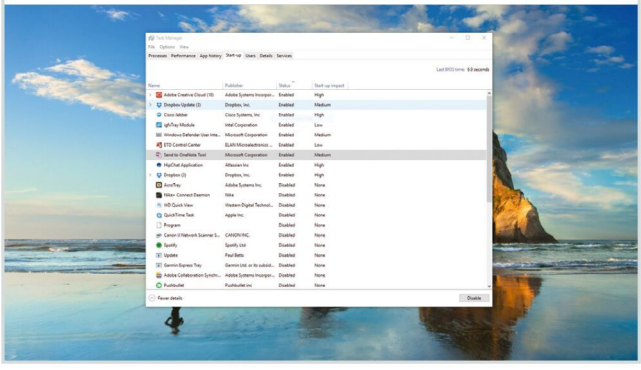
5 Here's our disk usage – as you can see it's pretty active! You will also have this if you have several big apps open (we've got Edge, Spotify, Word and Excel open in this example). In the previous step you could see our processor usage, and as you may have noticed, we've only been using around 40 per cent of its capability during the last minute.



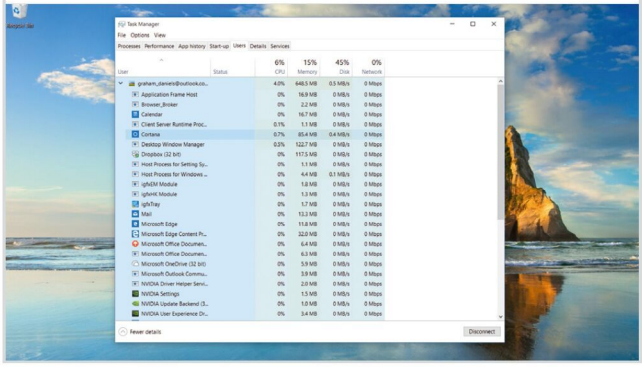
6 Wi-Fi usage (you can also see wired network usage if you use that to connect) is more sporadic as the network connection tends to be used intermittently – unless you're copying files or similar. Here we're streaming music, which appears to download in chunks. Notice there's no data being received or sent right at this moment.



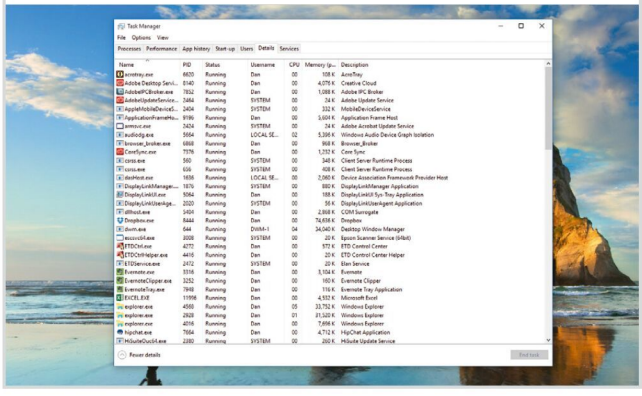
7 The Start-up tab is one of the most important in Task Manager. While you can configure an app such as Skype to start-up when Windows does and disable the same within the app, some applications are sneaky and enable themselves to start when Windows does. Here you can select the app and either enable or stop this from happening.



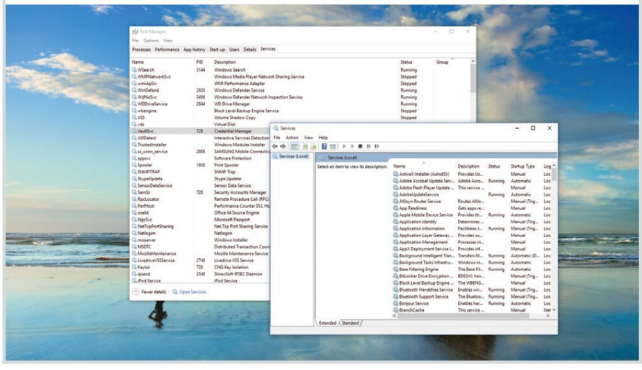
8 Although it's of limited general use, the Users tab details what apps and processes are running on a per-user basis. This might be useful if your PC is running slowly and you want to see what resources someone else who is logged into the PC is hogging. They might have something wasteful running in the background, for example.



9 The Details tab is really for pro users only and has full information on each running process and which user is responsible for it. You can also see how much resource the process is taking up as well as what is called a Process ID, or PID, that identifies the process on your machine.



10 Services are programs that run in the background. The chances are your PC is running lots of them. For example Windows Defender, the built-in security software, runs in the background as a service. As well as viewing the active services in Task Manager, you can click the Open Services link to manage services on your PC.



Free Windows 10 Security Software

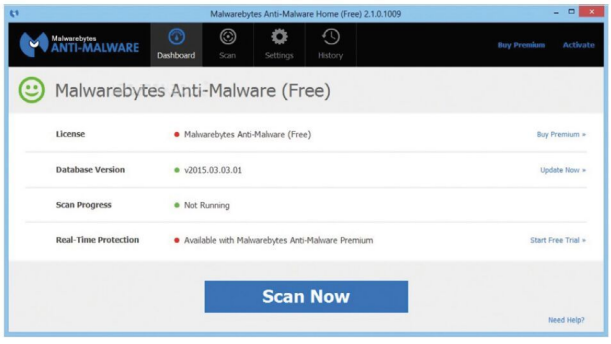
Finding security software for your PC can seem easy. Finding security software that works as it should and offers you the protection you need can be harder. From creating strong passwords to protecting your email from spam, there are lots of ways you can make your computer safer and less likely to suffer from external problems. Here are a few of our favourite security programs.

Malwarebytes Anti-malware

Download From: www.malwarebytes.com

The term Malware is used as a way of describing lots of potentially nasty things that can find their way onto your PC, including viruses, hijackers, adware and ransomware. Malwarebytes Anti-malware Free will scan for and protect you from all of them for 14 days after installation, and then just from general malware and rootkits after the trial period. Before the trial expires, Malwarebytes will detect and remove malware in real-time using advanced anti-malware, anti-spyware and anti-rootkit technology.
A rootkit is a collection of computer software, typically malicious, designed to enable access to a computer or areas of its software that would not otherwise be allowed and often masks its existence or the existence of other software.

Scans are done for the newest and most dangerous threats automatically, so you're protected without having to even think about it. It also wraps your browser and software programs in four layers of defence, stopping attacks that use vulnerabilities in those programs to infect your computer.

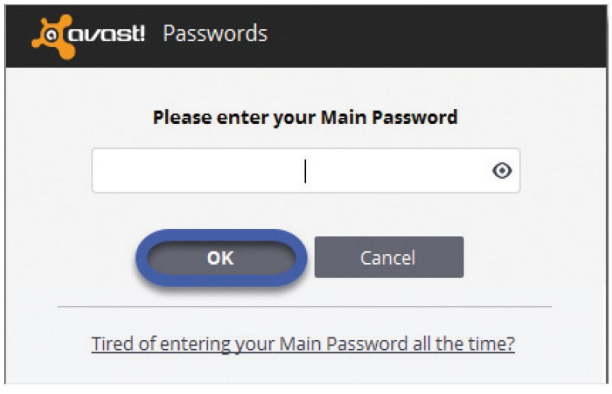


Avast Passwords

Download From: www.avast.com/en-gb/passwords

There can be few people around these days who do not have at least a couple of passwords to remember and if you are anything like us, you have about 15. From making payments to sending emails, strong passwords are a vital part of our online life. Many browsers offer to store your identity information but this is not very secure and can be easily hacked. When you store passwords in your browser, they are stored on your device along with the information necessary to decrypt them.

Avast Passwords stores your passwords with a much higher level of encryption and protects all your data with a password known only to you, so that your data remains safely hidden from any unauthorised access. It securely stores your sensitive information and enables you to quickly log into your online accounts and complete web forms. When you use Avast Passwords you can quickly import any information stored in your browsers, and be sure it is stored with top of the line security. Quickly import your autofill info from Chrome and Firefox, which are unsafe places to store your passwords. Avast Passwords will easily autofill login information for all of your accounts, so you don't have to enter the same info every time. Start storing the safer way without all the copying and pasting.



ALTERNATIVE PARENTAL CONTROLS

OpenDNS FamilyShield

FamilyShield is a free service from OpenDNS. Its parental control tools automatically block domains that have been flagged under headings such as “tasteless”, “sexuality”, or “pornography”.

Kidlogger

This free parental control software not only tracks what your children type and which websites they visit, it also keeps a record of which programs they use and any screen grabs they take.

Spyrix Personal Monitor

Spyrix Personal Monitor is a powerful multifunctional program for complete and detailed remote monitoring of user activity. It can act as a keylogger, capture screenshots and much more.

Qustodio

Download From: www.qustodio.com

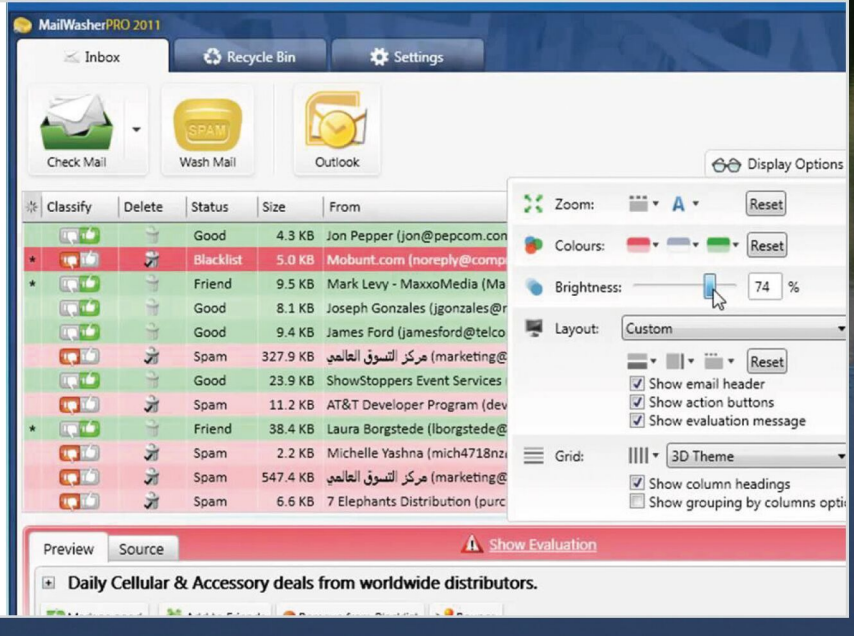
Anyone with teenage children will have felt the worry when letting them have freedom online. The Internet can be such a great thing but at the same time, it can be a truly awful place for kids if they (and you) are not careful. Qustodio is parental control designed for today’s busy, web-savvy parents. No hardware, no complicated set up, just a simple, web-based dashboard that gives you the info you need at a glance. Whether your kids use the family computer, personal laptop, tablet or mobile phone, Qustodio is there to set healthy limits, block questionable sites and keep kids safe.

You can see the apps your kids use, the searches they conduct, the social sites they visit and the people they hang out with online. The parent dashboard condenses each child’s Internet activities into easy-to-scan charts and graphs. You can also access daily timelines for minute-by-minute details on your child’s activities, plus a full record of the potentially harmful apps, websites and social profiles your child interacted with. This means that round-the-clock supervision doesn’t have to be time consuming; just select the sites you wish to block, choose time limits for online activities and the software does the rest.

MailWasher Free

Download From: www.mailwasher.net

Spam emails are one of those annoying and potentially harmful things that just don’t seem to go away, despite the advances in technology and the evolution of how we use it. It is not always clear how our email addresses get into the hands of the spammers but for almost anyone who uses the Internet regularly, there will come a time when they start to arrive. The Nigerian princes, the fake bank messages or even just the sales letters for products we have no interest in. We can block and delete these as they arrive and most email clients include some spam tools. However a far more complete solution is MailWasher.



Windows 10 Security Checklist

Taking the time to write down an effective security plan for your home network will pay dividends in the long-run. With it you're able to spot potential leaks in security, secure your home network Wi-Fi and powerline adapter technologies and ensure digital peace of mind.

Plan Ahead

We've come up with a template security checklist which you can use to create your own: for your home network. Tick each section and remember to keep checking regularly and alter it as new devices are added.

Checklist

- [ ] **Router Check** – Make sure that your router's admin password and access passwords are in a secure, unviewable place. So visitors can't see them when they come into your home.

- [ ] **Wi-Fi Security Check** – Log in to your router and check that the Wi-Fi is using WPS2. Check also the currently attached devices for any anomalies. If you use any other form of router security, double check it's still functioning as updates can reset routers.

- [ ] **Wireless Positioning Check** – Using a Wi-Fi analyser on your phone or tablet, measure the impact of the wireless signal from the router. If it's reaching out into the street and not so much the rear of the house, then consider moving it. Keep an eye on the signal power and weak locations.

- [ ] **OS Update Check** – Check for any operating system updates on all the computers and Windows mobile devices that connect to the home network.

- [ ] **Security Suite Update Check** – Run a similar update check on any antivirus clients, VPN clients and other third-party security programs and applications.

- [ ] **Program and App Update Check** – Run any update checks on frequently used programs and applications. After that, run as many updates on other installed programs on all your computers.

- [ ] **Installed Rogue Program and App Check** – Check each computer on the network for its list of installed programs. If there's anything in there that doesn't look right, research it and remove it if necessary. Make a note of the programs installed (as a screen shot or physical note) and compare them with each frequent check.

- [ ] **Password Reset Check** – Set a regular, usually 30-day, password reset. Each individual user should be able to reset all their passwords for every site they visit and make sure that the passwords they're using are strong. Use a password manager and password generator if needed.

- [ ] **Firewall Integrity Check** – Check that the firewall on each computer, and potentially any devices, is up and running and that there are no rogue programs within the inbound and outbound rules set.

- [ ] **Back up Important Files** – Make sure that each computer and device is regularly backed up. We'll cover how to effectively back up a Windows 10 computer on later pages. Back up important documents and keep the backup copy somewhere safe; consider purchasing a fireproof safe.

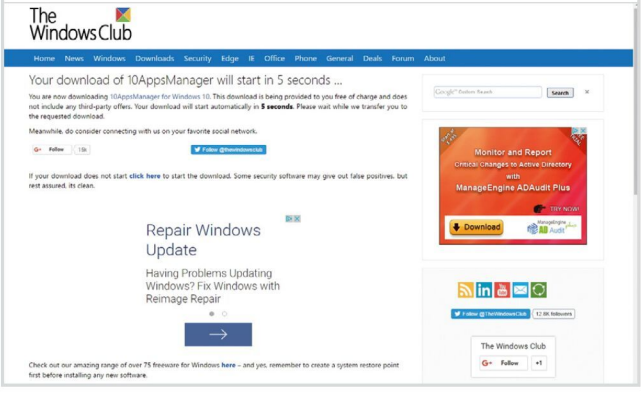
Remove Unwanted Windows 10 Bloatware

The choice to enable free upgrades to Windows 10 for existing Windows users was an almost inevitable step by Microsoft. Almost as inevitable was an increase in bloatware, similar to that seen on Android devices. Thankfully there are ways to remove or disable most of it.

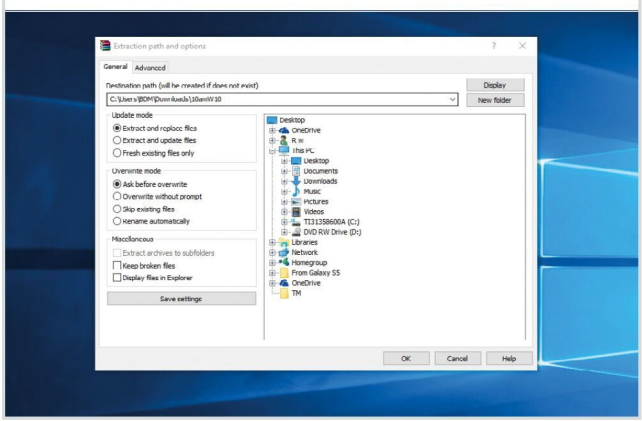
Working with 10Apps Manager

Adding software to remove other software may seem counterintuitive but this is a safer way to clean up bloatware than trying to remove it manually.

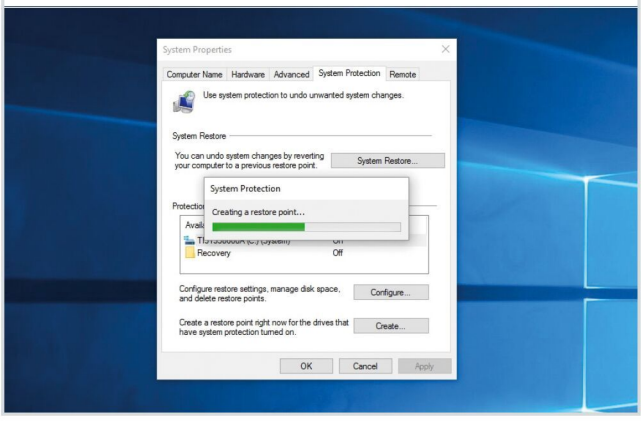
1 You can download the 10Apps Manager software from a variety of file download sites or you can get it directly from the creators at The Windows Club (www.thewindowsclub.com). It should be free wherever you download it from, so don't be fooled into paying for this software.



2 Extract the contents of the downloaded 10Apps Manager zip file and place the folder in your Program Folder and pin the shortcut of its .exe file to your Start menu. Do not separate out the contents of the Program folder. You don't need to install the software.



3 As when making any large system changes to your computer, you should create a system restore point first. You can do this via Start menu > Control Panel > System Properties > System Protection. Configure the restore settings and click "Create".



4 You can now double-click the 10Apps Manager .exe file to open the software on your computer. The extremely simple main interface will now open. Each of the tiles represents a piece of preinstalled software that you can uninstall if you have no use for it.

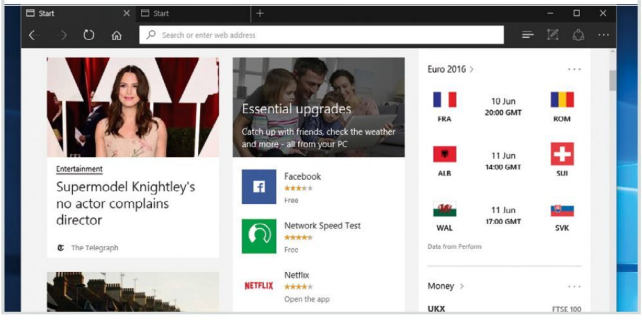
5 Click on any of the tiles and then confirm that you want to uninstall the app. You may need to wait a few seconds for the process to complete. You can delete as many preinstalled apps as you wish but if an app does not appear as a tile on the screen, you won't be able to add it.

6 You can reinstall any of the apps you uninstall through 10Apps Manager. The only slight annoyance is that the software doesn't remove or alter the tile once the app is uninstalled, so it is a good idea to make a note of which apps you remove from your system.

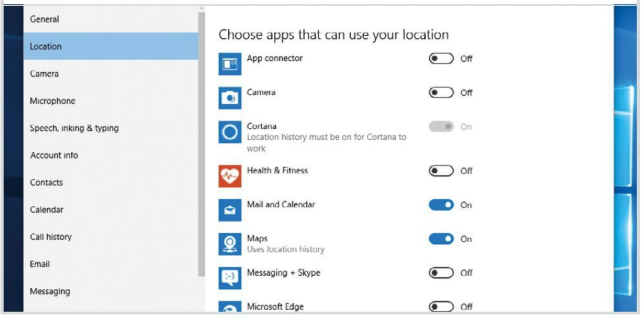
Disabling Other Features

There are several other features that, although not technically bloatware, might not be doing your computer performance any favours. Let's take a look at some of the worst offenders.

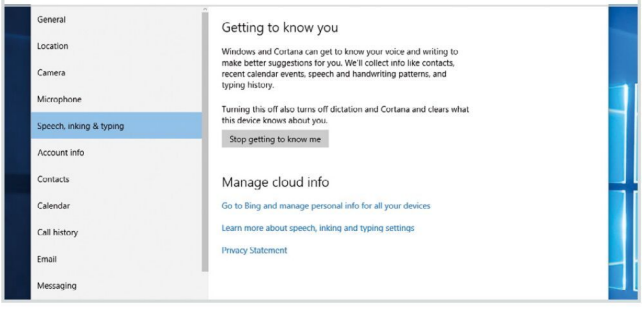
Targeted Ads Windows 10 assigns every user a unique advertising ID to make it easier to provide you with targeted adverts. While this cannot be removed, it can be disabled. Head to the "General" tab in Windows 10's Privacy menu. Disable the topmost toggle switch labelled "Let apps use my advertising ID ..."



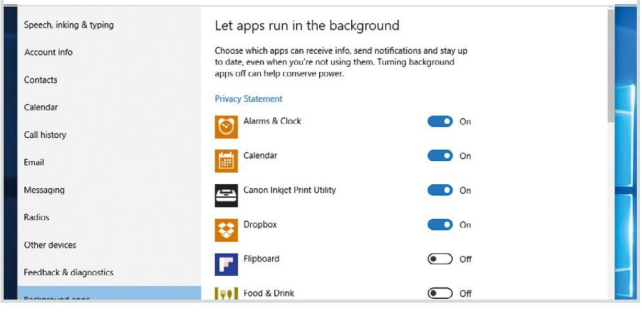
App Location Access Windows 10 third-party apps can access your location, webcam, microphone and more by default. Not all apps require these permissions. Go to Start menu > Settings > Privacy > Location and remove those permissions that seem unnecessary. Repeat for things like camera and microphone.



Getting to Know You Meant to streamline the new Windows 10 user experience, the Getting to Know You feature records logs of your typing history, saves recordings of your voice, collects information from your contacts etc. Go to Start menu > Settings > Privacy > Speech, linking & typing > Stop Getting to Know Me.



Background Apps This last option seems simple but it can make a big impact in terms of battery life and performance. From the Privacy menu, scroll down to the bottom of the menu, then select the "Background apps" option. From here, simply use the toggle switches to prevent these apps from running on start-up.



How to Free Up Space in Windows 10

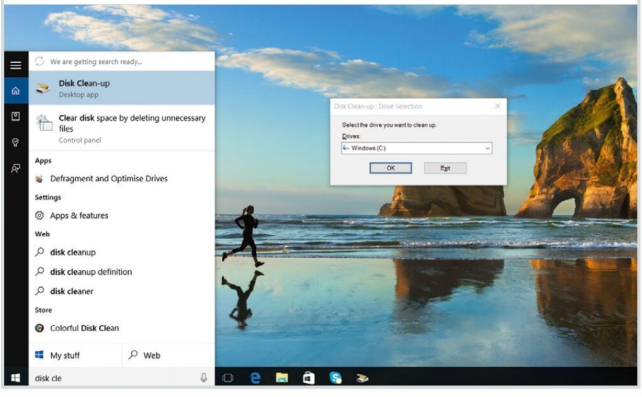
Disk Clean-up is the best way to free up space on your PC. It will clear up redundant files accumulating on your hard drive including temporary files and Downloaded Program files. But that's not the only way you can free up space, as you'll see…

Clearing Space on Your PC

It's worth giving your machine a little spring clean every so often to keep it lean. And that doesn't just mean removing unwanted files and folders from the desktop. Disk Clean-up should be an essential part of your PC maintenance.

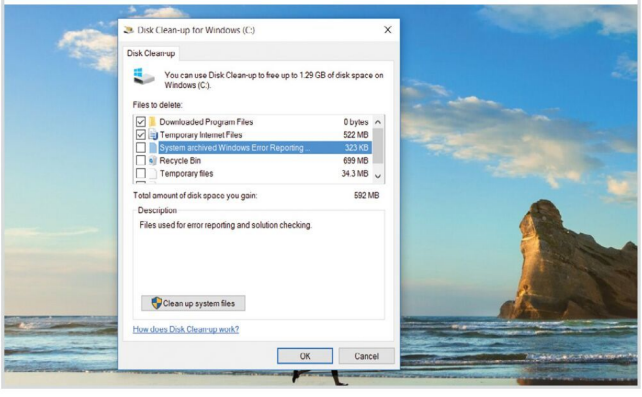
Clean Up

Disk Clean-up is a utility included with every copy of Windows. When you launch it (here we've searched for it using the search box on the taskbar), you'll get this small window appear. It will help you rid your PC of detritus that builds up over time as you download files from the Internet or install and uninstall apps.



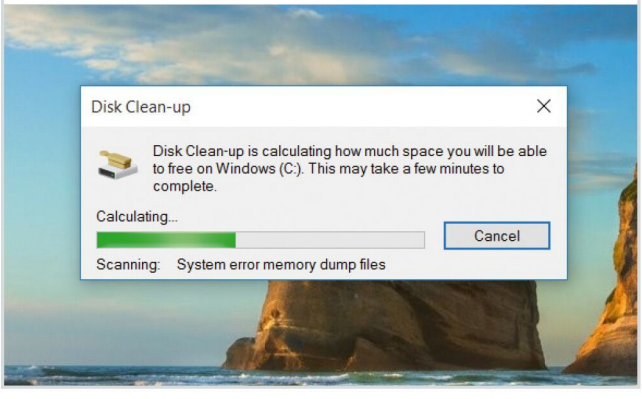
Scan Results

If you're scanning a second hard drive, it's unlikely Disk Clean-up will find a lot on it as it is mostly concerned with Windows files. And that's what we're looking at here in the results window. As you can see, you can check which items you want to remove from your PC. Click OK to remove.



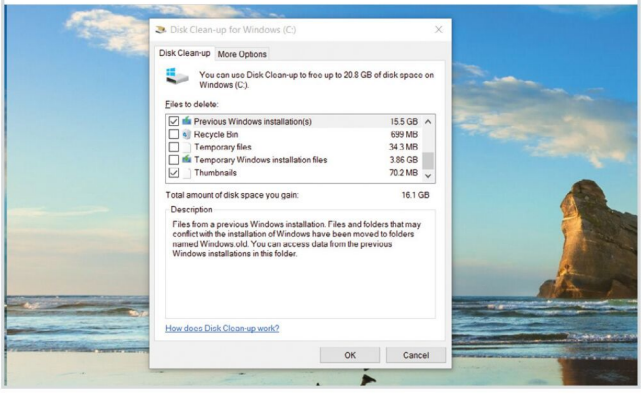
Which Drive?

You'll be asked to select the drive you want to clean up. Most of the time there'll only be one drive you wish to clean up (your C: drive), but it could well be that you've got more than one storage drive on your PC. Disk Clean-up will then begin to scan your drive for things it can sweep up.



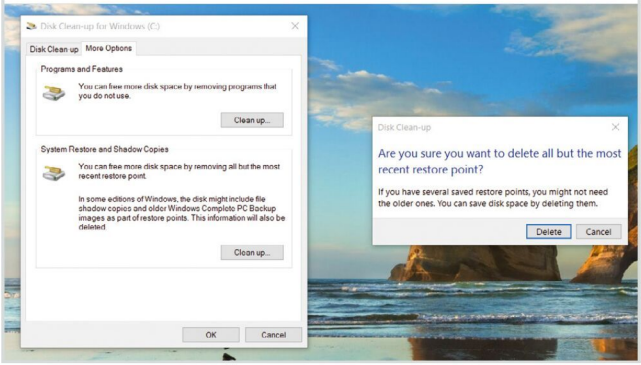
System Files

We actually didn't click OK in the last step; instead clicking the Clean Up System Files option. This won't harm your Windows installation, but will clean up extraneous files that some people prefer to keep. If you upgraded from an old copy of Windows, this includes your Windows.old folder on your hard drive.



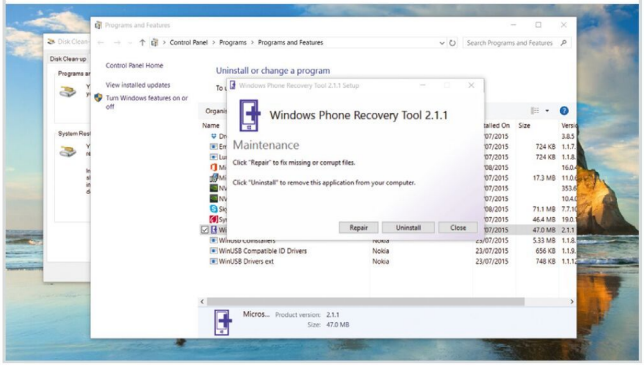
More Options

If you click the More Options tab, you'll see this window, taking you straight to the Add/Remove Programs area of Control Panel. It also gives you the option to remove old restore points that take up space inside Windows. The latest restore point will always be kept in case of a problem with your PC.



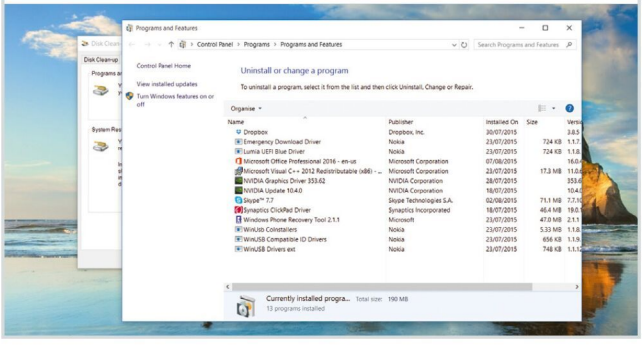
Uninstaller

Each desktop app has a different type of installer (or, in this case, uninstaller). Many are very similar, but you do get ones that differ, and one such is this app from Microsoft. Often you will be asked if you want to repair the application. You don't – you want to uninstall.



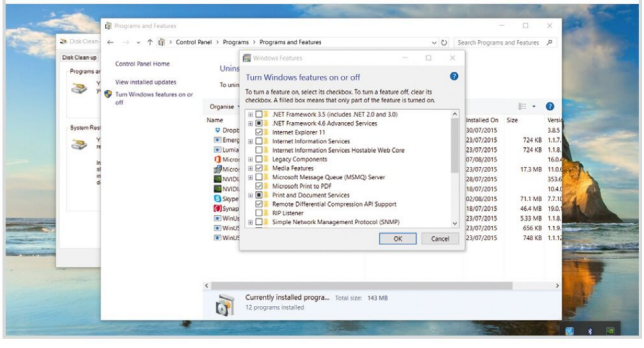
Programs and Features

This area of Control Panel is one of the most used, although it's not designed to be utilised quite as much in Windows 10 – the idea is that you'd uninstall using the method in the final step on this page. Still, it's the only way to see how much space your desktop applications are taking up. You can also access it via Control Panel > Programs.



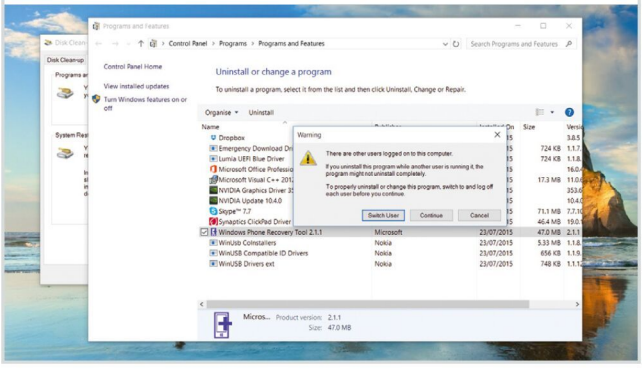
Windows Features

This is for advanced users only. Also from this screen you can select Turn Windows Features On or Off. You're able to uninstall elements of Windows that you don't use – perhaps the old Internet Explorer, for example, or Microsoft's Print to PDF plug-in if you have an alternative solution that you use.



Other Users

If you try and uninstall a program with other users logged onto the PC, you'll always get a warning that other people may be using the application and so it may not uninstall properly. Get other users to log off before uninstalling programs if this is an issue.



Uninstall from Start

You're also able to easily uninstall apps from the Start menu – simply right-click on the app in question and select Uninstall from the menu that appears. It's the best way to uninstall any app, whether it's come from the Windows Store or not.

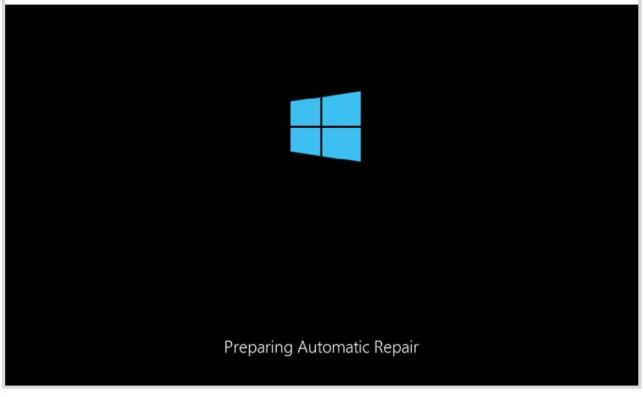
Troubleshooting Windows 10

If you have a problem with your Windows 10 machine, your PC will need to go to the Advanced Start-up Options menu, sometimes called the Boot Options menu. You may also need to boot into what's called Safe Mode. Hopefully this isn't something you will need regularly but we'll run you through it anyway.

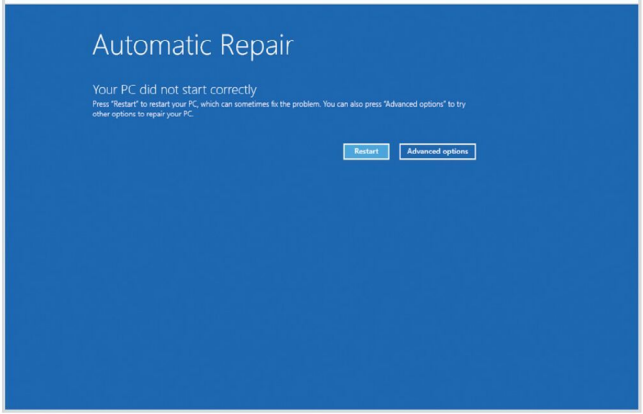
How to Use Advanced Start-up Options

Modern computers are complicated things and there's a lot that can go wrong. If your PC really isn't working correctly or seems slow, these helpful options will help you get it back on track.

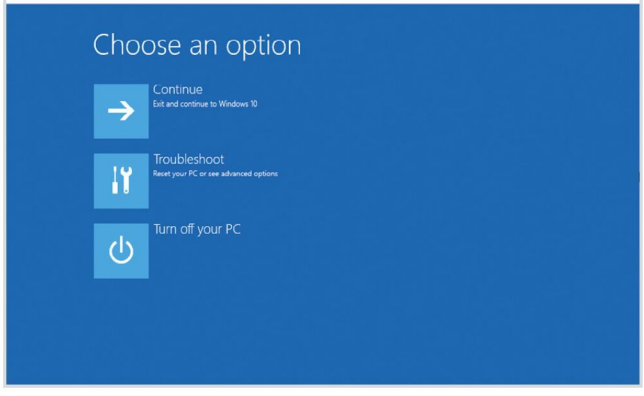
1 You may be taken to the Advanced Start-up Options menu. It will appear automatically if you have two consecutive start-up errors on your PC. But you can get to it manually from inside Windows 10 by going to the Settings app > Update & Security, clicking on Recovery and selecting Restart Now underneath Advanced Start-up.



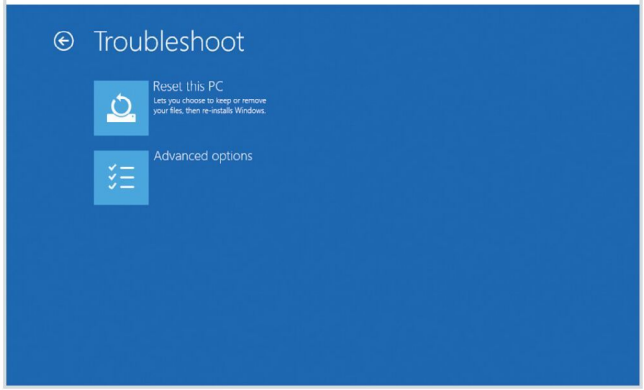
2 If your PC didn't start correctly, you'll see this screen. It gives you the option of restarting and trying again, or clicking on Advanced Options. We're going to run you through what happens if you click on this second button – various options are available to you.



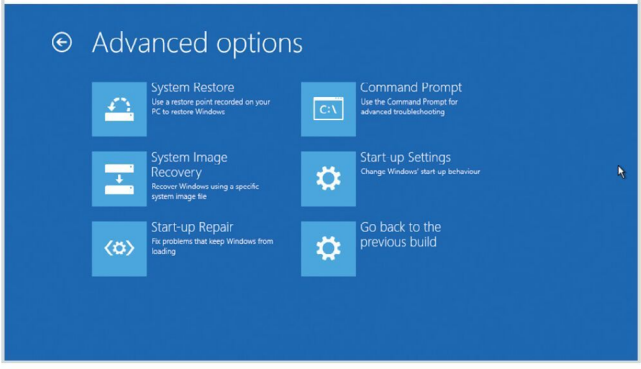
3 You'll then see this menu, which is a little transitional for our liking – we're not sure why these options aren't on the screen you get after this in Step 4 (by clicking Troubleshoot). From here, you can also continue to boot up Windows 10 or you can decide to turn off your PC if you are going to take it to a repair shop, for example.



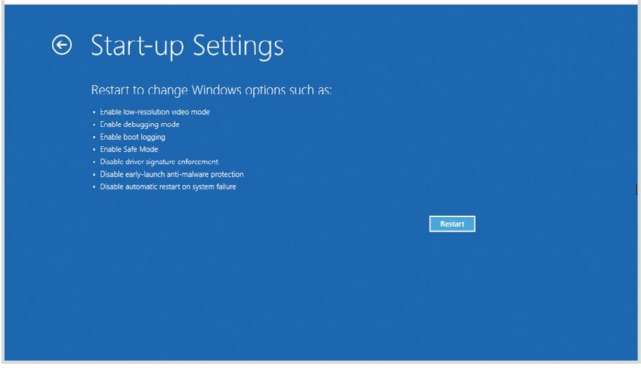
4 If you selected Troubleshoot, you get the option to Reset this PC. This is a little confusing in name, because it doesn't mean restart! It means resetting Windows to its factory settings (it reinstalls Windows, effectively). You can choose whether or not to keep your files, but we think this is a risky option. You have got your files backed up, haven't you?



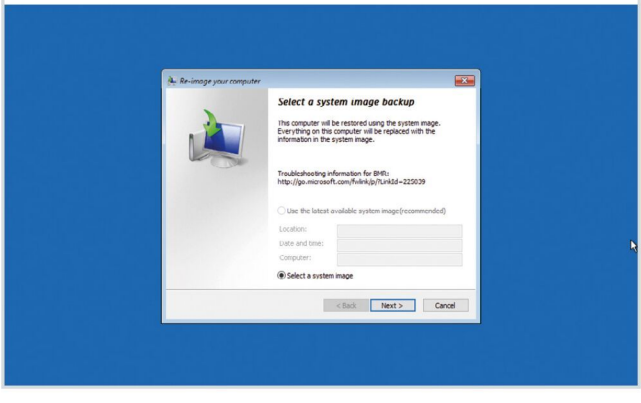
5 Advanced Options is actually the menu that we want, and you probably will do, too, if there's something seriously wrong with your PC. It's almost like the previous steps were tests to see if you really did want to get here. You can try and repair the start-up, or roll back using System Restore.



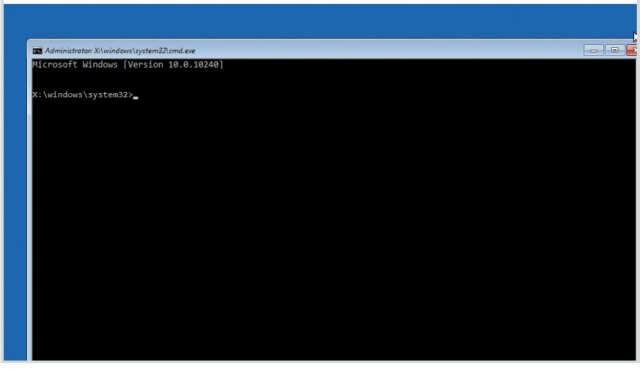
6 If you select Start-up Settings, you'll be shown this screen to ensure it is actually what you want (you can always go back using the Back button of course). From this you can instigate Safe Mode with or without networking access, as well as a low resolution video mode if you're having display problems.



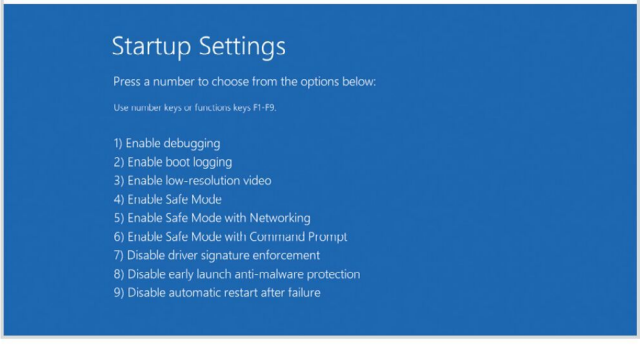
7 If you have a system image handy (a complete backup of your PC in a system image file) you can also restore it at this point. Anything you've created since the system image was made will be lost, so again it's a reason why you should back up your files.



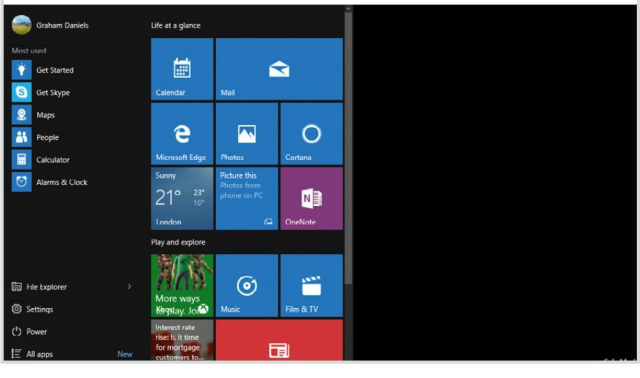
8 If you need to boot from a particular drive, such as USB, you can do so by starting from it using the boot options in the Advanced Options menu. You can also access the command prompt should you need to do any diagnostic checks of your files, though this isn't a common thing to have to do.



9 When your PC boots after going to Start-up Settings in Step 6, you'll see this menu. You need to press a number to boot your PC in a particular way. We'd always recommend seeing if your PC will boot into Safe Mode with Networking. If it starts up there without issue, it's probably a third-party software or driver problem rather than something with Windows itself.



10 This is what Safe Mode looks like. As you can see, it's very much like the standard version of Windows 10, but it is lacking a little in its graphical finish. It's designed for you to troubleshoot what is wrong with your system – perhaps you need to roll back to an earlier System Restore point, for example.



Windows 10 Troubleshooting Tips

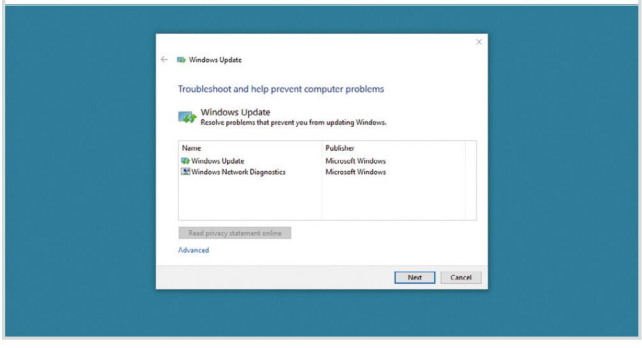
Windows 10 includes some useful tools for checking on and solving problems but sometimes you need to look a bit further and deeper. Occasionally you just need to go back to basics. These tips will help you solve some common problems encountered in Windows 10, particularly after installing the Anniversary update.

First Things to Check

If you're having problems with Windows Update, the Windows Update Troubleshooter might be able to automatically fix the problem. Go to Microsoft.com and search for Update Troubleshooter.

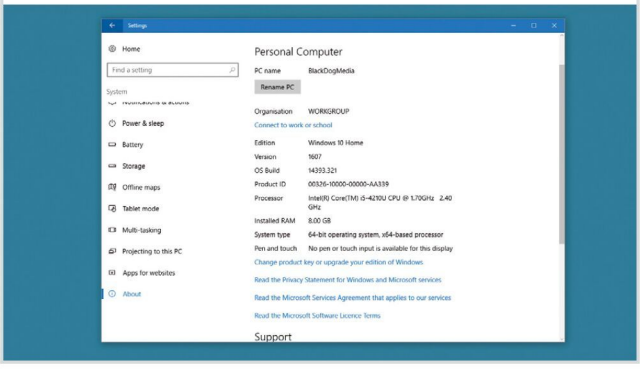
Windows Update Troubleshooter

Microsoft knows that things don't always go smoothly when updating and have provided a dedicated troubleshooting tool for use during this key task. If you're having problems with Windows Update, the Windows Update Troubleshooter might be able to automatically fix the problem. Go to Microsoft.com and search for Update Troubleshooter.



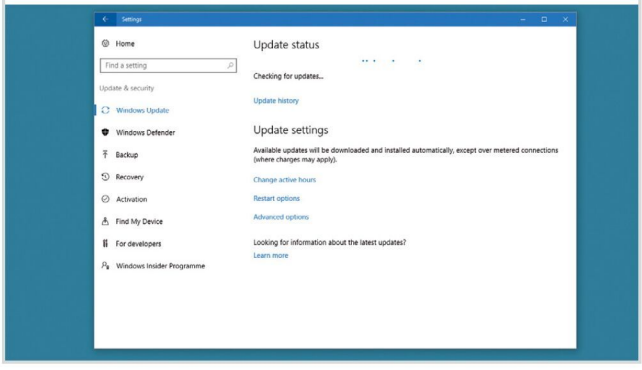
Checking System Spec

If you're having trouble installing or running a particular app or game, it may be that your PC hardware is not up to scratch. All commercial software will provide details of required and (sometimes) recommended specification needed to run it. You can check system spec at any time, just go to Control Panel and select System and Security, then System.



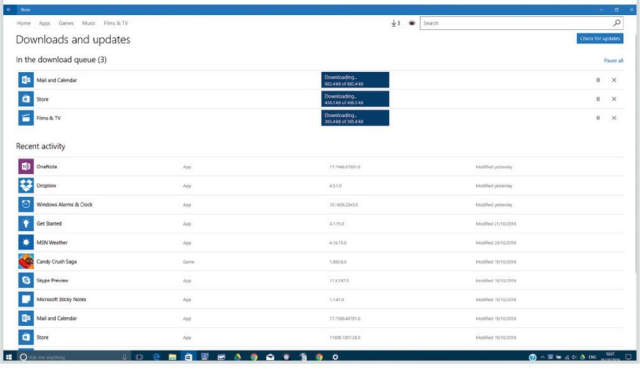
Check for Updates

Keeping your copy of Windows 10 up to date with the latest releases can really help to avoid problems before they happen. Press the Windows logo key and click Settings. Then choose Update & security > Windows Update and then select Check for updates. Install any available updates and restart your PC if required.



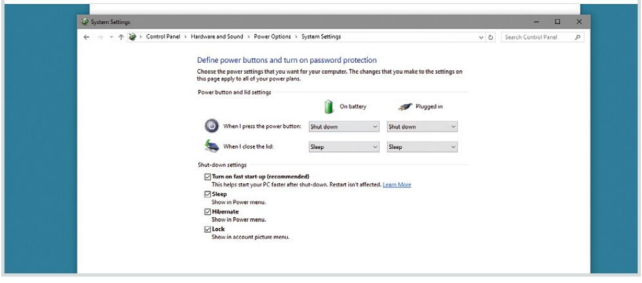
App Updates

If an app or program isn't working with Windows 10, particularly after the Anniversary update, try looking in the Windows Store for an update and if that doesn't work, delete and reinstall it. To check for available app updates on the store, click the user icon next to the search bar and select Downloads and Updates.



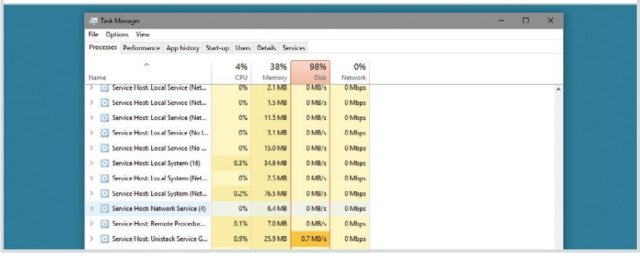
Slow Boot Fix

Like Windows 8 before it, Windows 10 uses a hybrid boot to enable fast boot times. It sounds great but can actually slow down boot for some users. Disable it by searching for Power Options in the Start menu and running the matching Control Panel applet, then in the left-hand pane click Choose what the power buttons do.



Non-responsive PC

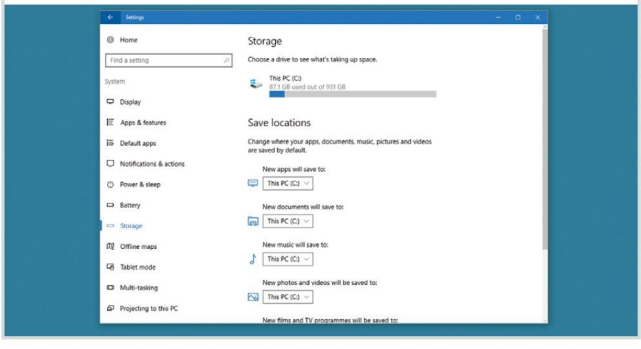
Windows 10 has a completely different shell than previous versions. The Explorer.exe process is still at its core but there are a few additional components as well. If you click the Start button and nothing happens or if the entire taskbar refuses to respond to an interaction, open Task Manager (press Ctrl+Shift+Esc), find Windows Explorer in the task list and click the Restart button.



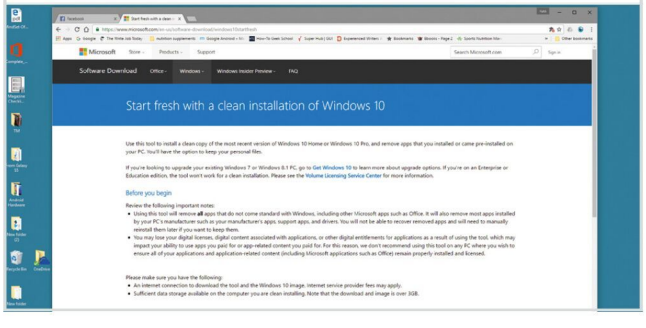
Fresh Installation Tool

If Windows 10 is really giving you problems and you have tried everything else to fix the issue, you can try using the Fresh Install tool. You will lose any installed apps but will keep your files.

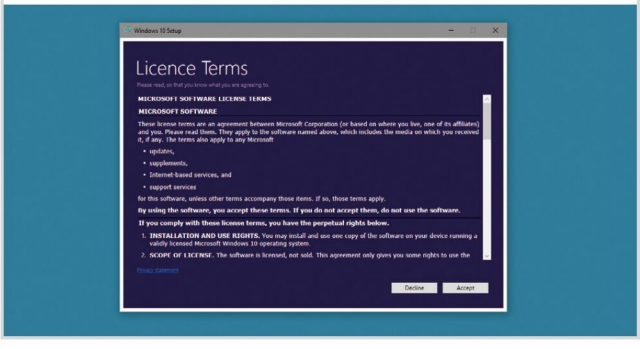
1 First make sure you have the following: an Internet connection to download the tool and the Windows 10 image and sufficient available data storage on the computer you are installing on. You need at least 3GB free for the download and the clean Windows 10 image file.



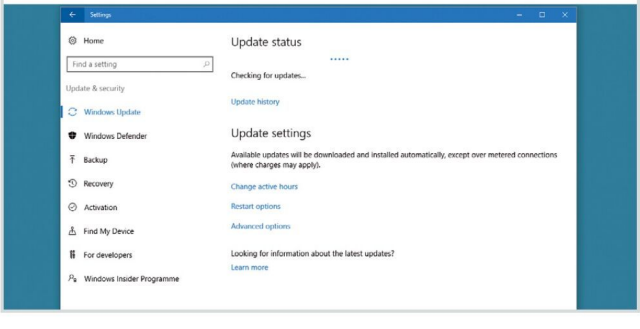
2 Download the tool **https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/software-download/windows10startfresh**. There is some advice on the download page about retrieving and reinstalling Microsoft software such as Office. It is worth checking this out if you are heavily reliant on that software.



3 BACK UP EVERYTHING you want to keep! Launch the tool and review and accept the licence terms. Choose what you want to keep. If you want to keep your personal files, choose the Keep personal files only option. Select the OK button to start the installation.



4 By using the tool, you may lose your digital licences, digital content associated with applications or other digital entitlements. Drivers may also be missing. If you experience any missing drivers after the clean installation has finished, go to Settings > Update & security >Windows Update.



Congratulations, we have reached the end of your latest tech adventure. With help from our team of tech experts, you have been able to answer all your questions, grow in confidence and ultimately master any issues you had. You can now proudly proclaim that you are getting the absolute best from your latest choice from the ever changing world of consumer technology and software.

Whatever your plans we are here to help you. Just check our expansive range of **Tricks & Tips** and **For Beginners** guidebooks and we are positive you will find what you are looking for. This adventure with us may have ended, but that's not to say that your journey is over. Every new hardware or software update brings its new features and challenges, and of course you already know we are here to help. So we will look forward to seeing you again soon.

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Windows 10 Tricks and Tips
14th Edition | ISBN: 978-1-912847-73-0

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