

Setting up a new personal computer

Often new personal computers (Windows 10 PCs) need some adjustment before being ready for everyday use.

Did you grab a new computer on Prime Day or have one on your holiday wish list?



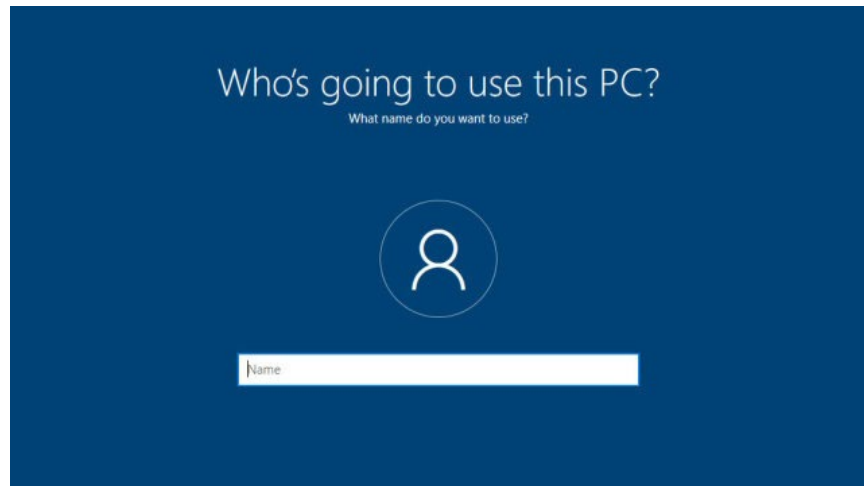
It is generally the case that computers, even when straight out of a new box or just sold from the shop, need attention before being put to work. This is common for computers using the Windows Operating System (O/S).

It is important to do the following fine tuning of a new computer for four reasons:

1. The new computer system needs to be made secure.
2. The operating system needs to be personalised to the user's preferences.
3. There are additional software programs that need to be added to the hard drives.
4. There are some software applications that can be removed from the computer.

On first start

After you have made the basic initial connections (power, plus monitor, keyboard, and mouse as needed), the Windows O/S will ask you to do various things, like setting your language, time zone, and clock and calendar. You will be pushed to create a

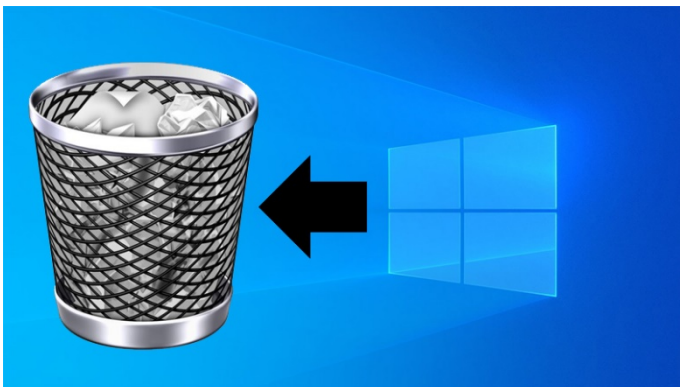


login—preferably by creating or using an existing Microsoft account. Microsoft, the providers of the Windows Operating System, would like your login to be the same you would use for accessing things like your Xbox, Skype, OneDrive, Office on the Web, etc.—essentially any service Microsoft provides. The purpose of this common logon is to have all your devices synchronising their data; in essence, linking your new personal computer to the cloud and all your Microsoft related accounts.

You may not want this to occur. Often, in that case, it is easier to disconnect from the Internet when setting up Windows 10.

However, you may also want multiple accounts on the new computer for use by a few people, e.g. workers sharing a computer, different members of the family, etc. the kids or other family. You do not have to do this at the set up - you can do that anytime.

De-Bloat the System



Big-name computer providers (i.e. vendors) typically install software on their personal computer products at the factory. These "extras" go by many names: bundleware, begware, bloatware, shovelware, and perhaps the most accurate, crapware. This is because a lot of it is just that: useless software. Vendors install it under the

guise of helping you out, but mostly they do it to get money from the software makers. The major system builders are reducing the amount of extra software (or at least making sure it does not appear all over your system), but there is a long way to go. In new computer systems it is very common to find extra pre-loaded software on a

retail-bought consumer system (e.g. from a discount store, chain store, etc.; less likely if you are buying from a specialised or business -oriented dealer or direct from the manufacturer, i.e. DELL).

Do not confuse crapware with trialware—a trial version of software you might actually want that is active for a limited time. It might be worth keeping, especially if it is a free trial of a solid security product, which leads us to...

Activate Shields

You should really pay to protect your computer system from malware, spam and malicious attacks. There are many security packages that can be purchased which include a range of security tools such as malware protection, firewalls, antispam tools for your email, even parental controls to keep children safe while online.



There are some of these security applications that are free. Here are three recommended products:

- Kaspersky Security Cloud Free
- AVG Antivirus Free
- Avast Free Antivirus

The Windows Operating System come with Microsoft Windows Defender Security Centre antivirus built in. When a third-party antivirus application is installed, Windows Defender goes dormant (i.e. shuts itself off), and only comes back to life if it detects that other antivirus is not running. It does this to avoid conflicting with other security programs.

Most computers do not need an additional firewall; the firewall integrated in Windows O/S is quite effective, along with the firewall you have likely running on your home networking router.

Download Updates

Always check for updates when you first switch on a new computer. Remember it has been in its box for some time before purchase and updates are likely to have occurred since its point of construction.

The PC will tell announce there are Windows updates available, probably about five minutes after you successfully boot up. You can check for them via

Settings > Update & Security > Windows Update.

The Windows O/S gets a major update twice a year. Depending on when the new computer has Windows installed on it, may mean that there are a few large updates to download. Let this process run its course. Walk away...it may take some time.

When the downloads are done, run Windows Update again. At this stage, updates tend to beget updates. Three times should be sufficient. By now, you should have a truly pristine Windows Operating System.

Set the active hours that updates happen in the background, so they only happen overnight or weekends.

Set Up Recovery



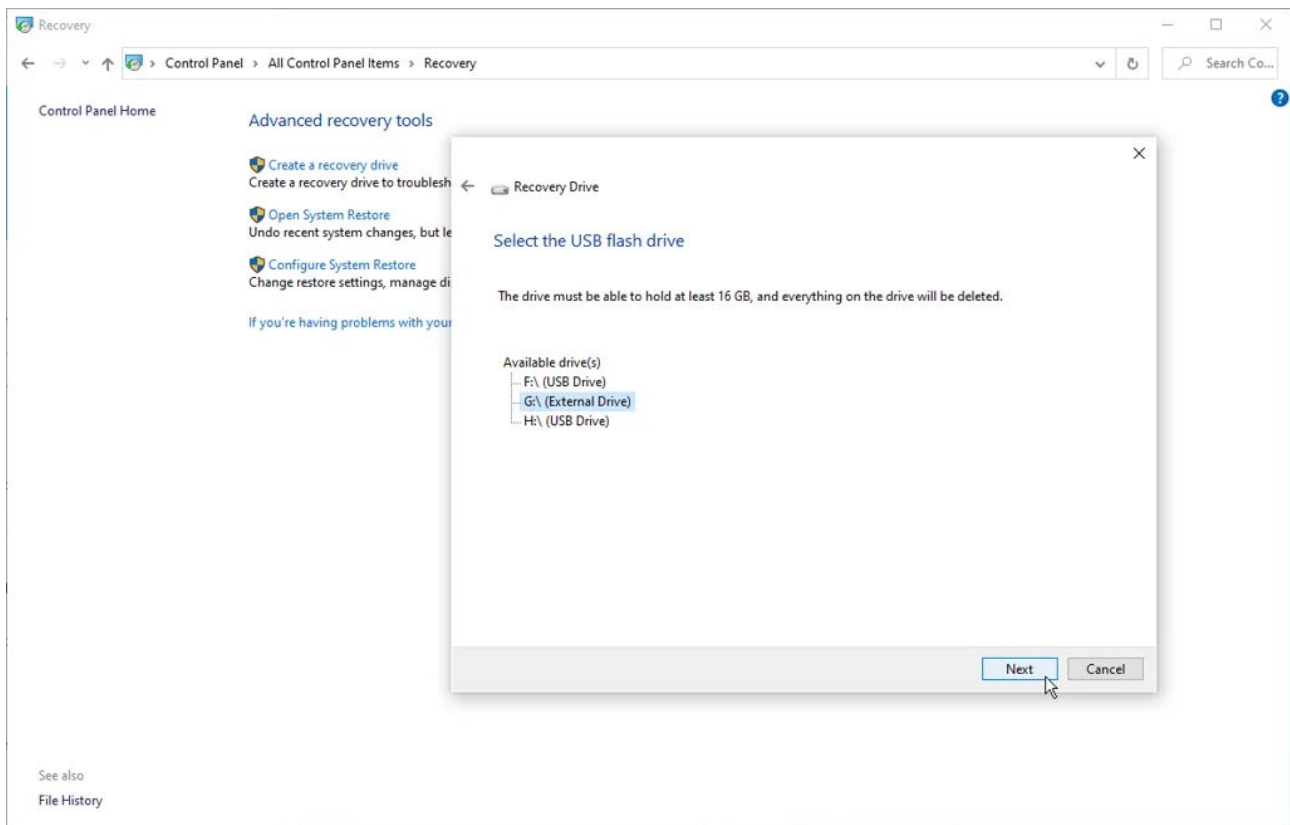
After something catastrophic happens, you need to use the Windows Recovery utility to get a fresh start, which requires all those uninstalls and updates again. Instead, back up the Windows system before putting the computer to use but after you have carried out any updates.

This helps restore everything quickly after a disaster.

Set Up a Recovery Drive

First, you need to set up the Recovery Drive as early as possible in your computer's life. Connect a large storage USB drive or insert a DVD into your computer. Type **Recovery Drive** in the search field and click **Create a recovery drive**.

Alternatively, open the Control Panel in icon view, click the icon for Recovery, and click the **Create a recovery drive** link. Answer **Yes** if Windows asks if you want to allow this app to make changes to your device. At the Create a recovery drive screen, check the box for **Back up system files to the recovery drive**, then click Next.

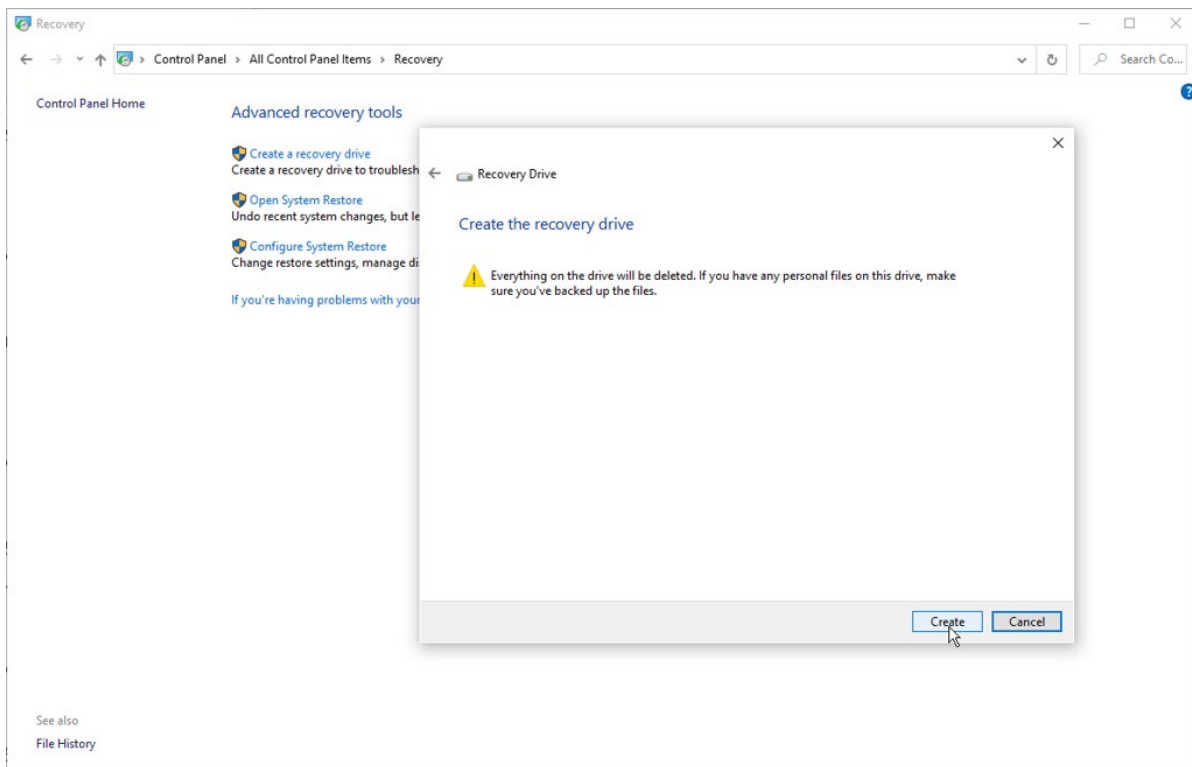


Select the Drive where you wish this back up to be stored.

Wait for Windows to pick up the USB drive or DVD. If multiple drives appear, select the one you want to use. Click Next.

Create the Recovery Drive

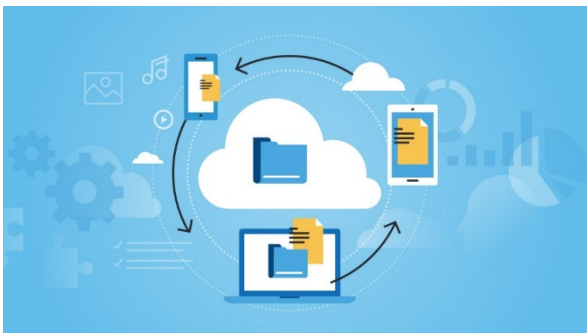
The next screen tells you that everything on the recovery drive will be deleted, so make sure no needed files are on the USB drive or DVD. Click **Create** and the recovery drive will be made. This process may take a long time, so be patient. After the drive has been created, click **Finish**.



Windows can also help you create a System Image, which can help recover your baseline system in case it will not boot up. You can find it by typing:

Making an image is like taking a snapshot-in-time of your current system—restoring from it will not bring back your files and programs, which is why it is recommended to do this now, at the beginning of a new PC's life.

Transfer Files



The easiest method of getting files from an old computer to a new computer is to simply have all the old PC files backed up in the cloud with a cloud storage site a like Dropbox, IDrive or Microsoft OneDrive (which is integrated with Windows). Run it on the PCs to back up all the files, then install it on a new PC and all the files across all the devices will appear. Once it is installed and files are transferred, you've also got your file backup system in place, so it's a win/win.

Pick Out a Better Browser

Computer users now have a choice of web browser.

Windows comes with *Edge* as its pre-installed primary web browser. You cannot uninstall *Edge*, because, Microsoft claims, too many things rely on having at least one browser installed. *Edge* now uses the same underlying system



as *Google Chrome*, so you know that web pages will most likely render the way they're supposed to.

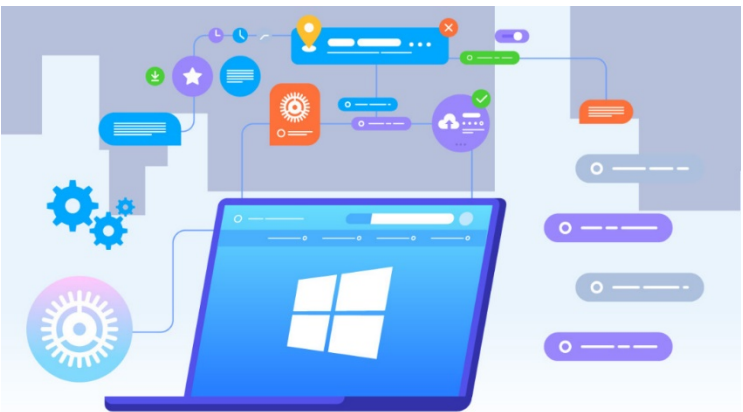
You could also install Chrome, like almost [70 percent of people do](#).

Mozilla Firefox remains popular.

Place Your Programs

No PC is really complete without at least an office suite, a photo-editing tool, a security application and a web browser.

There are free alternatives for almost any program you might need, many of which are web-based so you can use them right in the browser. Here are some that may suit you: [The Best Free Software](#).



If a user wants the same setup as their previous machine, then it is essential that a check is made of the Program Files folder on the C: drive of their old Windows PC. Make a list of the programs there. It is also probable they may want to carry over the settings and log-in info all their communications like emails and direct messages.

Two other key pieces of software to consider when setting up a computer for the first time: a [VPN](#) to keep Internet traffic private and a [password manager](#) to help you keep track of the credentials they will need to log in at services across the web and on their PC. Both application types are available as freeware providing basic features.

Tune-Up Time



On the right hardware, Windows 10 is impressively fast, but tweaks always help performance.

In the past, Windows could benefit a lot from using third-party tune-up software. You can still find plenty of that however many of the tools you need to optimize Windows are built

right in. They just lack that one-click option to make it all work. That includes using the disk defragmenter, freeing up extra drive space, setting what apps launch at startup, and more.

You can read all about the best options in [How to Tune Up Your Windows 10 PC for Free](#). We also have [12 Tips to Speed Up Windows 10](#), with hardware options like adding more RAM (max it out!) and upgrading to a solid-state drive if you haven't put one in that new PC.

Maybe the best tip in the lot: type adjust appearance in the search on the Windows taskbar. In the Performance Options that pops up, turn off animations, fades, shadows, etc. by clicking Adjust for best performance at the top. Windows may not look as pretty, but it will be a bit faster.

Review Extra Hardware

Getting a new PC is the perfect opportunity to reassess the hardware peripherals being attached. Consider carefully: Is the ancient flatbed scanner needed now that the photographs are all on the phone? Old USB hubs, ink-jet printers, and low-capacity portable hard drives could probably all stand a refresh if not outright dumping.

Old hardware moved to a new PC means you need the latest drivers—that is the software that lets peripherals work well with Windows. If you are hooking up old hardware, even if Windows recognizes it and all seems well, you really should seek out the latest, greatest drivers.

Not everything new is automatically good: That mouse and keyboard that came with your new desktop PC system could be enhanced with more ergonomic or well-built input devices in the keyboard/mouse areas.

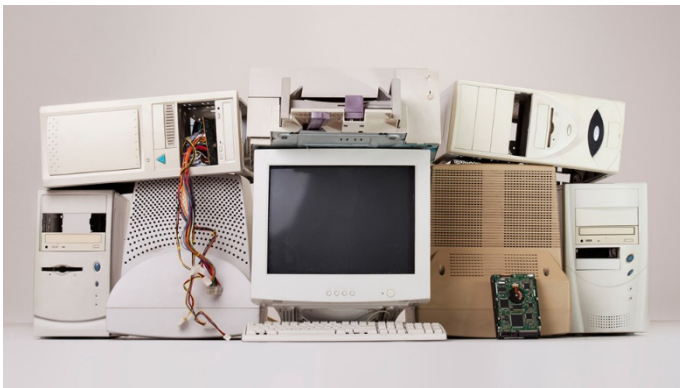
Register Everything

It is no guarantee of great technical support, but if registering the PC with the manufacturer, as well as registering the software and peripherals with their respective companies, there is a better chance of being recognized when the time does come to call for help. Getting a vendor to honour a warranty frequently depends on knowing

when you bought or received the product. It is smart to be registered in case there's a recall due to defects in the product.

Registering online is relatively painless. One downside is that registration can also put your name on endless mailing lists. If that is a concern, deselect that option when signing up or create a special email address you can use to filter them. For example, Gmail users can stick a random period in the first part of their address (such as your.name@gmail.com) and it will still come to the account, but you can filter messages sent to it into special folders.

What to do with your old PC



Whether you give old computers to a recycler, a friend or donate it to others, there are a few things you need to consider.

No matter what you do with (even placing in the rubbish can), sanitize that hard drive before passing it on. At the very least, format the drive(s)

before recycling the old PC. If you're extra paranoid, formatting isn't enough to be 100 percent certain your old data on a drive is completely unrecoverable. There is always the 'Swiss cheese' option: Take the drive out to the workshop and drill holes through it.

Adapted from the work of Eric Griffith's the article, 26 October 2020.