Fornham All Saints Computer Club

How to keep Windows 10 in optimum condition

This Tutorial is provided to help you keep your computer in top condition. If you follow this advice you will be far less likely to be one of those people complaining that my computer is slow to start or runs slowly. Experienced computer users are aware of all of the suggestions below and make time to carry out the important tasks that I have listed. Less experienced users may need to make time available on a regular basis just to do this essential housekeeping.

Set aside time regularly to clean up your PC

Tidy away files,

Check your backups to make sure that they worked.

Perhaps run an extra virus scan with something like Malwarebytes Free.

Do some of the jobs on the list below.

But first - Using the Windows 10 Search Box

Some people don't know how to use this useful feature. This search box is shown on the left of the task bar at the bottom of the screen. If you can't see it, follow this advice.

Search Box

First make sure that you are using small task bar buttons.

1. Right click the Taskbar and choose Taskbar settings.

2. Make sure that Use small taskbar buttons is NOT selected. Make sure that Cortana isn't set to Hidden. If Cortana search box is missing on your computer, it might be because it's hidden. In Windows 10 you have an option to hide the search box, display it as a button, or as a search box. If for some reason search box is set to hidden, you won't be able to use it, but you can easily fix that by following these steps:

> 1. Right click the Taskbar.
>
> 2. Choose Cortana > Show search box.
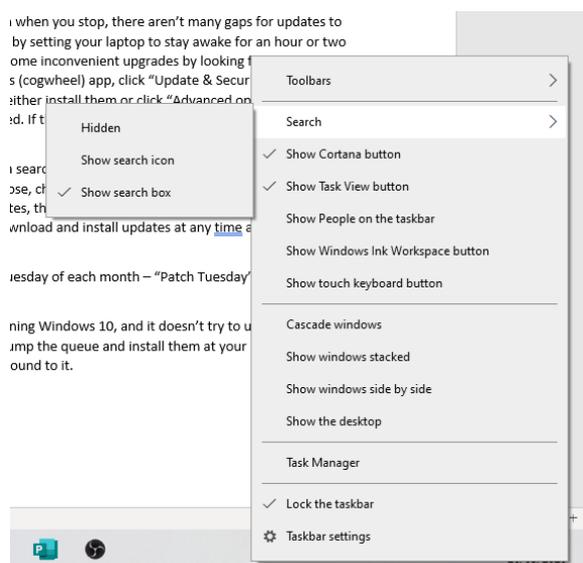
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Windows Updates

When Windows updates your computer and things go wrong it can create a lot of damage to your system. The first job is to ensure that Windows 10 updates works as it should. It keeps your system secure and provides bug fixes and updated software to keep your system running at its best. The problem is that it's very intrusive and unless it's well managed can make your system almost unusable at the times when you need it most. These unexpected updates can be a real pain.

How can I stop an unexpected Windows 10 update?

Consider this example from the Guardian Newspaper

Celia's working day was almost ruined after she was caught out by an enforced update. Can she stop it happening again?

Yesterday, I intended to take my laptop to visit a client, but when I was about to set off, yup, I couldn't turn it off without allowing Microsoft to do its upgrades. We all know how long that takes, and I had a train to catch, so I ended up having to wing the whole presentation. The infuriating thing is that I knew there was an upgrade around, so I had checked the power settings that morning to see if one was waiting to be installed.

There was no update at 9am. Somehow Microsoft snuck it in without my noticing. I do understand that people need to install updates, but can't Microsoft give us an escape route? This is my computer and my software and my business, so please can you trust me, just this once?

It's easy to be caught out by Windows updates, and I once left the house carrying an open laptop, confident that the update would finish long before the battery ran down. Microsoft takes a paternalistic view of updates: it tries to do what's best for people who don't know what they are doing and Microsoft has a Windows Update FAQ and a help page with a Trouble-shooter that you can download to help fix update problems

Your job is to manage the update process.

Update strategy

Your PC may appear to be up-to-date, but a search may find updates marked 'pending install' or 'pending restart'.

Laptops that are only used intermittently seem more likely to receive forced updates. Microsoft tries to download updates in the background without users being interrupted or even aware that it's happening. If you have an always-on desktop PC, the process is almost completely reliable. If you use a laptop for intense work then shut it down when you stop, there aren't many gaps for updates to be downloaded and installed. You can help by setting your laptop to stay awake for an hour or two while it's charging. You can also pre-empt some inconvenient upgrades by looking for them. During your housekeeping session, run the Settings (cogwheel) app, click "Update & Security" and see if any updates are pending. If there are, you can either install them or click "Advanced options" and pick a time and date when you want them installed. If there aren't, click the button "Check for updates" and see if it finds any.

If you need a lot of updates, they tend to come in batches, not all at once. One thing to remember is that Windows will download and install updates at any time and it is this process that slows things down.

Pay particular attention after the second Tuesday of each month – "Patch Tuesday" – when Microsoft usually releases security fixes.

Microsoft is updating almost 700m PCs running Windows 10, and it doesn't try to update all of them at once. By checking for updates, you can jump the queue and install them at your preferred time, not when Microsoft's update servers get around to it.

Schedule a restart

When you have a restart pending, the Settings app provides two options: "Restart now" and "Schedule the restart". Choose to schedule it and you can enter a date and time for the restart, which means you can put it off for up to six days.

Also click on "Advanced options" on the same Settings screen and select the last option: "We'll show a reminder when we're going to restart. If you want to see more notifications about restarting, turn this on." Instead of simply restarting at the time you entered, Windows 10 will ask again, enabling you to delay it again. You need to have a pending restart before the restart setting is accessible.

Active hours

Windows 10 lets you set "Active hours" in the Windows Update section of the Settings app. Click on "Change active hours" to set the times when you usually use your PC. You can reserve 18 hours out of 24 for work. Microsoft will generally not **restart** your PC during these times. If you are using your PC, you should get a notification to tell you that a restart is pending. You can either hit "Restart now" or "View settings" and select a time and date for the restart.

Save your work before restarts though.

If your laptop is asleep it will not wake to do the restart unless it is within the time frame that you have set for updates to be allowed.

This will not stop your computer from downloading stuff at any time of day. If this is a problem for you, ask about how to wake the computer from sleep to allow updates at night.

Sometimes you will see that an update has failed. Give it a few weeks to keep trying but if it continues to fail try using the trouble-shooter to resolve the problem.

Settings > Trouble-shooter > Updates

Automatic Maintenance

Security and Maintenance

This runs in the background anytime you're idle, including when your computer sleeps so long as you're plugged into the wall. It's automatically checking for errors to fix, defragging your hard drive, and running optimization services to improve the overall performance of your PC.

For some users, automatic maintenance actually does what it's supposed to do, especially on better quality computers. For others, it can slow down your computer, because sometimes it runs when

you're not actually idle. When this happens, automatic maintenance in Windows 10 ruins system performance.

Can you Disable Automatic Maintenance in Windows 10?

Unfortunately, for the time being, you can't disable automatic maintenance in Windows 10 like you could Windows 7 and 8. By tweaking the settings to a time when you won't be at your PC, like overnight, it will be less obtrusive.

If you notice maintenance is draining system resources, try turning off hibernate, sleep, and other power options that are more likely to trigger automatic maintenance in Windows 10

Automatic maintenance in Windows 10 is meant to make your PC perform better, especially when you come back from being idle. Tweak the settings to get automatic maintenance to work the way you want it, troubleshoot when it doesn't, and take advantage of all the built-in ways Microsoft helps make your computer run at its best with Windows 10.

Search 'automatic maintenance' and choose 'Change Automatic maintenance Settings'

Search 'Maintenance' and choose 'Security and Maintenance' – Then choose 'Change security and Maintenance Settings'

The above settings allow you to set a time when the automatic maintenance begins. As with Updates, you need to ensure that your system is switched on for this to work, but it will wake from sleep if you chose the setting.

Restore Points

These are really valuable if your computer develops a problem. Often caused by downloading something or installing something that caused a fault

In Windows the default condition is to Turn Off Restore Points, so you need to turn them on. This has saved me on many occasions when something goes wrong. I just reset my system to an earlier date and usually the problem is resolved.

Create a Restore Point

First you need to set up the restore function To Enable System Restore

Search for 'restore' and choose 'Create a restore point' Then click the configure button. **Click to enable** 'Turn on system protection' and then use the **Max Usage slider** to determine how much of your hard drive to use to store Restore Points — 5% to 10% is usually sufficient — and click **OK**. If you ever need to create a Restore Point manually (just before you start messing with any system settings, for example), return to this dialog box and click the **Create**… button, otherwise Windows 10 will create them automatically.

To Create a Restore Point

Search Restore and choose Create Restore Point

Go to the pop-up panel and access the System Protection Tab

At the bottom there is a Create Restore Point Option – Just Click it.

Restore your PC

Whenever you want to return your system to a particular Restore Point, open the **System Properties** dialog box again (see Step 1), click the **System Protection** tab and then click the **System Restore**… button. Follow the on-screen instructions and select the desired Restore Point when prompted. You can also click the Scan for affected programs button before going any further, to see what might change on your PC afterwards. When you're happy to proceed, click **Next**.

Take note of the option to view more restore points. If you know roughly when your system started to misbehave, you need to choose a point from before that date.

Using a restore point when your device won't boot

The previous steps went over how to use a restore point when you still have access to the desktop. However, there will be times when you may need to use System Restore because a system change is preventing your device from starting.

If you are unable to start your computer, it's possible to use the system advanced options to access System Restore, which you can do with these steps:

1. Try to start your PC three times to trigger automatic repair on Windows 10.

2. Click on Advanced Startup.

3. Click on Troubleshoot.

4. Click on Advanced options.

5. Click on System Restore.

This is a really useful thing to do three or four times per annum. This is partly because Windows deletes older Restore Points without warning.

Try to reduce the load on your computer to ensure that it's as responsive as possible.

Uninstall old software

Everyone likes to install free software just to see if it's worth keeping, but it's all too easy to forget about it once it's been rejected. Some software falls out of favour over time, too, but it still wastes hard drive space and can slow things down if it also runs pointless programs in the background (see later suggestions).

Start by uninstalling any software you don't want, no longer use or just can't remember installing in the first place. Go to **Control Panel > Programs > Uninstall a program** and look carefully through the list that appears. Just select an entry, click the **Uninstall** option to remove it and follow the prompts.

If you are not sure what a particular program is, just type its name into a search box on the internet and you will find out. Don't delete unless you are sure.

If you need to install and try out a new program, create a system restore point first, then install the program. See if you want to keep it. If not, uninstall it and then go back to the created system restore point. Practical if you can do it within say a day. This way you won't have residual junk from the program remain on your system.

Apps from the Microsoft store are removed in a different way. Go to the start screen and right click the App, then choose the uninstall option.

Clean the unwanted stuff from your hard drive

Use the **Disk Cleanup Tool** – Type '**Disk Clean-up** and choose the '**C**:' drive.

As part of your housekeeping clean up the junk. Depending on your computer usage, you could decide to do it every month or quarterly. On this day, use your built-in Disk Cleanup Tool and clear up your junk files.

Junk files are files that remain on your computer after a task has been performed. Sometimes, Windows or some program needs to create temporary files while doing some task and then forgets to delete the temporary files it created. As time goes by, your computer is full of junk files in the form of temporary files, log files, downloaded files, and unwanted Windows registry entries. While the Disk Cleanup Tool does a good job, some of you may prefer to use a third-party free junk file cleaner like CCleaner.

Stop Unwanted software from starting Up when you switch on

People often complain that their computer is slow to start up. It's usually because too many programs are loading when you switch on. When your computer is new, there are hardly any. As time goes by and new software is added the list becomes long. All programs can be started from the desktop or start screen anyway. So, consider only start things like Anti-Virus software that are essential when you start your computer.

Task Manager

Use Task Manager by right clicking the taskbar and selecting it from the list. Then click the startup tab. A single click on any item in the list followed by a single click on 'disable button' will stop the program from starting up.

So, decide for yourself which one's you really need to start-up every time your Windows starts. You can also delay Startup Programs or control the order in which they load when Windows starts by downloading a free app. I use Autorun organizer. It tells me the boot up time and suggests the best programs to delay the startup.

How to stop Windows 10 apps from running in the background

Search for 'Background Apps' in the search box and you will see the screen below
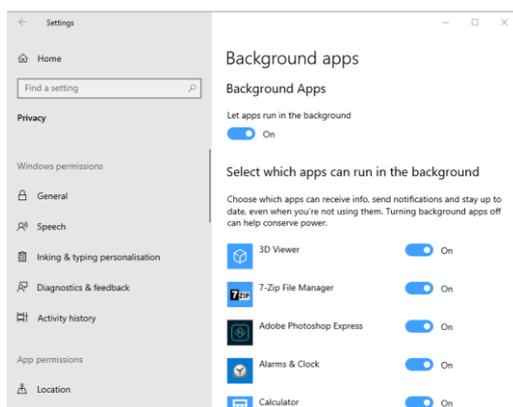
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On the "Background apps" page use one of the two options:

o Turn off the Let apps run in the background toggle switch to disable all apps acquired from the Store.

o Turn off the toggle switches for the specific apps you don't want to run in the background.

So, hopefully. If you are able to establish a regime that deals with the above issues on a regular basis, you should find your system to be more reliable and responsive than ever.

Otherwise you may just end up as one of the crowd, complaining that 'My laptop is slow, I think I need a new one!