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Microsoft updates such as BitLocker encryption and Remote Desktop. Windows 10 Enterprise: This version of Windows 10 is designed for large businesses and includes features such as DirectAccess and AppLocker. Step 1: Download the Windows 10 Installation Media To install Windows 10, you will need to download the installation media from the Microsoft website. You can do this by following these steps: Go to the Microsoft website and click on the "Download" button. Select the version of Windows 10 you want to install and click on the "Download" button. Choose the language and architecture (32-bit or 64-bit) of the installation media. Click on the "Download" button to start the download process. Once the download is complete, you will have a file called "MediaCreationTool.exe". This file is used to create a bootable USB drive or DVD that you can use to install Windows 10. Creating a bootable USB drive, you will need a USB drive with at least 8 GB of free space. Here's how to create a bootable USB drive: Insert the USB drive into your computer. Run the MediaCreationTool.exe file and follow the prompts. Select the USB drive as the installation media and click on the "Next" button. Wait for the process to complete. This may take several minutes. Step 2: Prepare Your Computer for Installation Before you start the installation process, you need to prepare your computer. Here are the steps to follow: Backup your data: Before you start the installation process, make sure to backup your important files and data. You can use an external hard drive or cloud storage service to backup your data. Disconnect any external devices: Disconnect any external devices such as USB drives, printers, and scanners. Disable any antivirus software: Disable any antivirus software you have installed on your computer. Booting from the Installation Media To start the installation process, you need to boot from the installation media. Here's how to do it: Insert the USB drive or DVD into your computer. Restart your computer. Press the key to enter the boot menu (usually F12 or Esc). Select the USB drive or DVD as the boot device. Step 3: Start the Installation Process Once you have booted from the installation media, you can start the installation process. Here are the steps to follow: Language and time settings: Select your language and time settings. Accept the license terms: Read and accept the license terms. Choose the installation type: Choose whether you want to perform a clean install or upgrade from a previous version of Windows. Partitioning the Hard Drive If you're performing a clean install, you will need to partition the hard drive. Here's how to do it: Delete any existing partitions on the hard drive. Create a new partition: Create a new partition for Windows 10. Step 4: Install Windows 10 Once you have partitioned the hard drive, you can start the installation process. Here are the steps to follow: Copy files: Windows 10 will start copying files to the hard drive. Install features: Windows 10 will start installing features such as the desktop and Start menu. Install updates: Windows 10 will start installing any available updates. Activating Windows 10 Once the installation process is complete, you will need to activate Windows 10. Here's how to do it: Enter your product key: Enter your product key to activate Windows 10. Activate Windows 10: Click on the "Activate" button to activate Windows 10. Step 5: Set Up Windows 10 Once you have activated Windows 10, you can start setting it up. Here are the steps to follow: Set up your network: Set up your network connection. Set up your account: Set up your user account. Set up your security settings: Set up your security settings such as Windows Defender and Firewall. Installing Drivers Once you have set up Windows 10, you may need to install drivers for your hardware devices. Here's how to do it: Go to the Device Manager: Go to the Device Manager to see if there are any devices that need drivers. Download and install drivers: Download and install drivers for any devices that need them. Conclusion Installing Windows 10 can seem like a daunting task, but it's actually quite straightforward. By following the steps outlined in this guide, you should be able to install Windows 10 on your computer with ease. Remember to backup your data, disconnect any external devices, and disable any antivirus software before you start the installation process. If you encounter any problems during the installation process, don't hesitate to seek help from Microsoft support or a professional technician. What are the system requirements for installing Windows 10? To install Windows 10, your computer must meet certain system requirements. These requirements include a 1 GHz or faster CPU, 1 GB of RAM for 32-bit or 2 GB of RAM for 64-bit, and 16 GB of free disk space for 32-bit or 20 GB of free disk space for 64-bit. Additionally, your computer must have a DirectX 9 or later graphics card with WDDM 1.0, and a 800×600 or higher display. It's also important to note that some features of Windows 10 may have additional requirements. For example, to use the touch features, you'll need a tablet or a touchscreen monitor. To use the facial recognition feature, you'll need a webcam that supports Windows Hello. Make sure to check the system requirements for any specific features you want to use before installing Windows 10. What are the different types of Windows 10 installations? There are two main types of Windows 10 installations: clean install and in-place upgrade. A clean install involves installing Windows 10 on a computer that doesn't have an operating system or has a different operating system installed. This type of installation gives you a fresh start and allows you to start from scratch. An in-place upgrade, on the other hand, involves upgrading an existing Windows installation to Windows 10. In-place upgrades are available for Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 users. This type of installation preserves your files, settings, and applications, making it a convenient option if you want to upgrade your existing Windows installation. However, it's recommended to perform a clean install if you're experiencing issues with your current Windows installation or if you want to start with a clean slate. How do I create a bootable USB drive for Windows 10 installation? To create a bootable USB drive for Windows 10 installation, you'll need a USB drive with at least 8 GB of free space and a computer with an internet connection. First, download the Media Creation Tool from the Microsoft website. Then, run the tool and select the option to create a bootable USB drive. The tool will download the necessary files and create a bootable USB drive. Once the process is complete, you can use the USB drive to install Windows 10 on your computer. Make sure to set your computer to boot from the USB drive in the BIOS settings. You can do this by restarting your computer, pressing the key to enter the BIOS settings (usually F2, F12, or Del), and setting the USB drive as the first boot device. What is the difference between 32-bit and 64-bit Windows 10 installations? The main difference between 32-bit and 64-bit Windows 10 installations is the amount of RAM they can support. 32-bit Windows 10 can support up to 4 GB of RAM, while 64-bit Windows 10 can support much more RAM, making it a better option for users who need to run memory-intensive applications. Another difference is that 64-bit Windows 10 can run both 32-bit and 64-bit applications, while 32-bit Windows 10 can only run 32-bit applications. If you have a 64-bit CPU and more than 4 GB of RAM, it's recommended to install the 64-bit version of Windows 10. How do I activate Windows 10 after installation? To activate Windows 10 after installation, you'll need a valid product key. If you purchased a retail copy of Windows 10, you can find the product key on the packaging or in the email drive. However, you will need to follow most of this method to start the upgrade. 2 Make sure you have a product key. If you bought Windows 10 through Microsoft using your Microsoft account, your product key is already linked to your account. If you bought Windows 10 from another retailer, you'll have a 25-character product key that you'll need to have handy to activate Windows.[2] If you don't have a product key or you're installing Windows 10 on a new hard drive, make sure you've linked your Windows 10 digital license to your Microsoft account before you start the installation.[3] Head to Settings > Update & Security > Activation from the current installation—if the activation status says Windows is activated with a digital license, click Add an account and follow the on-screen instructions to link your Microsoft account. If you're upgrading from an earlier version and your PC qualifies for a free upgrade, you won't need a product key. Advertisement 3 Go to . This is the official download site for Windows 10. 4 Click Download tool now. This is a blue button in the middle of the page. This downloads the Media Creation Tool, which you'll use to create your installation media (or start your upgrade). 5 Double-click the downloaded file. Its name begins with "MediaCreationTool" and ends with ".exe." You'll find it in your default download folder, which is usually called Downloads. Click Yes when prompted to allow the installer to run. 6 Click Accept to accept the license. It's in the bottom-right corner of the window. 7 Select "Create installation media" and click OK. This option lets you create a Windows installation disc or drive that will work on any compatible PC, not just the one you're using now. If you're updating your PC from an earlier version of Windows, select Upgrade this PC now instead, and then follow the on-screen instructions to install Windows 10. You're done! 8 Select your preferences and click Next. If you're installing Windows on the current PC, you can keep the default options. If you need to install on a different PC, make sure you choose the language and the USB flash drive that's at least 8GB, or any blank DVD to get started.[1] If you already have Windows 10 installed on the PC and just want to reinstall it, it'll be easiest to reinstall it from within Windows 10 instead of creating installation media. If you want to upgrade from Windows 7 or Windows 8.1, you won't need to create a DVD. Otherwise, choose the USB flash drive option. 10 Create your installation media. The steps are a little different depending on what you're doing:[4] Flash drive: Select your flash drive from the list, click Next, and wait for the installation files to install. When the process is complete, click Finish. DVD/ISO: Click Save to save the ISO file to your computer—it may take a while because the file is large and has to be downloaded. Once downloaded, you'll see a progress screen that monitors the download. When the download is complete, click Open DVD burner on the "Burn the ISO file to a DVD" screen, select your DVD burner, and then click Burn. Advertisement 1 Connect your Windows 10 installation media. If you created a flash drive, connect it to the PC on which you want to install Windows 10. If you made a DVD, insert it into the drive now. 2 Boot the PC into the BIOS. If your PC is not already set up to boot from your flash or optical drive, rebooting from your installation media won't work. You'll need to make a quick change in your BIOS to change the boot order. There are a few ways to get in:[5] Windows 8.1 or 10: From Windows, open Settings, select Update & Recovery or Update & Security, and go to Recovery > Restart now > Troubleshoot > Advanced options > UEFI Firmware Settings > Restart. Any PC: Reboot the PC and immediately start pressing (over and over again) the keyboard key required by your PC to enter "Setup," or the BIOS. The key varies by computer, but here are some of the most common keys: Acer and Asus: F2 or Del Dell: F2 or F12 HP: ESC or F10 Lenovo: F1, F2, or Fn + F2 Lenovo ThinkPads: Enter + F1. MSI: DEL Microsoft Surface Tablets: Press and hold the volume-up button, Samsung and Toshiba: F2 Sony: F1, F2, or F3 3 Go to the Boot tab. You'll use the arrow keys to select the Boot Order, depending on your computer's manufacturer. 4 Select a device from which to boot. You have a couple of options here: For a USB flash drive, select the Removable Devices option. For a disc installation, select the CD-ROM Drive or Optical Drive option. 5 Press the + key until your boot option is first. Once either Removable Devices or CD-ROM Drive is at the top of the list, your computer will select your choice as its default boot option. On some computers, you'll instead press one of the function keys (e.g., F5 or F6) to navigate an option up to the top of the menu. The key will be listed on the right side of the screen. 6 Save your settings. You should see a key prompt (e.g., F10 at the bottom of the screen that correlates to "Save and Exit"). Pressing it will save your settings and restart your computer. 7 Wait for your computer to restart. Once your computer finishes restarting, you'll see a window here with your geographical data. You're now ready to begin setting up your Windows 10 installation. Advertisement 1 Click Next when prompted. You can also change the options on this page (e.g., the setup language) before continuing if need be. 2 Click Install Now. It's in the middle of the window. 3 Enter your Windows 10 key, then click Next. If you don't have a Windows 10 key, instead click Skip in the bottom-right corner of the screen. If you've already installed Windows 10 on this PC and were signed in with your Microsoft account, your key should be linked to your account. When prompted, just sign in with your Microsoft account and Windows will locate your key.[6] If you've changed hardware in the PC, such as replacing the motherboard, you can activate Windows after installing by going to Settings > Update & Security > Activation > Troubleshoot > I changed hardware on this device recently. Sign in with your Microsoft account when prompted, choose This is the device I'm using right now, and then click Activate. 4 Follow the on-screen instructions to install Windows 10. You'll be asked to perform a few tasks, such as connecting to Wi-Fi and choosing some preferences. Once the installation is complete, you'll have a fresh new installation of Windows 10.[7] If you're upgrading from an earlier version of Windows, you'll be asked if you want to upgrade the current operating system or do a custom install. If you choose Upgrade, you'll preserve existing apps and files. Advertisement Ad New Question Question Will I lose my data if I reinstall Windows 10? Based on step 5 above, when it prompts "Which type of installation do you want?", you should select "Upgrade" to keep your files and settings. If you select "Custom," you will have a clean installation and all of the files and settings of your previous version of Windows will be cleaned. Question What button do I press for boot options? This is commonly F12, but can vary, depending on manufacturer. Your system will tell you which key to press upon first turning on the machine. Question My laptop has the key embedded in its motherboard, so do I need to enter it again? It should detect the key if it's on your motherboard. If not, you can re-enter the key. See more answers Ask a Question Advertisement Thank's Advertisement Reviewed by: Professional Technologist This article was reviewed by Stan Kats and by wikiHow staff writer, Nicole Levine, MFA. Stan Kats is a Professional Technologist and the COO and Chief Technologist for The STG IT Consulting Group in West Hollywood, California. Stan provides comprehensive technology solutions to businesses through managed IT services, and for individuals through his consumer service business, Stan's Tech Garage. Stan holds a BA in International Relations from The University of Southern California. He began his career working in the Fortune 500 IT world. Stan founded his companies to offer an enterprise-level of expertise for small businesses and individuals. This article has been viewed 1,355,841 times. Co-authors: 43 Updated: March 7, 2025 Views: 1,355,841 Categories: Windows 10 Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 1,355,841 times. There are several ways to install Windows 10 on your PC, whether you're upgrading from Windows 7 or 8, installing a new operating system from scratch, or reinstalling a fresh version of Windows 10. There are still ways to get a free Windows 10 upgrade license, too. How to Get a Windows 10 License There are a variety of ways you can get a Windows 10 license for your PC, and many of them are still free. Upgrade from Windows 7 or 8: Microsoft still offers a free Windows 10 upgrade to PC users who use accessibility tools. You can also still install Windows 10 under a Windows 7 or 8 key in the installer to receive a free Windows 10 upgrade license. Once you've performed the upgrade once, your PC has a Windows 10 license forever. So, if you upgraded when Windows 10 was released and downgraded shortly after, you're still eligible to upgrade to Windows 10 for free. A license associated with your PC is stored on Microsoft's servers. Buy a new PC with Windows 10: If your PC came with Windows 10 installed, it likely has a license key embedded into its UEFI firmware. The manufacturer paid for a license and you can reinstall Windows 10 on the PC without entering the key. Windows 10's installer will pull the key from a chip on the motherboard. Purchase a Windows 10 license: If you're building your own PC and don't yet have an operating system, you can purchase a Windows 10 license from Microsoft, just as you could with previous versions of Windows. Don't get a license: You can also install Windows 10 without entering a product key. You'll see messages telling you your Windows 10 system isn't licensed and needs to be activated, but it will be completely usable. You can even purchase a Windows 10 license from the Store within Windows 10 to turn it into a properly licensed Windows 10 PC. This is a convenient solution for testing Windows 10 on a PC without purchasing it first. Once you know which method is going to work for you, proceed to one of the sections below to install Windows 10. You can use Microsoft's upgrade tool to install Windows 10 on your PC if you already have Windows 7 or 8.1 installed. This will also make it possible to downgrade and go back to Windows 7 or 8.1 after you perform the upgrade, if you don't like it. If you're taking advantage of the the Assistive Technologies offer, just download the tool from the Assistive Technologies website and click through the wizard. It will give your PC a free Windows 10 license and install Windows 10. The Assistive Technologies offer will expire on December 31, 2017. However, if you take advantage of the offer before then, your PC will permanently have a genuine Windows 10 license. If you're upgrading to Windows 10 for another reason—perhaps you've previously upgraded to Windows 10 on the current PC and it already has a valid license—you can use the Download Windows 10 tool. Click "Download Tool Now", run it, and select "Upgrade this PC". Follow the instructions on your screen to complete the upgrade process. The tool you use will download the Windows 10 installation files and begin the installation process. If you don't want to upgrade from an existing Windows installation, you can download the official Windows 10 installation media for free from Microsoft and perform a clean install. To do this, visit Microsoft's Download Windows 10 page, click "Download Tool Now", and run the downloaded file. Select "Create installation media for another PC". Be sure to select the language, edition, and architecture you want to install of Windows 10. If you're installing it on a PC with a 64-bit CPU, you probably want the 64-bit version. If you're installing it on a PC with a 32-bit CPU, you'll need the 32-bit version. You can check what type of CPU your PC has if you don't know off the top of your head. If you're installing Windows 10 on the current PC, just keep the "Use the recommended options for this PC" box checked and the tool will automatically download the correct version for your current PC. The tool will allow you to copy the Windows 10 installation files to a USB drive or burn them to a DVD. If you're using a USB drive, it must be 4 GB or larger in size. All files on the USB drive will be erased as part of this process. If you want to install Windows 10 in a virtual machine, select the "ISO file" option here. The tool will download an ISO file, and you can then boot the downloaded ISO in a virtual machine to install Windows 10 inside it. Once you've created installation media, you'll need to insert it into the PC you want to install Windows 10 on. You then boot from the installation media. This may require modifying the boot order in your PC's BIOS or UEFI firmware. On the Windows Setup screen, select your language, time and currency format, and keyboard layout. Click "Next" to continue. When you reach the installer screen, select "Install Now" and follow the instructions to install Windows 10 on your PC. When you see the Activate Windows screen, you'll need to either enter a key or skip it. You may not see this screen if Windows 10 automatically detects a key associated with your PC's hardware. If you've never installed and activated Windows 10 on this computer before, enter your Windows 10 key here. If you don't have one, but you have a valid Windows 7, 8, or 8.1 key, enter it here instead. If you've previously taken advantage of the free Windows 10 upgrade offer on this PC, click "I don't have a product key". Windows will automatically activate with a "digital license" associated with your PC's hardware on Microsoft's servers once it's installed. When you reach the "Which type of installation do you want?" screen, click "Custom" to perform a clean installation and remove everything on your PC. (If you've changed your mind and want to upgrade your existing installation, you can click "Upgrade".) On the next screen, select the hard drive you want to install Windows on and erase it. If you have multiple partitions on that drive, you may want to erase those as well. Warning: When you delete a partition, you're also deleting all the files on that partition. Be sure you have backups of any important files before doing this! When you're done erasing partitions, you should have a big block of "Unallocated Space". Select that, click "New", and once it's formatted your drive, click Next. Windows 10 will install itself, and may restart a few times during this process. When it's done, you'll see the normal setup interface you see when setting up Windows 10 on any new PC, where you can add user accounts and adjust various settings. If you already have Windows 10 on your PC and want to perform a fresh install, you can also do that. Windows 10's Creators Update makes it much easier to install Windows 10 from scratch. You can use the "Fresh start" option in Windows Defender to get a completely fresh-from-Microsoft Windows 10 system. Unlike the standard Refresh and Reset options, which preserve any bloatware your PC manufacturer installed, this will wipe away all that manufacturer-installed stuff and just leave a fresh Windows 10 system. If you don't currently have Windows 10 installed or just prefer doing things the old-fashioned way, you can also use the Download Windows 10 application to create Windows 10 installation media and reinstall from scratch, if you prefer. Whether your PC came with a Windows 10 license or you previously took advantage of the free upgrade offer, you won't need to enter a license key during this process. Your Windows 10 license will be automatically acquired from your PC's hardware or via Microsoft's servers. A computer cannot function without an operating system, so installing Windows 10 is a critical step that every non-Mac user should know how to do. Of course, most devices come pre-configured out of the box, which means Windows is preinstalled and you don't need to worry about adding the OS manually. However, there are occasions when you might need to install Windows 10 yourself. Perhaps your device is running an outdated version of Windows, and you need to upgrade to Windows 10. Or maybe you want to perform a clean installation as your operating system is experiencing issues. Or you could simply want to add Windows 10 to a new PC or laptop. You may like Whatever your reason, you can use our guide on how to perform a full Windows 10 installation. We've also included a walkthrough for upgrading from a previous version of Windows. It's worth noting that installing Windows 10 can be a lengthy process, so make sure you have enough time to wait it out. How to install Windows 10: Full installationBefore we get into the installation walkthrough, it's worth noting that installing Windows 10 can be a lengthy process. Make sure you have enough time to wait it out. 1. Check your device meets the Windows 10 system requirements. Below you'll find the minimum specs needed to run Windows 10, so check your device is capable: Get instant access to breaking news, the hottest reviews, great deals and helpful tips.CPU: 1GHz or faster processor RAM: 4GB for Windows 10 32-bit or 2GB for Windows 10 64-bit Storage: 32GB of space or more GPU: DirectX 9 compatible or later with WDDM 1.0 driver Display: 800x600 resolution or higherIf your computer is lacking in terms of specs, then check out our roundup of the best laptops, or get a beastly machine by choosing one of our best gaming PCs. The Dell XPS 15 is an excellent Windows10 laptop (Image credit: Tom's Guide)2. Create USB installation media. Visit Microsoft's Windows 10 download page and select "Download tool now" under the "create Windows 10 installation media" section. Transfer the downloaded installer tool to a USB drive.(Image credit: Windows)3. Run the installer tool. Open the installer tool by clicking on it. Accept Microsoft's terms, and then select "Create installation media for another PC" on the "What do you want to do?" page. After selecting which language you want Windows 10 to run in, and which edition you want as well (32-bit or 62-bit), you'll be asked what type of media you want to use. Installing from a USB drive is definitely the preferred option but you can also install from a CD or ISO file. Once you choose your device, the installer tool will download the required files and put them onto your drive. 4. Use your installation media. Insert your installation media into your device and then access the computer's BIOS or UEFI. These are the systems that allow you to control your computer's core hardware. The process of accessing these systems is unique to each device, but the manufacturer's website should be able to give you a helping hand here. Generally, you'll need to press the F2, F12 or Delete keys as your computer boots up.(Image credit: Shutterstock)5. Change your computer's boot order. Once you have access to your computer's BIOS/UEFI you'll need to locate the settings for boot order. You need the Windows 10 installation tool to be higher up on the list than the device's current current boot drive: this is the SSD or HDD that your existing OS is stored on. You should move the drive with the installer files to the very top of the boot order menu. Now, when you restart your device the Windows 10 installer should load up first. 6. Restart your device. Save your settings in the BIOS/UEFI and reboot your device. 7. Complete the installation. Your device should now load up the Windows 10 installation tool on restart. This will guide you through the rest of the installation process. How to install Windows 10: Upgrading from an older version of Windows(Image credit: Shutterstock)If you're upgrading to Windows 10 from Windows 7 or Windows 8, the process is much easier. Here's how to upgrade from an older version of the Windows operating system. 1. Download the installer tool. Visit Microsoft's Windows 10 download page and select "Download tool now" under the "create Windows 10 installation media" section.2. Run installer tool. You can just upgrade your version of Windows directly from the installer tool, without creating separate installation media. When you reach the "what do you want to do?" section, select "Upgrade this PC now."3. Complete Windows 10 installation. Now the installer tool will guide you through the rest of the process. Just follow the steps to complete the installation process and you'll have Windows 10 installed on your device at the end of it. More Windows 10 tipsHow to find your Windows 10 product key | How to encrypt files on Windows 10 | How to turn on Bluetooth for Windows 10 | How to screenshot on Windows 10 | How to boot into Windows 10 safe mode | How to split the screen on Windows 10 | How to record a screen on Windows 10 | How to update drivers on Windows 10 | Mapping a network drive in Windows 10 | How to update Windows 10 | How to change the password on Windows 10 | How to factory reset on Windows 10 | How to speed up Windows 10 | How to reinstall Windows 10

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