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Windows Central

COMMAND LINE

How to edit the Registry using Command Prompt on Windows 10

Did you know that you can use Command Prompt to edit the Registry? In this guide, we'll teach you to use the reg.exe tool to modify the Registry on Windows 10.

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The Registry is a big part of Windows. It's the database that stores the most important settings that help the operating system and certain applications to work.

You typically use the "Registry Editor" to modify the database when you need to fix an issue, enable a secret feature, or improve a particular functionality. However, you probably may not know that Windows 10, similar to previous versions, includes **reg.exe**, which is a command-line tool that allows you also to edit the Registry using Command Prompt.

Reg.exe comes built into the operating system, and it includes the same functionalities found in the Registry Editor (GUI). You can even edit entries faster, as you don't have to manually browse the confusing tree database. And you get the flexibility of being able to implement tweaks in the Registry using scripts.

In this Windows 10 guide, we'll walk you through the steps to get started using Reg.exe to edit the Registry using Command Prompt.

How to edit the Registry using Command Prompt

Important: If you're planning to use these commands on your computer, make sure to understand that modifying the Registry is risky, and it can cause irreversible damage to your installation if you don't do it correctly. It's recommended to make a full backup of your computer before proceeding.

To run reg.exe, you first need to start Command Prompt as an administrator with the following steps:

1. Open **Start**.
2. Search for **Command Prompt**.
3. Right-click the result and select **Run as administrator**.
4. To run the tool, type the following command and press **Enter**:

   reg /?

This command will display all the operation types you can use, including:

- REG Query
- REG Add
- REG Delete
- REG Copy
- REG Save
- REG Load
- REG Unload
- REG Restore
- REG Compare
- REG Export
- REG Import
- REG Flags

Note: You can also use REG followed by the operation type and /? to get more help. For example, **REG QUERY /?** or **REG ADD /?**.

You'll also get the return codes: **0** meaning that the operation completed successfully, and **1** indicating the the operation failed. However, you won't get any return codes using the **Compare** switch.

While there a long list of possible command combinations, below we'll be listing the most useful command to get started using reg.exe with Command Prompt.

How to add and delete registry entries

Syntax
- Add: REG ADD KeyName [{/v ValueName | /ve}] [/t Type] [/f]
- Delete: REG DELETE KeyName [{/v ValueName | /ve | /va}] [/f]

Command description
- **KeyName:** Defines the path to the subkey or entry. Valid registry key shortcuts include HKLM, HKCU, HKCR, HKU, and HKCC. If you're trying to edit the registry on a remote computer, you can only use these shortcuts: HKLM and HKU.
- **/v ValueName:** Specifies the name for the registry key to be added or deleted.
- **/ve:** Defines if you're adding or deleting an entry that has a null value.
- **/t Type:** Specifies the type of registry entries. Here's the list of valid types:

  - REG_SZ
  - REG_MULTI_SZ
  - REG_DWORD_BIG_ENDIAN
  - REG_DWORD
  - REG_BINARY
  - REG_DWORD_LITTLE_ENDIAN
  - REG_LINK
  - REG_FULL_RESOURCE_DESCRIPTOR
  - REG_EXPAND_SZ

- **/f:** Adds or deletes registry content without prompting for confirmation.

- **/s Separator:** Defines the character you use to separate multiple instances of data when the **REG_MULTI_SZ** data type is specified and you need to add more than one entry. The default separator is **\0** if it is not specified.
- **/d Data:** Specifies the data for the new entry in the registry.

REG ADD examples

To add a subkey named **MySubkey** under **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software**, use the following example:

REG ADD HKLM\Software\MySubkey

To add a new DWORD (32-bit) value entry named **AppInfo** with the value of **1**, use the following example:

REG ADD HKLM\Software\MySubkey /v AppInfo /t REG_DWORD /d 1

To add a new DWORD (32-bit) value entry named **AppInfo** with value of **1** on a remote computer, use the following example:

REG ADD \\ComputerName\HKLM\Software\MySubkey /v AppInfo /t REG_DWORD /d 1

To add a new Binary Value entry named **Data** with data of **fe340ead**, use the following example:

REG ADD HKLM\Software\MySubkey /v Data /t REG_BINARY /d fe340ead

To add a registry entry with multiple values to **MySubkey** with a value name of MRU of type **REG_MULTI_SZ** and data of **fax\0mail\2\1**, use the following example:

REG ADD HKLM\Software\MySubkey /v MRU /t REG_MULTI_SZ /d fax\0mail\2\1

To add an expanded registry entry to **MySubkey** with a value name of **Path** of type **REG_EXPAND_SZ** and data of **%systemroot%**, use the following example:

REG ADD HKLM\Software\MySubkey /v Path /t REG_EXPAND_SZ /d ^%systemroot^%

REG DELETE examples

To delete the subkey named **MySubkey**, use the following example:

REG DELETE HKLM\Software\MySubkey /f

To delete the subkey named **MySubkey** on a remote computer, use the following example:

REG DELETE \\ComputerName\HKLM\Software\MySubkey /f

To delete the registry entry named **AppInfo** within the **MySubkey** subkey, use the following example:

REG DELETE HKLM\Software\MySubkey /v AppInfo /f

To delete only the registry entries that have no value inside the subkey named **MySubkey**, use the following example:

REG DELETE HKLM\Software\MySubkey /ve

To delete all the registry entries from the **MySubkey** subkey, use the following example:

REG DELETE HKLM\Software\MySubkey /va

How to copy registry entries

Syntax
- Copy: REG COPY KeyName1 KeyName2 [/s] [/f]

Command description
- **KeyName1:** Defines the path to the subkey you want to copy. Valid registry key shortcuts include HKLM, HKCU, HKCR, HKU, and HKCC. If you're trying to copy the registry on a remote computer, you can only use these shortcuts: HKLM and HKU.
- **KeyName2:** Defines the path to the subkey destination. Valid registry key shortcuts include HKLM, HKCU, HKCR, HKU, and HKCC. If you're trying to copy the registry on a remote computer, you can only use these shortcuts: HKLM and HKU.
- **/s:** Copies all subkeys and entries of a particular subkey.
- **/f:** Executes the copy command without prompting for confirmation.

REG COPY examples

To copy all subkeys and values under the key **MySubkey1** to the key **MySubkey2**, use the following example:

REG COPY HKLM\Software\MySubkey1 HKLM\Software\MySubkey2 /s

To copy all values under the subkey **MySubkey1** from a remote computer to the subkey **MySubkey2** on th a new computer, use the following example:

REG COPY \\ComputerName\HKLM\Software\MySubkey1 HKLM\Software\MySubkey2

How to export and import registry entries

Syntax
- Export: REG EXPORT KeyName FileName [/y]
- Import: REG IMPORT FileName

Command description
- **KeyName:** Defines the path to the subkey or entry. Valid registry key shortcuts include HKLM, HKCU, HKCR, HKU, and HKCC.
- **FileName:** Specifies the name and path of the .reg file to be exported or imported.
- **/y:** Overwrites the registry content without prompting for confirmation.

REG EXPORT examples

To export all the content within the subkey **MySubkey**, use the following example:

REG EXPORT HKLM\Software\MySubkey C:\RegKeyBackup.reg

To export and overwrite any existing file, use the following example:

REG EXPORT HKLM\Software\MySubkey C:\RegKeyBackup.reg /y

REG IMPORT examples

To import all the content, including subkeys, entries, and values within the subkey named **MySubkey**, use the following example:

REG IMPORT C:\RegKeyBackup.reg

How to save and restore registry entries

Syntax
- Save: REG SAVE KeyName FileName [/y]
- Restore: REG RESTORE KeyName FileName

Command description
- **KeyName:** Defines the path to the subkey or entry. Valid registry key shortcuts include HKLM, HKCU, HKCR, HKU, and HKCC. If you're trying to edit the registry on a remote computer, you can only use these shortcuts: HKLM and HKU.
- **FileName:** Specifies the name and path of the .hiv file to be saved or restored.
- **/y:** Overwrites the registry content without prompting for confirmation.

REG SAVE examples

To save a copy of subkeys, entries, and values within the subkey named **MySubkey**, use the following example:

REG SAVE HKLM\Software\MySubkey C:\RegKeyBackup.hiv

To save and overwrite any existing file, use the following example:

REG SAVE HKLM\Software\MySubkey C:\RegKeyBackup.hiv /y

REG RESTORE examples

To restore all the content, including subkeys, entries, and values within the subkey named **MySubkey**, use the following example:

REG RESTORE HKLM\Software\MySubkey C:\RegKeyBackup.hiv

Wrapping things up

While you can always use the Registry Editor, you'll find that it's sometimes easier and faster to use the reg.exe command-line tool. However, at the end of the day, you will still be editing the Registry, which is dangerous no matter which tool you use.

Also, make sure to double-check your commands before executing, as you can make mistakes. For example, **REG ADD HKLM\Sofware\MySubkey** is not the same as **REG ADD HKLM\Software\MySubkey**. A mistake like that might not do anything, or it could wreck your entire system. So be careful.

If you're wondering, yes, there is a big difference between **Export** and **Save**. The command **EXPORT** export registry content into a text format that you can easily distribute as a .reg file to other computers.

On the other hand, **SAVE** saves the registry content into a hive file format (.hiv), which preserves ownersh and other important information. You should only use this command if you're restoring entries to the same computer.

It's also important to note that while you can use many of these commands on a remote computer, IMPOR and EXPORT only work on a local computer (not over the network).

Although, we're focusing this guide for Windows 10, keep in mind that reg.exe has been part of the operating system for a long time, as such this should also work on Windows 8.1 and Windows 7.

Do you prefer using the Registry Editor or reg.exe to modify the Windows Registry? Tell us in the comments below.
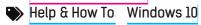
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