

Take control of updates

Discover how to use Windows Update, and wrest back control of the update process from Windows 10.

Updating Windows is an incredibly important part of your day-to-day maintenance, but many people put off the updating experience – if they can. This isn't laziness – Microsoft has quite the reputation for releasing patches before they are ready for general consumption, and there are horror stories of Windows installations falling over.

Despite this, in most circumstances it pays to ensure you're at least up to date with the latest security hotfixes, so opting out of updates altogether – even where possible – isn't practical. Let's see what you can do about ensuring the Windows Update process works with you and not against you.

TAKE BACK CONTROL

When Microsoft released Windows 10, it took control away from the end user running Windows 10 Home, and now forces updates to be installed as soon as they are available and downloaded. At this point, Windows tells you that updates are pending, and prompts you to restart your PC.

It's configured to force a reboot to

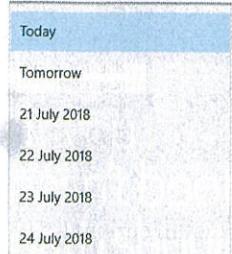
Schedule the restart

Schedule a time

We'll restart to finish installing updates when you tell us to. Just turn this on and pick a time.

On

Pick a time:



Windows 10 Home users can postpone the inevitable forced restart by up to seven days only.

install updates outside your "active hours"—in other words, when you're not typically using your PC, which is 5pm–8am by default (click "Change active hours" from the main Windows Update settings screen to change them). It means you can't delay an update indefinitely simply by refusing to shut down or restart, but you can defer it slightly: Click "Schedule the restart" next to the "Restart now" button, flick the switch to "On," and you can choose to push back the restart by up to seven

days. It's fine as a last resort, but can you really go for seven days without needing to restart or shut down your PC?

You'll have an easier time if you use Windows 10 Pro: Go to "Settings > Update & Security > Windows Update," and click "Advanced Options." The "Pause Updates" switch allows you to pause updates for up to 35 days – handy if you hear of an update causing problems, and want to put it off.

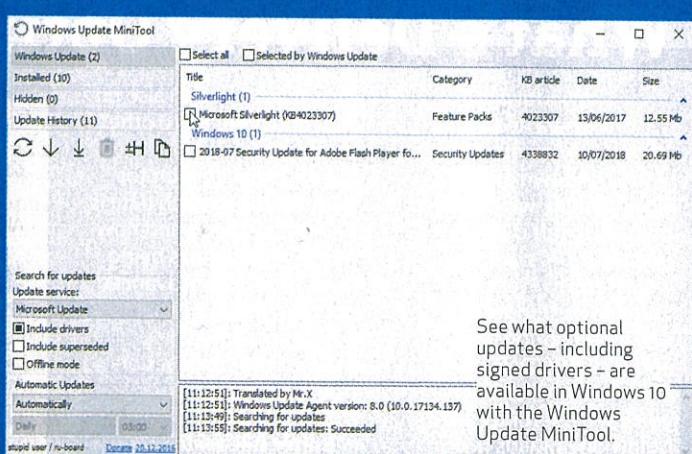
Optional updates

 Windows Update provides "optional" updates that include additional components, such as Silverlight. They also include Microsoft-delivered drivers for a wide range of hardware. Windows 7 and 8.1 users can review and install these via Windows Update, but these updates are hidden from view in Windows 10 – installing driver updates is a hit-and-miss affair, involving going into Device Manager and clicking "Update Driver" within the "Driver" tab of selected devices.

To see what's available – and install it – download

the Windows Update MiniTool (<http://bit.ly/2v9BwtK>). Extract its contents, then run wumt_x64.exe (64-bit) or wumt_x86.exe (32-bit), depending on your Windows system type. Click "Check for updates" under "Update History" after verifying "Include drivers" is selected. Select the updates you want, and click "Install Updates" to install them.

It's also possible to hide unwanted updates here – if you're struggling with an update that repeatedly refuses to install, hiding it stops Windows attempting to install it time and time again.



See what optional updates – including signed drivers – are available in Windows 10 with the Windows Update MiniTool.

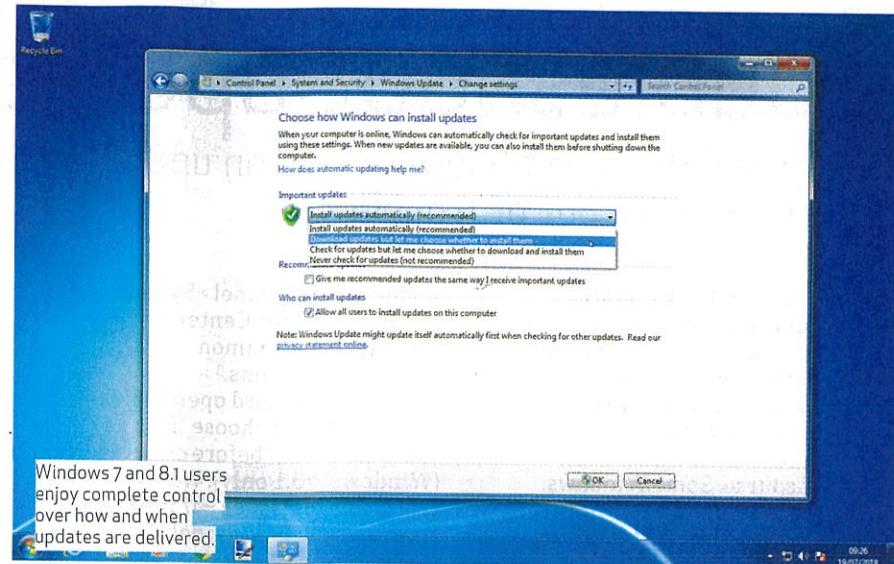
"It's also possible to hide unwanted updates here – if you're struggling with an update that repeatedly refuses to install."

A better way to prevent updates from getting on your system before they're ready is to scroll down to "Choose when updates are installed." You can delay feature updates by around four months after their release by switching from the "Semi-Annual (Targeted)" channel to "Semi-Annual" via the drop-down menu. You can defer this for up to an additional 365 days via the "Feature Update Defer" drop-down menu. It's also possible to defer quality updates—patches and security hotfixes—for up to 30 days via another drop-down menu. That way, you can avoid exposing your PC to an update that's later pulled for stability reasons.

What if you're running Windows 10 Home? The step-by-step guide below reveals a technique for manually disabling Windows Update that works for the latest April 2018 Update. Note, you should still periodically check for updates—launch the tool and re-enable the service to do so, then disable it again after use.

WINDOWS 7 AND 8.1

If you're still using Windows 7 or 8.1, you remain in full control of the process. Open "Control Panel > Windows Update," where you'll see a screen telling you how many updates are waiting to be installed. Click "Check for updates" to refresh this search at any time. Updates are divided into two types: important and optional. You're shown how many of each are available—click the relevant hyperlink to view and select which ones to install using the check boxes. For more information



about a specific update, select it for a summary, then click "More information" for a full description online.

You'll also see a status about whether the update has been downloaded or not, and whether it's ready to be installed on your PC. This status ties into how you've configured Windows Update. Click "OK" to return to the main screen, then click "Change settings" to control when and what updates are deployed to your computer.

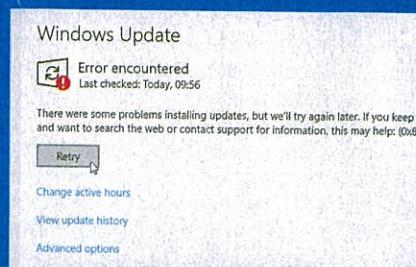
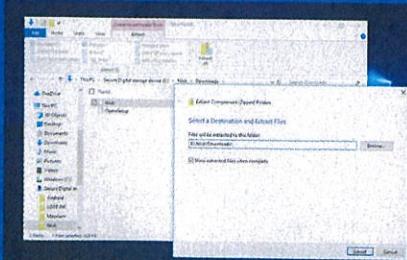
By default, updates are installed automatically either at a set time or when you next reboot, but if you want to pause before installing them, we recommend choosing "Download

updates but let me choose whether to install them." You can also review available updates before downloading them, or switch the feature off entirely—we don't recommend doing this, however, since both Windows 7 and 8.1 are still supported by security hotfixes, so should be kept up to date.

You'll also see a box allowing you to opt out of automatically receiving "recommended" updates alongside critical ones. Unchecking this box means recommended updates like the .NET Framework Tool are moved to the "Optional" category, where they're italicized to make them stand out (see the "Optional updates" boxout opposite).

Switch off Windows Update

How to switch off Windows Update



1 DOWNLOAD AND RUN

Download the Windows Update Blocker tool from www.sordum.org/9470/—the grey "Download" button is just above the "Related Posts" section. Once downloaded, right-click "Wub.zip" and choose "Extract All." Next, double-click "Wub.exe" inside the extracted folder to launch the program.

2 SWITCH OFF SERVICE

A small window appears. Select "Disable Service," and verify that "Protect Service Settings" is checked. Click "Apply Now," and the status should change to a red shield with an X, indicating it's been disabled. Reboot your PC—note any updates already awaiting a reboot will still be installed.

3 CHECK FOR UPDATES

After rebooting, reopen Windows Update Blocker and verify that the service is still disabled. Go to "Settings > Update & Security > Windows Update," where you should find everything appears normal, but click "Check for updates," and you'll see an error, indicating it's been disabled.