

# How to set up Windows 10

We show you how to configure a new Windows 10 PC to suit your needs and protect your privacy

Setting up your new PC isn't as easy as pressing the power button and letting your computer handle the rest, though that's what manufacturers would have you believe. In reality, the process can take several hours as you need to spend time reviewing privacy settings, removing unwanted software and creating backups.

It may sound arduous when all you want to do is play with your new toy, but taking the time to do it properly is worth the effort. Not only will these steps help you organise your operating system to suit your needs and preferences (rather than Microsoft's), they can improve computer performance and protect your valuable information in the event of a data disaster, which is an all-too-common occurrence.

We've put together a step-by-step guide to setting up a new Windows 10 PC, to coincide with the large number of Windows desktops, laptops, 2-in-1s and other devices that have made their way into Australian homes during and after Christmas.

Most of these steps also apply to Windows 8/8.1, and may also work with Windows 7

## Before you begin

You're going to be creating backups and downloading updates in the following steps, so it's important to have the following on hand before starting:

- **An external hard drive, 500GB or larger:** you'll use this to store your system backups and images.
- **A USB thumb drive, 8GB or larger:** to create and store a system recovery drive which can completely restore your computer.
- **10GB or more of monthly internet data:** your new PC isn't likely to be running the latest version of Windows 10, so you're going to have to download a bunch of system and security updates, as well as software. While this probably won't amount to 10GB of data (it'll be closer to 5GB), this allows plenty of breathing room for unexpectedly large updates.

Lastly, set yourself up in a clean, comfortable workspace that you can occupy for a few hours. Creating backups, installing software and downloading updates can take a long time depending on the speed of your internet connection, so you don't want to be in anyone else's way.

## First step: Set up

**01** When you turn on your new computer for the first time, you'll need to enter some details and change a few settings. These encourage you to set up a Microsoft account and ignore the privacy options, but you don't need to do this if you spend a bit of time working through the custom settings. Note that you can click the button in the bottom-left corner to open accessibility options if you're having trouble reading the text.

**02** After picking a language, keyboard layout (US for English speakers in Australia) and accepting the legal documentation, connect your computer to the internet using Wi-Fi or ethernet. You can skip this, but we recommend connecting so you can download updates straight away.

**03** Next, you'll see a screen called **Get going fast**. Do not click **Use express settings**; instead, select **Customize settings**. You can find it hidden towards the bottom left corner of the screen. This will open up the privacy customisation menu. Here, review each setting and decide whether you want to leave it on or off. Before making your decisions, read our rundown on Windows 10 privacy on page 19.

## Customize settings

### Personalization

Personalize your speech, typing, and linking input by sending contacts and calendar details, along with other associated input data to Microsoft.

On ☐

Send typing and linking data to Microsoft to improve the recognition and suggestion platform.

On ☐

Let apps use your advertising ID for experiences across apps.

Off ☐

### Location

Let Windows and apps request your location, including location history, and send Microsoft and trusted partners some location data to improve location services.

On ☐

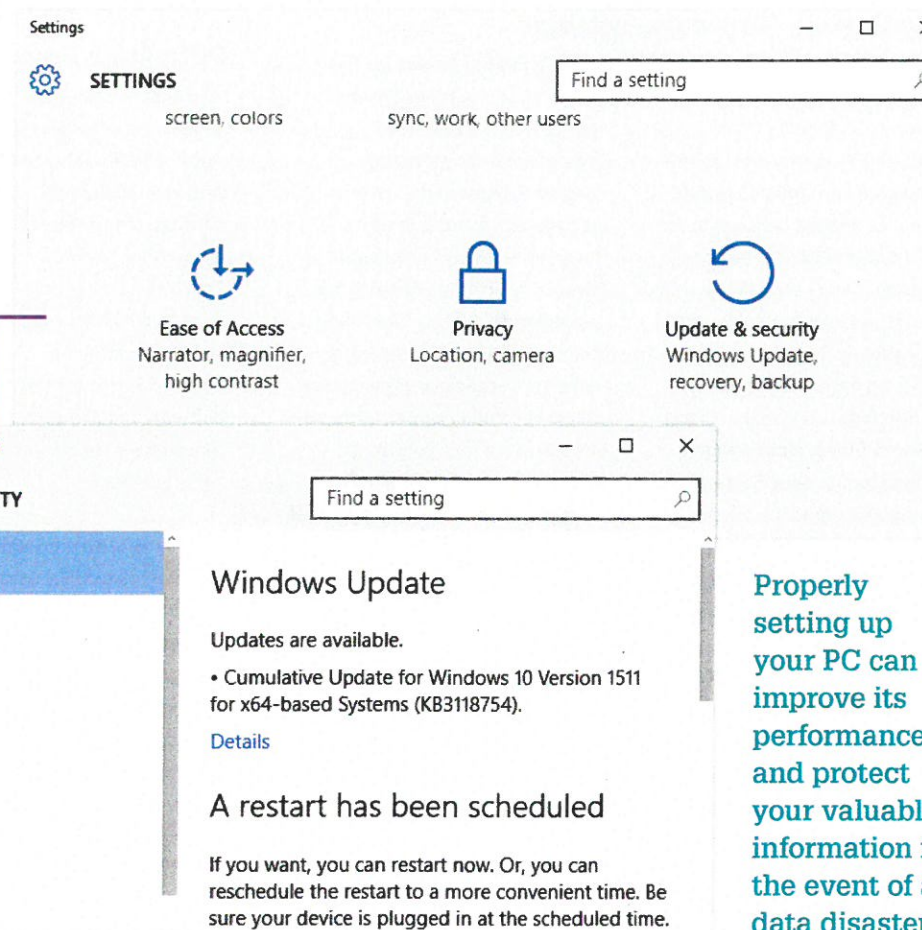
**04** If you can't decide on a particular setting at this point, or you want to research it a little more before committing, continue the installation for now. You can turn these settings on or off after you've finished setting up your computer. That said, you should consider turning off the first two settings under **Connectivity and error reporting**, as we feel that leaving them on could pose a security risk to your personal data.

**05** Next, you'll be asked to log in with your Microsoft account, or create an account if you don't have one. There are certain benefits to having an account, such as the option to sync data between devices (desktop, laptop, smartphone) and set up extensive child protection settings. However, it isn't necessary. If you don't want to create an account, click **Skip this step**. Here, you can create a standard local account with a simple user name and password that will work with or without an internet connection. After this, the manufacturer (e.g. Toshiba, Acer or Asus) may give you the option to set up an account with its brand. This is up to you, but we don't see any real benefit to joining.

## Second step: Get up to date

**01** A series of system and security updates are likely to have been released since your computer was built, boxed and shipped. Windows 10 typically starts installing updates as soon as you log in for the first time, but it's also worth running a manual scan to catch any that the auto-update may have missed. Go to **Settings → Update and Security**, wait a few seconds while your PC searches the Microsoft servers, then download and install any available updates. You can also initiate a manual scan by clicking **Check for updates**.

At this point, you'd usually prepare backup tools, but we're going to make a few changes before putting a system safety net together.



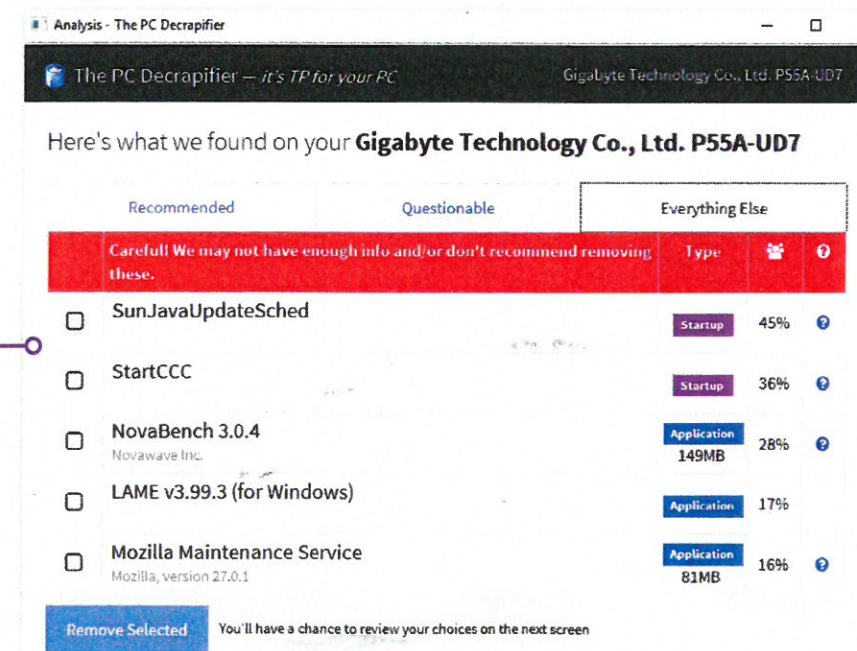
Properly setting up your PC can improve its performance and protect your valuable information in the event of a data disaster

## Third step: Slim down your system

**01** New computers usually come with a bunch of preinstalled software from the manufacturer and Microsoft. Some of it's useful, but a lot of it is of dubious value, which is why it's colloquially known as 'bloatware'. This can take up valuable storage space and system resources, so it's worth spending a bit of time removing the less-than-useful programs.

You can do this one of two ways:

- 1 With an automated program:** These scan your system and identify bloatware, giving you the option to keep or remove it based on their recommendations. We tried The PC Decrapifier ([pcdecrapifier.com](http://pcdecrapifier.com)) and it worked well.
- 2 Manually, using the Control Panel:** Should I Remove It ([shouldiremoveit.com](http://shouldiremoveit.com)) is an extensive database that lists common bloatware with an explanation, and suggestions as to whether you should remove it. The site also includes user ratings and the number of users that have removed each program. If you go to **Control Panel → Programs and Features**, you can browse the list of installed software, then crosscheck it in the Should I Remove It database. It's also available as an automated program, similar to The PC Decrapifier.



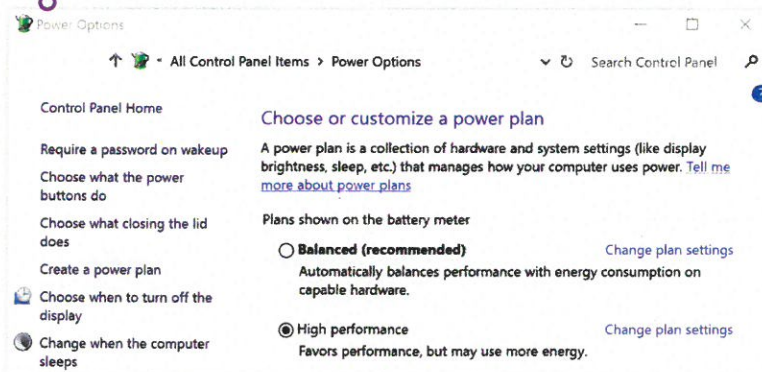


#### Fourth step: Customise settings

**01** Microsoft overhauled computer settings in Windows 10, making them accessible to users with limited technical knowledge. However, advanced options typically found in the **Control Panel** have been retained, so you can still dig into the nitty gritty if you know what you're doing. Spend some time exploring each subsection in the **Settings** menu, particularly **Power & Sleep, Notification & Actions** (both under **System**) and **Personalization**. Most include a short but detailed explanation with a link to the Microsoft website for more information.

**03** Lastly, don't be afraid to check out the advanced settings. 'Advanced' is used as a blanket term, but you'll often find that they're nothing more than a list of extended options. **Additional power settings**, for example, gives you greater control over power-saving options, but uses simple dropdown menus.

**02** **Ease of Access** in particular has some useful tools, such as text magnification and a virtual keyboard, that can improve accessibility for users with reduced dexterity and physical or visual impairments. **Display** has some similar features including contrast and text size settings, which are especially important on a high resolution screen as these tend to make text quite small. Most of these features aren't turned on by default, however, so if you need these settings adjusted, you may need to enlist the help of a friend or family member.



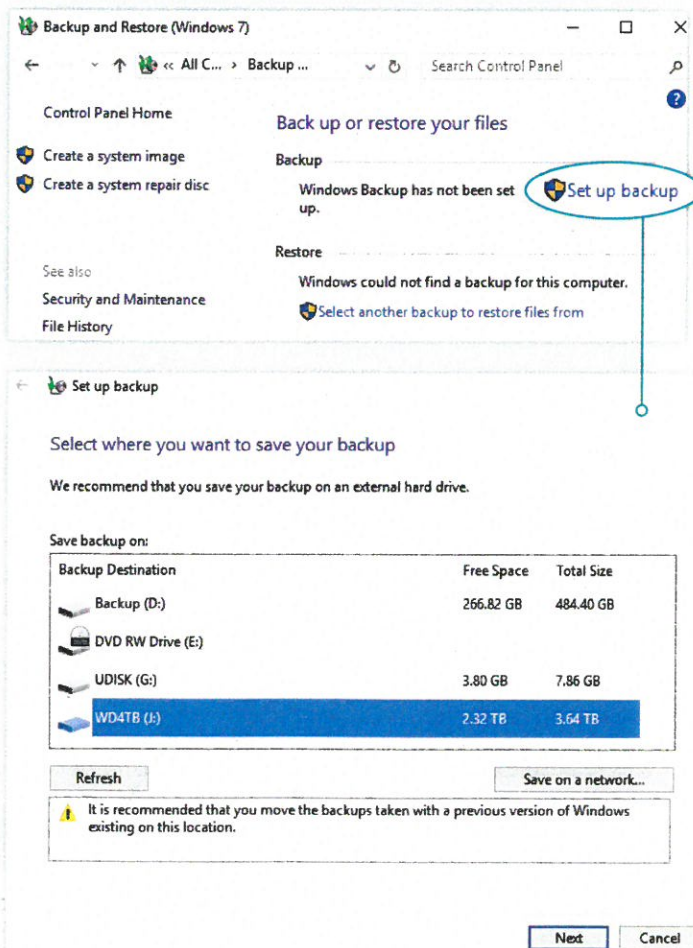
You should spend some time in the **Privacy settings** as well, as there are a handful of active data collection options which you may consider invasive. We've put together a detailed privacy guide in our Windows 10 hands-on review on page 16.



#### Fifth step: Prepare for an emergency

Now that you have a basic, bare-bones version of Windows 10 with your preferred settings, it's time to create your backups. That way, you can roll back to Windows in its current state in the event of a hardware or software failure, such as update errors or virus infection.

**02** Now it's time to make a backup, which is similar to a system image but is used to restore files, documents, data and so on, rather than your entire system. Go to **Control Panel → Backup and Restore** then click **Set up backup**. Select the same external hard drive as the backup location (create a folder named System Backup), then either let Windows select which files to back up, or manually select the hard drives, folders and subfolders to duplicate. When you're done, uncheck the box that says **Create a system image** (because we did that earlier), follow the remaining steps then click **Save settings and run backup**.



#### Sixth step: Grab some software

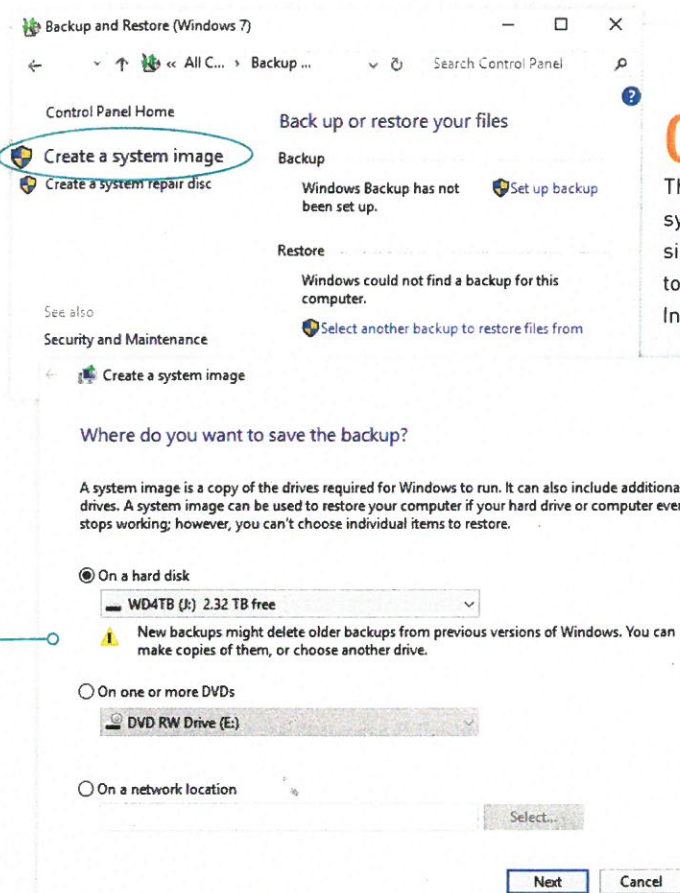
**01** You're on the home stretch – now all you need to do is tweak the system to your liking. The first step is to try some of the software included with the operating system (that isn't bloatware) such as the new Edge Browser, which replaces Internet Explorer.

**02** If you want to install well-known third-party software such as Firefox, iTunes, VLC Media Player or Dropbox, head over to [ninite.com](http://ninite.com). This is a one-stop shop for free, legal software; all you need to do is tick the apps you want, download the installer, and Ninite will handle the rest.

**03** It's worth investigating whether you need to buy third-party antivirus software as well. The built-in Windows Defender should be suitable if you're using your computer for basic tasks (emails, simple web browsing, etc.) but you should review its features under **Settings → Update & Security → Windows Defender**, just to make sure. We've also reviewed third-party antivirus software, which you can check out on our website at [choice.com.au/computersoftware](http://choice.com.au/computersoftware).

**04** Lastly, you'll need to change the default program for certain file types if you're using third-party programs (e.g. VLC instead of Windows Media Player for your music files). You can either go to **Settings → System → Default apps**, and click the icon under each category to choose a default app, scroll down for a more detailed list of options under **Choose default apps by file type**, or set them using the traditional method. To do this, right-click the file type on your desktop, then go to **Properties → General → Change...** and pick a program from the list. If your preferred program isn't there, click **More apps → Look for another app on this PC** to find the software you're after using Explorer.

That's it! You're computer is ready and you can start exploring Windows 10. Give our hands-on review (p16) a read as well – it should help you get your head around all the new and upcoming features. ■



**04** The final step is a regular backup schedule for your important files, folders, media etc. Go to **Settings → Update & Security → Backup**, click **Add a drive** and pick a place to store your duplicates. You can schedule a backup for every hour, two hours, six hours and so on, but you'll need to make sure your storage location is connected when a backup is due. Once you've selected the drive, click **More Options** to set the backup frequency (we recommend once every 12 to 24 hours), add folders, create exclusions and cancel backups.

It's also worth familiarising yourself with the system recovery section of the PC, so you can repair or restore your computer using the tools you just created. Repair options are under **Settings → Update & Security → Recovery**. You can access most by clicking **Advanced startup**, which opens a hidden boot menu. Here, you can scan your PC for errors then let Windows try to fix them, boot from a separate drive (e.g. a recovery drive), create startup settings (e.g. boot into Safe Mode) or launch a system image. This should be your first port of call when facing computer problems.

If you need to restore your PC to factory settings, click **Troubleshoot → Reset your PC**. Remember, this will delete the contents of your hard drive and should only be used as a last resort.

There are also third-party backup programs that offer extra features such as cloud support. Read our backup software review in CC Nov/Dec 14 or on our website.

