🇺🇸

TRENDING   **Microsoft Surface**   **Best Laptops**   **Best Motherboards**   Best (
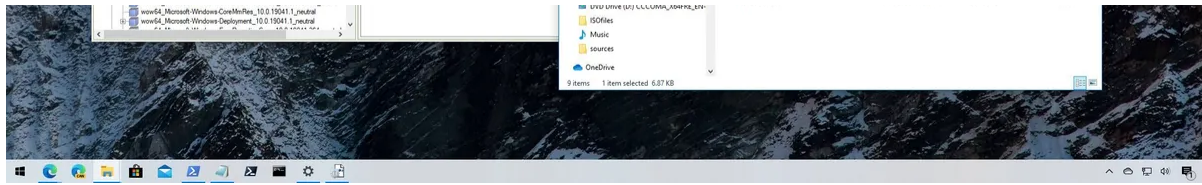
Software Apps   >   Windows 10

How to create an unattended installation of Windows 10

By Mauro Huculak last updated May 17, 2022

You can perform an automated installation of Windows 10, and in this guide, we'll show you steps to complete this task.

[f] [X] [P]
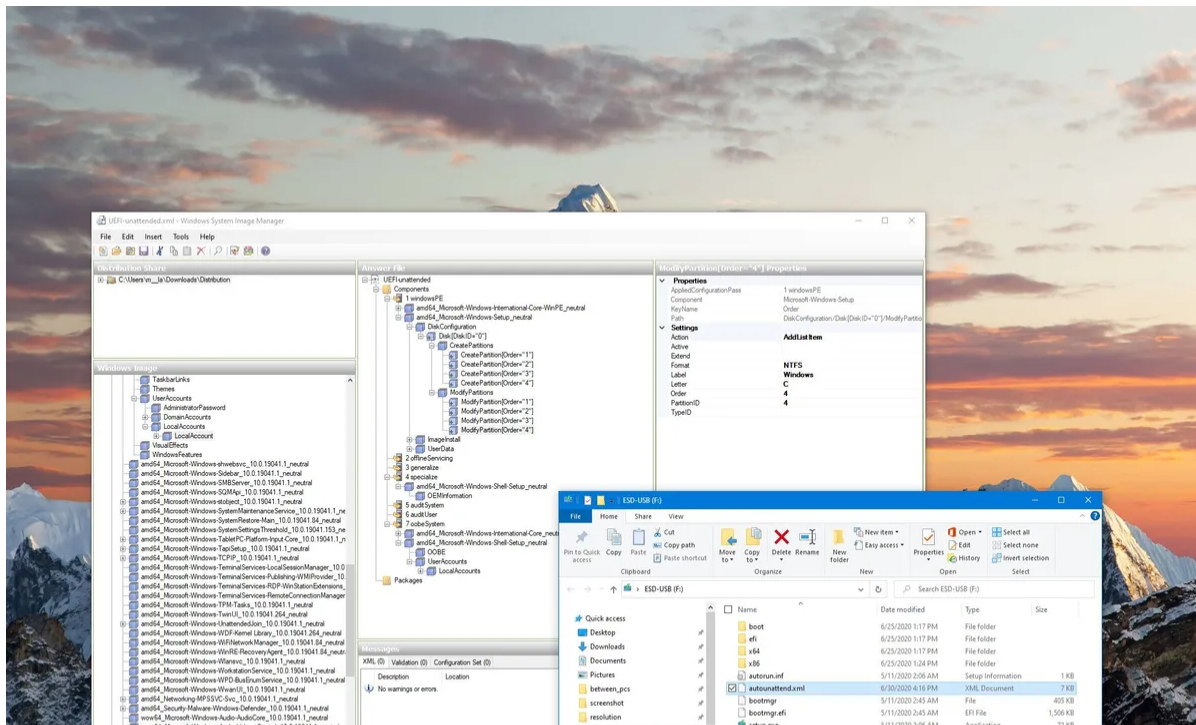
Windows 10 autounattned.xml (Image credit: Windows Central)

When you start a new installation of Windows 10, you must go through the Windows Setup, which is the experience that helps you to configure various settings, including language preferences, product key, and partition layout. After the installation, you also have to go through the out-of-box experience (OOBE), which you need to complete to configure settings like keyboard layout, account, and privacy settings.

Although the process is relatively easy for most people, you still have to spend the time controlling the installation and answering questions, which can take up a lot of time, especially if you need to complete multiple installations in your workplace.

If you want to automate the installation process (and save time in the process), you can create an answer file with instructions to complete every on-screen prompt, which you can integrate onto a bootable media. Then the Windows Setup can read to install Windows 10 automatically.

In this Windows 10 guide, we walk you through the steps to create an **autounattend.xml** answer file containing all the necessary settings to perform a basic unattended installation of the OS.

How to create unattended Windows 10 installation media

On Windows 10, you can use many ways to create and set up an answer file to automate the installation process. This guide outlines the instructions to configure a ".xml" file to perform an unattended installation of Windows 10 Pro 64-bit on a computer with a single drive using Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI) or Basic Input-Output System (BIOS).

After setting up the answer file, the process will erase everything on the drive, create and configure the necessary partitions, and install a fresh copy of Windows 10 with the most basic settings.

Warning: This is a friendly reminder that the installation process will completely erase the hard drive of your computer. If you have anything important on this device, it's recommended to make a full backup of your PC before proceeding.

- Requirements
- How to install Windows System Image Manager
- How to create Windows 10 answer file project
- How to create Windows 10 answer file
- How to save Windows 10 answer file project
- How to install Windows 10 with answer file
- How to troubleshoot problems with Windows 10 answer file

Requirements

This guide has quite a few steps, and you'll need a few things to complete the project successfully:

- Windows Assessment and Development Kit (ADK).
- Windows 10 installation files.
- Windows 10 account with administrator privileges.
- USB flash drive with 8GB of space.
- Spare computer to test the installation.

How to install Windows System Image Manager

Anyone can write an answer file manually. Microsoft offers the Windows System Image Manager (SIM) console available through the Windows Assessment and Deployment Kit (ADK) to make it easier to create the file to install Windows 10 unattended.

To install the Windows System Image Manager, use these steps:

1. Download the **Windows ADK** installer for Windows 10 version 2004.
2. Double-click the **adksetup.exe** file to begin the installation.
3. Select the **Install the Windows Assessment and Deployment Kit -
Windows 10 to this computer** option.
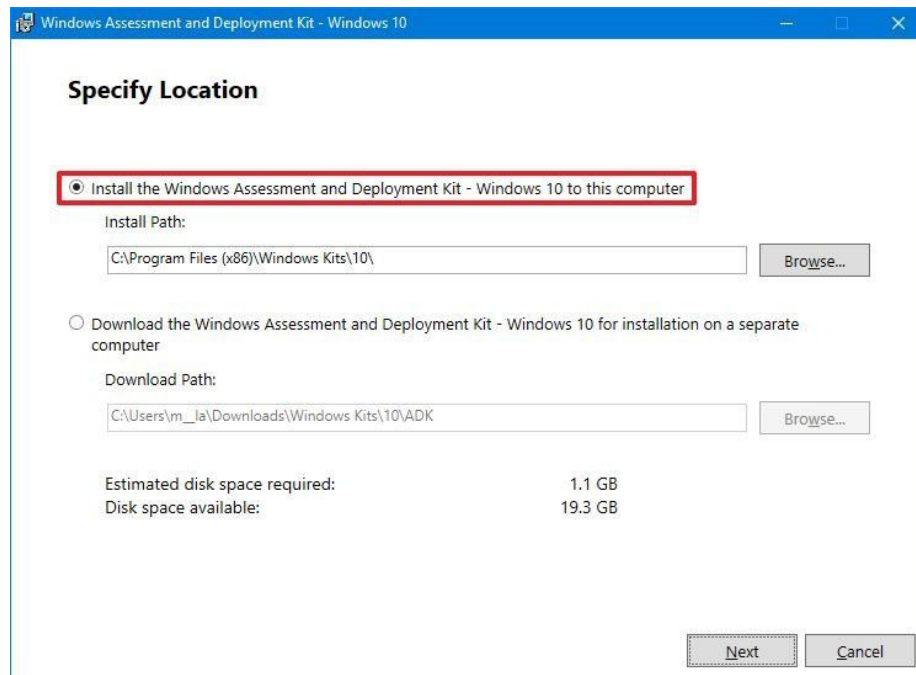
Source: Windows Central (Image credit: Source: Windows Central)

4. Click the **Next** button.
5. Select your privacy setting.
6. Click the **Next** button.
7. Click the **Accept** button to agree to the license agreement.
8. Clear all preselected choices.
9. Check only the **Deployment Tools** package to install the Windows
System Image Manager components.
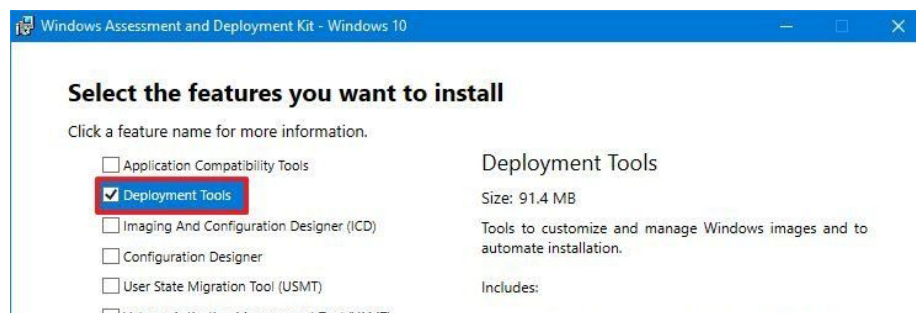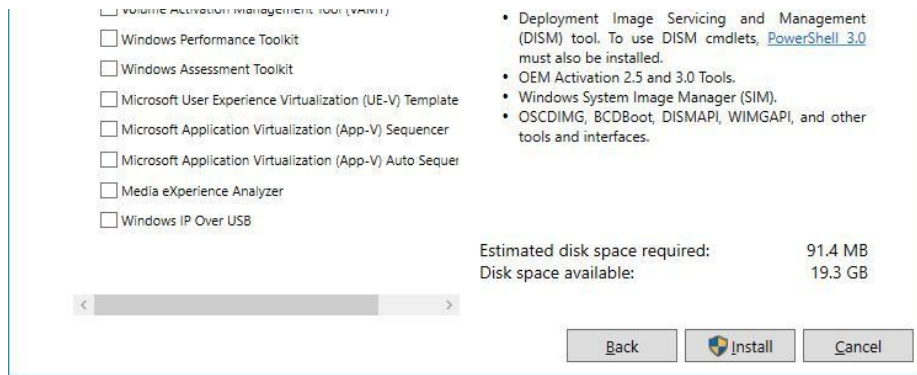
10. Click the **Install** button.

11. Click the **Close** button.

Once you complete the steps, you can use the console to create a ".xml" file with the answer to all the questions to automatically install Windows 10.

After the file is created, you can adjust the settings and reuse it for other installations, instead of having to use the Windows System Image Manager tool.

How to create Windows 10 answer file project

After installing the Windows System Image Manager console, you need to import the OS installation files onto your device, and set up the environment to create an answer file.

Import Windows 10 image files

To create an answer file, you need to open a Windows 10 image and create a catalog of all the components to automate the installation. However, to perform this task, you must first import the installation files onto your device.

To import the Windows 10 installation files, use these steps:

1. Open **File Explorer**.

2. Navigate to the Windows 10 ISO file location.**Quick tip:** Alternatively, you can also connect the USB flash drive with the installation files. If you don't have the files below, you can find the steps to use Rufus to download the latest ISO for Windows 10.

3. Right-click the ISO file and select the **Mount** option.

Source: Windows Central (Image credit: Source: Windows Central)

4. Open the drive with the Windows 10 installation files.

5. Click the **Select all** button from the "Home" tab.

6. Click the **Copy** button from the "Home" tab.

7. Navigate to the folder you want to use to store the files for the project.

8. Click the **New folder** button from the "Home" tab.

9. Specify a name for the folder – for example, **Windows2004**.

10. Open the newly created folder.

11. Click the **Paste** button from the "Home" tab.

Once you complete the steps, the installation files will be available on your device. However, to continue, you need to confirm the **install.wim** file image is present in the "sources" folder. If the ISO was created using the Media Creation Tool, you're likely to have an **install.esd**, which you won't be able to open because it's encrypted.

If you don't have an **.wim** image file, you can get the uncrypted image by downloading the latest Windows 10 ISO file from the Windows Insider Program or MSDN with a subscription.

Convert install.esd to install.wim

In the case that you're stuck with an "install.esd" image, you can use the DISM command tool to export the image files and create a ".wim" image from a ".esd" file.

To decrypt an install.esd image, use these steps:

1. Open **Start**.
2. Search for **PowerShell**, right-click the top result, and select the **Run as administrator** option.
3. Type the following command to identify the index number of the edition you want to use and press **Enter**:dism /Get-WimInfo /WimFile:C:\path\to\folder\sources\install.esdIn the command, make sure to change the path to the **sources** folder location with the "install.esd" file on your computer.
4. Confirm the index number for the edition you want to deploy. For example, in the case, select the index number of **6** to extract the files for Windows 10 Pro.
5. Type the following command to create an install.wim file and press **Enter**:dism /Export-Image /SourceImageFile:C:\path\to\folder\sources\install.esd /SourceIndex:6 /DestinationImageFile:C:\path\to\folder\sources\install.wim /Compress:Max /CheckIntegrityIn the command, make sure to change the path to the **sources** folder location with the "install.esd" file on your device. The destination path should be the same as the source.

Alternatively, you can also use the Rufus tool to download the Windows 10 ISO with an "install.wim" file.

Download install.wim using Rufus

To download a Windows 10 ISO file with Rufus, use these steps:

1. Open **Rufus** download page.
2. Under the "Download" section, click the latest release of the tool to save the file on the computer.

3. Double-click the **Rufus-x.x.exe** file to launch the tool.
4. Under the "Device" section, select the USB flash drive with at least 8GB of space.
5. Under the "Boot selection" section, click the **arrow** button next to the

"Select" option, and choose the **Download** option.

6. Click the now available **Download** button.

7. Use the "Version" drop-down menu and select **Windows 10**.

8. Click the **Continue** button.

9. Select the **20H1 (Build 19041.264 - 2020.05)** option to download the Windows 10 May 2020 Update.

10. Click the **Continue** button.

11. Use the "Edition" drop-down menu and select the **Windows 10 Home/Pro** option.

12. Click the **Continue** button.

13. Use the "Language" drop-down menu and select your installation language.**Quick note:** If you're in the United States, you should select "English" instead of "English International."

14. Click the **Continue** button.

15. Use the "Architecture" drop-down menu and select the **32-bit** or **64-bit** (recommended).**Quick tip:** You can find out the architecture of your device on **Settings** > **System** > **About**, under **Device specifications**.

16. Check the **Download using a browser** option.

17. Click the **Download** button.
18. Save the ISO file on your device.

Once you complete the steps, you'll end up with an ISO file of Windows 10 that includes the install.wim file inside the "sources" folder.

Setting up an answer file environment

To prepare the environment to create a new answer file project, use these steps:

1. Open **Start**.
2. Search for **Windows System Image Manager** and click the top result to open the console.
3. Click the **File** menu.
4. Select the **Select Windows Image** option.

5. Navigate to the folder with the Windows 10 installation files exported.
6. Access the **source** folder.
7. Select the **install.wim** image file.

8. Click the **Open** button.**Important:** Make sure that image is an **install.wim** file. Otherwise, if you have an **install.esd** image, this will not work.
9. Select the edition of Windows 10 you want to use. (Usually, you want to select the version that you're planning to install.)

10. Click the **OK** button.

11. Click the **Yes** button to create a new catalog file (if applicable).**Quick note:** This process will take some time, but it's a one-time process. The **.clg** file will be saved in the same location where the **install.wim** is stored, and you can reuse it later on other projects.

12. Under the "Distribution Share" section, right-click on "Select a Distribution Share" and select the **Create Distribution Share** option.

13. Click the **Create New Folder** option in the dialog box.

14. Specify a name for the folder – for example, "Distribution" and select the folder.

15. Click the **Open** button.

16. Click the **File** menu.

17. Select the **Select Distribution Share** option.

18. Locate the folder you recently created for the distribution files.
19. Click the **Open** button.
20. Click the **File** menu.
21. Select the **New Answer File** option.

After you complete the steps, the environment will be created to configure an answer file.

How to create Windows 10 answer file

An answer file contains seven different stages (passes), and the stages you need to configure will depend upon the type of automation you want to create.

This guide will help you to get started configuring an **autounattend.xml** answer file with the minimum requirements to automate the installation of

Windows 10 Pro using the **1 windowsPE**, **4 specialize**, and **7 oobeSystem** stages.

Pass 1 windowsPE

Using the pass "1 windowsPE," you'll set up region and language, drive configuration, installation location, and product key.

Quick note: Depending on the image, you may see the components name starting with **amd64_Microsoft-Windows** for the 64-bit version or **x86_Microsoft-Windows** for the 32-bit version of Windows 10. For this guide, we'll be using the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows** name format.

Configure language and region settings

To configure the region and language settings, while in the Windows System Image Manager, use these steps:

1. Under the "Windows Image" section, expand the **Components** folder.
2. Expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-International-Core-WinPE** component.
3. Right-click the **SetupUILanguage** component and select the **Add Setting to Pass 1 windowsPE** option.

4. Under the "Answer File" section, on the right side, select the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-International-Core-WinPE** component.

5. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, define the keyboard, region, primary and fall back language, and device location. For example, if you're located in the United States, you should be using these settings:

1. **InputLocale:** en-US.
2. **SystemLocale:** en-US.
3. **UILanguage:** en-US.
4. **UserLocale:** en-US.

Quick tip: Only users outside the United States should configure **ULLanguageFallback** using the **en-US** value as the fallback language. To identify the correct input profile name, you can check out this Microsoft support page.

6. Select the **SetupUILanguage** sub-component.

7. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, set **UILanguage** with the correct language. For example, because we're doing an install in "English," we're using the **en-US** option.

Configure installation settings

Inside the answer file, you also have to specify the settings to properly configure the drive.

To configure the drive settings in the answer file, use these steps:

1. Under the "Windows Image" section, expand the **Components** folders.
2. Expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-Setup** component.
3. Expand the **DiskConfiguration** component.
4. Right-click the **Disk** component, and select the **Add Setting to Pass 1 windowsPE** option.

5. Under the "Answer File" section, on the right side, select the **DiskConfiguration** component.

6. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, set the **WillShowUI** value to **OnError**. (If you leave this setting empty, the installation will stop during the hard drive setup process.)

7. Select the **Disk** component.

8. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use these values:

 1. **DiskID:** 0
 2. **WillWipeDisk:** true

Quick note: Setting the **WillWipeDik** setting to **true** will make sure to erase everything on the first hard drive before setting up the partitions. If you

have anything important on this drive, you should backup the data before proceeding.

Once you complete the steps to configure the **DiskConfiguration** settings, you'll need to set up the partition layout, depending on whether your device uses a legacy BIOS or UEFI.

The reason is that BIOS-based computers only require two partitions (System Reserved and Windows), and UEFI-based devices require four partitions (WinRE, EFI, MSR, and Windows).

You can check if you're using BIOS or UEFI by opening **System Information** from the Start menu, and checking the "System Summary." If "BIOS Mode" reads **Legacy**, then you're using BIOS; if it reads **UEFI**, you're using UEFI.

BIOS only: Creating and modifying partitions

If you have a computer using the legacy BIOS, continue with these steps. Otherwise, skip this part, and follow the UEFI instructions below.

To configure the partition layout for a device using BIOS, use these steps:

1. Under the "Answer File" section, expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-Setup** component.
2. Expand the **DiskConfiguration** component.
3. Expand the **Disk** component.
4. Right-click the **CreatePartitions** component, and select the **Insert New CreatePartition** option to create the first partition.

5. Right-click **CreatePartitions** again, and select the **Insert New CreatePartition** option to create a second partition.
6. Select the first **CreatePartition**.
7. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use these values to create a system reserved partition:
 1. **Extend:** false.
 2. **Order:** 1.
 3. **Size:** 500.
 4. **Type:** Primary.

Using these settings, you're indicating the setup to create the system reserved partition of 500MB, a partition required for Windows to boot.

8. Select the second **CreatePartition**.

9. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use these values to create a partition to install Windows 10:

 1. **Extend:** true.

 2. **Order:** 2.

 3. **Type:** Primary.

Using these settings, you're indicating the setup to create a partition to install Windows 10. You'll also notice that the **Size** value wasn't specified, and **Extend** was set to **true**. This is because we want the Windows Setup to create a partition with all the available space left on the drive after creating the system reserved partition.If you want to create multiple partitions, you need to set the value of **Extend** to **false**, and enter a value in megabytes in the **Size** setting. Then the last partition should have **Extend** set to **true** without specifying the **Size** value to indicate the setup to use the remaining available space to create the partition.

Using the above steps, outlined the steps to carved the partitions. The next steps specify the required file format and partition properties.

To specify the format settings in the answer file, use these steps:

1. Under the "Answer File" section, expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-Setup** component.
2. Expand the **DiskConfiguration** component.
3. Expand the **Disk** component.
4. Right-click the **ModifyPartition** component, and select the **Insert ModifyPartition** option to modify the first partition.

5. Right-click **ModifyPartition** again, and select the **Insert ModifyPartition** option to modify the second partition.

6. Select the first **ModifyPartition**.

7. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use these values to configure a system reserved partition:

  1. **Active:** true.
  2. **Format:** NTFS.
  3. **Label:** System.
  4. **Order:** 1.
  5. **PartitionID:** 1.

8. Select the second **ModifyPartition**.

9. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use these values to configure a partition to install Windows 10:

  1. **Format:** NTFS.
  2. **Label:** Windows.
  3. **Letter:** C.
  4. **Order:** 2.

5. **ProductID:** 2.

In the steps, using the **Order** and **PartitionID**, you're specifying how the Windows Setup should configure on each of the two raw partitions we created earlier.

You can learn more about the partition layout required for a BIOS system in this Microsoft support page.

As part of this setup, the last task is to indicate the setup where to install Windows 10.

To select the drive to install Windows 10 automatically, use these steps:

1. Under the "Windows Image" section, expand the **Components** folders.
2. Expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-Setup** component.
3. Expand the **ImageInstall** component.
4. Expand the **OSImage**.
5. Right-click the **InstalTo** component, and select the **Add Setting to Pass 1 windowsPE** option.

6. Under the "Answer File" section, on the right side, select the **InstallTo** component.

7. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use these values:
 1. **DiskID:** 0.
 2. **PartitionID:** 2.

The above settings tell the setup to install Windows 10 automatically on the first drive inside the second partition.

Once you complete the steps, continue with the Defining the product key instructions.

UEFI only: Creating and modifying partitions

If you have a computer using UEFI, continue with these steps. Otherwise, skip this part, and follow the BIOS instructions outlined above.

1. Under the "Answer File" section, expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-Setup** component.
2. Expand the **DiskConfiguration** component.
3. Expand the **Disk** component.
4. Right-click the **CreatePartitions** component, and select the **Insert New CreatePartition** option to create the first partition.

5. Right-click **CreatePartitions** again, and select the **Insert New CreatePartition** option to create a second partition.
6. Right-click **CreatePartitions** again, and select the **Insert New**

CreatePartition option to create a third partition.

7. Right-click **CreatePartitions** again, and select the **Insert New CreatePartition** option to create a fourth partition.

8. Select the first **CreatePartition**.

9. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use these values to create the Windows Recovery (WinRE) partition:

  1. **Extend:** false.
  2. **Order:** 1.
  3. **Size:** 500.
  4. **Type:** Primary.

10. Select the second **CreatePartition**.

11. On the right side, under "Settings," use these values to create an EFI partition:

  1. **Extend:** false.
  2. **Order:** 2.
  3. **Size:** 100.
  4. **Type:** EFI.

12. Select the third **CreatePartition**.
13. On the right side, under "Settings," use these values to create a Microsoft reserved partition (MSR) partition:
 1. **Extend:** false.
 2. **Order:** 3.
 3. **Size:** 16.
 4. **Type:** MSR.

14. Select the third **CreatePartition**.

15. On the right side, under "Settings," use these values to create the Windows partition:

 1. **Extend:** true.
 2. **Order:** 4.
 3. **Type:** Primary.

Using the above steps, outlined the steps to carved the partitions. The next steps specify the required file format and partition properties.

To specify the format settings in the answer file, use these steps:

1. Under the "Answer File" section, expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-Setup** component.
2. Expand the **DiskConfiguration** component.
3. Expand the **Disk** component.
4. Right-click the **ModifyPartition** component, and select the **Insert ModifyPartition** option to create the first partition.

5. Right-click **ModifyPartition** again, and select the **Insert ModifyPartition** option to modify the second partition.

6. Right-click **ModifyPartition** again, and select the **Insert ModifyPartition** option to modify the third partition.

7. Right-click **ModifyPartition** again, and select the **Insert ModifyPartition** option to modify the fourth partition.

8. Select the first **ModifyPartition**.

9. On the right side, under "Settings," use these values to configure the Windows Recovery (WinRE) partition:

 1. **Format:** NTFS.

 2. **Label:** WinRE.

 3. **Order:** 1.

 4. **PartitionID:** 1.

 5. **TypeID:** DE94BBA4-06D1-4D40-A16A-BFD50179D6AC.

10. Select the second **ModifyPartition**.
11. On the right side, under "Settings," use these values to configure an EFI partition:

 1. **Format:** FAT32.
 2. **Label:** System.
 3. **Order:** 2.
 4. **PartitionID:** 2.

12. Select the third **ModifyPartition**.
13. On the right side, under "Settings," use only these two values to

configure a Microsoft reserved partition (MSR) partition:

 1. **Order:** 3.
 2. **PartitionID:** 3.

14. Select the third **ModifyPartition**.
15. On the right side, under "Settings," use these values to configure a partition to install Windows 10:

 1. **Format:** NTFS.
 2. **Label:** Windows.
 3. **Letter:** C.
 4. **Order:** 4.
 5. **PartitionID:** 4.

In the steps, using the **Order** and **PartitionID**, you're specifying how the setup should configure each of the four raw partitions you have created earlier.

You can learn more about the partition layout required for a UEFI system in this Microsoft support page.

As part of this part of the setup, the last task is to indicate the setup where to install Windows 10.

To select the drive to install Windows 10 automatically, use these steps:

1. Under "Windows Image," expand the **Components** folders.
2. Expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-Setup** component.
3. Expand the **ImageInstall** component.
4. Expand the **OSImage** component.
5. Right-click the **InstalTo** component, and select the **Add Setting to Pass 1 windowsPE** option.
6. Under the "Answer File" section, on the right side, select the **InstallTo** component.
7. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use these values:
   1. **DiskID:** 0.
   2. **PartitionID:** 4.

The above settings will indicate for the setup to install Windows 10 on the first drive inside the fourth partition.

Once you complete the steps, continue with the Defining the product key instructions below.

Defining the product key

In the first pass, you can also specify the product key for Windows 10. If you're creating an answer file that you'll use in multiple devices, you should be using a volume or generic product key.

To specify a product key, use these steps:

1. Under the "Windows Image" component, expand the **Components** folders.
2. Expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-Setup** component.
3. Expand the **UserData** component.
4. Right-click the **ProductKey** component and select the **Add Setting to Pass 1 windowsPE** option.

5. Under the "Answer File" section, on the right side, select the **UserData** component.
6. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use the following settings:
  1. **AcceptEula:** true.
  2. **Organization:** WC.

In the above settings, you can use any name for the **Organization** value. For example, home users could "Family" as the organization name.

7. Expand the **UserData** component.
8. Select the **ProductKey** component.

9. Under the "Settings" section, make sure to update the **Key** value using the product key for the edition of Windows 10 you intend to install.

You can also use a generic product key to create an answer file:

- **Windows 10 Pro:** VK7JG-NPHTM-C97JM-9MPGT-3V66T.
- **Windows 10 Home:** YTMG3-N6DKC-DKB77-7M9GH-8HVX7.
- **Windows 10 Enterprise:** NPPR9-FWDCX-D2C8J-H872K-2YT43.

You can always check this Microsoft support website to find the appropriate generic key for your installation.

Pass 4 specialize

If you want to configure additional settings, such as model, manufacturer, computer name, ownership name, timezone, and more during the installation, while in the Windows System Image Manager, use these steps:

1. Under the "Windows Image" section, expand the **Components** folders.
2. Expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Shell-Setup** component.
3. Right-click the **OEMInformation** component and select the **Add Setting**

to Pass 4 specialize option.

4. Under the "Answer File" section, on the right-side, select the **amd64_Microsoft-Shell-Setup** component.
5. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use the following values (specifying your custom information):
 1. **ComputerName:** Workstation.
 2. **CopyProfile:** true.
 3. **RegisteredOrganization:** Windows Central.
 4. **RegisteredOwner:** WC.
 5. **TimeZone:** Eastern Standard Time.

If you don't configure the **TimeZone** setting, Windows 10 will set the zone based on the language you're installing. You can check the Microsoft support website to find out the exact name for your time zone.

6. Expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Shell-Setup** component.

7. Select the **OEMInformation** component.

8. (Optional) Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, specify some computer specific properties:

1. **Manufacturer:** Dell.
2. **Model:** XPS.

Once you complete the steps, during the installation, the setup will read the autounattend.xml file and configure the settings you specified.

Pass 7 oobeSystem

Using an answer file, you can also automate the configuration of the out-of-box experience (OOBE), including additional language settings, accept the licensing agreement, create a user account, and more.

To configure the out-of-box experience, while in the Windows System Image Manager, use these steps:

1. Under "Windows Image," expand the **Components** folders.
2. Right-click the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-International-Core** component, and select the **Add Setting to Pass 7 oobeSystem** option.

Source: Windows Central (Image credit: Source: Windows Central)

3. Under the "Windows Image" section, expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Shell-Setup** component.
4. Right-click the **OOBE** component, and select the **Add Setting to Pass 7 oobeSystem** option.

5. Expand the **UserAccounts** component.

6. Expand the **LocalAccounts** component.

7. Right-click the **LocalAccounts** component, and select the **Add Setting to Pass 7 oobeSystem** option.

8. Under the "Answer File" section, select the **amd64_Microsoft-Windows-International-Core** component.

9. Under the "Settings" section, on the right-side, specify the language

settings:

1. **InputLocale:** en-US.
2. **SystemLocale:** en-US.
3. **UILanguage:** en-US.
4. **UserLocale:** en-US.

Only users outside the United States should configure **ULLanguageFallback** using the **en-US** value as the fallback language.To identify the correct input profile name, you can check out this Microsoft support page.

Source: Windows Central (Image credit: Source: Windows Central)

10. Under the "Answer File" section, expand the **amd64_Microsoft-Shell-Setup** component.
11. Select the **OOBE** component.
12. Under the "Settings" section, on the right size, use the following values:

- **HideEULAPage:** true.*
- **HideOEMRegistrationScreen:** true.
- **HideOnlineAccountScreens:** true.
- **HideWirelessSetupinOOBE:** true.

- **ProtectYourPC:** 1.While most settings are self-explanatory, you'll notice that the **ProtectYourPC** setting is also configured to define how the express settings should be handled. Using the value of **1**, you're telling the setup to enable the express settings using the default preferences.

1. Expand the **UserAccounts** component.

2. Right-click the **LocalAccounts** component and select the **Insert New LocalAccount** option.

3. Under the "Settings" section, on the right side, use the following configuration to create a primary local account:

  - **Description:** My primary local account.
  - **DisplayName:** admin.
  - **Group:** Administrators.
  - **Name:** John.

Using the above settings, you'll be creating an account called "admin" for user "John," and we're adding the account to the "Administrators" group that gives the user unrestricted access to the device. Of course, you can always define your custom preferences, including for "Description," "DisplayName," "Group," and "Name."

1. Expand the **LocalAccount** component.

2. Select the **Password** component.

3. Under the "Settings" section, on the right-side, type a password in the **Value** field.

Source: Windows Central (Image credit: Source: Windows Central)

Source: Windows Central (Image credit: Source: Windows Central)

Source: Windows Central (Image credit: Source: Windows Central)

While you'll see the password in plain text, after saving the autounattend.xml file, the value will be encrypted.

How to save Windows 10 answer file project

Once you complete setting up all the configurations to install Windows 10 automatically, you need to remove all the unmodified components, validate the answer file, and save changes as an autounattend.xml file.

Remove unmodified components

To remove unnecessary components, use these steps:

1. Under the "Answer File" section, expand all the components you added from the "Windows Image" section.
2. Select the component that you didn't configure. (These are those with light purple color.)
3. Right-click the components, and select the **Delete** option.

Source: Windows Central (Image credit: Source: Windows Central)

4. Repeat **steps No. 2** and **3** until you remove all the components that you didn't modify.

After you complete the steps, you need to validate the answer file.

Validating answer files

To validate the answer file, use these steps:

1. Click the **Tools** menu.
2. Select the **Validate** option.
3. Under the "Messages" section, at the bottom, check the **Validation** tab. If you don't see any warnings, the file is good to go.

Once you complete the steps, it's time to save the file and imported to the installation media.

Saving the answer file

To save the answer file, use these steps:

1. Click the **File** menu.
2. Select the **Save Answer File As** option.
3. Navigate to the folder you want to save the file.
4. Under "File name," use the **autounattend.xml** file name.

5. Click the **Save** button.

If you're configuring multiple answer files, it'll be best to save the file on a different folder with a descriptive name.

Import answer file to USB media

To include an autounattend.xml file on a Windows 10 bootable media, use these steps:

1. Open **File Explorer**.
2. Navigate to the **autounattend.xml** file location.
3. Right-click the file, and select the **Copy** option.

4. Open the USB media with the Windows 10 installation files.

5. In the root of the drive, right-click the **Paste** to copy the **autounattend.xml** to the Windows 10 installation media.**Quick tip:** When placing the "autounattend.xml" file on the installation media, make sure you're using a bootable media that only includes one architecture (in this case, Windows 10 64-bit). If you created an installation media for both 32-bit and 64-bit, the process would pause at the beginning until you select the architecture to install.

In the case that you don't have a Windows 10 USB installation media, you can create one using the Media Creation Tool or using a third-party tool, such as Rufus.

How to install Windows 10 using answer file

Once you have the USB bootable media with the answer file incorporated, you can perform an unattended installation of Windows 10 with these steps:

Warning: This process will delete everything on your computer and install Windows 10 without any prompts. Make sure to connect the USB flash drive to the correct device. Otherwise, you may end up wiping out the incorrect device.

1. Turn off the computer you want to install Windows 10.
2. Connect the USB flash bootable media with the **autounattend.xml** file.
3. Power on the computer and then Windows 10 should install automatically.

If the Windows Setup doesn't start, it's likely because you don't have the device configured to boot from the USB installation media. If this is the case, you'll need to access the BIOS or UEFI firmware on your motherboard to change the boot order.

This process typically requires hitting one of the function keys (F1, F2, F3, F10, or F12), the ESC, or Delete key as soon as you start your device. However, these settings will be different per manufacturer, and even per device model. Make sure to check your computer manufacturer's support website for more specific instructions.

After getting access to the firmware interface, find the **Boot** settings and change the boot order to start with the USB drive that includes the installation files, and save the settings (usually using the **F10** key).

If your computer is based on UEFI, then the steps to change the boot order will be different.

On a Windows 10 device using UEFI, you'll need to access to **Settings** > **Update & Security** > **Recovery**, and under "Advanced Startup," click the **Restart now** button.

Then click on **Troubleshoot** > **Advanced options** > **UEFI Firmware Settings**, and click the **Restart** button.

Once you're in the UEFI firmware interface, find the **Boot** settings and change the boot order to start with the USB drive that includes the installation files, and then save the settings.

If the drive doesn't have an OS already installed, check your manufacturer support website for details to access the UEFI firmware.

How to troubleshoot Windows 10 answer file

Although an answer file can make the process of installing Windows 10 easier, one small mistake can halt the setup and cause unwanted errors.

When validating the answer file, if you come across any problems, you should always re-check the settings for each component you selected and remove any additional element that was not modified.

If you made a mistake configuring a property value for a component, don't empty the field, instead right-click the property and select the **Revert Change** option.

At the time to begin the Windows 10 installation, disconnect the computer from the network, because sometimes you may come across problems while the setup is trying to download updates. You can always reconnect to the network after the installation.

An answer file explicitly crafted for a computer using a legacy BIOS will not work on a UEFI-based device. Always make sure to use the correct settings for the hardware you're trying to automate the installation process.

In the rare case that the answer file you created using Windows System Image Manager isn't working, then you should open the "autounattend.xml" file with any text editor and correct any error manually.

Anyone can use this automation process, but this method has been designed for organizations. This means that you won't find an option to perform an installation using a Microsoft account. However, you can always create an installation with a Windows 10 local account and then link it to your Microsoft account. You can perform this task from **Settings** > **Accounts** > **Your info**, and clicking the **Sign in with your Microsoft account**

instead link.

You can check out this [Microsoft support website](#) to learn more about each setting, which you can configure to create an answer file to perform an automated installation of Windows 10.

Wrapping things up

While creating a bootable media with the instructions to install Windows 10 automatically has a lot of steps, the automation process will save you a significant amount of time and hassle, especially when you're in a network environment where you need to setup Windows 10 on multiple machines.

We're focusing on the minimum steps to perform an unattended clean installation of Windows 10 to help get started with the process. It's up to you to dig through and configure the components you need to comply with your situation. Furthermore, depending on your installation requirements, you may need to create multiple answer files.

Mauro Huculak

Mauro Huculak is technical writer for WindowsCentral.com. His primary focus is to write comprehensive how-tos to help users get the most out of Windows 10 and its many related technologies. He has an IT background with professional certifications from Microsoft, Cisco, and CompTIA, and he's a recognized member of the Microsoft MVP community.

TOPICS

WINDOWS 10 HELP

CATEGORIES

WINDOWS 10   SOFTWARE APPS

TOPICS

WINDOWS 10 HELP

MOST READ

1 AVerMedia Live Gamer ULTRA 2.1 (GC553G2) review: True 4K/60 FPS recording on consoles and PC, but the software needs work

2 Stay away from this mini PC company — I already gave it more chances than I should

3 'Monster Hunter Wilds' wish list: 8 things I hope Capcom will fix to turn Wilds into the apex Monster Hunter game

4 "I did everything I thought I needed to do to prevent it" Baldur's Gate 3 save deleting bug is still alive and well on Xbox, with players losing over 80 hour saves

5 Got some gifted holiday cash burning a hole in your wallet? How about treating yourself to the BEST Xbox headset you can buy while it's on sale for $65 off

Terms and conditions

Contact Future's experts

Privacy policy

Cookies policy

Accessibility statement

Careers

Licensing

About us

Newsletter

Advertising inquiries

Android Central

iMore

Do not sell or share my personal information