

Perform a Feature Update of Windows Server

Article • 04/11/2024

A Feature Update, also known as an in-place upgrade, allows you to go from an older operating system to a newer one while keeping your settings, server roles, and data intact. This article teaches you how to move to a later version of Windows Server by using a Feature Update.

❗ Important

- This article covers the Windows Server Feature Update process for non-Azure servers and virtual machines (VMs) only. To do a Feature Update of Windows Server running in an Azure virtual machine (VM), see [In-place upgrade for VMs running Windows Server in Azure](#).
- For users using Microsoft Entra Connect who're looking to upgrade, see [Microsoft Entra Connect: Upgrade from a previous version to the latest](#).

Prerequisites

Before you start upgrading, fulfill the following prerequisites:

- Determine [which version of Windows Server to update to](#).
- Make sure you have a valid product key and activation method. Keys and methods may vary depending on the distribution channel you received Windows Server media from, for example a Commercial Licensing program, Retail, or Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM).
- You'll need to have the setup media for the version of Windows Server that you want to upgrade to. Setup media for the target version of Windows Server can be obtained from OEM, Retail, Visual Studio Subscriptions, and the Volume Licensing Service Center (VLSC) channels.
- Have a location to store files away from your computer, such as a USB flash drive or network location.
- Review [Upgrade and migrate roles and features in Windows Server](#).
- Review [Microsoft server applications compatibility](#).
- Review any third-party application vendor support requirements.
- Make sure your computer:

- Meets or exceeds the [hardware requirements for Windows Server](#).
- Isn't running in Azure.
- Perform a full backup of your computer. This includes the operating system, apps, data, and any virtual machines (VMs) running on the server. You can use Windows Server Backup or a third-party backup solution.

ⓘ Note

- If you're perform a Feature Update of a Windows Server 2012 or Windows Server 2012 R2 server with Configuration Manager installed, also follow the pre-upgrade and post-upgrade instructions at [Upgrade on-premises infrastructure that supports Configuration Manager](#).

Collect diagnostic information

We recommend that you collect some information from your devices for diagnostic and troubleshooting purposes in case the Feature Update is unsuccessful. We also recommend you store the information somewhere you can get to even if you can't access your device.

To collect your information:

1. Open an elevated PowerShell prompt, make a note of your current directory, and run the following commands.

PowerShell

```
Get-ComputerInfo -Property WindowsBuildLabEx,WindowsEditionID | Out-File -FilePath .\computerinfo.txt
systeminfo.exe | Out-File -FilePath systeminfo.txt
ipconfig /all | Out-File -FilePath ipconfig.txt
```

💡 Tip

`Get-ComputerInfo` requires PowerShell 5.1 or later. If your Windows Server version doesn't include Powershell, you can find this information in the registry. Open Registry Editor, go to the **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion** key, and then copy and paste the Windows Server **BuildLabEx** and **EditionID** values.

2. Using **File Explorer**, navigate to the directory you noted down, and **copy** the files to a USB flash drive or network location off of your computer.

After you've collected all of your Windows Server-related information, we recommend that you back up your server operating system, apps, and VMs. You must also shut down, quick migrate, or live migrate any VMs currently running on the server. You can't have any VMs running during the Feature Update.

Perform the Feature Update

Now that you've completed your prerequisites and collected diagnostic information, you're ready to perform the Feature Update. In this section, you use Windows Server Setup to select the settings for the Feature Update. Windows Server Setup uses these settings to update your version of Windows Server, during which time your computer restarts several times.

To perform the Feature Update:

1. Using **File Explorer**, navigate to the Windows Server Setup media. Then open **setup.exe**. For example, if you're using removal media the file path might be *D:\setup.exe*.

Important

Depending on your security settings, User Account Control may prompt you to allow setup to make changes to your device. If you're happy to continue, select **Yes**.

2. By default, setup automatically downloads updates for the installation. If you're okay with the default settings, select **Next** to continue.

If you don't want Setup to automatically download updates, select **Change how Setup downloads updates**, choose the option appropriate to your environment, and then select **Next**.

3. If prompted, enter your product key and then select **Next**.
4. Select the edition of Windows Server you want to install and then select **Next**.
5. Review the applicable notices and license terms. If you agree to the terms, select **Accept**.

6. Select **Keep personal files and apps** to choose to do an Feature Update, and then select **Next**.
7. After Setup finishes analyzing your device, it displays the **Ready to install** screen. To continue the Feature Update, select **Install**.

The Feature Update starts, and you should see a progress bar. After the Feature Update finishes, your server restarts.

Checking if your Feature Update was successful

After the Feature Update to Windows Server is done, you must make sure the Feature Update was successful.


To make sure your Feature Update was successful:

1. Open an elevated PowerShell prompt and run the following command to verify that the version and edition matches the media and values you selected during setup.

PowerShell

```
Get-ComputerInfo -Property WindowsProductName
```

2. Make sure all of your applications are running and that your client connections to the applications are successful.

If your computer isn't working as expected after the Feature Update, you can [contact Microsoft Support](#)  for technical assistance.

Next steps

The following articles can help you prepare for and use your new Windows Server version:

- [Install or uninstall roles, role services, or features](#)
- [Windows Server management overview](#)
- [Get started with Windows Admin Center](#)
- [Key Management Services \(KMS\) activation planning](#)
- [Activate using Active Directory-based activation](#)

If you'd like to learn more about deploying and post-installation configuration and activation options, check out the [Windows Server deployment, configuration, and](#)

administration learning path.