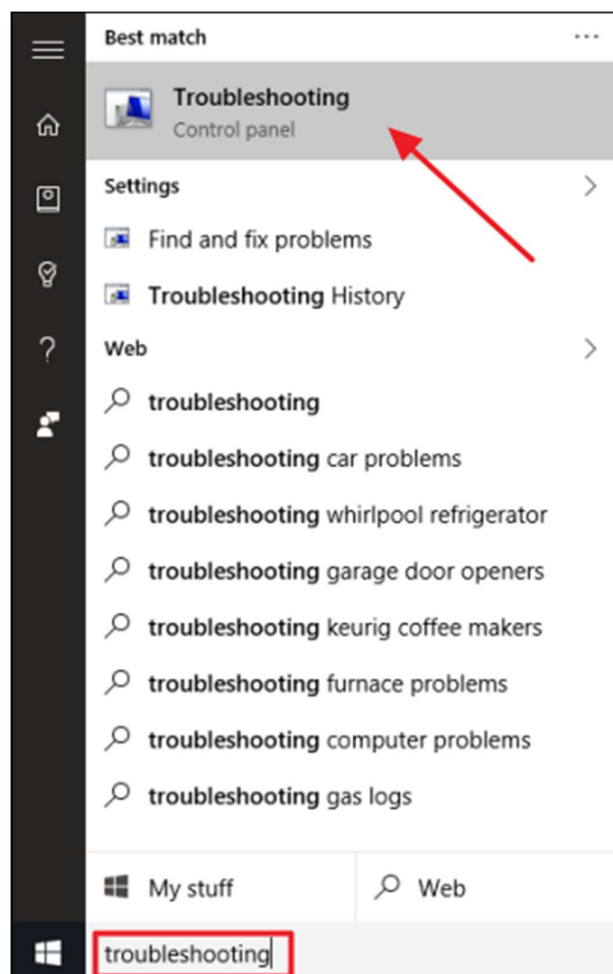# Fix Windows Update with a Troubleshooter

Windows includes a built-in troubleshooter that may be able to help fix a stuck update. It's the easiest method to try, so go ahead and run it first. The troubleshooter performs three actions:

1. It shuts down Windows Update Services.
2. It renames the `C:\Windows\SoftwareDistribution` folder to `C:\Windows\SoftwareDistribution.old`, essentially clearing the Windows Update download cache so that it can start over.
3. It restarts the Windows Update Services.

This troubleshooter is available on Windows 7, 8, and 10. You'll find it in the same place on all modern versions of Windows.
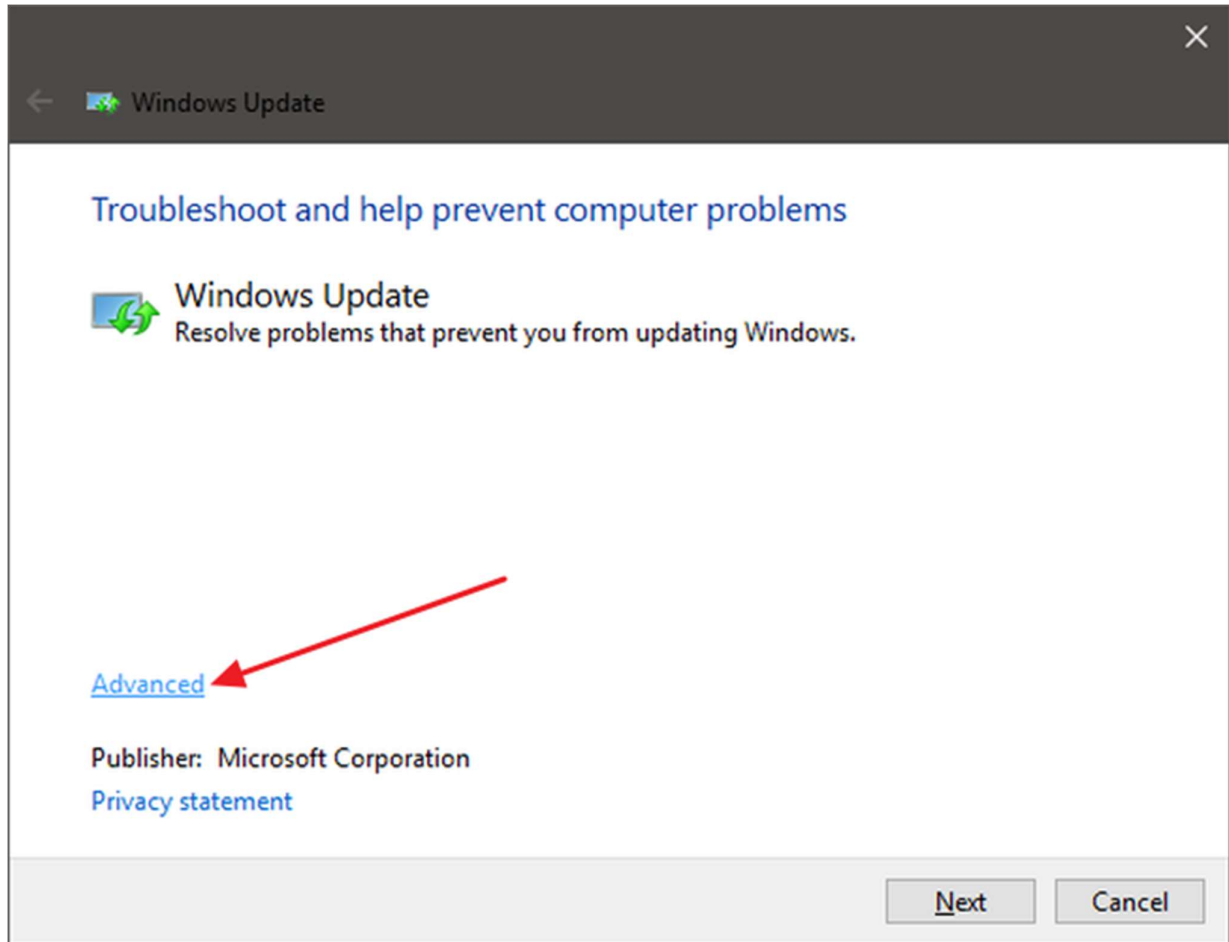
To run the troubleshooter, hit Start, search for "troubleshooting," and then run the selection that search comes up with.

In the Control Panel list of troubleshooters, in the "System and Security" section, click "Fix problems with Windows Update."
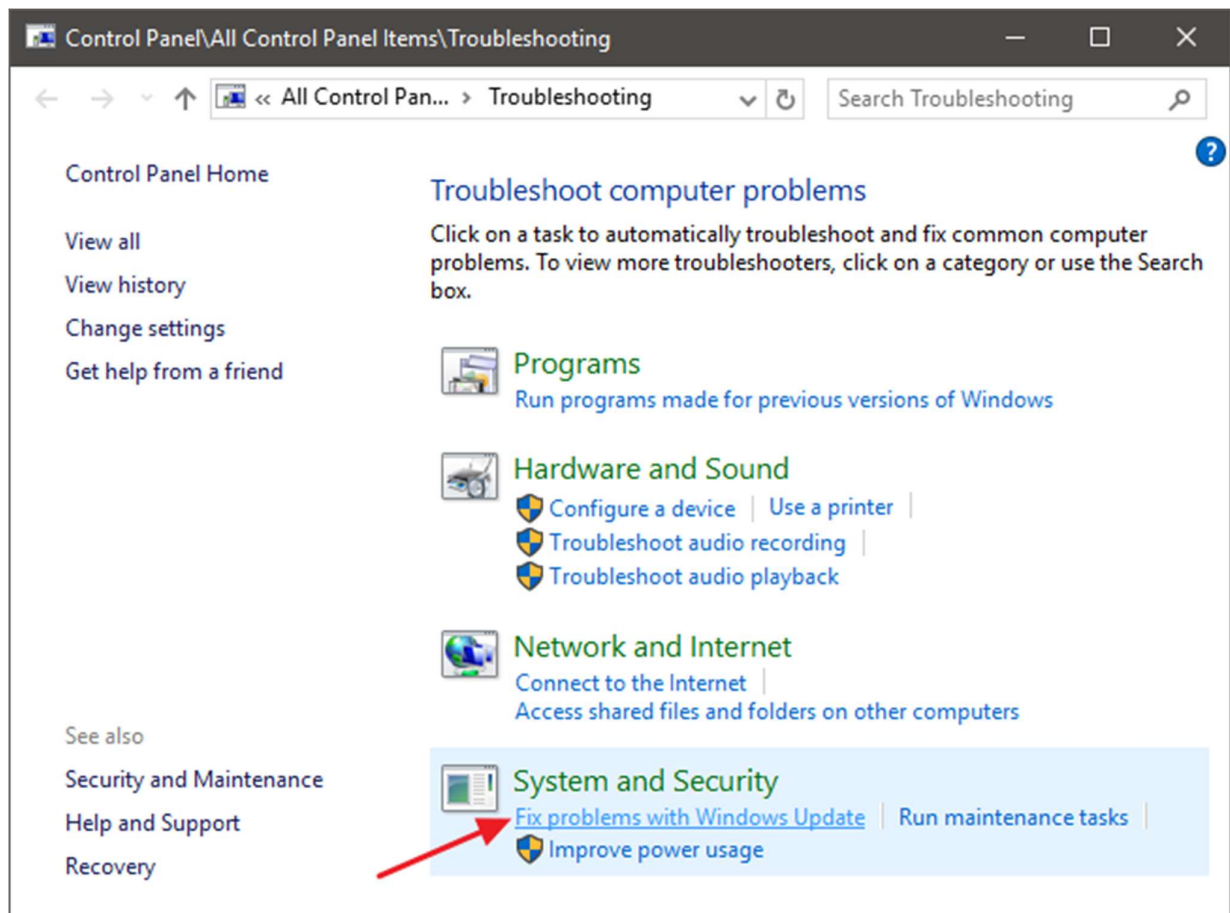
In the Windows Update troubleshooting window, click "Advanced."

In the advanced settings, make sure that the "Apply repairs automatically" check box is enabled, click "Run as administrator" and then click Next. Giving the tool administrative privileges helps ensure that it can delete files in the download cache.
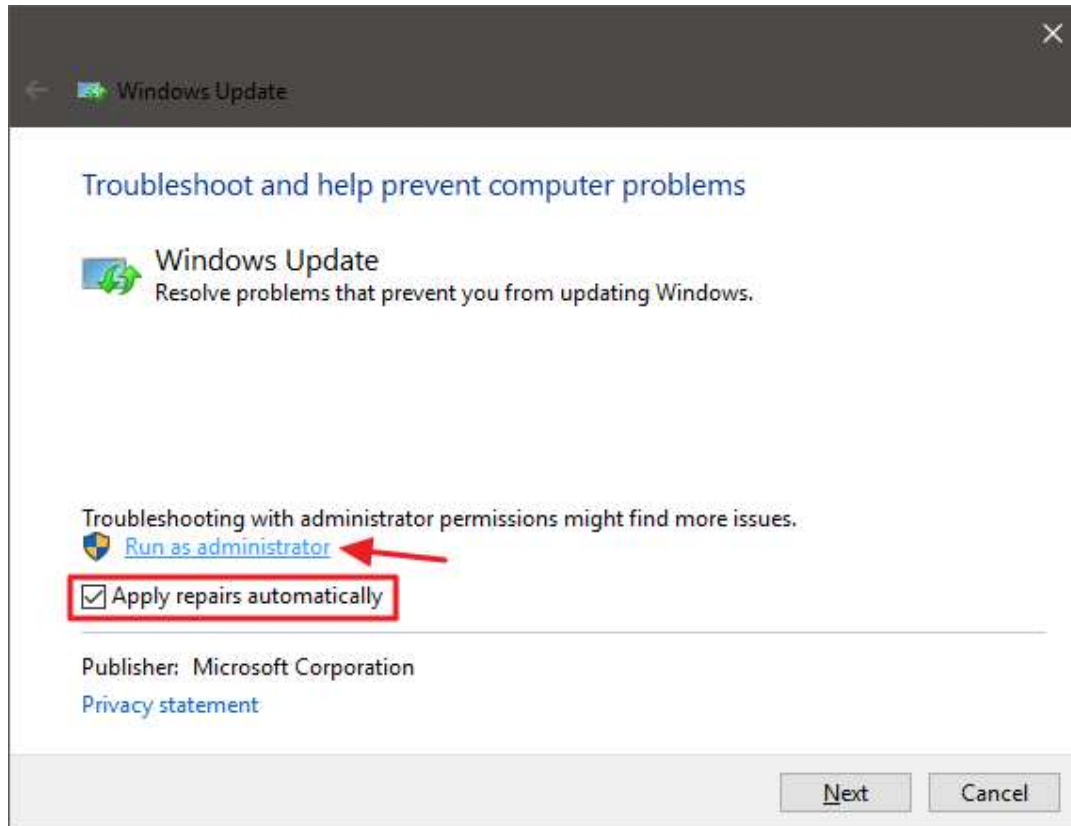
The troubleshooter works through its process and then lets you know whether it could identify and fix the problem. Most of the time, the troubleshooter can successfully remove a stuck update from the queue. Go ahead and try running Windows Update again. Even if the troubleshooter says it couldn't identify the problem, it's possible that the actions of starting and stopping the service and clearing out the cache did the trick.

Fix Windows Update by Deleting Its Cache Manually

If you're still having trouble after running the troubleshooter (or if you're the type that just likes to do things yourself), performing the same actions manually may help where the troubleshooter didn't. We're also going to add the extra step of booting into Safe Mode first, just to make sure that Windows can really let go of that cache of Windows Update downloads.

Start off by booting Windows into Safe Mode. On Windows 7, restart your computer and press the "F8" key on your computer while it boots to access the boot options menu, where you'll find a "Safe Mode" option. On Windows 8 and 10, hold down the Shift key as you click the "Restart" option in Windows and navigate to Troubleshoot > Advanced Options > Windows Startup Settings > Restart > Safe Mode.

It's a little more cumbersome than it used to be on the latest versions of Windows, but it's still reasonably straightforward. Of course, if you want, you could also take some time to add Safe Mode to the Windows boot menu to make it easier in the future.


When you've booted into Safe Mode, the next step is to stop the Windows Update service, and the easiest way to do that is with the Command Prompt. To launch the Command Prompt in Windows 7, open the Start menu, search for "Command Prompt", and launch the Command Prompt shortcut. You'll also find it under Start > All Programs > Accessories > Command Prompt. In Windows 8 or 10, you can right-click the Start menu (or press Windows+X), choose "Command Prompt (Admin)" and then click Yes to allow it to run with administrative privileges.
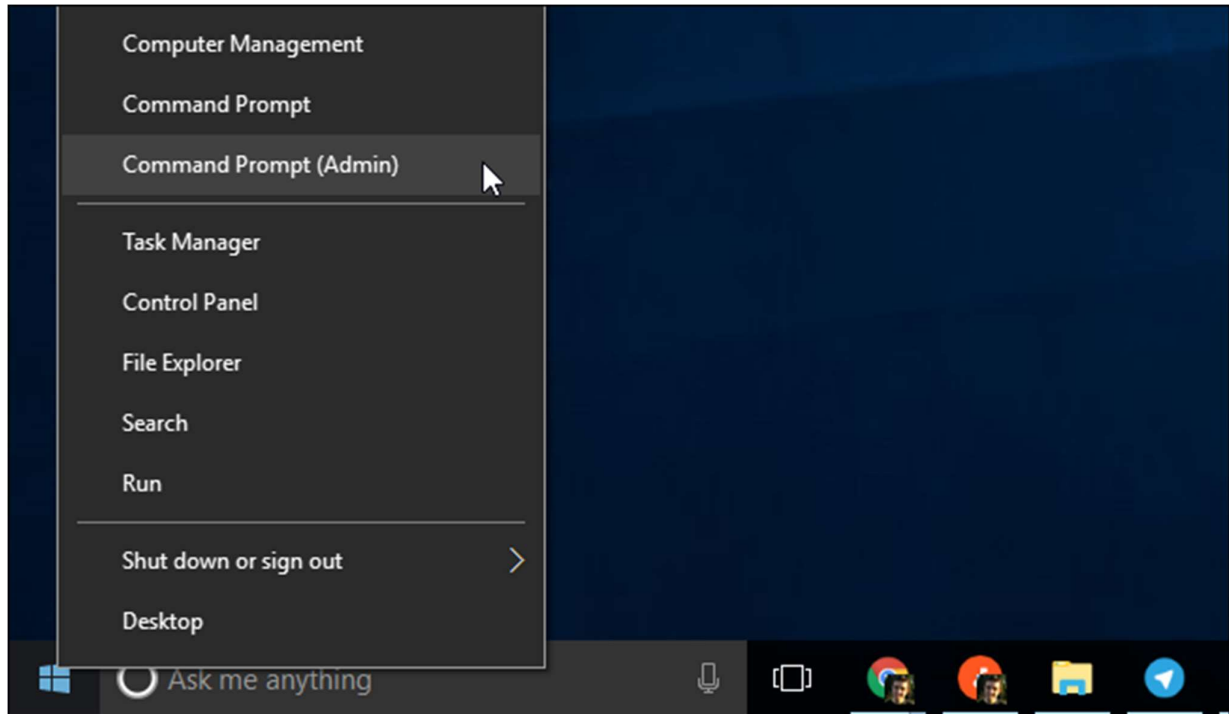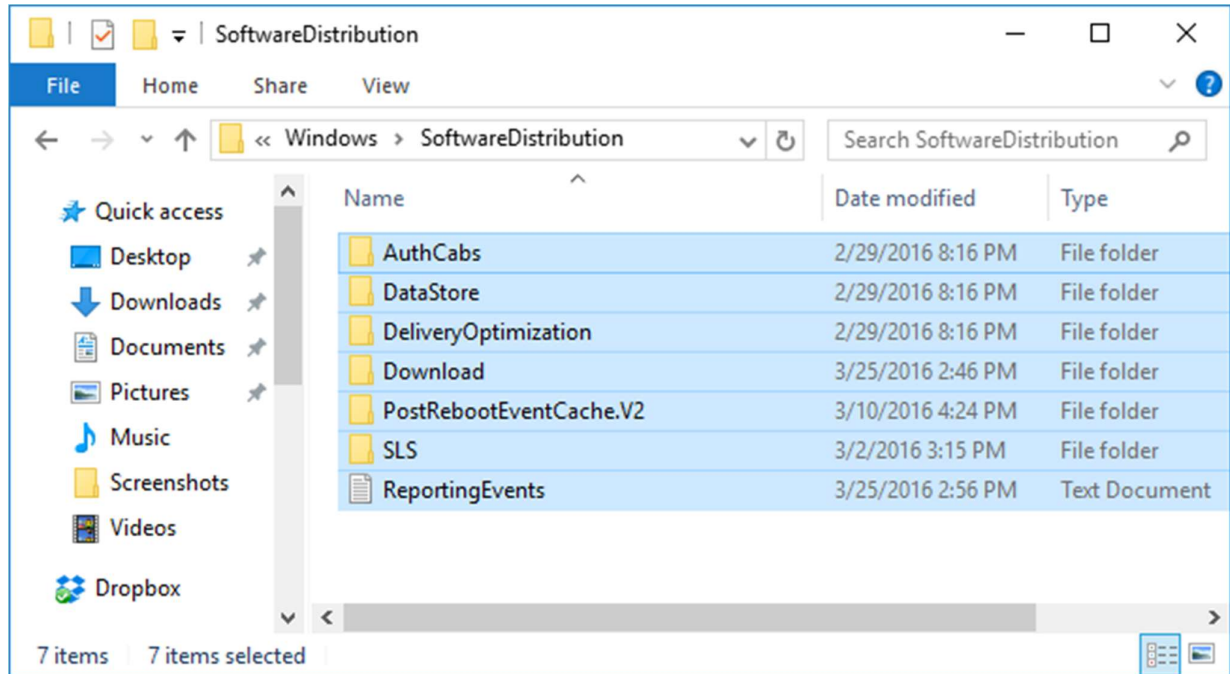
At the Command Prompt, type the following command and then hit Enter to stop the Windows Update service. Go ahead and leave the Command Prompt window open.
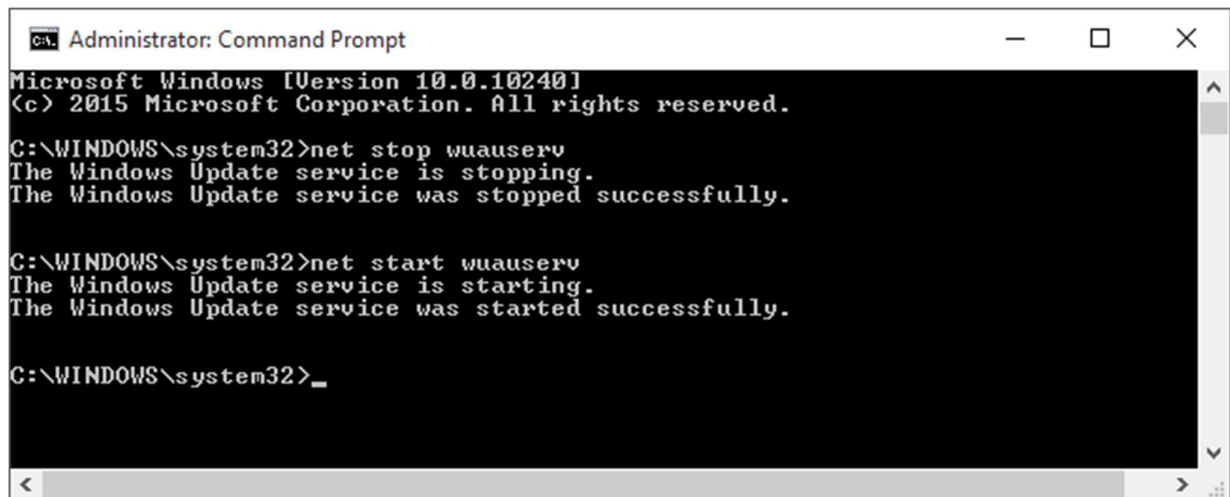
```
net stop wuauserv
```
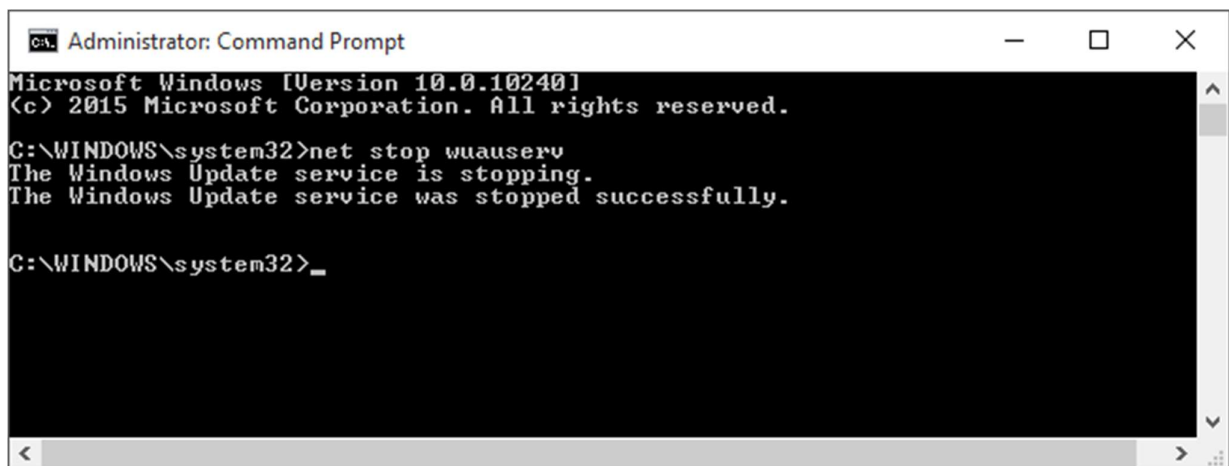

Next, open a File Explorer window and navigate to `C:\Windows\SoftwareDistribution`. Delete all the files in the folder. Don't worry. There's nothing vital here. Windows Update will recreate what it needs the next time you run it.

Now, you'll restart the Windows Update service. Return to the Command Prompt window, type the following, and hit Enter:

```
net start wuauserv
```


When the service has restarted, you can close Command Prompt and restart Windows into normal mode. Give Windows Update another try and see if your problem has been fixed.