

12 Must Know Tricks to Unlocking the Power of Windows 10

Windows 10 Anniversary Tips and Tweaks

Windows 10 is brimming with handy new features. And with all the new goodies come a host of new tweaks and tips—some of which unlock powerful functionality hidden to everyday users.

Here are some of the most useful Windows 10 tweaks, tricks, and tips we've found, including a series of fresh finds from August's massive anniversary update.



1. Secret, Powerful New Command Prompt Tools

Windows 10 packs a slew of nifty new command-line features, including the ability to copy and paste inside the command prompt with Ctrl + C and Ctrl + V.

To activate the goodies, open the command prompt. Right-click its title bar, then select Properties. You can find and enable the new features under the Edit Options section of the Options tab.

2. Activation Troubleshooter

The Windows 10 anniversary update added a great feature for DIY types: the ability to tie your Windows 10 license to your Microsoft Account rather than to your PC's hardware. Say goodbye to the days of calling Microsoft support to activate your OS simply because you swapped out your hard drive.

If you experience issues with Windows 10 after you upgrade your PC, go to Settings > Update & Security, add your Microsoft account (if it isn't linked already), and then click Troubleshoot at the bottom of the screen. Hit Microsoft's Account Troubleshooter FAQ for the full scoop.

Another awesome bonus for Windows enthusiasts: you'll find a fresh new Start, with a clean Windows install option alongside Windows 10's Refresh and Reset tools. This goes even further than the other options by blasting away any bloatware preinstalled by your device manufacturer. You'll be prompted to download a tool from Microsoft's website in order to start the procedure.

3. Audio Source Switching

The anniversary update added a nifty touch to Windows 10's in-taskbar volume controls: selectable sources. Now clicking the audio device name in the volume controls summons a list of all connected audio outputs, meaning you can switch from your headphones to your speakers and back again without having to dive into the Control Panel.

“You can switch from your headphones to your speakers and back again without having to dive into the Control Panel.”

4. Powerful Natural Language Search

Cortana can handle all sorts of commands you issue using natural language, such as playing music, creating reminders, showing the weather, or even remembering random facts for you, but the most powerful use of her natural language abilities revolves around basic search capabilities. You can give Cortana basic commands like “Find pictures from June” or “Find documents with Windows 10” and she’ll apply the appropriate filters, then scour your local files and OneDrive storage for results.

You can now enable Cortana on the Windows lock screen as well, where you can use voice commands to view and edit your schedule at a glance. It’s pretty handy! To turn on the feature, open Cortana and head to “Cog” Icon > Settings > Use Cortana even when your device is locked.

5. Customize Your Start Menu

Make the Start menu your own to customize your needs. If you appreciate the blend of the traditional interface with Live Tiles, note that you can right-click on any tile and select **Resize** to alter the tile's dimensions—just like on the Windows 8 Start screen.

Alternatively, if you are not a fan of Live Tiles and the Metro interface you can also right-click on every one of the defaults in the Start menu and select **Uninstall** to wipe them from your system (Or simply **Unpin from Start** if you'd rather hide than eradicate them). Repopulate them with desktop software of your choosing—you can right-click any app or program and select **Pin to Start**—and before you know it, it'll be similar to the Windows 7 Start menu.

6. Bash Comes to Windows

The Windows 10 anniversary update added the full, legendary Bash shell to Microsoft's operating system, thanks to a partnership with Canonical, the company that guided Ubuntu Linux's development. And it's running natively, without virtual machines or containers. With the right tricks, you can even use Bash to run graphic Linux applications or even the Unity desktop itself right inside Windows—though those unintended features are definitely limited.

To enable Bash, you'll need to be using a 64-bit Windows 10 AU build. Head to Settings > Update & Security > For Developers and enable Developer Mode. Once that is finished, navigate to Control Panel > Programs > Turn Windows Features On or Off and activate Windows Subsystem for Linux (Beta), then click OK. You'll be prompted to restart your PC. After you do, just search for "Bash" in the taskbar search menu to start your development engines.

**“Once logged on,
you can see the last
known location of
your Windows 10
mobile device.”**

7. Find My Device

Windows is not just on desktops anymore, and a handy new feature released in the Windows 10 November update acknowledges that: Find My Device, which does exactly what you think (though sadly, it doesn't offer remote lock or wipe capabilities yet).

To active it, head to Start > Update & Security > Find My Device, then click the big Change button and enable the “Save my device's location periodically” option when prompted. Once it's on, you can log into your Microsoft account and head to account.microsoft.com/devices to see the last known location of your Windows 10 mobile device.

8. Install Windows Store Apps Elsewhere

The Windows 10 Update fixes another longstanding frustration for both mobile and desktop users: The inability to install Windows Store apps to external storage. Ever since the Windows Store debuted in Windows 8, it's forced you to install apps to your device's primary hard drive—a sore point for Windows tablet owners, or users who run Windows off a small SSD boot drive.

But that's no more in Windows 10! After you've installed the Windows 10 November update, you can save apps to external storage or secondary drives by heading to Start > Settings > System > Storage after you've connected the storage to your PC, be it a thumb drive or SD card. From there, click the drop-down menu under "New apps will save to" and select the external storage drive you want to use.



9. Turn off File Explorer's Quick Access view

When you open File Explorer in Windows 10, it defaults to a new Quick Access view that shows your most frequently accessed folders and recently viewed files. If you'd rather File Explorer defaulted to the "This PC" view found in Windows 8, here's how.

Open File Explorer, then select View > Options from the Ribbon. A Folder Options window will open. Click the "Open File Explorer" drop-down menu at top, then select the "This PC" option. Click OK and you're done!

10. Move Open Windows Between Virtual Desktops

Virtual desktops let you segregate your open apps into discrete areas—literally multiple, virtualized versions of your PC’s desktops. Switching between open virtual desktops is easy enough using Task View (the button that looks like two panels, one over the other, in the taskbar) or Windows key + Tab, while Alt + Tab jumps you between open apps across all desktops. There’s also a way to actually shift an open app from one virtual desktop to another if you’d like to shuffle things around.

First, head to the virtual desktop housing the app you’d like to move to another virtual desktop, then open the Task View interface. Just click-and-hold on the app you’d like to move, then drag it to the desired virtual desktop at the bottom of the screen. You can also drag it to the “+New Desktop” option in the lower-right corner to create a new virtual desktop for the app.

11. Schedule Your Restarts

This is wonderful. If you've got pending updates that require you to reboot your PC, Windows 10 will allow you to schedule a specific time for it to do so.

Open the Settings option in the Start menu, then head to Updates and Recovery > Windows Update. If you have an update pending, you'll see the screen at left, which lets you schedule your reboot after you select the "Select a restart time" radio button. Even better, you can dive into the Advanced options and link and ask Windows to notify you to schedule a reboot whenever updates are ready to rock.

“Windows 10 will allow you to schedule a specific time for your computer to update and restart.”



12. Seize Control of Windows Updates

While the ability to schedule installation times for updates is very welcome indeed, not everyone is happy about the way Windows 10 handles patches—specifically, that you can't refuse them. Windows 10 Pro users—but not Windows 10 Home users—can delay downloading updates for some time, but eventually, Microsoft will force them on you.

There are some actions you can take to exert control over your Windows Update experience, however. Most notably, if you're using Wi-Fi for connectivity, you can set Windows 10's Wi-Fi connections as metered to download updates when you'd like to, rather than when Microsoft wants you to. The new Active Hours feature in the anniversary update lets you tell Windows specific times not to install updates. And if you ever encounter an update that refuses to play nice with your PC, Microsoft's released a tool that allows you to choose individual updates so they won't be downloaded again.

Those workarounds aren't a replacement for being able to manually choose the Windows Update you'd like to install, but they should help ease the sting a little.



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