

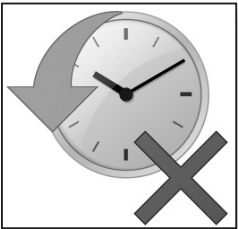
Frustrated by Frequent Restarts? Exert Some Control Over Windows Update!

This article shows you:

- The basics of how the Windows Update feature works
- How to set up Windows Update in the most helpful way
- How to avoid the need to restart your PC so often

In Windows 10, unlike previous versions, updates are regarded as so essential that they can't be switched off. Like it or not, updates are going to arrive, perhaps several times a month, and when they do, Windows Update is often going to want to restart your PC.

That interruption is always annoying, but you do have some control over when it happens. In this article, I'll explain how to use Windows Update, and I'll show you a few tricks you can use to make its behaviour less frustrating.



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## The Basics: Windows Update in Daily Use

*Windows Update  
takes care of  
itself...*

In the normal run of things, you don't actually 'use' Windows Update at all – it takes care of itself. Every so often, behind the scenes, it checks whether there are any new updates for Windows 10 that you haven't yet received and downloads them.

*... but it may  
interrupt you!*

It could download them at any time, but it will wait to install them at a time when it believes you won't be using your PC (based on your typical day-to-day use). That way, if one of those updates requires your PC to be restarted, the restart can happen when you're unlikely to be in the middle of doing something.

The catch is that many of us switch off our machines when we're not using them, robbing Windows of its chance to install the updates and, if necessary, restart. The result can be that soon after you next switch on the PC and settle down to work, you're met with a demand to restart.

*You can prevent  
that by checking  
it manually*

One way around this is to pick a good moment (perhaps before you get settled into working) and check for updates yourself. This way, you can get any updates and potential restarts out of the way before you begin:



1. Open the Settings app by pressing **Win+I** or by clicking the cog icon near the bottom-left corner of the Start menu.
2. In the Settings window, click on **Update & Security**.
3. That leads you straight to the Windows Update page, which is where you want to be. You'll quite likely see a **Check for updates** button, in which case give that a click and see what happens: if any updates are waiting, that will kick off the process of downloading and installing them. Alternatively, you

may see a list of waiting updates with a **Download** button beneath them, in which case click that.

4. If any updates were installed, you'll be told if a restart is required, and you can click **Restart now** to get that done before you finally settle down to work, safe in the knowledge that Windows Update won't interrupt you.

*Restart the PC if necessary*

## No Surprises: Receive Notifications Before Restarts!

One thing you definitely don't want is a 'surprise restart' while you're in the middle of doing something – or, perhaps worse, when you've nipped off to make a cuppa, expecting to find everything just the way you left it when you come back.

*Restarts can catch you by surprise*

It's probably not currently set to do so, but Windows 10 can give you a notification when it intends to restart the PC, and that's definitely something you want! Here's how to make sure you're getting those notifications:

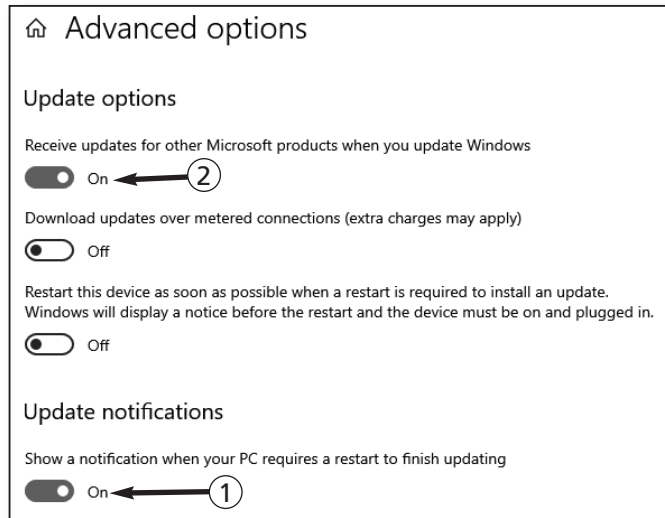
*Make sure you get a notification*

1. Make your way to the Windows Update page in Settings, as explained on the previous page.
2. Near the bottom of the window, click on **Advanced options**.
3. Below the 'Update notifications' heading, make sure the switch is set to **On** ①; if it's Off, click it.



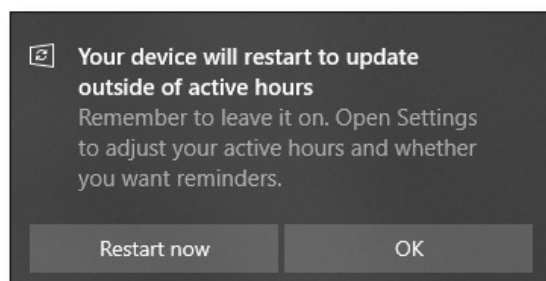
While you're here, there's one other thing that's worth doing. Near the top of the window, below the 'Update options' heading, switch on the option to **Receive updates for other Microsoft products...** ②. Since updates are going to happen anyway, you might as well get everything updated you can!





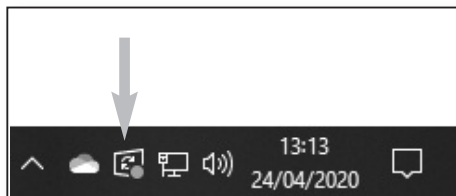
*Restart now or  
close the  
notification*

Now, whenever Windows Update wants to restart your PC, you'll see a notification like the one pictured below. It offers two straightforward options: to restart straight away, or simply to dismiss the notification by clicking **OK**:



*An icon appears  
near the clock*

If you click **OK** to get rid of the notification, you're not preventing the restart. Windows is still proposing to restart the PC at a time when (it believes) you won't be using it. To give you reminder of that, it places an icon in the notification area of the taskbar, by the clock:

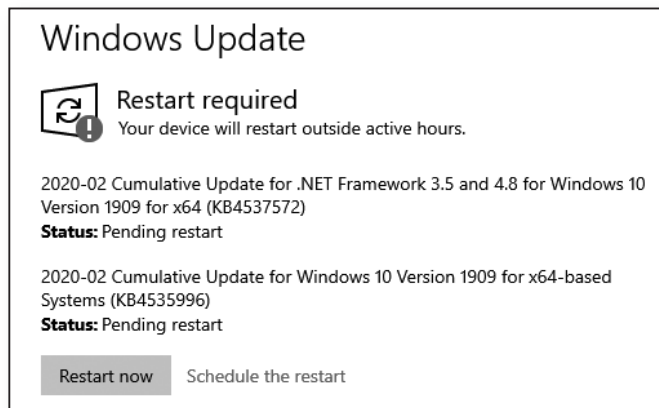


This icon remains there until the restart happens. At any time you can click this icon and you'll arrive at the Windows Update page of Settings where you'll see the words 'Restart required'.

*Click the icon...*

Here, you have two options: one is to click **Restart now** if you're ready to let the PC reboot. The other is to click **Schedule the restart** which lets you specify a convenient time and day (within the coming week) for the PC to be restarted.

*... and choose when to restart*



## Prevent Interruptions by Setting Your 'Active Hours'

Microsoft knows we don't want to be interrupted by updates while we're trying to work, so it offers a

*A 'Do Not Disturb' for Windows Update*

feature named 'Active Hours' to ensure that can't happen. Or, at least, to make it less likely.

With Active Hours, you specify the period when you're typically using the PC each day, and restarts won't occur during those hours.



The catch, as always, is that if you habitually turn off your PC as soon as you finish working, Windows won't get any chance to install updates outside of those hours, and sooner or later it will be forced to interrupt you anyway. There are all sorts of good reasons to leave your PC on and unused occasionally, and this is one of them.

Here's how to set up your Active Hours:



1. Make your way to the Windows Update page in Settings, as explained on page 2.
2. Near the bottom of the window, click on **Change active hours**.
3. On the next page, you'll see that Windows has chosen your active hours based on your typical usage. Perhaps you're happy with this, in which case, there's nothing more to do. However, if you'd prefer to set different hours you can do so: first click the **Automatically adjust active hours...** switch ① to **Off**, then click the **Change** link ②.
4. In the pop-up panel that appears, specify your usual start time and your end time and click **Save**. (Your active period can't be more than 18 hours.)

*Choose your Active Hours*

Automatically adjust active hours for this device based on activity

☐ Off ①

Current active hours: 15:00 to 09:00 Change ②

Based on your daily activity, we recommend using the following active hours:  
From 09:00 to 16:00

**Active Hours trick: avoid overnight restarts!**

Some people leave their PCs switched on and working overnight: it's the ideal time to let the PC get on with long-winded jobs such as encoding video or rendering animations or running payroll software. They won't want to wake up to find that Windows restarted the PC an hour after they left it and nothing got done!

*PC on or sleeping overnight?*

Likewise, you might put your PC to sleep overnight in the expectation of finding everything just as you left it, ready to continue where you left off.

In these cases, there's a trick you can use to force Active Hours to help you. Rather than specifying the period when you're actively using your PC, choose the period when it's left unattended!

*Ensure it can't be updated while you sleep!*

As you can see in the screenshot on the previous page, I've set my active hours to be from 3 in the afternoon right through to 9 in the morning, making the most of the full 18-hour allowance. That way, if Windows does decide it needs a restart, it will do so (and show a notification) during a 6-hour period when I'm sure to be sitting at it. I can then pick a good moment between jobs to click the icon it's placed by the clock and choose **Restart now**.

**The Manual Method to Avoid Restarts:  
Pause Updates**

Nobody minds receiving updates, but it's the enforced restarts that so often accompany them which really do get annoying. Over the next few pages, we'll explore a few ways you can take control of when – and even if – updates and restarts happen.

*Tricks to avoid restarts*

We'll start with one that puts you in almost-complete control of updates, albeit by giving you a little extra

*Pause updates for up to 35 days*

work to do. The trick is to 'pause' updates so that no more can arrive for up to 35 days. At some point during this period (or when it expires, if you forget), you collect any waiting updates, endure the restart that will almost certainly be coming your way, and then pause updates again.

If you like the sound of this, here's how to set it up:

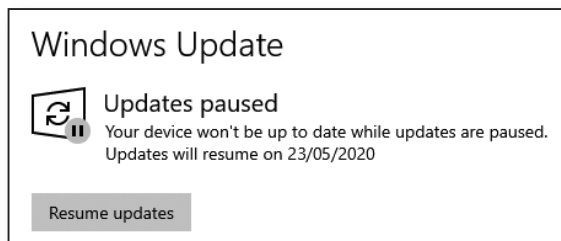


1. Make your way to the Windows Update page in Settings, as explained on page 2.
2. Near the bottom of the window, click on **Advanced options**.
3. Below the 'Pause updates' heading you'll see a box that says 'Select date'. Click that and choose a date: no updates will be fetched until this date – and of course, you therefore won't be prompted to restart the PC.

From now on, either of two things will happen:

*Check for updates yourself when you remember*

- During this pause, it will cross your mind to check for updates. Go back to the Windows Update page of Settings where you'll see that updates are paused (as pictured below). Click on **Resume updates** and Windows will immediately check for new updates, install any that are waiting and (if necessary) prompt you to restart the PC. Having done this, you can repeat the same steps to pause updates again for another 35 days.





- At the end of the 'pause' period, Windows will check for updates of its own accord. You can't be entirely sure when it will do this, but it will at least comply with your Active Hours (explained on page 5). Once again, when this has happened you can repeat the same steps to pause updates again.

*Windows will check when the pause is over*

Effectively, then, what you're doing is to keep Windows Update switched off, and choosing for yourself when to switch it back on temporarily and check for updates.

## Alternative Manual Method: Use a 'Metered Connection'

This trick is based on the concept of a 'metered' Internet connection. This is a connection with which your broadband supplier allows you to download a certain amount of data per month (perhaps 50 GB) and charges you extra for any amount over this.

*Do you have a download limit?*

Now, perhaps you do have a metered connection, perhaps you don't – with this trick, we tell Windows you do. Windows Update doesn't download updates over metered connections (other than the very few it regards as 'critical'), so you'll rarely receive updates and as a result you'll rarely be asked to restart the PC.

*You can tell Windows you do*

Of course, you really do need those updates, so as with the trick above, you'll have to do a little work yourself to do a manual check every so often.

To set this up, you simply set your Internet connection as 'metered'. To do that, start the Settings app and go to **Network & Internet**. You arrive at the 'Status' page: click the link that reads **Change connection properties**.

On the next page, you'll see a 'Metered connection' heading with a switch below it: click the switch to **On**.

### Metered connection

If you have a limited data plan and want more control over data usage, make this connection a metered network. Some apps might work differently to reduce data usage when you're connected to this network.

Set as metered connection



If you set a data limit, Windows will set the metered connection setting for you to help you stay under your limit.

Job done, and if you ever want to undo the change, it's a simple case of repeating the steps and returning that switch to **Off** again.

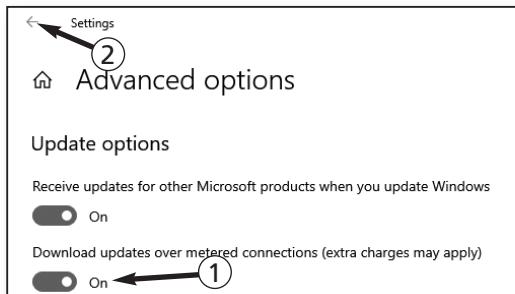
*Check for updates regularly by hand*

As I mentioned, it's important that updates do still arrive, but now you're able to do it on a schedule that suits you. Every so often, when you have the time, here's what to do:



1. Make your way to the Windows Update page in Settings, as explained on page 2.
2. Near the bottom of the window, click on **Advanced options**.
3. Click the switch labelled **Download updates over metered connections** ① to turn it to **On**, so that Windows Update is now able to fetch any updates that are waiting.

*Enable Windows Update to work*



4. Click the arrow ② in the top-left corner of the window to go back to the main Windows Update page, and there click on **Check for updates** or **Download** and follow any necessary steps to install updates and restart the PC.
5. Once the PC has restarted (if needed), come back to the Advanced options page again and this time switch off the option to **Download updates over metered connections**. This gives you another break from receiving updates until the next time you follow these steps.

*Disable Windows Update again*

## Pro Edition: Prevent Restarts with a Group Policy

Do you have Windows 10 Pro installed, as opposed to Windows 10 Home? You can find out by pressing **Win+Pause** and looking at the 'Windows edition' section near the top of the Window that opens.

*Using Windows 10 Pro?*

If you do have the Pro edition, you have a very nifty way to take control of Windows Update: you can set something called a 'group policy' that tells Windows it can download updates whenever it likes, but it can only install them (and restart the PC, if required) on your say-so. Whenever updates are ready to install you'll receive a notification, and you can choose for yourself when to install them by finding that notification in the Action Centre panel and clicking it.

*You can prevent automatic restarts*

If you like the sound of this, here's how to set it up:

1. Press **Win+R** to open the run dialog.
2. Type the command **gpedit.msc** and press **Enter** or click **OK**.
3. This opens a program called the Local Group Policy Editor. The left-hand panel contains a collection of



*Go to the **Windows Update** folder*

folders, and you need to expand a number of these in turn to locate the one we need. Expand **Computer Configuration**, then **Administrative Templates**, then **Windows Components** and finally click on **Windows Update**.

4. In the list on the right, find and double-click **Configure Automatic Updates**. This opens the window pictured below.

*Enable and configure this policy*

5. Near the top on the left, choose **Enabled** ①.
6. Below this, in the drop-down list ②, choose **3 – Auto download and notify for install**.
7. Click **OK** ③ and close the Local Group Policy Editor window and you're done. If you ever want to undo this change, just repeat the steps, but choose **Not Configured** in step 5 and then click **OK**.

