Windows 10 Machines - Cannot Update To Windows 11
March 1, 2025

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in bold, underlined, red typeface, starting with https:

All links in this PDF have been checked and work.

Hover over the link, hold down < Ctrl > and left click to open the hyperlink to a web page in your browser.

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Any **@gmail.com** contact addresses.

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Link to Google Drive for WACI Tips PDFs and Videos Mentioned

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BIL-Tm2ul4CR0YErTl-ApPbBG8A51pRO?usp=sharing

Short link to Google Drive (adhere to caps) https://ishort.ink/rSzn

NOTE: You need a free Google account (not nec. Gmail) to access.

Judy & Michael

WACItips@gmail.com   708.762.3259

Partial Glossary of Tech Terms

Accessibility: Features that make computers easier to use for people with disabilities, such as screen magnifiers or speech-to-text software.

Antivirus Software: A program that helps protect your computer from viruses and other harmful software.

Apps: Small programs that you can download and use on a tablet or smartphone.

Bloatware: Unnecessary preinstalled apps in an operating system.

Chromebook: A type of laptop that uses Google's operating system. It mainly uses the internet and is good for basic tasks.

Cloud Storage: Saving your files on the internet instead of on your computer. This way, you can access them from anywhere.

ESU (Extended Security Updates): Temporary security fixes for Windows 10 after official support ends. These are not a permanent solution so plan to replace your computer within 1-2 years! Does not replace antivirus or malware software.

Hardware: the physical components of a computer, such as the monitor, keyboard, mouse, central processing unit, hard drive and memory.

Linux: A free operating system that is an alternative to Windows.

Operating System: The main program that runs (like the engine of a car) your computer. Examples are Windows, macOS and Linux.

Peripheral hardware (external devices): printer, scanner, DVD player, Web camera, speakers/headset, USB (expansion) hub, etc.

Security patches: important updates that protect your computer from viruses and hackers.

Software: Another word for apps or programs that run on a computer.

Tablet: A portable computer with a touch screen, like an iPad, Samsung Galaxy, Amazon Fire, etc.

End of Life – Windows 10

Microsoft will stop providing security updates (patches) and support for Windows 10 laptops/computers (machines) on October 14, 2025.

Without these updates, your machine will become more vulnerable to viruses, malware and cyberattacks. (Think of it like leaving your front door unlocked when you leave the house.)

It's time to consider some options if your Windows 10 machine CANNOT be updated to Windows 11 at all.

Contents

We're here to help you make a decision with the following information! We do not get paid or make any commissions.

Key Considerations Before Choosing an Alternative

What do you mainly use your computer for? (i.e. Email, web browsing, word processing, video calls, YouTube videos, gaming, etc.).

Do you need specific programs you rely on that only work on Windows? (i.e. Microsoft Office, etc.).

Are you comfortable learning new technology such as alternative operating systems (i.e. Linux) and applications or programs (i.e. Google Docs)?

What is your budget for a new device or an upgrade? (i.e. buying a new computer, upgrading hardware or paying for extended support.

Do you have any dexterity concerns? (i.e. need for voice typing)

Do you have any vision concerns that require a larger screen, larger font or higher resolution?

Do you need or want a touchscreen?

Do you prefer typing on a physical keyboard or are you comfortable with a touchscreen?

Do you need a device that's easy to carry around (like a laptop) or will it stay mostly in one place (like a desktop)?

Do you use peripheral hardware or external devices such as printers, scanners, DVD players, speaker/headsets, etc. you use regularly? *Note: Make sure they are compatible with your new computer or operating system.*

How much local storage capacity do you need for applications, files, photos and videos?

Do you have someone who can help you with any changes and assist with setup, file transfer or learning a new system?

Copy Your Data - Files, Images, Videos, etc.

Your data, and being able to read and work with it, is more important to us than working with either a Windows 10 or 11 machine. Do you want to install and use them on your new machine?

Then it's crucial to copy your important data files to an **external storage** drive first. Your should create several copies of your data files and store them in safe places, separate from your computer.

Think of copies of your data as having a spare key to your house – if you lose the original, you still have a way to get in.

Data you should copy includes:

Documents: Word files, spreadsheets, letters, etc.
Photos: Family pictures, travel memories, etc.
Videos: Home movies, special events, etc.
Emails: Important messages, contacts, etc.
Other files: Anything else that is important to you.

Caution

Before you recycle or donate your Windows 10 computer, it's crucial to ensure that all your personal data is thoroughly removed from the hard drive. This helps protect your sensitive information, such as personal documents, photos, and financial records, from falling into the wrong hands. Deleting files is not enough to destroy them. Wiping, or physically destroying, the hard drive makes the data unrecoverable.

Keeping your data safe is just as important as finding a new use for your old computer.

This guide can not cover the details of copying your data or removing it from your hard drive(s). We have other PDFs (see page 2 - Google Drive link) about these topics. You can also find many step-by-step tutorials online or seek help from a tech-savvy friend or professional.

Risky Alternatives We Do Not Suggest

1. Ignore the Deadline All Together

Ignoring the deadline is a perilous approach coupled with significant security risks. This path is essentially uncharted, with no discernible advantages to speak of. The potential drawbacks are stark and unsettling. A malicious virus or malware could infiltrate your system, while a cyberattack could compromise sensitive information, leaving your digital world vulnerable to exploitation.

2. Convert Windows 10 to Chrome OS Flex (Free)

Converting Windows 10 to Chrome OS Flex is a tantalizing prospect since it is a free upgrade to a streamlined operating system. This transformation can breathe new life into your device, making it ideal for basic internet tasks such as email and web browsing. Using this operating system is surprisingly seamless and can deliver a hassle-free online experience.

However, not all Windows 10 machines are created equal, and some may encounter hardware compatibility issues during the conversion process. Problems with WiFi, touchpads, or speakers are just a few of the potential pitfalls, while CD/DVD drives may cease to function altogether. Furthermore, Chrome OS Flex falls short in its support for Android apps (see Chromebook below), limiting its versatility. Additionally, the performance standards of Chrome OS Flex are generally lower than those of dedicated Chromebooks, making it a less-than-ideal choice for resource-intensive tasks.

YouTube video if you wish to attempt: Chrome OS Flex | Turn An Old Laptop Or Desktop Into A Chromebook Or Box!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5P-aPRzk2Q

3. Installing Windows 11 using software that avoids Microsoft requirements and is not supported by them.

Some individuals may consider bypassing Microsoft's recommended update path by forcing the installation of Windows 11 using unsupported software. This approach, however, can lead to problems. The installation may be marred by bugs and crashes, leaving your computer vulnerable to technical issues. Furthermore, the lack of critical updates means that your device will be exposed to security risks, making it an unreliable and potentially hazardous choice. To successfully navigate this route, you'll need to possess advanced technical expertise, which can be a daunting requirement for many.

4. Upgrading your computer's internal hardware components.

This can be complex and costly, particularly for older machines. Upgrading components such as RAM, processors or storage devices can be time-consuming and may require specialized knowledge. Moreover, the cost can be substantial, making it a less-than-appealing solution for those on a budget.

5. Using your Smartphone for Internet access and emails.

This option is a less-than-ideal solution. The small screen and limited keyboard of a smartphone can make typing and navigating the web a frustrating experience. Additionally, the app-based nature of smartphones can limit your functionality and flexibility, while the limited saving options can make it difficult to access and manage your files.

6. Using security updates from third party sources

The reliability of these updates can be a concern, as they may not be thoroughly tested or validated by Microsoft. This can lead to a range of problems, including security vulnerabilities and system instability.

7. Buying a Mac (Apple) Computer

The high cost of Macs can be a significant barrier, particularly for those on a budget. Additionally, the unfamiliarity with Apple's specialized programs and the steep learning curve associated with using a Mac can make it a challenging transition for those used to a Windows operating system.

The limited hardware and customization options available on Macs can also be a concern for those who value flexibility and control. Finally, the inability to read and work with saved data files can be a significant inconvenience for those who rely on their computer for other critical tasks.

8. Moving to an alternative operating system (i.e. ReactOS, FreeDos, Haiku, ArcaOS, OpenIndiana, KolibriOS) other than Linux, Chromebook, Chrome OS Flex or Apple.

These options are not yet ready for prime time for a "normal" user and may be plagued by bugs, instability and limited functionality. They are not yet a reliable or trustworthy choice for everyday use.

See discussion of Linux, Chromebook and Chrome OS Flex options below

Options to Consider
Buy a New Windows 11 Computer

◦ **Pros:**
- Comes with Windows 11 ready to use (may need to be updated).
- Advanced security features like hardware-based encryption and built-in ransomware protection, keeping your data safe from threats.
- Accessibility features such as improved voice control or magnification to address dexterity and vision concerns
- Will work for many years.
- Faster, more efficient performance.
- Often includes setup help.

◦ **Cons:**
- Specific hardware requirements which may not be met by older computers.
- Some older programs or peripherals (i.e. printers, scanners, etc.) may not be compatible.
- Most expensive option ($200++ for laptops; $300++ for desktops).
- Need to transfer files and programs.
- Learning curve required for Windows 11.
- Concern over data collection, forced ads, bloatware, etc.
- Concern over stability issues.

Buy a Mini Windows 11 Pro Computer ($160+)

Same Pros and most of the Cons as above, and takes less space!

You need a monitor, keyboard and mouse. ($125+)

You may also need a special cable to connect your monitor, speakers (or audio adapters), a Web cam (for Zoom calls), an expansion hub (to connect additional USB devices). ($50-$75+)

Buy a Chromebook ($125+)

- **Pros:**
  - Internet based, simple to use, fast startup.
  - Automatic security updates, built-in virus protection..
  - Most modern Chromebooks can run Android apps.
  - Long battery life.
  - Affordable, portable.

- **Cons:**
  - Needs Internet access for most tasks.
  - Learning curve, typically can not run Windows programs.
  - Limited offline capabilities (if you have many photos, need video editing, etc.) and limited internal storage.

Pay for Microsoft Extended Security Update (ESU) *

- **Pros:**
  - Can keep using current computer.
  - Get security protection.
  - No major changes needed.

- **Cons:**
  - Costs about $30 for one year.
  - Temporary solution – no cost yet announced for 2nd year.
  - No new features or non-security updates
  - Must be running Windows 10, version 22H2

* Reference - **https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/whats-new/extended-security-updates**

Buy an iPad, Android or Amazon Fire ($50+) Tablet

- **Pros:**
  - Very portable.
  - Long battery life.
  - Intuitive touch screen.
  - Great for reading and entertainment.

- **Cons:**
  - Smaller screen, no keyboard ($50+ extra)
  - Need to purchase apps.
  - Learning curve.
  - Typing long documents can be difficult.

Convert Windows 10 to Linux (Free)

- **Pros:**
  - Free to install.
  - Works on older computers.
  - Good security.

- **Cons:**
  - Very different from Windows (like buying a new car with many unfamiliar controls.)
  - Potential compatibility issues
  - Steep learning curve.
  - Most likely will need technical help to install.

Options by Decision Tree (Guide)

1. How do you primarily use your computer?

A. Mostly Simple, Basic Internet Tasks (email, web browsing, YouTube videos, checking news, reading blogs, etc.):

- Are you comfortable with a simplified computer that mainly uses the internet?
    - **Yes:** Consider a Chromebook, a type of computer that primarily uses the internet. It's like a phone or tablet but designed as a laptop.
        - **Pros:** Simple, easy to learn. automatic updates, built-in virus protection
        - **Cons:** Requires internet, can't run Windows programs
        - **Cost:** $125-400 for basic models
    - **No:** See tablet options below

- Consider a Tablet (iPad or Samsung Galaxy Tablet)
    - **Pros:** Intuitive touch screen, portable, great for reading
    - **Cons:** Different from Windows, typing on a tablet can be harder than on a regular computer
    - **Cost:** iPad ($330-500), Android tablets ($200-400), Amazon Fire Tablet ($50-200)

B. Mix of Tasks with Specific Windows Programs (i.e. Microsoft Word, Excel, QuickBooks, etc.)

Proceed to Question 2 since you use specific Windows programs, let's see what options are best.

C. Intensive Tasks (photo/video editing, gaming)

Proceed to Question 2 since you use specific Windows programs, let's see what options are best.

2. Do you need specific Windows programs (i.e. Microsoft Word, Excel, QuickBooks, etc.)?

Yes: Proceed to Question 3 since you use specific Windows programs, let's see what options are best.

No:

- Are you open to trying a different operating system?
    - **Yes:** Consider Linux
        - **Pros:** Free alternative to Windows, works on older computers, secure
        - **Cons:** It works differently from Windows and can be difficult to learn
        - **Cost:** Free (can use existing computer)
    - **No:** Proceed to Question 3

3. What is your budget?

A. Limited Budget (under $500):

- Options:
    1. Basic Windows 11 laptop ($200-500)
       Pros: Familiar Windows environment, runs basic programs
       Cons: Limited performance, smaller screen
    2. Basic Windows 11 desktop ($300-500)
       Pros: Larger screen option, upgradable
       Cons: Need separate monitor, keyboard, mouse
    3. Switch to Linux (free, uses existing machine)
    2. Basic Chromebook ($125-400)
    3. Basic Android tablet ($60-300)
    4. Extended Security Updates ($30 for one year) for Windows 10

Note: Microsoft has only announced pricing for first year
Future years' availability and pricing unknown
Consider this a short-term, temporary solution only – You
will eventually need to buy a new computer

B. Moderate Budget ($500-1000):

- Options:
  1. Better Windows 11 laptop ($600-800)
       Pros: More storage, faster performance
  2. Better Windows 11 desktop ($700-900)
     Pros: More storage, faster performance, larger screen
     Cons: Takes up more space, less portable
  3. iPad with keyboard ($600-800)
  4. Better (see #2) Chromebook ($500-700)
  5. Keep current PC with ESU ($30 for one year)
     Again, consider this a temporary solution while saving for
     new device

Important Considerations:

1. All price estimates are approximate as of Feb. 2025
2. Extended Security Updates (ESU):
   - Only confirmed for first year at $30
   - Future years' availability and pricing not announced
   - Should be viewed as **temporary** solution
3. Consider future-proofing. Think about the future: Spending a little more now could save you money later.
4. Factor in setup/assistance costs if needed. Consider options such as Senior Planet, local community centers, computer clubs, online tutorials, YouTube videos, AARP's technology section, a tech-friendly friend or family member, etc.
5. Consider accessibility needs (screen size, keyboard size, screen magnifiers, speech-to-text software). If you have trouble seeing, hearing, or using your hands, there are special tools and settings that can help.

6. Remember to budget for:
- Antivirus software if add-ons needed ($30-60/year)
- Cloud storage if needed ($60-100/year)
- Setup assistance ($50-200 one-time)
- Monitor, keyboard and mouse if buying a new desktop ($150-300)

Ideas to Repurpose your Windows 10 Laptop or Computer after October 14, 2025.

1. Continue to use Windows 10 locally (without Internet access - if you love Windows 10 and apps) and a Windows 11 Mini Computer (for Internet access) with a KVM (Keyboard, Video and Mouse) Switch. Will also need some additional peripherals (see page 6 above).

2. Use the computer as a dedicated backup device for your important data.

3. Convert the computer into a Network Attached Storage (NAS) system for centralized file storage and sharing within your home network.

4. Use the computer to run home security software and connect it to cameras for a DIY home security system.

5. Use the computer to experiment with new software, learn programming, or practice using different operating systems (like Linux distributions).

6. Turn the laptop screen into a digital picture frame to display a slideshow of your favorite photos.

7. Create a dedicated music server to stream your music collection to other devices in your home.

8. Use the old computer to run virtual machines for testing different operating systems or software configurations.

9. Donate the computer to a local school, library, senior or community center where it can be used for educational purposes or public access.

10. Transform your old computer into a retro gaming console, Web server, VPN server, personal cloud server.

11. Use as a paperweight or decoration.

12. Recycle it, after wiping or destroying your hard drive(s).

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Brief Closing

We hope this helps you to focus on the task, understand some of your options and make an informed decision.