

FIRST STEPS: Setting up your new computer

Part 1: Initial Setup: Cables & Connectors

Desktop PC

The Monitor Connection:

Start by connecting your computer to the monitor. Most new computers include the necessary cables, but you should verify your connector types first. The most common are **HDMI** and **DisplayPort** (older styles like **VGA** and **DVI** are less common now).

- **Crucial Tip:** If your PC has a dedicated **Video Card (GPU)**, you will see a row of horizontal ports further down the back of the case. **Plug your monitor into these.** Do not use the vertical ports at the top (the Motherboard ports), or you may get no picture or very poor performance.

Keyboard and Mouse:

- **Wired:** Plug these into any available USB ports on the back of the PC.
- **Wireless (USB Dongle):** Plug the small USB receiver (dongle) into a port on the rear.
- **Bluetooth:** These require the computer to be fully on to "pair." You will need a cheap wired mouse/keyboard just to get through the initial Windows setup before you can connect Bluetooth devices.

Powering Up:

Last, connect the **Power Cord**.

1. Check the back of the PC; many power supplies have a small **I/O toggle switch**. Make sure it is set to the **"I" (On)** position.
2. Plug the cord into your power source (a Surge Protector or UPS is highly recommended).
3. Press the main Power Button on the front or top of the case.

2. All-in-One (AIO) Desktop

An All-in-One combines the computer and monitor into a single unit. You won't have a monitor cable to worry about—simply plug in your keyboard, mouse, and the power cord, then press the power button (usually located on the side or bottom edge of the screen).

3. Laptop

Power: Even if the battery has a factory charge, plug in the power adapter immediately. Windows setup consumes a lot of energy, and you do not want the machine to die during an update.

Navigation: While laptops have a trackpad, plugging in a **USB mouse** right away is highly recommended. It makes navigating the setup screens much faster and easier.

Part 2: The First Power On

1. The Manufacturer "Splash" Screen

The very first thing you will see is not Windows, but the logo of your computer's manufacturer (e.g., **Dell, HP, Lenovo, or ASUS**). This is called the "POST" (Power-On Self-Test) screen.

- **What's happening:** The computer is doing a lightning-fast health check of its internal parts like the memory and processor.
- **What to do:** Usually, nothing. If you see a message like "Press F2 for Setup," just wait—it will disappear on its own in a few seconds. [3, 4, 5, 6]

2. The Windows "Greeting" (OOBE)

After the manufacturer logo fades, the screen will turn blue or white with a spinning circle. This begins the **Out-of-Box Experience (OOBE)**.

The Very First Interactive Screen:

You will be greeted with a screen that asks: "**Is this the right country or region?**"

- **Desktop PC users:** Use your mouse to scroll through the list and click your country (e.g., Australia).
- **Laptop users:** You can use the trackpad or the arrow keys on your keyboard to highlight your choice.
- **Click "Yes"** to move forward.

3. Keyboard Layout

The next screen will ask about your **Keyboard Layout**.

- **Standard Choice:** For most users in Australia, select "**US**". We do not use the UK keyboard in Australia as it has a different layout.
 - **Second Layout:** It will then ask if you want to add a second layout. Most people should simply click "**Skip**".
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Wait for the Voice: On many new computers, **Cortana** (the virtual assistant) might start talking to walk you through these steps. If you find this annoying or are in a quiet room, you can click the **Microphone icon** at the bottom of the screen to mute her.

Part 3: The "Connect to Internet" There is a Trap

When you reach the screen titled "**Let's connect you to a network**," you will notice there is no "Skip" button. Windows is trying to force you to sign in with a Microsoft Account.

How to Bypass it (The "Secret Shortcut")

If you prefer a **Local Account** (one that isn't tied to an email address), follow these exact steps:

1. **Open the Secret Menu:** On your keyboard, press and hold the **Shift** key and then tap the **F10** key.
 - *Note for Laptop users:* You may need to hold **Shift + Fn + F10**.
2. **Type the Magic Command:** A black box (Command Prompt) will appear. Click inside it and type exactly this:

3. **Hit Enter:** Your computer will automatically restart.
4. **The Reward:** Go through the Region and Keyboard screens again. When you get back to the "Let's connect you to a network" screen, a new option will appear: "**I don't have internet**".
5. **Finish the Setup:** Click "**I don't have internet**" and then select "**Continue with limited setup**". Windows will now finally let you just type in a name for your computer without an email address.

6. Setting Up Your Username

Once you click "**Continue with limited setup**," Windows will ask: "**Who is going to use this device?**"

- Type in your preferred name (e.g., "John" or "Home-PC") and click **Next**.

7. The Password Shortcut

Now you will see the "**Create a super memorable password**" screen.

- **The No-Password Trick:** If you don't want to enter a password every time you turn on your computer, leave this box **completely empty** and just click **Next**.
- **The Benefit:** By leaving it blank, you skip the three "Security Questions" entirely and will be taken straight to your desktop every time you start up.

⚠️ A Note on Security Questions (If you choose to set a Password)

Because a Local Account isn't saved in the "cloud," Microsoft will ask you to set **three security questions**.

- **Don't skip these:** If you forget your password, these questions are the *only* way back into your computer.
- **Write them down:** Keep the answers in a physical notebook or a safe place away from the PC.

Note: You can always add a password later in Settings once you are comfortable with the computer.

Part 4: Privacy Settings

Before you see your desktop, Windows will show a list of "Privacy Settings" (Location, Diagnostic Data, Find My Device, etc.).

- **Recommendation:** Most users can toggle all of these to "**No**" or "**Off**". This stops the computer from sending extra data back to Microsoft and can help the computer run a little leaner.
 - Click **Accept** once you've made your choices.
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Part 5: Cleaning Out the "Bloatware"

When you buy a new computer, it often comes pre-loaded with "trial" software—apps you didn't ask for and probably don't want. These are called **Bloatware**. They take up space and can slow down your new computer by running in the background.

1. How to Uninstall Apps

Windows 11 makes it fairly easy to remove these programs through the Settings menu:

1. Click the **Start Button** (the four blue squares on your taskbar).
2. Click the **Settings** gear icon (if you don't see it, type "Settings" in the search bar).
3. On the left-hand menu, click **Apps**, then click **Installed apps** at the top.
4. Scroll through the list. When you see an app you know you don't want (like *TikTok*, *Instagram*, *trials of Microsoft 365*, or *pre-installed games*):
 - Click the **three dots (...)** on the right side of the app name.
 - Select **Uninstall**.
 - Click **Uninstall** again to confirm.

2. What is Safe to Remove?

If you aren't sure if something is important, a good rule of thumb is: **If you don't recognize it and it looks like a game or a social media app, it is usually safe to delete.**

- **Definitely Remove:** Trials for antivirus (like McAfee or Norton), "Daily News" apps, and any game you didn't install yourself.
- **Leave Alone:** Anything that has the name of your computer manufacturer (e.g., *Dell*, *HP*, *Lenovo*) followed by "Drivers," "Firmware," or "Update." These are necessary for your hardware to work correctly.
- **Recommended:** To completely uninstall a program it is advised to use a special program like BCUNINSTALLER. This program will uninstall any application on your computer and then check for any leftover items.

3. Cleaning the Taskbar

The Taskbar (the bar at the bottom of your screen) often comes "bloated" with icons you might never use, like the Search box, Task View, or Widgets.

1. **Right-click** on a blank space on your Taskbar.
2. Select **Taskbar settings**.
3. Under **Taskbar items**, you can toggle "Off" things like **Search**, **Task view**, and **Widgets** to make your screen look much cleaner and more professional.

Part 6: Silencing the "Spyware" (Privacy & Notifications)

Windows 11 is set up by default to track how you use your computer and send that data back to Microsoft. It also likes to "nudge" you with constant notifications. You can turn most of this off in one go.

1. Hardening Your Privacy Settings

Go to **Start > Settings > Privacy & security** and look under the **Windows permissions** section:

- **General:** Turn **OFF** all four toggles here. This stops Windows from tracking your app launches and showing you "suggested content" (ads) in the Settings app.
- **Speech:** Turn **OFF** Online Speech Recognition unless you specifically plan to use your voice to dictate text.
- **Diagnostics & feedback:** This is the big one. Turn **OFF** "Send optional diagnostic data." Also, make sure "Tailored experiences" is set to **OFF** so Microsoft doesn't use your data to send you personalised ads.
- **Activity history:** Uncheck "Store my activity history on this device." This stops Windows from keeping a minute-by-minute log of what you do.

2. Stopping the "Nudges" (Notifications)

Nothing ruins a new computer experience like constant pop-ups.

1. Go to **Settings > System > Notifications**.
2. Scroll all the way to the bottom and click on **Additional settings**.
3. **Uncheck** all three boxes:
 - *Show the Windows welcome experience...*
 - *Suggest ways to get the most out of Windows...*
 - *Get tips and suggestions when using Windows.*

Turning these off stops those annoying "Finish setting up your device" pop-ups that appear after you've already started using your PC.

3. Cleaning up Search

When you click the Search bar, Windows often shows you "Trending" news or pictures from the web that can be distracting.

1. Go to **Settings > Privacy & security > Search permissions**.
2. Scroll down to **More settings** and turn **OFF** "Show search highlights." This gives you a clean, simple search box without the daily clutter.

Part 7: Getting Online (Connecting to Wi-Fi)

Now that you are at the desktop, it's time to connect to your network.

1. **Find the Icon:** Look at the bottom right corner of your screen (the "System Tray"). Click on the icon that looks like a globe or a disconnected computer.
2. **Select Wi-Fi:** Click the arrow next to the Wi-Fi symbol. A list of available networks will appear.
3. **Log In:** Select your home network, click **Connect**, and enter your Wi-Fi password.
 - *Pro-Tip:* If you have a **Desktop PC** and can plug in an Ethernet cable directly to your router, do that instead. It is faster and more stable for the big updates coming next.

Part 8: The "Update Loop" (Your First Security Check)

Your "new" computer was likely sitting in a box in a warehouse for months. In that time, hackers found new holes and Microsoft released "patches" to fix them. You must run these updates before doing anything else.

1. **Open Updates:** Click **Start > Settings > Windows Update**.
2. **Check for Updates:** Click the big blue "**Check for updates**" button.
3. **The "Install All" Phase:** Windows will start downloading dozens of files. Let it finish. If it asks you to "**Restart now**," do it.

4. **The "Check Again" Rule:** This is the step most people miss. Once the computer restarts and you are back at the desktop, **go back to Windows Update and click "Check for updates" again.**
 - Often, one set of updates cannot install until a previous set is finished. Repeat this until it says: **"You're up to date."**

Don't Forget the "Optional" Updates

Sometimes the most important software for your screen or Wi-Fi card is hidden.

1. On the Windows Update screen, click **Advanced options**.
2. Look for **Optional updates**.
3. If there are "Driver updates" listed there and you are having an issue with one of these devices check the box and click **Download & install**. This ensures your hardware (like your webcam or printers) works perfectly.

A Critical Warning on Driver Updates

As you manage your new computer, you may see advertisements or websites offering software that “automatically updates all your drivers”.

Avoid these programs entirely: They are frequently scams or junkware designed to trick you into paying for something that Windows does for free. Using them can actually cause your computer to crash by installing the wrong files.

The Golden Rule about Drivers: Let Windows Update handle your drivers. It is safer, verified by Microsoft, and Free.

The Printer Exception: Printers are the one device that often need specific software from the manufacturer’s official website (like HP, Canon, or Brother) to unlock all their features and function correctly. Windows 11 will attempt to install a generic printer driver that may work ok. If the generic drivers do not work then you need to visit the manufacturer’s web site.