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5 Things to Remember When You Upgrade to Windows 10

Microsoft's new operating system has a lot going for it. Here are some things to keep in mind when getting started.

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IMAGE: Getty Images

If you've received notification from Microsoft that your machine is eligible for a [Windows 10](#) upgrade, don't shy off. It's fast, the user interface is smart, and there are a lot of other good things going for it. I've already upgraded one notebook and a notebook/tablet convertible and learned a few things in the process. Here are some points to keep in mind.

Give yourself some time to install it

Installing any new version of Windows has always taken time. But now you're compounding that with the need to download the software, which is close to 3 GB in size. If your internet connection is iffy at all, you'll have to add the download time to the actual installation and set-up. Be sure you turn off automatic power down, so the computer doesn't go to sleep in the middle of the download, by going to the Hardware and Sound option in the Control Panel, choosing Power Options, and then setting the "Put the computer to sleep" box to Never. Also, be sure the laptop, notebook, or tablet is plugged in.

Get a thumb drive

Things can always go wrong with any computer, and when they do, it's good to know that you can get your machine back to basics and reinstall the system, or start Windows even when something is wrong on your computer. Problem is, the Windows 10 upgrade doesn't come on a disc. You may find that even a new computer arrives with Windows 8.1 and needs an upgrade, which means that the partitioned system restoration copy that comes with the machine isn't of the new operating system. So you'll need to create your own backup copy. In the search box, type "recovery drive" without the quote marks. That should bring up the Create a Recovery Drive tool found in the Control Panel. You'll need a thumb drive that has at least 16 GB of space and the process will wipe anything else on it, so invest in a dedicated thumb drive for this.

See what you should upgrade before Windows

I learned this through trying to use an external Wi-Fi antenna called BearExtender that I've found useful over the years. You may have software and device drivers that aren't compatible with Windows 10. See if there's anything you can or should update before installing the new operating system, otherwise you might find yourself suddenly having to backfill a change to get access to a tool you're accustomed to using.

Give yourself some time to get used to it

Windows 8 and 8.1 drove many people nuts because of changes in the user interface. After so many years, the fact that many users became reliant on the Start button isn't surprising. So bringing back the Start button and a sense of the old way of doing things in Windows 10 is a good step. But Windows 10 doesn't quite work like Windows 7 or Vista or XP. There are differences--mostly for the good, so far as I've been able to see. Instead of upgrading all your machines, start with one and get used to the changes.

Enjoy the new UI

Right-click the Start button and you have immediate access to a whole wealth of options, including a quick way to start the Task Master, Device Manager, Network Connections, or a number of other choices that would have previously required several clicks. If you need to find a program, try typing its name in the search box on the Taskbar. Right-click a program to pin it to either the Start menu or Taskbar (the choice can vary).

Click on the notifications icon on the right-hand side of the system tray at the bottom of the screen. Not only do you get messages from the system, you have access to the Action Center, which puts you in easy reach of a number of options. For example, if you're on a convertible, click the Tablet Mode icon and you get the Windows 8.1 Metro user interface, with its blocks to click. Select the icon again and you're back to the regular desktop view.

Oh, and when you click Start, consider clicking the Get Started icon. You'll get a video introduction to some of the new features.

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