

Windows 10 the last Windows?

When Windows 10 was first released in 2015, Jerry Nixon, a Microsoft developer speaking at the company's Ignite conference famously said, "Right now we're releasing Windows 10, and because Windows 10 is the last version of Windows, we're all still working on Windows 10." This statement has been repeated thousands of times on as many web sites to proclaim that there won't be a Windows 11, nor any future Windows other than Windows 10.

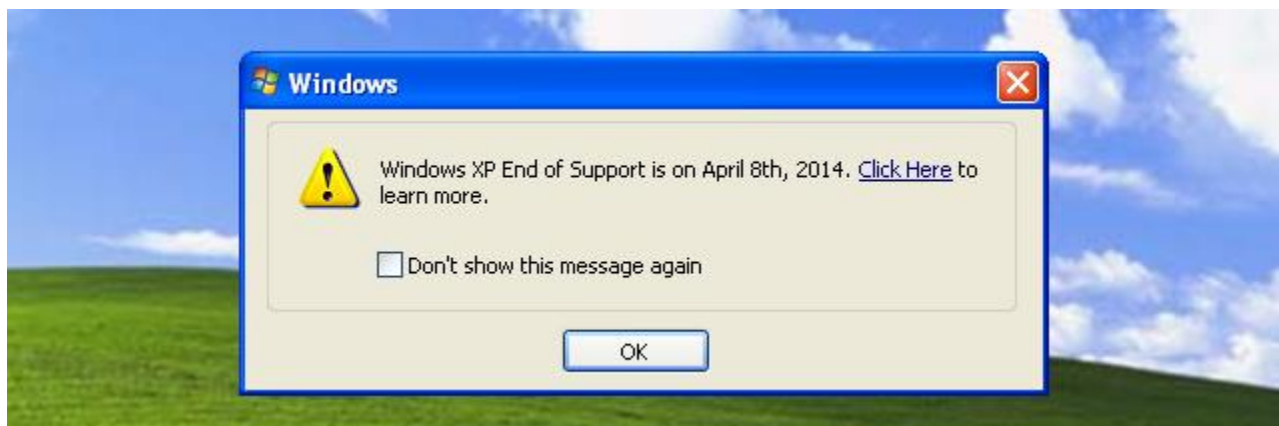
Here's another famous quote, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet". Thank you, William Shakespeare.

The Windows 10 version you have on your computer today is not the same Windows 10 version that was released in 2015. The name is the same, but the product itself has evolved and is still evolving. You know all those annoying times when Windows does updates on your computer and you're forced to wait until the updates complete? That's evolution. Update by Update, Windows 10 has changed over the years, adding new features, fixing vulnerabilities, expanding its usefulness and incorporating users' suggestions for improvement. Windows 10 is ever changing, and just like my 7-year-old granddaughter is still named Maddi, she is surely not the same child he was 5 years ago (but she is still as sweet).

The Old Model of Paying for OS Upgrades

[Source](#)

In the past, Microsoft would release a new version of Windows every few years, and users would be happy to fork over their hard-earned cash to upgrade to the latest and greatest. However, this expectation changed over time. Instead of getting excited for the newest Windows release, most people would instead buy a device and use whatever OS it came with until the computer stopped working. Why would you pay for an upgrade to Windows 7 when Windows XP works just fine?



This mindset infamously led to the long life and painful death of Windows XP. Microsoft supported it for 12 years, even after it released Windows Vista, 7, and 8. The company had to spend time and resources to come up with patches for an ancient OS, which millions of people kept using even after it was no longer supported.

This also causes a big problem for software developers. They have to keep every Windows version (which can differ wildly) in mind when creating programs. This can result in software not taking advantage of the latest Windows features, so as not to alienate those on older versions.

And in extreme cases, if a developer feels that creating software for Windows is such a hassle that it's not worth his time, he might decide to go elsewhere. A lack of great Windows apps makes Windows a less compelling platform, which Microsoft obviously doesn't want.

The result of people never paying to upgrade is fragmentation across Windows versions, which is a major issue for Microsoft. With the rise of mobile platforms, a better way became clear.

The rise of free upgrades

Meanwhile, on mobile devices, new version upgrades are pretty much always free. When Apple releases a new version of iOS, everyone with a compatible device can download it on launch day at no cost. Android suffers from fragmentation with system updates, but you still don't have to pay to upgrade.

Apple has done this with the Mac platform for some time, as well. Years ago, the company used a similar approach to Windows—you had to pay to buy each new version of Mac OS X when it arrived. But since 2013, when the company released Mavericks for free, all Mac feature updates are free to anyone with a compatible device.

When companies make the latest updates available to everyone at no charge, they can more quickly deprecate older versions. As mentioned, people have an expectation that an OS will work for a decent amount of time after they've paid for it.

Even after 12 years, some people were still upset that Microsoft pulled the plug on Windows XP. But nobody really cares when Apple stops supporting a version of macOS from three or four years ago, because they've already upgraded for free. Meanwhile, app developers can be confident that the majority of users have the latest OS version, letting them take advantage of the new features more quickly.

Original 2015 Windows 10 is no longer supported

We loudly warned users of Windows 7 demise in Jan 2020, but I don't think we mentioned that the version of Windows 10 that was released in 2015 has not been supported for years. Don't panic.

Remember evolution? You probably aren't using that 2015 version any more. Because your computer receives Windows updates on a regular basis, you're covered.

18-month shelf life

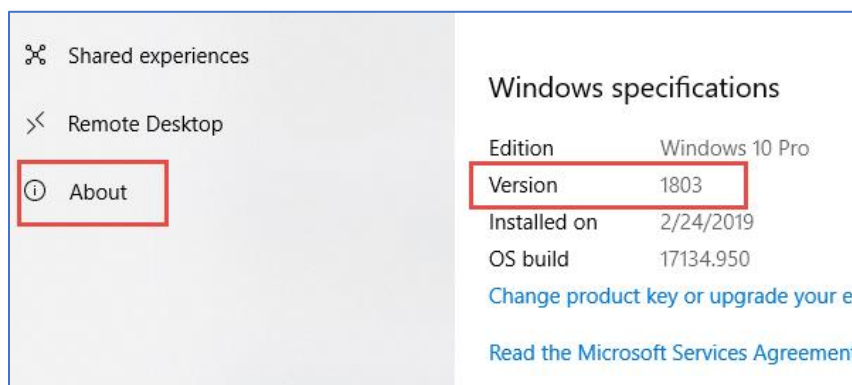
As part of Microsoft's plan to eliminate the need for a Windows 11 or 12, they release 2 major Windows 10 updates a year, as well as various build updates throughout the year. Each of the major updates have an 18-month support life. At the end of 18 months that version will no longer be supported. If your company must comply with HIPAA guidelines, the lack of support could put you in hot water, since using an unsupported operating system is a HIPAA violation.

Fortunately, Windows 10 updates are turned on by default, and unless you have had some reason to disable updates, or your update feature is broken, you should be right up to date with the latest version of Windows 10.

How do I know?

It's easy to find which version of Windows 10 you are using.

1. Press **Windows key + I** on the keyboard. This will open Windows Settings.
2. Click **system**
3. In the left panel, click **About**
4. In the right panel, scroll down to **Windows specifications** and look next to **Version**.

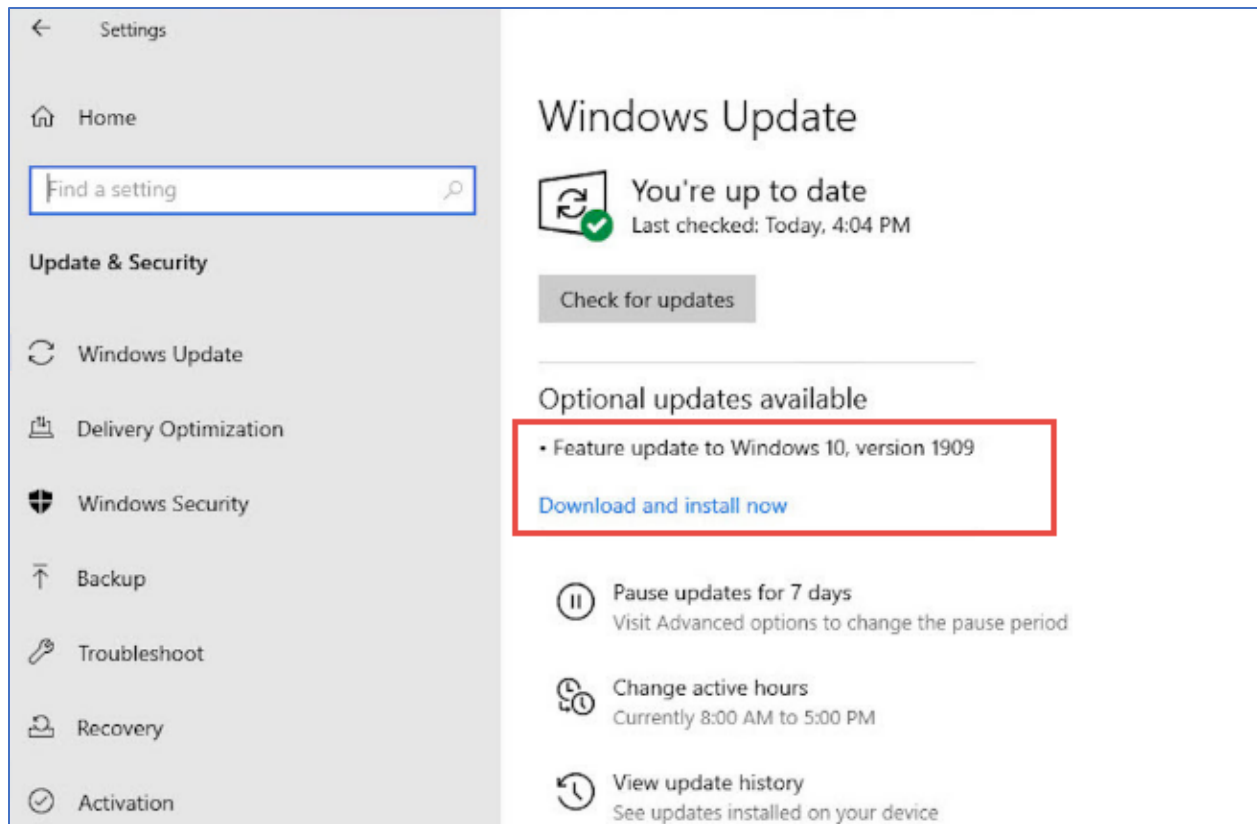


At this writing, the most current version is 1909. The picture above clearly shows that this system has an older version. Versions are named by year and date. Above, the version is March 2018 (1803, get it?).

How do I upgrade versions?

When I'm ready to install version 1909 I will follow these steps. Note, if your current version is 1903 the upgrade will take about 10 minutes. If your version is earlier than that, expect the update to take several hours.

1. Press **Windows key + I** on the keyboard. This will open Windows Settings.
2. Click **Update & Security**
3. Look for the section that says *Feature update to Windows 10, version 1909* and click the link to **Download and install now**



What if I don't update?

With the 1903 update (the version prior to 1909), Microsoft changed their long-standing method of automatically installing a major update and, instead, is allowing the user to install it themselves. This allows users to choose a convenient time (It took us over 2 hours to install 1903 on a test system with a solid state drive).

If you don't update, Windows will start warning you as you approach the 18-month end of support date, and finally, if you don't take the hint, Windows will do the update without your permission.

You don't have to be in a big hurry to install the major updates, including 1909. After a major release, Microsoft normally spends the next year fixing bugs in the release, so it's usually a good idea to give a major update a few months to work the kinks out. Why invite trouble?

And then there's this

Regardless of Jerry Nixon's proclamation that this is the last Windows, Microsoft has updated its Windows lifecycle page showing that its support for Windows 10 will officially end on October 14, 2025. This closely follows their normal 10-year support timeline for a product. What will happen on that date is anybody's guess, but I think we can be certain that it will be some continuation of Windows 10, even if, like Shakespeare's rose, it is called something else.

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