

Microsoft wants you using Windows 10, like it or not

February 3 2016, by Anick Jesdanun



In this Jan. 21, 2015, file photo, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella speaks at an event demonstrating the new features of Windows 10 at the company's headquarters in Redmond, Wash. If you're running an older version of Windows, you might suddenly find Microsoft's Windows 10 upgrade already downloaded on your machine. The automatic download, beginning the first week of February 2016, is part of Microsoft's aggressive push to get Windows 10 on as many devices as possible. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File)

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Microsoft's Windows 10 upgrade already downloaded on your machine.

You never requested it, so why are you getting it?

The automatic download is part of Microsoft's aggressive push to get Windows 10 on as many devices as possible. Since last July, Microsoft has distributed the [free upgrade](#) on request. But starting this week, it's also pushing it out to those who haven't requested it—and who might not want it.

Microsoft isn't actually installing Windows 10 automatically, but installation is just a click or two away. If you're not careful, you might suddenly find the new system on your old machine.

Is this good for you?

THE BENEFITS OF WINDOWS 10

Windows 10 has many improvements over its predecessors—especially Windows 8. It's much easier to use than Windows 8, and it offers more modern controls—akin to mobile devices—than Windows 7. (There is no Windows 9.) Windows 10 also paves the way for multiple devices to work together. You might be able to buy an [app](#) once to run on your PC, phone and Xbox game machine, for instance. The app's layout would automatically reconfigure to the given screen size.

New apps are being designed for Windows 10, so if you have an older system, you might find yourself shut out.

BENEFITS FOR MICROSOFT

Microsoft is reducing reliance on software sales in favor of services such as the Bing search engine, OneDrive storage and Skype for communications. Windows 10 was designed to steer users to those services. Microsoft makes money from ads and premium features that cost money—such as additional OneDrive storage.

Microsoft can also encourage app makers to write more software for Windows 10 if a lot of people are using it. It's similar to how Apple pushes its users to upgrade to the latest iPhone and Mac systems. App developers know they can enable the latest features without worrying about abandoning too many users of older devices.

WHY HOLD OUT?

System upgrades aren't always smooth, especially on older machines with slower processors, less memory and less storage space available. Microsoft's Get Windows 10 app will verify that you meet minimum system requirements—but minimum doesn't mean speedy.

Older machines also might have software that won't work on Windows 10, so you'd have to spend money upgrading those programs, if upgrades are available at all. Printers, scanners and other accessories also might need new controlling software, called drivers. If a driver update isn't available, you might find yourself with a dead accessory.

And once you upgrade to Windows 10, you might be ceding control over future upgrades to Microsoft. The company is offering incremental updates to Windows 10 on a regular basis, and it won't always give you a choice on whether to accept.

HOW TO KEEP THE OLDER WINDOWS

Microsoft is treating Windows 10 as a type of security update it regularly pushes to users. Microsoft is now reclassifying Windows 10 as "recommended" rather than "optional." In doing so, those who have set their machine to automatically get important updates will get Windows 10, too. You can avoid this by turning off automatic updates in the settings under Windows Update. That's not recommended, though, because you might miss important security fixes.

If you work for a large company, your system administrators are likely monitoring these updates, so Windows 10 won't automatically download without their OK. Plus, Microsoft isn't offering Windows 10 for free to larger companies.

Microsoft will support Windows 7 until 2020 and Windows 8 until 2023, after which time it will stop fixing any security problems. By then, it might be time for a new computer anyway.

IF YOU'RE READY

To install Windows 10, all you need to do is accept it when prompted. Getting Windows 10 shouldn't affect your photos and other documents, though there's always a risk of a meltdown with any major upgrade. Back up your files first. You can use an online storage service such as OneDrive or DropBox to keep a backup online.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T LIKE WINDOWS 10?

Microsoft keeps a backup of your system for a month. In the settings, go to "Update & security" and then "Recovery." You'll find the option to return to Windows 7 or 8. Your files should be OK, but you'll lose any apps installed after upgrading to Windows 10. Remember, you have only 31 days to change your mind.

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