Fix
WINDOWS 10

SOLVE THE MORE FRUSTRATING OVERSIGHTS AND PROBLEMS IN MICROSOFT'S LATEST AND GREATEST
BY NICK PEERS

WINDOWS 10 certainly blends the best features of Windows 7 and 8.1, but there are still hurdles to overcome if you truly want to enjoy it. In this feature, we round up the most frustrating annoyances you're likely to come across with your new operating system, and show you how to get the OS to work the way you want it to once again. You'll discover how to restore features taken out of Windows 10, such as Windows Media Center, make sure settings are correctly applied to protect your privacy and security, plus resolve other issues with the minimum of fuss.

Once you've worked your way through our list, you'll have a PC that's working for you, not the other way round. Without further ado, then, it's time to get Windows 10 firmly in line....

Watch DVDs Again

WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER lost the ability to play DVD video in Windows 10 [as it did in Windows 8 before it]. You can purchase Microsoft's Windows DVD Player for $15 from the Store, but why do that when VLC Media Player enables you to watch DVDs—including non-Region 1 discs—for free? Just download and install it from www.videolan.org/vlc Before you play any movies, open the "Video" menu and choose "Deinterlace → Automatic" to improve the picture quality.
Replace Windows Media Center

WINDOWS MEDIA CENTER has also been dropped from Windows 10. There are plenty of free alternatives, but our personal recommendation is Kodi [www.kodi.tv], which also has a built-in DVD player. If you have a TV tuner attached to your PC for watching and recording live television, you’ll also need NextPVR [www.nextpvr.com], along with the CCCP pack [www.cccp-project.net]. Visit http://kodi.wiki/view/NextPVR for a guide to pairing NextPVR with Kodi.

Prepare to Recover

WHAT HAPPENS IF Windows 10 fails to boot? You need a system recovery drive that gives you access to Windows 10’s repair options. You can create a full-blown reinstall disc with these tools (see right) or you can press a spare 1GB USB flash drive into service instead with just the repair utilities in place. To do the latter, plug the drive into your PC, type “recovery” into the “Search” box, and click “Create a recovery drive” under “Settings.” Unplug the system files to the recovery drive, and follow the prompts to create your drive. Should you need to use it, restart your PC with the drive plugged in to access the tools.

Create a Reinstall Disc

IT PAYS TO be able to reinstall Windows from scratch should you need to. You need a blank DVD or spare 8GB USB flash drive. First, download the Windows 10 Media Creation Tool from www.microsoft.com/en-gb/software-download/windows10—choose 32-bit or 64-bit depending on your system (press Windows-Pause/Break and look under “System” if you don’t know). Launch the tool. Select “Create installation media for another PC,” click “Next” and follow prompts to select your language, edition, and architecture (32-bit or 64-bit). Insert your USB flash drive, or create an ISO file you can then burn to a single DVD.

Save Bandwidth

WINDOWS 10 USES peer-to-peer technology to deliver Windows updates. This means your Internet connection is used to share updates you’ve downloaded with other users. If you’re on a slow broadband connection, or you’d rather not let Microsoft do this, you can change it. Click “Start” and choose “Settings.” Select “Update & Security,” and click “Advanced options” under “Windows Update.” Next, click “Choose how updates are delivered,” and either switch the feature off or select “PCs on my local network” to further cut bandwidth usage by only sharing the updates between PCs in your home.

Lose the File Explorer Ribbon

WE’VE LOVED the File Explorer since its introduction in Windows 8, but if you’re not a fan of its ribbon interface, you can disable it and restore the Windows 7 look using a program called OldNewExplorer—download it from http://thiny.net/files/OldNewExplorer.rar. You need a program capable of extracting RAR files to use it—try 7-Zip [www.7-zip.org]. Once extracted, launch the program and click “Install,” then tick the various boxes to change how File Explorer looks—close and reopen any File Explorer windows to see the effects.
Change Default App by File Type

IF YOUR APP ISN'T LISTED when trying to set it as the default via "Settings," try this instead: Browse to a file you want to open, right-click it, and choose "Open with." Choose another app." Tick "Always open this app..." before selecting your chosen default. If it's not in the list, click "More apps" to reveal more choices, and if your chosen program still isn't there, click "Look for another app on this PC" to manually select it. Start your search under "Program Files" or "Program Files (x86)."

Restore Classic Start Menu

IF YOU'VE UPGRADED FROM WINDOWS 7, you might not like the new "Start" menu at all. If you're hankering after the "classic" style, download and install Classic Shell from www.classicshell.net. During installation, (un)pick all entries except "Classic Start Menu" and "Classic Shell Update." Once it's installed, click the "Start" button to configure it—the default settings should be fine, so click "OK." The classic "Start" menu blends in with the Windows 10 look, but provides settings and shortcuts that you'll be more familiar with—there's even a shortcut to the Windows 10 "Start" menu, too.

Disable Cortana

THERE'S LITTLE DOUBT that the Windows 10 search bar is useful, but it links into Microsoft Cortana by default. If you decide you don't like Cortana's additional tools, you can reduce its functionality to that of previous versions of Windows. Click the search bar to open Cortana. If you're using it for the first time, click "Not interested" to disable it; otherwise, click the "Settings" button and click the "Use Cortana" switch to "Off." You can also disable the web portion of Windows 10's search capabilities from here, too, restricting searches to files, programs, and settings on your PC.

Change Default Apps in Settings

AFTER UPGRADING TO WINDOWS 10, Microsoft changes your default browser to Edge. To fix this, click "Start → Settings → System → Default apps." Click the Edge entry, then pick your browser from the list that pops up. You can change other key app defaults here: video, photo, mail, and so on. For a wider range of app choices, click "Set defaults by app." Advanced users can also set defaults by file type or protocol using the appropriate links.
RESTORE WINDOWS PHOTO VIEWER

MICROSOFT HAS REPLACED Windows Photo Viewer with the Photos app, but it's possible to restore it as an option when setting the default app for photos. It's a convoluted process—see "Method 4" at www.askvg.com/tip-restoring-windows-photo-viewer-as-default-in-windows-10/. However, the site does provide a ready-made zip file containing the required Registry entries. Download this to your hard drive, then open it to access the .reg file within. Double-click this, then choose "Run" followed by "Yes" [twice] to make Windows Photo Viewer an option once again.

CUSTOMIZE HIDDEN START MENU

WINDOWS 10 HAS a hidden "Start" menu—press Windows-X or right-click the "Start" button. The menu includes shortcuts to hidden parts of your system, such as the old Control Panel, Run dialog box, and Event Viewer. But you can add your own, or rearrange and delete existing shortcuts with Win-X Menu Editor. Download the zip file from http://winraer.com/download.php?view=21, right-click it, and choose "Extract All" to save it to a suitable folder. Browse to the "x64" (64-bit) or "x86" (32-bit) folder, then double-click "WinXEditor.exe." Click "Add a program" to browse for a program, or "Add preset" for options such as shutdown and restart entries. You can also add individual Control Panel applets and administrative tools.

RESTORE BRIEFCASE

IT MAY HAVE NICHE APPEAL, but the Briefcase was one of the earliest tools for keeping data synced between two locations. While it's been removed from Windows 10 (and 8), you can get it back again with a Registry tweak. Download the required file from http://winraer.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Briefcase.zip. Double-click it to open it, then double-click "Windows 8-Enable Briefcase.reg." Click "Run," followed by "Yes" twice, then restart Explorer via Task Manager to restore its features. Note: It doesn't work well with User Account Control, so don't create Briefcases inside any administrator-protected folders.

TIGHTEN PRIVACY IN EDGE BROWSER

IF YOU STICK with Edge, there are some important privacy settings you need to switch on before relying on it. Launch the browser, then click the "..." button in the top-right corner, and choose "Settings." Scroll down and click "Advanced settings," and make sure the "Block pop-ups" slider is set to "On." While you're there, click "Send Do Not Track requests" to "On," then set "Cookies" to "Block only third-party cookies" for greater privacy.

ACCESS CLASSIC DISPLAY SETTINGS

WE'RE NOT MASSIVE FANS of the new "Personalization" dialog, which is now part of "Settings." If you aren't either, and are hankering after the old "Display Settings" dialog from Windows 7 and 8, you can create a shortcut to it on the desktop. Right-click some blank space, and then choose "New → Shortcut." Now type the following into the "Location" box: "control.exe desk.cpl,Settings,0Settings" Click "Next," give the shortcut a suitable name, and click "Finish." Now you can use this freshly created shortcut to tweak your display settings.
Switch System Restore Back On

DON'T ASK US WHY, but on some systems Windows 10 disables System Restore by default. The first thing to do, then, is switch it back on. Press Windows-Pause/Break to open "System Properties," and click "System Protection" in the left-hand column. You should see that "Protection Settings" have been switched off for all your drives. Locate your Windows drive (it should be marked "System"), and click the "Configure..." button. Select "Turn on system protection," and allocate up to 10 percent of your available space using the slider. Click "OK" twice to finish the job.

Improve Windows Update

BY DEFAULT, Windows Update now delivers all updates automatically. While you can’t put them off indefinetely, you can improve matters. Go to "Settings → Update & Security → Windows Update → Advanced Options." Windows 10 Pro users can select "Deferr upgrades" to put off non-security updates for several months. Windows 10 Home users, on the other hand, should set "Choose how updates are installed" to "Notify to schedule restart," so they can receive alerts that updates are about to be installed. Home users with Wi-Fi connections can also postpone updates by going to "Settings → Network & Internet → WiFi → Advanced Options," and flicking the "Metered Connection" switch to "On" until you are ready to update.

Choose how updates are installed

- Notify to schedule restart
- Give me updates for other Microsoft products when I update Windows.
- Deferr upgrades
- View your update history
- Choose how updates are delivered
- Get Insider builds

You’ll be asked to schedule a restart to finish installing updates. Updates won’t download over a metered connection (where charges may apply).

Remove Unwanted Apps

WINDOWS 10 SHIPS with a number of built-in apps, such as Mail, Money, and Groove Music. However, if you don’t like any of these, Microsoft doesn’t provide an “Uninstall” option to help you get rid of them. You can still ditch them, though, with IObit Uninstaller 5 (www.iobit.com/advanceduninstaller.php). Once installed, open the app from the "Start → All apps" menu, then select "Win Manager" from the left-hand menu, and select "Windows Apps." Expand the "Windows Apps" section, where you’ll see all the apps listed. Click the dustbin next to one to remove it. Any apps can be restored later through the Store.

Tame Quick Access

QUICK ACCESS can be a mess, mixing pinned icons, frequently accessed folders, and recent items. Open File Explorer, switch to "View," and click "Options." Disable the latter two via "Privacy," and instruct File Explorer to open to the "This PC" view instead of "Quick Access." You can pin the "Recent Places" shortcut to "Quick Access"—press Windows-R, type %AppData%\Microsoft\Windows\ and press Enter. Right-click the "Recent Items" shortcut, and choose "Pin to Quick Access."

Restore Classic Alt-Tab Switcher

PRESS ALT-TAB, and Windows 10 displays a list of thumbnails for all of your open windows. If you would rather stick with the old look, press Windows-R, and type "regedit" to open Registry Editor. Browse to the following key: "HKEY_CURRENT_USER\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer.." Now select "Edit → New → DWORD (32-bit) Value." Name it "AltTabSettings." Double-click the value and set it to 1. Now restart Explorer from Task Manager to restore the icon task switcher.
**Settings**

**MANAGE WIFI SETTINGS**

**WiFi Sense**

WiFi Sense connects you to suggested WiFi hotspots and networks that your contacts share with you. By using this feature, you agree that it can use your location.

Remember, not all WiFi networks are secure. 

Learn more

Connect to suggested open hotspots

☐ Off

Connect to networks shared by your contacts

☐ Off

Give and get Internet access without seeing shared networks. You'll get connected to WiFi networks your contacts share. They'll get connected to networks you share.

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**Run Older Apps**

Most apps that work in Windows 7 and 8 should also work in Windows 10, but if your app doesn't work, all may not be lost. If you still have access to a non-OEM copy of an older version of Windows, you can install it in a virtual machine, courtesy of VirtualBox (www.virtualbox.org). Basically, this enables you to create a virtual PC inside Windows 10, into which you can install your old programs while you look for a compatible update or suitable alternative.

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**Disable Wi-Fi Sense**

If you connect wirelessly to your network, the Wi-Fi Sense feature, which connects you to crowdsourced WiFi hotspots and networks shared by your contacts, is enabled by default if you choose "Express Settings" during the Windows 10 upgrade process. It's designed to make it easier to connect to friends' networks through your Facebook, Outlook.com, or Skype contacts list. If you'd rather not share this information, you can disable it. Click "Start → Settings → Network & Internet → WiFi." Click "Manage Wi-Fi Settings," and click both switches to "Off" to prevent your network details being shared with others.

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**Recover Hard Drive Space**

Once you're up and running with Windows 10, and convinced you won't need to go back to your previous version of Windows, it's time to free up some drive space.

Open File Explorer, go to "This PC," right-click your "C" drive, choose "Properties," then click "Disk Cleanup." As soon as the dialog opens, click "Clean up system files," and wait for it to scan again. Go through the list, ticking those items you don't need—the biggest item by far will be "Previous Windows installation." Tick this to free up space, but remember there's no going back once the files are gone.

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**OneDrive Changes**

One of the best features of OneDrive in Windows 8 was the ability to use "placeholders" for certain folders, effecting giving you access to your stored files without having to also hold a copy on your hard drive. Sadly, Windows 10 ditches this feature (for now). Instead, you need to specify which folders you want to keep synched on your PC. To do this, right-click the OneDrive icon in the Taskbar Notification area, and select "Settings." Switch to the "Choose Folders" tab, and click "Choose Folders." Untick "Sync all files and folders on my OneDrive," and then tick only those folders you need access to.

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**Bypass Login**

If you're the only user of your PC, and you'd like to boot straight to the desktop without having to enter your password, here's what to do. Press Windows-R to open the "Run" dialog, then type "netplwiz," and press Enter. Make sure your user account is selected, then untick "Users must enter a username and password to use this computer," and click "Apply." Enter your user password and click "OK" twice. Windows will also require you to enter your password after your PC wakes from sleep. If security isn't an issue, click "Start → Settings → Accounts → Sign-in options," and change the "Require sign-in" drop-down to "Never."