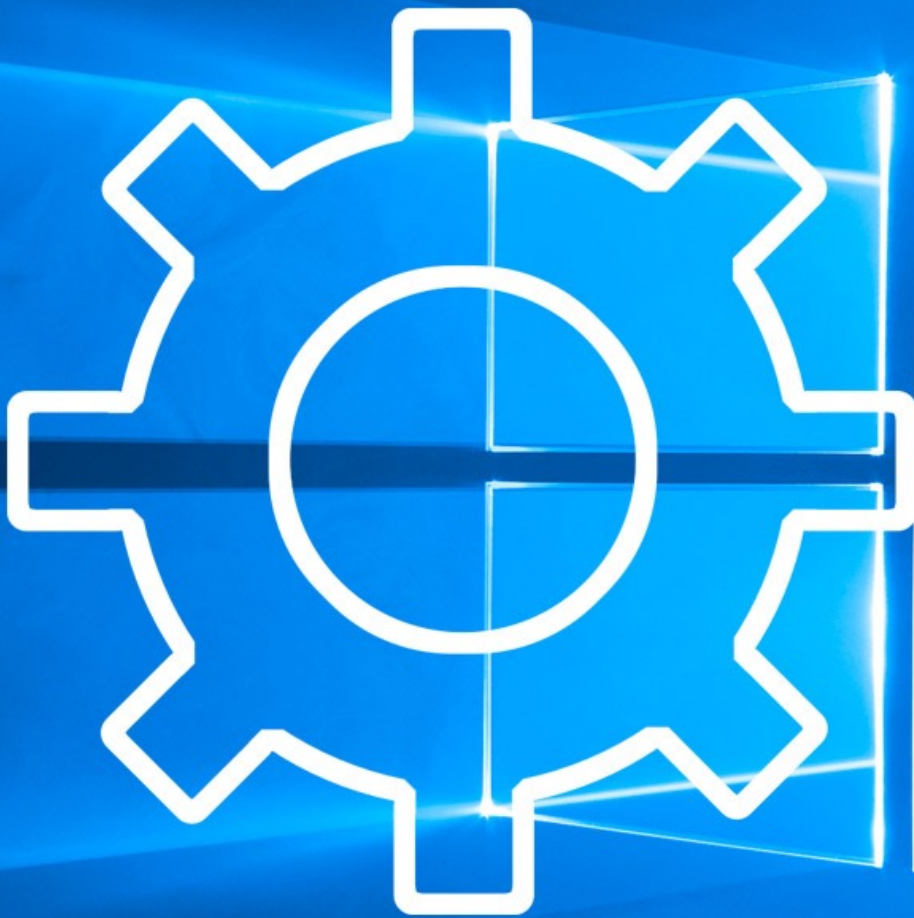


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How to Control Windows 10: **THE SETTINGS GUIDE**



by Christian Cawley

How to Control Windows 10: The Settings Guide

Written by Christian Cawley

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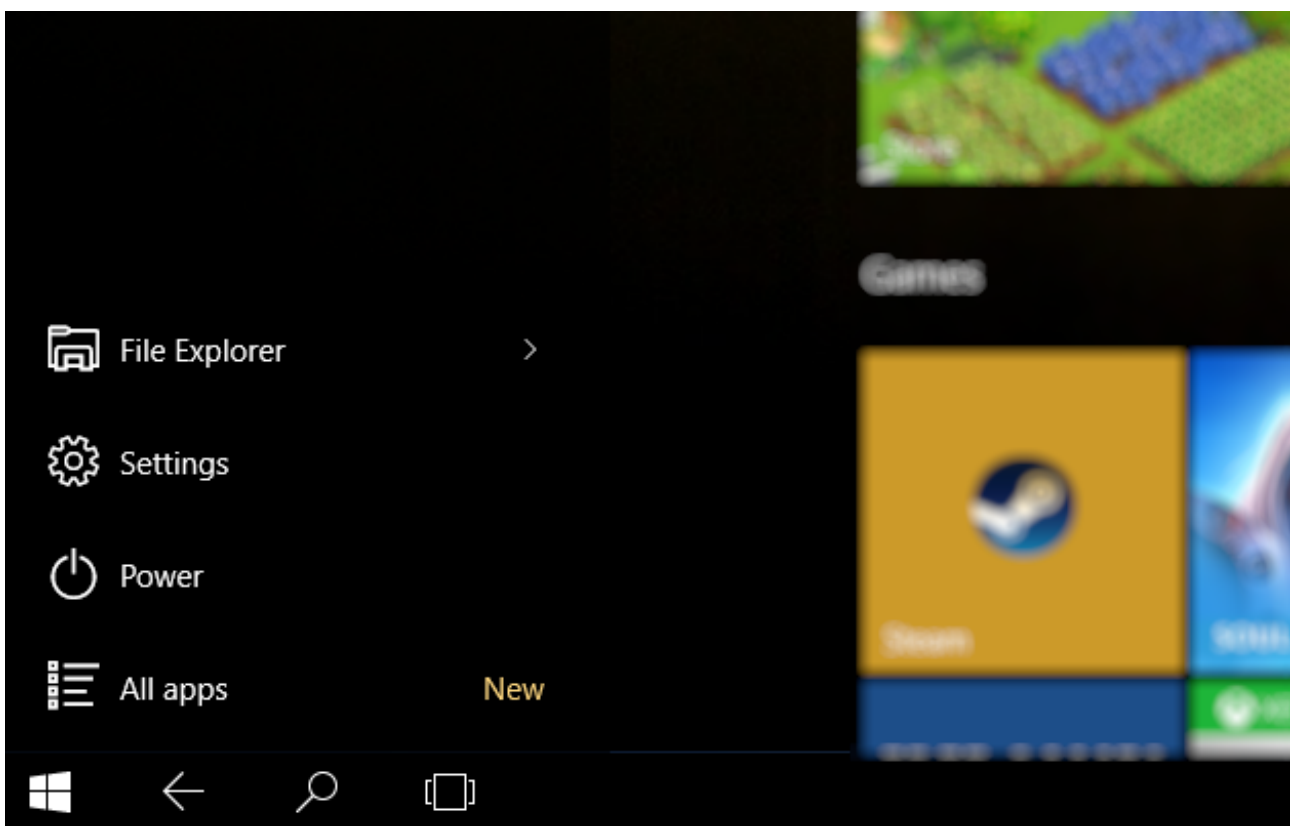
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The control panel, one of the most important interfaces in Windows, is being slowly retired. In its place, Microsoft has introduced a successor, a process that began in Windows 8 and continues in Windows 10 with the new Settings app.

You may recall the introduction of the restyled control panel in Windows XP. This offered two views, although most power users quickly switched from the “category” view back to the “classic” option (first seen in Windows 95). Eventually, this was replaced by the control panel interface made popular in Windows 7, and still present in Windows 8.x.

Windows 10 pairs the intuitive new Settings app alongside the Windows 7 control panel, just like Windows 8 did; this time around, however, the requirement to access the desktop app control panel has been greatly reduced, with many more options transferred into the new Settings app.

How to Access Settings and Control Panel

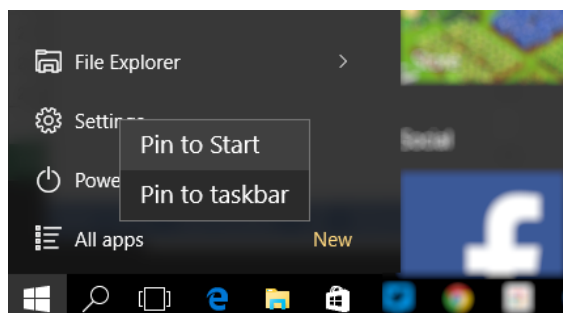


So where is the new Settings screen? You have several options available to you.

- In desktop mode, click **Start**, and you'll see Settings in the lower left corner of the menu.
- If you prefer [keyboard shortcuts](#), **WINDOWS + I** will open Settings.
- Should you happen to be in Windows Explorer, select This PC/Computer, and you'll notice that **Settings** appears in the ribbon menu.
- In tablet mode, tap the hamburger icon to expand the left-hand menu, and you'll find **Settings** in the lower-left corner.
- In either mode, you can open the Action Center (by clicking the icon or swiping in from the right) and tap **Settings**.

Easily Find Windows 10 Settings

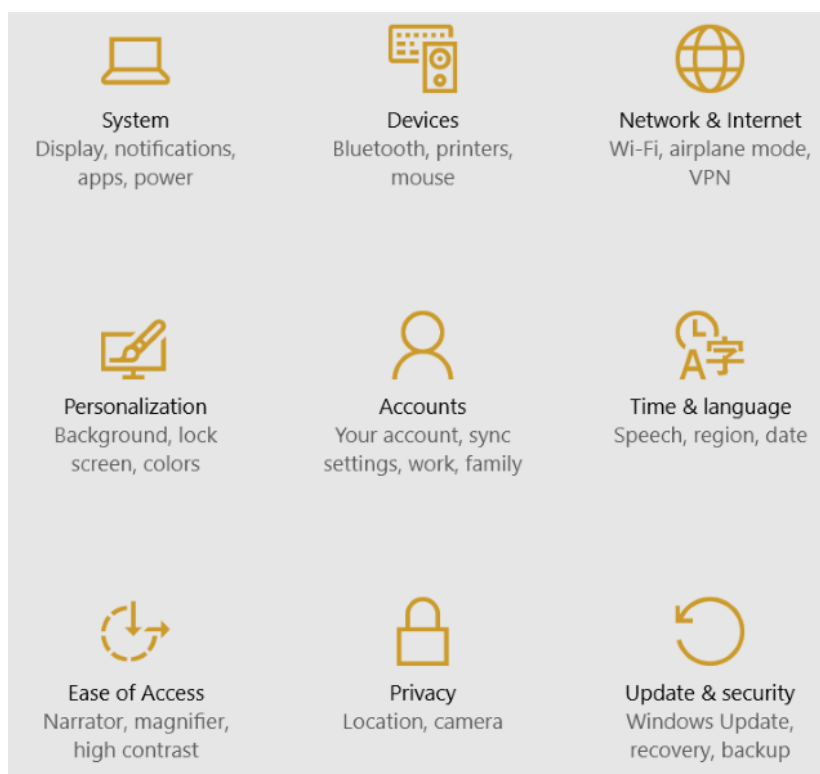
While opening Start and clicking or tapping on **Settings** is quick (particularly with the keyboard shortcut), you can make the process even slicker. Click **Start** and right-click **Settings**, and select **Pin to Start** or **Pin to Taskbar**.



The first option will create a new Start menu tile that can be set to **Small** and **Medium**, while the second drops a shortcut icon into the taskbar. Right-clicking these shortcuts will display the option to remove them, should you change your mind.

Getting Started with Settings in Windows 10

You might want to check your printer, configure privacy settings for your device camera or adjust your PC's regional settings. Whichever tweak you're looking to make, once you have opened the Settings app, you'll find a view similar to this:

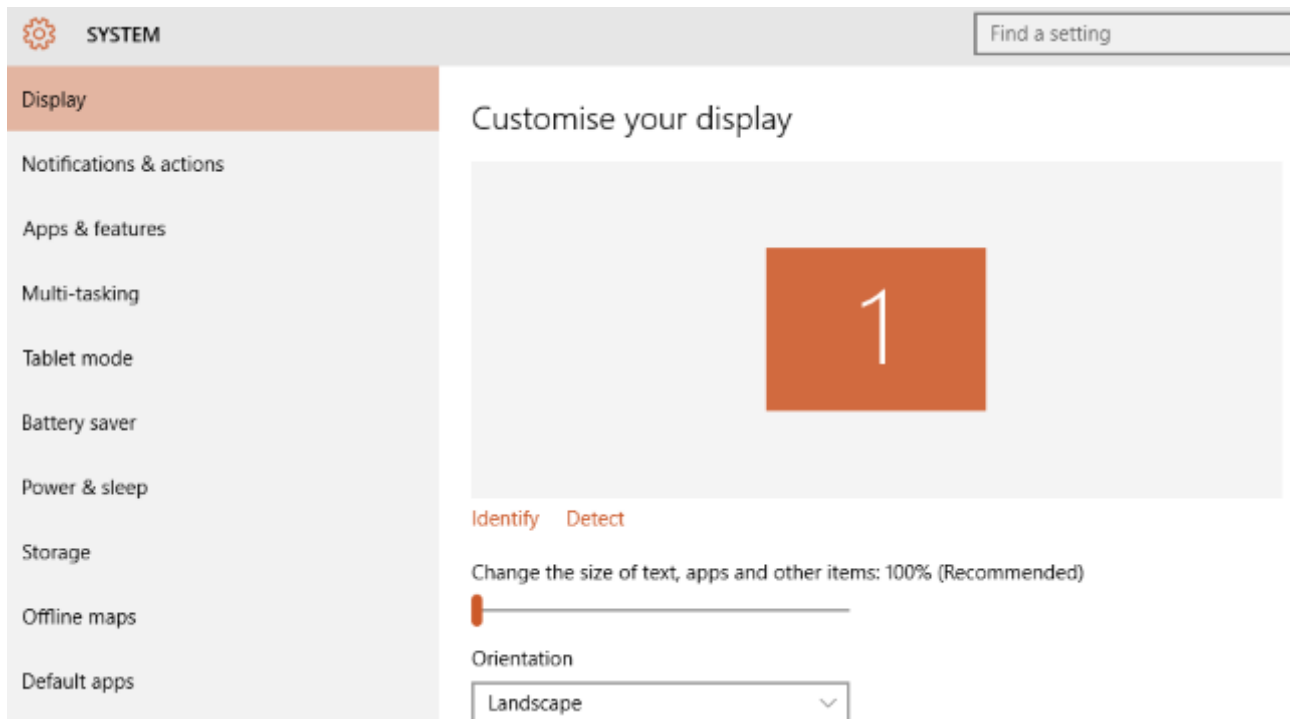


Suitable for mouse or touch control, the Settings app groups similar tasks into these nine options. The following screen then lists the various settings you can change down the left side of the window, and tapping each of these will display changes you can make in the right-hand pane.

Let's take a look at just what the Settings app can do.

Manage Your System

Each button on the Settings app leads to a collection of settings that will change the way your PC works. Start with the **System** button, where you will find tools to adjust your **Display** (orientation, text size, etc.).



See that **Advanced display settings** link? You're probably expecting that to offer up a collection of options in the old-style Windows settings box, but you would be wrong – this too has the new user interface.

Quick actions

Choose your quick actions



Select which icons appear on the taskbar

Turn system icons on or off

Notifications

Show me tips about Windows



On

Show app notifications



On

Also here you can manage **Notifications**, and add and remove Modern apps in the **Apps & features** screen. Meanwhile, the **Snap** feature, whereby windows are automatically arranged by Windows to use the optimum display space, can be toggled and configured in **Multi-tasking**, along with Windows 10's virtual desktop feature.

Tablet mode

Make Windows more touch-friendly when using your device as a

Automatically switch to tablet mode

Go to the desktop

Remember what I used last

When this device automatically switches tablet mode on or off

Always ask me before switching

Hide app icons on the taskbar in tablet mode

☒ On

If your device is a hybrid that can be used as a tablet, it might be worth spending a moment in the **Tablet Mode** screen, and configuring touch-friendly mode and other useful options that will make interacting with your touch-screen display far more satisfying.

Overview

Battery level (plugged in, not charging)
60%



Battery use

Battery saver

Extends battery life by limiting background activity and push notifications.

Battery saver is currently:

☐ Off

For power management and related settings, see the **Battery saver** and **Power & Sleep** screens. Battery saver can be activated to kick in at 20%, and limits background activity much like on a phone

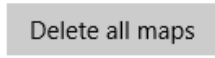
or tablet. To assist in extending battery life, you can also set up how long the screen stays switched on. For further, granular access to these settings, click **Advanced power settings** – on this occasion, you *will* see an old-style Windows screen.

Storage displays how much remaining space you have on your HDD or , and simplifies the process of moving libraries to a new drive or partition by offering a dropdown box for the documents, pictures, music, and videos storage locations to be remapped.

Maps

Download maps to search for places and get directions even when you're not connected to the Internet.

 Download maps

 Delete all maps

Metered connections

If this is turned off, maps only download over free WiFi or unlimited mobile data. (You might incur additional charges if you turn it on).

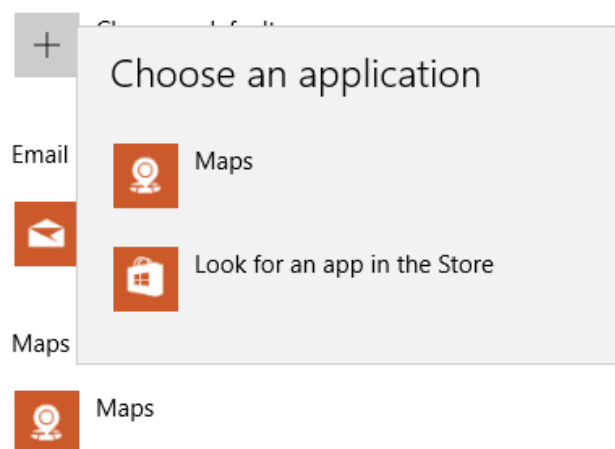
 Off

This does not affect automatic updates.

Offline maps may seem a largely useless feature unless you're using a tablet, but if you're concerned about data use (perhaps on a metered connection) then it can prove handy if you plan a lot of [journeys using Bing Maps](#).

Choose default applications

Calendar



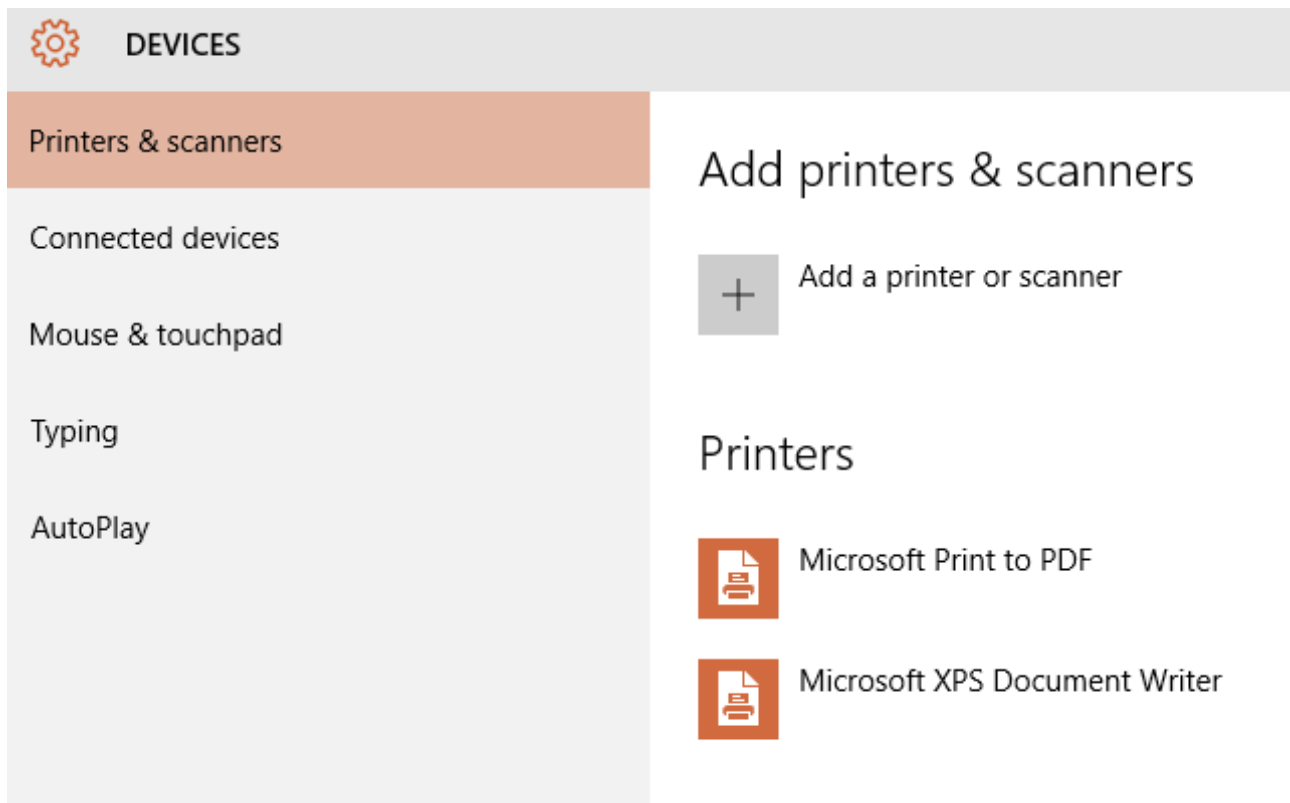
As new apps are installed on your [Windows](#) PC or tablet, so your preferred apps for particular tasks will change. The **Default apps** screen helps to configure which apps are used for which tasks,

PC name	WORKGROUP-PC
Rename PC	
Organisation	WORKGROUP
Join a domain	
Join Azure AD	
Edition	Windows 10 Pro
Product ID	00330-80000-00000-AA800
Processor	Intel(R) Core(TM) i5-4210U CPU @ 1.70GHz 2.40 GHz
Installed RAM	2.00 GB
System type	64-bit operating system, x64-based processor
Pen and touch	No pen or touch input is available for this display
Change product key or upgrade your edition of Windows	

offering the facility to search the store for an alternative or select one that has already been installed.

Finally, your PC information can be displayed in **About**, where you will find the PC's name, workgroup and the version of Windows it is running, along with the CPU and RAM. This is more or less the same information you would previously have found by right-clicking **Computer** in Windows Explorer and selecting **Properties**, and indeed in Windows 10 you can still use this method.

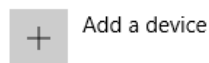
Configure Devices



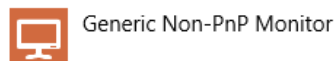
Providing everything you need to connect devices from keyboards to external hard disk drives and printers, **Devices** is perhaps the one part of the Settings app that you'll access regularly.

Use the **Printers & Scanners** screen to add corresponding new hardware, and pay attention to the **Download over metered connections** setting, which will prove useful if an upper limit is set on your data (whether through home Internet or mobile broadband). Note that the links under **Related Settings** open in old-style Windows boxes.

Add devices



Other devices



Download over metered connections

Connected Devices oversees the non-printer hardware you have connected already, while **Mouse & Touchpad** and **Typing** feature some simple adjustments to make mouse and keyboard use more efficient.

AutoPlay

Use AutoPlay for all media and devices

☒ On

Choose AutoPlay defaults

Removable drive

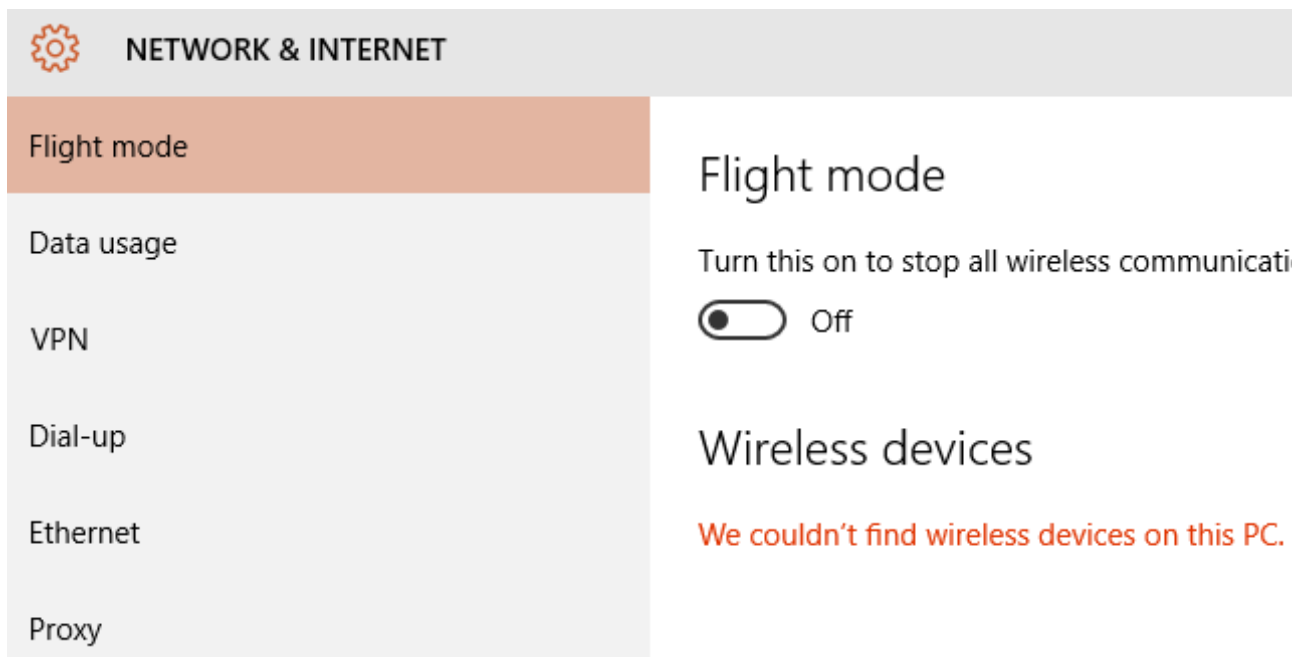
Ask me every time 

Memory card

Open folder to view files (File Explorer) 

Finally, **Autoplay** lets you toggle this feature and set action defaults for removable drives and memory cards. For instance, you can set File Explorer to be opened each time you insert a memory card, or even have the contents played or imported to your computer.

Manage Connectivity in Windows 10



Network & Internet is one collection of settings that you'll hopefully rarely need. **Flight mode** is where it begins, with a simple switch for toggling the connectivity master switch.

Overview

Data usage from last 30 days



Related settings

[Storage settings](#)

Data usage displays how much data your computer has consumed over the past 30 days, and from what source. Click **Usage details** to see information on the data your apps are using.

A screenshot of the 'Add a VPN connection' form in Windows 10. The form has a dark orange background and contains three input fields. The first field is labeled 'VPN provider' and has a dropdown arrow. The second field is labeled 'Connection name'. The third field is labeled 'Server name or address'.

If you're using a VPN, set this up by tapping **+Add a VPN** connection and entering the relevant details. Not sure what a VPN is? You should check out our [guide to VPNs](#), as well as our collection of [recommended VPN apps](#).

Automatic proxy setup

Use a proxy server for Ethernet or Wi-Fi connections. These settings don't apply to VPN connections.

Automatically detect settings



On

Use setup script

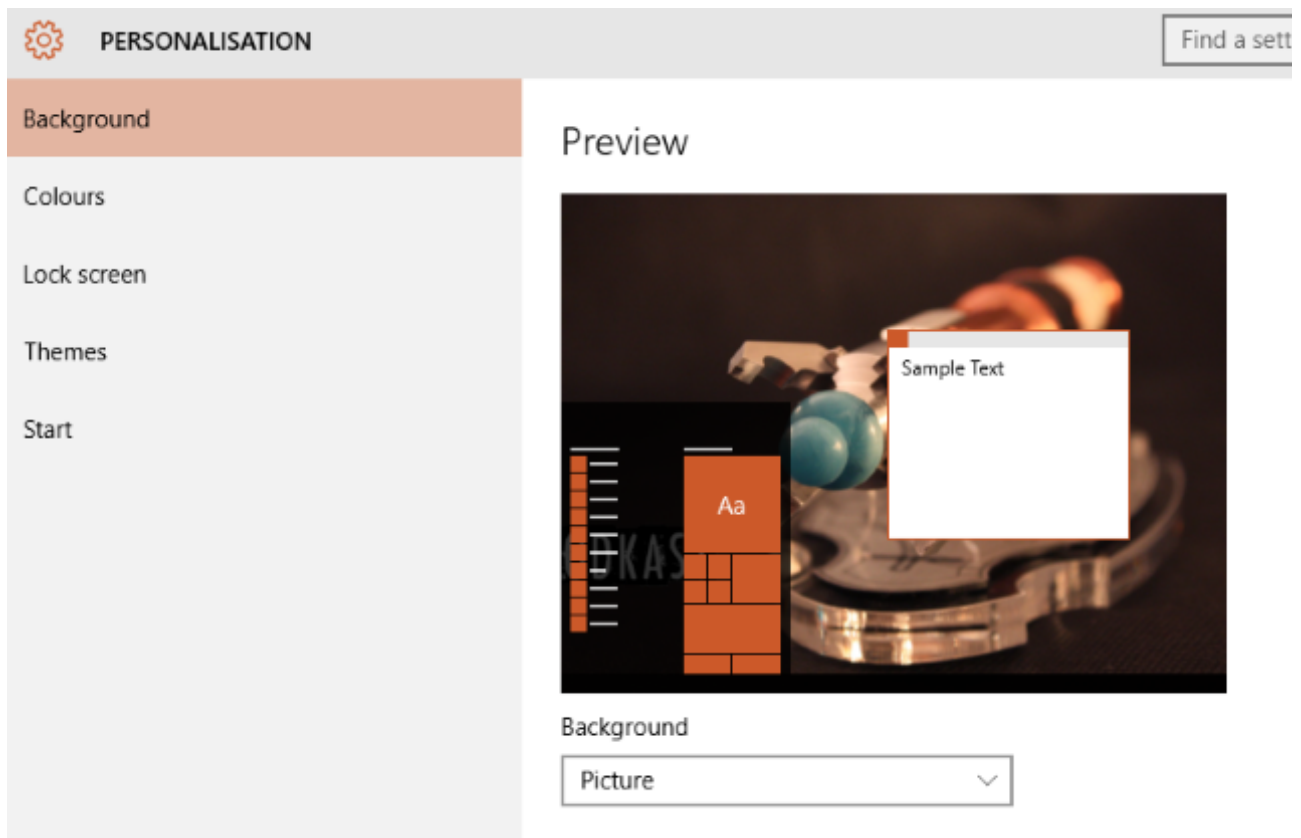


Off

In the unlikely event that you're using dialup Internet, you can configure your connection in the **Dial-up** screen, while the **Ethernet** screen also offers appropriate tools. This section closes with the **Proxy tools**, provided to enable connection to the Internet via a proxy server.

On the whole, the Network & Internet connectivity tools take their lead from mobile devices, which should make this new approach more accessible.

Windows 10 Personalization Settings



With Windows 10, you can enjoy a little more customization than was possible in Windows 8.x, thanks to the return of the Start menu. Use the **Personalization** screen to look at the options, which begin with the **Background** button, where you can select a new **Background picture**, either from the provided options or by clicking **Browse** to find a suitable image on your computer. The background can also be set as a **Solid color** or even a **Slideshow**; if you choose this option, you'll be asked to select an album of images from where the slideshow will be sourced.

Choose a colour

Automatically pick an accent colour from my background

☒ On

Show colour on Start, taskbar and action centre

☐ Off

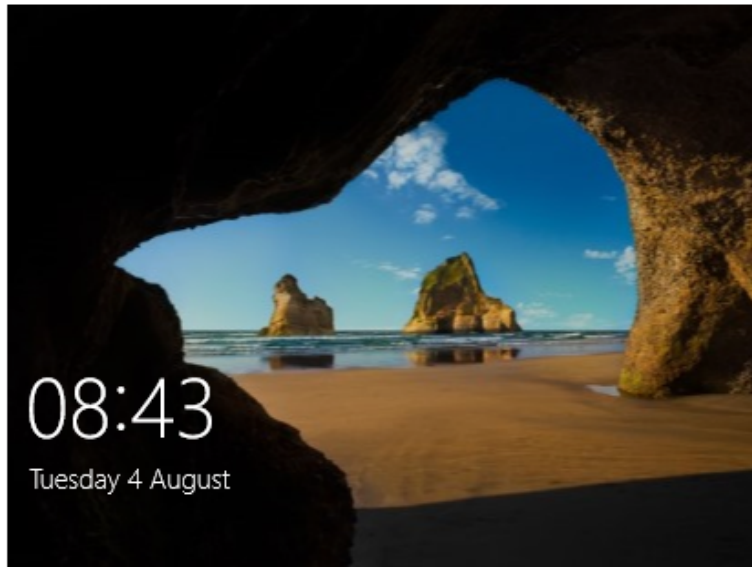
Make Start, taskbar and action centre transparent

☒ On

High contrast settings

In the **Colors** tab, accent colors can be selected. If you've upgraded from Windows 8, this will be carried over from your previous OS, and the color will be based by default on your background. To set your own color, disable **Automatically pick an accent color from my background** and choose your preferred color from the grid. Also use this screen to toggle transparency on the Start menu, taskbar, and action center.

Preview



Background

Picture ▼

The **Lock screen** background image can be set as easily as the desktop background, although you can also use this screen to set which Windows 10 app statuses can be displayed on the lock screen. Eight apps can be featured here in total, one of which can give you detailed information.

Configuring the way your computer looks too time-intensive? If so, use the **Themes** button to browse for a preloaded theme or style, which includes background image and accent color.

Start

Show most used apps



Show recently added apps



Use Start full screen



Show recently opened items in Jump Lists on Start or the taskbar



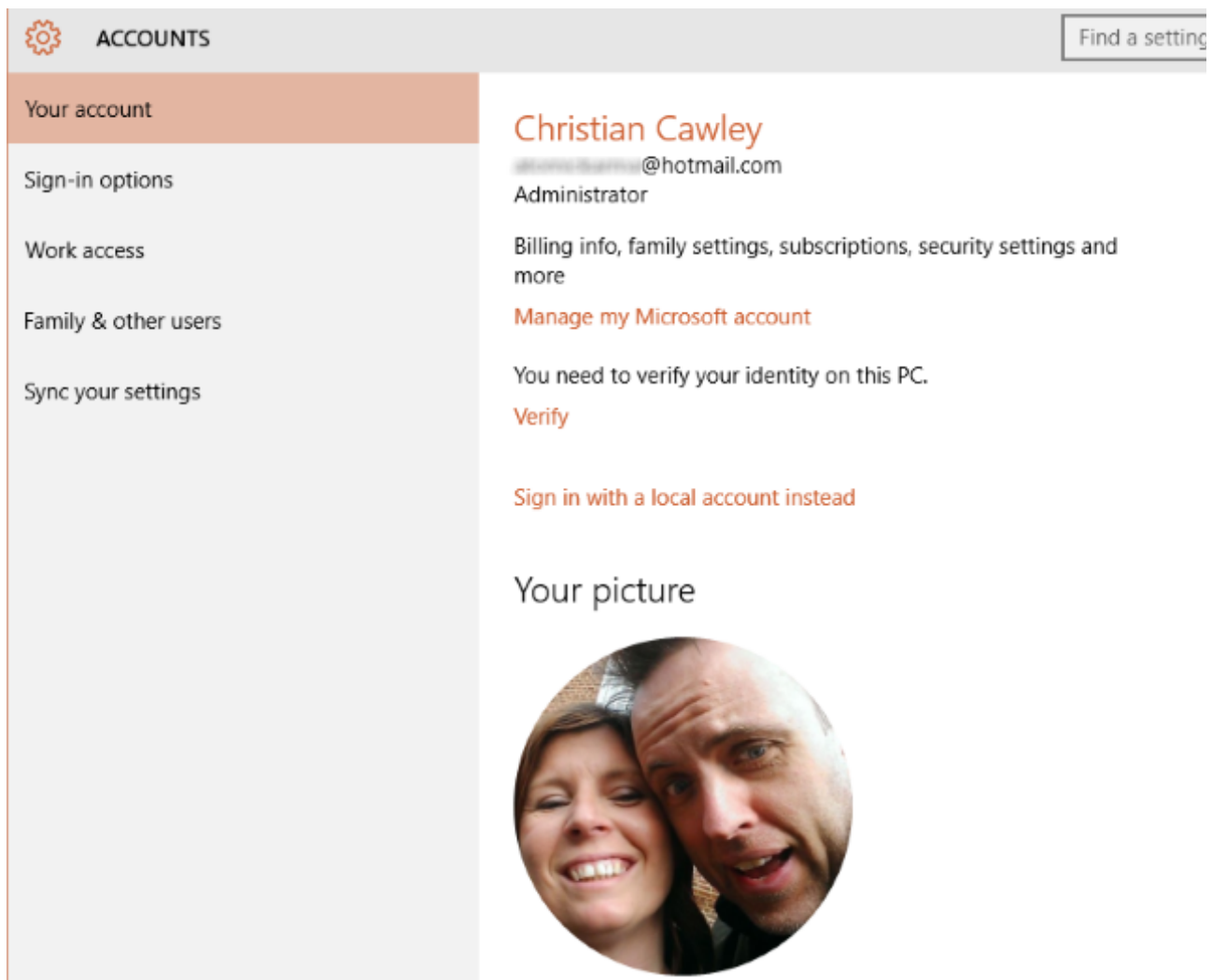
Choose which folders appear on Start

More **Start** menu/screen (depending up whether you're using a desktop or tablet) settings are available. Here you can force the most used apps to be displayed, along with recently added apps. You can also **Choose which folders appear on Start** with what must be the most wasteful use of space in any Windows menu, ever. Keep an eye on the **Use Start full screen** button, too.

When activated, this reverts your Start menu to the Windows 8.x-style Start screen, complete with an apps list accessible via a button in the bottom left corner. This would seem to be more appropriate for tablet users.

Manage Accounts and Sign-in Options

Accessing your Windows 10 computer requires an account. The main way to do this is to use an existing Windows/Microsoft account, such as Hotmail/Outlook, OneDrive, Office, Xbox Live, etc. – much the same as with Windows 8.x.



Using a Microsoft account gives you the advantage of online syncing for your Windows 10 settings, which means that you can log in to any Internet connected computer and see the same desktop Start screen layout, background image, and style (other data is also synced, as you'll see below).

When you first sign into Windows 10 you can choose to use a Microsoft account, or create a local account. If you want a local account later on, you can do this in **Accounts > Your account**, and select **Sign in with a local account instead**. Use this screen also to **Browse** for or create a new profile picture, and add other relevant accounts (other Microsoft logins, or even a workplace or school account).

Password

Change your account password

Change

PIN

You can use this PIN to sign in to Windows, apps and services.

Change

[I forgot my PIN](#)

Picture password

Sign in to Windows using a favourite photo

Add

Windows 10 supports standard text and numerical string passwords, PIN numbers, and Picture passwords (where an image is displayed and you draw upon it). Each of these can be configured in **Sign-in options**. A PIN is recommended for tablet use.

Work access is provided as an option to connect to shared workplace, school, or organization resources, and you'll need your relevant credentials to sign in via the +**Connect** button.

Your family

Add your family so everybody gets their own sign-in and desktop. You can help kids stay safe with appropriate websites, time limits, apps and games.



Add a family member

[Learn more](#)

Other users

Allow people who are not part of your family to sign in with their own accounts. This won't add them to your family.



Add someone else to this PC

For family computers, the **Family & other users** screen enables you to manage who can and cannot use your Windows 10 computer.

Add a child or an adult?

Enter the email address of the person who you want to add. If they use Windows, Office, Outlook.com, OneDrive, Skype or Xbox, enter the email address they use to sign in.

☒ Add a child

Kids are safer online when they have their own account

☐ Add an adult

daughter@myserver.com

[The person who I want to add doesn't have an email address](#)

The **+Add a family member** screen enables you to add children or adults, but each user will require a Microsoft account to be created on their behalf (unless they have one already). The **Setup Assigned Access** link is provided to limit app access for additional accounts.

Sync your settings

Sync Windows settings to other devices using
atomickarma@hotmail.com.

[How does syncing work?](#)

Sync settings

☒ On

Individual sync settings

Theme

☒ On

Web browser settings

☒ On

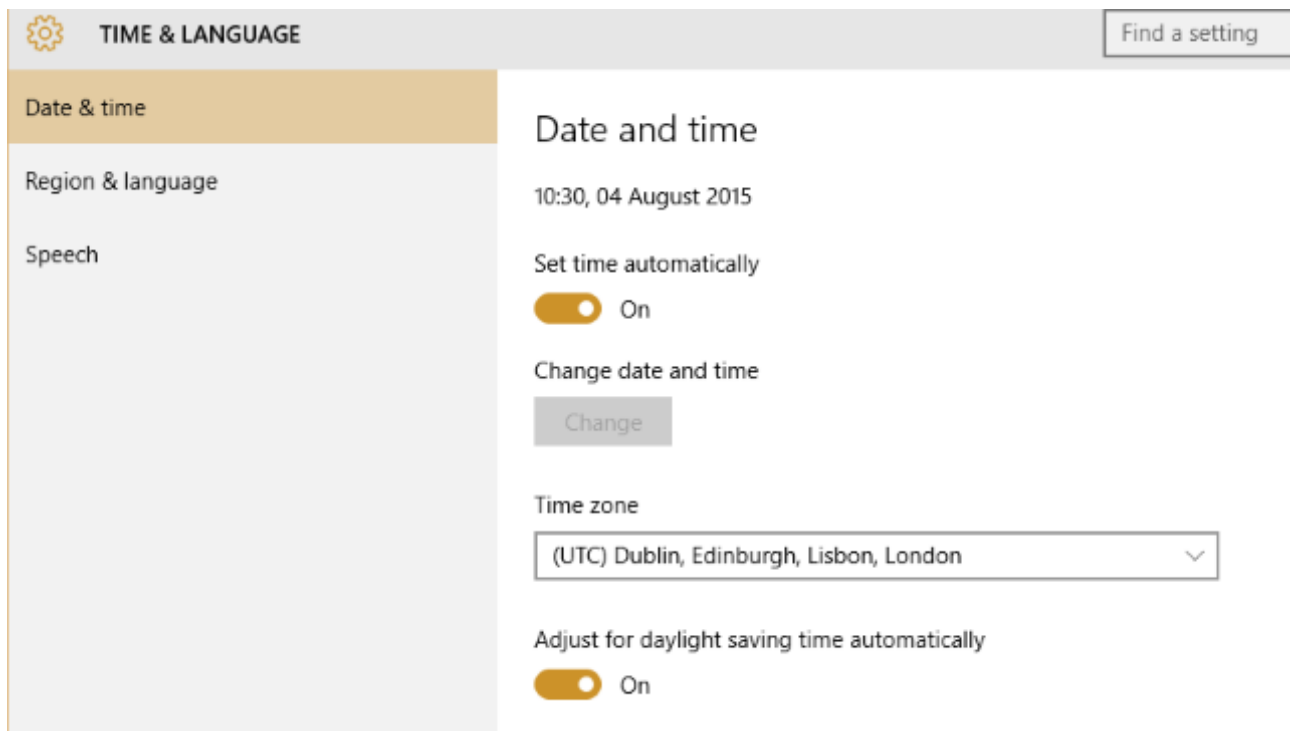
Passwords

☒ On

As mentioned above, the benefit of logging into Windows 10 with a Microsoft account is to sync profile and browser settings, and the full extent of synced data types can be reviewed and toggled in **Sync your settings**.

Time & Language Settings

Wherever you are in the world, Windows 10's **Time & Language settings** screen can be used to configure the correct regional options should they be inaccurate.



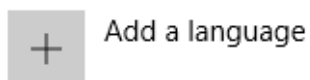
In **Date & time**, you can set automatic, server-provided time or disable the **Set time automatically** option and set a manual clock. The **Time zone** and daylight saving time can also be configured, while time and date formats can be reviewed, and, if necessary, adjusted.


Country or region

Windows and apps might use your country or region to give you local content

Languages

Add a language to read and type in that language



 English (United Kingdom)
Windows display language

To get the benefit of regional content and the correct language, the **Region & language** screen features settings to change your location and add a new default display language. Use the **Additional date, time & regional settings** link to go further in depth (into a classic Windows box).

Speech language

Choose the language you speak to your device

English (United Kingdom) ▾

☐ Recognise non-native accents for this language

Text-to-speech

Change the default voice for apps

Voice

Microsoft George Mobile ▾

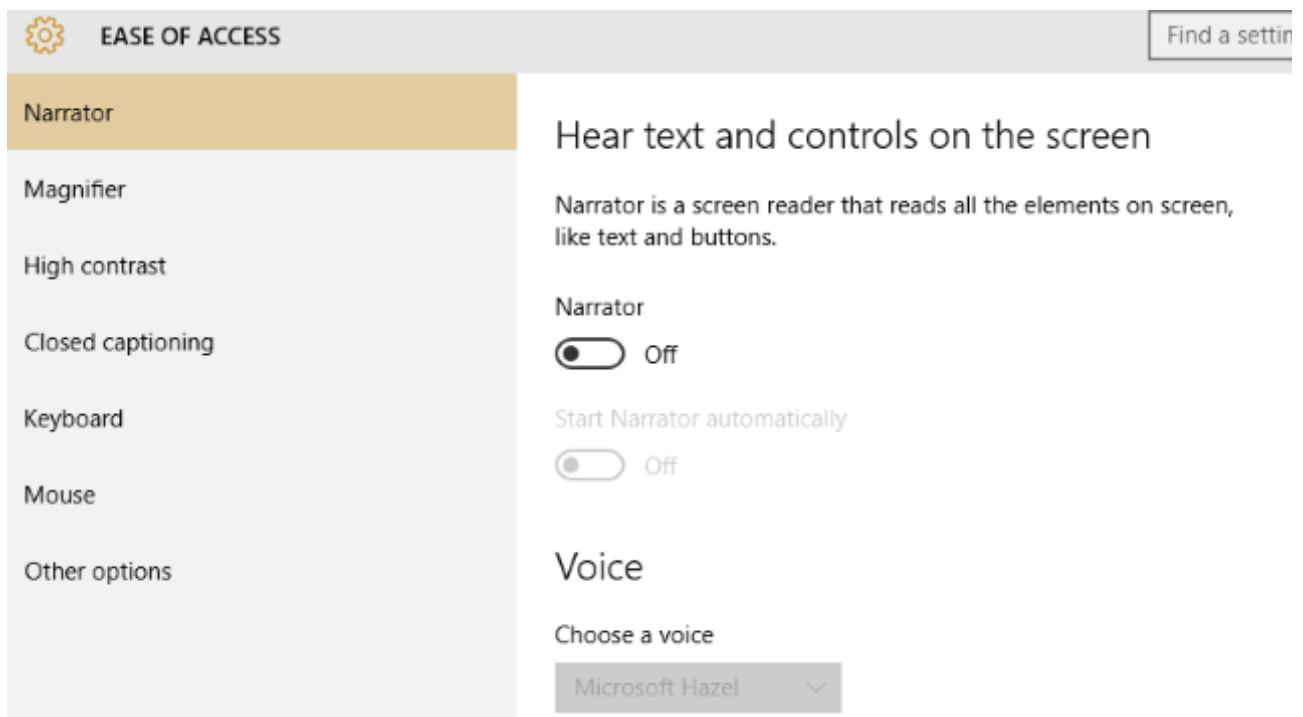
Speed



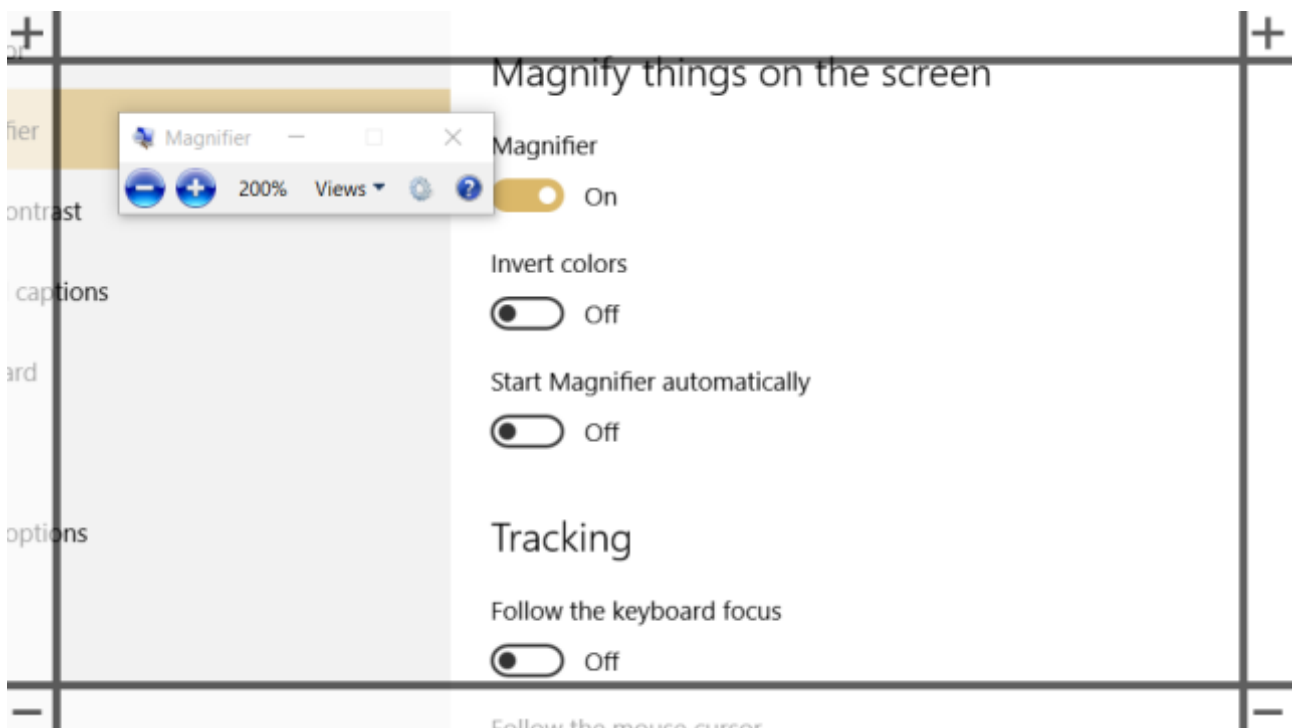
Preview voice

The **Speech** box offers a collection of tools to manage your speech language, text-to-speech voice and speed, and microphone setup. If you're already using [Cortana in Windows 10](#) then you should have your mic already configured.

Ease of Access in Windows 10



Accessibility on Windows isn't just about providing the tools for disabled people to use a computer. While the provision of a narrator, magnifier, high-contrast display options, and closed captioning is vital for less able-bodied people, via the **Ease of Access** screen, these features can also be employed by the able bodied. For instance, **Narrator** can be used to help small children get to grips with a computer.



Magnifier, meanwhile, can be employed if you're using the computer with a display that, for reasons unknown, is situated some way from you. On the other hand, **High contrast** is clearly an advantage

for those with poor sight, as are the **Closed Captions** settings (default options for the deaf can be unreadable against certain backgrounds).

On-Screen Keyboard

Turns on the On-Screen Keyboard



Sticky Keys

Press one key at a time for keyboard shortcuts



Toggle Keys

Hear a tone when you press Caps Lock, Num Lock and Scroll Lock



Again, **Keyboard** accessibility options aren't just for the disabled. The **On-Screen Keyboard** can prove useful in situations when the standard tablet keyboard doesn't fulfill its purpose.

Pointer size



Pointer colour



Mouse buttons

Use numeric keypad to move mouse around the screen



Meanwhile, if you're having difficulty tracking the location of your mouse pointer, the **Mouse** settings

Visual options

Play animations in Windows



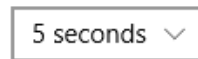
On

Show Windows background



On

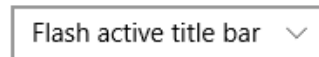
Show notifications for



Cursor thickness



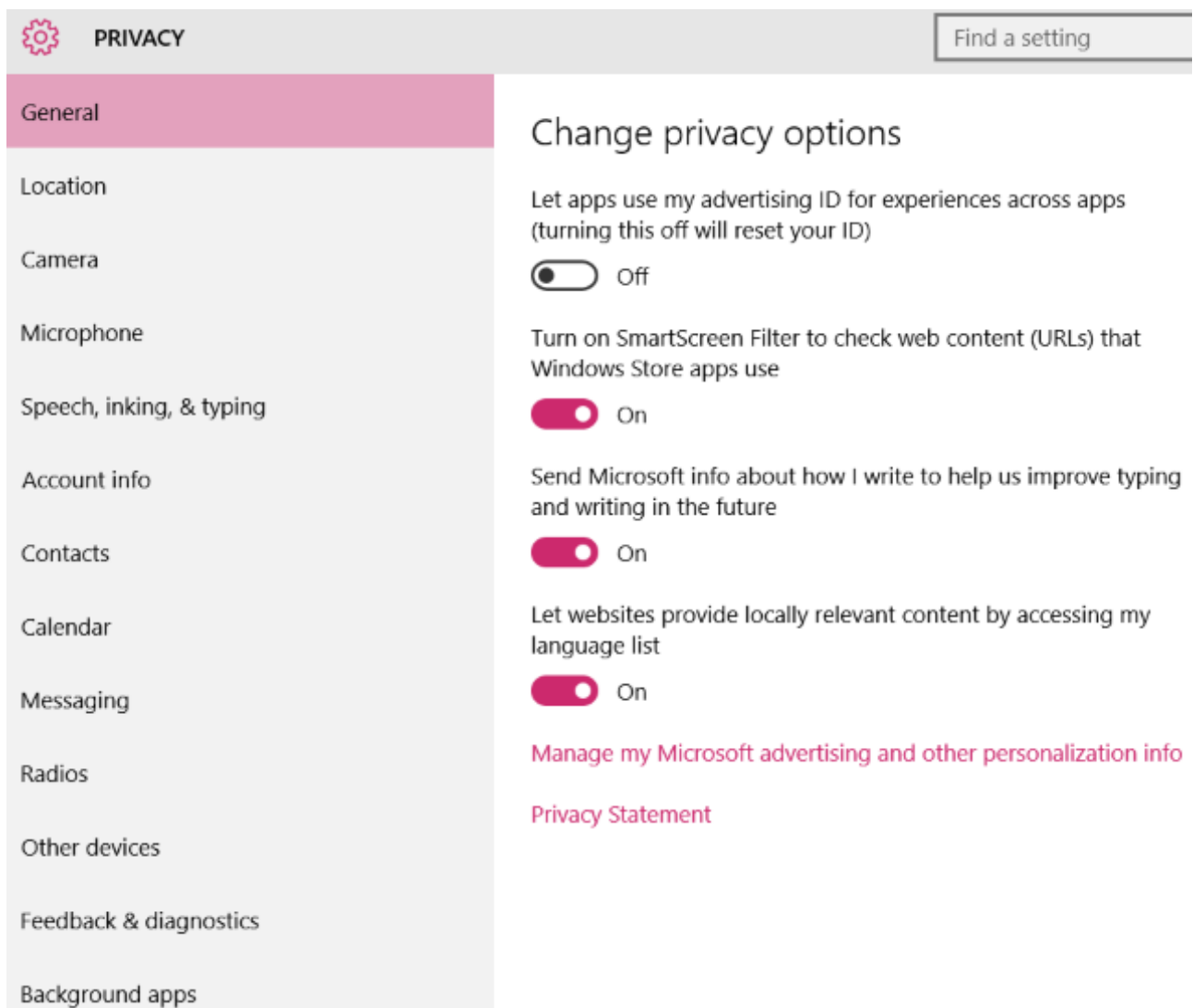
Visual notifications for sound



give you improved size and color, as well as some options to improve use of the keyboard's numeric keypad as a substitute mouse.

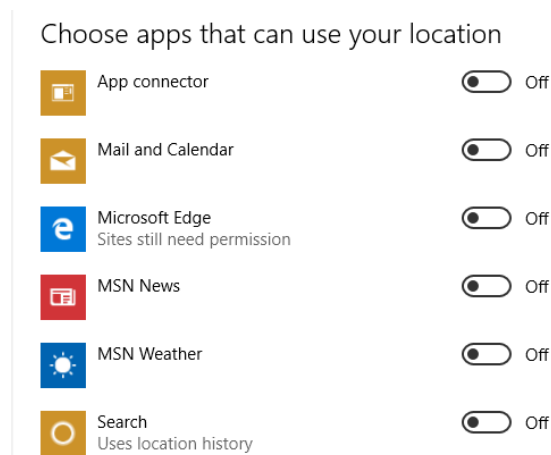
Some **Other options** are also provided, such as toggling animations and the Windows background, the length of time notifications should be displayed, and even the thickness of the cursor!

Windows 10 Native Privacy Settings



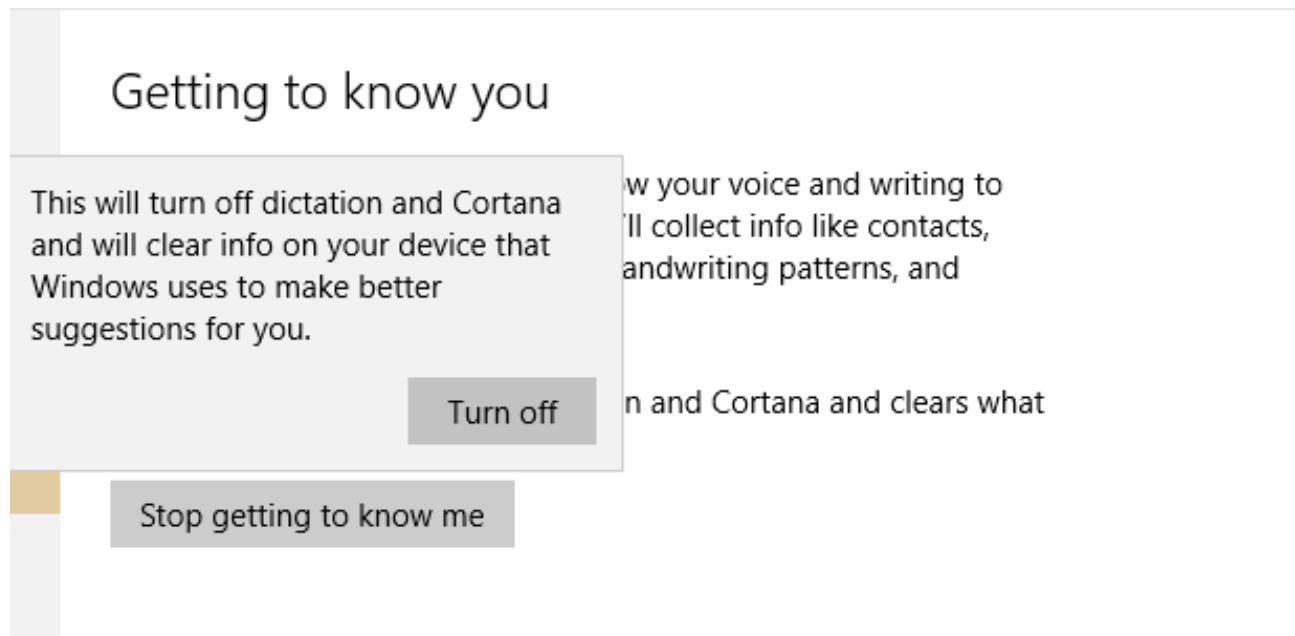
As befits an operating system that is arguably more invasive than any previous iteration, Microsoft has equipped Windows 10 with a comprehensive collection of **Privacy** options.

These begin with the **General** tab, where you can configure privacy options (you can disable in-app ad tracking by switching the first option to **Off**), while further settings can be adjusted by opening the **Manage my Microsoft advertising and other personalization info** link.



Location settings can prove useful for certain apps, but also present a security risk. This screen enables you to disable location tracking and delete your location history; you can also determine which apps you want to allow to use your location.

Camera and **Microphone** settings app screens display the apps that can use those tools, which you can disable as needed. You can also block apps from accessing both peripherals should you need to.






You should have already met Cortana, and if so Windows 10's "Getting to know you" service in **Speech, inking & typing** is used to manage information like contacts, calendar events, and even speech, handwriting, and typing history. This can be disabled (**Stop getting to know me**), but note that doing so will also disable Cortana.

Contacts

Privacy Statement

Choose apps that can access contacts

Some apps need access to contacts to work as intended. Turning off an app here might limit what it can do.

	App connector	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On
	Mail and Calendar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On
	Windows Shell Experience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On

Apps can access data about you and your contacts. If this is something you're happy with, then that's fine, but if you wish to prevent this type of data from being shared, use the **Account info** and **Contacts** screens to disable it.

App access to your **Calendar** and **Messaging** (text or MMS) can also be disabled. Given how we've seen Android apps breaching user privacy over the years, it seems likely that a similar attack vector will be attempted in Windows 10. On a similar point, if you want to block apps from accessing Bluetooth automatically and without your knowledge, switch off the **Let apps control radios** setting in **Radios**.

Sync with devices

Let your apps automatically share and sync info with wireless devices that don't explicitly pair with your PC, tablet, or phone

 On

Example: beacons

[Choose apps that can sync with devices](#)

[Privacy Statement](#)

Use trusted devices

Let your apps use your trusted devices (hardware you've already connected, or comes with your PC, tablet, or phone).

Examples: Xbox One, TVs, projectors

ATOMIC-LAPTOP









NFC and other wireless devices that don't securely pair with your phone are particular privacy and security risks. Such devices might be iBeacons (think adverts targeted at individuals in Minority Report) or contactless payment systems. You can disable this functionality in **Other devices**, where you'll also see a list of other hardware with access to your apps.

Do you want to give Microsoft feedback? What about diagnostic information when your PC and apps are not working correctly? **Feedback & diagnostics** simply determines whether you want information sent to Microsoft.

Let apps run in the background

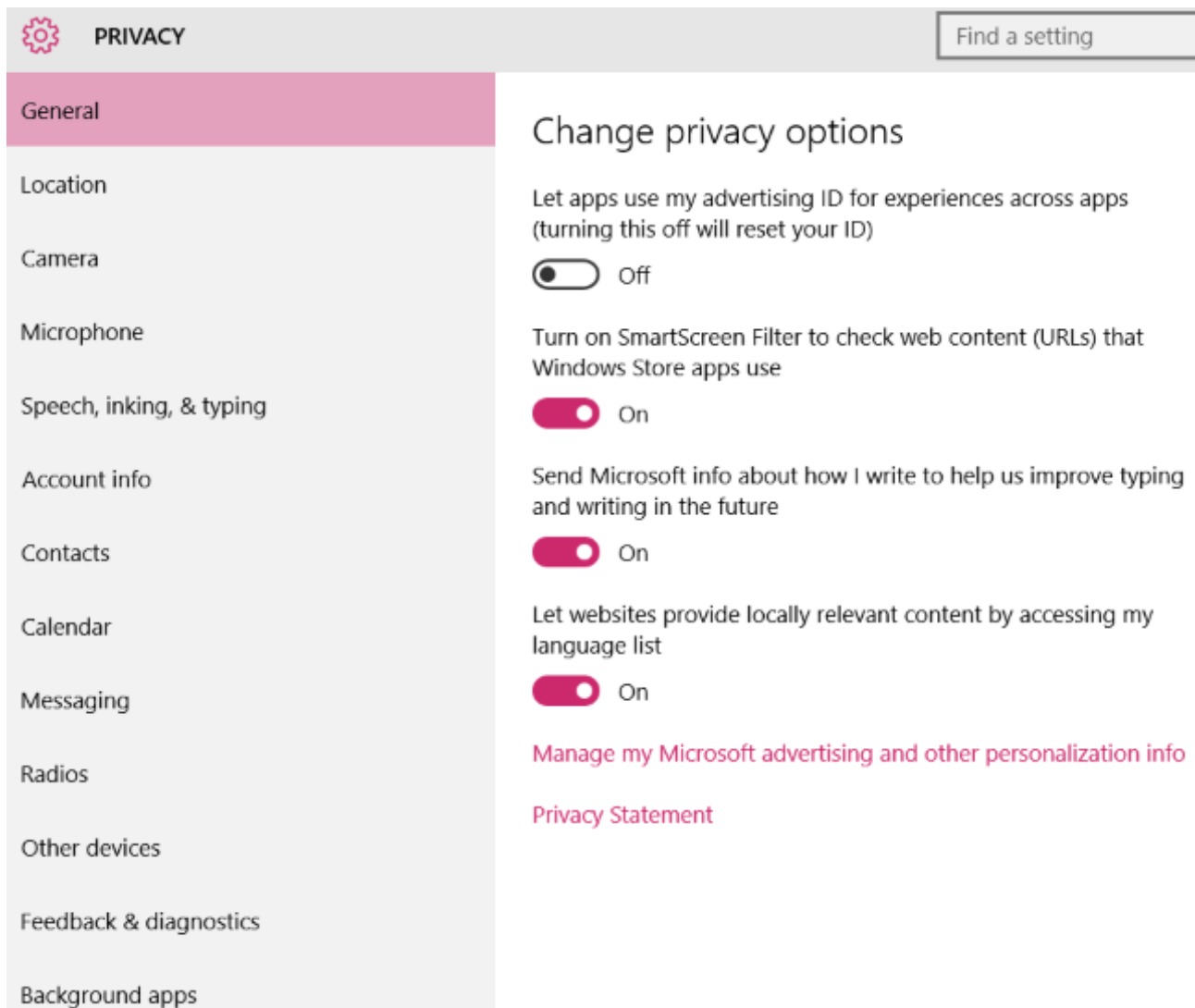
Choose which apps can receive info, send notifications and stay up to date, even when you're not using them. Turning background apps off can help conserve power.

[Privacy Statement](#)

	Alarms & Clock	 On
	Get Office	 On
	Groove Music	 On
	Mail	 On

The final section in the Privacy screen on the Windows 10 settings app is **Background apps**. Here you can enable and disable the apps that you're happy to have running in the background. Some may be more useful than others, but of course this depends entirely on how you use Windows...

Update and Recovery



Windows Update is vital to the concept of *Windows as a Service*, and you can access **Windows Update** via the **Update & Security** screen. Here, you can check for new updates, check the restart schedule, and check the **Advanced options** to configure how updates are installed (whether automatic or manual, for example). Here you can click **Restart now** to install any pending updates, or adjust the schedule to suit.

Real-time protection

This helps find and stop malware from installing or running on your PC. You can turn this off temporarily, but if it's off for a while we'll turn it back on automatically.

☒ On

Cloud-based Protection

Get better, faster protection by sending Microsoft info about potential security problems Windows Defender finds.

☒ On

[Privacy Statement](#)

Next is the **Windows Defender** screen. Microsoft's own malware defense tool is becoming increasingly important to Windows (not before time!) and this is one of the few times when you should leave communication between your Windows 10 PC and Microsoft active.

As well as real-time protection, Windows Defender provides cloud-based protection, which basically means that issues are compared with problems stored in the Microsoft cloud. Windows Defender can scan your PC for problems, but occasionally you may wish to exclude certain files. Use the **Add an exclusion** link to manage this. [Our recent look at Windows Defender](#) provides additional information to this section.

Reset this PC

If your PC isn't running well, resetting it might help. This lets you choose to keep your files or remove them, then re-installs Windows.

Get started

Go back to an earlier build

If this build isn't working for you, try going back to an earlier one. When the next build is ready, we'll install it.

Get started

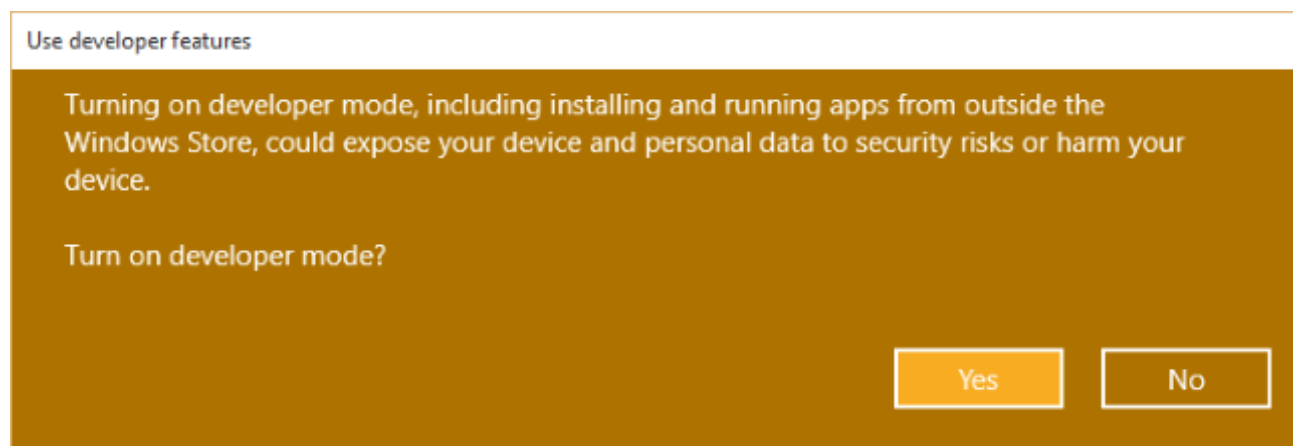
Advanced start-up

Start up from a device or disc (such as a USB drive or DVD), change Windows start-up settings or restore Windows from a system image. This will restart your PC.

Restart now

For the first time, Windows 10 includes a simple, usable **Backup** solution. Get started with this by clicking **Add a drive**. Similarly, **Recovery** can be used to revert to a previous state in Windows 10. Our guide to [resetting and recovering Windows 10](#) offers far more information on these features than can be included here.

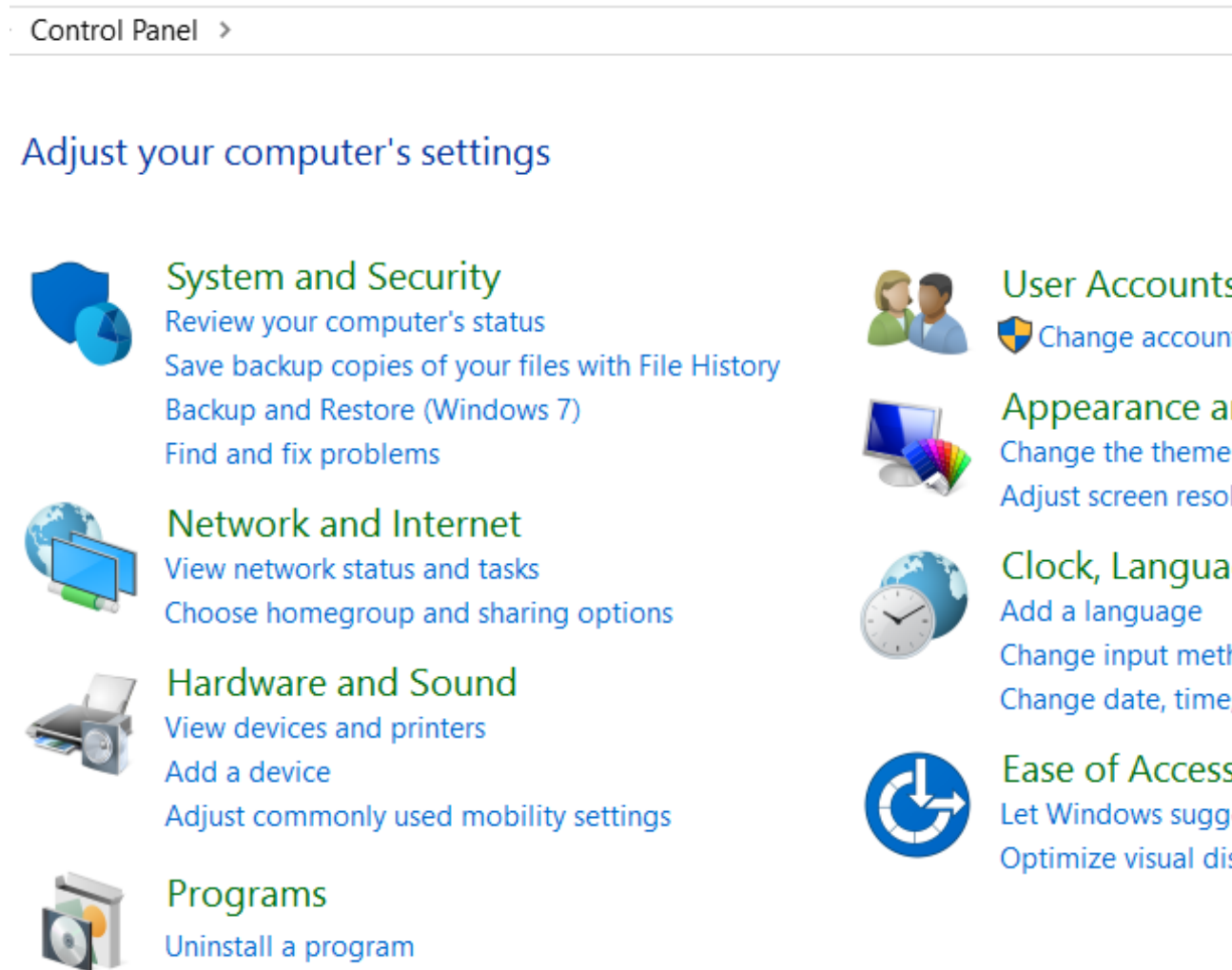
Is Windows 10 activated? Check in the **Activation** screen, and if you upgrade your Windows 10 version, use the **Change product key** button to register the upgrade.



Finally, some users may see the **For developers** screen. This is purely for developers, and **Don't use developer features** is best left selected. Developers will know what [Sideload apps](#) and **Developer mode** can do (in short, if you're not developing apps, enabling these settings is a security risk).

Whither Control Panel?

Should you need a deeper level of system adjustment, the old control panel remains in Windows 10's initial release (although its days are almost certainly numbered). To open the old-style control panel, click **Start** and use search/Cortana to enter the term "control panel". (You might also press WINDOWS+R, type "control panel" and click **OK**.)



You should immediately see the control panel result at the top of the list, where it is described as a "Desktop app". Tap this to open, and you'll see the traditional control panel view first introduced in Windows Vista, a more useful iteration of the earlier "category view" control panel in XP. Anything you cannot yet configure with the Settings app, you should be able to do here. If it seems too complicated, we recently [demystified the control panel](#), just to make it simpler for you.

What do you think of the Settings app? Does it work for you, or would you prefer it if Windows left a perfectly good interface alone? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

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