

# "WINDOWS 10" ACTIVATION

by Francis Chao  
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**TuCS** COMPUTER  
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SOCIETY

**WINNERS**  
WINdows usERS



An International  
Association of Technology  
& Computer User Groups

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Notes**”

# SUMMARY

If you take an existing "Windows 7" or "Windows 8" or "Windows 8.1" computer and upgrade it for free, your copy of "Windows 10" will be activated with a "Digital License". If you purchase a retail copy of "Windows 10" and use it to install or upgrade a computer, you will be activating with a 25-character "Windows 10 Product Key". 3

# TOPICS

- Microsoft's Activation Servers
- Do Not Comply With All Initial Requests for A Product Key (For "Windows 10")
- Two Ways to Activate "Windows 10"
- Which Method of Activation Was Used in My "Windows 10" Computer?

## TOPICS (continued)

- Details of "Digital License" Activation
- Details of "Product Key" Activation
- Difference Between "Digital License" Activation and "Product Key" Activation
- "Anniversary Update" Converts "Product Key" to "Digital License"
- Linking Your "Microsoft Account" to a "Digital License" Activation

# MICROSOFT'S ACTIVATION SERVERS

- The activation process for most of Microsoft's software products including "Windows.." depends on their server farms:

# MICROSOFT'S ACTIVATION SERVERS (continued)

- 1+ million servers for Microsoft services such as "OneDrive", "Bing", "Outlook.com", "Skype", "Xbox", according to Steve Ballmer.

See

<http://www.extremetech.com/extreme/161772-microsoft-now-has-one-million-servers-less-than-google-but-more-than-amazon-says-ballmer>

# MICROSOFT'S ACTIVATION SERVERS (continued)

- \$23 billion spent to build server farms worldwide according to <https://storageservers.wordpress.com/2013/07/17/facts-and-stats-of-worlds-largest-data-centers/>



# MICROSOFT'S ACTIVATION

## SERVERS (continued)

- Server farms located in  
Santa Clara, California  
Chicago (Northlake), Illinois  
West Des Moines, Iowa (x3)  
San Antonio, Texas  
Boydton, Virginia  
Ashburn, Virginia  
Quincy, Washington  
Dublin, Ireland

# FY10 MS Online Data Centers and Markets

- Data Center location will be based on ship-to address during the purchase process
- Data will reside in 2 Data Centers to provide redundancy

- Current market
- Coming in April 2010



## Virginia with backup in Washington+

1. United States
2. Canada
3. Mexico
4. Puerto Rico
5. Brazil+
6. Chile+
7. Colombia

+ In FY11 we will launch a co-lo in Brazil that will serve Brazil, Chile, and some other LATAM countries. Until then Brazil and Chile will use Virginia which has acceptable latency rates

## Dublin with backup in Amsterdam

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Austria        | 13. Israel      |
| 2. Belgium        | 14. Netherlands |
| 3. Czech Republic | 15. Norway      |
| 4. Denmark        | 16. Poland      |
| 5. Finland        | 17. Portugal    |
| 6. France         | 18. Romania     |
| 7. Germany        | 19. Spain       |
| 8. Greece         | 20. Sweden      |
| 9. Hungary        | 21. Switzerland |
| 10. Ireland       | 22. UK          |
| 11. Italy         |                 |

## Singapore with backup in Hong Kong++

1. Australia
2. Hong Kong
3. India (sales in Nov '09)
4. Japan
5. Malaysia
6. New Zealand
7. Singapore (sales in Nov '09)
8. South Korea (sales July '10)
9. Taiwan (sales July '10)



*An aerial view of the Microsoft data center in Quincy, Washington*

After years of operating in third-party facilities, **Microsoft** began building its own data centers in 2007 as it ramped up its battle with Google in the online services arena. Its first in-house project was a huge data center in the small Washington town of Quincy, where Microsoft invested \$550 million in building a 470,000 square foot data center supported by hydro-electric power from nearby dams on the Columbia River. A year later it unveiled a



*An aerial view of the 470,000 square foot Microsoft data center in San Antonio.*

## 6. MICROSOFT DATA CENTER, DUBLIN, 550,000 SF

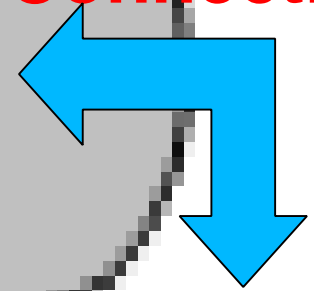


## 5. MICROSOFT CHICAGO DATA CENTER, Chicago 700,000 SF



**Server Farms  
Operated by  
Microsoft:  
Activation Servers  
Other servers for  
Outlook.com,  
OneDrive, Bing, etc.**

**Internet  
Connection**

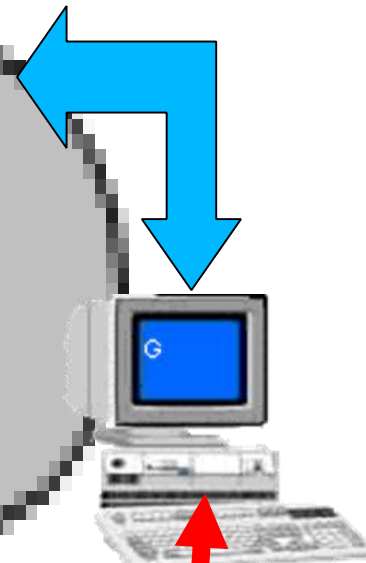


**Activated  
"Windows 10"**

# Microsoft's Activation Servers

**UUID of your motherboard, edition ("Home" or "Pro" or "Workstation"), bitness (64bit or 32bit) and optionally, your Microsoft account's email address if this is a "Digital License" activation if you have "linked" the "Digital License to a Microsoft Account**

**Internet Connection**



**Activated  
"Windows  
10"**



# MICROSOFT'S ACTIVATION SERVERS (continued)

- Two separate databases inside Microsoft's activation servers:  
"Digital Licenses" database  
and  
"Product Keys" database

# Microsoft's Activation Servers

**DIGITAL LICENSES DATABASE**

**"Product Key" DATABASE,**

# Microsoft's Activation Servers

**UUID of your motherboard,  
edition ("Home" or "Pro" or "Workstation" or  
"Enterprise"),  
bitness (64bit or 32bit), and  
optionally, your Microsoft account's email  
address if this is a "Digital License" and you  
linked it to your Microsoft Account**

**"Product Key",  
edition ("Home" or "Pro" or "Workstation" or  
"Enterprise"),  
bitness (64bit or 32bit), and  
Number of remaining activations for key**

# MICROSOFT'S ACTIVATION SERVERS (continued)

- Microsoft states that they never store the 25-character product key and the UUID of a computer's motherboard in the same database record

# DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY IN "WINDOWS 10.."

- When installing or upgrading to "Windows 10..", do not comply with all initial requests for a product key.



## Activate Windows

If this is the first time you're installing Windows on this PC (or you're installing a different edition), you need to enter a valid Windows product key. Your product key should be in the confirmation email you received after buying a digital copy of Windows or on a label inside the box that Windows came in.

The product key looks like this: XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX

If you're reinstalling Windows, select I don't have a product key. Your copy of Windows will be automatically activated later.



[Privacy statement](#)

[I don't have a product key](#)

[Next](#)

If this is the first time you're installing Windows on this PC (or you're installing a different edition), you need to enter a valid Windows product key. Your product key should be in the confirmation email you received after buying a digital copy of Windows or on a label inside the box that Windows came in.

The product key looks like this: XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX

If you're reinstalling Windows, select I don't have a product key. Your copy of Windows will be automatically activated later.



I don't have a product key





Windows Setup



Select the operating system you want to install

Operating system	Architecture	Date modified
Windows 10 Pro	x64	7/16/2016
Windows 10 Home	x64	7/16/2016
Windows 10 Home Single Language	x64	7/16/2016
Windows 10 Education	x64	7/16/2016

Description:  
Windows 10 Pro

Next

# DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY IN "WINDOWS 10.." (continued)

- Unlike previous "Windows.." products, "Windows 10" is kinder and gentler, even if you do not activate it.

DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL  
REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY IN  
"WINDOWS 10.." (continued)

- Unlike previous "Windows.." products, "Windows 10" will let you complete an upgrade or installation, even if you do not comply with all initial requests for a product key.

DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL  
REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY FOR  
"WINDOWS 10.." (continued)

- After installing or upgrading to "Windows 10", if you need to activate it with a 25-character "Windows 10 Product Key" you have an indefinite amount of time to do so.

DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL  
REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY IN  
"WINDOWS 10.." (continued)

- Unlike previous "Windows.." products, "Windows 10" will not turn your Desktop black, delete what you are working on, and shut your computer down every 60 minutes, even if it is "Windows 10" is not activated. Unactivated copies of "Windows 10" are now kinder and gentler!

# DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY (continued)

- Reason 1:

A digital license may already be stored up in Microsoft's activation servers but the installation wizard will not notify you of this situation.

# DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY (continued)

- Reason 1 (continued):  
If you enter in a newly-purchased Retail key at this point and Microsoft already has a "Digital License" stored up in their activation server system, your computer will now have two "Digital Licenses" and you will have to jump thorough hoops to re-use the newly-entered Retail key on another computer some day.

# DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY (continued)

- Reason 2:

If you use a newly-purchased Retail key for "Windows 10" and something goes wrong during the rest of the installation process:

and IF you have an "OEM System Builder" channel key you might need to buy another key (since OEM System Builders have zero "support from Microsoft



# DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY (continued)

- Reason 2 (continued):  
If you use a newly-purchased Retail key for "Windows 10" and something goes wrong during the rest of the installation process and you have purchased a "Retail" channel key, you will have to phone or text Microsoft support to reuse the "Retail" key

# DO NOT COMPLY WITH ALL INITIAL REQUESTS FOR A PRODUCT KEY (continued)

- If you install "Windows 10.." into a blank hard drive or if you upgrade a copy of "Windows 7", "Windows 8", or "Windows 8.1", ignore the following request to enter in a 25-character activation key:

# TWO WAYS TO ACTIVATE "WINDOWS 10.."

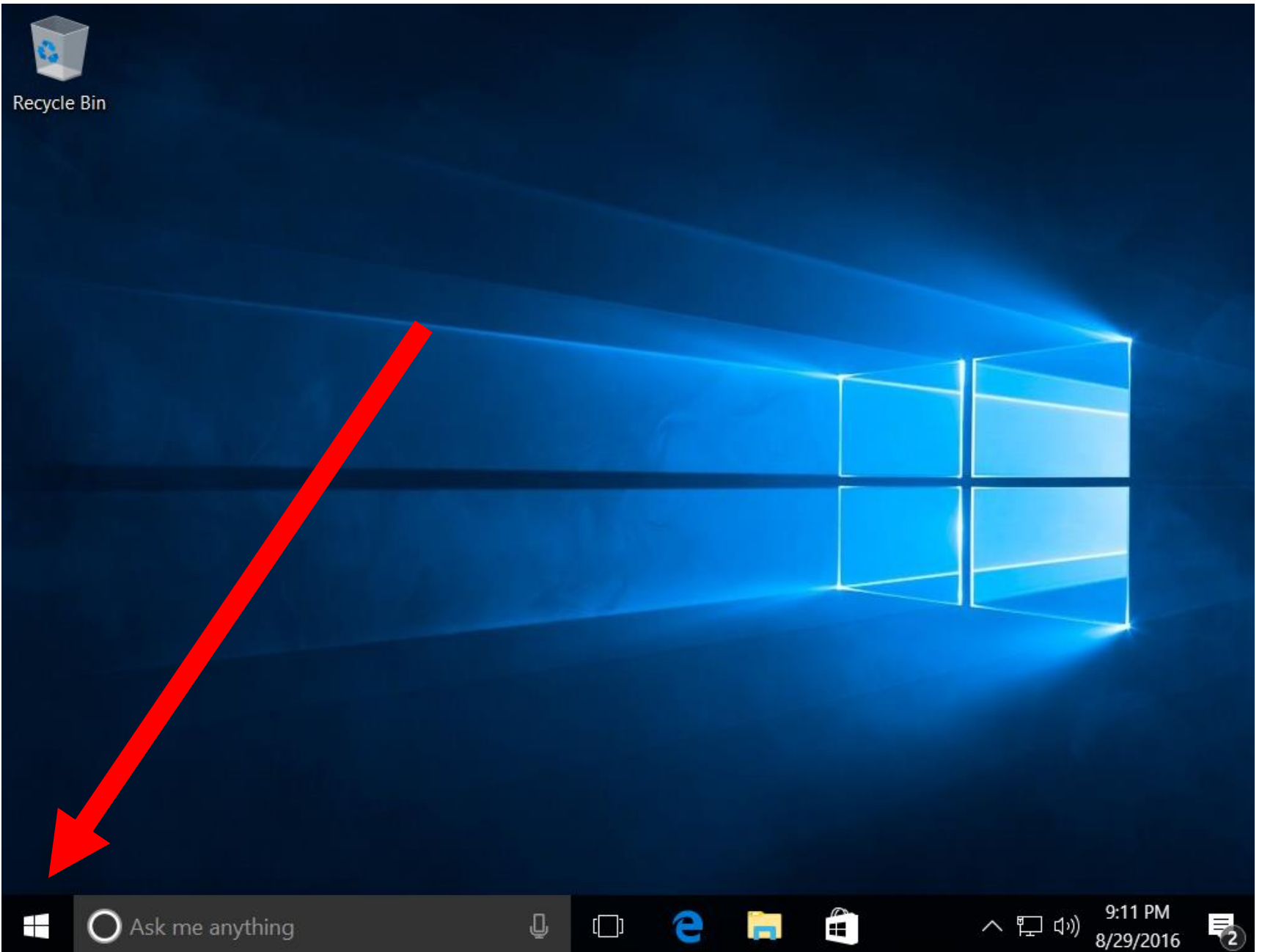
- Method 1:  
"Digital License" Method  
(No "Windows 10" product key is used to activate "Windows 10".)
- Method 2:  
"Product Key" Method  
(A 25-character "Windows 10 Product Key" is used.)

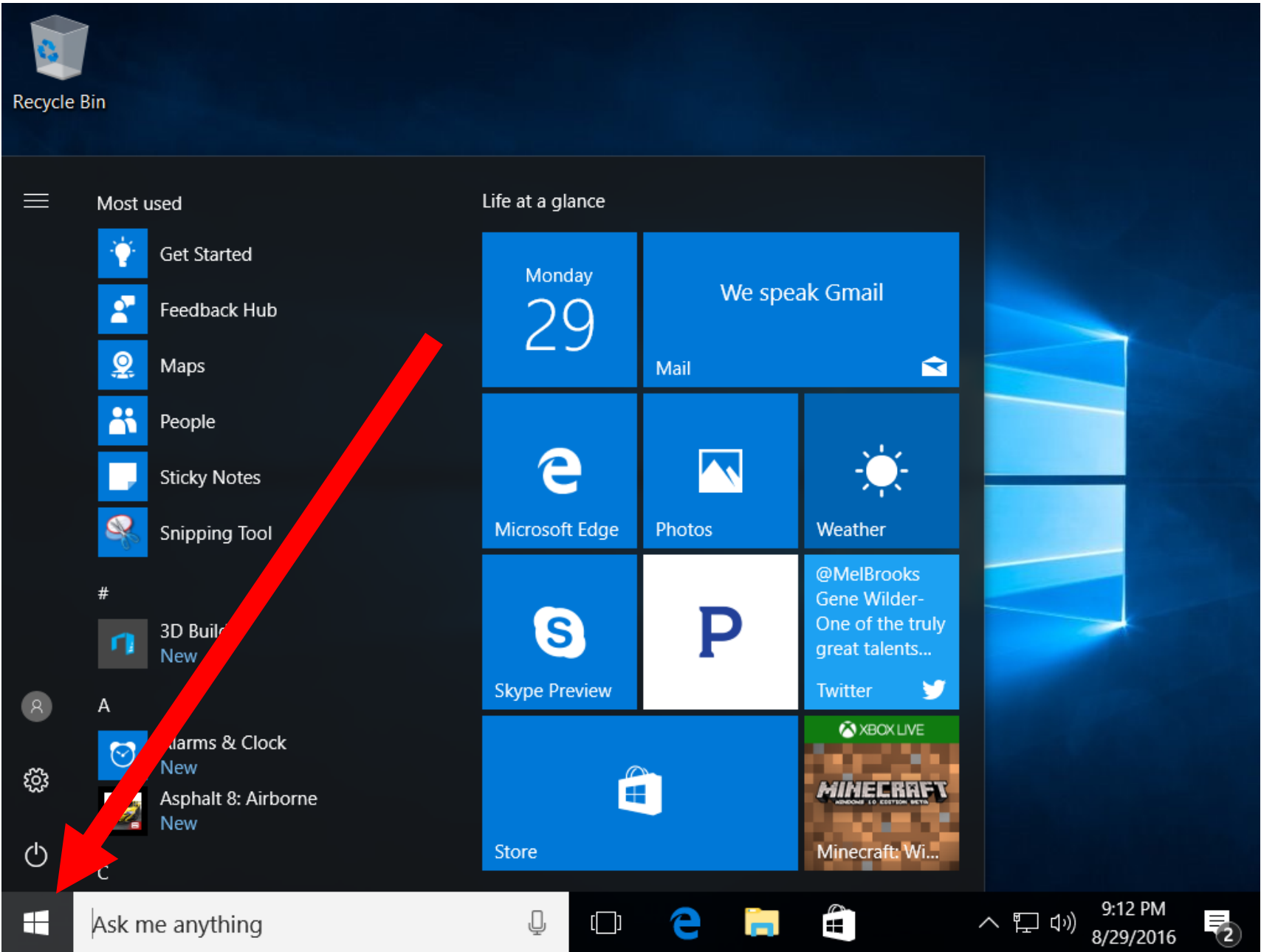
# TWO WAYS TO ACTIVATE "WINDOWS 10.." (continued)

- Microsoft's confusing description of the differences between the two activation methods is located at <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/12440/windows-10-activation>

# WHICH METHOD OF ACTIVATION WAS USED IN MY "WINDOWS 10" COMPUTER?

- Step 1:  
Click on the "Start" button.

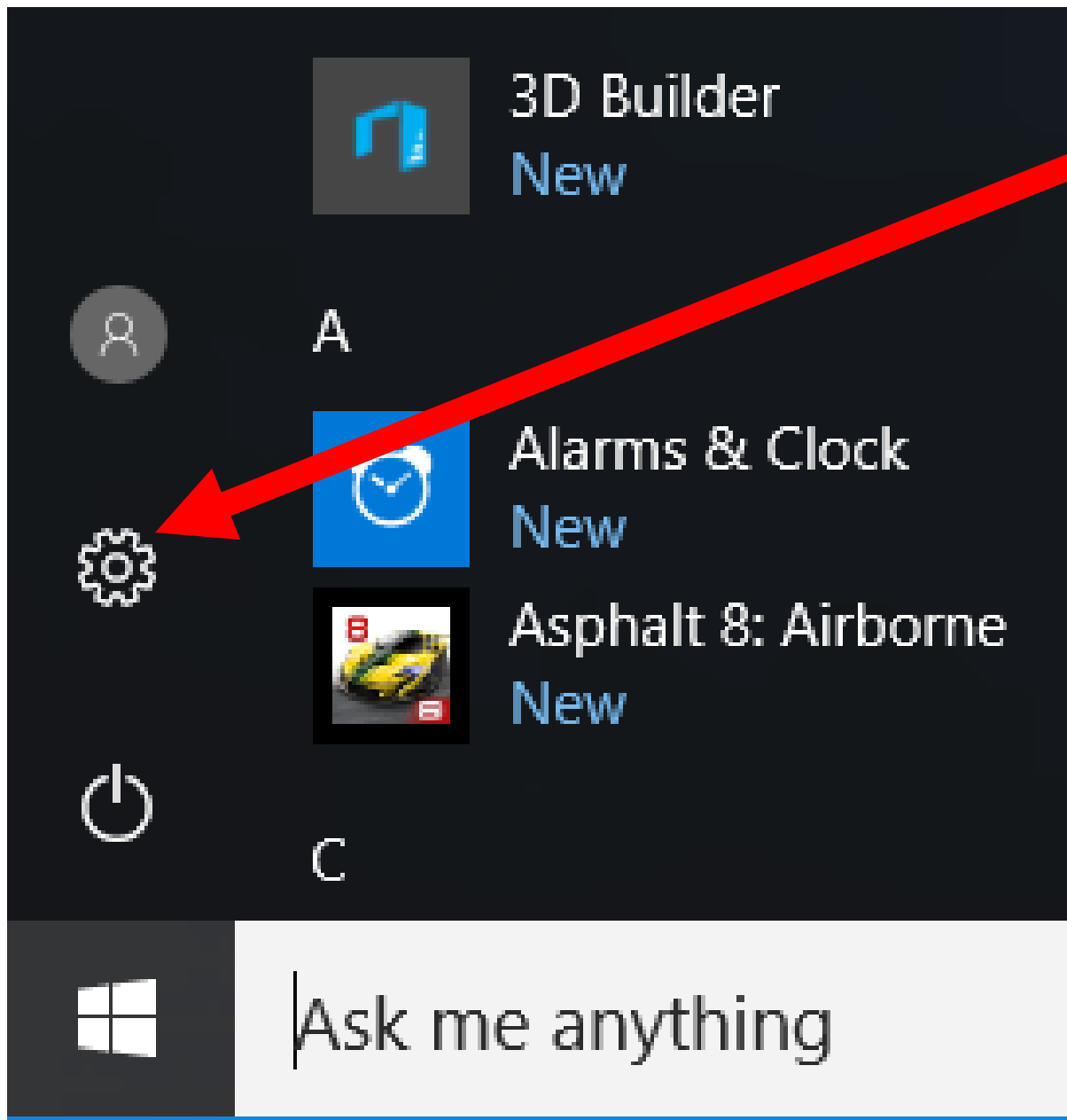


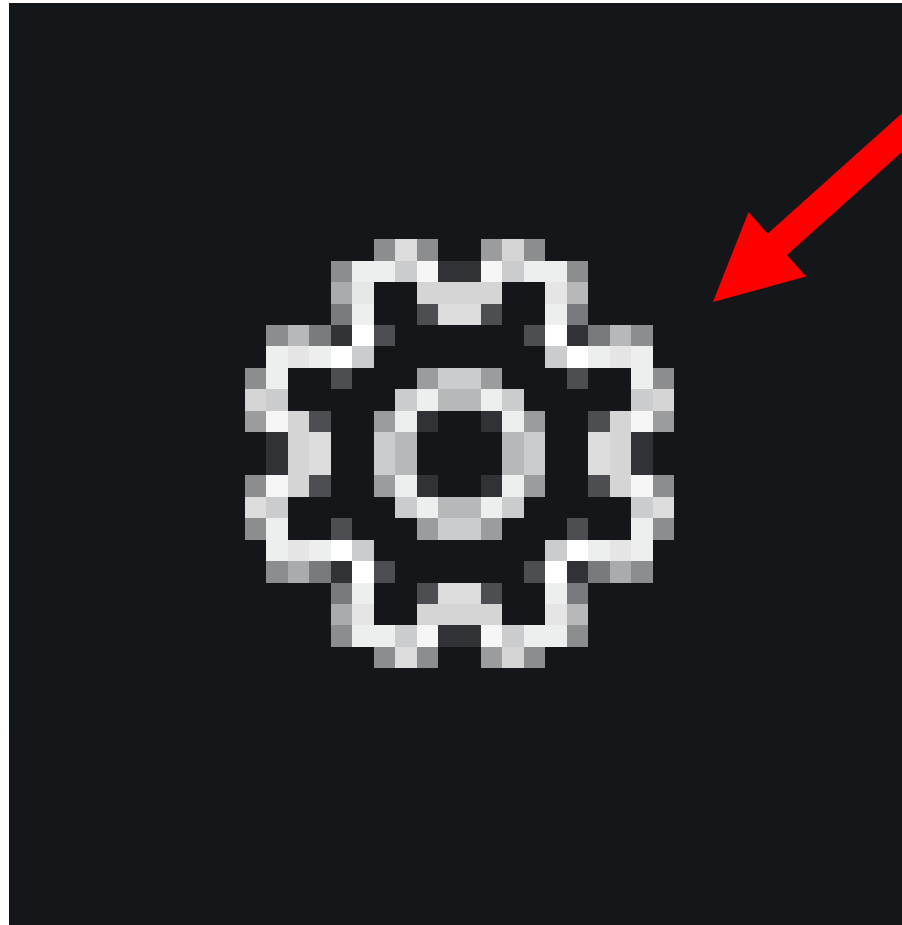


# WHICH METHOD OF ACTIVATION WAS USED IN MY "WINDOWS 10" COMPUTER? (continued)

- Step 2:  
Click on the "Settings" icon:

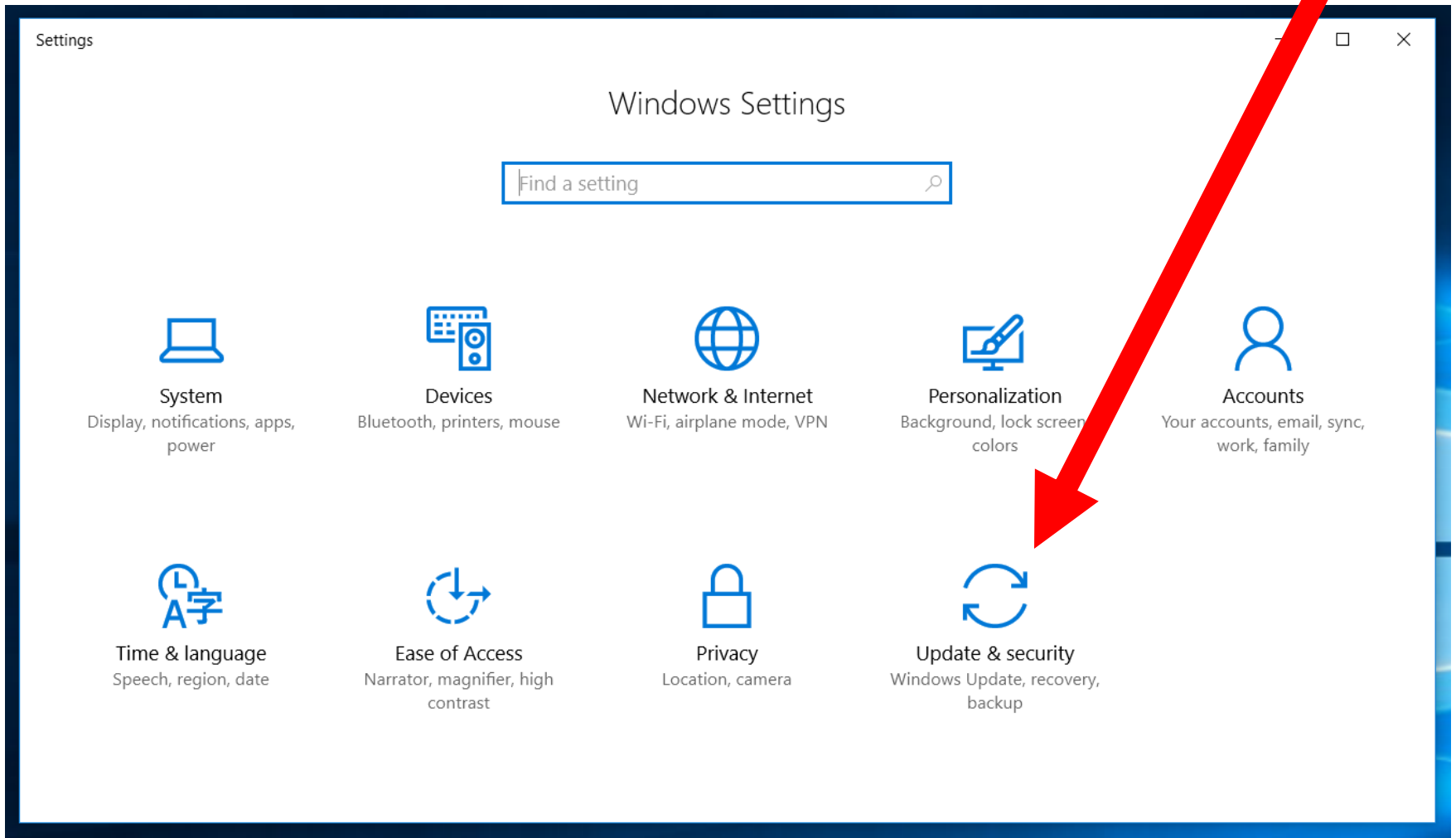


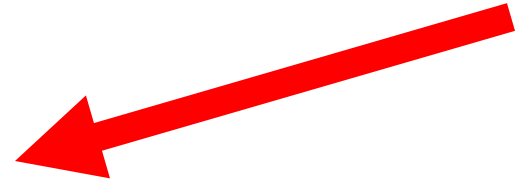




# WHICH METHOD OF ACTIVATION WAS USED IN MY "WINDOWS 10" COMPUTER? (continued)

- **Step 3:**  
**Click on "Update & Security":**





# Update & security

Windows Update, recovery,  
backup

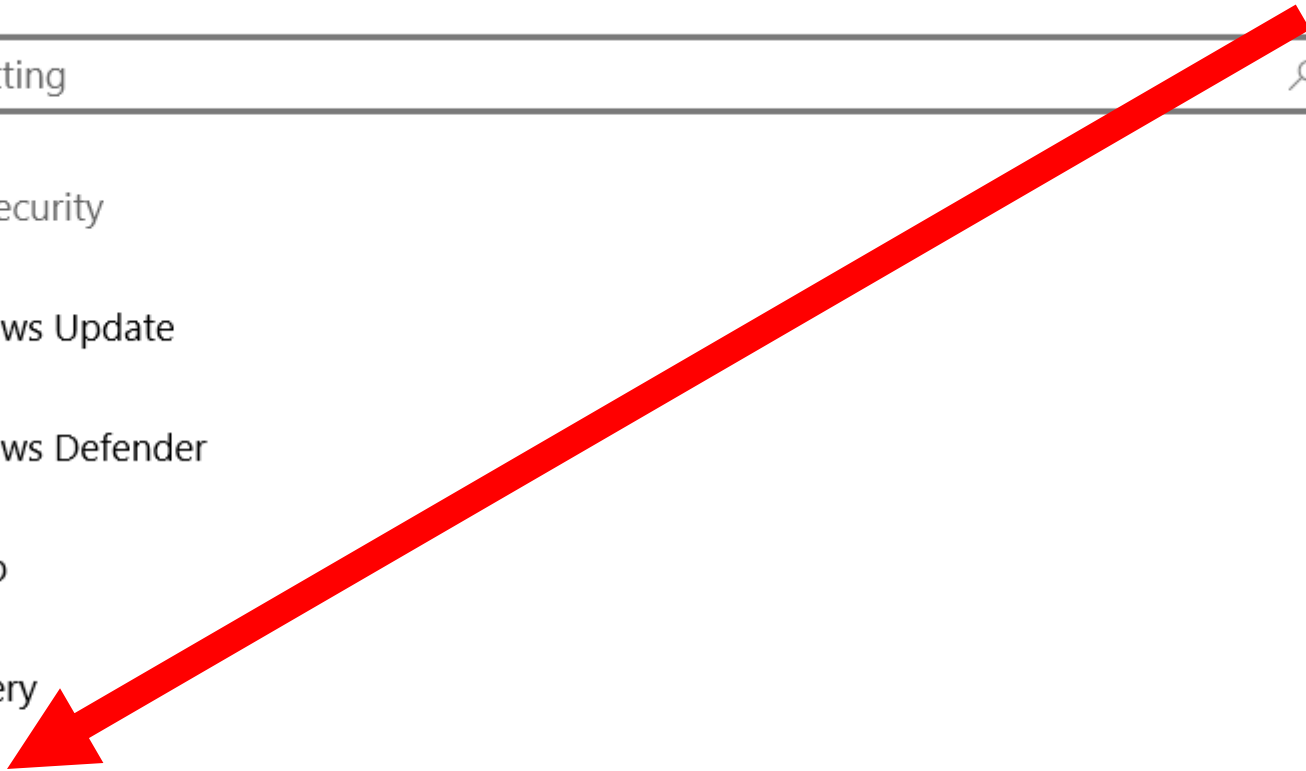
# WHICH METHOD OF ACTIVATION WAS USED IN MY "WINDOWS 10" COMPUTER? (continued)

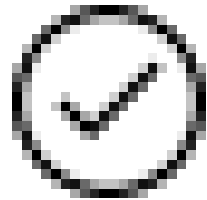
- Step 4:  
Click on "Activation":

Find a setting 

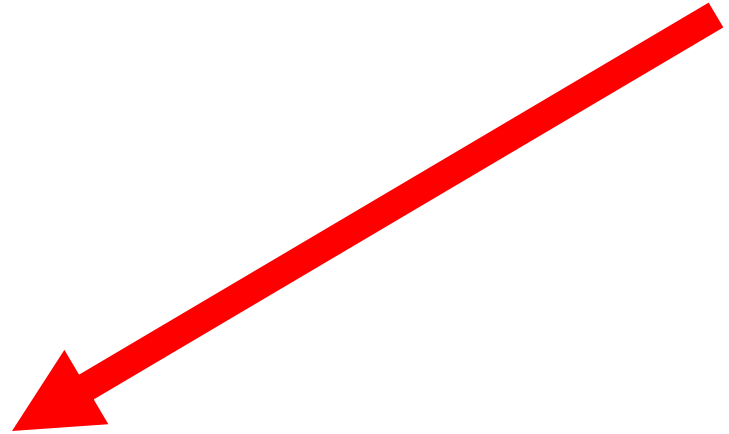
Update & security

-  Windows Update
-  Windows Defender
-  Backup
-  Recovery
-  Activation
-  For developers
-  Windows Insider Program





Activation





# WHICH METHOD OF ACTIVATION WAS USED IN MY "WINDOWS 10" COMPUTER?

(continued)

- If Windows 10 has been activated with a "digital license", the "Activation" screen in "Settings" will state

**Activation: Windows is activated with a digital license**

and there will be no "Product

Key:" line:

Home

Find a setting

Update & security

Windows Update

Windows Defender

Backup

Recovery

Activation

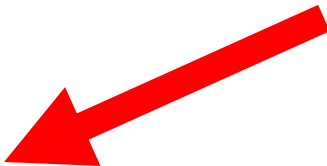
For developers

Windows Insider Program

# Windows

Edition Windows 10 Home

Activation Windows is activated with a digital license  
[Learn more](#)



## Upgrade your edition of Windows

Upgrade to Windows 10 Pro to add features that help you connect to company networks, access one PC from another, encrypt your data and more.

Go to the Store to buy the upgrade or enter a product key.



Go to Store



Change product key

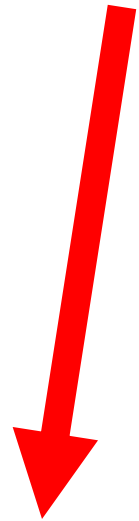
## Add a Microsoft account

Your Microsoft account unlocks benefits that make your experience with Windows better, including the ability to reactivate Windows 10 on this device.

[Learn more](#)

Edition Windows 10 Home

Activation Windows is activated with a digital license  
[Learn more](#)



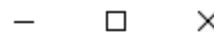
# WHICH METHOD OF ACTIVATION WAS USED IN MY "WINDOWS 10" COMPUTER?

(continued)

- If Windows 10 has been activated with a "Windows 10 Product Key", the "Activation" screen in "Settings" will state

**Activation: Windows is activated**  
and

**Product Key: xxxxx-xxxxx-xxxxx..**  
like this:



Home



## Update &amp; security



Windows Update



Windows Defender



Backup



Recovery



Activation



For developers



Windows Insider Program

## Windows

Edition	Windows 10 Home
Activation	Windows is activated
Product ID	0[REDACTED]0
Product Key	XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-K[REDACTED]H

## Upgrade your edition of Windows

Upgrade to Windows 10 Pro to add features that help you connect to company networks, access one PC from another, encrypt your data and more.


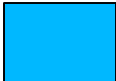
Go to the Store to buy the upgrade or enter a product key.

[Go to Store](#)[Change product key](#)

## Add a Microsoft account

Your Microsoft account unlocks benefits that make your experience with Windows better, including the ability to reactivate Windows 10 on this device.

[Learn more](#)

Edition	Windows 10 Home
Activation	Windows is activated
Product ID	0  0
Product Key	XXXXXX-XXXXXX-XXXXXX-XXXXXX-K  H

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- **Digital License**

(= "Digital Entitlement"

= "Device Based Activation")

"Windows 10" is the first and only  
"Windows.." product that can be  
activated by means of a "Digital  
License"

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- When you activate a copy of "Windows.." prior to "Window 10..", Microsoft does **not** store the UUID of the motherboard of your computer in its activation servers



# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- "Digital License" means that Microsoft's activation servers in their server farms store the UUID of the motherboard of a computer, the edition of "Windows 10" ("Home" or "Pro"), as part of the activation process.

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE "

## ACTIVATION (continued)

- "UUID" stands for "Universally Unique Identifier"
- A UUID is a 128-bit value that has a high probability of being unique that is used to label devices such as motherboards, hard drives, graphics adapters, etc.

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- According to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universally\\_unique\\_identifier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universally_unique_identifier):  
.. a UUID is represented by 32 lowercase hexadecimal digits, displayed in five groups separated by hyphens, in the form 8-4-4-4-12 for a total of 36 characters

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- If you look at the UUID that is stored inside the firmware of your computer's motherboard, it would look like this:

```
UUID
```

```
----
```

```
595B4D56-3B34-BA91-4F7C-F030072DAE75
```

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- 595B4D56-  
3B34-BA91-  
4F7C-  
F030072DAE75

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- When "Windows 10" is not activated:  
If you go to "System" in the "Control Panel":

Windows [Version 10.0.10240]

System

Control Panel > All Control Panel Items > System

Search Control Panel

Control Panel Home


- Device Manager
- Remote settings
- System protection
- Advanced system settings

### View basic information about your computer

Windows edition

Windows 10 Pro

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### System

Processor:	Intel(R) Core(TM) i7-4790 CPU @ 3.60GHz 3.60 GHz
Installed memory (RAM):	4.00 GB
System type:	64-bit Operating System, x64-based processor
Pen and Touch:	No Pen or Touch Input is available for this Display

### Computer name, domain, and workgroup settings

Computer name:	Win76Pr20120308	<a href="#">Change settings</a>
Full computer name:	Win76Pr20120308	
Computer description:		
Workgroup:	WORKGROUP	

### Windows activation

Connect to the Internet to activate Windows. [Read the Microsoft Software License Terms](#)

Product ID: 00330-80000-00000-AA037 [Activate Windows](#)

See also

Security and Maintenance



## Windows activation

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Connect to the Internet to activate Windows. [Read the Microsoft Software License Terms](#)

Product ID: 00330-80000-00000-AA037

 [Activate Windows](#)

---

# License Terms



# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE "ACTIVATION (continued)

- When "Windows 10" is "activated":  
If you go to "System" in the "Control Panel":

System

Control Panel > All Control Panel Items > System

Search Control Panel

Control Panel Home


- Device Manager
- Remote settings
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- Advanced system settings

### View basic information about your computer

Windows edition

Windows 10 Pro


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### Windows activation

Windows is activated [Read the Microsoft Software License Terms](#)

Product ID: 00330-80000-00000-AA037  [Change product key](#)

See also

Security and Maintenance

## Windows activation

---

Windows is activated [Read the Microsoft Software License Terms](#)

Product ID: 00330-80000-00000-AA037

 [Change product key](#)

## Windows activation

---

Windows is activated [Read the Microsoft](#)

Product ID: 00330-80000-00000-AA037

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- If you upgrade a computer that has a genuine copy of "Windows 7.." or "Windows 8.1.." to "Windows 10", it will activate your new copy of "Windows 10" and the UUID of the motherboard of the computer will be stored in Microsoft's activation servers and a default, placeholder 25-character product key will be placed into the Windows registry in your computer:

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE "

## ACTIVATION (continued)

- This means that everyone who upgrades from Windows 7 or Windows 8 to Windows 10 sees the same default, placeholder product keys listed at <https://www.maketecheasier.com/windows-10-activation-procedure/> when running "Belarc Advisor" or other diagnostic software:



# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- Use any Web browser in an Internet-connection computer to go to [belarc.com](http://belarc.com)
- Then download the free "Belarc Advisor":



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✓ AUTOMATIC  
✓ ACCURATE  
✓ COMPLETE

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G+1 329 Like 5K

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- **Operating Systems:** Runs on Windows 10, 8.1, 2012 R2, 8, 2012, 7, 2008 R2, Vista, 2008, 2003 SP2, XP SP3. Both 32-bit and 64-bit Windows are supported. Our commercial products also run on all other versions of Windows and on the Macintosh OS X, Linux, and Solaris operating systems.
- **Browsers:** Runs on Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari, Opera, and many others.
- **File size:** 4374 KB.
- **License:** The license associated with this product allows for free personal use only. Use on multiple PCs in a corporate, educational, military or government installation is prohibited. See the license agreement for details.
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- **Browsers:** Runs on Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari, Opera, and many others.
- **File size:** 4374 KB.

What do you want to do with advisorinstaller.exe (4.27 MB)?

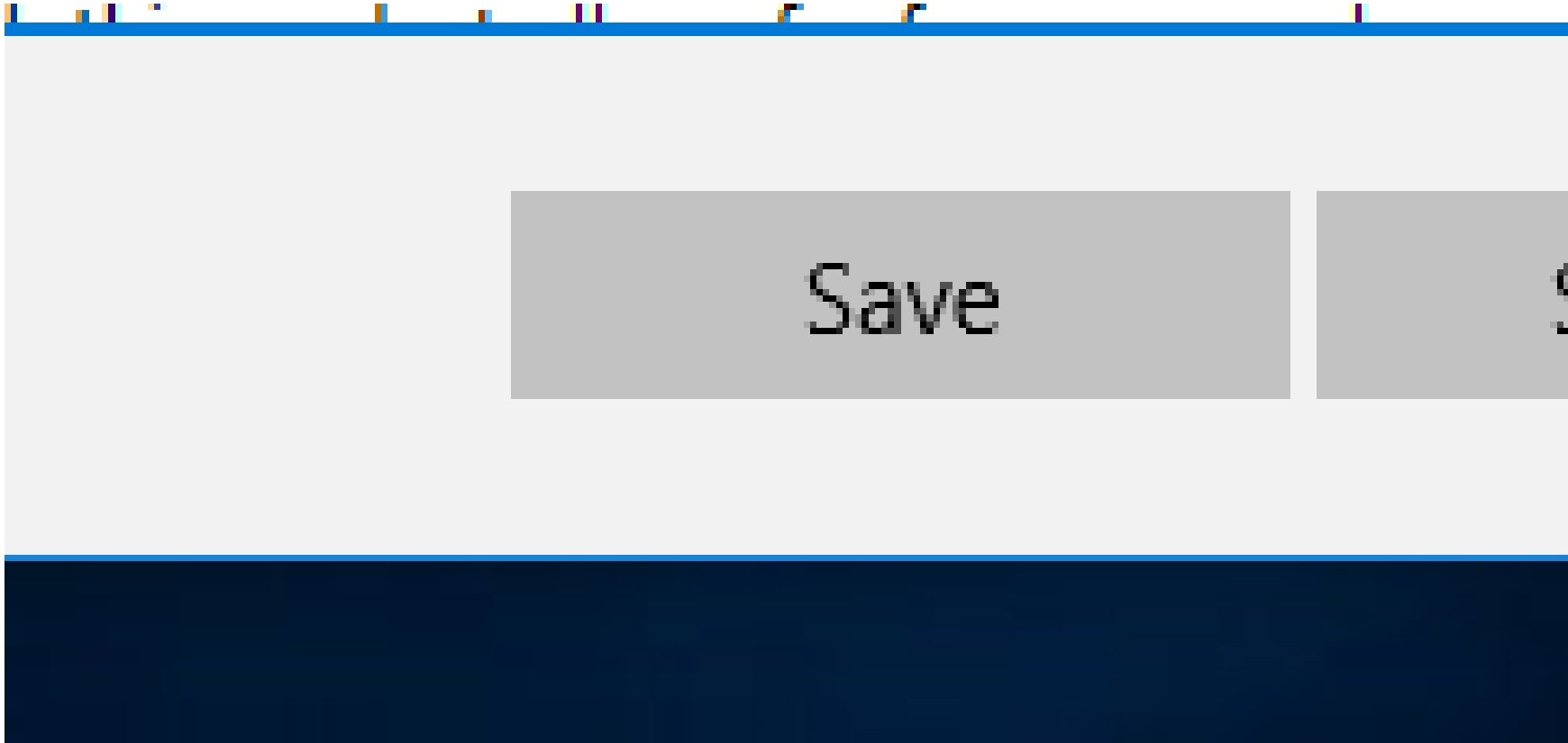
Save

Save as

Cancel



http://www.belarc.com/index.html RC.COM





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The **Belarc Advisor** builds a detailed profile of your installed software and hardware, network inventory, missing Microsoft hotfixes, anti-virus status, security benchmarks, and displays the results in your Web browser. All of your PC profile information is kept private on your PC and is not sent to any web server.

CLICK HERE TO  
DOWNLOAD  
YOUR FREE COPY OF THE  
BELARC Advisor

- **Operating Systems:** Runs on Windows 10, 8.1, 2012 R2, 8, 2012, 7, 2008 R2, Vista, 2008, 2003 SP2, XP SP3. Both 32-bit and 64-bit Windows are supported. Our commercial products also run on all other versions of Windows and on the Macintosh OS X, Linux, and Solaris operating systems.
- **Browsers:** Runs on Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari, Opera, and many others.
- **File size:** 4374 KB.
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advisorinstaller.exe finished downloading.

Run

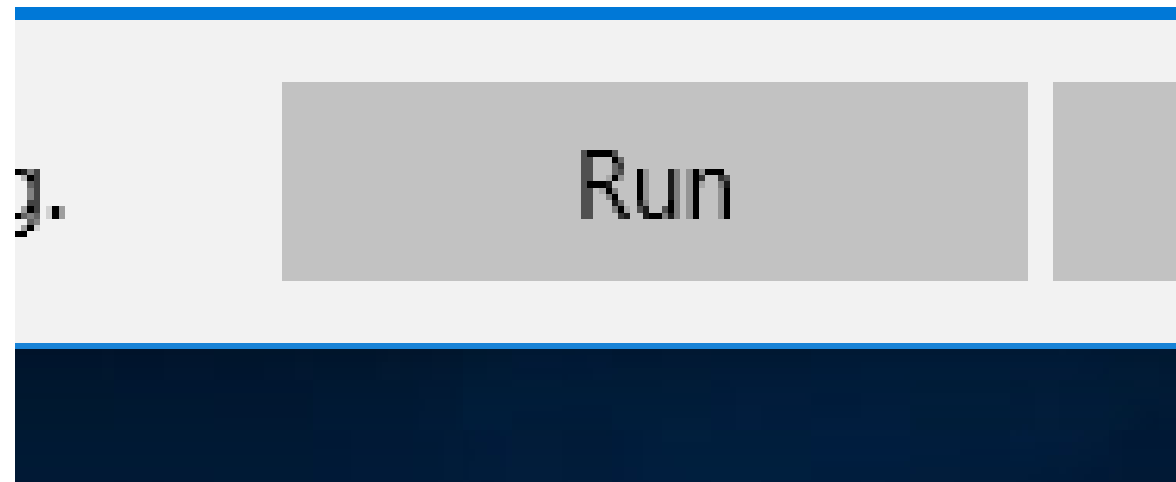
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User Account Control



Do you want to allow this app to make changes to your device?



Belarc Advisor Installer

Verified publisher: Belarc, Inc.

File origin: Downloaded from the Internet

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Yes

No

Yes

New!



Try out the free Belarc Security Advisor for your Android phone or tablet and find out about vulnerabilities that anti-virus products can't fix.

You can get the Belarc Security Advisor by searching for Belarc on Google Play.

Continue Installing Belarc Advisor

on Windows 10, 8.1, 2012 R2, 8, 2012, 7,



Belarc Advisor



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for the Belarc Advisor ("Advisor")

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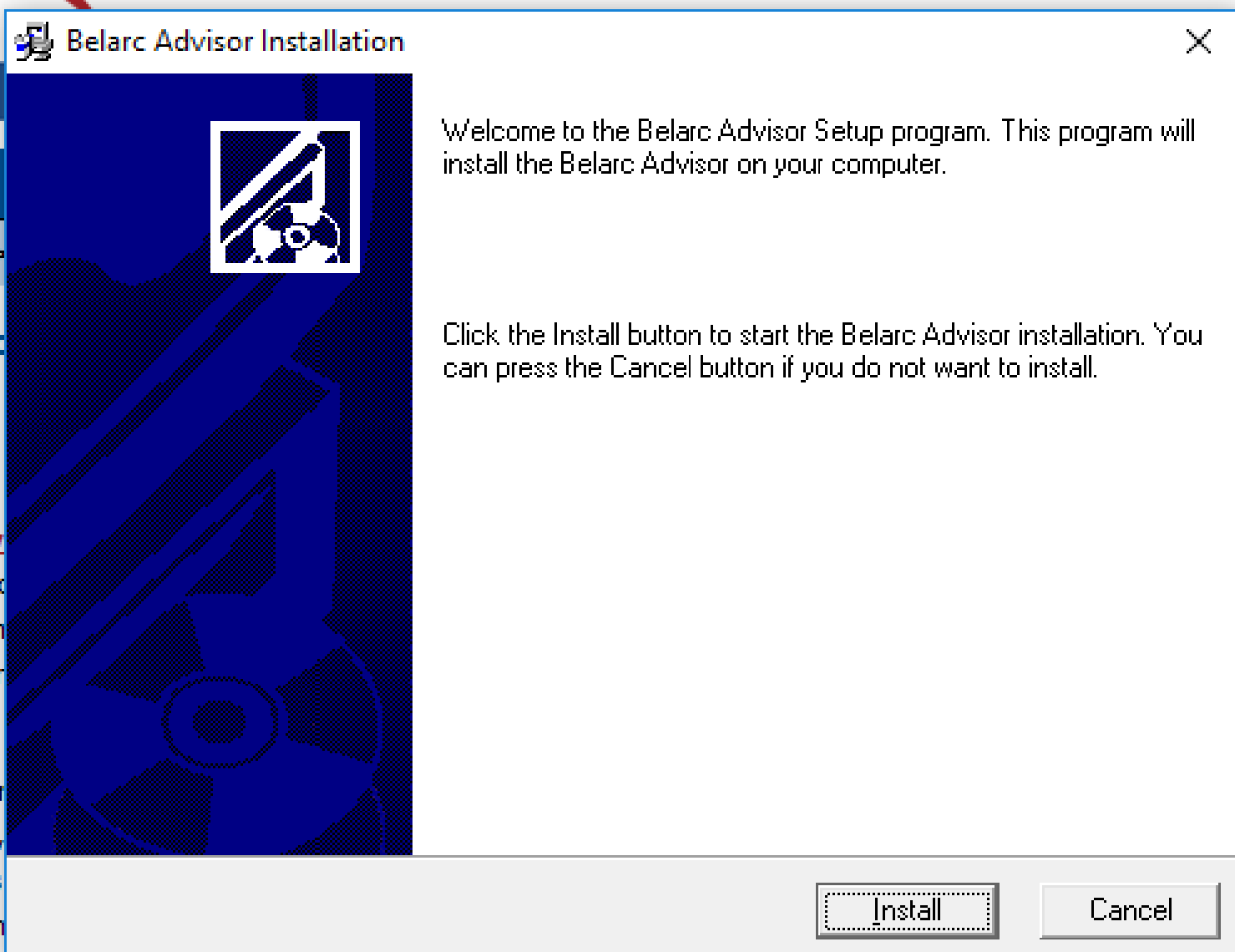
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I Don't Agree

ers: Runs on Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari, Opera, and m

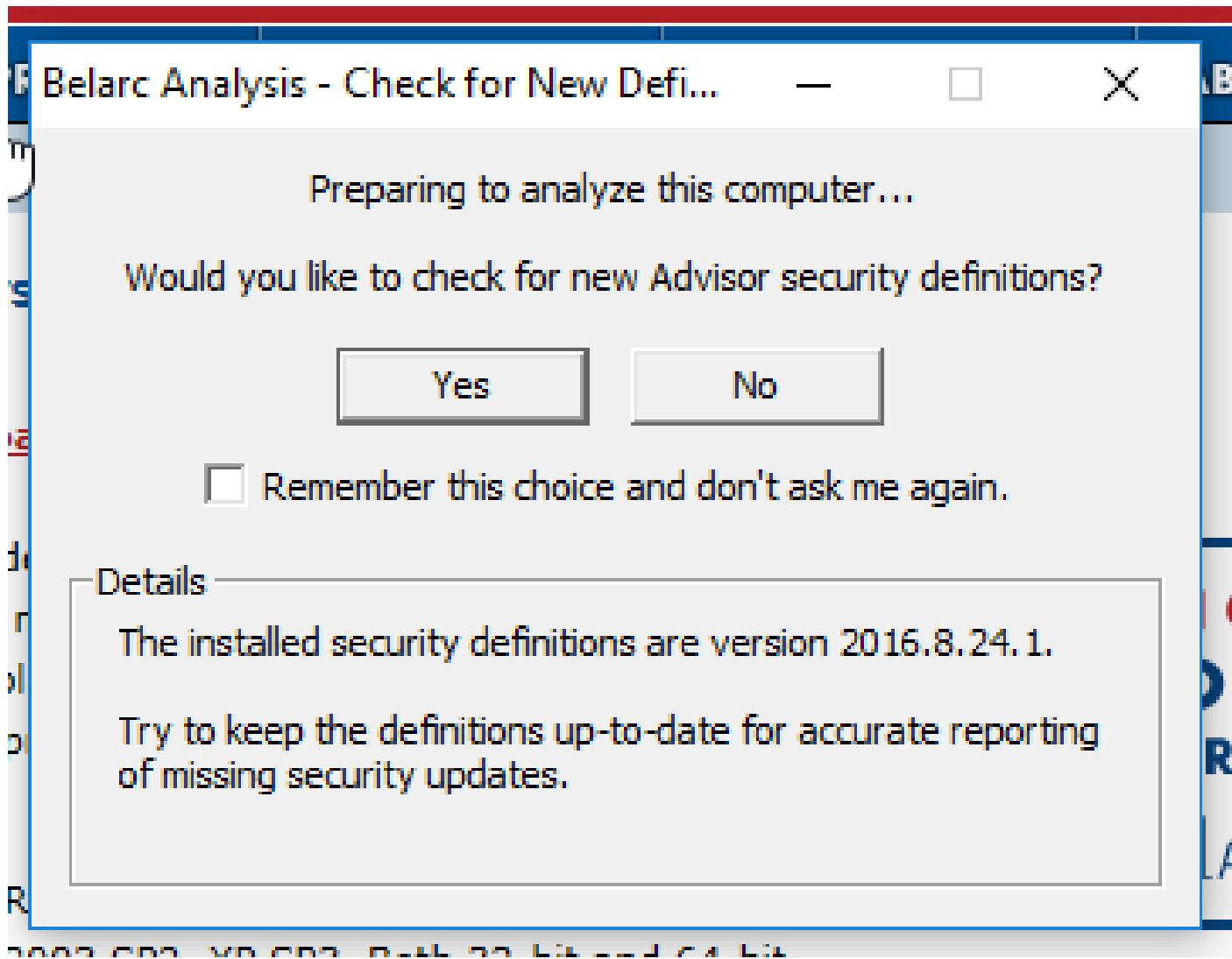
re: 4374 KB



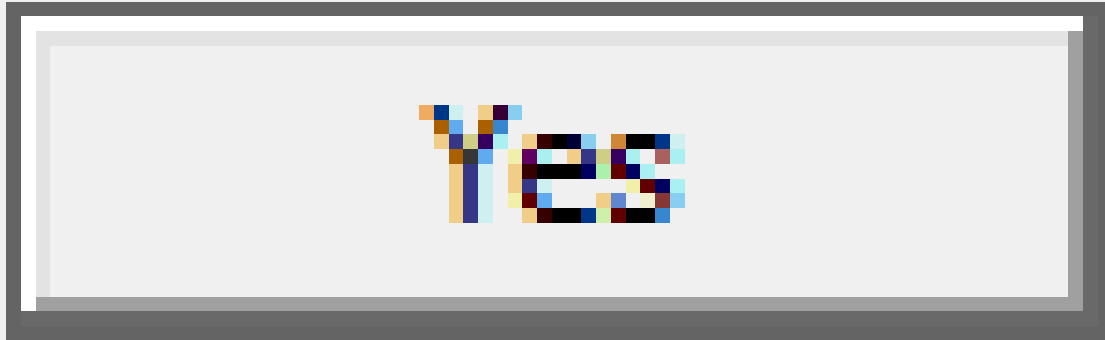
ers: Runs on Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari, Opera, and m

Install

Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari







Advisor

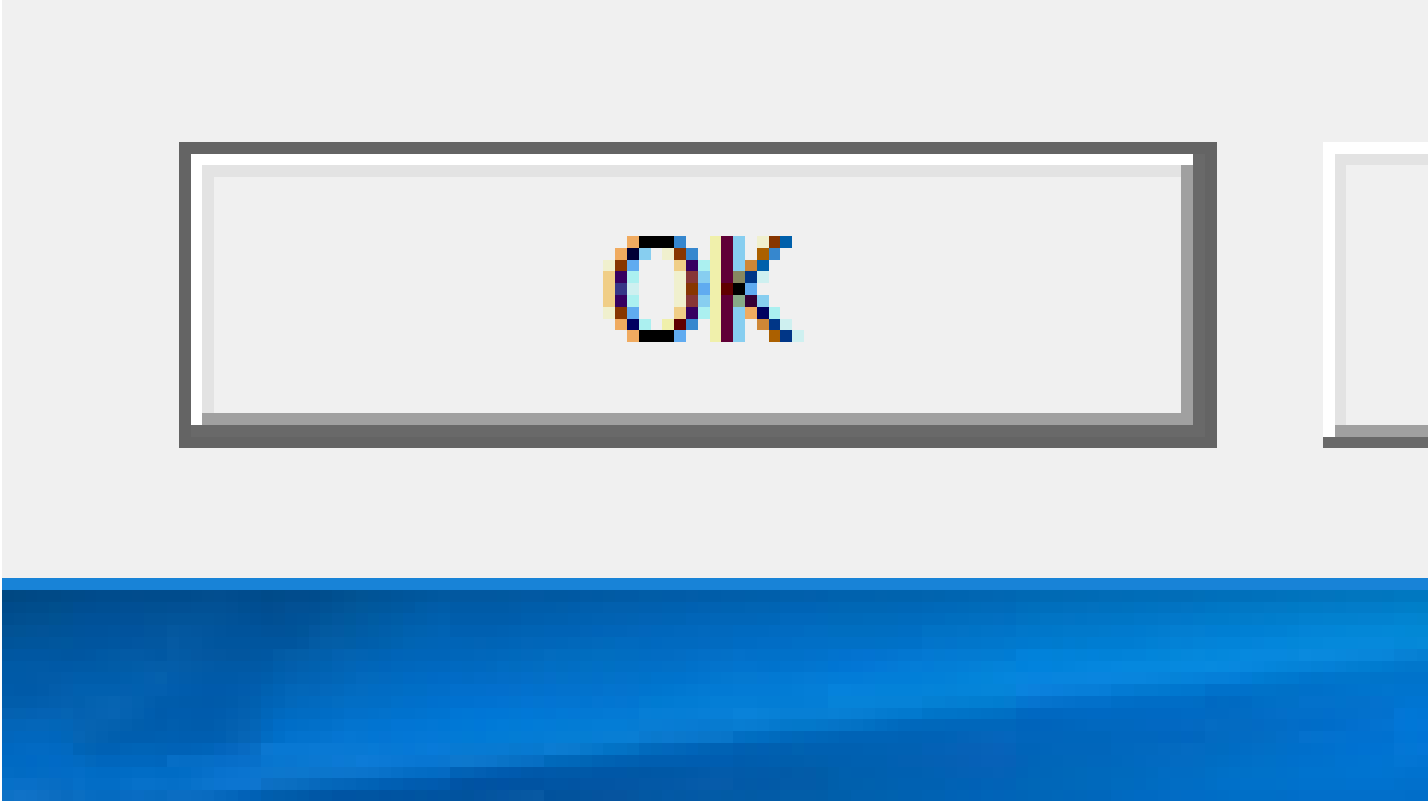


Your Advisor security definitions are up-to-date.

(Current version is 2016.8.24.1)

OK

Cancel



Advisor

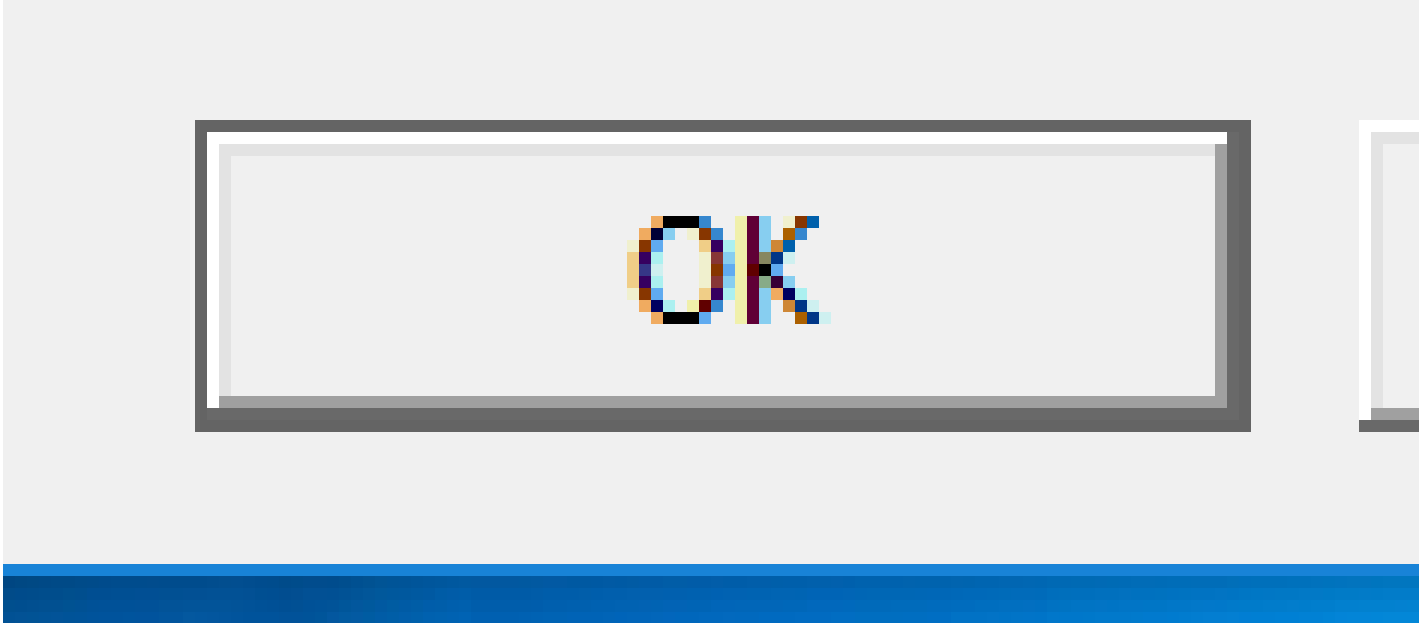


Your Advisor security definitions are up-to-date.

(Current version is 2016.8.24.1)

OK

Cancel



OK

## Belarc Analysis

Checking for missing security updates.

28%



# BELARC Advisor

The license associated with the Belarc Advisor product allows for **free personal use only**. Use on computers in a corporate, educational, military or government installation is prohibited. See the [license agreement](#) for details. The information on this page was created locally on your computer by the Belarc Advisor. Your computer profile was not sent to a web server. [Click here for more info.](#)

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**System Security Status**

**Security Benchmark Score**  
*Available only for Windows 7, Vista, and XP Pro*

**Virus Protection**  
 ✓ Up-to-date

**Security Updates**  
 ✗ 1 missing

## Computer Profile Summary

*Computer Name:* DESKTOP-8TK656G (in WORKGROUP)  
*Profile Date:* Tuesday, August 30, 2016 6:38:55 PM  
*Advisor Version:* 8.5c  
*Windows Logon:* testuser

[Try BelManage, the Enterprise version of the Belarc Advisor](#)

In page Links:

[Software Licenses](#)

[Software Versions & Usage](#)

Operating System	System Model
Windows 10 Home (x64) Version 1607 (build 14393.0) Install Language: English (United States) System Locale: English (United States)	VMware, Inc. VMware7,1 System Serial Number: VMware-56 4d a2 32 e7 e4 c1 da-b4 30 c0 e7 7d 4f f3 45 Enclosure Type: Other

**Manage all your software licenses...**  
**Try BelManage, the Enterprise version of the Belarc Advisor**

**Software Licenses** [\[Back to Top\]](#)

Belarc - Advisor	410e9ab4
Microsoft - Internet Explorer	00326-10000-00000-AA118 (Key: YTMG3-N6DKC-DKB77-7M9GH-8HVX7)
Microsoft - PowerShell	89383-100-0001260-04309
Microsoft - Windows 10 Home (x64)	00326-10000-00000-AA118 (Key: YTMG3-N6DKC-DKB77-7M9GH-8HVX7)

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**Software Versions & Usage** (mouse over **i** for details, click **i** for location) [\[Back to Top\]](#)

- i** Adobe Systems - Shockwave Flash *version* 22,0,0,209 (32/64-bit)
- i** Assigned by your organization - Work or school account *version* 1000.14393.0.0
- i** Belarc - Advisor *version* 8.5c
- i** GAMELOFT - Asphalt 8: Airborne *version* 2.6.0.6
- i** king - Candy Crush Soda Saga *version* 1.68.500.0
- i** Microsoft - .NET Framework *version* 4.6.1586.0
- i** Microsoft - 3D Builder *version* 11.1.9.0 (64-bit)
- i** Microsoft - Antimalware Service Executable *version* 4.10.14393.0 (64-bit)
- i** Microsoft - App Installer *version* 1.0.2181.0 (64-bit)
- i** Microsoft - Connect *version* 10.0.14393.0
- i** Microsoft - SmartScreen *version* 1000.14393.0.0
- i** Microsoft - Sticky Notes *version* 1.1.24.0 (64-bit)
- i** Microsoft - Store *version* 11607.1001.51.0 (64-bit)
- i** Microsoft - Store Purchase App *version* 1.0.45.0 (64-bit)
- i** Microsoft - Windows Alarms & Clock *version* 10.1608.2312.0 (64-bit)
- i** Microsoft - Windows Calculator *version* 10.1608.2213.0 (64-bit)
- i** Microsoft - Windows Camera *version* 2016.816.20.0 (64-bit)
- i** Microsoft - Windows Default Lock Screen *version* 10.0.14393.0
- i** Microsoft - Windows Hello Setup *version*

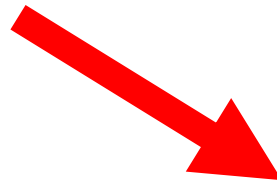


Microsoft - Windows 10 Home (x64)

00326-10000-00000-AA118 (Key: YTMG3-N6DKC-DKB77-7M9GH-8HVX7)

Microsoft - Windows 10 Home (x64)

When Windows 10 is activated with a "Digital License", a generic placeholder product key is stored in the Windows registry



00326-10000-00000-AA118 (Key: YTMG3-N6DKC-DKB77-7M9GH-8HVX7)

# DETAILS OF "DIGITAL LICENSE " ACTIVATION (continued)

- When you use a Windows 7, 8, or 8.1 product key to activate "Windows 10.." successfully, Microsoft's activation servers actually store the UUID of the motherboard and the edition of Windows 10 (Home or Pro or Workstation)

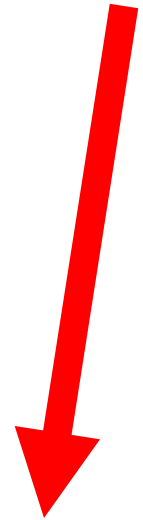
Edition

Windows 10 Home

Activation

Windows is activated with a digital license

[Learn more](#)

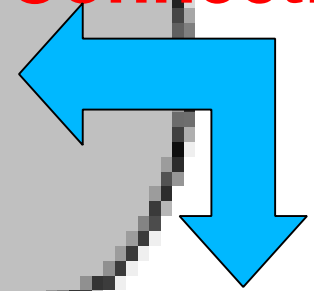


# "DIGITAL LICENSE" ACTIVATION

**Activation Servers Operated  
by Microsoft:**

**UUID of your motherboard,  
edition (Home or Pro),  
and  
optionally, your Microsoft  
account's email address if  
you link your digital license  
to a Microsoft Account**

**Internet  
Connection**



**Activated  
"Windows 10"**

# " DIGITAL LICENSE" ACTIVATION

**Activation Servers Operated by  
Microsoft:**

**UUID of motherboard,  
edition (Home or Pro or  
Workstation),  
and optionally, your Microsoft  
account's email address if you  
link your digital license to a  
Microsoft Account**

# DETAILS OF "PRODUCT KEY" ACTIVATION

- "Product Key" activation is the original method of activating "Windows.." .
- A 25-character "Windows 10 Product Key" is provided inside each retail copy of "Windows 10.." that you purchase.



# DETAILS OF "PRODUCT KEY" ACTIVATION (continued)

- "Product Key" activation occurs when you purchase and install a retail copy of "Windows 10" and you use a "Windows 10 Product Key" to activate a copy of "Windows 10"

# DETAILS OF "PRODUCT KEY" ACTIVATION (continued)

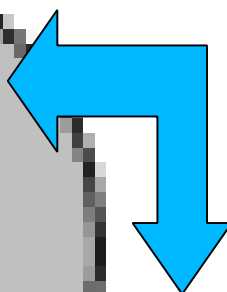
- When you purchase a copy of "Windows 10" and you use it to either upgrade from any prior version of "Windows.." OR to install into a blank hard drive, Microsoft's activation servers actually store :  
UUID of the motherboard and  
the edition of Windows 10 (Home or Pro or Workstation),

# "PRODUCT KEY" ACTIVATION

Microsoft's Activation Servers

UUID of motherboard,  
edition (Home or Pro or  
Workstation

Internet  
Connection



Activated  
"Windows  
10"

# " PRODUCT KEY" ACTIVATION

## Microsoft's Activation Servers

**UUID of motherboard,  
edition (=Home or Pro or  
Workstation),**

# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN "DIGITAL LICENSE" AND "PRODUCT KEY" ACTIVATION

- There are is only one difference between "Digital License" and "Product Key" activation:

# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN "DIGITAL LICENSE" AND "PRODUCT KEY" ACTIVATION (continued)

- **DIFFERENCE:**

In "Product Key" activation with a "Product Key " that is purchased from the "Retail" distribution channel, the 25-character "Windows 10 Product Key" (that you purchased) is stored up in the Windows registry inside your computer (instead of a placeholder key).

# "DIGITAL LICENSE" ACTIVATION

**Activation Servers Operated by  
Microsoft:**

**UUID of motherboard,  
edition (Home or Pro),  
status (trial, full, or "Insider Preview")  
and**

**your Microsoft account's email  
address username if you have linked  
your "Microsoft Account"  
to the digital license**

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO A "DIGITAL LICENSE" ACTIVATION

- If a copy of "Windows 10" has a been upgraded to or beyond the "Anniversary Update" (= "Version 1607") "Digital License", you can link it to your "Microsoft Account".



# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO A "DIGITAL LICENSE" ACTIVATION (continued)

- If your "Microsoft account" is linked to your "Digital License" activation, you can then use the "Activation Troubleshooter" in "Windows 10" when you change your computer's motherboard and also resolve other activation issues.

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO A "WINDOWS 10" ACTIVATION (continued)

- After you "link your digital license to your Microsoft account", the email address that you use to log into your Microsoft account will be stored up at Microsoft's activation servers along with the other information that corresponds to your "Digital License".

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO A "WINDOWS 10" ACTIVATION (continued)

- Prior to making your digital license linked to your Microsoft Account, your digital license will look like this up at Microsoft's activation servers:

# Microsoft's Activation Servers

**UUID of motherboard,  
edition (Home or Pro),  
status (trial, full, or "Insider  
Preview"),**

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO A "WINDOWS 10" ACTIVATION (continued)

- After making your digital license linked to your Microsoft Account, your digital license will look like this:

# "DIGITAL LICENSE" ACTIVATION

## Microsoft's Activation Servers

**UUID of motherboard,  
edition (Home or Pro),  
status (trial, full, or "Insider  
Preview")**

**and**

**your linked Microsoft  
account's  
email address (optional)**

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10 "

(continued)

- There are two ways for you to link your "Digital License" to a "Microsoft Account":

Method 1: "Add a Microsoft Account" from the "Activation" screen in "Settings"

Method 2: Run the "Sign in with a Microsoft Account instead" from "Accounts" in "Settings"

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- Details of Method 1:  
Click on the "Settings" gear icon.  
Click on "Update & security".  
Click on "Activation".  
Click on "Add an account".



Settings

Home

Find a setting

Update & security

- Windows Update
- Windows Defender
- Backup
- Recovery
- Activation**
- For developers
- Windows Insider Program

WINDOWS

Edition Windows 10 Home

Activation Windows is activated with a digital license  
[Learn more](#)

### Upgrade your edition of Windows

Upgrade to Windows 10 Pro to add features that help you connect to company networks, access the PC from another, encrypt your data and more.

Go to the Store to buy the upgrade or enter a product key.

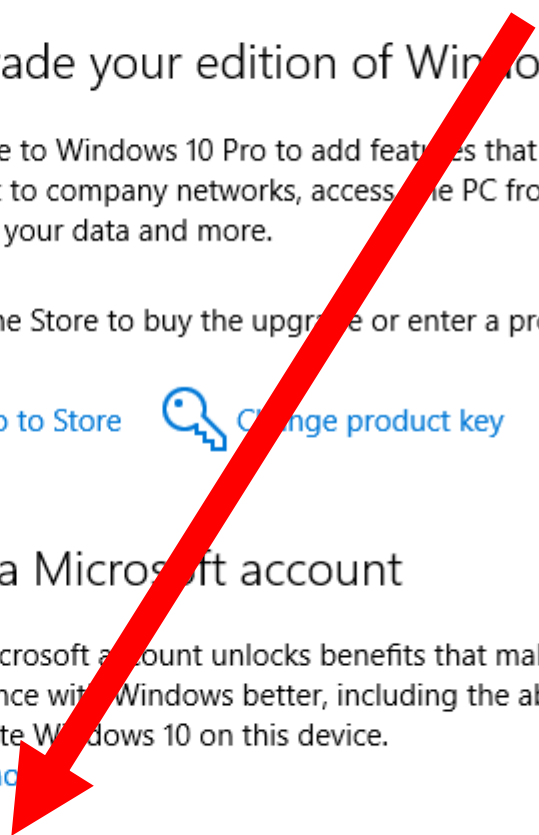
[Go to Store](#) [Change product key](#)

### Add a Microsoft account

Your Microsoft account unlocks benefits that make your experience with Windows better, including the ability to reactivate Windows 10 on this device.

[Learn more](#)

[+ Add an account](#)

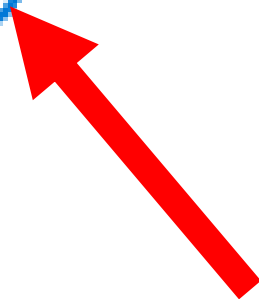


# Add a Microsoft account

Your Microsoft account unlocks benefits that make your experience with Windows better, including the ability to reactivate Windows 10 on this device.

[Learn more](#)

 Add an account



# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- Details of Method 2:  
Click on the "Settings" gear icon.  
Click on "Accounts".  
Click on "Sign in with a Microsoft  
account instead".  
etc.

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- After you link your "Microsoft Account" to the activation process, your "Activation" screen will say  
"..linked to your Microsoft Account."

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO A THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- If you are running "Windows 10 Pro", it looks like this:



 Home

Find a setting 

Update & security


 Windows Update


 Windows Defender

 Backup

 Recovery

 **Activation**

 For developers

 Windows Insider Program

# Windows

Edition Windows 10 Pro

Activation Windows is activated with a digital license linked to your Microsoft account

[Learn more](#)

## Update product key

To use a different product key on this device, select change product key.

 [Change product key](#)

Edition Windows 10 Pro

Activation Windows is activated with a digital license linked to your Microsoft account

[Learn more](#)

Settings

Home

Find a setting

Update & security

- Windows Update
- Windows Defender
- Backup
- Recovery
- Activation**
- For developers
- Windows Insider Program

## Windows



Edition Windows 10 Home

Activation Windows is activated with a digital license linked to your Microsoft account  
[Learn more](#)

## Upgrade your edition of Windows

Upgrade to Windows 10 Pro to add features that help you connect to company networks, access one PC from another, encrypt your data and more.

Go to the Store to buy the upgrade or enter a product key.

 [Go to Store](#)  [Change product key](#)



# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- If you are running "Windows 10 Home", it looks like this:

Edition Windows 10 Home

Activation Windows is activated with a digital license linked to your Microsoft account

[Learn more](#)

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- After you link your "Microsoft Account" to the activation process, if you originally activated "Windows 10" with a "Windows 10 Product Key", the registry of "Windows 10" will still have your original 25-character "Windows 10 Product Key" in it as determined by software programs such as "Belarc Advisor", if your key is a "Retail" channel key.

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- After you link your "Microsoft Account" to the activation process, "Windows 10" will start requiring you to log into your computer with your "Microsoft Account" (if you were logging into your computer with a "local account" prior to the linking process).

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- If you wish to go back to logging into "Windows 10" with a "local account" after "Adding a Microsoft Account" to the activation of "Windows 10", go to "Settings", "Accounts", "Sign in with a local account", etc.

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- If you go back to logging into "Windows 10" with a local account, the Microsoft's activation servers will no longer store your Microsoft account's email address so you can no longer use the "Activation Troubleshooter" to re-activate if you change the motherboard of the computer

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- The process of linking a Microsoft Account to a copy of Windows 10 that was activated by means of a "Windows 10 Product key" converts the activation to a "Digital License" even if you then revert back to logging into "Windows 10" with a "local account".

**IF YOU REVERT BACK TO LOGGING IN WITH A "LOCAL ACCOUNT", MICROSOFT'S ACTIVATION SERVERS WILL STOP STORING YOUR MICROSOFT ACCOUNT'S EMAIL ADDRESS:**

**Activation Servers Operated by Microsoft:**

**DIGITAL LICENSE RECORD:**

**UUID of motherboard,  
edition (Home or Pro),  
status (trial, full, or "Insider  
Preview")**

**~~& your Microsoft account's  
email address (optional)~~**



# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- See <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/20530/windows-10-reactivating-after-hardware-change>

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- The process of linking your "Microsoft Account" and then continuing or starting to log into your copy of "Windows 10" is only important if you plan to change the motherboard of your computer soon.

# LINKING YOUR "MICROSOFT ACCOUNT" TO THE ACTIVATION OF "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- We recommend linking your "Microsoft Account" and then going back to logging in with a local account in order to convert your "product key" activation to a "digital license" activation in order to mitigate the privacy issues of logging into "Windows 10" with a "Microsoft Account".

# TO GET THE UUID OF A MOTHERBOARD

- Many not-free diagnostic software programs can give you the UUID of a motherboard
- However, to get the UUID of a motherboard for free: open a "Windows Powershell" or a "Command Prompt" window and copy one of the following lines of code into it.

Then press the <Enter> key once:

```
wmic csproduct get uuid
```

```
wmic path win32_computersystemproduct  
get uuid
```

```
get-wmiobject
```

```
Win32_ComputerSystemProduct | Select-  
Object -ExpandProperty UUID
```

```
(get-wmiobject
```

```
Win32_ComputerSystemProduct).UUID
```

# WHEN YOU INSTALL OR UPGRADE FROM FROM AN EARLIER VERSION OF "WINDOWS.."

- If you use a "Version 1803" or "Version 1809" installation media DVD to either install onto a blank hard drive or to upgrade from Windows 7, 8, or 8.1, AND you put in an invalid Windows 7, 8, 8.1, or 10 "Product Key", the installation process will continue but you will have an "not activated" copy of Windows 10.. unless a digital license already exists for the UUID of the motherboard of the computer.

# WINDOWS 10.. COMPUTER

**Motherboard's UUID is stored in non-volatile memory (for all desktop and laptop computers)**

**If this is a OEM\_DM computer that is built by a large computer manufacturer, then an "OEM Product Key" is stored in a the "MSDM" table of the "ACPI" of the motherboard**

**Hard drive stores the Windows "Registry" in "hive" folders and in RAM**

**Windows.. "Product Key" is stored in the "Windows Registry":**

# WHEN YOU INSTALL OR UPGRADE FROM FROM AN EARLIER VERSION OF "WINDOWS.." (continued)

- If a large computer manufacturer built the computer, the computer manufacturer will place a unique, single-use "OEM Product Key" in the MSDM table in the motherboard of the computer  
AND the computer manufacturer will place a generic administrative product key in the Windows "Registry" in the hard drive of the computer



# WHEN YOU INSTALL OR UPGRADE FROM FROM AN EARLIER VERSION OF "WINDOWS.." (continued)

- The generic administrative product key in the Windows "Registry" in the hard drive of the computer is not unique:  
The computer manufacturer will re-use this generic administrative product key thousands of the computers that it installs "Windows 10" into.

# WHEN YOU INSTALL OR UPGRADE FROM FROM AN EARLIER VERSION OF "WINDOWS.." (continued)

- If you buy and install a "Retail" "Product Key Channel" copy of "Windows 10", the actual 25-character "product key" that you buy and then use will be stored in the Windows "Registry"
- If you buy and install a "OEM\_.." copy of "Windows 10", a generic, administrative, placeholder 25-character product key will be stored in the Windows "Registry"

# WHEN YOU INSTALL OR UPGRADE FROM FROM AN EARLIER VERSION OF "WINDOWS.." (continued)

- To determine if a 25-character "product key" that is stored in the Windows "Registry" is a "Retail" product key or a generic, administrative, placeholder product key, search for in the Google or Bing search engine since all generic and manufacturer's generic product keys are published on the Internet

# IF YOU ACQUIRE A USED "WINDOWS 10.." COMPUTER

- If you acquire a used "Windows 10.." computer that does not have a hard drive, you can install a hard drive into it and then install installation DVD's for "Windows 10 Home", "Windows 10 Pro", or "Windows 10 Workstation" into the computer to determine if the computer has any existing "digital licenses" up in Microsoft's activation servers:

Do not buy a new copy of "Windows 10.." until you determine this!

# IF YOU ACQUIRE A USED "WINDOWS 10.." COMPUTER

- If you acquire a used "Windows 10.." computer that does not have a hard drive, you can install a hard drive into it and then install installation DVD's for "Windows 10 Home", "Windows 10 Pro", or "Windows 10 Workstation" into the computer to determine if the computer has any existing "digital licenses" up in Microsoft's activation servers:

Do not buy a new copy of "Windows 10.." until you determine this!

# Activation Servers Operated by Microsoft: "PRODUCT KEY" DATABASE

**UUID of motherboard of your  
newly-acquired, used computer,  
edition = "Home"**

**UUID of motherboard of your  
newly-acquired, used computer,  
edition = "Home"**

# IF YOU ACQUIRE A USED "WINDOWS 10.." COMPUTER (continued)

- If you buy a new copy of "Windows 10.." with a new "Product Key" and the computer already has a "Digital License", then you use the new "Product Key", Microsoft has then managed to sell the same "digital license" twice since they only store one "digital license" for a specific motherboard "UUID":

For a specific edition and bitness of "Windows 10..", their activation servers can only store one "digital license". 151

IF YOU USE A "WINDOWS 7 PRO" KEY TO  
ACTIVATE OR RE-ACTIVATE A  
"WINDOWS 10 HOME" COMPUTER..

- Then your "Windows 10 Home" computer will upgrade itself to "Windows 10 Pro". However, if you use key.vbs or "Belarc Advisor" to view the 25-character "activation key" that is stored in the "Registry" will not have the "Windows 7 Pro" key stored. Instead a default "placeholder" key for "Windows 10 Pro" will be stored inside the "Registry" of the "Windows 10 Pro" operating system



# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN "WINDOWS 7", AND "WINDOWS 10"

- In "Windows 7", the 25-character "activation key" is stored inside the "Registry" and you can use key.vbs or "Belarc Advisor" can be used to view it

# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN "WINDOWS 7", AND "WINDOWS 10" (continued)

- In "Windows 10", the 25-character "activation key" that is stored in the "Registry" is a "placeholder key" that used for hundreds of thousands of computers. While you can still view this "placeholder key" using key.vbs or "Belarc Advisor", this "placeholder key" is of no use to you for re-installing the "Windows 10" operating system,

# REFERENCES

- <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/everything-know-windows-product-keys/>
- Older generic placeholder product keys that you will find in the Registry of free upgrades from Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 can be found at <https://www.maketecheasier.com/windows-10-activation-procedure/>

## REFERENCES (continued)

- Placeholder keys for the additional flavors of "Windows 10" can also be found at <https://winaero.com/blog/generic-key-to-install-windows-10-rtm/>  
However, ignore their advice to use these keys during the installation or upgrade process.

## REFERENCES (continued)

- Placeholder keys for the additional flavors of "Windows 10" can be found at <https://www.tenforums.com/tutorials/95922-generic-product-keys-install-windows-10-editions.html> and <https://winaero.com/blog/generic-key-to-install-windows-10-rtm/>