



BUSINESS GUIDE

# Is Windows 10 still **safe** for business?

What the end of Windows 10 support means for your business and the practical steps you should take to stay secure.



## Windows 10 computers will continue to work, but Microsoft's standard support ended on 14 October 2025.

Unless a device is enrolled in the Extended Security Updates programme, it no longer receives regular security and reliability updates, leaving your business more exposed to cyber threats and potential compliance or operational risks.

Extended Security Updates can provide temporary protection, but they are not a long-term solution. Businesses should now have a clear plan to upgrade compatible devices to Windows 11, replace older hardware or move to another supported environment.

### What does the end of Windows 10 support mean?

The end of support does not mean Windows 10 computers suddenly stop working. You can still switch them on, access files and use installed applications. However, Microsoft no longer provides standard:

- Security updates
- Reliability and quality fixes
- New features
- General technical support
- Improvements designed to protect against emerging threats

Without these updates, newly discovered vulnerabilities may remain unresolved, making unsupported devices increasingly difficult to protect.

Antivirus software is still important, but it cannot replace operating system security updates. It may detect many malicious files and suspicious activities, but it cannot repair a vulnerability within Windows itself.

## What are Windows 10 Extended Security Updates?

Windows 10 Extended Security Updates, commonly known as ESU, are available as a paid annual subscription for eligible business devices.

Commercial ESU provides critical and important security updates. It does not include:

- New Windows features
- General product improvements
- Standard Windows 10 technical support
- Non-security updates requested by customers
- A permanent extension of Windows 10 support

Eligible devices must meet Microsoft's requirements, including running Windows 10 version 22H2 and having the necessary updates installed.

Microsoft currently allows businesses to purchase ESU for up to three years following the end of Windows 10 support. The cost increases each year, and businesses joining during a later year must also purchase coverage for the previous years.

This means ESU becomes progressively more expensive and should not be viewed as a long-term alternative to upgrading or replacing your devices.

**ESU is a temporary measure, not a long-term solution.**

## When could ESU be appropriate?

ESU may be useful when a business has a small number of Windows 10 devices that cannot immediately be upgraded or replaced. For example, a device may

- Operate specialist machinery or equipment
- Depend on an older business application
- Require additional compatibility testing
- Form part of a planned hardware replacement programme
- Be needed during a critical trading period
- Require further budget approval before it can be replaced

If you retain a Windows 10 device, document why it is still required, how it will be protected and when it will be upgraded or replaced. Every device should have a clear transition plan.

## When should a computer move to Windows 11?

A Windows 10 computer may be suitable for upgrading if it meets Microsoft's Windows 11 hardware requirements and is compatible with your business applications and equipment.

Before upgrading, check:

- Processor and security requirements
- Available memory and storage
- Business application compatibility
- Printers, scanners and specialist equipment
- Encryption settings and recovery keys
- User files and backups
- Remote-access and security software
- Accessibility requirements

Eligible Windows 10 devices can usually be upgraded to the equivalent edition of Windows 11 without an additional Windows licence charge.

However, the move still needs to be carefully planned. Installation, testing, data migration and changes to business applications may involve additional time and cost.

## What if a device cannot run Windows 11?

There are several options available:

### Replace the device

For most everyday laptops and desktop computers, replacement is the simplest way to return to a fully supported environment. It can also improve performance, reliability and energy efficiency.

### Use ESU temporarily

ESU can provide additional protection while you replace the device, test essential software or complete an application migration. It should have a defined end date rather than becoming the default long-term solution.

### Modernise the application

If an older application is preventing the move to Windows 11, find out whether it can be updated, replaced, hosted centrally or accessed through a supported virtual desktop environment.

### Consider a cloud desktop

Azure Virtual Desktop or Windows 365 can provide users with access to a supported Windows environment from suitable devices.

Cloud desktops are not automatically the right solution for every business or workload. The local device must still be appropriately secured, protected and managed.

## How should your business manage the transition?

### 1. Identify every Windows 10 device

Use asset management or device management tools to create an accurate list rather than relying solely on manual records.

### 2. Assess each device

Determine whether each computer can be upgraded, needs to be replaced, requires temporary ESU coverage or needs further investigation.

### 3. Prioritise higher-risk devices

Start with computers used for administration, finance, sensitive information, remote access and other business-critical activities.

### 4. Test essential applications

Make sure your business software, integrations and connected equipment work correctly with Windows 11 before completing a wider rollout.

### 5. Plan the move

Back up important data, transfer user settings and schedule upgrades or replacements to minimise disruption.

### 6. Protect any remaining devices

Windows 10 devices that cannot immediately be retired may require tighter access controls, additional monitoring or separation from other parts of your network.

## Frequently asked questions

### Will Windows 10 computers stop working?

No. Windows 10 computers will continue to start and run, but unsupported devices no longer receive standard Windows security and reliability updates.

### Is antivirus enough to protect Windows 10?

No. Antivirus is only one layer of protection. It cannot replace the updates that fix vulnerabilities within the Windows operating system.

### Can every Windows 10 computer upgrade to Windows 11?

No. A device must meet Microsoft's hardware requirements. Its applications, security tools and connected equipment should also be checked for compatibility.

### Does ESU make Windows 10 fully supported again?

No. ESU provides specified security updates for enrolled devices. It does not restore standard technical support, introduce new features or continue normal Windows 10 development.

### Unsure whether your computers should be upgraded, replaced or covered by ESU?

Layer 4 can review your device estate, identify any remaining Windows 10 computers and create a practical transition plan covering Windows 11 upgrades, hardware replacement, ESU and application compatibility.

**Talk to our team about your Windows 10 transition.**