

Refresh Windows?!

Sounds safe, right? You may not lose any personal files and the computer may be all clean and nice again. It might even go back to being fast again. True, it will likely be fast again. But what about all those programs you installed? Did you keep the disks, activation codes, installation upgrades, the printer that for some odd reason took far longer to install than the instructions said? Let us not forget the hours of Windows security and user experience updates that have happened since that day long ago when you turned it on the first time. Yes, all that will be gone too. Doesn't seem so simple any more. It down right sounds like a lot of time and effort.

What Refresh Does:

When you reset your PC and remove everything:

1. The PC boots into Windows RE, the Windows Recovery Environment
2. Windows RE erases and formats the Windows partitions before installing a fresh copy of Windows.
3. The PC restarts into the new copy of Windows.

When you choose to keep your files, the same steps occur. However, before erasing your Windows partition, Windows RE scans the hard drive for your files and personal settings. It places them aside, installs a fresh copy of Windows, then puts those files back where they were found.

Whether you choose to keep your personal files or not, this process involves a completely fresh Windows system. That's why your desktop programs are erased.

The "Reset this PC" option is convenient, but there's one big problem with it: if your PC manufacturer installed a lot of junk software you don't want at the factory, resetting your PC will bring all that junk back.

Thankfully, with Windows 10's Anniversary Update, there's now an easy way to get a fresh-from-Microsoft Windows 10 system. Just click the "Learn how to start fresh with a clean installation of Windows" link on the Settings > Update & Security > Recovery screen.

The new "Give your PC a fresh start" tool will download a Windows 10 image straight from Microsoft and install it on your system, giving you a fresh-from-Microsoft system with none of that factory software installed. The hardware drivers you need should be automatically downloaded from Windows Update after you're done. If you need a hardware driver or utility that isn't automatically installed from Windows Update, you'll find them on your PC manufacturer's download site.