

Tips, Tricks and Advice from your local “IT Guru”

This month I want to talk to you about upgrading to Windows 10. Microsoft has finally announced a date for when the latest version of Windows will be available, and it's soon. Yes, 29th July is the big day... well, for some anyway! One of the big new features of Windows 10 is that it is one operating system for all devices: desktops, laptops, tablets, phones, and even games consoles. Whatever device you use, it all looks and feels similar. The trouble is that not all versions will be ready at once, so if you're expecting your phone to be updated at the same time as your PC, then you'll be disappointed. However, the good news is that when the individual versions become available they will all be free... well, for some anyway! Hmm, I'm beginning to sense a theme.

Actually, it's not as bad as it sounds. Any PC or tablet running Windows 7, 8, or 8.1 will be entitled to a free upgrade to version 10 for a year after its release. It's a simple process, much like the upgrade from Windows 8 to 8.1. If you have a modern Windows phone, then you will also get a free upgrade to the latest version when it's available (sometime in the Autumn). If you have one of the earlier Windows Phones running version 7.X then you are out of luck. The really low-end Windows 8 phones may not get the full Windows 10 For Phones (what a silly name) experience due to hardware limitations. Also, if you have an older PC with Vista or you are still running Windows XP, then you will have to purchase a copy of Windows 10, wipe the PC, and install the new version from scratch. However, given that any system running these versions is likely to be over 5 years old by now, I would advise just buying a new PC.

So, how do you get the latest version? For phones, it will be delivered like all the phone updates: over the air, and you won't have to do anything extra to get it. For PC's and Tablets, you will soon notice a new white Windows icon appearing in the system tray (the right-hand side of the bar at the bottom of your screen). When you click this you can “reserve” your copy of Windows 10. All this is really doing is telling your system to include the upgrade in the regular system update downloads. Once the upgrade is available it will automatically be downloaded, allowing you to install it at a convenient time. Once it's released I'm sure you will also be able to download the upgrade from the Windows store as well.

So, what can you expect from the new version? On tablets you won't really see much difference. You'll still get the Start screen with all its colourful tiles and easily accessible information as the main interface, and you can still drop into the desktop when you need to. If you have a desktop or laptop then you don't get to see the Start screen. Instead, you'll get a new Start button that not only shows all of your installed programs, but displays tiles just as the original Start screen, complete with their quick glance information. The Apps from the store that used to function as tiles now run on the desktop – in a window, just like the good old days! This makes the interface look much more like a modern version of XP or Windows 7, which is great if you are an experienced user but a little bit trickier if you just want to do a few simple things or are a beginner. The good news is that nothing is changing deep down, so any programs that you already have should still work - it's just a case of getting used to a different way of launching programs.

I guess the big question is whether or not you should upgrade. On Windows phones, you don't really get an option: it will just happen, so that's easy! For PC's, I think it's a good move unless you really like the Start screen. Either way, it's worth letting your system download the upgrade. At least that way you have the option to install it when you've made a decision.

If you have any questions or anything you would like me to cover in this column, email me at look@4-11consultants.co.uk

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