BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Can My PC Run Windows 11? How to Check

Run Microsoft's free check in two minutes — and understand exactly what it tells you

Plain-English Windows help from:

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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

The only sure way to know if your computer can run Windows 11 is Microsoft's free PC Health Check app, which only reads your PC and changes nothing. Open it (it may already be installed — search the Start menu), find the Windows 11 section, and click Check now. A green result means a free upgrade is available; back up your files first, then upgrade through Settings Windows Update.

A "doesn't meet" result is common on older PCs and is not a dead end — sometimes it is only a TPM or Secure Boot setting that needs turning on, and even when it is not, you can enroll in free Extended Security Updates or revive the machine with ChromeOS Flex. Only ever download the checker from Microsoft's own site.

1 The Short Version

With Windows 10 support over, the natural question is whether your current computer can simply move up to Windows 11 for free. The honest answer is: some can and some cannot, and the only way to know for sure is to run a quick, free check from Microsoft. It takes a couple of minutes and changes nothing on your computer — it just tells you yes or no, and why.

This guide shows you exactly how to run that check, how to read what it tells you, and what the strange-sounding requirements (like "TPM 2.0") actually mean in plain English. By the end you will know with certainty whether a free upgrade is on the table for your machine.

- Microsoft's free "PC Health Check" app gives a clear yes-or-no answer.
- Windows 11 needs newer hardware than past upgrades — age is the usual deciding factor.
- The check only reads your computer; it does not install or change anything.
- If the answer is no, you have good options — covered here and in a companion guide.

TIP

Running the check is completely safe and reversible — it is just a readout, like a doctor taking your temperature. You are not committing to anything by looking.

2 Why Windows 11 Is Pickier Than Before

For years, upgrading Windows meant almost any computer could come along for the ride. Windows 11 broke that pattern on purpose: Microsoft set higher minimum requirements, mostly for security reasons, so that the newest Windows runs on hardware with modern protections built in. That is good for safety, but it means some perfectly good older computers are left out.

The requirement that surprises people most is a small security chip called TPM 2.0, plus a fairly recent processor. These are common in computers made in roughly the last several years and often missing or switched off in older ones. None of this reflects on whether your computer still works well — it is purely about meeting Microsoft's security bar.

GOOD TO KNOW

A computer failing the Windows 11 check is extremely common and nothing to feel bad about. It simply means the machine predates the new requirements, which is true of millions of good, working PCs.

3 What You'll Need Before You Start

The check is light and quick. Gather just a couple of things so it goes smoothly.

- Your computer turned on and connected to the internet.
- A few minutes of quiet — the download and check are fast.
- Patience for one small download from Microsoft's own website (nowhere else).

WATCH OUT

Only ever download the PC Health Check app from Microsoft's own website. If a search turns up other sites offering "Windows 11 checkers" or "upgrade tools," skip them — some are traps. When in doubt about which link is the real Microsoft one, that is a fine moment to call me before clicking.

4 Get the PC Health Check App

Microsoft makes a small free program called PC Health Check whose whole job is to tell you if your PC can run Windows 11. On many Windows 10 computers it is already installed; if not, you download it once from Microsoft.

1. Click the Start button and type "PC Health Check" to see if it is already on your computer.
2. If it appears in the results, click to open it and skip to the next chapter.
3. If it is not there, open your web browser and search for "PC Health Check" — choose only the result on Microsoft's own site (microsoft.com).
4. Download and open the small installer, and follow the simple prompts to install it.
5. Once installed, open the PC Health Check app.

TIP

If you are at all unsure which search result is the genuine Microsoft one, stop there — picking the wrong download is the only real risk in this whole process, and it is one I am happy to steer you past over the phone or on a visit.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

5 Run the Check and Read the Answer

With the app open, the check itself is one click. Look near the top of the app's window for a section about Windows 11 and a "Check now" button.

1. In the PC Health Check app, find the Windows 11 section at the top.
2. Click "Check now" and wait a few seconds.
3. Read the result: it will say either that your PC meets the requirements, or that it does not.
4. If it says no, click "See all results" or the details link to learn exactly which requirement was not met.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A green "this PC meets the requirements" message means a free upgrade is available to you. A "doesn't currently meet" message is not the end of the road — sometimes a setting simply needs turning on, and even when it truly cannot upgrade, you still have solid options.

6 Decoding the Requirements in Plain English

If the check lists things your PC is missing, here is what those terms actually mean, without the jargon.

Requirement	In plain words
TPM 2.0	A small security chip. Often present but switched off in settings; sometimes genuinely absent on older PCs.
Secure Boot	A safety feature that checks Windows hasn't been tampered with at startup. Usually can be turned on.

Supported processor	Your PC's "brain" must be recent enough — this is the most common true blocker on older machines.
4 GB RAM / 64 GB storage	Minimum memory and space. Most PCs from the last several years clear this easily.

Two of these — TPM 2.0 and Secure Boot — are sometimes just turned off in a settings screen called the BIOS, and turning them on can flip a "no" into a "yes." That screen is a bit intimidating and easy to get wrong, so it is a classic thing to let a pro handle rather than poke at alone.

7 "It Says No" — Don't Panic

If the check says your PC cannot run Windows 11, nothing is wrong with your computer and you have not lost anything. It simply means this machine predates the requirements, which is true for a huge number of good PCs. You now have a clear picture, which is exactly what the check is for.

- Sometimes it is only a setting (TPM or Secure Boot) that needs enabling — worth a look before giving up.
- You can enroll in Microsoft's free Extended Security Updates to keep your current Windows 10 safe into 2027.
- You can give the machine a lighter new life with ChromeOS Flex if you mostly browse and email.
- You can plan, without rushing, for a newer computer when the time is right.

> **WATCH OUT**
> I have a companion guide called "This PC Can't Run Windows 11 — Your Real Options" that walks through each of these calmly. A "no" from the check is a starting point, not a dead end.

8 "It Says Yes" — What Happens Next

If the check gives you the green light, the upgrade to Windows 11 is free and, for most people, smooth. It keeps your files and most of your programs in place, so it feels more like a large update than starting fresh. Still, a little preparation makes it worry-free.

1. Back up your photos and documents first (to an external drive and/or the cloud) — always do this before any big change.
2. Make sure your laptop is plugged in, or your desktop will not lose power, during the upgrade.
3. When ready, the upgrade is offered through Settings Update & Security Windows Update.
4. Set aside an hour or two; the computer will restart itself a few times, which is normal.

> **TIP**
> Even when the upgrade is straightforward, many people prefer to have it done with a steady hand — so their files are safely backed up first and someone is there if a question comes up. That is an easy, low-stress visit.

9 A Word on "Forcing" Windows 11

You may read online about tricks to install Windows 11 on a computer that failed the check. It is technically possible in some cases, but Microsoft warns that such PCs may not receive updates and are not officially supported, which can lead to problems down the line. For a home computer you rely on, that is usually a poor trade.

WATCH OUT

I generally steer people away from forcing Windows 11 onto unsupported hardware. The free Extended Security Updates or ChromeOS Flex are safer, more reliable answers for an older machine. If you are curious whether forcing it makes sense in your specific case, ask me — it rarely does.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

10 Keeping Your Decision Safe

Whatever the check tells you, protect your files before you make any change. This is the single step that turns a big-sounding decision into a low-stakes one, because your irreplaceable photos and documents are safe no matter what you choose.

- Copy your Documents, Pictures, and Desktop to an external drive or USB stick.
- Or sign in to a cloud service (OneDrive, Google Drive, iCloud) so a copy lives online.
- Best of all, do both — then any upgrade or switch is completely reversible in spirit.

11 A Readiness Checklist Before You Upgrade

If the check gave you the green light and you've decided to go ahead, a short readiness checklist makes the upgrade smooth and worry-free. Running through it takes just a few minutes and heads off the handful of things that trip people up.

1. Back up your photos and documents to an external drive and/or the cloud — always first.
2. Plug in a laptop, or make sure a desktop won't lose power during the upgrade.
3. Set aside an hour or two when you don't need the computer; it restarts itself several times.

4. Make sure you know your Microsoft account sign-in (email and password), as it may ask.
5. Close any open programs and save your work before starting.
6. Start the upgrade from Settings Update & Security Windows Update when ready.

- Don't upgrade right before you need the computer for something important.
- A steady internet connection helps the download finish without stalling.
- It's normal for the screen to go dark and the machine to restart more than once.
- Your files and programs will be waiting for you when it's done.

WATCH OUT

The one thing never to skip is the backup. An upgrade almost always keeps your files perfectly, but 'almost always' is not 'always,' and a five-minute backup turns a small risk into no risk at all. If you'd like it done properly, that's a natural part of an upgrade visit.

GOOD TO KNOW

Think of the checklist as buckling your seatbelt — a small, sensible habit before a journey that's almost certainly smooth anyway. With it done, you can start the upgrade and walk away while it works.

12 What Actually Changes if You Upgrade

People often hesitate over the check because they imagine upgrading to Windows 11 means learning a whole new computer. In practice it is far gentler than that. Your files, your photos, your email, your programs, your passwords and your printer all stay exactly where they are — the upgrade carries them along. What changes is mostly the look, and only in small ways.

- Your files and photos stay put — nothing is erased or moved.
- Your programs keep working and don't need re-installing.
- The Start button sits in the center by default, though you can move it back to the left corner.
- The settings and menus look a little fresher, but do the same jobs.
- It feels more like a big update than a new computer.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the centered Start button or the new look bothers you, every bit of it can be adjusted back toward the familiar. Knowing that the upgrade keeps everything in place takes most of the worry out of the decision.

13 Questions People Ask Before Deciding

A few of the same sensible questions come up again and again when people face this choice. Here are the honest, plain answers.

You're wondering…	The short answer
Will I lose my files?	No — an upgrade keeps your files, photos, and programs in place. Still, back up first.
Is the upgrade really free?	Yes, if your PC passes the check — there's no charge for the Windows 11 upgrade itself.
Do I have to upgrade right now?	No. You can enroll Windows 10 in free security updates and decide later.
What if I upgrade and hate it?	There's a short window to go back to Windows 10, and the look can be adjusted either way.
Is my PC too old?	The check tells you plainly; a 'no' is common and has good alternatives.

TIP

There's no wrong answer and no deadline forcing your hand today. The check simply gives you the facts, and from there you can take your time — this is a decision to make calmly, not under pressure.

14 When to Call Bill

Running the check is something most people can do, and I want you to feel able to. But the moments around it — making sure you are downloading the real Microsoft app, turning on a TPM or Secure Boot setting in the BIOS, backing up safely, or carrying out the upgrade itself — are exactly where a careful hand helps.

I come to you here in Portage County, run the check on your actual computer, and tell you plainly what it means for you. If the answer is yes, I can back you up and do the upgrade with you; if it is no, we pick the best of the real options together. Either way you end up certain, not guessing.

- You are not sure which download is the genuine PC Health Check.
- The check failed only on TPM or Secure Boot and you want those turned on safely.
- You got a green light and want the upgrade done with your files protected first.
- You got a no and want help choosing among the alternatives.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. The check is free, fast, and changes nothing on your PC.

I want to...	Do this...
Find the checker	Start type "PC Health Check" — it may already be installed
Download it safely	Only from Microsoft's own site (microsoft.com) — nowhere else
Run the check	Open the app Windows 11 section Check now
Understand a "no"	Often age/processor; sometimes just TPM or Secure Boot turned off
Act on a "yes"	Back up files first, then upgrade via Settings Windows Update
If it says no	Enroll in free Extended Security Updates, or look at ChromeOS Flex
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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