BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Windows 10 Is Ending — What to Do Now

What the deadline really means, your options in plain English, and no need to panic

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Windows 10 reached "end of support" on October 14, 2025, which means no more free security updates — but your computer still works and nothing broke, so there's no need to panic. You have three calm options. First, check whether your PC can upgrade to Windows 11 for free (Settings Update & Security Windows Update, or run Microsoft's free PC Health Check app); the upgrade keeps your files.

Second, if it can't upgrade, enroll in Microsoft's Extended Security Updates to keep getting safety patches — consumer coverage runs through October 12, 2027. Third, buy a new PC only if yours is already old, slow, or failing. Ignore any pop-up, countdown, or phone call urging you to act now — that's always a scam.

You have time to choose well.

1 The Short Version

You may have seen a warning on your screen, read something in the news, or heard from a friend: Windows 10 is "ending." It sounds alarming, and companies are only too happy to let that alarm sell you a new computer in a hurry. So before anything else, here is the calm truth: your computer did not stop working, nothing has gone wrong, and you have time to make a sensible choice rather than a panicked one.

What actually happened is that Microsoft stopped providing free security updates for Windows 10 on October 14, 2025. The computer still turns on and does everything it did yesterday. What you are really deciding is how to keep it safe from here on — and you have a few good, affordable options. This guide walks through each one in plain English so you can pick what fits you, with no pressure and no jargon.

- Windows 10 reached "end of support" on October 14, 2025 — it still works, but no longer gets free security updates.

- Option 1: see if your PC can upgrade to Windows 11 for free (many can; the upgrade keeps your files).
- Option 2: if it can't, enroll in Microsoft's Extended Security Updates (ESU) to keep getting safety patches — coverage runs through October 12, 2027.
- Option 3: when the machine is genuinely old and slow, that's the moment a new PC makes sense — but only then.
- You do NOT need to rush, panic, or trust any pop-up that says "act now" about this.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> If you only remember one thing: nothing breaks overnight. You can keep using the computer while you decide, and the safest first step is simply to check whether it can upgrade to Windows 11 for free — which costs you nothing to find out.

2 What "End of Support" Actually Means

The phrase "end of support" sounds like a shutdown, but it is gentler than it sounds. It means Microsoft has stopped sending Windows 10 the free monthly security updates and no longer offers technical help for it. The software itself keeps running exactly as before — your programs open, your files are all there, your email and browser still work.

The reason it matters is security, not function. Those monthly updates quietly patch newly discovered weak spots that criminals try to exploit. Without them, over months and years a Windows 10 computer gradually becomes a softer target for viruses and scams. It is a slow drift, not a cliff edge — which is exactly why you have room to choose calmly.

	Keeps working?	Still gets security updates?
Windows 10, doing nothing	Yes	No — stopped October 14, 2025
Upgraded to Windows 11	Yes	Yes — fully supported

Windows 10 with ESU enrolled	Yes	Yes — security patches through Oct 12, 2027

GOOD TO KNOW

Think of it like a house whose alarm company stopped sending patrols. The house still stands and the doors still lock; you have simply lost the extra watchful eye. Upgrading, or enrolling in ESU, hires that watchful eye back.

3 First, Don't Panic — and Watch for Scare Tactics

The Windows 10 deadline has been a gift to scammers and pushy sellers, because fear makes people click and buy without thinking. Knowing their playbook takes all the power out of it. Real warnings about this come quietly, from Windows itself or from Microsoft's own website — never as an urgent phone call, a pop-up with a countdown, or an email demanding you "renew" immediately.

- No legitimate company will phone you out of the blue about Windows 10 ending. That is always a scam.
- A pop-up with a ticking clock, a phone number to call, or a "download now to stay protected" button is a trap — close the browser, don't click.
- You never pay a stranger by gift card, wire, or remote-access app to "fix" Windows. Microsoft does not work that way.
- You have months, not minutes. Anything demanding instant action is pressure, not help.

WATCH OUT

If a message about Windows 10 makes you feel frightened and rushed, that feeling is the scam working. Stop, don't click or call the number shown, and either check Microsoft's website yourself or call me. The genuine options in this guide are never urgent and never involve a surprise phone call.

4 Option 1: Can Your PC Upgrade to Windows 11 — for Free?

For a great many people, the simplest and cheapest answer is to upgrade to Windows 11, which Microsoft offers free to eligible Windows 10 machines. The upgrade keeps your files, photos, and most programs in place — it is more like a thorough update than starting over. The only catch is that Windows 11 needs a reasonably modern computer, so the first job is to find out if yours qualifies.

1. Open the Start menu, then Settings.
2. Go to Update & Security, then Windows Update.
3. Click "Check for updates." If your PC is eligible, Windows often shows a message offering the free upgrade to Windows 11 right there.
4. For a clear yes-or-no, download Microsoft's free "PC Health Check" app from their website — it tells you plainly whether your PC can run Windows 11, and why not if it can't.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Windows 11 is free only for PCs already running Windows 10 version 22H2 that meet its hardware requirements. Roughly speaking, computers made from about 2018 onward often qualify; older ones frequently do not, usually because of a security chip called TPM that newer machines have and older ones lack. If yours doesn't qualify, that is normal and not a fault — Option 2 is for you.

5 How the Free Upgrade to Windows 11 Goes

If your PC is eligible and you decide to upgrade, the process is designed to be hands-off, but a little preparation makes it stress-free. Set aside an hour or two, keep the laptop plugged in, and don't rush it.

1. Back up your important files first — to an external drive or a cloud service — just in case. This is good practice before any big change.
2. Make sure the computer is plugged into power and connected to the internet.

3. In Settings, Windows Update, choose the offer to download and install Windows 11, and follow the prompts.
4. Let it run. It will download, install, and restart a few times; the screen may go dark between steps — that is normal.
5. When it's done, sign in as usual. Your files and most programs will be right where you left them, in a slightly fresh-looking layout.

> **TIP**
>
> Windows 11 looks a little different — the Start button sits in the middle of the bottom bar instead of the far-left corner — but everything you use is still there. If the new look is the only thing putting you off, that is a ten-minute tour I'm happy to give you, and then it feels like home again.

6 Option 2: Extended Security Updates (ESU) — Buy Yourself Time

If your computer cannot upgrade to Windows 11, you are not stuck and you do not have to buy a new machine today. Microsoft created a consumer program called Extended Security Updates — ESU for short — that keeps sending the important security patches to a Windows 10 PC even though regular support has ended. It is specifically meant to give ordinary people a safe bridge until they're ready to move on.

- ESU keeps delivering the critical security updates that protect you from new threats — the part that actually matters after end of support.
- For consumers, Microsoft has said this coverage runs through October 12, 2027, giving you roughly two more safe years on Windows 10.
- It applies to eligible Windows 10 version 22H2 PCs — the same ones that otherwise can't move to Windows 11.
- You enroll from within Windows itself, in the Windows Update area — not by calling anyone or clicking a pop-up.

GOOD TO KNOW

ESU does not add new features or speed anything up — it is purely the security shield. That is the right thing to buy time with: it keeps you safe on the computer you already know while you decide, on your own schedule, whether and when to replace it.

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.

7 How to Enroll in ESU

Enrolling is done safely from inside Windows, and Microsoft has offered more than one way to sign up — including routes that cost nothing. Because the exact choices and any fee can change over time, treat the steps below as the reliable path and confirm the current details on the screen (or let me confirm them with you) rather than trusting any outside website.

1. Make sure your PC is up to date first: Settings, Update & Security, Windows Update, and install anything pending.
2. In that same Windows Update screen, look for an "Enroll now" link or an Extended Security Updates option. If it isn't there yet, fully updating and restarting usually makes it appear.
3. Follow the on-screen enrollment. You'll likely need to sign in with a free Microsoft account.
4. Microsoft has offered a few ways to enroll — including a no-cost route tied to backing up your settings, a rewards-points route, and a modest one-time paid option. Pick whichever the screen offers that suits you.

WATCH OUT

The enrollment details and any price have shifted since the program launched, so I'd rather not quote you a figure that might be out of date. If you want ESU set up, this is a ten-minute job I can confirm and do with you — making sure you enroll through Windows itself and never through some look-alike website charging for a free feature.

8 Option 3: When It's Genuinely Time for a New PC

Sometimes the honest answer is that the old computer has simply reached the end of a good, long life — and the Windows 10 deadline is as sensible a moment as any to replace it. But that should be a decision about the machine itself, not a panic about a date. Here are the real signs that a new PC is the right call rather than a pushed one.

- It was already painfully slow, freezing, or struggling before any of this came up.
- It can't upgrade to Windows 11 AND it's old enough that spending on it no longer makes sense to you.
- The battery barely holds a charge, the screen or keyboard is failing, or it's simply too small or dim for comfort now.
- You'd genuinely enjoy a faster, fresher machine — that's a perfectly good reason too.

TIP

If you do buy new, Windows has a built-in tool called Windows Backup that helps carry your files, photos, and settings across to the new PC, so moving in feels familiar. Choosing and setting up a new computer — and moving everything over without losing a thing — is exactly the kind of visit I'm glad to make, and Bill's Home Tech has companion guides on desktop-versus-laptop and Mac-versus-Windows to help you choose.

9 Staying Safe if You Keep Windows 10 a While

Perhaps you've decided to stay on Windows 10 for now — maybe you're waiting, weighing options, or simply not ready. That's a reasonable choice, especially with ESU keeping the security patches coming. Whether or not you enroll in ESU, a few sensible habits keep an older Windows 10 machine meaningfully safer.

- Enroll in ESU if you can — it's the single biggest thing that keeps a Windows 10 PC protected now.
- Keep your web browser (Edge, Chrome, or Firefox) updated — browsers get their own updates separately and are your front line against bad websites.
- Make sure Windows Security (the built-in protection, formerly Windows Defender) is turned on; it's free and keeps running.
- Be extra careful with email links and attachments, and never install software a pop-up or caller tells you to.
- Keep a backup of your important files on an external drive or the cloud, so nothing is ever truly at risk.

WATCH OUT

The one thing not to do is keep an un-patched Windows 10 PC AND use it carelessly for banking, shopping, and email with no ESU and an out-of-date browser. That combination is where real trouble creeps in over time. A little care, or a quick visit to set things up, closes that gap.

10 What About My Programs, Printer, and Email?

A very fair worry when any big change looms is whether your familiar things will still work — your email, your printer, the programs you rely on. For the most part, the answer is reassuring, and knowing what to expect takes the edge off.

- Your files, photos, and folders stay exactly where they are through an upgrade to Windows 11 — nothing is deleted.

- Most everyday programs and your printer carry straight over; occasionally a very old program or printer needs a fresh, free driver from the maker's website.
- Your email keeps working — it lives with your email provider (like Gmail, Outlook.com, or iCloud), not inside Windows, so it isn't affected.
- Microsoft's Office apps will keep running on Windows 10, and Microsoft has said it will continue security updates for Microsoft 365 apps on Windows 10 until October 10, 2028.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> If a particular program or an old printer is the thing you're anxious about, that's worth checking before you upgrade rather than after. I can look at exactly what you use and confirm it'll be fine — or sort out the one or two things that need a nudge — so there are no surprises.

11 Making the Choice — A Simple Decision Path

With the options laid out, the decision itself is actually straightforward. Walk down this short path and it usually points clearly to one answer, with no agonising.

1. Check if your PC can run Windows 11 (PC Health Check or Windows Update). If yes and the machine is otherwise fine — upgrade for free. Done.
2. If it can't upgrade but works well and you like it — enroll in ESU and keep using it safely while you decide at your leisure.
3. If it can't upgrade AND it's already old, slow, or failing — this is the natural moment to choose a new PC.
4. At any point you're unsure — that's a good time to ask, not to guess or to let a pop-up decide for you.

Your situation	The sensible choice
PC qualifies for Windows 11, works fine	Free upgrade to Windows 11
Can't upgrade, but runs well	Enroll in ESU, stay on Windows 10
Can't upgrade, already old/slow	Plan for a new PC

Not sure / anxious about it	Have someone check it with you

12 A Few Words on the News and the Noise

You'll keep seeing headlines, pop-ups, and well-meaning relatives with strong opinions about all this. It helps to hold a few steady facts in mind so the noise doesn't rattle you. None of this is an emergency, and you are allowed to take your time.

- "Windows 10 is dead" headlines are for clicks. The reality is: it still works, and you have clear, affordable options.
- You are not forced to buy anything today. ESU and the free Windows 11 upgrade both exist precisely so you don't have to.
- A free upgrade really is free — if a website is charging you for "Windows 11," it's not Microsoft.
- The date that mattered has already passed, quietly, with most machines still humming along fine.

> *Windows 10 ending is a decision to make calmly, not an emergency to survive. You have the time, and you have good choices.*

13 When to Call Bill

Everything in this guide is something you can do yourself, and I've written it so you can. But this is also one of those moments where a half-hour with someone who does it every week saves a great deal of second-guessing — checking whether your PC can upgrade, doing the upgrade cleanly, enrolling in ESU through the right door, or choosing and setting up a new machine and moving everything across without losing a single photo.

I come to you here in Portage County, look at your actual computer, tell you honestly which option fits — including when the right answer is simply to keep what you have — and then set it up so you're safe and comfortable. With 30+ years of professional experience, I've guided a lot of people through exactly this kind of change, and I'll never push you toward a purchase you don't need.

- You want to know for certain whether your PC can take the free Windows 11 upgrade.
- You'd like the upgrade, or ESU enrollment, done properly without the worry.
- A pop-up, email, or phone call about Windows 10 has made you uneasy and you want a straight answer.
- You think it may be time for a new computer and want help choosing — and moving everything over.
- You'd simply rather have it sorted calmly, once, by someone you trust.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. There's no emergency — just a calm choice to make.

I want to…	Do this…
Understand the deadline	Win10 lost free security updates Oct 14, 2025 — it still works
Check for the free upgrade	Settings Update & Security Windows Update Check for updates; or run PC Health Check
Keep Win10 safe if I stay	Enroll in ESU (covers through Oct 12, 2027); keep browser updated; backups on
Find the ESU sign-up	In Windows Update, look for 'Enroll now' / Extended Security Updates
Know when to buy new	Only if it can't upgrade AND is already old, slow, or failing
Avoid the scams	Ignore pop-ups, countdowns, and cold calls about Windows 10 — close the browser
Protect my files either way	Back up to an external drive or cloud before any big change
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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