

How to Safely Tweak the Registry

The registry is a database in Windows that contains important information about system hardware, installed programs and settings, and profiles of each of the user accounts on your computer. Windows continually refers to the information in the registry as it functions from startup to shutdown.

Normally, you should have no need to make manual changes to the registry because programs and applications that are functioning properly typically make all the necessary changes automatically. An incorrect change to your computer's registry could render your computer inoperable. However, if a corrupt file appears in the registry, you might be required to make changes to it.

You should back up the registry before making any changes and then change only those values that you understand or have been instructed to change by a source you trust. To back up the registry, follow these steps:

1. Open the Registry Editor by clicking the **Start** button, typing **regedit** into the search box, and then pressing Enter. If you're prompted for an administrator password or confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation.
2. Locate and click the key or subkey that you want to back up.
3. Click the **File** menu, and then click **Export**.
4. In the **Save in** box, select the location where you want to save the backup copy, and then type a name (perhaps, Registry Backup) for the backup file in the **File name** box.
5. Click **Save**.
6. Later, if you want to return your Registry to its original state, simply open the registry via regedit, click on the file menu, and then click **Import**.

In addition to making a backup copy of the registry before making any changes, it's always a good practice to create a restore point using System Restore. The restore point contains information about the registry, and you can use the restore point to undo changes to your system.