KEEP WINDOWS, HARDWARE DRIVERS, AND THIRD-PARTY APPS UP TO DATE

Keeping your Windows updated can be frustrating. Windows 10 is a lot more aggressive about using Windows Update to keep itself updated than past versions of Windows—and for the most part, that's a good thing. If you've used Windows 7, you had a good bit more control about what updates to apply, and when.

While you can't really prevent updates from happening in Windows 10, you can at least change things like your active hours—the time when you usually use your computer and don't want to apply updates and restart your system.
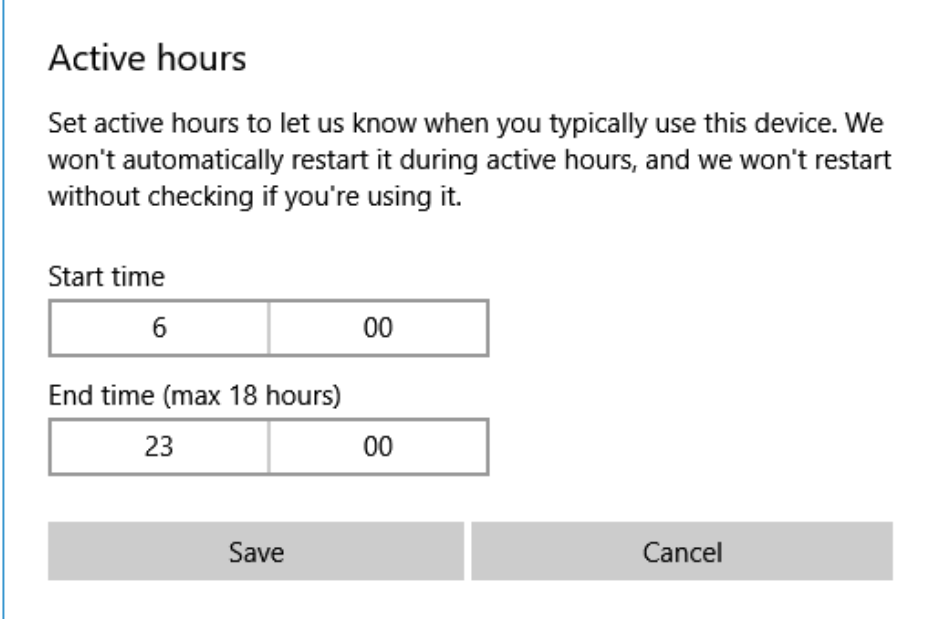
How to Set "Active Hours" So Windows 10 Won't Restart at a Bad Time

Windows 10 automatically downloads and installs updates, but Windows 10 gives you more control over when this happens. Set "active hours" when you generally use your PC and Windows won't restart your computer during those hours. Microsoft allows you to define up to 18 hours of each day as "off limits" and prevents automatic restarts during those hours. In addition, Windows still won't restart your computer while you're actively using it, even outside of active hours.

You'll find this setting in the Settings application (Windows key + I) > Update & Security > Windows Update. Click "Change Active Hours" under Update Settings.

Choose a "Start time" and "End time" here. You should set the hours during which you generally use your computer.

For example, with the new 18 hour range, you can set your "active hours" from 6 AM to 12 AM, or midnight. Windows won't automatically install updates during these hours. Windows will only automatically install updates and restart during the hours of midnight to 6 AM.

Note that your active hours must be between 1 and 18 hours. You can't go above 18 hours. You also can't set different active hours on different days, so you can't specify different active hours for weekdays and weekends.

Keeping Third-Party Apps Up-to-Date

Keeping third-party apps up to date automatically is a little more challenging. Some apps have built-in updaters that can download and install updates automatically; others can check for updates and at least notify you, and still others just rely on you to check for updated versions once in a while.

Security software, like antivirus apps, are especially important to keep updated. Most have automatic updaters built in. Still, it's important to check up on them periodically–like before you run a manual scan–just to make sure. As an example, Windows Defender gets regular updates for virus definitions through Windows Updates, but still offers the ability to manually check for updates when you open it up.

There are some third-party utilities out there, like [Patch My PC](hyperlink) (hyperlink), which can scan all your installed apps, check for updates, and then install them for you. Unfortunately, a favorite automated solution—Secunia PSI—has closed up shop.

And then there are hardware drivers. If you've got the default Windows drivers installed for your hardware, the good news is that Windows Update takes care of updating those automatically. And the truth is, the basic Windows drivers are good enough for most types of hardware. For some types of hardware, like graphics cards, you'll probably want the actual manufacturer drivers that are kept much more up to date and offer additional features. For those, you'll have to rely on the manufacturers' own tools to keep things up to date.