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Windows 10 Semi-Annual Update is Still Late



The usual semi-annual “feature update” to Windows 10, called ‘1809’ for the year and month, still hasn’t shown up as an automatic update anywhere that I’ve seen. I have installed it manually on test computers, without problems, but news reports are that it’s blocked on a lot of computers. Apparently any computer with a video card or chipset from the AMD Radeon HD2000 or HD4000 series can’t install it, but those chips are from many years ago, and that set of computers is due for replacement anyway. Other reports are that update breaks sound on certain computer models.

The first announced delay, two months ago, was due to small numbers of reports of user profiles being deleted. A user profile is the login account, and there’s one for each user of Windows on a computer; it holds the ‘My Documents’ folder, settings, pictures, music, videos, shortcuts or favorites, basically all your stuff.

So this a rough upgrade. There are patches for this feature patch already, and there will be more.

As usual, there is a way to get it early, following some basic steps. And I won't list those, because if your computer doesn't have it yet, it's because Microsoft hasn't released it for systems running the hardware it has detected in each system. So just wait for it. Update your full backups to an external drive while you wait. Just in case.

To check what version of Windows 10 (or Windows 7) you're running, click the Windows logo key (the logo formerly known as Start), type 'winver' at the prompt, and press Enter. The result will be similar to the box above, with the version marked on the second line. If Windows has a slow startup, and appeared to have been installing updates, that's how you can check if the system now has the new semi-annual update.

Important for iCloud users on Windows: If you run iCloud on Windows, usually for synchronizing an Apple phone with Outlook, your iCloud software must be version 7.8.1 or newer to work with the new '1809' version of Windows 10. Call for help if needed with these updates, or to have automatic patching software installed to just keep the third-party software up-to-date at all times. (\$20 a year)

Why would you care if the new feature update is late, or if it installs at all? The problem is that Microsoft supplies security patches for Windows 10 computers for only two years after the subsequent version. So for version 1803, from March 2018, there's a replacement starting to install now, so the security patches for 1803 will end November 10, 2020. If your computer is six years old, no problem, it's time to replace it. For newer computers, that's a potential problem.

Feature Upgrades

Once '1809' arrives, there are new features, but most users will find only one they'll use. There are more color choices, as in a 'dark mode' for File Explorer (black background, nice for night-time work on mobile devices), and a setting for "Make text bigger," which is a simpler way to adjust font sizes than has been available previously.

'Clipboard history' is new as a built-in feature, but that was available as a third-party add-on to Windows for decades now—the best-known version is called ClipMate. What does history add to the clipboard? Well, you can save multiple items to the clipboard, for example, maybe name, address, city, and so on, and when pasting with Windows-key-V (instead of the usual Ctrl-V), choose which saved item to paste. Clipboard history can be very helpful when filling-in online forms.

There's more on the new Windows 10 1809 features here:

<https://www.groovypost.com/howto/best-new-features-windows-10-october-2018-update-version-1809/>

Over 50% of Phish Sites have the Padlock



For years now, you've heard that a web site needs the padlock to be safe. Yes, that's partially true. If you will enter any financial information, or even a login, into a web site, watch for the padlock. The padlock means that the site is encrypted, not that it is safe. All safe sites have encryption, but not all encrypted sites are safe.

Here's the issue: Encryption, to get the padlock, requires a "site certificate" and there are multiple types of those, and it's far beyond the ability or even a reasonable use of time to identify which type of certificate is in use. The basic site certificate provides encryption, and guarantees that all content on that page has not been tampered with, and that an internet provider (or free coffeeshop Wifi) has not inserted advertising into a web page. That type of certificate is now, most commonly, provided for free by the web hosting service, and those certificates are labeled as coming from Let's Encrypt or Comodo.

Upgraded certificates aren't free, and they include different levels of proof of who the site owner is, above and beyond just what the site address is. These certificates should result in the so-called 'Green bar padlock', but these have been faked on bad sites, so the extra validation does not prove that the site is good, only that it is encrypted. You can right-click on those padlocks, and read what type of certificate it is, but adding more tech information generally does nothing for clarity and establishing identity.

Encrypted is good; that means anything that you type into an encrypted site cannot be read by third parties as it passes through the internet, and that all the pieces of the page you are looking at came from encrypted servers. Some page content, usually advertisements, may still come from a third-party site, but it is encrypted by the site that stored it.

And the news: Half of all phishing sites, sites that copy other sites in order to capture your login, now have a padlock. So they're showing a padlock for their own address, not the site they're copying. You have to read the address, to make sure you're on, for example, Paypal.com/page_name, and not Paypal.com.py/page_name. (.py is in Paraguay.)

So the padlock is part of safe, it's required, but it isn't everything. Pay attention to the address bar, and type in addresses for banking sites, always, don't click them in emails and don't search for them. If you need Citibank, they're at citi.com. Type it in.

Office Icons are Changing

In the department of 'change for the sake of change,' Microsoft has changed the icons for Microsoft Office for users of Office 365 (subscription) and for Office 2019, and the changes will show up soon, during normal updates.

WordPress 5.0 is Out

WordPress runs most new websites, and, by some counts, half of all web sites. WordPress 5.0 launched on December 6th, and may have already autoupdated your web site, depending on how updates are set to install. If you edit your WordPress site yourself, there's a new text editor for pages and posts, called Gutenberg. There's an introduction video to it here, on the official announcement page:

<https://wordpress.org/news/2018/12/bebo/>

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