

# COMPUTER

# CORNER

## My Life with Windows 10: or How I Overcame My Fear of Upgrading

By **Stuart Murray**  
Special Guest Columnist



*As with many Microsoft products, the new operating system Windows 10 has both supporters and detractors. Correspondingly, there are pros and cons. CNet will tell you that this new OS combines the best bits of old and new Windows features into a cohesive package, while correcting nearly all of the missteps of Windows 8 they also point out that many of the new features will be lost on those who don't care about touch screens. Regardless, the time has come to consider Windows 10 as a major upgrade for PCs. As with any such upgrade, there are apprehensions. Computer Corner welcomes guest columnist Stuart Murray to provide his insight and experience with the upgrade process. Stuart is an AGS member, and you may know him from his presence at Research Days and work at Military Research Days.*

I have been around computers for most of my working life. I started out at Sandia Labs as a technician working on microprocessors and programming when main frames--the really big computers of the day--were the norm. They required a terminal and a modem to make a connection to the main frame so microprocessors could be programmed. Like anything else, technology moved forward to the IBM PC and Microsoft's MS-DOS. A few years later, Microsoft introduced Windows 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 and finally 3.1. I had new things to learn about the operating systems to keep pace with our projects. Along came Windows 95, 98, Windows NT, Vista, and Windows 7. I may have skipped a few iterations. Like all new versions of Windows, there is a learning curve. Some of it is steep and some not so much, but there are always new things to learn from Microsoft when they introduce a new operating system. I am no stranger to Windows products. I am not an expert, rather more of shade tree mechanic.

The last few years, Microsoft has also gotten into the hardware business with their tablets like the Microsoft Surface using an operating system called Windows RT, 8 and 8.1. A lot has been written about Microsoft's change in strategy to touch-based screens and the pros and cons of Windows 8.1. Microsoft made the decision to fix all the deficiencies and make major improvements on the existing operating system. The result is Windows 10. You may ask, what happened to Windows 9? The decision to skip the number 9 was a marketing one based upon the perception that Windows 9 might be viewed as a minor upgrade instead of a major revision. Here's a quote from the website Network World. "During the official unveiling for Redmond's latest OS, Microsoft explained that the forthcoming update was so great that it warranted a '10' moniker. In other words, just as OS X marked a new beginning for the Mac, Microsoft, too, may believe that Windows 10 will mark a new chapter in the history of Windows. While this may have been a consideration, another theory has emerged via Reddit that, if true, would be just downright comical." So why am I telling you all this? I made the transition on my 3-year-old Dell Latitude laptop from Windows 7 to Windows 10 and I wanted to share my experience with you.



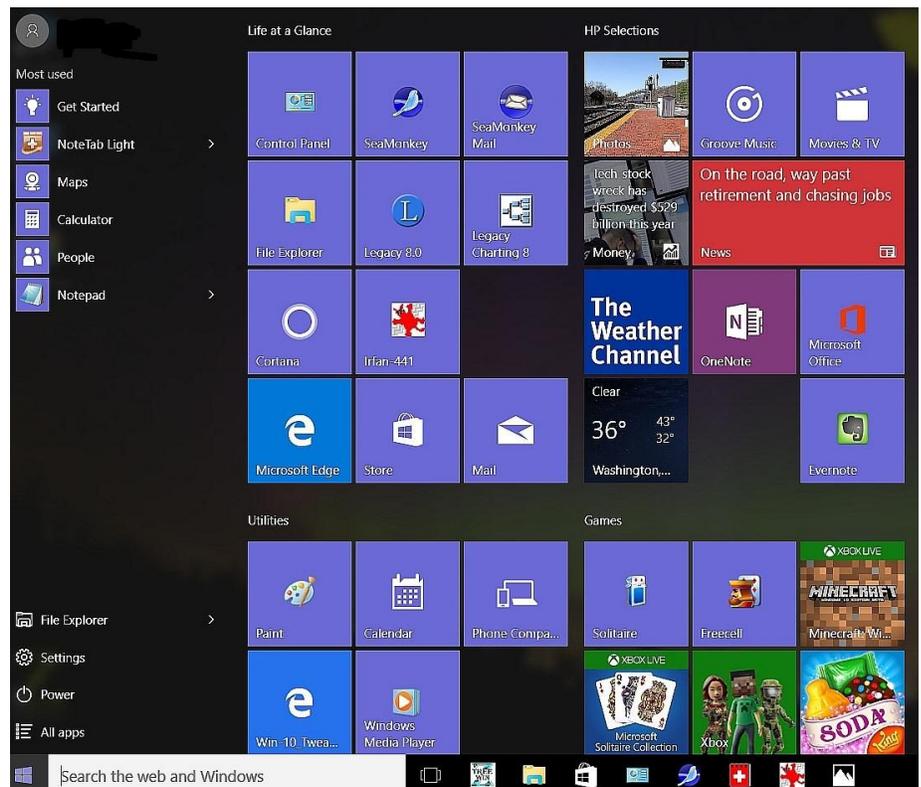
I was leery of updating as I know Microsoft's track record usually consists of every other major release being a disaster and requiring updates to fix the issues. Sometimes Microsoft has to go back to the drawing board for major revisions. Microsoft's attempt with Windows 8 was to make the software operate on any Windows compliant computer like the Microsoft Surface, Windows phones, laptops, tablets, and desktop computers. It was an attempt to make you feel comfortable if you used multiple devices switching from, say, your Windows phone to your tablet. Unfortunately, Microsoft made decisions a lot of

people didn't like and Windows 10 was born. Microsoft tested the daylights out of the pre-release Windows 10 with the user community, and what they released out of the box was decent. I got my notice to upgrade several months ago, but I decided to wait and see. Everything I read said this was a decent operating system and yes, there were tweaks to be made. Still I waited to see if any major problems popped up.

Long story short (well maybe not so short), I am running Windows 10 and so far, so good. My Dell Latitude laptop is a three-year-old computer with 8 Gigabytes of memory and a one Terabyte hard disk. My original disk developed a problem and I replaced it with a larger one for cheap. Microsoft does have a program to check if your computer is capable of upgrading to Windows 10. I will say if your computer is older than three years, I would NOT consider upgrading to Windows 10. There are requirements for Windows 10 to function correctly, and a lot of times older computers are ignored just because it is more cost effective for Microsoft to focus on the new hardware and write their software accordingly. Microsoft does a pretty good job of keeping old software working, but economics does win out eventually. Check out the information below to see if your computer is ready for Windows 10:

Open the *Get Windows 10* app by clicking the Windows icon in the system tray. Before you rush ahead and reserve your free upgrade, click on the *Menu Icon* (three small parallel bars) at the top left, and, in the panel that slides open, click *Check Your PC*. The app takes very little time to run the check and you do not need to do anything. The results are separated into two sections: devices which list incompatible hardware and apps which list incompatible apps. Your PC might still be compatible but some devices might not be, and it is important to check for any devices that are not compatible because a critical device might not be supported. You might see any sort of device listed in the results, so before you go ahead and make the reservation for your new Windows 10 copy, check with your PC manufacturer to see just how essential a particular incompatible device is. If you reserve a copy of Windows 10 with one critical incompatible device, you could be upgraded and left with something important like connectivity problems. And if you do not see the *Get Windows 10* icon, you can contact Microsoft and a technician will walk you through the process to see if your computer is compatible.

How do you get Windows 10? I had a notification pop up on my taskbar telling me I was able to upgrade to Windows 10. You can also visit Microsoft's web site for instructions how to obtain Windows 10. It is free to all eligible users for one year from their release this last summer—this implies all Windows 7, 8 and 8.1 users with valid licenses. I have read that they have opened it to all, but you may have to pay for it if you don't qualify. If you are using Windows 95, 98, or XP you are out of luck, and I urge you to buy a new computer with Windows 7, 8.1 or 10 installed if you are a Windows user. Microsoft has stopped supporting all security updates for XP which is now susceptible to those who would love to get hold of your personal information. You would be surprised at the number of people still using Windows XP.



When I upgraded to Windows 10, it took about three hours, only because I add software and make minor changes to the Windows 7 OS. The download and installation went smoothly with no major issues except with my virus software blocking the internet connection when I finally booted into Windows 10. Fixing that issue, the Desktop came up looking like Windows 7 with my background screen and icons all intact. The startup is slightly different as Microsoft tweaks this process. You get new startup icons and back splash screens, but the login is still the same. All the

Windows 7 programs I have installed are still intact and 99.9% of them function just like they did in Windows 7. You may find that a few of your programs may need to run in Microsoft's compatibility mode. If your program fails to operate correctly, Microsoft will attempt to make a diagnosis to correct the problem. A couple of mine, like old Photoshop and Adobe programs, require that I run in Windows 7 compatibility mode and I have not noticed any performance issues.

So what does Windows 10 look like to you? The Windows panes are not all that different, a little squarer, a little old fashioned in comparison to Windows 7. You still get a task bar at the bottom with a new start button icon--a small four-pane window icon--on the left side. You get a new search bar next to the right of the start icon. You can still drag and drop your most-used desktop icons down into the task bar. Instead of the icon being entirely highlighted when it is in use, the task bar highlights it with a blue bar underneath the icon. You still have the time and date on the extreme right along with internet, volume and charge icons displayed. You still have a "Show Hidden Icons" if more programs are running in the background. It looks like a large carrot, or up arrow. You still have the ability to right click on the task bar to display and change various features of the task bar. Basically, what you could do on the task bar in Windows 7 is still the same in Windows 10.

The Start button or Windows Icon introduces some new features and keeps some old features, although they may be renamed. The Start Icon contains some distinct features. The user who logged into the computer is on the top left, and below is the "Most Used" list of programs you use, similar to Windows 7. Top right side is titled "Life at a Glance" containing current information displayed on apps you use, like Microsoft Calendar, Outlook, Cortana, and others. I don't use a lot of their services except for the weather information. Bottom right has "Play and Explore" containing app information for games, music, movies/TV or current events. Lower left has four tabs allowing access to "File Explorer," "Settings," "Power," and "All Apps."

All of these items are selectable by the user:

- The "File Explorer" button is similar to Windows 7, allowing you to search for files on your computer.
- The "Settings" button is similar to the "Control Panel" in Windows 7. It will bring up a display to allow you to change features on Windows 10. Just be careful--the changes made here should be done with care and understanding of what you are doing.
- The "Power" button allows you to put the computer to sleep, power down or restart Windows 10.
- The "All Apps" button brings up a list of all the software Windows or you have installed on your computer, similar to Windows 7.
- The Search bar allows you to find programs on your computer or other information on the web.

What have I noticed about Windows 10 that is different from Windows 7? Not that much in terms of day-to-day usage. I still have my Windows 7 Desktop, and can still get to the internal workings of Windows 10 through the "Settings" tab in the Start Icon. Microsoft rearranged some things, but if you are computer savvy enough, you can still find them. I did not use Windows 8 and 8.1, so I went from Windows 7 to Windows 10, skipping those two versions. I find that as things change, the more they stay the same. I didn't find the switch to Windows 10 as traumatic as I thought it might be. It is more like Windows 7 even though I am sure that, under the hood, a dramatic shift in the operations is working. My programs still work. I have an older Adobe and Microsoft Office Suite installed. There is a new Microsoft browser called Edge. I still have Internet Explorer, but Edge is supposed to be a replacement for IE with fewer security issues. I have Firefox and Chrome browsers installed and they work just fine. The Edge browser is worth checking out.

If you install Windows 10 and don't like it, you still have the option to revert back to an older Windows version you might have had installed. I think there is a 30-day window to do this. Microsoft will back out the Windows 10 installation and reinstall the previous version. Like any new product, I would urge you to Google, Bing, or whatever search engine of your choice for "Windows 10 Installation." There is a ton of useful information on the web with step-by-step instructions for installing Windows 10. I am finding it was not that scary of a transition. Microsoft finally got it right this time around. Let's hope Microsoft keeps up with this philosophy on the next version.

If you have questions or get stuck installing Windows 10, contact Stu Murray, email: [stubucks@gmail.com](mailto:stubucks@gmail.com).