

# Change Your Windows 10 SETTINGS NOW!

Microsoft's default settings in Windows 10 aren't as safe as they should be. **Jonathan Parkyn** explains what they do, and tells you which to disable

Every version of Windows has had settings that needed tweaking, whether it's changing the Desktop background to a photo of your grandchildren, or switching off a feature you don't like. But Windows 10 takes this to a worrying new level. No previous

version has had more default settings that Microsoft has simply got wrong.

We've said it before, but it's worth repeating: we like Windows 10. It's a fast, modern operating system (OS) with some great tools. But whether you've recently upgraded or you're planning to soon,

there are dozens of settings you need to change. Some, such as Microsoft's Wi-Fi sharing feature, could leave your data vulnerable to hackers. Others, such as a secret **keylogger** that records everything you type, compromises your privacy.

Here, then, is our ultimate checklist of all the settings Windows 10 users need to change - 52 in total. In each case, we'll explain what the default setting is and the reasons why Microsoft wants you to leave it that way. Then we'll show you what we recommend changing it to and why.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Protect your privacy and stop Windows 10 spying on you

- Block unwanted updates and stop background downloads

[thatMicrosoft](#)

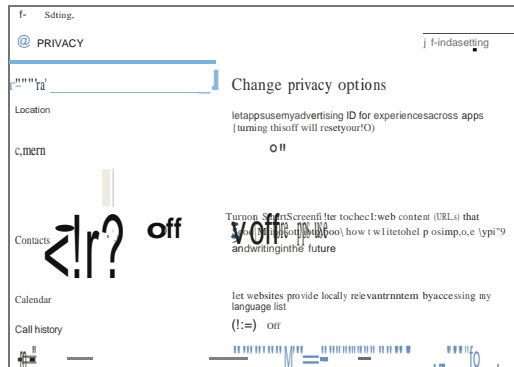


# PRIVACY AND SECURITY

## Send Microsoft info about how I write

**Windows 10 default: On** Microsoft wants to record and analyse how you write so it can "improve typing and writing in the future".

**We recommend: Off** This is effectively the same as letting Microsoft install a keylogger on your PC, letting the company record everything you type. We suggest opting out by clicking **Start, Settings, Privacy, then General and switching 'Send Microsoft info about how I write to help us improve typing and writing in the future' to Off** (see screenshot above right).



Turn off this setting to stop Microsoft tracking what you type

with Location, both these settings can be switched off altogether by clicking **Start, Settings, Privacy and then either Camera or Microphone**. But it's more likely that you'll want to leave both enabled and then choose which trusted apps to allow from those listed in each case. Skype, for example, would be pretty useless without access to your camera or microphone.

## Speech, inking & typing

**Windows 10 default: On** Microsoft wants to gather information about you - what you type, who you contact, where you go and more - in order to "personalise your experience" (see [www.snipca.com/19085](http://www.snipca.com/19085)).

**We recommend: Off** If you find this setting a little creepy,

then disable it by clicking **Start, Settings, Privacy, then 'Speech, inking & typing' and 'Stop getting to know me'**. Bear in mind that doing this will effectively render Cortana useless.

## Account info, Contacts, Calendar, Messaging, Radios

**Windows 10 default: On** All five of these settings are enabled, allowing apps to access your personal information across several different apps.

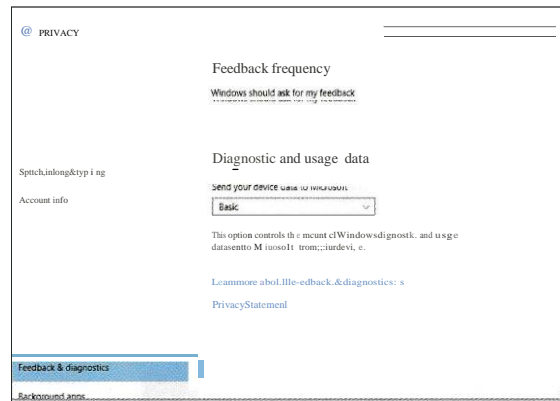
**We recommend: Off** for specific apps. **Click Start, Settings, then Privacy and check each of these five settings to make sure that there aren't any apps you don't want accessing personal information listed under the 'Choose apps that can access...' section**. Some apps should be left enabled. For example, under Contacts you may wish to leave 'Mail and Calendar' enabled, so that you can access your contacts when using the Mail app. But many, including

Microsoft's mysterious 'App connector', can be safely switched off

## Feedback & diagnostics

**Windows 10 default: On** By analysing data about your PC and the way you use it, Microsoft hopes to be able to identify and fix problems, or tailor Windows to suit people's needs.

**We recommend: Off** Assuming you don't want Windows to hassle you with endless feedback requests, **click Start, Settings, Privacy, then 'Feedback & diagnostics' and select Never underneath 'Feedback frequency'**. To limit how much information about your computer use Microsoft can monitor, choose Basic from 'Diagnostic and usage data' below. However, bear in mind that Microsoft recently admitted it will automatically



Select 'Never' to stop Microsoft pestering you with feedback requests

collect some diagnostics information about your PC *whatever* your setting (read more at [www.snipca.com/18847](http://www.snipca.com/18847)).

## WiFi Sense

**Windows 10 default: On** Microsoft wants to make it easy for Windows 10 users to connect to their friends' Wi-Fi networks, so it shares an encrypted version of your private wireless security key with other Windows 10 users you know, letting them connect automatically.

**We recommend: Off** WiFi Sense works by sharing your Wi-Fi security key with people in your contacts list but, currently, you can't choose which ones - it's all or nothing. That means even people you don't really know could end up with access to your Wi-Fi, which isn't safe.

**To switch WiFi Sense off, click Start, Settings, 'Network & internet', then WiFi. Scroll down and click 'Manage WiFi settings'. Under WiFi Sense, make sure both options are set to Off**

## Location

**Windows 10 default: On** Some Windows 10 apps, including Maps and Weather, use your current location to provide you with relevant information.

**We recommend: Off** for specific apps. It's possible to disable Location altogether (click **Start, Settings, Privacy, Location, Change, then click the switch to Off**), but this will limit the abilities of certain features, particularly on the Maps app. A better option may be to leave Location on, then scroll down and switch off all the apps listed underneath, apart from the ones you know you'll use.

## Camera, Microphone

**Windows 10 default: On** Windows allows apps to access the cameras and microphones that are built into many tablets and laptops, or webcams and headsets attached to desktop PCs. This is in order to provide certain functions, such as voice recording.

**We recommend: Off** for specific apps. As

## WHY DOES WINDOWS 10 HAVE SO MANY SETTINGS?

One of the reasons is that Windows 10 spreads them across so many different areas of the OS. Microsoft would argue that the new Settings app replaces many Control Panel items and simplifies them. But the Control Panel is still there and houses at least 41 items (sometimes more, depending on your system), compared with around 45 found in Windows 7. And this is in addition to more than 60 in the Settings app.

# SYSTEM AND UPDATES

## Choose how updates are installed

**Windows 10 default:** 'Automatic (recommended)'. Microsoft is so keen to keep all its users' PCs up to date that the default setting for Windows Update is to download and install updates whether you want them or not.

**We recommend:** 'Notify to schedule restart' You can choose when updates are installed, so that you don't suddenly have to stop whatever you're doing and reboot your PC. Click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', Windows Update, then 'Advanced options' to change the setting to 'Notify to schedule restart' (see screenshot above right). For more ways to manage updates read Issue 464's Cover Feature: 'Stop and Control Windows Updates'.

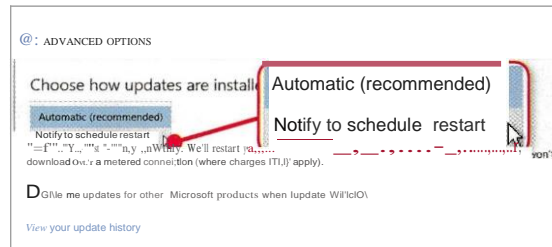
## Metered connection

**Windows 10 default:** Off Windows 10 automatically assumes that your internet connection allows for unlimited data. **We recommend:** On If you pay for your internet connection by the gigabyte, then enabling this setting will prevent background downloads eating into your data allowance. But even if your connection isn't pay-as-you-go, there's another reason you may want to switch this on. If Windows thinks your connection is metered, then it won't force updates on you unless you download them manually. Currently, this only works on wireless connections. Click Start, Settings, 'Network & internet', WiFi, then click 'Advanced options' and click the button under 'Set as metered connection'.

## Updates from more than one place

**Windows 10 default:** On Windows 10 uses peer-to-peer technology - similar to BitTorrent - to take the strain off Microsoft's own servers. It does this by making Windows 10 users upload Windows and app updates to other users' PCs over the internet.

**We recommend:** Off There's no evidence to suggest this setting is unsafe, but it could mean you waste gigabytes of personal bandwidth - and all just to save Microsoft money. Click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', Windows Update, 'Advanced options', then either switch the setting off altogether, or choose the 'PCs on my local



For more control over Windows Update choose 'Notify to schedule restart'

**network' option.** The latter will actually save bandwidth if you have multiple Windows 10 PCs, because updates will be downloaded and shared with your PCs.

## Give me updates for other Microsoft products when I update Windows

**Windows 10 default:** Off Unless you activate this option, Microsoft will assume you want updates for Windows 10 only, not its other products, such as Office.

**We recommend:** On While Windows updates can be annoying, they're generally a good idea because they fix problems, add features and make your computer safer. The same goes for all the other software on your PC, so if you own other Microsoft programs or devices - Office, for example - it's worth switching this setting on so that you get their latest updates. Click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', Windows Update, 'Advanced options', then 'Choose how updates are delivered'.

## Backup

**Windows 10 default:** Off Despite having several different built-in backup options, Windows 10 leaves them all disabled unless you do something about it yourself.

**We recommend:** On Backing up is such an important part of running a PC but, amazingly, Windows 10 still fails to enable backup when you first set up your computer. To enable it yourself click Start, Settings, 'Update & security',



Plug in a USB then click 'Add a drive' to make Windows 10 continuously back up your data

## 4 SETTINGS YOU SHOULD PROBABLY LEAVE ALONE

### 1. THE REGISTRY

Change the wrong thing in the Windows Registry and you could seriously mess up your PC. Best to leave it alone unless you know what you're doing.

### 2. SILOLOAD APPS

It's possible to install apps from sources other than the Windows Store: click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', then 'For developers' and enable 'Sideload apps'. But it isn't safe to do so.

### 3. WINDOWS DEFENDER

You can configure Windows 10's built-in antivirus protection by clicking Start, Settings, 'Update & security', then Windows Defender. But leaving these settings alone is safer.

### 4. START-UP SERVICES

You might be tempted to make your PC boot faster by disabling services that launch when it starts. But disable the wrong one and it may not start at all.

feature, plug in a USE hard drive, then click 'Add a drive' and follow the prompts. This backs up your data continuously in the background. If you'd prefer to use a more familiar scheduled backup instead, click 'Go to Backup and Restore (Windows 7)' and click 'Set up back-up'.

## System Restore

**Windows 10 default:** Off For reasons we've yet to fathom, Windows 10 disables System Restore altogether.

**We recommend:** On System Restore is a feature we've relied on since Windows XP. It provides a way of rolling back your system to a time before a troublesome update or program was installed, instantly fixing disastrous PC problems. To re-enable it, right-click Start and select System, then click 'System protection'. In the window that opens, click your system drive (usually C:), then click configure. Next, click 'Turn on system protection' and use the slider to allocate a small percentage of your hard-drive

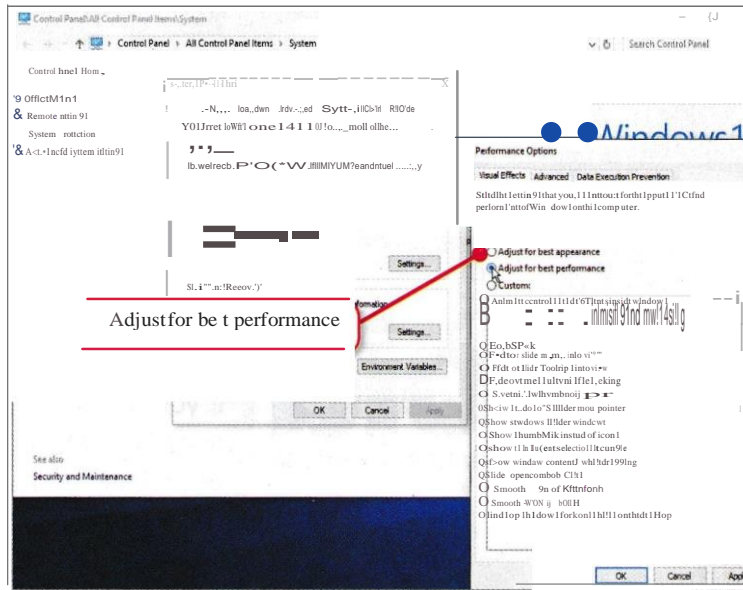
space (around two per cent) to System Restore, then click OK.

## PERFORMANCE, SPEED AND INTERFACE

### Visual Effects

**Windows 10 default:** 'Let Windows choose what's best for my computer' Windows 10 uses a lot of fancy effects to make it attractive to use, but these all consume system resources. By default, the OS manages these automatically.

**We recommend:** Off You may notice a significant improvement in performance if you disable Windows 10's visual effects. Right-click Start, then click **System**, **Advanced system settings**. Now click the **Settings** button under **Performance**, select the **'Adjust for best performance'** option at the top, then click OK (see screenshot right). The effect will be more noticeable on some PCs than others; if you don't notice any difference, you can always switch back.



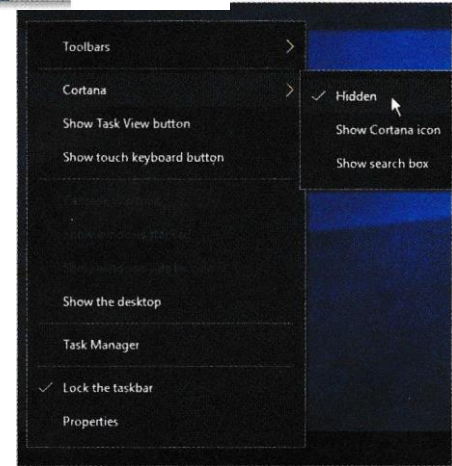
Select 'Adjust for best performance' to turn off visual effects - it may speed up your PC

### Start-up items

**Windows 10 default:** Enabled Windows 10 allows programs to add themselves to your PC's start-up unless you choose to disable them, the idea being that important programs are ready to go as soon as your computer starts.

**We recommend:** Disable as needed. Not all the programs that get added to your start-up are as important as they think they are. Right-click the taskbar, then click **Task Manager**. Click **'More details'** if shown, then click the **Start-up** tab and work through the list. Click **any items you don't need**, then click **Disable**. If you're not sure what an item does, right-click it and select 'Search online'.

can be a massive time-saver, as it lets you carry on working exactly where you left off when you restart your PC. To add Hibernate to the options available from the Start menu power button, right-click **Start** then select **Power Options**. Click **'Choose what the power buttons do'**, then click **'Change settings that are currently unavailable'**. Next, tick the **Hibernate** box under **'Shut-down settings'** (see screenshot below). While you're there, check that **'Turn on fast start-up'** is ticked, too. This is another time saver, though it's normally enabled by default. Click **'Save changes'**.

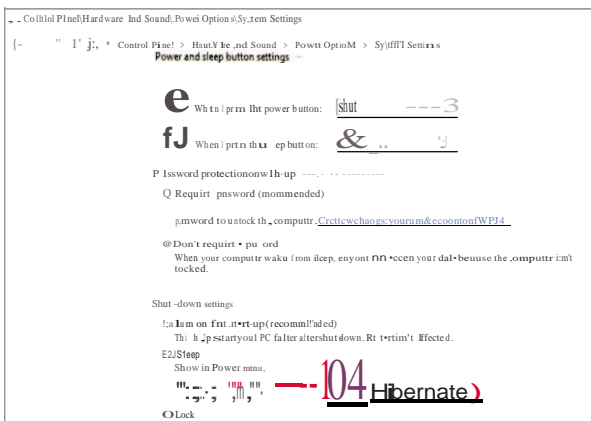


You can remove Task View and the Cortana

### Hibernate

**Windows 10 default:** Disabled Hibernate is a way of shutting down your computer so it saves all your programs and files.

Enabled Hibernating



Tick **Hibernate** to turn on this valuable setting, which Microsoft disables by default

### Task View and Search bar

**Windows 10 default:** Enabled Microsoft is so desperate for you to use the new features in Windows 10 that it has stuck two of them - Task View and Cortana's search bar - permanently to the taskbar. **We recommend:** Disabled You can tidy up your taskbar by disabling both.

To disable the **Task View** button, Right-click the taskbar, then click **'Show Task View button'** to untick it. To disable the **Search bar**,

and select **Cortana**, then choose **'Show Cortana icon'** to replace the **Search bar** with an icon, or choose **Hidden** to hide it altogether.

Bear in mind that this won't disable features themselves - you'll still

search bar from your taskbar

be able to use Task View by pressing Win+Tab, for example.

### Quick Access view

**Windows 10 default:** Enabled The new default view in File Explorer is intended to help you get to your most recently or frequently used files and folders quickly. **We recommend:** Disable (optional) This one's down to personal taste. Quick Access is actually quite useful, but takes some getting used to. If you don't like it, bring back the old My Computer-style view of all the drives on your computer by clicking the **File Explorer icon** on the taskbar. Make sure the ribbon is visible (click the down arrow in the top right if not), click the **View** tab, then click **Options**. On the **General** tab of the window that opens, choose **This PC** from the **'Open File Explorer to'** dropdown menu and click **OK**.

## NOTIFICATIONS AND ADVERTS

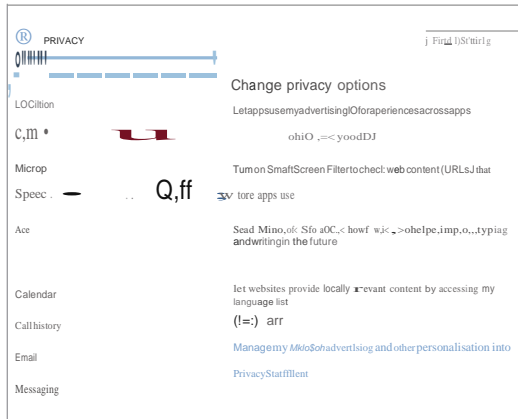
### Let apps use my advertising ID for experiences across apps

**Windows 10 default:** On You are given a unique advertising ID that Microsoft uses to provide you with targeted advertising across all the apps you use.

**We recommend:** Off If you'd rather not be tracked and targeted by advertising, then switch this setting off - you'll find it in **Start, Settings, Privacy, General** (see screenshot right).

**Switching this**

**off won't stop adverts**, but it will reset your advertising ID and prevent companies targeting you.



Disable this setting to prevent companies targeting you with adverts

### Let websites provide locally relevant content by accessing my language list

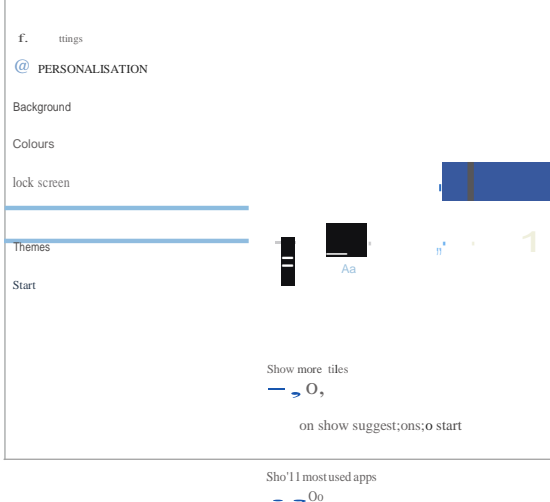
**Windows 10 default:** On The theory here is that advertisers are able to provide you with adverts in your own language.

**We recommend:** Off What this setting does is allow websites you visit to know which languages you have installed on your PC. **Disable it by going to Start, Settings, Privacy, General and switching it off.**

### Occasionally show suggestions in Start

**Windows 10 default:** On Microsoft makes money from any apps sold in the Windows Store, so it tries to persuade you to buy from there wherever possible. Since the November update, this has included the Start menu, where ads for 'Suggested apps' now appear under your 'Most used' apps.

**We recommend:** Off Seeing adverts in your Start menu feels invasive; to banish them, click Start, Settings, Personalisation,



Microsoft wants to show you adverts in your Start menu - here's where to turn them off

then click **Start on the left** and switch the **'Occasionally show suggestions in Start' setting to Off** (see screenshot below).

### Personalised ads

**Windows 10 default:** On Microsoft wants to show adverts that are relevant to you whenever you use your web browser or sign into your Microsoft account.

**We recommend:** Off Amazingly, there are two key Windows 10 privacy settings that aren't available in Windows 10. **Instead, you'll need to go to:** <http://choice.microsoft.com>. Click 'Sign in' and log in with your Microsoft account. You'll see two options - 'Personalised ads in this browser' and 'Personalised ads whenever I use my Microsoft account'. Switch both off (see screenshot above right).

### Get Office

**Windows 10 default:** Enabled Microsoft wants you to buy Office, so it displays 'Get Office' messages in your Notifications.

**We recommend:** Disable. These annoying notifications are essentially ads caused by an app that comes preinstalled with Windows 10. **Uninstalling the app is an effective way of silencing them for good, so click Start, 'All apps', scroll to 'Get Office', right-click it and select Uninstall.**

### Show me tips about Windows

**Windows 10 default:** On Your PC will deliver occasional 'helpful' tips to you via the Action Centre, in order to point you towards new features and tools. **We recommend:** Off You don't have to put up with being



Don't want to buy Office? Uninstall the 'Get Office' app to stop Microsoft pestering you

hassled by unnecessary notifications. Some people have reported that disabling them dramatically boosts performance, too (read this Reddit forum post [www.snipca.com/19094](http://www.snipca.com/19094)). **Click Start, Settings, System, then 'Notifications & actions' on the left. Switch the setting (just under the Notifications heading) to Off.**

### Show app notifications

**Windows 10 default:** On Apps are allowed to send you notifications that appear as pop-ups near the notification area, as well as in the Action Centre and the lock screen.

**We recommend:** On, but Off for specific apps. Some notifications are useful but, with Windows 10's default settings, it's easy to end up drowning in annoying alerts. **To fix this, click Start, Settings, System, then click 'Notifications & actions'. Leave the global 'Show app notifications' setting On, but scroll down and check the list of apps shown below, switching to Off any you don't need notifications from.**

### Show notifications on the lock screen

**Windows 10 default:** On With this enabled, you can view notifications you've received without logging in. **We recommend:** Off The trouble with this setting and the one below it ('Show

alarms, reminders, and incoming VOIP calls on the lock screen') is that other people can see the emails, calendar appointments, missed calls and other personal information that lock-screen notifications may contain. You may feel more comfortable switching these off, particularly if you use your PC at work or in public. **Click Start, Settings, System, then click 'Notifications & actions' and scroll down to disable both settings.**



# APPS AND PROGRAMS

## Windows Store App updates

**Windows 10 default:** On The Windows Store app checks for and downloads any updates for your apps so that you don't need to think about it.

**We recommend:** Off While this option may be convenient, it won't necessarily work for everyone. If you're on a capped or metered internet connection, for example, you may prefer to monitor or control the bandwidth these updates use up. Open the Windows Store from the taskbar icon, then click your account icon and select Settings. Switch 'Update apps automatically' to off.

## Windows Store Live Tile

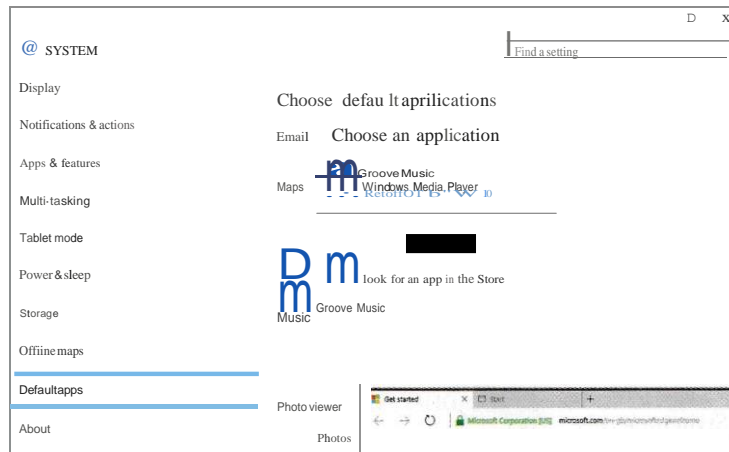
**Windows 10 default:** On With this enabled, the Windows Store's Start menu Live Tile will display new or featured apps and games that you might be interested in.

**We recommend:** Off This is another way for Microsoft to push Windows Store advertising at you. If you're fed up with this hard sell, open the Windows Store app and navigate to its settings as described in the previous tip, then switch 'Show products on tile' to Off.

## Default apps

**Windows 10 default:** Windows 10 apps Unless you specify otherwise during setup, Windows 10 will set its new apps as the defaults for music, photos and more, while Edge will become your default browser.

**We recommend:** Your own favourite programs and tools Getting you to use its own apps is another way that Microsoft will try to sell you stuff, because its Groove Music and Film & TV apps are tied directly into Microsoft's own online entertainment stores. To switch back to your preferred programs, click Start, Settings, System, then 'Default apps'. Now click each of the apps listed and choose the program you want instead. If the program you want isn't listed, you may need to install it. For even more control, scroll down and click



You don't have to stick with Windows 10's default Desktop apps

'Choose default applications by file type'.

## Background apps

**Windows 10 default:** On Windows 10 allows its built-in apps - plus many of those you download from the Windows Store - to run in the background all the time, so that they can remain

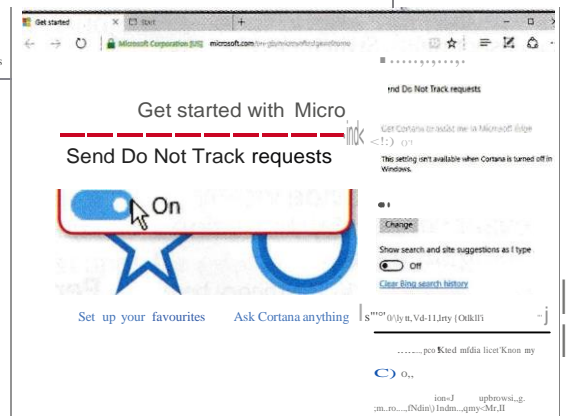
connected and up to date.

**We recommend:** Off for certain apps. In some cases, it can be

very useful to have an app running in the background. With News running, for example, you can get the latest headlines from your Start menu Live Tile without actually having to launch the app. But the more apps you run, the more memory you'll consume, as well as battery life if you're on a laptop. We'd suggest limiting background apps to a minimum, so click Start, Settings, Privacy, 'Background apps', then scroll through the list switching off any you don't need.

## Edge - Privacy and services

**Windows 10 default:** Edge, the web browser that comes built into Windows 10, is set to allow all cookies. It also speeds up your browsing by showing suggestions and using predictions as you type in the search or address bar.



Don't let websites track you when you browse the web using Edge

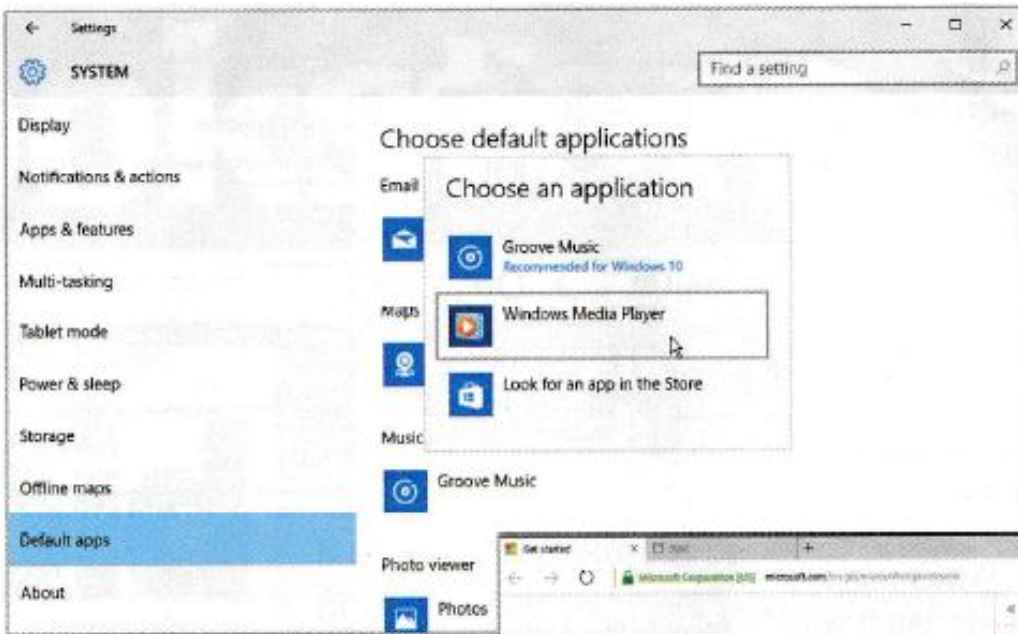
**We recommend:** If you've started using Microsoft's new web browser since switching to Windows 10, or if you're an Internet Explorer user who's looking at Edge to plug the gap when IE is finally phased out, then there are some settings you'll need to change.

Click the three-dots top right, then click Settings, 'View advanced settings'. Under 'Privacy and services', switch on 'Send Do Not Track requests' - this will stop many websites from tracking your movements. Under Cookies, we'd suggest opting for 'Block only third-party cookies'. And, if you'd rather not send Microsoft data about your web browsing habits, you should turn off 'Show search and site suggestions as I type' and 'Use page prediction to speed up browsing, improve reading and make my overall experience better'.

**NEXT ISSUE** On sale Wednesday 20 January

**ON SALE 20 Jan**





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