

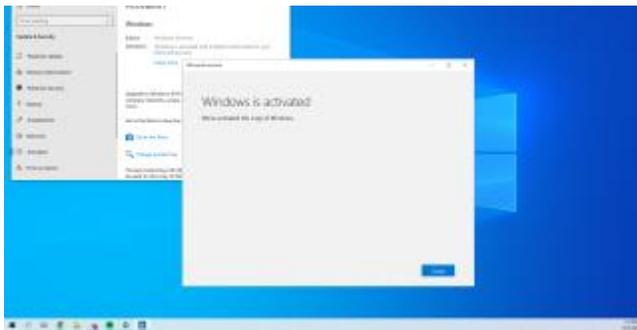
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# How to Transfer a Windows 10 or 11 License to Another PC

By [Avram Piltch](#)

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Rebuilt your PC? You may not need to buy a new Windows key.



(Image credit: Tom's Hardware)

If you're building a new PC (perhaps one of the [best PC builds](#)) with Microsoft's operating system on it, you probably need a Windows product key. Yes, you can run Windows 10 or 11 without a key, but this "inactivated" version of Windows will have an annoying watermark in the lower right corner of the screen and will have some features -- the ability to change wallpaper, for example -- disabled.

So it really helps to have a Windows product key, but the good news is that, if you are replacing a computer that already has a valid Windows key, you may be able to transfer the key to your new PC. We say "may" because your ability to transfer a Windows license depends on what type of license you have, which we'll explain below. However, if you need a new key, check out our article on [how to get Windows 11 or 10 for free or cheap](#).

If you have a transferrable product key, we'll show you how to move it from one computer to another. The method of transfer will vary based on whether you have a "digital" (tied to your Microsoft account) or traditional license (you move the ID key itself).

## Is Your Windows Product Key Transferrable?

When it comes to transferability, there are two types of Windows key:

- **OEM keys:** Not supposed to be transferable. These are the keys that manufacturers use to install Windows on any prebuilt PC. They are also the keys you get at discount key vendors such as Kinguin. You can always try, however.
- **Retail** (aka "Full Packaged Product") **keys:** transferrable. These keys are usually the expensive ones people pay more than \$100 for. But it's always possible your computer had one (from a prior upgrade) you don't know it.  
If you don't know which type of Windows product key you have, you can find out when you unearth the key itself.

## Finding Your Windows 10 or 11 Product Key

Unless you have it meticulously stored from the last time you installed Windows, you probably need to find your product key. To find out what type of Windows 10 or 11 product key you have and the key number, we recommend downloading and running [Magical Jellybean KeyFinder](#)(opens in new tab). The key itself will be listed as "CD key" and the version of license will likely be here too under the "Installed from" callout.

## Determining if You Have a Digital License

If your key is transferrable and you want to transfer it, you now need to know whether you have a "digital license" or a regular one. With a regular license, you can transfer the product key from one computer to another by deactivating it on the old PC before entering it on the new one.

However, if you have a digital license, that means that the number is tied to your Microsoft account and, in order to transfer it, you need to follow a different procedure which involves deactivating the old PC via your Microsoft account's settings menu.

To find out if you have a digital license, you need to **visit the activation settings page** in Windows. You can get there by searching for "activation" in the search box and clicking the top result.

If the Activation screen says that you have a digital license, follow the instructions for transferring a digital license below. Otherwise, follow the instructions for transferring a non-digital Windows 10 or 11 product key, also below.

## How to Transfer a Digital Windows License to a New PC

If your Windows license is "digital," which means that it's tied to your Microsoft account, entering the product key into a new PC will not work. The new computer won't activate. Instead, you must deactivate the old PC using the settings Menu of the Microsoft website and then use the troubleshooting function in the activation menu on the new PC.

1. **Reset Windows** or completely erase the drive on your old PC. See our tutorial on [how to reset Windows 10 or 11](#). If you don't do either of these things, the computer will still be seen as registered with Microsoft and could prevent you from being able to activate the same key on the new PC.
2. **Install Windows 10 or 11 on the new PC**, without entering a product code during the install process. When prompted, you just click "I don't have a key."
3. **Log in to your account** on microsoft.com.
4. **Navigate to the My Microsoft Account page.** You can get there by selecting My Microsoft Account from the pulldown menu under your username or navigating directly to [account.microsoft.com](https://account.microsoft.com)(opens in new tab) after you have already logged in.

5. **Click View All Devices** so you can see a list of all the devices associated with account.
6. **Scroll down to** and **select the PC** you wish to deactivate.
7. **Click "Info and Support."**
8. **Click Remove this Device** in the upper right corner.
9. **Check "I'm ready to remove this device"** and **click Remove**.
10. **Navigate to the Activation settings menu** on the new PC. The easiest way to get there is by searching for "activation" and clicking the top result.

You will notice that the screen says your copy of Windows could not be activated. If, for some reason, it says it has been activated, you're already done and can end here.

11. **Click "Troubleshoot."**

A dialog box will probably appear, telling you that Windows was unable to activate.

12. **Click "I changed hardware on this device recently."**

This tells Microsoft that you have made a major upgrade to your computer. Nevermind that you are probably on a whole new PC with a new motherboard (but perhaps some of the same components). Consider the new PC an upgrade in your own mind.

13. **Select the new PC** you are using, **click "this is the device I'm using right now"** and **Activate**.

After a few seconds, you should get a confirmation screen saying that "Windows is activated."

Your new PC should now be activated.

## How to Transfer Your a Windows Product Key (Non-Digital License)

If you don't have a "digital license," for your Windows 10 or 11 product key, you will need to actually enter the alphanumeric key into the activation screen on the new PC. If you haven't already wiped the old PC, we recommend formally removing the product key, effectively "deactivating" it. This may help Microsoft get the impression that you are no longer using the key.

Here's how to deactivate Windows 10 or 11 and activate a new PC with the same key.

1. **Launch a command prompt as administrator**. You can get there by searching for cmd in the search menu and then right clicking the top result and selectin Run as administrator. Click Ok if prompted for permission by Windows' User Account control.

2. **Enter *slmgr /upk*** at the command prompt and **hit Enter**.

```
slmgr /upk
```

You will see a window that says uninstalled product key successfully.

3. Enter *slmgr.vbs /cpky* at the command prompt

```
slmgr.vbs /cpky
```

This will remove the product key from the registry itself, officially deactivating your PC. You will see a message saying. "Product key from registry cleared successfully."

5. Enter *slmgr.vbs /dli* to confirm that the product key is actually removed.

```
slmgr.vbs /dli
```

You should see a message saying that there's no product key. That means it's gone.

You will also see a red message on the Windows settings activation screen saying that your copy of Windows is not activated. But you don't need to check it.

6. **Now enter your product key** on the new PC. If you haven't installed Windows on it yet, you can enter the key during the install process. If you already installed Windows but haven't activated yet, navigate to the Activation settings menu and click "Change Product Key" then enter it.

If your key doesn't work at this point, either you need to wait and try again later in the day or get a new key.