

Windows 10 ESU: One account covers up to 10 PCs with free enrollment through 2026

Start date [Aug 8, 2025](#)

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Microsoft has quietly confirmed a welcome twist for holdouts on Windows 10: a single consumer Extended Security Updates (ESU) license, tied to your personal Microsoft account, can cover up to 10 PCs—plus you don't have to pay the previously announced \$30 if you opt to sync settings with the Windows Backup app or redeem 1,000 Microsoft Rewards points. All consumer enrollment paths deliver critical and important security updates through October 13, 2026. (support.microsoft.com)

Overview

With Windows 10 support ending on October 14, 2025, Microsoft's ESU program offers a security-only lifeline for users who need more time to transition. Consumer ESU is simple: enroll from Windows Update on a Windows 10 version 22H2 device, choose one of three enrollment options (Windows Backup sync, 1,000 Rewards points, or a one-time \$30 purchase), and keep getting security patches until mid-October 2026. The license is linked to your Microsoft account rather than a product key, and it can be reused across up to ten eligible PCs you own. (support.microsoft.com)

What's new and why it matters

- Up to 10 PCs per consumer ESU license, tied to a personal Microsoft account.
- Two “no additional cost” enrollment routes: sync PC settings with Windows Backup or redeem 1,000 Microsoft Rewards points; or pay \$30 USD once.
- Security updates only (no new features, no non-security fixes, and no general technical support) through October 13, 2026. (support.microsoft.com, learn.microsoft.com)

This is more generous than anticipated for households with multiple Windows 10 machines, reducing friction and cost for families and enthusiasts managing several older PCs. (support.microsoft.com)

Eligibility and limitations

To enroll in the consumer ESU program, devices must:

- Run Windows 10, version 22H2 (Home, Pro, Pro Education, or Workstation) with the latest updates installed.
- Use a Microsoft account with administrator rights; child accounts are not eligible. (support.microsoft.com)
- Important restrictions:

The consumer ESU program can't be used by commercial devices. Enrollment won't be offered to PCs in kiosk mode, joined to Active Directory or Microsoft Entra (Azure AD), enrolled in MDM, or already licensed for ESU. (support.microsoft.com)

How to enroll and add more PCs

Microsoft is rolling out an enrollment wizard via Windows Update. The company said the wizard began reaching devices in July with broad availability expected by mid-August 2025. (blogs.windows.com)

Enroll your first PC

- Open Settings > Update & Security > Windows Update.
- Select Enroll now and sign in with your Microsoft account if prompted.
- Choose one option: sync settings with Windows Backup, redeem 1,000 Rewards points, or pay \$30 USD. (support.microsoft.com)

Add up to nine more PCs

- On each additional Windows 10 version 22H2 device, go to Settings > Update & Security > Windows Update.
- Select Enroll now and follow the prompts; the same account-tied ESU license can be reused up to 10 times. (support.microsoft.com)

Pro tip: if you sign in locally, you'll be asked to sign in with a Microsoft account during enrollment because the ESU license is bound to that account. (support.microsoft.com)

What you get—and what you don't

ESU delivers only “critical” and “important” security updates as defined by Microsoft's security response process. It does not include new features,

customer-requested non-security fixes, design changes, or general technical support beyond ESU activation and update issues. (learn.microsoft.com)

This distinction matters: your Windows 10 system stays supported for vulnerabilities, but the OS feature set—and many app experiences—will continue to age. Microsoft has separately signaled that Office feature updates on Windows 10 will wind down, further nudging users toward Windows 11 for the latest capabilities. (windowscentral.com)

Cost comparison: consumers vs. organizations

- Consumers:
- Free via Windows Backup settings sync or 1,000 Microsoft Rewards points
- Or a one-time \$30 USD payment
- Coverage window: October 15, 2025, through October 13, 2026 (support.microsoft.com, blogs.windows.com)
- Organizations:
- \$61 per device for Year 1, doubling in Years 2 and 3 (i.e., \$61 → \$122 → \$244), cumulative if you start late
- Up to three years of updates after end of support
- Cloud and virtual options (Windows 365, Azure Virtual Desktop, and other Azure-based VMs) receive ESU at no additional cost; Windows 10 endpoints connecting to Windows 365 Cloud PCs are also entitled for up to three years with an active subscription. (learn.microsoft.com)

Cloud and virtualization exceptions

If you access Windows 11 Cloud PCs through Windows 365 or use Azure-hosted Windows 10 VMs, ESUs are included at no extra charge and updates arrive automatically. This approach can be attractive for organizations modernizing via Cloud PCs while keeping certain Windows 10 scenarios alive during migration. (learn.microsoft.com)

Security and privacy considerations

- Enrolling via Windows Backup requires syncing settings to the cloud with a Microsoft account. That convenience may raise privacy questions for some users and could consume OneDrive storage if you expand beyond settings. Consider reviewing backup scopes and OneDrive capacity before enabling. (support.microsoft.com, theverge.com)
- ESU is security-only. Long-standing bugs unrelated to security won't be addressed, and app vendors may reduce Windows 10 support over time.

Planning a Windows 11 migration remains prudent.
(learn.microsoft.com, windowscentral.com)

Who should use Windows 10 ESU

- Households with multiple Windows 10 PCs that can't move to Windows 11 yet—especially where the 10-device license limit drives down costs.
- Power users maintaining older hardware, test benches, or niche peripherals that lack Windows 11 drivers.
- Small organizations with a few personal-use devices that don't meet the criteria for commercial ESU (remember: domain-joined or MDM-managed devices aren't eligible for the consumer program). (support.microsoft.com)

Practical guidance for Windows enthusiasts

- Verify each PC is on Windows 10, version 22H2 with current updates before attempting enrollment.
- Decide your enrollment path:
- No-cost via Windows Backup settings sync (fastest if you're already syncing),
- 1,000 Microsoft Rewards points, or
- \$30 USD one-time purchase.
- Use the same Microsoft account across up to ten devices to reuse your consumer ESU license.
- Keep an upgrade plan. Treat ESU as a bridge to Windows 11, not a destination. (support.microsoft.com, learn.microsoft.com)

Bottom line

For Windows 10 users determined to hang on a little longer, Microsoft's consumer ESU program is more flexible than expected: one account-bound license covers up to 10 PCs, and two no-cost enrollment options remove most of the friction. The trade-off is clear—security updates only, and only for one year—so the smartest play is to use ESU to buy time while you map a clean move to Windows 11 on your schedule. (support.microsoft.com, learn.microsoft.com)