

# How to Reset Your Windows 10 laptop: Format your PC

By [Avram Piltch - Online Editorial Director](#) May 05, 2020



[Windows 10](#) is prone to all sorts of issues, from the [sudden disappearance of files](#) to [problems with installing updates](#). If your computer isn't running the way it should, giving you strange errors or performing slowly, then it's probably time for a reset.

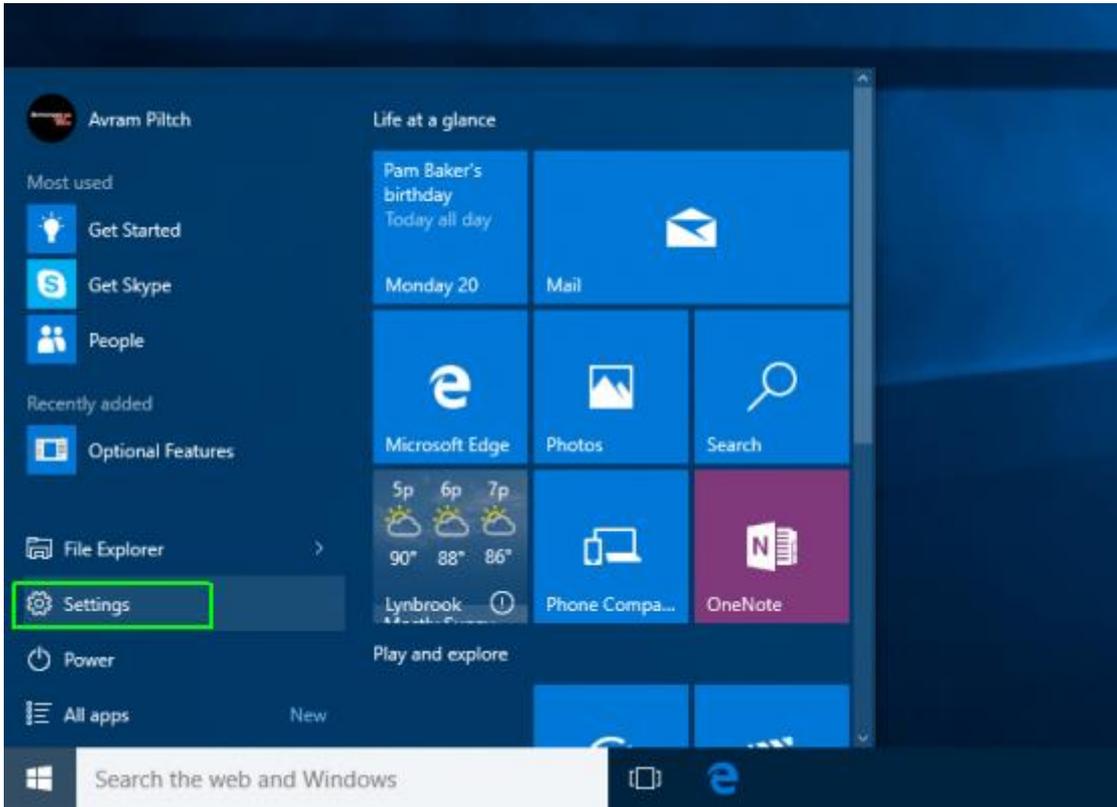
You might also want to reset your Windows 10 laptop if you're upgrading to a new device and want to sell your old one. Of course, you don't want to give a laptop filled with sensitive information and personal documents to a stranger. So before you exchange cash for tech, be sure to reformat your Windows 10 laptop.

Reformatting your PC or restoring to an earlier state can clean out any pesky background programs and wipe your computer's hard drive of any unneeded files. The operating system provides a number of options that let you reset your Windows 10 computer to an earlier state.

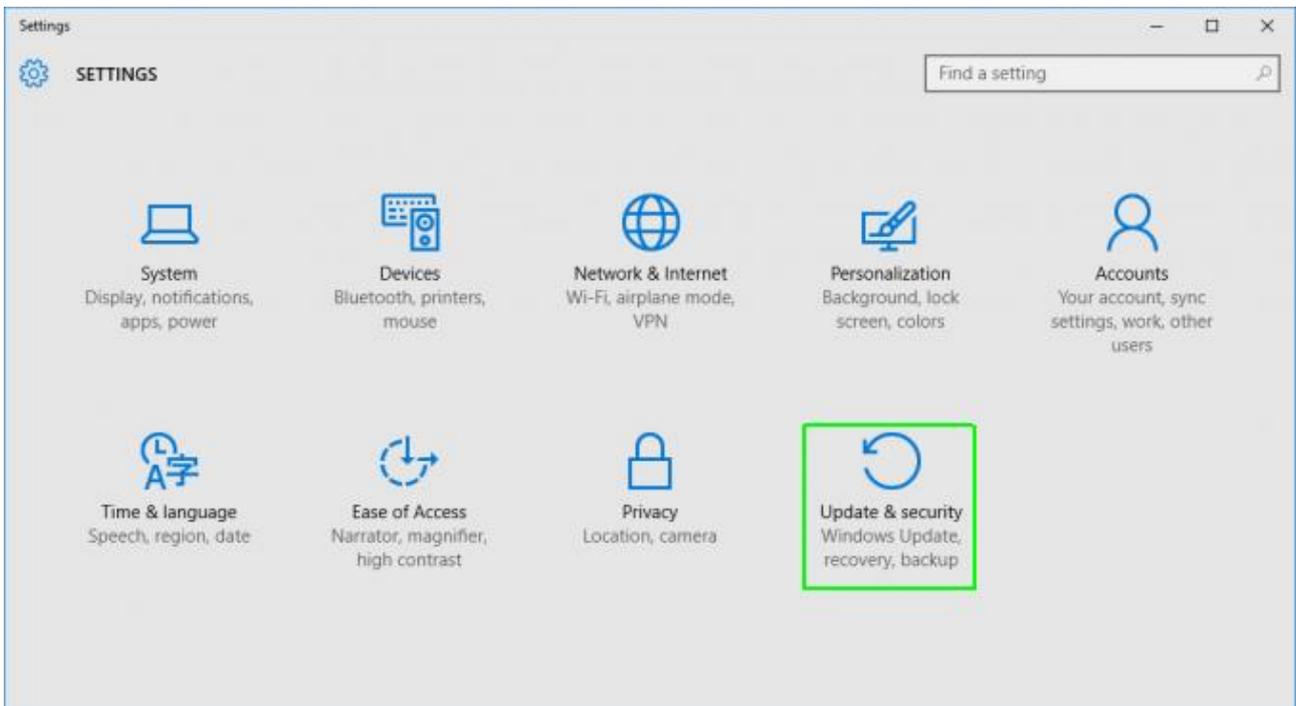
Here's how to reset your PC in Windows 10 using the settings menu. If you can't access Settings, scroll down to instructions on formatting Windows 10 from the sign-in screen.

# How to Reset Your Windows 10 PC

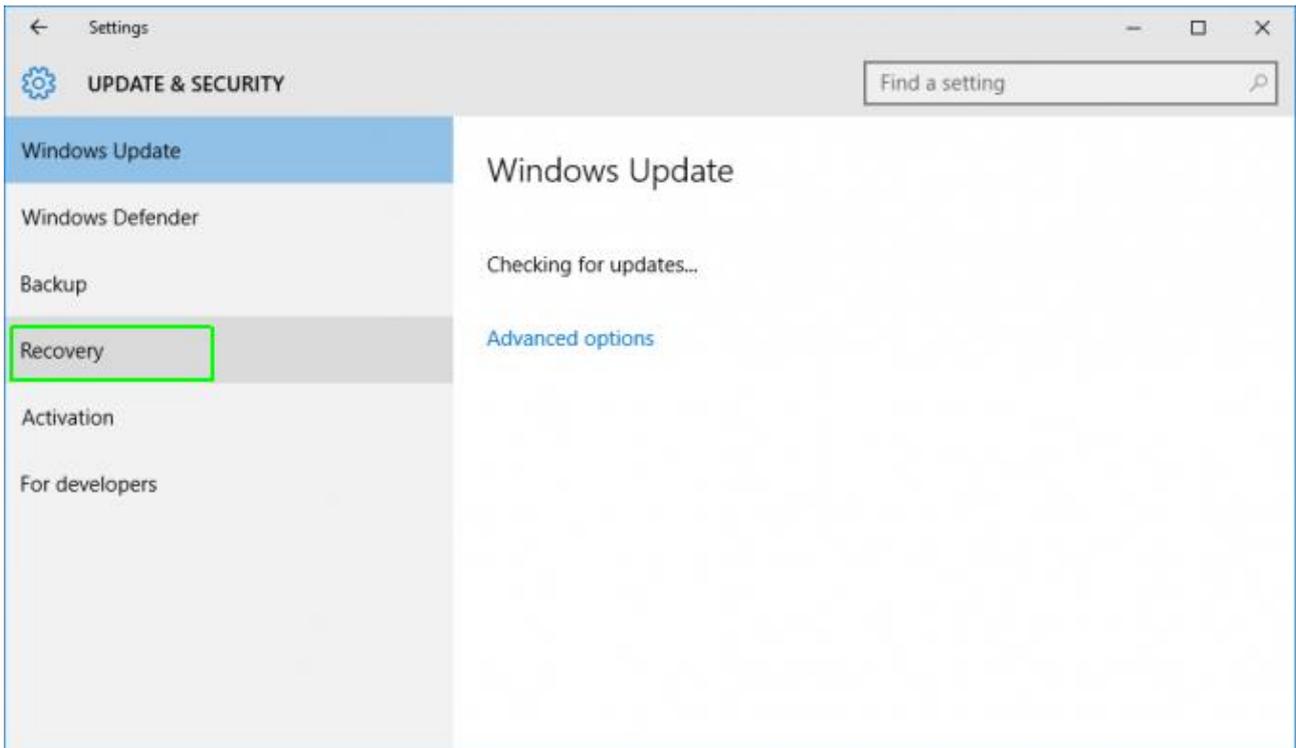
1. **Navigate to Settings.** You can get there by clicking the gear icon on the Start menu.



2. **Select "Update & security"**

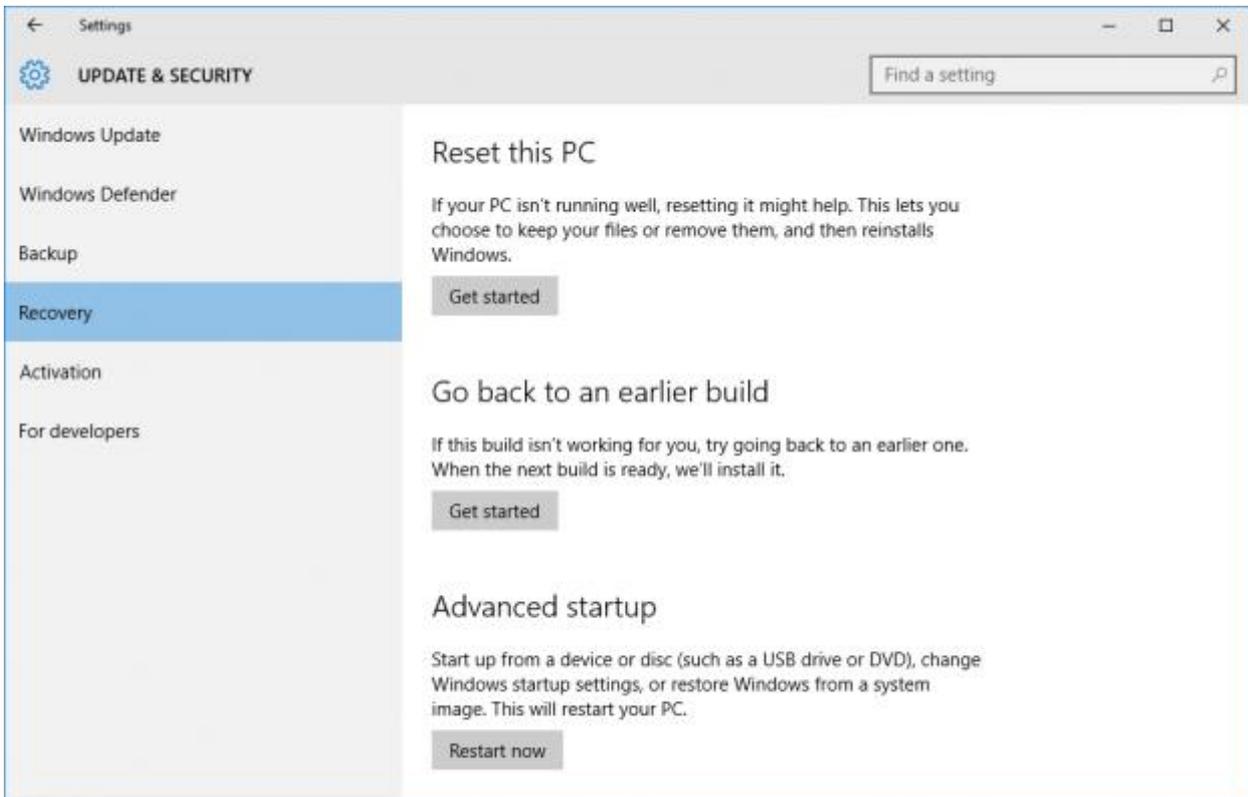


3. Click **Recovery** in the left pane.

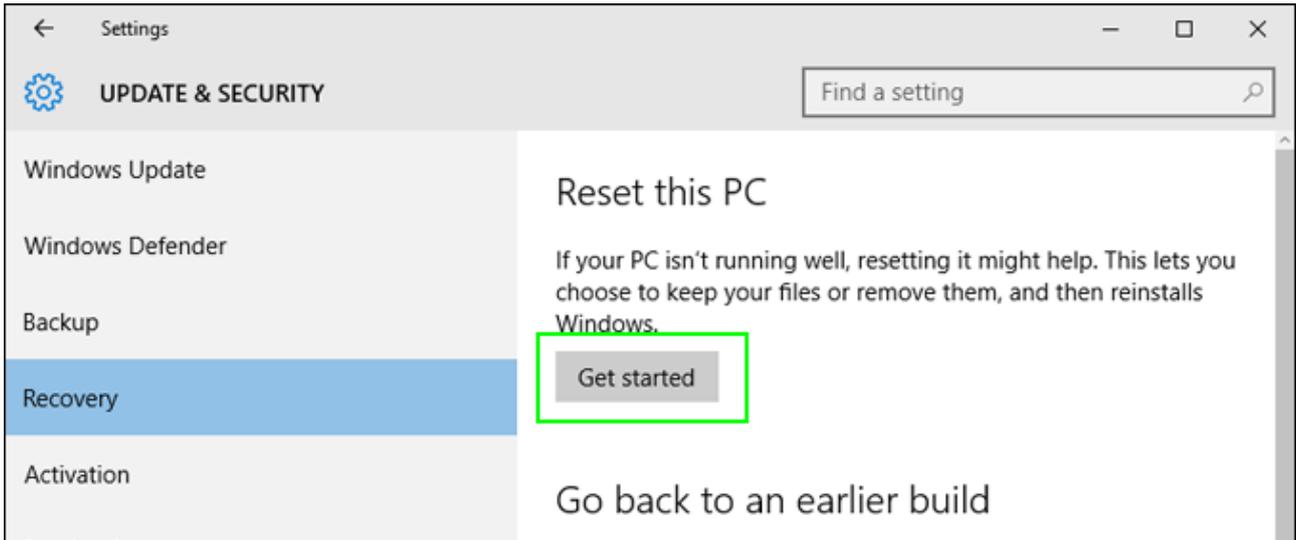


4. Windows presents you with three major options: **Reset this PC**, Go back to an earlier build and Advanced startup. Reset this PC is the best option for starting fresh.

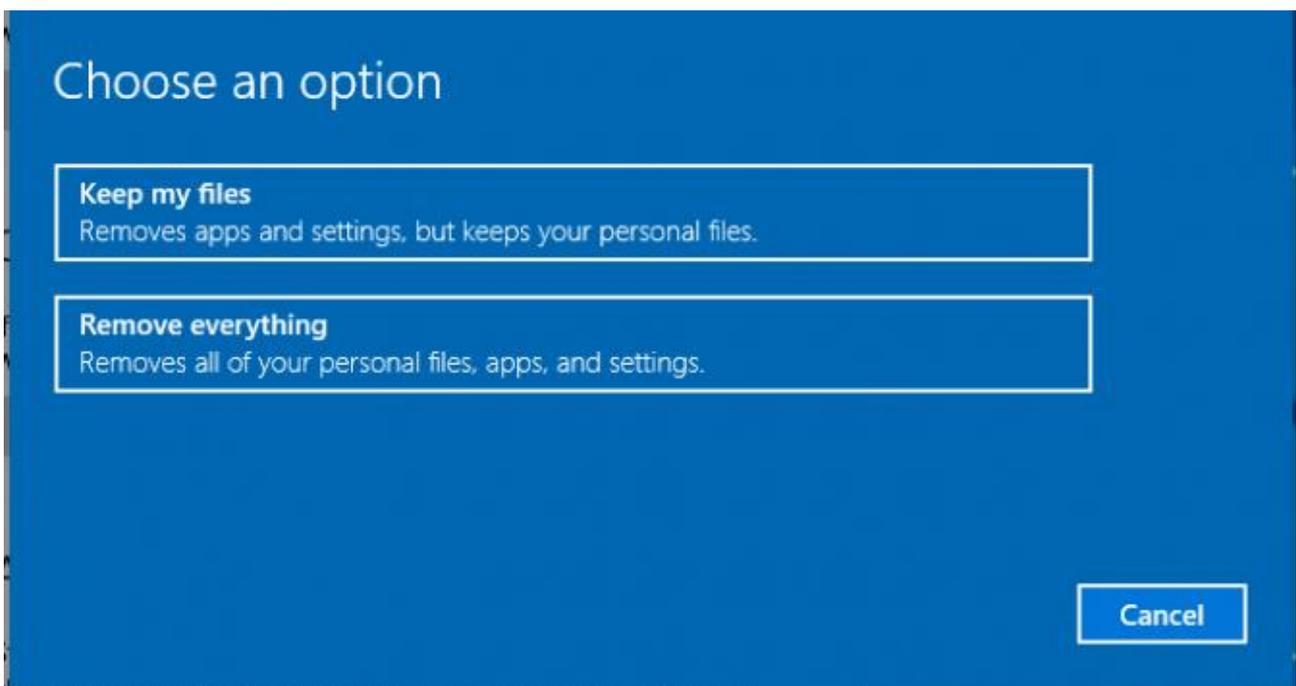
Advanced startup lets you boot off a recovery USB drive or disc and "Go to an earlier build" is made for Windows Insiders who want to roll back to a previous version of the OS.



5. Click **Get started** under **Reset this PC**.

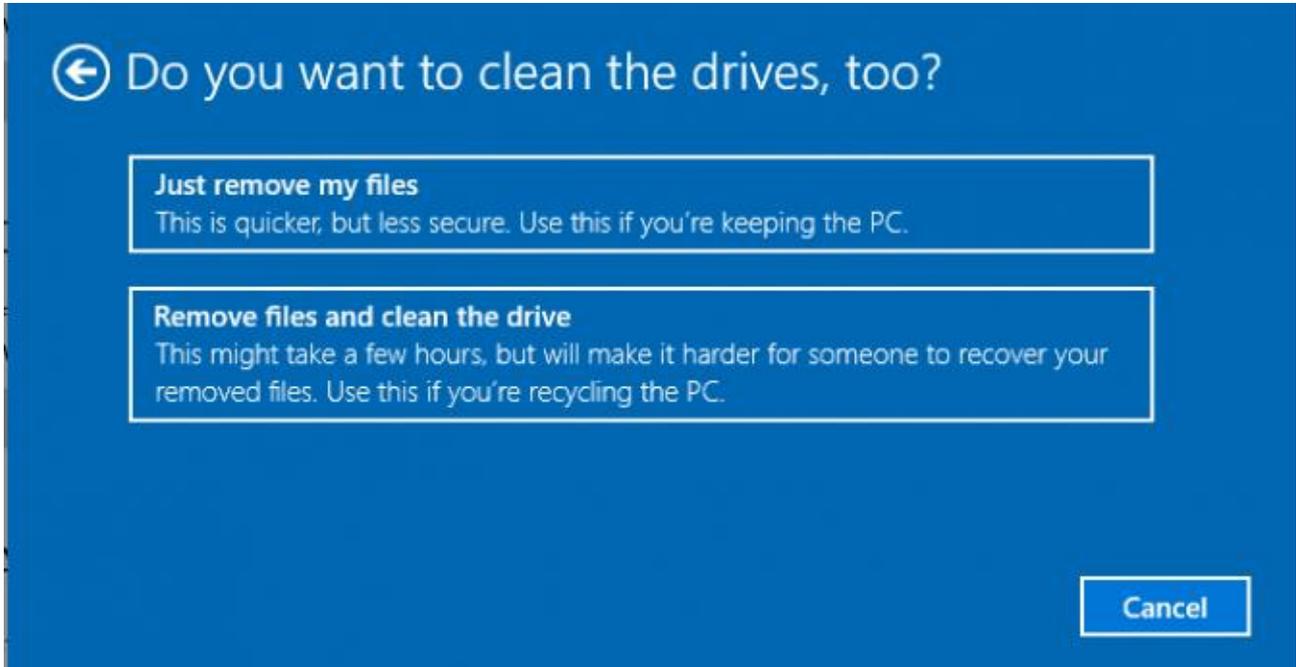


6. Click either "**Keep my files**" or "**Remove everything**," depending on whether you want to keep your data files intact. If not, Remove everything will do as it says: delete all of your files, photos and programs. Either way, all of your settings will return to their defaults and apps will be uninstalled.

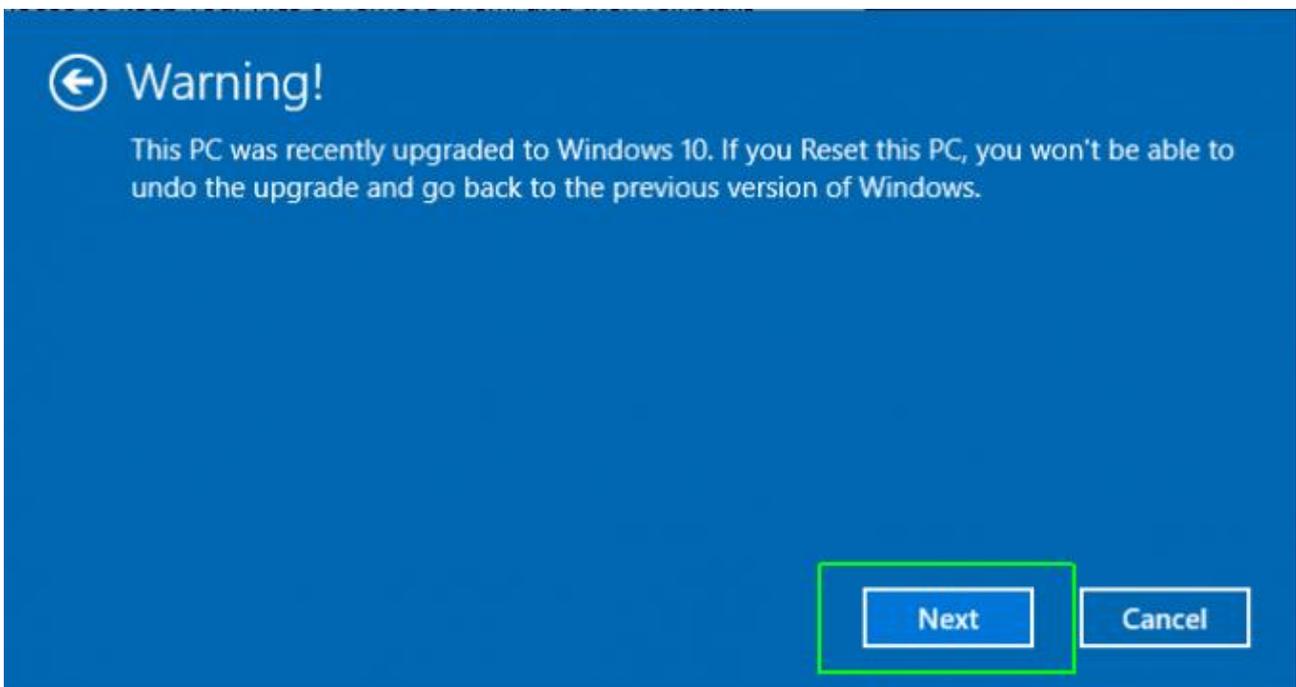


7. Select **Just remove my files** or **Remove files and clean the drive** if you chose "Remove everything" in the prior step.

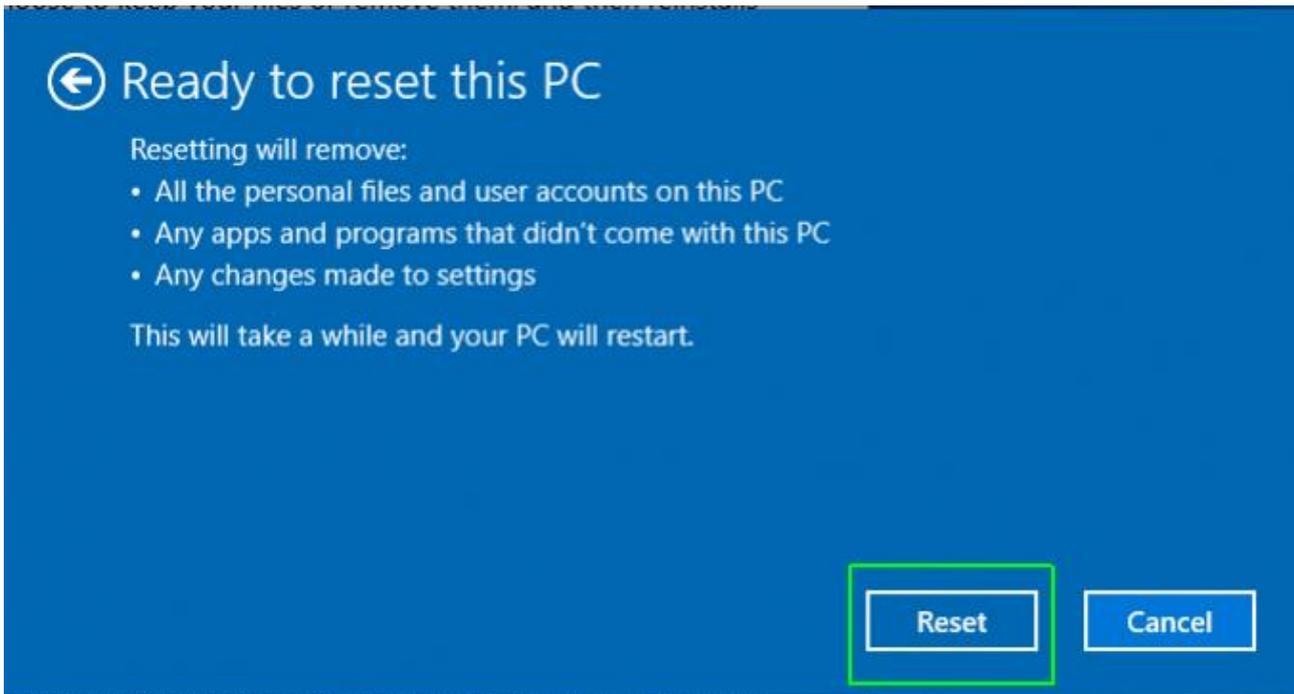
Cleaning the drive takes a lot longer but will make sure that, if you are giving the computer away, the next person can't recover your erased files. If you are keeping the computer, choose "Just remove my files."



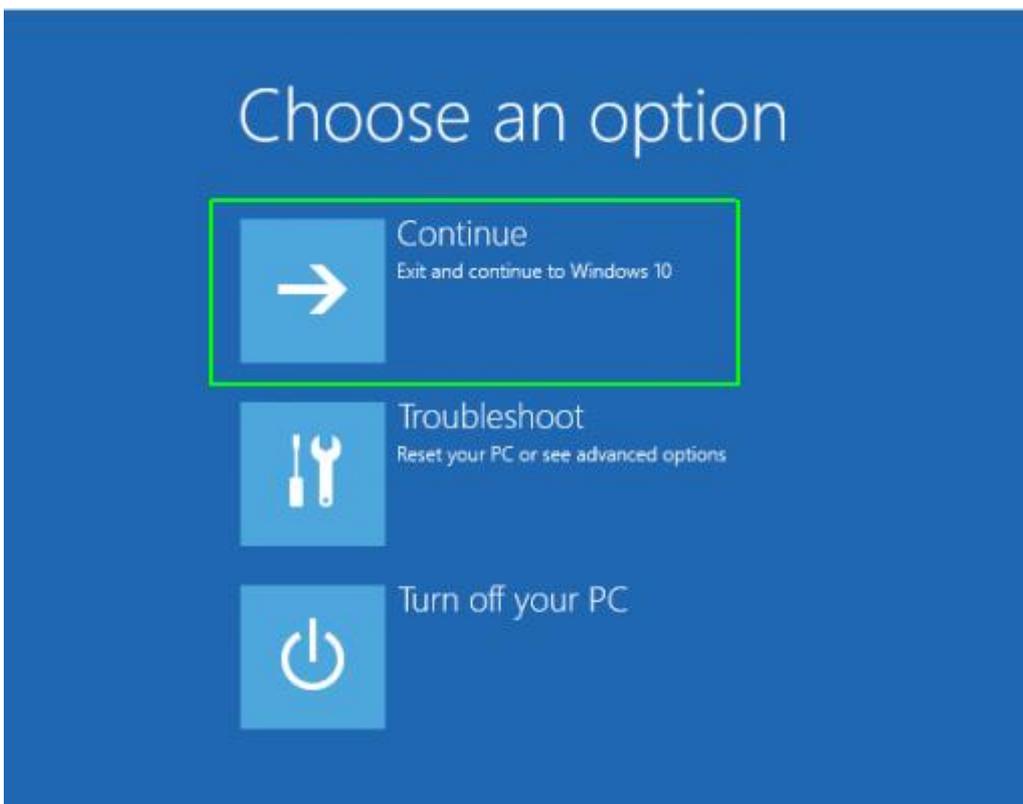
8. Click **Next** if Windows warns you that you won't be able to roll back to a prior version of the OS.



9. Click **Reset** when prompted. Windows will then restart and take several minutes to reset itself.

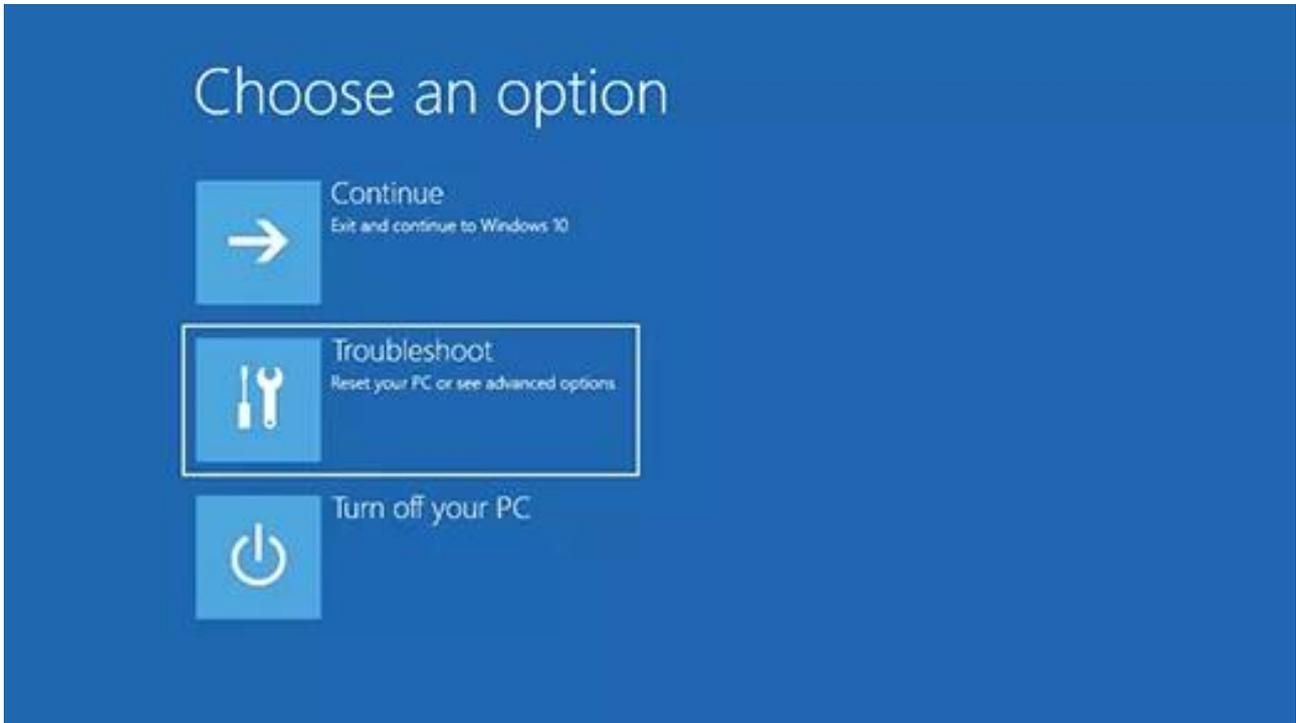


10. Click **Continue** when prompted.



## How to reformat Windows 10 from the sign-in screen

If your laptop is acting up, and you can't access the settings menu, you can try resetting your PC from the sign-in screen.



(Image credit: Microsoft)

- Press the **Windows logo key and L** on your keyboard. This will take you to the Windows 10 sign-in screen. Don't login.
- Instead, you can reset your PC by holding the **Shift** key while you click the **Power button>Restart** in the lower-right corner of the screen.
- Your PC will restart in Windows Recovery Environment (WinRE) environment.
- From the option screen, choose **Troubleshoot>Reset this PC**. From here, choose between the options listed above.

Hopefully, you have fewer hiccups now that you know how to reset your Windows 10 PC. And if you're planning on selling or giving your laptop away, you can do it with peace in mind that the next owner won't have access to your files.