



How to Wipe Your Windows PC Before Donating

A simple step-by-step guide to erase your data and prepare your device for its next owner

Why This Matters

Before donating your Windows PC or laptop, it's important to erase your personal data — including passwords, files, photos, and account information. This protects your privacy and ensures the next user receives a clean, ready-to-use device.

Before You Begin

Take a few minutes to complete these steps before erasing anything:

- Back up your files to an external drive or cloud service (OneDrive, Google Drive, etc.) so nothing important is lost.
- Sign out of Microsoft account apps: open Settings → Accounts → Your Info → Sign Out.
- Deauthorize any software tied to your account (e.g., Adobe, Microsoft Office) if applicable.
- Make sure the PC is plugged into power before you start — this process can take 30 minutes to several hours.
- Make sure you're connected to Wi-Fi if you plan to reinstall Windows from the internet.

Tip: Not sure which version of Windows you have? Press the Windows key, type “winver”, and press Enter. A small window will show your Windows version.

Option A: Windows 11

Windows 11 includes a built-in Reset feature that erases everything and reinstalls Windows cleanly. Here's how:

- 1. Open Settings.**
Click the Start button (Windows icon), then click Settings (the gear icon), or press Windows key + I.
- 2. Go to Recovery.**
Select System from the left menu, then scroll down and click Recovery.

3. Start the Reset.

Under Recovery options, click Reset PC next to “Reset this PC.”

4. Choose “Remove everything.”

When prompted, select Remove everything to fully erase all personal files, apps, and settings.

5. Choose how to reinstall Windows.

Select Cloud download to download a fresh copy from Microsoft (recommended), or Local reinstall to use files already on the device. Cloud download requires Wi-Fi.

6. Confirm and reset.

Click Additional settings to verify “Clean data” is enabled (this overwrites the drive for better security), then click Next → Reset. The PC will restart and complete the process automatically.

 **Important:** Selecting “Clean data” takes longer but makes deleted files much harder to recover — we strongly recommend this option before donating.

Option B: Windows 10

Windows 10 has a similar Reset feature. Follow these steps:

1. Open Settings.

Click the Start button, then click Settings (the gear icon), or press Windows key + I.

2. Go to Update & Security.

Select Update & Security, then click Recovery in the left menu.

3. Start the Reset.

Under “Reset this PC,” click Get started.

4. Choose “Remove everything.”

Select Remove everything when prompted to ensure all personal data is erased.

5. Choose how to reinstall Windows.

Select Cloud download (requires Wi-Fi) for a fresh copy, or Local reinstall to use existing files on the device.

6. Enable drive cleaning.

Click Change settings and turn on Clean data, then click Confirm → Next → Reset. The PC will restart and complete the process automatically.

Note: If your PC won’t start normally, you may be able to access Reset by booting into Windows Recovery: hold Shift while clicking Restart, then go to Troubleshoot → Reset this PC.

After Erasing

Your Windows PC is now ready to donate! Here's a quick checklist before you hand it over:

- The screen should show the Windows setup screen (language and region selection).
- Include the power adapter or charging cable if you have it.
- Remove any stickers or labels with your personal information.
- If the PC has a carrying case, consider including it.

Donating to AZ StRUT

AZ StRUT (Arizona Students Recycling Used Technology) accepts computers, laptops, and peripherals — working or not — for refurbishment and redistribution to students and families in need across Arizona.

Drop-off locations and donation information:

- Website: azstrut.org
- Phone: 480-222-4066
- Address: 3025 S 48th St, Ste 102, Tempe, AZ 85282
- Drop-off hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Your donation helps bridge the digital divide — thank you for giving your device a second life!