

How to Eliminate Most of Your Windows 10 Vulnerabilities

A report from security experts highlights hundreds of critical vulnerabilities discovered in Microsoft Windows in 2016 alone. Any of them could allow a hacker to take full control of an unpatched PC. But one simple trick can create a roadblock to neutralize more than 94% of these threats.

All you have to do is log into Windows as a “standard” user, with limited privileges to add and remove components, change system settings, and so on. If you can’t make drastic changes to the system, neither can any malware that may find its way past your defenses.

More than 94% of the critical vulnerabilities tallied in the security report require administrator privileges to exploit them. One hundred percent of critical vulnerabilities in Internet Explorer and Edge can only be exploited by malware with administrator privileges. *It’s clear that you should be using a standard user account except in circumstances when higher privileges are necessary.*

Most of us have both our Microsoft account and local account set for administrator privileges and all the vulnerabilities that come with that powerful status. When Windows is installed, the first user account created is an administrator account. Most home users just use it routinely, and don’t bother to create standard (non-administrator) user accounts.

Every system needs an administrator account occasionally. **But you should create and routinely use standard user accounts that have lower privileges.** Here is how to create a standard account without administrator privileges:

Microsoft desperately wants you to create a Microsoft account so it can track you all over the Web. Finding the option to create a new standard user account on a PC without creating a matching Microsoft account is a challenge, but it can be done.

1. Enter **Settings** (Windows + I).
2. Click on **Accounts**.
3. Click on **Family & Other People**.
4. Click on “Add someone else to this PC.”
5. Click on “I don’t have this person’s sign-in information.”
6. Click on “Add a user without a Microsoft account.”
7. Finally, you can create a standard account by giving it a unique name. It does not need a password, so leave that area blank.

If you discover that you erroneously created an administrator account during this process, follow this string:

1. Go to the Control Panel (type *control panel* at the start button, then click in the column above).
2. Make sure you are in large icons mode.
3. Click on User Accounts.
4. In this area, you can change an administrator account to a standard account.

Occasionally, a standard user may need administrator privileges to run an app. If you get an error message saying administrator privileges are required, right-click on the app's shortcut and select "run as administrator" from the drop-down menu.

As mentioned earlier, using a standard account mitigates over 90% of critical vulnerabilities. But that doesn't mean you can dispense with anti-malware protection, download software from sketchy sites, and click every link that appears in your inbox.

When you close down your computer, make sure you are closing down from your new standard account. Then, the next time you reboot, you will be taken to your new standard account **without** administrative privileges!