

UNINSTALL AND REINSTALL INTERNET EXPLORER IN AN EFFORT TO DEBUG IT

Because Internet Explorer browser is really a component of Windows itself, uninstalling and reinstalling, while possible, is somewhat different than other applications and has different implications.

Because it's so tightly intertwined with Windows itself, repairing Internet Explorer (IE) by uninstalling and reinstalling has always been a somewhat obscure process. With the advent of Windows 10, that process changed. It's no more or less obscure; it's just different.

Uninstalling IE can be marginally helpful if you never use it, but by resetting some of the software and settings reinstalling can be a useful diagnostic step if you're having problems.

Uninstalling IE in Windows 10

Go to *Settings* (Windows + I), then click on *Apps*.

On the resulting *Apps & Features* page, click on *Manage optional features*.

The list of optional features currently installed may take a few seconds to populate. When it does, scroll down until you find Internet Explorer.

Clicking on Internet Explorer exposes an Uninstall button; click on that.

Windows will then look like it's uninstalling Internet Explorer, displaying a progress bar near the top of the page.

When it's done, you can close the Settings app.

Note that this operation appears to be uninstalling IE. In fact, even when the process is done and you've closed the Settings app, Internet Explorer has not been completely uninstalled.

You must reboot. On return from the reboot, Internet Explorer will no longer be present.

Reinstalling Internet Explorer in Windows 10

The process to reinstall Internet Explorer starts the same way as the uninstall process, shown above: open the Settings app, click on Apps, and click on Manage

optional features. This time, when you get to the manage optional features list, click on *Add a feature*.

This resulting page will take a few seconds to populate a list of available features. Once complete, scroll down until you find Internet Explorer. Click on it and then click on the Install button.

Unlike the uninstall process, you do need to click the back arrow at the top of the page to return to the “Manage optional features” page. Then, like the uninstall process, Windows will display a progress bar at the top of the list.

You must reboot for the changes to take effect.

What you’re really uninstalling

Not all portions of Internet Explorer can be uninstalled, because Internet Explorer is so tightly woven into Windows. So, what’s being uninstalled and reinstalled?

It’s mostly about the user interface — those portions of Internet Explorer you can actually see and interact with are removed or reinstalled. The “guts” remain.

Those portions of Internet Explorer used to render web pages, for example, are key components not just of Windows, but of other applications as well. They may not display their information in a web browser, but still use the same technology as webpages. The guts of Internet Explorer are used to display it in whatever window or context the applications choose.

The result is that uninstalling and reinstalling may not solve the same broad spectrum of issues that, say, uninstalling a completely stand-alone browser like Chrome or Firefox might. Only a reinstall of Windows itself would do that. Even so, many of the issues we experience with Internet Explorer and browsers in general do revolve around the user interface, so it remains a valuable debugging and diagnostic technique.