

WHAT IS WINDOWS 11 S MODE, AND SHOULD YOU USE IT?

Windows 11 S Mode gives you a more secure system, but is it worth it?

Windows S Mode puts your computer on complete lockdown. Once activated, S Mode lets you enjoy the highest level of security Microsoft can offer. However, there are limitations.

What Is Windows 11 S Mode?

S Mode is a feature that Microsoft created to give users a secure, smooth experience with the Windows operating system. When you use Windows 11 in S mode, your computer only gets access to basic resources and drivers. More notably, S mode freezes all other apps that hog your RAM and processes that may task your CPU. These changes in your user experience of Windows S mode will sound very familiar if you have used a Chromebook.

Should You Use Your PC in S Mode?

It depends on your security and privacy goals. Here are four reasons you may consider using a PC in Windows S Mode:

1. S mode restricts the applications that can run on the computer to Microsoft Store applications only. So, you cannot download software from third-party sources. Also, they can only browse the web on Microsoft Edge. (Google Chrome won't be available to you!) The Windows native browser has additional online security to prevent you from visiting unsafe websites. However, Edge does not exactly block access to all sites.
2. Window S mode prevents users from installing third-party apps (such as Google Chrome and Malwarebytes). This restriction means your chances of installing malware on your computer reduce significantly.
3. Remember that S mode is a one-way street. There's no leaving S mode and going back. So, if you need to install a new non-Microsoft Store app, you'll have to leave S mode. The alternative would be using a separate computer or web-based version of the app, if available. If these options sound like a hassle or you don't want to buy another PC, you can always dual-boot another operating system instead.
4. You Want the Chromebook Experience. S mode gives you a similar experience to what a Chromebook gives. So, you can get a high-end PC and try S mode for several days or weeks. This way, you can decide if you want all that power or if the basics

work for you. More importantly, you retain the option to leave anytime you want—something you don't get in Chromebooks.

5. **Your Computer Boots Faster.** If you have been using a Windows computer for a while, you'll notice how booting takes longer as you install more apps. This lag is because some autorun apps start working in the background once you turn on your computer. Third-party software and malware, especially, cause this lag. S mode lets you use apps optimized for Windows and reduces your risks of getting malware that slows down your computer.

What Are the Drawbacks of Using S Mode?

Your computer works the way Microsoft intended for it to work: safely and efficiently. However, there are drawbacks:

1. **You Can Only Get Apps from the Microsoft Store.** Windows S can only run Modern Universal Windows Platform (UWP) store apps. These are apps that Microsoft developers directly created or verified. Other types of apps delivered through third-party licenses to the Microsoft Store will be unavailable in S mode.

2. **The Windows registry is off-limits to users in S mode.** The registry is a powerful database of configuration settings that lets power users customize Windows to their taste—beyond the regular settings. However, tinkering with the Windows registry can harm your PC, something the clamshell of S mode is designed to prevent.

How to Activate S Mode in Windows 11

You can't activate S mode; it comes pre-installed or shipped with the OS. So, when you get a new laptop, you'll have the option to use it in S mode when you're setting it up for the first time. Some computers, like the Surface, come shipped with S mode only, and you don't get that option to try S mode first.

How to Leave S Mode in Windows 11

Note that leaving S mode is one-way. You can't leave and come back.

That said, the first step is to check if your PC is running S mode in the first place. You can do this by navigating Windows > Settings > System > About.

Your Windows specification will show if you're running Windows 11 Home in S mode.

If your PC is indeed running Windows 11 Home in S mode, you can leave by navigating to Windows > Settings > System > Activation.

Click Upgrade your edition of Windows

Follow the on-screen instructions

Window S Mode: Fast, Secure, but Limiting

S mode takes the responsibility of maintaining your cybersecurity off you. You also get a snappy performance from your hardware. This naturely makes S mode better suited for people who don't want to tinker with technology. If you can't decide still, the good news is you can buy a regular PC and try out S mode. The snag is you can't go back once you decide to take charge.