

PRINTABLE GUIDE

Restart or shut down Windows safely

Restart reloads Windows, Shut down turns it off and Sleep pauses a session using some power. A laptop lid follows its configured behaviour.

Windows 11 | 2 min read | 5 steps

Before you start

- ☐ Any documents saved
- ☐ Time to allow Windows to finish

1. Save your work first

Save open documents and complete or pause any task that must not be interrupted. Check unfinished uploads and calls. A restart closes apps, and an app's recovery feature is not a reliable substitute for saving.

- ☐ Done this step

2. Open the power menu

Select Start, then the Power symbol. Read the options rather than choosing by position. If an update is waiting, you may see Update and restart or Update and shut down.

- ☐ Done this step

3. Choose the action

Use Restart to reload Windows after a problem or requested update. Use Shut down when finishing. Use Sleep for a short pause if it suits your device. Sleep still uses some battery, so plan power for a long absence.

- ☐ Done this step

4. Let the process finish

Follow save prompts and leave power connected during updates. Wait for shutdown or restart instead of pressing the power button repeatedly. A screen going dark before an update finishes does not necessarily mean it is safe to unplug.

☐ Done this step

5. Resume when ready

After shutdown, press the power button once to start again. After Sleep, wake using the normal control supported by your computer. If a problem persists after Restart, record it and use the relevant troubleshooting guide.

☐ Done this step

Try it for yourself

Find Restart and Shut down in the menu, then close the menu if you are still working.

☐ I tried the task.

My notes

Should I hold the power button to turn it off?

Use the Windows menu normally. A forced power-off is a last resort for an unresponsive device and can lose unsaved work.

Official help and the online guide

Windows shutdown and sleep - <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/experience/power-battery/shut-down-sleep-or-hibernate-your-pc>

Read online: <https://plaintech-guides.pages.dev/guides/restart-or-shut-down-windows/>