

Everyday tips | Easy | 2 min read

Restart, shut down or sleep: what is the difference?

Restart, Shut down and Sleep all sound similar but do different things. Knowing which to use can save you time and fix many small problems.

What each one does

- **Sleep** pauses your computer and keeps your work open. It uses a little power and wakes in seconds. It is good for short breaks.
- **Shut down** closes everything and switches the computer off. It is good when you will not use it for a day or more.
- **Restart** closes everything and switches the computer straight back on. It clears out stuck programs and is the best first step for most problems.

Which should I use?

1. If you are stepping away for a short while, choose **Sleep**.
2. If you are done for the day or going away, save your work and choose **Shut down**.
3. If the computer is slow, odd or misbehaving, or after installing updates, choose **Restart**.

Good to know

On many Windows computers, **Shut down** does not fully clear everything, because a feature called Fast Startup saves part of the system to start faster. This is why **Restart** is better for fixing problems than shutting down and turning on again.

On a Mac, you will find these choices under the Apple menu at the top left of the screen. On Windows, click the **Start** button, then the power icon.

Laptops may also have **Hibernate**, which saves your work and switches off completely. It is not always shown in the menu.

Closing a laptop lid usually puts it to sleep. If you carry a laptop in a bag, shut it down first, because a sleeping laptop can overheat.

When to get more help

Stop and ask for help if the computer will not wake from sleep, restarts by itself over and over, or says it is installing updates for hours without finishing. Never switch off during an update unless we advise it. Tell us what you see on screen.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.