

Windows laptops & PCs | Medium | 2 min read

Wiping a PC safely before you sell or give it away

Deleting files or emptying the Recycle Bin does not really erase them. Before you pass on a laptop or PC, you must remove your files and accounts properly. Take your time, because this is permanent.

Step 1: save what you want to keep

Copy photos, documents, saved passwords, browser bookmarks and licence keys to an external drive or OneDrive. Check that the copies open on another device. Once you reset, there is no undo.

Step 2: sign out of things

- Sign out of Microsoft 365, and deactivate any paid programmes that limit the number of PCs.
- Turn off **Find my device** in **Settings, Privacy & security** (Windows 10: **Update & Security**).
- Remove the device from your Microsoft account at account.microsoft.com, under **Devices**.
- Unlink any work accounts.

Step 3: reset the PC

1. Windows 11: open **Settings, System, Recovery**, then **Reset PC**. Windows 10: open **Settings, Update & Security, Recovery**, then **Get started**.
2. Choose **Remove everything**.
3. Choose **Cloud download** or **Local reinstall**. Cloud download needs internet and fetches a fresh copy; either is fine.
4. Click **Change settings** and switch **Clean data** to **Yes**. This overwrites the drive so that your files are far harder to recover. It takes much longer, sometimes several hours.
5. Click **Next** and then **Reset**.

Keep the laptop plugged in the whole time. Do not switch it off partway through.

Step 4: check

When it restarts, you should see the first-time setup screen, such as **Let's start with your region**. Do not sign in. Switch it off and hand it over.

If the PC has a faulty or dead drive

If the PC will not start, you cannot reset it. Do not sell it with your drive inside. Ask us about removing the drive or wiping it properly.

Do not put it in the household bin. Take it to a recycling point and ask about safe data destruction if it held sensitive information.

When to get more help

Get in touch if the reset fails or loops, if the PC belonged to a business, if it had customer data on it, or if you are unsure the wipe was thorough.

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.