

COMPUTER NEWS from the



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MORE ON WINDOWS 10

Microsoft is adding Windows 10 monitoring functionality to Windows 7 and 8

Security that causes insecurity

By **Chris Merriman** in "thrinquirer.com".



MICROSOFT HAS BEGUN retrofitting some of the more controversial aspects of the new Windows 10 operating system to predecessors 7 and 8.

No, that doesn't mean that [HAL 9000-U-LIKE Cortana](#) is coming aboard, but it does mean that Windows 7 and 8 users are going to be giving up a little bit more metadata to 'improve the Windows experience'.

Three patches have been released in Windows Update. KB3080149 is described as an 'Update for customer experience and diagnostic telemetry', a tracking service for diagnostics on functional issues in Windows systems that don't take part in the Customer Experience Improvement Programme.

Screech! Say *what?* In other words, it's a patch to allow diagnostics to be taken from your machine even if you expressly opted out of it. You know that thing where it asks you to tick a box to agree to send anonymous usage statistics to Microsoft 'to improve future versions'? Yeah. That. It's basically overriding your opt-out of that.

Behind door number two we have KB3068708. This little one, again described as an 'Update for customer experience and diagnostic telemetry', seems to be an encryption option for the first one, which might take a little of the sting out of it.

Or not.

Finally there's an 'Update that adds telemetry points to consent.exe in Windows 8.1 and Windows 7', or KB3075249 to its friends. Microsoft explained: "This update adds telemetry points to the User Account Control feature to collect information on elevations that come from low integrity levels."

In other words (we think) it's checking to see whether anything with no permissions asks for administrator permission, in case there's something fishy about it.

The combined updates do, however, give a surprising number of new visibilities to Microsoft. Perhaps what might surprise more people is that this information is collected as standard in Windows 10.

The fact that there's a retroactive fit going on is making people even more suspicious than usual. There is a school of thought that Windows 10 is a giant piece of spyware. [The Chinese certainly think so.](#) μ

How to Fix Windows 10 Desktop Icons Missing



By Dennis Faas on September, 7 2015 in "infopackets.com".

Infopackets Reader Kelly R. writes:

"Dear Dennis,

I've been using Windows 10 and so far so good. I took your advice and installed Classic Shell, which I think is a superior Start Menu than the default Windows 10 Start Menu. Everything has been great for the last few weeks, but suddenly all of my icons on the desktop have disappeared! At the same time, my browser window won't minimize or maximize - it only moves left or right. I have no idea what's going on but I'd really like to have my icons back on the desktop! I am going bananas! Can you help? "

My response:

Admittedly I was perplexed by this question, so I offered to dial into Kelly's machine using my remote desktop support service to have a closer look. Kelly agreed to let me dial in, and sure enough, the desktop icons were gone. In fact, the desktop was completely blank with the exception of 3 bars at the top left of the screen. When I clicked the 3 bars, it activated the Start Menu - but it wasn't the Classic Shell Start Menu - it was the Windows 10 Start Menu, which I thought was strange.

I also tried adjusting the web browser, but it would only move from left to right. I asked Kelly if she was using a tablet computer, but she said she was using a PC. As such, I suspected that perhaps "tablet mode" somehow got triggered on the PC.

After a bit of research and some digging around, I confirmed my suspicion - tablet mode was in fact enabled on the PC. As soon as I disabled it, everything went back to normal. I then demonstrated how to enable or disable tablet mode so that Kelly could help herself to undo the change if she needed to again in the future. And, in case anyone else is wondering, I'll explain how to toggle back and forth between tablet mode and PC mode should you find yourself in this very same situation.

How to Enable or Disable Tablet Mode (and switch back to PC mode)

Switching back and forth between PC and Tablet mode is very easy to do. Here's how:

1. When it's off, then PC mode is activated. In the lower right hand corner of your task bar (near the clock), there is an icon that looks like a speech balloon. This is the Action Center and it's used to display important system messages, but it also has a few other features, such as allowing you to toggle Tablet Mode mode on or off.

2. To demonstrate how this is done, click on the Action Center icon to open the Action Center window on the far right of the screen.

3. Near the very bottom of the Action Center window are a number of squares; one of them says "Tablet Mode". If you click on Tablet Mode, the system will change into Tablet Mode instantly and icons on the task bar and the desktop will disappear. Don't worry - the tray bar will remain on the screen, including the Action Center, so you can easily get back in to reverse the changes.

4. To disable Tablet mode (and to re-enable PC mode), click the Action Center icon again and then click on the Tablet Mode square. Your system will then change back to PC mode and the icons on the desktop will reappear.

Hope that helps!

Has Microsoft Security Essentials Improved?

Category: [Anti-Virus](#) From "askbobrankin.com".

Since MSE debuted in 2006, Microsoft had hyped it to the heavens as the first free antivirus protection built into Windows. Many users of Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7 (and now Windows 10) were persuaded to rely upon MSE as their only real-time antivirus protection. But in 2013, I called MSE an "EPIC FAIL." So has it gotten any better since then?

MSE: Still the Worst?

In October, 2013, I wrote an article titled [Microsoft Security Essentials: EPIC FAIL](#). At the time, my advice was this: "I can't say that [MSE](#) is worthless, but it's certainly not essential... with so many other excellent free alternatives, my advice is to avoid it or replace it."

Even though Microsoft touted MSE as a "free comprehensive security solution," they came out with a shocking and confusing [admission](#) that MSE was never intended to be a "category leader." MSE, according to Microsoft, provides just a "baseline" that better products should aim to beat. And they do, by wide margins.

Independent tests comparing over two dozen [antivirus products](#) in 2013 consistently ranked MSE dead last in protection against zero-day exploits, the kind of attacks that can only be detected by analyzing the behavior of suspect software. MSE also ranked near the bottom in detecting well-known viruses, a comparatively easy task. Only in "usability" did MSE fair well;

but “user-friendly software that doesn’t work well” seems like an oxymoron.



It's been two years since those reports. Has Microsoft Security Essentials (also known as Windows Defender in Windows 8 and higher) gotten any better?

MSE was replaced by an updated Windows Defender module in [Windows 8](#), which carries on into Windows 10. Originally an anti-spyware program that did not address viruses, the Windows Defender name pre-dates MSE. The Windows 8/10 version of Defender tackles viruses and real-time protection against zero-day threats. Is it better than [Microsoft Security Essentials](#)? Alas, no. In fact, Defender is more or less MSE under a different name. The two programs even use the same virus signature databases.

What Do Independent Test Labs Say?

The [June 2015 test results from AV-TEST](#) show that MSE/Defender still ranks dead last among the 21 products compared. The difference in overall ratings is enormous, too.

Defender scored 90% in AV-TEST’s “protection against zero-day threats” category in May, 2015, and actually fell to 85% in June. The average for all tested products is 98%. For detection of known viruses – the simplest job for any antivirus program – Defender scored 89% in May and 95% in June. The average score for all products is 99%.

Another independent test lab, [AV-Comparatives](#), [gave MSE an overall rating of just 4.7](#) out of 18 points, the lowest score of 21 products tested. Multiple competitors scored over 14.0, including Avira Antivirus Pro, Bullguard Internet Security, eScan Internet Security, Panda [Free Antivirus](#), and Quick Heal Total Security.

Microsoft’s Defender and MSE are not “baselines” of minimal adequacy in antimalware protection. They are, in my opinion, totally inadequate! Anyone relying upon either of these programs as their sole means of defense is making a mistake that could lead to big trouble.

And yet... Microsoft is STILL promoting Windows Defender as “all you need,” even in the new Windows 10. Here’s an example from a Windows 10 Technical Preview FAQ:

Q: What Anti-Virus should I install for Windows 10 Technical Preview?

A: You don't need to install any Anti-Virus program, because you already have one which is Windows Defender. It protects you against Virus, Worm, [Trojan](#), Spyware, Adware and other malicious programs same as what Microsoft Security Essentials is doing in Windows Vista and Windows 7.

There Are Better Alternatives

In response to the disgraceful test scores described above, Microsoft argues that the tests don’t measure the overall security of Windows itself. Windows Defender should be tested in conjunction with the SmartScreen anti-[phishing](#) filter built into Internet Explorer, as well as other security features baked into Windows 10.

But what if you want to use another browser? What if you don’t want the weakest link in your Internet security to allow one out of seven zero-day threats into your machine?

Well, then I suggest you install one of the top-rated anti-malware suites and disable the superfluous and inadequate MSE (Win XP/Vista/7) or Defender (Win 8/10). I've written recently about the [Best AntiVirus Software for 2015](#) and I also maintain a list of [Free Anti-Virus Programs](#).

I've suggested for years that any of those freebies, plus occasional scans with the free version of [MBAM](#) will do a fine job of protecting you.

Question of the month:

WHY DO THEY PUT BRAILLE ON THE DRIVE-THROUGH BANK MACHINES?