



Seasonal Hacks and Attacks

It's the season to be careful. In addition to all the other fake invoices and warnings arriving in email about urgent issues that don't actually exist, there are seasonal hoaxes. Watch out for:

- Fake charity scams. Don't donate through an email link. And watch out for recent-disaster relief donation scams, asking for donations, or worse, gift cards.
- Black Friday shopping deals. Third-party deal listings have to make money somehow. Good ones are just referral links, but many go to phishing scams, simply stealing payment information.
- Fake shipping notices. These may have dangerous attachments, or expensive fictional receipts that advise calling a number to reverse a false

charge; that call results in stolen card numbers.

- Gift card scams. Don't pay for anything with gift cards. For that matter, any message asking to pay a supplier in a way never used before is dangerous.

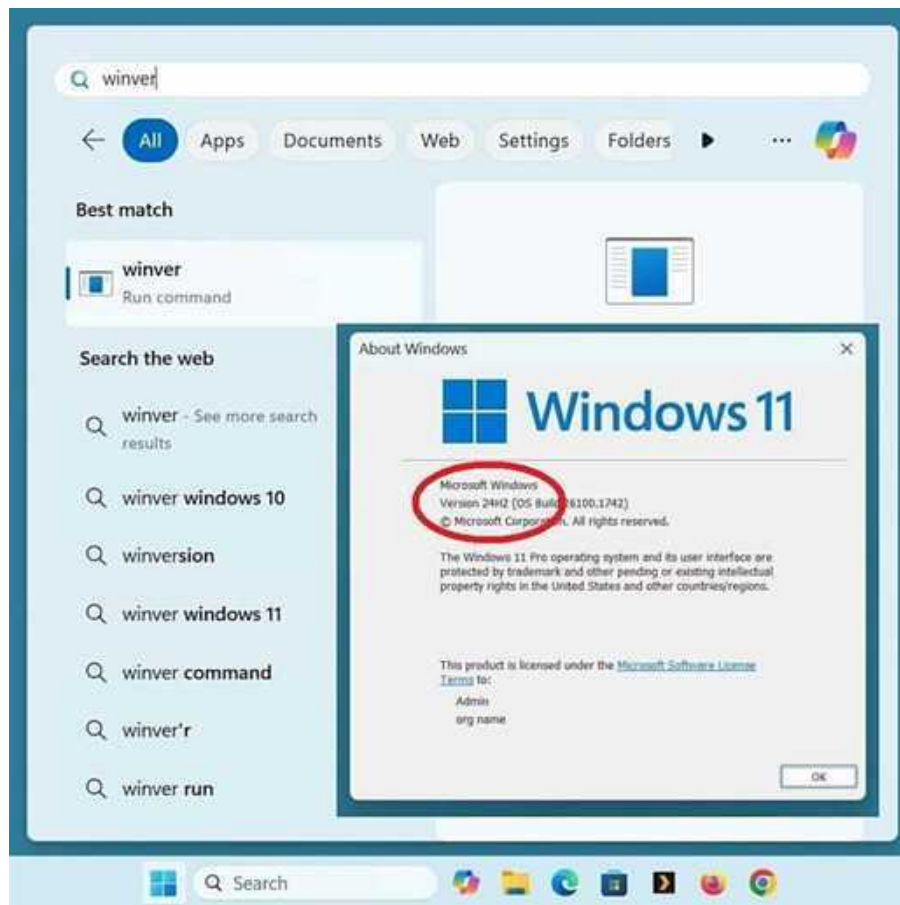
And as always, using a non-administrator Windows account for your daily work blocks over 90% of hacks and exploits. That's good, and it's also why the phishing attempts keep arriving; hacks rely on end users to click boxes and enter passwords. Be suspicious; big companies, especially online shopping, generally won't change payment methods in holiday season. When in doubt, ignore the emails and go directly to the site for your shopping.



Quick Tip: Don't Save Web Pages. Print Them to PDF

Shortcuts are good for keeping copies of web pages, but sometimes you need legal documentation of what a web site looked like on a specific date. Or you just want to save a recipe. The obvious-but-bad choice is to go into the browser menu and use that 'Save Page As...' command. Don't do that. What it does is rewrite the web page to work locally, and save it with a folder of graphics and other on-page junk. The result is a collection of files with extremely long names that will break backup software. It's a big and messy way to save anything.

Far better: Use the 'Print to PDF' printer selection to keep that page instead. It creates just one PDF file, which you name yourself, and which will work far more reliably than that 'saved' mess. And for the recipes, it's something you can email.



Windows 10 Updates have Ended

All versions of Windows 10 have reached the no-longer-patched stage. While there have been no widely-reported exploited hacks, hackers don't publish their work, and compliance regulations don't care whether an exploit exists—unpatched is out of compliance for PCI, HIPAA, and most other regulatory purposes.

The options for these machines, again, are:

- Upgrade to Windows 11 (Call for a free upgrade check, even if Windows says Not Eligible.)
- Add the Windows ESU (Extended Security Updates), for either \$30, for free for some users. That's a one-year-ONLY option. It's available (varies) in either the Windows Update page in Settings, or in the Microsoft Store, here:
<https://apps.microsoft.com/detail/9n87tz9kbj74?ocid=webpdshare&hl=en-US&gl=US>
- Add 0Patch instead. This is a third-party patching add-on for Windows 10, available for an annual price of 25 Euros, around US\$ 29, for each year. These will be available for 5 years.
<https://0patch.com/>

At this point, my recommendation is that the best option is to upgrade to 11. Otherwise, choose the Microsoft ESU if you're already using a Microsoft login on the computer; ESU will not install without an administrator-level Microsoft

account on the computer. If you don't have a Microsoft account on the system and don't want to add one, then choose OPatch, which is a very fast and easy install. The usual reminder applies: OPatch is a subscription product, for 25 Euros/year, that patches Windows 10 security and hotfix problems. You must login and cancel the auto-renewal when you no longer use the computer you've bought it for.

Here is a caution about Windows 10, even with the added patching. Some software doesn't check, know, or care that you've added additional patches. It just won't install on Windows 10, or tech support for these products will end their chats and calls as soon as they see Windows 10. Most products may work as long as you don't need new annual versions, or help from tech support. So far, these companies have announced Win 10 restrictions:

- TurboTax for tax year 2025 will not install.
- Quickbooks, no tech support.
- Pro System FX and other Wolters Kluwer tax software, no tech support. (effective Dec 7th, 2025)
- Adobe Creative Cloud
- Microsoft 365 apps, the web-page versions of Word, Excel, etc, will run, but will have no support available.
- In general, most software publishers will stop testing their products on Windows 10 soon, if they haven't already.

Windows 11 Versions Last Two Years Each

Windows 11 versions 23H2 and older are also no longer patched. Upgrade to version 24H2 or 25H2. The newer 25H2 has only been available for a few weeks, but it's a smaller annual feature upgrade than most, and behaving well, so I have no problem with using it for anything but servers. It's starting to arrive automatically in Windows Update, and can be allowed, but choose your reboot time; it's still a much longer-than-usual reboot, followed by the usual 'Hi! We're glad you're here!' messages that basically mean "first login of that user since an annual feature update was installed." It's OK to reboot at the end of a day, and let it work overnight. Laptops must be plugged in while updating, as always.



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