Lost and found: Windows 10's safe mode (excerpt)

By Tracey Capen, WindowsSecrets.com, 9/17/15

Windows 10 might be a significant improvement over Windows 8, but it still possesses some of its predecessor's dual personality. That's most evident in Windows system settings, but it's also true of some built-in troubleshooting tools.
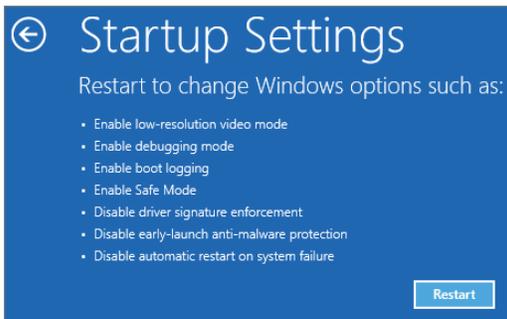
A workaround for accessing Windows safe mode

In brief, safe mode boots Windows with a limited set of essential drivers and startup files. Safe mode loads just enough to get Windows running. As noted in a Microsoft help page:

"Safe mode is useful for troubleshooting problems with programs and drivers that might not start correctly or that might prevent Windows from starting correctly.
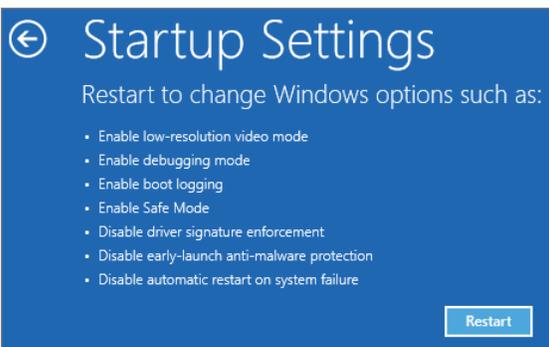
"If a problem doesn't reappear when you start in safe mode, you can eliminate the default settings and basic device drivers as possible causes. If a recently installed program, device, or driver prevents Windows from running correctly, you can start your computer in safe mode and then remove the program that's causing the problem."

Microsoft doesn't make it easy to access safe mode either in Windows 8 or 10. Here are some ways to start Windows 10 in safe mode.

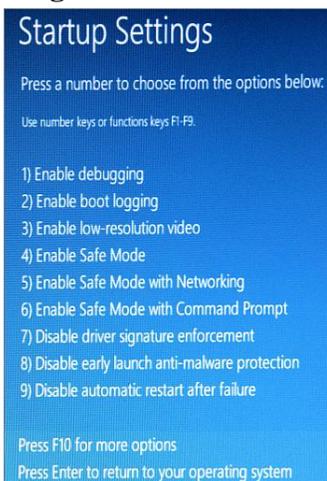
A quick launch of Win10 Troubleshoot

The easiest way to access them is to open the start menu and click the Power icon. Next, hold down the Shift key and click Restart. That will pop up the "Choose an option" window; select Troubleshoot and then Advanced. (An alternate route is to click Settings/Update & Security/Recovery/Advanced startup.) (Another alternate route is available after doing a Ctrl-Alt-Delete).

In the Advanced options window, select Startup Settings; you'll end up with the window shown in **Figure 1**. It merely describes what options you'll have. Click Restart.

At this point, your system will do a full restart. A second Startup Settings window then appears — with actual choices. As shown in **Figure 2**, pressing the #4 key enables safe mode. If you press it, Windows restarts again and opens with the classic minimalist look. (Interestingly, the safe mode window lists your current Windows build.)

Figure 1.

Rebooting out of safe mode returns your system to its standard startup format.

Again, after you're finished with safe mode, rebooting should return your Windows installation to its normal startup process.

Figure 2.