How to use System Restore in Windows 10

By Martyn Casserly | 28 Jun 2017 | techadvisor.co.uk

Experiencing problems with your Windows 10 PC? We show you how the built-in System Restore feature could be the solution.

Windows 10 has proven itself to be a very robust and reliable system. But, even the most carefully constructed software can run into trouble at times if an application goes rogue, files become corrupted, or other disasters strike.

In these instances it can be worth rolling back your system to a time when things where still working properly. This can be achieved with the System Restore feature that's built-in to Windows 10. We show you how to hit this virtual reset button and quickly get your PC back up and running. See also: Quick fixes for common Windows 10 problems

Back up your data!

When attempting any kind of restore or general system fix it's always very important to back up your data first. This can be either through the tools that are included with Windows, Cloud Storage Services, or third party software.

Take a look at our How to backup Windows 10 guide for some helpful ideas.

What is System Restore?

The idea behind System Restore is simple. While you use your PC, Windows is periodically taking a snapshot of your system (apps, data, and the OS itself) which it saves on your hard drive.
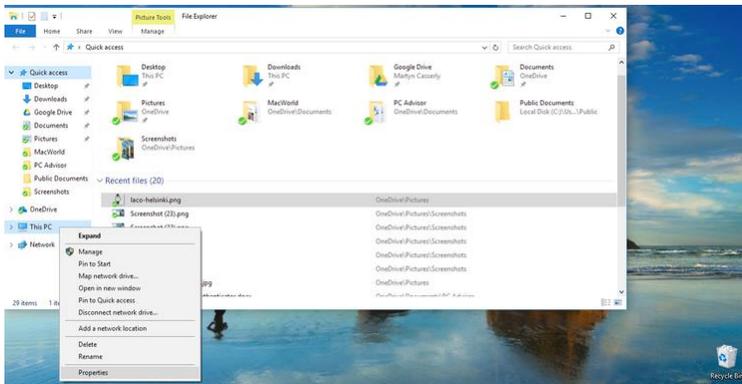
Then if you hit a point where you develop a problem, System Restore allows you to go back to a previous instance, before the troubles began, so you can salvage the situation.

The clever part is that your data - documents, images, and such - remain unmolested, whereas any apps you've installed after that point in time are removed. It can truly be a real life saver when things go wrong.
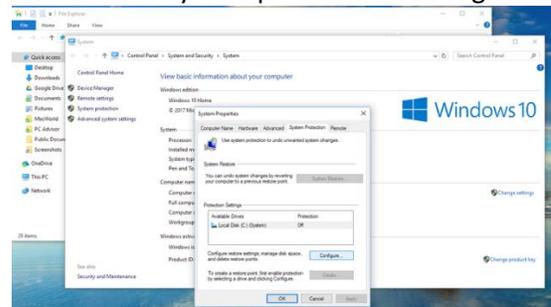

One downside though, and it's a pretty major one, is that there's a good chance you may never have turned the feature on in the first place.

Obviously this will be bad news if you need it now, as Windows will have no saved versions of your system to restore.
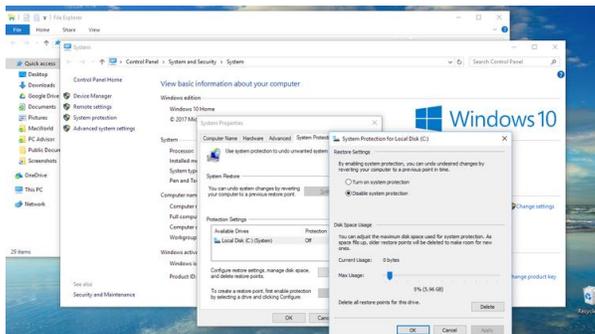
To ensure this doesn't happen in the future go to File Explorer, right click on This PC and select Properties
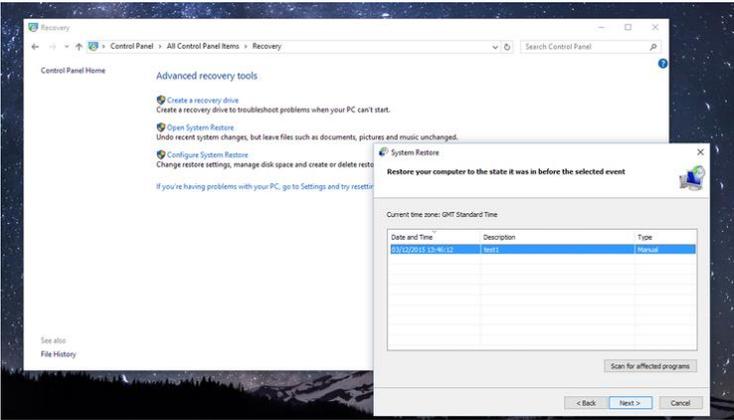
Now choose System protection > Configure

Make sure that you tick the *Turn on system protection* option, then set how much of your hard drive you want to allocate to System Restore.

Windows 10 takes up around 20GB of space, plus you'll want to make room for your data. So calculate accordingly. If you only have a small internal drive then you can always use an external one instead. When you're done click *OK*.

Now, at least, if you encounter problems going forward you'll know you have a safety net.
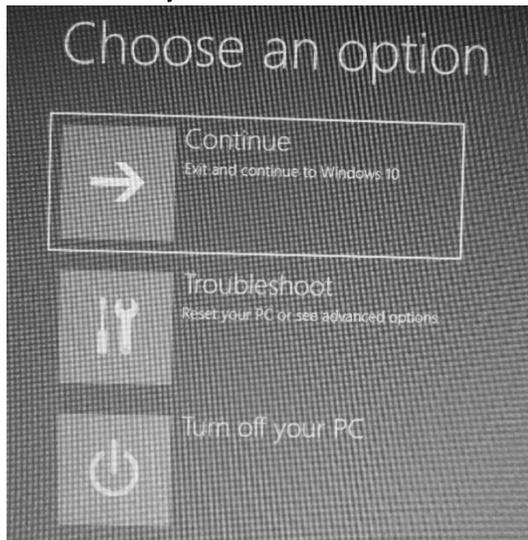
How to use System Restore from Settings

The easiest method is through the Settings menu. To do this open the Start Menu and type *Control Panel*, then select the top option. From Control Panel search for Recovery, and then navigate to *Recovery > Open System restore > Next*.

Here you'll be presented with a list of restore points. Choose the one you want, then select *Next > Finish* and Windows will restore that saved version of your system.

Tom: You can also create a restore point from this screen by clicking on Configure System Restore. Then click on the Create button.

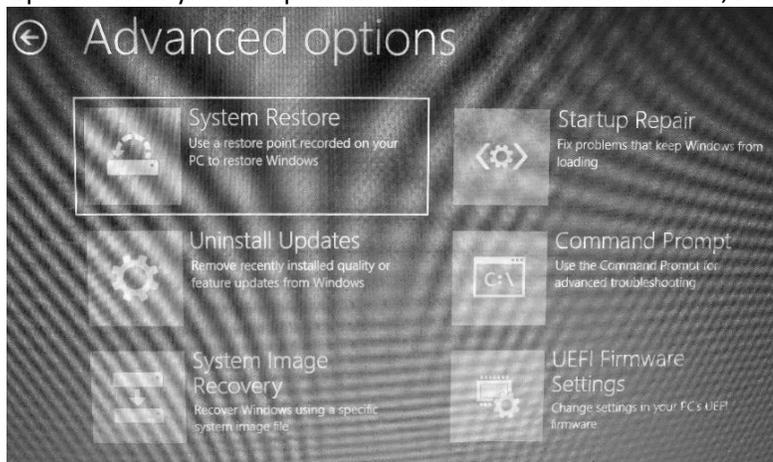**How to use System Restore from the Power options**

An alternative route is to launch the process by restarting your PC. This way you'll need to open the Start Menu, then while holding down the shift key click on *Power > Restart*.

Nothing will look different, but rather than the normal bootup sequence you should instead see a blue screen with the three options, one of which is *Troubleshoot*. Click this to begin the process.

Tom: If you go this route you will need to know your password. If you are using a PIN to sign on, it won't work here. If you get stuck doing this, just turn off the PC with the power button. When you power back on, you will have your usual start up procedure.

In the Troubleshoot menu you'll see two further options - *Reset this PC*, and *Advanced Options* - choose Advance Options. Now you'll be presented with several other choices, but the one to choose is *System Restore*.

Windows will now setup the restore process, and ask you which account you want to use. Select the relevant one, then enter your password.

Next you'll be taken to a list of all the System Restore points you have on your machine. Select the one that you want, click the *Scan for affected programs* option if you want to check with apps will be removed, then click *Next > Finish* and confirm that you want to restore this backup.

Windows will now complete the process, reboot, and should be good to go.

Hopefully this will solve any issues your PC was having, but if problems persist then it might be worth completely wiping your drive and installing a fresh copy of Windows.

Suggestion: If you are installing a new program/app, it would be a good idea to set a system restore point before you do the install. Then you can go back to your system as it was before the install if you need to.