

How Do I Factory Reset an HP Notebook Laptop to its Original Settings?

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For most people using a modern HP laptop, the go-to method is Windows Recovery. If your computer is still booting up normally, start there. But if you're staring at a screen that won't load, you'll need to use the F11 recovery shortcut during startup. There is also a third option called HP Cloud Recovery, which is available for many consumer models and lets you reinstall the exact HP factory image using a USB drive.

Method 1: Resetting Directly from Windows Settings

1. Back up your files first. This is the most important step. A full factory reset can wipe your apps, your settings, and even your personal photos or documents depending on which path you take. Microsoft strongly suggests saving anything you don't want to lose before you begin the process.
2. Open your Settings menu.
3. If you are on Windows 11, head to System > Recovery.
4. Look for Recovery options and click Reset PC. On Windows 10, you'll find this under Update & Security > Recovery > Reset this PC.
5. You will be asked to choose one of these:
 - Keep my files - This will reinstall Windows and keep your personal documents safe, but it's going to strip away your installed apps and reset your system settings.
 - Remove everything - This wipes the slate clean. It removes your files, apps, and settings. This is what you want if you're planning to sell the laptop or give it to someone else.
6. Next, you'll see two more choices:
 - Cloud download - This pulls a fresh, updated copy of Windows directly from Microsoft's servers.
 - Local reinstall - This uses the system files already stored on your laptop's hard drive.
7. Take a quick look at the summary, then hit Reset.
8. Now, just sit back and wait. The notebook is going to restart a few times while it works its magic.

Method 2: How to Reset if Windows Won't Boot

1. Start by shutting the laptop down completely.
2. Turn it back on and immediately start tapping the F11 key repeatedly until you see the recovery screen. This is the standard way to trigger the Windows Recovery Environment on HP systems when the OS is acting up.
3. Once the Choose an option screen pops up, go ahead and select Troubleshoot.
4. Select Reset this PC.
5. Just like before, choose between Keep my files or Remove everything.
6. Follow the prompts on the screen to finish the reset.

Method 3: Getting the "Out-of-Box" Experience with HP Cloud Recovery

If you want your laptop to feel exactly like it did the day you unboxed it-original HP software, drivers, and all-you should use HP Cloud Recovery. Just keep in mind this is mainly for supported consumer PCs. This tool lets you download a full recovery image onto a USB flash drive to start fresh.

1. You'll need a different, working Windows PC to download and open the HP Cloud Recovery Tool .
2. Follow the instructions to create a recovery USB using a blank flash drive.
3. Plug that USB into the HP notebook you're trying to fix.
4. Power it on and immediately start tapping F9 to pull up the boot menu. Select the USB drive from the list. This is how HP recommends booting from external recovery media.
5. Follow the setup prompts to reinstall the original factory image.

Quote: Important: If you are selling, recycling, or handing the laptop off to a new owner, always choose Remove everything. You don't want your personal data hanging around for the next person.

Which Option is Right for You?

- Go with Reset this PC if your laptop is working fine and you just want a fresh start.
- Use the F11 recovery shortcut if Windows is crashing or won't load at all.
- Use HP Cloud Recovery if you want all the original HP factory software and drivers back on the machine.

Why Your Laptop Might Not Look Exactly Like "Day One"

Here is something most people don't realize: the standard Reset this PC option in Windows mostly focuses on the operating system itself. It cleans up Windows, but it doesn't always bring back every single piece of "bloatware" or specialized HP software that came with the computer. That's why HP offers the Cloud Recovery tool. Microsoft treats a "Reset" as an OS refresh, while HP's own tools are designed to restore the entire factory image. Both work, but the results look a little different depending on what you're after.