Embracing Silicon Innovation, and support policy clarifications

Top questions and answers for Enterprise and OEM teams to leverage in response to customer questions

**Where can I read more about Microsoft’s approach to supporting the latest silicon innovation on Windows?**

We wanted to share more details on our recommendations for enterprise customers. As we’ve done since the beginning of our work with Windows 10, we want to communicate transparently with our customers on what they can expect from their experience on Windows. More information is available in our blog post: [Windows 10 Embracing Silicon Innovation.](https://blogs.windows.com/windowsexperience/2016/01/15/windows-10-embracing-silicon-innovation/)

**What is the support policy for prior generations of processors and chipsets on Windows 7 or Windows 8.1?**

Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 will continue to be supported for security, reliability, and compatibility on prior generations of processors and chipsets under the standard [support lifecycle for Windows.](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/lifecycle) This includes most devices available for purchase today by consumers or enterprises.

**What is the support policy for Intel’s 6th generation of processors (also known as Skylake) that was released in late 2015?**

Through July 17, 2017, new Skylake devices on the [supported list](http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/p/?LinkId=723118) will also be supported with Windows 7 and Windows 8.1. During the support period, these systems should be upgraded to Windows 10 to continue receiving support after the period ends. After July 2017, the most critical Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 security updates will be addressed for these configurations, and will be released if the update does not risk the reliability or compatibility of the Windows 7/8.1 platform on other devices.

For information about how to identify what generation of processor you may have, see Intel’s page on [processor numbers.](http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/processors/processor-numbers.html)

**Where can I find the list of Skylake devices supported on Windows 7 and Windows 8.1?**

Microsoft has published a listing of OEM web pages which list the [Skylake systems supported on Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 w](http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/p/?LinkId=723118)hich is regularly updated.

**What if my device is not on the Skylake support list?**

Only devices on the “Skylake support list” will be supported through the 18-month support period. We’re working closely with OEM partners to update the list of supported devices and will continue to do so over the coming weeks. Please check with your OEM vendor regarding the status of your device for the support list.

**Is Microsoft supportive of Skylake?**

We are excited about the innovation coming with Skylake and have worked very closely with Intel on the next generation of computing. Compared to Windows 7 PC’s, Skylake when combined with Windows 10, enables up to 30x better graphics and 3x the battery life\* – with the unmatched security of [Credential Guard](https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/mt483740%28v=vs.85%29.aspx) utilizing silicon supported virtualization. We and our partners are continuing to invest, innovate, and update to drive continued performance improvements across Windows 10 and Skylake devices.

*\*Based on Intel’s claims.*

**How does Microsoft plan to provide support for new processors and chipsets when they are released?**

As new silicon generations are introduced, they will require the latest Windows platform at that time for support. This enables us to focus on deep integration between Windows and the silicon, while maintaining maximum reliability and compatibility with previous generations of platform and silicon. For example, Windows 10 will be the only supported Windows platform on Intel’s upcoming “Kaby lake” silicon, Qualcomm’s upcoming “8996” silicon, and AMD’s upcoming “Bristol Ridge” silicon.

**What level of support does Microsoft deliver under the Extended support phase, and how does the support for Skylake devices differ?**

Until July 17, 2017 Microsoft will offer the same level of extended support for Skylake devices on Windows 7/8.1 by offering security updates, paid support, and help content. Non-security updates will not be offered for these devices running Windows 7/8.1. During the support period, these systems should be upgraded to Windows 10 to continue receiving support after the period ends. After July 2017, **the most critical** Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 security updates will be addressed for these configurations, and will be released if the update does not risk the reliability or compatibility of the Windows 7/8.1 platform on other devices.

**What are the differences between the levels of support offered under the support lifecycle for Windows, and what support is offered for Skylake devices after July 17, 2017?**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of support | Mainstream support phase | Extended support phase | Skylake support after  July 17, 2017 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Request to change product design and features |  |  |  |
| Security updates |  |  | Only the most critical updates\* |
| Non-security update support |  |  |  |
| Complimentary support included with license, licensing program or other no-charge support programs |  |  |  |
| Paid-support (including pay-per-incident Premier and Essential Support) |  |  |  |
| Product-specific information that is available by using the online Microsoft Knowledge Base or Support site at Microsoft Help and Support to find answers to technical questions |  |  |  |

 Available  Not available  Only available with Extended Hotfix Support through

Premier Support. Not available for Desktop Operating System consumer products or systems supported under the Skylake

transitionary support policy. For more information, see the [Support Lifecycle FAQ for Windows](http://aka.ms/winlifefaq)

*\* Through July 17, 2017, new Skylake devices on the* [*supported list*](http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/p/?LinkId=723118) *will also be supported with Windows 7 and Windows 8.1. During the support period, these systems should be upgraded to Windows 10 to continue receiving support after the period ends.* ***After July 2017, the most critical Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 security updates will be addressed for these configurations, and will be released if the update does not risk the reliability or compatibility of the Windows 7/8.1 platform on other devices.***

**Will “the most critical security updates” include all critical updates?**

Microsoft’s commitment is to delivering the most critical updates, a subset of the critical updates, that do not risk the reliability or compatibility of the Windows 7/8.1 platform on other devices. With Windows 7 now in extended support, we are focused on our commitment to deliver security, reliability, and compatibility to our installed base on their current systems. Redesigning Windows 7 subsystems to embrace new generations of silicon would introduce churn into the Windows 7 code base, and would break this commitment. As a result, we are unable to commit to delivering all critical security updates on Skylake devices.

**What is Microsoft’s definition of “critical updates”?**

Microsoft’s [security bulletin rating system](https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/security/gg309177.aspx?f=255&MSPPError=-2147217396) is used to define the severity of updates from Low, Moderate, Important, and Critical.

**What is the experience for devices downgraded by Volume Licensing customers to Windows 7, but are not on the Skylake support list?**

Only devices on the [Skylake support list](https://microsoft-my.sharepoint.com/personal/shadlar_microsoft_com/Documents/Redstone/aka.ms/skylake-support) will be supported. For more information regarding Microsoft's support lifecycle for Windows, please see the [Support Lifecycle FAQ.](http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/p/?LinkId=722733)

**How will Windows 10 LTSBs be supported?**

Windows 10 LTSBs will support the currently released silicon at the time of release of the LTSB. As future silicon generations are released, support will be created through future Windows 10 LTSB releases that customers can deploy for those systems. This enables us to focus on deep integration between Windows and the silicon, while maintaining maximum reliability and compatibility with previous generations of platform and silicon.

**Why do you need this Skylake support list now? Why don’t you just support all Windows 7/8 devices as you’ve done before when new silicon is introduced?**

* Next generation silicon introduces significant innovations and was designed for a new generation of computing, not for older versions of Windows, which were developed before any x86/x64 SOCs existed.
* For Windows 7 to run on Skylake, device drivers and firmware need to emulate Windows 7’s expectations for interrupt processing, bus support, and power states- which is challenging for Wi-Fi, graphics, security, and more.
* As partners make Skylake customizations to legacy device drivers, services, and firmware settings, customers are likely to see regressions with Windows 7 ongoing servicing.
* Along with our partners, we want to confidently recommend the best path forward for our customers so they can embrace innovation, with the reliability and compatibility their organization will require.

**If we support devices on “Skylake support list” until 7/17/2017, why can’t we support after through the W7/ 8.1 respective EOS date.**

The support provided between now and July 17, 2017 is a transitionary support period designed to give customers time to plan their deployments to Windows 10. During the 18-month support period, these systems should be upgraded to Windows 10 to continue receiving support after the period ends.

**How long will there be supply of the systems, based on the previous generation silicon? Will there be enough supply to last through W7 and W8.1 EOS respectively?**

We can’t provide commentary on hardware inventory on behalf of our hardware partners. We recommend you check with your OEM regarding the availability and support for both Skylake and non-Skylake systems.

**Is it true that Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 will no longer be available for sale by OEMs later this year?**

Last October, Microsoft announced the end of sale dates for Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 and communicated the dates on the [Windows Lifecycle Fact Sheet.](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/lifecycle) After October 31, 2016, Windows 7 Professional and Windows 8.1 products will no longer be licensed for preinstall on OEM devices.

**How will this policy change affect enterprise adoption? Will it slow it down?**

We do not believe this will slow the adoption of the new generation of computing. We’ve seen strong interest for Windows

10, which is the fastest adoption of Windows ever with more than 76% of our enterprise customers in active pilots and over

22 million (As of Jan 2016) devices running Windows 10 across business customers. The new innovation delivered by Skylake, alongside Windows 10, and our OEM partners is incredible. We expect our enterprise customers to embrace an innovative path forward, but will offer robust device options for those customers that wish to stay on Windows 7/8.1 and Skylake, as they plan their upgrade to Windows 10.

**What Windows 10 deployment resources can Microsoft provide for sharing with our external customers?**

* Plan your Windows 10 deployment <https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/mt240566>
* Introduction to Windows 10 Servicing <https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/mt598226(v=vs.85).aspx>
* Windows 10 IT Pro FAQ <https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/dn798755>

**Are things really that different with Skylake? Or is this just a sign of Microsoft’s lack of commitment to customers on older operating systems, part of your push to move people to Windows 10 and achieve your one billion goal?**

* The innovations delivered by Skylake are so advanced; they benefit from a new generation OS. There are many benefits to greater integration, such as dramatically improved graphics and battery life, which are only achieved through this integration. We believe this leap forward in innovation is good for our customers and the ecosystem.
* At the same time, this level of innovation creates challenges on older operating systems, which were never designed for Skylake. Skylake introduces significant innovations and was designed for a new generation of computing, not for older versions of Windows, which were developed before any x86/x64 SOCs existed.
* But, we know many of our customers continue to rely on Windows 7 for it’s well understood reliability and compatibility. For Windows 7 to run on Skylake systems, device drivers and firmware need to emulate Windows 7’s expectations for interrupt processing, bus support, and power states- which is challenging for Wi-Fi, graphics, security, and more. As partners make Skylake customizations to legacy device drivers, services, and firmware settings, customers are likely to see regressions with Windows 7 ongoing servicing.
* Along with our partners, we want to confidently recommend the best path forward for our customers so they can embrace innovation, with the reliability and compatibility their organization will require.

**So, are you seeing major issues on Skylake?**

* We believe Windows 10 and Skylake will deliver amazing experiences to our customers.
* As is common with any new silicon/hardware/software combination, we have seen a few issues which we are working hard to fix quickly, working closely with our partners, via a series of updates. We’ve already delivered updates that have dramatically improved power management and other initial issues.
* Windows 7 was never designed for Skylake, which introduces significant innovations and was designed for a new generation of computing, not for older versions of Windows, which were developed before any x86/x64 SOCs existed. For Windows 7 to run on any Skylake systems, device drivers and firmware need to emulate Windows 7’s expectations for interrupt processing, bus support, and power states- which is challenging for WiFi, graphics, security, and more. As partners make Skylake customizations to legacy device drivers, services, and firmware settings, customers are likely to see regressions with Windows 7 ongoing servicing.

**Can you summarize what changes have been made to your support policy for Windows 7 and Windows 8 on Skylake?**

With Windows 7 now in [extended support,](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/lifecycle) we are focused on our commitment to deliver security, reliability, and compatibility to our installed base on their current systems. Redesigning Windows 7 subsystems to embrace new generations of silicon would introduce churn into the Windows 7 code base, and would break this commitment. Today we are clarifying our Windows support policy:

* Windows 7 will continue to be supported for security, reliability, and compatibility through January 14, 2020 on previous generation silicon. Windows 8.1 will receive the same support through January 10, 2023. This includes most of the devices available for purchase today by consumers or enterprises.
* Going forward, as new silicon generations are introduced, they will require the latest Windows platform at that time for support. This enables us to focus on deep integration between Windows and the silicon, while maintaining maximum reliability and compatibility with previous generations of platform and silicon. For example, Windows 10 will be the only supported Windows platform on Intel’s upcoming “Kaby Lake” silicon, Qualcomm’s upcoming “8996” silicon, and AMD’s upcoming “Bristol Ridge” silicon.
* Through July 17, 2017, Skylake devices on the supported list will also be supported with Windows 7 and 8.1. During the 18-month support period, these systems should be upgraded to Windows 10 to continue receiving support after the period ends. After July 2017, the most critical Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 security updates will be addressed for these configurations, and will be released if the update does not risk the reliability or compatibility of the Windows 7/8.1 platform on other devices.

**Why are you limiting support to the Windows 7/8/Skylake supported list?**

We want to help our customers prepare for their Windows 10 upgrade. To do that, there will be specific new Skylake devices that will be supported to run Windows 7 and Windows 8.1. This approach ensures our customers can upgrade now to new devices their employees will love while preparing for a Windows 10 upgrade. This list will be posted online and continuously updated as we work closely with our partners.

**What is the criteria for OEMs to list devices on the support list for Windows 7/Windows 8 devices on Skylake?**

* For the listed systems, along with our OEM partners, we will perform special testing to help future proof customers’ investments, ensure regular validation of Windows Updates with the intent of reducing potential regressions including security concerns, and ensure all drivers will be on Windows Update with published BIOS/UEFI upgrading tools, which will help unlock the security and power management benefits of Windows 10 once the systems are upgraded.
* We’re grateful to the strong cooperation from our partners to support our customers. This is a new program designed to help our customers take advantage of the major innovations delivered in Skylake, with the reliability and compatibility their enterprises require.

**When will you publish the supported system list, and where?**

The support list is available [here,](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/skylake-support) and will continue to be updated as additional OEMs provide information about their supported devices over the coming weeks.

**How many devices are going to be on this list?**

We expect the list to be robust, currently with 100+ models of devices, offering many choices for our enterprise customers from a range of OEM partners.

**This is a big change for some enterprise customers. Is 18 months enough time for them to change their deployment plans?**

We’ve developed this approach with great feedback from our enterprise customers, OEM partners, silicon partners, and industry experts. The Internet has sped up the pace of innovation. Delivering Windows as a service for the first time with Windows 10 is one way we are embracing the ability to deliver innovation to our customers. Chip manufacturers, OEMs and others in the ecosystem are also embracing rapid innovation. The pace of innovation is changing the playbook and options for customers, but we continue to offer many options for customers who prefer the comfort of their existing environment.

**Do these changes impact consumers at all, or is this largely focused on the enterprise?**

Consumers typically buy the latest and greatest technology, so less applicable. Our enterprise customers have unique needs and plan their deployment cycles carefully, so this guidance is predominantly for them.

**Will these changes extend to other chips beyond Skylake?**

Yes. Going forward, as new silicon generations are introduced, they will require the latest Windows platform at that time for support. This enables us to focus on deep integration between Windows and the silicon, while maintaining maximum reliability and compatibility with previous generations of platform and silicon. For example, Windows 10 will be the only supported Windows platform on Intel’s upcoming “Kaby Lake” silicon.

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