

Windows Activation Issues

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FAQ: How do I resolve issues with activating Windows 10 or 11 using a product key?

Issue:

Users may encounter various errors when trying to activate Windows 10 or 11 with a product key. Below are the most common activation errors:

Common Activation Errors:

1. **"The product key is in use" error**

This error occurs when the product key has been previously used or registered on another device. In some cases, this could be a false positive.

2. **"Windows can't activate. Try again later" error**

This issue is usually caused by a temporary server problem or network-related issues.

3. **"The product key you entered didn't work" error**

This error may occur if the product key entered is incorrect or meant for a different version of Windows.

4. **"This copy of Windows is not genuine" error**

This can occur if the installed Windows copy is not legitimate or has been flagged by Microsoft.

5. **"Windows is activated with a digital license linked to your Microsoft account" error**

If you are trying to activate Windows on new hardware, this error may appear if the activation is tied to a previous device.

6. **Windows 10 Home Activation Failure due to missing .NET Framework**

In some cases, Windows 10 Home fails to activate because the .NET Framework is not installed.

7. **Windows 10 Activation Failure due to missing Microsoft Store**

Sometimes, activation may fail if the Microsoft Store is not installed.

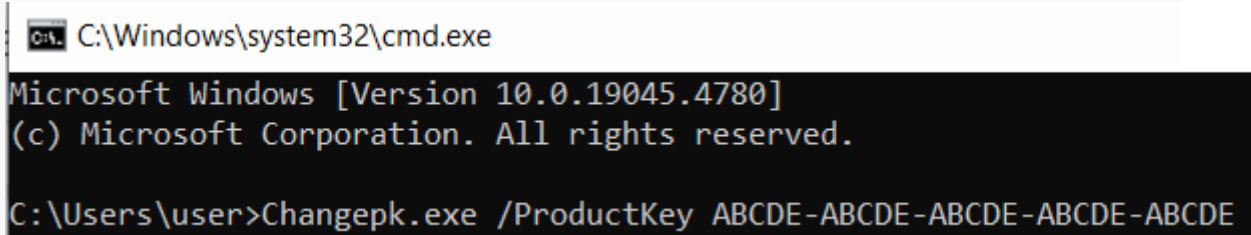
Common Solution for Most Errors:

For most of the errors mentioned above, the following command can help resolve product key-related issues:

Solution:

1. Open **Command Prompt** with administrative privileges:
 - Press the **Windows key**, search for "cmd," right-click, and select **Run as administrator**.
2. In the Command Prompt, enter the following command:

```
Changepk.exe /ProductKey XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX
```



The screenshot shows a Windows Command Prompt window. The title bar indicates the path C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe. The window content shows the Microsoft Windows version (10.0.19045.4780) and copyright information. The command prompt shows the user 'user' at the C:\Users\user directory. The command entered is 'Changepk.exe /ProductKey ABCDE-ABCDE-ABCDE-ABCDE-ABCDE'.

Replace `XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX` with your actual product key.

Press **Enter** to apply the product key. This should resolve the issue.

Specific Solutions:

1. For "Windows can't activate. Try again later" error:

If the issue persists after using the `Changepk` command, it might be due to server or network problems.

Additional Solution:

- Ensure you have an active internet connection.
- Retry the activation process after a few minutes.
- If it continues to fail, try activating Windows using the **Phone Activation Method**:
 - Press **Windows key + R** and type `slui 4` into the Run dialog.
 - Follow the on-screen instructions to activate Windows by phone.

2. For "This copy of Windows is not genuine" error:

If using a legitimate product key, follow these steps:

Additional Solution:

- Ensure you are using a **genuine product key**.
 - If you purchased the key from a third party, verify its authenticity with the vendor or Microsoft.
 - If necessary, reinstall a genuine version of Windows.
-

3. For "Windows is activated with a digital license linked to your Microsoft account" error:

If you've changed hardware, the digital license may not transfer automatically.

Additional Solution:

- Sign in to your Microsoft account linked to your previous activation.
 - Use the **Activation Troubleshooter**:
 - Go to **Settings > Update & Security > Activation**.
 - Click **Troubleshoot**, then follow the steps to re-activate Windows using your digital license.
-

4. For Windows 10 Home Activation Failure due to missing .NET Framework:

In some cases, activation fails because the .NET Framework required for certain activation processes is not installed.

Solution:

- **Install Windows Updates**:
 - Press **Windows key + I** to open **Settings**.
 - Go to **Update & Security > Windows Update**.
 - Click **Check for updates** and install any pending updates.
 - Once the updates and .NET Framework are installed, retry the activation process.
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5. For Windows 10 Activation Failure due to missing Microsoft Store:

Sometimes activation can fail because the **Microsoft Store** is not installed on the computer.

Solution:

- **Reinstall Microsoft Store:**

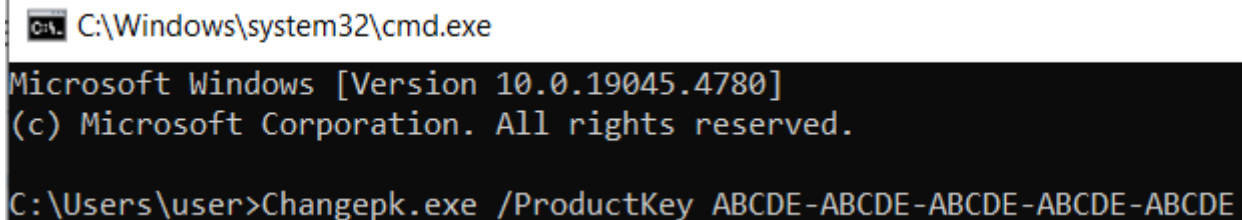
- You can download and run a script to reinstall the Microsoft Store.
- [Download this script to reinstall the Microsoft Store](#) before continuing with activation.
- After reinstalling the Microsoft Store, retry the activation process.

Upgrading Windows 10/11 Home to Windows 10/11 Pro

Upgrading from Windows Home to Pro can be done during the Out of Box Experience (OOBE) or after setup. Below are the different methods for upgrading:

Option 1: During OOBE (Out of Box Experience)

- Press the **FN** KEY Once. (This will ensure that the F1 - F12 Keys are active)
- **Press Ctrl + Shift + F10** to open Command Prompt.
 - If Command Prompt does not show up, press **Win + R** to open the Run dialog, type `cmd`, and press Enter to manually open Command Prompt.
- **Enter the upgrade key** using the following command in the Command Prompt:
- **Changepk.exe /ProductKey XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX**



```
C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe
Microsoft Windows [Version 10.0.19045.4780]
(c) Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

C:\Users\user>Changepk.exe /ProductKey ABCDE-ABCDE-ABCDE-ABCDE-ABCDE
```

Replace `xxxxx-xxxxx-xxxxx-xxxxx-xxxxx` with your actual upgrade key.

Option 2: Ctrl + Shift + F3 Method

1. Press the **FN** KEY Once. (This will ensure that the F1 - F12 Keys are active)
2. Press **Ctrl + Shift + F3** to boot into audit mode. This will skip the OOBE and allow you to perform administrative tasks before the user account is created.
3. **Open Activation Settings** and click **Change Product Key**.
 - Enter the upgrade key to initiate the upgrade.

4. After updating, you may encounter a situation where you are locked out of your account. In this case:
 - **Restart** the computer instead of shutting it down.
 - You will be logged back into your account automatically.

Note: If you see a blank screen, wait for a few minutes to ensure all updates are completed, and then force shutdown the computer.

Option 3: Regular Mode Upgrade

If you're already in the regular user mode of Windows (not during OOBE or audit mode):

1. **Go to Activation Settings:**
 - Press **Windows key + I** to open **Settings**.
 - Navigate to **Update & Security > Activation**.
 - Click **Change Product Key**.
2. **Enter the upgrade key** in the prompt.
3. If you encounter any issues, you can open **Command Prompt** with administrative privileges and enter the following command to apply the key manually:

```
Changepk.exe /ProductKey XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX
```

Replace `XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX` with your upgrade key.