

What is the command to reset a Windows installation without deleting any files

Asked 3 years, 1 month ago Modified 3 years ago Viewed 9k times

41

I want to sell a pc and have reinstalled Windows 10 and afterwards I installed the correct GPU driver. Now I want to reset the pc so when it gets turned on the next time the windows first-time configuration comes up, but the already installed GPU driver should NOT be removed. I know that this is possible and have done it multiple times already, but I don't remember the command and can't find it anywhere.

11

windows-10

command-line

cmd.exe

reset

factory-defaults

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edited Apr 9, 2019 at 10:26



glglg

1,419 11 23

asked Apr 7, 2019 at 16:18



QuesterDesura

724 6 11

- 13 This is a really confusing title, since hitting the reset button of a PC doesn't delete files.
– David Richerby Apr 8, 2019 at 17:03

I don't think so. If you search for 'reset pc', then you won't find a single answer, that will not explain you how to reset your windows installation to factory defaults, thus removing all installed applications. As found here: support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/17085/... "Reset your PC to reinstall Windows but delete your files, settings, and apps—except for the apps that came with your PC."
– QuesterDesura Apr 8, 2019 at 18:40

- 1 @QuesterDesura Win10 actually has a reset that should preserve drivers, but that's quite different from the OOBE you're looking for. – Bob Apr 9, 2019 at 4:27

@Bob *Where are you getting your information from, as it's factually incorrect.* Using Windows 10's Reset functionality removes all user accounts and files, booting to OOBE upon completion. It appears you may be confusing "Refresh" with "Reset" and can view screenshots of the entire Reset procedure, showing it booting to OOBE here: [How to: Perform a clean install using Reset this PC in Windows 10](#) – JW0914 Apr 14, 2019 at 11:53

@JW0914 Oh, I don't know, perhaps [the official documentation](#)? I am most certainly not confusing *refresh*, which *does not exist in Windows 10* (rather, it was folded into "reset"). That said, the actual preservation of drivers is somewhat more complex (you'd need an in-place upgrade first to "lock" the drivers in) and, again, not what the asker was looking for here, hence the comment instead of an answer. – Bob Apr 14, 2019 at 14:42

2 Answers

Sorted by:

After searching for a whole hour I found the solution: `sysprep` .

61 Enter this is in the command line and it will shutdown your PC after confirming. The next time you start your PC it will look like a fresh install.

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edited Apr 7, 2019 at 20:17



Kamil Maciorowski

58.7k 22 106 157

answered Apr 7, 2019 at 16:28



QuesterDesura

724 6 11

5 A fresh install doesn't come with the GPU driver, what does the command do, then? – Aritz Apr 8, 2019 at 6:12

@XtremeBiker docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-hardware/manufacture/desktop/... – ErikE Apr 8, 2019 at 6:37

5 It will look like a fresh install(out-of-box experience - OOBE) when you power on the PC again, but the installed software/drivers will still be there after doing the "first time startup" configuration. The link from @ErikE links to a specific option of sysprep "Generalize", but it is optional. The general command is described here: docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-hardware/manufacture/desktop/... – QuesterDesura Apr 8, 2019 at 8:03

2 **This is *not* the way to reset Windows** and will lead to issues depending on what 3rd party software licenses the user has. [SysPrep](#) is used to generalize a Windows install to allow imaging of the install for cloning to workstations, VMs, etc., removing machine specific IDs from the Windows install, including drivers (also problematic since certain drivers, such as chipsets, must be installed prior to any other drivers or Windows Updates). Correct way: `systemreset -cleanpc` – JW0914 Apr 13, 2019 at 19:49

Again, the `sysprep` command only generalizes the pc when an additional parameter `/generalize` is given, it is entirely optional to remove machine specific IDs(docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-hardware/manufacture/desktop/...). Please actually read the documentation before spreading false information. `systemreset -cleanpc` will not lead to the desired behavior as described in the question. – QuesterDesura Apr 28, 2019 at 18:17

0 *This shouldn't be necessary, as Windows 10 will auto install all WHQL drivers required by the hardware upon running Windows Update (exception is Chipset drivers)*

The only way to ensure the GPU driver is permanently included (in this scenario) is to:

1. Install a previous version of Windows 10 (*v1809, v1803, etc.*)
2. Install the GPU driver
3. Update to v1903 (*any version newer than one installed*)
4. Perform a [Reset](#) via:

- **CLI:**

```
systemreset -cleanpc
```

- **GUI:**

- *Settings > Update & Security > Recovery > Reset this PC*

- **Recovery:**

- Click the **Power Button**, hold down SHIFT and select **Restart**
 - Once Recovery Menu loads, select **Troubleshoot**, then **Reset your PC**
-