

COMPUTER GURU

By Don Benjamin

Operating System Updates and Security Patches

Microsoft and Apple roll out new editions of their operating systems (“OS”) each fall that include new features, improved reliability, and better security. They also issue minor updates—sometimes called “patches”—throughout the year that fix minor bugs, and obscure, but potentially harmful, security flaws that users report to Microsoft and Apple. And that’s why it’s important (as in REALLY important) that your computers and mobile devices are running the latest OS edition available, and that you install patches as soon as they’re issued.

Same “Look and Feel”

Windows, MacOS, iOS, and Android operating systems are mature, stable, and consistent from year to year. Changes to the “user interface”—the look and feel—are mostly subtle. Your icons and folders won’t change, and you won’t lose any data. New “dark mode” settings can be easier on the eyes. Improvements to Edge and Safari make web browsing quicker and easier. Under the hood, these new OS editions keep your data more secure, improve file handling efficiency, and help ensure you are actually the person using your computer.



What’s the “Operating System?”

The operating system is software that manages your computer or mobile device. It runs applications when you tell it to, displays stuff on your screen, and manages your documents on your internal drive. It asks for a password when you turn on your device, connects to the internet, and sends documents to your printer. It keeps your disk drive working efficiently, your battery charged, and keeps the little clock at the top or bottom of your screen accurate. And it helps keep your computer safe from running malware that will ruin your day.

This table lists the current operating systems as of October 2, 2018:

Company	OS Name	Latest Major Edition	Devices
Microsoft	Windows	Windows 10 “October 2018 Update”	Computers and tablets
Apple	Mac OS	Version 10.14, “Mojave”	Computers
	iOS	iOS 12	iPads and iPhones
Google	Android	9.0, “Pie” ¹	Tablets and smart phones

Windows, MacOS, iOS 12, can be set to update automatically, which is a jim-dandy idea. Google updates some parts of Android automatically, but major edition updates are managed by the device maker (e.g., Samsung, LG, etc.)

If you need help figuring out which operating system you have, or need help with any of these apps, visit our Technology Lab on Tuesdays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Wednesdays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., or Fridays from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

¹ The device manufacturer controls which version of Android.