

Difference between Shutdown and Restart on Windows 11

In Windows 11, Shutdown uses Fast Startup by default, preserving parts of the system state for quicker boot, while Restart performs a full reset, clearing all processes and drivers for a clean start. In another words, Fast Startup (enabled by default) means Shutdown doesn't fully power off the system. It saves the Windows kernel in a hibernation file to speed up boot time. Restart, on the other hand, clears all memory, drivers, and system processes, ensuring a fresh start. This is why updates and troubleshooting often require a restart.

There are instances where the users do not restart and just shutdown their machine when they knock off from work and power on when they start work. And the affected machine uptime is almost more than four weeks and processes started to stall with symptoms like being unable to print or unable to access certain applications as well as the Internet. It is recommended to restart your machine at least once a week. It is also a good habit to update all your software before the reboot.

If you want Shutdown to behave like a full power-off:

1. Open Control Panel → Power Options
2. Click Choose what the power buttons do
3. Click Change settings that are currently unavailable
4. Uncheck Turn on fast startup
5. Save changes

If you want to know how long your machine has been running without a restart:

1. Press Ctrl + Shift + Esc to open Task Manager.
2. Go to the Performance tab.
3. Select CPU on the left.
4. Look at the Uptime field at the bottom. It shows how long the system has been running since the last boot.

Feature	Shutdown	Restart
Fast Startup	Enabled by default; saves kernel state	Bypassed; performs full kernel reload
System State	Partially preserved (hybrid hibernation)	Fully cleared
Boot Speed	Faster due to saved kernel	Slower but cleaner
Driver/Process Reset	Not fully reset	Fully reset
Use Case	Daily power-off, quick boot	Troubleshooting, applying updates