

Microsoft to permanently close all of its retail stores

Microsoft is giving up on physical retail. Today to permanently close all Microsoft Store locations in the United States and around the world, except for four locations that will be “reimagined” as experience centers that no longer sell products.

Those locations are New York City (Fifth Ave), London (Oxford Circus), Sydney (Westfield Sydney), and the Redmond campus location. The London store only just opened about a year ago. All other Microsoft Store locations across the United States and globally will be closing, and the company will concentrate on digital retail moving forward. Microsoft says Microsoft.com and the Xbox and Windows storefronts reach “up to 1.2 billion monthly customers in 190 markets.”

The company tells *The Verge* that no layoffs will result from today’s decision. “Our commitment to growing and developing careers from this diverse talent pool is stronger than ever,” Microsoft said in its LinkedIn post on the move.

The decision partially explains why Microsoft had yet to reopen a single store after they were all closed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Last week, Microsoft told *The Verge* that its “approach for re-opening Microsoft Store locations is measured and cautious, guided by monitoring global data, listening to public health and safety experts, and tracking local government restrictions.” The company declined to offer an update on when any stores might open again.

Microsoft's store in London.

Photo by Tom Warren / The Verge

Since many Microsoft stores are in shopping centers and malls, the continued closure hasn't stood out as unusual. In US states that are taking a cautious approach to restoring retail operations – to avoid a resurgence of the novel coronavirus – most malls remain closed. There have already been spikes of COVID-19 cases in regions with more relaxed guidelines, which has led Apple to re-close some stores where it had only recently welcomed customers back in.

In April, Microsoft outlined in a blog post how many retail store associates had shifted to remote work after their everyday jobs were sidelined. The company has continued to provide regular pay for team members through the pandemic. "Our retail team members will continue to serve customers working from Microsoft corporate facilities or remotely and we will continue to develop our diverse team in support of the overall company mission and objectives," the company said in today's update.

The Microsoft Store debuted in 2009 and closely adhered to Apple's successful retail playbook. Each store is a showcase for the company's Surface and Xbox hardware, plus a selection of third-party PCs. Employees were well-versed in all things Windows, and the company also offered in-store events, workshops, customer service, and repairs.

Update June 26th 9:50AM ET: The article has been updated to clarify that all Microsoft retail stores will be closing. The company's locations in New York, London, Sydney, and Redmond will be converted into experience centers that do not sell products.

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