

What's new in Windows 10 Build 2004

Enlarge / One upside of Windows 10 2004: You won't find old install CDs all over the office two decades from now.

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The Internet may have fun trying to guess the next natural feature of California or animal alliteration name for the other major operating systems, but Windows build naming conventions can be downright hard to parse. The latest officially released build was originally known as 20H1—meaning the first half of 2020. As it got closer to release status, it received its official build number: 2004, meaning April 2020. However, it didn't *actually* hit release status for another month, on May 27.

Maybe that's all indicative of what awaits users when they finally upgrade to Windows 10 2004; this is *not* Microsoft pumping out major changes like its debut of Windows 2000 roughly two decades ago. Still, a new Windows release is a new Windows release. So we recently spun up a fresh VM with a clean install of Build 2004 to take a look at its new features.

Edge, Installation size, Search,

and Kaomoji

- The first, and saddest thing we noticed about Windows 10 2004 is that it still doesn't come with the new Edgium—clean installs still provide the legacy version of Edge.

Jim Salter

- A clean install of Windows 10 2004 consumes 14.0GiB of hard drive space. This is before any Windows Updates, let alone application installations.

Jim Salter

- The Web pane of a standard Windows-key search result has a new and updated design. It looks pretty nice, if you're into searching the Internet from your start menu.

Jim Salter

- Did you know that Windows provides easy access to emoji? OK, fine, you're one of the cool kids—but did you know it provides easy access to *kaomoji*?

Jim Salter

The very first thing we noticed after a fresh install of Build 2004 was Edge. To be specific, Legacy Edge. You'll still need to go out of your way to install the new and improved Chromium-based Edge, which we're going to keep calling "Edgium" until the legacy version finishes going away.

Using Windirstat to pull a directory treemap on the brand-new Windows 10 2004 installation, we see 14GiB used. It's worth noting that this 14GiB is *before* either installing any applications, or—and this is important—hitting Windows Update.

Windows Update will still tend to bloat up the operating system pretty rapidly, and the SxS directory in particular still balloons with legacy versions of code that has been replaced in security upgrades. Unfortunately, you cannot remove any of that without damaging your OS. There are methods to reduce the size of SxS (pronounced Side by Side) somewhat, but they're limited and kind of a pain in the butt. Even the

optimized results still get inexorably larger over time.

Although there's no Edgium, 2004's Internet access did get modernized in one unexpected place—the Start menu. We're not really big fans of searching the Internet directly from a Start menu—we prefer a little more logical separation between what's local and what's remote. If you're into that, though, you can do things like type “weather” into the Start bar and get attractively formatted Internet results directly in the menu itself *without* ever opening a real browser.

Speaking of search, Microsoft says it noticed how commonly people were turning its Search Indexer service off, so the company took several steps to try to convince users to turn this back on. Microsoft's search indexer now recognizes many new signals of high disk activity—or potential high disk activity—that trigger it to either slow down or entirely pause its disk activity:

- Gaming mode is on
- Power savings mode is on
- Low power mode is on (constrained mode or connected standby)
- The device is waking up after being in low power mode or in a log-on state
- Device goes from AC > DC
- CPU usage goes above 80 percent
- Disk usage goes above 70 percent
- The device's battery charge is less than 50 percent
- The device's display state goes to screen off

Microsoft pretty aggressively polls its Windows Insiders running preview builds, and it says that the results of pop-up dialogs asking Insiders why they'd disabled Search Index showed significant improvement after the new signals were in place.

Beyond Internet and search, what else is new? Emoji and

kaomoji. If you've been using the smileyface button in social media sites to get access to emoji from your Windows PC or laptop, you're doing it wrong. Any standard graphical text interface on Windows—including Notepad—provides direct access to emoji by using the keyboard shortcut [Windows key] + [.]

The [Windows key] + [.] shortcut to bring up an emoji selection panel is pretty old news—it has been in Windows since Build 1803. And in Build 1903, the emoji panel added kaomoji support. Kaomoji are traditional, generally elaborate text-mode constructions such as the ``\_(\_)/`` shruggie. Build 2004 adds significantly to the kaomoji section of the emoji panel, adding classics like `☹(¬_¬)☹` and `(n^o^)>—☆` to its repertoire.

Listing image by Jim Salter

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