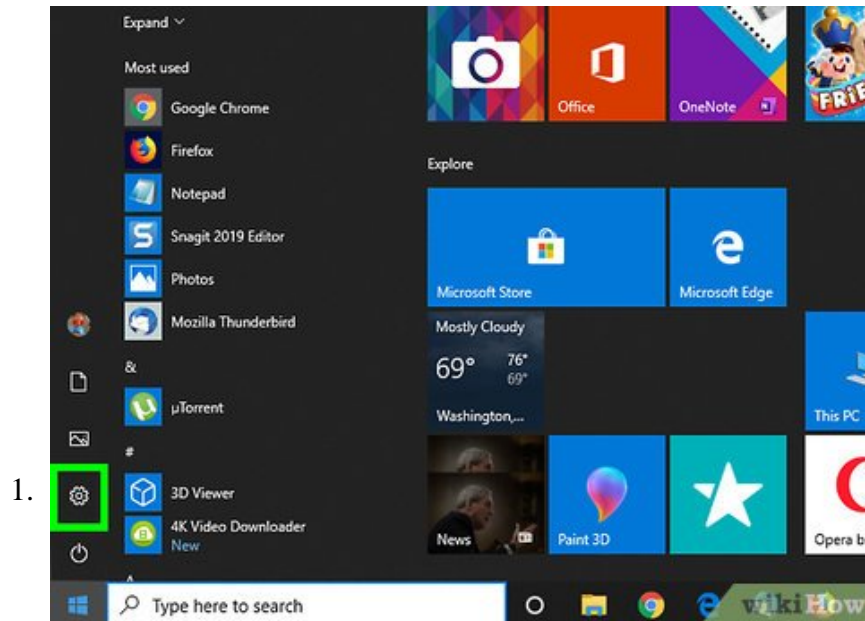


# How to Format Windows

This wikiHow teaches you how to format any hard drive connected to your Windows 10 PC. If you just want to format one drive connected to the PC, you can do so using the Disk Management tool. If you want to completely erase all data,...

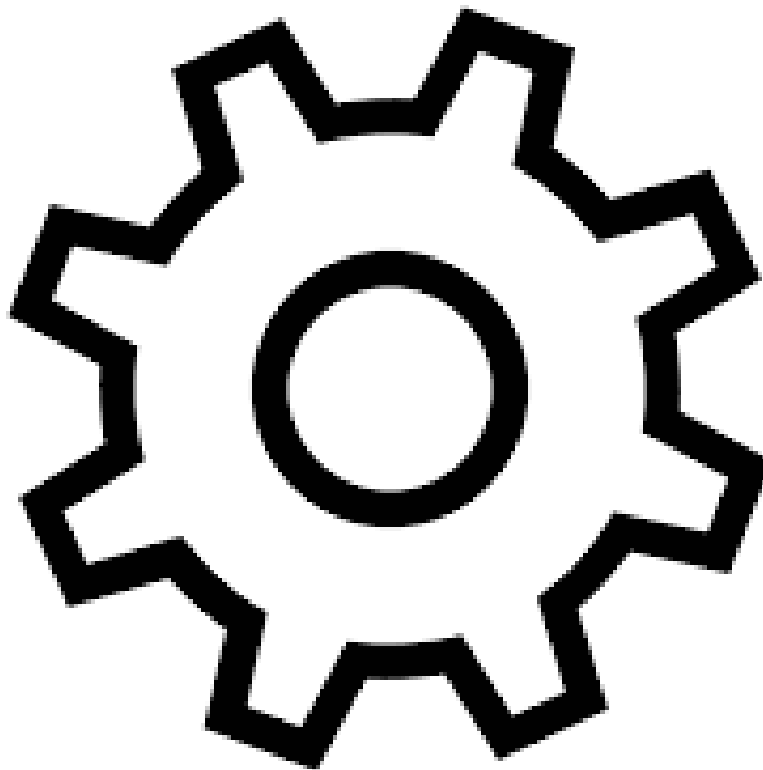
Method 1 of 2:

## Deleting All Data and Reinstalling Windows

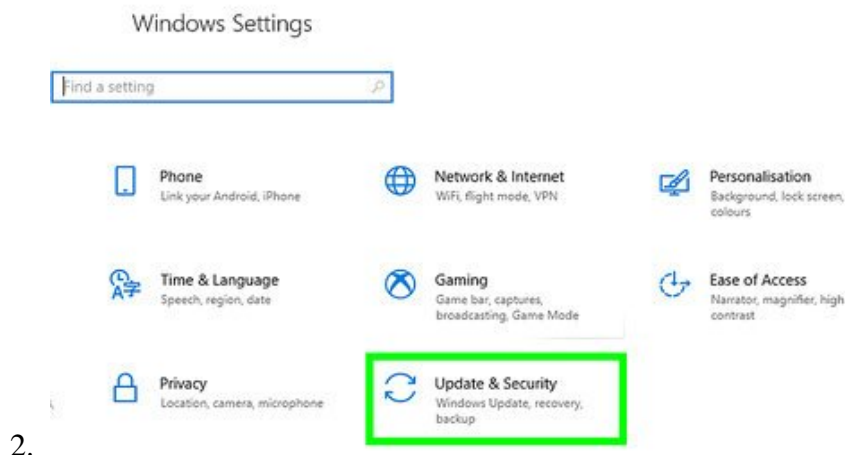


1.

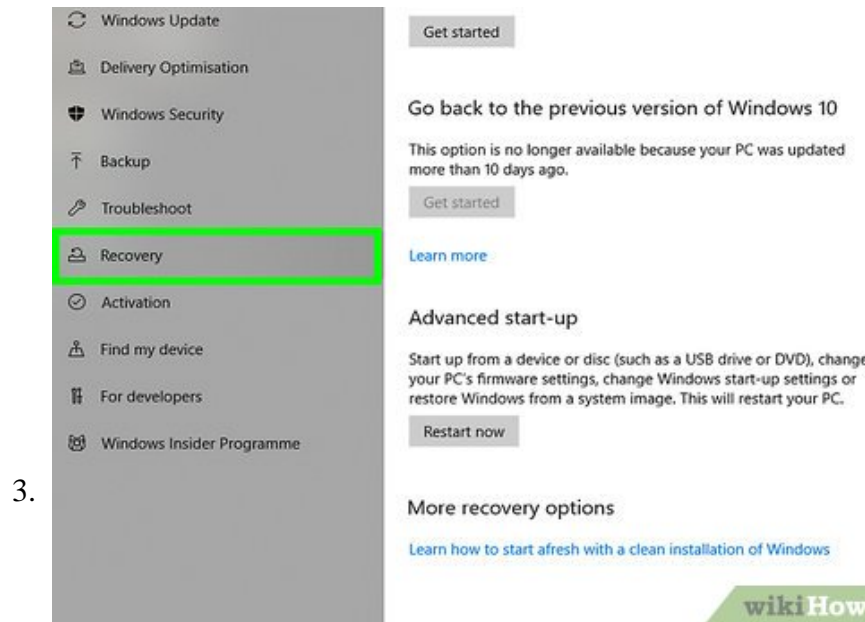
Open your Windows Settings



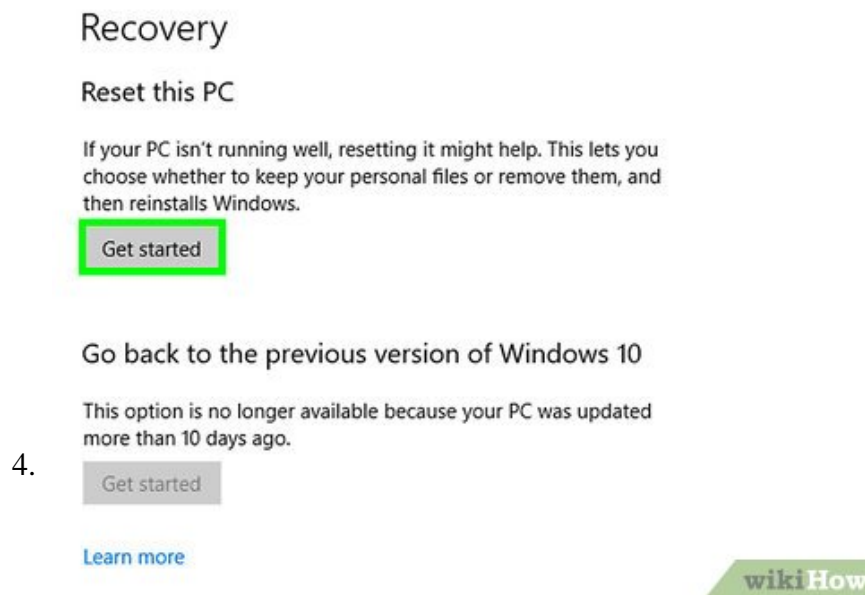
- . You'll find its gear icon in the Start menu near the bottom-left corner.<sup>[1]</sup>
  1. Formatting can take while (sometimes hours) depending on your hard drive(s). Make sure your computer is plugged into a reliable power source so the formatting process is not interrupted.
  2. If you can't sign in to the PC, boot to the sign-in screen and press ? **Shift** as you select **Power** > **Restart**. When the PC comes back up, select **Troubleshoot**, then **Reset this PC**, and then skip to step 5.



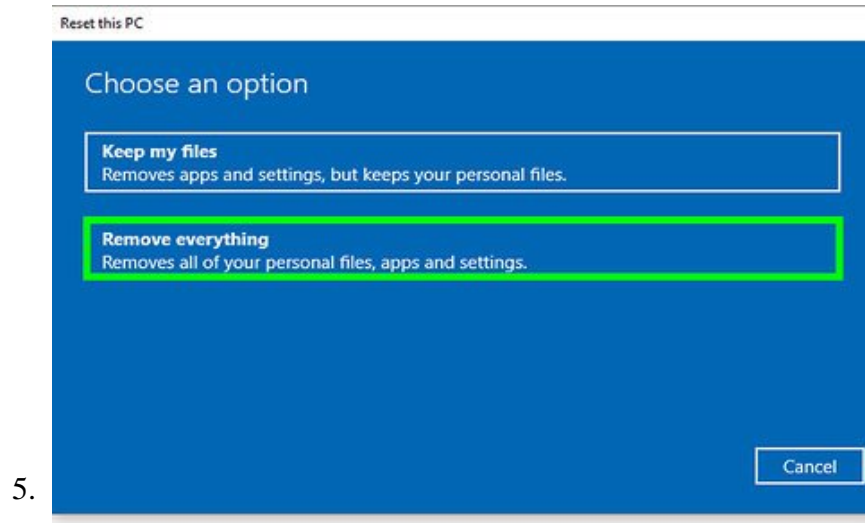
Click **Update & Security**. It's the option with two curved arrows.



Click **Recovery** in the left panel. Your recovery options will appear in the right panel.

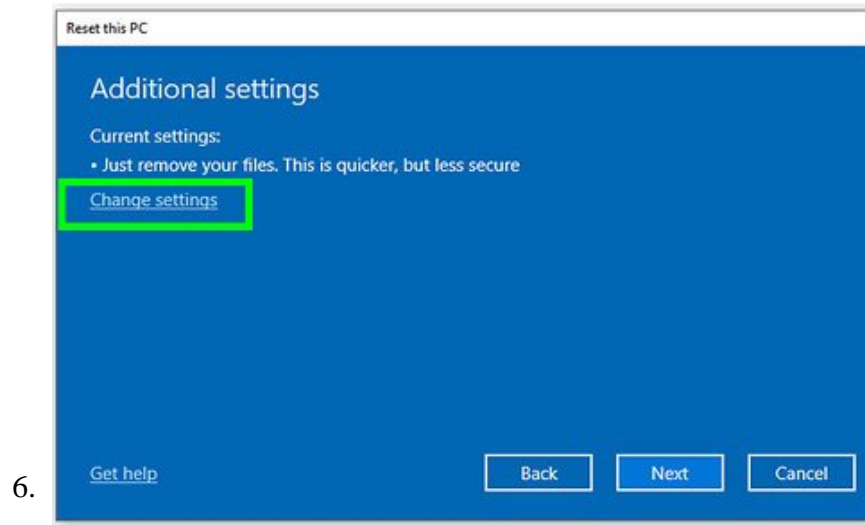


Click **Get Started** under "Reset This PC." It's the first button in the right panel.



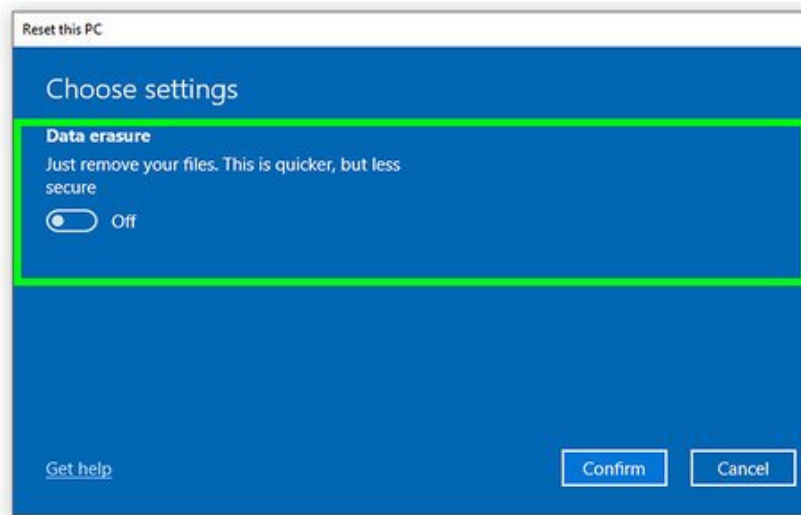
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Select **Remove everything**. This option will completely wipe the hard drive before reinstalling Windows. All of your data will be deleted and you'll have to reinstall any third-party apps after the process completes.



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Click **Change settings**. Two new options will appear.

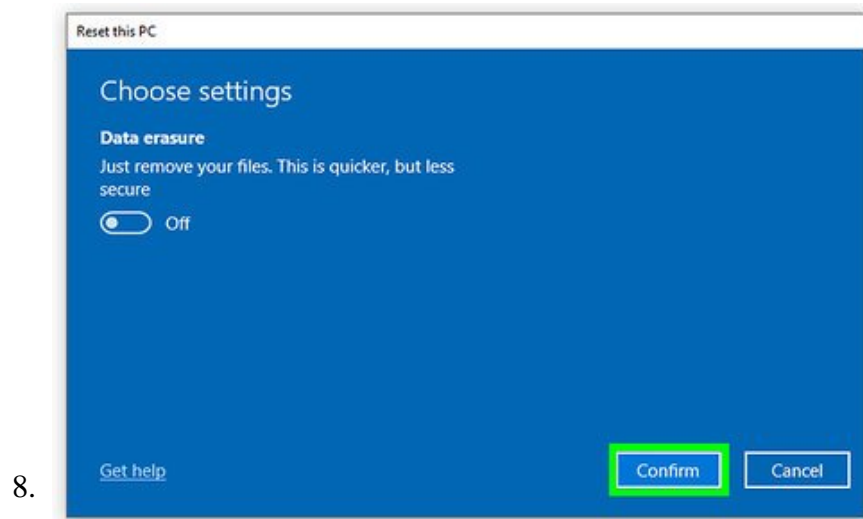


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**Slide the switch to the On**



**position.** Your hard drive will not be formatted unless you toggle on this switch.

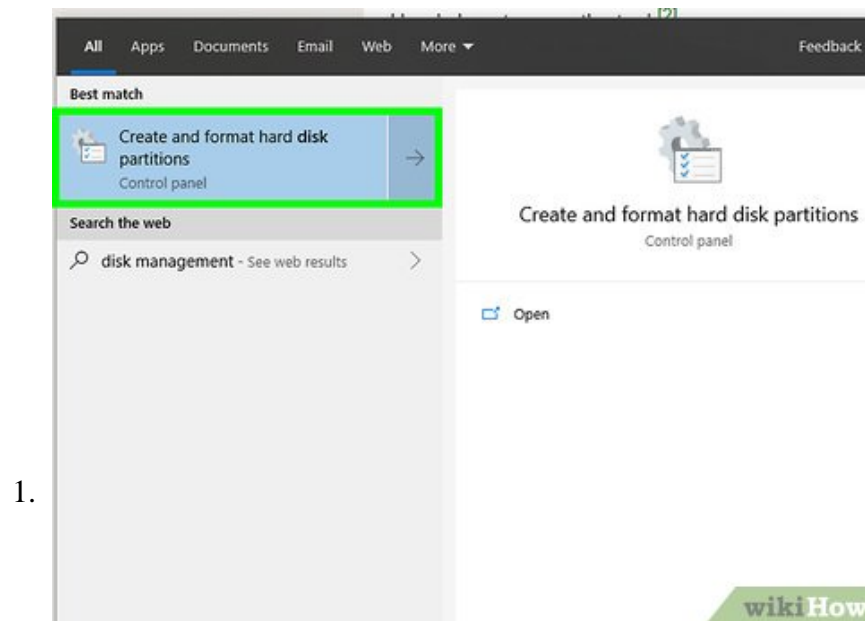


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Click **Confirm**. This begins the process of wiping the data from your computer and reinstalling Windows 10. When the PC is finished reinstalling, you'll be prompted to set it up as new.

Method 2 of 2:

## Formatting a New or Non-Primary Hard Drive

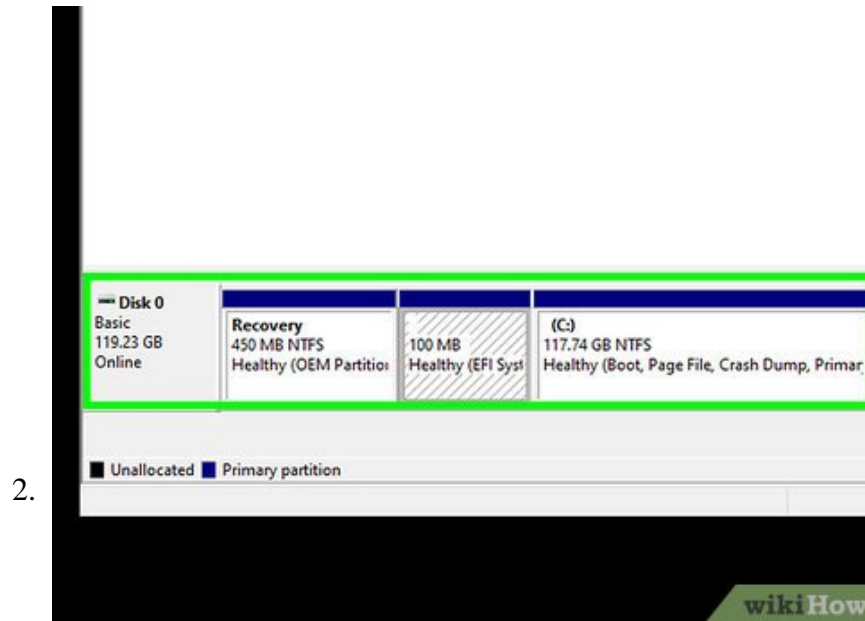


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**Open the Disk Management tool in Windows.** If you want to format a hard drive connected to your PC that isn't the primary (Windows) hard drive, use this method. Here's how to open the tool:<sup>[2]</sup>

1. Press **Win + S** to open the search bar.
2. Type **disk management**.
3. Click **Disk Management** in the search results.

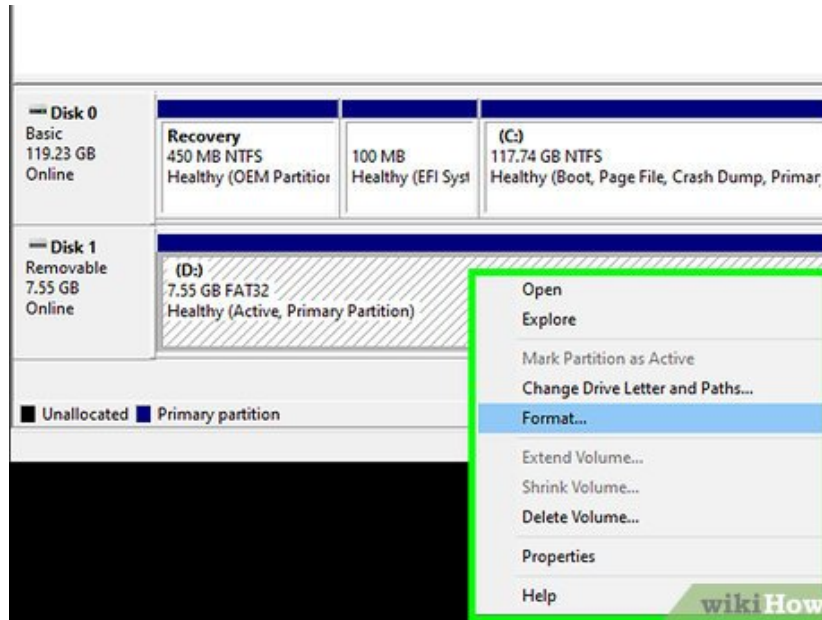
4. A list of partitions appears in the top-half of the window, while a list of physical hard drives appears at the bottom.



**Create a partition if the drive is brand new.** You'll only need to do this if you see *Unknown* or *Not initialized* next to the disk number in the bottom half of tool. Here's how to prepare a new drive for formatting:[3]

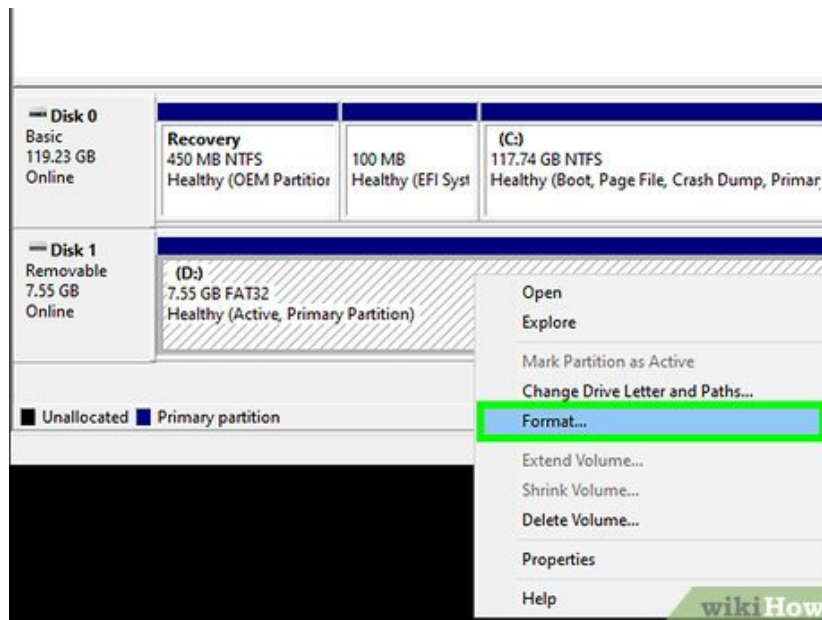
1. Right-click the drive and select **Initialize Disk**.
2. Check the box next to the hard drive.
3. Select **MBR (Master Boot Record)** if the drive is smaller than 2TB, or **GPT (GUID Partition Table)** if it's 2TB or larger.
4. Click **OK**.
5. Right-click the "Unallocated" box to the right of the disk and select **New Simple Volume**.
6. Click **Next**.
7. Specify a partition size (optional) and click **Next**.
8. Select a letter for the new drive and click **Next**.
9. Skip to Step 5.

3.

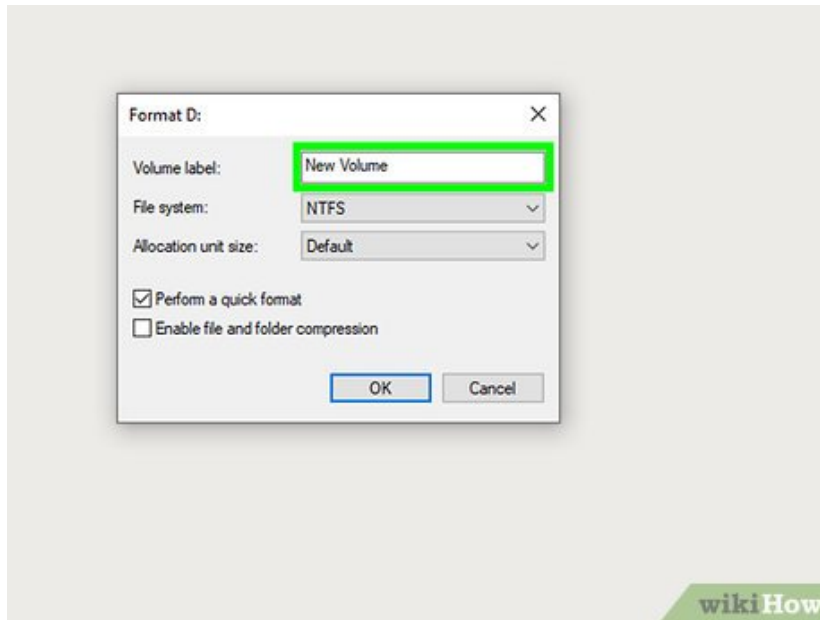


Right-click the drive or partition you want to format. A context menu will expand.

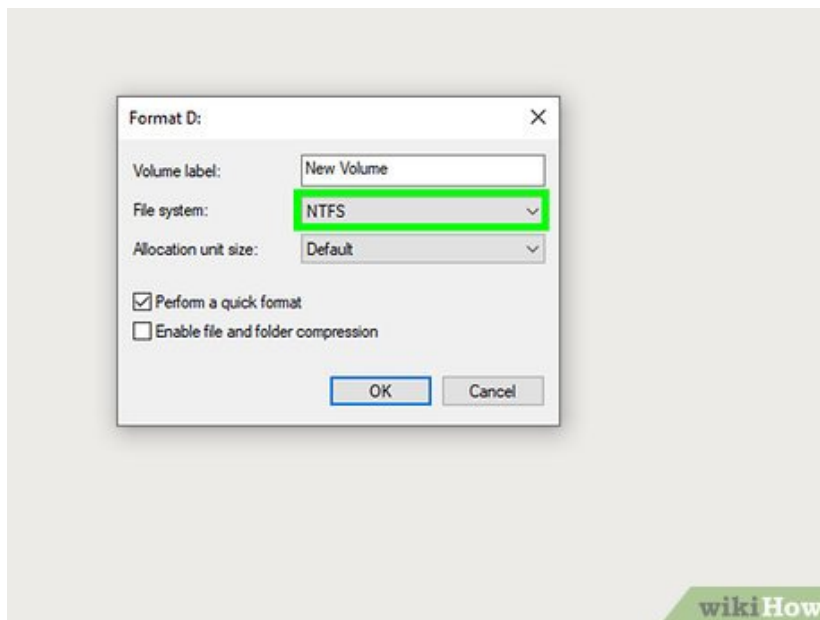
4.



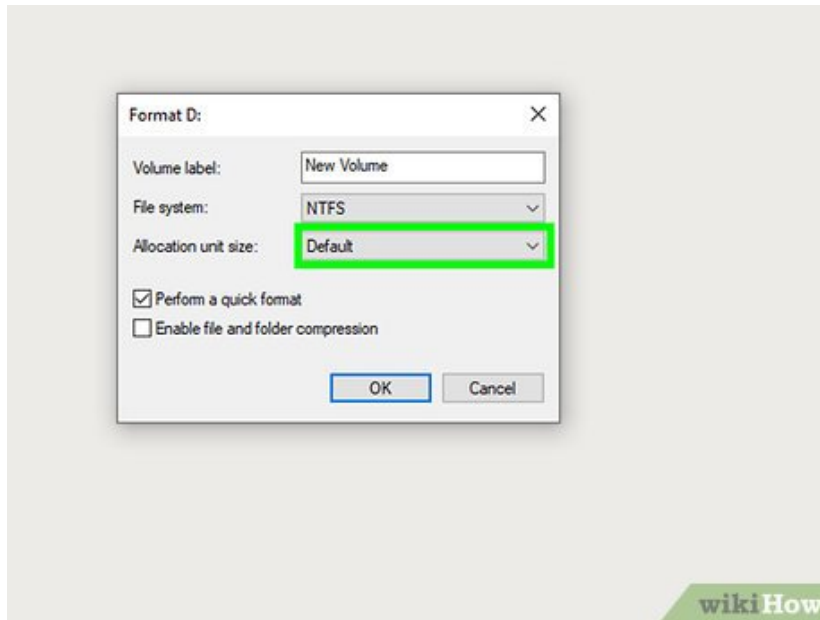
Click **Format** on the menu.



Type a name for the hard drive into the "Volume label" field. This is how the drive will be identified on your computer (e.g., *Games, Music, New Drive*).

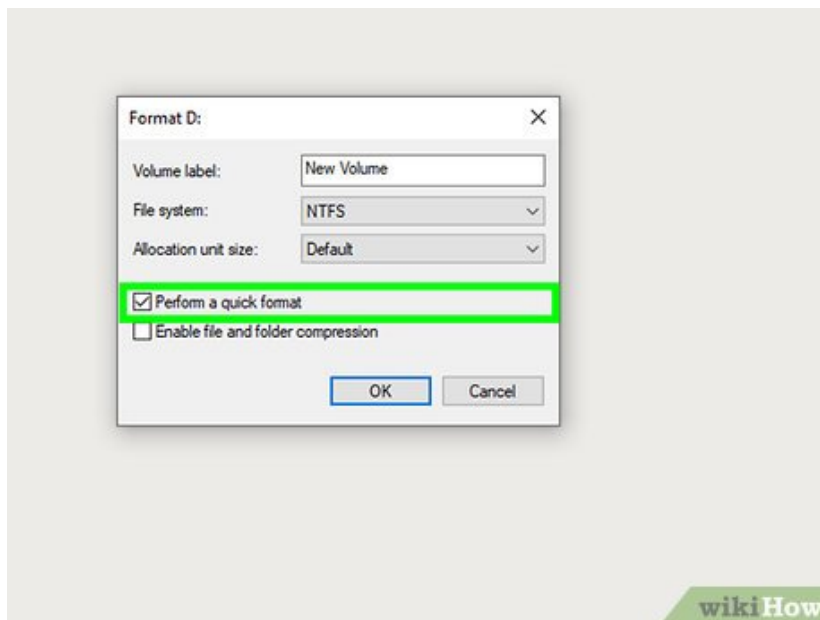


Select **NTFS** from the "File system" drop-down menu. This is the file system typically used with Windows 10. If you don't have specific instructions to choose another file system, this option is what you need.



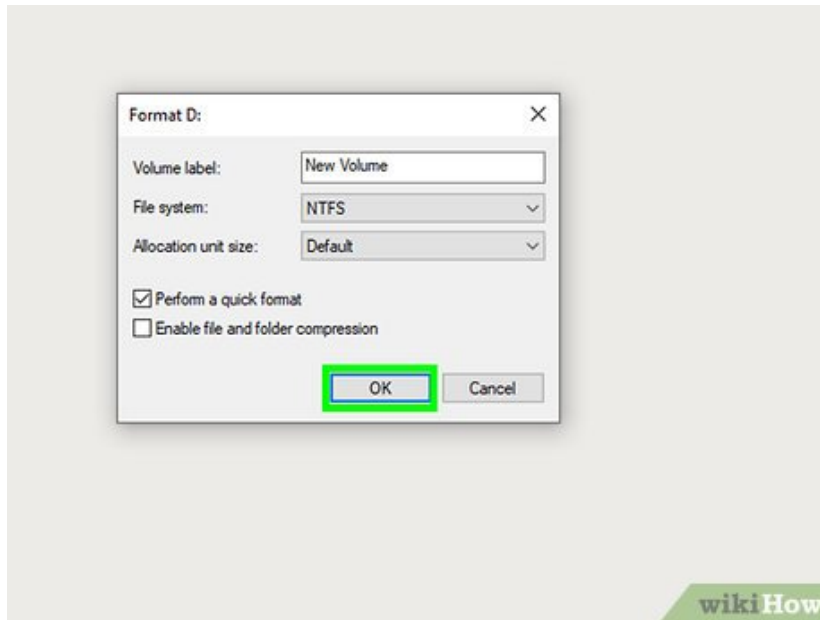
7.

Select **Default** from the "Allocation unit size" menu. If you have specific instructions to specify an amount here, you can do so. Otherwise, the default option works for most.



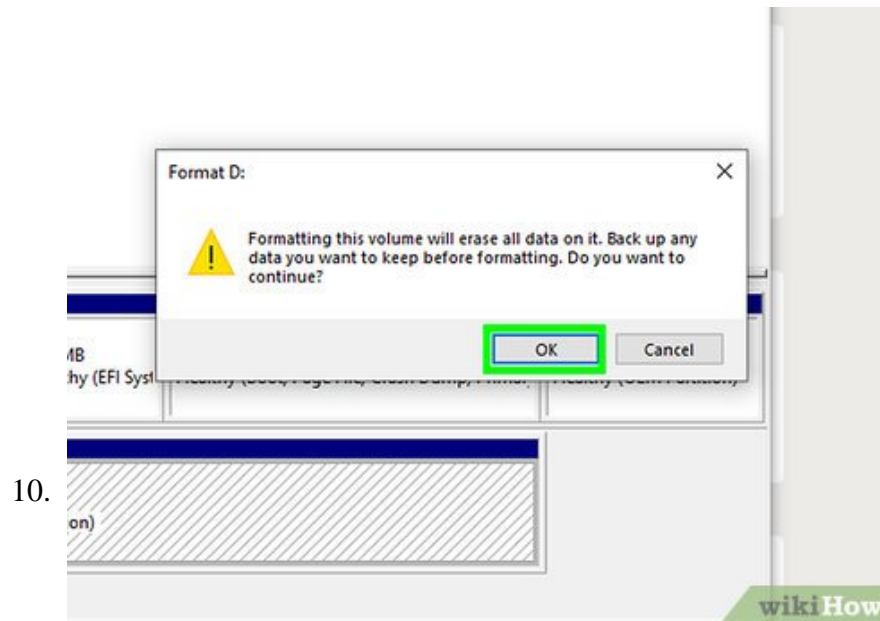
8.

**Check the box next to "Perform a quick format" (optional).** A full format can take several hours because it also checks the drive for damage.<sup>[4]</sup> A quick format just formats the drive without doing an in-depth check.



Click **OK** to format the drive. A confirmation window will appear.

1. Formatting can take while (sometimes hours) depending on your hard drive(s). If you're using a laptop and it isn't plugged in to a power source, plug it in now.



Click **OK** to confirm. The drive will now be formatted with the selected parameters.

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