

Tech Q&A: How being online renews Office 365 PC apps

May 28 2020, by Steve Alexander



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Q: In your column about Microsoft Office 365, you said the user "must go online at least once every 30 days or your PC-based software will stop working." What do you mean by go online? Just

connect to the internet? Use the Microsoft Edge browser? Update my Office 365 software?

- Lauren Tiffany, Iowa City, Iowa

A: As you read in the earlier column, an Office 365 subscriber can download the Office apps to a PC and work offline for 30 days. After that time, Microsoft requires you to go online so it can confirm that you are still a paid subscriber.

By "go online," I mean connect to the internet with any web browser and visit any website. When you do, the Office 365 apps on your PC should automatically contact Microsoft via their built-in "activation and validation service." Microsoft will then look up your account to see if you're still a subscriber. If you are, your apps will be renewed for another 30 days of offline work.

However, sometimes just connecting to the internet isn't enough to trigger this app rejuvenation. If that happens, you will eventually get the warning message "product deactivated," and you won't be able to edit or create documents. The solution is to give the activation and validation service a nudge by logging in to Office 365.

You can log in via one of the PC-based apps, such as Word. Open Word, then open one of the Word files on your PC. At the top of the screen, click "File," and in the resulting menu click "Account." On the next screen, log in with the e-mail address and password you use for Office 365. That should prompt the activation and validation service to work, and for Microsoft to renew the apps for another 30 days of offline work.

Q: My Windows 10 Asus laptop has begun disconnecting from our Wi-Fi network as often as every 5 minutes, forcing me to restart the PC to reconnect. The PC seems to be OK; it easily connects to the

internet if I use a cable instead of Wi-Fi. Our Wi-Fi network also seems to be OK; it works for a Chromebook, two phones and two TVs. What's wrong?

- Scott Strampe, Eden Prairie

A: There are two possible culprits—your PC's software or its connection to the Wi-Fi network.

Because your loss of Wi-Fi connectivity is intermittent, I suspect the latter. The PC-to-[wireless connection](#) is probably being interrupted because the Wi-Fi signal is too weak.

A weak Wi-Fi signal can be caused by too much distance between the wireless router and the PC, or by obstacles in your house (such as walls or brick fireplaces) that attenuate the signal as it passes through them. Once the signal is weakened, it's easily interrupted by radio interference, which can be caused by microwave ovens, Bluetooth devices, fluorescent lights or a neighbor's Wi-Fi network. To strengthen the signal, move your laptop closer to the wireless router.

If that doesn't work, use the Asus troubleshooting checklist for Wi-Fi problems. It deals with updating your BIOS (basic input-output system) software, running Windows updates and replacing the wireless software driver for your PC's network adapter (the circuitry that connects the PC to any network.)

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