How to Refresh Windows 8 and Windows 8.1

Information

This will show you how to use a new feature in **Windows 8** and **Windows 8.1** to **refresh your PC** to keep all personal data, Metro style apps, and important settings from the PC, and reinstall Windows.

If a recovery image provided by your PC's manufacturer is present, Windows 8 will use that image when you refresh your PC. Otherwise, Windows 8 will use your installation media when you refresh your PC.

This **refresh** feature is something close to like what doing a **repair install** in Windows 7 and Vista was for, but made a lot easier, faster, and safer to do now in Windows 8.

You must be signed in as an **administrator** to be able to do the steps in this tutorial.

Refreshing your PC goes like this:

- The PC boots into Windows RE (**R**ecovery **E**nvironment).
- Windows RE scans the hard drive for your data, settings, and apps, and puts them aside (on the same drive).
- Windows RE installs a fresh copy of Windows.
- Windows RE restores the data, settings, and apps it has set aside into the newly installed copy of Windows.
- The PC restarts into the newly installed copy of Windows.

Note

Which Settings will be Preserved

- All user accounts.
- Files in all users' **C:\Users\(user-name)** folders. (ex: Desktop, My Documents, My Music, etc...)
- Wireless network connections
- Apps from the **Windows Store** will be kept.
- Mobile broadband connections
- BitLocker and BitLocker To Go settings
- Drive letter assignments
- Personalization settings such as lock screen background and desktop wallpaper
- Choices you made during Windows Welcome, such as computer name and user accounts, will not change.
- Network, Libraries, and Windows Update settings will not change.
- Customer Experience Improvement Program settings will not change.
- Windows Error Reporting settings will not change.
- Some drivers may or may not be removed.

Which Settings will be NOT be Preserved

- File type associations
- Display settings
- User settings
- Windows Firewall settings
- App settings
- All installed 3rd party desktop programs (not Store apps). A list of removed apps will be saved on your desktop after the refresh is finished to let you know which programs were removed.
- You **PC settings** will be changed back to their defaults.
- Installed Windows Updates will be removed.
- Some drivers may or may not be removed.

Tip

If you create a **custom recovery image**, a refresh will also contain the desktop apps you've installed, and the Windows system files in their current state. If you would like to be able to **refresh Windows 8 with a custom recovery image**, then you would need to create and register a custom image first.

Refresh Windows 8 - Create and Use Custom Recovery Image

OR

Refresh Windows 8 - Set a Custom Recovery Image as Active

Warning

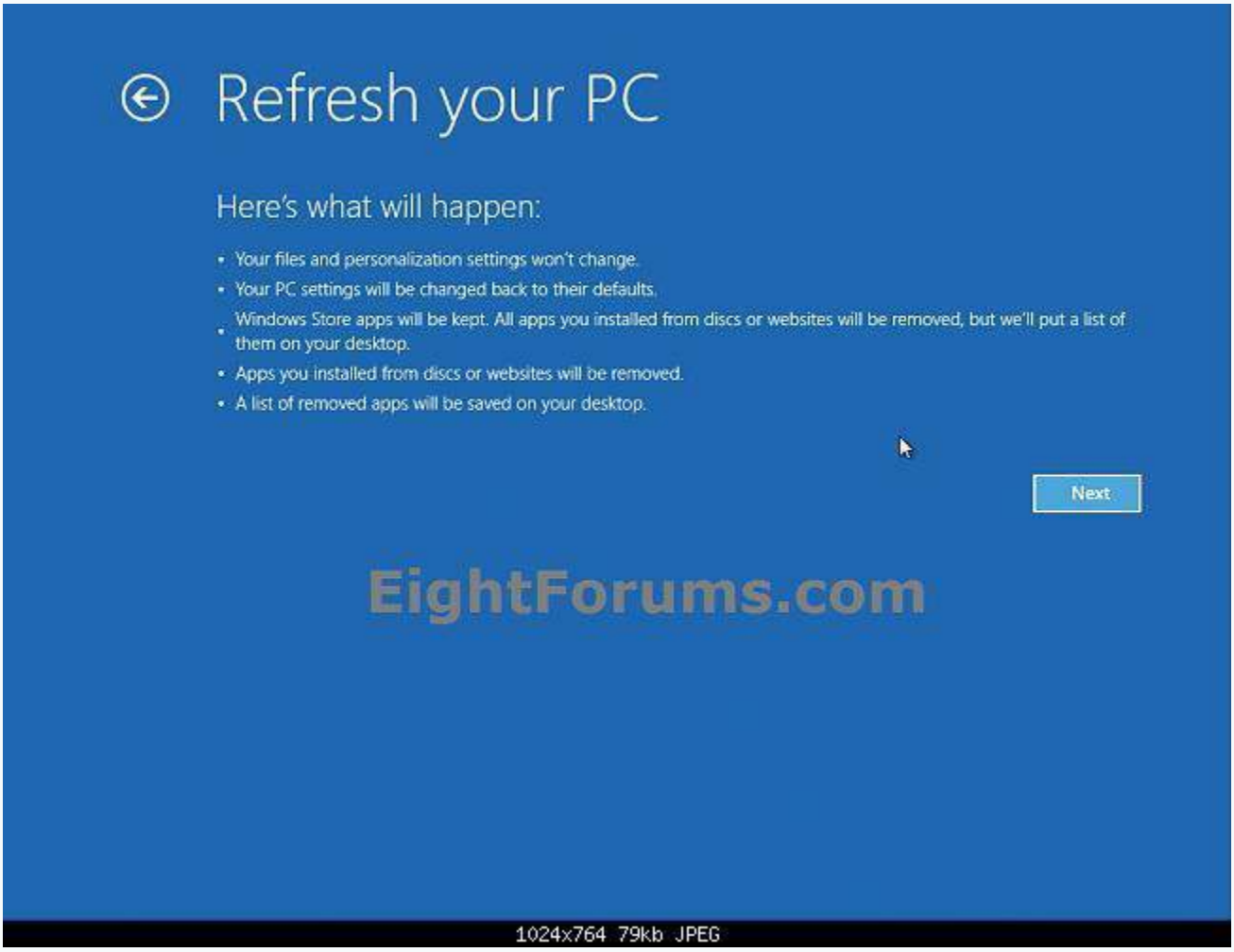
If you set UAC to **Always notify me**, then you will not be able to use the **refresh** and **reset** Windows 8 features. These features require UAC to be set to the default or lower level to work.

If you have an **OEM PC** that came with **Windows 8 preinstalled** and updated to Windows 8.1, then when you refresh Windows, it will restore Windows 8. Afterwards, you will need to **update to Windows 8.1 via the Store** again.

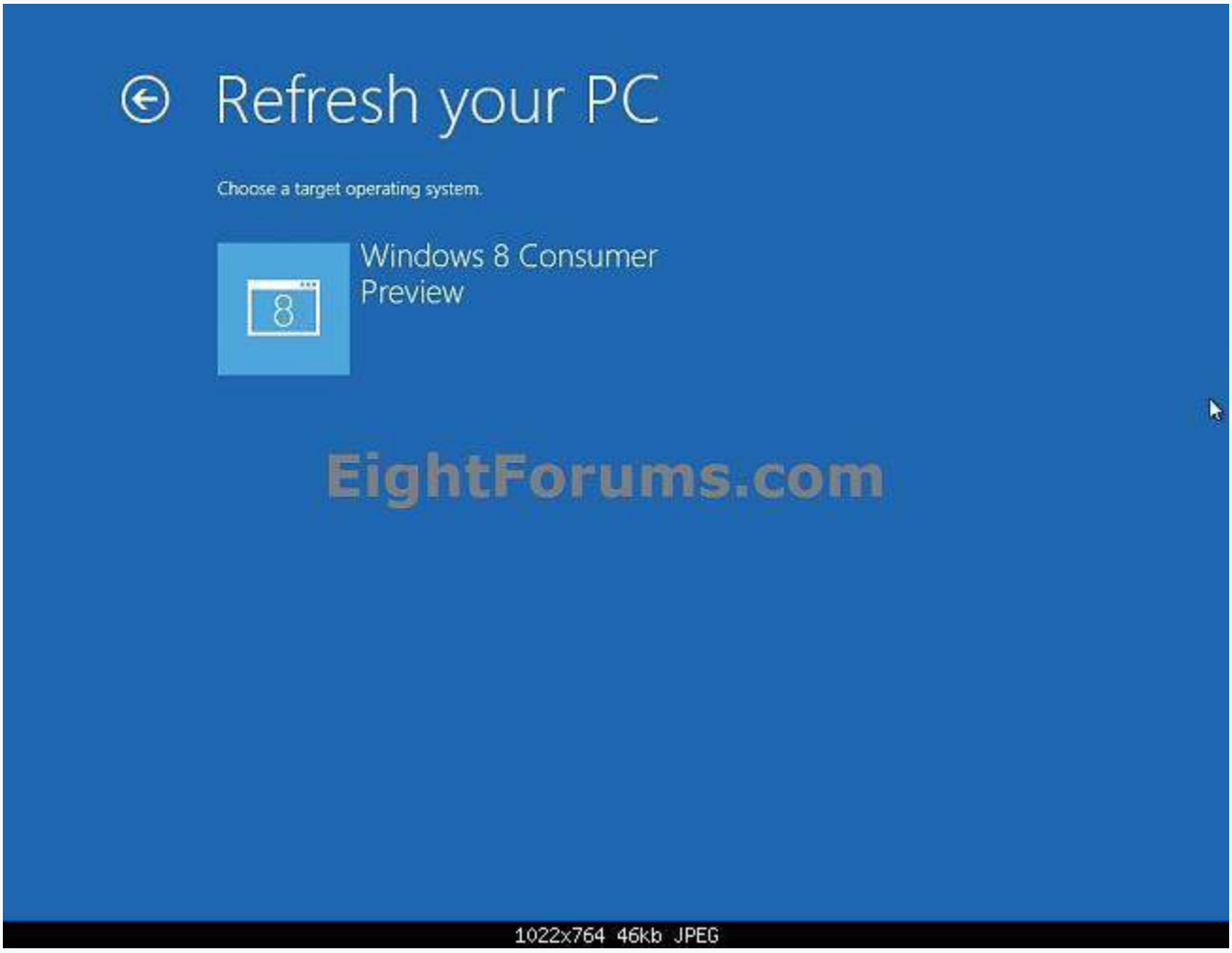
OPTION ONE
How to Refresh Windows 8 and Windows 8.1 at Boot

1. Boot to the **System Recovery Options** using your **Windows 8 installation DVD or USB thumb drive**, or **ISO** file if in a **virtual machine**, and click/tap on the **Refresh your PC** option. (see screenshot below}

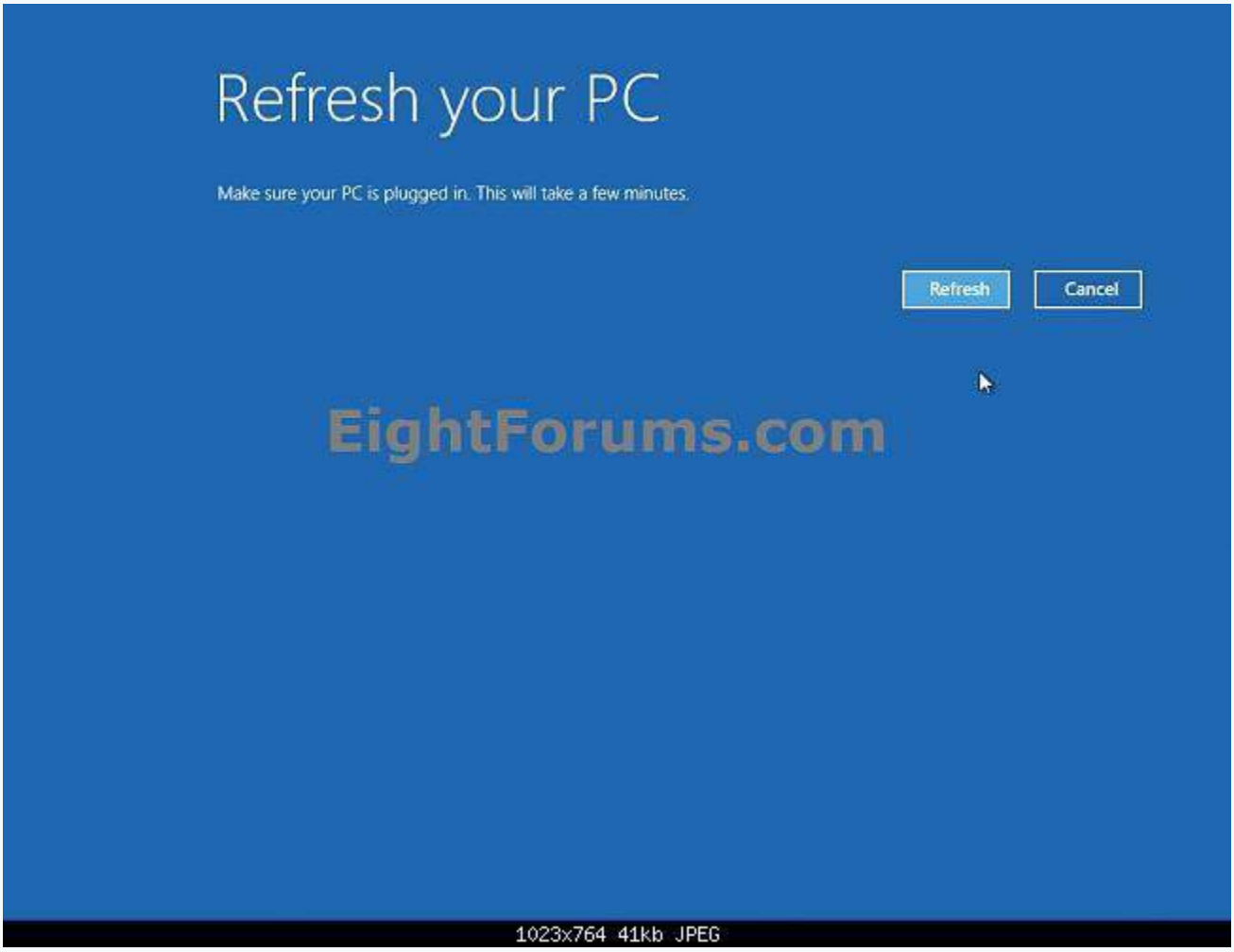
2. Click/tap on **Next**. (see screenshot below)



3. If prompted, select the Windows 8 or 8.1 that you want to refresh. (see screenshot below)

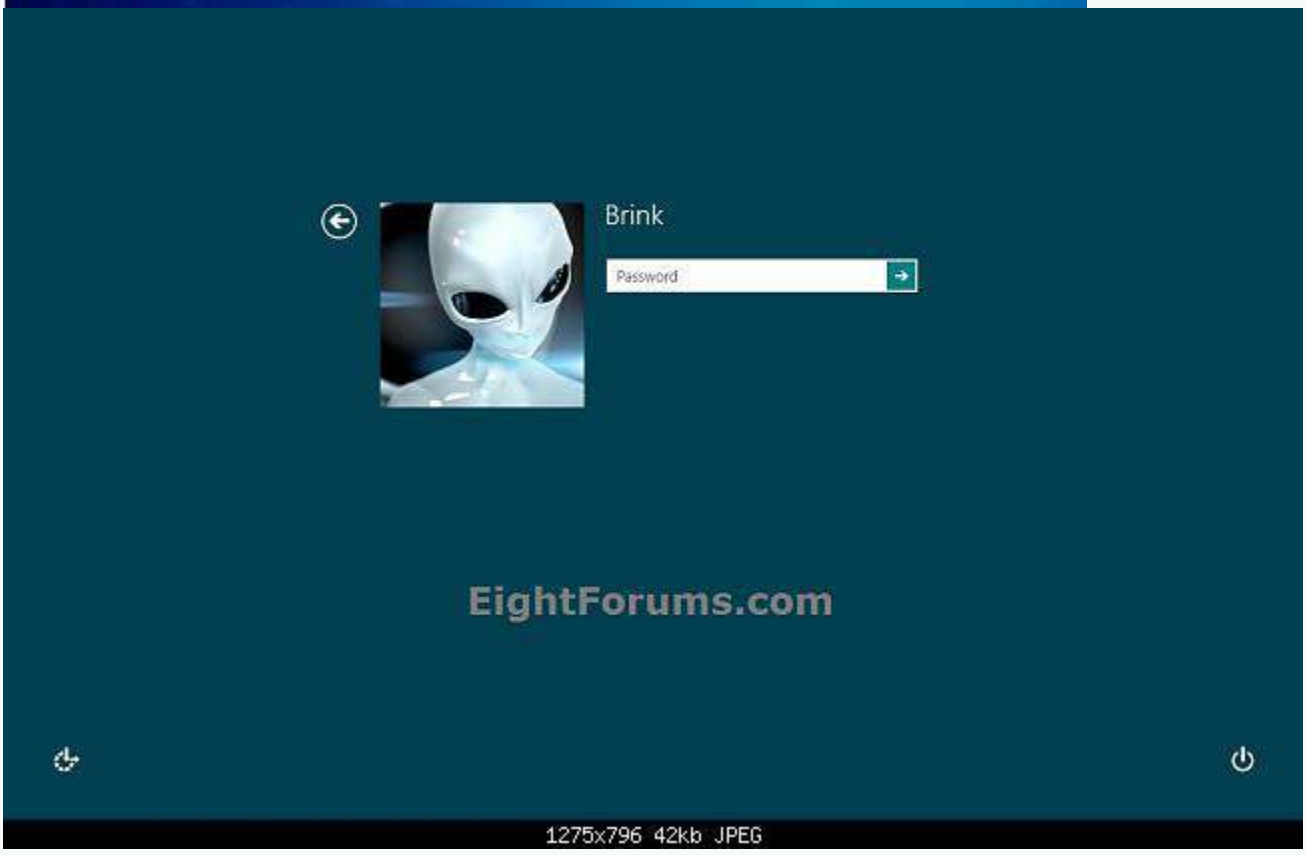


4. Click/tap on **Refresh**. (see screenshot below)



5. Windows 8 or 8.1 will now start to be refreshed.

6. When it's finished, you can now log back on to a refreshed Windows 8 or 8.1. (see screenshots below)



Note

If any apps were removed during the refresh, you will find a **Removed Apps.html** file on the desktop detailing what it removed and at what time.

You will also now have a **Windows.old** folder that has been placed in the root directory of the **Windows 8 or 8.1** drive that contains a copy of the previous Windows 8 or 8.1 installation before it was refreshed. This folder can be quite large in size, so the tutorial below will show you how to delete it if you like.

How to Delete the "Windows.old" Folder in Windows 8

OPTION TWO
Refresh Windows 8 or Windows 8.1 from within Windows 8 and 8.1

1. While signed in as an **administrator** in Windows 8 or 8.1, do **step 2 or 3** below depending on which option you would prefer to use.

2. Open the **Control Panel (icons view)**, click/tap on the **Recovery** icon, click/tap on the **If you're experiencing problems with your PC, you can refresh it in PC settings** link, and go to **step 4 or 5**below. (see screenshot below)

3. Open **PC settings**, and do **step 4 or 5** below for the Windows 8 you have installed.

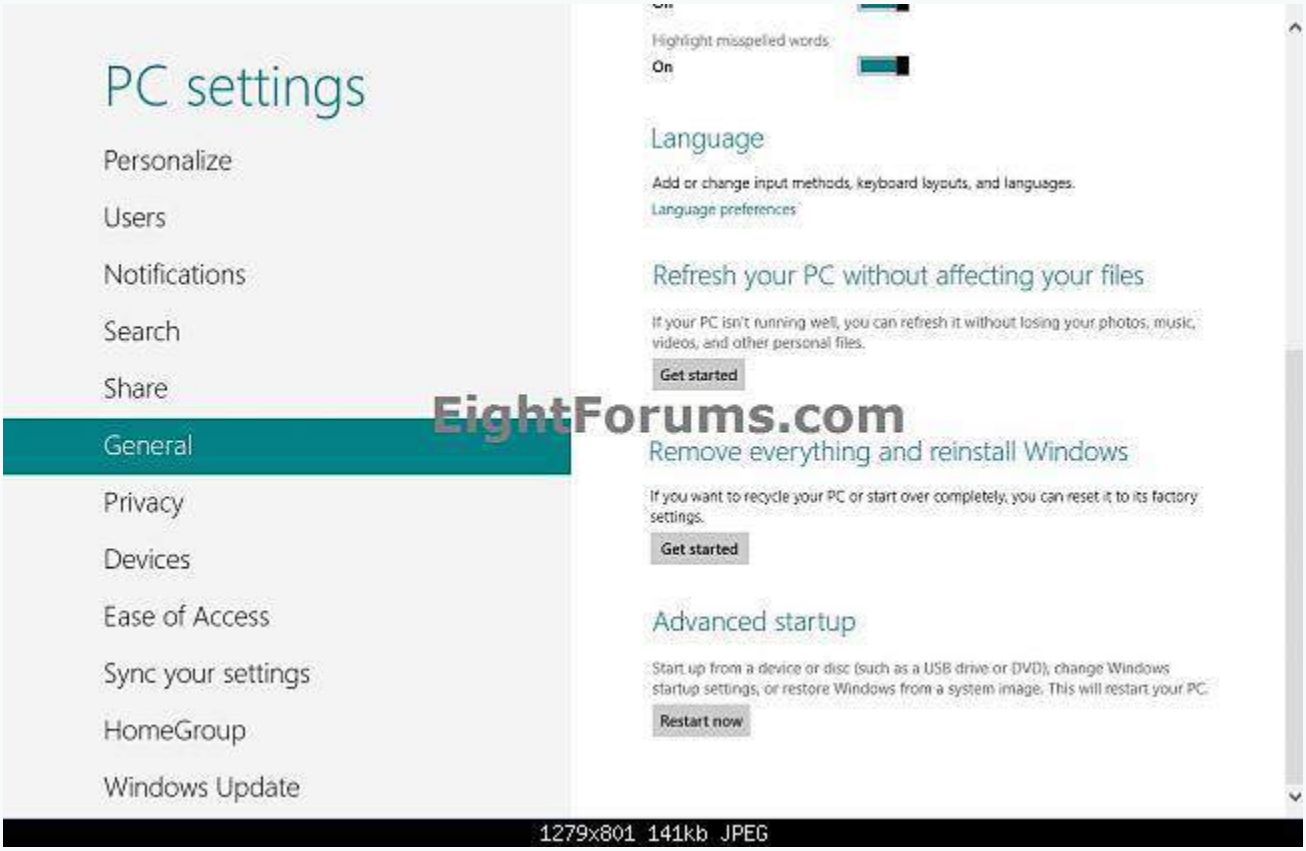
4. If you have Windows 8.1 or Windows RT 8.1

A) On the left side in **PC settings**, click/tap on **Update & Recovery**. (see screenshot below)

B) On the left side in **Update & Recovery**, click/tap on **Recovery**, click/tap on the **Get started**button under the **Refresh your PC without affecting your files** section on the right side, and go to**step 6** below. (see screenshot below)

5. If you have Windows 8 or Windows RT

A) Click/tap on **General** on the left side, click/tap on the **Get started** button under the **Refresh your PC without affecting your files** section on the right side, and go to **step 6** below. (see screenshot below)



6. If prompted by **UAC**, then click/tap on **Yes**.

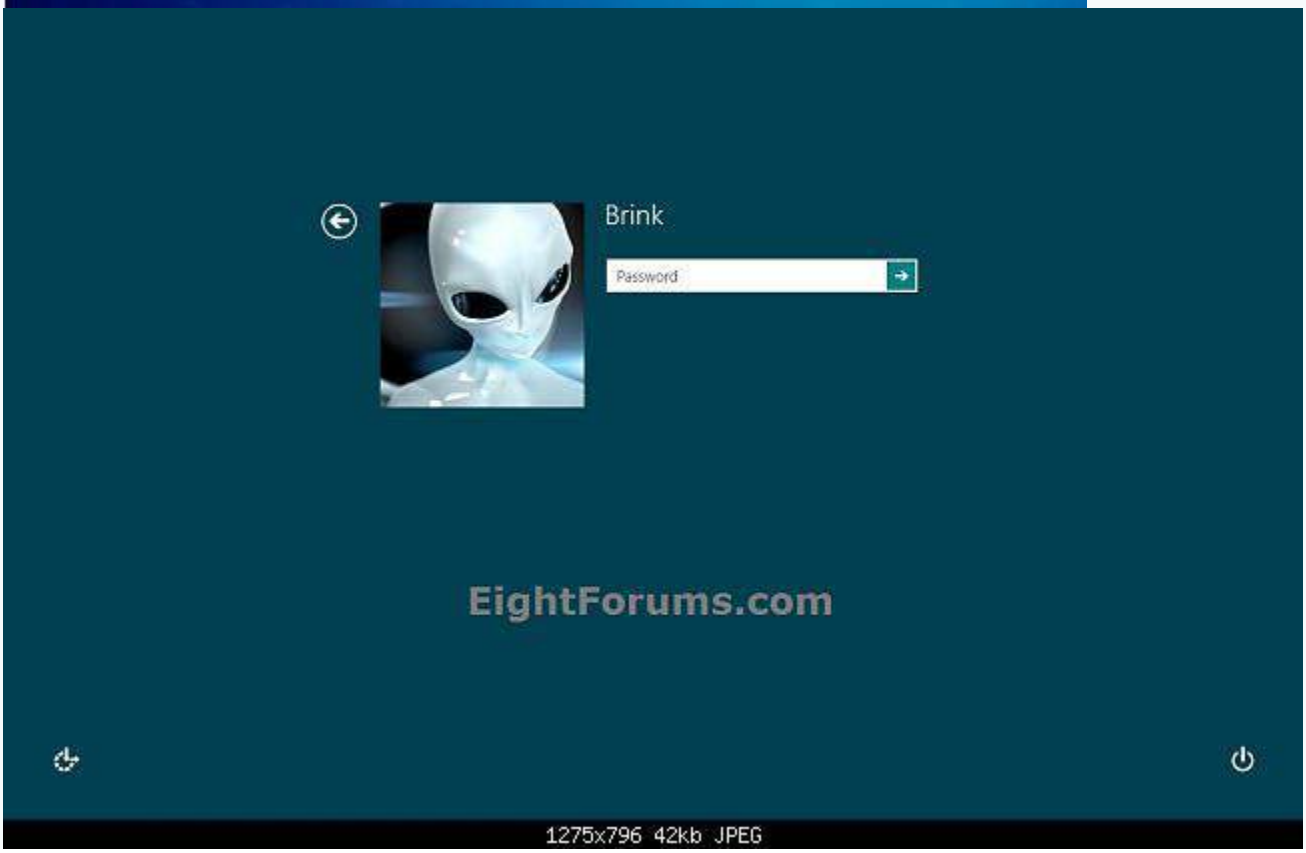
7. If prompted to **Insert media**, insert or connect your **Windows installation DVD or USB**, or **ISO** file if in a **virtual machine**.

8. Click/tap on **Next**. (see screenshots below)

9. Click/tap on **Refresh**. (see screenshot below)

10. Windows 8 or 8.1 will now start to be refreshed.

11. When it's finished, you can now log back on to a refreshed Windows 8 or 8.1. (see screenshots below)



Note

If any desktop apps (programs) were removed during the refresh, you will find a **Removed Apps.html** file on the desktop detailing what it removed and at what time.

You will also now have a **Windows.old** folder that has been placed in the root directory of the **Windows 8 or 8.1** drive that contains a copy of the previous Windows 8 or 8.1 installation before it was refreshed. This folder can be quite large in size, so the tutorial below will show you how to delete it if you like.

How to Delete the "Windows.old" Folder in Windows 8