# Windows 10 Tricks and Tweaks

Bring back the classic Windows Start menu

This is actually the first step in tweaking Windows 10, and not just because I'm nostalgic for the traditional user interface. It also allows me to get at all the settings, programs and devices more readily. Since this is not available in Windows 10 natively, programmers around the world have stepped in and written utilities that will bring back the more familiar Start menu. The one I have installed most often is called **Classic Shell**, but I hear that updates are no longer being written for it. I'll continue to use it as long as it works, but if it does become obsolete, there are others, most notable of which is called **Start10**. Each of these third-party utilities, along with installation and configuration instructions, can be found via quick google searches. Note: Classic Shell is free, and Start 10 costs less than five dollars (with a 30 day free trial).

Switch to a local account

Microsoft wants you to log into Windows 10 using a cloud-based Microsoft account instead of a local account (limited to that computer), and that is the default way of setting up a Windows 10 computer. Their argument is that this will allow you to more readily share your stuff across multiple devices and give you access to some of the more advanced features of the operating system, like the voice recognition assistant called Cortana. Microsoft's real agenda in having you do this, however, is that they can collect more data on you, what you are doing on your computer, and where you go and what you buy on the internet, and they share that information with their "partners" in the interest of finding ways of generating more revenues off you. I personally hate this kind privacy intrusion, don't care about Cortana, and can effectively access my stuff on all my devices in other ways, so I would switch to a local account instead. Here's how:
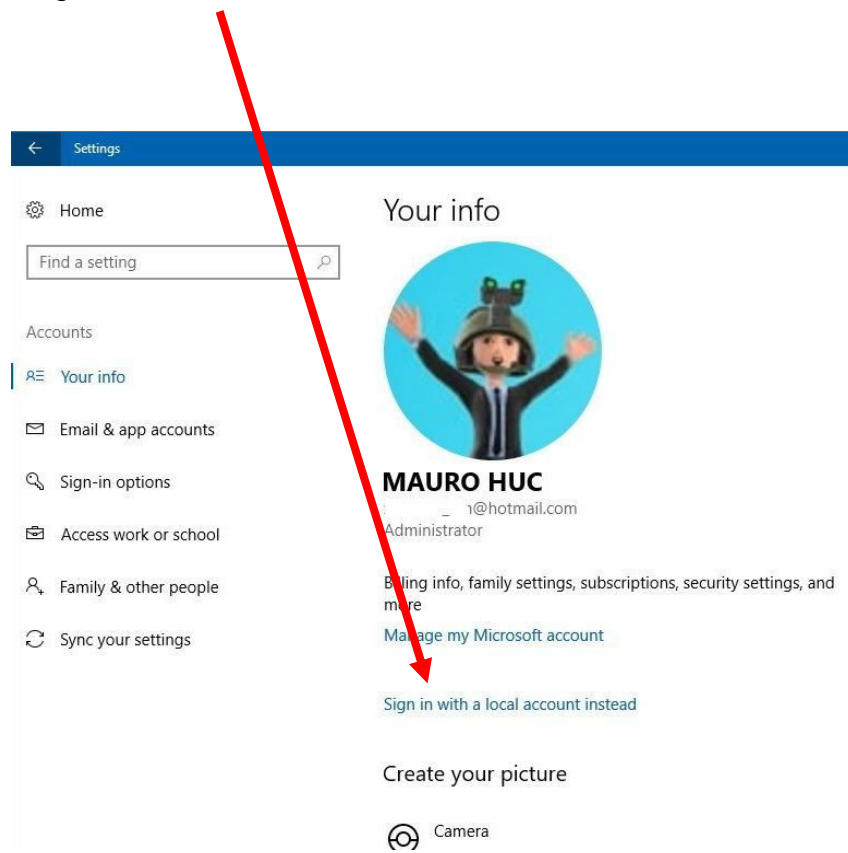
1. Click on your newly installed Classic Shell Start menu, and then click on PC Settings.

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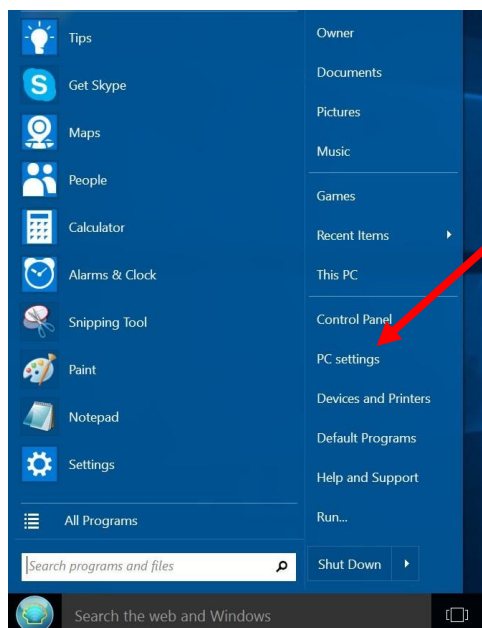
2. In the Settings window, click on Accounts.
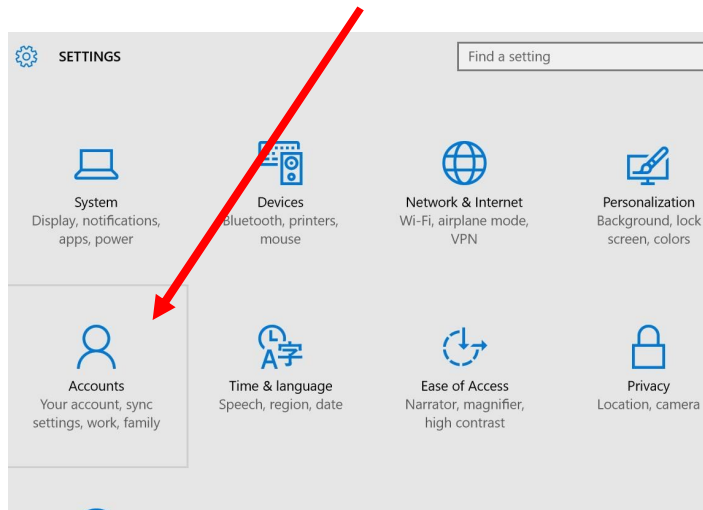
3. Under "Your Info" click "sign in with local account instead".

4. It will then prompt you for a Username and Password. You can type anything you want as a Username, but something must be in there. If you don't care about having a password to get into the computer, leave those fields blank. Click Next, and then "Sign out and finish".

2

Trim update settings to avoid problems

By default, Windows 10 will download and install updates for the operating system automatically, as it should, but it also does a couple of things that many people would not want it to do and might cause problems. In addition to the important updates for the operating system, the default update settings would download and install updates for any Microsoft products it finds on the computer, which can cause problems both in terms of the functionality of the other software and in terms of changes to the user interface. Also, the Windows 10 update system, by default, uses a rather sketchy concept of using the computer to assist in updating other computers and vice versa via networks and the internet, something that appropriately raises concerns for most computer owners. Here's how to prevent both of these:

1. Click Start, and in the menu that opens, click PC settings.

2. In Settings, click "Update and Security"
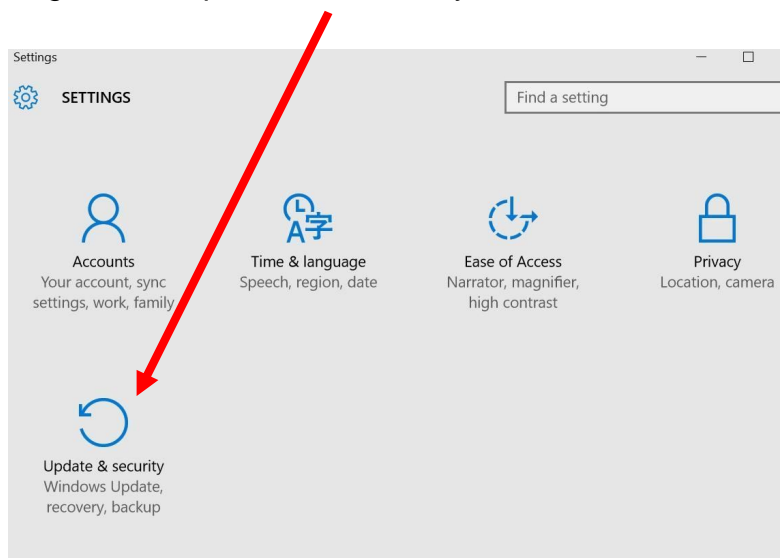
3. In Update and Security, click "Advanced Options"

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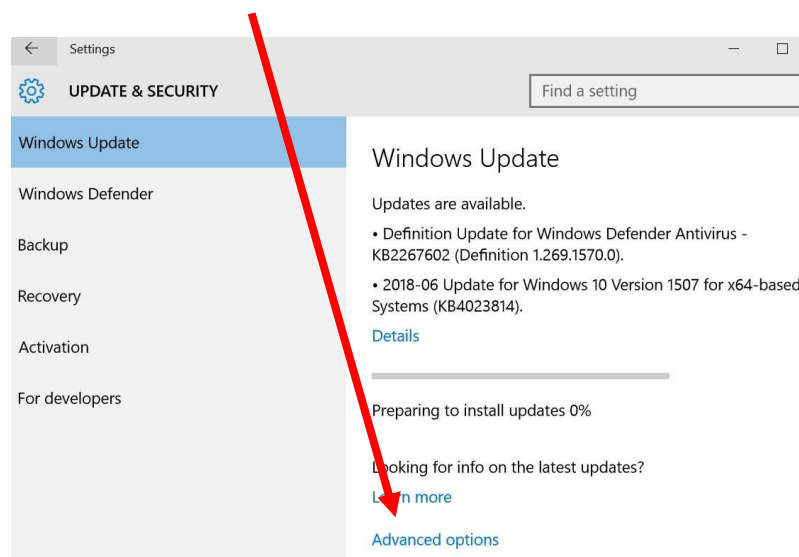
4. In Advanced Options, click to uncheck "Give me updates for other Microsoft products when I update Windows", and to really play it safe, click to put a check mark in front of "Defer upgrades". Unless you want real problems, do NOT "Get insider builds".
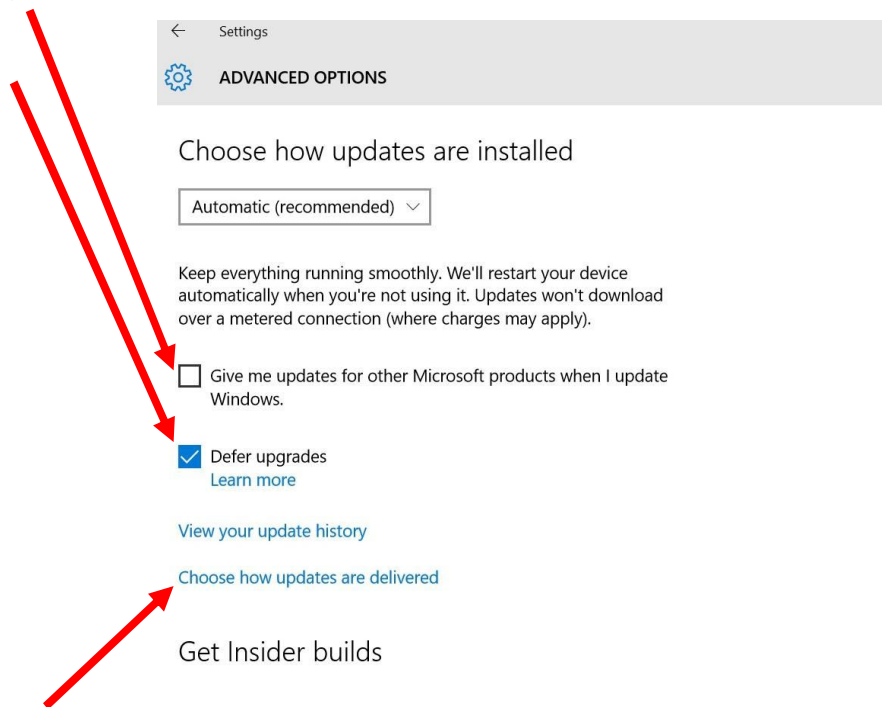

5. Then click "Choose how updates are delivered".

6. Turn off "Updates from more than one place".

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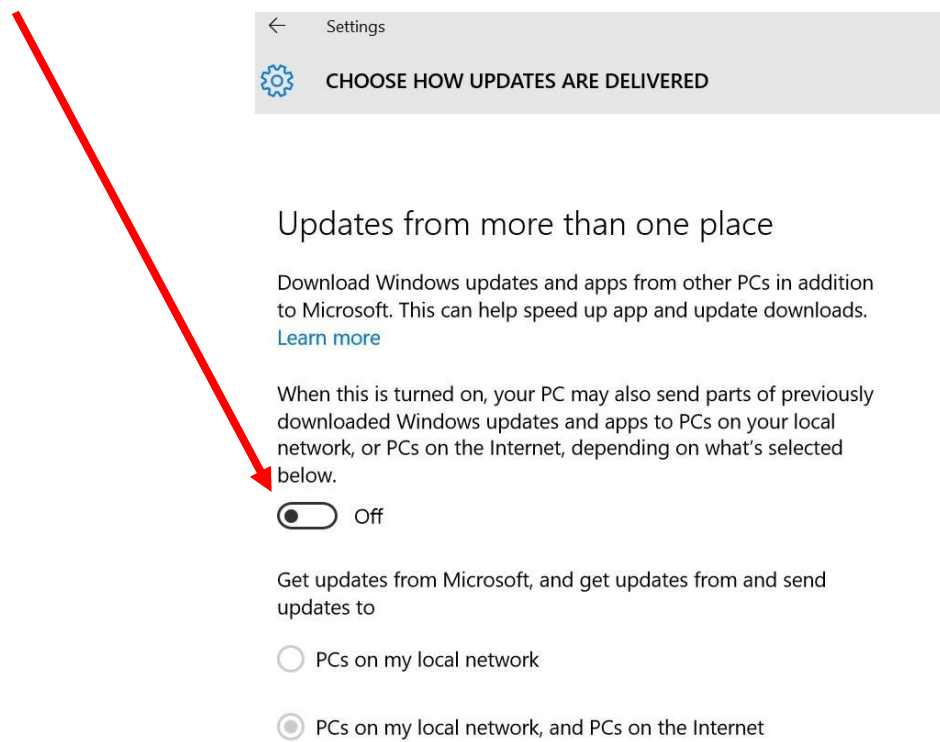
Alternative Web Browsers

A common joke in the IT support business goes something like this: the web browser Internet Explorer (or Microsoft Edge) has only one job, to download and install a different web browser. Neither of Microsoft's browsers, IE or Edge, works as well on most web sites as either Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox, but to get the alternatives to work as the default browser, one must take extra steps in the Windows 10 settings. Here's how:

1. Download and install your preferred browser, Firefox or Chrome, which is done the same way on any operating system, and instructions for doing so can be found on their respective websites.

2. After installing your preferred alternate web browser, click Start, and in the menu that opens, click "PC Settings".

3. In Settings, click "System".
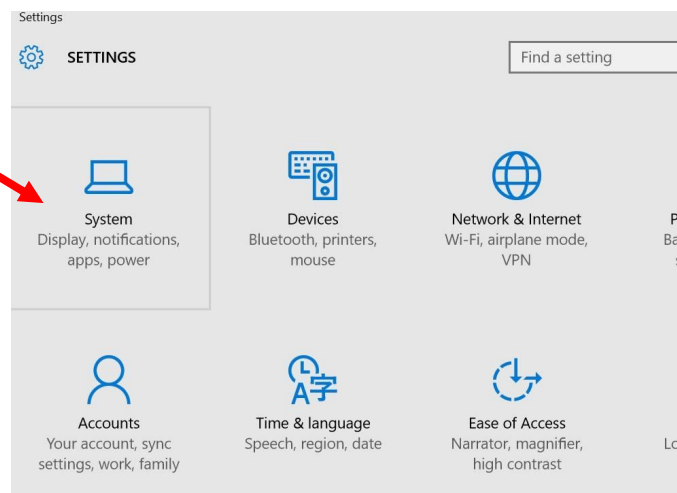
4. In the System settings window, click on "Default Apps".
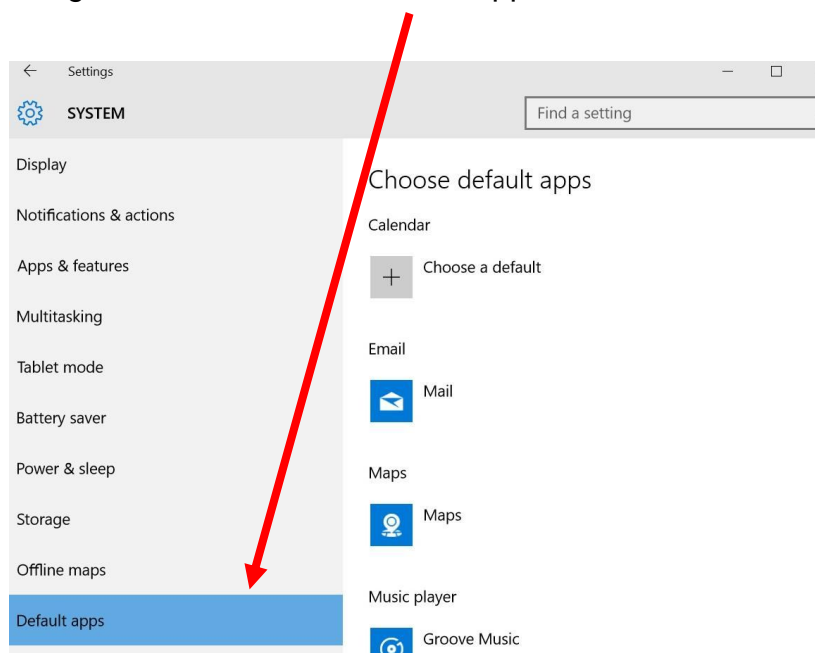
5. On the right hand side, under "Choose default apps", scroll down to "Web browsers" and click on whatever is showing there. A menu will open that will allow you to click on the browser of your choice.
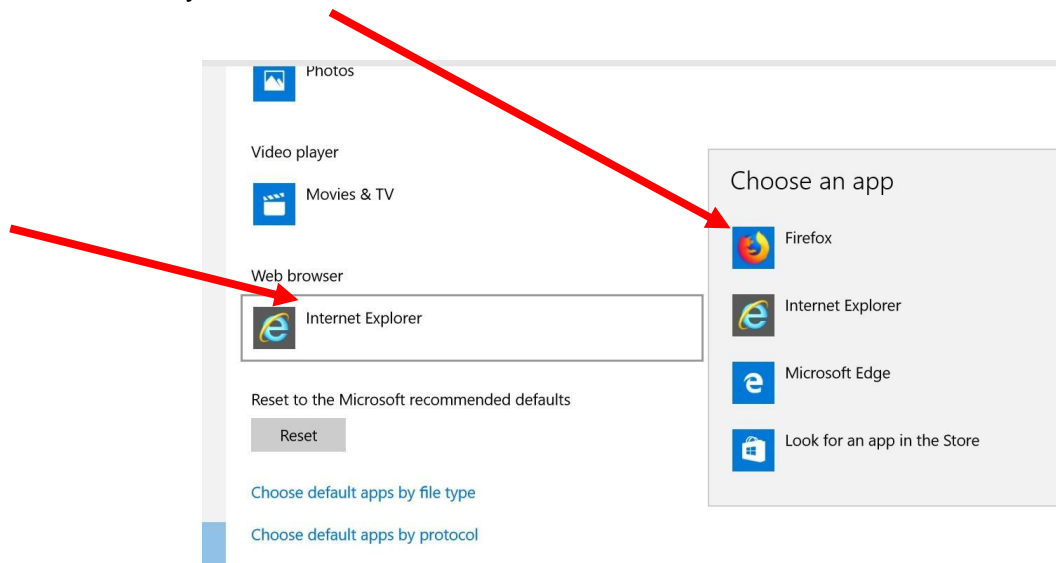

Alternative pdf (Adobe Reader) File Handlers

Windows 10, by default, wants to use the browser, Edge, to open pdf (Adobe Reader) files. Most people don't like that and would rather use Adobe Reader or something similar to open their pdf files, thank you very much. Similar to the web browser story, one must take a couple extra steps beyond installing Adobe Reader, or a viable alternative (see article on Adobe Reader DC). Here's how:

1. Download and install whichever pdf software you prefer to use.

2. As in the previous steps for choosing an alternate web browser, click Start > PC Settings > System > Default Apps. At the bottom of the list on the right, click on "Choose default apps by file type".

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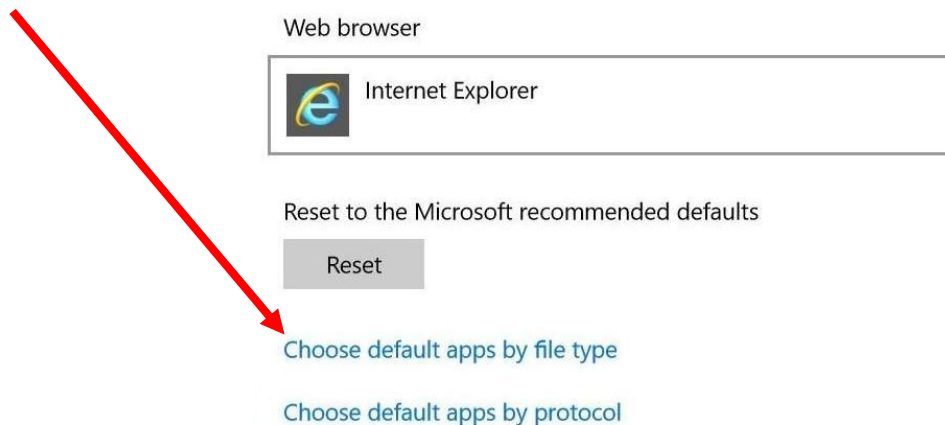
3. The list that opens is alphabetical. Scroll down to and click on .pdf, and in the list that opens, choose your preferred pdf handler app. In this example, an alternative to Adobe Reader, SumatraPDF, is the selected app.
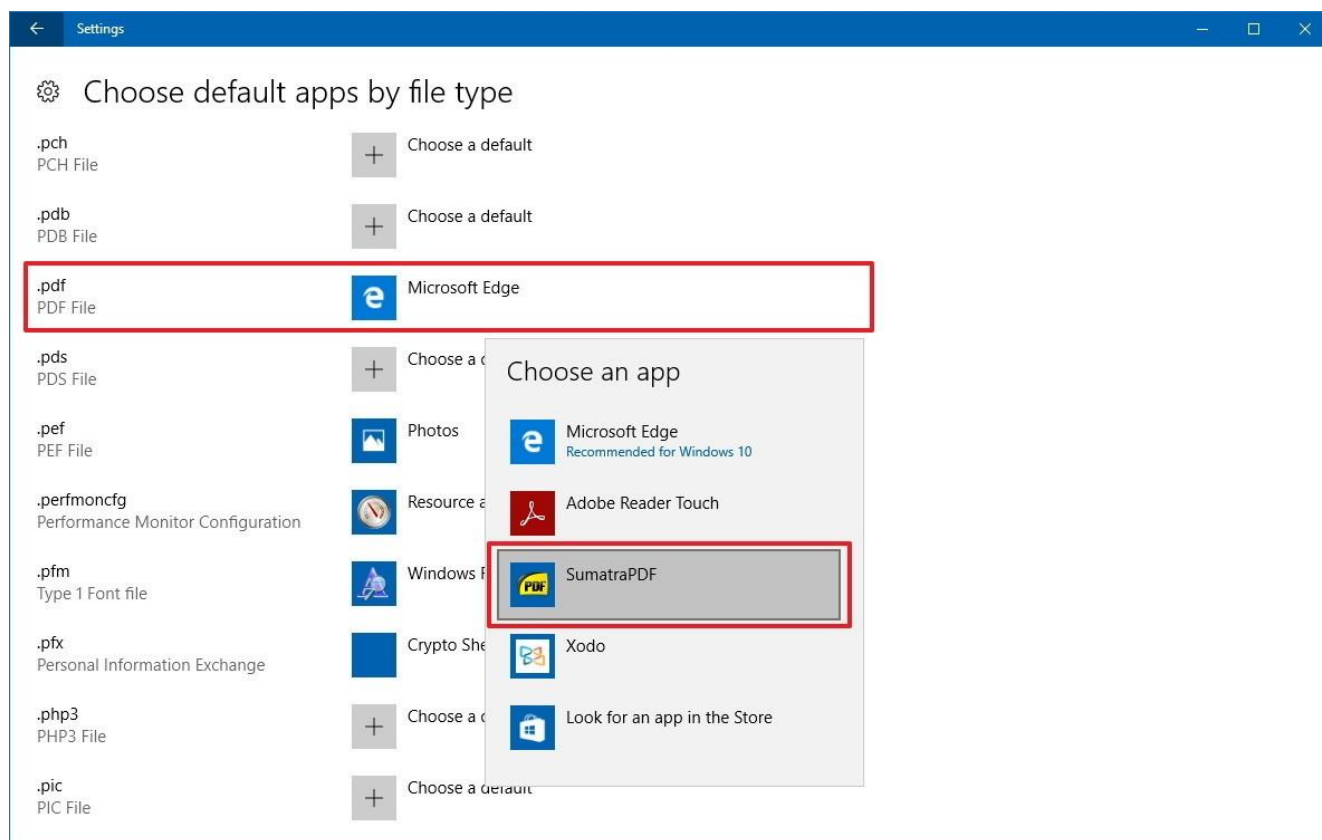
4. Windows will try to convince you otherwise in a little dialog box that pops up. Click "Switch anyway".