(Approx. 1394 words)

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**Microsoft Windows 11 Copilot: how not to remove it***The horse's mouth, Copilot AI, did not answer my how-to-remove question accurately or completely.*

by John Krout, Newsletter Contributor and Presenter

Potomac Area Technology And Computer Society

<https://patacs.org/>

**Introduction**

Automatic installation of un-requested software is a behavior that I do not favor.

Microsoft forced a double whammy on my Windows 11 desktop computer on February 17.

The February 17 PATACS+OPCUG joint monthly meeting was Zoom-only due to adverse weather. At about 3 PM during that meeting, Zoom froze on my computer, and a minute later, it was apparent the entire computer was frozen. I pulled the power plug and then re-inserted it. When starting up, the computer installed a Windows 11 operating system update, displaying an increasing completion percentage. The download of that update probably caused the initial freeze.

After about 10 minutes, I was able to rejoin the Zoom meeting.

After the meeting, I checked Settings on that computer. I found what I expected: long ago, I had used Settings to create a "NO UPDATES" time range of 9 AM to 2 AM daily. Microsoft led me to have faith in that setting and then clearly ignored the setting.

***illustration 11***

One day after the meeting, I found an unfamiliar icon in the right corner of my Windows 11 gray taskbar. You can see it in **illustration 1**. The icon is on the right and includes the letters PRE.

A click on the icon revealed a "preview" of Microsoft **Copilot**, their generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) brand. Either a left-click or right-click on the icon opened a tall, thin dialog window, inviting me to ask a question.

I also found a scalable Copilot logo graphic in the [C:\Windows](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cscvju%5CDocuments%5CC%3A%5CWindows) folder tree. You can see that in **illustration 2**.

Obviously, Microsoft wants to beat its generative AI competitors to desktops. The competitors include mega-firms like Google, Adobe, and Autodesk and startups like OpenAI.

**Where does AI do its work?**

***illustration 21***

In a nutshell, today and for the indefinite but no doubt long future, AI will be executed on servers, not your computer. Personal computers just don't have the hardware for storage and execution of generative AI.

Consider the following consequences of that situation.

First and foremost, those servers will capture and retain EVERYTHING you use AI to accomplish, and maybe a lot more (see third consequence). The owners of that AI service and servers will seek to monetize that valuable information about you.

I am against such monetization.

Second, AI services won't be available everywhere because the Internet is unavailable everywhere. Certainly not where cell towers are blocked by terrain or are overloaded. And laws may prohibit the use of generative AI in some locations, especially overseas.

The third consequence is speculative, I admit. I wonder if Copilot will be running behind the scenes, invisible to the user, monitoring the use of non-Microsoft apps, listening to conversations through microphones, and watching through webcams. Microsoft sees profit in such behaviors.

I see violations of privacy and unwarranted use of bandwidth that I pay for.

**My first interactive generative AI experience**

You can see my dialog with Copilot below. My input is identified as You. I added italics to clarify the two major sub-headings in the generative AI answer.

As you will see below in the dialog, the answer was incomplete. Perhaps I should have asked how to remove the Copilot preview *from my computer*. Maybe I should be glad that the AI could not read my mind.

**You:**

how to remove the Copilot preview

**Copilot:**

Certainly! If you'd like to remove the Copilot preview from your Windows 11 taskbar, there are a couple of options:

*Remove Copilot from Taskbar (Temporary):*

This method will hide the Copilot icon from your taskbar without completely deactivating it.

Follow these steps:

Open the Settings app (you can search for it in the Start menu).

Click on Personalization.

Scroll down and select Taskbar.

Toggle off the Copilot option.

*Disable Copilot Completely (Permanent):*

If you want to permanently disable Copilot, follow these steps:

Click on Start and search for gpedit to open the Group Policy Editor.

In the left-hand panel, navigate to User Configuration > Administrative Templates > Windows Components > Windows Copilot.

Double-click on Turn off Windows Copilot in the right-hand panel.

Click Enabled, then click Apply and OK.

Remember that if you ever want to enable Copilot again, you can follow the same steps and choose "Not configured" or "Disabled" instead of "Enabled" in the last step.

That's it! If you need further assistance with Windows, feel free to ask. 😊

<end of dialog>

I did try the permanent removal option. I encountered a problem: **gpedit** was not found on my Windows 11 computer. I searched on the Windows Store and did not find it there. It appears to be part of Windows 11 Pro only. I am disappointed that Copilot did not say so.

I searched the Web and found a page of scripts for installing gpedit, one for Windows 10 and one for Windows 11. When the script is finished, I can start Gpedit by typing Gpedit.msc in the Windows 11 search field.

Using the remaining instructions, I could find and complete the steps. Alas, the icon remained active after that, so I assumed a restart was also required, which was also not mentioned by Copilot. When the computer restarted, the icon was indeed no longer in the taskbar corner.

**Copilot is also found elsewhere on the computer.**

A day later, I found the Copilot icon in another place, the popup that appears when the Search field in the taskbar is clicked. You can see that second icon in the upper right corner of **illustration 3**. The second icon does ***not*** contain the letters PRE.

And yes, that second icon is active. Using gpedit to disable Copilot, as described by Copilot, did not remove or disable the second icon.

I decided not to include the URL for gpedit installation scripts in this article because using GPEDIT did not remove the Copilot icon anywhere other than on the right end of the taskbar.

***illustration 31***

More Web research followed. I found a page on which a registry edit was described to disable Copilot. I tried that registry edit method. It did not work for me.

I opened Windows Settings and used Search to find references to Copilot in Settings. None were found. The same not-found result happened in the Windows Control Panel.

**Is removal from a computer not possible?**

My Web research also turned up a Microsoft forum page on removing Copilot. A Microsoft rep posted an answer repeating the gpedit technique and reiterated a familiar refrain: **Copilot is now a part of the Windows 11 OS and** ***cannot be removed***.

In court many years ago, Microsoft sang that same song about an earlier version of Windows and the Internet Explorer (IE) Web browser. Microsoft claimed IE could not be removed without seriously harming the Windows OS. An outside expert demonstrated in court how to remove IE without impacting the Windows OS. In short, Microsoft may have believed that the company made IE removal from Windows impossible, but the company was proven wrong.

Microsoft may have learned much since then, but so have outside experts who use critical thinking skills to test and challenge Microsoft's claims. Perhaps the story of Copilot and its removal of it is just beginning.

Microsoft has demonstrated that it is willing to install what the company considers the latest Microsoft killer app **without giving its Windows customers a choice before or after the installation**. Giving customers a choice might limit Microsoft's profit potential.

That lack of a choice shows that Microsoft does not treat customers respectfully.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Krout is a retired software engineer who has worked on contracts for many Federal agencies in the Washington DC metro region. He began writing and speaking about creative uses of personal computers in the early 1980s. More recently, he has also covered interesting uses of smartphones, tablets, and electric vehicles. He lives in Arlington, VA. John is also an avid photographer and recently enjoyed a trip to Texas to photograph the eclipse, one of the