Using DuckDuckGo

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Starting Tails on PC

This page describes the basic and advanced techniques to start Tails from a USB stick on PC.

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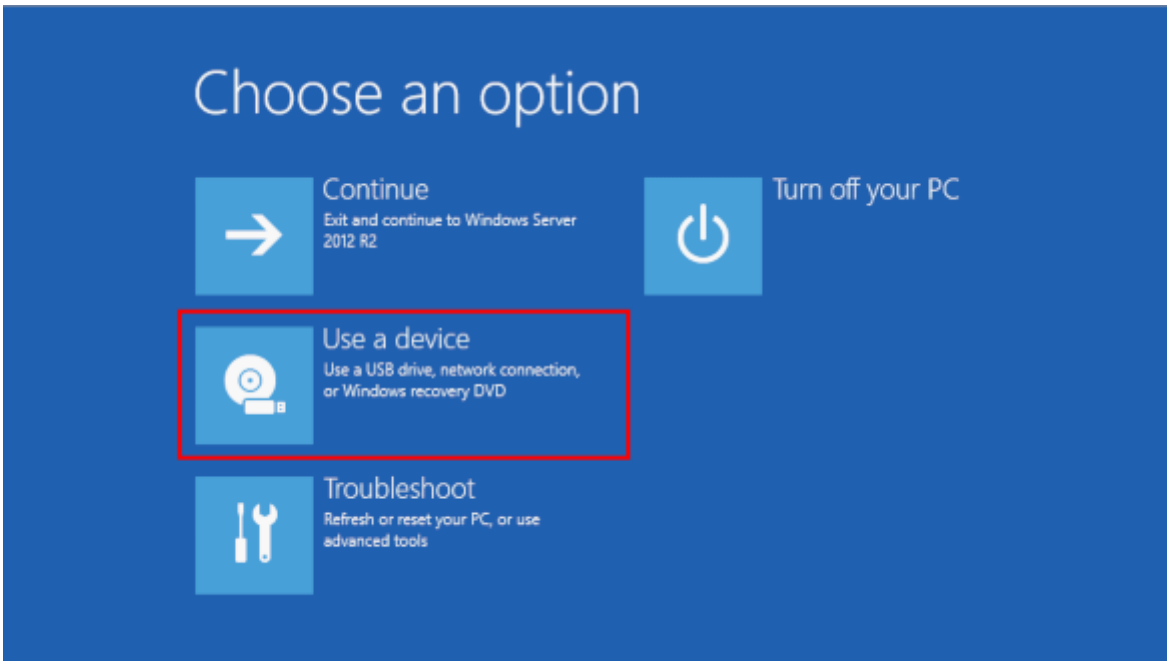
Starting from Windows 8 or 10

From Windows or the sign-in screen of Windows:

1. Make sure that you have installed Tails using either:
   - *balenaEtcher* from Windows
   - *balenaEtcher* from macOS
   - *GNOME Disks* from Linux
   - the Linux command line
2. Click on the **Start** button.
3. Press and hold the **Shift** key while you choose **Power ▸ Restart**.
4. In the **Choose an option** screen, choose **Use a device**.



> If the **Choose an option** screen does not appear, refer to the instructions on starting Tails using the Boot Menu key.

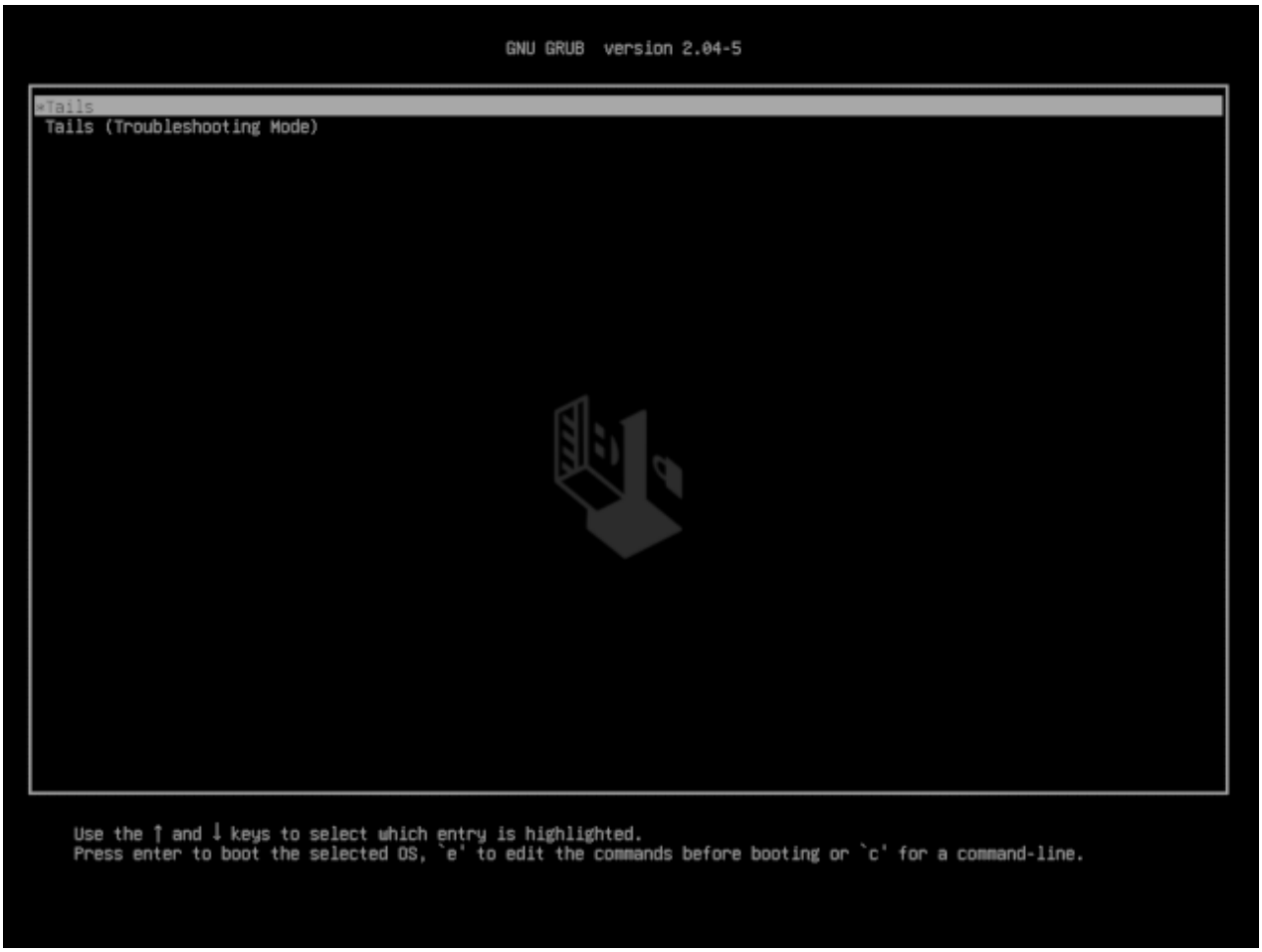
5. In the **Use a device** screen, choose **Boot Menu**.

   Plug in your Tails USB stick shortly after choosing **Boot Menu** and while Windows is shutting down.

> We recommend that you only plug in your Tails USB stick while Windows is shutting down. Otherwise, a virus in Windows could infect your Tails USB stick and break its security.
>
> Such an attack is possible in theory but very unlikely in practice. We don't know of any virus capable of infecting Tails. See our warning on plugging Tails in untrusted systems.

The Boot Menu is a list of possible devices to start from. The following screenshot is an example of a Boot Menu:

6. In the Boot Menu, select your USB stick and press **Enter**.
7. If the computer starts on Tails, the Boot Loader appears and Tails starts automatically after 4 seconds.



If the Boot Loader appears, you can continue reading our instructions on the Welcome Screen and configuring the Persistent Storage.

Welcome Screen and configuring the Persistent Storage.

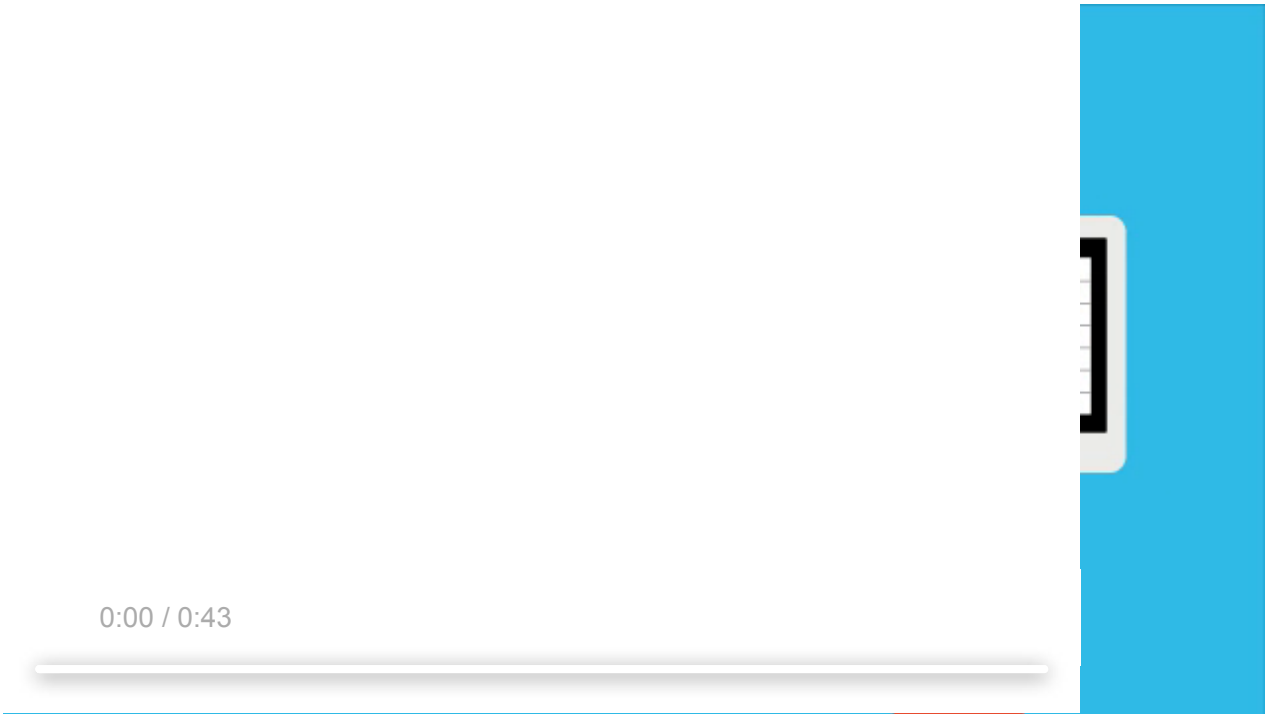
Starting with the Boot Menu key

Most computers do not start on the Tails USB stick automatically but you can press a Boot Menu key to display a list of possible devices to start from.

> If Windows 8 or 10 is installed on the computer, you can refer instead to the instructions on starting Tails from Windows 8 or 10. Starting Tails from Windows is easier than using the Boot Menu key.

The following screenshot is an example of a Boot Menu:

This animation summarizes how to use the Boot Menu key to start on the USB stick:



The following instructions explain in detail how to use the Boot Menu key to start on the USB stick:

1. Make sure that you have installed Tails using either:
   - *balenaEtcher* from Windows
   - *balenaEtcher* from macOS
   - *GNOME Disks* from Linux
   - the Linux command line
2. Shut down the computer and plug in the Tails USB stick.
3. Identify the possible Boot Menu keys for the computer depending on the computer manufacturer in the following list:

Manufacturer	**Key**
Acer	F12, F9, F2, Esc
Apple	Option
Asus	Esc
Clevo	F7
Dell	F12
Fujitsu	F12, Esc
HP	F9
Huawei	F12
Intel	F10
Lenovo	F12
MSI	F11
Samsung	Esc, F12, F2
Sony	F11, Esc, F10
Toshiba	F12
others…	F12, Esc

> On many computers, a message is displayed very briefly when switching on that also explains how to get to the Boot Menu or edit the BIOS settings.

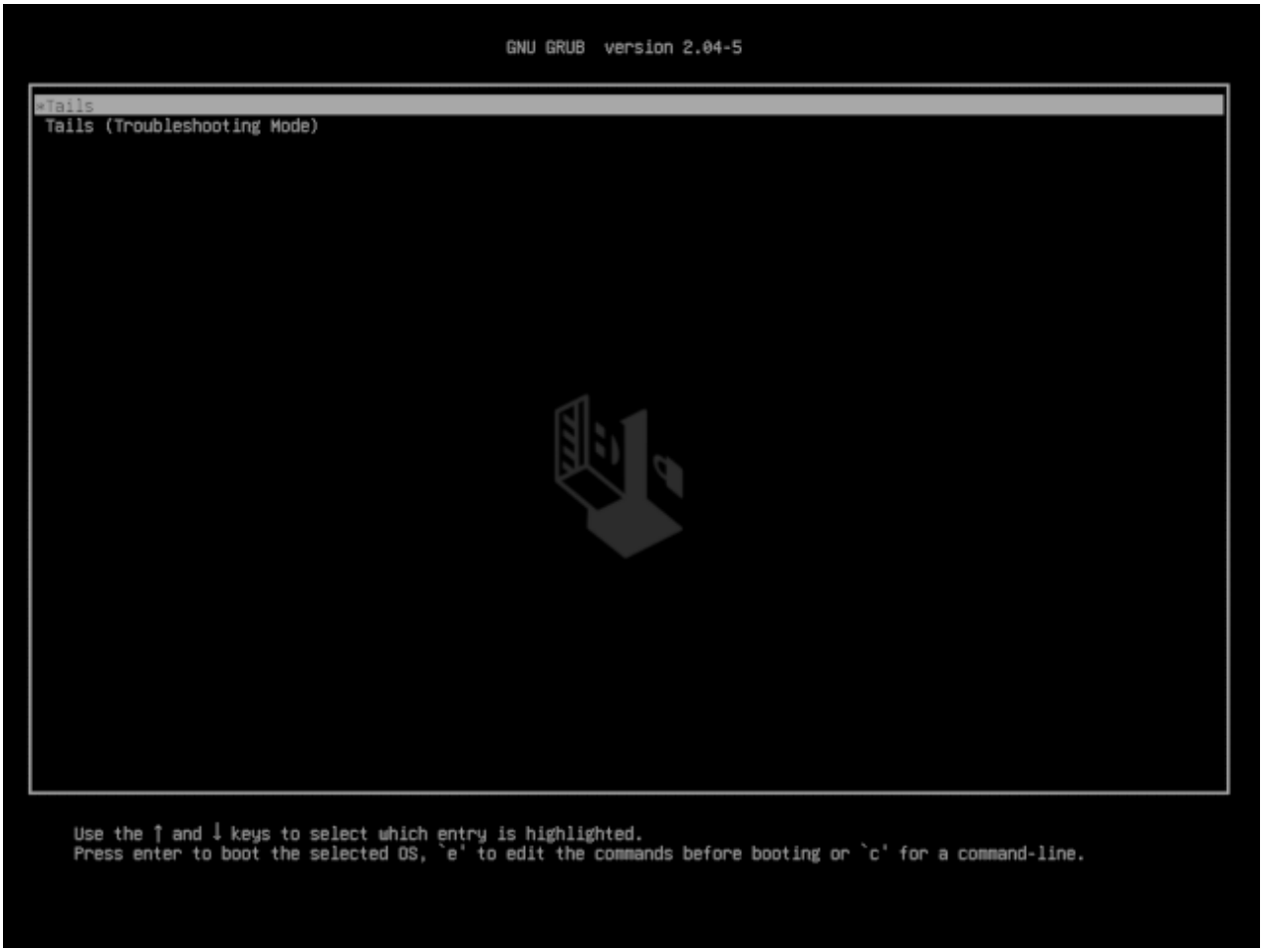
4. Switch on the computer.

Immediately press several times the first possible Boot Menu key identified in step 2.

5. If the computer starts on another operating system or returns an error message, shut down the computer again and repeat step 3 for all the possible Boot Menu keys identified in step 2.

   If a Boot Menu with a list of devices appears, select your USB stick and press **Enter**.

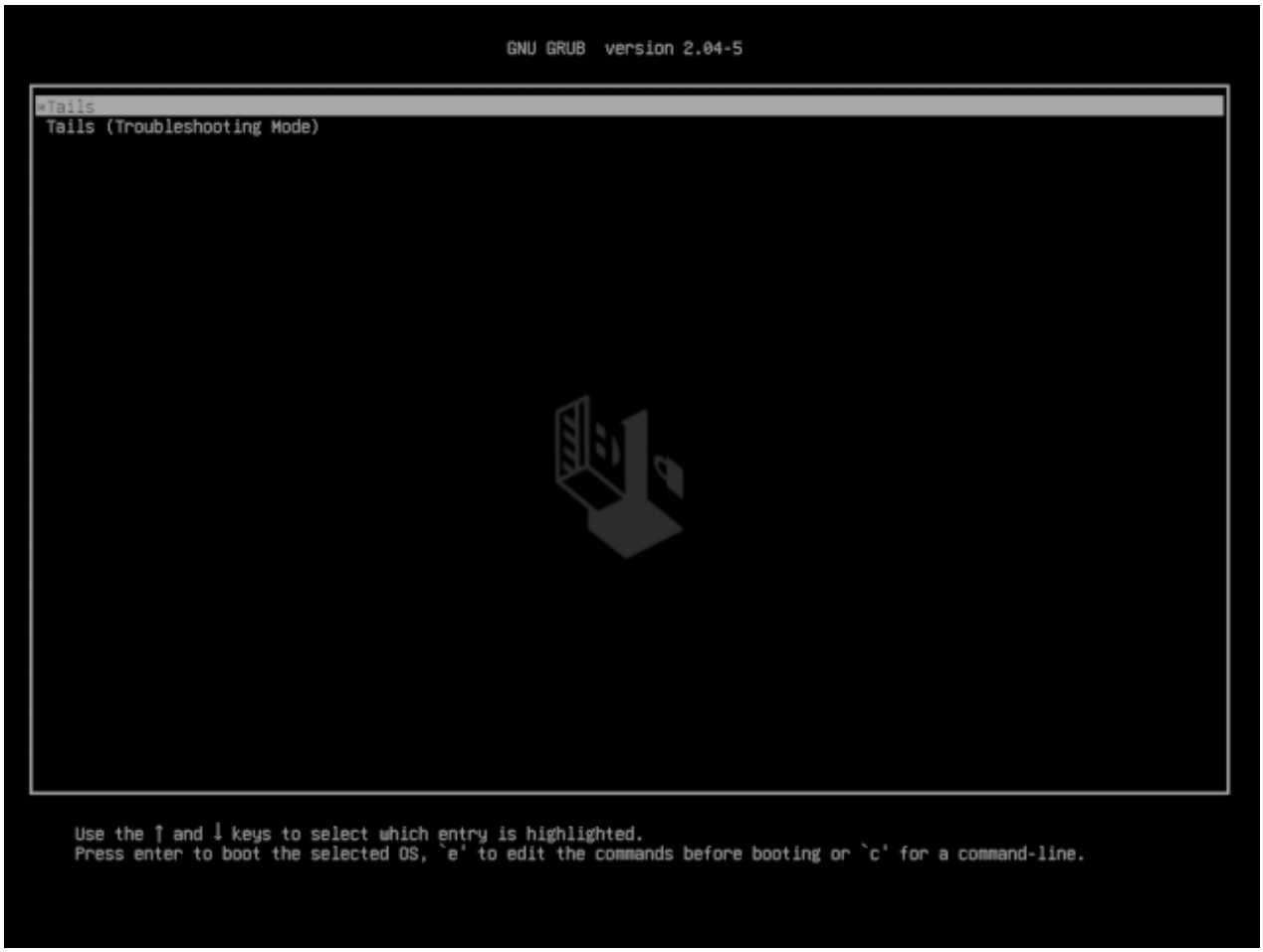
6. If the computer starts on Tails, the Boot Loader appears and Tails starts automatically after 4 seconds.



> If the Boot Loader appears, you can continue reading our instructions on the Welcome Screen and configuring the Persistent Storage.

Troubleshooting Tails not starting at all

Use this section if the computer does not start from the USB stick and the Boot Loader does not display:



Verify your Tails USB stick

1. Make sure that you have installed Tails using either:
   - *balenaEtcher* from Windows
   - *balenaEtcher* from macOS
   - *GNOME Disks* from Linux
   - the Linux command line
2. Make sure that you have verified your download of Tails.
3. Try installing again on the same USB stick.
4. Try installing on a different USB stick.
5. Try using the same USB stick to start on a different computer.

If you get the following error message in Windows:

```
The disc image file is corrupted.
```

Then, you have to install Tails using *balenaEtcher*.

Check our list of known issues

Similar problems might have been reported already for your computer model in our list of known issues about Tails not starting at all.

Edit the BIOS or UEFI settings (advanced users)

To learn how to edit the BIOS or UEFI settings, search for the user manual of the computer on the support website of the manufacturer.

> Take note of the changes that you apply to the BIOS or UEFI settings. That way, you can revert the changes if they prevent the computer from starting on its usual operating system.

In the BIOS or UEFI settings, try to apply the following changes:

- Make sure that the Boot Menu key is enabled, in your BIOS or UEFI options. This option might be called **Boot Device List** or something similar, depending on the computer.
- Edit the **Boot Order**. You might see an entry for **Removable devices** or **USB media**. Move this entry to the top of the list to force the computer to start from the USB stick before starting from the internal hard disk.
- Disable **Fast Boot**.
- Enable **CSM Boot**.
- Enable **Legacy Boot**, in addition to UEFI. The computer might not start anymore on its regular operating system if you disable UEFI completely or if you only enable Legacy boot.
- Try to upgrade the BIOS or UEFI. To do so, refer to the support website of the computer manufacturer.

Troubleshooting Tails not starting after the Boot Loader

Use this section if the Boot Loader appears but not the Welcome Screen when you start Tails.

Verify your Tails USB stick

1. Make sure that you have installed Tails using either:

- *balenaEtcher* from Windows
- *balenaEtcher* from macOS
- *GNOME Disks* from Linux
- the Linux command line

2. Make sure that you have verified your download of Tails.
3. Try installing again on the same USB stick.
4. Try installing on a different USB stick.
5. Try using the same USB stick to start on a different computer.

Try the Troubleshooting Mode entry

In the Boot Loader, choose the **Troubleshooting Mode** entry, which works better on some computers.

Try the External Hard Disk entry

In the Boot Loader, choose the **External Hard Disk** entry, if it is available. Some USB sticks need this entry in order to start Tails.

Check our list of known issues

- If the computer displays the error message **Error starting GDM with your graphics card**, refer to our list of known issues with graphics cards.
- Otherwise, refer to our list of known issues about Tails not starting entirely. It might contain workarounds for your computer model.