Windows Remote Assistance Sessions

Remote Assistance is available in Windows 7, 8 and 10. It allows you to request assistance from a friend, who can then observe your system while you are working or control the system remotely.

To start the session, you must provide an "invitation" file and a password to your helper. A Windows feature called Remote Assistance will make the file and the password – you just have to send them.

Remote Assistance offers several ways to make this happen. Only two will be described here and they differ only in whether the process is semi-automatic or manual.

- If you have an email program ("client") such as Microsoft Outlook, you can use the semi-automatic method. Remote Assistance creates the email and displays it. You need only send it.
- If you use a Web browser (e.g., Chrome, Firefox, Edge) to handle email, you must do more of the work yourself.

Either way, the effect is to get the file and password to the helper.

You'll need to use the Windows key on your keyboard. Most PCs have two. The Windows logo has changed over the years but the placement of the keys has been the same for quite some time.
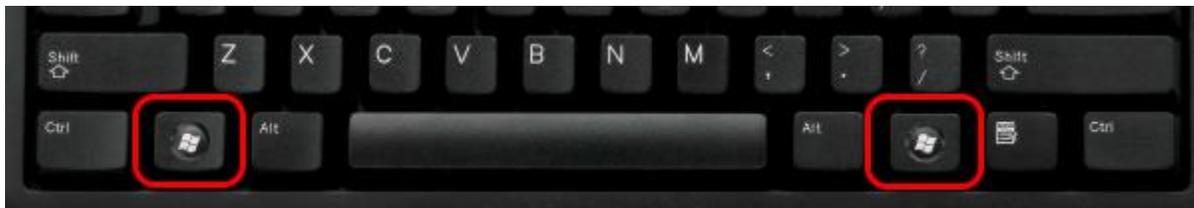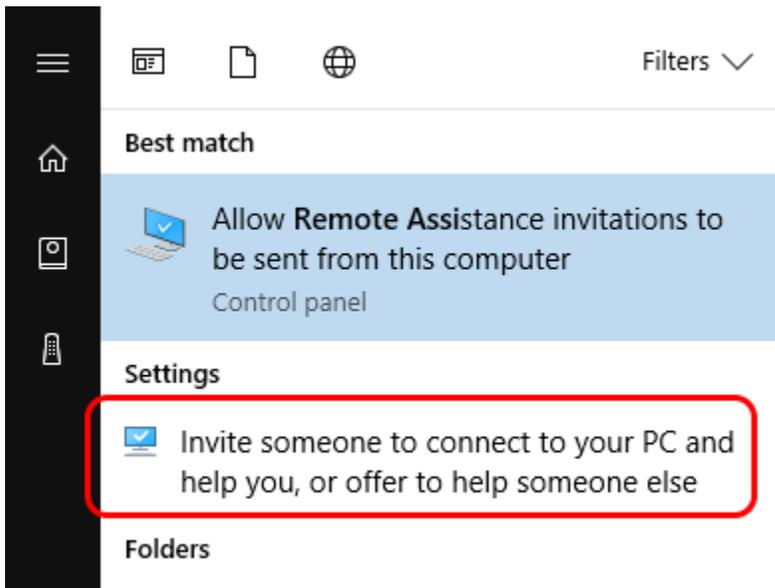

There are two ways to start the Remote Assistance program.

You can ask Windows to find the program for you by pressing the Windows key on your keyboard and then typing "Remote Assistance" (without the quotation marks).
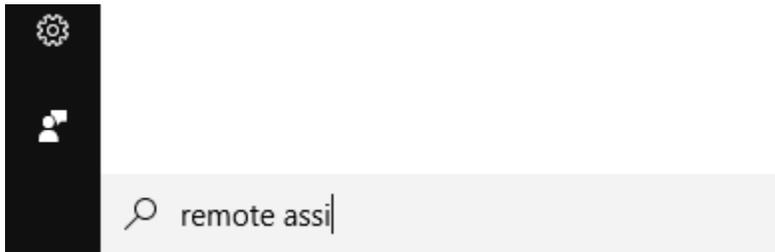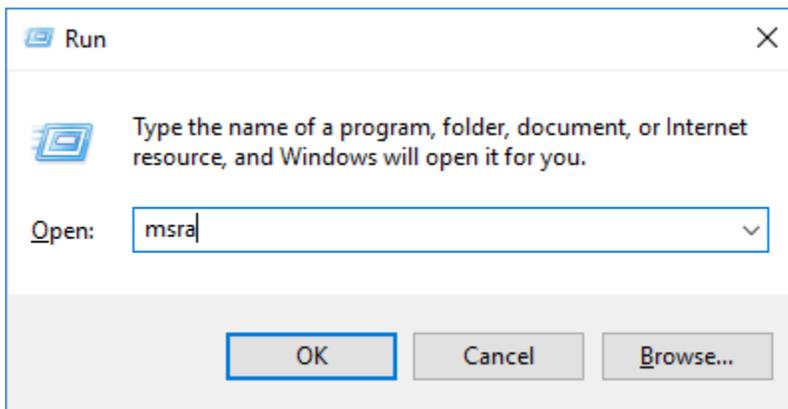

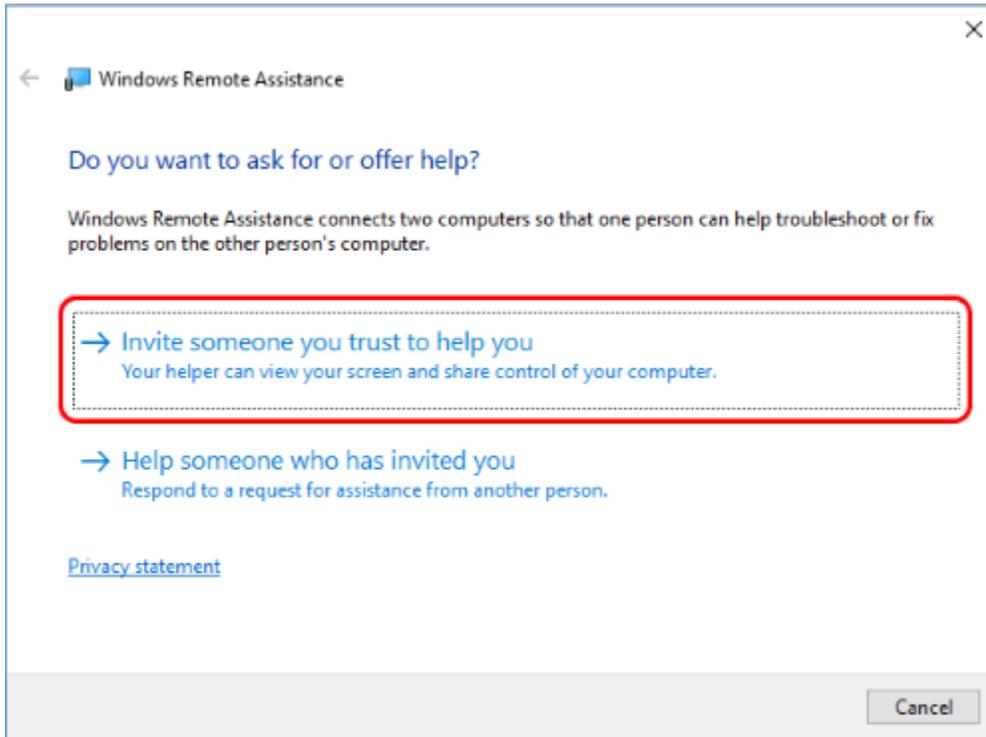As you type, you will see this at the top of the start menu:
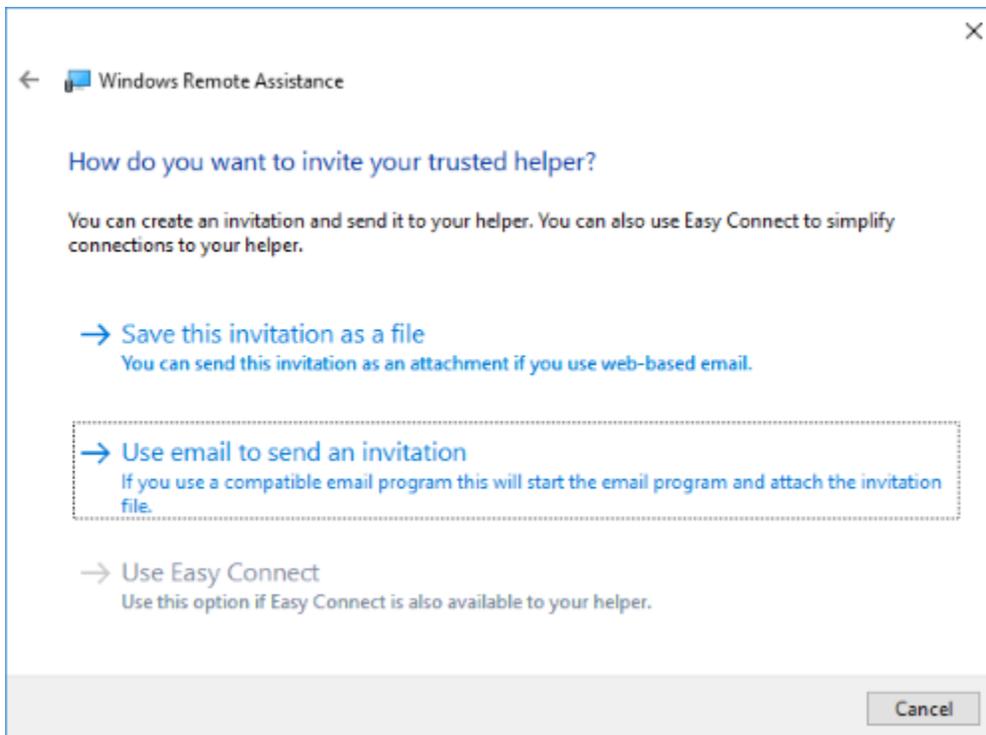

Click the area circled in red above.

The other method is to press and hold the Windows key on your keyboard, then press the R key and release both (Win+R) to bring up the Run dialog. Type in "msra" as shown below, then press Enter or click the OK button.

However you start Remote Assistance, you will see this:

Click the "Invite" section. You will see this:

This is where you choose semi-automatic or manual.

- Choose "Use email to send an invitation" if you have a program like Outlook.
- Choose "Save this invitation as a file" if you use Web-based email.

The Remote Assistance file is named **`Invitation.msrcIncident`**.

If you choose the "Use email" option, Remote Assistance will start your email program (if necessary) and automatically compose a message with the invitation file already attached. You just have to fill in the email address of your helper and send the email.

If you choose the "Save" option, you will be asked where you want to save this file. Save it on the desktop so you can easily find it later to delete it. Once it is saved, go to your Web-based email and compose a message. Fill in the email address of your helper and *manually attach the invitation file* to the message. Don't forget the attachment step – without the file, your helper will be helpless. Send the email.

At this point it may be helpful to get your helper on the phone. The Remote Assistance system has a Chat capability that works very well, but sometimes a call can be more efficient.

Your helper also needs a password. Remote assistance displays the password as the last step:
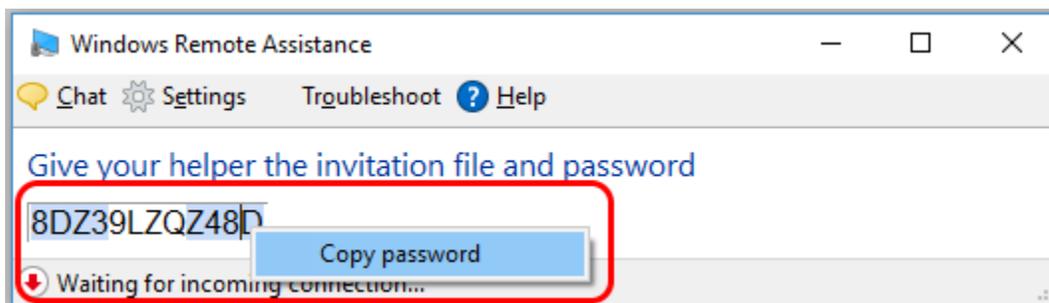
You can read the password to your helper over the phone, which is a very safe method. However, your helper has to type it in, which is prone to error. You can help the helper by sending a second email containing just the password (not in the subject line). You can cut and paste the password into the email by first right-clicking the password in the display above and clicking the "Copy Password" option.

Once your helper has the password and the file, the helper can start the remote session. The remaining steps are simple and your helper can guide you through them.

While the session is in progress, the Remote Assistance window must remain open. If you close that window, the session will disconnect. You can end the remote session at any time.

By default, the helper can only watch. The helper can request control of your computer, which you can grant and also terminate at any time.

Grant control only to someone you trust!