

All your Windows 7 questions answered, part I

November 3rd, 2009, 3:17 pm · 2 Comments · posted by Ed Schwartz, NOCCC



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This is Part 1 of a multi-part article about the new Windows 7 operating system. Since Windows 7 has arrived and there have been many questions about it, this article is devoted to answering some of those questions.

Let's start with this: What is [Windows 7](#)?

Windows 7 is the new operating system Microsoft released on Oct. 22, 2009. It's the successor to Windows Vista. You can buy the software in stores on a DVD and upgrade older PCs or buy a new computer with Windows 7 pre-installed.

This is the third version of Windows since Windows XP launched on Oct. 25, 2001. Windows Vista arrived on Jan. 30, 2007 but software issues led many users to switch back to XP. Microsoft put development on the next operating system in fast forward. Enter Windows 7.

So, should you buy Windows 7?

If you purchased your PC within the last year or two you may be able to upgrade to Windows 7 to take advantage of its new features without too many headaches. You can read about the new features on Microsoft's site, at "[Windows 7 features](#)" (shortcut: <http://bit.ly/223L1j>).

Current Windows XP users will continue to receive Windows updates such as security patches and critical fixes through April 8, 2014 for now. Vista users will be supported for quite some time also. Whether you are running XP or Vista you can continue doing so without losing your e-mail programs such as Outlook Express or Windows Mail. In fact, if you are happy with your current setup you can ignore the new Windows 7.

Before you even think about upgrading, you should do the following:

- Download and run the Microsoft Windows Upgrade advisor at <http://bit.ly/vhEhR>. This will inform you of any potential conflicts between your existing hardware and software and Windows 7.



- Run the **Windows Easy Transfer Wizard** to backup all of you data, user settings, etc. The program is built into Windows Vista and XP users can download it at <http://bit.ly/3pYA1a> . This web site will tell you what can be backed up. I strongly recommend purchasing an external hard drive for this purpose. Easy Transfer Wizard can be run from the Windows 7 DVD by inserting the Windows 7 DVD, cancelling any auto-run windows that opens, opening My Computer, right-clicking the DVD drive icon, selecting open, navigating to the Support folder, opening the MIGWIZ folder and running migsetup.exe. By the way, MIGWIZ is the migration wizard, another name for the Easy Transfer Wizard. Leave it to Microsoft. Microsoft has more information on this upgrade process at <http://bit.ly/3EXK7x>.
- Visit the Microsoft compatibility site at <http://bit.ly/1gW6Ns> to look for potential conflicts.
- Go to your manufacturer's web site and download all of the drivers for your PC. Look for Windows 7 drivers first and if not available, download the Vista drivers. Make sure to download the correct ones for your PC whether they're 32-bit or 64-bit.

There are basically three versions of Windows 7 available: Home Premium, \$119.99; Professional, \$199.99; and Ultimate, \$199.99. (More on pricing at <http://bit.ly/s2nrr>.) These prices are for the upgrade versions. Full versions, which most people don't need, are about \$100 more, see image below. Upgrade versions are for users that currently own a PC containing a licensed version of XP or Vista. There is also available a Home Family Pack with three user licenses for \$149.99. **There is absolutely no reason to purchase the full version if you currently have XP or Vista.**



Wikipedia has a great comparison chart explaining the features of the various versions at <http://bit.ly/EOEPE> . Microsoft's chart is at <http://bit.ly/12NY6J>.

For those of you that purchased a new PC on or after June 26, 2009, you may be entitled to a free Windows 7 upgrade from your manufacturer. See <http://bit.ly/rjAz4> for details. This offer expires on Jan. 31, 2010.

The free upgrade offered by Dell, for example, consists of two DVDs. The first DVD is the Dell Windows 7 Upgrade Assistant DVD and the second one is the actual Windows 7 installation DVD. The Windows 7 DVD contains the version corresponding to the version of Vista that you currently have, either 32-bit or 64-bit. If you want to upgrade from 32-bit to 64-bit you will have to purchase the software. Some manufactures are supplying both versions. You may want to check with your manufacturer.

Next up: How to upgrade to Windows 7

Ed's note: Two excellent books on Windows 7 are: "[Windows 7 Inside Out](#)" by Ed Bott and "[Windows 7 Secrets](#)" by Paul Thurrott. Some of the material in this article was researched in these books. Other material was obtained from my personal experience in installing Windows 7 and from the nice folks at the new [Microsoft Store](#) at the Mission Viejo Mall in Orange County California.

In a [recent article](#) I mistakenly assumed that the store employees in red shirts were the experts. Boy was I wrong. Employees wearing any color shirt are extremely knowledgeable. Many thanks are due to the Microsoft employees Jason, Bryan, Dukes, J.D. and to the store Manager Walter, for putting up with me.

For more articles and sample Upgrade Advisor Reports on Windows 7, visit my personal site at www.edwardns.com/windows7.html. ~Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member.
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