

Microsoft Windows 7

Is it Finally the Right Time to Upgrade?

Windows 7 is finally here and Microsoft intended it to be intuitive and simple to use and hopes to remedy past OS problems related to security, reliability and stability. In an attempt to meet the needs of the many different types of computer users, Windows 7 will be released in six versions.

The Six Versions of Windows 7

Starter- is for PCs with limited hardware capabilities (netbooks, lower end laptops and workstations). Users are limited to using a maximum of three simultaneously running programs at a time.

Home Premium- offers enhanced Windows navigation, improved taskbars and jumplists, live thumbnail previews, Mobility Centre for smart phone users, Aero Glass-a new way to view folders, enhancements to Windows Media Center and Media Streaming, and the ability to simultaneously run an unlimited number of applications.

Home Basic- is a scaled down version of Home Premium that is intended for the overseas market. This version has been modified to run on PCs with smaller processors.

Professional- includes all the features of Home Premium as well as providing simple and secure server networking, advanced network backup, file and folder encryption, and location-aware printing to help your PC find the correct printer, regardless of location.

Enterprise- is similar to Professional but is intended for large corporate customers that are business volume-licensed. In addition to the features offered in Professional, it also includes enhanced security features such as Bitlocker data protection and advanced management capabilities.

Ultimate- provides home users all the features of the Enterprise version but doesn't require a volume license. Unfortunately, this version will have only limited availability through occasional promotional deals.

New Features of Windows 7

This is a list of the new features that will be available with Windows 7:

Improved performance

System boot time and application launch times have noticeably decreased. A reduction in the time required to place systems into and retrieve them out of hibernation mode makes "putting your system to sleep" more convenient.

New optimisation tools decrease battery usage, allowing portable computer users more "cord-free" time than was possible with Vista and XP.

Enhanced searching capabilities

New options allow you to look for keywords in documents, emails, attached storage devices, and can also

extend the search to networked servers and designated web pages.

Location aware printing

When you connect to a network, Windows 7 will automatically detect your location and select the proper printers for your print jobs.

Virtual hard disk support

Windows 7 can be virtualised, allowing multiple operating systems to reside on a single host machine. Windows 7 is preconfigured to support Hyper-V virtual machines.

Expanded security

BitLocker-to-Go brings the encryption powers of BitLocker to portable storage devices such as USB drives and external storage devices.

Preinstalled drivers let your Windows 7 machine “read” most biometric devices.

App-Blocker lets IT administrators easily control the applications individual users can access.

Windows Access Center replaces Vista’s Security Center. The Access Centre provides security alerts and gives you the tools to take care of problems and system maintenance in one convenient location.

Geo-tracking will broadcast the position of your computer to location-aware applications such as mapping programs.

Simple device management

Device Stage is a plug-and-play app that will recognise portable devices when connected to a computer, and then provide you with only the relevant menus and options needed to manage the device.

New remote access methods

BranchCache provides branch-office users quicker access to files stored on central file servers in the main office. Direct Access gives mobile users remote access to resources without requiring the use of a VPN.

Troubleshooting tool

Problem Steps Recorder (PSR) provides a recording app-when an error repeatedly occurs after executing a particular sequence of steps, you can use the PSR to log the sequence, and share it with the IT administrator for problem solving solutions.

Benefits of Windows 7

The Windows 7 OS provides many new tools and features that focus on improved productivity through improved usability. This new OS has been constructed to be more intuitive and less distracting (no more annoying and unnecessary pop-ups notifying the user that there is a notification for the user). Users that upgrade to Windows 7 will benefit from increased productivity while enjoying the following resources:

Quicker boot time- the average windows 7 machine will boot will boot up in under 60 seconds. With the

decreased boot time, users will no longer have time to run across the street for a mocha while their system starts up. Instead, users can get to work as soon as they sit down.

Compatibility- The flexibility of Windows 7 gives users the ability to run almost any software that is Windows compatible. Windows 7 will work with more accessories and programs than its predecessors, Windows Vista and Windows XP. Microsoft has designed this OS to automatically run any program that was designed for Vista, and it will also be able to run most XP applications in an XP compatibility window.

Libraries- Windows 7 provides a new, more intuitive way of organizing and locating documents. Instead of wasting time trying to remember where a previously created document is stored, a user can now search for their documents by type in different “libraries” such as communications, contacts, documents, downloads, music, pictures and videos. Not only will a user see a shortcut for the document they need, they will also gain immediate access to specific data that is pertinent for each type of library. For example: when the “contacts” library is opened, it will show phone numbers and e-mail addresses and when the “downloads” library is opened, it will list the URL source for each download. The libraries are customisable, allowing users to create personalised folders that will keep project documents and files accessible.

Jump Lists- This updated menu is a timesaving tool that allows a user to preview open applications and folders. When the mouse is moved over the taskbar, a popup menu appears and lists all open windows. Right clicking will provide a brief history of recent changes and other useful information.

Windows Search- This enhanced search feature resembles the “auto-complete” function that is a familiar tool in Microsoft Word. The moment a user starts to type a word in the search field, Windows 7 will list items that match the typed characters. The list will decrease as characters are added. At any point, a user can preview the search results-without having to open the document.