



# Windows 7 upgrade

## Should I upgrade?

Microsoft released their new operating system, Windows 7, a few weeks ago. Of course Microsoft are in the business to make money so as far as they are concerned, everyone should buy Windows 7. But is this really necessary? Why should you change to Windows 7? What are the requirements and implications of changing?

Here is a bold statement – If you are running Windows XP and all the software you use works ok, there is no need to upgrade to 7. Microsoft have said they will support XP until April 2014 which means that security and stability issues will continue to be fixed until that date. By then XP will be 13 years old which shows just how robust XP is.

So what circumstances are right for moving to Windows 7? First, if you buy a new PC today it will almost certainly be shipped with Windows 7. Secondly, if you are currently running on Windows Vista there is a good argument to upgrade.

Windows Vista was released in early 2007 but it had a very poor start. The main reason people started to use it was because it shipped with new PC's. Unfortunately Vista required a powerful PC with a lot of memory to work well so many people were disappointed with its performance. Microsoft also changed the licensing which led to poor take-up by large users.

Windows 7 has learned from the mistakes of Vista and has a much lower system requirement. This means that many PC's currently running Vista rather slowly will see a performance boost if upgraded to Windows 7.

## What should I do before upgrading?

So you have made the decision to upgrade or you are buying a new PC. If buying a new PC, then it couldn't be simpler. The computer will be fully Windows 7 compatible and be ready to use. However if upgrading, what should you be checking before you take the plunge? First you should download and run the Windows 7 upgrade advisor. Click this link – [Upgrade](#) to download the program. This program checks your hardware and some software that is installed on your PC and tells you if it will work under Windows 7. The program will highlight areas that are not compatible and check that the PC meets the minimum requirements for Windows 7. You should take note of the warnings and take advice if you are not sure.

Unfortunately, the upgrade advisor will not check any non-Microsoft applications that you might be using. For example, Sage provides a range of accounting and payroll software which many small companies use. The support pages of Sage give a list of their software that is compatible with Windows 7 so if you are using one of the listed versions it should be safe to upgrade. There are many other software vendors each with their own compatibility issues so anything that you run on your PC will need to be carefully checked with the vendor. In some cases you may have to buy a new version assuming it is available. However If you are still left with software that won't work on

Windows 7 but you still wish to upgrade, there is a solution using 'Windows 7 XP mode virtualisation', a mouth full which not surprisingly is not straight forward. This option is only available with the two higher versions of Windows 7, it requires more memory, your processor chip needs to [support Virtualization](#) and be turned on in the Bios. We suggest taking advice if you need this option.

If a custom install is required (discussed later), all application software will need to be reloaded after Windows 7 has been installed. Make sure you can find all the disks and product keys before proceeding. Plus any anti-virus software which is planned to be reinstalled will need to be checked for support of Windows 7. It is likely that new versions will need to be obtained due to the radical differences in Windows 7 security controls.

As regards your PC hardware and attached devices, Windows 7 has a huge range of supported devices so unless your machine is very old it will probably be ok. If not, check with the vendor's web site first for drivers, before thinking of buying a newer device.

### **Which version of Windows 7 should I upgrade to?**

So now you have checked your hardware and software and you are confident that it will work correctly under Windows 7. Which version of Windows 7 should you install? Microsoft has released 6 versions of Windows 7 but not all are available in the UK. The retail versions that can be bought here are **Home Premium**, **Professional** and **Ultimate**. Each includes 32 bit or a 64 bit versions. The features that each version offers are documented on the Microsoft web site [here](#). For most small businesses the best option is probably Professional because it supports XP mode virtualisation and has comprehensive Backup software included. The latter will enable you to backup your important data on a regular basis, an essential tool for a business.

Each version comes in **Upgrade** or **Full** editions. If you are going from XP or Vista to Windows 7, then the less expensive Upgrade edition is the one to choose. All other installations of Windows 7, including older versions of Windows, new or blank machines will need the Full edition.

The final choice is 32 or 64 bit. Put simply, the vast majority of people will see little benefit from using the 64 bit version. It may be slightly faster but it's real performance boost is that it can address more than 3.2 Gb of memory, an essential feature for a PC server or one being used for intensive graphics and video work. On the downside, all your hardware drivers must be 64 bit versions and at the moment not all manufacturers have these available. So for most, the 32 bit versions will be fine.

### **Ways to upgrade**

So now you have checked your hardware and software compatibility, purchased your chosen version and are ready to do the upgrade. Wait! From the Windows 7 Upgrade edition there are two ways to install. As an upgrade or as a custom install (as Microsoft call it).

You can only use the upgrade method from Windows Vista to Windows 7, and only if going between same versions i.e. Vista Home Premium 32 bit to Windows 7 Home Premium 32 bit. Other Vista upgrades to a higher level or changing from 32 bit to 64 bit or any version of XP, then the custom install method is the only option. Although the upgrade method (where applicable) is simpler, many still advocate opting instead for a custom install as the best way to go as it gives you an opportunity to clean your disk and discard all of those unused files.

## The Custom installation method

Any custom install does have some implications though. You will need to perform a full backup of all your data before you do the installation. This can take some time and Microsoft has provided software to help you perform this. Windows Easy Transfer is available [here](#). You will need an external hard drive to back up your old PC to and the process can take several hours. Prudent business users may also [image](#) their PC in case a serious problem means they need to fall-back to the state before the upgrade was attempted. Once the data is backed up you can start the Windows 7 installation.

Do a custom install and format your hard drive according to the instructions on screen. The installation process is usually about 1 hour. Step by step instructions are available [here](#). You will then have to install all your application software and then restore your backup using Windows Easy Transfer. Finally any specific setting for email and internet access will have to be set.



Now enjoy Windows 7 !!!!

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### Decision Summary

Upgrade question	Advice
Should I upgrade?	From Vista - yes. From XP - no, unless there is a specific need.
What version to buy?	Business users should buy Professional or higher.
Full or Upgrade edition?	If moving from Vista or XP to Windows 7 buy the Upgrade edition. All others scenarios buy the Full edition.
32 or 64 bit version?	Keep it simple and stay 32 bit version unless you need to use more than 3.2GB of memory. 64 bit isn't intrinsically faster.
When I buy, are the 32 bit and 64 bits versions sold separately?	No – Each version of Windows 7, such as Home Premium comes with both 32 and 64 bit versions of Windows 7.
Upgrade or Custom Install methods?	Upgrade install method is only available when moving from the Vista to the same level of Windows 7 and not changing from 32 to 64 bit.
Can I upgrade from a lower version of Windows 7 to a higher version at a later date?	Yes using the any-time upgrade online feature. But there is a cost.

Briefing provided by **Social Enterprise IT CIC Ltd**

[www.seit-cic.co.uk](http://www.seit-cic.co.uk) - Need help getting to Windows 7? Social Enterprise IT provides an upgrade service to help you choose the right version and get there safely.

[About this statement](#)

Ver 1.0 Nov 2009.