

## WINDOWS XP TIPS & TRICKS

### Five Things You Should Know If You're Thinking About Upgrading To Windows Vista

#### 1. The Upgrade Advisor and The Application Compatibility Toolkit

Before doing anything else, you should download and run the ["http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready/upgradeadvisor/default.mspx"](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready/upgradeadvisor/default.mspx). This program will examine your computer and tell you which version of Vista will run best on your computer. Well, nothing is perfect! The Upgrade Advisor will only tell you if your computer will run Windows Vista and suggest a version of Windows Vista that may be best suited to your computer. It does not, unfortunately, tell you what requirements your computer doesn't meet. (Yeh, I know. I was thinking that same thing too!)

To ensure that your Windows Vista upgrade installation goes well for you, you should also make sure that all of your programs will run with Windows Vista installed (for a fairly comprehensive list see our Site of the Week this week too). Download and run the ["http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=24DA89E9-B581-47B0-B45E-492DD6DA2971&displaylang=en"](http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=24DA89E9-B581-47B0-B45E-492DD6DA2971&displaylang=en) to help you determine which programs are installed on your machine that may not work well (or at all) with Windows Vista. Make sure you install and run the Upgrade Advisor and ACT (Application Compatibility Toolkit) before you run out and plunk down your hard-earned cash on a copy of Windows Vista. Be ready for some surprises. That's all I'm going to say about it :)

#### 2. Processor and Memory

Windows Vista, according to the Microsoft Team (who are always nothing if not optimistic) say you can run Windows Vista with a 800MHz processor. And you'll do well with 512 MB of RAM. Uh huh. And you can buy a Mercedes Benz for \$2000.00 and Beamer for \$1500.00 too. But not a new one of either (not that I would know, I have a truck that won't start :-))

Well, regardless of what the slap-happy, bright-eyed Microsoft team believes, it's time for the cynical EB and TC to tell you like it is. And it's like this folks:

- a) You should have at least a 1.2 GHz processor
- b) You should have at least 1 GB (preferably 2 GB) of RAM

If you don't have at least a 1.2 GHz processor then your computer is probably already too old to think about upgrading its hardware just so you can run Windows Vista. If you have a 1.2 GHz processor or better but less than 1 GB of RAM you can add more RAM relatively inexpensively. And despite what it sounds like, installing additional RAM is a "snap" (no pun intended). Actually installing more RAM in computer is one of the easiest things you can do, and probably one of the first things computer neophytes learn to do once they're past the fear of opening the computer case and breaking the seal that says "If you break this seal your warranty is voided and you will get a big sink hole in your backyard which will swallow up all your yard furniture."

Many sites that sell RAM like ["http://www.crucial.com"](http://www.crucial.com) provide detailed instructions for your computer model and will help you find the right RAM for you computer. Don't be afraid to install the RAM yourself. It's easy and relatively inexpensive. There is no reason

to pay the Geek Squad or someone else \$79.00 to do it.

### 3. Make Sure You Have A DVD Drive

Well, if you don't know this yet, Windows Vista is too big to fit on CD. So it comes on DVD. So, in the unlikely event you get this far and you don't have a DVD drive in your computer, don't run out and buy Windows. If you do, be prepared to give it to Uncle Jake at Christmas, because you won't be able to install it. That is, unless you run back out and buy a DVD Drive and install it.

### 4. Making Sense Of Vista's Variety

#### Windows Vista Home Basic

This version of Vista provides is the bottom of the rung. You know the basic transportation model. No fancy Aero Glass, no advanced features, just the basics. Hey, that's probably why they call it, Windows Vista Home Basic? Ya think? We think Microsoft has a good idea here, give this version a name that almost no one would want to admit they bought (cheapskate!) and use shame to upsell the poor confused home user to Windows Home Premium. Price? About \$99.00 (that's pretty close to what you paid for Windows XP Home) for the Upgrade version.

#### Windows VistaHomePremium

A pretty nifty marketing move this is. With something on the shelf right next to "Basic" who's going to choose "Basic" (at least while someone is looking)? Windows Home Premium is the version that most people are going to install. This version is sort of a middle-of-the-road version between Basic and Ultimate. It offers more functionality and features (like Aero Glass) than the Vista Home Basic edition and is probably the version that most average to advanced home users will install. Price? Between \$150.00 and \$169.00. Depending on how good of a shopper you are.

#### Windows Vista Business

If you're running Windows XP Professional now this is the version you'll want to get. It has all the features you've become accustomed to in XP Pro and many new business-oriented features. Why business users need Aero Glass escapes me, since one would think in a corporate environment a jazzy desktop would be of little importance. However, Microsoft, in their infinite wisdom, doesn't include Aero Glass in the Home Basic version, but does give it to its business users. Now the corporate world can have a 3D desktop with snazzy glass-effect toolbars and 3D application windows - stuff you really need to make big corporate decisions like Bill Gates. This version will set you back about \$200.00 - give or take ten bucks.

#### Windows Vista Ultimate

The Vista Ultimate version is Vista's shining star. All the features that Vista offers are in this one. No basic stuff here. This is the real deal. And the price reflects this. Bill Gates will only get richer if this one sells a bunch. What does it cost for

the Windows Vista Ultimate version? If you're a good shopper you can but Windows Vista Ultimate for just \$249.95! It does come in a pretty case too---

## 5. Other Stuff You Need To Know

You'll need a Vista-approved 128 MB High-end graphics card to use the Aero Glass feature. If you don't care about glassy toolbars, application Windows, fancy icons, rotating windows, and the like, you can get away with a Vista approved 64 MB graphics card. We suggest, if you're buying a new computer you choose one with a high-end 256MB 3D graphics card so you can dazzle your friends with your dazzling glass-like desktop. If your friend has a newer MAC he won't be dazzled though. MACs have had this sort of thing for awhile.

If you have a notebook computer and you find that your graphics card is not Vista-ready, throw your notebook away. No, just kidding. You better stick with Windows. You cannot easily change the graphics card in most notebooks. Most of them are hardwired to the motherboard, meaning you'd be better off buying a new motherboard, which unless you're planning on installing it yourself (not easy), will cost you about as much w/installation as a new notebook. Your best bet if you have a newer notebook is to stick with Windows XP - unless you're extremely wealthy and have money to throw away.

Revised 6/11/2009 JMM