

Computer Tips

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Do I Need Microsoft Vista?

With the launch of the new Microsoft Windows Vista, many of you are no doubt asking the question, Do I need to upgrade to this new version? What benefits if any does it give me? Is it value for money for me? In this edition of our column, we will give a few pointers that should help to answer these questions for you.

Overall Windows Vista ships with several new features and enhancements. These include better networking, better sound, a new *look and feel*, new file searching capabilities, better security, better and easier program installation methods, and several technical additions built-in that were add-ons for Windows XP.

Ok, so Windows Vista has some great new features—but does that mean I need to upgrade? For the technically minded of our readers, it is always exciting to be one of the first to buy the new Windows simply because it is the latest and greatest. However, for the average computer user, upgrading to Windows Vista may not be such a good idea. Here are a few things to consider.

1) **Hardware compatibility.** Will your current printer work with Windows Vista? Or the network adapter that you use to get on the Internet. All hardware components in your computer need 'drivers' to communicate with each other. These drivers need to be Windows Vista compatible, otherwise they will not work. If you are contemplating upgrading to Vista, make sure your current hardware and peripherals have drivers that are compatible with Vista.

2) **Software compatibility.** Will your current software run in Windows Vista? Microsoft has been pretty good about backward compatibility with major Windows upgrades, but there are always *some* programs that just will not run after a major Windows upgrade. Check that your favourite games are compatible with Vista, as many older card/arcade games may not run.

3) **Can your computer handle Vista?** This is one of the major reasons for maybe holding off getting Vista. If your PC is more than 12 months old, there is a very good chance it will not run Windows Vista. This would require a PC upgrade, thus adding to the cost of buying Windows Vista. However, if you are considering buying a new PC in the not-too-distant future, it will come preinstalled with Windows Vista. Then maybe a good time to upgrade.

4) **Can YOU handle Windows Vista?** Windows Vista has a whole new look and feel, more features and new goodies. This means that you will have to *learn* how to use those new features! If you are technically minded, and love playing with the latest technology, then this may not be an issue. However, for the majority of users, Vista will take some getting used to. Many of you who upgraded from Windows 98/ME to Windows XP will remember the frustrations you found in trying to find familiar buttons, etc.

Of course, the decision to upgrade or not is really yours. But consider the pros and cons of changing to a new version of Windows. Next issue, we will discuss more on Vista.

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