

Windows Vista is the new operating system from Microsoft. As it is, XP will still be on sale for a year or so, then still be supported (but not supplied anymore). Most people will be unsure as to whether or not to get Vista yet or wait – hopefully the following information will help you make an informed choice.

Which Version should I choose?

1) Ultimate

Ultimate is the choice for those users who want all the functionality available with Vista. It combines the best of the Home and Business versions and adds some additional features.

2) Home Premium

This is the preferred edition for home desktops or laptop/mobile PC's. It provides the productivity, entertainment and security necessary for your PC at home or on the move.

3) Home Basic

This version is for the basic home users who simply want access to emails, surfing the internet and photo handling. It permits easier setup and maintenance, with additional security features built in. Realistically, this version has not got most of the functionality that Microsoft are advertising for Vista, but it will permit a user to have a cut-down version of it. Note – Windows Aero is not available with Home Basic.

4) Business

This is the first version of Windows designed specifically to meet the needs of small businesses. It selects and tailors a number of the new features of Vista specifically for business use.

5) Enterprise

This version meets the needs of larger organisations with more complex IT infrastructures. This is the premium business edition of Vista, with all of the features of the Business edition plus extra capabilities to help lower IT costs and improve data protection.

64-bit editions are available for serious computer users who are running a computer with a 64-bit processor and who require the higher end of functionality to handle media, gaming, technical computing or demanding financial analysis. Unfortunately you will have to ensure that ALL applications, system and devices are 64-bit compatible or you will not be able to run it.

To choose which version is the best for you, please have a look at Microsoft's comparison chart [HERE](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windowsvista/editions/choose.mspx) (<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windowsvista/editions/choose.mspx>).

The Problems

Unfortunately, since its release, Vista has had many differing opinions from numerous sources. The problems reported with it at present are:

1) Most PC's just are not high enough a spec to run it properly. Even PC's, which are being sold as 'Vista Compatible', are not fully compatible with all the versions available. A lawsuit has been filed in Washington seeking class-action status for 10,000 people and damages in excess of \$5million – they say that whilst the PC's have been slapped with stickers stating they were 'Vista Compatible' or 'Vista Premium Ready', these machines could run nothing more than the most basic of Vista installations.

2) Numerous existing software applications are not compatible. Although you can run your application in 'compatibility mode', there are reports of serious numbers of applications which will just not run under Vista.

3) Drivers are not always available for existing hardware devices. This problem will become less of a problem as and when manufacturers get to grips with Vista and provide the updates necessary.

4) Specifications that are provided as 'minimum' by Microsoft to run Vista are very low. The realistic minimum (we will call it the 'preferred minimum') will be listed later in this article.

5) There have been numerous reports of it being very slow, though this is probably down to the fact that the PC being used did not meet the 'preferred minimum specification' which IT vendors are beginning to recognise.

What can you do?

1) Upgrade Current PC to Vista?

We at Comspec are not recommending to people that they upgrade to Vista for current PC's and Laptops. If you intend to upgrade, then at least wait until Service Pack 1 is released. This will remove a number of the current problems, and give time for hardware manufacturers to get the necessary drivers into the public domain.

Hopefully a number of the compatibility issues will also be sorted out. Please remember back to when you first got XP – we all had reservations about it at the beginning, but SP1 sorted most of these (with SP2 making it the Windows version we all know and love at the moment).

2) When buying a new PC

Again, there will be problems even with new PC's at present. The existing software/applications you have will not run properly on it and you will have problems getting drivers for accessories or upgrades. We have even heard of some new Vista PC's being supplied without the proper drivers for some of the onboard devices.

3) Wait and spend wisely

We would recommend to our client base that you wait for a while before deciding how to approach Vista. This will allow new software to filter through which has been designed for Vista, and the manufacturers to release components and devices which have been made for Vista. Some of the new laptops being proposed (designed specifically with Vista in mind) look awesome and will make better use of the increase in functionality.

What do you need to run it?

Microsoft have the following '*minimum supported requirements*' for PC's that intend to run Vista:

- 800MHz processor
- 512Mb system memory (RAM)
- 20Gb hard drive with at least 15Gb free
- Support for Super VGA graphics
- CD-ROM drive

Realistically, we would not recommend that you even try to run Vista on a PC with this specification.

Microsoft ‘*recommended*’ system requirements are:

Home Basic:

- 1GHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor
- 512Mb of system memory (RAM)
- 20Gb hard drive with at least 15Gb free
- Support for DirectX 9 graphics and 32Mb of graphics memory
- DVD-ROM drive
- Audio Output
- Internet Access

Home Premium/Business/Ultimate:

- 1GHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor
- 1Gb of system memory (RAM)
- 40Gb hard drive with at least 15Gb free
- Support for DirectX 9 graphics with:
 - WDDM Driver
 - 128Mb of graphics memory
 - Pixel shader 2.0 in hardware
 - 32 bits per pixel
- DVD-ROM Drive
- Audio Output
- Internet Access
- Additional requirements for extra functionality (tv card, touch screen, etc)

Comspec recommend the following ‘**preferred minimum**’ to run Vista smoothly:

- 3.0 GHz processor (32-bit or 64-bit)
- 1Gb system memory (2Gb would be better)
- 80Gb hard drive with at least 40Gb free
- Support for DirectX 9 graphics
- Minimum of 128Mb of graphics memory
- Network support, either 100Mb Ethernet or 802.11g (or both)
- All USB ports must be USB 2.0
- DVD-ROM drive
- Audio Output (preferably HD audio – as this will become a requirement)
- Broadband Internet Access

We would ask that you take extra care when installing the 64-bit version – you must ensure that your PC will support 64-bit operation and that all of your devices and applications will support 64-bit operation.

We hope that the information contained in this article have cleared some things up for you, but do not hesitate to call us if you require some additional information.