



The Truth About Windows Versions

Which Windows Operating System should you be using and what is really supported?

This is a source of great debate right now. The currently supported versions of Windows are Vista, 7, 8.1 and 10. **We recommend either Windows 7 or Windows 10, but make sure that you get the Professional version.** The home version does not have the same networking and security features and causes support problems in a business environment.

Windows Vista

There are not many Windows Vista computers left running. Microsoft will end all support for Vista on April 11, 2017. There really is not a good upgrade for this older hardware to a new operating system. If you still have a Vista computer, then your best plan is to buy a new computer before April of 2017.

Windows 7

Windows 7 is still supported through January 2020. It is the most commonly used Microsoft Windows version for business use at the moment, but Windows 10 is moving quickly to over take its place. It is stable and works well. Windows 7 is the best choice if you have older printers, scanners or specialized software that is not compatible with Windows 10. If you are using or running Windows 7 and plan to replace your computers in the next 1-3 years, it makes sense to stay on Windows 7.

Windows 8

There really is no compelling reason to run Windows 8, instead of Windows 7 or Windows 10. Both windows 7 and 10 them offer better performance, networking and usability as compared to Windows 8. We recommend the free upgrade to Windows 10 while it is still available, but do it in a controlled way. Your upgrade to Windows 10 will go much smoother if you do it in a planned and controlled manner instead of just letting it upgrade automatically.

Windows 10

Contrary to what you have probably heard from your friends or read in the newspaper, Windows 10 actually does work and has many improvements over Windows 8. It has better navigation and networking than Windows 8 also has improved memory handling and brings several new features to Windows. Windows 10 works best with the newer hybrid devices that can function as both a laptop and tablet. However, in some cases it is possible for Windows 10 to run faster on some older computers than Windows 7 or 8.

There are some settings that we recommend changing for usability, privacy and security purposes. These settings are discussed in our Windows 10 Survival Guide. Some of these settings will allow you to choose the apps you want to use instead of the built in versions that are in Windows 10. An example: choosing an application to use like Adobe Reader for opening PDF files instead of the new Windows PDF reader. Changing these settings takes care of most of the “problems” that many people have been complaining about with Windows 10.

We have seen some issues with older printers and scanners in Windows 10. You might need to get a newer printer or scanner if a driver is not available for your model.

Overall, Windows 10 does work and is the direction that Microsoft is headed. Don't get left behind.

Home version of Windows

If you are using a computer for business, do not get the home version of Windows. The Home version of Windows does not have the security and networking features that are needed to function correctly in a business environment. This introduces security risks and creates support headaches that can be easily avoided by purchasing a computer with the Professional version of Windows installed.



END OF SUPPORT

What does “Supported” really mean? This is where most of the confusion starts. There is a lot of hype and misinformation written by newspapers, magazines and online about the end of support for the various versions of Windows. Many of these articles take the support dates out of context because they are trying to shock people into reading their article.

Microsoft has a policy that has been in effect since 2002 that outlines how they will support their operating systems. This policy states that “*Microsoft will offer a minimum of 10 years of support for their Operating System Software Products.*” Microsoft divides the 10 years into 2 support types; Mainstream and Extended. Mainstream support means they are still creating updates that contain new features, security updates, bug fixes and generally lasts for the first 5 years, but could be longer. Extended support means that they will provide updates for security patches and limited amounts of bug fixes. Extended support lasts for at least 2-5 years depending on several factors.

The information below is taken directly from the Microsoft website and includes a link to this information on Microsoft’s website if you want to see for yourself.

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/lifecycle>

End of support refers to the date when Microsoft no longer provides automatic fixes, updates, or online technical assistance. This is the time to make sure you have the latest available update or service pack installed. Without Microsoft support, you will no longer receive security updates that can help protect your PC from harmful viruses, spyware, and other malicious software that can steal your personal information. For more information, go to Microsoft Support Lifecycle.

Client operating systems	Latest update or service pack	End of mainstream support	End of extended support
Windows XP	Service Pack 3	April 14, 2009	April 8, 2014
Windows Vista	Service Pack 2	April 10, 2012	April 11, 2017
Windows 7 *	Service Pack 1	January 13, 2015	January 14, 2020
Windows 8	Windows 8.1	January 9, 2018	January 10, 2023
Windows 10, released in July 2015 **	N/A	October 13, 2020	October 14, 2025

As you can see in the table above, Windows Vista, 7, 8 and 10 are all currently still supported under the extended support model. Windows 8 and 10 are still supported under the Mainstream support model. Based on this information, Windows 7, 8 and 10 are all viable supported versions of Windows for quite a while into the future. They will be receiving security patches and bug fixes for all 3 versions. In addition, Windows 8 & 10 are still currently receiving new feature updates.

Hopefully this information helps to clear up some of the confusion about Windows versions. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us using the information at the bottom of this page or using the contact form on our website www.UltimateITGuys.com.