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Microsoft Windows VISTA – Now or Never? Jerold M. Aronson MD MPH FAAP (SFSM Webmaster)

Windows Vista is Microsoft's first new operating system in more than five years and the successor to Windows XP. Is it worth rushing out to purchase and upgrade your current PC? Unlikely! However, if you need to buy a new PC (if your old one died or you've been waiting and waiting for Vista to be released), then by all means do so; there's nothing wrong with [Windows Vista](#).

Why Now? Ask yourself – what can I not do now with my computer that Vista will help me do or do better? While operating system upgrades are essential for helping our computers keep pace with mightier processors, gluttonous storage, skyrocketing use of media and the persistent high-speed connectivity associated with our high tech world, this may not describe your situation. Vista is an improvement...if you need these things.

Software reviewers across the Internet say, in general, that for most users there is no one compelling feature within Windows Vista that cries out to switch over; neither the enhanced graphic capabilities (Aero) nor the improved system performance features (especially crash-proofing). As for security, Microsoft's biggest improvements in Windows Vista are within the Enterprise or 64-bit editions, editions most home users will not be running. Finally, there are no specific big-name software packages written exclusively for Windows Vista--most software available today is compatible with both Windows XP and Windows Vista.

Your current Windows XP SP2 system is probably fine and can even be improved with its existing tools in lieu of upgrading to Vista. Specifically, if you are aware of the following problems:

Problem	Possible Solution
Insufficient disk space	Defrag the hard drive
Files come up slowly	Add RAM memory
Error message "disk write or read error" appears	Detect and repair disk errors

These topics and more are discussed, with illustrations and screen shots at the Microsoft.com website, under [Microsoft At Work – Get Started](#) (“4 Ways to Speed Up Your Computer’s Performance”).

Perhaps you’ve decided to upgrade anyway. Most people will find either Windows Vista Home Basic or Windows Vista Home Premium to be their best choice. While Windows Vista does make a backup of your previous operating system before installing, it is always recommended that you backup your current Windows XP system yourself, just in case.

All features--even if you paid for them--are dependent on specific computer hardware configurations being present; As you get ready to upgrade, be aware of two widely reported challenges that relate to Windows Vista System requirements, i) system RAM memory and ii) video card and video memory.

While Microsoft says system RAM memory requirements are 512 MB for Vista Home Basic and 1 GB for Vista Home Premium, most software reviews strongly recommend 1-2 GB of RAM memory for optimum performance. The greater the RAM memory, the faster that your PC will run. This is especially important as many software applications are loaded at PC startup (often without your knowledge).

In addition, the new Windows Vista “Aero” display interface has specific minimum graphic card requirements. Check carefully or your system may be able to run Windows Vista but not run Windows Aero. This is especially true if your graphics card uses “shared memory” rather than dedicated video RAM. Shared memory decreases the amount of RAM memory available for system operations decreasing performance. Note: in general, PCs purchased within the last two years have a better chance of being able to run Windows Vista as is, or with affordable improvements to the system hardware.

Microsoft has tried hard to make Vista compatible with “legacy” software including placing a “compatibility wizard” deep within Vista. However, many incompatibilities have been reported especially related to software drivers. Check online with your software manufacturer about Vista compatibility with the specific software version that you own. It may be necessary to download new drivers.

You can check to see if your PC is capable of handling Vista by using the [Microsoft Vista Upgrade Advisor](#) to help decide which Vista is good for you. Go to Microsoft.com and search for Microsoft Vista Upgrade Advisor. This small software tool will scan your computer and create an easy-to-understand report of all known system, device, and program compatibility issues, and recommend ways to resolve them. Upgrade Advisor can also help you to choose the edition of Windows Vista that best fits the way you want to use your computer. Just download, install, and run the Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor.

Finally, do you have a special situation where security/stability is key? If so, purchase a new PC with VISTA loaded. It may be less expensive and certainly less of a hassle than to upgrade your existing PC.

In summary, "If it Ain't broke; Don't fix it!" Microsoft Windows VISTA – Now or Never? Eventually is the answer for most PC users!

Disclosure – I am not currently a Vista user and I do not intend to upgrade to Vista with my current PC's.

Your opinions are desired. Please send them to Webmaster [Jerald M. Aronson MD FAAP.](#)

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