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## Windows 7 .. now available



## Should you upgrade to Windows 7?

Microsoft Windows version 7 became available October 22, 2009 on retail shelves and shipping on new computers.

Like Vista, there are several different versions available including those for international markets and enterprise installations. Most of our customers however, will be looking at one of the four basic versions - Starter, Home Premium, Professional,

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## Send a Soldier a Netbook

Big Blue Water along with other local businesses are joining together to support our soldiers. Soldiers are sent away from friends and family for long periods of time and we, at Big Blue Water, would like to use technology to bring our soldiers closer to those they love. Beginning October 2009 we will begin a campaign to collect funds to purchase

or Ultimate. Prices are also cheaper than Vista – on average about \$40 cheaper – ranging from \$120 for the Home Premium Upgrade to \$399.99 for the full retail ultimate package.

If you are running Vista Home, Business, or Ultimate version, you can upgrade to Windows 7 (this is called an ‘in-place upgrade’).

If you are running Windows XP or any other older version of windows - *an ‘upgrade’ is not possible* – you can purchase the upgrade software if you are running XP but installation of the upgrade will require a custom installation - meaning wipe the box and start over or partition the machine to run multiple versions (retaining a copy of XP and installing Windows 7 in a new partition).

If you have to do a custom installation, you’re going to have to backup your existing data, wipe the box, reinstall all of your software (assuming it’s compatible), then restore your data files, and finally setup your email, favorites, shortcuts, and preferences. If your machine is more than 3 years old, you may also need to purchase hardware upgrades (more memory, a faster video card, etc.) increasing the cost even more.

One of the pitfalls of Windows 7 (like all new releases) is that driver support is not yet available for all of the devices that you may currently have in your existing computer – and although the hardware may work fine now – you may find it doesn’t work at all with Windows 7.

Another pitfall is that many XP commercial applications will not run on Windows 7. Some machines can run XP Mode which is a "seamless", virtual instance of XP that runs in the background and is capable of running XP software – so “XP Mode” does provide a way around that. But - the machine has to support hardware virtualization in the processor - which is built into but disabled on many processors. You also have to purchase a Windows version that supports XP Mode – either the Pro or Ultimate version.

If your current software applications are not compatible – and your current machine cannot run XP Mode, you may have to purchase new or upgrade your software as well.

If you are considering an ‘upgrade’ from XP you might be further ahead to consider buying a new machine with Windows 7 preinstalled. Lenovo desktops (without the monitor) start at \$499. Lenovo laptops start at \$599. If you buy a new machine, you’ll still be faced with the installation of software applications and backup and restore of your data. Until January 31, 2010, Lenovo offers a free copy of Windows 7 on select machines with Vista Business installed and on some of those machines, a downgrade to XP as well (this is only available on some – not all – Lenovo models).

In a nutshell – if you are running Vista Home, Business, or Ultimate – and your machine runs Vista well – upgrading to Windows 7 may be a fairly painless process. If you are running anything else, you may be in for a long lengthy process and disappointment once you’ve started down that road.

and donate a netbook to soldiers departing to Iraq.

If you would like to help, feel free to stop by our office to drop off your donation amount. Or, go to <http://bigbluewater.com/send-a-soldier> to make a contribution via PayPal.

Any questions? Please call Melissa at Big Blue Water 269-857-5517.



## MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Minimum system requirements are the same as they were for Vista; so if your current computer came with Vista – and has the processing capacity and memory to run Vista well – you should be okay there. You can confirm your computers current specifications by going to MY COMPUTER and looking at the PROPERTIES of your computer. Minimum requirements are:

- 1Ghz or faster processor
- 1GB Ram (for the 32-bit version) or 2GB Ram (for the 64-bit version)
- 16-20 GB hard drive space

*We recommend that you double-up the ram.* Although it will run on a machine that meets the minimum requirements, it may be usable but frustrating. Performance is always better with more ram.

## What's in it for me?

The Starter version is a stripped down version that will come installed on a netbook (those small computers that look like half a notebook) and the ultimate version includes all of the features of Windows 7.

In between these two are the Home version and Pro version. Similar to XP, the Home version, although it looks full featured, does not include a lot of the networking features found in the Pro version. If you are planning to use your computer for business use, the Pro version should be the minimum that you consider.

CNET has published an excellent chart to help you to choose the version that you need.

## Before you decide to 'upgrade' ...

Do a physical inventory of your current system. Using that information, go online and find out if your current hardware is supported. Then go to the software manufacturer's site for the software you are using and find out if they have an upgrade for Windows 7. Make a list of anything that you have that's incompatible – then put together a price list of the upgrades that you'll need. Add that to the price of the software.

If you have to do a 'custom installation' plan on 2-3 hours to get the operating system installed, and updated. Add 15-30 minutes for each software application that you'll need to install. If you are installing an office suite, add another hour or two for that. Time to backup and restore your data will depend on how much data you have. We see the average backup taking 45 minutes to an hour and restore taking twice that long. And then after you have everything installed, consider the time it will take to setup your email and internet settings.

Plan on a few hours to a few weeks to get things back to normal.

## And then there's the learning curve ...

Although we've found Windows 7 to be relatively easy to use, it is different and there will be a learning curve. Things are little different.

If you know how to use Vista, you'll be fine with Windows 7 after using it for about a week and it will get easier as you go.

If you feel that you need to take a class, consider what it entails. There are a lot of classes out there that you can take – some of them will teach you a whole bunch of things you don't understand or need to know and 3 years from now you still won't know how to do what you need to do. Classes can be found at your local library or senior center for free or cheap.

An alternative would be one-on-one tutoring. One thing at a time. A few minutes or an hour at a time. I find that anything more than an hour is too much to absorb for the average person.

Tutoring can be provided by almost any IT provider – including us. We take the time to help you do what you need to do – it doesn't matter what version of Windows – or Mac – that you are using.

#### Is it worth it?

Vista was a huge disappointment for a lot of people. XP was a lot more stable, simpler, and cleaner operating system. With Windows 7, Microsoft has returned to a stable, simpler, cleaner operating system. The interface is cleaner, security functions have been toned down, and search functionality has been improved. It's not perfect, it still has some flaws. Parts of it feels unfinished and after it hits the street you'll still have the daily updates from Microsoft to fix things or counteract the activities of the hackers who can hack because they do. But the software has gotten quite a few positive reviews.

*We've been running it at the office for a few months now – on our old Nobilus machine that we never would have considered installing Vista on – and it runs well. You are welcome to stop in and play with it.*

#### TOOLS YOU CAN USE

- PC WORLD Performance Tests  
[http://www.pcworld.com/article/172509/windows\\_7\\_performance\\_tests.html](http://www.pcworld.com/article/172509/windows_7_performance_tests.html)
- Which Windows is right for you?  
[http://reviews.cnet.com/8301-31012\\_7-10379487-10355804.html](http://reviews.cnet.com/8301-31012_7-10379487-10355804.html)
- Windows 7 Compatibility Center (includes a link to the Windows Upgrade advisor)  
<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/compatibility/en-us/default.aspx>
- The Windows Upgrade Advisor tool will run diagnostics on your computer to determine if it meets the minimum specifications.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/get/upgrade-advisor.aspx>

- [Upgrading from Windows XP to Windows 7](#)

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/help/upgrading-from-windows-xp-to-windows-7>

- [Windows 7 Help](#)

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/help>

- [Microsoft Easy Transfer software](#) lets you pick and choose the files and settings that you want to transfer from one computer to another.

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows7/products/features/windows-easy-transfer>

- CCLEANER cleans up all the temporary files, broken registry entries, missing shortcuts, and software that did not uninstall itself properly.

<http://www.ccleaner.com/>

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## Calendar Sharing..who, what, when and where?

We use Google Calendar for sharing things – each person has their own calendar on Google and through “Sharing” settings – we allow each other to have access (there are several options here – you can share it so that the other person only sees “busy” or “free”, they see events with details (Dr. Appt Monday at 2pm), or they can add / change events on your calendar, or they can manage sharing of the calendar)

We have personal calendars setup so that others can only see activities.

Then we have a shared calendar for the business – BBW – that all of us have access to and can add / change events on.

And then– we each maintain our own calendar on our own respective computers – using whatever application we choose to use. I use Outlook (windows) and Charles uses iCal (Mac)

Using Google Calendar Sync (this is the piece you are looking for) I sync my Outlook Calendar to the Google Calendar so that I only have to maintain things in one place – on my laptop using Outlook.

It works well – so well that I forget I am using it.

I maintain my events on my own personal Outlook Calendar and it just syncs with

Google every 2 hours. If I add something new it gets added and when I delete stuff it gets deleted. You can sync 1-way (from Outlook > Google or vice versa) or you can sync 2-way (so that regardless of which one you add or change an event on it syncs with the other). I use 2-way.

You can use Google Calendars without the Outlook synchronization and just share your calendars with others.

If you want to use Outlook and give the husband access to your Outlook calendar do this:

- 1) Setup an account (for each person) on Google so that you have access to Google Calendar
- 2) Setup Outlook on your computer
- 3) Download and install Google Calendar Sync on your computer
- 4) Setup your sync settings for Google Calendar

That's it! Once you have it setup you never have to do anything else with it – it just works.

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