



## Windows Vista (03/2007)

Windows Vista has now been out for just under a couple of months, so I thought I would give you a quick introduction to the subject, without going into too much detail.

To kick off the confusion, there are in fact 7 possible versions of Windows Vista available (in fact there are 14 if you include Small Business and the 32bit Vs 64bit option, but a line needs to be drawn somewhere!). The main versions are:

- Vista Home Basic
- Vista Home Basic N
- Vista Home Premium
- Vista Business
- Vista Business N
- Vista Ultimate
- Vista Enterprise.

However, to remove some more of the confusion, the 2 versions with an “N” are exactly the same as the non “N” versions, except that they have had Windows Media Player removed in order to comply with European anti-trust rulings, and, are as such, only available in Europe. Frankly you can ignore these 2 versions as there is no good reason to not have Windows Media Player. Also, the enterprise version is only available on Volume licensing, so ignore that one too. So, there are really only 4 versions to choose from: Basic, Premium, Business and Ultimate.

Vista Basic is similar to Windows XP with a different look, better security, a slightly more user friendly interface, and a theoretical faster start up time. However, with the greater hardware requirement for running Vista, your Windows XP would start up pretty quickly anyway. So it remains basic and contains little of the “Eye Candy” that Vista is selling itself on, for which you need to buy the Premium Version.

Vista Premium opens up all the new features and the famous Aero user interface (see-through-ish glass effect Windows) and is focused on Multimedia Entertainment with the inclusion of Windows Media Centre, DVD authoring and a useful backup tool amongst other things. For home users it is the Version to go for, Vista Basic being, as the name suggests, too basic to warrant the software costs and the additional costs of the hardware requirements.

Vista Business is comparable to Windows XP Pro, its main advantage being the remote desktop functionality and the ability to join a domain, but is as a result trimmed of the multimedia functionality (“Entertainment”) of the Vista Premium edition. So, if you want both the business functionality tools and the Entertainment, then you can then opt for the Vista Ultimate edition, which has it all!

So what does Vista cost? Standard prices found on a major UK retailer’s website:

Basic Upgrade	£99
Basic	£179
Premium Upgrade	£175
Premium	£210
Ultimate Upgrade	£240
Ultimate	£350.

If you wish to buy the French version of Vista Ultimate, you should find it for around €500. For those of you who think that it all looks a little expensive, then you may be interested to know that in the USA, the Ultimate version has a recommended retail price of \$399, which with current exchange rates translates to around £205.....be aware of licensing issues!

Not only will you need to fork out a considerable amount of money for the Vista software, you will also need to ensure your PC has the hardware requirements in order to run it. As a rough guide you will be comfortable with:

- Dual core Processor (the faster the better)
- 1 Gig of Ram or more
- 256 MB dedicated Graphics card or more
- 40 gig hard rive with 15 gig free space.

In general, the best way to get to onto Vista is to buy a new PC with all the required hardware and Vista pre installed. If you are happy your existing PC will run Vista, then there are upgrade possibilities (ensure you back up everything before you upgrade). Plus there is a Microsoft Upgrade Advisor tool available on the Microsoft

Website that will tell you whether your hardware is good enough, and what your upgrade options are.

A few things to be wary of if you are considering moving up to Vista:

- there is still a considerable amount of hardware, peripherals and third party software which are not yet supported by Vista, and thus you may need to wait for drivers to become available before your printer will actually work
- some new PCs have a “Vista Ready” sticker on them, which usually means it will run Vista Basic and not the other versions, so look for the “Vista Premium Ready” sticker instead
- Vista OEM licenses will only work on the first PC they are installed on and can't be reinstalled when you buy a new PC, so unless you are sure, avoid the OEM licenses.

It is a little early to give a verdict on Windows Vista, but in general there is nothing dramatically new apart from the “Eye Candy” and the new security features. However the hackers and virus writers of the world have not yet had a really go at breaking Vista's security. Once there are enough users running Vista and the crooks feel there is now plenty out there to be stolen, they will probably make a determined effort at cracking Vista's security.

I personally would suggest you wait 6 months before buying Vista, purely to allow Microsoft to iron out the bugs, third parties to produce drivers, and any Security oversights to be plugged. However, if you are looking at buying a PC now, then you might as well buy into the new “Vista Experience” as it is already difficult to find a PC shipping with Windows XP and not Vista.....

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