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Starting up

About Windows 7 Digital Classroom
Windows 7 is the foundation for everything you do on your computer. You can use it to run software applications faster than ever, organize your documents and files, and quickly connect your computers to others or the Internet. Because Windows 7 does so many things for all types of users, you need a guide—and that where the Digital Classroom helps you. The *Windows 7 Digital Classroom* is like having your own personal tutor. You can jump to any lesson in the book at any time—they are completely self-contained. Each lesson has detailed step-by-step instructions. They’re called lessons, not chapters, because each one is written by an expert instructor and you complete each lesson understanding what you need to know so you are up-and-running quickly, in plain, simple language.

Maybe you’re new to Windows. If so, start at the absolute basics in the first three chapters and discover the essential things you can do with Windows 7, including how to work with applications, windows, and folders. If you’re interested in customizing Windows 7 and getting connected to the Internet, jump right into Lesson 4, “Customizing Windows 7” and Lesson 5, “Surfing the Web with Internet Explorer 8.”

Maybe you want to get productive immediately, using word processing, instant messaging, e-mail, and organizing and sharing photos. If so, skip ahead to Lessons 11 through 13. If you’re interested in getting under-the-hood, setting up accounts, creating a network, and securing your system you can move right to Lessons 7 through 10. There’s even a lesson devoted to getting the most from Windows 7 on a laptop or netbook computer—it’s Lesson 14.

So go ahead, flip through the book and you’ll find that the Digital Classroom is the fastest, easiest way to understanding Windows 7. Filled with hundreds of images, illustrations, and plain-language step-by-step instructions, It is like having your own personal tutor.

Is this book for you?
This book is for anyone who wants to gain a better understanding of how to use and configure Windows 7. If you’re using Windows 7 at home or managing a small network at your office, the *Windows 7 Digital Classroom* is for you. It is filled with useful, easy-to-understand advice and instructions. The *Windows 7 Digital Classroom* is written for anyone who wants clear, plain explanations for how to get Windows 7 computers to work efficiently, organize their files, and keep their computer safe. Simply put, this book helps you get the most from all that Windows 7 offers. If you’re already an IT professional managing a large computer network, this book is probably not the type of resource you need. But if you’ve been given the role of managing Windows 7 computers in your office or need to do it at home, and you want a companion to help you, the *Windows 7 Digital Classroom* is a good choice for you.
About operating systems

An operating system is the software that provides the user interface that you use to interact with your computer. It is the direct link between your computer’s hardware—the memory, hard drive, mouse, keyboard, webcam, speakers—and the software such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Photoshop, Internet Explorer, and the thousands of other programs that are available to run on your computer. Some common operating systems in use today include Windows, Linux, UNIX, Solaris, and, Mac OS. The most widely used operating system is Windows, and the latest version of the windows software is Windows 7. The Windows 7 operating system is what gives your computer its personality so that things look and act consistently from one program to the next. The operating system also makes it so each software program can interact with the other in harmony—so you can browse the Internet, edit photographs, and write an e-mail at the same time. Understanding your operating system is the first step to being able to work effectively with any program on your computer.

Prerequisites

Before starting the Windows 7 Digital Classroom, you should have Windows 7 installed. This book does not include the Windows 7 operating system, which you must purchase separately.

The lessons in the book will help you connect to a network, the Internet, and to a printer—so these can wait if you haven’t yet set up those elements.

If you have purchased a computer that includes Windows 7, start with the first lesson. If you are upgrading to Windows 7, and have not yet installed the software, you should continue with the Starting Up section which includes installation and upgrade instructions.

Windows 7 versions

There are three separate versions of Windows 7. There is Windows 7 Home, Windows 7 Professional, and Windows 7 Ultimate. This book covers most features found across all three versions, so it is a good companion for you gaining an understanding of Windows 7, regardless of which version you are using. You can learn about the different versions of Windows 7 in Appendix A.
System requirements
Before starting the lessons in the Windows 7 Digital Classroom, make sure that your computer is set up and running Windows 7. If you’re planning to upgrade to Windows 7, make sure your computer is equipped for running the Windows 7 operating system. Note that you must purchase Windows 7 separately from this book. The minimum system requirements for your computer to effectively use Windows 7 are listed below:

- 1 GHz or faster 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor
- 1 GB RAM (32-bit) or 2 GB RAM (64-bit)
- 16 GB available hard disk space (32-bit) or 20 GB (64-bit)
- DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver
- CD or DVD drive

Additional requirements to use certain features:
- Internet access
- Depending on resolution, video playback may require additional memory and advanced graphics hardware
- Music and sound require audio output

Installing Windows 7
If you purchased Windows 7 separately and need to install it on your computer. You’ll want to get Windows 7 installed on your computer before going ahead with the lessons in this book. We cover three common scenarios:

- Upgrading to Windows 7 from Windows XP. Use the steps in this section to upgrade from Windows XP and keep your files, settings, and programs.
- Upgrading to Windows 7 from Windows Vista. Go to this section to see how you can easily upgrade from Windows Vista and keep your files, settings, and programs.
- Installing Windows using custom settings. Follow these instructions to completely replace your current operating system or if you are installing an operating system for the first time.
Installing Windows 7

Starting up

To get started with the Windows 7 installation or upgrade process you will need:

• **The Windows 7 disc.** You’ll need the software to get started or if you purchased and downloaded Windows 7 online you’ll need the Windows installation file.

• **Your Windows 7 product key.** You can find your product key on the installation disc holder inside the Windows 7 software or in a confirmation e-mail if you purchased and downloaded Windows 7 online. A product key uses this format where the X’s represent the numbers in the key: XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX

• **The Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor.** You can download this free utility from Microsoft.com. It helps locate any potential problems before you upgrade. You can find the upgrade advisor here: [http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/get/upgrade-advisor.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/get/upgrade-advisor.aspx). Be sure to download and run this before performing an upgrade or installation of Windows 7.

![The Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor](image)

• **A place to back up your files.** You’ll be going through a major change in your computer, and you want to make sure you have a second copy of any important files before you start this process. You can back up your files to an external hard disk, a DVD or CD. If you have a network, you can back them up to another folder or use Windows Live Mesh. It doesn’t really matter where you put your files—just make sure you have a second copy of them before you start this process.

• **An Internet connection.** Before you start the upgrade, confirm that your Internet connection is working. You’ll likely have certain drivers and updates that Windows 7 will want to access as part of the installation process. You can still install Windows without an Internet connection, but a connection is helpful.

• **An antivirus program.** You will want to make sure it is updated, and then run it. This helps to make sure that you’re starting the Windows 7 installation without any vulnerabilities. Turn it off after you have updated and run it. After you install Windows 7, be sure to turn your antivirus program on again, or install new antivirus software that works with Windows 7.
Deciding which version of Windows 7 to install: 32 bit or 64 bit

If you’re running a 32-bit version of Windows Vista, you can only upgrade to a 32-bit version of Windows 7, and if you are current using a 64-bit version of Windows Vista, you can only upgrade to a 64-bit version of Windows 7. To switch from a 32-bit version of Vista to a 64-bit version of Windows 7, use the Custom installation option.

A 64-bit operating systems can handle large amounts of memory—typically 4 gigabytes (GB) of random access memory. This is useful if you work with CAD files, image editing programs with really large images, or do extensive professional video editing. 64-bit software and computers are relatively new, so if you don’t work with the software mentioned above or your computer is more than a few years old, you are likely better off sticking with your 32-bit operating system.

To find out whether your computer is capable of using the 64-bit version of Windows, do the following on your computer:

1. Open Performance Information and Tools by pressing the Start button, clicking Control Panel, clicking System and Maintenance, and then clicking Performance Information and Tools.
2. Click View and print details.
3. Under System, you can see what type of operating system you’re currently running next to System type, and, next to 64-bit capable, whether you can run a 64-bit version of Windows. If your computer is already running a 64-bit version of Windows, the 64-bit capable listing is not displayed.

If the Upgrade option is not available

Some versions of Windows don’t work with all installation discs you’re utilizing. You might not see the option if you’ve inserted the 64-bit installation disc and you are using a 32-bit version of Windows Vista, or if you are trying to upgrade to Windows Vista Ultimate from a lower edition, like Home Premium. To make this type of change, you will need to use the Custom option during installation.

Remember that the upgrade options does not preserve your files, settings, or programs so it is important that you back up your files and settings before installing Windows 7. You’ll also need to reinstall your programs using the original installation discs or files.
Perform an Upgrade installation of Windows 7

Most users of Windows Vista can select the Upgrade option to install Windows 7. This is the most convenient way to install Windows 7 on your computer. It keeps your files, settings, and programs from Windows Vista. If you are upgrading from Windows XP, you will select the Custom option, which is described later in this section.

1. Insert the Windows 7 installation disc into your computer or double-click the installation file if you downloaded Windows 7. Setup should start automatically. If it doesn’t, press the Start button, click Computer, double-click your DVD drive to open the Windows 7 installation disc, and then double-click setup.exe.

2. On the Install Windows page, press Install now.

3. The Get important updates for installation page appears. Choose to get the latest updates to protect your computer against security threats. You computer will need to be connected to the Internet during Windows 7 installation to get these updates.

4. On the Please read the license terms page click I accept the license terms, then press Next.

5. On the Which type of installation do you want? page, select Upgrade.

6. Continue to follow the on-screen instructions to finish installing Windows 7.
Upgrading from Windows XP to Windows 7

Upgrading your computer from Windows XP to Windows 7 requires a custom installation, which doesn’t preserve your programs, files, or settings so you’ll want to follow the steps here to help transfer your files and user accounts.

Starting up

To transfer your files and settings, you’ll need the following:

- **External hard drive.** You’ll need to move your files off your computer before you install Windows 7 so they do not get destroyed. To make this easier, we recommend a free download called Windows Easy Transfer, which will require an external hard disk. They’re readily available at electronics and office supply stores, and they provide an easy way to add additional storage space to your computer.

- **The original installation discs for your software programs.** You’ll need to reinstall your programs after installing Windows 7.

Moving files and settings

Windows Easy Transfer is a free software utility from Microsoft that helps you move files and settings to your new version of Windows 7.

Windows Easy Transfer creates a single, large file containing your files and settings and it’s best to have it placed on an external hard drive. Windows Easy Transfer moves only your files and settings—not your programs. You’ll need to reinstall your programs once the Windows 7 installation is finished.


2. Navigate to the download site and click Download, then press Open.
Upgrading from Windows XP to Windows 7

Run Windows Easy Transfer to save your files and settings

1. Make sure your external hard disk or other storage device is connected to your computer.


3. Select an external hard disk or USB flash drive to indicate the destination where you will back-up the files.

4. Click This is my old computer.

5. Deselect any user accounts that you do not want to transfer, then press Next.

6. If you want to password protect the backup file, do so, otherwise leave the boxes blank, then press Save.

7. Browse to the external hard disk or other storage device where you want to save your Easy Transfer file, then press Save. Be certain to save the Easy Transfer file to your external hard disk, otherwise it will be deleted during the installation of Windows 7.

8. Windows Easy Transfer will back-up your files and settings. When completed, the location of the files will be confirmed along with the file name. Press Next, then press Close.

9. Disconnect the external drive, you will need it later in this process.