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'Windows' Shopping

On January 30, 2007, Microsoft will release its new operating system – Windows Vista. This replaces Windows XP and is packed with improvements, according to Microsoft. Their marketing department has a huge budget for this product so you may see advertisements soon.

3 things we like about Vista ...

1. Search

No longer do you have to rely on long file names to make things easy to find again. Vista lets you add keywords to files, so add tags like 'sales, Michael' to a digital photo called 'presenting at the conference.jpg'. Search will then find this photo during a 'sales' search, even though sales isn't in the file name. Search for Michael and find all the photos with that tag. The search function also now reaches out to more than just files and can also include your emails and even web sites you have visited.

2. Family Safety Settings

Whilst some families have turned to additional software to restrict their children's computer usage, Microsoft has now included some of this functionality natively in Vista. You can now control allowed websites and downloads as well as restrict which specific programs and games will run. Detailed reporting will show you exactly what your children have been using on your computer as well as which websites they have visited.

3. Graphics – Aero and Flip 3D

'Aero' graphics enhance the look of Vista. The glass-like opaqueness of some see-through frames can be altered. Hold your mouse over a window on your task bar and you'll see a mini pop-up displaying the contents of that window, rather than just having to rely on its title to figure out what it is. Hold down 'Alt' and press 'Tab' to see thumbnails of your open windows or the 'Windows' key plus 'Tab' will stack them in 3D so you can flip through them like playing cards.



But watch out for

Your Vista upgrade budget

Be warned, you'll need 4-8 times the memory (RAM), 10 times the hard disk space and 3 times the processing power (CPU) compared to Windows XP and maybe a new graphics card to support Aero. This may mean budgeting for hardware upgrades as well as the cost of the Vista software. That assumes that your existing computer can be upgraded. If you are still running Windows 95, 98 or ME, it may be more cost-effective to buy a completely new system.

Vista Versions

Vista comes in four main 'flavours' – Home Basic, Home Premium, Business and Ultimate. Some countries will also get two other versions - Starter and Enterprise. Not all versions have all of the Vista functionality. Home Basic does not include Aero, Flip 3D, Media Centre and more. Home Premium gains these without the business functions. Business adds backup, networking and remote desktop but loses Media Centre whereas Business Ultimate has everything. Of course, the price increases accordingly.

Software & hardware compatibility

Microsoft assures us that its own, current products will work with Vista, but the responsibility lies with the other manufacturers to ensure their software or devices will work with Vista too. Major vendors such as Corel and HP have committed to delivering updates if necessary to ensure Vista compliance, for some of their products. For more information, check with each vendor individually.

Talk to your local Computer Troubleshooter about how Vista can benefit you and what is required for your particular upgrade.



**Contact your local Computer
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