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Welcome to the world, Windows 7!

From late October 2009, new computers will start to ship with Windows 7, the latest operating system from Microsoft. This month we look at some of the features that may entice you to upgrade:

At Home:

Share nicely – With most homes now having multiple computers, the 'HomeGroup' feature makes it easier to share printers and files (including music, pictures and videos). Entering a password connects your Windows 7 computer into the HomeGroup, and settings control which files are shared and which remain private.

Take the music with you – Windows 7 and Media Player 12 allow you to access and play media files from your home PC remotely via the internet on another computer.

Snap & Shake – Time to teach your mouse some new tricks! Aero Snap activates when you drag a window to an edge of your screen. Left or right edges automatically make the window resize to a full 'top-to-bottom but half screen width' size. Drag to the top of your screen, and your window will retain its width but stretch out vertically to fill your screen from top to bottom. Aero Shake lets you literally grab and shake a window to minimise all of the other open windows on your screen.

At Work:

Find more – The speed of the Start menu's search feature has improved significantly. You'll see search results from files and Outlook emails stored locally on your computer, including the text contained within email attachments. Search also extends beyond just your PC and can be configured to include results from your company's network drives and public websites, using search connectors.

USB secrets – USB storage (in either keys or portable hard disks) has become more popular for people working at multiple locations or for storing backups. With BitLocker To Go (in Windows 7 Ultimate edition), you can now secure files on these devices by encrypting them with a lengthy password. This password can be remembered on your regular PC, and if it's forgotten, a 48 character recovery key can be used on any Windows 7 PC to restore access to your files. Just don't lose your recovery key too!

On The Go:

Performance – Windows 7 requires less horsepower to run than Windows Vista. Independent publications have reported that ageing laptops running Windows XP have become more responsive with Windows 7.

Saving power – Numerous features have been added to automatically preserve battery life, such as shutting off power to unused network ports and reducing background activities. There are also more tweaks for creating your own power-saving schemes, including setting the video quality and processor cooling options.

Talk to your local Computer Troubleshooter about your options for upgrading to Windows 7.

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