

## Windows 7

Windows 7 was put on the market in October last year, somewhat quietly in comparison to the huge marketing efforts made for Vista, and is now, apparently, Microsoft's fast selling operating system ever. For the enthusiasts, it's because Windows 7 is brilliant and for the more pessimistic (realists) amongst you it's because Windows Vista was so ..... well, not quite up to expectations!!

It is clear that Windows 7 is a vast improvement over Vista, though most of the arguing is about whether Windows 7 is in fact just Vista Service Pack 2 and whether Microsoft is not being a bit cheeky asking people to pay for it - Home Premium costs £149.99, Professional is £219.99 and Ultimate is £229.99 when first released and remain unchanged, plus there are also upgrade prices if you can ever be happy with the Microsoft \$/£ pricing system:

Upgrade to Windows 7 from Vista or XP	USA	UK	France
Home Premium	\$119	£99	€119
Professional	\$199	£189	€289
Ultimate	\$219	£199.	€299

So don't buy in France – the Pro version at today's exchange rates is £255 or \$416 !!!

So what's changed in Windows 7?

If you have got Windows Vista you may initially be disappointed, as it looks almost exactly the same! But that is where the similarity ends as 7 is a much more stable operating system. – perhaps as some say “What Vista should have been”. It is also much faster and less greedy in RAM than Vista, running quite happily with 2 Gigs of RAM while Vista usually wanted double that. It is also a lot more user friendly and claims that even people with no previous computer experience can get along happily with it.

Here are the main points to note:

1/ The User Account Control system, the one everyone hates that keeps asking you security questions to which most users do not know that answer has been greatly improved. It is now customizable so that the user can choose what level of pop up security questions he wants, to the point of being asked none at all. It is in fact a good security system, its just Microsoft went about it the wrong way with Vista, but they have fortunately corrected the issue with 7.

2/ Networking has been significantly simplified for the home user, with the facility to share files, printers and multimedia across your home network via the Homegroup feature. It is also a lot easier to join and manage networks without having to be a network guru, and for those of you who like to access your PC whilst away from home, then the equivalent of Remote Desktop Connection is available regardless of which version of 7 you have (previously a feature restricted to the Professional version).

3/ Searching for files is also a lot easier on 7 – ever downloaded something from the internet but had no idea where it had been saved on your computer? Windows 7 will allow you to find any files easily, even if you do not know what they are called.

Windows search runs similarly to searching for something on the internet, so finding files is easy.

4/ There are also many user friendly features that enable you to organise your desktop:

- pin shortcuts, programmes to your menu or taskbar (though you could already do this in XP) for easy access
- Jump lists are pretty useful and allow you to right click a programme icon and up pops a jump lists or recently used documents or visited websites so that you can jump right to the document you want without initially finding it and then opening it.
- The Snapping tool is very useful for those of you who like to compare documents or have multiple windows open at once – drag one window to the left and one to the right and they automatically resize to fill half of the screen each without moving and resizing them manually.
- You also get live previews of files by hovering over them on the taskbar and can close them directly without going to the application and closing from there instead.

To be honest, these features are not really what Windows 7 is about. Vista had many “cool” features that XP did not have, but it was not a successful operating system as it was unstable and overall the user was often left confused by the plethora of questions he was being asked, not knowing what other issues he might be creating by clicking “Continue” or “Cancel”....

What is important with Windows 7 is that it is a stable and fast operating system, with most of the Vista issues removed. You could say that it has been over engineered, though that is impossible with an operating system, but Microsoft messed up big time with Vista and as a result Windows 7 has been seriously tested to avoid the previous failings. However, Windows 7 is probably still going to crash from time to time, all operating systems do, but it will not happen regularly, it has a tool to determine why the crash occurred and thus avoid it happening again.

So there you have it, Windows 7 has some funky features, though you will probably not use them much, but is more importantly more stable, faster and delivers a better user experience. I would not buy the upgrade but would not hesitate to buy Windows 7 on a new computer as opposed to searching around for one with XP. If you need to run older XP applications you can, but this is a privilege Microsoft expects you pay dearly for – you need Windows 7 Ultimate....

For computer problems and advice, please contact: Edward on 06 26 98 03 12 or by email on [ed@emarshall.fr](mailto:ed@emarshall.fr) All previous VVV Computer articles can be found at [www.emarshall.fr](http://www.emarshall.fr)