

No interest? Then why do Vista questions roll in?

Last week's review of Windows Vista brought a slew of e-mail from readers with questions about the new operating system.

Conventional wisdom said there wasn't much interest in Vista, but you wouldn't have known that from my e-mail inbox or our Web site traffic. Thanks largely to hits from Google News, it was the No. 1 story on [chron.com](http://www.chron.com) the day it ran.

With that in mind, here are the most common questions I was asked about Vista from last week, and the answers:

□ **If I am upgrading a home PC, which version of Windows Vista should I buy?**

This will largely depend on the hardware in your computer. If your system has the graphics-card muscle to handle Vista's new Aero Glass look (see last week's column for the minimum requirements at www.chron.com/vistareview), then start with Home Premium. If it has a TV-tuner card in it that Vista supports, you'll also want Home Premium, as it has the

Media Center components in it.

If your PC doesn't have what it takes and can't be upgraded, then start with Home Basic. You can always bump up to a version with more features using Anytime Upgrade, which lets you unlock more features. You pay for the difference between versions at one of several sites and are issued a new product key. Pop in your original Vista DVD, type in the key and your operating system is upgraded without you having to buy a new disc or download anything.

Also look at the recommendations in the Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor. You can find out more about it in my story on getting ready for Vista at www.chron.com/vistaready.

□ **I hear Vista comes with antispyware, but no antivirus, and my current antivirus software isn't compatible with it. What is?**

Vista comes with Windows Defender, the same antispyware program available for free for Windows XP. But you're right, you still need antivirus software.

If you install Windows Vista as an upgrade on a PC with antivirus software that's not compatible, Vista will warn you to remove it, or may simply disable it. If you do a clean install, of course, that's not an issue. But either way, Vista will squawk when it first boots up that you need an antivirus program. A link will direct you to www.microsoft.com/athome/security/update/windowsvistaav.msp. From there you can buy and download Vista-compatible antivirus programs.

Missing from it, though, is an excellent free one that I've mentioned before. Grisoft's AVG Free 7.5, available at free.grisoft.com, works quite nicely with Vista.

□ **I am not interested in a fancy interface - I turned off the Playskool colors in Windows XP. Besides, it just slows down your computer. Can I just turn that junk off?**

Yes you can. In fact you can drop all the way back to the Windows 2000 interface in

Vista, if you like.

But the notion that Aero Glass slows down your computer is based on the way Windows used to handle the display of the interface. In previous versions of Windows, the CPU or main processor was very involved in creating some of the effects seen in Windows XP.

But in Vista, Aero Glass' 3-D look is rendered largely by the processor in the PC's graphics card. In some ways, such as dragging open windows across the desktop, Vista's display feels more responsive. Even if you're into minimalist computing, and your PC can handle Aero, try leaving it on for a few days before reverting to an earlier interface era.

□ **I have a relatively new PC, and Dell is sending me an upgrade disk of Home Premium. I can't decide whether to do the clean install or the upgrade option. Can you make any suggestions?**

With previous versions of Windows, I would have recommended the clean install. But Vista handles what Microsoft calls an "in-place upgrade" differently. In a nutshell, it essentially "scoops out" your applications and settings from your old Windows setup, sets them aside, then places on your hard drive what's essentially a clean install of Vista. It then goes back and returns your settings and applications.

What I've been suggesting for those who can't decide is to first try the in-place upgrade. If you're not happy, blow it away by doing the clean install and start over. As I wrote in the getting-ready story, an upgrade installation can take several hours, depending on your setup. A clean install takes only 20 to 30 minutes, so you won't be losing that much time if you need to start over.

□ **Should I wait until the first Vista service pack to upgrade?**

That's certainly the advice you hear from a lot of techies, ~ and it's the conventional wisdom dispensed for any new Microsoft operating system. And, if you're happy with Windows XP, you're not going to lose anything by waiting. Microsoft expects to get Service Pack 1 for Vista out the door by year-end - about the same period of time it took for the first XP service pack.

But here's something to keep in mind: With Windows Update, Microsoft pushes out patches and fixes each month. On Vista's consumer launch day, Jan. 30, there were a bunch of bug-fix patches already awaiting those early adopters who'd bought it.

By the time Service Pack 1 rolls around, most users will already have its fixes on their systems.

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