

## Windows Vista: Installing the Upgrade on a Blank Hard Drive

Ok, I bought Windows Vista Business Upgrade the other day so I could start playing with it. Since I didnt want to mess up the configuration of my current computer, I thought I would install Vista on a blank hard drive.

Sounds easy enough, after all the previous versions of Windows required you to have a legitimate copy of an older Windows operating system and simply asked for that copy during the install so they could verify upgrade compliance.

Before installing Windows Vista, I ran the [Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor](#) on my current system. As I suspected, my video card was not up to Vista standards and the 512MB of RAM was on the low end of what Vista wanted. So, I purchased a NVIDIA chipset video controller with 256MB of RAM and increased the amount of system memory to 1GB before proceeding. These upgrades drained my pocketbook of another \$120.00 beyond the cost of the Vista Business upgrade.

Now I was ready to proceed with installing Vista and seeing what all the "wow!" was about.

### Installing Vista

After adding the new blank hard drive and setting the computer to boot from DVD, I placed the Windows Vista DVD in the drive and started the installation. I then Choose "Install Now" and proceeded to wait. After a few more screen, I was given the message that I was unable to install this upgrade version of Vista. What? It didnt even ask for my Windows XP CD?

It seems you cannot install the upgrade version on Vista on a perfectly blank hard drive without a workaround. The trick is to install a trial version of Vista, then install the upgrade version over the top so Windows has something to upgrade. Follow the procedure below to do this:

- 1) Install your blank hard drive and place the Windows Vista DVD in the bootable drive
- 2) Boot your computer from the Windows Vista DVD
- 3) Choose Install Now
- 4) Dont Put Product Key in just click Next
- 5) Answer No to the question "Do you Want to Enter Your Product Key Now"
- 6) Select the Version of Windows Vista you purchased and check the box "I have selected the edition of Windows that I purchased" click Next

The [following versions](#) are listed

Windows Vista Business  
Windows Vista Home Basic  
Windows Vista Home Premium  
Windows Vista Ultimate  
Windows Vista Home Basic N  
Windows Vista Business N  
Windows Vista Starter



The Starter edition is only offered in emerging countries where piracy is rampant to combat illegal copies, while the N versions are distributed in the European Union countries.

- 7) Check the box to accept the license terms and click Next
- 8) Continue with the normal setup of the trial version
- 9) After setup finishes and you are on the Windows Desktop, run the setup program again from within Windows Vista
- 10) During the setup, Choose Custom (advanced) when it asks what type of installation you want. This will perform a clean install of Windows Vista
- 11) Select the hard drive you want to install to and click Next

When you are finished you can delete the Windows.OLD folder on the hard drive from the trial installation. Then you can activate Windows Vista and register it.

### **DRIVER\_IRQL\_NOT\_LESS\_OR\_EQUAL Blue Screen Error Message during Windows Vista Installation**

During the installation, I received the annoying message above and the system froze every time. I traced this error to some incompatible drivers for the NVIDIA chipset card I had installed prior to installing Windows Vista. It seems even though the outside of the box proclaims Windows Vista compatibility the drivers on the CD aren't quite up to par.

I removed the video card and installed Windows Vista without the Aero interface and high end graphic features and the installation proceeded smoothly. After I returned to the desktop, I visited NVIDIA's support site and downloaded the latest graphic drivers for my card and installed them. Finally, I shut down the system, installed the new graphics controller and rebooted.

Everything appeared to load correctly, but I was presented with a driver installation screen asking to find the correct drivers. I pointed them to the NVIDIA drivers and the computer installed them and rebooted. Then I was presented with the same driver installation AGAIN! After further investigation, the drivers it was looking for were for the built in video controller. I quickly disabled it and problem was solved.

After installation was finished, I proceeded to the Performance Information and Tools section of System and Maintenance and told the computer to update my Windows Experience Index score. This score ranges from 1 to 5.9 based on the CPU, RAM, Graphic Card, and Hard Drive installed in the computer. This base score gives you an indication of how your hardware will run with Windows Vista. The lowest score for any component becomes your score.

### **Conclusion**

Based on my fight to install Windows Vista upgrade on a previously purchased computer and the cost involved in increasing the RAM and video card, it might be wise to purchase Windows Vista preinstalled on your next computer than to try upgrading an older one to use it. Although as they always say, Your Mileage May Vary.