

Introduction to Windows Vista

The speedy evolution of technology can leave even experts scratching their heads. It seems as though as soon as you buy a new form of tech, a release that follows instantly makes it obsolete. Microsoft, no stranger to changing things, released Vista, the latest version of their Windows operating system over one year ago. Those that adopted the operating system both early and late seem fairly displeased with its overall performance.

While it does have its quirks, it does several things quite well. The graphics, security, and organization have all been improved immensely. There is a bit of shock when one first digs into the operating system; however, it is soon alleviated and things start to make sense. This session will attempt to explain the differences between Windows Vista and Windows XP from an everyday user's standpoint. We'll also moderately scratch the surface of some advanced, under-the-hood stuff and make it more understandable.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Taking a cue from director Sergio Leone, let's dissect what works and doesn't in the program. Here is a list of "the good, the bad, and the ugly" of Windows Vista. We'll discuss them as we read the list. Feel free to ask any questions you might have.

- The good
 - Tighter security.
 - Aesthetically pleasing appearance.
 - Better organization of file folders.
 - Lightening fast hardware searches
 - Certain aspects of memory management have improved
- The bad
 - Slower boot time than Windows XP.
 - Security Warnings can be a bit excessive.
 - Requires more RAM.
 - The improved security sometimes makes old programs work incorrectly.
 - Multiple versions of the operating system confuses users.
- The ugly
 - Some people will miss the standard graphics of Windows XP.
 - While some of the new organization of files is nice, those used to Windows XP might dislike having to adapt to a new way of working.
 - Although the graphics have dramatically improved, the new effects (3D Flip, Aero Glass) take a massive amount of system resources to run.

Most of what's in the ugly category could also be put in the bad, but, to make Vista look better, I split them in twain. I also really wanted to carry on with my The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly reference. Who doesn't like Clint Eastwood?

Windows welcomes you

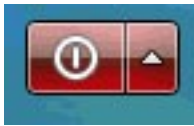


The photo you see before you is the new and improved Windows Welcome Screen. As with previous versions, you'll see an icon for each user registered on the computer. Here we have accounts for someone named Daniel, who is apparently a fan of cats, and Administrator. Note that on every PC it is a good idea to keep both an administrator account and one for everyday use. Running in administrator full-time gives you access to every part of a computer. So, should you get a virus while running an administrator account, the bug will also have full access to your computer.

As you can see, the actual Welcome Screen isn't that different from past versions of Windows. You have an icon for each user, as I mentioned, which you click to login. Should the account have a password then you'll be prompted to enter it.

(windows welcomes you, cont.)

The two main differences between the Windows XP and Windows Vista Welcome Screens are as follows:



This is the shut off menu. Should you boot up your computer, then decide you'd rather go outside then simply click the circle with the dash inside to shut down immediately. If you click the up arrow, next to the circle, then you can tell the pc to go to sleep (Doing this shuts down all but the basic elements of the pc. "Awakening" from sleep mode is much quicker than booting, but it will drain a laptop battery a slight bit), or you can restart the system.



The above button appears on the lower left hand side of the welcome screen. It is linked to the "Ease of Access" features that Microsoft has provided for those who need them. Here they are, along with a brief description of each.

Narrator: a text-to-speech utility for people who are blind or have low vision. Narrator reads what is displayed on the screen—the contents of the active window, menu options, or text that has been typed. This procedure tells you how to turn on and use Narrator. (<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/windowsxp/narratorturnon.aspx> for tutorial)

Magnifier: display utility that makes the computer screen more readable by people who have low vision by creating a separate window that displays a magnified portion of the

screen. (<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/windowsxp/magnifierturnon.aspx> for tutorial)

High Contrast: a color scheme can make the screen easier to view for some users by heightening screen contrast with alternative color combinations and font sizes. Use this accessibility tutorial to adjust High Contrast settings. (http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/windows2000/highcontrast_select.aspx for tutorial)

(windows would like to welcome you, cont.)

Onscreen Keyboard: a utility that displays a virtual keyboard on the computer screen that allows people with mobility impairments to type data by using a pointing device or joystick. (<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/windowsxp/usingkeyboard.aspx> for tutorial)

StickyKeys: an accessibility feature designed for people who have difficulty holding down two or more keys at a time. (<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/windowsxp/stickykeys.aspx> for tutorial)

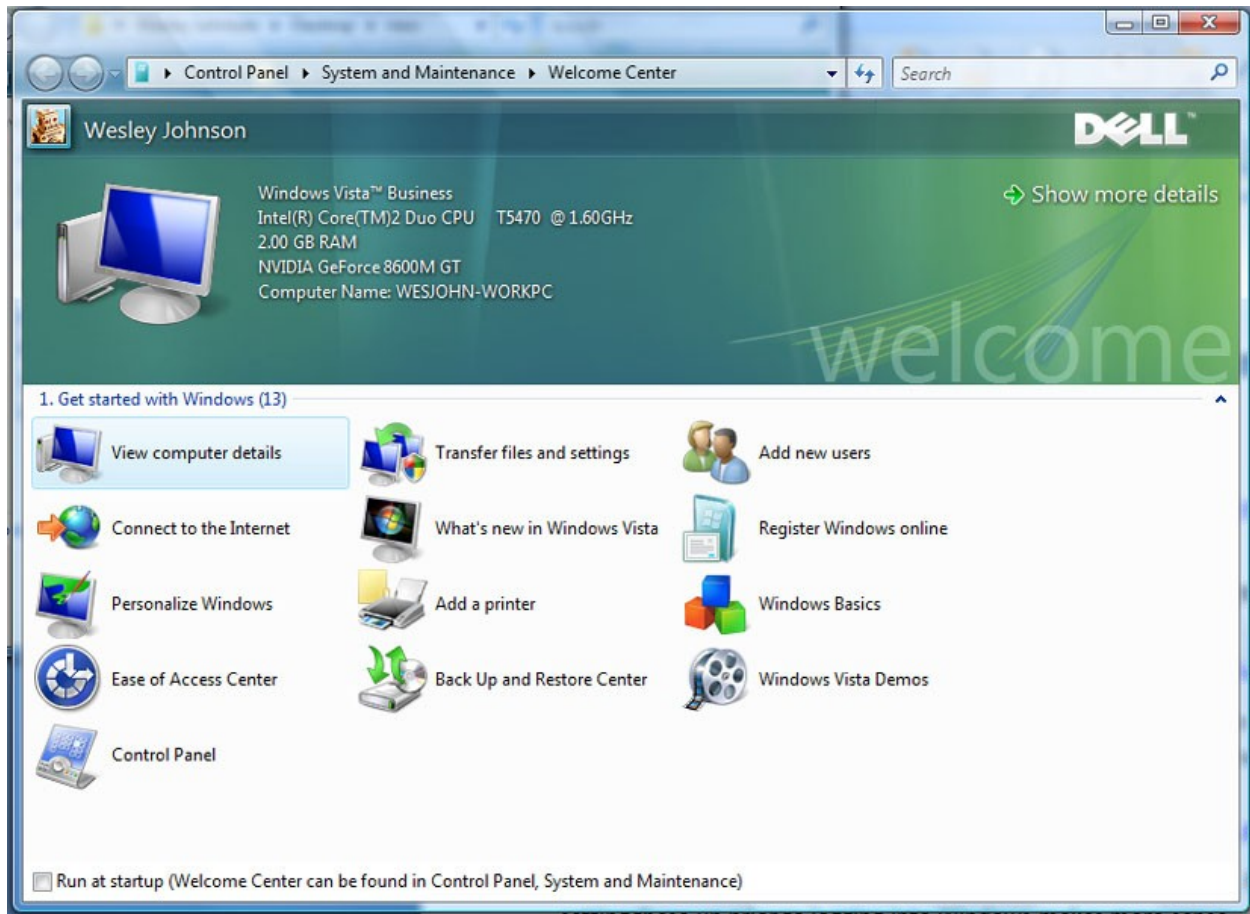
FilterKeys: an accessibility option that adjusts the keyboard response so that inadvertently repeated keystrokes are ignored. Using FilterKeys, you can also slow the rate at which a key repeats when you hold it down. (<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/windowsxp/filterkeys.aspx> for tutorial)

All these features can be accessed under the Control Panel as well. But, in my opinion, setting these up prior to logging into Windows makes more sense.

Since Microsoft is really pushing a warm, friendly, and welcoming experience they want to continue to assist you in making the jump to Windows Vista. Should you be booting up a brand new computer for the first time, you'll be presented with the Windows Welcome Center soon after pushing the power button. We will discuss this in the following section.

Go ahead and click the icon that says CC LX (the x will be replaced with the number on the back of the laptop you have) to sign into Vista. I've enabled all the laptops to display the Windows Welcome Screen after booting up. We'll take a look at it next.

The Welcome Center



The above screenshot is the aforementioned Windows Welcome Center. It gives users everything they need to set their new machine up and give an overview of the new operating system. When you first see the center, you are given a truncated version of what is available ... to view them all at once (as they are shown above) click “show all 13 items.”

There are many things available here that will assist you in making the transition from Windows XP to Windows Vista. Note the Windows Vista Demos, What’s New in Windows Vista, and Windows Basics. Those might be things you’d like to go through in your own time.

As noted at the bottom of the screen, you may access your Windows Welcome Center after your initial computer set up by visiting the Control Panel, System and Maintenance Section.

Useful Parts of the Welcome Center

View computer details: By default, the View computer details option is selected. This causes the specs of your computer to be displayed in the top bar. If you click “View More Details” on the right side then you’ll be able to gauge your Windows Experience Index.

- The Windows Experience Index is a new feature in Vista that scans your computer’s hardware to see how well it’ll run the operating system. 5.0 is a perfect score (the laptop you’re using now is a 4.6). After doing the scan, Vista will shut down some of the special effects and unsteady options to make things run smoothly. Should you be considering a new pc purchase, I’d recommend using this on some demo models before making up your mind.

Transfer files and settings: This will guide you in pulling old files and settings from previous computers to your new one.

Add new users: This, much like Windows XP, is where you’ll set up user accounts on the system. Remember, as I said earlier in the guide, it is NOT a good idea to allow everyone to run as administrator. This is a surefire way to have a virus mess up your lovely new machine. I advise creating one administrator account to use when installing programs, then, for day-to-day use, create a regular account for everyone who’ll be using the pc.

Control Panel: Like an old friend, Control Panel is always there for you. This is another area that is similar to past versions of Windows. The new layout is a bit confusing (we’ll talk about it later). Should it prove too difficult for you to navigate you are given the option of switching to Classic view which resembles XP’s look. This option is also given in other parts of Windows Vista.

Ease of Access: This gives you access to the features I described earlier in the study guide. So, if you’ve already set up things from the Welcome Screen then odds are you won’t need to go here.

Connect to the internet, Add a printer: These two options are self explanatory. They allow you to set up your internet connection and add a printer. Doing both of these actions is no more difficult than it was in Windows XP.

Now that that's out of the way, click the X in the upper right hand corner of the Welcome Center to reveal the Windows Desktop.

The Desktop and Start Menu



Pictured above is the Windows Vista Desktop. As you can see, despite a major overhaul in the graphical presentation, the layout is quite similar to past versions of Windows. The system tray and clock are still in the lower right hand corner, the program icons are still on the desktop, and minimized programs still go to the start bar.

Another change is the removal of the classic My Documents, My Computer, etc. folders from the desktop. These are still on your hard drive, and, if you want, you can create shortcuts to them on your desktop. The “my” has been dropped, though, and they are simply called Computer, Documents, and so on.

The thing that freaks people out the most is the missing Start Button. Fear not, though, as the Start Button has merely morphed into a round Windows logo. Clicking it brings up

the Start Menu, which has changed pretty drastically. In the next area we'll give you the basics of the new design.

(the desktop and start menu, cont.)

The Start Menu



Click the new Start Button (or as I like to call it, Big Round Shiny Windows Logo Thing) to reveal the new and improved start menu. While the improved part may be considered debatable by some, I actually like the way this works.

(the desktop and start menu, cont.)

The differences you should be aware of are as follows:

- **Windows Search** – Windows Search is one thing Microsoft really got right in Vista. They've sped it up a great deal and eliminated the animated dog that attempted to help you find files in Windows XP.

Look at the bottom of the Start Menu. See the box that says Start Search? Click in it and type Internet Explorer. Within milliseconds the search produces the most relevant results on your computer. You can hit enter right after typing your search and it'll open the top result.

- **Documents, Computer, etc** – As I mentioned, all the "My" has been eliminated from the Windows platform. These can all be accessed from the start menu. And, if you're a fan of the way it used to be, you can right click the items on your start menu with your mouse, select Send To from the menu you get, and tell it to put a shortcut on your desktop. After that, you may rename the shortcut My Documents.
- **Personal File Structure**- Microsoft's attempt to make Vista a more organized operating system was successful. See the computer name on the upper right hand side of the start menu? Take your mouse and click it. This brings up the personal files for whatever account you are logged in as. Documents, Contacts, Music, Downloads, Favorites, Save Games and more are all saved here for easy access. Some of these areas are also linked directly from the start menu.
- **Shutting Down, Hibernating, Sleeping**- To get the Shut Down, Restart, etc. options click the tiny arrow pointing to the right in the lower right hand side of the start menu. This gives you options similar to those you got with the red button on the welcome screen. We'll go over them again for good measure.
 - **Switch User** – Allows you to switch to a different user account on the computer quickly.
 - **Log Off** – Signs out of your account and takes you back to the Welcome Screen.

- **Lock** – This locks the machine and doesn't allow anyone to use it until you return and enter in your password.

(the desktop and start menu, cont.)

- **Restart** – This will log you out, turn off your machine, and restart it. This is handy if your computer gets slow and bogged down. Sometimes a restart can work wonders.
- **Sleep, Hibernate** – The option given for putting your computer in sleep mode varies depending upon the version of Vista (we'll go over those before the end of class) you purchased. Ours is Windows Vista Business, so we're given the sleep option, which puts your computer into a low powered mode. Awaking from sleep mode is much quicker than booting up. This is handy, however, going a month doing this in lieu of an actual shut down could cause your computer to slow down.
- **Shut Down** – Logs out of your computer and turns it off.
- **Run Box** – The Run Box is a semi-advanced part of Windows that should only be used when needed. You can access certain under-the-hood aspects of Windows and programs this way. It was a part of the Start Menu in XP, but, now, it can only be accessed by pressing the Windows Key (lower part of your keyboard, in between ALT and Fn) and R at the same time.

Although this is mainly used to access advanced stuff, you can also use it to quickly open certain programs. For instance, if you bring up the run box and type CALC, the Windows Calculator will open. This works with several programs and is handy and can speed things up if you don't like hunting for things.

That was quite a bit of information without many visual aids. So, if you have any questions or comments, please share them now.

Wireless Internet and Network Access

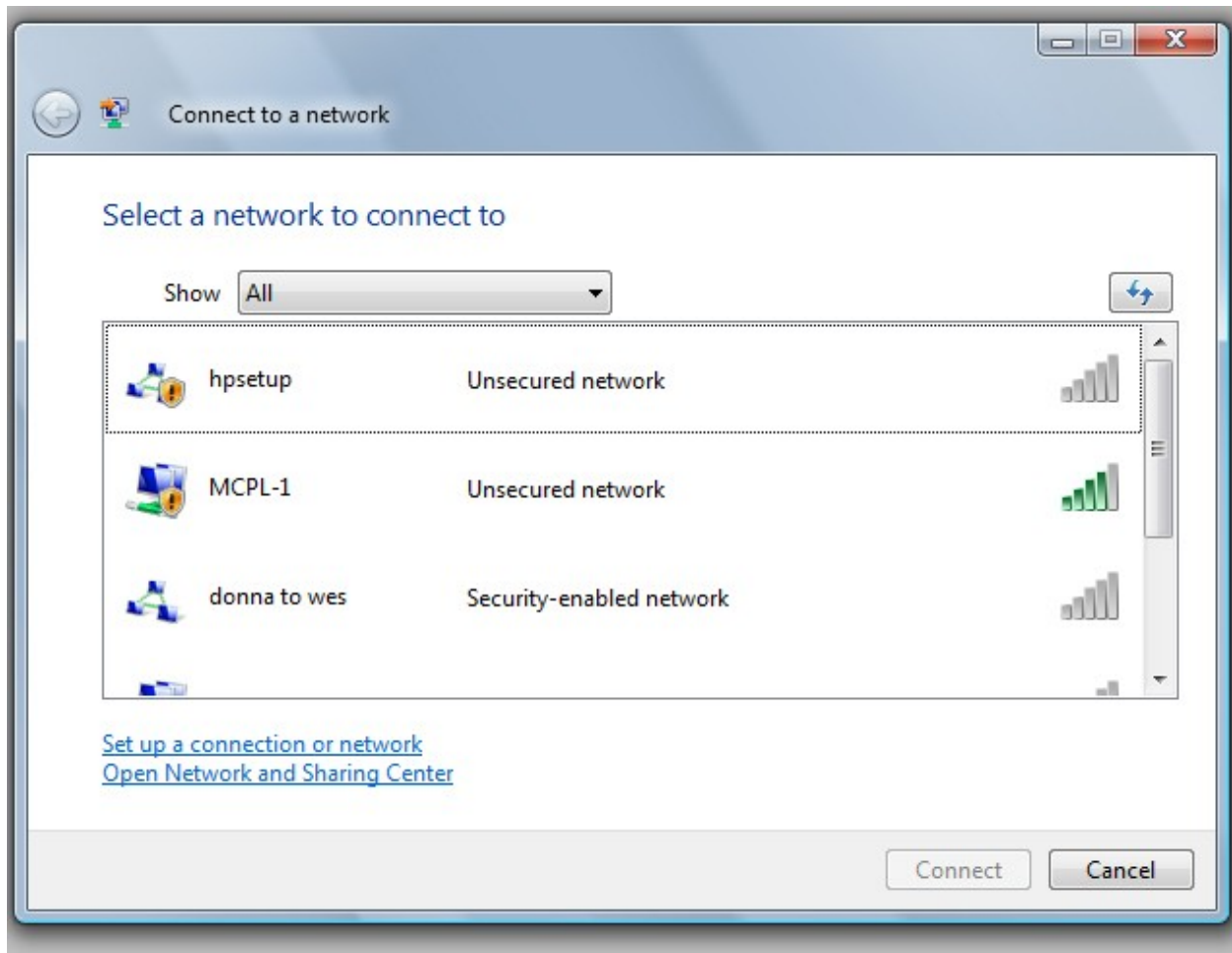
Accessing a wireless network has been made incredibly easy in Windows Vista. I'll walk you through the basic steps in the section. Let's start out by looking at your system tray, which, as I pointed out in an early screen shot, is the area in the lower right hand side of your screen. It looks like this:



See the two computers shaded blue with the globe between them? Since they look like that, instead of what is pictured in the right hand photograph, that means we are logged on to the internet. Should we not be connected, you'd get the blank computers with the red X.

To connect, simply double click the blank computers with the X. Windows will notify you if any wireless networks are available immediately. If it says there are some in your area, click connect and you'll be given the wireless networking menu. Don't worry, it sounds more advanced that it actually is. The menu is pictured at the top of the next page.

(wireless internet and network access, cont.)



This menu shows you available networks near your computer. Those that say “unsecured network” are ones that are open and do not need a password. Beware of connecting to these, though, as some nefarious folks might leave open access to the internet in hopes of getting personal data off your PC. Using someone else’s network could also make their internet access slower if you download big files so that could anger them. Make sure you have permission from whoever owns the network before you use.

Select whichever network you decide to connect to, then click connect, and in a few seconds you’ll be able to have internet access. It will tell you when the connection was successfully made. It’s that simple.

Many malls, restaurants, and libraries now offer free wireless internet around the clock. So, if you're at Starbucks, McDonalds, Panera Bread, or the Muhlenberg County Public Libraries, you may surf the web free from fear. Sadly, Starbucks and McDonalds both charge for their access.

Random bits on Windows Vista

You now have a good working knowledge of Windows Vista basics. But, before we're done, let me give a few brief notes about the product.

- **Improved Security-** Security is being stressed now more than ever in Microsoft products. One big difference in this area reveals itself when you attempt to install a program. If you're logged in under an administrator account (which should only happen if you're installing something), you'll receive several prompts asking if you're sure you want to install the program. If you're not an administrator, and try to install something, you'll be asked for the administrator password.

This is a good thing in certain situations. If multiple people are using your computer then this keeps them from junking up your system. It also prevents malicious software from installing itself on your pc. That said, it can grow annoying as the prompts are sometimes excessive. You'd think Windows Vista would know that installing a product made by Microsoft is okay and that you want to install it.

- **SuperFetch** – This function was built into XP but received little mention. SuperFetch attempts to speed up your computer by memorizing what you do at specific parts of the day. If you open up a web browser at 8:00 AM every morning to look at CNN for news, Vista memorizes this and makes sure that the web browser is loaded in to your computer's memory (RAM) at that time every day.

This helps things move a bit faster.

- **Readyboost** – How many people have seen a flash drive? These devices are essentially miniature hard drives that you can store information on and take with you to other PCs. If you own a flash drive, and it has ReadyBoost built in (it will say on the packaging of the drive if it does), you can help Windows Vista boot up faster. This feature also works in Windows XP, however, few seem to know of it.

If you boot up a Vista machine with a Readyboost drive plugged in, your computer will be tricked in to thinking that this is extra memory and boot up faster. Since Windows Vista is notoriously slow at starting up, this is a welcome feature.

- **Windows Update** – Windows Update functions a little easier than it did before. It can be accessed via the System and Maintenance section in the Control Panel. It'll tell you automatically if you have any updates available and let you select which ones you want. It walks you through the steps in a fairly easy fashion.
- **Windows Defender** – Windows Vista comes with a built-in spyware scanner called Windows Defender. It'll warn you if you go too long without scanning or updating. As with Windows Update, it was made extremely easy to use. When you're prompted to scan or update you simply click the button with that command on it.

Although I'm partial to other spyware scanners, this one actually works quite well, too.

In closing...

I could probably talk about Windows Vista for hours and still not cover everything. There are many new functions and features built in that have yet to be discovered by the everyday user. However, I believe with what we've talked about today that you'll be able to have a great experience with the operating system.

For the remainder of class I'll take any questions you might have. And, if you'd like for me to go over anything in the Random Bits section in more detail, I can do that as well.

Thanks for attending!