



Windows 8 Questions

What is Windows 8?

Windows 8 is the latest version of Microsoft Windows. It comes after Windows 7 (which came after Windows Vista, which came after Windows XP). Windows 8 brings a big change in the appearance of the operating system. It now has two main screens, a new one (which Microsoft at first called Metro, but now calls Modern) and a more familiar desktop screen. It starts up in the new 'Modern' screen.

What is Windows RT?

Windows RT is a version of Windows 8 that runs on ARM processors (which are common in mobile devices including Microsoft's Surface RT tablet). It presents the Modern interface and only runs programs downloaded from the new Microsoft App Store, in addition to a suite of pre-installed programs which includes Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office 2013 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote).

Do I need to move on from my present version of Windows?

If you can do everything you want to do with your present setup, there's no need to upgrade to Windows 8. If you are still using Windows XP, it's good to plan to move on well before April next year (2014) when Microsoft will stop issuing security updates for Windows XP, but that still gives you time to watch how Windows 8 beds down.

If I want to upgrade from my current version of Windows to Windows 8, how can I find out if my computer can cope with Windows 8?

Microsoft will test your computer for you. Go to the Microsoft page <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-8/upgrade-to-windows-8> and click on the "Download Upgrade Assistant" link and follow the instructions. The Assistant checks your hardware for compatibility with Windows 8. You can install and run the Assistant without having to download the full operating system if you do not want to.

Do I need a touch-screen computer or tablet to use Windows 8?

The new Modern interface is designed for use with a touch-screen but it can also be controlled with a mouse and keyboard. You do not have to have a touch-screen to use Windows 8.

How do I buy Windows 8?

If your computer passes the test and can cope with Windows 8, you can

buy Windows 8 as an upgrade to your present operating system (which may be anything from Windows XP Service Pack 3, through to Windows 7). If your operating system is older than Windows XP, it's very likely that your computer will not pass the test for Windows 8 compatibility, and you will need to purchase a new computer if you want to use Windows 8.

Should I download the upgrade or buy it on a DVD?

The download costs less, but if you choose it, you will receive the version of Windows 8 that matches your older operating system. If your old OS is the 32-bit version, you will receive the 32-bit version of Windows 8. Provided that your computer hardware can cope with the 64-bit version of Windows 8 (the test result will tell you) you can make better use of your computer's resources by upgrading to the 64-bit version even if your current OS is 32-bit. But to do that you will need to purchase the DVD. Members who have very slow internet connections such as dial-up, or who have limited internet data allowances, will also need to purchase the DVD. (The size of the Windows 8 download is about 3 gigabytes.)

Should I upgrade or do a clean reinstall of Windows?

The easiest way to upgrade is to download Windows 8 and install it as an upgrade over your old OS. If you do that, the installer will do its best to keep your old settings, program installations etc. (If you are upgrading from Windows XP, only your data will be preserved; if from Vista, your settings and data will be preserved; but in both those cases you will need to reinstall your programs.) A clean install of your new Windows 8 involves a fresh start: it requires you to reinstall all your programs, and to fetch your data files from your backup, and redo your settings. You would have to do this anyway if you purchased a new computer. A clean install minimizes any risk that old information on your hard disk could confuse Windows 8 even after installation. Whichever you choose, It's very important to have a full backup before you install Windows 8.

Will Windows 8 allow me to use all my old programs?

If you accept the download and you have Windows Vista or Windows 7, all your old programs will run under Windows 8. Also, if you move from 32-bit to 64-bit Windows, your 32-bit programs will still run (as they will under Vista or Windows 7 64-bit). If you are moving from Windows XP, and are still using some old DOS-style 16-bit programs, these will not run under Windows 8 without the help of an additional program to provide the 16-bit environment these programs need.

With Windows 8 installed on my computer, how can I learn to use the new features?

When you install Windows 8 and start it up you will be given some introductory information on your screen. Windows 8 also has a built-in help system, with advice on using the new interface, which you can access by pressing the Windows key and the F1 key together.

**I have purchased a new computer with Windows 8 already installed.
How do I find the desktop?**

On the Modern interface clicking on the bottom left pane opens the desktop. To return to the Modern screen from the old-style Windows desktop, just press the Windows key on your keyboard.

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