

Advice on Taming Your Unruly Computer and Learning More About Computers - by Allen Stein

We Computer Tamers get questions similar to this one often. "I went into a computer store and they told me I can't get a computer with Windows XP anymore. Is this true?"

What they should have told you is that you can't get Windows XP from that store anymore, but you can still buy a computer with Windows XP installed.

We Computer Tamers have been working with Microsoft for many years and are experienced with all of the Microsoft operating systems, it seems to us that no transition has created as much public interest and complains as what we are seeing with Windows Vista. Even Apple is making lots of fun about it.

The closest thing that we can compare it is the release of Windows ME, which was in most everyone's opinion the worst version of Windows developed, but the difference between VISTA and ME is that users weren't forced to migrate to ME as they have been with VISTA.

Most users went from Windows 98 Second Edition to Windows 2000 or XP and skipped right over the "Millennium Edition" or edition "Major Error" because of the problems that were associated with it.

The reality of Windows Vista is that it is a more stable and more secure operating system than Windows XP, but it looks and works differently and many are having a superficial response to the interface when they attempt to use it.

Part of the problem is that change is always hard, especially here in New England and especially when someone else is dictating to you when you must change. This current situation clearly shows that Microsoft has failed in its marketing of Vista.

The complaints from the Internet caused Microsoft to delay the demise of Windows XP somewhat, but alas, the end is near.

June 30th marks the end of the line for major retailers and major manufacturers to acquire product for sale in their stores or through their websites.

This does not mean that you won't be able to find any Windows XP machines on July 1st, as they are allowed to sell Windows XP systems until they run out of stock (if they have any). Each retailer and manufacturer will determine when they plan to close out Windows XP for the public to purchase.

Dell, for instance, stopped taking orders for Windows XP systems on June 18th, but even then it does not mean that you can't get a computer with Windows XP installed on it.

Here are the currently published timelines and associated events for Windows XP (all then are subject to change of course!):

June 30, 2008 - PC manufacturers and retailers stop selling computers with XP installed. The only source of new computers pre-loaded with Windows XP is through generic "white-box" computer resellers.

Jan. 31, 2009 - Microsoft stops selling Windows XP altogether through any channel (with the exception of some non-US versions and specialized low-end laptops).

April 14, 2009 - Mainstream support ends (free live support and warranty support). Free maintenance (Windows XP updates) will continue but will be limited to security fixes only.

April 8, 2014 - All support for Windows XP ends – no more security fixes, no more support of any kind from Microsoft...we are on our own!

To add to the confusion, manufacturers and white-box dealers can offer “downgrade” rights to those that pay for Windows Vista Business or Ultimate until January 31st, 2009. This means that you pay for Windows Vista Business or Ultimate, but the computer gets loaded with Windows XP Professional (XP Home is not available for downgrades).

This program was designed primarily for businesses that have not approved Vista for use on their corporate networks, but anyone can take this route (and it may be the safest for you, because you will already have what you need to migrate to Vista in the future.) If you choose this option, make sure that the manufacturer or reseller includes the Windows XP disk along with the license key (they will usually charge a little more for it, but you want the disk!) or you may be stuck in a ditch down the road when you need to reinstall Windows XP.

Here’s the bottom line. You will be able to purchase some form of a computer with Windows XP pre-loaded on it until January 31st of 2009, however, starting on July 1st, 2008 it will become increasingly more difficult and more expensive because your options narrow.

We Computer Tamers will do our best to have Windows XP available to our customers including those who purchase new systems.

We also will be providing Windows VISTA interface training and guides to those customers who have or will buy Windows VISTA.

VISTA is here and XP ultimately will go away. Get with the change and learn more about the differences between VISTA and XP. The world around you is changing – believe it or not, it always has. Get with it and grow in the use of technology. Don’t every say you are computer illiterate! You are learning each day more about computers. Have a little self respect.

Allen is one of the Computer Tamers who host The Computer Club heard every Wednesday after the 5 o’clock news on WILI AM 14. You can learn more about getting your unruly computer under control by visiting TheComputerTamers.com and explore the free information compiled there for you. Earlier columns are also available at the website. Be sure to visit the Computer Tamers Sales and Service Center at River Plaza, 75 Bridge Street Willimantic or our new Storrs Depot. The phone number is 860-456-1310. You can call us toll-free 1-877-456-1310.