

# Re: Format again

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*Source:*

[http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/WinXP/microsoft.public.windowsxp.help\\_and\\_support/2008-04/msg02014.htm](http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/WinXP/microsoft.public.windowsxp.help_and_support/2008-04/msg02014.htm)

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- *From:* "Ken" <[suttoncoastguard@xxxxxxx](mailto:suttoncoastguard@xxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Mon, 21 Apr 2008 15:23:17 +0100
- 

Thanks for the info I think I will  
Thanks for ,all your help

Ken

"Daave" <[dcwashNOSPAM@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:dcwashNOSPAM@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote in message  
[news:23Am%235f7oIHA.548@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:23Am%235f7oIHA.548@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Ken wrote:

With regards to my previous post with regards to formatting, a problem, which I forgot to mention before is that my computer has only a system recovery disk and not a windows xp disk. Can anyone help with this problem?

Ken, in the future, please don't start a new thread; it confuses things.

What is the make and model of your PC? We first need to determine its specs to see if it can handle Vista.

Also, in your original post, you stated:

I have a load of stuff on my hard disk that I want to get rid of and I want to reformat my hard disk and re-install Windows XP and update it with a Vista upgrade which my good lady brought back from London.

Instead of performing a clean install of XP, which wipes your hard drive completely, why not just delete the "load of stuff" you have? Clean installs are rarely needed, and they are a lot of work. If there are performance issues, then they can usually be addressed, and again, it would be much easier than starting from scratch.

In your case, since you have a system recovery disk, it won't be quite

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as time-consuming. But still, you will need to make sure you save all your data first, including e-mails, bookmarks, settings, etc. You also will need to have all the installation media/files for all your XP programs. Furthermore, are you sure these programs will also work under Vista?

If you *\*really\** want to run Vista and if your PC can handle it, I would first image your hard drive using a program such as Acronis True Image. This way, in the event you don't like Vista (and there are many who fall into this camp), you can easily revert to your old XP system.

I believe there are two ways to accomplish what you want. First, run your system recovery disk for a pristine XP system. Then upgrade to Vista by booting off the upgrade disk. (By the way, only one person can use this upgrade disk. If your good lady is using it, then you won't be able to.) The other method is described here:

[http://www.winsupersite.com/showcase/winvista\\_upgrade\\_clean.asp](http://www.winsupersite.com/showcase/winvista_upgrade_clean.asp)

Interestingly, even though you need to have a valid XP license for the upgrade (which you apparently do), there is a way to perform a clean install of Vista using the Upgrade disk but without qualifying media!

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Here's how it works.

### Step 1: Install Windows Vista

Boot your PC with the Windows Vista Upgrade DVD. After the preliminary loading screen, click the Install Now button to trigger Vista Setup. In the next screen, you normally enter your product key. However, there's a little-known trick in Windows Vista Setup whereby you can simply skip this phase and use the install media (Upgrade or Full, any version) to perform a clean install of virtually any Vista product edition. What you do is leave the Product Key field blank, deselect the option titled "Automatically activate Windows when I'm online," and then click Next. Vista Setup will ask you whether you would like to enter your Product Key before continuing. Click No.

In the next Setup screen, you'll be presented with a list of the Windows Vista product editions you can install. This list may vary from locale to locale, but in the US, you'll see Vista Home Basic, Home Premium, Business, Ultimate, and some N editions. Choose the product edition you actually own. You'll be asked to verify that you've chosen the correct version. Do so to continue past the End User License Agreement (EULA) screen.

In the next screen, you select the type of install. Choose Custom (Advanced) instead of Upgrade. Next, you choose the partition to which to install Windows Vista. If you need to format the disk, select the

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Drive options (advanced) option to do so and then continue.

Now, Setup copies the Vista install image to your PC, expands it, and installs Windows. This phase of Setup should take about 15 to 20 minutes and trigger at least one reboot. When Vista is installed, you'll step through the penultimate phase of Setup in which you enter, in succession, your user name and password, computer name, and the date, time, and time zone. Then Setup runs its final task, a performance test that could take about 5 minutes. If everything goes well, and you're running fairly modern hardware, you should hit the Welcome screen and, after logging on, the new Vista desktop less than 30 minutes after you began this process.

### Step 2: Upgrade

What you've installed is decidedly temporary. You've got 30 days during which you can run this non-activated version of Windows Vista. If you try to activate Windows now, it will fail, because you've performed a clean install of Vista and you only have an Upgrade product key.

What to do, what to do? If you read Microsoft's support note carefully, you will have seen that the Upgrade versions of Vista support upgrading from "a compliant version of Windows, such as Windows Vista, Microsoft Windows XP, or Microsoft Windows 2000." Well, you just installed Windows Vista, so why not just upgrade from this install? That's right: You're going to upgrade the non-activated clean install you just performed, which will provide you with a version of the OS that you can, in fact, activate.

To do this, just open Computer and double click on the icon for the DVD drive that contains the Vista Upgrade media. Run Setup again, this time from within Vista. Choose Install Now, and then "Do not get the latest updates for installation" in the next screen. Then, in the now-familiar Product Key phase, enter your product key. It's on the back of the pull-out Vista packaging. You can choose to automatically activate Windows when online or not, it's your choice. In the next screen, accept the Windows EULA.

Now, choose the Upgrade option. Windows will install as before, though you might notice that it takes quite a bit longer this time. (Upgrade installs seem to take up to 45 minutes, compared to 30 minutes or less with clean installs, and reboots at least one additional time.)

Because you've just completed an upgrade install, you won't be prompted to enter your user name and so forth (only the time zone screen is presented). Instead, you'll just boot directly to the Welcome screen when the performance check is complete. Using the user name and password you created during the first install, logon to Windows.

Once again, you have 30 days in which to activate Vista. However, this time activation will work: To activate Vista immediately (unless you

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told it to do so during Setup), open the Start Menu, right-click Computer, and choose Properties. Then, at the bottom of the System window that appears, click the link titled Activate Windows now.

Is this legal?

One might naturally wonder whether the aforementioned instructions describe an action that is legal or ethical. After all, anyone could purchase an Upgrade version of Windows Vista (therefore saving a lot of money when compared to a Full version) and use it to perform a clean install even if they don't own a previous, compliant Window version.

After telling my "Windows Vista Secrets" coauthor Brian Livingston about this workaround, he wrote that using this process was indeed ethical, in his opinion. "Microsoft itself created the upgrade process," he wrote in a newsletter article describing the workaround. "The company designed Vista to support upgrading it over a previously installed copy of XP, W2K Pro, or Vista itself. This isn't a black-hat hacker exploit. It's something that's been deliberately programmed into the approved setup routine."

Fair enough. Of course, if you do use this workaround to clean install Vista with the Upgrade media, and you don't own a previous, compliant version of Windows, you're most certainly violating the Windows EULA and, thus, breaking the law. Proceed at your own risk.

Final thoughts

This is an interesting and viable workaround for anyone who owns a previous Windows version but would like to perform a clean install of the new operating system on their existing hardware. While I'm a bit nervous about legal implications and Microsoft's ability to cut off this process in the future, I'm glad that innocent Windows upgraders do in fact have all the options that were available to them in previous Windows versions. For its part in this silliness, Microsoft gets a virtual slap on the wrist: Sometimes, it seems, the company forgets that Windows is expensive and paying customers should be able to easily install the new OS without taking on the added clutter of a previous Windows installation.

—Paul Thurrott  
February 3, 2007

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