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Make older programs run in this version of Windows

Applies to all editions of Windows Vista.
Which edition of Windows Vista am I using?

Most programs written for Windows XP also work in this version of Windows, but some older programs might run poorly or not at all. If a program written for an earlier version of Windows doesn't run correctly, use the Program Compatibility Wizard to change the compatibility settings for the program. To change settings for a program manually, use the individual program's Compatibility tab.

If changing the settings does not fix the problem, go to the program manufacturer's website to see if there is an update for the program.

⚠️ Do not use the Program Compatibility Wizard on older antivirus programs, disk utilities, or other system programs because it might cause data loss or create a security risk.

Run the Program Compatibility Wizard

1. Open the Program Compatibility Wizard by clicking the **Start** button 🔵, clicking **Control Panel**, clicking **Programs**, and then clicking **Use an older program with this version of Windows**.

2. Follow the instructions in the wizard.

If you cannot install a program, insert the installation disc for the program and, using the wizard, browse to the program's setup file, usually called Setup.exe, Install.exe, or something similar. The wizard is not designed to work on programs that have an .msi file name extension.

To change compatibility settings manually for a program, right-click the icon for the program, click **Properties**, and then click the **Compatibility** tab.

Setting	Description
Compatibility mode	Runs the program using settings from a previous version of Windows. Try this setting if you know the program is designed for (or worked in) a specific previous version of Windows.
Run in 256 colors	Uses a limited set of colors in the program. Some older programs are designed to use fewer colors.
Run in 640 × 480 screen resolution	Runs the program in a smaller-sized window. Try this setting if the graphical user interface appears jagged or is rendered improperly.
Disable visual themes	Disables themes on the program. Try this setting if you notice problems with the menus or buttons on the title bar of the program.
Disable desktop composition	Turns off transparency and other advanced display features. Choose this setting if window movement appears erratic or you notice other display problems.
Disable display scaling on high DPI settings	Turns off automatic resizing of programs if large-scale font size is in use. Try this setting if large-scale fonts are interfering with the appearance of the program. For more information, see Make the text on your screen larger or smaller and Ways to improve display quality.
Privilege level	Runs the program as an administrator. Some programs require administrator privileges to run properly. If you are not currently logged on as an administrator, this option is not available.
Show settings for all users	Lets you choose settings that will apply to all users on this computer.

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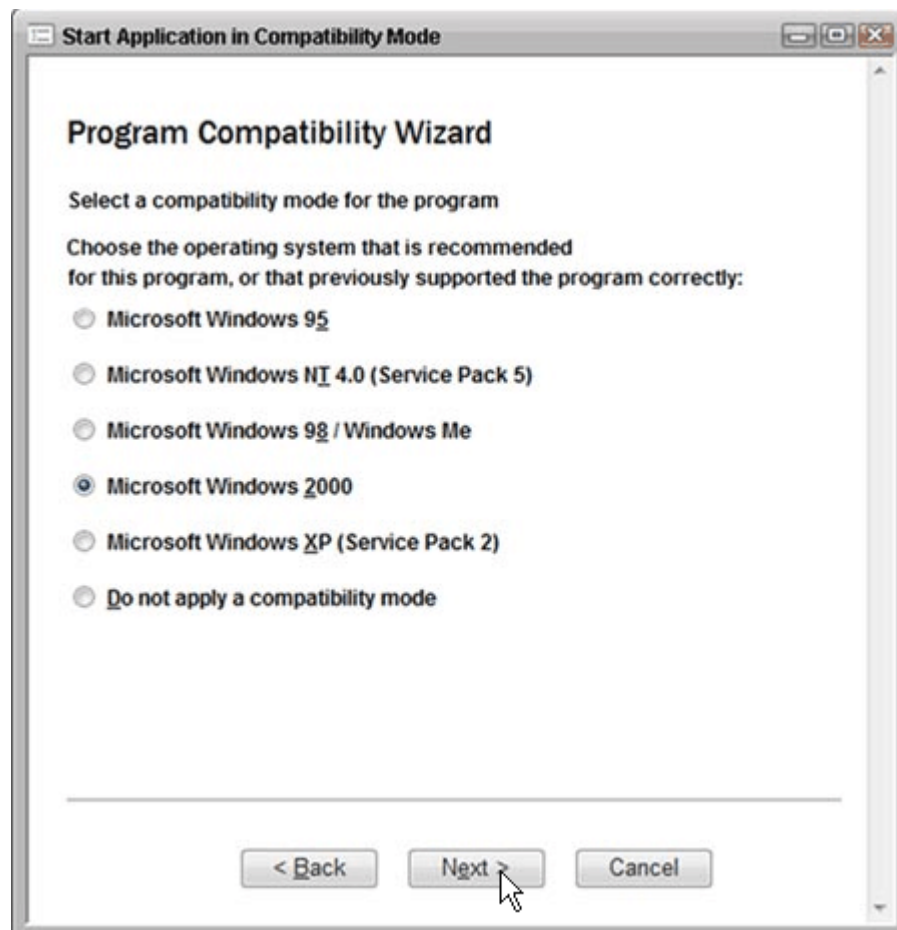Operating Systems > Windows > Windows Vista > Software Information >

Windows Vista: Compatibility Mode

Compatibility Mode on Vista

Windows Vista includes a feature that allows the user to run older applications on the Windows Vista operating system called Compatibility Mode. Using this is quite simple and prevents new users from having to re-buy their favorite applications.

With the application already saved to the computer:

1. Right-click on the application's .exe file.

2. Select **Properties** from the menu.

3. From there, click on the **Compatibility** tab to prompt the **Program Compatibility Wizard.**

4. Pick the operating system with which the application was previously used (most likely Windows XP).

Last Updated: 9/7/2007 4:20:30 PM

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Run Applications In Compatibility Mode In Vista

by Diana Huggins on April 9, 2007 at 12:40 pm · Comments
Categorized by Diana's Tips / More Information

If you upgrade to Windows Vista, one of the things you may discover is that not all of your older programs will work under Vista. Many software vendors are working to release Vista-compatible versions but in the mean time, you can try running the applications in Compatibility Mode.

To do so:

1. Open Windows Explorer.
2. Location the application executable.
3. Right click the executable and click the Properties option.
4. Select the Compatibility tab.
5. Select the Run This Program in Compatibility Mode option.
6. From the drop-down list, choose the operating system you ran before upgrading to Vista.
7. If necessary, select the option to run the program as an administration.
8. Click OK.

Tags: vista, windows, microsoft

What Do You Think?

How to run pre-Vista programs in Compatibility Mode at SoftSaurus - April 18, 2007 @ 3:51 am

[…] I haven't run into any must-have apps that aren't working in Vista, so I can't vouch for this, but it is supposed to be how it works. If you've tried Vista's compatibility mode, share your experience in the comments. — Adam Pash Run Applications In Compatibility Mode In Vista [Windows Fanatics] […]

Dean Bryant - April 21, 2007 @ 5:38 am

I'm using ACT 4.0 (never had a reason to upgrade) and can't get it to run in Vista. Compatibility Mode didn't help.

[VISTA: How to run pre-Vista programs in Compatibility Mode at SoftSaurus](#) - April 26, 2007 @ 1:55 pm

[…] I haven't run into any must-have apps that aren't working in Vista, so I can't vouch for this, but it is supposed to be how it works. If you've tried Vista's compatibility mode, share your experience in the comments. — Adam Pash Run Applications In Compatibility Mode In Vista [Windows Fanatics] […]

Larry - April 26, 2007 @ 2:04 pm

I have tried compatibility mode for an accounting package that runs from Linux through RMCOBOL 7. When run as administrator it almost works, but believe that the environmental settings for the regular user is different in administration mode? This is a tough one to solve for our tech support guy with the accounting software is not familiar with Vista. I might look at using VMware for this one application. The user wanted the lastest and greatest!

michael - May 5, 2007 @ 1:44 pm

I've been running windows vista for about 5 months. The only thing good about it is the fancy window switching, and it works well when browsing the internet. Windows mail is a mess; it does not delete messages… I compose music using a variety of software programs, and have had no success with any of them at all; compatability mode included. I wish I could just revert to windows xp… maybe I'll do that? What a mess

michael - May 5, 2007 @ 1:45 pm

I think I'll go apple next time

pam.. - May 13, 2007 @ 9:01 pm

the compatiblity doesn't work! hahahahahaha!

and i don't want to downgrade my OS. help?

Mitch - May 23, 2007 @ 3:27 pm

"Location the application executable."? that doesn't make any sense. And why would you open Window's explorer to change the computer's settings? Help please!!!

Sleprox - May 25, 2007 @ 2:34 pm

It makes perfect sense.

The only way to set compatibility mode is to click on file you intend to modify;

And how would you do that?

I would guess, open Windows Explorer, and browse to the C:\Program Files subdirectory listed under Computer;

Find your incompatible subject file; for example, we will say Internet Explorer isn't compatible with Vista(Haha, just follow me, it's an example);

You would go to C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer;

Right click on IEXPLORER.EXE (You may have to turn on File Extensions under Folder Options to see the exe files)

Select Properties–>Compatibility–>Check the first box under Compatibilty Mode, Select the OS you want to emulate, then check mark the box under Privilege Level, click OK.

Now, you won't be able to to check these boxes in this example, since MS is certain that it is compatible with Vista and it is Greyed out.

Simple really, the worst part is finding out that it doesn't solve your problem, then you have to seek help from the Publisher of the Software, and hope they have an update.

kerry - August 9, 2007 @ 6:44 am

greetings-
I am about to make that enormous leap of leaving my old computer behind and buying a new one with Vista OS and I am ABSOLUTELY terrified! ANy advice out there? I don't WANT to do this but my old computer has become a Frankenstein experiment and moves at about the pace of a turtle. Put it this way- my computer is so old I only have a 40gb hard drive and 256k of ram. Nearly all my internal drives have ceased to work and I have enough external equipment plugged in that when the lights are out in my office it looks like Times Square at night. I feel like I should be moving forward, but am fairly convinced that practically all the software I have will not run on vista. ANd from reading these posts, it sounds like the compatability modes offered in Vista will be of absolutely no use to me. Should I just buy an upgraded computer and have them install xp or is taht crazy and still staying in the dark ages? what to do? HELP!!! I really could use some advice.
:) Kerry

VonLewis - September 18, 2007 @ 7:28 pm

I needed Autocad for school
Just got a Pc for it, new with Vista
The damn popup already annoy me!!!
But now the program i need can run on Vista! what a f…… waste!
Switching to Xp if i can find an answer soon, the time i need to get Xp.

What are your thoughts?

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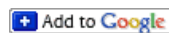
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