

Computer Observer

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Should You Wait To Buy Windows Vista

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

The debates about upgrading to Windows Vista are more prevalent than ever and if you're ever involved in one of them here are some things you should know.

If you have a computer that currently has Windows XP, DO NOT UPGRADE. Upgrading never works as smoothly as it should. Windows even makes a utility to check whether or not your computer can be upgraded to Windows Vista. But here are the facts. Windows Vista is a much newer operating system that takes a very powerful machine to run. Even if you were able to get it installed on your older computer it would probably run very slow.

Yet, getting it installed/upgraded would be a great victory. Upgrades never go smoothly because a lot of the programs you are currently using and a lot of the devices you have attached to your computer will not be compatible with Windows Vista. Once you upgrade, you may find that your printer no longer works and the CD you have doesn't support Vista. Your antivirus may no longer work and now you have no protection until you reinstall.

Software developers have had to make entirely new versions to be compatible with Windows Vista so a lot of older programs will not work until you upgrade to newer versions. As you may have figured out, this can get very expensive very fast.

So if you are interested in using Windows Vista, get a new computer with it preinstalled. If you don't need a new computer yet then it may be a good time to wait.

Remember...if you buy a new computer and you'd like to have your old files copied to the new once you can call Computer Pros and we set it up for you.

Ann's Tips By Ann Dodderidge

The next VACUG will feature a presentation by Lindsay Albers, a staff member of Smart Computing.

If you enjoy the Computer Observer then you'll really like Smart Computing Magazine.

"Smart Computing is a monthly magazine devoted to helping users improve their productivity with personal computers. The magazine, founded in 1990 as PC Novice, emphasizes tutorial articles and plain-English writing that defines technical terminology.

Smart Computing is more than just another periodical for its readers; the magazine becomes a valuable part of many readers' computing reference libraries. Popular regular features include a Q&A section, which answers readers' questions; PC Operating Instructions, which focuses on the fundamental skills of using various operating systems; and Quick Studies, which contains how-to articles explaining a single feature of major applications such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, WordPerfect, and Quicken. Other sections cover the Internet, computing basics, upgrading components, troubleshooting, and more.

Each monthly issue also includes hardware and software reviews packed with common-sense buying advice based on the needs of real buyers, rather than just technical test results. These straight-talking reviews provide insight on the latest and best hardware and software."

If you'd like to order a copy of Smart Computing use the following codes and get an entire year for \$29.

SC: 6230 - CPU: 315

Smart Computing is really a great magazine that is packed with useful information and actually gives you tips that you can use. I recommend you give Smart Computing a try today.

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Computer Lockups By Adam J. Richter M.S.

If you are reading this article there is a good chance that your computer has locked up at least once. Lockups are a fact of computing.

Sometimes what seems like a lockup is not. Sometimes the computer is overwhelmed with loading different programs that it just takes a while to catch up to what your doing so if you think your computer is locked up try waiting a couple of minutes to see if it starts responding again.

If it doesn't then there is a good chance that your computer is locked up. The first thing you can try if your computer is locked up is to try using ALT+CTRL+DELETE. Sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't. If it does not then you have a hard lockup you will need to reboot the computer. This may have happened to you before. Have you tried hitting the power button and nothing happens?

Newer computers have a soft power button that doesn't actually turn off the computer when you hit the button. Older computer had hard power buttons that would turn off the computer instantly but to turn off the computer on newer computers you have to hold in the power button for 6 to 10 seconds. By doing this the power will completely turn off on the computer.

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Digital Camera's

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

What to Look for When Buying a Digital Camera

Resolution – Resolution determines the quality of the picture the camera takes. Typically this is indicated in megapixels. Right now 5 megapixels is the most common but the greater the megapixel the higher quality the picture. The higher quality the picture the bigger memory card you need.

Size/Weight – Pay attention to the size and weight of the camera. You can find powerful cameras in very small sizes if you do a lot of traveling. But if you plan on taking some professional photos then you may be better off getting one of the larger professional grade cameras.

Zoom – Zoom is sometimes a point of confusion when purchasing a digital camera because there are two types of zoom. Digital and Optical. Digital Zoom can be used after the picture is taken and Optical zoom is used before and while the picture is being taken. The higher the optical zoom, the more you can zoom in while taking pictures. Just be careful, the more you zoom in the more difficult it is to take clear pictures.

Storage – Some cameras come with a large amount of built in storage. Others come with a small amount of built in storage and with the ability to plug in an SD, CompactFlash, or SmartMedia expansion memory card.

Batteries – Digital cameras that use AAs usually run out pretty fast. You will definitely want a digital camera with rechargeable batteries or you will want to get some rechargeable AAs.

Movies – A newer feature of digital still picture cameras is the ability to take movie clips. This can be fun but will definitely fill up the memory card fast.

Menus – If you have the option to use a camera before purchasing it, make sure to do so. Some of them have easier menus to navigate than others. Many camera stores have the cameras on display so you can try them out. Take advantage of this.

Transferring Pictures to your Computer

There is a common misconception that you have to have special software installed to transfer pictures from your camera to your computer. This is no longer true with Windows XP and Vista. In XP/Vista the camera is detected automatically.

- Step 1: Just take a picture or two
- Step 2: Plug the camera into the computer using the USB connection
- Step 3: Turn the camera on, sometime you have to turn the camera to a special mode.
- Step 4: Windows will detect the digital camera and will allow you to choose the 'Scanner and Camera Wizard' this wizard automates copying the pictures to your computer. You will go through a few questions regarding which pictures you want to copy, what you want to call them, and where you want to save them.

After completing the wizard, your pictures are typically saved in the 'My Pictures' folder.

Manipulating your Pictures

Once the pictures are copied to your computer you will want to manipulate them. You may want to crop, print, or email them.

There are a few different software packages that make this pretty easy. Kodak Easyshare is one of the most popular but Google's Picassa software is becoming very popular.

Picassa is a free download and it will manage all of the pictures on your computer. With one single click you can change pictures to black and white, you can remove red eye, change the size of the picture, print the picture, and even e-mail pictures.

If you have a Kodak camera you will probably want to try the Kodak Easyshare software. If you don't have a Kodak camera then you will enjoy Picassa.

It can be downloaded from
<http://picasa.google.com/>



The Venice Area Computer Users Group

The Next Meeting is Monday October 1st 2007 at 4:00 p.m. Venice Library
www.thevacug.com

The VACUG is a non-profit organization designed to help its users become more adept in using computers. This is accomplished through classes, Q&A sessions, and through the networking of members.

Presentation meetings are held the first Monday of each month. Family, guests, and the general public are welcome. Meetings feature industry leaders such as Adobe, Corel, Microsoft, Quicken, and local experts demonstrating the latest software and hardware on the market.

One year membership is \$35.00.

Invite a guest to the next meeting FREE. Non-members may join at the meeting or may print and bring an application from www.thevacug.com

Meeting Schedule

- 4:00-4:05 PM.....Sign-in
- 4:00-4:45 PM.....Forum – Computer Pros
- 4:45-5:00 PM.....Break
- 5:00-6:00 PM.....Guest Lecture -
Smart Computing - Lindsay Albers
- 6:00-6:15 PM.....Prizes and Raffles

Meeting Location

Venice Public Library (in the auditorium)
300 Nokomis Ave S
Venice, FL 34285



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