

## Is Windows 7 any good? Should I buy it?

It's the curse of the early adopter. You either find yourself surfing the new wave of technology, or getting beaten up by the dumping surf of disappointment.

Windows Vista was very much the latter experience. A simple "upgrade" of a pretty up to date machine turned into two frustrating days of hardware upgrades, re-installs, and driver hunting.

When I was offered a release candidate copy of Windows 7 two months ago, I was naturally reluctant. However, I have to say, it has been a brilliant experience and I'll explain why I like it and offer some guidance as to whether you should upgrade.

Vista was, let's face it, a bit of a dog. It suffered from insufficient driver support which made it difficult to install on many machines. It also seemed to have been rushed out and was pretty unstable, crashing or even blue screening quite regularly. Windows 7 was completely different. I have installed the 32 bit version on a media PC (Acer Aspire E500 with 2GB RAM) in the lounge, and the 64 bit version on one of my work PCs (Custom, 4GB RAM, ASUS P5B motherboard, Core Duo). Both were quick and easy installs. In use Windows 7 seems to be quick to boot, and quick in operation compared with Windows Vista. In addition, network speed seems much improved which is important for most business situations. Vista was dreadful in this respect. Windows 7 is also very pretty, continuing the transparency effects that started in Vista. There also graphical user interface improvements that are actually very useful, like previews of open windows from the tool bar and the "flow" view of all windows. The version we have been using is Windows 7 Ultimate which has all the toys like Windows Media Center in it, and this also is very good, although in fairness this has always been a great bit of software. It is a brilliant way to free your digital media from your PC or network access storage, and put it on a big screen. It is also a very competent at TV tasks like pausing live TV and recording individual programs and series. So all good news really. Should you upgrade? Well, actually it's not as clear cut as you might think. You still need a pretty contemporary computer to run Windows 7. I'd suggest that if you are currently using XP, either stick with it, or upgrade your PC / Laptop to one with Windows 7 pre-installed. If you are using Vista, go buy Windows 7 now! Update! Microsoft have re-introduced their generous "Ultimate Steal" programme to get good discounts on their products - you can get Windows 7 Professional for £30 and Office 2007 Ultimate for just £38.95 (that's 90% off!) All you need is an ac.uk email address to prove you are a student.