

# What is Windows?

Windows is an operating system for PCs (personal computers). The operating system is the software that organizes and controls all of the components (hardware and software) in your computer so that they integrate and work efficiently together.

The first operating system from Microsoft was known as MS-DOS (Microsoft Disk Operating System). This was a non-graphical, line-oriented, command-driven operating system, able to run only one application at a time.

The original Windows system was an interface manager that ran on top of the MS-DOS system, providing a graphical user interface and using clever processor and memory management to allow it to run more than one application or function at a time.



## Don't forget



There have also been versions of Windows aimed specifically at businesses, including Windows NT, Windows 2000, Windows 2003 and Windows 2008.

The basic element of Windows was its “windowing” capability. A window (with a lower-case w) is a rectangular area used to display information or to run a program. Several windows can be opened at the same time so that you can work with multiple applications. This provided a dramatic increase in productivity when using PCs, in comparison with the original MS-DOS.

Microsoft released four versions of this interface management Windows, with numerous intermediate versions, including:

- 1985 – Windows 1.0
- 1987 – Windows 2.0, 2.1 and 2.11
- 1990 – Windows 3.0, 3.1, 3.11 (Windows for Workgroups)
- 1995 – Windows 95, 98, 98 SE and Me (Millennium Edition)

## Hot tip



Windows XP and later versions no longer incorporate MS-DOS, though they do still feature a Command Prompt that permits DOS-like command line functions.

The next version, Windows XP, was a full operating system in its own right. This was eventually followed by Windows Vista:

- 2001 – Windows XP (eXPerience) Home and Professional
- 2007 – Windows Vista Home, Home Premium, Ultimate etc
- 2009 – Windows 7 Starter, Home Premium, Ultimate etc

# About Windows 8

The latest version of Windows was released in 2012.

- 2012 – Windows 8, Windows 8 Pro and Windows RT. This is the eighth major version (as Microsoft views the Windows product release cycle)

One of the main developments with Windows 8 is that it is designed to work equally well on touch screen devices and traditional computers. The number of versions of Windows 8 has been consolidated too, compared with previous versions and there are now three main options on offer.



## Windows 8

This is the main consumer version of the software. It is a fully-featured version including all of the new features such as the new Windows 8 interface, Windows 8 apps, the improved File Explorer and Internet Explorer 10 which has versions for both the Windows 8 interface and the traditional Desktop environment. Windows 8 is designed to work equally effectively on desktop PCs, laptops and also touch screen computers and tablets. This version of Windows 8 can be upgraded to from, among others, Windows 7 Starter, Home Basic and Home Premium.

## Windows 8 Pro

This is targeted more towards the business user. It contains all of the features in the Windows 8 version plus added features for security encryption and PC management. If you are upgrading from Windows 7 Professional or Ultimate then this is the version to use.

## Windows RT

This version of Windows 8 is only available pre-installed on PCs and tablets with ARM processors, which help with a lightweight design and improved battery life for mobile devices. The RT version also comes with a pre-installed version of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Powerpoint and OneNote) that is optimized for use on touch screen devices.

Don't forget



The Windows logo has also been redesigned, to make it look more like a window and less like a flag, as in previous versions.