



OUT BEHIND THE BARN DANS LE FEU DE L'ACTION

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Microsoft Vista — Who needs it?

Microsoft has finally released the new PC computer operating system that they have talked about since 2004. This article discusses how this new software will affect physicians using PC computers in their homes or offices. Those who use Apple Macintosh OS X computers already have many of the "new" features offered in Vista.

HARDWARE SPECIFICATIONS

Microsoft lists the absolute minimum Vista hardware requirements as a 1 gigahertz processor, 512 megabytes of system memory, a 20-gigabyte hard drive with at least 15 gigabytes of available space, support for DirectX-9 graphics with 32 megabytes of graphics memory and a DVD-ROM drive. In reality, you will need more than these minimums.

NEW COMPUTERS

Most new PCs will now be shipped with Vista installed, but this may only be the "Home Basic" version. If you are a serious computer user, you should get at least the "Home Premium" version, which requires more than the minimum hardware specifications.

OLDER COMPUTERS

If your computer currently uses a version of Windows older than Windows XP or 2000, it is unlikely to be able to run Vista. If it was purchased in the past 2 years, it may be able to do so.

UPGRADE ADVISOR

If you plan to upgrade to Vista, this site,

www.windowsvista.com/upgradeadvisor, is a "must visit." As well as detailed information about the new software, Microsoft offers a free utility to check your computer for Vista compatibility. I was able to download the program, but could not run it because I have not yet installed the free upgrade to Windows XP Service Pack 2. That's probably a warning sign that my old Dell PC is too old to handle Vista anyway. And it was "state of the art" back in 2003!

SOFTWARE COMPATIBILITY

Before you upgrade to Vista, check with the vendors of your non-Microsoft programs to ensure that your current version will run under Vista. You may have to pay to upgrade to a newer version, on top of what you pay for Vista itself.

INSTALLATION

I've read articles about Vista that suggest that even computer professionals encounter problems when installing Vista. Consider having it done by a professional; preferably one who has already done the upgrade a few times and knows what can go wrong. If you do it yourself, be sure to back up your programs and data files first. Microsoft offers a free "Easy Transfer" utility for backing up to an external hard drive or DVD-ROM.

ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS

Vista manages computer networks differently. Check with your electronic medical records vendor to see if their

network software is compatible before you add a Vista computer to your current system.

SECURITY

Vista is more secure than previous versions of Windows. Parental controls have also been added to manage what your children can download from the Internet. One negative aspect of this feature is that it may not be compatible with firewalls and other security software from third party vendors.

BUILT-IN APPLICATIONS

Vista includes new versions of Internet Explorer (7.0) and Windows Media Player (11) as well as other utility programs. Some of these new applications are available for Windows XP computers. They are available as a free download from the Microsoft Web site (<http://www.microsoft.com>).

MORE INFORMATION

Supersite <http://winstersite.com> offers detailed articles about the advantages and disadvantages of Vista, Internet Explorer 7.0, Windows Media Player 11 and other Vista components.

MY PERSONAL BOTTOM LINE

For the moment, I will continue to use Windows XP Pro on my home and office computers, but I will upgrade to Service Pack 2 and then download Internet Explorer 7.0 and Windows Media Player 11. I plan to buy an external DVD burner or a high-capacity hard drive to back up my data, both now and in the future. When I do buy a new computer, I will probably get one with at least the "Home Premium" version of Vista pre-installed. By that time, Microsoft should have fixed some of the "bugs" that have already been discovered in Vista.

About the cover: *Grate's Cove Industry*

For over 300 years the fishermen of Grate's Cove landed their catch of cod by "pronging" it from stage to stage all the way up the cliffs—backbreaking work, which required a lot of manpower, in the worst kinds of weather.

In the 1940s a system of cables, gas engines and buckets was introduced so that fish was loaded into buckets from the boats and powered up long cables to the stages at the very top of the cliffs. There it was split, salted and dried on massive flakes spread all around the cliffs. This involved every member of each family. It was later transported by truck to merchants in St. John's who shipped it overseas to Italy, Britain and Spain. In the 1960s, a fish plant was built at water level in the town so the fish could be unloaded directly at the plant wharf where it was fresh frozen and shipped around the world. This ended the "old" industry, and the stages, flakes and cables were simply left to rot. The old fishing lifestyle also died as children moved away, returning only to wonder at what their forefathers had gone through.