

Computer Corner

By Jim Jeup
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The most common computer question I hear lately,

“Should I upgrade my computer to Windows XP?”

My first response is usually the same,

“Does your computer currently meet your needs?”

If the answer is yes, then don't upgrade. If the answer is no, then Windows XP deserves a closer look. Three important questions about your computer and Windows XP are, “Will Windows XP run on my computer?”, “How do I check my computer for XP compatibility?” and, “Will my software run on Windows XP?”

Will Windows XP run on my computer?

Any new computer purchased since Christmas 1999 should run XP just fine, but here are the minimum requirements:

- 300 MHz Pentium II or compatible processor (or better)
- 64MB of RAM
- 2GB of free hard-drive space
- SVGA plug-and-play monitor
- 12X or faster CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive.

I have installed XP without problem on older machines that meet these minimum requirements, but the “64 MB of RAM” requirement makes computer operation slower when running more than one application. I recommend a minimum of 128 MB of RAM for normal users who want to do more while email is open, and people who want to benefit from the new “eXperiences,” like built-in photography and digital music support will want 256MB of RAM or more. Memory is inexpensive right now, so this is a worthwhile investment.

How do I check my computer for XP compatibility?

Microsoft's web site offers “upgrade eligibility” information and distributes XP's "Upgrade Advisor" (free). Upgrade Advisor will check your computer's compatibility before you purchase an XP upgrade. **Warning:** The download is large (32MB). If you have a dialup, or slow internet connection, downloading “Upgrade Advisor” can become a task. Another way to check XP compatibility is to seek help from a professional. A Certified Technician, or Microsoft Certified Professional, will have knowledge of your computer hardware. They know what is compatible with XP, and will help find solutions to serve your needs when hardware is not compatible. Either solution will save you time investigating compatibility issues.

Will my current software run on Windows XP?

If you're purchasing new software, look for the Windows XP Compatible sticker. However, some older software may not work with Windows XP. Microsoft has built-in “Compatibility Mode” to help solve most issues. XP can fool your program into believing it is still running on your old operating system. Using “Compatibility Mode” requires you to know where the software is located on your computer, and some software won't accept this work-around. If you are unsure about your software, Microsoft's web site offers software compatibility lists, or again, seek help from a professional.

Example:

When using Outlook 2000 and upgrading to Windows XP, after XP Setup is complete, you must reinstall Outlook 2000 for the application to work properly.

Computer Corner is accepting questions. If you have a computer question of broad interest, or if you found these answers confusing, email Computer Corner at cornerquestions@advancedmobiletech.com

Jim Jeup is with Advanced Mobile Tech – Onsite, Flat Rate Computer Repair, and can be reached at (813) 508-4378 or on the web at www.advancedmobiletech.com