

Six Ways to Move to Windows XP

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During the past few months, I've seen a growing interest among user group members to adopt the Windows XP operating system. Questions about how to move to Windows XP are coming up more and more in user group meetings. This article briefly describes the six ways to move to Windows XP, so that you can determine which would best suit your personal needs.

Families of Operating Systems: For the past several years, Microsoft has offered two families of operating systems to use on personal computers. For the home user, they provided the Windows 95/98/Me family of operating system. This operating system has included five major versions over the years -- Windows 95, Windows 95B, Windows 98, Windows 98 Second Edition, and Windows Millennium. While it may sound like these are several different operating systems, in fact, they are different releases of the same operating system with different names.

While end-users were using the Windows 95/98/Me operating system, businesses were getting to know the Windows NT operating system. This operating system included five different versions over the years -- Windows NT3.1, Windows NT3.5, Windows NT4, Windows 2000, and Windows XP. While Windows XP comes packaged two different ways -- a Home Edition and a Professional Edition -- they are both the same operating system with slightly different features to meet the needs of their intended audiences.

Microsoft has told us that Windows Me was the last version of the home operating system that they will release and that Windows 95/98/Me users are expected to move to the new Windows XP operating system for the most recent version of Windows. All future personal computer operating systems put out by Microsoft will be based on the Windows XP system we now have. This has prompted many users to take a close look at Windows XP and to determine when and how they will move to this new operating system version.

Six Ways to Windows XP: A look at the documentation that comes with Windows XP will identify one or two ways to take when moving to XP. Upon closer inspection, there are actually three approaches that you can take to move to Windows XP plus a couple of options on each of these three approaches to give you a total of six ways to get to Windows XP. Let's briefly review the three main approaches and then look at the two options that make up these six ways to Windows XP.

The first way to move to Windows XP is also the easiest way to get there -- buy a new computer with Windows XP already installed on it. This saves you the expense and effort

to upgrade your current computer to a level that will support Windows XP. It also saves you from installing the new operating system on your computer. All of this is taken care of for you by the computer manufacturer. Microsoft has stated that they expect 90% of their users to take this first approach.

The second approach to getting to Windows XP is to purchase a Windows XP upgrade package from your software dealer and to install it on your computer replacing your current operating system. When you are done, you will have Windows XP on your computer and your old operating system will be gone. I find this approach a bit risky and do not recommend it to most users. If anything should happen while you are installing Windows XP, you might end up with a bad installation of XP and you may also destroyed your old operating system in the process. Select this option only if you have taken a full backup of your entire system before starting the installation.

The third approach is to purchase a Windows XP upgrade package from your software dealer and to install Windows XP on your hard drive, side-by-side with your old operating system. When you are done, you have both your old operating system and your new Windows XP system on your computer. This approach takes a little more disk space to run and some partitioning utilities to set up the hard drive, but it is by far the safest way to move to Windows XP. You will also find that some of your hardware and software may not run at first under Windows XP. This side-by-side approach gives you the ability to continue to run these hardware devices and applications on your old operating system until you can get them to also work on Windows XP. Therefore, you can migrate your system slowly from the old operating system to Windows XP and still have all of your system working on one operating system or the other.

Each of these three main approaches has two sub-options to choose from – a Clean install or an Upgrade install. This refers to how closely you connect to your applications and settings on your old operating system. A Clean install is a total replacement of your operating system with little connections to your past operating system. You will need to re-install all of your applications on your new XP system and then select all of your application settings again after they are installed. This approach may take a bit more work, but it promises you the most efficient system after you complete the installation.

The Upgrade install retains as many links to your old applications and settings as it can. It is sort of a merging of the new Windows XP operating system with your old operating system, so that when you are done, your applications will run just the same as they did on your old system. While this may appear to be the easiest to do, it may take you longer overall to take this option. Not all of your applications will work under Windows XP and you may need to spend a great deal of time testing out your applications to make sure they work properly on XP.

Which Way is Best for You: At first, all of these six ways may sound like they should work for you. Actually, it is a bit more difficult than that. Here are some guidelines to help you decide which of the six ways to move to Windows XP is actually the best one for you to follow.

One of the first things to determine is if your computer hardware is powerful enough to support Windows XP. The Windows XP operating system is a robust and stable operating system, but it demands a more powerful computer to run on. As a rule of thumb, if you purchased your computer in the past two years, then it will probably handle Windows XP without too many equipment upgrades. If it is older than two years, then the cost to make many upgrades to the computer may offset the cost of purchasing a new computer instead. Take a close look at your computer hardware to make sure it has the following equipment on it:

- 300 Mhz Processor
- 256 MB RAM
- 1.5 GB of Available Hard Drive Space

If your old computer is not up to these minimum specifications, then you need to buy what is needed to bring your computer up to this minimum level. The cost to do this may help you determine whether to spend your money upgrading an old computer or purchasing a new computer instead.

If you purchase a new computer, you may be able to use most of your external devices on the new computer. For example, your display and printer may work just fine on your new computer, thus saving the cost to replace these devices, too. To be sure that your devices will work on your new Windows XP system, you can download a free tool from the Microsoft website and run it on your current system. This tool is called the Windows XP Upgrade Advisor. After you run the Upgrade Advisor on your current (non-Windows XP) system, you will know which of your devices may not work under Windows XP without obtaining new drivers for them.

The next consideration you need to make is whether your applications will run on Windows XP or not. If you currently run an earlier version of Windows NT or Windows 2000 and your applications work ok on that operating system, then there is a good probability they will also run under Windows XP. If you are using a release of the Windows 95/98/Me operating system family, then some of your current applications may not work unless they are re-installed or new versions of them have been obtained and installed. Low-level utility software is almost certain not to run on Windows XP without a new release of the utility. The Windows XP Upgrade Advisor mentioned above should also tell you which of your applications will work on XP and which ones may not work for you. This information is good to know in advance so that you can be prepared by obtaining the latest versions before you install Window XP.

Tools to Help you Move to XP: Perhaps the best tool you can use to help you move to Windows XP operating system is PartitionMagic by PowerQuest Corporation. Version 7 of this excellent partitioning utility is designed to work with Windows XP as well as other common operating systems. PartitionMagic will let you create multiple primary partitions in which to install your new operating system. With the BootMagic utility, which comes as a part of the PartitionMagic package, you can switch between your new

Windows XP system and your older operating system as mentioned in the third approach above. This is one tool that will make the process of moving to Windows XP so much easier for you to accomplish. Don't attempt this move without PartitionMagic.

The second tool that you should have is Drive Image v5, which also works with Windows XP. Making changes to your operating system is a serious undertaking that you don't want to attempt without a full backup of your current system before you start to install Windows XP. Drive Image is one of the best backup utilities on the market and one that you really need to have to accomplish this project of moving to Windows XP.

Finally, I have just completed an educational CD entitled, "Discovering your Hard Drive" that contains all of the detail steps of these six ways to move to Windows XP. This CD will guide you through the steps of each of these six approaches, besides providing many additional topics to help you better understand and organize your hard drive. This information is difficult to find in other sources and many of the ideas covered on the CD are only found in this one source. This is a must to help you get to Windows XP.

How to Order Products: User group members and guests can order PartitionMagic v7, Drive Image v5, and the "Discovering your Hard Drive" CD at a significant discount off the list price of these products. PartitionMagic and Drive Image have a list price of \$69.95 each, but the user group price for these excellent utilities is only \$35 each. That's the best price you will find on these quality products. Likewise, the "Discovering your Hard Drive" CD is available to user group members and others for only \$20. With a \$5 shipping fee, the total price for these three items is only \$95 delivered to your door.

To order the products, access our secure web site at www.ugr.com/order and complete the order form. Enter the special price code of UGEM02 on the form where required. You can use your VISA, MASTERCARD, or Discover Card to purchase the items or complete the form and mail it with your check or Money Order. As soon as we receive your order, we will ship it via US Priority Mail and your products should arrive at your door in less than a week's time. If you are not happy with your products, you may return them within 30 days for a full refund of their purchase price.

I hope this has helped you think about when you need to move to Windows XP and how to do it. I plan to write other such technical articles in the future that you can watch for. Thank you for your interest in hard drives and PowerQuest's products.