

Use a USB Key to Install Windows 7

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Putting the Windows 7 installation on a USB thumb drive has a few advantages—a small USB key is much more convenient for carrying around than a DVD, the OS will actually install much faster, and you can use a USB key to install Windows 7 on systems that do not have a DVD drive, such as a netbook. In fact, you can even install Windows 7 on netbooks that have fairly modest hardware.

Dennis Chung, an IT Pro Evangelist at Microsoft recently posted a video demonstrating how easy it is to prepare your thumb drive and use it to install Windows 7. Here's a quick look at the process:

1. First, you'll need the DiskPart utility on the system you will use to prep the thumb drive. This is a free disk partitioning utility that is likely already installed on your Windows system. If not, you can download DiskPart [here](#).
2. Launch the DiskPart utility by typing `diskpart` at the Start Menu.
3. Then run the `list disk` command to check the status of your drive.
4. Now run `select disk 1` where the "1" is actually the corresponding number of your USB drive.
5. Run `clean`.
6. Once the thumb drive is clean, you can run `create partition primary`.
7. Now make the partition active by entering `active`
8. Then you need to set up the file system as Fat32 by running `format fs=fat32 quick` (quick, of course, specifies that you want to perform a quick format to speed up the process).
9. Entering the `assign` command gives the USB drive a drive letter, making it easy to access from Windows Explorer
10. Then you can copy everything from the Windows 7 installation DVD onto the USB key (a simple drag and drop will do).
11. Now you can insert the thumb drive into the system you want to install Windows 7 onto and boot the system. The installation will now proceed as usual—but faster.