

How To Use The Command Prompt In The Vista Windows Recovery Environment

The Windows Recovery Environment Command Prompt is a text-based console that allows that allows you to perform many tasks on your computer by typing in the commands that you would like to execute. These commands allow you to perform a range of tasks from managing the files on your hard drives, formatting and repartitioning hard drives, configuring how Windows boots, deleting and copying files, scanning your computer for malware, as well as many other tasks. In past versions of the Windows, the Command Prompt would typically not allow you to run any of your Windows programs that require a graphical user interface. The Command Prompt in the Windows Recovery Environment, though, does allow you to launch certain Windows programs. This is a huge advantage as you now have a much larger variety of tools at your disposal to repair your computer.

To access the Windows Recovery Environment Command Prompt you need to boot your computer off of the Windows Vista DVD by inserting it into the DVD reader on your computer and turning your computer on. Your computer will start and you should see the BIOS listing the hardware on your computer as well as other information. When that information has been cleared, your computer will see that a bootable DVD is inserted and present a prompt similar to Figure 1 below.

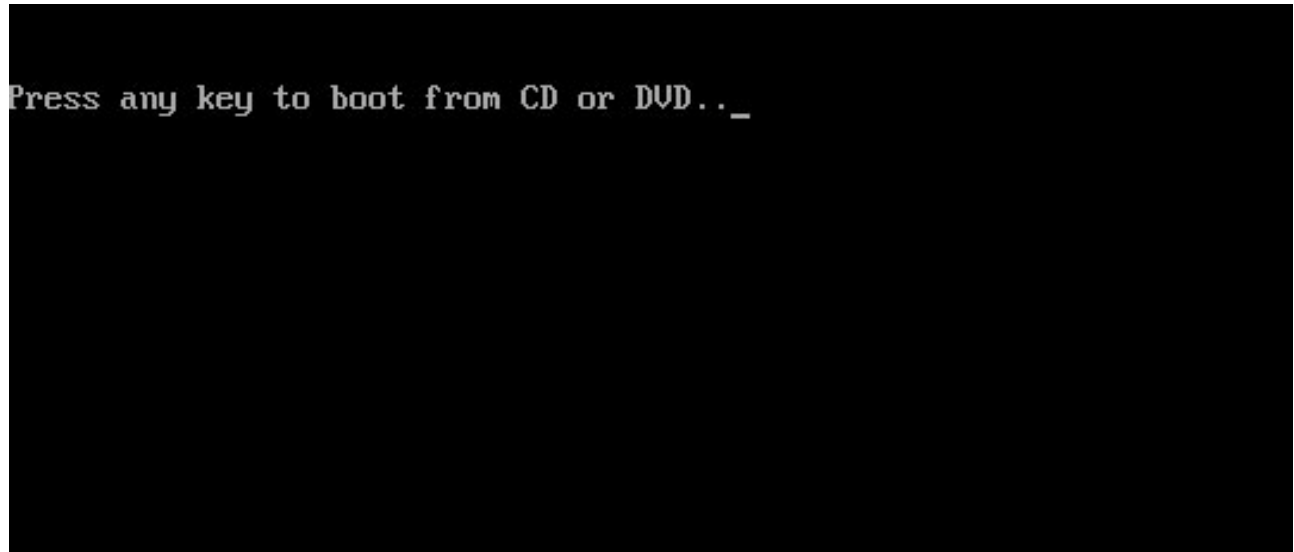


Figure 1
Boot the computer from the CD or DVD

Select the Vista installation you would like to repair, and if there are drivers you need to load in order for Vista to access any of your drives or other components, then you should click on the Load Drivers button to load them. When ready, press the Next button to continue. If the repair process does not detect any problems starting Vista, it will display a list of available recovery tools. If it does detect a problem it will attempt to perform a Startup Repair to automatically fix these problems. If you would like to allow this process to continue, then you can read more about it here. Otherwise click on the Cancel button and select the View advanced options for system recovery and support option to see the list of recovery tools.

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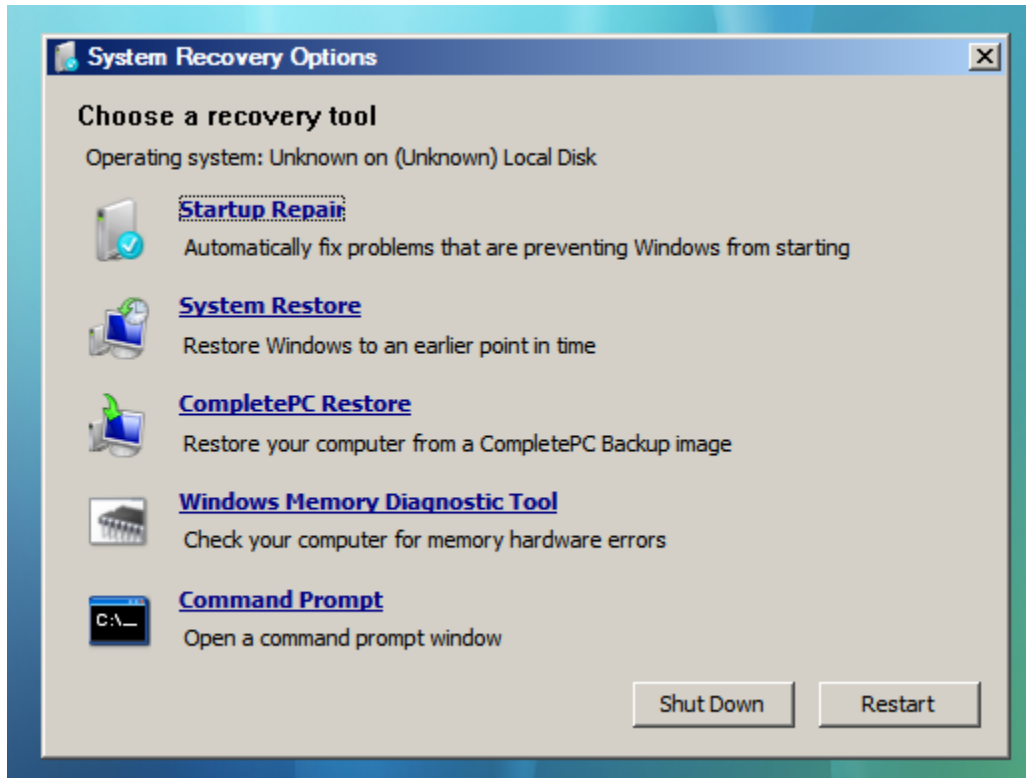


Figure 5
System Recovery Options

At this screen you would then click on the Command Prompt option. Once you click on that option, the Command Prompt will open as shown in Figure 6 below.

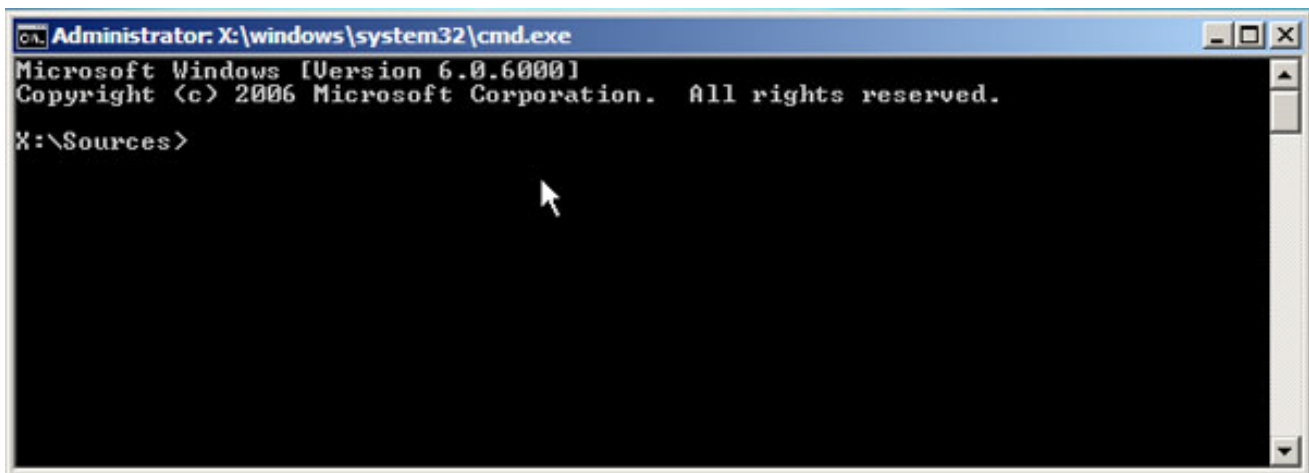


Figure 6
Command Prompt in the Windows Recovery Environment

If you are unfamiliar with the Windows Command Prompt, the first thing you may notice is that there is no graphical user interface to and instead you need to type in all of your commands. Though this may be daunting, once you learn the commands and programs that you can use in the command prompt,

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you will find it a very powerful repair tool for removing stubborn malware, fixing boot issues, tweaking the Windows Boot Manager when you cannot load Windows, and accessing your files.

Using the command prompt is simple. When you want to perform a task you simply type them in with your keyboard, and when done typing the command, press the enter key. If the command was entered correctly, it will execute and display the information you requested. A powerful feature of the Recovery Console Command Prompt is that you can not only run console programs, but you can also run certain Windows programs such as Notepad or an antivirus program. Unfortunately, not all Windows programs will be able to run in this environment, so you will need to test them out one at a time.

To help get you started with using the Command Prompt I have listed a series of console commands that work in this environment. To get the help information for each of these programs you can type the program name followed by /h and press the enter key. For example, to see the help information for the copy command you would type copy /h and then press the enter key. As more programs and commands are found they will be added to the lists below. Each of the console commands must be typed into the console in order to execute them.

Console Command	Description
copy	Copy a file to another location.
move	Move a file to another location.
rd	Remove an empty directory.
ren	Rename a file or directory.
more	Show the contents of a file one page a time. Typically used to read text/ascii files.
type	Show the contents of a file all at once without pausing at each page like the more command. Typically used to read text/ascii files.
xcopy	Copy a folder and all its contents to another location.
mkdir	Make a new directory.
diskpart	Load the Windows disk management program. From this program you can create, delete, shrink, and expand your existing partitions as well as get information about partitions and hard drives.
dir	List the contents of the current directory or the directory you specify as an argument.
cd	Change your current directory to another one.
attrib	Change the file attributes on a particular file or directory.
del	Delete a file
bcdedit	Displays and allows you to change how Windows boots up. This command is useful for people who are having trouble with the Windows Boot Manager.
chkdsk	Scan your hard disk for errors and fix them.

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When you are finished using the Command Prompt you can exit it by typing exit and then pressing the enter key on your keyboard. The command prompt will close and you will now be back at the list of available repair tools.

The Windows Recovery Environment Command Prompt is such a powerful tool because you can perform actions on your files and data without having to be in Windows. This means that if you are infected with malware you can use the recovery environment to clean your computer without fear of the malware hindering your efforts. If you find other Windows programs that work within the recovery environment, please let us know about them in the forums.