

# MICROSOFT WINDOWS VISTA CLEAN INSTALL

By Brian Livingston and Paul Thurrott

A clean install of the operating system is our preferred method for installing Windows Vista. Although it's possible to upgrade to Windows Vista from certain previous Windows versions this path is perilous and can often result in a Frankenstein-like system where only some of your applications work properly. In our opinion, it's best to start with a clean slate when moving to a new operating system, especially a major release like Windows Vista.

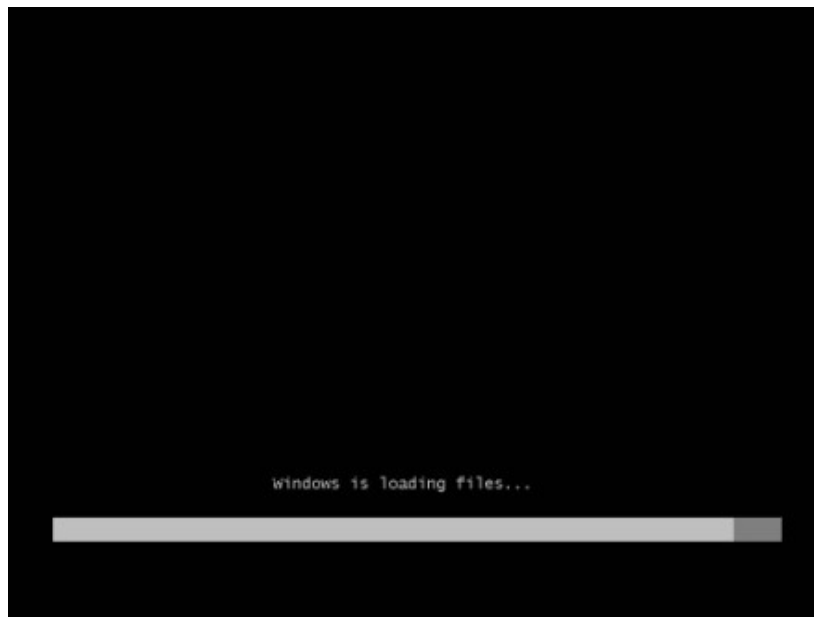
## Step-by-Step: Windows Vista Interactive Setup

We're going to walk you through the entire Windows Vista Setup process, using Microsoft's interactive Setup application. This application was completely overhauled for Windows Vista, and it's much more streamlined, simplified, and faster-moving than the version used in Windows XP.

Follows these steps to install Windows Vista as a clean install:

1. Insert the Windows Vista DVD in your PC's optical drive and reboot. After the BIOS screen flashes by, you may see a message alerting you to Press any key to boot from the CD or DVD. If so, press a key. Some systems, however, do not provide this warning and will instead boot from the DVD by default.

**Secret:** *If your system does not boot from the DVD, you may need to change the system's boot order so that the optical drive is checked before the first hard drive. To do this, you will have to consult your PC's documentation, as each PC handles this process a little differently.*



A black screen with a progress bar and the text "Windows is loading files" will appear as shown above.

# MICROSOFT WINDOWS VISTA CLEAN INSTALL

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**These settings apply only to Setup, not the eventual Windows Vista installation.**

2. Eventually, the screen will display a multicolored drape effect and the initial Setup window appears as shown below. Here, you can preconfigure the language, time and currency formats, and keyboard or input method you'll use during Setup.



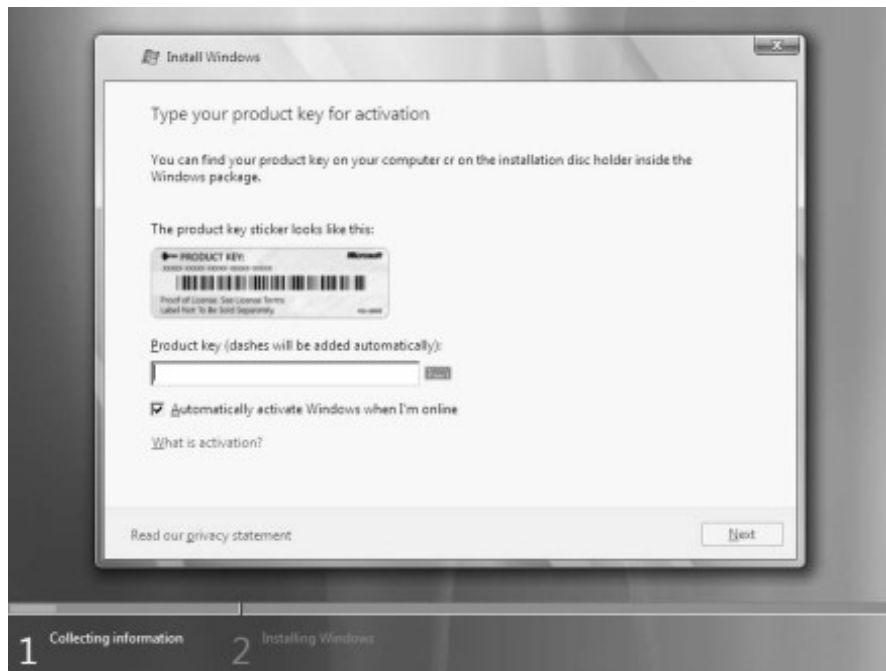
**This window jumpstarts Setup and the Windows Vista recovery tools.**

3. **Click Next.** The Install Now window appears as shown in the above screen shot. To continue with Interactive Setup, click Install Now.

**Secret:** This window also provides a way to access Windows Vista's new recovery tools. If you run into a problem with Windows Vista later, such as not being able to boot into Windows for some reason, you can boot your system with the Setup DVD and use these tools to help fix the problem.

# MICROSOFT WINDOWS VISTA CLEAN INSTALL

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**Spread 'em. This is where Microsoft ensures you're genuine.**

4. In the next window, (shown above) enter your Windows Vista product key. This is a 25-digit alphanumeric string—in blocks of 5 separated by dashes—that you will find on a bright yellow product key sticker somewhere in your Windows Vista packaging. You can also optionally choose to have Windows Vista automatically activate for you.

**Secret:** *Do not lose this product key or give it away to anyone. Each Windows Vista product key is valid for exactly one PC. After you've installed Windows Vista and activated it—which ties the product key to your hardware—you won't be able to use this number again on another PC, at least not easily. Note, however, that you will have no problems reinstalling Windows Vista on the same PC using this same product key. If for some reason you are unable to electronically activate Windows later, Vista will provide a phone number so you can do it manually.*

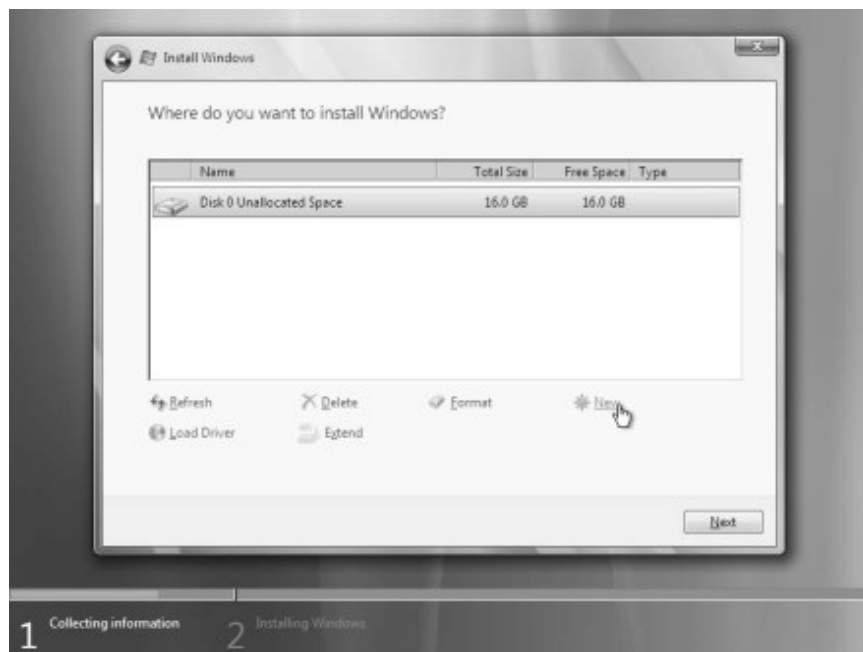
# MICROSOFT WINDOWS VISTA CLEAN INSTALL

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**Sign over all your rights simply by clicking a single check box.**

5. In the next window, shown above, you must agree to the End User License Agreement (EULA). Although very few people actually read this document, you should take the time as it outlines your legal rights with regards to your usage of Windows Vista. Our understanding of the legalese in this document is that Microsoft exerts certain rights over your first-born and soul. In the screen shot above you can see the EULA windows.

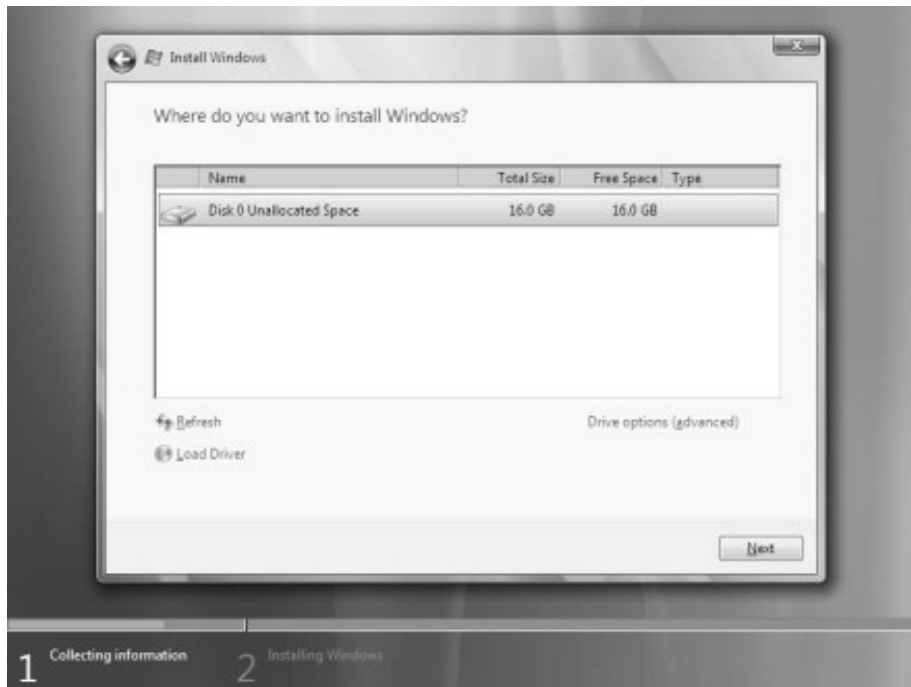


**New to Vista Setup is a more graphic disk configuration phase.**

# MICROSOFT WINDOWS VISTA CLEAN INSTALL

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6. In the next window, select the partition, or disk, to which to install Windows Vista. On a clean install, typically, you will be installing Windows Vista to the only disk available, as shown below.



**Here, you can perform various disk-related tasks, including resizing partitions**

7. Typically, you will see a link called More Options on this window. Clicking this link brings you to a screen where you can delete, format, or extend the current disk, if possible, or create a new partition if the hard drive is brand new and unformatted. This window is shown in the screen shot above.

**Secret:** *If you are performing a clean install on a previously used machine, we advise you to format the disk during this step to ensure that none of the cruft from your previous Windows installation dirties up your new Windows Vista install. You don't actually need to format a new disk. If you attempt to install Windows Vista on an unformatted disk, Setup will simply format the disk to its maximum capacity, automatically.*

# MICROSOFT WINDOWS VISTA CLEAN INSTALL

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**Grab lunch while Setup installs Windows Vista.**

8. After you've selected the disk and formatted it if necessary, you can walk away from your computer for 20–45 minutes, depending on your hardware. During this time, Setup will copy the various files it needs for installation to the hard drive, expand the Vista image file from the DVD, install Windows Vista and any included software updates, and complete the installation by attempting to load drivers for your hardware. A screen like that shown below will display during this entire process.



**Here, you specify the account you'll typically use in Windows Vista.**

# MICROSOFT WINDOWS VISTA CLEAN INSTALL

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9. A reboot or two later, and your PC will launch into the second, and final, interactive phase of Setup. In the first screen, shown above, you are prompted for a user name (typically a short name like Paul or Brian and not a full name like Ferris Bueller), password, and display picture. If you don't choose a picture, you get the flower by default. (You've been warned.)

**Secret:** A few notes about this initial user account. Unlike Windows XP, Windows Vista does not create a visible Administrator account automatically for security reasons. Nor are you allowed to create up to five user accounts, as you were in XP. Instead, you can create a single user account during Setup. That user account will be given administrator privileges.

Subsequent user accounts, created in Windows Vista using the User Accounts Control Panel, are given limited user privileges by default, but that's easy enough to change. We look at creating and modifying user accounts elsewhere in the book.

**Caution:** Be sure to use a password, please. It's unclear to us why Microsoft even makes this optional, but using a strong password is one of the most basic things you can do to keep your system more secure.

Here, you configure computer-related options.



10. Type a name for your PC and choose a desktop background (see above figure). By default, Setup picks a PC name that is based on your user name. This is probably not a great name for your PC, but you're free to change it.

**Secret:** Setup provides you with only six potential background images for some reason. To change your background to another image or a solid color after Setup is complete, right-click the Desktop, choose Personalize, and then Desktop Background. You'll see many more choices there.

**Secret:** Setup doesn't let you specify a workgroup name, or join an Active Directory-based domain, as did the Windows XP Setup routine. To change this after Setup is complete, open the Start

# MICROSOFT WINDOWS VISTA CLEAN INSTALL

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*Menu, right-click Computer, and choose Properties. Then, click the Change Settings link in the Computer name, domain, and workgroup settings section of the resulting window. The dialog box that appears is very similar to the one you're used to from Windows XP.*



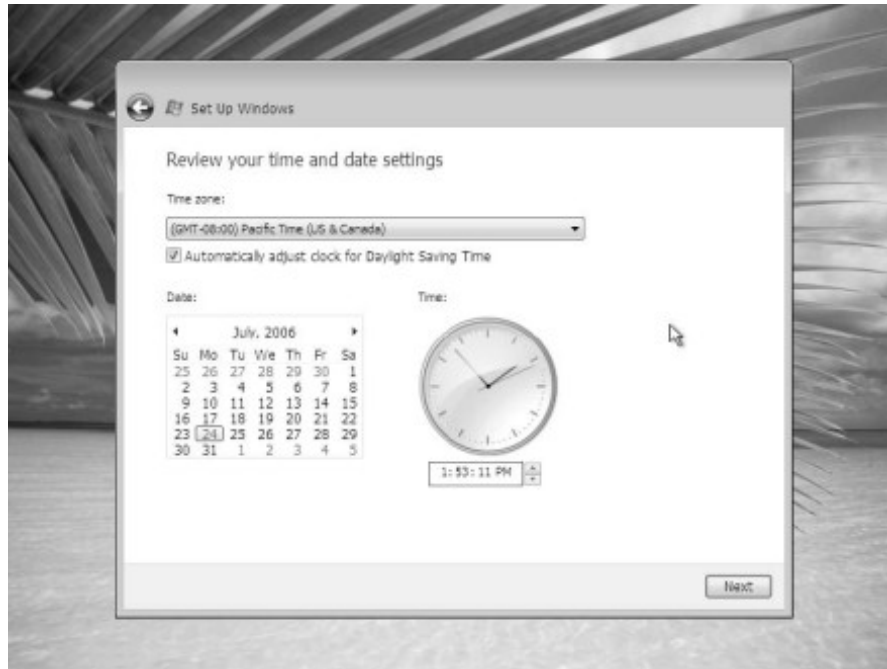
**In this part of Setup, you configure Automatic Updates.**

11. Choose whether to enable Automatic Updates, shown below. You can use the recommended settings, in which Windows automatically downloads and installs all updates, can install only important updates, or can choose to be prompted later.

**Secret:** *This behavior is far more aggressive than the similar Setup screen that Microsoft added to Windows XP with Service Pack 2. Note that you can't choose to download but not install updates. Our advice is to choose the Ask Me Later option for now, even if you completely trust Microsoft. Then, you can configure Automatic Updates later using the new Windows Update utility. From that interface, you can use the more traditional options, including downloading but not automatically installing.*

# MICROSOFT WINDOWS VISTA CLEAN INSTALL

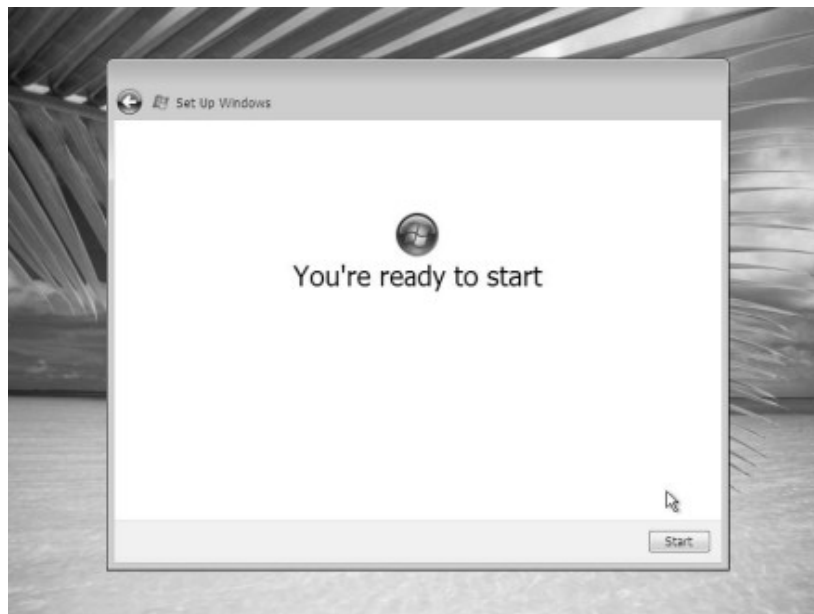
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Curious that the time zone defaults to Pacific Time.

12. Configure the time zone, date, and time.

**Secret:** *Even if you're not particularly careful about setting the time correctly here, Windows Vista will eventually adjust to the correct time automatically, because it is configured out of the box to synchronize with an Internet time server. That said, you should at least make an effort to ensure that the time is reasonably correct to avoid problems with this process.*



The moment we've all been waiting for.

13. Setup announces when Interactive Setup is complete and you're ready to start.