

Windows install glitch could save hundreds of dollars

By Steve Ragan Feb 4, 2007, 19:46 GMT

The fact that you can install the Windows Vista Upgrade without having installed Windows XP or Windows 2000 is one of the latest developments since the Windows Vista release. It could save you money, but it might not be what it appears to be. Is this a legitimate glitch in the OS or simply an overlooked and permitted exception to the rules?

Some call this method proof that the security and piracy measures used by Microsoft are invalid. Many members of several security mailing lists wonder where that opinion comes from. The issue is not a lack of security; it is a lack of product checks. The work around is simple. Proven by Daily Tech, and first announced by Windows technology guru Paul Thurrott, the steps needed are drawn out, but easy to follow. Boot with the Upgrade [DVD](#) version of Vista. Click 'Install Now'. When prompted for a Product Key, do not enter it yet. This is the most important step; leave the fields blank, and click 'Next' to move to the next screen. On the new screen, select the version of Vista you bought. Install as normal (30 Day Trial). When finished, restart the DVD-based setup and install the software again, this time as a legitimate, full version. This will perform an 'in-place' upgrade. It will ask for the Product Key once more, and now you should enter it. The upgrade, sans Windows XP or 2000, is complete.

That information isn't illegal per se: it comes from the documentation provided by Microsoft in regards to how to perform a 'clean install' using an upgrade version.

While the software allows this, there are some things to consider. If you bought an upgrade of Vista for the implicit reason of using this loophole, you might be in violation of the EULA. However, there is no clear wording on this, just as there is no clear wording about several licensing issues.

Another point not mentioned in any news stories about this is an obvious one. If you already have Windows XP or 2000 installed, then you qualify for the Vista Upgrade Edition anyway. The complaint most have is that Vista deletes the other OS and, with at best 50-50 results, migrates your information and other profiles. The odds of you not keeping your profile and other information are so large that several experts tell users to back everything up rather than leaving it up to Vista to keep that information.

Some have also pointed out that this is a worthless workaround because you can get the OEM or Student version more cheaply than the Upgrade version. Doing so does violate the EULA, and you risk your Product Key becoming invalid because you have to provide false pretenses to qualify for the Student version. Also, you can no longer just buy an IDE cable or other hardware to get an OEM product.

If this is in fact an unknown loophole, you can expect Microsoft to correct it quickly, so this won't work forever. If it is intended, then it makes the point of buying anything other than the upgrade version moot. With the confusing wording of the EULA, and the now widespread workaround based on data provided by Microsoft, is anyone else confused? If so, you aren't alone. Maybe Microsoft will explain it. Then again, if they explain it in the same way they explained the license agreement . . . well, you get the point.