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## Your Complete Guide to Windows Vista Service Pack 1 Part One

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**It's finally here. But what exactly does Service Pack 1 contain? Which essential tasks must you carry out before installing? We've got the details every Windows Vista user needs to know. By Mike Williams**  
**Published on 19 March 2008**

Windows updates aren't normally something you have to spend any real time considering. Just leave Windows Vista at its default settings and your system will look after itself, downloading and installing patches as they become available. Easy.

There's a problem, though. The automatic updates are only for urgent security issues, to ensure you're protected from hackers and the latest malware. Microsoft produces many other patches and updates that fix bugs, improve performance or add small new features, but the Windows Update system won't install these unless you specifically request them. And as few people have the inclination to monitor everything that Microsoft puts out, some Windows Vista set-ups can get outdated over time.

Microsoft has a solution for this problem: the Service Pack. This is a single upgrade that includes all the most important operating system updates released so far, with a selection of new ones thrown in for good measure. Install it and you'll bring your PC right up to date in one go – a real time-saver.

When Microsoft officially released Windows Vista Service Pack 1, we were as keen as everyone else to see what it contained. And the list of improvements certainly looked impressive: better compatibility with all kinds of programs, faster file copying, a slightly quicker Internet Explorer 7 and improved performance across the board, not to mention power-saving tweaks for laptops, improved reliability, and a whole lot more. But we also realised that Service Packs are major upgrades that can sometimes cause problems in themselves, so we had to prepare for the installation carefully.

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The second part to our in-depth look at Service Pack 1

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## Release Notes

Microsoft puts Service Packs through detailed and lengthy testing before really obvious problem it will be caught early on. But if that kind of major issue only appears to users with a specific model of laptop, who are using a particular graphics driver, and have installed a certain application, that's going to be more difficult to spot. Microsoft adds details of such issues to the Windows Vista Service Pack 1 Release Notes, though, and that's where we looked first to see if there were any issues that might affect our test system. (You can do the same for your PC by following the instructions available to view at [support.microsoft.com/kb/936330](http://support.microsoft.com/kb/936330).) Paying attention to Service Pack 1 related news stories proved useful, too, as we heard about some programs that didn't work with the upgrade: BitDefender Internet Security, ZoneAlarm Security Suite, Fujitsu Shock Sensor, plus a few more. These are updated now, but a list of incompatible programs are available at [support.microsoft.com/kb/935796](http://support.microsoft.com/kb/935796).

Don't stop at just those programs, though. Think about the other applications that you're using: are there any you haven't updated for a long time? Visit the support sites and look for Service Pack 1-related information. If there's a problem, you should find upgrades or advice to help you deal with the issue.

## Before installation

Windows Vista Service Pack 1 is a massive update, and while many hundreds of thousands of people have installed it successfully, there are some who have reported major problems. We knew the odds were that we'd be fine, but it's not worth taking any risks, so we ran a complete backup of our system before continuing with installation.

We also took the time to make sure System Restore was running properly by creating a restore point (click **Start**, type **System** in the Search box, click **System** and select **System Protection > Create**). That way, if Service Pack 1 did prove troublesome on our PC, we could always remove it and roll back our system to its pre-installation state. Or at least, that's the theory.

Windows Vista Service Pack 1 may be 'only' around 550MB if you download the stand-alone file, but the upgrade requires vastly more hard drive space for its temporary files – 7GB and 12GB for the 32- and 64-bit versions respectively. That was fine for my system – I had a 32-bit PC and 75GB to spare – but if you're using a laptop or have a crammed hard drive, you might have problems. If you're close to the space limit, the installation may crash.

To boost your chances of success, click **Start**, type **Disk** in the Search box, then launch **Disk Cleanup** and have it delete all the temporary files on your PC. If that isn't enough, browse the **Start > All Programs** menu and remove any applications you don't need. Ready? Then let's get started.

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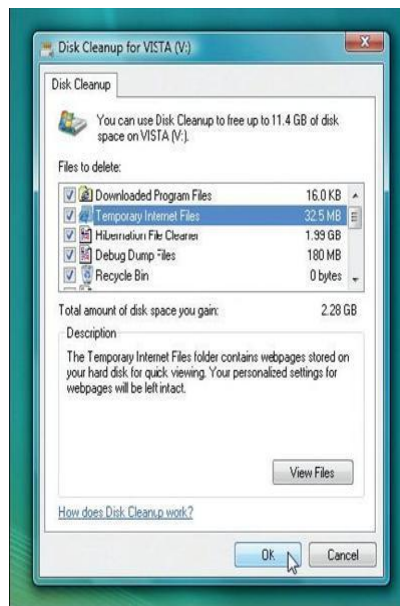


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**HARD DRIVE** Make sure you've plenty of free hard drive space before you try to install

## Simple setup

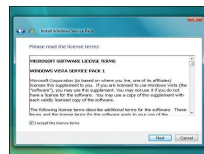
Close down any non-essential applications you might have running at the moment. That includes all those icons in your system tray (click or right-click them and look for **Close** or **Exit** options); everything apart from your antivirus tool.

The easiest way to install the Service Pack is through the disc that came with this magazine. Simply pop the DVD into your DVD drive and follow the instructions that appear – see 'Installing Windows Vista Service Pack 1' opposite. The entire update process took just under an hour for us, but may take twice that time on some hardware: there's a lot to be done. Just keep an eye on it for a minute or two to check everything looks fine, then go and do something else. Check back occasionally and you should find your system has rebooted, and you're now running Windows Vista Service Pack 1.

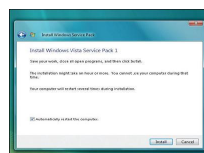
## Installing Windows Vista Service Pack 1



**1. LAST MINUTE NEWS** . You've prepared your system for Service Pack 1, so now it's time for the installation. Pop the disc that came with this issue into your disc drive and select **Windows Vista Service Pack 1** from the menu. Follow the '**What you should know**' link to view any late-breaking SP1-related news.



**2. SMALL PRINT** . If the news says you can't install Service Pack 1 with your firewall on until it's been updated, or something equally major, press **Cancel** and follow its recommendations before reattempting installation. Otherwise, click **Next**, read the licence, check 'I accept the license terms' (if you do) and click **Next**.



**3. NEARLY THERE** . Close any programs you might have open, including non-essential apps you've got running in the system tray, click **Install**, and leave Service Pack 1 to do its work. Your PC will reboot a few times during the installation process, but it should all be finished in around an hour's time.