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From the January-March 2007 Issue & [2007 Tax Season Survival Guide](#)

Well, here it is the middle of October (when I'm writing this column). The 2006 tax season is finally drawing to an end, and the 2007 season is only three months away — now that's depressing. However, you may very well be cranking those 2007 returns on a new operating system — Windows Vista. Microsoft has imposed its own deadline of October 25 for the release of Vista, and I'm writing this article on RC-1 (RC is for Release Candidate) while downloading RC-2. Each subsequent release gets a little better — more included driver support and more stability. I'm particularly impressed with the performance enhancements and the modern look and feel of the OS. I have written previously about Windows Vista, but because we're so close to launch (and actually, by the time you read this, you will either own or have thought about owning the OS), I wanted to write some more about the version choices for Vista.

Microsoft licensing is well known for the confusing and many times frustrating myriad of choices with its various products. Licensing alone needs a specialist to determine which licensing method is right for you. With the addition of Windows Vista, that tradition continues with five (count 'em) different version choices. The five versions, in no particular order, are as follows:

The Five Versions of Vista

- Windows Vista Home Basic

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that all other product editions will build from. It will include features such as Windows Firewall, Windows Security Center, secure wireless networking, parental controls, anti-spam/anti-virus/anti-spyware functionality, network map, Windows Search, Movie Maker, Photo Library, Windows Media Player, Outlook Express with RSS support, P2P Messenger, and more. Windows Vista Home Basic is roughly analogous to Windows XP Home Edition. Like Starter 2007, Vista Home Basic will not support the new Aero user interface.

Windows Vista Home Premium

This is whole home entertainment and personal productivity throughout the home and on the go. As a true superset of Home Basic, Windows Vista Home Premium will include everything from Home Basic, as well as Media Center and Media Center Extender functionality (including Cable Card support), DVD video authoring and HDTV support, DVD ripping support, Tablet PC functionality, Mobility Center and other mobility and presentation features, auxiliary display support, P2P ad-hoc meeting capabilities, Wi-Fi auto-config and roaming, unified parental controls that work over multiple PCs, backup to network functionality, Internet

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This is a powerful, reliable and secure OS for businesses of all sizes.

Windows

Vista Business will include domain join and management functionality, compatibility

with non-Microsoft networking protocols (NetWare, SNMP, etc.), Remote Desktop,

Microsoft Windows Web Server, and Encrypted File System (EFS).

Additionally,

Vista Business will include Tablet PC functionality. Windows Vista Business is roughly analogous to XP Pro today.

Windows Vista Enterprise

Optimized for the enterprise, this version will be a true superset of

Windows

Vista Business. It will also include unique features such as Virtual PC, the multi-language user interface (MUI), and the Secure Startup/full volume encryption

security technologies ("Cornerstone"). There is no analogous XP version for this product. This version is aimed at business decision-makers, IT managers and decision-makers, and information workers/general business

users. Vista Enterprise will be offered exclusively through Software Assurance,

which means you can't buy this in your favorite software store.

Windows Vista Ultimate

This is the best operating system ever offered for a personal PC, optimized for the individual. Windows Vista Ultimate is a superset of both Vista Home Premium and Vista Business, so it includes all of the features of both of

those product versions, plus it adds Game Performance Tweaker with

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Vista Ultimate today. This version is aimed at high-end PC users and technology

influencers, gamers, digital media enthusiasts, and students.

Windows Starter 2007:

In addition, there will reportedly be yet another (although not Vista branded) version of Windows called Windows Starter 2007, aimed at beginner computer users in emerging markets who can only afford a low-cost PC. This will be a subset of Vista Home Basic and will ship in a 32-bit version only (no 64-bitx64 version). Starter 2007 will allow only three applications (and/or three windows) to run simultaneously, will provide Internet connectivity but not incoming network communications, and will not provide for logon passwords or Fast User Switching (FUS). Starter 2007 is analogous to XP Starter Edition. This version will only be sold in emerging markets. Remember the XP Starter Edition came out of the legal battles between Microsoft and the EU.

So as 2006 comes to a close, it's no longer a decision of whether to buy the new version (Vista) or not; it's more a decision of which version to buy.

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