

Don't let your computer go unprotected!

Support is ending for Windows XP and Office 2003

On April 8, 2014, Microsoft will stop providing security and non-security updates, hotfixes and support for its Windows XP operating system and Office 2003.



How will this affect you as a user?

Both XP and Office will continue to run on your computer. However, with no new updates, your system will be vulnerable to new malware and security threats. If you currently have Microsoft Security Essentials installed, you will continue to receive anti-malware updates for a limited time. In the final analysis, if you or your business requires a secured computer, you must update your system.

What are your options for XP replacement?

For many individuals and small businesses, there are several options to consider. The option you select will depend on the peculiarities of your organization - how many users? Type of computers? Third party integration, other software program, etc. If you choose to stay with Microsoft Windows, you have two great options - upgrade to Windows 7 or Windows 8.1. Either option has advantages and disadvantages.

Windows 7

Upgrading to Windows 7 is the easiest option with fewer challenges. First, Windows 7 may run on your existing computer saving you the cost of a new system. Second, it has a similar look and feel to XP and a not so steep learning curve as Windows 8.1. Third, it will run all of the existing programs on your current XP. The downside considerations include: (i) Windows 7 is already four years old and (ii) It does not have the same level of security and performance as Windows 8.1, although it is far superior to XP.

Here is the rule that I would recommend: If your existing computer meets the system requirements for Windows 7 and you do not wish to invest in a new computer, you may upgrade to Windows 7. This Microsoft's [Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor](#) will help you to assess your system for compatibility with Windows 7.

Windows 8.1

Windows 8.1 is Microsoft's newest operating system. It is compatible with the latest technologies, has the best security and performance record and runs on a touch screen and non-touch screen systems. You have the added choice of running the Windows 8.1 start menu or the classic start menu, which is similar to Windows 7.

The benefits Windows 8.1 include improved multitasking and multi-monitor support, new and improved apps, smart search, desktop customization, cloud capabilities and Skype, to mention a few. If you don't mind the learning curve, Windows 8.1 is an excellent choice. It provides a superb entry into a more connected world, which is already omnipresent.

Your older computer may not be able to run Windows 8.1. Download and run this [Windows Upgrade Assistant](#) to check if your PC meets the system requirements for Windows 8.1. You may also find this [FAQ](#) helpful in answering your questions. The learning curve to Windows 8.1 is a bit steeper than Windows 7, but it could be worth the extra investment in time and resources.

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What are your options for Office 2003 replacement?

"You wouldn't use a 10-year old mobile phone or digital camera, so why would you want to use an out-of-date version of Office?"

Office 2003 users have several options: Office 2007, 2010 or 2013. I would recommend an upgrade to 2010 or 2013, with a preference to 2013. The learning curve on either option is about the same. Office 2013 costs a bit more but has several advantages. Read this blog from [Gartner](#) and this one from [Techrepublic.com](#) for more insights.

Why is this important in Healthcare?

As a Health Custodian or Health Care Facility (HCF), you are required to secure your clients' Personal Health Information (PHI). The continued use of XP or Office 2003 beyond the support period announced by Microsoft could leave your PHI vulnerable to cyber criminals. Even worse, you could potentially wake up one day and find your clients' information posted on social media. A breach of this magnitude could have devastating impacts.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Engage your Tech Support

This Blog is not intended to cover all of the available scenarios but more so to alert you of the change and some of the options available. You should not hesitate to engage your Tech Support Company or person, who will be in a better position to provide you with great advice.

About the Author

Danny Doobay has been a Business and IT consultant to industry and government for more than 25 years. He has held executive positions in both public and private sectors. He has also project managed software development, implementation and data migration.

He is currently the CEO of Baylaan Technologies, a software solutions developer based in Markham, Ontario. Baylaan develops both custom and packaged software solutions for several sectors, including the increasingly popular SkeduleX Practice and Case Management System.



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