

NTRLS IT: Real Stories
Where Things Have Moved to in Windows Vista Compared to XP

Issue / Problem:

How to locate the regular operating system features that you were used to in XP but which have been moved to new locations in Windows Vista. Also, some tips on how to make Vista run smoother.

Background Information you should know about:

What is Windows Vista? Windows Vista is Microsoft's next operating system after Windows XP/XP Pro. It was released about a year and half ago. Vista is compatible with Windows 2000 and Windows 2003 Server editions. There are 8 flavors of Windows Vista which include the following: Basic 32bit, Basic 64bit, Home Premium 32bit, Home Premium 64bit, Business 32bit, Business 64bit, Ultimate 32bit and Ultimate 64bit. It is highly recommended that you get Vista Business or better since it will have the networking components that you will need to add the workstations to your domain. It is also recommended that you run Vista with at least 2GB of RAM.

Windows XP is the predecessor to Vista and the operating system that at least half of people are still using today. It is recommended that you have at least 512MB of RAM to run Windows XP, but with all the latest updates from service packs I'd recommend at least 1GB of RAM.

Also, don't worry about mixing and matching XP Pro computers with Vista Business computers on the same network. Both are compatible with each other for sharing and usually for accessing the same programs. When Vista was first released there were some issues with program compatibility, but most of the computer program vendors have fixed them by now.

Resolution / How we solved the problem:

If you are using Vista and want to make it run more smoothly and want to know where to find a lot of the features you're used to in XP, maybe this info will help:

1. Where are the File, Edit, View, Tools and Help menus in Vista? Microsoft hid them. What you need to do to turn it on again is go into the control panel, go into Folder Options, then click the View Tab. Then put a check mark into the Box labeled "Always show menus." Hit Apply and then OK. This will turn on that feature on all folders and most menus in Vista.
2. Where are the display settings? When you right-click your desktop background, instead of seeing Properties, you now see Personal Settings. Microsoft has moved everything here into a main menu where you can configure your Personal Settings as to the way Vista looks. If you want to change your icons on the desktop, this is also located here in Personal Settings in the top left section (Change desktop icons). It is now possible to add the Control Panel icon to the desktop or remove the Recycle Bin icon from the desktop here.

3. How can you turn off the UAC (User Account Control)? Why is Vista asking me to continue or cancel on just about everything I do? Well that's the UAC doing this. I highly recommend you turn this feature off, IMO it is more of a hindrance than a help. It was originally put in to help keep inexperienced users from screwing up their computer, but for us more experienced users it doesn't do anything but add one extra step before we complete our task, or keep us from completing our task altogether. So I say, "TURN IT OFF!" In order to turn the UAC off – oh, and I'd recommend that you do this as one of the first steps on your to do list -- go into the control panel and go into User Accounts. Once there, next to the multicolored shield, you should see "Turn User Account Control on or off". Click this and then you will see the check box to enable or disable this feature. Uncheck it and reboot your computer. Now this annoying little helper will no longer bother you.
4. Where is my Add/Remove Software in Vista? It's now called "Programs and Features" in the control panel and it now shows only the installed programs that did not come with Vista that you have added later. If you want to see your updates you need to click the "View installed updates" in the top left corner of the Programs and Features section. Also in here you can add and remove Vista features such as add your Games back in that are somehow missing from a fresh install of Vista by clicking on "Turn Windows Features on or off".
5. Where is Windows Update? It's not necessary to have to use the browser to update Windows anymore. The update feature has been separated from the default browser in Vista and is located in the control panel or on the Start Menu as well as in Internet Explorer 7 or 8. Now you can install other browsers without worrying about breaking certain update features in Windows when making a non-IE browser your default. Vista doesn't care.
6. Where is the Run command or Printers on the Start Menu? By default they are turned off and you need to turn them back on. The Start Menu is the circle-shaped button with the Microsoft flag on the bottom left of your desktop taskbar. Right click it and select "Properties". By default it should be on the Start Menu tab. Click the "Customize" button to the right. From here you can control what options you want displayed on the Start Menu. If you scroll down a bit, you will see the options to display "Printers" and "Run command".
7. Where are the Restart, Shutdown, Logoff, Switch User, Sleep and Lock computer options? They are on the Start Menu at the bottom and to the right. If you click on the arrow pointing to the right a menu will pop up and display ALL of your options here.
8. Where is Disk Defrag and when should you use it? It is in the same place as before, but now you cannot see the progress. BUT it does have a scheduling tool to defrag at a time of your choosing. I would suggest scheduling it for when the computer's on and you're not using it because it seems to take a lot longer than XP's defrag did.
9. Where is "My Documents"? It's now in a folder on the desktop (if you added it to be seen from Personal Settings) or on the Start Menu labeled the same as the user you logged in as. Inside you will see all the folders that used to be in My Documents.

I hope some of these enlightening tips will help your Vista experience go smoother and have a friendlier look and feel comparable to what you were used to in XP. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at abeatty@ntrls.org.