

Step by Step Instructions for Dual Booting Windows XP and Windows 7

Installing a new operating system is an exciting, but sometimes difficult and nerve-wracking process. Setting up your machine to dual boot two operating systems can be even more frustrating. Dual booting is the process of having two separate operating systems installed on one machine with the option of choosing which one to boot into.

Whether you're choosing to dual boot because you aren't satisfied with your upgrade, or simply because you like aspects of each operating system, the process is the same. Windows 7 is a big upgrade from Windows XP, yet both operating systems have their advantages. Luckily, the process to dual boot between them is fairly simple.

Which Operating System do I Install First?

It might not seem like a big deal, but the order in which you install each operating system is important. While it is possible to install in either order, installing Windows XP before Windows 7 is advisable. The reason for this has to do with the Windows Boot Manager.

The Windows Boot Manager is a program which runs before Windows, and lets you choose which operating system to boot into. Windows XP has an older version of this program, and installing it on a machine with Windows 7 already installed will install the older version of Windows Boot Manager as well. This older version will not recognize future versions of Windows, such as Windows 7, and boot into XP by default. Installing Windows XP after Windows 7 would require you to reinstall the updated version of the Windows Boot Manager to resolve this issue before you can dual boot.

Installing Windows XP

The first thing you need to do is install a copy of Windows XP on your machine. If you already have this installed, you can skip to the next step.

To install Windows XP you need the following items:

- A legitimate Windows XP CD
- A Windows XP product key
- A PC which meets the minimum requirements for Windows XP

Whether or not you have another OS currently installed, the process for installing Windows XP is the same. However, you should take note that installing Windows XP will overwrite any other OS on the hard drive you install it to.

To install Windows XP:

1. Place your Windows XP CD in your computer and restart.
2. Press **spacebar** when prompted to boot from your Windows XP CD.
3. Follow the onscreen instructions and accept the Windows XP Licensing Agreement.
4. Click the hard drive you wish to install your OS to. This will erase any data or OS currently installed on the hard drive.
5. Press **Enter** and click **Unpartitioned space**

6. Press **Enter** once more to format this space to NTFS, which is the file system used by Windows XP.
7. Once your hard drive is formatted, Windows XP will restart and present you with several options. Click the region and language options which apply to you.
8. Enter your name and other information to personalize your install.
9. Enter your product key from the back of your CD case. This verifies you have a legal copy of Windows.
10. Follow the onscreen instructions and enter the appropriate information. Time and Date, Usernames, Passwords, etc.
11. Windows XP will restart once more and begin the final step.

Once you are in the final step of installation, continue to follow the onscreen instructions until you are asked to connect to the Internet. It will then ask you to configure your Internet connection. This is done by connecting an Ethernet cable from your router or modem, or by entering your wireless network information. Windows will ask you if you are ready to activate. Choosing yes will authenticate your copy with Microsoft to prove it is a legitimate version.

Windows XP Installation

Creating a Partition for Windows 7

Once you have your copy of Windows XP installed, it is time to create a partition on your hard drive for Windows 7. A partition is a portion of your hard drive that is designated as its own separate hard drive. This allows you to install multiple operating systems without them conflicting with one another.

To create this partition from inside Windows XP:

1. Click **Start** and click Control Panel.
2. From Control Panel, click **Performance and Maintenance** when sorting by Category, then **Administrative Tools**.
3. From Administrative Tools, click **Computer Management**.
4. Right click on the hard drive containing Windows XP.
5. Click **Shrink Volume**.
6. Enter the amount you wish to shrink the current volume by and click **Shrink**. This will be the size in MB available for the partition you will create for Windows 7. You'll need at least 16 GB for 32-bit Windows 7 and 20 GB for 64-bit Windows 7.
7. Right click on the new unallocated region that was created after shrinking and click **New Partition**.
8. Click **Primary Partition** and click **Next**.
9. Click the size of your new partition and click **Next**.
10. Assign a drive letter and click **Next**.
11. Click **Format this partition with the following settings**.
12. Click NTFS as your file system, default allocation unit size, click a name for the new volume and click **Next**.

After creating your partition, it is time to install Windows 7.

Installing Windows 7

The process for installing Windows 7 is very similar to installing Windows XP.

To install Windows 7 you need the following items:

- A legitimate Windows 7 DVD
- A Windows 7 product key
- A PC which meets the minimum requirements for Windows 7

To install Windows 7:

1. Place your Windows 7 DVD in your computer and restart.
2. When prompted, press any key to boot from the DVD.
3. Follow the onscreen instructions and click your preferences.
4. Accept the License Terms.
5. Click **Custom Installation**.
6. Windows will then ask where you wish to install Windows 7. Click the partition that you created previously.
7. Follow the onscreen instructions and enter your preferences and product key as you did for Windows XP.

After you finish your installation of Windows 7, you must activate your copy within 30 days. Activation in Windows 7 is just as simple as Windows XP.

To activate your copy:

1. You must first connect to the Internet. Just as with Windows XP, you can do this with an Ethernet cable or through your wireless network.

2. Click **Start** and right click on **Computer**.
3. Click **Properties** from the list.
4. Click **Activate Windows Now**.
5. You may be prompted for your administrator password. Enter it if needed.
6. Enter your product key, click next and follow the onscreen instructions.

Dual Booting Windows XP and Windows 7

Now that you have completed the installation of each OS, you are now able to dual boot into either when you start your computer. You will be met with the Windows Boot Manager and a list of each installed OS. Simply click your desired version of Windows and your PC will do the rest.