



Windows Vista™

Downgrade Rights

Downgrade rights are an end-user right and are documented in the product License Terms or End-User License Agreement (EULA) and refer to the ability of your customers to acquire the most recent version of Microsoft® operating system software but continue to run a previous version until they are ready to move to the new operating system version.

When and Why Would Customers Use Downgrade Rights?

Your customer is purchasing a new computer system and needs to run the same operating system as their existing 10 systems—Windows XP Professional. An OEM may facilitate the end user's downgrade rights from Windows Vista Business or Windows Vista Ultimate to a qualified version of Windows XP Professional (noted below) on the new computer system. This process is further defined in the Desktop Operating System License Agreement (DTOS). The downgrade media must be supplied to you from the end user and must come from a legally licensed version of Microsoft retail, OEM/System Builder, or Volume License channels.

What software versions qualify for downgrade rights?

Not all versions of software contain downgrade rights. The chart below shows the OEM desktop operating system software versions that contain downgrade rights in the product License Terms and the version of software the end user can downgrade to.

The OEM versions of Windows Vista Business and Windows Vista Ultimate include downgrade rights to Microsoft Windows XP Professional, Microsoft Windows XP Professional x64 Edition, and Microsoft Windows XP Tablet PC Edition. Customers may not downgrade to Windows 2000 Professional from Windows Vista Business or Windows Vista Ultimate.

No downgrade rights are included in other Windows Vista products in the OEM channel.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who can install the downgrade software or reinstall the original software?

A. An OEM (when authorized by end user), or the end user.

Q. Can I ship media for the downgrade software system as well as most recent version they are using to downgrade from?

A. No – downgrade media is provided by the end customer.

Q. What about product activation? When a previously licensed version of Windows XP Professional is used for the downgrade, won't activation fail on the new PC?

A. When an end user is using their downgrade rights offered under the License Terms in Windows Vista Business and Ultimate versions and they use both Windows XP media and a product key that was previously activated, they will be unable to activate on-line over the Internet, due to the hardware configuration change when installing on the Vista system. In these cases the end user will be prompted to call the Activation Support Line and explain their circumstances to the Customer Service Representative. Once it is determined that the end user has a valid Vista Business or Ultimate license, the Customer Service Representative will help them activate their software.

Q. Can end users return to Windows Vista Business or Windows Vista Ultimate software after they downgrade?

A. Yes. End users who downgrade may reinstall the original software when they are ready to migrate. For example, an end user who downgrades to Windows XP Professional may later return to Windows Vista Business software provided that the end user deletes the Windows XP Professional software from the PC.

Q. How do end users reinstall the original software after downgrading to a previous allowed downgrade version?

A. End users must use the original OEM media or recovery software on the hard disk that was included with the PC for reinstallation. The downgrade software must be deleted from the hard drive before the original software is reinstalled.

Q. Where do customers get the CD to install the downgrade software?

A. End users must use a legally licensed version of the specified previous version of the Windows desktop operating system to install the downgrade software. The downgrade software may be from the retail, OEM/System Builder, or volume licensing channels.

