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Counter-Strike on Windows Vista

Windows XP/Windows Vista comparison

Today, I decided to show you the differences between running Counter-Strike, the famous tactical first-person shoot game, on a Windows Vista operating system and on a Windows XP platform. Now, Windows Vista was often regarded as the most secure release of Windows, the parent company Microsoft promoting it as a simple way to work on the computer and remain secure. Except for the security features, most of the users are avoiding to update their operating system to Vista because they are afraid of huge loading times and computer errors. Their main concern? Vista's Aero. Some of the users sustain that the new interface of the operating system requires a lot of resources, making the computer load quite slow. That's why I decided to test one of the most popular games ever and present you the results provided by 3 different platforms: Windows XP, Windows Vista with Aero and Windows Vista without Aero. Because a very powerful computer equipped with Windows Vista was quite useless, as the games ran perfectly, I decided to test Counter-Strike on one of the most popular hardware configuration: AMD Sempron 2500+, NVIDIA GeForce FX 5200 and 1GB of RAM. I know, some of you might think that these are low resources to run Windows Vista, but I just wanted you to know ... in case you were wondering whether you have any chance to install the operating system and even play a game on your computer or not. I also should tell you that I'm not an addicted gamer, so I decided to leave the default settings with a few exceptions: I increased the fps_max option from Counter-Strike to 999 to see how many frames per second the game returns. Don't tell me that I should disable the VSYNC option from the graphic driver because I wanted to leave it enabled just as any other beginner that installs Vista and wants to play Counter-Strike. I also installed some bot packs to allow me to test the usage of the resources when the server gets full.

Windows XP So: I installed the game, I made the changes and I started my own server. Because I wanted to analyze the game's loading times, I created my own server for three times, obviously not at the same time. The first server was loaded in no more than 3.04 seconds. The other attempts were even better and created the server in 2.82 seconds and 2.84 seconds. Clearly, Windows XP allows Counter-Strike to load very fast. Then, I started to test the game. I was playing de_aztec, a famous map among Counter-Strike players. As you can see in the screenshots below, the game's FPS remained at the 60 level and was rarely decreased by more complex animations such as bombs, grenades or weapon effects. I must say that the game experience was quite steady and I was able to play continuously without any tiny lag time. Have a look at the following pictures to view Counter-Strike on Windows XP.

Windows Vista Just like the XP test, I wanted to test the server's loading speed for three times. The first attempt gets a "WOW" mark from me because the game returned me no more and no less than a... BLUE SCREEN. Incredible or not, the operating system was blocked and the computer was automatically restarted by a blue screen error. I must mention that I have been using Windows Vista for some time and I never received this kind of error. OK, I said, let's try it again and see what happens. I entered the game and the first server creation attempt returned me a 3.35 seconds time. A little bit higher than XP, but acceptable. The third test was similar and was made in 3.52 seconds. Now, let's play the game. The game experience was pretty much the same as on XP, without many lag times, except the ones created by a smoke grenade or a bomb explosion. The impressive element was the FPS rate that was often increased over the 60 level gained by XP and that obviously returns improved quality. I agree that 60 FPS is quite a low result, but for the sake of the comparison between the two operating systems, it is more than relevant.

Windows Vista

without Aero Because most of the Vista users sustained that Aero is the element that requires a lot of resources, I wanted to test the same game with the same settings on Windows Vista without Aero. So, I disabled this attractive interface and I entered the game. The first start of the server was made in 3.88 seconds while the second one returned a 3.57 seconds time. The third attempt was a little bit slower and made in 3.38 seconds. Now, the game was almost the same as with Aero and recorded the same 60 FPS rate with a similar periodical increase. As you can see, Windows XP remains the perfect platform for gamers because it provides the best game experience bundled with minimum system requirements. Of course, Windows Vista is also an efficient operating system, but if you really want to play a game on it you should upgrade your system with a huge amount of memory. Of course, some of you love Counter-Strike and can apply a lot of tips and tricks to optimize the settings and get improved performance, but for a beginner user, Windows XP is the recommended platform for games.