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Windows XP  
Microsoft

## [The Evolution of the Windows XP SP3 Activation Architecture](#)

### *The Vista way...*

With the availability of the third and final service pack for Windows XP in early 2008, Microsoft will introduce a series of modifications to the operating system's fabric. Users will not be able to see nowhere near the extent of changes delivered by SP2, but one aspect of the platform that will be evolved is the activation architecture. At this point in time, using just the downloadable standalone [Release Candidate of Windows XP SP3](#), the alterations implemented will not be visible. "As with previous service packs, no product key is requested or required when installing Windows XP SP3 using the update package available through Microsoft Update", Microsoft informed. "The Windows Product Activation changes in Windows XP SP3 are not related to the Windows Vista Key Management Service (KMS). This update affects only new operating system installations from integrated source media. This update affects the installation media only and is not a change to how activation works in Windows XP." However, a complete installation of the platform with SP3 deployed on top will be very similar to what Windows Server 2003 and Windows Vista offer. In this regard, XP users will no longer have to enter the mandatory product key during the installation process. Windows XP SP3 will present the alternative to skip the stage and continue the installation, making the introduction of the 25-character code optional. "As in Windows Server 2003 SP2 and Windows Vista, users can now complete operating system installation without providing a product key during a full, integrated installation of Windows XP SP3. The operating system will prompt the user for a product key later as part of Genuine Advantage. As with previous service packs, no product key is requested or required when installing Windows XP SP3 using the update package available through Microsoft Update", Microsoft revealed. The installation of XP SP3 will complete with no problems and, just as in Vista, users will have the option to test drive the operating system for a total of 30 days. But unlike Vista, XP SP3 does not feature the "rearm" command and as such the initial 30-day Grace period cannot be extended. XP SP3 will only require the product key at the end of the Initial Grace period, and failing to provide a valid one will virtually lock the user out of the operating system. "Entry of a product key will be required later for continued use of Windows. If you choose not to enter the product key now, you might need to reinstall Windows later and potentially lose files and information, or you might need to purchase another edition of Windows", is the message presented by the operating system to the users that will choose to skip entering a product key during the deployment of XP SP3.