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Windows Vista
Microsoft

Windows Vista Downgrades

Licensing basics

While the positioning of software downgrades at the opposite pole of upgrades is valid in terms of concept and semantics, the actual processes come with inherent nuances, that only make the difference more subtle. The aspect is collateral to the Microsoft license-based Modus Operandi, and in this sense, it is the actual license of the software that governs over the users' downgrade rights. As far as its main cash cows (the Windows client and the Office system) are concerned, Microsoft's upgrade policies are streamlined, and users are encouraged to adopt the new versions of the products as they come out. The same is not the case for downgrades. The Redmond company is in fact stretched between offering its customers solutions tailorfit on their environments and needs, and pushing the migration to its latest versions of products. This is why, when it comes down to the corporate environment, Microsoft is offering customers the possibility of acquiring the latest technology it has to offer, but deploy and use prior versions until the entire ecosystem from hardware to additional software products is ready for migration. But downgrade rights are limited. "Downgrade Rights grant the right to use a prior version of Microsoft software instead of the version you purchased. For instance, the ability to install Office 2003 instead of Office 2007 if you purchase an Office 2007 license that includes downgrade rights. These rights, if granted, would be listed in the End User License Agreement (EULA) you purchase through OEM licensing or Retail Box licensing or in the Product Use Rights document for licenses purchased through Volume licensing programs," explained [Eric Ligman](#), Microsoft US Senior Manager Small Business Community Engagement. Since earlier this year, Microsoft has streamlined considerably the downgrade process of Vista, in order to make it easier for corporate users to switch back to XP. You can read about the initial difficulties of Vista to XP downgrades [here](#), but also get an overview of the process [here](#) and [here](#), and understand the [simplifications Microsoft introduced](#). However, downgrading licensing rights can be accessed via Microsoft's [Downgrade Rights Chart](#). "Not all licenses have downgrade rights included in them. In fact, almost all OEM and Retail Box licenses do NOT include downgrade rights; whereas, Volume License programs do include them. We have a Downgrade Rights Chart available for download which gives an overview of which licensing options generally do and do not offer downgrade rights. Of course, the definitive way to determine if downgrade rights are included in your license is to read your EULA itself. Generally, it will be listed under the "INSTALLATION AND USE RIGHTS" section of the EULA", Ligman added.