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Windows XP
Microsoft

[Windows XP SP3 - And So It Ends](#)

June 30, 2008 and April 2014

It's the end of an era for Microsoft. Not the end of [Windows XP](#), but the end of the XP era. In the context in which after June 30, 2009, Microsoft will no longer permit its retail partners and original equipment manufacturers to sell the predecessor of Windows Vista, the company has not steered clear of addressing concerns about the future of XP. This, although at this point in time XP and the future seem like two concepts that fail to play well together. Microsoft stuck firmly to the June 30, 2008 Direct OEM and Retail License Availability end date and failed to repeat the change of heart at the end of 2007 which resulted in the addition of five more months to XP's phase out process. The Redmond giant initially planned to cut off retail and OEM sales of XP at the end of January 2008, but it succumbed under the pressure coming from consumers and PC manufacturers. As a direct result, Microsoft will now stop selling Windows XP in a little over a week, on [June 30](#). "We love that you love Windows XP," Microsoft stated on its official "The Facts About the Future of Windows XP" [website](#). "But our commitment to innovation sometimes means making tough choices. This is one of them." The software giant's example of innovation is of course the only Windows client left to fill in the gap of XP, namely Windows Vista. And in this regard, Microsoft seems to be struggling to convince everyone of the innovation factor and the value of Vista, especially to business customers. **Extended support throughout April 2014** But the fact of the matter is that, outside of the end of the XP era, the actual operating system will survive well past the release of Windows 7. Just as today there are still remnants of Windows 2000, Windows NT and Windows 98, so will Windows XP continue to linger well into the next decade. The reason for this is simple, a massive ecosystem of users and an environment of software and hardware solutions are orbiting around XP. So massive in fact that the very evolution of Windows is impacted. An illustrative example in this regard is the fact that Windows 7 will ship in both 32-bit and 64-bit versions at the end of 2009. But XP is not dead. Not even by a long shot. Not at over 70% of the operating system market. And this is not about Service Pack 3, this is about the good old anti-Vista, XP SP2. Microsoft will continue to offer support for XP SP2 until July 13, 2010, which is two years from now. And XP SP3 will go even further than that. "We understand some of our customers aren't ready to upgrade their PCs to [Windows Vista](#). Although Windows XP will disappear from stores, we'll continue to offer Extended Support for the operating system for six more years, until April 2014," Microsoft added. Customers that haven't already moved to Vista, or haven't even debuted plans for migrating/upgrading, will most likely skip Vista altogether. Windows 7 seems a viable alternative in this context, with Microsoft opening up more and more on the next iteration of the Windows client. The company only demoed the multi-touch computing capabilities of Windows 7, but in the second half of this year more demos are coming including [DirectX 11](#) and [more aspects of the operating system](#). **Vista SP1 to XP SP3 downgrades** "If your business relies on Windows XP, there's still a way to get it. When you buy the Windows Vista Business or Windows Vista Ultimate, you're automatically entitled to move back to Windows XP Professional via what we call "downgrade rights." We've been working closely with our industry partners to develop new programs for small business customers interested in exercising these rights," Microsoft explained. But exercising downgrade rights means that customers will actually be buying Windows Vista. Downgrade rights essentially offer users the possibility to install and run two Windows operating systems under the same license, of course, not concomitantly. Microsoft's bet is that business clients will buy Vista, use XP on current IT infrastructures and with existing software, and then move to the new OS when ready. OEMs including

Lenovo, Dell, HP and Acer, will continue to offer Vista, now with SP1, until January 2009. **Vista SP1 the only open game in town** The truth is that sales of Windows XP will continue even after June 30. Microsoft will continue to offer XP to system builders worldwide until January 31, 2009. At the same time, XP will continue to be available on ultra-low-cost mobile and desktop computers until June 30, 2010, or one year after the availability of [Windows 7](#), whichever comes first. Customers in emerging markets will continue to be able to buy Windows XP Starter edition until June 30, 2010. But standalone shrink-wrapped copies of Windows XP will disappear from store shelves, as will the new OEM computers with the operating system preloaded. Market analyst companies Gartner and IDC estimate that worldwide PC shipments will go over the 300 million milestone by the end of the year. Starting with the half of 2008, the vast majority of new OEM machines, representing the main gulp of the Windows volume of sales, will feature Windows Vista. In this regard Vista SP1 will be the only open game in town, with XP still available, for those who will know what to look for. **XP Support - Mainstream vs. Extended**In April 2009 Microsoft will retire Mainstream support for [Windows XP SP3](#); however, users will still be able to enjoy Extended support until April 2014. Even though the XP era ends on June 30, 2008, the death of the operating system will only come in 2014. This means that long after Windows Vista and even Windows 7, Windows XP will still be clinging to the last crumbs of market share, with customers too stubborn, or simply incapable to let go. "Mainstream support delivers complimentary as well as paid support, free security updates and bug fixes to all Windows customers who purchase a retail copy of Windows XP (i.e. a shrink-wrapped, not pre-installed, copy). Extended support delivers free security updates to all Windows customers. Customers can also pay for support on a per-incident basis. New bug fixes require the Extended Hotfix Support program," Microsoft added.