



Clean Install Windows XP



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Why clean install?

While a clean install is not always necessary, slightly better stability and performance can be expected when XP is installed to a clean hard drive or partition.

The XP upgrade is a vast improvement over previous Windows upgrades, and is usually the best choice when transitioning from a previous Windows version to XP. I recommend the clean install approach as a last resort, not the first option.

My recommendation is to prepare for a clean install, but first try the upgrade option. If in the unlikely event results of the upgrade are a failure, nothing is lost but the time spent doing the upgrade and evaluating the results. The preparation to clean install is in place and the upgrade experience will serve as a hands on tutorial to familiarize you with the XP setup procedure.

What are the positives

Slightly better performance, a smaller footprint on the hard drive, knowledge that nothing is carried over from a previous OS. There really isn't that much more than the issues in the link I included below.

Known Issues for XP Upgrades

More KB setup related articles

What are the negatives?

You will need to reinstall all your programs, backup and restore your data and files along with custom tweaks.

There are exceptions where a clean install can impair the performance over a well prepared upgrade. The exceptions being systems with proprietary hardware and system utilities like laptops and some OEM desktops.

Hint: When you experience a situation where the hardware or software worked when you upgraded, but is no longer functional after clean installing. You can restore the original OS along with the software/drivers that work and then use the retail Home or Pro, upgrade or full XP version to install XP. This will be as close to a clean install as possible without actually clean installing.

Preparation

Does your system meet the **minimum requirements**?

Run the **Upgrade Advisor** from the XP CD or download from Microsoft.

Upgrade Advisor

Even though XP will recognize most of the hardware and peripherals the clean install does NOT furnish all the latest drivers. For instance, without downloading the appropriate drivers from the card manufacturer's web site; Graphics cards will not be enabled for OpenGL.

Does your system allow booting from the CD? Check your **BIOS** by noting during boot up the Key Commands needed to access the **BIOS**, this will be a text message usually at the bottom of the screen. If your system has a splash screen with the OEM logo hiding the boot up screen, press ESC as soon as you start boot up. When you get to the **BIOS**, access the screen that allows you to change the boot sequence. Set it to boot from **CD** before **hard drive** in the boot sequence. Some systems can change the boot sequence without accessing the **BIOS**, **laptops** for the most part do not need to access the **BIOS**.

If your computer does not support booting from the CD, check your OEM or Motherboard makers web site for updated **BIOS**. If the system is old enough it doesn't support booting from CD, you should carefully evaluate your options. Sometimes the complete replacement of the system will be a better investment than the likely need to upgrade hardware and software to run XP.

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If booting from CD is impossible, you have the options below.

Download the XP floppy boot disk set from Microsoft. Home and Pro plus the SP1 version of Home and Pro can be downloaded from the link below.

XP Boot Floppy Set

Another option to the floppy disk set

from

Dr. D's

Windows XP System Setup Disk Look for bootdisk essentials

Allows you to boot from a single floppy disk, partition and format the drive and then begin the XP installation from CD

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 Note:

A lot of people appear to be unaware of the fact that you do NOT need the 4 or 5 setup disks in order to install Windows 2000 and XP. A common Win98 boot disk such as the Boot Disk Essentials diskette below can be used to install these OS's. This is what the Win XP System Setup Disk above does.

Here's how to do it:

1. Start the computer with your chosen boot disk.
2. Change to the cd rom drive.
3. Go into the \i386 directory on the cd rom.
4. Run WINNT.EXE to begin the install process.

The above was copied from Dr. D's web site.

If a bootdisk other than the **essentials** is used, **smartdrv.exe** must be added and loaded manually before running WINNT.EXE

If the system you have files and setting on the drive is the one you are clean installing, you should run the **Files and Settings Transfer wizard*** on the XP CD before running setup. Also backup anything you do not have other media to restore from. This also includes software downloaded from the internet that is only accessed from the hard drive. Make sure you have all passwords and serial numbers backed up. If possible it would be a good idea to use Imaging software like Ghost or Disk Image to create an image of the partition before clean installing. The two mentioned have the ability to restore individual files from the images.

*See the link below for the ultimate user friendly illustrated guide on the valuable XP transition tool F.A.S.T by **MS-MVP Gary Woodruff**

<http://aumha.org/a/fast.htm>

You will need to have a qualifying Win98/Me/2000 CD to insert if you are using an upgrade version of XP to clean install. OEM restore disks will usually not fulfill the qualifying requirement. If the restore disk has a i386 folder, it will usually work.

As a final preparation tip, download critical updates and burn to CD or obtain update CD's from Microsoft before running the XP setup.

Since XP is now on Service Pack 2, if your XP CD does not include SP2, I highly recommend creating a slipstreamed XP CD with SP2 to use for the Clean Install.

Slipstreaming Windows XP with Service Pack 2 (SP2)

Another Slipstream step by step

AutoStreamer mirror link for **AutoStreamer**

Step by Step on AutoStreamer

Windows XP Service Pack 1

Get Windows XP SP1a on CD

Service Pack 2

Windows Security Update CD below is shipped free of charge.

Microsoft Windows Security Update CD

Steps to Clean Install XP

If the above instructions for configuring your system to boot from CD or you have acquired the necessary **boot floppy/floppies**; you can now boot the computer and follow the on screen prompts.

Have your Product Key available, typical install is around 30 minutes. If setup seems to hang, wait at least 10 minutes + before restarting system. You should experience momentary screen blackouts.

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1. Power on the computer. Press the **Pause/Break** key as soon as you see text on the screen.

[If you currently are running in an OS of any flavor, insert XP CD and restart computer. Skip to #3 if system is configured to boot from CD.]

2. Insert XP CD into CD drive. Press **ENTER** to resume booting from the XP CD. (**BIOS** must support booting from CD and boot order must be set so CD boots before hard drive. If computer does not support booting from CD go to **2a** for floppy install).

2a. Floppy install: Boot from Win98/Me/Special XP install floppy disk with **smartdrv.exe** added to the boot disk or the Win XP set of 6 floppy disks.

3. Look for message "booting from CD" usually located at the bottom of the screen. If you have a factory splash screen, press ESC to unload it.

3a. Floppy install: From the A Prompt; A:\type: **smartdrv.exe**. then press **ENTER**. If you are using the **XP boot floppy setup disks** skip to step #5.

4. Press any Key when you see the prompt to '**Press Any Key**'

4a. Floppy install: Type CD at the command prompt("CD" refers to the command syntax Change Directory)to access the location of the CD-ROM drive with the XP setup files; CD to the i386 folder where you will type: **winnt.exe** to start setup.

5. Setup will start copying files, if you need to install any third-party or SATA/RAID drivers press F6 at this time. the copying of files can take awhile.



6. Next you will get the option to repair or enter setup, choose to enter setup. Press ENTER.

To see images full size, place mouse cursor over image and click/double click or press the left button and open.

7. Press F8 if you agree to the license.



8. Setup will scan for previous Windows installations

9. If you are using the upgrade version of XP on a computer without any version of Windows currently installed, this is where you will replace the XP CD with your qualifying CD, XP setup will scan the qualifying CD and instruct you to replace it with the XP CD to continue XP setup; otherwise, you will not see this screen. **Clean install qualifying media can be any of the following Win NT3.51, 4.0, 2000, Win 95, 98, Me and XP Home when upgrading to XP Pro.**



10. Choose the location to install.



10a If this is a clean hard drive, you can choose to create a partition in the un-partitioned space. At this point, you can allow Setup to use all the space or set a size for the partition.

10b If the hard drive or partition has a previous installation of XP you want to remove, choose to delete the partition by pressing "D". You will then be prompted to create a new partition in the empty space. This will remove all data from the deleted space.



If setup returns a message the partition contains the setup files and cannot be deleted use the info from this link: [Delete NON-DOS Partition](#)

10c If you intend to use multiple partitions or dual boot, this is where you specify the size of the boot partition and or setup location for XP. If you are planning to dual boot XP, I would create a small 100 meg DOS partition for the first primary partition, then an 8 to 10 gig partition for XP. You can partition and format the remaining space after XP is setup from Disk Manager. If you do not intend to dual boot, you can either use all the un-partitioned space or create an 8 to 10 gig partition for XP and leave the rest free to partition later.



If a fat32 partition larger than 32 gigabyte is desired, the hard drive or partition will need to be created before running XP setup. XP will not create a fat 32 partition larger than 32 gig, but will support one previously created.



11. Choose the file system from this screen. If dual booting and you created the small 100 meg partition, make it a fat partition. NTFS is configured at the optimal file size during the initial setup. See this link for more on **NTFS**

If you have more that one partition or hard drive on your system, make sure you are formatting the correct partition/drive.



12. This is where you reinsert the XP Pro Upgrade CD if necessary.

13. Press Enter to continue.



14. Setup will show a progress box and reboot when copying files is complete.

15. When you see the "Press any Key to Reboot" **do not** Press any Key. If CD boots anyway, remove CD and reboot.



16. From this point, you will follow the on screen prompts.



17. If you live outside the US, you will probably need to modify the default settings.



18. Personalize your XP Enter your Name and Organization.



19. Enter the Product Key. The Key is located on the back of the CD folder in the Retail versions and on a holographic label with the OEM versions purchased with a piece of hardware. Write this key down and secure it in a safe place in case the original is misplaced or destroyed through natural causes.



20. Choose a name for the computer, this should be a unique name for the computer, especially if it is to be connected to a network. In Pro, you are given the option of creating a password or leaving it blank.



21. Set your Time Zone and Time and Date.

22. Setup will scan for network.



23. If detected you will have the choice to choose a typical configuration or custom. Choose typical if you are unsure.



24. For home you will choose your workgroup, if a network is already established and you intend to connect to it, use the existing workgroup name, otherwise, I suggest using the default.

25. For Pro, the same goes for Pro as suggested for Home, but you will have the choice to join a Domain, if you do not have a Domain or do not know leave blank.

26. Setup will continue and will reboot when completed. Ignore the "Press Any Key" if displayed by your system.



27. The XP loading window will now display after reboot.

Note: All XP SP2 versions now show the **same** XP loading screen. Windows XP is displayed for both Home and Professional.



28. You will see a change display settings, say yes, and accept the setting if you can see the screen after accepting.



29. You will see a welcome screen, press next and unfortunately you have to wait for the dialog to finish.

30. Set up your internet or network connection.



31. This is the Register screen. You must activate within 30 days of installing XP, but you do not ever have to register, Registration is completely optional and if you do not register, no personal information will be transmitted during activation. If you register, then activation will transmit that information along with the activation.

Blaster worm warning: Enable the **XP firewall** before connecting to the internet. Installing XP with the original XP (often referred to as the gold version) with out Service Pack 1 or 2 XP CD media do not immediately activate over the internet. Decline activation. Activate firewall before connecting to the internet. You can activate after the firewall is enabled and service packs and critical updates are installed.

To enable the XP firewall: Go to Control Panel - Network Connections.

Right click the connection you use, then Properties; there is a check box on the **Advanced** page to enable the XP firewall. After installing XP you should upgrade to a third party hardware or software firewall. The XP firewall is limited to incoming traffic only.

If you plan to test XP or intend to change hardware on the computer within thirty days; I suggest you do not activate immediately. You will be reminded on boot up until you do.



32. This is the activation window.

The first Activation is usually done over the internet if the computer is connected to the internet. Select this option if connected to the internet.

If the computer is not connected to the internet, select the activate by phone option.



- 33. Activation can be accomplished by making a phone call to the phone number [Usually Toll Free] supplied on screen. A service representative or automated phone service will request you to give them the generated alphanumeric string from the activation screen and the activation center representative or automated service will then give you a slightly longer number to input into the onscreen activation page.



33a. Only if requested by the service representative or if you specifically need to change the product key click the button labeled Change Product Key at the bottom of the window.



- 34. Setup users screen. Set at least one user for yourself or the person that will be using the computer.



- 35. Thank You

- 36. Logon to XP and apply Service Pack and Critical updates from Windows Update before installing any software or hardware.

- 37. Install your anti-virus software.

- 38. Install all applications and setup your email.

- 39. Restore from Files and Settings transfer after reinstalling all applications.

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