



# MTS Home Solutions

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## When is it Time to Upgrade to a New Computer?

One question that users commonly ask is, "When is the right time to upgrade to a new computer?" While many factors will be involved in making this kind of decision, such as finances, computing needs of the person or family and status of the user's current system, the following factors are important to consider when considering a new computer purchase

1. **Age and status of the current computer.** Computers, like any other mechanical device, are prone to failure, especially as they get older. While some computers may continue to function just fine after 5 years, others may be on the verge of major component (hard drive, system board) failure. How long a system lasts may largely depend upon how it was used. For example, a home computer that was only used for a few hours per day for basic computing tasks (word processing, e-mail and browsing the internet) would likely be in much better shape after 5 years of service than a system which was highly utilized (8-10 hours per day) over the same time period. As a computer gets older, it may become more difficult to find replacement parts for components which fail, or the computer may become more expensive to fix than buying a new computer
2. **Current Operating System Being Used.** The computer's operating system is the environment or platform from which all other programs run. Most of the home computers in service at this point are running Microsoft Windows XP, which has been a comparatively stable and reliable operating system over the last several years. While security updates for this OS will be available until 2014, consumers will need to consider either Windows Vista or Windows 7 (to be released in October, 2009) when purchasing a new computer. While Windows XP is not yet obsolete (e.g. most computer programs will still work with Windows XP), this OS will eventually be outmoded within the next few years. Some consumers were not particularly impressed by the performance of Windows Vista. However, Windows 7 promises to fix many of the perceived problems of Vista, and consumers are likely to be more impressed with it.
3. **Finances.** Prices for home computer systems have drastically decreased over the last 7-10 years. This is good news for budget-conscious consumers. It is now possible to get a quality desktop computer system in the \$400-\$500 range. In addition, it has become easier and cheaper to upgrade the computer's components (e.g. install a larger hard drive, upgrade memory, add a Blue-Ray player, etc.) after the initial purchase. When considering a new computer purchase, consumers should buy a system which is both in their budget range as well as one which is appropriate to the computing tasks. For example, if a family wants a computer which will be used for a lot of high-end gaming or video editing, they should focus on a system with a fast 64-bit processor, a lot of memory (at least 4 gigabytes) and a high-end video card. By contrast, if a family wants a computer which will be used to help the children with school work (mainly word processing, Internet browsing, instant messaging, listening to music, etc.), then most entry-level desktop systems will fit the bill nicely.

### How to Make the Switch

One of the daunting tasks that folks face when they purchase a new computer is the job of getting the important data, including programs, documents, pictures, music files, videos, etc. from the old computer to the new computer. Here are a few of the options that users can consider:

- **Windows Files & Settings Transfer Wizard**

Within Windows XP, Vista and 7 there is a tool which will help users to transfer most or all of their data files (documents, pictures, music files, etc.) from the old computer to the new system. Users can either place these files on removable media (e.g. flash drive or external hard drive) or they can connect the computers together using a data transfer cable or a network cable. The length of time that it takes to move the data from one computer to the other will depend upon the amount of data that needs to be transferred. MTS Home Solutions can assist with this process, and we will only charge for the amount of time that it takes to set up and transfer the data. The advantage of using the Files and Settings transfer wizard is that it is already

included within the Windows software. One drawback, however, to using this method is that only files and settings are transferred. Programs are not. Therefore, it is necessary to re-install the programs onto the new computer before transferring the data.

- **Utilizing a Specialized Transfer Program**

There are several software products on the market which will transfer both data and programs from one computer to the other. These programs often include both a program to move the data as well as a cable with which both computers can be connected. This option may be preferable for home computer users who may not have the original media available to re-install the programs on the new computer. The cost of one of these data transfer programs ranges from \$50 - \$70.

- **Online Backup & Restore**

A third option that home computer users may want to consider is the use of an online backup service, such as Carbonite Online Backup. An online backup service uses a small piece of software on your computer to back up particular files and folders on your computer. The software copies the data over an encrypted internet connection to a secured server in an off-site data center. The server itself is also backed up regularly. Once the files and folders on the old computer are backed up to the server, the user can then switch his or her backup subscription to the new computer. Over the period of a few hours or a few days (depending on the amount of data), the files will be transferred to the new computer.

Like the Files and Settings transfer wizard, this method only transfers files and folders; programs must be installed on the new computer. However, this method is definitely the easiest to use, especially for non-technical computer owners. For about the same price as a data transfer program which will likely be used only one time, users can move their data with an online backup service and have the added protection of having their files backed up in a secure, off-site location. An additional feature of Carbonite is that users can securely access their files from any internet-connected computer. This makes it very convenient to access important documents when users are away from home.

MTS Home Solutions can set up and configure Carbonite Online Backup on a home user's computer and can walk you through all of the pertinent steps of getting your data transferred to your new home computer.

While each person must make his or her own decision regarding when is the best time to purchase a new home computer, we would be happy to assist you in the evaluation of your current system as well as in the process of setting up and configuring your new system as well as transferring data from a previous computer. If we can be of assistance to you in any way, please do not hesitate to e-mail us or call us using the contact information listed above.