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In case you haven't heard, Windows XP is being phased out. If you love it, like many users do, this is not good news. Windows XP allows users to seamlessly run multiple applications and toggle between them with ease. Also, many software application are dependent upon the use of Windows XP.While many people feel like Microsoft is doing the right thing by moving away from Windows, there are still many people who like the "feel" and easy-to-use features of Windows XP. There is a "Windows XP mode" in Windows 7, but it is restricted to Professional versions of the hardware. You can, however, get Windows XP with Windows 8, and you do not have to buy any additional products or software keys. You will need to download several free programs (if you do not already have them installed). The first step is to download the Windows XP Mode installer file directly from Microsoft. You will then be asked to validate your version of Windows. If you are using a pirated or shareware version of Windows, Microsoft will not let you download this file. After you have successfully validated your version of Windows, download the file as prompted, but make sure you do not run the installer. At this stage, just download the file. (If you are asked to choose between two files, choose: WindowsXPMode-en-us.exe). Next, you will need to extract the files. If you do not currently have extraction software you will need to get one (7-Zip and WinZip are both good programs and are free to download). Once you have extracted the files from the Windows XP Mode installer, you will need to view the files. Locate the file marked "xpm" and drag it to any folder on your computer to extract it. Repeat the same process with the file marked "VirtualXPVHD." This file is a virtual hard drive file, so once you extract it (if done correctly) you should now see the .VHD extension. If you do not, right click the file and rename it to "VirtualXPVHD.vhd". Once you have successfully completed these steps, you can delete the "WindowsXPMode-en-us.exe" and "xpm" files in order to save space on your hard drive. Now, you have a .VHD file we can boot in a virtual machine program. If you do not have one already, try VirtualBox because it's free and runs on all versions of Windows 8. After downloading, click the "new" button to create a new virtual machine and follow the instructions. When asked for the operating system, select "Windows XP (32-bit)." In the next step, you can select as much memory as you like to be allocated to VirtualBox. I would suggest sticking to the recommended 192MB simply because it causes less issues. For the hard drive, select the last option ("use an existing virtual hard drive file") and select the .VHD file you saved earlier. You can now boot your Windows XP Mode system by clicking the Start button in VirtualBox. You'll have to enter a few details to finish setting it up, but you won't have to go through the entire installation process or enter a product key. From here, the process is about the same as if you had installed Windows XP inside a virtual machine from a Windows XP disc. Install any old software that requires Windows XP inside the virtual machine and you are ready to go! You will now be able to use all of your old programs inside the VirtualBox, while still maintaining the use of Windows 8.Featured photo credit: Windows XP/Alfred Hermida/Flickr via flickr.com Note: 8/17/09 11 a.m. PDT -- Due to popular demand, we've reopened the survey!If you don't pant at the thought of the arrival of Windows 7 on October 22 and still use Windows XP on at least one of your PCs, PC World would like to know more about why.We're surveying folks who still use the venerable Windows XP as their primary operating system. We hope to use the feedback in upcoming articles on PCWorld.com.If you would complete this short survey to assist us, we'd appreciate it. It will take about 3 minutes of your time.Read "Windows XP Users: We Still Love XP and Loathe Vista, But Windows 7 Looks Impressive" to see what other PC World.com readers think. Note: When you purchase something after clicking links in our articles, we may earn a small commission. Read our affiliate link policy for more details. Windows XP is an operating system that Microsoft introduced in 2001. It served as an innovation of the Windows NT kernel and a successor to Windows Me (for consumers) and Windows 2000 (for enterprises). It was ultimately succeeded by Windows Vista in 2006. Like most other Windows operating systems, XP was made available in two versions: Home Edition (32-bit only) and Professional Edition (32- or 64-bit). Mobility was a major focus in all facets of technology at the time, so both versions of XP included support for plug-and-play features as well as wireless network connectivity using the 802.11x wireless security standard. Both versions were also available as either a full license or an upgrade to an existing Windows operating system. History of Windows XP Before its official release in 2001, XP had been developed as two separate projects (named "Odyssey" and "Neptune") until they were consolidated under the "Whistler" title. It was intended to merge the previously distinct lines of consumer and enterprise-grade operating systems, effectively ending the development of MS-DOS. The marketing tagline for XP in 2001 was originally "Prepare to Fly," but the September 11 attacks in the United States caused Microsoft to shift the messaging to "Yes You Can" to avoid any negative repercussions. The launch was immediately regarded as a success. Many users lauded its ease of use, stability, and performance benefits among other benefits. The initial Windows XP release was followed by the release of Windows XP 64-Bit Edition (v2002) and Windows XP 64-Bit Edition (v2003). Windows XP Media Center Edition was also released in 2002 for home theater systems and similar entertainment environments. It included support for a digital video recorder (DVR) and expanded multimedia content. In 2014, Microsoft announced it would be ending support for Windows XP. This move had a significant impact on business and government users alike, and reports quickly surfaced of compatibility issues as well as a number of security vulnerabilities that would no longer be addressed with system updates or patches. As a result, many users weighed these risks against the cost of upgrading to a new operating system and the accompanying learning curve. Today, less than 1% of devices still operate on Windows XP. Windows XP features The XP release was said to be the most significant Windows release since Windows 95. Short for "experience," Windows XP naturally introduced a greater focus on the user interface; in addition to an updated look and feel, XP provided a more stable and reliable environment than previous versions of Windows. Other features of Windows XP include: Automatic updates Support for Internet Explorer 6 Windows Messenger Multilingual support (Professional Edition) Remote Desktop (Professional Edition) Updated Start menu, including support for window grouping, pinned item lists, etc. Faster start up, log on, log off, hibernation, and user switching functionalities In case you haven't heard, Windows XP is being phased out. If you love it, like many users do, this is not good news. Windows XP allows users to seamlessly run multiple applications and toggle between them with ease. 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