

# STAR Watch

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## Microsoft Increases Pressure on Windows 95 Users to Upgrade

So, you are still running Windows 95 and you would like to upgrade your web browser to the Internet Explorer version 6. You navigate your way to the Microsoft Download Center and you attempt to download and install the newest version of Microsoft's web browser. You barely get started when the message appears on your monitor, stating that IE 6.0 cannot be installed on a Windows 95 machine.

Other Windows 95 users have encountered similar problems when they tried to run some of the newest multimedia applications (and games) on their computers. In order to run, these programs require version 8 of DirectX. This latest version of DirectX provides the extended multimedia and multi-player support to these new applications. Without it, they will not work. The update is free. But it won't install on Windows 95 machines.

Last year, very few people were even slightly concerned when Microsoft announced plans to drop support for several products in November and December of 2001. No one was upset that MS-DOS,

Windows 3.xx or Windows NT version 3.51 would no longer be supported—almost no one used them anymore. Windows 95 was included in that announcement, but the prevailing attitude could be summed up in one sentence: It won't stop working just because they no longer support it. While no one disputes that fact that Windows 95 continued to perform as well after support was dropped as it did before, it is also true that no improvements were made to it. Software vendors stopped worrying about compatibility with it. And if a previously undiscovered bug showed up? No one fixed it.



### Windows Desktop Product Lifecycle Guidelines

Information about the demise of Windows 95 was published on Microsoft's website along with their plans for other currently available operating systems. On this page (<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/lifecycleconsumer.asp>), Microsoft agrees to give at least 12 months notice of any changes

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to their operating system offerings along with a list of all of these changes that will go into affect in the next 24 months.

They have made this information available so that consumers have “advanced notice of plans to change Windows desktop availability and assisted support options for all desktop versions of Windows”. This is supposed to give consumers “advanced notice to allow for accurate information technology and product planning within their organizations”. (Translation: We are providing you with this information so that you know when to start saving your money for your next purchase from us.) There are 3 phases in the product lifecycle:

- 0 – 3 years: Mainstream Phase – The product will be generally available through computer manufacturers and retail outlets. It will be fully maintained and supported.
- 3 – 4 years: Extended Phase – The availability of the product will begin to dwindle. No new copies of the product will be released. In addition to online support information, Microsoft will offer “paid incident support” for those who are willing to pay for help.
- 4+ years: Non-Supported Phase – The product is becomes unavailable for purchase. Only online support is available. Microsoft reserves the right to terminate online support after providing 12 months notice.

#### What can users do?

Back to Windows 95: There are two obvious alternatives. Users can choose to stay with it, or they can upgrade to a more current Windows operating system. If the Windows

95 machine is due for retirement very soon, it might make sense to live with the limitations imposed by Win95 until the workstation is phased out. If it's less than two years old, it might make sense to upgrade to Windows 98 Second Edition. The upgrade to Win98SE could be performed by anyone who is reasonably computer literate.

While it might be possible to upgrade to Windows 2000 or Windows XP, there are many more hardware and software issues to be addressed. It would probably require significantly more time and greater technical expertise.



#### How much will it cost to upgrade?

Not-for-profit organizations could upgrade their computers to a supported operating system for as little as \$20 per machine from CompuMentor ([www.compumentor.org](http://www.compumentor.org)). CompuMentor offers a variety of discounted software products to qualified or-

ganizations. To qualify, you must meet these criteria:

- Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
- Be located in the U.S.
- Meet some minimal vendor requirements

#### This too, shall pass ...

Start planning for the future now. Microsoft has already announced plans to change the status of other widely used operating systems:

- June 30, 2002: Windows 98/98SE moves into the “Extended Phase”
- March 31, 2003: Windows 2000 Professional changes to “Extended Phase”
- June 30, 2003: Windows NT version 4.0 and Windows 98/98SE become “Non-Supported”
- December 31, 2003: Windows Me moves into “Extended Phase”



# Useful Free Utilities

Windows contains very few utilities. Windows users, especially those who frequently use the Internet, can easily increase the functionality of their computers by installing some free utilities offered by vendors. Some of these utilities, such as NoteTab Light, and AVG Antivirus, are offered to entice users into buying the paid versions which have even more functionality. Some, like Startup Cop are offered by computer magazines to show users that by reading the magazine, people will learn about new, helpful software.



memory and processing power. They slow computers down.

Most of these programs do not have to run automatically to function. The programs work well when users just start them when they are needed, and close them when they are no longer needed. Unfortunately, when a program is running in the background, it does not stop running when the main application is closed. The program keeps running, consuming computer resources and slowing the machine.

## 1) *Startup Cop*

All new computers seem to really speed along. Eventually though, they just get slower and slower. This often happens because as users load new software, the installation programs, without asking, assume that part of the program should be run automatically as soon as the computer is started. Corel and Word both install small utilities that run automatically at startup, as do many free utilities like Real Player, the software that allows users to play music. These programs that “run in the background” consume

A small free utility called Startup Cop finds programs that run in the background and lets users disable them. The utility also allows users to reverse their decision and start applications that they want to run in the background (like antivirus software) if a user incorrectly closes a program. Startup Cop is available from <http://www.zdnet.com/downloads/> The link constantly changes, so type “Startup Cop” in the search box to find the current link.

## 2) *Ad-aware*



Many of the free programs that people download from the Internet carry a hidden price tag. The programs monitor Internet activity so that targeted advertising can be sent to users. Like programs that run in the background, these programs also affect computer performance, but they tend to do so only while a computer is using the Internet. They slow the Internet connection down because of their constant background activity. They also raise serious privacy concerns.

Ad-aware is a free utility that finds such programs and gives users the option of removing them. Ad-aware warns that removing the advertising components can disable some of the programs. But once users know what programs are monitoring their Internet activity, they can choose whether they want to run the program anyway or remove it.

Ad-aware can be downloaded from: <http://tomcoyote.com/lindex.html>

### 3) *Pop-Up Stopper*

Are you sick of advertising boxes appearing on your screen? These pop-up boxes can be an annoyance – or worse - some sites set these pop-up boxes to overwhelm your browser if you try to leave the site, popping as many as 15 screens at once.



As its name suggests, Pop-Up Stopper puts a halt to this. It is a small free program that will prevent most boxes from loading. The instructions tell you that if you load this program and still want to open a second window in the

browser, you can just hold down the “Ctrl” key to allow a second window to open.

### 4) *AVG Antivirus*

Every computer should be protected by an antivirus program. If your budget is tight and you cannot afford to buy a commercial program like Norton Anti-Virus, this free, fully functional program will monitor your computer and e-mail for viruses and will even automatically update itself if the machine is connected



to the Internet.

The only "catch" is that the company can end the updates whenever it chooses to do so. It will eventually end the updates and try to get users to buy the product. Until it does, though, it is a good solution for offices that do not own a commercial antivirus product. It is also a good solution for offices that own out-of-date products, such as older versions of McAfee that can no longer be updated.

AVG Antivirus can be downloaded from [http://www.grisoft.com/html/us\\_downl.htm#FREE](http://www.grisoft.com/html/us_downl.htm#FREE)

### **5) *NotepadEx and NoteTab Light***

NotePad, the text editor that comes with Windows, has some serious limitations. It only opens very small files and it has no word processing features like search and replace. Although text files can be opened with most word processors, if a user does not remember to save the file in a certain way, the file will save as a Word or WordPerfect file.

NotepadEx and NoteTab Light are free replacements for Notepad. They over-

come many of the limitations of Notepad and allow users to efficiently edit files. NoteTab Light is especially useful for editing html files.

One of the most useful Windows utilities is the utility that allows users to update Windows from the Internet. Microsoft constantly issues patches and fixes for Windows that increase Windows security. These updates will prevent many, but not all, viruses from affecting Windows computers. The update utility can be found on Windows 98 and higher by going to "Start," and then clicking on "Windows Update" (Microsoft does not offer updates for Windows 95) When you are on the Microsoft site, click on the "PRODUCT UPDATES" link. You will be asked if you want to download and install a small program. Answer "Yes."

One of the updates that might be offered (depending upon how recently you have updated your computer) is one for Internet Explorer. Many people who use Netscape do not download and install the Internet Explorer update. Microsoft uses new versions of Internet Explorer to update Windows. So even if you do not use Internet Explorer as your web browser, you should consider downloading and installing this update.



### For February 2002

Total Hits . . . . .	208,408	Most Active Hour. . . . .	9-10 a.m.
Total User Sessions . . . . .	16,827	Accessed Using Netscape . . . . .	21%
Average Hits/Day		Accessed Using Internet	
(Monday thru Friday) . . . . .	7,443	Explorer . . . . .	78%
Average User Sessions/		From Windows 95 . . . . .	12%
Weekday . . . . .	730	From Windows 98 . . . . .	53%
		From Windows 2000 . . . . .	19%
		From Windows XP . . . . .	4%
		Most Active Day of Week. . . . .	Monday



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