

Why always "Windows XP" and "Windows Vista" and not just "XP" and "Vista"?

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When the Internet Explorer folks announced that they were going to call their next version of Internet Explorer *Internet Explorer 7 for Windows XP* and *Internet Explorer 7 in Windows Vista*, many people responded to the awkward name by suggesting that it be shortened to *Internet Explorer 7 XP* and *Internet Explorer 7 Vista*. Why the longer names? Lawyers. Microsoft's own trademark guidelines[†] specify that the product names are *Windows XP* and *Windows Vista* and not just *XP* and *Vista*. The trademark is on the entire phrase, not just the last word. Furthermore, the trademark guidelines specify that products may not append just *XP* or *Vista* to their names; they have to say *X for Windows XP* or *X for Windows Vista*. In an earlier era, you had to be careful to say *Windows NT* and not just *NT* for the same reason. You see, the name *NT* is a registered trademark of Northern Telecom, and part of the agreement with "the other NT" is that the Windows product would always be used with the word *Windows* in front. If you took a close look at the Windows 2000 box, you may have seen the phrase "Built on NT Technology." I don't know how hard it was to do, but I suspect a good amount of negotiations with Northern Telecom took place to allow Microsoft to use that alternate formulation without the word *Windows* in front. Indeed, if you looked really closely at the box, you'd have found a trademark acknowledgement for Northern Telecom deep in the fine print. Lawyers by training are very cautious people. After all, a new lawsuit against Microsoft gets filed approximately once every thirty seconds.¶ They're probably also responsible for all your Office# shortcuts on the Start menu being named *Microsoft Office This 2007* and *Microsoft Office That 2007* instead of *This 2007* and *That 2007*, or even (shocking!) just *This* and *That*. It's a daring move, and lawyers don't like to be daring. Nobody ever got sued for playing it safe.†† **Nitpicker's corner** (guest appearance) *Just burning off a footnote marker because I don't like asterisks. †I myself violate some of these guidelines because I try to write like a human being and not a robot. Only robots say *Windows-based programs*.‡ ‡That statement is not literally true. Here's a reformulation of that statement for the benefit of robots:§ "People who say *Windows-based programs* sound like robots." §That statement is also not literally true. Here's a reformulation of that statement for the benefit of people who take a robotic approach to reading: "Here's a reformulation of that statement for the benefit of people who take a robotic approach to

reading:” ||Burning off another footnote marker because I don’t like parallel lines either. ¶An exaggeration, not a statement of fact. #s/Office/Microsoft® Office™ System/** **I have not researched whether that’s the correct way of writing it.

††Okay, maybe somebody somewhere has gotten sued for playing it safe. It was just a catchy sentence, not a statement of fact.

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