

How to Slipstream Windows 7

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Slipstreaming has been around for a while now but slipstreaming windows 7 is a little different than the old XP, so here's how...

Choose the installation

Launch RT Seven Lite, click 'Browse | Select OS Path' and point it at your Windows set-up files. If you have a Windows 7 DVD then just browse to the root directory of that. If you don't have a DVD then the files are probably stored on your hard drive: check your PC documentation.

When you locate them, copy the folder structure somewhere, then point RT Seven Lite at the new location (don't use your original folder). If you've chosen a DVD then RT Seven Lite will complain, because it needs the files to be located on your hard drive. Click 'OK' to confirm that you're happy with this, then make a new folder somewhere convenient and RT Seven Lite will copy the files over.

Once everything has been transferred, choose the Windows 7 edition you'd like to configure. Make sure it's the one you have a licence key for, and click 'OK'. RT Seven Lite will then create the image and you'll be ready to go.

Add updates

By default RT Seven Lite starts with all its key options disabled, but this is easily fixed. Click 'Task', check the 'Select All' box and the toolbar will become available. Click 'Integration' and you'll see where components can be added to your Windows build, a technique called slipstreaming.

The Updates tab, for instance, is where you can add Windows patches. RT Seven Lite requires that these files be in Microsoft's standalone update format (.msu), though, so you'll need to get online and download these first. The simplest way to do this is via a site that sorts these updates for you, like The Software Patch.

Go to the Windows 7 section and follow the links to the patches you need. Alternatively, go directly to Microsoft and search for them there. Whichever option you choose, download your MSU files to the same folder. Then switch back to RT Seven Lite, click 'Integration | Add' and select all the MSU files.

Adding drivers is almost as straightforward. First, download the latest versions, then unpack them to a folder (if your current archiver can't unpack executable files, try 7-Zip from www.7-zip.org instead). Finally click 'Add', and choose the INF file for the driver to include it in your build.

Third-party applications can be included in much the same way – click 'Applications | Add' and choose your program – but there's one major complication. The set-up program needs to be capable of running silently; that is, without any user prompts.

Some set-up programs have documented switches that allow them to run silently. Firefox uses an '/S' switch, for instance, and adding this after the program name should result in the browser being quietly installed along with Windows.

If you can't find any documentation for command-line switches, the Universal Silent Switch Finder may be able to help, or a tool like SFXMaker, which can build silent installers for many apps.

When you've finished, click 'Apply'. If you don't want to make any other changes to your build, click 'Commit'. RT Seven Lite will then make the changes to the Windows image. This will take a while, so only click 'Commit' when you're sure you've finished.

Remove features

Removing standard Windows 7 features can be dangerous, but it can make for a faster, less resource-hungry system. There are unlikely to be any serious problems, so it's definitely worth checking out the options available.

Click the 'Features Removal' button for a closer look. RT Seven Lite divides its list of all the removable Windows

components into seven sections. The first, Accessories, is perhaps the safest place to start tweaking.

Will anything bad happen if you remove the games, Paint or the Windows 7 calculator? If you'll never use them, check their boxes. Click each option in turn and check the help at the bottom of the screen for an explanation of what it does. Pay particular attention to items highlighted in dark red, as they're required for other components to work properly.

Then move on to the Drivers section. You don't have a TV tuner, for instance? Then there's no point installing the associated drivers on your hard drive; check the boxes to remove them all.

You can also remove the printer, modem, network and scanner drivers for all models apart from your own. Arguably you can even remove the lot, as Windows will search online anyway, and the chances are you'll also have a driver disc for any hardware you buy in future.

After this it all gets a little complicated. Which network components can you omit? Do you have any surplus services? If you're unsure, we'd recommend you just leave the components in place, and click 'Apply' to save any changes.

If you're determined to strip everything then you'll find advice in the RT Seven Lite forums. The thread here may give you more ideas.

Add customisations

Creating a custom version of Windows doesn't have to involve making scary decisions about components. In the Customisation tab, you're able to add your own screensavers, Windows Themes, wallpaper images and gadgets.

It's also possible to set a new Windows log-in screen, although you need to be careful: the JPEG file must be less than 250kB in size, and it should be in one of the resolutions displayed by RT Seven to ensure it's not distorted.

The confusingly named Media Sounds section lets you change your Windows system sounds to alternatives in WAV format. Click 'Documents' and you can even save important files that you'd like to be installed by default as a part of Windows. Just click 'Add' to choose them. And again, click 'Apply' when you're done to save your customisations.

Burn a DVD

Once you're happy with your customisations and tweaks, it's time to burn the finished results to a DVD. Click 'Log | Commit' to update the image first, then choose the ISO-Bootable section for the functions you need.

First choose what you'd like to do in the Select a Mode list. You can create an ISO image, burn an existing image, create a bootable USB flash drive and so on. We'll select Direct Burn to create a custom Windows 7 DVD.

Find a writable DVD, place it in the appropriate drive, then choose that drive in the Device box if it's not already selected. Enter a volume name and burn speed for the disc, then click 'Direct Burn' to finish.

That's it, you're finished: you've made a custom version of Windows 7. We'd recommend you try it out in a virtual machine first, but otherwise your faster, optimised Windows 7 will be ready and waiting for the next time you need to reinstall.