From Windows 1.0 to Windows 10: A history of Microsoft's signature PC software

June 24 2021, by Brett Molina, Usa Today

Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

On Thursday, PC owners got a first look at the future of Windows.

Microsoft hosted an event Thursday detailing what's next for Windows 11, the operating system that has helped power personal computers since

the '80s.

Last month during the tech giant's Build developers conference, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella teased Windows 11 during his keynote address, noting he has been testing it out for the last several months and is "incredibly excited" about its prospects.

A preview of Windows 11, expected to be the next version of the operating software, reportedly leaked, featuring details such as updates to the Start button, a new startup sound and a centered menu.

As we learn more about Windows 11, let's take a look back and how the operating system has changed.

Windows 1.0

Release date: November 1985

Key features: Microsoft moves away from MS-DOS with its first operating system that featured a [graphical user interface](#), which allowed users to use a mouse to point and click on tasks instead of typing commands. The first version of Windows arrived about two years after Apple launched its first Macintosh computer.

Windows 2.0

Release date: December 1987

Key features: The follow-up introduced resizable [windows](#) for applications users could overlap with one another. It also added more color options.

Windows 3.0

Release date: May 22, 1990

Key features: PCs running 3.0 received a big boost in memory. It meant users could multitask with multiple apps more efficiently, and apps overall ran faster. The interface was revamped to add more consistent colors and readability. It also introduced this little game you may have heard of called Solitaire.

Windows 95

Release date: August 24, 1995

Key features: Microsoft went all out promoting this next version of Windows: Special sections in newspapers, ads featuring the Rolling Stones song "Start Me Up," and a Windows 95 Video Guide with "Friends" stars Jennifer Aniston and Matthew Perry.

So what did it offer? It marked the biggest shift in Windows' user interface, adding the Start button and Taskbar to help users easily find applications. It also added the option to right click on the mouse for additional tools such as edit, copy and paste.

Windows 98

Release date: June 25, 1998

Key features: The next version of Windows introduced USB support, opening the door for third-party PC accessories. It also added new troubleshooting wizards and the ability to view DVDs or broadcast TV. It was also the last rooted in Microsoft's original MS-DOS system.

Windows XP

Release date: October 25, 2001

Key features: Microsoft had another hit on its hands with an operating system boasting the longest shelf life of any Windows platform. In 2014, 13 years after its launch, it was still the second most popular operating system. It included built-in wireless networking support as well as improvements in Internet tools and handling music, videos and photos.

Windows Vista

Release date: January 30, 2007

Key features: The maligned operating software overhauled the interface and introduced a redesigned search function and a visual style called Aero. However, Microsoft quickly shifted away from Vista as issues with slowness and incompatibility hampered adoption and more computer owners clung to XP.

Windows 7

Release date: October 22, 2009

Key features: Microsoft appeared to right the ship after the Vista debacle with Windows 7. Top features included a revamped taskbar, improvements to media options, alerts for system updates that were less disruptive, and support for multitouch options.

Windows 8

Release date: October 26, 2012

Key features: This update embraces a more mobile world, adding touch-friendly tiles representing various apps and other features. It's also

unified to work on tablets, laptops and desktop computers. One big problem: it killed the Start menu.

Windows 10

Release date: July 29, 2015

Key features: OK, nothing is ever really dead, as the Start menu gets a second life with Windows 10. Microsoft also provided prime attention to Cortana, its own personal digital assistant. It also introduced the web browser Microsoft Edge, the eventual replacement for Internet Explorer.

(c)2021 U.S. Today
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.