Article ID: 918342 - Last Review: December 11, 2007 - Revision: 3.5

How to change the Volume Licensing product key on a Windows XP-based or a Windows Server 2003-based computer

> ℹ️ **System Tip**   ✕
>
> This article applies to a different version of Windows than the one you are using. Content in this article may not be relevant to you. Visit the Windows 7 Solution Center

Warning The steps in this article only apply to Volume License media. If you follow these steps on OEM media or on retail media, you will not change the product key.

INTRODUCTION

When you use a *leaked* product key in a Volume Licensing installation to install Microsoft Windows XP or Microsoft Windows Server 2003 on multiple computers, various issues may occur.

Note A *leaked* product key is a product key that is available to the general public.

For example, you may not be able to install Windows service packs or to automatically obtain updates from the Windows Update Web site. You may experience the symptoms that are described in the following Microsoft Knowledge Base articles when you install a Windows service pack:

326904 (http://support.microsoft.com/kb/326904/) You receive a "The product key used to install Windows is invalid" error message 883254 (http://support.microsoft.com/kb/883254/) You receive a "The product key used to install Microsoft Windows may not be valid" error message when you try to install Windows XP Service Pack 2 842196 (http://support.microsoft.com/kb/842196/) "The product key used to install Microsoft Windows may not be valid" error message when you try to install a Windows update in Windows Server 2003 This article describes how to change the Windows XP or Windows Server 2003 Volume Licensing product key after a Volume Licensing installation. For this procedure, you can use the Windows Activation Wizard graphical user interface (GUI) or a Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI) script. The Activation Wizard method may be easier. However, you may prefer the script method if you must change the product key for multiple computers.

MORE INFORMATION

Use the Activation Wizard

Important This section, method, or task contains steps that tell you how to modify the registry. However, serious problems might occur if you modify the registry incorrectly. Therefore, make sure that you follow these steps carefully. For added protection, back up the registry before you modify it. Then, you can restore the registry if a problem occurs. For more information about how to back up and restore the registry, click the following article number to view the article in the Microsoft Knowledge Base: 322756 (http://support.microsoft.com /kb/322756/) How to back up and restore the registry in Windows

If you do not have to change many Volume Licensing product keys, you can use the Activation Wizard.

Note We recommend that you run System Restore on Windows XP to create a new restore point before you follow these steps. For information about how to create a restore point by using System Restore, see the "To Create a Restore Point" help topic in Help and Support.

1. Click **Start**, click **Run**, type **regedit**, and then click **OK**.
2. In the left pane, locate and then click the following registry subkey: **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\WindowsNT\Current Version\WPAEvents**
3. In the right pane, right-click **OOBETimer**, and then click **Modify**.
4. Change at least one digit of the **OOBETimer** value to deactivate Windows.
5. Click **Start**, click **Run**, type the following command, and then click **OK**:   **%systemroot%\system32\oobe\msoobe.exe /a**
6. Click **Yes, I want to telephone a customer service representative to activate Windows**, and then click **Next**.
7. Click **Change Product key**, type the new product key in the **New key** boxes, and then click **Update**.

   Note If the previous Activation Wizard screen appears again, click **Remind me later**, and then restart the computer.
8. Repeat steps 6 and 7 to verify that Windows is started. Click **OK** when you receive the following message: Windows is already activated. Click OK to exit.
9. Install any Windows service packs that you want to install.

   Note If you cannot restart Windows after you install a service pack, press F8 when you restart the computer, click **Last Known Good Configuration**, and then repeat this procedure.

Use a script

You can create a WMI script that changes the Volume Licensing product key, and then deploy this script in a startup script. The ChangeVLKey2600.vbs and ChangeVLKeySP1 sample scripts use the new Volume Licensing key that you want to use, in a five-part alphanumeric form, as a single argument. We recommend that you use the ChangeVLKey2600.vbs script on Windows XP-based computers that are not running Service Pack 1 (SP1) or a later service pack. We also recommend that you use the ChangeVLKeySP1.vbs script on Windows XP-based computers that are running SP1 or a later service pack. These scripts perform the following functions:

- They remove the hyphen characters (-) from the five-part alphanumeric product key.
- They create an instance of the **win32_WindowsProductActivation** class.
- They call the **SetProductKey** method with the new Volume Licensing product key.

You can create a batch file or a file that uses either of the following sample scripts together with the new product key as an argument. Then, you can deploy that file as part of a startup script or you can run the file from the command line to change the product key on a single computer.

For more information about how to script the product key, visit the following Microsoft Web site: http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/bb457096.aspx (http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/bb457096.aspx)

ChangeVLKeySP1.vbs

```
' ' WMI Script - ChangeVLKey.vbs ' ' This script changes the product key on the computer. ' '*********************************************************** ON ERROR
RESUME NEXT if Wscript.arguments.count<1 then Wscript.echo "Script can't run without VolumeProductKey argument" Wscript.echo "Correct usage: Cscript ChangeVLKey.vbs ABCDE-FGHIJ-
KLMNO-PRSTU-WYQZX" Wscript.quit end if Dim VOL_PROD_KEY VOL_PROD_KEY = Wscript.arguments.Item(0) VOL_PROD_KEY = Replace(VOL_PROD_KEY,"-","") 'remove hyphens if any for each Obj
in GetObject("winmgmts:{impersonationLevel=impersonate}").InstancesOf ("win32_WindowsProductActivation") result = Obj.SetProductKey (VOL_PROD_KEY) if err <> 0 then WScript.Echo
Err.Description, "0x" & Hex(Err.Number) Err.Clear end if Next
```

ChangeVLKey2600.vbs

```
' ' WMI Script - ChangeVLKey.vbs ' ' This script changes the product key on the computer. ' '*********************************************************** ON ERROR
RESUME NEXT if Wscipt.arguments.count<1 then Wscript.echo "Script can't run without VolumeProductKey argument" Wscript.echo "Correct usage: Cscript ChangeVLKey.vbs ABCDE-FGHIJ-
KLMNO-PRSTU-WYQZX" Wscript.quit end if Dim VOL_PROD_KEY VOL_PROD_KEY = Wscript.arguments.Item(0) VOL_PROD_KEY = Replace(VOL_PROD_KEY,"-","") 'remove hyphens if any Dim WshShell
Set WshShell = WScript.CreateObject("WScript.Shell") WshShell.RegDelete "HKLM\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\WPAEvents\OOBETimer" 'delete OOBETimer registry value
for each Obj in GetObject("winmgmts:{impersonationLevel=impersonate}").InstancesOf ("win32_WindowsProductActivation") result = Obj.SetProductKey (VOL_PROD_KEY) if err <> 0 then
WScript.Echo Err.Description, "0x" & Hex(Err.Number) Err.Clear end if Next
```

You can use the ChangeVLKeySP1.vbs script from a command line by performing the following action:

Click **Start**, click **Run** type the following command, and then click **OK**:   **c:\changevlkeysp1.vbs** *ab123-123ab-ab123-123ab-ab123*   **Note** In this command, *ab123-123ab-*

ab123-123ab-ab123 is a placeholder that represents the new product key.

APPLIES TO

- Microsoft Windows XP Professional
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003, Datacenter Edition (32-bit x86)
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003, Datacenter x64 Edition
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003, Enterprise Edition (32-bit x86)
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003, Enterprise x64 Edition
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003, Standard Edition (32-bit x86)
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003, Web Edition
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 R2 Enterprise Edition (32-Bit x86)
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 R2 Enterprise x64 Edition
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 R2 Standard Edition (32-bit x86)
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 R2 Standard x64 Edition

Keywords: kbsetup kbregistry kbenv kbhowto KB918342

Get Help Now
Contact a support professional by E-mail, Online, or Phone

Microsoft Support

Microsoft
©2010 Microsoft