



I've always liked trying different operating systems. The trouble is, I don't always have a spare PC laying around to do this.

I could go through the effort of installing a second hard drive and using it as the home for the new OS. The trouble with that is...well, the trouble! Who really wants to open the case of their PC and perform a type of "techno brain surgery"? Did you ever see all those wires in there? Who knows what they all are? What if I do something wrong? I could end up opening someone's garage door in Lapland every time I click on a link.

There is always the old and daunting method of partitioning and re-formatting my existing hard drive, and using the "newly created" space to install and try the new OS. The issue with this is that it's risky. There is always the possibility that something could go wrong, and not only will

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the new OS not install properly, but the drive could be damaged or destroyed. Instead of having a cool system with dual operating systems, I could end up with nothing but a \$600 paper weight.

Besides all that, I've never been particularly good at that sort of thing. Like most people, I like my computing to be simple, straightforward, and most important of all, idiot proof.

Oh, if only someone would come up with a way to install and manage multiple operating systems that was simple and safe! It was during such a verbal tirade that a friend told me about Sun Virtual Box, the best OS management software I've heard of yet. As its name implies, it literally creates a "virtual" computer within your computer to run and manage multiple operating systems.

Getting it was simple enough, I just went to this URL for the [SUN Virtual Machine](#)

Installation was a breeze. It was nothing more than launching the downloaded file and following the simple steps outlined in the installation wizard. It was no different than installing a game or ordinary office software.

With all that out of the way, it was now time for the nerve racking stuff: installing a new OS!

When I first opened the Sun Virtual Box I got a window with only two things: a brief "welcome" message and an icon of a blue gear with the word "new" below it. The welcome message stated clearly that I was to click the blue gear to begin my OS installation. With tension in my stomach but optimism in my heart, I steadied my hand and clicked on the blue gear. What I got was a reassuring message:

***This wizard will guide you through the steps that are necessary to create a new virtual machine for VirtualBox.***

***Use the Next button to go the next page of the wizard and the Back button to return to the previous page.***

Ah, a wizard! My stomach immediately settled. It seems that Sun Virtual Box manages operating systems by creating a unique “virtual machine” for each one. The next window presented me with a dialogue box to name the new VM (virtual machine), and a drop-down list to select which OS was to be installed in this space. The selections offered were Microsoft Windows, Linux, Solaris, BSD, IBM OS/2, and “Other”.

I was trying Windows 7, so of course I chose the Microsoft Windows option. A “version” drop-down list allowed me to choose Win7.

The next window asked me to choose exactly how much of my machine's memory (RAM) would be allocated to my Win7 installation. This was easily done by dragging a “slider” graph further to the right for increasing memory allocation. I chose the recommendation of 512 MB.

The next step is where things got slightly tricky. The wizard needed me to “Select a hard disk image to be used as the boot hard disk of the virtual machine.” Not being the world's foremost tech guru, I wasn't quite sure what it was asking me. The wizard said I could create a new “hard disk” or use an existing one. I guessed that it needed disk space to boot Win7. I had nothing of the sort installed on my machine, so I bravely chose the “create new hard disk” option. This opened a “wizard within the wizard” to create this new space. “Fear not”, I thought to myself, “for this is a wizard, and, as long as I pay attention to what I'm doing, it can do me no harm”. I swallowed my fear, and moved on to the next step.

I was presented with two options for the size of the virtual hard disk image: Dynamically expanding storage, and Fixed size storage. Fortunately, the wizard provided brief but clear explanations of what this meant:

As the names suggest, the dynamically expanding space starts out very small, but grows in size as Win7 needs it. A limit is set on how large it will be permitted to grow.

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Fixed size storage is just that: a size is set and this space will neither grow or shrink.

I've always been kind of a "flexible" guy, so I chose the dynamically expanding option. I liked the idea of it "shrinking" to almost nothing when not in use. I've got a 35 GB hard drive, so I decided to allow the space to grow to about half of what I've got, or 17 GB.

The next step asked me to confirm the settings I just selected, and press finish. With a slight lump in my throat, I clicked the button, then crossed my fingers. One more final confirmation, and viola!! What I got next was a pleasant surprise: no whirring or clicking for five minutes, no smoke or fires, no...well, no anything! I was merely back at the Virtual Box opening window, this time with the newly created "Win7" virtual machine listed on the upper left. My heart momentarily soared, but I soon realized I had to "power up" this vm, and install Win7 into it.

The first step in doing this is to click a green arrow icon titled "start". Even someone with my limited ability could figure this out. Clicking this icon brought me to a splash screen informing me that I would have to press my right "Ctrl" key to move the cursor outside of the VM window. It seems that when you use your keyboard and mouse inside the VM window, it is "captured" by the Virtual Box. This was not complicated, but if I had not been informed of this, it would have drove me nuts!

The next step started the "First Run Wizard", which guided me through the installation of Win7. This went quickly and smoothly. In no time at all, I had completed the installation. Installing was just as easy through Sun Virtual Box as it would have been on any computer.

Now I'm able to run Win7 (as well as a couple of other operating systems I've since installed!) on my system almost effortlessly. So, if your like me, and want to experiment with different operating systems, and don't want to go through the trials and tribulations that used to go along with it, give Sun Virtual Box a try. You'll be glad you did.

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