

# Microsoft sets October release for Windows 8 (Update)

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Microsoft's new tablet Surface on display in Hollywood last month. Microsoft says its Windows 8 will be available to consumers in late October as part of the software giant's effort to ramp up its operating system for a variety of devices.

Microsoft's next-generation operating system will be available in October as the software giant strives to stay relevant in a blossoming mobile era centered on tablets and smartphones.

"This will be the biggest product and services launch year in our company's history," Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer said at an annual gathering of gadget makers and other partners in the Canada city of Toronto.

The new Windows 8 operating system will be available in August for computer, tablet or smartphone makers to build into hardware, according

to Microsoft.

Windows software designed to power the range of Internet-connected devices popular in modern lifestyles will be available to consumers as an update beginning in late October, the technology firm announced.

Microsoft reported that it has sold more than 630 million licenses of Windows 7, and that the software powers the majority of business desktop computers.

Windows 7 went public in October 2009.

Communications manager Brandon LeBlanc said Windows 8 will be available in 109 languages across 231 markets worldwide.

It "is simply the biggest deal for this company in at least 17 years," Ballmer told the gathering at the annual Worldwide Partner Conference, referring to the time since the launch of the game-changing Windows 95 operating system.

"It's the glue; it's the foundation of everything Microsoft is built on."

The latest version of the operating system that is the norm for personal computers will also be used on many smartphones and tablet computers, including Microsoft's own Surface tablet to be launched this year.

The Redmond, Washington-based firm has gone on record stating that Surface tablets would hit the market when the Windows 8 operating system became publicly available.

Windows 8 allows users readily to store and share personal data among various devices under the "SkyDrive" cloud computing service.

Rivals Apple and Google offer such services, which let people store digital data on servers in the Internet "cloud" and access files from devices of their choosing.

The new Microsoft system will support a wider range of devices, including touch- and stylus-based smartphones and tablet PCs as well as desktop and laptop machines.

Versions of Windows 8 have been tailored for chips used to power various mobile devices.

The software giant has been trying to expand its presence in the booming market for smartphones and tablets, which is currently dominated by Apple and Google.

Microsoft said separately it would release a new version of its popular Office software suite called Office 365 Open, which allows its partners to resell.

Microsoft also said it would acquire Perceptive Pixel, which makes large-scale, multi-touch displays.

The company makes what it calls "the world's largest projected capacitive, optically bonded multi-touch display," which is 82 inches (two meters) in size.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

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