

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Windows Server 2012 Essentials?

A: The latest version of Windows Small Business Server, Windows Server 2012 Essentials is a flexible, affordable, and easy-to-use server solution designed and priced for small businesses with up to 25 users and 50 devices that helps them reduce costs and be more productive. Windows Server 2012 Essentials is an ideal first server, and it can also be used as the primary server in a multi-server environment for small businesses. Windows Server 2012 Essentials enables small businesses to protect, centralize, organize and access their applications and information from almost anywhere using virtually any device. Additionally, Essentials has the ability to grow as your business grows, providing an elastic solution that allows you to purchase and then perform an in-place conversion to Windows Server 2012 Standard if your business needs change over time.

Customers can use Windows Server 2012 Essentials as a platform to run critical line-of-business applications and other on-premises workloads, as well as to provide an integrated management experience when running cloud-based applications and services, such as email, collaboration, online backup, and more.

In addition, Windows Server 2012 Essentials enables businesses to better protect their data through automated backup and restore capabilities, which provides the ability to recover from accidentally deleted or overwritten files, and to quickly recover and continue operations in the event of a disaster. And as business needs grow and change, Windows Server 2012 Essentials is able to grow as well, including the ability to perform an in-place upgrade to Windows Server 2012 Standard.

Q: Why did Microsoft create Windows Server 2012 Essentials?

A: There are roughly 36 million small and medium-size businesses (SMBs) worldwide with more than one PC, and many see IT as a strategic imperative to grow their business. SMBs are typically short on IT resources, but need powerful technology solutions similar to those used by even the largest companies. Building on the design philosophy of the current, award-winning Windows Small Business Server product, Windows Server 2012 Essentials provides small businesses with a flexible, affordable server solution that will help save time and money while significantly increasing employee productivity. Windows Server 2012 Essentials is the simplest way for small businesses to unleash the power of Windows Server 2012 and cloud-enable their IT.

Q: Why did Microsoft change the name of Windows Small Business Server Essentials to Windows Server Essentials?

A: Microsoft, along with its customers and partners, has enjoyed great success with Windows Small Business Server, and we are committed to continuing that success into the future. By elevating Essentials to a core edition of the Windows Server 2012 family, we more clearly communicate how it is positioned in the market relative to the other Windows Server editions, simplify our messaging to our customers and partners, and increase the level of visibility of the product and its unique value for the small business market.

Sales Market

Q: How are the IT needs of small business different from those of the midmarket or enterprise?



A: Small businesses typically have little or no in-house IT staff. They often rely on consultants or solution providers. Windows Server 2012 Essentials was developed with this difference in mind, providing flexible, reliable IT infrastructure that “just works” and an ideal set of tools to help technology consultants serve small business clients. Windows Server 2012 Essentials provides an end-to-end integrated setup that installs and configures many of the roles and features of Windows Server 2012 according to best practices configuration for small business environments. This provides customers with immediate out-of-the-box value and productivity. Essentials has also been designed to cloud-enable IT for small businesses, making it possible to more easily leverage the growing ecosystem of online applications and services, such as Microsoft’s online backup offering and Office 365.

Q: Who are the target customers for Windows Server 2012 Essentials?

A: Windows Server 2012 Essentials offers an affordable first-server option and can be used as the primary infrastructure server in a multi-server environment. It is designed so that it can be easily deployed and managed by individuals within organizations where there are limited in-house IT skills. It is optimized to let small businesses run applications on-premises or take advantage of the growing number of online applications and services such as Office 365 which provides email and collaboration, as well as other software that many companies around the world are using today.

Product Information

Q: What is included with Windows Server 2012 Essentials?

A: Windows Server 2012 Essentials incorporates best-of-breed 64-bit product technologies to deliver a server environment well suited for the vast majority of small businesses. The product technologies include:

- **Server Operating System:** Windows Server 2012 product technologies provide the core of Windows Server 2012 Essentials. For more information, visit the Windows Server 2012 website (<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsserver2012>). Windows Server 2012 Essentials provides an end-to-end integrated setup that installs and configures many of the roles and features of Windows Server 2012 according to best practices configuration for small business environments. This provides customers with immediate out-of-the-box value and productivity.
- **Data Protection:** Windows Server 2012 Essentials leverages several new features available in Windows Server 2012 to provide greatly improved data protection capabilities. The new Storage Spaces (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/hh831739.aspx>) feature allows customers to aggregate the physical storage capacity of disparate hard drives, dynamically add hard drives, and to create volumes with specified levels of resilience. Windows Server 2012 Essentials can perform complete system backups and bare-metal restores of the server itself as well as the client computers connected to the network—now with support for volumes larger than 2 terabytes. Additionally, Windows Azure Online Backup (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/hh831419.aspx>) can be used to protect files and folders in a cloud-based storage service that is managed by Microsoft. Windows Server 2012 Essentials also centrally manages and configures the new File History feature of Windows 8 clients, helping users to recover from accidentally deleted or overwritten files without requiring administrator assistance.
- **Anywhere Access:** Remote Web Access provides a stream-lined, touch-friendly browser experience for accessing applications and data from virtually anywhere they have an Internet connection using almost any device. Windows Server 2012 Essentials also provides an updated Windows Phone app and a new modern app for Windows 8 clients, allowing users to intuitively connect to, search across, and access files and folders on the server; files are also automatically cached for offline access and synchronized when a



connection to the server becomes available. Windows Server 2012 Essentials turns setting up virtual private networking (VPN) into a painless wizard-driven process of just a few clicks, and simplifies the management of VPN access for users. Client computers can leverage a VPN connection to remotely join the Essentials environment without the need to come into the office.

- **Health Monitoring:** Windows Server 2012 Essentials monitors its own health status and the status of client computers running Windows 7, Windows 8, and Mac OS X version 10.5 and above. Health status notifies you of issues or problems related to computer backups, server storage, low disk space, and more.
- **Workload Flexibility:** Windows Server 2012 Essentials has been designed to allow customers the flexibility to choose which applications and services run on-premises and which run in the cloud. In previous versions, Windows Small Business Server Standard included Exchange Server as a component product, which added expense and complexity for customers who wished to leverage cloud-based messaging and collaboration services. With Windows Server 2012 Essentials, customers can take advantage of the same integrated management experience whether they choose to run an on-premises copy of Exchange Server, subscribe to a hosted Exchange service, or subscribe to Office 365.
- **Extensibility:** Windows Server 2012 Essentials builds on the extensibility model of Windows SBS 2011 Essentials, which allows other software vendors to add capabilities and features to the core product, and adds a new set of Web Services APIs. It also maintains compatibility with the existing [software development kit](#) (SDK) and [Add-Ins](#) created for Windows SBS 2011 Essentials.

Q: Why would I want a hybrid server versus just running everything online (or in the cloud)?

A: It really comes down to customer preference. Some small business owners may feel comfortable with everything online (or in the cloud). Others, typically those who have already invested in client or client-server line-of-business (LOB) applications, will be more comfortable having either an on-premises application server, such as Windows Server 2012 Standard. Yet another segment may be best served by a solution such as Windows Server 2012 Essentials, which gives them the flexibility to run software on-premises and online (in the cloud). Microsoft is delighted to be able to offer options for a wide range of customer and partner preferences.

Q: Which applications would I be more likely to run on-premises and which ones would I want to run online (in the cloud)?

A: Within the small business segment there is a wide variety of applications, and how they are deployed varies by industry and country. For example, if you're in financial services, you may have some regulatory requirements to maintain records on-site at your business, and so you might prefer a traditional computing approach. If you're a small real estate office, you may not face the same requirements, and so you might be more likely to look at running both local and online software. The benefit of Windows Server 2012 Essentials is that it's an affordable first server that lets you do traditional computing, online (cloud) computing, or both—according to your preferences and needs.

Q: How does Windows Server 2012 Essentials compare with Windows Server Foundation?

A: The two products are similar in that both address the needs of small businesses. Both are considered low-price offerings, and will ship primarily through OEM partners. The key differences come down to the level of IT skill required to deploy and manage them.

Windows Server 2012 Essentials is designed primarily to be a first-server option for small business customers who are typically constrained by limited IT skills and value a pre-configured environment and lower operating costs. As such, small businesses may handle deployment and management on their own or outsource to a partner.



Windows Server Foundation, on the other hand, is considered a “general purpose server” for up to 15 user accounts, providing a rich set of entry level capabilities for small businesses. It tends to require a greater level of IT skill to design, implement, and manage a custom solution. Windows Server Foundation customers are more likely to employ a solutions provider or other partner to help with those aspects.

Q: If I have less than 15 users, how do I decide which version is right for me?

A: Counting users is one way to do it, but the more relevant considerations will be your IT requirements and the level of IT skill within your organization. If you’re a small business with limited in-house skills, Windows Server 2012 Essentials is an appropriate option. It’s simple, affordable, and easy to manage, and has been tailored to address common small business IT scenarios. Windows Server 2012 Essentials is the ideal solution if you plan to expand your business capabilities through the cloud as it is designed to facilitate your connection to online services. On the other hand, if you have some level of in-house IT skills and want the ability to tailor server roles to their unique environments, then Windows Server Foundation is potentially better suited to your business.

Q: Will there be a next version of Windows Small Business Server 2011 Standard?

A: No. Windows SBS 2011 Standard, which includes Exchange Server and SharePoint Foundation as component products, will be the final such Windows Server offering. Windows Server 2012 Essentials has been designed to allow customers the flexibility to choose which applications and services run on-premises and which run in the cloud. With Windows Server 2012 Essentials, customers can take advantage of the same type of integrated management experience whether they choose to run an on-premises copy of Exchange Server, subscribe to a hosted Exchange service, or subscribe to Office 365.

Q: What will Windows SBS 2011 Standard customers with Software Assurance receive?

A: If you have Software Assurance on Windows SBS 2011 Standard, you will receive one Windows Server 2012 Standard license and one Exchange Server 2010 Standard license. Customers with current Software Assurance will receive the above licensing grant. This grant will be reflected upon your agreement renewal; however you are entitled to use the granted product upon its availability.

Q: How long will customers be able to purchase Windows Small Business Server 2011 Standard?

A: Windows Small Business Server 2011 Standard will remain available through the OEM channel until December 31, 2013, and will remain available in all other current channels until June 30, 2013. In addition, the Windows Small Business Server 2011 CAL Suite will remain available through the OEM channel until December 31, 2016, and will remain available in all other current channels until June 30, 2016. CALs will no longer be available after those dates.

Q: What is the recommended solution for customers who require on-premises messaging and collaboration services as well as the latest version of Microsoft products?

A: The latest versions of Windows Server, Exchange Server, and SharePoint Server can be used together to provide customers with a robust, scalable on-premises solution for messaging and collaboration. Additionally, these server solutions can be deployed as either physical or virtual workloads. For example, a complete virtualized environment running on a single physical server can be created by combining a copy of Windows Server 2012 Standard and a copy of Windows Server 2012 Essentials. A single license of Standard allows it to run as a Hyper-V host and support two additional virtual operating system environments, one of which could be used to run Exchange Server and the other could be used to run another workload, such as a line-of-business application. Essentials can also run as a virtual operating system environment on the same physical server to provide the core services for managing, monitoring, and helping to keep the entire environment protected and secure.

Q: Will there be a next version of Windows Home Server?



A: No. Windows Home Server has seen its greatest success in small office/home office (SOHO) environments and among the technology enthusiast community. For this reason, Microsoft is combining the features that were previously only found in Windows Home Server, such as support for DLNA-compliant devices and media streaming, into Windows Server 2012 Essentials and focusing our efforts into making Windows Server 2012 Essentials the ideal first server operating system for both small business and home use—offering an intuitive administration experience, elastic and resilient storage features with Storage Spaces, and robust data protection for the server and client computers.

Q: How long will customers be able to purchase Windows Home Server 2011?

A: Windows Home Server 2011 will remain available in all current channels until December 31, 2013. Additionally, under the standard Microsoft embedded OS licensing terms, select OEM partners may choose to continue offering WHS 2011-based appliances for an extended period of time.

Running Line-of-Business Applications

Q: What applications can I run on Windows Server 2012 Essentials?

A: Almost all Windows Server 2012 applications should run on Windows Server 2012 Essentials. Windows Server 2012 Essentials differs from Windows Server 2012 primarily in that several of the roles and features of Windows Server are automatically installed and configured according to best practices for a small business environment. In some cases, an application that is designed to run on Windows Server 2012 may require that specific roles and/or features are not enabled. See the manufacturer’s product information for specific details.

Q: Will Windows Server 2012 Essentials work with all editions of Windows 7 and Windows 8 client software?

A: Yes, you can access Windows Server 2012 Essentials with all versions of Windows 7 and Windows 8. For editions such as Home, which does not have domain join capability, the Launchpad and other attempts to access the network will prompt for a user name and password (whereas this does not happen in Professional and higher editions).

Q: Will there be a next version of the Windows Small Business Server 2011 Premium Add-on?

A: No. The Windows SBS 2011 Premium Add-on, which includes SQL Server 2008 R2 Standard for Small Business, will be the final version of that offering. SQL Server 2012 does not offer a Small Business edition, and therefore future versions of the Premium Add-on will not be offered.

Q: What is the recommended solution for customers who are looking for a “premium” small business server offering?

A: The latest versions of the component products of the Premium Add-on, Windows Server 2012 Standard and SQL Server 2012 Standard, can be used together in a Windows Server 2012 Essentials environment to provide a robust, scalable platform for running line-of-business applications and other workloads, such as Exchange Server and SharePoint Server. Other Microsoft offerings, such as Windows MultiPoint Server, can also be combined with Windows Server 2012 Essentials to provide an even more comprehensive solution that can address a wide range of customer needs.

For example, a complete virtualized environment running on a single physical server can be created by combining a copy of Windows Server 2012 Standard and a copy of Windows Server 2012 Essentials. A single license of Standard allows it to run as a Hyper-V host and support two additional virtual operating system environments, one of which could be used to run Exchange Server and the other could be used to run another workload, such as a line-of-business application. Essentials can also run as a virtual operating system environment on the same



physical server to provide the core services for managing, monitoring, and helping to keep the entire environment protected and secure.

Q: What will Windows SBS 2011 Premium Add-on customers with Software Assurance receive?

A: If you have Software Assurance on the Windows SBS 2011 Premium Add-on, you will receive one Windows Server 2012 Standard license and one SQL Server 2012 Standard license. This grant will be reflected upon your agreement renewal; however you are entitled to use the granted product upon its availability.

Q: How long will customers be able to purchase the Windows Small Business Server 2011 Premium Add-on?

A: Windows Small Business Server 2011 Premium Add-on will remain available through the OEM channel until December 31, 2013, and will remain available in all other current channels until June 30, 2013. In addition, the Windows Small Business Server 2011 CAL Suite for Premium Add-on will remain available through the OEM channel until December 31, 2016, and will remain available in all other current channels until June 30, 2016. CALs will no longer be available after those dates.

Software Development Kit (SDK)

Q: Why are you providing a software development kit for Windows Server 2012 Essentials?

A: We have made the software development kit available on the Microsoft Developer Network so software partners can easily integrate applications and extend the functionality of the Dashboard and Remote Web Access. We estimate that this will allow partners and customers to perform as much as 80 percent of their typical IT management tasks through one console, saving significant time and resources.

Q: Are add-ins developed with the SDK available for Windows SBS 2011 Essentials compatible with Windows Server 2012 Essentials?

A: Yes.

Q: How do I access the SDK?

A: Please visit the Windows Server 2012 Essentials TechCenter, <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sbs/jj159331>.

System Requirements

Q: What are the system requirements for Windows Server 2012 Essentials?

A: For a complete set of requirements, please visit <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/jj200132.aspx>.

Processor	Minimum of one 1.4 GHz x64 processor Maximum of two physical sockets
RAM	Minimum: 2 GB Recommended: 4 GB Maximum: 64 GB
Hard Disk Space	Minimum One 160 GB disk drive



Support

Q: Who provides end customer support for Windows Server 2012 Essentials?

A: Support for Windows Server 2012 Essentials depends on the channel the customer purchases it through. If you obtain it through an OEM, the OEM will be the support system.

Microsoft Customer Service and Support (CSS) offers a number of support options for customers who have questions or concerns prior to deployment, or experience a problem during or after deployment. These options include online/self-help support, phone-based technical support, and professional support offerings.

Q: What online support options are available?

A: Customers have access to a variety of free online support tools at <http://www.support.microsoft.com> including:

- **Product Solution Centers** that contain support information by product, including common issues, how-to articles, troubleshooting tips, and the latest downloads.
- **Online Support webcasts** where online support customers can watch live presentations given by Microsoft experts, and participate in live Q&A chat sessions following each presentation.
- **Microsoft Technical Communities** that provide opportunities to interact with Microsoft employees, experts, and peers in order to share knowledge and news about Microsoft products and technologies. For Windows Server 2012 Essentials, please visit our forum at <http://social.technet.microsoft.com/Forums/en-US/winserveressentials/threads>.

Q: What is a professional support contract?

A: Microsoft Services provides professional support offerings that include pre-packaged support, proactive services to improve IT health, reactive services, and various levels of Support Account Management. Professional support offerings available to small and medium-size business customers include:

- **Essential Support**, a pre-packaged support offering that provides phone support, proactive support services, and access to online support tools for one fixed price.
- **Software Assurance**, a comprehensive maintenance and basic support offering providing a broad range of benefits including newly enhanced support services, deployment assistance, training tools, and the latest technology that can help minimize licensing costs and improve your business productivity

Q: What if I need live technical support? How do I reach a support representative?

A: Customers can access technical support from our industry-leading technical support staff via email, through live chats, or over the phone 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and in more than 40 different languages. Prices for these services will vary. Contact and pricing information is available at <http://www.support.microsoft.com>.