

Windows and Office

Disable Vista's User Account Control prompts while protecting your system

By [Greg Shultz](#)

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Takeaway: Annoyed by Vista's User Account Control (UAC) constant permissions-seeking? Greg Shultz explores a way to disable UAC's prompts while leaving its protection intact.

You may have already disabled Windows Vista's User Account Control (UAC) in order to avoid its regular "Windows needs your permission to continue" prompts. The only problem with disabling UAC is that once you turn it off, the doors are wide open for inadvertent mistakes or unauthorized changes that can destabilize your system — both of which can happen to even the most experienced computer user. Because of this potential danger, you may opt to leave UAC in place and suffer the "Are you sure?" prompts.

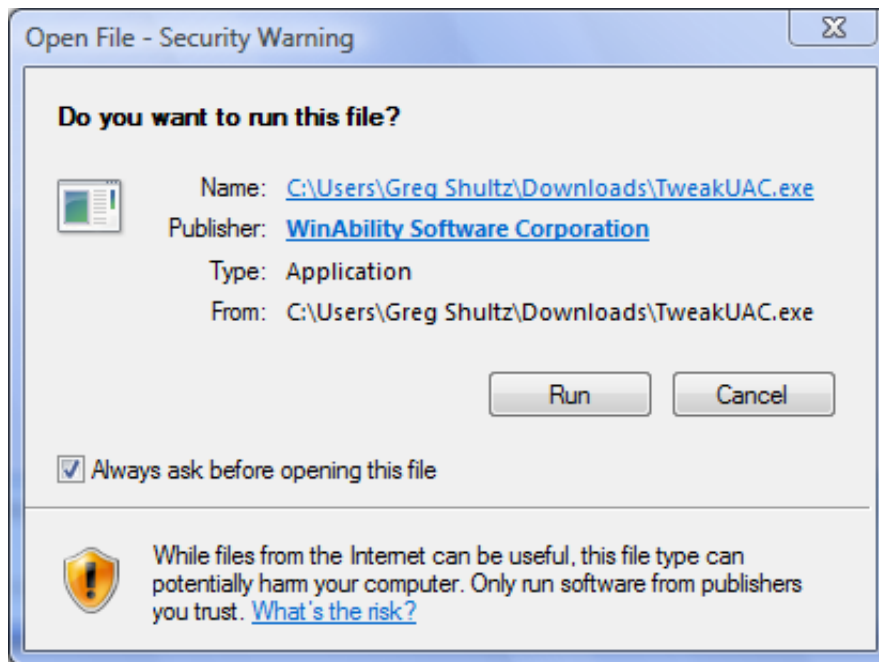
I recently discovered a more prudent way to disable UAC's prompts while leaving its protection intact by using a tool called [TweakUAC](#) from WinAbility Software. I stress the word *prudent* here because rather than completely disabling UAC, TweakUAC allows you to put UAC in a quiet mode.

In this edition of the Windows Vista Report, I'll introduce you to TweakUAC and describe how TweakUAC's quiet mode is safer than completely disabling UAC.

Using TweakUAC

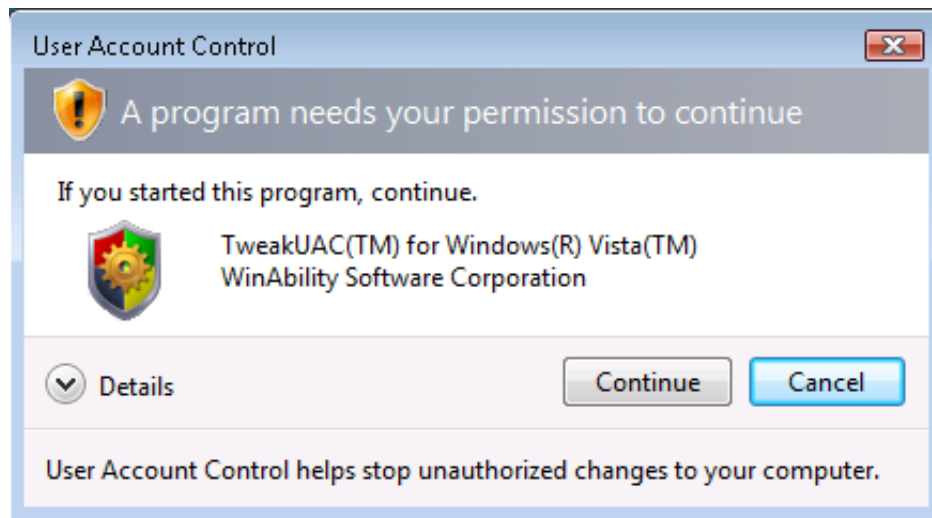
TweakUAC, which doesn't require installation, is very [PowerToys](#)-like in that it performs a single operation very well. Once you download and run TweakUAC's executable file, you'll see the Open File - Security Warning dialog box (**Figure A**), and then you'll see a UAC dialog box (**Figure B**). Click Continue.

Figure A



The Attachment Execution Services (AES) displays the Open File - Security Warning message because the operating system considers the file dangerous until you tell it otherwise.

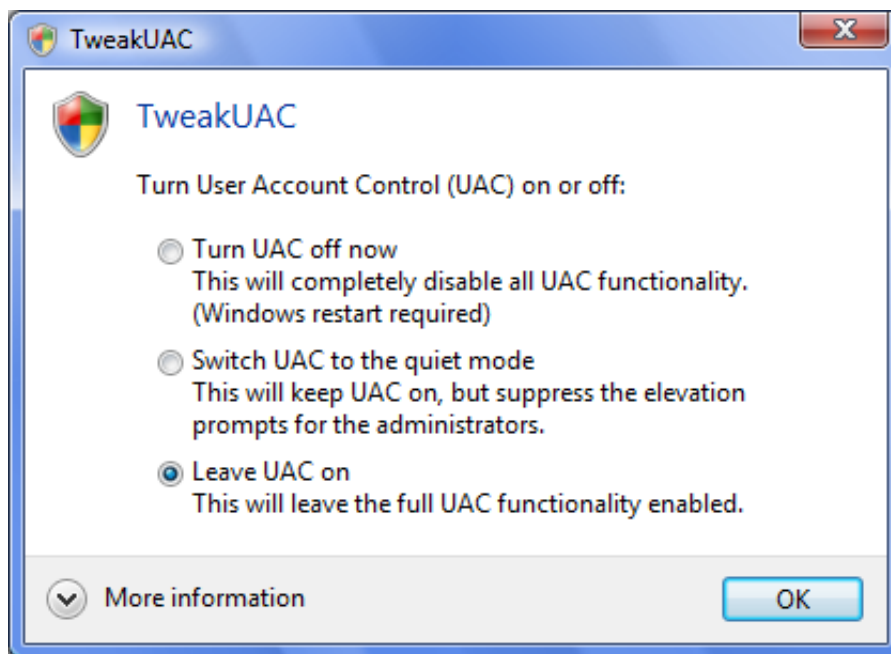
Figure B



Vista will display the User Account Control dialog box when you run TweakUAC.

The first time you run TweakUAC, you'll encounter the End User License Agreement dialog box, followed by the main TweakUAC dialog box (**Figure C**).

Figure C

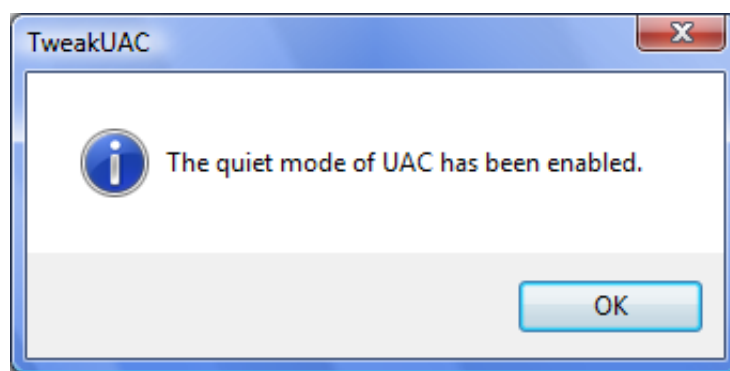


The main TweakUAC interface is a simple dialog box offering you three choices, including the safety precaution Leave UAC On.

The Turn UAC Off Now option will completely disable UAC, just like in the Control Panel's User Account tool. Selecting this option will require that you restart the system.

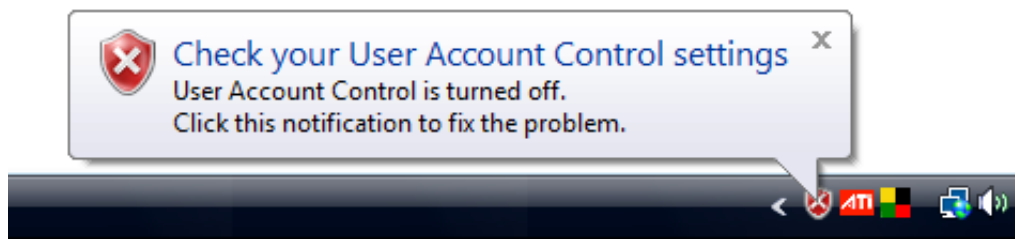
To switch UAC to quiet mode, click the Switch UAC To The Quiet Mode option and click OK. You'll see the TweakUAC dialog box (**Figure D**), which confirms this, and a Security Center icon and message balloon in the notification area (**Figure E**). The message balloon will fade away, but the Security Center icon will remain until you re-enable UAC.

Figure D



You receive a small confirmation dialog box when you enable quiet mode.

Figure E

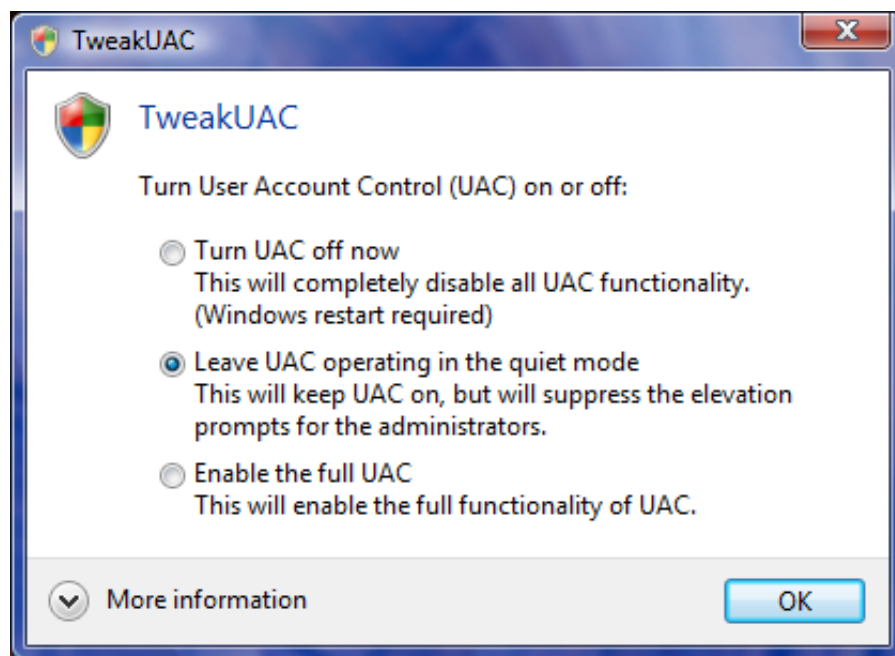


You will see a Security Center icon in the notification area, as well as a message balloon, when you enable quiet mode.

You can now perform most any task that would normally display a UAC, without having to deal with a “Windows needs your permission to continue” prompt. However, the main protective feature of UAC will still be in place. In other words, all applications will still run with the standard user permissions by default, and since TweakUAC’s quiet mode of operation only works on accounts with administrator privileges, those with standard user accounts will still encounter the UAC prompt.

If you decide later that you want to re-enable UAC, simply run TweakUAC again. The TweakUAC dialog box will look a little different (**Figure F**), with the default selection as Leave UAC Operating In The Quiet Mode. Select the Enable The Full UAC option.

Figure F



While the options are basically the same, the wording in the TweakUAC dialog box is a bit different.

What's your take?

Have you completely disabled UAC? If so, are you likely to re-enable it and begin using TweakUAC and its quiet mode?

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