

# When developing, do you turn off UAC in Vista?

Asked 16 years, 3 months ago    Modified 12 years, 5 months ago

Viewed 2k times

---



6

I didn't upgrade to Vista until May or so and one of the things I've always heard developers I know in real life say is "first thing you should do is turn off that UAC crap"



Well, I've left it on this whole time for a few reasons. First, just as a failsafe in case I do something idiotic like have a momentary lapse of reason and run an attachment from an email, or in case I view a site which hits some unpatched exploit. Second, as a big of an experiment to see how good or bad it really is.



Finally, I figure that it enforces some better practices. I used to develop every website in Windows directly in inetpub\wwwroot (Visual Studio .NET 2003 more or less required this) but now I develop them elsewhere because the UAC clickfest is a nightmare. I figure this is Microsoft's way of saying "you should *really* be doing it this way".

By way of another analogy - if you wrote a web app which runs on XP and 2000 just fine but requires 50 different security features of Server 2003 to be turned off, the real solution might be instead to just fix the application such

that it doesn't require the security features to be turned off.

But now I'm having to work with an app which is really really **NOT** designed to be developed outside of inetpub/wwwroot and so UAC is really a nuisance. It's beyond the scope of the project to rectify this. I want to stick to my guns and leave UAC on but I'm also worried about being so autopilot about clicking "Yes" or "Allow" three times every time I need to modify a file.

Am I just being hard headed? Do most developers on Vista leave the UAC on or off? And for the instance described above, is there a better/easier way?

windows-vista

uac

Share

Improve this question

Follow

edited Sep 24, 2008 at 17:23



Matt Hinze

13.7k ● 3 ● 36 ● 40

asked Sep 24, 2008 at 16:57



Tom Kidd

12.9k ● 20 ● 91 ● 134

23 Answers

Sorted by:

Highest score (default)



I think it is necessary to leave UAC on on a test machine, so you can see what a real user would see using your

12



app. However, I turn it off on my development machine since I find it distracting, and I trust myself enough to not need it.



(Hopefully your test machine != your dev machine right?)



All this being said, I support UAC, and I am not recommending anyone else turn it off, especially 'common users'.



Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 16:59

Follow



**GEOCHET**

21.3k ● 15 ● 77 ● 99

---

Well the thing that made me think of this recently was a web app I'm developing. The "testing" is on a QA server. It's a little different I suppose in that I'm not worried about what a customer could do to that machine, versus what they might have running on theirs. – [Tom Kidd](#) Sep 24, 2008 at 17:21

---



I code in a standard user account, with UAC turned on.

8

Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 28, 2008 at 0:51

Follow



**TraumaPony**

10.8k ● 13 ● 57 ● 75



---

No I do not close UAC.



5

Programming C# winform, and web with IIS. Database is progresql. No need to bother with UAC. Some program only require 1 authorization, not a big deal.



Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 16:58

Follow



[Patrick Desjardins](#)

141k ● 89 ● 294 ● 346



3

I keep UAC on. I find it useful to develop in an environment similar to my end user. That way if I write any code which is trying to read / write from restricted areas I will know about it quicker.



Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 18:21

Follow



[Mark Ingram](#)

73.5k ● 53 ● 177 ● 233



2

UAC is incredibly annoying at first when you get a new system. The problem is that when you first start out with a new install you have all kinds of programs to set up and settings to tweak. It seems like you see the UAC prompt every 5 minutes.



After a while, two things happen:



1. You're not setting up as much new stuff.
2. You've become a little more used to the prompt.

At this point UAC isn't so bad anymore. I have UAC on and I've only seen one or two prompts in the last couple weeks. That's right about perfect: if I see a prompt I wasn't expecting I know to make sure I *really* want to proceed.

I will argue that the 2nd effect kind of defeats the purpose. What they *should* do is have UAC disabled by default, but for the first month only. After the first month prompt you to turn UAC on, where the default option for someone who doesn't really read things is to turn it on. Then people aren't annoyed during their setup period, and it's easier to make an informed choice about what you want to do with UAC.

Share Improve this answer

edited Sep 24, 2008 at 17:17

Follow

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:08



Joel Coehoorn

415k ● 114 ● 577 ● 813

---

No one asked what you like or don't like about UAC.

– [GEOCHET](#) Sep 24, 2008 at 17:10

---

@Joel: I don't read your answer that way at all. It is just a long winded rant about how you would have designed UAC better than MS. It is largely off topic. – [GEOCHET](#) Sep 24, 2008 at 17:12

---

I was trying to include information that someone on the other side of the argument may not have fully considered. The last

paragraph is a little off-topic, though. – [Joel Coehoorn](#) Sep 24, 2008 at 17:13

---

I use the built-in Administrator account for the initial setup (no elevation required) and revert to a standard account after that. – [Zooba](#) Sep 28, 2008 at 1:13

---

@Zooba: there are reasons not to do that. Some installers work such that the installed program will then require elevation to start. Thus you're back to seeing an excessive number of UAC prompts. – [Joel Coehoorn](#) Sep 29, 2008 at 16:58

---



I leave it on

1

[Share](#) [Improve this answer](#)

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:00

[Follow](#)



[Darryl Braaten](#)

5,231 ● 4 ● 37 ● 50



I leave it on, but have it set to automatically elevate privileges when necessary. It's a fine distinction, but a distinction nonetheless.

1

[Share](#) [Improve this answer](#)

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:04

[Follow](#)



[David Hill](#)

4,142 ● 2 ● 25 ● 20





1

Services like Microsoft SQL Server runs with administrator privileges. Visual Studio on the other hand does not. Nor do most developer-tools.



I make heavy use of virtual machines to **1)** make sure my development environment is safe at all times, and **2)** to test out software with the potential of leaving my machine FUBAR. And **3)** to limit down-time, restoring my development environment, *"in case I do something idiotic like have a momentary lapse of reason and run an attachment from an email" :)*

Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:06

Follow



clipse

21.7k ● 37 ● 133 ● 170



1

I have been using Windows 2008 in my workstation following the advices on

<http://www.win2008workstation.com/wordpress/> and it

has worked great for me. I don't remember turning off UAC, but certainly I haven't suffered it, so I guess it's turned off.



As others have said, you do need to have test [virtual] machines that are configured as close as possible to the ones your users will have so you won't have any surprises deploying your app.

Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:16

Follow



Rodrigo Gómez

1,079 ● 9 ● 25



1



I think whether you do this or not should depend on the target audience for your application, although I can completely understand people disabling it.

If all your users run Vista with UAC disabled then I think you can get away with turning it off, but this probably isn't realistic--or advisable. At the other end of the spectrum, our applications are used by a vast number of people with every conceivable version and configuration of Windows from Win2k onwards, and obviously including Vista and Server 2008. Since we're an ISV with no control over our users' environments, or over policies governing their privileges and administration, I always leave UAC enabled--even though it annoys me beyond all reason at times--because then I know about any possible problems it might cause for people using our applications sooner rather than later.

Disclaimer: most of my actual coding time is spent on Windows XP, although I have a Vista 64-bit test machine under my desk which I use on a daily basis for testing. Generally I'll use this box around 20 - 30% of the time.

Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:21

Follow



Bart Read

2,757 ● 3 ● 22 ● 32





1

Developing or not developing - was the first thing I did after installing vista. Just seemed an annoying nuisance at best.



Share Improve this answer  
Follow

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:50



Scott

121 ● 1 ● 6



1

Instead of running antivirus to suck away my CPU cycles (I need as many as I can with RDPs and VMs running all the time). I just leave UAC on as a safeguard to double check and make sure only certain things run. It does more than that though, it also restricts programs access to sensitive areas, so a program basically can't trash your system without you allowing it through UAC. I have not had a problem yet and my system runs only what I need it to run, quickly and smoothly.



Share Improve this answer  
Follow

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:51



MetaGuru

43.7k ● 68 ● 195 ● 300



0

It's too annoying for me, it gets turned off as soon as I install Vista.



Share Improve this answer  
Follow

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:07



Erik Ross

2,183 ● 14 ● 18



0



I turn it off as soon as I install the OS. Security by endless modal dialogs is no security at all. Normal users just get used to clicking even more 'OK' buttons after a couple of weeks or so.

EDIT: Wow, down-voted huh? Must be some Microsoft employees around here...Of course it should remain on on a test machine, probably should have mentioned that.

Share Improve this answer

edited Sep 24, 2008 at 17:48

Follow

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 17:19



Ed Swangren

124k ● 24 ● 188 ● 268

Your third sentence almost made it sound as if you were saying "develop your app however you want, people will just have to get used to the security prompts" - which is not what you meant. Also, if security by dialogs isn't security, then what is? For what it's worth, Linux does the same thing.

– Tom Kidd Sep 24, 2008 at 17:48

@schnapple Linux does not do the same thing. It leaves sudo "unlocked" for a period of time after it's last use. Only if you don't use sudo within a certain amount of time will it prompt you for a password. – epochwolf Sep 24, 2008 at 18:25

@epochwolf: this is true. But couldn't it be argued that this is then less secure than Vista? – [Tom Kidd](#) Sep 25, 2008 at 17:33

---



0

I turn it off on computers that I am using.

When testing, I test in the target environment, which means I may have UAC on or off.



I see no benefit to developing with it on.



Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 18:02



Follow



[bruceatk](#)

5,138 ● 2 ● 27 ● 36

---

I wish when people mark you down they explain why. I believe testing needs to be done with it on and off and I guess I would need someone to explain why that is bad?? – [bruceatk](#) Oct 30, 2008 at 0:56

---



0



I find it extremely annoying and turn it off at all times, I trust myself enough to not have to have fail safes in place. If I screw up and run some dodgy application that's my bad and I'll live with the consequences. Meanwhile I'm not spending 5 minutes of my day clicking through some damn annoying popups.

Share Improve this answer

Follow

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 18:19



[Adam Gibbins](#)

363 ● 3 ● 9



0



I have it off, but that's because I trust myself entirely too much. Its funny though, it seems to make the average user (I live in Jourdanton TX, we have a lot of "average users" here in the middle of nowhere) afraid of the control panel, because it causes all these weird prompts to come up and wants their password every 5 minutes if they start to poke around.

That said, I think it depends on your level of expertise with the system. On your dev machine, yes, definitely turn the darn thing off. I haven't gone a day this week without needing to install or update some piece of software, and I don't like having to elevate myself to admin status to have to do that.

What I would *really* like is the ability to have it elevate for a period of time, or say automatically turn itself back on when I log off, so that I could do an entire session's worth of installing stuff without being bothered, and then be

secure again when I was done and (inevitably) had to restart the machine as seems to be common practice with windows installers now.

And all that ranting aside, I think for your test machine, it should definitely be on. Not because I necessarily agree with the feature (any more than I agree that the Administrator account should be disabled permanantly, I love that account way too much) but because the User is very likely to have it turned on, and you need to see your program through their eyes. This is especially true if your program is going to require elevation, say to change a setting or modify a certain directory, so that you can prompt your users to accept the UAC warning in your program, which adds an extra layer of comfort to the user I think.

Oh, and as for the one program, let me harp on you just slightly. Shouldn't the program have a define somewhere in the main header files that tells it where its "working directory" is? If this is already the case, then why is it so hard to change that working directory to somewhere else? If its not the case, shame on you, and you should go fix that. ^\_^ That would have saved you a lot of trouble.

-Nicholas

Share Improve this answer

Follow

answered Sep 26, 2008 at 7:41



Blank

7,188 ● 13 ● 51 ● 71



0



I'm running into issues where our build scripts do things like manipulate registry entries or add things to the GAC. We're trying to get away from this stuff but until we do it's there and requires privilege escalation. So the build scripts get run from an Administrator command window. The problem comes in when I open Visual Studio 2008 and try to build part of the application - I can't as a normal user because the output files can't be overwritten because the build in the Admin console produced the same files at a higher privilege level. It's causing me a lot of frustration and I'm thinking the best way is to turn UAC off for now but I'm very reluctant to do so.

Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 26, 2008 at 12:25

Follow



Ron

---

try running visual studio as admin – [Brian Leahy](#) Oct 29, 2008 at 23:55

---



0



Because I've got post-build scripts to copy executables into the Program Files directory for testing I run Visual Studio with elevated privileges.

One tip I've found that makes life easier, is that to quickly start a command prompt with elevated privileges you can:

1. press Window Key
2. type "cmd"

3. Press Ctrl+Shift+Enter
4. Left cursor key (with right pinky) to move to "Continue" button on UAC dialog
5. Enter

I always keep one open for launching my IDE and running build scripts.

The only downside I've found is that elevated windows don't interact with some of my window tweaking software like [KatMouse](#) and [Switcher](#).

Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 28, 2008 at 0:40

Follow



**Sam Hasler**

12.6k ● 10 ● 73 ● 106



0



No, but I do change some settings:

- Do not prompt for elevation if not in the administrators group.
- Elevate automatically if you are the [machine]\administrator



I do not put myself in the administrators group. Just a plain old user, with no elevation prompts.

Use Run As if developing/debugging web apps with development server

Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 28, 2008 at 0:45

Follow



Bill

2,451 ● 4 ● 22 ● 24



0



I code with UAC off. I found annoying to see all those popups when i open visual studio or staruml, or just want to change a setting in my machine. I have always installed a good internet security suite that kepted me "virus free" on my machine for long years and i don't see the point to have always an "are you sure" prompt on every task i do. I agree with Ed because everyone click ok.

Exemple : install a firewall to some member of your family. When they will be prompted if app XYZ can connect to the internet, they will click yes. They will not make the distinction between a good app and a spyware/virus. It's the same thing with UAC.

Share Improve this answer

answered Sep 28, 2008 at 1:01

Follow



David

141 ● 2



0



I leave UAC on, but have VS set to always run as admin. The only real reason why I do that though is that I mostly work on software that requires admin permissions to run anyway. (And yes, I know that should be the minority, but my app happens to be one of those -- it's a soft-realtime hardware controller.)





For general purpose apps, you must at least test with UAC enabled; while you could do that on a separate machine, it's easier to test on your dev machine. And the prompt isn't that much of an imposition, especially if you disable the "secure desktop" option (which reacts very slowly with most graphics cards when enabled).

Share Improve this answer

answered Mar 12, 2012 at 7:30

Follow



Miral

13k ● 4 ● 58 ● 100



-1



If you stay on Vista, turn off UAC and rely on Microsoft Security Essentials' real-time monitor to intercept anything that wants to alter your system. Or, upgrade to Win7, where you can leave UAC on and control the levels at which you want UAC to notify and interrupt the execution.



EDIT: It's very easy to exploit a Windows computer anyway, so what's the sense in having UAC turned on, if it really doesn't guarantee protection?

Share Improve this answer

edited Jul 26, 2012 at 18:48

Follow

answered Jul 26, 2012 at 14:25



Joe R.

2,042 ● 4 ● 38 ● 74

This is horrible advice. If you don't leave uAC on then you don't know if your program interacts poorly with it. Besides

you can tune Vista's UAC also. – [Security Hound](#) Aug 7, 2012 at 11:06

---

---