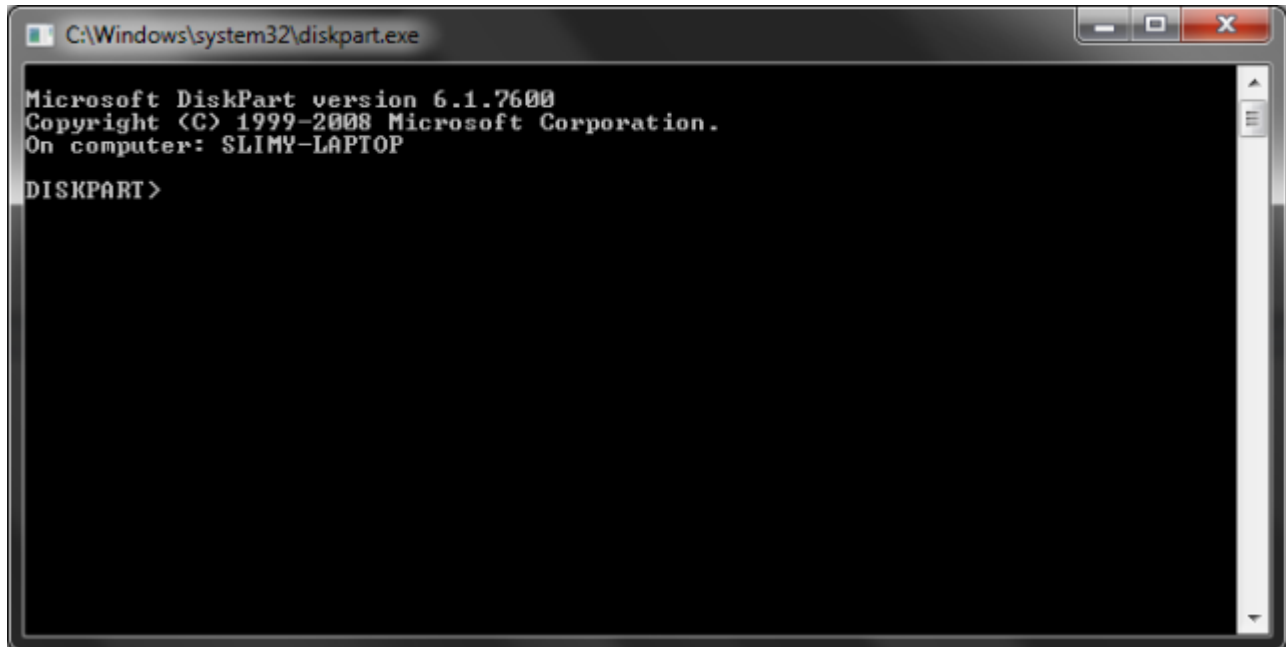


# How to create a bootable Windows 7 USB flash drive

Looking for a quicker way to install Windows 7 than via DVD? Try this.

by [Emil Protalinski](#) - Dec 10 2009, 5:05pm WEST

## Manual Creation

A screenshot of a Windows command prompt window titled "C:\Windows\system32\diskpart.exe". The window contains the following text: "Microsoft DiskPart version 6.1.7600", "Copyright (C) 1999-2008 Microsoft Corporation.", "On computer: SLIMY-LAPTOP", and "DISKPART >". The window has standard Windows window controls (minimize, maximize, close) in the top right corner.

```
C:\Windows\system32\diskpart.exe
Microsoft DiskPart version 6.1.7600
Copyright (C) 1999-2008 Microsoft Corporation.
On computer: SLIMY-LAPTOP
DISKPART >
```

Maybe you don't like that Microsoft violated the GPL with the first version of the above tool (the company has since GPLed the code), or you're old-school and just love using the command prompt. Regardless of what your reasons are for creating a bootable Windows 7 USB drive manually, we have the scoop on how to do it. First, open the command prompt (if you use UAC make sure to right click it and choose "Run as administrator"), type "diskpart" without the quotes, and hit enter. You can also get here by simply typing "diskpart" without the quotes into the Start Menu and hitting enter.

```
C:\Windows\system32\diskpart.exe
Microsoft DiskPart version 6.1.7600
Copyright (C) 1999-2008 Microsoft Corporation.
On computer: SLIMY-LAPTOP

DISKPART> list disk

   Disk ###  Status              Size               Free               Dyn  Gpt
   -----  -
   Disk 0    Online              298 GB             0 B
   Disk 1    Online              15 GB              0 B

DISKPART> select disk 1
Disk 1 is now the selected disk.

DISKPART> clean
DiskPart succeeded in cleaning the disk.

DISKPART> _
```

Now type "list disk" without the quotes and hit enter. Take a look at the Size column and figure out which disk number your USB drive is. Ours is number 1, so we're going to type "select disk 1" without the quotes and hit enter. Now we're going to wipe it by typing "clean" without the quotes and hitting enter (make sure to do a backup of the contents if you haven't already).

```
C:\Windows\system32\diskpart.exe
DiskPart succeeded in cleaning the disk.

DISKPART> create partition primary
DiskPart succeeded in creating the specified partition.

DISKPART> select partition 1
Partition 1 is now the selected partition.

DISKPART> active
DiskPart marked the current partition as active.

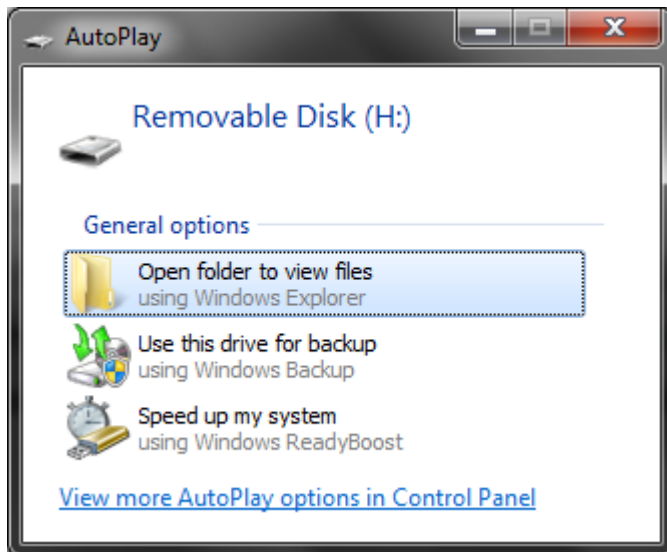
DISKPART> format fs=fat32
    100 percent completed
DiskPart successfully formatted the volume.

DISKPART> assign
DiskPart successfully assigned the drive letter or mount point.

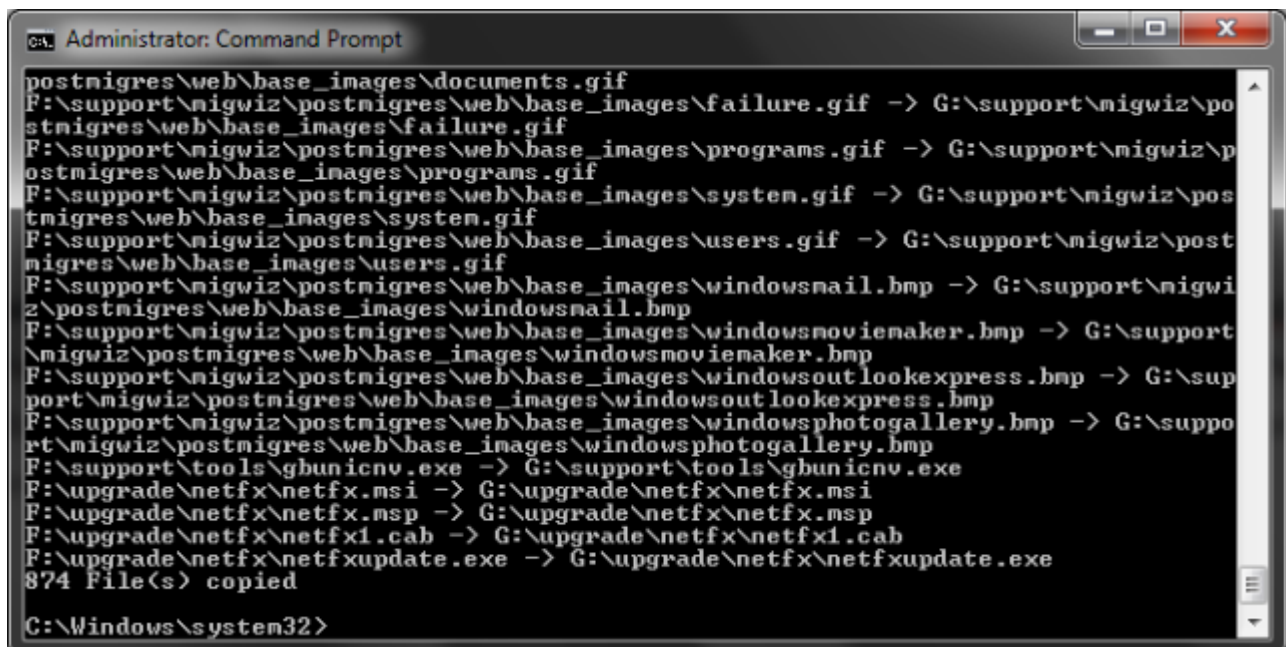
DISKPART> _
```

At this point we want to prepare the USB drive for the files and make sure it is bootable. Type "create partition primary" without the quotes and hit enter. Then type "select partition 1" without the quotes and hit enter. Next type "active" without the quotes and hit enter. Finally, type "format fs=fat32" without quotes and hit enter (if you choose to use ntfs, you'll later have to run the "Bootsect.exe /nt60 G:" command to put boot manager compatible files onto your USB flash drive to make it a bootable device). This one will take a while, so go grab a snack, we'll wait.

When that's done, type "assign" without the quotes and hit enter (this will assign a new drive letter to the USB flash drive).



An AutoPlay window like the one above will appear. Remember the drive letter (in our case it is H:), close the window, type "exit" without the quotes and hit enter. If you are working with an .ISO image, the best way to do this last part is to mount the file with a program like [Virtual Clone Drive](#). Alternatively, you can extract the files from the .ISO image and simply copy them to the USB drive, but since we've been using the command prompt up to this point, we'll show you how to do the last step with it as well.

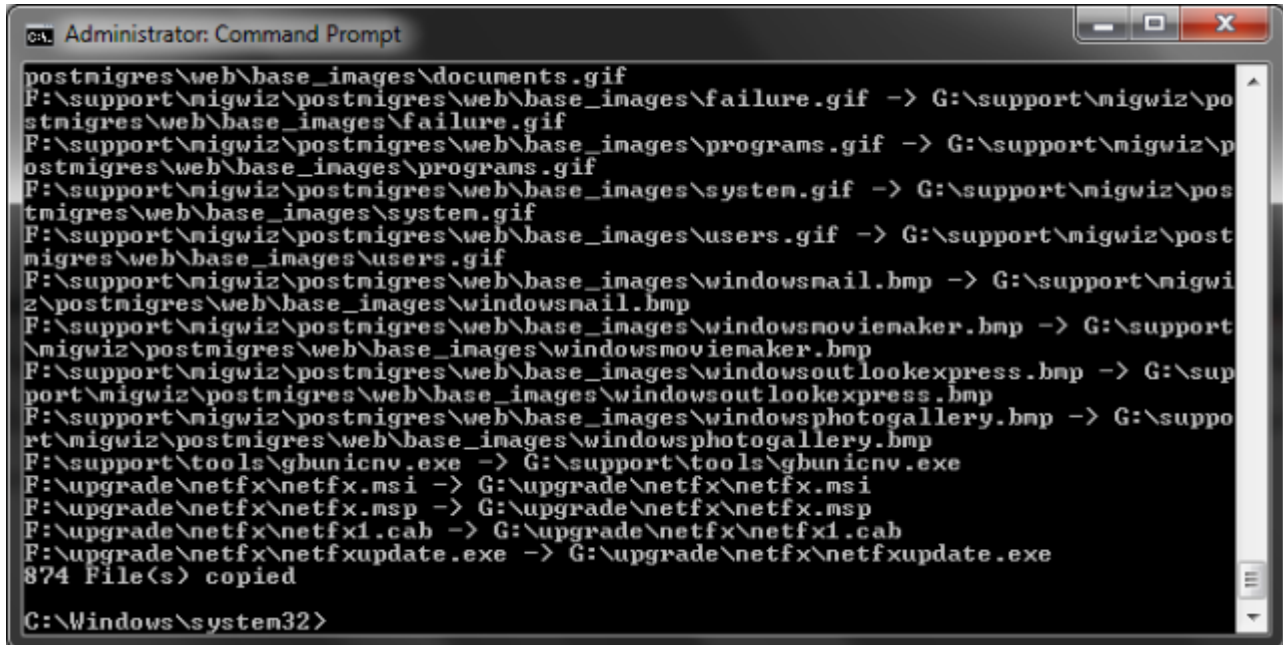


```
C:\Administrator: Command Prompt
postnigres\web\base_images\documents.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\failure.gif -> G:\support\nigwiz\po
stnigres\web\base_images\failure.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\programs.gif -> G:\support\nigwiz\p
ostnigres\web\base_images\programs.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\system.gif -> G:\support\nigwiz\pos
tnigres\web\base_images\system.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\users.gif -> G:\support\nigwiz\post
nigres\web\base_images\users.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmail.bmp -> G:\support\nigwi
z\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmail.bmp
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmoviemaker.bmp -> G:\support
\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmoviemaker.bmp
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsoutlookexpress.bmp -> G:\sup
port\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsoutlookexpress.bmp
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsphotogallery.bmp -> G:\suppo
rt\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsphotogallery.bmp
F:\support\tools\gbunicnv.exe -> G:\support\tools\gbunicnv.exe
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msi -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msi
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msp -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msp
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfx1.cab -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfx1.cab
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfxupdate.exe -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfxupdate.exe
874 File(s) copied
C:\Windows\system32>
```

If you don't have the command prompt open, open it with administrative privileges, type "xcopy f:\*.\* /s/e/f hg:" without the quotes and hit enter. Note that you will likely have to replace "f:"

with the drive letter for your Windows 7 DVD and "g:" with the drive letter for your USB flash drive. Don't worry if install.wim takes a while to copy: it's easily the biggest file on the disc.

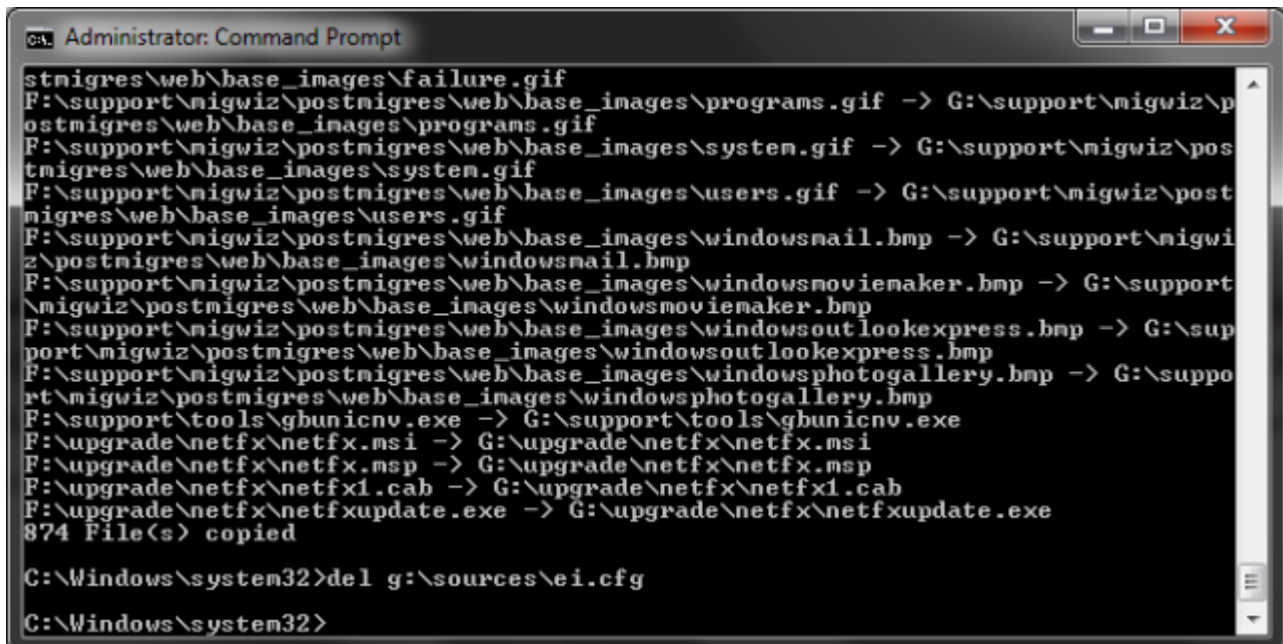
### Bonus: install any edition of Windows 7



```
Administrator: Command Prompt
postnigres\web\base_images\documents.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\failure.gif -> G:\support\migwiz\po
stnigres\web\base_images\failure.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\programs.gif -> G:\support\migwiz\p
ostnigres\web\base_images\programs.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\system.gif -> G:\support\nigwiz\pos
tmigres\web\base_images\system.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\users.gif -> G:\support\migwiz\post
nigres\web\base_images\users.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmail.bmp -> G:\support\nigwi
z\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmail.bmp
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmoviemaker.bmp -> G:\support
\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmoviemaker.bmp
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsoutlookexpress.bmp -> G:\sup
port\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsoutlookexpress.bmp
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsphotogallery.bmp -> G:\suppo
rt\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsphotogallery.bmp
F:\support\tools\gbunicnv.exe -> G:\support\tools\gbunicnv.exe
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msi -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msi
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msp -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msp
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfx1.cab -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfx1.cab
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfxupdate.exe -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfxupdate.exe
874 File(s) copied

C:\Windows\system32>
```

This is a completely optional step and you only want to do this if you want to be able to choose which edition of Windows 7 to install. In the command prompt, type "del G:\sources\ei.cfg" without the quotes and hit enter (where g: is your USB flash drive).



```
Administrator: Command Prompt
stnigres\web\base_images\failure.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\programs.gif -> G:\support\migwiz\p
ostnigres\web\base_images\programs.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\system.gif -> G:\support\nigwiz\pos
tmigres\web\base_images\system.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\users.gif -> G:\support\migwiz\post
nigres\web\base_images\users.gif
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmail.bmp -> G:\support\nigwi
z\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmail.bmp
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmoviemaker.bmp -> G:\support
\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsmoviemaker.bmp
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsoutlookexpress.bmp -> G:\sup
port\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsoutlookexpress.bmp
F:\support\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsphotogallery.bmp -> G:\suppo
rt\nigwiz\postnigres\web\base_images\windowsphotogallery.bmp
F:\support\tools\gbunicnv.exe -> G:\support\tools\gbunicnv.exe
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msi -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msi
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msp -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfx.msp
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfx1.cab -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfx1.cab
F:\upgrade\netfx\netfxupdate.exe -> G:\upgrade\netfx\netfxupdate.exe
874 File(s) copied

C:\Windows\system32>del g:\sources\ei.cfg

C:\Windows\system32>
```

This will make sure that your Windows 7 installer no longer has a specific version of Windows 7 set as the default, and you will be prompted to choose the version you want to install. Remember

that while this gives you a more universal Windows 7 installer, you still need to make sure you are choosing the edition that you own, or you will not be able to activate Windows 7 with the key you have obtained.