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Users of Windows Vista may have noticed that they have two extra settings compared to Windows XP users. These are “Sleep” (Standby mode) and “Hibernate” mode. But what do they actually do?

“Sleep” mode can be compared to a human’s sleeping patterns. Everything remains operating but there is a large reduction in the amount of energy being used in this mode. This means if you are going to step away from the computer for 15 to 30 minutes, you can set it to “sleep” and come back to the computer when ready to use it again, with all the same settings and programs open ready to use without wasting power.

“Hibernate” mode is an enhanced version of “Sleep” mode and can be used when you are in a hurry to leave the house for example but want to continue using the same information when you get home. “Hibernate” will save the exact settings of what you are doing on the computer (keep all the current programs open) and will save every setting on your computer. It will then completely turn off using no energy at all and will load off the file it has saved on next boot up (and then delete that file).

Using “Hibernate” is extremely useful but may cause fragmentation of some files if used excessively and may require you to run a defragment of your computer to make it run faster. Don’t be too scared with the above warning, it will not greatly affect your computer speed or damage any files; it simply means there is a chance that it may slow your computer down.