

Windows Kiosk Mode Uses & Limitations

Windows 8 introduces a new feature that has effectively been dubbed "Kiosk Mode" due to the ability to lock down Windows to a single application that the user can run. It does this by allowing an administrator to create a windows account with what it calls "Assigned Access". The new user account, upon logging in, will automatically start the application that was selected. The user cannot access other applications, including the app switcher and charms bar. The start screen is also disabled. By creating a new user and setting up the application to be Internet Explorer, you could easily create a machine that automatically starts the web browser and limits the user to only that application



This level of restriction and lockdown is sufficient for "surface" level of kiosk lockdown but there are clear opportunities for exploitation, disruption, malicious activity, and privacy leaks.

Windows 8 Kiosk

The lack of features in Windows 8 Kiosk Mode means that the user can log off by pressing the Windows key quickly five times. This key sequence returns the user to the login screen. Users can also visit any website of their choosing.

Another Windows Kiosk Mode failing is that users may unknowingly choose to save their credentials for a website. It's possible that any future user of the kiosk would then automatically be logged on to that website upon visiting it. Users would need to take care to make sure that they do not tell any websites to automatically "Remember them", and instruct IE to not save any passwords for the current site. This puts the onus of protecting privacy and keeping data secure on the user, not the kiosk itself.

If users are completely trusted and information being submitted (if any) is not private, there is no cause for concern about only allowing access to certain domains. If this is an issue, this may not be a good solution, since IE has no way to limit browsing to certain sites.

Lastly, if a web page has the capability to perform an upload or download a file, it is possible that the user could gain access to the local file system of the kiosk. If the kiosk user was created as a normal (limited) user, the extent to which they could make changes is severely limited, but many directories in the file system would be writable by kiosk user.

In all, Windows Kiosk Mode can make it easy for trusted users to access the internet, but like Google Chrome Kiosk Mode, there is no true security or lockdown to restrict access to particular domains, protect user privacy, or secure the OS overall. For true protection, restrictions, and security, it is recommended that [kiosk software](#) be utilized. KioWare has multiple options (from KioWare Lite to KioWare Full with Server) that will allow more control and provide true security to protect both the device and the user.