

# ESXi on CompactFlash? ...

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[vm\\_sjo](#) 11 posts since

Sep 2, 2008 Hi all,

I've seen lots of posts about USB flash etc., but i'm wondering if anyone is running ESXi from a CompactFlash card mounted in a CF<->ATAPI/SATA converter? I would have thought that it'd work fine as long as the underlying disk controller is supported.

One thing that worries me though is the likelihood of CF failure from too many writes in the future. Is ESXi 'flash friendly'? Does it do much disk i/o (for the host)?

I'm looking to build a vmware host using an Intel G31-based desktop board, onboard vga, 8GB RAM and onboard gigabit ethernet and would like it solid state!

Thanks! Tags: esxi, storage, flash



[nick.couchman](#) 4,969 posts since

Jan 13, 2006 **1. Re: ESXi on CompactFlash?** Sep 2, 2008 8:29 AM

I believe that some people have reported success doing this. I think it'll need to be hooked up to the SATA controller, though - IDE controllers are usually not detected correctly for booting. You should be able to follow the same instructions as you would for USB flash drives for creating the image.

As far as "flash friendly" - as long as you're not hosting VMs on the CF card, then it shouldn't be too bad. It does, however, write log files and configuration changes to the card, so there is some amount of writing, and, unless you purchase a card and/or writer with the technology to flash the card evenly, it could suffer from one part of it being flashed more frequently than the rest.



[vm\\_sjo](#) 11 posts since

Sep 2, 2008 **2. Re: ESXi on CompactFlash?** Sep 2, 2008 9:03 AM

in response to: [nick.couchman](#)

nick.couchman- Yeah that's what I suspected. I was reading through the esxi install documentation earlier and it talks about a 'scratch pad' (swap file afaik).. If this is running from flash storage then I can't imagine it lasting a huge amount of time!

Can you/anyone confirm this is the case?



[nick.couchman](#) 4,969 posts since

Jan 13, 2006 **3. Re: ESXi on CompactFlash?** Sep 2, 2008 11:01 AM


in response to: [vm\\_sjo](#) Each of the VMs have swap files, but you can configure where these are stored. The default is for them to be stored with the virtual machine, so I don't imagine that this will be a problem for the CF card if you're not storing VMs on the card.



[BigValley](#) 1 posts since

ESXi on CompactFlash? ...

Nov 20, 2008 4. **Re: ESXi on CompactFlash?** Nov 20, 2008 5:05 PM

 in response to: [vm\\_sjo](#)

You can set the userworld swap location to point to a SAN LUN. See

[http://kb.vmware.com/selfservice/microsites/search.do?language=en\\_US&cmd=displayKC&externalId=1004177](http://kb.vmware.com/selfservice/microsites/search.do?language=en_US&cmd=displayKC&externalId=1004177)

I'm running it this way using the HP ESXi internal USB flash drives connected to an Equallogic iSCSI SAN via Qlogic HBA's. I haven't experienced any problems yet, but I have only had these servers in production for a couple of weeks.




[wila](#) 3,266 posts since

Jun 27, 2006 5. **Re: ESXi on CompactFlash?** Nov 20, 2008 5:37 PM

Hi,

I run a ESX3.5 full blown version that way for more as a year now and it works really nice. Its more performant as using the normal IDE drive that it had before.

I admit that it was an old drive 

There's not much writing going on on the CF card, most of what is being written is the log files and if there's a lot of writing going on there... you probably have other issues to worry about.

But even if it writes a lot down there (I had the [FileIO 0xbad0006 issue](#) write down in the log for months... every minute a couple of lines at least) it can deal with that. The "wear rate" is hugely overrated. It is not comparable to cheap USB sticks that actually do show wear and break quickly.

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Wil



[Thorsten Schn...](#) 247 posts since

Apr 20, 2005 6. **Re: ESXi on CompactFlash?** Mar 16, 2009 3:22 AM

Hi,

I'm currently also looking to building a cheap ESX host using the G31 board. Have you had success with your project ?


Thanks

Thorsten



[asatoran](#) 2,926 posts since

Jun 23, 2006 7. **Re: ESXi on CompactFlash?** Mar 16, 2009 12:30 PM

 in response to: [Thorsten Schn...](#) I am running a Dell PE400c using the built-in ICH5 SATA controller and a 4GB CF card in a CF->SATA adapter. Basically, as long as your SATA controller is recognized, then the CF card in the SATA adapter looks like any other basic SATA drive. Just don't store VMs to the flash memory or anything else that writes much to the drive. Use the CF just to boot ESX and have a separate datastore for the VMs.