**Table 1.7   Comparison of NTFS and FAT File Systems**

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| **Subject of Comparison** | **NTFS** | **FAT16** | **FAT32** |
| Operating system compatibility | A computer running Windows Vista, Windows Server 2003, Windows 2000, or Windows XP can access files on an NTFS partition. A computer running Windows NT  4.0 with Service Pack 4 or later can access files on the partition, but some NTFS features, such as Disk Quotas, are not available. Other operating systems allow no access. | File access is available to computers running Microsoft® MS-DOS®, all versions of Windows, Windows NT, Windows XP, Windows Vista, and OS/2. | File access is available only to computers running Microsoft® Windows 95 OSR2, Windows 98, Windows Me, Windows 2000, Windows XP, and Windows Vista. |
| Volume size | Recommended minimum volume size is approximately 10 MB.  Recommended practical maximum for volumes is 2 terabytes. Much larger sizes are possible.  Cannot be used on floppy disks. | Volumes up to 4 GB.  Cannot be used on floppy disks. | Volumes from 512 MB to 2 terabytes.  In Windows Vista, you can format a FAT32 volume only up to 32 GB.  Cannot be used on floppy disks. |
| File size | Maximum file size 16 terabytes minus 64 KB (244 minus 64 KB) | Maximum file size 4 GB | Maximum file size 4 GB |
| Files per volume | 4,294,967,295 (232 minus 1 files) | 65,536 (216 files) | Approximately 4,177,920 |

If you also want to use MS-DOS on your system, you must use FAT to format another partition, which is the MS-DOS operating system's native file system. MS-DOS does not recognize data on NTFS or FAT32 partitions.

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| **ImportantImportant** |
| To format the active system partition you must use a file system that all the operating systems running on your computer recognize. You can have up to four primary partitions, but only the active one starts all the operating systems. |