Updates: frequently asked questions

Here are answers to some common questions about updates. For information about updates and your privacy, read the **Windows Update privacy statement** online.

What are updates?
Updates are additions to software that can help prevent or fix problems, improve how your computer works, or enhance your computing experience.

Where can I find updates?
For Windows updates, including those for Internet Explorer or **programs** that ship with Windows, go to Windows Update in Control Panel:

1. Open Windows Update by clicking the **Start** button , clicking **All Programs**, and then clicking **Windows Update**.

2. In the left pane, click **Check for updates**.

Microsoft recommends that you turn on automatic updating so Windows can install new updates as they become available. For more information, see **Turn automatic updating on or off**.

For information about finding updates for the Microsoft Office System, see **Update Microsoft Office**. For updates for other programs and devices that you use, check the website of the publisher or manufacturer.

Do I need to download and install updates?
Yes. Updates do not take effect until they are installed, but to install updates, you must first download them to your computer. You can choose to have Windows automatically download and install updates for you, automatically download updates and notify you so you can install them yourself, or notify you to both download and install new updates yourself. For more information, see **Change how Windows installs or notifies you about updates**.

What types of updates can Windows install automatically?
You can set Windows to automatically install important and recommended updates, or to install important updates only. Important updates provide significant benefits, such as improved security and reliability. Recommended updates can address non-critical problems and help enhance your computing experience. Optional updates are not downloaded or installed automatically. For more information, see **Turn automatic updating on or off** and **Change how Windows installs or notifies you about updates**.

To install drivers and other optional updates

1. Open Windows Update by clicking the **Start** button , clicking **All Programs**, and then clicking **Windows Update**.

2. In the left pane, click **Check for updates**, and then wait while Windows looks for the latest updates for your computer.

3. If any updates are found, click **View available updates**.

4. Select the optional updates that you want, and then click **Install**. If you are prompted for an administrator password or confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation.

For more information, see **Change how Windows installs or notifies you about updates** and **Install Windows updates**.

How often should I update my computer and my programs?
As often as possible. Updates are the best way to prevent or repair known problems, and they can enhance the security of your computer. For Windows, the easiest way to install updates is to turn on automatic updating. Windows will install new updates as they become available. For more information, see **Turn automatic updating on or off**.

What happens if I forget to install an update?
Your computer might be at risk or you might experience unnecessary problems with Windows or your programs.

Can I get updates automatically?
For Windows and programs that ship with Windows, such as **Internet Explorer**, yes. Just turn on automatic updating. For more information, see **Turn automatic updating on or off**. For other programs, check the website of the publisher or manufacturer to see if you can get updates automatically.

How much do updates cost?
Updates from Microsoft for Microsoft products are free as part of maintenance and support services. For other products, check with each program publisher and device manufacturer to see if updates are free of charge. Depending on your Internet connection, standard local and long distance phone charges and **Internet service** charges might apply while you download and install updates from any publisher or manufacturer.

Why do I need to install some updates separately, before or after installing other updates?
Typically because these updates require you to restart your computer before they can take effect. You might, for example, need to install an update for Windows Update itself before you can check for other updates for your computer. In other cases, an update might be a new version or a service pack for software that you're currently running. To make sure that your computer is ready to install these updates, you must first install all important updates for your computer. After you've installed important updates, Windows will ask if you want to install the stand-alone or "exclusive" update by itself.

I share my computer with other people. Do we all get the same updates?

Yes. Updates **apply to** Windows and your programs, regardless of who uses them.

I have a home network. Can I update all my computers at the same time?
No. You need to turn on automatic updating or check for updates for each computer separately. For example, computers running different versions of Windows need different updates. Windows detects which updates apply in each case but you can't, for example, apply updates for Windows XP to a computer running Windows 2000.

Can I remove updates?
You can remove some updates, but not updates that affect important operating system files. You should only remove an update if you're sure that it's causing a problem.