

## How to Keep Your Computer Up to Date

An important part of owning a personal computer is keeping your software up-to-date. Security patches, upgrades, and hotfixes need to be installed to make your computer safer while connected to the Internet. When using a computer running Microsoft Windows, this checklist can include windows, antivirus, antispyware, and firewall updates. However, for most computer users this can seem like a daunting task and I hardly ever work on a customer's computer without finding at least one missing needed update concerning hardware or software.

### The Basic Updates

#### Windows Updates

At the very least, you should keep your computer up-to-date with the latest Windows security patches and updates for your operating system. Microsoft has made it fairly easy to keep everything updated by including an automatic updates feature in Windows XP and Windows Vista. Although its not always advised to install Windows updates when they are immediately released, it is a good idea to install these updates shortly after they are released. In most cases, Windows updates are created to fix security holes and vulnerabilities in Windows that can be exploited by hackers to take over your computer or use it to send spam or viruses. If you don't have Windows set to automatically update, you can visit the following website to check your computer for these updates and download them.

<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>

#### Antivirus Updates

Keeping your antivirus software up-to-date is also an important step in keeping your computer running properly while connected to the Internet. I run across many computers that have antivirus software installed, but the virus signatures have not been updated in several months or even years. Your antivirus software is only as good as the last virus signature update you have installed. If a virus was discovered yesterday, and you havent updated your antivirus product today, then you are susceptible to being infected by that particular virus.

Most free antivirus programs such as AVAST, AVG, and Anti-Vir check for updates on a daily basis as long as your computer is connected to the Internet.

#### Anti-Spyware Updates

Whether you are running Lavasoft Ad-Aware SE, Spybot Search and Destroy, Windows Defender, Webroot SpySweeper, or another antispyware product, you need to update the software regularly for it to be effective. Just like antivirus software, software to remove adware and spyware can't remove problems if it doesnt have that program in its database. Unfortunately, many of these programs don't update themselves automatically. When you open your antispyware program look for a button or tab to update the adware database and do this on a regular monthly basis before scanning your system.

#### Firewall Updates

Most firewall programs will prompt you that there is a newer version to download. Its always a good idea to download these updates when they become available.

## Other Updates

What about the other programs installed on your computer, do they need to be updated to remain secure? The easy answer is yes, however most of these other programs don't automatically tell you when a new version is available. The average computer user usually doesn't have the time or the patience to check all these other installed programs and update them. However, a couple utilities have come to the rescue and provide fairly in-depth checks for insecure or outdated software.

## FileHippo.com's Update Checker

FileHippo.com, a software download website, released a small program to download and run on your computer that will check your machine for un-patched, outdated, and insecure versions of installed software. The program checks video drivers, software updates for java and flash, adobe acrobat reader, chat programs, and more. If Update Checker finds a problem, it will provide the name of the program as well as a link to download the latest version of the outdated software. The program gets its updates based on the software available on the [FileHippo.com's website](#). So although its not an absolutely complete list of updates its very close. Follow the steps below to download Update Checker and run it.

1) Click on the following link to download FileHippo's Update Checker to your desktop or [Visit the Update Checker web page](#) to read more.

<http://www.filehippo.com/updatechecker/FHSetup.exe>

or for the standalone version without an installer click below

<http://www.filehippo.com/updatechecker/UpdateChecker.exe>

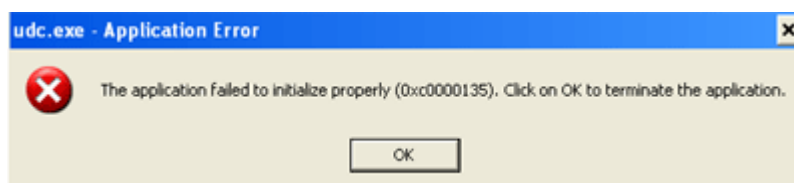
2) Once the Update Checker is saved to your desktop, find the UpdateChecker.EXE file and double-click on it to start scanning or run UpdateChecker from your All Programs menu.

3) After the scan is completed, you'll be presented with a screen similar to the one shown below. Download and install any updates you wish by clicking on the link provided in the Update Checker report.



## Possible errors when installing Update Checker

When you try to install Update Checker, you may receive the application error "The application failed to initialize properly (0xc0000135). Click on OK to terminate the application. The message is shown below:



Update Checker requires Microsoft .Net Framework 2.0 to be installed. If it is not, you will likely receive the error message shown above. To resolve this, download and install Microsoft's .Net Framework 2.0 before running Update Checker. Click on the following link to download Microsoft's .Net Framework 2.0:

[Download Microsoft .Net Framework 2.0](#)

### **How to Check What Version of .Net Framework is Installed**

If you are wondering what version of Microsoft .Net Framework is installed on your computer, you can download the following program to check your system

<http://www.tmgdevelopment.co.uk/versioncheck.htm>

### **Secunia's Online Software Inspector**

Secunia, a well known security company, has created an online checker for outdated and insecure software on your computer. Although they don't require you to download a program, the site does require java to be installed to operate properly. You can visit their Online Software Inspector by visiting the link below.

[http://www.secunia.com/software\\_inspector/](http://www.secunia.com/software_inspector/)

If you don't have Java installed or would rather just install a program to check your system for updates, Secunia has released a beta version of Personal Software Inspector.

### **Secunia's Personal Software Inspector**

According to their website:

"The Secunia PSI detects installed software and categorizes your software as either Insecure, End-of-Life, or Up-To-Date. Effectively enabling you to focus your attention on software installations where more secure versions are available from the vendors."



Personal Software Inspector detects and advises on problems with more than 4,700 applications and also provides links to updates for the affected programs. PSI installs in your Startup group to monitor your applications each time your computer boots. You can read more about PSI or download it by clicking on this link:

<https://psi.secunia.com/>

In many cases, these old and outdated versions that PSI finds can be removed from your computer by using the Add or Remove Programs section in Control Panel. Installing a newer version of a program (for instance Java) will leave the old version still intact and you'll have to go to Add or Remove Programs to remove the old version.

Old versions of Adobe Flash Player can sometimes be difficult to find and remove. Adobe has created an uninstaller to find a remove Flash Player. For the uninstaller and more information on why the flash player may not install click [here](#).

FileHippo's Update Checker and Secunia's Software Inspector evaluate your installed programs based on different databases, so each finds a comparable although not identical list of outdated applications. For this reason, it may be a good idea to run both programs at first on your computer, and then settle on which one you like better.

While Secunia's Personal Software Inspector focuses on insecure and "end of life" software, FileHippo's Update Checker will check for updated versions of software as well as some hardware. In either case, these programs should become part of your monthly checklist when updating your computer and protecting yourself from threats from the outside world.

## Hardware and Device Driver Updates

What about hardware updates? While software updates keep your computer from being infected or otherwise compromised, hardware updates can solve issues from computer lockups, screen freezes, and printing problems among other problems. There is a cool utility from a company called RadarSync that checks your computer against currently 90,000 updates. The free version allows you to scan your computer and shows you updates for your hardware including manufacturer and filename, but does not provide direct download links. You'll have to go to the manufacturers website and find the driver yourself. RadarSync's Premium version does provide direct download links to drivers, email notification when a new driver is available, and rollback protection when a driver doesn't work as expected.

