

Patching Tips

An unpatched machine is more likely to have software vulnerabilities than a patched one. These vulnerabilities are like gaps in a computer's defense system and can be used by hackers to gain control of a machine through a virus or other attack.

Software and operating systems are regularly patched with new versions or updates. This strengthens the code and eliminates bugs and other pesky problems. Are you taking any of the following steps to update your computer?:

- Turn automatic updates on:** Configure your computer to receive updates. Across platforms, the Update feature provides automatic or manual options and several levels of frequency. We recommend setting the updates to occur automatically and as frequently as possible. A daily update allows patches to download the same day they are released. A weekly update holds all patches from that week and downloads them together.
- Know what is being updated:** If you have automatic updates turned on, you will receive messages letting you know if updates are available and what is being updated. Windows and Macintosh computers only receive automatic updates for software from their respective companies. Any third-party software running on the machine, including browsers, will update separately. Make sure you check the third-party software's update feature for how this works.
- Learn about other Windows options:**
 - Win domain computers:* Some computers are automatically patched when part of a server service such as win.mit.edu. In that case, *no set up is required*; your computer will receive updates automatically.
 - Subscribe to WAUS:* Provided by MIT for Windows users, this service downloads critical security updates after they have been determined to be safe and compatible by IS&T.
- Know when updates will be available:** Unless you read technology news, you'll only know there's been an update when automatic updates is turned on. The two most popular operating systems patch on different cycles:

Windows: Microsoft releases their biggest security bulletins the second Tuesday of every month. They may also release some out-of-cycle patches when necessary.

Macintosh: Apple bundles patches in their security updates and also releases individual software patches for bugs and other flaws several times a year as needed.

Instructions for patching software and operating systems can be found via our web site:
<http://ist.mit.edu/security/support/patches>