

Protect Your PC with Windows XP Firewall

Use an Internet Firewall

A firewall is a piece of software or hardware that can help protect your computer against hacker attacks, such as computer viruses. In this step, we will tell you how to turn on the Internet Connection Firewall built into Windows XP.

There are two ways to turn on the Internet Connection Firewall in Windows XP:

- Let us do it for you with our [online tool](#)
- Follow the manual steps below.

Important Before you begin to turn on the Internet Connection Firewall, back up your files and information. If you need help, see [Backing Up Your Computer Files](#).

How to turn on the Internet Connection Firewall

1. Click **Start**, and then click **Control Panel**.
2. Click **Network and Internet Connections**.



3. Click **Network Connections**



TIP: If you do not see **Network and Internet Connections**, click **Switch to Category View**.



4. Highlight a connection that you want to help protect, and then click **Change settings of this connection**.



5. Click **Advanced** and then select **Protect my computer and network by limiting or preventing access to this computer from the Internet**.



6. Click **OK**.

Important The Windows XP Internet Connection Firewall might prevent you from performing useful tasks, such as sharing files or printers on a network, using instant messaging (IM), or hosting multiplayer computer games. Nonetheless, we strongly recommend using a firewall to help protect your computer.

If you turn on the Internet Connection Firewall and find that you can't perform tasks you normally do, read [How to Open Ports in the Windows XP Internet Connection Firewall](#)

Get Computer Updates

Security updates help protect your computer from viruses, worms, and other threats as they are discovered. Windows XP has an Automatic Updates feature that you can use to download the latest security updates automatically. In this step, we'll tell you how to turn on Automatic Updates. We'll also tell you how to bring your computer up to date with previously released software updates.

There are two ways to turn on the Automatic Updates feature in Windows XP:

- Let us do it for you with our [online tool](#)
- Follow the manual steps below.

Important: Before you begin to turn on the Internet Connection Firewall, back up your files and information. If you need help, see [Backing Up Your Computer Files](#).

Turn on the Automatic Updates feature

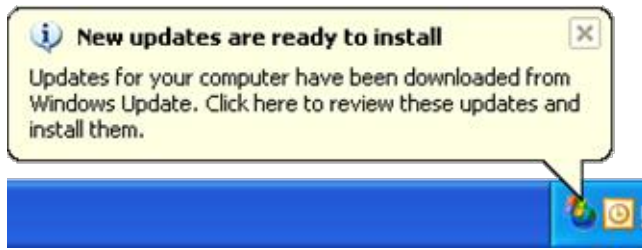
Important The Automatic Updates feature you are about to turn on will only download future Microsoft updates. You will still need to use Windows Update to get up to date after you have turned on Automatic Updates. (We'll tell you how at the end of this step.)

1. Click **Start**, and then click **Control Panel**.
2. Click **Performance and Maintenance**.
 - If the **Performance and Maintenance** category is not visible, click **Switch to Category View**.
3. Click **System**.
4. Click **Automatic Updates** and then select **Keep my computer up to date**.
5. Select a setting. Microsoft strongly recommends selecting **Automatically download the updates, and install them on the schedule that I specify** and setting a daily update time.



Important You can schedule your Automatic Updates download for any time of day. Remember, your computer must be on at the scheduled time. (We recommend choosing a time when you will not be using the computer for other tasks.)

6. If you choose to have Automatic Updates notify you in step 5, you will see a notification balloon when new downloads are available to install. Click the notification balloon to review and install the updates.



Next, get up to date with Windows Update

Now that you have Automatic Updates turned on, you will receive all critical updates automatically. Automatic Updates does not download previously released updates or non-critical updates, however. You can use these instructions to bring your computer up to date with previous security updates now, and to get non-critical updates in the future.

1. Bookmark this page.
2. Go to [Windows Update](http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com) (<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>)
3. Follow the directions on the Windows Update site to review and select downloads.
4. When finished, return to this page and go to the final step below, Step 3: Use Up-to-Date Antivirus Software.

Tip Some downloads will require you to restart your computer after installation. Be sure to return to Windows Update after restarting and check for additional updates. You might have to do this several times to ensure you have all the latest updates.

Important If you use Microsoft Office products (including Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft PowerPoint), visit the [Office Update](#) site to install the latest Office security releases.

Use Up-to-Date Antivirus Software

Antivirus software helps protect your computer against viruses. Many computers come with antivirus software installed. You can also purchase antivirus software and install it yourself. Just having an antivirus program installed is not enough, however. You also need to keep your antivirus software up to date.

In this step, we will tell you how to get, install, and update antivirus software.

Do I have antivirus software installed on my computer?

1. Click **Start**, and then click **Programs**.
2. Look for the word *antivirus*. You might also see the name of a popular antivirus manufacturer or package. These include: McAfee, Norton, Trend Micro, and Symantec.

3. If you don't have antivirus software installed, check out the following antivirus software companies for special offers on their products:
 - [Computer Associates](#) (12-month free trial subscription)
 - [F-secure](#)
 - [McAfee](#) (12-month free subscription after mail-in rebate)
 - [Panda Software](#) (90-day free trial subscription)
 - [Symantec/Norton](#) (90-day free trial subscription)
 - [Trend Micro](#) (90-day free trial subscription)

Important Having two different antivirus programs installed on one computer can cause conflicts (problems) on your computer. Always uninstall existing antivirus software before installing another package.

Is your antivirus software up to date?

Installing antivirus software will only protect you against known security issues. To help ensure your computer is safe, you need to keep your antivirus software up to date. Most antivirus companies offer subscription services to ensure you get the latest updates.

To check if you have up-to-date software: Open your antivirus program from the **Start** menu or the taskbar notification area and look for update status.

If you still are not sure if your antivirus software is up to date, contact your antivirus software provider.

Congratulations! You're Done!

If you have another computer in your house, you will need to repeat these three steps for the appropriate operating system on that machine. To get started, use your other computer to connect to the Internet and visit <http://www.microsoft.com/protect>.