

Computer Corner

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Q: How can I protect my Windows XP computer from viruses and hackers?

A: Protecting your computer from virus, hacker and worm attacks is a 3-step process for Windows XP.

Step 1 – Use an Internet Firewall

Step 2 – Get Security Updates

Step 3 – Use Up-to-date Antivirus Software

Step 1 – Use an Internet Firewall

A firewall is software or hardware that creates a barrier between your computer and potentially harmful Internet content. It will help guard against hackers and some computer viruses. Windows XP includes the **Internet Connection Firewall**. Turn it on with the following process;

- Click **Start**, and then click **Control Panel**.
- Click **Network and Internet Connections**
- Click **Network Connections** (If **Network and Internet Connections** is not visible, click **Switch to Category View** on the left **Control Panel**)
- Right click a connection you want to help protect, then click **Change settings of this connection** from the drop-down list
- Click **Advanced**, then place a “check mark” by **Protect my computer and network by limiting or preventing access to this computer from the Internet**
- Click **OK**

NOTE: Internet Connection Firewall can block useful tasks such as sharing files or printers through a network, transferring files in applications (like: instant messaging), or hosting multiplayer games. But, it is recommended that you use a firewall (ports can be opened to allow sharing)

Step 2 – Get Security Updates

Security updates help protect your computer from viruses, hacker vulnerabilities and other threats as they are found. Windows XP has an **Automatic Updates** feature, which will download security updates automatically, or on a schedule you choose

NOTE: Automatic Updates will only download future updates and will not download existing updates available for your computer. Visit Windows Update after turning on Automatic Updates feature in order to be sure you have all the latest updates available

- Click **Start**, and then click **Control Panel**
- Click **Performance and Maintenance** (If **Performance and Maintenance** is not visible, click **Switch to Category View** on the left **Control Panel**)
- Click **System**
- Click **Automatic Updates** and select **Keep my computer up to date**
- Select a setting (Three choices; **Notify me before downloading**, **Download and notify me when ready to install** and **Automatically download updates and install on the schedule that I specify**)

Get your computer up to date with currently available security updates.

- Go to the Windows Update Web site at <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>
- Click **Scan for Updates**. Windows Update scans your computer and displays a pre-selected list of critical updates, including security updates and service packs (Modems may take several hours to complete the update process)
- Click **Critical Updates and Service Packs** under **Pick updates to install** (Windows Update creates a list of updates for your computer and critical updates are selected for download automatically)
- Click **Review and install updates**
- Select updates and click **Install Now** (You may need to restart your computer after installing updates)

NOTE: Go back to Windows Update after installation to check for any additional updates (This may take several visits)

Step 3 – Use Up-to-date Antivirus Software

Just having an antivirus program installed is not enough to keep your computer protected from virus attacks. You also need to keep your antivirus software up to date. Here are some links to antivirus software makers;

- Trend Micro/Internet Security – www.trendmicro.com
- Symantec/Norton – www.symantecstore.com
- Panda Software – www.pandasoftware.com
- F-secure – www.f-secure.com
- Computer Associates – www.my-etrust.com

NOTE: Having two different antivirus programs installed on one computer can cause conflicts on your computer. Always uninstall existing antivirus software before installing another package. Additionally, installing antivirus software will only protect you against previous security issues. Ensure your computer is safe by keeping it up to date. Most companies offer subscription services to ensure you get the latest updates.

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