

Part 7 - How do I Speed up my Computer?

Welcome back to a series of computer related articles brought to you by VistaSol Computer Solutions. Over the coming weeks we are featuring articles based on the theme of 'How do I . . .?'

Last week we covered the subject of 'Viruses and Malware Prevention / Cure'. In this week's article we'll be continuing with the theme of '**How do I Speed up my Computer**', with the next subject:

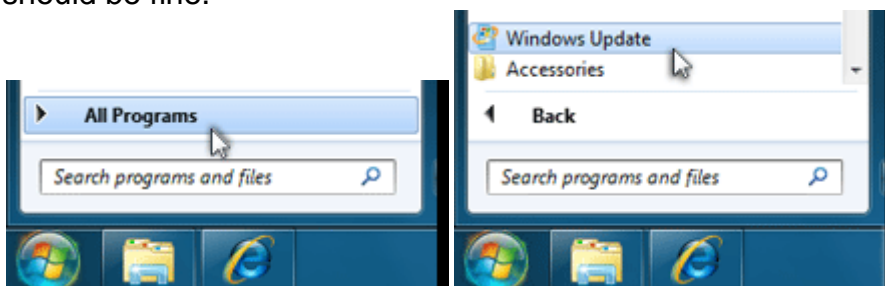
- ❖ Updating Windows Software and Hardware

Why do I Need Windows Updates?

I accept that Windows Updates can at times be a nuisance, especially if you happen to shut down your computer and receive the dreaded message "*Installing 1 of 50 updates, do not unplug or turn off your computer*"! However, Windows Updates are necessary, and are made available to 'fix' critical problems with the operating system. This may take the form of fixing security issues that have been identified, or fixing compatibility issues with current or new hardware. They may also provide new software to update hardware on your computer. Whatever form they take, they should not be ignored, because in most cases they are designed to improve the operating system as a mutual benefit.

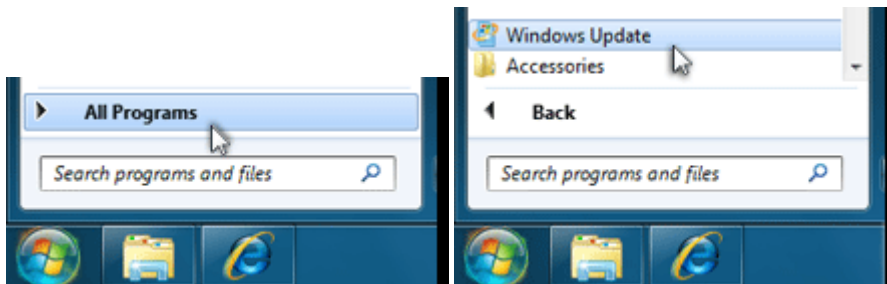
How do I check if I have Windows Updates enabled for my computer?

If you have **Windows 7** installed, you can check if you have Windows Updates configured by clicking on the 'Start menu button', then 'All Programs', then 'Windows Update'. In the window that appears, look in the left column and click on the item 'Change Settings'. Here you can change the settings to suit your own circumstances. In most cases, as long as there is a green shield with a tick in it, that should be fine.



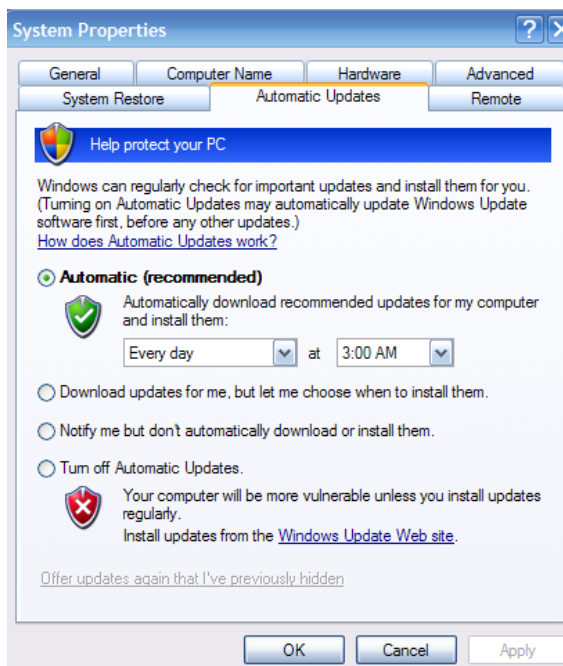
In Windows Vista:

Follow the same procedure outlined above i.e.



In Windows XP:

1. 'Right' click on 'My Computer', select 'Properties'
2. Select the 'Automatic Updates' tab
3. Select the settings option that suits your circumstances (see below).
4. Click **OK**



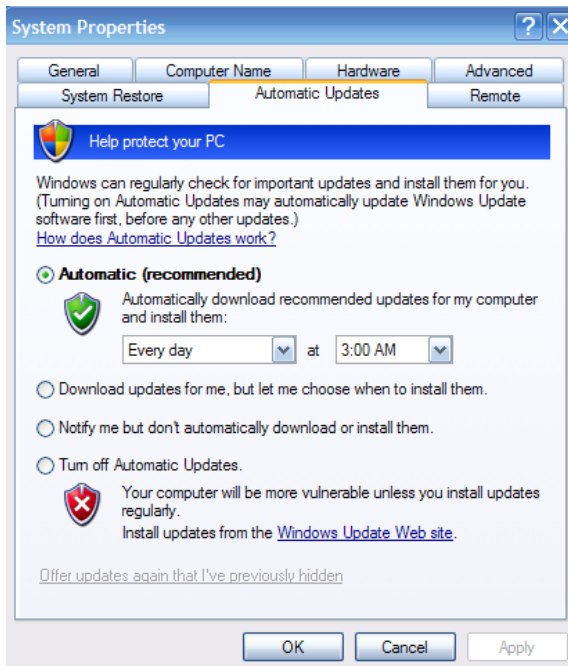
But I only have access to a Dial-up service . . .

Win 7/Vista

In Win 7 and Vista, if you are concerned about 'Windows Updates' being downloaded and installed automatically (especially if you only have a dial-up service), change the settings so that Windows Updates is set to:

"Check for updates but let me choose whether to download and install them"

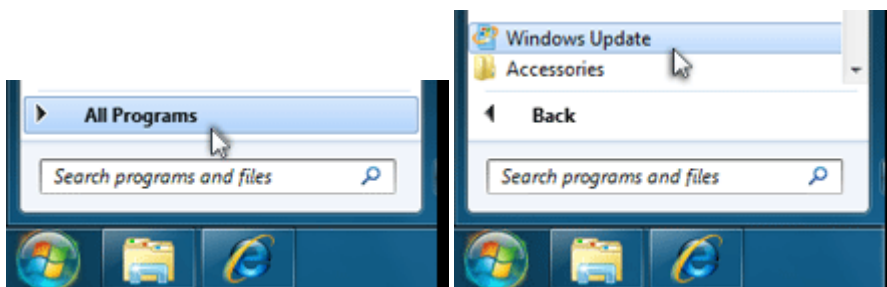
XP Users



Click in the circle to the left of “Notify me but don’t automatically download or install them”

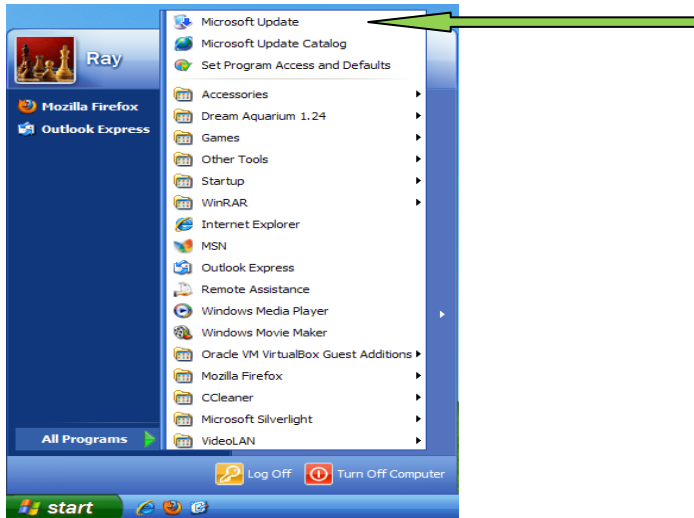
Manual Updates

In most cases Microsoft will deliver updates to you automatically, but you can take more control of these updates by starting up Windows Update manually and then click on the ‘Check for updates’ option (in the left column). Hardware upgrades are usually listed as ‘optional’ and can only be accessed this way.



XP Users

XP users should click on the 'Start button', 'All Programs', 'Windows Update' - in the web page that appears, wait until prompted, then click on the 'Custom' button to see the optional updates available.



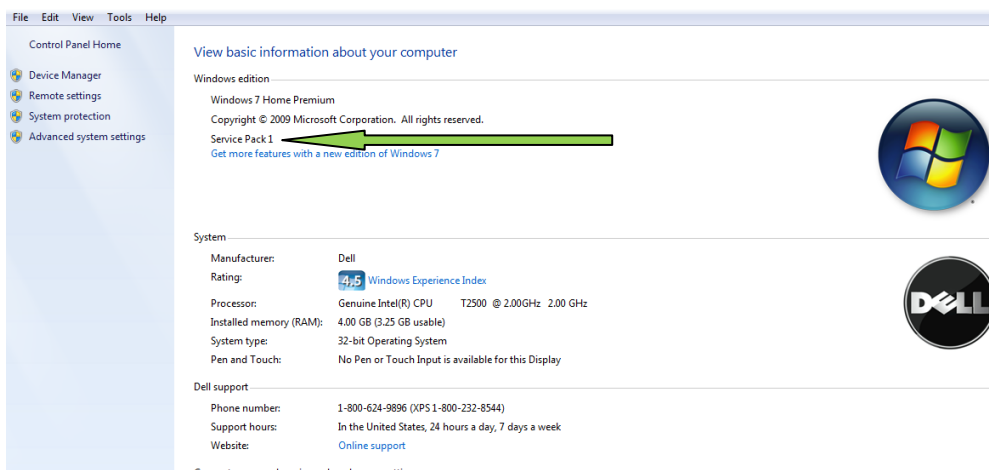
Service Packs

Periodically, Microsoft will consolidate earlier minor updates with a major upgrade into what is known as a Service Pack. These are usually very big, and in some cases contain almost a complete rewrite of the operating system. The latest Service Packs are:

- ❖ Windows 7 – Service Pack 1
- ❖ Windows Vista – Service Pack 2
- ❖ Windows XP – Service Pack 3

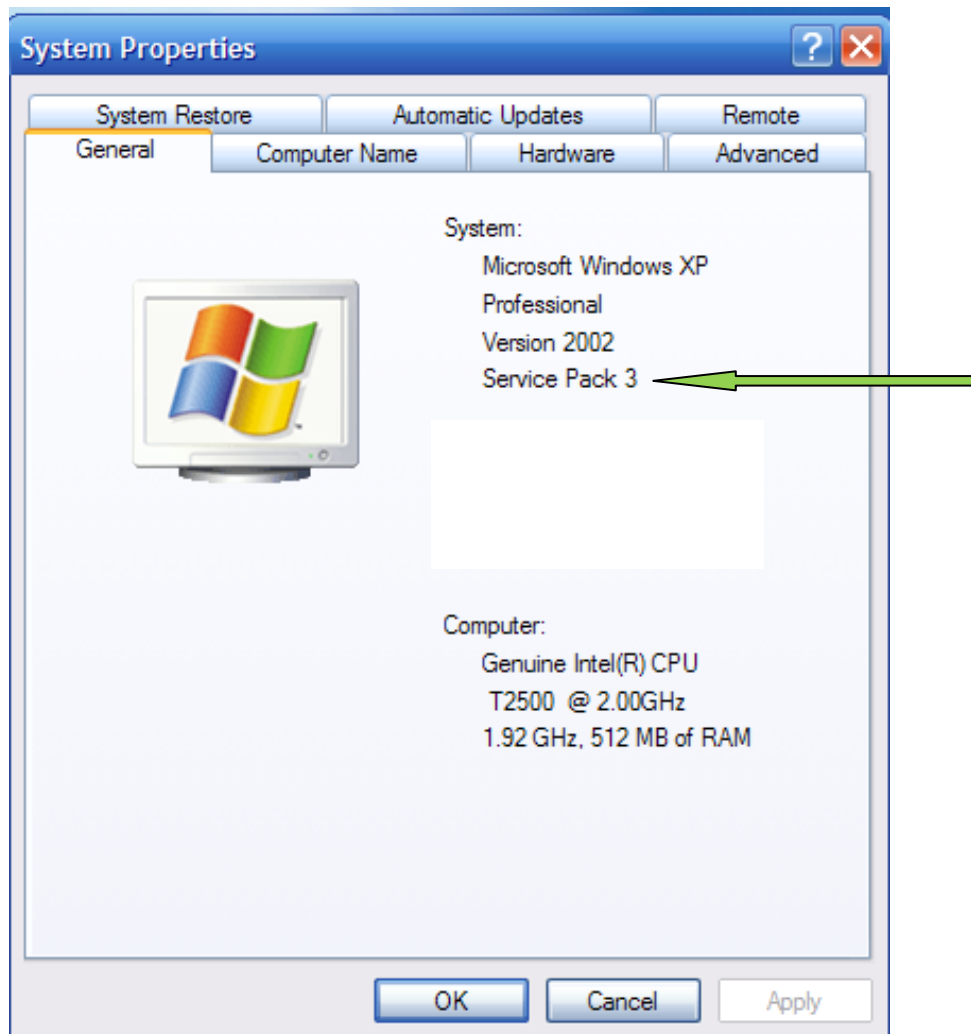
How do I know which Service Pack I have?

Check which Service Pack you have installed by 'right' clicking on the 'Computer' icon (or 'My Computer' in XP) and select 'Properties' from the menu. In the Properties window, the type of operating system and the current service pack installed will be displayed in the top third of this window. (If you don't see a Service Pack listed, you don't have any installed).



Important note for XP Users:

If you have Windows XP installed, you need to have at least **Service Pack 2** installed. This Service Pack introduced additional security features for Windows including the 'Windows Firewall' to protect your computer. Service Pack 2 also introduced the Windows Update feature, without it you will not receive any Updates, and you will be susceptible to malicious software from the Internet.



Part 8 – How do I speed up my computer?

- ❖ Hardware conflicts/updates
- ❖ Updating Hardware Device drivers
- ❖ Repairing damaged or missing hardware drivers

Repairing Hardware Problems

You may find that your computer performs slowly; freezes or that something just doesn't work properly. This may be because the hardware device drivers (software) are:

1. Out of date
2. Not installed correctly
3. Damaged
4. or Windows does not recognise the hardware installed.

N.B. This article assumes that any faulty devices you have do not include a device for accessing the internet. Please also consider using the CD which may have been included with any devices you have installed yourself in the past.

If you are receiving errors, or something just isn't working e.g. no sound, it's most likely that one of the above problems exists.

The Device Manager

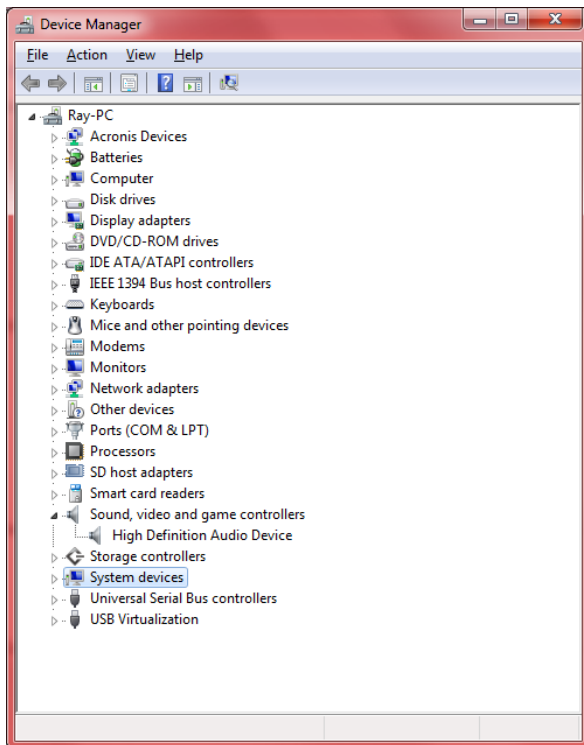
Windows maintains a list of all hardware devices installed and monitors the state of these hardware devices using the Device Manager. To view the contents of the Device Manager, follow these steps:

Windows XP

1. Right click on 'My Computer' and select 'Properties' from the menu
2. In the 'Properties' window, click on the Tab labelled 'Hardware'
3. Click on the button labelled 'Device Manager'

Windows Vista / Win 7

1. Right click on 'Computer', and select 'Properties' from the menu
2. In the 'Properties' window, look in the left column and click on 'Device Manager'



Carefully look down the list of drivers; if you see any item with a yellow triangle, this indicates that there is a problem with the drivers for that particular device(s).

You can try and update the driver software by right clicking on the faulty device and selecting 'Update Driver Software' from the menu. You will then be prompted with a number of options for how you would like to update the driver. The dialog windows vary between Windows XP, Vista, and Win 7, but in essence you need to select the option which will search the internet/MS Updates for the updated drivers.

If you're lucky, windows will locate the drivers and fix the problem for you. Continue this process for any other faulty device drivers you find in the Device Manager. If not: . . .

Windows cannot install this driver

If you receive a message that windows cannot install the driver you require, or words to that effect, all is not lost – other options are available.

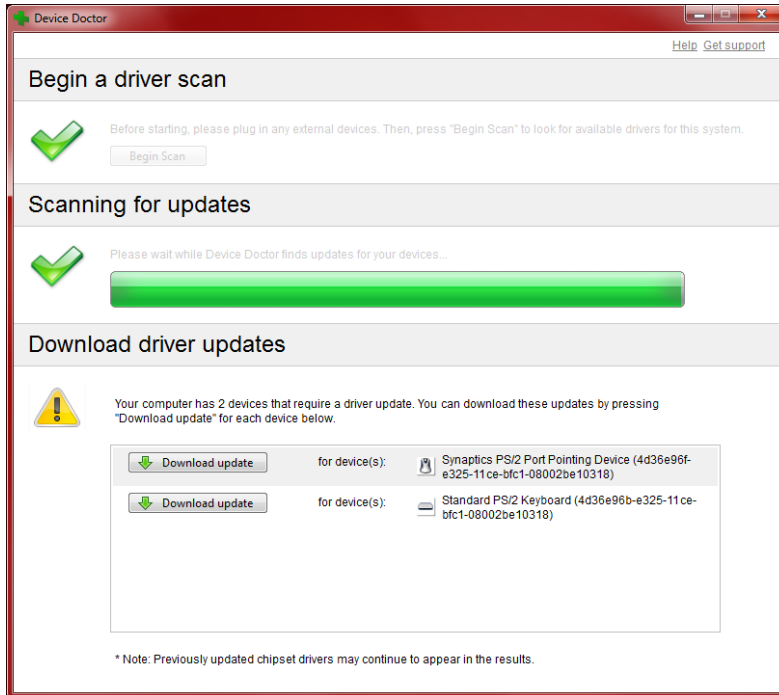
The Device Doctor

Device Doctor is a freeware Windows application that scans your computer hardware and checks to see if there are new driver updates available for your devices. It also locates drivers for "unidentified devices" in the Windows Device Manager. You can download this utility from here:

<http://www.devedoctor.com/>

After you have downloaded the Device Doctor, double click on the downloaded file to install it, and then run it from its desktop icon.

IMPORTANT: Before downloading any driver updates in the next step, follow their instructions for creating a 'System Restore Point' in case anything goes wrong.



Click on the 'Begin Scan' button to start the scanning process. You will then be presented with a list of devices with updates available. Check to see if any of your faulty devices appear in this list. If your device is listed, click on the 'Download Update' button – you will be taken to the Device Doctor's web site. Please read the instructions and follow their advice for creating a System Restore Point before proceeding to download the driver update.

Download the driver by clicking on the 'Download driver installer' text midway down the web page. Once downloaded, double click on this file to install it. When the install has completed, check in the Device Manager to see if this has fixed your problem device.

Follow the above steps for each of your faulty drivers.

Hopefully that should fix any problems with hardware devices on your computer.