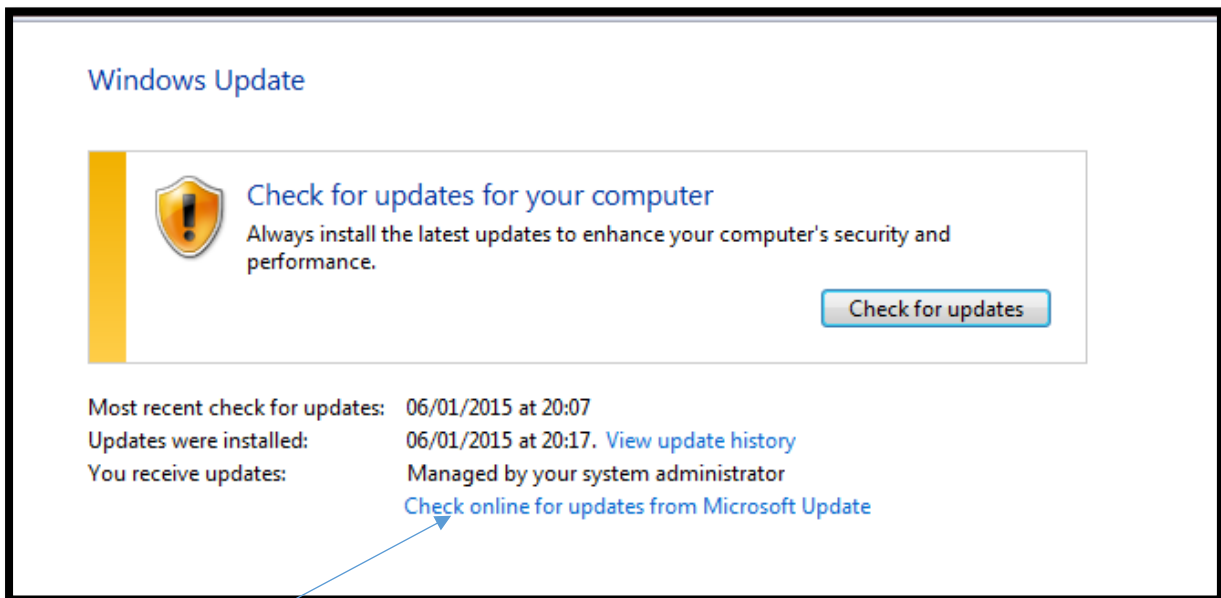# Windows Critical Updates

Article 10606 | Updated 15/5/17 | Composed by Sally Latimer-Boyce | Instructions specific to Windows 7

How do I check for updates on my computer?

To check for Windows Updates, go to START > ALL PROGRAMS > WINDOWS UPDATE.

(for other versions of Windows, go to START > CONTROL PANEL > SYSTEM AND SECURITY > WINDOWS UPDATE)

The following screen will appear:

Windows Update

Check for updates for your computer
Always install the latest updates to enhance your computer's security and performance.

Check for updates

Most recent check for updates: 06/01/2015 at 20:07
Updates were installed: 06/01/2015 at 20:17. View update history
You receive updates: Managed by your system administrator
                                  Check online for updates from Microsoft Update

Click this link CHECK ONLINE FOR UPDATES FROM MICROSOFT UPDATE

Note. The "CHECK FOR UPDATES" button is unpredictable and unreliable and may result in the updates failing to run. We therefore recommend using ONLY the option arrowed above.

When did the updates last run?

If you look at the information BELOW the "check for updates" button, you will see the date and time of the most recent updates.

In the example below, you will see updates were installed on 9/12/14, but also FAILED. In this instance, it would be prudent to restart the computer and run the updates again.

After clicking "CHECK ONLINE FOR UPDATES FROM MICROSOFT UPDATE" it may take between 20 mins and 3 hours for the results to appear. It is perfectly safe to work on the computer in the meantime.

When the results do appear, this is how it will look:
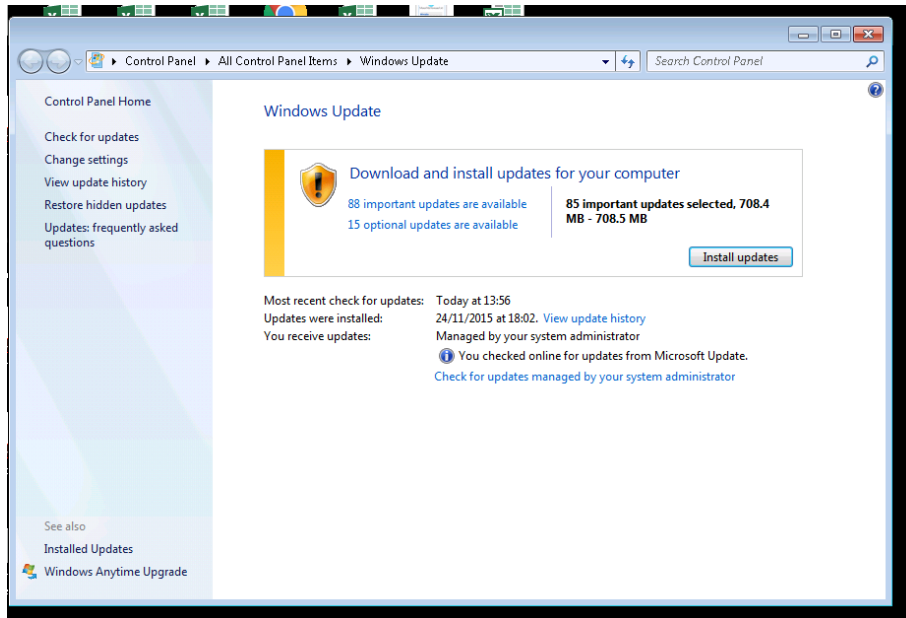
Click INSTALL UPDATES.

Slow Broadband may lead to the updates taking hours to complete.

Once the updates are complete, you may be prompted to restart your computer.

Recommendation: Following a restart, check for updates again to see if another batch is available for installation.

The objective is to:

a) Run updates frequently (fortnightly should be sufficient)
b) Keep an eye on the date "updates were installed"
c) Power your computer off at least once per week (some updates require a power down, rather than a restart).

What if the updates fail?

There are many things that can cause updates to fail. It is recommended that the PC's be serviced regularly in order to reduce the risk of updates falling behind or failing. If you have followed the instructions above, and are still unable to install updates, please log off and try again when logged on as Administrator. You might also want to try turning your PC off and on again before retrying.

If problems persist, please contact Serendipiti.

What are Windows updates?

Windows updates are enhancements to the software that is running on your computer. They are provided completely free of charge, and can prevent or fix problems. Updates improve the security of the computer and can also enhance performance.

Microsoft recommends that these updates be applied automatically, so that security and other important or recommended updates can be installed as they become available.

Sadly though, the process for ensuring the successful deployment of these updates is extremely ambiguous, and many end users are unaware of the prerequisites required of them personally, as the user of that computer.

The first thing you should know is that these updates are often presented in linear batches. Each batch might contain multiple updates, but subsequent batches will not run until the previous batch has been applied correctly.   Unfortunately, a significant number of updates require that the computer be rebooted - or even powered off and on again - in order to install correctly.

If a computer user finds it more convenient to leave the computer on overnight and does not turn his or computer off on a frequent basis, it is entirely possible that he is unwittingly preventing the completion of pending updates. This will create a bottleneck scenario and may lead to the computer falling behind with these important enhancements.

Update alerts can be enabled to prompt the end user but in my experience, many users doubt the validity or origin of such prompts and as such they may unwittingly decline to let them run.

There is a difference between updates pending a restart, and updates pending a shutdown. A restart does not turn off the power of the computer, a shutdown does.

The user cannot easily tell if updates are pending a restart - it is only when clicking the restart button that these updates announce themselves. However, a Windows 7 user can tell if updates are pending a computer shutdown, because an exclamation mark will appear on the shutdown button itself.

If you are trying to save on IT support costs, avoid leaving windows updates to tech support. Instead, ask your consultant to confirm that automatic updates are enabled on every computer (and disable notification too). Then encourage your staff to restart their computers once per day, and power off the computer at least once per week. Lunchtime is a good opportunity, or at the end of the day. This will help maintain the computers and it will give the employee a sense of ownership and responsibility for their own equipment. Furthermore, it will ensure that delays (and potentially additional charges) are not incurred when IT support performs routine or maintenance work.