

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This month's question is: Do I really want to use the Automatic Update feature of Windows XP? I'd rather see what the updates are and only install the ones I believe apply to me.

You have a good point and I feel the same way about the updates for Windows and Office. But you should know that only Critical/Security Updates are installed by the Automatic Updates feature. And since these are very important updates for the health and security of your computer, I would recommend that you use the Automatic Updates feature. To enable Automatic Updates you need to open the Control Panel. Then double-click on Automatic Updates and select Automatic Updates. You are given a choice as to when to get these updates. The default is every day at 3AM. I don't know about you but my computers aren't normally running at 3AM, so I would recommend that you change the time to some time during the day when you're likely to have your computer turned on and connected to the internet. Since Microsoft only issues updates once a week, it isn't necessary to be online everyday at that time. Also don't worry about receiving messages that you missed the update time, as this is completely automatic working in the background.

There are two other categories of updates that Microsoft issues; Software, Optional and Hardware, Optional. As their names suggest these are optional updates and I would check for them once every month or two and install the ones you feel you need. To see these updates you need to run Windows Updates from the Start Menu and select a Custom Update so that you get a list of available updates. Then you can pick and choose the updates you wish to install.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.