

Windows^{xp} Q&As



Q My internet connection password is seven characters long. When saved, an extra nine are added. I still get connected and this happens even if I retype the password.

A Microsoft attempted to make Windows XP more secure by displaying 16 'blobs' irrespective of the password's real length. This is meant to confuse any would-be hacker who might be looking over your shoulder hoping to guess your password.

Q I am unable to use my online banking program under Windows XP. The application requires Java, which is not automatically installed. It's available under the Service Pack but I'm reluctant to install this. Is there any other way to install Java on the OS?

A Microsoft no longer includes the Java VM (virtual machine) with Internet Explorer and has made the download hard to find since losing Sun Microsystems' court action. It claims it is

now only legally able to provide updates to users who already have VM installed.

Some public-spirited people have made copies of the installable VM available on their servers, but be very wary of unofficial download sites as it's an ideal way to distribute viruses or Trojans.

One reliable link is a Java developer's site at <ftp://ftp.visualware.com/pub/java/msjvax86.exe>. This VM file contains Build 3805 which is not the latest version but you can update it using Windows Update. (Readers who already have Build 3805 or earlier should still install this update as it corrects a security vulnerability.)

Go to Windows Updates (<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>) and, under 'Pick updates to install', select 'Critical Updates and Service Packs'. Scroll down to number 810030 Microsoft VM Security Update, which has a download size of 5.1MB. Remove all the other updates from the list before clicking on 'Review and install updates' – by default they are all selected for download.

You can also install a Java plug-in from Sun Microsystems at <http://java.sun.com/getjava/download.html>. We can't guarantee that your online banking app will work perfectly, though, as there are differences between Sun's and Microsoft's implementation of Java. Check with your bank's technical people before trying it. However, users report that it works well and runs faster than Microsoft's JVM. ■

Save Windows Updates to a file



Whether you prefer to download updates to Windows XP and install them later, or like to limit your time online by downloading an update once and installing it on all your computers, here's how to do it.

Go to Windows Update (<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>) and, in the lefthand pane under Other Options, click Personalize Windows Update. Tick the box next to 'Display the link to the Windows Update Catalog' under See Also then click Save Settings. A link to the Windows Update Catalog should now appear. Click this link then select 'Find Update for Microsoft Windows Operating Systems'. Choose your version of Windows XP from the list box and click Search. Note that RTM denotes the first version without Service Packs. You can then select and download the updates you require.



↑ Use the Windows Update Catalog to download and save your updates to a file