

## Microsoft Windows Update

Windows Update was originally introduced as a major new feature for Windows 98, and the technology exists in Windows 2000, Windows XP, Windows Server 2003, Windows 98, and Windows Me. Essentially, Windows Update is a special Web site that scans your operating system and offers the most recent service packs, hotfixes, security updates, and other updates appropriate for your computer. The Web site works only with the basic operating system and any included software, such as Internet Explorer or Media Player. You can access the site at <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>.

Windows Update automatically detects the operating system running on your computer and offers only fixes appropriate for your system. However, Windows Update does include a Windows Update Catalog, which you can enable by modifying your Windows Update preferences (using the Preference link on the Web site itself). The Catalog provides access to all available updates for all operating systems, allowing an administrator to download updates for her organization and then distribute them internally. The alternative is to have each user connect to Windows Update, which is a waste of bandwidth: Most users will wind up downloading the exact same updates to their computers as every other user in the organization.

Windows Update is primarily useful for a home environment or a very small business environment. Larger businesses can use Microsoft's freely available Software Update Service (SUS), which basically provides an in-house version of Windows Update, allowing corporate users to obtain their operating system updates through their local area networks, rather than by using the company's Internet connection.