

Get All the Updates

Enabling automatic updates on a computer, smartphone and any other “smart” devices you own ensures they always get the security updates they need with little or no effort on your part. Sometimes, these updates can cause issues with software, but the security improvements are generally worth the temporary risk for most people.

If you have a Windows computer:

Windows 10 downloads and updates automatically by default, but it doesn't know *when* is the best time to apply those updates without help from you. If you've ever had a morning ruined by a warning saying your computer's about to restart, then you'll want to dial in these options:

1. Click the Start menu and open up “Settings.”
2. Click “Update & Security” and select “Windows Update.”
3. Click “Change active hours” and pick the hours you use your computer. This prevents Windows from restarting during those hours, but will still update your device as needed.

The Windows updates keep the operating system up-to-date, but you will also need to enable automatic updates in any software you have. To do this, open up the software and poke around the menu options. You will usually find the automatic updates option in the application's settings menu.

If you have a Mac computer:

Enabling automatic updates on Mac is easy, but it doesn't have the handy scheduling features like Windows:

1. Click the Apple logo and click “System Preferences.”

2. Click on “Software update.”

3. Check the box next to “Automatically keep my Mac up to date.”

You can also enable software updates for anything you download from the Mac App Store.

1. Open up the App Store (you can find it in the Applications folder).

2. Click the App Store menu and select “Preferences.”

3. Click the check box next to “Automatic Updates.”

Your Mac and the bulk of its software will now stay up-to-date. If your Mac needs to restart to apply these updates, you will get a notification asking when you want to do so. Usually, you can set it so it restarts overnight and doesn't disrupt your day.

If you have an Android phone:

Many Android phones automatically update apps and the operating system by default, but it's good to double-check. These settings may differ slightly on your version of Android. First, make sure the Android operating system updates automatically with feature and security updates:

1. Open “Settings” and select “About Phone.”

2. Scroll down and find “Software Update.”

3. Make sure “Check Automatically” is toggled on.

For app updates, you need to check the Google Play app:

1. Open up the Google Play app and open “Settings.”

2. Find the “Auto-update apps” option and check that it's enabled.

If you have an iPhone:

Like Android's, the iPhone's automatic updates are enabled by default, but it's good to double-check, especially if you've carried over old settings from older iPhones:

1. Open up "Settings" and tap "General."
2. Tap "Software Update" and scroll down to make sure "Automatic Updates" is toggled on. These updates will usually happen overnight when the phone is plugged into a charger.

For apps, the process is similar:

1. Open up Settings and scroll down to "iTunes & App Store."
2. Check that "Updates" is toggled on under the "Automatic Downloads" section.

Everything Else

Now's the hard part: updating every other connected device in your house. This is an important but annoying step if you own "smart" devices like a Nest thermostat or Hue light bulb. If you have a lot of those devices, this step can take a long time. If it works better for you, perhaps try to do a few a day for the next few days.

For most connected devices — light bulbs, speakers, security cameras, thermostats, outlets or locks — you usually need to first update the application on your smartphone. Then look for an option to update the device using the smartphone app. Generally, you will get an alert about an update, but it's useful to set a calendar reminder to remind yourself to open the apps once a month to force them to connect, check for updates and issue those updates. Think about any device you might have that's connected to the internet — stuff like printers, routers, even accessories like wireless mice all need software updates now and again. For each of those devices, hop into its software or settings and find the automatic updates toggle.

Have you completed this?

Mark this task complete



Why Am I Doing This?

Manufacturers release small, incremental security updates to devices all the time. Keeping all devices and accessories you own up-to-date means they're more secure. If you set up automated updates ahead of time, you can at least make installing those updates less painful.