

Microsoft Windows XP SP3 (Service Pack 3)

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My recommended installation procedure:

This is definitely an 'overkill' approach to the installation of Windows XP SP3 in as much as the doctor may say 'don't smoke, don't drink, don't eat fast foods, eat healthy and exercise daily' etc. My personal motto is 'Perfection is useless', so I don't expect many to go to the extremes of this procedure. However, if you want to have the absolutely best chance as close to a perfect problem free SP3 installation, take a day off work and do the following.

- If you are using an AMD CPU in a brand name computer contact a service technician

The reported side effects of installing SP3 on some brand name AMD based systems are serious. You must contact the place of purchase, or the manufacturer, or a qualified computer technician who knows how to rectify the problem.

- Carry out a full system virus scan of your computer
- Carry out a full spyware and malware scan of your computer

If you have any infections or malware lurking around in your system, things are not going to go smoothly with the SP3 installation. Proceed when you know your system is clear.

- Uninstall any old programs that you don't use
- Uninstall any old hardware drivers for any products that are no longer being used

The less legacy drivers on your system the better. Outdated printer & scanner drivers that are no longer connected are notorious for causing problems with service packs.

- Cleanout all temporary system files and accumulated cached files

The cleaner the temporary storage areas of your hard disk are, the less chance of the temporary SP3 installation files are likely to be corrupted by them. There are many products to do this job more efficiently but if you don't have any 3rd party cleaning programs at least use the built in one;

[Start-All Programs-Accessories-System Tools-Disk Cleanup]

- Ensure you have the latest internet explorer 7.0 web browser installed

This step is my experience only. On 2 occasions so far when installing SP3 on a new computer with Internet Explorer 6.0 installed, the upgrade to Internet Explorer 7.0 would not complete afterwards. I had to uninstall the SP3 upgrade, install the Internet Explorer 7.0 upgrade, then do the SP3 upgrade all over again. I have not yet discovered why this problem occurs but contrary to some technical support sites it is happening. So you have been warned, ensure you are running Internet Explorer 7.0 before installing SP3.

- Ensure you have enough Hard Disk drive space

The Windows XP SP3 installation will require approximately 1GB of free hard drive space during installation. Check how much space you have left before you begin.

- Ensure you have enough download capacity on your Internet Account

The Windows XP SP3 installation will require a minimum of 70mb internet downloads. Ensure your account can provide this and be aware of any extra charges involved if you exceed this.

- **Backup all your personal data off the hard disk.**

With any luck, your Windows XP SP3 installation will complete without any problems and a data recovery will not be necessary. However a Service Pack upgrade to an operating system is serious business and it's not worth the risk. Besides, there is nothing wrong with creating a full backup of your personal data. You will never believe how happy you will be if you ever need it in the future!

A full backup of your personal data should include;

- Your 'My Documents' folder
- Your 'Desktop' folder (in case you have left any stray files or folders out on the desktop)
- Your 'Favorites' list
- Your 'email address book' (you may need advice to do this)
- Your 'email messages data base' (you may need advice to do this)
- Your 'system fonts' (ditto, but not so important)

And finally any program data residing on the root directory of the hard disk

As an example of this, MYOB products install their program and the master company files into C:MYOB folder on the root directory. Ensure you add folders such as these to the backup.

- **Shut down any programs running in the background**

Including any Antivirus and firewall products, check what else is running at least via the icons in the lower right of the task bar near the clock. If you cannot identify the program leave it, but if you know what it is see if you can right click on it and find an 'exit' option. The less programs or services running in background memory, the easier the SP3 installation is going to go.

- **Begin the Windows XP SP3 installation.**

This is done by running the 'Microsoft Updates' system until the SP3 installation option appears.

Start – All Programs – Microsoft Update *

Follow the installation prompts to begin the process.

The minimum download size is approximately 70MB, but this will vary from computer to computer as it checks to see if you have missed any previous updates and adds them to the download.

Of course attempting to do this on a dialup internet system will take a day or more so you may want to get the job done professionally. I am of course offering the service to take computers using dialup to my service centre to get the job done faster.


Even if you are on broadband, the time will still vary depending on your speed. 256kbps plans will take longer than an hour. Typical speeds are 256kbps / 512kbps / 1500kbps or faster.

During the update you must monitor its progress as it stops at certain points prompting you to continue after it has successfully downloaded the main package. After it successfully completes the installation, you are then requested to restart the computer via another prompt.

A successful restart will take longer than usual as system files are being modified etc. Wait at least 5 – 10 minutes before you use the system.

To check if your update was successful, click **Start – Control Panel – System** icon, and see if **SP3** is shown on your licence screen similar to the one at the top of this document.

At this stage it is VERY wise to start checking your programs and accessories to ensure everything is functioning okay. If you have a problem with your printer, scanner, DVD burner or any other hardware or programs weeks or months later, you are never going to know if it was caused by the installation of SP3! Check them all now to avoid future confusion and frustration.

* If your system does not have 'Microsoft Update' present  Microsoft Update and only shows 'Windows Update', you are missing components that may cause problems. I would recommend professional support to get your system up to date prior to installing SP3.