

## Tip 8

### Keep your software up-to-date

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When computers were first introduced on a large scale by small businesses, the software being used was often updated only once or twice a year and sometimes not at all until a new computer was purchased. This was acceptable in the 1980s and early 1990s as there were fewer businesses reliant on computers connected to the Internet.

As many computers are now connected to the Internet, security of data is becoming an important issue. It is essential that computer software is kept up-to-date with the latest security patches. As hackers are always trying to find new ways to break into computers that are online, software companies release updates and corrective patches to software via their websites. Updates are usually provided free if you have bought a legitimate version of the software.

#### What you can do

To be sure your critical software is up-to-date:

- draw up a list of all the critical software you use - e.g. operating system, email, firewall, spam filters, anti-virus
- access the relevant vendor's website and check to see that you have the latest version
- as part of your security plan, check for new security patches and updates on a regular basis
- whenever possible, use software that provides an automatic updating feature and make sure you turn it on. Usually this will automatically explore the vendor's website for new updates and then download and install them automatically whenever you log on to the Internet.

#### Further information

The supplier of your software, computers and your Internet service provider may provide information on the latest in software updates and security risks. It would be useful to visit their websites for new information and to subscribe to newsletters for software upgrades and other security issues in general.

#### What is a patch?

A patch is a solution provided by a vendor to address vulnerabilities in existing software. It is vital therefore to install any new patches that are made available. Patches can usually be downloaded from the relevant vendor's website.