

# How to Use WindowsUpdate.Com

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**Microsoft** (*Microsoft*) has created a website called **WindowsUpdate.Com**. This website distributes updates and fixes for your Windows Operating System (7, Vista, XP, 2000, ME, 98) in a timely manner, so your computer runs in tip-top condition! These components include, but are not limited to *Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, Windows Media Player*, and now all *Microsoft* products like *Office, Works, Visio, Live, Silverlight, .NET, SQL Server, Microsoft* development tools, etc. Usually, only *Microsoft* products are provided although some updates for hardware installed on your computer are also made available. It is a free service and is usually referred to as **Windows Update**, but since it now covers all *Microsoft* products, it is also known as **Microsoft Update**. These terms are used interchangeably through this document; **Windows Update**, when referring to the service and **Microsoft Update**, when referring to the screens on the website. They are one and the same.

**Note:** *If you are in a corporate environment, please do not use this document as updates are probably pushed to your computer by your IT department!*

There are three kinds of updates available from *Microsoft*. They are:

- **High Priority (or Critical):** Recommended updates that *Microsoft* deems necessary to keep your computer as secure and stable as possible. These are automatically downloaded to your computer if the **Windows Automatic Update** service is running. *Highly recommended by the author!*
- **Software, Optional:** Optional updates *Microsoft* believes you will benefit from having. These are not automatically downloaded by the **Windows Automatic Update** service, so need to be downloaded manually using the *Windows Update* website. *Highly recommended by the author!*
- **Hardware, Optional:** Some manufacturers distribute their hardware drivers through the *Windows Update* website. *Not recommended by the author, unless you know what you are doing!*

This document covers:

- Using the **Windows Automatic Update** service.
- Manually using the *Windows Update* website.

Additional information can be obtained for different operating systems covered by *Windows Update* from the *Microsoft* website below:

<http://www.microsoft.com/security/updates/mu.aspx>

## 1. Using the Windows Automatic Update Service

If your computer is always online, **High/Critical** updates are automatically downloaded onto your computer by the **Windows Automatic Update** service. This service operates in the background and downloads updates when you are not using your internet connection. When these updates are ready for you to install, a little yellow shield icon appears in your **System Tray** in the bottom right of your screen saying **Updates are now ready to download/install**; see **Figure 1**.



Figure 1: Windows Automatic Update service yellow shield icon telling you updates are ready to install.

It is recommended to **always** click on this icon and apply the recommended updates. Stay with the default of **Critical**, click on **Next** to continue, and accept any license agreements. When it is complete you may or may not be asked to reboot your computer. Again, you are notified by the yellow shield icon as in **Figure 2**.

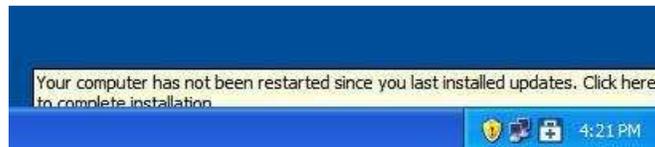


Figure 2: Windows Automatic Update service yellow shield icon telling you the computer needs to be restarted after updates.

## 2. Some Things to Know About the Windows Automatic Update Service

There are a few things you should be aware of concerning **Windows Automatic Update Service**:

- Make sure that the **Windows Automatic Update** service is running, so that **Critical/High** updates are automatically downloaded to your computer when they are available from *Microsoft*. See **Section 3 Enabling the Windows Automatic Update Service**.
- It only **automatically** downloads **Critical (High Priority)** updates.
- Optional **Software** and **Hardware** updates, which are also available on the **Windows Update** website, are also important to have on your computer. You can use this document to update all these components manually.
- If you have a laptop, and/or are not usually connected to the internet at the time that **Automatic Updates** is set to run (by default it is set to 3:00 AM every day), then you can use this document to update all your components manually.
- Microsoft has a tendency to change the way the **Windows Update** website work as they update its **features**, so do not be confused, if there are slight changes from time to time! Just understand that the procedure to follow is the same, and check back to the website where you obtained this document for updates to it.

### 3. Enabling the Windows Automatic Update Service

It is recommended you ensure that the **Windows Automatic Update** service is running as well as downloading updates to your computer. Do the following:

1. Open **Start | Control Panel**.
2. Open **Security Center**. The following Window appears:



Figure 3 Windows Security Center

3. If **Windows Automatic Updates** is set to **ON**, you're good to go, otherwise, click **Turn on Automatic Updates**, and close the window.

## 4. Using the Windows Update Website

It is recommended that you perform a manual update every few weeks, so that you are not missing any recently-released updates.

*Note: To run Windows/Microsoft Update, you must open the website using only Internet Explorer. This procedure will not work using any other browser!*

Do the following:

1. Once you are connected to the internet, open *Internet Explorer* from your *Desktop* or the *Start* menu.
2. Open menu item **Tools | Windows Update** (or open the website address <http://www.WindowsUpdate.Com>). The following window *should* appear:

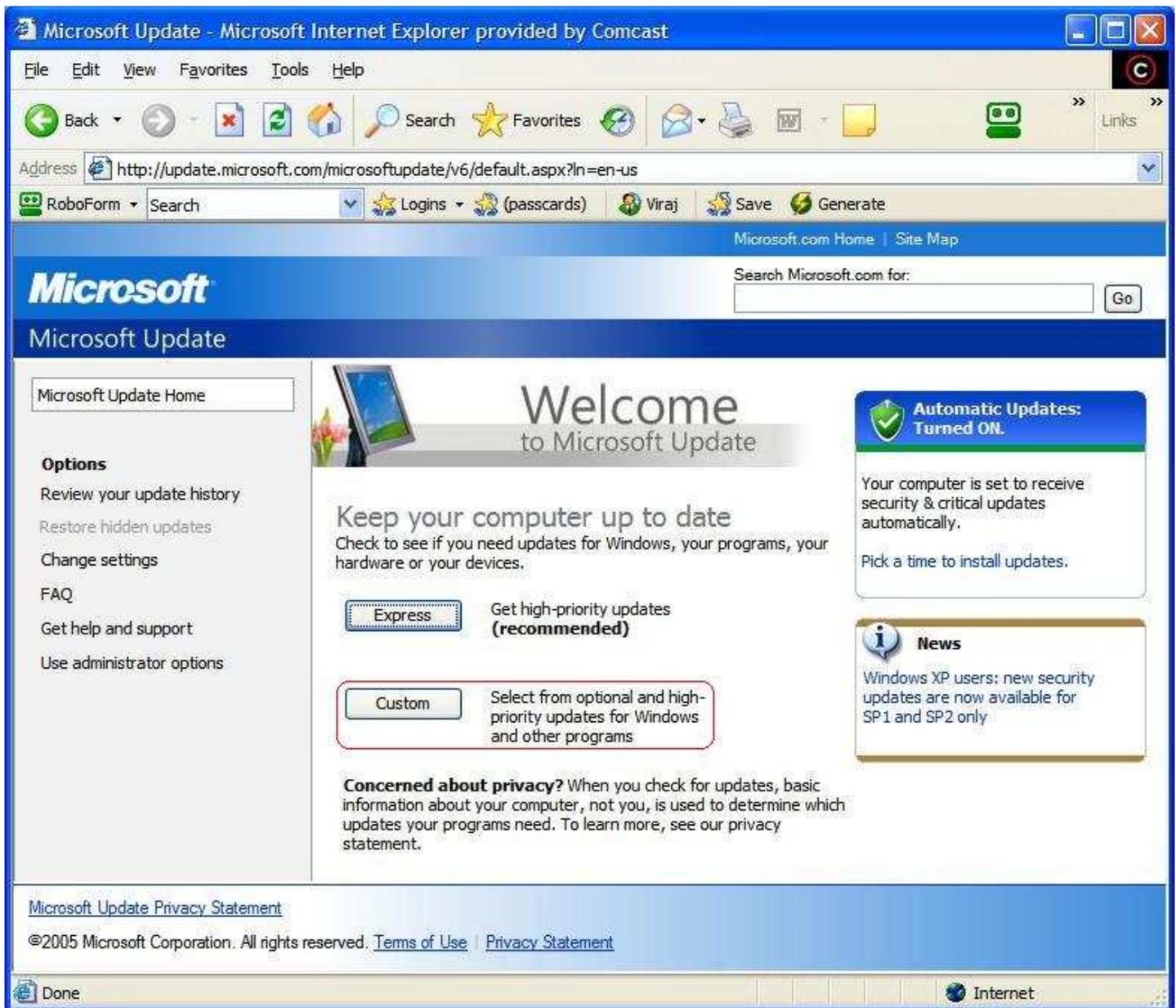


Figure 4: Microsoft Update website main window.

*Note: The first time you do this, you may be prompted to download an ActiveX control (component) from Microsoft. If you are not familiar with how to do this, please see **Section 7 Downloading ActiveX Controls/Components & Section 8 Downloading Files Using the Information Bar** for instructions.*

*Note: Occasionally, and especially the first time you access Windows Update, you may be prompted to validate your copy of Windows using the Windows Genuine Advantage tool (WGA). Please provide affirmative responses until you return to the screen above. See*

3. Click **Express** or **Custom** (recommended). It will take a couple of minutes for the system to be scanned; the green progress bar will start to scan your computer for the updates already installed (see Figure 5). If you are asked to download an **ActiveX** control, please do so with affirmative responses.



Figure 5: Microsoft Update website after you click Express or Custom.

4. When the check is complete, the following screen will be displayed.

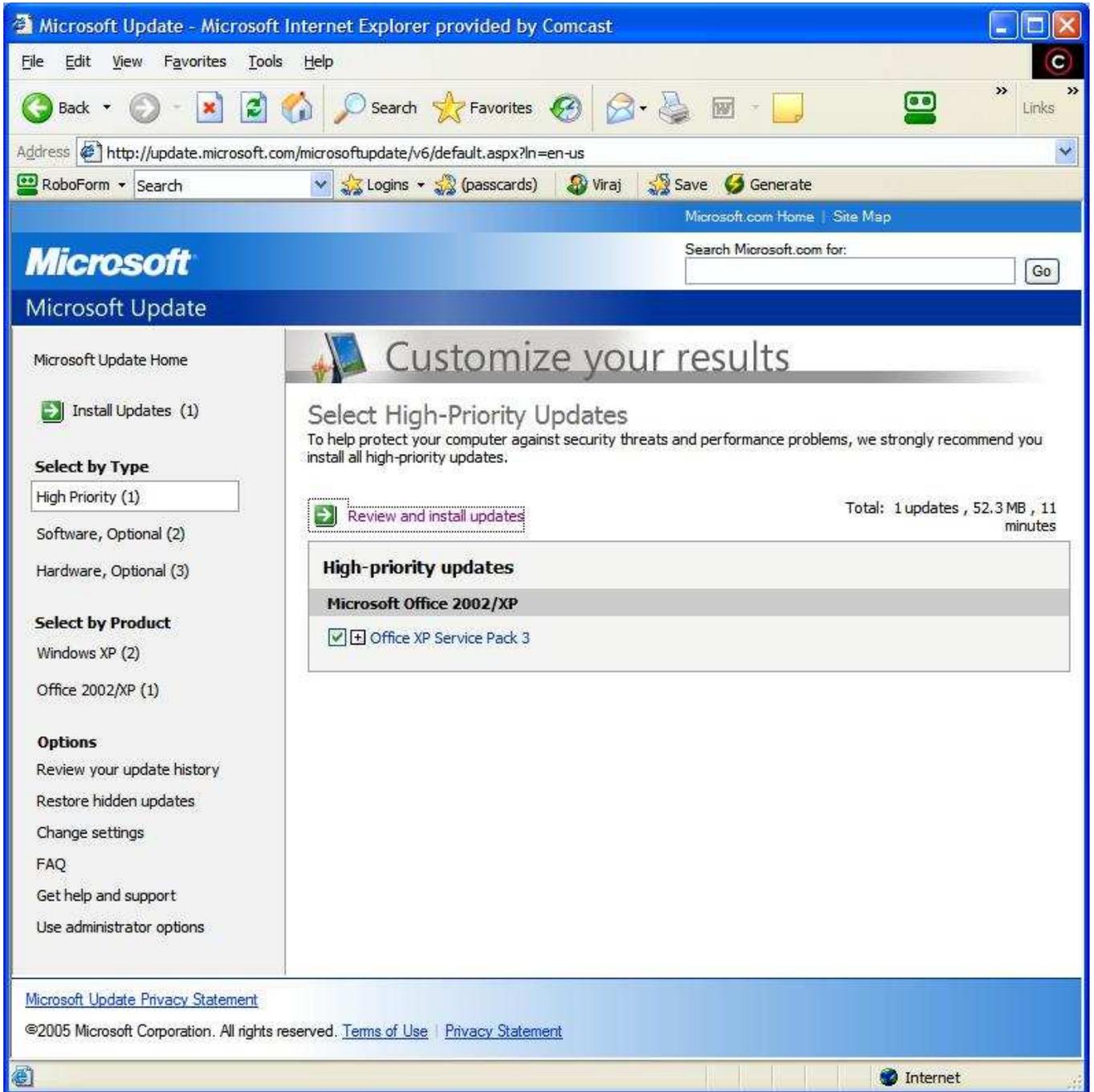


Figure 6: Microsoft Update website after the update check is complete displaying the number of available updates.

5. The **left** menu column displays the updates that are available for your particular computer. There are three types of updates:

- **High Priority (or Critical)**
- **Software, Optional**
- **Hardware, Optional**

6. The **High Priority** updates are automatically selected for you and placed in the list on the **right**.

7. You can just use these and continue with **Review and Install Updates** (green arrow at the top).

Note: It is recommended that you first apply all the necessary **High/Critical** updates. Once these are up-to-date, return to the website to also apply the available **Software** updates. See **Section 5 Applying Optional Software Updates**.

8. Click on the **Review and Install Updates**, and the list will show up in the **right** column as in **Figure 7**.

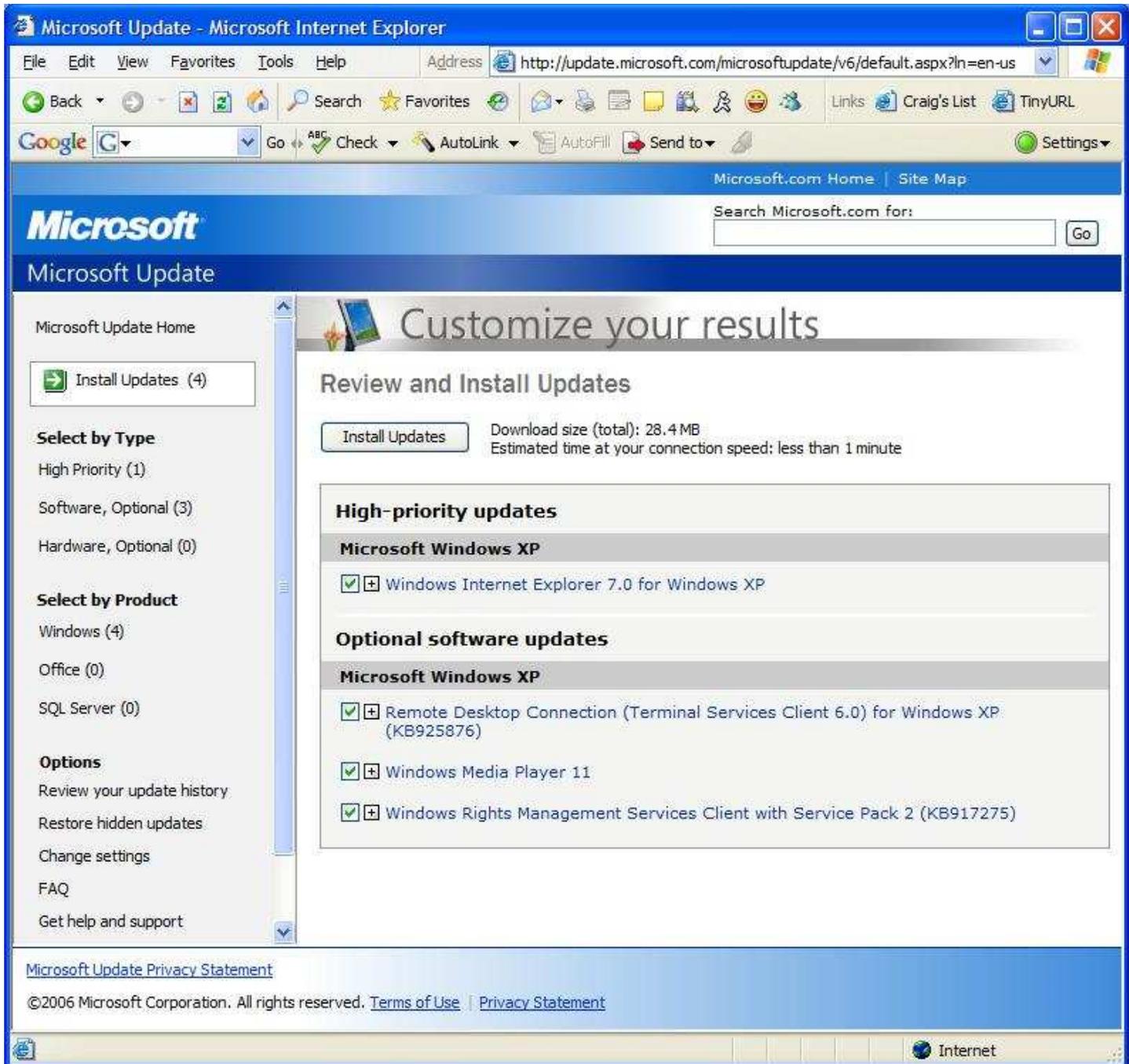


Figure 7 Ready to install updates.

9. Click **Install Updates**. You may be prompted to accept **Microsoft License Agreements** and **End User License Agreements** (EULAs). Always respond with the affirmative to any requests; **I Accept, I Agree, Yes, OK, Next, Validate, Continue, Install**, etc. The window in **Figure 8** should appear with a green status bar showing the progress of downloads and installations, which should take place automatically.

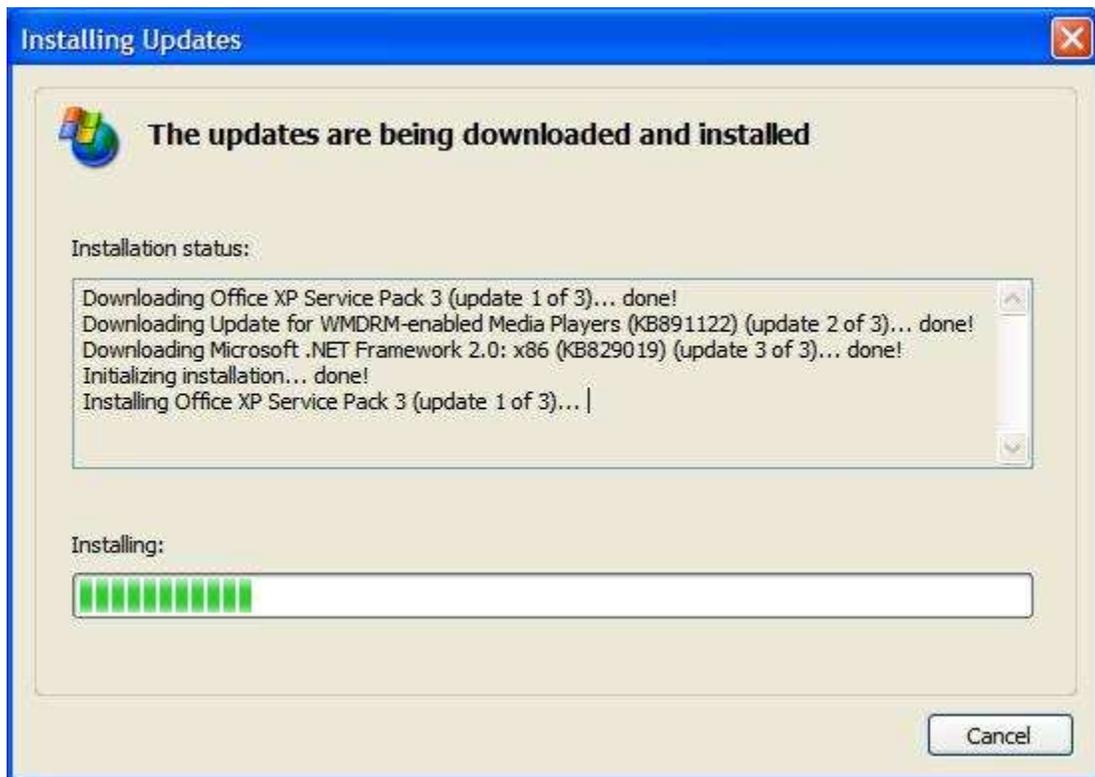


Figure 8: Installing updates window.

*Note: The download can take a long time, so be prepared to watch occasionally for any prompts.*

*Note: You will most likely be asked to restart your computer. Please do so.*

*Note: Occasionally, you may need to answer prompts as in the case of upgrading to a newer version of Internet Explorer. Please respond in the affirmative to check for and apply updates to this program.*

*Note: Even if you see that you are downloading and installing what looks like the last update, it may not be so. Windows Update is smart enough to know which updates have been installed. So, if you have not installed a program you are just downloading, it does not show you updates to it yet. These will appear the next time you go to Windows Update. **So, the best way to tell if you have everything is to go back repeatedly to Windows Update, and make sure all the counts are 0 (zero).***

*Note: It takes about 5-6 times or more on a computer which has not had updates applied at all. Once all lists say 0 (zero) updates available, it will tell you there are no more for right now, and you can close Internet Explorer. After that, you should go there every couple of weeks to check for new updates, and the process becomes less iterative.*

10. Once completed, **Review Your Installation Results** will be displayed as in **Figure 9**.

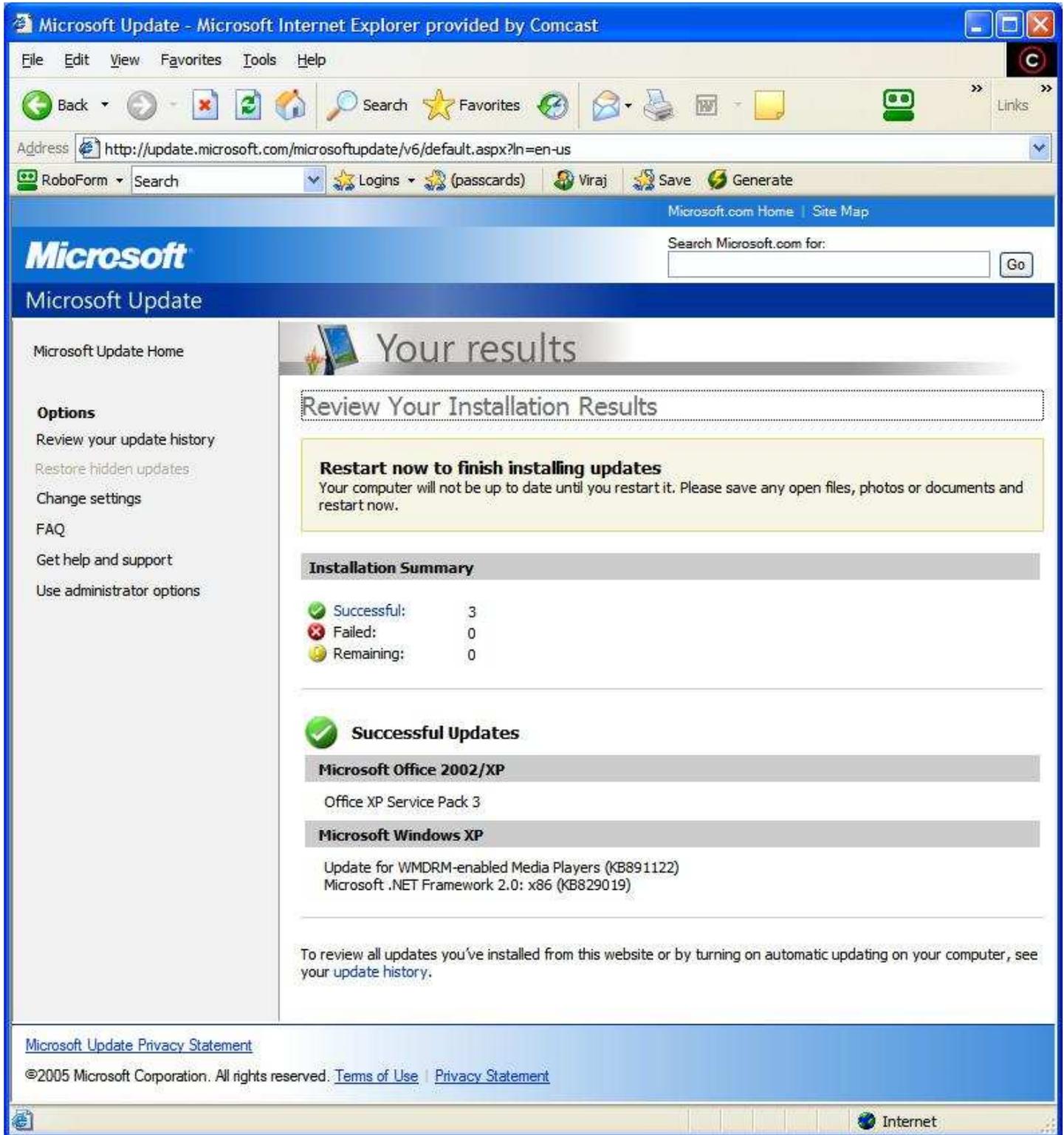


Figure 9 Update install status.

11. You may be asked to **Restart** your computer. Please close all applications saving your work and then click the **Restart** button.

12. Now return to the top of these instructions, and repeat the process again for **High/Critical** updates. If these are complete, then proceed to **Section 5 Applying Optional Software Updates**.

## 5. Applying Optional Software Updates

On subsequent visits to **Windows Update**, you will most likely see many **Software** updates, which have not been applied. You need to do these manually as follows:

1. Click **Software, Optional** in the **left** column. This will open the list of available software updates in the **right** column as in **Figure 10**.

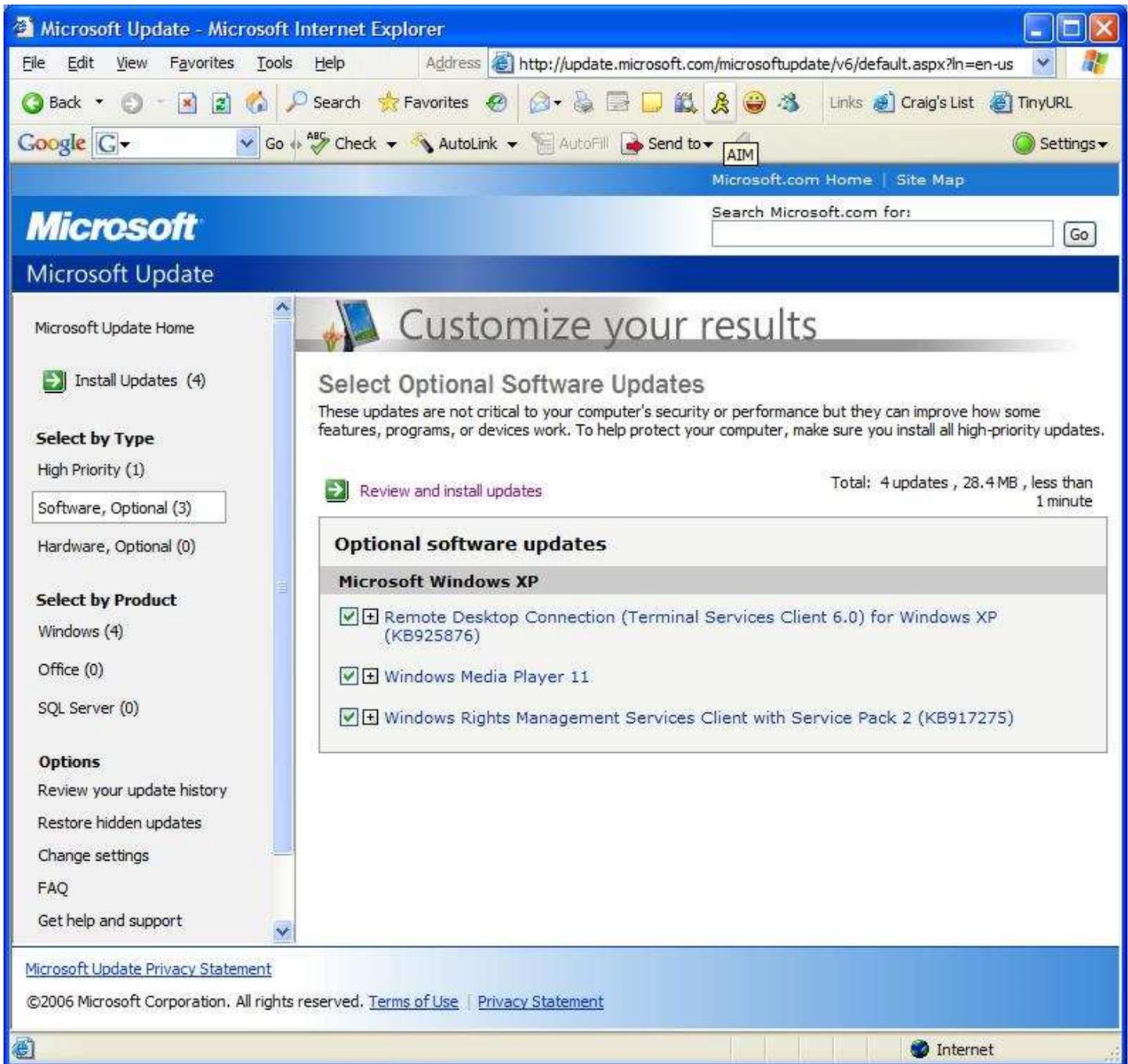


Figure 10 Software, Optional updates.

2. You can now select the **Software** updates that you would like installed by placing a checkmark beside them.  
*Hint: Start from the bottom of the list, as it opens the update's description and you will need to do a lot of scrolling to get to the bottom of a long list!*

Note: It is recommended that you install all software updates.

Note: If your computer is **not** particularly fast or does not have 2GB or more of RAM, the author does not recommend installing **Windows Search**.

## 6. Hiding Updates You Do Not Want to Install

If you do not want to install updates at any time, you can hide them, so they do not keep appearing in the updates-to-be-installed list. You can do this by clicking on the + beside the title of the update and placing a checkmark beside **Hide Update**. You can enable this again by using the **Options | Restore Hidden Updates** in the **left** column.

## 7. Downloading ActiveX Controls/Components

ActiveX controls or components are programs that you download on your computer through Internet Explorer, which provide certain features that you need to use. Sometimes, when you access websites that use ActiveX, you will be asked to download the component. Internet Explorer does not normally download these components without your permission. Meaning, it will inform you, but it will not download the control without you actually clicking to start the download.

## 8. Downloading Files Using the Information Bar

To tell you when a file such as an *ActiveX* control is waiting to be downloaded Internet Explorer displays a message using what is known as the *Information Bar*. This bar is located at the top of the web page, under all the Internet Explorer toolbars as in **Figure 11**:



Figure 11: Internet Explorer Information Bar.

The bar is usually a very light yellow, but when you move the mouse over it, it changes to blue. When you click on it, it will either say *Install ActiveX...* or *Download File...* Select this, and then respond in the affirmative to either **Install** or **Run** the downloaded file.

Note: If you are on a website such as Windows Update, then it is a good idea to install it, so you can proceed further. But, if you are on a website that you are not familiar with, do not respond to this.

Note: Although not relevant for this discussion, when Internet Explorer blocks pop-up windows (pop-ups), you are notified through this Information Bar.

## 9. Using the Windows Genuine Advantage Tool

The *Windows Genuine Advantage* (WGA) tool is used by Microsoft to determine if you have a legal copy of Windows on your computer. If you do not have a legal copy, then you are not entitled to some Windows updates from this website. WGA is an *ActiveX* component that Microsoft requires that you download onto your computer and run. If it determines that your copy of Windows is legal, it allows you to continue with *Windows Updates*. If it determines that the copy is illegal, then it puts a notice on your desktop and will guide you to either fix the problem, or more likely, buy a legal copy of Windows. More information on WGA can be found at: <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/892130>.