Updates & Updaters

What is an Updater? A program that runs, usually in the background, that tries to update automatically.

Why do I need updates? Updates can provide improved security, additional capabilities & options, improved compatibility, improved performance, newer versions of programs you already have

Are they all important? No. Although some updates (specifically for Windows) are security updates, other updates like acrobat, flash player, Google, Yahoo and others are more for compatibility issuses.

Which updates don't I need? Drivers (with the exception of some graphics cards) , most optional Microsoft updates, Brand updates (like Dell or HP, Apple, Google, Yahoo, etc)

If I don't need them, why are they present? All these companies want to have some kind of presence on your computer this is also known as branding.   So I may have a Dell computer, but my HP printer has installed an updater that reminds me, Hey I have an HP product.

Which updates are of high importance? Any Windows update that offers critical or security updates should be treated as important. Anti Virus, Anti Spyware, Anti Malware updates & definitions are also considered high importance.

Some updates can be considered good, but not 100% needed for your computer to function safely. Some of those would be updates for Flash Player, Acrobat Reader, Java, Apple, & Shockwave.

Updates can fix some hardware and incompatibility problems. If a hardware device on your system suddenly stops working or starts behaving oddly (example; low screen resolution and colors, no audio, networking problems) An updated driver could fix these types of issues. These updates are driver updates. If a program doesn't work the way it should, an update for that program could fix the problem, these types of updates care call patches or service packs.

What are the most common updates on my computer?
List of common updates:
- Microsoft updates for operating system, Internet Explorer, Net.Framework, silverlight, MS Essentials, MS Office updates (NOTE: IE 9 & SP-1 for Win 7 3/14/11)
- Java- from Oracle, programming language, allows additional capabilities on the WEB
- DirectX – improved graphics performance
- Adobe Acrobat- reads pdf files
- Adobe Flash Player-plays videos & animations on the web
- Media Players-Real Player, QuickTime, VLC, MP
- IE, Firefox & other browsers-
- Shockwave- plays videos & animations on the web
- Apple updates (usually for iTunes, Quicktime, & iPod/iPhone devices)
- HP updates (comes with all HP products)
- Roxio & Sonic Solutions-CD/DVD burning software
- BIOS (motherboard updates)
- Firmware updates (for devices like routers, optical drives, digital cameras)

- Google, Yahoo, other browser enhancements/toolbars
- Antivirus programs & other security related programs
- Quicken/Quick Books updater

Should I run a program that updates everything for me? No
   A. Another background app, B. You may be getting updates that you don't need or want, C. you may get an update that can throw off you system, IE. A driver update that is incompatible with your hardware.

Cleaning up Updaters:

Removing as many unnecessary updater programs from your system can improve performance.

Go to add/remove programs (XP) or Programs & Features (Vista/7) and look for anything that has the word update/r in it. Uninstall them if you're not using them.

Java updates can be turned off in the control panel.   Flash player, right click on flash content on the web and select global settings. Acrobat updates can be turned off, under help or preferences.

On the above updates just mentioned, you can also set the time these programs will check for updates, so instead of checking for updates every week, which can be very annoying, you can set them to check for updates every 30 days or 60 days depending on the options within each of the programs.

What happens when I have problems installing an update? Programs like Flash, Acrobat, Java and such can become unstable or corrupt by updates. In most cases if an update causes corruption, there's usually a reason for it. Sometimes that reason can be another pre-existing condition such as malware or a virus. If you do experience problems with an update, the program can be uninstalled and reinstalled manually. This can also be done when updating from a very old version to a very new version of the same program, like Adobe Acrobat ver. 7 to ver. 10.