

## **JAVA HACKER ALERT -Update this program to protect your computer**

Q. My computer keeps nagging me to update Java. I know a while back you told us to stay away from Java because it's associated with some dangerous viruses. Should I bother updating it or should I just delete it? I think I need it for some programs that I run. Thanks for always helping me keep my computer safe.

Before I answer your question, Abby, some people might need a refresher. Java is a required part of many popular programs like LibreOffice, some Adobe programs and popular online games.

Most PCs ship with Java installed by default. Since OSX 10.7, Macs have Java automatically disabled for browsers.

Earlier in the year, hackers began finding dangerous security holes in Java. For a few months, it seemed like every time Oracle - the company that develops Java - patched one, another security hole popped up.

That's why I recommended that people disable or even delete Java. Keeping it around gave hackers a window to completely take over your PC or Mac. Sadly, it meant certain useful programs wouldn't work properly, too.

However, Oracle released a new Java update last week. It has new security features that make it worth an upgrade.

In fact, it allows you to keep using most of the Java-based programs you need without exposing your computer to security risks.

If you've uninstalled Java in the past, you'll need to re-install it with the latest version. For those with Java already installed, you'll need to update.

You can find the most recent version of Java on Oracle's site. Or click the Java Update icon in the Windows notification area, if it appears. Make sure the download says that it's Version 7 Update 10.

If you have older versions of Java installed, be sure to uninstall them. You can check in Start>>Control Panel>>Programs list.

Mac users should go to Finder>>Applications and then type "JavaAppletPlugin.plugin." Right click the file that appears and select "Move to Trash."

To bring up Java's new security settings, go to Start>>Computer and type "Javacpl.exe" in the search bar. If it doesn't appear, you may have to find it manually.

Go to Start>>Computer and open your Local Disk (C:). Go to Program Files (x86)>>Java>>jre7>>bin and scroll down until you see "javacpl.exe". On 32-bit computers, it's under Program Files>>Java>jre7>>bin.

Mac users can find the same file by going to System Preferences and clicking on the Java icon - it looks like a steaming cup of coffee.

Before you launch the file, it might be helpful to right-click it and create a shortcut on the Desktop. That way you can find Java's settings later and easily update it in the future.

Run javacpl.exe to load Java's control panel and select the Security tab. Uncheck the box that says "Enable Java content in the browser."

This allows you to use Java-based programs without Java being active in your browser. Since most of Java's security issues come from online threats, this makes Java much safer.

When this option is set, some websites might not work properly. If you find a site isn't working properly, go back to the Security menu and move the security level slider to "Custom level."

In the menu that pops up, you'll see three different settings to customize. Set the options to "Prompt User," "Single-click confirmation prompt" and "Prompt user," respectively.

Now, when you use a site that requires Java, it will ask for your permission before loading. Make sure you grant that permission only to sites you trust!

Keeping your programs up to date isn't the only good security behavior to start. Here are three more habits that will keep your computer safe.

- Security software is the key to protecting your computer from viruses. [Download one of these free security options.](#)
- With scammers changing their methods every day, it's tough to keep up. [Find out what scams to watch for in 2013.](#)
- Even if you're up on your security, a nosy neighbor or bad egg nearby could ruin it. [Secure your router to keep them out.](#)
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