

Updating Windows 7 All at Once (SP2)

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Yesterday, Microsoft launched the "Convenience rollup update" of Windows updates into a single downloadable file just under 500 Mbytes in size! It purports to bring a Windows 7 (with Service Pack 1 installed) up-to-date by, apparently, removing every other Windows update (what we all call "patches"), and replacing all of it with this single package.

I've been struggling with a semi-working system that wouldn't reliably accept normal Windows updates, a Dell Optiplex 760 (about six years in service). Normally, I would have waited for a few weeks for experience to pour in from the pioneers¹ who would serve as references on whether this "rollup 2" was worth my time. But, on this computer, I'd already rent my garments and torn my hair out, so, what's to lose? My expectations were low, so nearly anything that offered the smallest improvement would be acceptable.

Prepping the System

1. To start, you have to have a bootable, mostly-working Windows 7 system (x32 or x64; downloads are available for both) with at least 4 GB of available disk space on the drive that holds Windows 7. You must have at least Service Pack 1 installed.
2. No new software comes without at least *one* defect³, this package is no exception. You have to install a bug-fixer named [KB3020369](#). Nobody's perfect. Install it, and follow the instructions.
3. Now, you're ready to download [KB3125574](#), and store it away, preferably not on the same disk partition as your existing Windows system. I reserve C: drive for "Code" and the D: drive for "Data," so onto the D: drive it went.

Be warned, however: Always true to form, M\$ ***demands*** you must use Internet Explorer v6.0 or later to reach the page linked to above. If your favorite browser is not IE 11, then you'll have to use a computer that still *has* that browser installed to get the package⁴.

4. Before you start, go *read the documentation*:

For [KB3020369](#)

For [KB3125574](#)

If you don't know what you're about to do, how will you know how to screw it up? Make sure you understand what prerequisites there are, and comply with them

¹ You can identify "pioneers" by the arrows in their backs.

² Why does Microsoft have to use new language every time some programmer gets promoted to a supervisory position? Let's call it what it is: It is Service Pack 2, plain and simple. It looks like a Service Pack, it smells like a Service Pack, and it leaves behind the tell-tale footprint of a Service Pack.

³ See, I can emulate Microsoft, too: It's what most of us would call a "***bug***."

⁴ Once you've downloaded the update, you can do what I do with IE11: Ignore it.

before you start (e.g., "...you also need at least 4GB of free disk space..."). Are you *sure* you checked?

If you really need to know what's in each "rollup" package, you [can download that](#) as an Excel file.

Getting Updated

1. Log on as the Administrator; no don't just give yourself "admin" privileges...you have to be *the* admin.

I prefer, when doing major maintenance on a system to type "netplwiz" in the text box above the globe in the lower-left corner. That opens up a place where I can set it up to automagically logon *one* user after each startup or restart by supplying a password. Be sure to remember to change it back to the normal mode, with individual passwords required, when you're all done.

2. Clean up the system as best you can. Shut down unneeded services, loaded applications, etc...anything that will interfere with the process of fixing the system.

I recommend tweaking.com's wonderful "Windows Repair." I use it liberally on most computers I service...including my own. It ensures that those little mistakes we all make in configuration don't pile up and crash something. Pleasantly, that product is inexpensive, and saves lots of time trying to debug a broken computer.

Oh, and follow the instruction, step-by-step, meticulously, every time, until you're sure you know what you doing, lest you fail to do something important. For example, the author of "Windows Repair" says, after you've run the "Repair" function once, reboot and follow the same "repair" instructions again. That ensures that some late-in-the-process change doesn't have deleterious effect on some earlier-in-the process change, because things are "out of sync." And, the advice on Tab #1 to "drain" the system of energy is a vital first step; it will help, but it may also alert you to the motherboard battery being (or near being) dead.

3. Start by preparing the system with the fix that, if you ignore, will break the "rollup" fixes to follow.
4. Then, restart your system, and run KB3125574. Expect it to restart a few times, and take a total about one hour (see my informal log, below)
5. Look at the log of "Installed Updates" applied (Open "Windows Update" and in the lower left-corner, click on "Installed updates"). It will take some time for your system to scan for all the updates, *they're all gone*⁵, replaced by a single entry for the

⁵ Just like a good Service Pack *should*. But, on some systems, the old updates will remain in place...I'm still investigating what the difference is.

KB3125574, the update just applied. That's how you'll know, in future, if the system has been fully repaired with the "rollup."

6. Apparently, even though the system is functional, the update process appears to continue for another couple of hours, in the background, perhaps applying other, less crucial amendments to the system. I say, let it run.
7. But, while it's running, you might want to go back and launch "netplwiz" again, and re-enable any authorized user to logon (with their password).

Post Mortem Notes

Gee, with all those changes, whadya expect??? Yet, the largest problem I've seen is that the Search Indexer has to be reset, to rebuild the index, because many thing have changed beneath Windows graphic appearance.

That's the biggest manual thing I've had to do. The computer is now sitting there, waiting for it's nightly backup to commence, and then be properly shutdown.

Note: That was for one system. Now, I've run it on four more, and the results are different each time. I just applied KB3125574 to my trusty desktop, and—although it ran for hours—there's been no error message, and it appears to have cleanly concluded. But, there's no record of it in the "Installed Updates." That's why I've updated this technote. Use at your own risk, and report your own experiences (and workarounds), so I can refine this document from its' present confused state to a sound reference document.

Manual Log

During my first use of this Windows Update-to-fix-all-Updates, I scribbled some notes; it was just about one hour, start-to-apparent finish.

1. Green progress bar shows, but stuck at the left edge. It jumps, then creeps to about 33% of the putative "estimated time" about 23 minutes later.
2. Suddenly, the time estimate on the screen jumps from 33% to 50%, then quickly to 100%.
3. Surprisingly, it finished in about 45 minutes, with no apparent errors, and restarted the computer automatically
4. During the shutdown, it takes several more minutes flogging the disk drive (the panel light flickers), apparently making changes in the system
5. It starts up again, and shows that normally-dreaded "Configuring Windows Updates" for another five minutes before Starting Windows appears again
6. Ah, but we're not done yet: It spends another six minutes with "Configuring Windows Update" (%estimates are wild!)
7. Then, it "jumps" from 13% to 100%, after about seven minutes...and restarts Windows again.
8. Back to "Configuring Windows Updates," again...for another six minutes
9. Restarts again, but the delays between events are getting shorter

10. Finally, a "Welcome" screen shows, almost precisely one hour since the update was first launched

Conclusions

Just as "Windows Repair" is one of the most versatile and robust solutions to reviving a "crufty" system, KB3125574 is now my *second* step in the revival cycle. It remains to be seen whether it can survive future updates that will be coming from Microsoft, or will they render that tool less useful.

For a while, at least, we can rebuild a system, and within an hour, have all major, relevant updates applied, instead of launching Windows Update overnight and hoping something will have been downloaded by morning.