

"The Skinny" on Windows XP Service Pack 3

For those of you not using Windows Vista yet (a round of applause to you), Microsoft has recently released Service Pack 3 for Windows XP. This latest Service Pack, released to the Web April 29th, 2008, will be the final Service Pack released for the Windows XP family of operating systems as Vista is slated to be the only OS for a while, until the release of Windows 7. I have had a chance to play with SP3 and do a little digging to find out about it. Apparently this SP contains all the previous releases of updates found in SP1 and SP2, but this is not considered a "must have" in order to continue with certain features of Windows or the Automatic Updates, as in previous releases. There are also a couple new features found in this latest release, but nothing earth shattering. They are: Network Access Protection compatibility. Announced years ago, this feature allows Windows XP machines to interact with the NAP feature in Windows Server 2008. This functionality is built into the RTM version of Windows Vista as well. Product Key-less install option. As with Windows Vista, new XP with SP3 installs can proceed without entering a product key during Setup. Kernel Mode Cryptographics Module. A new kernel module that "encapsulates several different cryptographic algorithms," according to Microsoft. "Black hole" router detection algorithm. XP gains the ability to ignore network routers that incorrectly drop certain kinds of network packets. This, too, is a feature of Windows Vista. So far, things have progressed rather smoothly with this update, although it is a large one and takes some time to download, unpack and install. Count on taking an hour of your time to complete the task in full, depending upon your internet connection. I have performed three installs so far and have yet to encounter a problem, although some users have reported issues, such as driver issues after install. This does not mean that the issue was caused by the SP install, however it's best to make you aware of potential problems. Now, do you need SP3? If your up to date on all your Security Updates, then your really not missing much and you can hold for a while if you wish. The old saying "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" works well here. However, if your not up to date (shame, shame) then I would suggest that you proceed with the SP3 update as this will get your machine current on Security and Bug fixes. As always, make sure you have a backup of all important files, documents, pictures, etc. BEFORE applying the SP3 update just in case something goes awry. Better safe than sorry. If you do encounter issues after installing the update, please let us know so we can inform other users of potential problems they may encounter. You may contact us here: [Contact Us](#)