It is an unfortunate reality that using a computer requires us to keep our software up to date to prevent issues. Issues can be as minor as incompatibility with certain types of files or websites through exposing your computer to malicious hackers. Though most of us know this is important it is like changing oil in your car – you know you should do it, but we aren’t always as diligent about it as we should be. Microsoft has tried to make it easier to keep their software up to date with Windows/Microsoft Update but this tool doesn’t update software from other companies. Most of us use programs like iTunes, Quicktime, Java, Flash Player, Adobe Acrobat and Firefox so keeping everything up to date can be a seemingly insurmountable task.

Use Secunia Software Inspector To Keep Software Updated
Secunia (www.secunia.com) is a well-respected security company that offers a lot of information, advisories and tools for the geek crowd. They also offer a free tool to scan your computer to find common programs that are out of date. Best of all, it’s Web-based, so there’s no software to install though you do need to install a Java application the first time you visit.

Software Inspector works fine with Windows XP or Windows Vista using Internet Explorer or Firefox. You need to be using Windows though, so Mac and Unix/Linux users will not be able to make use of this great tool. That said, this tool has a comprehensive coverage of common programs and best of all - it’s free.

Running A Scan
Running the scan is pretty simple. Just follow these steps:
1. Run Microsoft/Windows Update and install all pending updates.
2. Open Internet Explorer or Firefox and go to www.secunia.com/software_inspector
3. Click the START NOW button near the middle of the webpage.
4. If you receive a message similar to the following, you need to click the CANCEL button and then visit [www.java.com](http://www.java.com) to install the latest version of Java on your computer before running the scan.

![Warning message](image)

5. If you see a prompt similar to the following, click the RUN button.

![Prompt message](image)

6. Wait until you see **Java Applet loaded successfully. Press “Start” to begin** before proceeding.

**Secunia: Online Software Inspector**
The Secunia Online Software Inspector will inspect your operating system and software for insecure versions and missing security updates. A default inspection normally lasts 5-40 seconds, while a thorough inspection may take several minutes. Note: If you have anti-virus software or similar enabled, an inspection may increase significantly in duration.

- **Detection Statistics:**
  - 0 Applications Detected in Total
  - 0 Insecure Versions Detected
  - 0 Secure Versions Detected

- **Running For:** 0 minutes, 0 seconds
- **Errors Detected:** 0 Errors Detected

- **Enable thorough system inspection:** Enable the Secunia Online Software Inspector to search for software installed in non-default locations.

- **Did you find this scan useful?**
  - Then you might find it even more useful to run our powerful installable programs, capable of conducting very thorough and indepth scans.

**Status / Currently Processing:**
Java Applet loaded successfully. Press “Start” to begin.

7. Click the START button to initiate the scan.

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**Status / Currently Processing:**
Java Applet loaded successfully. Press “Start” to begin.
The scan will run anywhere from a couple minutes to 10-15 minutes depending on the software you have installed and the speed of your computer.

8. When the scan completes, you will see a dialog box similar to the following:

9. I suggest you click the CANCEL button, but you can click OK if you would like to receive reminders from Secunia.

10. That’s it! You have successfully scanned your system!

**Ok, I See Programs That Need To Be Updated, So Now What?**

After the scan completes, the website lists the programs it detected and whether there is an update available. You will see a listing similar to the following:

Now you have to start updating everything. If this is the first time you have run Software Inspector or it has been a while since you last ran it you may have a lot of updates pending. If you update your system regularly – such as monthly – the process will go fairly quickly since you will have a much smaller number of updates to load.

Secunia is very good about including links to the newest version of programs so for many programs you just have to click the link and download the latest version or update. There are some programs that you will want to handle carefully to ensure they are updated optimally. Most programs not noted below can be updated simply by following the link provided by Secunia and installing the new version or update.

**Java**

As noted previously, Java won’t remove old versions so you will need to take care of this yourself. The easiest way to do this is to open Add/Remove Programs in the Control Panel (Programs and Features in Vista), then uninstall all versions you see listed. Once that is done, install the latest version from the Java website (www.java.com). **IMPORTANT:** If you see any versions labeled with SE or special edition, do not remove them as they are likely needed for programs on your computer like SAS or Banner.
Flash is another application that usually leaves old versions installed when you install the latest version, so you will need to uninstall it yourself. The easiest way to do this is to open Add/Remove Programs in the Control Panel (Programs and Features in Vista), then uninstall all versions you see listed. You can then install the latest version from www.adobe.com/go/getflash. If you have problems uninstalling Flash, you may need to use one of the following methods to remove it:

Uninstaller for version 5+:
http://www.adobe.com/support/flashplayer/downloads.html#uninstaller
Manually remove Flash:
http://kb.adobe.com/selfservice/viewContent.do?externalId=tn_12727&sliceld=2

Do You Get A Java Error When Trying To Run Software Inspector?
If you attempt to run Software Inspector and the process doesn’t complete or you receive a Java error it likely means you need a more recent version of Java installed. Yes, you need a working copy of Java to scan your system for flawed versions of Java. You can download and install the latest version of Java from the following site: www.java.com.

Do You See Duplicate Programs Listed?
Does the report show more than one version of programs like Flash, Acrobat or Java? This is likely because you have multiple versions of some programs installed without realizing it. This means you can have one version that is secure and more than one version of the same program that is not. In the case of programs like Java and Acrobat the old version often remains as opposed to upgrading or removing the old version when installing a newer one.

If I Use Software Inspector And Microsoft Update, Does That Mean Everything Is Up To Date?
Using Microsoft Update and Software Inspector will definitely ensure a majority of the programs on your computer are up to date. That said, the combination of these two tools may not catch everything on your system. If you are aware of any programs on your computer not listed in the Software Inspector results you may want to check them individually to be sure. Most programs have an option to check for updates off the HELP menu to make this process a little easier.

That’s It
Hopefully this information helps you keep your computer running well for the long haul. If you run into any snags using Software Inspector or have questions about something you see on the results, make sure to touch base with your IT support person.