

ITS Resource Center Home

Java - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Contact Information

Help Desk & Training Services
315-859-4181
helpdesk@hamilton.edu

M-F 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Sa-Su 10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Q: If I've disabled Java in my web browsers already, do I really need to update it?

A: Yes, you should [update Java now](#), and **continue updating Java whenever your computer prompts you that an update is available**. The most recent versions of Java will always contain patches for previously discovered security holes in Java. Updating Java on your computer will make your computer as safe as it can be from Java exploits.

Q: Then why did ITS tell me to disable Java in January 2013?

A: We advised campus to disable Java earlier because:

- There wasn't a "patched" version of Java available to update your computer and
- At least one campus computer had been compromised by the existing security holes. That computer had to be completely wiped and rebuilt.
- Exploits that take advantages of Java vulnerabilities frequently include keystroke loggers which are used to capture passwords and financial information (credit card, banking, etc).

Q: If I update Java, should I still keep it disabled in my browsers?

A: If you have not needed Java in the past few weeks, then yes, keep it disabled in your browsers. Having Java both up to date and disabled in browsers is absolutely the safest approach. However, if you do need to use Java for some of the [web-based tools that are important to your work](#), you can leave it enabled now. (Note that disabling Java in your *browser* still leaves Java available for applications installed on your computer.)

Q: Do I need to update Java on my personal/home computer?

A: Yes, [update Java](#) on every computer you use, and **continue updating it whenever you receive a prompt on your computer**. You can use the directions found through the ITS Resource Center page <<https://my.hamilton.edu/its/rc/managing-java-on-your-computer>> to manually update both Windows and Macintosh computers.

Q: Is Java the same thing as JavaScript?

A: No. You need not worry about JavaScript.

Q: What about my mobile devices (phone, tablet)?

A: You need not worry about Java on your phone or tablet unless you deliberately installed a Java app on your device. In that case, you should be sure to keep it up to date.

Q: What is Java ?

A: Java is three things.

- It's a programming language.

- It's a "virtual machine" - a program (run-time environment) you can install on any computer (including mobile devices) in which any program written in Java can run.
- It's the set of programs for developers to use that makes all that possible. Java is capable of doing far more complex applications than JavaScript.

Q: How did I get Java in the first place? I don't remember installing it.

A: Most people will find that Java has been installed on their computers whether they were aware of it or not. Java was designed with security in mind, but because it is widely used, it is a favorite target for cyber criminals. All software has potential security risks, especially when (like Java) it is running programs written by unknown entities across the web. You should make sure you keep Java regularly updated to minimize the risks.

Last Updated: February 14, 2013