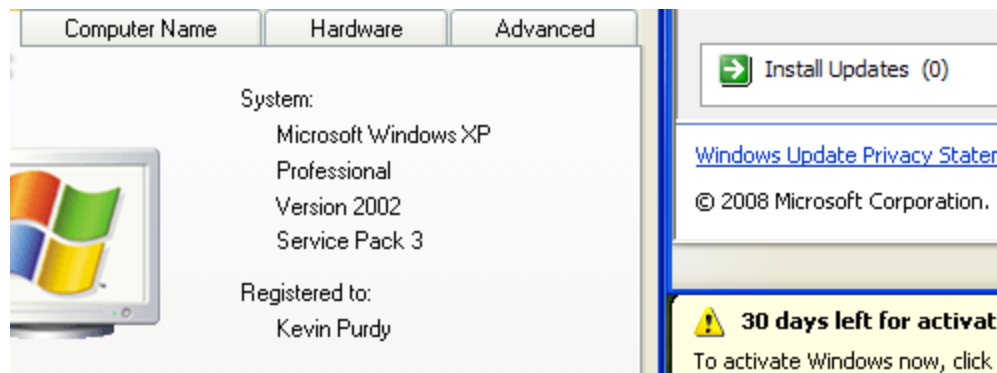


# Slipstream SP3 into Your Windows Xp Installation CD

By Kevin Purdy  
(Lifehacker)



Next time you wipe your PC's hard drive clean and reinstall Windows with that old installation disc, you don't want to connect your fresh, unpatched and vulnerable system to the internet only to download 176 new updates from Microsoft. If your XP installation CD is older than 2004, once your system is online, you'll have to wait for hefty service packs to download, chained to your mouse while pushing the Next button, watching progress bars, and rebooting multiple times. Wouldn't it be better to start your installation, head out to run errands or grab coffee, and come back to an up-to-date system *before* your system gets online? It's possible, using some free software and a blank disc. After the jump, I'll show you how to create an automated, customized XP installation CD or DVD, that includes Microsoft's official-but-not-released Service Pack 3 for Windows XP.

## Note on the current status of Service Pack 3

As of May 2, 2008, Microsoft has released Windows XP Service Pack 3 to PC manufacturers, but due to a last minute bug discovery which has to do with software for businesses (not home users), they have delayed the "release to web." This means they are *not* yet pushing it to users via Windows Update, and they have not yet published a Microsoft Download Center page for it. However, the official SP3 file is available for download on Microsoft's servers. Here's the [direct link to the English version](#). No word on when SP3 will appear on Windows Update, but no doubt it will be soon. For more on what you get with the new service pack, here's our [complete field guide to SP3](#).

## Why make a "slipstreamed" disc?

Maybe you're the type who can't fathom being absent while Windows installs, unable to prune all the unnecessary applications and features, customize the desktop, set up user accounts and install needed drivers. Well, you and I have a lot in common, but we can both enjoy what nLite, a free slipstreaming utility, can do:

- **Pre-configure and tweak Windows**—Nearly every power-user setting, from hidden file showing to deep registry hacks, can be set from the get-go.
- **Pre-install drivers and printers**—No more searching through the Nvidia, ATI, or printer manufacturers' sites for the exact package after install.
- **Strip your system for speed**—Adam's already showed us how nLite can help you trim Windows to its bare essentials, which not only saves disk space and frees up memory, but saves you the time of disabling and removing the superfluous stuff later (and clicking "Yes" on every "Are you sure ..." prompt).

# Slipstream SP3 into Your Windows Xp Installation CD

By Kevin Purdy  
(Lifemaker)

## What you'll need

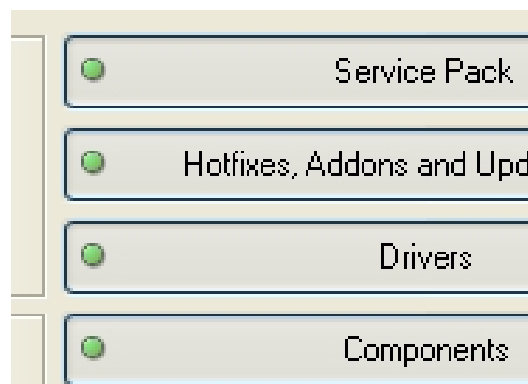
- A Windows installation disc
- nLite (and .NET 2.0)
- A copy of [Service Pack 3 \(SP3\) for XP \(32-bit\)](#), downloaded from Microsoft's servers
- A working Windows system, with at least 1 GB free hard drive space
- Blank CD or DVD
- [WinUpdatesList](#) (recommended)

Note for Vista users: There's a similar utility for creating a slipstreamed Vista DVD, [vLite](#), which got the step-by-step treatment from Digital Inspiration. That tool, however, doesn't allow for half as much customization—not yet, anyways.

## Getting started



After you've installed nLite, load your installation CD into your disc drive and make sure you've got your 25-character product key handy. Launch nLite, click to the next screen, "Locating the Windows installation." Before you go further, create a new folder somewhere on your computer, at the hard drive root (as in "C:\") if possible. Click "Browse," select your CD drive, and you'll be prompted to copy your CD to a folder. Select the folder you created, then wait for the copy to finish.



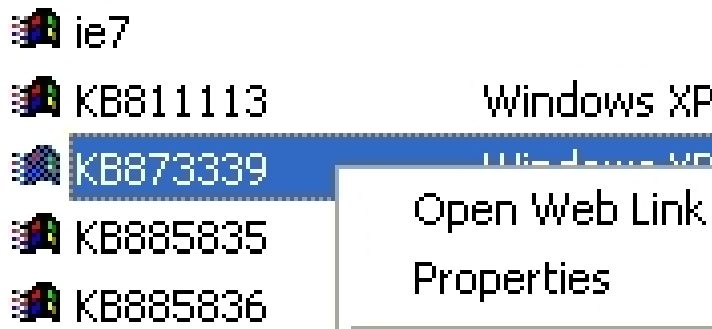
# Slipstream SP3 into Your Windows XP Installation CD

By Kevin Purdy  
(Lifehacker)

NLite's next screen will ask what you want to customize on your install disc. If you only want to update to SP3, only click the "Service Pack" button. But unless you love answering questions and never touch a setting in Windows XP, you'll want to flip all the switches green and click "Next."



Now nLite will ask for slipstream files, or packages you want to integrate into the installer. You'll always want to have the latest service pack available, since, for instance, Service Pack 3 incorporates the fixes made in SP1 and SP2, so it makes them unnecessary. If you grabbed the latest beta of nLite, you'll see a Service Pack 3 already offered for integration, but it's an older release candidate. Hit the "Choose" button, select the executable file you downloaded from Microsoft with the seriously long file name, and give nLite a few minutes to implement it. When you see the version number change, hit "Next" and move on.



"Hotfixes and Update Packs" is for all the tiny little Windows Updates between service packs. If you're including SP3, you can pretty much skip this part. But in the future, and for those not jumping onto SP3, I recommend running WinUpdatesList. You'll see a list of all the updates you've installed, and sorting by date and type should show you what you've installed since the last service pack. Right-click on an update, and you'll get a link to a related Microsoft Knowledge Base article, where you should be able to download the fix directly and patch it into nLite. You can also roll executables for Windows updates—like [Internet Explorer 7](#), which (still!) doesn't install by default—into your disc.

Click "Next," and you'll see an identical screen for drivers. If you know where to find the .INF files that connect your hardware to Windows, you can roll them into your install disc, but be warned: a small printer INF increased the final size of my ISO by at least 200 MB—I'm still trying to figure out why, but

# Slipstream SP3 into Your Windows Xp Installation CD

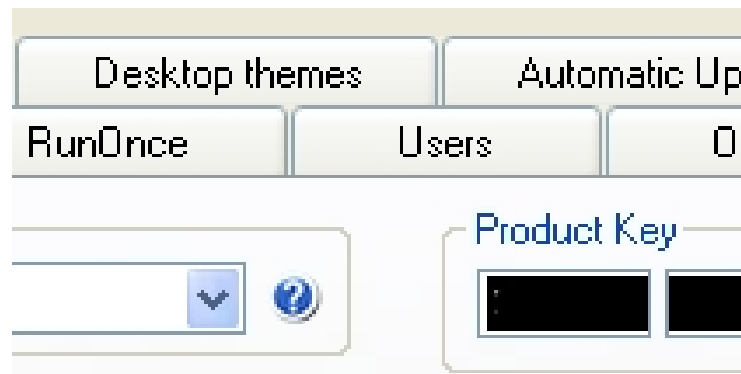
By Kevin Purdy  
(Lifehacker)

if you encounter similar problems, simply throw the driver installation files into spare space on the disc (more on that soon).

## Customize your install



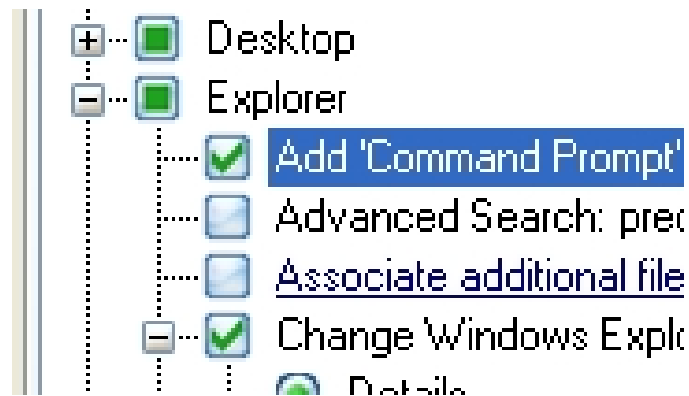
You start really making your XP system your own on the next screen. The "Compatibility Window" that pops up can protect you from yourself; unless you're sure you can do without an item, you'll want to leave it checked. Behind it, the "Remove Components" section is where you can pull out all the stuff you don't ever use or don't have. Most of the savings are small in hard drive size, but keep your system from clogging with services and drivers it doesn't need. Among the almost-guaranteed safe removals: "Briefcase" from Accessories; most of the non-red items in Hardware; Keyboards and Languages that you don't ever plan to use; "Tablet PC" from Multimedia; and MSN Explorer and Windows Messenger from Network.



Up next is the "Unattended" section, if you checked it, and this one requires attention to detail. If you want to set and forget your XP install, change "Unattended Mode" to "Fully automated," but then move slowly through every tab, filling in every section you'd expect to get prompted for during install. You can fill out your Product Key in advance here, and you'll also want to check "Skip OOBE" (Out Of Body Experience, or the introduction tour). Fill out all the name fields in "Users" and "Owner and Network ID," and make sure to set the time in "Regional." Once you're content you've pre-empted your installer, click "Next."

# Slipstream SP3 into Your Windows Xp Installation CD

By Kevin Purdy  
(Lifehacker)



You can pretty much leave the "Options" pane alone, although I enable the "merge" option by way of hoping for a smaller package. The "Tweaks" options are up next, and while I can't tell you how to customize your desktop, I'll note that you can basically set up your desktop, Start Menu, Internet Explorer and lots of other Windows tweaks from these prompts. Check the bottom bar for descriptions, and fear not—all of these can be undone, and we've posted a good many here at Lifehacker.

Finished! Total size is 405.16MB

The installation was reduced by 181.99MB.

Hit "Next," and you're almost done—click "Yes" to start the bundling process. Once that's finished (about 7-10 minutes on a faster computer), you can click through to make or burn an ISO file. **Before doing that**, gather up any files you want to keep on the disc, like that finicky printer driver or your favorite app installers, and place them in their own folder in the directory where you copied your original XP CD to. Now hit "Make ISO," choose where to save the image, and then burn it to CD or DVD using your favorite utility, like [the free ISO Recorder](#).

You've now got a CD that's completely up to date, and installs by itself (once you get past the initial blue-and-white loading screens, that is). You might have to run through nLite a few times if your images turn out bigger than you want, but you can always create a bootable DVD if needed.

What changes, updates, or advanced features have you slipstreamed into your Windows disc? What do you still wish you could have loaded onto your Ultimate No-Touch Install CD? Let's hear 'em both in the comments.