

Disabling Automatic Updates in Ubuntu (LTS Versions)

This guide provides a comprehensive technical procedure for disabling automatic updates on **Ubuntu 22.04, 24.04, and 26.04** (both Server and Desktop editions). These steps ensure that the system does not download or install packages without manual intervention.

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On modern Ubuntu systems, automatic updates are managed via `unattended-upgrades`, APT periodic configs, and `systemd` timers. To fully stop them, follow the steps below.

1. Disable the Unattended-Upgrades Service

First, stop and disable the main service responsible for automatic background installations.

Bash

```
sudo systemctl stop unattended-upgrades
```

```
sudo systemctl disable unattended-upgrades
```

2. Configure APT Periodic Settings

Modify the APT configuration to stop the system from updating package lists and running upgrades automatically.

1. **Edit the config file:**

Bash

```
sudo nano /etc/apt/apt.conf.d/20auto-upgrades
```

2. Set the values to "0":

Plaintext

```
APT::Periodic::Update-Package-Lists "0";  
APT::Periodic::Unattended-Upgrade "0";
```

(Note: This is the official and most reliable method recommended by Ubuntu.)

3. Disable and Mask systemd Timers

Even if the service is disabled, systemd timers might attempt to trigger APT tasks.

1. Disable the timers:

Bash

```
sudo systemctl disable --now apt-daily.timer  
sudo systemctl disable --now apt-daily-upgrade.timer
```

2. Mask the services (Hard Disable):

Masking prevents these services from being started by any other process or manually by mistake.

Bash

```
sudo systemctl mask apt-daily.service  
sudo systemctl mask apt-daily-upgrade.service
```

Desktop GUI Settings

If you are using a Desktop environment, you should also disable the GUI notifications:

1. Open "**Software & Updates**".
2. Navigate to the "**Updates**" tab.
3. Set "**Automatically check for updates**" to **Never**.

Verification

To ensure everything is correctly disabled, run the following checks:

- **Check Timers:** `systemctl list-timers | grep apt` (No active APT timers should appear).
- **Check APT Config:** `apt-config dump APT::Periodic` (Should show both values as "0").

Reverting Changes (Enable Updates)

If you need to re-enable automatic updates in the future, run:

Bash

```
sudo systemctl unmask apt-daily.service apt-daily-upgrade.service
sudo systemctl enable --now apt-daily.timer apt-daily-upgrade.timer unattended-upgrades
```

Don't forget to set the values back to `"1"` in `/etc/apt/apt.conf.d/20auto-upgrades`.

Important Security Notice

By disabling automatic updates, you assume full responsibility for the security of your system.

- **Kernel security fixes** will not be applied automatically.
- **Vulnerabilities** in critical packages like OpenSSL or SSH will remain open.
- **Containers** (Docker) may remain unpatched.

It is highly recommended to manually update your system at least once a week:

Bash

```
sudo apt update && sudo apt upgrade
```

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