

SPK Single PC Edition: Installation Notes



The Alexander SPK (System Protection Kit) helps you solve system crashes (Blue Screens/BSOD) by setting up your system to automatically produce, save, and analyze crash data. Immediately following installation the SPK will search for historical data to process. From that point on it will manage crash events and report its findings in simple reports. In many cases the culprit will immediately be clear. If you need to report a to a vendor that their software caused problems on your PC, the SPK can send a Crash Report email for you, complete with technical details validating your claim and simplifying their resolution for you. This document will walk you through the installation and setup of the SPK.

System Requirements

MS Windows 2000/XP. Allow about 25 MB for program files.

Download

The Single PC Edition download is about 16 MB. It contains both the SPK files and the Java runtime.

NOTE: Be sure to have a live connection to the Internet both during the full installation process as well as afterwards. During installation the SPK will download the debugger from Microsoft.com. Following installation it will return to retrieve needed system-level data.

Installation

Installing the Alexander SPK Single PC Edition is simple and quick (though a dial-up connection will take longer). After downloading the file, simply run setup.exe. The set up process will

- Install the SPK files
- Install the Java runtime (contained in the SPK setup files)
- Download the MS debugger (from Microsoft.com)
- Install the MS debugger (which is used by the SPK invisibly in the background)
- Offer you to start the SPK's operation
- Reconfigure MS Windows to save Kernel Memory Dump files and to automatically restart after a system crash
- Check for historical crash data to process for you

Running the set up file will begin installation of the Alexander SPK. It will install itself in c:\Program Files\Alexander SPK.

You will then be offered to install the Java runtime. The SPK makes calls into Java for many operations so it is important to accept the default installation.

Then you will see a tool called "DebuggerGrabber" downloading the Microsoft Debugging Tools for Windows. The file is about 7 MB. The SPK sits on top of the debugger, using it to both process the memory dump files as well as to get additional system level data from Microsoft.com. Use of the debugger is completely invisible. Accept the license Microsoft and allow it to do a default installation.

Once the SPK, Java, and the debugger are installed, the SPK will present a small dialogue box to you. Simply press the *Start* button and the SPK will begin its work. You do NOT have to restart your PC to get the program running!

Historical Files

With the SPK running, and since this is a new installation, the SPK will search your PC for historical MiniDump dump files. Many PCs, especially XP systems, are set to save these small 64 K MiniDump

files by default (of the 3 kinds of memory dump files, these are the smallest, Kernel Dumps are the middle, and Full Dumps are the largest, being equal to the size of RAM). If the SPK finds any, it will process them for you automatically. This can be very informative, since it can provide a history of what has caused problems to date.

Initially, the dialogue box will report *No Reports Available*. Soon the *Report Status* will change to *Processing dumps prior to install*. Whether you have 1 file or dozens, it will process them all.

It is important that the PC has a live connection to the Internet, as the crash analysis process will require access to Microsoft.com to retrieve crucial system level data needed to build your reports (it won't need to go outside for this system data again until after you update Windows through a patch, fix, etc.)

Kernel Memory Dump Files

Installing the SPK changes the system to save Kernel Dump Files because they contain far more information, making them more valuable in resolving the cause of system crashes. Of course, this makes them larger (but far smaller than Full Memory Dumps); they are roughly equal to the memory space used by the MS Windows operating system kernel itself. A PC with 512 MB RAM will probably produce a Kernel Dump file of about 60 MB. Note that if you are concerned with hard drive space, you can set the SPK to automatically discard the Kernel Dump File after *n* number of days or simply have it only retain the most recent file. The resulting SPK Crash Report files are not a concern since they are small, averaging only 100 – 150 K.

SPK Single PC Edition Viewer



The viewer can be launched several ways: select Start > Programs > Alexander SPK > SPK Single PC, from the desktop shortcut, from Windows Explorer, or from SPK Control accessed by double-clicking in the system tray at the bottom right of your screen. To familiarize yourself with its operation, from the Viewer, select the HELP > Using the Alexander SPK. For additional questions, email support@alexander.com. *We'll be glad to help!*

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