

Technology Tips To Go

Maintaining and Protecting Your Computer

Routine maintenance on your computer is critical for optimum performance and to protect from harmful viruses and spy programs. Follow these steps on a regular basis to help insure trouble-free operation.

Windows Update – This is a service provided by Microsoft to update your version of Windows with the latest patches, fixes and files you need for security.

1. Go to: START/PROGRAMS/Windows Update or: <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com> . Depending on which version of Windows you have, you may be able to do this from the Control Panel.
2. Once current updates are found, click “Install Now”. It may tell you there is an update that must be installed by itself. If so, go ahead and you may have to reboot your computer to install the rest.
3. Other non-critical updates may be listed if you choose to install them. You should run Windows Update at least once per week.

Disk Cleanup – Each time you open a program or surf the Internet, temporary files are stored on your computer that are no longer needed when you close the program. However, the files remain on your computer, taking up space unless you delete them. Windows provides a utility to clean up these unneeded, temporary files.

1. Go to: START/PROGRAMS/ACCESSORIES/SYSTEM TOOLS and Right-click on, Disk Cleanup.
2. Take, “Send to” then “Desktop”. This will place a shortcut icon on your desktop so you can get to this utility quickly the next time you want to run it.
3. Go to your desktop and double-click the Disk Cleanup icon. It will scan your computer to locate un-needed files.
4. Place a checkmark in all boxes or especially the Temporary Internet Files, Temporary Files, and Recycle Bin boxes. Click OK then YES. Your computer will be clean for awhile. This process should be done once per week.
5. You can also clean up the Temporary Internet Files in your browser by finding Internet Options and clearing Temporary Files and Cookies.

CCleaner – (Crap Cleaner), http://www.filehippo.com/download_ccleaner/ , is a freeware system optimization and privacy tool. It removes unused and temporary files from your system, (as Disk Cleanup does) - allowing Windows to run faster, more efficiently and giving you more hard disk space. The best part is that it's fast!

1. Click on the link above then click, “Download the latest version” on the right.
2. Download and install CCleaner.
3. Double-click the program icon to start the program.
4. In the “Cleaner Settings” section, under the “Windows” TAB, put checkmarks next to the things you want to clean. Do the same under the “Applications” TAB. Click the,

“Run Cleaner” button and wait. The first time will take awhile but after that, it will run very quickly. This operation should be done once a week.

Disk Defragmenter – Each time you open a program, the files of that program are transferred from memory to free sectors on your hard drive. The more you do this, the free sectors are spread all over your hard drive and it takes more time to “find” the free spaces and load your program. Defragmenting rearranges your hard drive placing similar files together to optimize this process.

1. Go to: START/PROGRAMS/SYSTEM TOOLS and click on, “Disk Defragmenter”.
2. Click the drive to fix, (usually C:, then click the “Defragment” button. Depending on how big your hard drive is and how many files are on it, this could take a couple of hours or more. I suggest starting this and coming back to it later..

Auslogics Disk Defragmenter Screen Saver – A free disk defragmenter that runs as your screen saver and defrags your hard drive automatically: <http://tinyurl.com/d88bys9>.

Spyware and Adware – While surfing the Internet, you will go to web sites that have advertising banners on them that download files to your computer in order to “track” your web surfing tendencies. This information is then sent back to the company for marketing purposes. Sometimes they even install search bars or other programs or files on your computer to help them with advertising. This is not particularly harmful to you but it adds unwanted files to your computer taking up space and it is usually aggravating. To protect yourself, download and install the free programs, AdAware and Spybot Search & Destroy. Using these two programs together regularly will keep your computer relatively spyware free.

SPYBOT

1. Go to: <http://www.zone-x.com/spybot.php> and click on Spybot S&D under Download Site and follow the download instructions. Once downloaded, double-click the install file and follow directions to install it.
2. Go to: Start/Programs/Spybot S & D and run the program.
3. The first time you use it, it will ask you to Backup Your Registry, Search For Updates, and Immunize Your System . Go ahead and click the buttons to do these.
4. When it’s finished, click, Start using the product, then, “Search & Destroy” link to scan your computer. You will see the number of bots it’s checking for and the progress at the bottom.
5. When it’s finished, Click, “Fix Selected Problems”.

Malwarebytes – This free software is highly recommended to remove different types of malware. Go to: <http://bit.ly/AbvAs5>, click on “Free Download”, download and install the program. Place a shortcut to the program on your desktop as explained earlier and run a scan on your computer bi-weekly.

Google Pack – Google offered a package of programs for free until 2011 to meet some needs people have. Because many of these programs are offered “in the cloud” now, Google has discontinued their package plan. You can still pick and choose which ones you want to download from their list on the following site: <http://google-pack.en.softonic.com/>

Virus Scan – EVERYONE needs virus protection software on their computer. AND, virus data files MUST be updated weekly for you to be fully protected. New viruses are developed constantly and if you have old virus data files, you are not protected from the new ones. Viruses that are spread through email are mostly caught at the server before they get to your inbox but you still need protection. There are a couple of good web sites that will do free online scans of your computer. Go to: <http://housecall.trendmicro.com/> , download the small file in the middle of the page and follow the directions to complete the online scan of your computer. Or: <http://security2.norton.com> and click on, Symantec Security Check, then Virus Detection, Accept and NEXT. (You must be using Internet

Explorer 5.0 or higher to use this.) It may take several minutes for this depending on how many files you have on your hard drive.

A great free virus scanning program is AVG Anti-Virus. Get it at: <http://free.avg.com/>. Download and install the program and, as I mentioned earlier, update your virus definitions weekly or set the options to automatically do this. The instructor has used this for years with great success.

Another highly rated free antivirus software program is Avast: <http://www.avast.com/en-us/free-antivirus-download>.

Personal Firewall – A firewall is hardware or software that filters incoming and/or outgoing traffic on your computer. It will alert you when suspect activity has tried to invade your computer and give you a choice to block or unblock it. Everyone needs some kind of Personal Firewall. Windows has one located in the Control Panel and there is a good FREE third-party firewall called ZoneAlarm, found at: http://www.zonealarm.com/store/content/catalog/products/zonealarm_free_firewall.jsp

Pop-up Screens – A good way to minimize those annoying pop-up advertising screens is to activate the Pop-up Blocker in your browser. Do a search on “pop up blocker” and find one for your browser.

Alternate Browser Option – Another thing you might want to consider is using the FireFox Internet browser or Google Chrome instead of Internet Explorer. They are purported to be superior in security features, spyware blocking and pop-up blocking and many school divisions are using it exclusively. Find information on FireFox at: <http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox>. Google Chrome can be found at: <http://www.google.com/chrome>.