

Computer Maintenance Tips

These computer maintenance tips are well worth the time you will spend on them. It's kind of like cleaning and organizing your house. When everything is put away in the right place, and all the junk and clutter is cleaned up, it makes it much nicer to be there, and much easier place in which to work and play.

General Computer Maintenance Tips:

- **Keep all of your working files in one folder.** The My Documents folder is offered by Windows expressly for this purpose. The benefits of keeping all your files in one place are multiple. One, you know where all your files are, two, it's easy to back them all up at once, and three, your machine will run faster.
 - **Don't put your personal files on the root of the C: drive.** If you store a large number of files in the root folder, you could corrupt your disk file table which could lead to a "NTLDR is missing" error message when you boot the computer. Very bad. If you have personal files on the C: drive now, move them to the My Documents folder.
 - **Uninstall programs that you are not using.** But don't just delete the program. Remove it correctly so you won't cause Windows errors. Go to Start, Control Panel, Add or Remove Programs. Find the program you want to remove in the list, and click the Remove button.
 - **If you download a zip file and expand it, delete the original zip file when you are done.**
 - **Store your hardware drivers and purchased software installer files off your hard drive.** A flash drive works great for this purpose.
 - If you aren't already using one, **get a good surge protector** and plug your computer and peripherals into it. If you live in an area with bad lightening storms, unplug you computer and peripherals during the storm.
 - **Practice safe computing.** Don't accept software or downloads for which you didn't ask. Delete any suspicious email without opening it. And even if the email came from your best friend, don't open any email attachments with the following extensions: *.exe, .com, .vbs, .bat, .mdb, .reg, and .js
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Scheduled Computer Maintenance Tips:

Daily computer maintenance tips

- **Update your anti-virus scan and anti-spyware definitions,** if they aren't being done automatically.
- **Back up** any critical files that you have changed today to your flash drive.

Weekly computer maintenance tips:

- Make sure your anti-virus and anti-spyware programs have been updated with the latest definitions, and **run a full scan** from both programs.
- **Reboot your computer.** (If you shutdown your computer each night, disregard this tip). If you leave your computer on all the time, definitely do this. It will reset the RAM, and your computer will run much better and faster.

Monthly computer maintenance tips:

- Clean up your temp files, your temporary internet files, and other junk files about once a month. To do this easily, you can either download my favorite program for cleaning, [CCleaner](#) or run the built-in [Windows Disk Cleanup tool](#).
 - Ensure you have the latest **Windows updates** installed. Go to Internet Explorer, Tools, Windows Update. Click on the Custom button. (I always use the Custom button so I can check what's going to be installed before it gets installed). Windows update may ask you to download and install the latest version of itself. Go ahead and do that, then click Close when it's finished, and then Continue. It will then check again for real updates and offer those. Choose which updates you want to install. Uncheck the ones you don't want to install.
 - **Clean out your email,** paying special attention to your Inbox and Sent box. The easiest way I've found is to sort your email box by size of the message, and delete the largest unneeded emails first.
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Quarterly computer maintenance tips:

- [Change your passwords.](#) (Yes, I know this is a pain, I hear you groaning. But it's really a good idea to do this).

- **If you have a mouse with a roller ball** (non-optical) clean it out. Use a Q-tip and some isopropyl alcohol to clean the ball and the internal rollers. Remove any caked on grease, oil, and dust that may have accumulated.
- Check to see if you need to **defragment** your computer's hard drive. To do this in Windows XP, go to Start, All Programs, Accessories, Systems Tools, Disk Defragmenter. Run an analysis first by clicking the Analyze button. Go do something else while it runs. Windows will tell you if it needs to be defragmented. If it does, click on the Defragment button, and again go do something else while your computer runs this.
For Windows Vista, this computer maintenance tip is a little different: Go to Start, All Programs, and click on Accessories. Find Systems Tools, Disk Defragmenter and click on it. Vista will ask you for permission to continue. Click Continue. Vista doesn't give you the ability to choose to defragment, it just assumes you want to and presents a schedule to do so. You can stick with the suggested schedule, or modify it. If you want to kick off the defrag process immediately, click the Defragment Now button. It will then ask you which drive you want to defrag. Uncheck the drives you don't want to defrag, and then click OK.
- Check all your computer cables and make sure they are plugged in tight, and not being pinched or pulled in a way that is damaging them.
- **Check your C: drive (hard disk) for disk errors.** NOTE: please make sure you have a current backup of your files before you run a check disk command. (Also, do this immediately if you see a message stating that your Windows "volume is dirty").

To run a check disk manually on your C: drive, do this:

1. Click Start, select Run.
2. In the box, type cmd and click Ok. In the black DOS window, type: `chkdsk c: /f` (The /f command automatically fixes any errors encountered).
3. Go to Start, Shutdown, and restart the computer. When the computer restarts, it will run `chkdsk` automatically. The Check Disk process could take over an hour, so schedule this when you have something else non-computer related to do. On rebooting the PC, you will see a window that shows the progress of the disk check. When it's finished, it will boot back to the normal version of Windows.

Opening your computer case could void your warranty, and expose you to possible electric shock. Please be careful.

6 month computer maintenance tips:

- **Go on dust patrol. FIRST, TURN OFF and UNPLUG your computer from the electrical socket.** Blow out your keyboard with a compressed air can, and then turn it over and tap it with your hand a few times to shake out any other junk. Brush off the dust bunnies from your PC fan (and any other parts in the back of the PC). Also, open the computer case and GENTLY blow or vacuum out any dust in there, especially around the CPU chip (the big square chip on the mother board).
MAKE SURE you touch something metal to ground yourself before you open the case and reach in there. Even the slightest static electricity zap can ruin a computer chip.

Annual computer maintenance tips:

- Check to see if you have the **latest hardware drivers** loaded for your printer, monitor and other peripherals.