

How to Maintain a Healthy Computer

Provided by Hotweazel.com for Microsoft® Windows® XP operating systems

The following directions, if completed on a regular basis, will allow your computer to run at its optimal speed. Performance is greatly reduced over time, due to the accumulation of spyware, unnecessary files, a disorganized hard drive, and worst of all...viruses!

Please make sure there are no open programs running in the background when performing the steps presented in this tutorial to ensure a trouble-free experience.

Print these pages and follow the directions very carefully. Hotweazel.com assumes no responsibility for any consequential events arising from the use of this tutorial.

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I. Temporary Internet Files

Every time you surf the internet, order something online, or read e-mail, information is stored on your computer for later use. Over time, this junk accumulates and eventually influences the performance of your computer.

Perform once a month. For heavy internet users, perform once a week.

- 1) Open **Internet Explorer**
- 2) Click on **Tools** at the top left of the page and select **Internet Options...** from the drop-down list
- 3) In the **General** tab, locate and click on **Delete Files...**
- 4) Make sure the box next to **Delete all offline content** is not checked and click **OK**
- 5) Once again, click **Delete Files...** and this time check the box next to **Delete all offline content** and click **OK**
- 6) (PLEASE NOTE: the following step will delete any usernames and/or passwords, preferences, etc. saved on previously visited sites). Remain in the **General** tab. Locate and click **Delete Cookies...** and click **OK** in the confirmation box.
- 7) Click **OK** at the bottom of the window in the **General** tab
- 8) Close **Internet Explorer**

II. Disk Cleanup

This procedure frees up space on your hard drive by deleting unnecessary files that you can safely delete.

Perform once a month

- 1) Double click the **My Computer** icon on your desktop (if the icon is not present, click **start** on the lower left hand corner of your screen and click on **My Computer**)
- 2) Locate **Local Disk (C:)** and right click on it. Select **Properties** from the drop down list.
- 3) In the **General** tab, you will find a button labeled, **Disk Cleanup**. Click on it and wait until your computer scans the drive for unnecessary files (this step may take some time, please be patient).
- 4) In the **Disk Cleanup** tab, make sure all items are checked EXCEPT for **Office Setup Files** (if present)
- 5) Click **OK**. You will be presented with a confirmation box. Click **Yes**.
- 6) Your computer will now clean up your hard drive (please be patient, this step may take some time depending on how often you carry out this maintenance). Upon completion, the status box will disappear.
- 7) Close all open windows

III. Disk Defragmentation

This procedure rearranges the files on your hard drive so that they are accessed more efficiently by your computer. Over the long run, a disorganized hard drive can eventually crash and obliterate all stored data.

Perform once a month

- 1) Double click the **My Computer** icon on your desktop (if the icon is not present, click **start** on the lower left hand corner of your screen and click on **My Computer**)
- 2) Locate **Local Disk (C:)** and right click on it. Select **Properties** from the drop down list.
- 3) Select the **Tools** tab
- 4) Locate and click the **Defragment Now...** button
- 5) In the new window, click **Defragment** (please be patient, this step may take some time depending on how often you carry out this maintenance)
- 6) Upon completion, click **Close** in the pop-up window
- 7) Close all open windows

IV. Disk Check

This procedure determines the integrity of your hard drive.

Perform once every three months

- 1) Double click the **My Computer** icon on your desktop (if the icon is not present, click **start** on the lower left hand corner of your screen and click on **My Computer**)
- 2) Locate **Local Disk (C:)** and right click on it. Select **Properties** from the drop down list.
- 3) Select the **Tools** tab
- 4) Locate and click the **Check Now...** button
- 5) Check both boxes: **Automatically fix file system errors** and **Scan for and attempt recovery of bad sectors.**
- 6) Click **Yes** in the pop-up window
- 7) Restart your computer. Upon restart, your computer will determine the wellbeing of your hard drive (please be patient, this step will take some time). Upon completion, you will be brought back to Windows.

V. Unnecessary Programs

Many computers store a large number of programs which are never used. This procedure will allow the user to safely remove these unnecessary programs from the disk drive. If one tries to manually uninstall a program, there will always be remnants left behind (which only a professional can remove). Also, if you are not sure about a specific program, don't delete it!

Perform once every three months or when you wish to remove a specific program

- 1) Click **start** in the lower left corner of your screen
- 2) Locate and click **Control Panel**
- 3) Locate and click **Add or Remove Programs**
- 4) In the **Change or Remove Programs** section, you will be presented with a list of installed programs (including the frequency of use, size on disk, and when it was last used)
- 5) To uninstall a specific program, left click to highlight it.
- 6) Click the **Change/Remove** or **Remove** button which appears once highlighted
- 7) Follow all steps until the program is successfully deleted
- 8) Go back to step 5 to uninstall additional programs
- 9) Upon completion, close all windows and restart your computer

VI. Windows® Update

Microsoft® periodically releases updates for Windows® operating systems. These updates repair certain bugs they discover after time, decrease the security vulnerability of your system, or add functionality to your operating system.

Perform once every month or configure “Automatic Updates” setting (described below)

- 1) Click **start** in the lower left corner of your screen
- 2) Locate and click **Windows Update** (this may also be located within **All Programs**)
- 3) Follow the steps to update your operating system with the latest revisions
- 4) To automatically setup your system to receive and install updates, right click the **My Computer** icon on your desktop (if the icon is not present, click **start** on the lower left hand corner of your screen and right click on **My Computer**)
- 5) Select **Properties** from the drop down list
- 6) Click the “**Automatic Updates**” tab (if not present, you may need to first manually update your operating system because this feature is itself an update)
- 7) Select **Automatic (recommended)**. Select a frequency and time of day your computer will be on and connected to the internet
- 8) Click **OK** at the bottom of the window

VII. Spyware

Spyware are files that allow publishers to observe your internet browsing activity, record your credit card numbers, and present you with unwanted pop-up advertisements. An accumulation of spyware can severely slow down your PC, cause it to crash, or behave abnormally.

Perform once a month. For heavy internet users, perform once a week.

- 1) Open **Internet Explorer**
- 2) Go to the website: **http://www.download.com**
- 3) Search: “**Ad-Aware personal**” under software
- 4) Scroll down and click on, “**Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition 1.06**” (PLEASE NOTE: The software version is always being updated, hence, the name may be slightly different).
- 5) Click **Download Now**
- 6) Hit **Run** in the pop-up window and follow all steps to install this software on your computer
- 7) **IMPORTANT:** Every time you run this program, make sure you update the spyware definitions. You may do this by clicking on the globe in the upper right hand corner of the program. Click **Connect** and follow the directions.
- 8) After updating spyware definitions, click **Start**, select **Perform a full system scan** and hit **Next**
- 9) Upon completion, you will be presented with a summary of spyware found on your hard drive. Click **Next**.
- 10) Place a checkbox next to each item in the list and click **Next**
- 11) Close the program

VIII. Viruses

It is recommended to have a valid and updated version of anti-virus software installed (and running at all times) on your computer. If you currently lack this software and are concerned that your computer may be infected with a virus, please follow the directions below to utilize a free virus scan provided by McAfee®.

Most anti-virus programs run in the background and scan all incoming e-mails, downloaded files, etc. Hence, it is not required to run a scan unless you suspect your computer is infected. To be on the safe side, run a full system scan once a month.

- 1) Open **Internet Explorer**
- 2) Go to the website: **<http://us.mcafee.com/root/mfs>**
- 3) Click **Scan Now**
- 4) Follow all directions to scan your entire hard drive for viruses
- 5) If a virus is found, you need to purchase anti-virus software to remove it from your computer

IX. Hardware Upgrades

Random Access Memory (RAM) is used by your computer to store all data that has to be processed by the computer. Many computers slow down significantly when multiple programs are running simultaneously. This is not necessarily due to poor maintenance; however, it may be due to a lack of this memory.

It is suggested to have a minimum of 256 megabytes (MB) of RAM installed in your computer (the more the better). However, there is a maximum amount of memory a computer can hold (different for all systems). Additionally, it is best to buy RAM in pairs. Please follow the directions below to determine how much memory your system currently holds, how much it can hold, and where you can shop for additional RAM.

- 1) Right click the **My Computer** icon on your desktop (if the icon is not present, click **start** on the lower left hand corner of your screen and right click on **My Computer**)
- 2) Select **Properties** from the drop down list
- 3) In the **General** tab, you will be presented with a summary of information about your computer (including the amount of RAM installed)
- 4) 1,000 megabytes (MB) = 1 gigabyte (GB). If you fall below the minimum suggested amount of RAM, visit: <http://www.crucial.com> to purchase more memory or stop by a local computer dealer to upgrade your system.

X. Optimal Environment

Computers should be internally cleaned for accumulated dust. You may have it professionally cleaned by visiting your local computer dealer. Additionally, computers should be stored in a cool environment which is well ventilated.

Perform an internal cleaning every six months

XI. Precautions

No matter how well you look after your system, there will always be the possibility of your computer crashing, a hard drive failure, etc. It is best to backup your important files on CDs every so often to prevent losing all your data if such a breakdown occurs.