

Computer Maintenance Basics

From PCR Tech

Computers are very sensitive pieces of equipment. You can shout at it, threaten it, or even call it dirty names, and it won't cry. But things like dust, humidity, or power surges can cause untold damage and data loss. As with keeping yourself healthy or maintaining your car, prevention is the best cure. Once things get out of hand, hassle and cost will increase exponentially. This guide covers some of the basics to preventing your computer from becoming ill.

Maintaining your computer

- Keep food and drink away from the computer. Liquids and electronics don't mix well.
- Use canned air to blow out dust and debris from fans and inside the case.
- NEVER use a vacuum to remove dust, unless it is a specially made anti-static vacuum.
- Try to keep the temperature of the room cool and humidity low.
- Shut the computer down by going through the Start Menu. Simply pulling the plug or pushing the power switch will cause damage.
- Reboot the computer at least once every couple of days to reset the system.
- Install Anti-Virus software
 - PCR Tech recommends AVG Anti-Virus
 - AVG Free is better than nothing
 - Remember to update every two weeks

System Tools

There are a number of tools at your disposal to keep your computer running efficiently. Unfortunately, PCs don't maintain themselves very well, so your computer needs your help to keep everything on track.

- Disk Defragmenter – Re-organizes the hard drive to be more efficient. As files are used, they get scattered across the hard drive. Defragmenting puts those scattered files back together so the computer doesn't have to go searching.
 - Start > Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Defragmenter
 - Run every two weeks (at least)
- Disk Cleanup – Just because you deleted a file doesn't mean it is gone. Empty the Recycle Bin and clear out your temp files by running this utility.
 - Start > Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Cleanup
 - Check all boxes except Compress Old Files, unless desired
 - Run every two weeks

Despite your best efforts to defrag and keep your computer clean, some unnecessary programs like to run at startup up. The more programs that run at the same time clog up the machine's memory and reduce performance. The following steps will not uninstall a program or prevent you from running the program later. This method simply prevents unwanted programs from running when you first boot the computer.

First, create a Restore Point lest something bad happen:

1. Start menu > Programs > Accessories > System Tools > System Restore
2. Follow the prompts to create a restore point. Close System Restore when finished.

Now launch msconfig

1. Click Start > Run (XP) or click in the search box (Vista / Win7)
2. Type "msconfig" (without quotes)
3. Click the Startup tab and you will see a list of programs with check boxes. The boxes that are checked are programs that run when the computer starts up.
4. Uncheck the programs that you do not want to start when you boot your computer.
5. Click OK to close the window when finished and reboot. That's it!

NOTE: Proceed at your own risk. Be careful not to disable your anti-virus or any programs that you recognize to be important. If you don't know what it is, then leave it be! Only disable programs such as Messenger, Quicktime, Adobe, etc..

Ctrl – Alt – Del:

- Should a program lock up, or hang, press Ctrl – Alt – Del to bring up Task Manager.
- Highlight the stalled program and select End Now
- Wait a few moments and the program should end.

