

Simple Maintenance of your System

Computers are complex systems of hardware and software that have to interact properly with each other to work correctly. **Getting useful, problem-free work from your computer system over an extended period of time is not "maintenance free!"** With a little effort on your part, you CAN make it all work better. I suggest that you use the following simple techniques-they will prevent most common problems you might encounter with your Windows system. The same general rules apply to Macs except the terminology is different.

1. Make sure that the hard drive that your Windows folder resides on has AT LEAST 200-500MB of free space-the more the better! This is the most common cause of "Out of Memory" errors and bizarre behavior. Windows needs the "elbow room" for its swapfile (used for memory page swapping when running many programs at once especially if you have less than 32MB of RAM) and for spooling print jobs to C:\Windows\Temp.

2. Clean out your C:\Windows\Temp folder and Internet Explorer "Temporary Internet Files" at least once a month. The best time to do this is as soon as you get to the Windows Desktop on startup, before you run any applications. A build up of either the number of total files in this folder or the total drive space taken by files in this folder can cause:

- A. Printing/spooling problems.
- B. "Out of memory" errors.
- C. Other bizarre, unpredictable behavior.

3. Run Scandisk and Defrag on the hard drive(s) every two weeks. If running either results in the constant "restart" of either program- try running them after unloading your antivirus program or after booting Windows in the "Safe Mode." **If all else fails, run Scandisk from a bootup DOS prompt.** Spend the money on a good set of system software tools like Norton Utilities. NU has much better versions of a disk scanner, defragger and a good Registry cleaner. If you decide to get NU just install the basic utilities-their fancier apps-"Crash Guard" etc. hinder system performance.

4. Only load the software you need at Startup: Most new Windows systems these days load a ton of little junk programs at system startup-that's why the "tray" in the lower right hand corner of your screen is just chock full of little icons! All those icons represent programs running all the time, in the background. Check your Startup Folder-get rid of the applications you don't need. By all means, if you ever find something called "Find Fast" (installed by some versions of MS Office) remove it.

5. Installing new software: Never buy and install "Version 1.0" of anything! Wait until the new software (or the latest version of existing software-example Office XP) is out there a few months before you take the plunge! Take care with what software you install. Be skeptical and conservative-don't assume all new software is easy to install or problem free. If some hot, new software program you've purchased does not install correctly or causes ANY adverse or odd side effects on your system-remove it immediately then call the tech support folks for the program or consult their website for technotes, FAQs, etc. If, after a reasonable amount of effort, you can't make it work-get professional help or take it back!! NEVER try to find and then manually delete the files that the program installed-that worked in DOS-it does not work in Windows! **Always remove all programs via Control Panel/Add Remove Programs or use the "Uninstaller" that came with the program itself**-that way you not only delete the files the program installed BUT you also delete any Registry entries the program installation made.

6. Remove any old software, via the above technique, that you do not need or use anymore!

Then run Scandisk/defrag. Less complexity, less clutter=better performance, far less problems!

7. Installing new Hardware: Same basic rule as above-if it does not work remove it! Call the tech support for this hardware or check their website. Stick with "brand name" hardware-3COM, Xircom, HP, Western Digital, Intel, IBM etc. These brands tend to have better tech support and help websites. Again, if after a reasonable amount of effort, you can't make it work-get professional help or take it back!!

8. Keep your hardware drivers (especially for your video card) up to date: Check places like Windrivers.com for the latest versions.

9. Keep your system virus free: The main virus threats (see <http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/index.html>) or (<http://download.mcafee.com/updates/updates.asp?>) to your system come from these sources: EMail-if you use MS Outlook; removable disks (floppies, Zips) passed to you by someone else or shared network files. To better protect your system, buy, install and regularly update your antivirus software. Turn on the "autoprotect" feature. Run a full antivirus scan on any removable disks that are passed to you by others (before you use the files on the disks) and on your hard drive periodically. If you use MS Outlook, keep up with the MS security patches via this website: <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/downloads/default.asp>. If you don't have an antivirus program, Norton (Symantec) and McAfee both offer good anti virus solutions.

10. Keep your system updated: Microsoft releases periodic changes to most versions of Windows and Office; go to <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com/> and click on [Product Updates] for Windows or [Microsoft Office Product Updates] for Office. This site contains **security patches**, **bug fixes** and other useful utilities that you can add to your system.

11. Avoid programs like: **Hotbar, Precision Time Manager, Bonzi Buddy, Gator, KaZaA, Bear Share, Network Essentials, Smart Search Engine, Secure Lock...** etc.

ABOVE ALL

Be conservative and humble in how you treat your system.

Install just what you need, not every last "cool" piece of software you find out on the internet

If you're not sure how -don't do it-get professional help!

Don't trust your system to a friend, neighbor or relative that claims they "know something about computers!!"

There are far too many "computer" people out there that can "talk the talk" but can't "walk the walk"

Would you get your car repaired by just anyone? Then don't treat your computer that way!