

# PC TUNE-UP

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## PC MAINTENANCE

Like your car, your PC needs regular maintenance. Without it, both your car and PC will not run efficiently and may even not run at all. Below are things you should do daily, weekly, monthly, and annually to keep your computer healthy and up-to-date. Let's get started!

### Daily

Backing up your data is very important. It is not if, but *when* your hard drive can fail. Viruses or human errors can cause you to lose an important file. Daily backups don't have to be for your whole hard drive, but just your data files; things like word processor files, spreadsheets, photos, and music files. You can backup your files to removable disks like a CD or DVD disk using a CD Writer. You can also backup to an external hard drive or—for important files—to both. Recently online data backup has become available to home and small business users. One site, [www.mozy.com](http://www.mozy.com), offers up to 2 GB online storage for free. If you need more, they charge \$4.95 per month for up to 30 GB of storage.

### Weekly

You should always have an up-to-date virus and firewall program installed on your

PC. If not, you should do so immediately. You should also schedule weekly virus scans of your PC. Most programs will allow you to set up automatic weekly scans. You should also have Automatic Updates turned on. With this, your PC will automatically download and install the latest Microsoft updates. These programs are vital in keeping PC free of viruses.

### Monthly

You should run a monthly defragmentation of your hard drive. Running a defragmentation will help "clean up" your hard drive, removing extra, unnecessary "fragments" stored on your computer. This will allow your PC to load files from the hard drive as quickly as possible. The built-in Windows Defrag software is located under Start->Programs-> Accessories-> System Tools-> Disk Defragmenter.

Also on a monthly basis you should scan your hard drive for errors. Microsoft provides a program called ScanDisk under Start-> Programs-> Accessories-> System Tools-> ScanDisk.

While you're at it, you should also clean your moni-



Your PC needs maintenance

tor screen. You can purchase LCD cleaning supplies to clean your screen at any local office store, such as Staples or Office Max. To start cleaning, apply the cleaning liquid to a soft, lint-free cloth. Do not use paper towels as they can scratch LCD screens. It is also generally not recommended to use a window cleaner such as Windex as these products contain ammonia. Be careful cleaning LCD screen, as you can damage it if you press too hard or apply too much cleaning liquid.

### Annually

Like you clean out your closet, attic, or garage once in a while you should clean out unused programs on your PC. If there are any programs that you installed to try or ones that you never use, removing them will free-up disk space and

### Maintenance Highlights

- Daily Backups
- Weekly Virus Scans
- Monthly Defragment and Disk Scan
- Annual Disk Cleanup

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make your PC run faster. To remove programs, first see if the program comes with an uninstall program. If so, this would be located in the program group you are trying to remove. An example of this is the program RealPlayer, a music player for your computer. When locating the file group under Start->Programs->Real-> RealPlayer, a list of programs will come up, one of which is "RealPlayer Uninstaller." If your program does not have this, Windows has an Add/Remove Program section to remove programs from your PC. To access this, go to Start-> Settings-> Control Panel and double click on "Add/Remove Programs." Free up disk space by running Windows disk cleanup Start->Programs->Accessories-> System Tools->Disk Cleanup.

In addition to your hard disk clean-up, cleaning your PC case, or tower, is a good idea. To do so, first make sure your PC is turned off and the power cord is disconnected. For desktop PCs clean the outside with a damp cloth. To clean the keyboard, turn it upside down and gently shake it to dislodge any dust or crumbs. You can also use some compressed air (sold in cans at local office supply stores) on the keyboard to remove any dust or crumbs that have fallen between the keys. To make sure that your PC stays cool while running, remove the dust from the outside fan openings by using a brush and some compressed air. The fan openings are usually found on the side or back of the computer's case. While doing this, try not to blow the dust inside the computer's case.

Spending a few minutes over the year will help ensure that your PC runs reliably and trouble-free.