



Easy Do-It-Yourself Computer Maintenance Tips

Presented by:

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Your computer is very similar to a car. It needs regular, basic maintenance to help keep it running smoothly and more error-free.

Understand, however, that performing regular maintenance on your computer does not mean that it will never break or experience problems. It just helps reduce the chance that something serious will happen to your computer.

This guide provides you a quick list of the basic computer maintenance tasks you should do on a regular basis.

Daily Maintenance

1. Back-Up Your Data Files

If you create letters or other documents, save pictures, or do your finances on your computer, you should **STRONGLY** consider investing in a backup system to keep all your files safe. Without a backup system, your files could be forever lost if they are accidentally deleted or a virus infection attacks your computer.

Many backup solutions are available – including using an external hard drive attached to your computer or an online backup service.

It is best to consult a computer professional, such as Calibre Computer Solutions, to properly configure your backup solution so that all of your important files are protected.

2. Perform Virus Scans

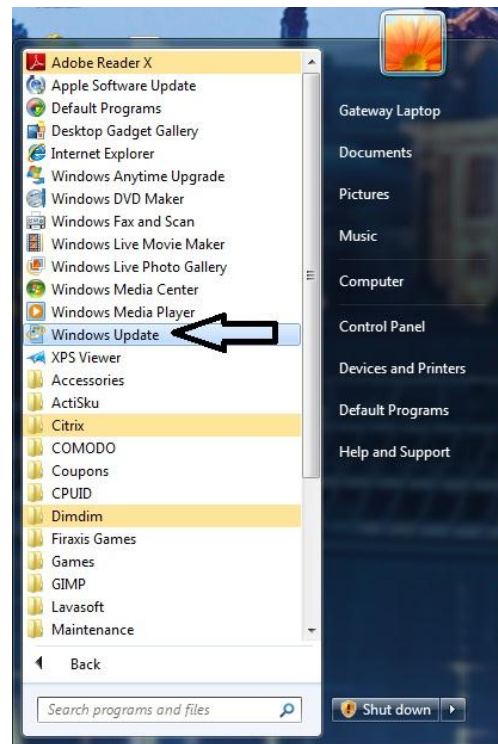
Virus scans are **VERY** important in keeping your computer protected from viruses and hackers. Updating your virus definitions and running a daily virus scan is a **MUST**. Most antivirus software does this automatically, but you need to make sure it is installed and configured correctly.

Calibre Computer Solutions recommends VIPRE Antivirus, as it updates and scans automatically, as well as resolves any infections that it finds. It is also one of the more effective antivirus software programs available today.

Weekly Maintenance

1. Install Updates

Installing Windows updates on a weekly basis helps protect your computer and fix known problems with the operating system. To install Windows updates, click on the *Start button*, select *All Programs*, and look for *Windows Update* or *Microsoft Update* toward the top of the list of installed programs.



It is also important to install updates for other programs, including Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash Player and Java.

Each of these software programs has a distinctive icon or dialog box that will alert you that updates are ready to be installed. These icons generally appear in the bottom right corner of your screen near the clock.

Adobe Reader Updates



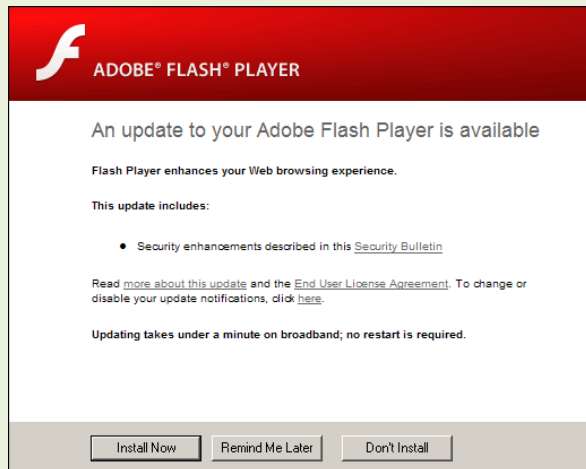
The Adobe Reader update icon is a red square with the Adobe logo. It appears in the system tray.

Java Updates



The Java update icon is an orange square with the Java logo. It appears in the system tray.

Adobe Flash Player Updates



The Adobe Flash Player update appears on your screen as a dialog box.

2. Reboot Your Computer

Some people leave their computer on all the time. This is ok. However, if you leave your computer on all the time, you will want to reboot the computer at least once or twice a week. This helps clear out the memory and allow the computer to operate faster.

You should turn off your computer if you are leaving for the weekend, vacation, or any extended time when you will not be using your computer. If you are concerned about lightning storms, you can unplug your computer from the wall after shutting it off.

Monthly Maintenance

1. Remove Junk Files

Over time, there are quite a few unnecessary files that are stored on your computer that eventually slow down your computer. These include Internet history, Internet temporary files, cookies, among other things.

The best way to remove all these files at one time is to use a free software called CCleaner. It can be downloaded from <http://www.piriform.com/ccleaner/download/standard>.

2. Run Disk Check

Running a monthly disk check examines the health of your hard disk, detecting and fixing potential problems before they happen.

NOTE: Be sure you have a backup of your important files BEFORE running a disk check.

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**
3. Restart the computer. When the computer restarts, it will run the disk check automatically. The Check Disk process could take over an hour, so schedule this when you have something else non-computer related to do. When it is finished, it will boot back to the normal version of Windows.

3. Run Disk Defragmenter

Each time you use your computer, files on your computer get accessed by various programs. When the program is finished using a particular file, it doesn't always put it back in the same place it found it. Running a defragment on your hard drive puts the files back in their proper places, which helps speed up your computer.

- 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 and Windows 7, go to Start, All Programs, and click on Accessories. Find Systems Tools, Disk Defragmenter and click on it. Windows may ask you for permission to continue. Click Continue. Click the Defragment Now

button. It will then ask you which drive you want to defragment. Uncheck the drives you don't want to defragment, and then click OK.

6-Month Maintenance

1. Clean Dust & Dirt From Inside the PC

Computers and other electronic components attract dust, dirt, and animal hair. This can cause potential problems, as it clogs up the fans inside your computer and can cause heat to build up and damage the critical parts of your computer.

BEFORE CLEANING YOUR COMPUTER, TURN IT OFF AND UNPLUG IT FROM THE POWER OUTLET.

Blow out your keyboard with a can of compressed air, 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 out any dust in there, especially around the CPU chip (the big square chip on the mother board).

Annual Maintenance

1. Schedule a PC-Tune Up Appointment

Every year, it is a good idea to have a computer professional like Calibre Computer Solutions perform a complete PC Tune-Up on your computer. They can uninstall unnecessary software programs, clean the registry, and check all of your hardware for potential problems.

This affordable service is very similar to taking your car in for an oil change.

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 lightning storms, unplug your 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