



Computer Maintenance and Cleaning Up Temp Files

1. Back up your files!

In the terrible event that your hard drive crashes and information is non-recoverable, you will want to make sure you have a recent backup of all your important files. This can be done in a variety of ways; the most popular using current technology is to burn (copy) all of the files to a CD-R or CD-RW disk. Most applications save to the same "default" folder which is the **My Documents** folder. Unless you have specified various other folders to save to, the process of copying the important data is relatively simple. Just copy the entire **My Documents** folder. (In some cases, this may take more than one disk, especially if you have an abundance of music files or digital images saved.)

Some applications, like QuickBooks or Quicken, prompts you to **backup** your file frequently. This backup file is still on your hard drive unless you are backing up to a floppy drive, a zip drive, or a handy new flash drive. If you are backing up to your hard drive, whenever you burn (copy) your other important data, you will want to find the backup file for QuickBooks and burn (copy) this file as well.

Recommendations on the frequency of backing up files varies widely. Some experts recommend daily backups, others say every few months. In many cases, every couple of months may be sufficient. It depends on your level of computer use, the number of files you tend to save, and the importance of those files to you. If you are keeping track of financial information that would be hard to duplicate if lost, you will want to consider a more timely response to backing up.

2. Keeping your computer virus-free!

It is of the utmost importance to make sure you have anti-virus software installed and that it is up to date with its newest virus definitions downloaded and installed! Many people do not understand how anti-virus software works. They have the false notion that because it was installed on their computer two years ago they are protected even though they may never have done any updates. What this really means is you are protected against any virus developed prior to the installation (two years ago). Any **new** virus developed since that time, you will be susceptible to. This is why it is **critical** that you update your virus software weekly. It is also important to note that your subscription for any updates is good for one year from the date of installation of the software. In other words, after your one-year is up, you must purchase a new copy or update your current version online. I would hesitate to update your software if the version is over two years old. Many software manufacturers will let you update the product but will offer no tech support for some of the older versions. In this case, you are better off buying a recent version for new installation. Let me reiterate, if you have no anti-virus software installed – you have **no business** being on the Internet!



3. Tune up your computer!

There are a variety of utilities available (Windows OS) for keeping your computer at peak performance levels. Click on **Start**, **Programs**, **Accessories**, and finally **System Tools** to see your choices. The first item you will want to become familiar with is the **Disk Cleanup** utility. Again, the amount of computer usage will dictate how frequently you will want to run this. If you are surfing on the internet and working with lots of various files daily, once per week or every two weeks should be good. If you use your computer once or twice a week, running the disk cleanup once a month should be sufficient.

The next utility you will want to become familiar with is the **Disk Defragmenter**. This reorganizes the computer files into adjacent clusters instead of files that are scattered about the hard drive. Adjacent clusters are faster to retrieve, thus optimizing the computer performance. Isn't it easier to find files in your file cabinet if they are organized rather than shuffling through a messy pile? Works the same for your computer. You will want to run Disk Defragmenter once a month.

Windows 98 and Windows ME operating systems have a **System Scan Disk** utility included as well. This allows you to check the integrity of your hard drive or other media. A repair system is also in place if errors are found on the drive. Like Disk Defragmenter, you should run this utility once a month.

There you have it. The three basic utilities you will want to take advantage of to keep your computer running at peak performance. Remember, your computer is just like any other appliance you have in your home; there is a need for regularly scheduled tune-ups and without them, things start to go awry.

You probably thought you were done, right? Well, there are a couple of other things you can do to clean out other unnecessary files. Right click on **My Computer** and choose **Explore**. Next, right click on **C: Local Disk** (your hard drive) and again, choose **Explore**. In the left windowpane, click the + (plus) sign by the **Windows** folder to expand the content of the folder. Scroll down the left pane to the **Temp** folder and click once to select it. This should show you the folder contents in the right windowpane. Click **Edit** on your **Menu Bar** and then click **Select All** (or use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+A). Press **Delete** on your keyboard and click **Yes** when prompted "Are you sure you want to delete".

Scroll the left pane back up so you can see the **Documents and Settings** folder and click the + (plus) to once again, expand the folders. Locate the **user name** who is logged on to the computer and click the + (plus) sign to expand this folder as well. Find the folder labeled **Cookies** and click to select and activate its contents to the right windowpane. Select (by clicking once) the file named index (or index.dat), on the **Menu Bar** click **Edit** and then click **Invert Selection**. This should select – or highlight – all files except the index file. Once again, press **Delete** on your keyboard and click **Yes** when prompted "Are you sure you want to delete". That wasn't so bad was it? Now you have gotten rid of all the **Temp** files that disk cleanup didn't do and also, all of the **Cookies** your computer was storing.