

# 12 easy PC tasks you should be doing (but aren't) – a roundtable discussion



[www.pcworld.com/article/2032032/12-must-do-pc-tasks.html](http://www.pcworld.com/article/2032032/12-must-do-pc-tasks.html)

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# 12 easy PC tasks you should be doing (but aren't)

1. Clean the case, keys, and display
2. Back up your data
3. Guard against malware
4. Update your software
5. Organize your files
6. Toss out the chaff
7. Encrypt your private data
8. Change your passwords
9. Organize startup
10. Organize your inbox
11. Automate everything
12. Should you defrag your drives



# 1. Clean the case, keys, and display

*"Dirt and dust buildup in and around your computer can clog the fans and air intakes, causing your hardware to run hotter, which lowers its expected life span."*



## *1.a. Case*

- Unplug it and move to open space
- Remove cover/side panel
- Clean vents
  - Lightly dampened paper towel
- Blow/vacuum dust
  - Compressed air/use short bursts
- Clean fans (power, cpu, graphics card)
  - Hold/don't over spin fans

## *1.b. Keyboard*

- Turn-over and shake
- Blow/vacuum
- Re-shake
- Pop out individual keys (if necessary)
- Wipe keytops with paper towel
  - Lightly moisten with rubbing alcohol
  - Also wipe mouse
    - Ball/glide surfaces

## *1.c. Display*

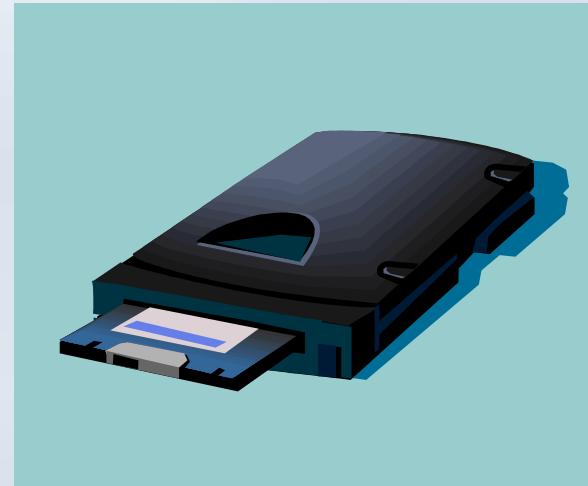
- Unplug
- Remove dust
- Wipe screen
  - Microfiber cloth
    - Lightly dampened if necessary
      - Water or 50/50 water and vinegar
    - Wipe again

## 2. Back up your data

*"Your computer is not invulnerable. Hard-drive failures happen, as do floods, fires, earthquakes, thefts, and other calamities. The hardware is replaceable but the data..."*

## 2. *Back up your data (cont'd)*

- Onsite
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> drive
  - External drive
  - Other computer/device
- Offsite
  - Friend/neighbor/relative
  - Cloud
    - Storage
    - Service





## *2. Back up your data (cont'd)*

- Backup software
  - O/S
  - Shareware
  - Purchase
- Backup type
  - Image
  - Full/partical/incremental
- Timing/frequency

### 3. Guard against malware

*"If you have been using computers for a long time you might be tempted to think that you don't need to run antivirus software. "I never open suspicious email attachments, and I stay away from sketchy websites..."*

*Remember , Little Orphant Annie says:*

*"An' the Gobble-uns 'at gits you ef you don' t watch out!"*

### *3. Guard against malware (Cont'd)*

- Viruses
- Hijackers
- Trojans
- Adware
- Annoying toolbars



### *3. Guard against malware (cont'd)*

- Antivirus
- Specialized software
- Security updates
- Firewall



## 4. Update your software

*"Unlike fine red wine, software does not get better with age. Software is like chocolate milk. Great when you first get it, but more and more likely to make you sick the longer it sits. In other words, old software is a security risk, often containing vulnerabilities that an attacker can use to get into your system."*

## *4. Update your software (Cont'd)*

- Operating system
  - Security updates
- Utilities
  - Java
  - Browser
  - Mail client
  - Applications
- Specialized software
  - Drivers

## 5. Organize your files

*"It happens to the best of us. Sometimes it's just too tempting to save time right now by dumping files and folders into your Documents folder, or your C: drive, or onto the desktop. You can always organize things later, right? Well, later is now."*



## 5. Organize your files (Cont'd)

- Develop a plan
  - Analyze volume
  - Interests
  - Ease of backing up
- Libraries feature (Windows 7 or 8)

[http://www.pcworld.com/article/187473/using\\_windows\\_7\\_libraries.html](http://www.pcworld.com/article/187473/using_windows_7_libraries.html)

*"One of the most useful new features in Windows 7 is Libraries, a simple yet powerful tool for streamlining the management of all the files on your PC. It's useful when organizing local data, and even more powerful when used to organize data across a network."*



## *5. Organize your files (Cont'd)*

- Gather like items
  - Sort/order by extension
    - Explorer/Multi commander/Pro Desk
    - Multi-pane/window view
    - Select
    - Drag and drop
- Specialized software
  - Dropit

<http://www.pcworld.com/article/2024235/review-dropit-organizes-your-downloads-folder.html>

## 6. Toss out the chaff

*"While you were organizing your files, you probably noticed a different problem. You have a lot of old and useless files, documents, and applications taking up valuable space on your hard drive."*

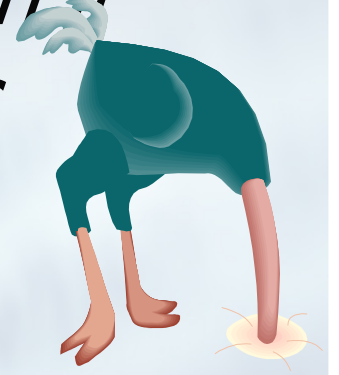


## *6. Toss out the chaff (Cont'd)*

- Analyze
  - TreeSize
  - SpaceSniffer
- Decrapify
- Uninstall
- Clean-up
  - Disk cleanup
  - Empty trash
  - Clean registry

## 7. Encrypt your private data

*"How much of your life resides on your computer? Do you keep medical records, bank statements, or other files you wouldn't want other parties to access? ... You should encrypt those sensitive files, however, to make sure that your information stays safe and secret even if your data winds up in someone else's hands."*



## *7. Encrypt your private data (Cont'd)*

- O/S facilities
  - Password protect folders/files
- Specialized software/utilities
  - TrueCrypt



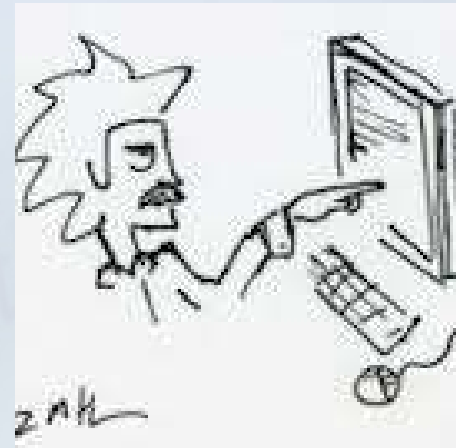
## 8. Change your passwords

*"Performing this task is just as crucial as backing up your data. Most users, unfortunately, make several fundamental password errors that can compromise their online accounts and data, and the easiest way to fix them is to start over from scratch."*



## 8. *Change your passwords (Cont'd)*

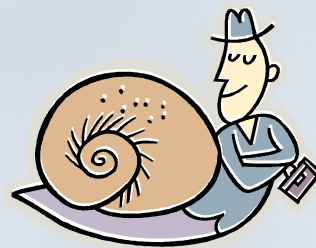
- Use strong passwords
  - At least 10 characters
    - Mix of upper and lower case, symbols, and numbers
- Not same across multiple websites
- Change regularly
- Don't share/keep secret
- Remember them
  - Password manager



KeePass (<http://www.pcworld.com/article/236006/KeePass.html>)

## 9. Optimize startup

*"One of the most frustrating experiences in computing is waiting for a slow-as-molasses startup to finish. You have to wait through the POST (power-on self test) screen, then pass the Windows Startup Screen, and then tolerate the most irritating part of all when you can see your desktop but the computer is still unresponsive and too slow to use."*





## *9. Optimize startup (Cont'd)*

- MSConfig
- Ccleaner
  - Tools
  - Startup
- Solutio
- Winpatrol
- Mike Lim's STARTUP

## 10. Organize your inbox

*"When you're trying to get things done email can be your worst enemy. Sure, it's invaluable for doing business and for keeping in touch, but it can also be a distraction and a massive time sink."*



## *10. Organize your inbox (Cont'd)*

- Create multiple folders
  - Regard inbox as temporary holding zone
- Clean out the inbox
  - Move needed message to appropriate folders
  - Delete remainder
- Automate rules and filters
- Unsubscribe
- Consider a mailbox manager

# 11. Automate everything

*"Keeping your PC running smoothly and securely doesn't have to be a headache. Many of the tasks that are described in this article have to be performed only once, or invoke software that updates automatically. For the rest, Windows baked-in Task Scheduler can help you keep running on a regimented schedule."*

# *11. Automate everything*

- Automatic updates
  - Express vs customized
  - O/S
  - Browser
  - Mail client
- Backups
- Windows task scheduler
- Manual checklist/calendar

## 12. Should you defrag your drives?

*"If you've been using PCs for more than a year or two, you have probably heard about how important it is to defragment your hard drive regularly. ... It's still a good idea to defrag your storage periodically to prevent heavy fragmentation from becoming an issue over time. If nothing else, the odds of recovering lost data after a disaster are increased if you defragged your drive recently."*

## *12. Should you defrag your drives? (Cont'd)*

- Windows Vista, 7, or 8
  - Automatically defragments once a week
- Older Windows
  - Manually defrag
- Disable automatic defragmentation for SSDs
  - Unnecessary
  - May reduce life span

# PC World article recommended software

- Backup – CrashPlan  
(<http://www.crashplan.com>)
- Malware – AVG Antivirus Free  
(<http://free.avg.com>)
- Software Update – Secunia Personal Software Inspector  
([http://secunia.com/vulnerability\\_scanning/personal/](http://secunia.com/vulnerability_scanning/personal/))
- Organize – Dropit  
(<http://www.pcworld.com/article/2024235/>)



## *Recommended software (Cont'd)*

- Chaff – SpaceSniffer

(<http://www.pcworld.com/article/231779/>)

- Decrapifier

(<http://www.pcworld.com/article/231508/>)

- Revo Uninstaller

(<http://www.pcworld.com/article/231511/>)

- Ccleaner

(<http://www.pcworld.com/article/231606/>)

## *Recommended software (Cont'd)*

- Encrypt – TrueCrypt  
(<http://www.truecrypt.org/>)
- Passwords – KeePass  
(<http://www.pcworld.com/article/236006/>)
- Optimize – WinPatrol  
(<http://www.pcworld.com/article/260026/>)
- Organize – SaneBox  
(<http://www.pcworld.com/article/258154/>)