

Here's a suggested list of some of the items that should be maintained on your computer and some suggestions for added security. Basic maintenance and basic security work together to keep your system performance at its peak. Like your vehicle, a computer is a complex item that needs routine maintenance and basic security to keep it running and free from problems. Keeping a clean and maintained machine makes for a smoother operating computer.

It may sound like a lot to do, but breaking it down and doing some occasionally should make it simple. Plus, if you start off on the right track you'll save headaches down the road.

It's difficult to say how often these items should be completed. Your computer is different from others and your use is different, so your time frame may differ and that's fine. This is intended to give some ideas of the types of things that should be done.

Add/delete/modify as needed. The point is to establish a routine on a regular basis.

First, some of the basics: For the most part, these items need to be done only once. (Should be done immediately when getting a new machine)

- Rename user account disable guest account & password other accounts • Install a firewall
- Install an antivirus program
- Install a spyware/malware remover
- Install a spyware blocker
- Install a trojan detector
- Install a registry guard
- Install a program to edit your startup programs
- Uninstall preloaded programs that you won't use
- Secure browser & email client settings
- Setup "popup" control or install popup blocker
- Customize settings for all installed programs
- Check for current versions/updates on all software, including the Operating System.(OS)
- Disable "Messenger" unless needed
- Replace/disable programs that "phone home"
- Determine how you will back up critical data
- Install surge protector or UPS

- Record serial #s, product key #s, model #s & specifications
- Make (and test) a boot disk
- Back up drivers and special install disks
- Clean up the startup programs

Perform as needed:

- Backup vital files on a time frame appropriate for you. If you have a lot of important data that is updated/added frequently you'll need to backup more often than someone who has little critical data.
- It's also a good idea to change your passwords periodically

Items needing attention regularly. Suggested time frame: Weekly to 2x/month

- Update definitions on any program running in the background, such as a real time virus detection.
- Run virus check and spyware check (if not done automatically)
- Clean out junk mail and old email
- Clean cookies, temp files etc.
- Empty recycle bin
- Backup registry/set System Restore point

Suggested time frame: Monthly to Quarterly

- Disk check & Defragment
- Check for OS updates & patches

Suggested time frame: Once or twice a year

- Clean keyboard, mouse, mouse pad, monitor, vents & case
- Uninstall (don't just delete folders of) obsolete & unused applications
- Clean out old downloads and files that are no longer needed. Also check for ~*.*, *.tmp, *.chk, *.old, file0*.* and other similar files
- Clean inside case (blow out dust, check connections etc), including power supply
- Check that fans are working
- Clean out excess startup programs • Clean Start Menu
- Clean & organize files

- Check hard drive space - should be >20% free space
- Clean index.dat files
- Clean out Bookmarks/Favorites
- Clean out excess graphics files

And also.

- Don't forget to unplug your system and phone/internet connection during thunderstorms!
- Document error messages so you can research them or ask for help
- Pay attention to strange sounds and noticeable changes in performance