

Basic computer maintenance everyone should do:

By: Gord Routley – Elder College – “Maintaining Your Computer” class

Computers tend to bog down over time. Some simple maintenance every 2-4 weeks (depending on computer use and programs installed) will only take 10-30 minutes and can be performed at any knowledge level and will keep your computer running smoothly. With this guide, and three downloads, you will see a noticeable improvement. This is fairly basic and something all computer users should do.

Remove programs you no longer use or knew about:

Over time, you may have installed games or utilities that you forgot about or no longer use. Why waste the space? Go to your control panel, Add\Remove programs (or Programs and Features in Vista/Windows 7) and uninstall anything you no longer use. Occasionally you will find a toolbar or other item you were unaware was there! They can sometimes sneak in and often cause havoc.

Cleaning your hard drive of unneeded files:

One of the biggest problems is hard drive usage. Your hard drive has more moving parts than any other in your computer and is constantly adding, deleting and reorganizing files. Because of this, you want to clean your computers hard drive. A great free tool for this is CCleaner: Download it from here:

<http://www.eldercomps.com/free/> (first item on list)

Simply open CCleaner, and the cleaner section should be open.

Click run CCleaner and wait. That's it, you're done.

It is a very safe tool and has never damaged any of the hundreds of computers I have run it on.

Remove invalid registry entries:

Next up is the registry. Frankly, the registry is overrated as a speed tweak, in general, but it does get large and can contain many invalid references. The registry is not an area for even the average computer user to be playing around in. The good news is CCleaner has a safe registry cleaner built in, so why not clean out old, invalid entries?

Click the issues button.

Click scan for issues.

Click fix selected issues. (it doesn't matter what they are – they're all broken – delete them!)

That's it, you're done, a safe, fast registry clean.

Startup items:

Here is a HUGE culprit on the average PC. See all those icons in the lower right

corner of your screen? Those are all being loaded on startup, and those are not all of them either! If you're wondering why you have to wait a minute to use your computer after startup, it is because all of those items are loading after Windows has started. They also use up memory just sitting there. Removal takes a bit more knowledge, or research, than the previous two, but you can do it!

First off, if you know what these items in the tray are and do not need them running, you can either right click an icon and look for options or a "run with Windows" option. Otherwise, you can double click any icon to open the program and look for options from there. Some are easy and common. QuickTime, AOL and RealPlayer are good examples of items that do not need to be there.

CCleaner also has a startup manager. Click tools, then startup. You can delete any unneeded items from there. Be careful, there is no backup, so either look up the program on Google or ask on our forums if you want to know what an item is for. Because the startup loads drivers and some programs you may need, be careful removing items you are unsure of.

Defragment your hard drive

Now that you have removed all of this garbage, you have fragmented files all over your hard drive. Reading and writing data on a heavily fragmented hard drive is slowed down because of the excessive time needed for the heads to move between fragments on the disk surface. The files on your hard drive now probably look like a box of tacks after you open them and toss them on the ground. Defragmenting your hard drive would be like the box of tacks still nicely sealed in the box. All neat and tidy and easy to get at!

Microsoft includes a disk defragmenter, but it is widely known that it is not very good. Luckily, there's a great free alternative available called Defraggler – from the very same people who produce CCleaner:

Defraggler

Use Defraggler to defrag your entire hard drive. Download it from here:

<http://www.eldercomps.com/free/> (second item on list)

Malware

You should also use a malware scanner occasionally just to be sure you did not pick something up. Download only from a trusted site like ElderComps.com and consider using Malwarebytes' Anti-Malware. It's a high performance anti-malware application that thoroughly removes even the most advanced malware and spyware. Download it from here:

<http://www.eldercomps.com/free/> (third item on list)