Routine Computer Maintenance Tasks

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Why should I perform routine computer maintenance tasks?

Over time, computers get slower because files become disorganized and resources are consumed by unnecessary software. There are routine maintenance tasks you can do on your computer to help keep it running efficiently. Most maintenance tasks take only a few minutes and should be part of the routine of computer usage.
Disc Cleaning

Over time, mostly in one week increments, the hard drive will accumulate "trash." This includes temporary files, recycle bin files and cookies that clutter up your hard drive and slow down your computer. If you use Internet Explorer, for example, and don't clean out the temporary files, it may seem like the browser is moving at a crawl. Running DiskClean in Window's System Tools will help.
Defragmentation

As you use more and more files and add files to the hard drive, they get split into fragments and are spread to different locations on the hard drive. Run Defrag, which is also located in System Tools. Defrag will pull those fragments into one location, making it easier and quicker for the computer to find the full file. This procedure should be done about once a month.
Updating

Keeping computer software up-to-date fixes bugs and security holes as well as provides the latest versions of software that typically run better. Most software programs allow you to set automatic updating for certain times, which ensures regular updating. This is particularly recommended for antivirus software.
Anti-Virus

Hopefully, you're running some kind of Anti-Virus software on your computer and you're keeping it up to date. A lot of folks have a tendency to install AV software and then ignore it (assuming it's doing its job in the background). Don't make this mistake. Be sure to open your software every week or two and check for updates. After doing so, you should also run a virus scan to make sure your computer isn't infected.
Backup

Backing up your computer, while not strictly a maintenance function, should be on your maintenance checklist. Using an external hard drive and backup software, you should run the software at least once a week or set up the program to do it automatically. That way, if your computer crashes, you won't lose any data you've saved on the computer's hard drive.
Formatting

Formatting a computer involves erasing all of the data on the computer's hard drive, and then reinstalling the operating system so that the computer is restored to factory defaults. This can be useful if your computer is malfunctioning, or you are planning on selling or donating it.
You should only reformat a hard drive when your operating system is so corrupt that it won't even boot, even in safe mode. Or, if you would like a clean install of Windows and to get rid of all the crap you have downloaded through the years to make your PC run faster.

**Disk formatting** is the process of preparing a data storage device such as a hard disk drive, solid-state drive, floppy disk or USB flash drive for initial use.
Physical Maintenance

In addition to software maintenance, you should also do regular physical cleaning. If you have a desktop computer, open up the case and blow out the dust inside. For laptops, use canned air to blow in and around the keys to get rid of the dirt, dust and other debris that has accumulated there. Dust and debris can create heat, which can affect your computer's motherboard performance. The more that collects, the more of a chance your computer can overheat, requiring a shutdown.
These were additional notes to reinforce what was done in class. Remember to refer to your IT Manual.
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