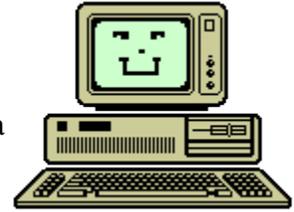


Computer Care & Safety

Computers, like any other piece of electronic equipment, need special care and attention in order to perform properly and safely. There are several specialized tasks such as defragmenting, scanning and reformatting that computer experts can do to keep the internal system of a computer working well. However, we'll leave these tasks to the experts for now and concentrate on some daily do's and don'ts that any computer user should know.



A Clean Machine

This may seem like a simple topic, but computers require special cleaning even on the outside. Keeping your system free of dust, dirt and liquids is the first step to computer care. Your system's user guide is the best place to find information on how to clean your outer components; but here are some general tips that you should always remember:

- **Never** spray your monitor screen (or any other computer component) with glass cleaner. Instead, spray a lint-free cloth *lightly* with glass cleaner, then clean the screen. Be sure to hold the cloth away from the computer when spraying.
- Computer components should be kept as dust-free as possible.
- Canned air or small computer-specific vacuum cleaners are an excellent way to clean keyboards, computer case vents, or around disk drive openings.
- The rubber ball inside the bottom of a mouse may need occasional cleaning. If the mouse does not perform correctly, check your user guide for cleaning directions.
- **Never** try to remove the cover on your computer to clean inside. Instead, take it to an authorized service technician for cleaning.
- Keep all liquids and food items away from your computer. Liquids and food crumbs can damage delicate electronic circuits. Also, mixing liquids and electronic components can cause serious electrical shock!
- Wash your hands before using the computer to avoid "sticky keys."
- When in doubt about how to clean your computer system, consult your user manual or technical support.

A Shocking Possibility

It is important to remember that your computer is connected to electricity. If you have an Internet connection, that also means that your computer is connected to a telephone line or cable connection. These are also conductive connections. That means that lightning could be conducted to your computer through any of these connections. For safety reasons, you should never use your computer during a storm.

Many computer users purchase **surge protectors** to safeguard their system. The user plugs computer components into the surge protector, then plugs the surge protector into the wall. Just like the name implies, surge protectors are designed to protect computers against electrical

surges or lightning. However, these devices can fail, so it's best to stay clear of the computer during storms.

Also, as mentioned earlier, electricity and liquids don't mix. Keep water and other liquids away from the computer system. This includes drinks, water guns, fish bowls and cleaning fluids.

Beware of Viruses

Viruses and worms are names for pesky computer-unfriendly programs that can accidentally be downloaded into your system. Some are just a nuisance, but others can crash your system and cause irreparable damage. To avoid these nasty creatures, follow these safety tips:

- Install, use and regularly update virus software
- Never open an e-mail attachment unless you know and trust the person who sent it.
- Do not accept downloads from Internet sites that you don't know and trust.

If you would like to learn more about viruses and antivirus utilities, Check out [The Virus Zoo](#) at CNet for some great information!

Avoid Installation Marathons

Let's say that you were given several new computer games for your birthday. Or maybe your parents just bought you a new system and you want to load all your favorite games. Do you sit down and install all of these programs one right after another? **No!** It may be tempting, but it's not a good idea. Sometimes, installing a new program can cause conflicts within your system. These conflicts will need to be worked out or else the program will have to be uninstalled so that your system will work correctly. If you install 2 or more programs before you realize there is a problem, it will be very difficult to determine what the problem is and which program caused it. Instead, try installing one program, then use your computer long enough to see how your system responds to the installation before loading the next program.

Safe Computing!

Following these guidelines should help you to take good care of your computer system, so that you can get lots of enjoyment from it. Remember, that if you have any questions about your particular system, you should check your user guide or contact technical support.