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# 'Tuning Your P.C.'

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## Tuning Your Computer for Optimum Performance

A computer is just like an engine, it needs to be tuned and serviced regularly. If you neglect it, much like an engine, it will loose power and eventually stop working altogether.

We will be looking at a few key areas to keep your computer in tune and running at its best. These include...

- **The Internet**
- **Installed programs and Operating System**
- **Space management**
- **Virus protection**
- **Removing old files**
- **Disk defragmenting**

### The Internet

The first thing you should be looking at is your connection to the WWW and seeing if you are using the latest browser. An out of date browser can stop web pages from displaying correctly. Try using different browsers to see which suits you. Mike uses Mozilla from [www.mozilla.org](http://www.mozilla.org) , because it stops pop-ups and the browser hijackers are n't smart enough to change his start page!!! Netscape is another alternative.

You should also have a firewall in place so you can control what comes in and goes out from your computer. Zone alarm from [www.zonelabs.com](http://www.zonelabs.com) has a good reputation





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for stand-alone systems or a hardware firewall/router/switch/optionally wireless device for a networked home or business. It is imperative to use excellent hardware that is at a mature stage of development see [www.netgear.com.au](http://www.netgear.com.au) or [www.dlink.com.au](http://www.dlink.com.au) – you can email me if you want my personal recommendation or read forums about these types of equipment.

Windows XP includes a software firewall that can be toggled on in the advanced settings of either a dial up connection or LAN (Local Area Network) connection. See <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/networking/learnmore/icf.mspx> for more information.

Regularly delete your temporary Internet cookies, files and offline content. See <http://www.techspot.com/tweaks/ie6/index.shtml> for more detailed explanation of some of the common Internet Explorer features in the latest browser from Microsoft.

## **Installed Programs and the Operating System**

Do not install just any old thing on your computer, it just uses up valuable space and slows your computer down. If you go to Control Panel and Add/Remove software, you can see a list of all the installed programs. If you are sure that you don't use it, and never will, you should remove it. Demo games, search bars that you never really wanted, date programs and suspect anti-virus type software all gets the flick from me, especially as many of these types of software are sponsored by advertising and therefore introduce pop-ups and other 'rubbish' type advertising.

Personally, Kazaa, WinMX and on and on (Software that downloads movies, music, software etc.) should be used intelligently and in the full knowledge that they will open up the system to the worst types of Trojan viruses as well as potentially huge Internet bills as you are now inviting the rest of the world to come into your computer and upload anything they fancy for free at your expense. Good luck. Just because you set the settings in one of these programs to restrict access to only parts of your computer does not make it secure, as people write applications to access it all through the download process. Unless you are comfortable shoplifting and stealing the occasional CD here and there, try downloading free music from sites such as [www.mp3.com](http://www.mp3.com) and other such excellent resources where copyright is freely given!

You can also prevent programs from loading when Windows starts up to speed up your boot time. To do this, remove the program from Start/Programs/Start-up or type in 'msconfig' in Win98, Win98SE, Win ME or Win XP and study the start-up area. For advanced users, try <http://www.blackviper.com/WinXP/servicecfg.htm> and





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[http://www.answersthatwork.com/Tasklist\\_pages/tasklist.htm](http://www.answersthatwork.com/Tasklist_pages/tasklist.htm) and [http://www.pacs-portal.co.uk/startup\\_content.php](http://www.pacs-portal.co.uk/startup_content.php) - thanks, - Mike.

The Operating System needs to be fresh too! In my opinion less than 18months old is good or else I re-install to keep performance clean and fast. If you change oil in your car, then please consider changing the software in your computer from time to time too! Backup thoroughly before even imagining this task please!!!

## **Space management**

Keep all your files in one place like My Documents, this will allow you to backup with ease and allow you to find files easier.

When you install a new program, if it gives you the option, choose to save the files in the same place as all your other files.

Keep your desktop clean. A typical desktop should have less than 10 icons on it. This will encourage you to save things in the right folders!

Do not save things on the desktop! You or someone else WILL delete it by accident.

## **Virus protection**

Although we have spoken about it before, I can't stress the importance of virus protection enough. Up to 80% of all fatal computer problems could have been avoided by good antivirus software. The key here is to protect a new system before the crap (or your old data, bearing in mind that this too may have a virus) comes in.

AVG still seem to have the most effective results, but you must update it regularly to make it effective.

Also, use Spywareblaster and Spywareguard from <http://www.javacoolsoftware.com/downloads.html> install all windows critical updates – they rarely kill your system nowadays and use anti-spam software such as Mail frontier's Matador or Mail washer Pro if your I.S.P. has n't yet worked out how to stop spam.





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The order of security on a new system must be...

1. Firewall.
2. Anti-virus.
3. Spyware security.
4. Connect to Internet for 'Windows Update', critical updates and then anti-spam.

The reason for this order, is that if you were to connect to a broadband network without a firewall, the Blaster Worm for example could shut your system down within 9-15 seconds, before you even had time to get the windows updates that could have stopped it!

## **Removing old files**

I use a tool called HD cleaner. It removes all the little files you can't see that Windows saves. Removing these files will speed up your computer if done correctly.

DO NOT remove registry files or use registry cleaners unless you are absolutely sure of what you are doing. The only tool you should use in HD cleaner is the SUPER CLEANER.

## **Disk defragmenting**

A hard disk is like a record and stores all its files in consecutive order, but after a while as you delete old files and add new ones the disk just puts files where there is space. This causes fragmentation and slows your computer down.

As a rule you should defragment your computer every month.

If you see that little hard drive light on your computer going crazy blinking on and off this is your computer saying, "Please defragment me!" or "Get some more RAM!".

Even if Windows says that you do not need to defragment, do it anyway.

Empty your recycle bin regularly. Try to get into the habit of emptying it every time you turn off the computer.

Kind Regards,

*Mike Bloomfield & Nic Danger*



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Nic Danger is a part of the team at A PC Genius in Sydney.

Nic is famous for winning all the PC magazine speed awards across Australia and also the value awards and has wallpapered some PC companies with such awards for months at a time when they have sought his guidance and design know how. He is an expert on performance computing and water-cooling CPU's and chipsets to achieve unbelievable speeds, which he does for large manufacturing companies across Australia. Nic is also a legendary software and driver technician for motherboard and graphics chipsets. You may contact Nic at [nic@apcgenius.com](mailto:nic@apcgenius.com) - thanks, Mike Bloomfield.



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