

Computer Tips 'n Tricks

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The following are a few of the computer tips and tricks that I have picked up over the years.

- When purchasing a computer, always buy the most computer that you can afford. The latest hardware, the latest operating system, the largest hard drive you can afford ... all will keep your computer operating a peak performance longer than if you had economized in these areas.
- Read your owners manuals and help files for all your software. You'll be surprised at the things you never knew.
- Do you have installation disks scattered everywhere in your home? If so, I guarantee that you will not be able to find an installation disk when you need it in a hurry. Go out and buy a 3-ring binder with slots to hold your CDs and DVDs. Then, take your CDs out of their plastic cases and write the serial numbers in permanent ink on each one. Better still, purchase a labeler, and make a label with this information for each installation CD. Then, store your CDs in your three-ring binder.
- Create a document with all the important information about your computer. Store this document in your three-ring binder. Also keep a copy of the information in your Documents folder in your computer.
- Back up ... back up ... back up! Be sure to back up your data every single day. If you have all your installation disks, it's not as important for you to back up your applications. You can always reinstall the programs. But, your data is irreplaceable! You never know when the electricity will surge, the lightning will strike, or the hard drive will just give out. By backing up your data regularly, you will never have to spend ours upon hours recreating everything you lost.

- Where to store your backed up data? You have a few options:
 1. You can save your backed up data on a series of CDs or DVDs.
 2. You can save your backed up data on an external USB-powered hard drive
 3. You use an online data storage service to store your data offsite. This is the most secure method as your data will remain secure even if your computer is stolen or your house burns down. I use an offsite data storage service from Mozy. It is inexpensive and secure.
- Install an anti virus program and keep it up to date. Unfortunately, computer rogues come up with new viruses almost daily. Only by keeping your antivirus program up to date are you ever protected. Check the instructions on your antivirus program to have the program automatically update itself.
- When you install a new program, check the options to see if you can disable it from running automatically each time you start your computer. If there is no way to check in the program's options, go to the Startup tab in Start/Run/MSCONFIG and disable the program. Your firewall and virus scanner should load at Startup. But, almost every other program you install does not need to run in the background all the time.
- Your Recycle bin can be a life saver; but it can also be a disk hog! The default size for the recycle bin is 10% of your hard drive space. This may be much more than you need. To reduce the size of the recycle bin, follow these steps:
 1. Right-click the recycle bin icon.
 2. Select "Properties".
 3. Drag the slider to a lower percentage.
- Do you have a contact in your Outlook that you want to give to a colleague? Just right-click the contact and click Send. Outlook will open with your contact as an attachment. When your colleague receives your email, he/she has only to right-click the attachment and click Save. The new contact is automatically saved in the Contact list. Cool!