

Article: [COMPUTERS BEHAVING BADLY](#)

Topic: PC Housekeeping

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This article describes the basic steps that can be routinely performed on your computer to improve speed and increase free space on your hard drive.

Due to the various versions of the Windows operating systems (95, 98, NT, Me, 2000, XP), the precise method for performing each step varies slightly. So I will describe the general process rather than the specific steps.

Firstly, double click My Computer, which is normally on the Desktop. Right click your C:\ drive, which is your hard drive and select Properties. From the General tab, selecting Disk Cleanup will remove any files from your computer that are no longer necessary. It will also empty the Recycle Bin. Then from the Tools tab, click the box to check for errors. When that is done, click the Defrag box.

Defrag is the process of placing each of the files on the hard drive that have become fragmented back into one contiguous file. Fragmented files are files that reside in multiple spots on your hard drive, instead of just one spot. The reason a file becomes 'broken up' is due to other files being added, changed or deleted on your hard drive. For example, when a file is deleted, the space left behind is available to be used by a new file. But if the new file is bigger than the available space then some of the new file will be put in the empty space and the rest will go to the next available space. Thus the file now lives in more than one physical spot. This is called fragmentation and can lead to slow access times when trying to retrieve a file as the file has to be located across many areas instead of just one.

Emails are another area that tends to grow with age. Check the Deleted Items mailbox and remove any that are old or no longer needed. Also clean out the Sent mailbox. You can either delete any unwanted emails outright, or consider archiving them. Archiving is simply a process to store old emails in a separate location. Outlook has an Archive option (File, Archive – but this may vary depending on the version you run).

Programs that check for viruses, spyware and adware should be updated regularly and ran to perform full scans of your computer. Spyware and Adware are renowned for slowing computers down - as well as performing other malicious activities.

Try and keep your computer up to date with the latest fixes and patches. These are freely downloadable from the Windows Update web site. Be warned however that it is not unheard of for Updates to sometimes cause as many problems as they are trying to solve. It is always advisable to backup personal files before applying any updates.

Most computer magazines regularly have the latest Service Packs on the supplied CD. A Service Pack is a collection of security fixes, critical updates, and sometimes, new features that have been bundled together.

To stop temporary files from building up from Web surfing, in Internet Explorer go to Tools, Internet Options, Advanced and under the Security group, tick the box to Empty temporary internet files when browser is closed.

Lastly, feel free to email me with any questions. Your queries can be published along with a reply so others with the same problem can benefit.

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