PC Maintenance Guide from PC World

These tips, tools, and resources can help keep any machine happy, healthy, and trouble-free.

Things to Do

… Every Day
Update your virus and spyware definitions: Viruses spread within hours, so keeping your antivirus software up-to-date is essential.

Do an incremental backup: Making a copy of files that have changed since your last full backup is quick and easy.

Reboot when programs crash: Failed applications can cause other programs to falter. Restart your system after every crash to clear it out.

… Every Week
Perform a full virus and spyware scan: Find anything nasty hiding on your system by regularly scheduling a total scan.

Do a complete backup: Better safe than sorry. A backup of all your data will help you recover if your drive fails.

Run Windows Update: Get the latest patches from Microsoft to secure your system, by running this from the start menu.

Run a spyware-and-adware removal program.

… Every Month
Update your programs: To make your apps more stable, check for vendors' software updates.

Check for new drivers: Installing the latest drivers for your devices can help speed up and stabilize your PC.

Use a one-click utility-suite checkup program: A utility suite can give your PC a thorough checkup.

… Every Year
Clean out your PC case: Use a vacuum cleaner to carefully clear out the dust that collects in a case and can clog up the fans.

Spring-clean you programs: If your PC seems sluggish and bloated, make a full backup and then use the restore CD to return the system to its original state.

Conduct a full diagnostic check: A hardware-diagnostic program can test your equipment and track down faulty components before they fail completely.