



Top 10 Tips for New Computer Users

Provided by Derek Houseworth (derek@houseworthconsulting.com)

10. Keep everything

Keep program disks, documentation (including serial & service tag numbers) and your computer's shipping boxes in case you need to reinstall programs or send the computer back to the manufacturer for warranty service.

9. Get help

Books, magazines and web sites are good sources of information on how to use Windows XP, especially the "Dummies" series for novice computer users. Consult the knowledge base websites of your computer manufacturer and Microsoft (<http://www.microsoft.com/support>) for articles and advice on troubleshooting specific problems.

8. Shut down & restart regularly

Restart your computer before spending time troubleshooting any problem because many problems don't reappear after your computer has been restarted. Less frequent problems may require you to unplug or remove the battery (if you have a laptop) for a few minutes before restarting the computer.

7. Keep files separate with user profiles

Create a user profile or login for each person using a shared computer. User profiles keep documents, emails, favorites and other settings separate and can be protected by passwords and file encryption if necessary.

6. Maintain your computer's hard drive

Regular maintenance should include running run Disk Cleanup and Disk Defragmenter to keep your computer's hard drive operating as fast as possible.

5. Install only what you really need

Computers with fewer installed applications generally run faster and more reliably. You should be selective about the programs you choose to install. Periodically review the list of installed programs on your computer and remove any you don't regularly use.

4. Update your antivirus program

Install an antivirus program and subscribe to receive regular definition updates. Viruses and other security threats are constantly changing and an antivirus program that hasn't been updated in years isn't much better than no antivirus program at all.

3. Regularly install critical & security updates

Microsoft and many other software producers are making the process of distributing and installing security updates and fixes more automatic, but you'll still want to visit the Windows Update web site regularly to make sure your computer is up to date, especially if you're using a dial-up Internet connection.

2. Secure your network connections

Wireless networks are convenient but they can also be a big security risk and someone can easily hijack your Internet connection or worse if your network isn't properly secured. Most new DSL & cable modems include a built in firewall but many older models lack this feature and the Windows Firewall should be the minimum level of protection for computers connected directly to the Internet.

1. Backup your documents

Backup the contents of the Documents and Settings folder to a writable CD, USB drive, external hard drive or some other removable media and store it in a safe location. Backing up the entire hard drive isn't as critical since you're much more likely to need to restore an individual document than the entire system from scratch.