

Technology

Time for a Tune-Up, Redux

Clean Up Your Computer With the Little Things That Will Allow It to Work More Effectively

BY DANIEL J. SIEGEL

Of all the columns I have written for *The Philadelphia Lawyer*, “Time for a Tune-Up,” which provided tips to keep computers running smoothly, is the one for which I receive the most requests for copies. Although the advice I gave five years ago remains valid, with changes in technology, it could use a little updating. Thus, Time for a Tune-Up, “Redux.” A bit of the old, and some new advice as well – updated for Windows 7. Of course, some programs, such as Norton Utilities and System Mechanic, to name a couple, can perform many of these tasks for you automatically.

MAKE SURE YOUR OPERATING SYSTEM AND ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE ARE UP-TO-DATE

The most important thing you can do to ensure your computer runs smoothly is to verify that its operating system is up-to-date and that its anti-virus software is both up-to-date and operating. While many larger firms perform these operations automatically, in most offices and at home this maintenance is left to PC users, who more often than not fail to perform these critical tasks regularly.

To find out which operating system your computer is running, right-click on the “Computer” icon on your desktop and select “Properties” from the pop-up menu; if the icon is not on your desktop, you can locate it and right-click on it on the Start menu. This opens the “System”

dialog box, displaying your system type and other information. At the bottom left are various options, including “Windows Update.” Click on that link, and then “Change Settings.” From there, make sure that you have selected “Install updates automatically (recommended)” or “Download updates but let me choose

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whether to install them.” If you choose the latter option, you should still install all of the updates, but this setting lets you do so when you want and avoids the “surprise” that occurs when Windows does it for you and then reboots.

Next, verify that your anti-virus software is running and up-to-date. (If you don’t have anti-virus software on your computer, stop reading and immediately go to a computer or office supply store, buy anti-virus software

and come back and install it; then, you can continue reading.) Next, open your anti-virus software (the way to do this depends upon the program you use) and confirm that your anti-virus software: is enabled; runs automatically when your computer starts; automatically checks for and install new virus definitions; and, is set to automatically scan your computer (weekly, at a minimum) for viruses and to decontaminate and/or quarantine them.

BACK-UP YOUR CRITICAL DATA

There are two types of computer users, those who back up data regularly, and those who do so after the first crash or the first time a file is irretrievably lost. Best practices require daily back-ups – either of your entire system or, at a minimum, your documents, financial records and other critical data. But the reality remains that many law offices and other businesses simply fail to perform daily back-ups.

There are many ways to back-up your system. The best is to use external hard drives, tape back-ups or an online service and program your computer to perform these back-ups daily, weekly if you must. It only takes one crash, or even the accidental deletion or corruption of an important file for you to learn how valuable routine back-ups are.

CLEAN

Clean your monitor and your keyboard, and rid them of the dust and other visitors



that accumulate. First, check the manual to determine what cleaning materials and solutions are recommended. Depending upon the monitor, you may be able to use window cleaner, although I find that eyeglass cleaner (the liquid and the cloth) works best. Laptop monitors are trickier, but they also need to be cleaned.

As for your keyboard, first turn it upside, preferably over a trash can. You'll be amazed at how much junk falls out. Then, spray the keyboard using one of those compressed canned-air dusters, and watch what emerges – all of that stuff could eventually stop your keyboard, or a couple of keys from working. Finally, use keyboard wipes to clean the keyboard and the keys.

GET RID OF TEMPORARY FILES

Computers create numerous temporary (or “temp” or “tmp”) files, but never get rid of most of them. For example, when you visit a website, your computer stores the site temporarily in its memory, allowing them to reappear quickly when you click. Over time, your hard drive saves thousands of these “temporary” files. Remove these files at least once a month.

To remove “temporary” Internet files from Internet Explorer 8, go to the “Tools” menu and select “Internet Options.” There is a “Browsing history” section in the center of the “General” tab. Use the “Settings” to customize what you remove and when. Next, click the “Delete” button, to see a dialog box with check boxes for you to decide which data to delete. Then, click “Delete,” and the process will begin. Alternatively, you can also select the “Delete browsing history on ext,” but that will regularly erase your browsing history, and you may not want to do so. Be cautious when selecting the “Cookies” box because doing so deletes

iCloud Lets You Sync It All

Apple wants users of its mobile devices to seed its new iCloud with all of their songs, photos and other files. In return, the data will rain down from iCloud and sync on all of those devices, wirelessly.

“Today it is a real hassle and very frustrating to keep all your information and content up-to-date across all your devices,” Apple CEO Steve Jobs said at a June event introducing the service. “iCloud keeps your important information and content up to date across all your devices. All of this happens automatically and wirelessly, and because it’s integrated into our apps you don’t even need to think about it – it all just works.”

Apple said users can sign up for iCloud for free on an iPhone, iPad or iPod touch running iOS 5 or a Mac running Mac OS® X Lion with a valid Apple ID. (Apple expects to release iOS 5 sometime this fall.) iCloud includes 5GB of free cloud storage for mail, document storage and backup. Purchased music, apps, books and photo stream do not count against the storage limit. But iCloud is not limited to Apple users. Using iCloud with a PC requires Windows Vista or Windows 7; Outlook 2010 or 2007 is recommended for accessing contacts and calendars.

iCloud Backup automatically and securely backs up your iOS devices to iCloud daily over Wi-Fi when you charge your iPhone, iPad or iPod touch. Backed-up content includes purchased music, apps and books, Camera Roll (photos and videos), device settings and app data. If you replace your iOS device, just enter your Apple ID and password during setup and iCloud restores your new device.

iTunes in the Cloud lets you download your previously purchased iTunes music to all your iOS devices at no additional cost, and new music purchases can be downloaded automatically to all your devices. In addition, music not purchased from iTunes can gain the same benefits by using iTunes Match, a service that



replaces your music with a 256 kbps AAC DRM-free version if Apple can match it to the over 18 million songs in the iTunes Store. It makes the matched music available in minutes (instead of weeks to upload your entire music library), and uploads only the small percentage of unmatched music. iTunes Match will be available this fall for a \$24.99 annual fee. iTunes in the Cloud will support all iPhones that iOS 5 supports this fall. ■

Google's Android is Top OS

Google's Android operating system remains the most popular OS for smartphone users in the United States, according to a survey of mobile phone subscribers by ComScore.

Android had a 36.4 percent share of the market for the first quarter of 2011, a 13 percent increase over the previous quarter. Apple's iPhone garnered 26 percent of the market, a 5 percent jump over the last quarter. Research in Motion's BlackBerry dropped 5 percent to 25.7 percent of the market.

Microsoft's Windows Phone and Windows Mobile OS fell to 6.7 percent at the end of April and the Palm Web OS registered just 2.6 percent of the market.

The success of the Android OS was expected, ComScore said, because it runs on phones made by several different manufacturers. The Apple OS and BlackBerry OS run only on devices made by Apple and RIM. ■





all cookies (information files stored on your computer by websites you have visited), so be careful or you may have to reenter lots of information at websites you visit frequently.

EMPTY THE RECYCLE BIN

Just like temporary files aren't really temporary, deleted files aren't really deleted. Instead, when you delete files from your computer, they are "renamed" by Windows, moved to the "Recycle Bin," and continue to occupy valuable space on your hard drive. They aren't actually deleted until you empty the Recycle Bin.

If you have software that helps rid your computer of these unwanted files, use it. If not, you can do it yourself. To empty deleted files from your PC, right-click on the "Recycle Bin," which is generally located on your Desktop. Then select "Empty Recycle Bin" and follow the prompts.

CLEAN UP YOUR HARD DRIVE

The built-in "Disk Cleanup" utility helps rid your system of unwanted or unnecessary files. To do so, click the "Start" button, then select "All Programs," then "Accessories," then "System Tools," and, finally, "Disk Cleanup." When the Disk Cleanup utility window opens, it scans your "C" drive and display a Disk Cleanup tab. Then, click the checkbox next to each type of file you want to remove. The utility will display how much hard drive space you can free, with the total appearing in the list of files to delete. Click OK and the utility will delete all of the selected file types and close when it is done. If you want to scan a different drive, just start the utility again.

UPDATE YOUR SOFTWARE

Updating all of the programs on your computer used to be a major undertaking. Now, there are numerous free programs that allow you to do so quickly and easily. Two of the more popular programs are the FileHippo.com Update Checker (<http://www.filehippo.com/updatechecker/>) and Secunia PSI (http://secunia.com/vulnerability_scanning). Both are easy to

use. The FileHippo program is free and a bit less obtrusive than Secunia PSI, which offers a free consumer version and a for-fee corporate version. Both programs will automatically notify you when programs need updating and provide links to websites from which you can download the newest versions.

DEFRAGMENT YOUR HARD DRIVE

Computers store files in segments, which means that a file is stored on whatever portions of the hard drive are "available."

Thus, files can be divided and saved on multiple locations on your hard drive. As a user, you do not know this. While this will not pose any problems for your files, it is true, however, that the more fragmented your hard drive becomes, the slower it will run as Windows searches for all the "pieces" of the files you are using.

Defragmenting your hard drive – that is, pulling all the pieces of your files together – fixes the problem. Windows comes with a defragmentation utility. To use it, click the "Start" button, then select "All Programs," then "Accessories," then "System Tools," and, finally, "Disk Defragmenter." You can adjust

when Windows will regularly defragment your drive, or do so manually. When you do so manually, the program will tell you how fragmented your disk is and recommend whether defragmentation is needed. From there, simply tell it to begin.

Preventive maintenance is always beneficial, whether it's your car, your computer, or your body (that's why we take vitamins). While we all use our computers extensively, we often forget to do the little things that will allow them to work more efficiently and, hopefully, delay the need to buy replacements. ■

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*Daniel J. Siegel (dan@danielsiegel.com), a member of the Editorial Board of *The Philadelphia Lawyer*, is a local attorney who operates the Law Offices of Daniel J. Siegel, LLC and is the president of Integrated Technology Services, LLC.*



Samsung UN55D8000



Panasonic VIERA TC-P55GT30

3D TV without glasses may still be in development, but if it's just too hot to go out this summer, you can take solace on the sofa and check out these currently available 3D televisions from Panasonic and Samsung. Both feature stunning 1080p resolution and 3D images so real you'll feel like you're outside - without the humidity.

| FEATURES | SAMSUNG UN55D8000 | PANASONIC VIERA TC-P55GT30 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| SCREEN SIZE | 54.6 INCHES | 55.1 INCHES |
| DISPLAY TYPE | LED WITH MIRC0 DIMMING PLUS | PLASMA |
| RESOLUTION | 1080P FULL HD | 1080P |
| DIMENSIONS | 48.5" X 27.8" X 1.2" | 51.1" X 32.6" X 2.4" |
| WEIGHT | 35.7 LBS (WITHOUT STAND) | 69.5 LBS (WITHOUT STAND) |
| 3D GLASSES | 2 PAIR | SOLD SEPARATELY |
| BUILT-IN WI-FI | YES | WI-FI READY |
| INTERNET APPLICATIONS | SAMSUNG APPS | YES |
| PRICE | \$2,399 | \$2,199.95 |