

## Personal Computer Tune-Up Checklist

1-Visit <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com/>, usually found on your Windows Startup menu, and check for operating system updates. Several critical updates, or service releases will require that you load one item, reboot, and come back to the site. CNS recommends that all Critical Updates be loaded. Check this site once every **two weeks** for an update. Note: Users of Windows 95, 98, ME, or 2000: once per month is fine.

2-In Internet Explorer, clear your old junk **once per month**. With IE open, choose **Tools\Internet Options\** Click on *Delete Files*, and *Clear History*. Make sure to check **Delete Offline content** on the popup window. Believe it or not, everything you view on the web is stored in these folders, creating an increasingly large storage of pages, and images that you may never view again.

3-Run ScanDisk. **Programs\Accessories\System Tools\ScanDisk**. This will check your hard drive for errors. Make sure at least once every 6 months, you do a *thorough* test. Check the box that allows this utility to *automatically fix errors*.

4-Run Defrag. **Programs\Accessories\System Tools\Defrag** Check the Settings tab to ensure the following items are checked: Rearrange program Files, Check the drive for errors, and every time I defragment my hard drive. Windows stores files on your hard drive in the “next available” space, and not necessarily all together. This means that a single Word document might be spread over several areas of the drive. Defragmenting the drive will reduce the time required to access your files.

5-Keep your Antivirus Software Current! Whether you use Norton Antivirus, or McAfee Virus Scan, or others, a weekly update while online will keep your system protected from the latest attacks. Typically, the “update” you download is a signature file that is set to recognize any new virus signatures that have been uncovered. Users of Cable Modems or DSL users with Static IP addresses should also install and maintain a Firewall, subject to the same rules of keeping up to date.

6-Anything you install (software or hardware) on your system may have implications that may affect other devices or applications, whether the manufacturer thinks it will or not. Guess what? YOU are responsible for your own computer. XYZ Software, that made the new graphics editor you just downloaded for free, is certainly not liable for interoperation with your other software.



7-Do you need to upgrade the operating system or not? Typically, unless the latest release of Windows, such as XP, provides a functionality that you need, then you probably don't need to upgrade. Just keep your version of Windows current, as described in step 1. If you do need to upgrade, and are a Win95/98/ME user, and are upgrading to either Win2000/2000Pro/NT/XP, these are very different operating systems, which handle files differently, and also render certain programs obsolete. (Laplink USB or Serial transfers between two PCs, as an example). Be sure that your "upgrade" doesn't break more than it actually gives you in return.

8-Check for new Drivers. Refer to your owner's manual for Printers, Cameras, Scanners, Joysticks, Gaming Devices, Palm Pilots, etc. for the latest version of their drivers, specific to YOUR operating system. What worked on your old operating system may or may not work after an upgrade. Also, if your new pc came with factory-installed drivers for your peripherals, they will likely NOT be the latest. Check the manufacturer's site directly for updated drivers. Installation instructions are typically loaded with the download, but be careful what you're doing!

9-Clean out the old programs. If you are about to upgrade to a newer version of the same program, and the new version is not an "upgrade edition", delete the old one first. Either use the uninstall option from your menu, specific to that program, or via the Add/Remove Software option in the Control Panel.

10-If all this leaves your head spinning, give me a call, and I'll come do it for you, and teach you how to do it yourself, if you wish.

Happy Surfing!

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