

Give your Computer a Tune-up

There are several simple things you can do to improve the performance of your computer. If you have any questions, or feel uncomfortable performing any of these tasks on your office computer, feel free to contact the Help Desk (920/403-4357) for assistance.

You don't have to perform every step of the tune-up every time, but they are listed here in the order that makes the most sense when doing them all.

Delete files you no longer need

Start by going through your documents and getting rid of anything you no longer need. You may have several years' worth of files saved, so now is a good time to weed them out. If you find any old temp or backup files (e.g., those Word files with names like ~WRD0711.tmp, ~\$File.doc, or Backup of File.wbk), you can delete those too.

Warning: Be very careful when deleting files. Never delete or move any files you can't identify. If in doubt, leave it alone. Just because you don't know what it is doesn't mean that your computer doesn't need it!

Back up your files

It's a good idea to make regular backup copies of all your important files, just in case you have problems with your hard drive. For details, see the handout *Backing Up your Files*, at <http://www.snc.edu/techsupport>.

Uninstall unused programs

If you have any programs installed on the computer that you never use, you might want to uninstall them, to free up that space on your hard drive. Note that once you uninstall a program, you cannot get it back unless you have the original installation disks or files with which to reinstall it.

Note: To uninstall a program properly, you must either run the uninstall option for that program, or remove it through the Add/Remove Programs control panel. Do **not** just delete the files associated with the program.

1. Go to Start ▶ Settings ▶ Control Panels ▶ Add/Remove Programs. You'll see a list of the programs installed on your computer. If you don't recognize a program, do not remove it without consulting Technology Support Services first – it could be something your computer needs.
2. To remove a program, click on it and click the Add/Remove, Remove, Uninstall/Change or Change/Remove button.
3. Follow the instructions on the screen to uninstall the program.

Identify & remove spyware

Malicious programs, known as spyware or malware, can cause damage to your computer, send information about you or your computer to their creators or other companies, send you spam (junk e-mail), send spam to other people using your computer, and even steal your identity.

There are several free programs that can find spyware on your computer and remove it. Links to download these programs can be found on our Downloads page at <http://www.snc.edu/techsupport/downloads.html>.

Delete unneeded shortcuts from your desktop

Too many icons on your screen? Note that the ones with the arrow in the corner are just shortcuts, and can be deleted without removing or harming the original program. To delete a shortcut from your desktop (screen) that you don't want, drag it to the Recycle Bin, highlight it and press Delete, or right-click on it and choose Delete.

Control what starts automatically

Having programs automatically start when you turn on your computer can be convenient, but you may want to eliminate some things which are starting automatically to make your computer boot up faster.

Windows XP

1. Right-click on the Start menu and choose Open.
2. Double-click on Programs.
3. Double-click on Startup. The shortcuts here are for programs that start automatically at startup.
4. Delete the shortcuts for anything that you don't want to start automatically.

Windows 7/Vista

1. Go to Start – All Programs – Startup. The shortcuts here are for programs that start automatically at startup.
2. Delete the shortcuts for anything that you don't want to start automatically.

Control what starts automatically: Advanced

For advanced users: In addition to the items in the Startup group (previous section), there are other things that start in the background when your computer starts up. The utility that allow you to see what these things are and turn them on and off is called msconfig. To use msconfig, go to Start – Run and type **msconfig**, and press Enter (Windows XP), or Start, type **msconfig**, and press Enter (Windows 7/Vista). Go to the Startup tab to see items that are starting automatically. To avoid problems, do not turn off anything unless you know what it is.

Get Windows updates

Microsoft regularly releases updates and security patches for its Windows operating systems, as well as its application software (e.g., Internet Explorer, Office). To get these updates:

1. Go to Start ▶ (All Programs) ▶ Windows Update. You should be taken to the update page on Microsoft's web site.
2. Follow the instructions on that screen to download and install all of the updates pertaining to your version of Windows and your other software programs. Always download all of the updates listed as "critical."

Get other software updates

Just as Microsoft regularly releases updates and security patches for its software, other companies may do this too. To check for updates to software installed on your computer, look for an update option in the software, or go to the software manufacturer's web site.

Delete temporary Internet cache files

For Internet Explorer

1. Go to Start ▶ [Settings] ▶ Control Panels ▶ Internet Options.
2. Under Browsing history, click the Delete button.

For Firefox

1. In Firefox, go to Firefox – History – Clear Recent History.
2. Choose the time range and items to clear and click the Clear Now button.

Clear temp files & Recycle Bin

Windows saves temporary files in various locations. These files remain in the temp folder until the folder gets too full; then the oldest items will be deleted automatically. You can also empty this folder manually.

1. Go to Start ▶ [All] Programs ▶ Accessories ▶ System Tools ▶ Disk Cleanup.
2. Wait while it does its calculations.
3. Click once on each item to see a description of it.
4. Choose the desired items and click OK. Note that while emptying the Recycle Bin does free up space on your hard drive, once you empty it, any files you've deleted will be irretrievable.

Update anti-virus/anti-spyware protection

Make sure that your anti-virus/anti-spyware program is being kept up-to-date. If it doesn't update automatically, then make sure you update it regularly. At home, if you're still using the College's version of McAfee VirusScan, we recommend switching to Microsoft Security Essentials or another free program. (Why? Because McAfee only prevents viruses, not spyware, and you need protection from both.) See our Downloads page for details & links: <http://www.snc.edu/techsupport/downloads.html>.

Scan for viruses & spyware

After you update your anti-virus/anti-spyware program, do a complete scan of your hard drive (not every time, just when you're giving your computer a tune-up or you suspect you may have a virus). Open your anti-virus/anti-spyware program and tell it to scan your entire C drive, including all files, subfolders, & compressed files.

Run Scan Disk

After the above steps, run Scan Disk, a Windows program which will perform a variety of tests to diagnose problems on your hard drive and may be able to repair them.

Windows XP

1. Close all open programs.
2. Go to Start ▶ Programs ▶ Accessories ▶ System Tools ▶ Scan Disk. Follow the instructions on the screen.

Windows 7/Vista

1. Go to My Computer, right-click on your C: drive, and choose Properties.
2. On the Tools tab, under Error-checking, click the Check now button.
3. Check the “Automatically fix file system errors” box and click Start.

Run Disk Defragmenter

After running Scan Disk, run the Disk Defragmenter, known for short as “Defrag.” Defrag is a Windows program which essentially rearranges the data on your hard drive to make it more efficient, to make saving and opening files faster.

1. Close all open programs.
2. Go to Start ▶ [All] Programs ▶ Accessories ▶ System Tools ▶ Disk Defragmenter.
3. Choose Analyze disk to see if the disk needs to be defragmented. If so, follow the instructions on the screen.

Assistance and questions

If you have any questions or need more information, contact the Help Desk at (920) 403-HELP (4357) or helpdesk@snc.edu. The Help Desk is for St. Norbert College students and employees only.