

Surf 'N Stuff 'N Tips

SOFTWARE MAINTENANCE

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Run Windows' built-in hard-drive maintenance tools. Windows includes three very handy utilities for tuning up your hard drive, all of which you can access by opening *My Computer*, right clicking on the C: drive, and selecting Properties from the pop-up menu. We recommend you run each of these tools at least once a month.

The first of these utilities is **Disk Cleanup**, which removes unneeded temporary files (temp) that consume dozens or even hundreds of megabytes of storage. The second tool is Windows XP's **Disk Check**, which is accessible from the **Tools tab** under **Error-checking**. This utility scans your hard drive for disk errors and corrupt files and automatically repairs any problems it finds.

The third utility is the **Disk Defragmenter**, available from the **Tools tab** under **Defragmentation**. Since Windows automatically places new files in the space that previously deleted files had occupied on your drive, large files are spread out in pieces across your drive. Disk Defragmenter repositions your files on the drive so that they're stored contiguously, improving performance.

LAPTOPS NEED LOVE TOO!

Rechargeable laptop batteries have come a long way, but even the most advanced lithium-ion batteries will lose capacity over time. The best way to ensure the maximum life span of a battery is to condition it. Users should fully charge a new battery, discharge it completely and recharge it to 100 percent again. After that, you don't need to deplete the battery before charging it again, but you should always make sure to charge the laptop to 100 percent before unplugging it.

Battery Conditioning

from

Popular Mechanics

Condition your battery the first time you charge it and it will stay stronger longer.



UPDATE YOUR SOFTWARE

From Popular Mechanics

Your security tools can't detect new threats if you don't update them. Many of these utilities, such as **Alwil avast**, automatically update daily, but others, like **Spybot**, require manual updates that you should perform at least weekly.

Likewise, your system should be kept as current as possible. Select Automatic Updates in the Control Panel of Windows XP and make sure that you PC is set to download critical operating system updates daily.

If you're having problems with any component—such as a video card—sometimes the manufacturer will have remedied the problem with a new device driver. Check your PC vendor's Web site for updated drivers. Alternately, you can look for the latest driver on the component manufacturer's Web site. Check the driver version number on the site against the version installed on your PC by looking in the Device Manager (find it in the System menu under the Windows XP Control Panel).

Occasionally, you should also check for new versions of your motherboard's BIOS, or Basic Input/Output System, which is the part of your PC that tells all your hardware how to function. Your BIOS version is listed on the screen that appears just after you turn on your PC. If you don't see this screen during boot-up, tap the tab key after you turn it on.

AND FINALLY... PUN FUN

There was once a young man who, in his youth, professed his desire to become a great writer. When asked to define "great" he said, "I want to write stuff that the whole world will read, stuff that people will react to on a truly emotional level, stuff that will make them scream, cry, howl in pain and anger!"

He now works for Microsoft, writing error messages.