

ComputerFAQs Weekly

716-668-0838

Special Report

Special Report #1: *Ten Steps To PC Maintenance* August 1, 1995

Most people agree that they should have their car tuned up regularly, but they don't know that their computer needs proper care and maintenance too. The purpose of this report is to show you ten steps that you can take to make your PC perform better, and have a longer life. Any questions or comments? Call us at 716-668-0838.

STEP 1: Leave It On. Your computer experiences a small amount of stress each time you turn it on. You can increase the life of your computer by leaving the system on 24-hours a day. You can use a screen-saver (such as the one that comes with Windows) to prevent against monitor "burn-in," but it's not necessary.

STEP 2: Keep It Clean. The simplest preventative maintenance you can perform is to keep your computer dust free. When not in use, place a dust cover on your case, monitor, and keyboard. You should regularly take your computer case apart and vacuum all of the dust out. Dust will gather on the internal components over several months and will act as an insulator, trapping heat inside your case. Your computer should be kept as cool as possible. In addition, make sure to clean your floppy drives with a head cleaner at least once a year.

STEP 3: Invest In Power Protection. You can reduce the likelihood of damage to your computer from power surges by investing in a surge suppressor. In addition, you may want to consider purchasing an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). These are devices which provide a steady stream of power to your computer that is spike free. In addition, if the power goes out, a UPS system can deliver several hours of additional power so that you can turn your system off safely and save any data you may be working with. Call for pricing. We have many different types of UPS systems available.

STEP 4: Easy On Your Hard Drive. Your hard drive has moving parts which wear down with use. To increase the life of your hard drive, you can create something called a RAM Disk which uses your system's memory to store temporary information. In addition, the DOS utility SmartDrive attempts to "cache" data that's being read from and written to your hard drive. See your DOS manual or call us for more information on setting up a RAM Disk or SmartDrive. In addition to these software-caching methods, you can purchase a hard drive controller with a built-in hardware cache. You will notice a speed difference, and it will increase the life of your hard drive.

STEP 5: Defragmentation. Over the course of several months, the data on your hard drive will start to look like Swiss Cheese. This is caused by a less-than-perfect disk management system in DOS. You don't need to know how it works (although we'd be happy to explain it to you), but you do have to know that it is happening every day while you write and delete files on your hard drive. You can fix it by running a program called DEFRAG that comes with DOS version 6. Defrag can increase your system performance *a lot* because it places

files in contiguous space on your hard drive. See your DOS manual for more help with Defrag, or call us for more details.

STEP 6: Optimize Your Memory. To get the best performance from your computer, you should optimize your system's memory regularly. There are many memory management programs available on the market, but the one that comes with DOS (MemMaker) is sufficient. MemMaker will load as much as possible into your computer's higher memory locations, leaving valuable conventional RAM available for DOS and your applications.

STEP 7: Run System Diagnostics. To make sure everything is running properly, you should run a professional-level software and hardware diagnostic on your system at least once a year. There are many great packages available. These software utilities will test everything from your floppy drives and motherboard to your keyboard and video RAM. Programs such as Check-It Pro and SpinRite will find potential problems before they occur, and try to fix them.

STEP 8: Back It Up. Make sure you perform regular backups of your hard drive. Remember, the data on your drive is priceless. If you lose it all to a hard drive failure, you could be out hundreds or thousands of dollars in lost business. In addition, by backing up files and deleting them from your hard drive, you are making more of your system's resources available, thereby increasing performance. You can even transfer valuable data that you still need to use to a CD-ROM disk for retrieval. Call us for more tips on data storage.

STEP 9: ScanDisk. Another great hard drive utility is ScanDisk. It comes with DOS version 6, and it can detect a wide variety of disk problems. You should run ScanDisk every couple of weeks, just to make sure there are no problems with your hard drive.



STEP 10: Call PCDoctor. "But I don't have the time to do all of this!" Face it, proper maintenance of a computer system can take you several hours. Call the professionals. We will run every diagnostic test and cleaning procedure mentioned in this report, inspect your system for potential problems, and recommend ways that you can improve your efficiency based on *your* specific needs. In addition, with our *PCDoctor+Plus* service, our on-staff Certified Novell Administrator will diagnose and optimize your network as well.

Call us now at 716-668-0838 for more information on how *PCDoctor* can help your company. Mention this

report to receive 20% off your first preventative maintenance service, and 10% off a maintenance contract (not valid with other discounts). Call us now! We'll discuss your needs and how we can serve you.

