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Going Unplugged

In this age of wireless technology, laptops (or notebooks) are at the peak of their existence. Modern laptops are easily a match for desktops in the normal business environment and they are very convenient. But there are some basic things you will need to think about when purchasing or maintaining your laptop.

Firstly, if you are buying a new laptop, make sure you get one that suits you. Check the connections available – customize your laptop with USB2, Firewire, bluetooth, infrared, wireless, TV out, DVD Writer, and many other options. These are important considerations as the last thing you want is to carry around a large amount of peripherals and USB devices to provide for these requirements.

Remember the ergonomics of a laptop. Actually, a laptop goes against every ergonomic rule ever set for a PC, it's lower than your eyes, the keyboard is flat and small and the screen and keyboard are connected, so try and think about ways to prevent injuries or strains. Keep the laptop high up preferably on some sort of stand and think about the way you use your hands while typing. If you are planning to use your laptop regularly at the office or at home, considering using a docking station to connect a keyboard, mouse and even an LCD screen to ensure the monitor is at eye level.

Maintenance is just as important on a laptop as it is on a desktop computer. You still have to keep backups check for spyware, clean out temporary files and defragment your laptop! Virus scanners and firewalls are even more important now, as your laptop no doubt is equipped with the latest wireless networking and internet devices. This is especially important when wanting to use a public wireless network at the local coffee shop or internet café. Also

don't regularly virus, a n d scanner w h e n y o u r offline for a long period.



forget to update your spyware other bug s, especially having left machine

A major consideration is theft, you can insure the laptop, but you must back up your data. Laptops are very easy to steal, but you may purchase security locking devices that will deter most thieves.

You need to clean your laptop. A simple clean of the screen and keyboard will help keep it running efficiently. Using special wipes and cans of compressed air can help you with this and your local Computer Troubleshooter can show you how to use them properly. Also, when not in use, keep your laptop in a padded or hard-covered case. This will prevent you from having that one slip, and losing everything.

Your battery is the biggest change to consider from a desktop to a laptop. When looking to buy a new laptop, try and get the longest battery life you can – you will regret it if you don't! You must look after your battery, otherwise the extra money spent on that longer lasting battery life will be wasted. Avoid frequent full discharges of your battery because this puts additional strain on it. Several partial discharges with frequent recharges are better for new lithium-ion batteries. Short battery life in a laptop is mainly cause by heat, so try and keep your laptop cool – avoid leaving it in a hot car.

Once you get into a routine, it's easy, but setting up your new laptop, or advice on buying a laptop that is right for you, is the hard part. Your local Computer Troubleshooter can help you out here as they regularly face issues like this every day.

Computer Troubleshooters of Southwest Austin

**6034 Abilene Trail
Austin, TX 78749**

512.394.9115

512.301.2186

dbryce@comptroub.com

www.ct-swaustin.com

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Starting the New Year right.

Well it is the time of year again, soon the holidays will be over. We will pack up all the decorations and set our new goals for the year to come. We will start collecting files to get ready for taxes and archiving the old files (at some of us will). The start of the year is a good time to do some maintenance on your computer as well. The following check list details items you might consider.

1. Backup your computer and critical files. Whether you use CD, DVD or an online backup services, it is always a good idea to make a year end/begin backup.

2. Clean up your email database. We get busy and as we receive email we tend not to delete the unimportant / irrelevant email's. Over time this builds and increases the size of the underlying files that hold the emails. The larger these files become, the more likely they are a becoming corrupt or having a size limitation problem. Take some time and delete the unimportant stuff, move the items that you want to save but have not referenced in a while to an archive folder.

3. Delete temporary files: Search for all files containing ~*.*, *.Bak, or *.tmp. These are commonly used as "working

files" and are not needed. They use up valuable disk space.

4. Clean up the temporary internet files. In Internet explorer go to the tools menu; select Internet Options; Click on the delete cookie button; Click Ok; when that is done Click on the Delete Files Button; select the check box "Delete all offline content"; click Ok; When that is done Click on the Clear History Button; Click "yes". Once that is all done click "ok" to close the internet options page.

5. Scan your computer for spyware, and viruses using your anti-virus and anti-spyware programs. For you anti-spyware we recommend you have a good proactive scanner like counterspy, and two additional passive scanners like Ad-Aware and Spybot Search and Destroy.

6. Defragment your hard drive. In order to one increase the performance of the hard drive while saving and to decrease space utilized on the disk, your files are actually broken into smaller fragments. Over time these fragments are spread further and further apart. This causes slow access. Defragmenting the drive brings the files back together. In windows XP click the Start button; then click "All Programs"; Click Accessories; click System Tools; Click Disk Defragmenter; Click the Defragment Button.

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