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Our Top Ten Tips – Part 1



Once upon a time, your computer was brand new. It started up perfectly, ran your software without errors and it had never even seen the internet. However, over time things started to slow down. As you visited websites and installed software, something had a negative effect on your computer's performance. Your local Computer Troubleshooter can 'clean' things up, but what happens when you get your computer back again? Is it just a matter of time before another service is needed?

Fortunately there are some things that you can do. Below are the first five of our 'Top Ten Tips' for looking after your computer:

1. **Use a 'firewall':** A firewall allows you to prevent access from the internet to certain areas of your computer. This increases your level of security and makes it harder for 'hackers' to get to your information. Firewall protection is provided by special software on your computer, or your network hardware (e.g., your broadband internet modem may have an inbuilt firewall capability). A firewall is essential for anyone with high speed internet access.
2. **Use up-to-date anti-virus software that works:** Anti-virus software is essential for any computer that reads information from another source (including emails, websites and files on USB sticks). To be effective, your anti-virus software must be working and it must be updated with the latest information from the manufacturer – they regularly send out updates telling your system what new viruses to look out for. Check with your anti-virus software maker, as you may need to pay a subscription fee to entitle you to the updates.
3. **Use anti-spyware/anti-adware software:** Spyware and adware programs will slow down your computer, running 'in the background' without your knowledge and they will not be picked up by your anti-virus software. Anti-spyware/anti-adware software must also be kept up to date, but those scans do not examine each file as it is used on your computer. Run your anti-spyware and anti-adware scans on a regular basis, or see if you can schedule them to start automatically at a certain time each day.
4. **Apply new 'Windows Updates':** As it becomes aware of them, Microsoft releases updates and patches to fix security problems. Find the 'Windows Update' icon or visit <http://update.microsoft.com> to check if there are any new updates that your computer needs. If you have Windows XP with Service Pack 2, this can be automated in 'Control Panel' – 'Security Center'.
5. **Backup your information & test your backups:** Make sure that your important files are being copied somewhere else on a regular basis (e.g., onto CD, tape or using online backup solution). Your computer can fail at any time, and you could lose everything! Make the time now to check that you can actually read those files from your backup copy.

Talk to your local Computer Troubleshooter about the best way to implement our first five tips in your particular situation.

Next month we will bring you more tips, including 'defragmentation' and dust.



**Contact your local Computer
Troubleshooters**

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