# Computer Tips Quarterly
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10 Tips to Get Your Computer Ready for the School Year

 - Always be sure to have a flash drive handy.  The cost is about $9 - $40, depending on memory size, and can be used in case there are printing issues or computer mal-functions to back up the document and print or use it on another computer/laptop.

 - Parents should explain to their children that their computer is a tool, not a toy, and should be respected as such. Wandering all over the Internet can pick-up spyware, malware and viruses.  Although you may have protection on your computer to guard against these things, new viruses are out everyday.

 - Keep your computer in an open area where the air can circulate.  If your computer heats up and gets clogged with dust, it will FRY!!!  This is a major concern, especially for a laptop, which can be easily fixed by sitting your laptop on a cooling pad.

 - Always keep an extra black and colored ink cartridge on hand.  You never know when you'll need one, and the last thing that you want to do is run to the store, last minute, to purchase one.

 - Keep at least 300 MBs of your C: drive free for Windows to use.  If you use Windows XP or Vista, then you should have 400-600 MBs of free space.  This will ensure that your computer will continue to run up-to-speed.

 - Run Scandisk and Defragment at least once a month.  This will keep your hard drive healthy and prevent crashes.

 - Purchase a UPS (uninterruptable power supply) for your computer.  This will keep your computer from crashing during power outages, and will protect your computer from low and high voltage occurrences.

 - Do a virus check regularly.  Set up a schedule.  Your computer should be set to run a complete virus scan automatically everyday.  In order for the scan to run, your computer must be turned on, therefore, it is suggested to have the virus scan run in the early morning hours, while your family is sleeping.  Be sure to check to if you are using an anti-virus software that has real-time protection, as well as an anti-spyware component.  If there is no anti-spyware component, be sure to run an anti-spyware program as well.  The key to both of these programs is that they are up-to-date.  Making sure that

your definitions are the most recent versions for both your anti-virus and anti-spyware programs is very important, and will help detect the new viruses that are developed each day.  Keeping up with anti-virus software updates and running virus scans regularly will help insure that your computer will run smooth and virus-free all year long.

 - If you have high speed wireless Internet connection, be sure to secure it with an encrypted password and have a firewall program set-up.  Most routers will already have a firewall program, but be sure to double check for it.  This will keep away those who want to hijack your computer from gaining access to it.

 - Backup, backup, backup any data you cannot afford to lose.  Back it up with at least two separate physical drives like external hard drives, flash drives, CD-RW's, etc.  The time to backup is when you create something you can't afford to lose.

 Ten Tips to Keep your Computer Running Smoothly

 1. Never, never, turn your computer off with the power switch until Windows has shut down. The one exception to this rule is when your computer locks up and your hard drive is not running (hard drive light is not blinking). In this situation, you can turn the power off without harmful effects to the hard drive. As cutting the power can also result in lost data or Windows files, you should only do this when you have to.

 Following this rule will prevent permanent hard drive defects caused by the hard drive heads contacting the surface of the drive disc, and it will prevent a host of Windows problems.

 Whenever possible, recover from crashes by pressing the Ctrl + Alt + Delete keys at the same time. Press them again to reboot your computer.

 2. We highly recommend that you purchase an UPS (uninterruptable power supply) for your computer. This will keep your computer from crashing during power outages, and will protect your computer from low and high voltage occurrences.

 An UPS is far superior to a surge protector and will save your computer from almost any type of power disaster. (See #1 above for what happens when your computer crashes.)

 3. Backup, backup, backup, any data you cannot afford to lose to at least two separate physical drives. So backup data to external hard drives, flash drives, CD-RW's, etc. The time to backup is when you create something you can't afford to lose. Don't wait until tomorrow.

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 4. Run Scandisk and Defragment at least once a month. This will keep your hard drive healthy and prevent crashes.

 5. Never unplug peripherals from the computer when it is powered up. Unplugging with the power on can short out the

connector socket or the motherboard.

The only exception to this rule is if you know a peripheral is "hot pluggable". If you do not know what "hot pluggable" means then ignore this exception.

6. Do keep at least 300 MBs of your C: drive free for Windows to use. If you use Windows XP or Vista then you should have 400-600 MBs of free space on your C: drive.

If you do not have enough free space you will choke Windows and it will start dumping data to your hard drive, or it will just get really, really, slow.

Use the ADD/Delete tool in the Windows Control Panel to delete unneeded programs from your drive.

7. Do not let a lot of programs load up when you start your computer. They use valuable memory and Windows Resources (Windows internal workspace).

All programs in your Windows System Tray (in the lower left of your screen) are running on your computer. Close them if you don't need them or run them and configure them not to load when you boot up.

Other programs running in the background can be found by pressing Ctrl + Alt + Delete at the same time.

8. Do use a virus checker regularly. Everyone should use a virus checker. The best type of protection is continuous monitoring from a dedicated anti-virus program like Bit Defender. The second best thing is to use is the free online virus checkers such as Bit Defender free online scan.

9. If you have a high speed Internet connection you need a firewall program. A firewall program keeps those who want to hijack your computer from gaining access to your system. You really do not want someone else running your computer. You may use the Windows built-in Firewall or one that comes with your antivirus program.

10. Keep track of the software disks you receive with your computer and new peripherals. These disks contain valuable software drivers and programs for Windows and are needed when Windows must be reloaded. Keep these disks and your Windows software disks in a safe, dry, place -- you never know when you will need them. Also make sure that you have any license Key Codes or product key codes stored with the corresponding software. &ldquo;You lose your license&hellip;good luck getting the license key replaced!&rdquo;