Tech Beat

Technology with a heartbeat
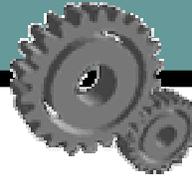
Keep Your Computer Purrrrring

Computers and cars. What do they have in common? They need regular maintenance. As much as your computer acts like it's alive, for better or for worse, it is a machine. Give it a regular checkup. It'll return the favor with speed and consistency. Well, if nothing else goes wrong…

First, defragment to avoid "delayment." Go to START -> PROGRAMS -> SYSTEM TOOLS -> DISK DEFRAGMEN-TER. With daily use, pieces of data get mixed up and separated from each other, making it hard for the computer's brain to retrieve data quickly. It has to go around looking for stuff. Defragmetation brings those pieces together. Take a break and come back when it's done its job. (You'll hear a little sigh of relief coming from your speakers.)

Second, vaccinate regularly. Your anti-virus program works as well it keeps in touch with the latest bugs. Update every week. I use MacAfee because it doesn't interfere with other programs on my machine, as I've found Norton does. But whatever program you use, check it. If an update is available, get it. If you program expires, buy a new one.

Third, keep up with Window upgrades. Your windows program is likely to have glitches. Upgrades eliminate those glitches and upgrade your system. My computer automatically checks for updates and lets me know when they come up. You can set those options during the update process. If you haven't been prompted, go to your browser and tell it to update or upgrade your system. In Explorer, go to TOOLS -> WINDOWS UPDATE -> CHECK FOR UPDATES. Windows XP has just come up with a Service Pack 2. Check it out.

Fourth, delete, delete, delete. (1) Delete everything in your recycle bin and in your email program's Trash Box. (2) Delete all files in your Internet Temporary Folder. That gets rid of all of the junk that sneaks into your computer every time you go on the Web. In Explorer, go to TOOLS -> INTERNET OPTIONS -> GENERAL TAB -> TEMPORARY INTERNET FILES. Click on DELETE FILES first. After that's done (be patient), click on DELETE COOKIES. (3) Delete those attachments that fill your computer with junk. My attachments in Eudora go to a file under that program's folder. Find yours and get rid of the little rascals. Don't be swayed by their whimpering. (4) Delete anything else you are not using.

Fifth, back up your programs and files. You can buy an external hard drive with 100 gigs and back up to your heart's content. If you travel, carry the little box with you. Cool. You can also back up files on CD's or DVD's. Once you have everything backed up, you can delete all of the folders that you are not using but want to keep, just in case.

Sixth, and optionally, download two programs: one to snag all of those nasty pop-ups, and one to get rid of all of the hidden junk that you can easily find with the steps above. I use STOPzilla for the pop-ups. Works great. I use Spybot for getting rid of junk from advertisers. Love it. Tell it to "Search and Destroy," and then to immunize you!

Seventh, pat your computer everyday, and repeat gently, "Thanks for making my life easier today. Your partnership makes me happy." Say it smiling, like you mean it! Give it some power and let the inspiration flow!

All of this talk about

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