

The ABC's of PC Maintenance

By Lorrie Jackson

WHY A TECHTORIAL?

What will I learn today?

You will learn the basics of PC maintenance.

What hardware and/or software does the techtorial apply to?

This techtorial applies to any PC (computer running Windows). Mac users will find parts of the techtorial helpful as well.

Which National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers does the techtorial address?

The techtorial helps ensure reliable, working technology, which in turn will help teachers achieve all NETS standards.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed a set of National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers. Standards or Performance Indicators are included for each techtorial to help teachers and administrators improve technology proficiency. For a complete description of the standards indicated, go to [NETS for Teachers](#), click Standards in the menu bar on the left, and then click the arrow to the right of Standards and Performance Indicators for Teachers.

WHY MAINTAIN YOUR COMPUTER?

Problem:

Bikes must pump air into their tires. Cars must have their oil changed. Computers must be kept in good working order as well.

Solution:

Remember your ABCs:

A = Antivirus

B = Backup

C = Clean Up

A IS FOR ANTIVIRUS

A computer virus is a software program that can destroy information or make it difficult to manage the contents of a computer disk. Computer viruses can affect hardware, software, and/or stored information. Some computer viruses are intentionally created; others are practical jokes.

Computer viruses are spread primarily through floppy disks and e-mail. Using an anti-virus program once a week to check for hidden viruses (for school computers, check with tech staff first.) can help immunize your PC against most viruses. In addition, you should take care when using floppy disks or e-mail.

A IS FOR ANTIVIRUS

Watch Your Floppys

- Don't save files to a floppy disk unless you know that the original computer is virus-free.
- If you suspect that a floppy might have a virus, ask the school tech staff to check it out.
- Otherwise, use an anti-virus program to check the disk. If a virus is detected, discard the disk!

Take Care With E-Mail

- Avoid opening e-mails with odd or nonsensical subject lines, with grammar errors or stilted language, and from a sender you don't know.
- Avoid opening attachments you weren't expecting, from a sender you do not know, or ending in .exe -- unless you're *sure* you know what it is.
- When in doubt about a particular e-mail, delete the message and e-mail the sender (if you know him or her) to learn whether the e-mail was legitimate.

B IS FOR BACKUP

Computers aren't infallible; files do become lost or damaged or infected by viruses. Protect your files by backing up your work. Backing up files simply means copying them to a second location. A good rule of thumb is to back up your files once a month if you don't use the computer often, and once a week or more if you are a frequent computer user.

Files can be backed up to

- Floppy Disks. Floppies are a simple solution for beginners, but they can be easily damaged or lost and they have limited storage capability.
- E-mail. E-mailing a file to yourself works for one or two files, but they probably are not secure from prying eyes.
- CD-RW. If you have a CD writer, burning your files onto a CD can provide back up for important files, but using this method for weekly back up is difficult.
- Server. Some schools or districts maintain a secure server; ask if you can save your work to the server too.
- Zip Drive. Although not a common option, zip discs provide easy and large-capacity storage. Zip drives and discs must be purchased, however.

C IS FOR CLEAN UP

Files will be easier to find if you manage your files efficiently, straighten up your desktop frequently, and clean your hard drive regularly.

The Jackson Five Of File Management

1. Only keep files on your desktop when you're using them; otherwise, put them in a clearly-labeled folder on the C: drive.
2. When loose files equal ten or more, make folders to store them in!
3. Don't be afraid to delete files containing information you can get elsewhere or files you won't need again.
4. Remember that folders can be more than just one level! Store folders inside folders!
5. Make file and folder names meaningful -- the more specific, the better!

NEAT AND CLEAN

Clear the Desktop

You can use your My Documents folder to keep your desktop neat and uncluttered. If you don't find the My Documents folder on your desktop, double-click My Computer, double-click the C: drive icon, and then double-click My Documents to open it. Drag files you've saved on your desktop into My Documents. Create more folders within your My Documents folder: open My Documents and then click File>New>Folder. Clearly name each folder you create and drag the appropriate files in My Documents into one of those folders. Finally, delete unwanted files by right clicking each file, left clicking Delete, and hitting Enter.

Organize the hard drive

Your computer is always in a hurry; it throws pieces of data into whatever empty spots it can find on your hard drive. Eventually, that disorganized data storage will slow down your computer. Luckily, your computer has a built in system for reorganizing your data. That system consists of two steps.

Step 1: Go to Start>Programs>Accessories>System Tools>and choose Disk Defragmenter. Defragging the C: drive monthly can bring your computer back up to speed.

Step 2: Go to Start>Programs>Accessories>System Tools>and choose Disk Cleanup. Run Disc Cleanup for the C: drive. Disk Cleanup throws away temporary Internet files and other unneeded files that could slow down your PC.

TELL ME MORE

Where can I find more information about PC maintenance?

[Computer Hope.com](http://ComputerHope.com) provides excellent tips for keeping your PC in tip-top shape.

Mcafee and Symantec offer anti-virus software you can purchase, as well as alerts on the latest viruses and virus hoaxes.

What's next?

Be sure to visit next week -- and every week -- for another quick and helpful techtorial!