

Preventative Maintenance Windows Operating System and Programs (Part 3) by Ross Hendry

In the last two articles we looked at how best to physically clean your computer hardware, now we need to look at cleaning the operating system and digital information.

Get Up to Date

1. Windows Operating System

Windows is probably one of the most complex computer programs available, and constantly needs to be maintained as problems are found and fixed, additional features are added and drivers are updated. It is imperative that Windows updates are installed and monitored. If you find the updates are failing, check out why and try to resolve the issue. Not all failures are important, and they may be updates that do not relate to your particular set-up, but do check them out and try to put right the problem if they are relevant and you are able to. This will ensure that you have the most secure and efficient operating system for your set-up and needs.

Windows usually offers you choices for when and how the updates are delivered and installed, I prefer to use "download updates but let me choose when to install them", this enables me to monitor the updates and check their success and try resolve failed ones; it also helps if there are unknown system problems after having done updates, I know to investigate which one upset my system!

Other options are :-

- Install updates automatically (recommended)
- Check for updates but let me choose whether to download and install them
- Never check for updates (not recommended)

2. Anti Virus and Anti Malware

It is a fact of digital life that someone will try to infect your operating system or browser at some time, whether it is by an infected email, visiting an infected website or downloading something that carries some form of malware or virus.

There is no need to purchase an antivirus program for most home users, the free options available are brilliant: Avast, AVG, Bitdefender, Panda, Malwarebytes, Spybot search & Destroy, and Windows Defender/Microsoft Essentials all provide protection and are free for either the program or the updates. The top rated free program at present is Avast, depending upon the reviewers!



I have found that many users download and install these programs but do not set them up correctly. By this I mean scheduling scans of their system to run regularly and to retrieve both program and virus definition files regularly.

I scan my PC every night and check every file. It is scheduled to start to run about midnight and is always finished by the time I want to logon each morning. I do not think that most home users need to do this but I would recommend a weekly scan and the collection and update of both program and antivirus definition files daily.

I use two programs to protect my system: AVG basic protection and Spybot search and destroy by Safer Networking. These two seem to work well together with AVG mainly protecting my PC from viruses and Spybot keeping me safe from malware. These programs provide both real time protection and the ability to run scheduled scans. I do not usually regularly scan with spybot S&D, I tend to run this once per month or if I am worried about any sites I have visited, such as football streaming or maybe looking for a free program. I know that my browsing habits may expose my PC to infections so I am very careful about what sites I visit. In truth this is probably the best protection there is!

Programs and Applications

1. Do you really need all of the programs on your computer?

Over time we add programs such as utilities and applications to our PCs and use them as we need to. However, most people do not remove the programs when they have served their purpose. I strongly recommend that you review the programs that came with your PC and that you have installed, and remove those that you do not use or are not likely to use. Most programs may be downloaded and re-installed when you need them, or you have the disks that enabled you to load them in the first place.

I suggest that if you have not used a program since you purchased the PC you probably do not need it. If in doubt check on-line, simply ask "do I need PC optimiser" or "snapfish". I find that Google.co.uk usually has good advice and make my judgement accordingly.

In my experience the most commonly obsolete type of program is the sort that came with your old printer. I know you recycled the printer but did you think to uninstall the software that came with it?

If possible, use the uninstall program that came with the program you want to uninstall. If there was no uninstall option, simply go to Control Panel and "programs and features", which will list all of the installed programs on your PC and give you the option to uninstall, re-configure or repair the program.

We have now got the operating system up-to-date and hopefully free of Viruses and Malware and have removed all of the unused/unwanted/obsolete programs. Next month I shall suggest some other programs that will clean up the hidden elements of your system and help you reclaim storage space on your hard disk drives.

Ross Hendry is the proprietor of Interface Consulting and Engineering, who has over 42 years experience in Communications, Computer Technology and Direct Marketing. (See advert below).

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