

## Preventative Maintenance Physical Cleaning (Part 2)

by Ross Hendry

Last month we looked at effective cleaning inside and outside our PC. This month, let's clean the peripherals...

### Mouse

There are two basic type of mice used on PCs, the mechanical ball-type mouse and the newer laser-style ones, laser or optical mice. Laser mice are very easy to keep clean, use a mild degreaser to clean the whole mouse, using wipes or a nearly dry cloth to wipe over the surface of the mouse, you might want to check that the lens on the laser is clean using a cotton bud or similar. Ensure the three or four hard pads on the base of the mouse are very clean as this is what the mouse slides upon.

The ball-type mouse is more complicated, because the ball itself attracts grease from our hands and this in turn allows the dust to stick to it. This causes collars of dust and grease to stick to the rollers inside the ball housing and can impair the accuracy of the mouse. Undo the 'ball' cover and take out the mouse. I find the best way to clean the ball is to cover it in sticky-tape a couple of times which gets off most contamination. The rollers are usually a little more difficult. I use a sharp blade to scrape/cut the contaminates from each of the two or three rollers and once I have removed all of the solids, I wipe each roller thoroughly with a solvent to remove any further grease that dust etc. might stick to. Please be careful not to let the greasy contaminates you have scraped off re-enter the mouse, ball cavity or indeed the inside of the mouse itself as this will only re-contaminate it and make it difficult to use accurately. Finally use a mild degreaser to wipe the outer surfaces of the mouse.



### Keyboard

Keyboards are dust catchers. By their design, they sit on our desks all day and catch whatever is floating in the air. The first thing to do is to place a clean cloth or sheet of paper under the keyboard. Now turn the keyboard upside down and gently tap or shake it to remove any of the dust, crumbs and hairs they like to trap. Once you have removed the loose stuff you should give the keyboard a blow with the air duster blowing from left to right and using your vacuum cleaner to catch the evacuated dust etc. Once you are happy that you have removed as much of the solids as you are able, give the keyboard a wipe with a cloth moistened with degreaser - paying particular attention to the surface of each key and the palm rest if you have one.

### Printers

Printers are a great source of dust, the more paper you print the more dust you will find. Generally printers need a good vacuum and wipe of their surfaces, the printer should be vacuumed at least once a month if you print daily. You should also seek to clean up any ink spills, using a mild degreaser on a cloth and paper towels to dry off the area cleaned.

### Scanners

Usually these need a physical dust and wipe with a moist cloth or PC type wipe. Most important is the scanning surface - ensure that the glass is kept clean and optically clear at all times, as when this glass is contaminated it will show on scans and copies.

### Speakers

Once again these are very good at collecting dust. I find that brushing the speaker outlets towards a vacuum cleaner that is running removed most of the dust; finish off with cotton buds for the nooks and crannies!!

### Monitors

Cleaning a monitor is much like cleaning a TV. The new flat screen TVs are far more delicate than the older style CRT (Glass Tube), so be careful how firmly you wipe them. Clean the outer surfaces with a cloth moistened with mild degreaser and polish. Check the manufacturer's cleaning instructions for LCD/LED type screens to ensure that you do not damage the monitor by using incorrect cleaning fluid. I think of the screen as being like my spectacles - I need them to be crystal clear so I use the optical wipes in individual wrappers and change them as soon as they show dirt. I lightly dust the screen first to remove any contaminates that could scratch the surface of the screen, then apply the moist wipe and finally polish off with a clean lint free cloth.

### Cables

These are normally overlooked whilst cleaning your PC. They do collect dust and can get quite sticky so do need regular cleaning. Safety first, make sure that any cable you clean is disconnected from both ends - do one at a time and reconnect it. If you take a picture before you start you can use it to ensure things go back where they came from! Clean the cable with a duster first then a cloth moistened with degreaser. Please make sure any cable is totally dry before reconnecting. If the cable you disconnect has exposed connectors you may clean these with a very mild solvent after brushing out any dust first.

Keeping your PC physically clean will prolong its life and make it a more pleasant place to work. Try to keep your environment clean if you can and avoid as much dust, moisture and smoke as possible.

Next month we can start on cleaning up the operating system and programs!

*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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Siret : 515 246 544 00016—Location : La Gare. 85120 Breuil Barret

