

3 back-to-school computer tips

Q: What should I be doing to get our computer ready for the upcoming school year?

A: Much like the "spring cleaning" season, the back-to-school season is a good time to evaluate your computer to make sure it's secured, optimized or to decide if it's time to upgrade or replace the unit.

Even if you don't have kids going back to school, going through the evaluation, especially if you haven't done so in a while, is a good idea.

Start With Updates

Updates to your operating system, security software and productivity tools can provide you with new tools and features, but it's essential for keeping your Internet-connected computer secure.

The easiest way for hackers to exploit your computer is through known security holes that haven't been patched, so look for the "Check for Updates" option in everything you and your kids plan on using this year (most often found in the Help menu).

Make Room For Growth

Your hard drive plays a significant role in the overall performance of

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your computer, especially if it's getting close to full.

Make sure you have plenty of free space for both future storage and the constant work space your computer needs to process temporary files.

Uninstalling programs and deleting video files will free up the most space, while getting rid of old documents will hardly make a dent because they're so small.

Windows users can run the built-in "Disk Cleanup" utility to clear out old temp files and other unneeded junk that accumulates, while Mac users can download <u>Trend Micro's Dr. Cleaner</u> utility to do the same.

If you can't free up at least 25 percent of the drive space, you should consider upgrading to a larger drive, which is usually significantly less hassle and less expensive than starting over with a new computer.

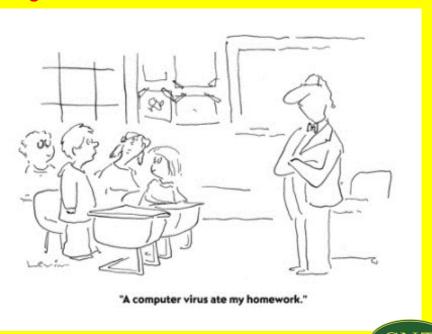
If you really want to extend the life of your computer, consider upgrading to one of the ultrafast Solid State Drives (SSDs) which can breath new life into any computer that's been running slow.

Backing up your Computer

Nothing ruins a school year like lost homework or project files, especially if it's a year-long project that gets lost near the end of the school year.

Older students should be taught how to use a USB flash drive or external hard drives to make copies of everything.

If you use your computer occasionally, back up your data once a week. If you use your computer every day, a daily backup of the files you use most often or modified that day is a good idea.







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