

Computer Tech Talk

Computer Preventive
Maintenance - Software
By Dennis Henson

Last week's "Tech Talk" article discussed hardware preventive maintenance (PM). This week's article discusses the cleaning and tuning of your personal computer (PC) software on your hard drive.

Software Maintenance. You can keep your computer running as fast as the day it came out of the box if you carry out regular "tune ups". Tune ups don't happen automatically. You must manually run tools built into the Microsoft Windows operating system. Software PM includes deleting useless temporary files, deleting old and obsolete emails, removing programs that you never use, and speeding up data access. I'll be describing tune-up tasks using Microsoft Windows XP. For earlier operating systems, you may have to hunt a bit to find the same tool. E-mail me if you get lost. Sit at your PC with your copy of this article and try the steps that follow. Just reading this material is boring and confusing. Doing the steps while sitting at your PC as you read is pretty easy.

Useless Temporary Files. You might think that the Windows operating system would be smart enough to remove useless files on its own, but it isn't. Instead, Windows provides you with easy to use tools to remove files manually. The directions that follow in this article require that you use both the left and right mouse buttons. To press the left mouse button, I will use "left-click" and to press the right mouse button once, I will use "right-click". Let's get started. Left-click "Start", then right-click "My Computer". Left-click on the word Explore in the window that pops up. In the new window, right-click on the "Local Disk C:" drive. Left-click on the word "Properties" in the next window. We've finally gotten to the main cleanup tool. Left-click once on the "Disk Cleanup" label. Windows should find useless files and compute the amount of wasted space. After the discovery process finishes, left-click "OK", and say "Yes" to - "Are You Sure" to actually delete these files.

Temp. Internet Files. Every picture, logo, or graphic you have viewed on the internet is stored "permanently" on your

hard drive. The process I let your hard drive reorganize described in the previous all its files. Computers store paragraph eliminated temporary your data in pieces (fragments) internet files once, but why not all over the hard drive. This delete them each time you exit works well when you create your Internet Explorer (IE) documents piece at a time, but browser? There is a command in will slow you down when you the advanced settings for IE to retrieve the whole file later. do this. Here's how to Consider for a moment that your permanently turn on this computer hard drive is like a feature. Left-click on "Start" library full of books (files). then "Control Panel". If you are Instead of storing an entire book in classic view, double left-click in one place on the shelf, the "Internet Options". If you are in librarian takes each chapter as category view, left-click it is created and stores chapters "Network and Internet all over the library. To look at Connections", and then double the entire book, you must go to left-click on "Internet Options". each of the locations to extract At the top of internet options is the chapters then put the book an "Advanced" tab. Left-click back together in chapter order. "Advanced" once. Use the "down It's very time consuming. It's arrow" key or mouse to scroll also time consuming for your down to the security entries. computer to find a data file Make sure to check the box stored by Windows in fragments. beside "Empty Temporary Defragmentation is a tool that Internet Files folder when collects all the individual browser is closed". Left-click fragments of a larger data file "OK" to close the "Advanced" and puts them together in side-window and left-click the red "X" by-side locations on your hard to close all windows back to the drive. Running this tool can desktop.

Old Email messages. You should regularly prune your defragmenting. To start this obsolete email. Left-click once tool in Windows XP, do the on mail entries you don't want following. Left-click on "Start", anymore and press the delete left-click on "All Programs", left-key. Then go into the "Deleted click on "Accessories", left-click items" folder and left-click them on "System Tools", left-click on once more and press the delete Disk Defragmenter". Left-click key. They're gone. Do this for on the "Defragment" tab in the both incoming mail (InBox), as final window. When this process well as the "Sent Items" box. completes, your hard drive will be optimized (for a while).

Unused Programs. There may be programs on your Updates and Scans. computer you never use. These Always keep your anti-virus programs take up hard drive subscription current. Go on the space and in many cases run internet at least weekly for the continuously, slowing down your latest list of virus definitions. PC. There is a tool for removing Get the latest security updates programs in the Control Panel to your operating system from called "Add or Remove Microsoft. You can do these Programs". Get to this tool by updates automatically or left-clicking "Start" then manually. Automatic settings "Control Panel" and double click are best if you have a broadband on "Add or Remove Programs". connection. You can start the Windows will present a list of Windows update process installed program for your manually by left-clicking on review. Caution: Never delete "Start", then "All Programs", any program that is unfamiliar then "Windows Update". Use a to you. If you see programs that program like Spybot Search and are not used by you or the Destroy to scan weekly for operating system (old games, unwanted "spyware" programs music software you don't use, installed on your computer. software for a printer long Remove spyware with the discarded) then you can remove spyware detection tool. Anti-them. First left-click once on the virus and sypware removal were program line to select it in blue. discussed in earlier "Tech Talk" Then left-click on the "Remove" articles. All previous "Tech tab and follow the instructions Talk" articles are available to remove the program online by going to permanently. Don't over do it www.hensoncomputerservices.com and delete something necessary

Speed Up Data Access. Once or twice a year you should

Questions and comments about this article may be emailed to: hcs@mchsi.com