



Weekly  
Monthly  
Quarterly

# Recommended Maintenance Schedule for Windows-Based PCs

## Recommended Task

## Steps

- \* = Optional
- ✓ = Recommended

### Virus and Spyware Removal

✓	✓	✓	<p>Update your antivirus definitions to the latest version.</p> <p><i>Note: Most antivirus software included with a new computer is limited and only includes 30-90 days of complimentary updates. After this trial period, you must either buy the full version or pay to extend your support period.</i></p> <p><i>Likewise, full products typically come with 1-year of included updates, after which you must either buy the newest version of the software or pay to extend your support period.</i></p>	<p>Make sure you are connected to the Internet before attempting to update.</p> <p>Right click the antivirus icon in the notification area (the lower right corner of your screen near the clock) and choose the option to update your virus definitions.</p> <p>Norton/Symantec use a program called <b>LiveUpdate</b> to update all Norton/Symantec components. It should be in your <b>Start</b> menu somewhere under All Programs.</p>
✓	✓	✓	<p>Perform a full-system virus scan of all hard drives.</p>	<p>The steps vary by product. Refer to your antivirus software manual.</p>
✓	✓	✓	<p>Use AdAware to scan your system for spyware and other malware.</p> <p>Please be aware that removing spyware may impact other software on your system. Some software requires the spyware to generate income for the authors, and if the spyware is removed, the software you like may cease working. AdAware has a nice feature that can restore spyware that was deleted previously.</p> <p><i>Note: You can use any spyware scanner (including any software that comes bundled with your antivirus software) for this weekly scan, but we like AdAware for its ease of use and reliable results.</i></p> <p><i>AdAware SE is also free for personal use, though businesses need to purchase one of the licensed versions.</i></p> <p>You can download or purchase AdAware from:  <a href="http://www.AcanthusTech.com/security/downloads.php">http://www.AcanthusTech.com/security/downloads.php</a></p>	<p>Launch AdAware</p> <p>Click the <b>Check for Updates</b> hyperlink above the <b>Start</b> button</p> <p><b>Connect</b> button</p> <p><b>OK</b> button</p> <p>Wait for the update to download and install</p> <p><b>Finish</b> button</p> <p><b>Start</b> button</p> <p><b>Perform smart system scan</b> should be checked</p> <p><b>Search for negligible risk entries</b> unchecked (optional)</p> <p><b>Next</b> button</p> <p>Wait for scan to finish</p> <p><b>Next</b> button</p> <p>Select the <b>Critical Objects</b> tab</p> <p>Right-click on any object that was found and choose <b>Select all objects</b> from the menu.</p> <p>Scroll through the list and uncheck any objects you wish to keep (e.g. ones for web sites you visit regularly). It should be fairly safe to delete everything found, but certain ease-of-use functionality may be removed, and some software may stop working. See note to left.</p> <p>Repeat the process for any other visible tabs.</p> <p><b>Next</b> button</p> <p>Confirm the number of objects selected and select <b>OK</b></p> <p>Close AdAware or click <b>Start</b> button for another scan</p>



Weekly  
Monthly  
Quarterly

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* ✓ ✓	Use Spybot Search & Destroy to scan your system for spyware and other malware.	<p>Launch Spybot S&amp;D</p> <p>Click the <b>Update</b> button on the left side</p> <p><b>Search for Updates</b> button</p> <p>Check any unmarked available updates</p> <p><b>Download Updates</b> button</p> <p>Wait for the updates to download</p> <p>Click the Immunize button on the left side</p> <p>You will be told if any additional immunizations are possible</p> <p>If so, click <b>OK</b>, then click <b>+Immunize</b></p> <p>Click Search &amp; Destroy</p> <p><b>Check Problems</b> and allow the scan to complete</p> <p>Scroll through the list and uncheck any objects you wish to keep (e.g. ones for web sites you visit regularly). It should be fairly safe to delete everything found, but certain ease-of-use functionality may be removed, and some software may stop working. See the notes under AdAware.</p> <p><b>Fix Selected Problems</b></p> <p>Click <b>Yes</b> to remove the selected items</p> <p>Click <b>OK</b> and close the program</p>
<b>E-mail (Outlook, Outlook Express, Thunderbird, etc.)</b>		
✓ ✓ ✓	Empty your Deleted Items or Trash folder in your e-mail program	Right-click the folder, and choose the appropriate option from the menu.
* ✓ ✓	Outlook Express users should compact their mail folders regularly.	<p>File menu</p> <p>Folders option</p> <p><b>Compact All Folders</b> option</p>
<b>Web Browsers (Firefox, Internet Explorer, etc.)</b>		
✓ ✓ ✓	Clear your web browser's temporary items cache.	<p><b>IN FIREFOX:</b></p> <p>Tools menu</p> <p><b>Options...</b> option</p> <p><b>Privacy</b> tab</p> <p><b>Cache</b> option &gt; <b>Clear</b> button</p> <p><b>OK</b> button</p> <p><b>IN INTERNET EXPLORER:</b></p> <p>Tools menu</p> <p><b>Internet Options...</b> option</p> <p><b>Delete Files...</b> button</p> <p><b>Delete all offline content</b> checkbox &gt; <b>OK</b> button</p> <p><b>OK</b> button</p>



Weekly  
Monthly  
Quarterly

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<p>* * <b>Optional:</b> Clear your web browser's cookies.</p> <p><i>Some people mistakenly believe that cookies are bad. Actually they can be helpful for remembering passwords, allowing you to login to secured web sites automatically, and remembering certain preferences you have selected.</i></p> <p><i>Some cookies are used by marketing sites to collect data on your shopping and browsing habits. These are called "tracking cookies." Since most tracking cookies are removed during spyware detection (below), you usually <b>do not</b> need to delete cookies manually.</i></p>		<p><b>IN FIREFOX:</b></p> <p>Tools menu Options... option Privacy tab Cookies option &gt; Clear button OK button</p> <p><b>IN INTERNET EXPLORER:</b></p> <p>Tools menu Internet Options... option Delete Cookies... button OK button OK button</p>
<p>* ✓ ✓ Check for critical and other updates in Firefox and any extensions.</p> <p><i>There is no separate option for this in Internet Explorer; it is part of Windows Update (below).</i></p>		<p><b>IN FIREFOX:</b></p> <p>Tools menu Options... option Advanced tab Software Update option Check both checkboxes (Firefox and My Extensions) Check Now button</p> <p>A. Select any critical Firefox updates &gt; Install button &gt; Finish button &gt; OK button &gt; Close Firefox &gt; Repeat the process to check for additional updates.</p> <p>B. Select any remaining updates &gt; Install button &gt; Finish button &gt; OK button &gt; Close Firefox</p>

## Backup Your Data

✓ ✓ ✓ Regular backups of your data are the only way to really protect yourself from data loss. Loss can occur due to viruses, accidentally deleting files, overwriting newer copies with older ones, system crashes, and numerous other reasons. You should back up your most critical files on a weekly basis (daily is even better). It's a good idea to back up all your data (not just your critical files) on a monthly basis. Applications that are installed from disc generally do not need to be backed up, unless you have plenty of storage space and a fast backup method (like a tape drive). Programs that you download or that are stored on magnetic media (e.g., floppy disks) only should be backed up. CD-ROMs and DVD-ROMs are less likely to be damaged, but it's possible. In all cases, such backups should only be for personal, archive use subject to applicable copyright laws. The exact process depends on what backup media (CD-ROMS, DVD-ROMS, tapes, online methods, floppies, etc.) and software (Windows Backup, BackupExec, etc.) you use. AcanthusTech can help you develop solutions that fit your budget if you do not have a backup plan in effect.



Weekly  
Monthly  
Quarterly

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**Steps**

## System Updates

\* ✓ ✓ Check for critical and other updates at Office Updates.

Use Internet Explorer to access the site:  
<http://office.microsoft.com/officeupdate/>

\* ✓ ✓ Check for critical and other updates at Windows Updates.

Use Internet Explorer to access the site:  
<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com/>

Microsoft generally releases updates and patches to its software on the second Tuesday of each month. The updates usually are available on the Windows Update web site by the end of the day. We recommend you check for the updates sometime between the 2nd and 3rd Wednesday of each month.

To minimize the number of individual installations you will have to download, look for items called a "service pack" or "roll-up". These contain numerous updates in a single, large installation.

Windows Update is a process. If it has been over a month since you last visited the site, you will probably have to visit the site multiple times to obtain all the available updates. This is because some updates must be installed separately, and most require a complete system restart in between installations.

Dial-up users may find it more convenient to have a technician apply the updates either at your office using discs or at their service facility using a high-speed Internet connection.

### Custom button

Wait while the site examines your computer

After the scan finishes, all available Critical Updates will be selected automatically.

Under **Select by Type** on the left, click **Software, Optional** and add any items that sound useful (if you are uncertain, it should be safe to install any or all of them). Note that some items must be installed individually.

Under **Select by Type**, click **Hardware, Optional** and add any items that sound useful. These are generally drivers that help your hardware work with your computer better.

Sometimes, however, hardware updates can cause serious problems, even locking you out of your PC, so you might find it safer to not upgrade these without some knowledge of how to boot into Windows **Safe Mode** and rollback a driver.

After selecting which updates to install, click the **Install Updates** link.

Confirm the options and click the **Install Updates** button. Follow on-screen prompts.

Next a restart is generally recommended or even required

Repeat this process until all Critical Updates have been installed and all optional updates you want have been installed.

\* Java updates

The Java utility should automatically notify you when new updates are available. It is a good idea to visit [www.java.com](http://www.java.com) every few months to manually check for the latest version.

\* Flash and Shockwave updates

Use your browser to access the site:  
<http://www.macromedia.com/shockwave/download/alternates/>

Download and install both the Flash and Shockwave players (Authorware is generally never encountered on most web sites). There are different versions for both Internet Explorer/AOL and other browsers (Firefox, Mozilla, Opera, etc.). You will need to install both versions if you use both IE and a non-IE browser.



Weekly  
Monthly  
Quarterly

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**Steps**

## System Maintenance

\* ✓ Disk Cleanup

Start Menu > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Cleanup  
 Select the drive to scan (you should scan every drive)  
 Click **OK** and wait for the scan to complete (often very slow)

Check the options you want removed. Note that not all options may be present on your system.

Generally safe to remove:

- Downloaded Program Files, Temporary internet Files,
- Microsoft Office Temporary Files,
- Microsoft Error Reporting Temporary Files,
- Recycle Bin, Temporary Files,
- Web Client/Publisher Temporary Files

Network users generally should not remove these, but non-networked users may remove:

- Temporary Remote Desktop Files, Temporary Offline Files

Network users could lose data if these are deleted while disconnected from their network; non-networked users should not have any of these files:

- Offline Files

Avoid removing unless space is REALLY tight:

- Office Setup Files

Nobody should choose this option unless there is NO other choice due to performance reasons:

- Compress Old Files

\* ✓ Disk Defragmentation

Start Menu > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Defragmenter

Select the drive to scan (you should scan every hard drive)  
 Click **Analyze** and defragment if it is recommended.  
 Repeat until all hard drives have been scanned.

\* ✓ Clean and Dust

Use a microfiber cloth or a Swiffer (or any similar soft, dry cloth) to dust the exterior of the keyboard, mouse, chassis, and monitor. Be careful not to catch the cloth and break anything off.

Keyboards collect lots of gunk. A soft brush or gentle vacuuming with a brush attachment can be used to remove the gunk. The computer should be powered off during cleaning. Be careful not to dislodge or break any keys.

To clean a monitor screen or a mouse, use products specifically designed for cleaning these objects. If you have an LCD flat-panel display, be sure any cleaner is specifically designed for LCD screens; many monitor cleaners are not.

There are some cleaners for printer paper paths that can safely be used. Printer exteriors can be cleaned with a soft cloth, but the interiors should only be cleaned by a trained technician.

\* Change Passwords

Passwords should be changed often enough to keep your information safe, but not so frequently that you forget them. Every 6-12 months is generally a good idea for most personal passwords. Businesses should aim for every 1-6 months, depending on how much employee turnover and secure information is in your company.