

Optimize your Computer using Standard Microsoft Utilities

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(Windows 7, Windows XP, and Windows Vista)

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New computers generally run quite fast, but over time they may slow down. When you launch a program, save a file, browse the Internet, or work on your email, the response of the computer may have diminished. Microsoft provides software that is built into your computer to help rejuvenate its memory and processor. These utilities are safe to use and should be used periodically just like changing the oil in your automobile. Additional details can be found at the following web site:

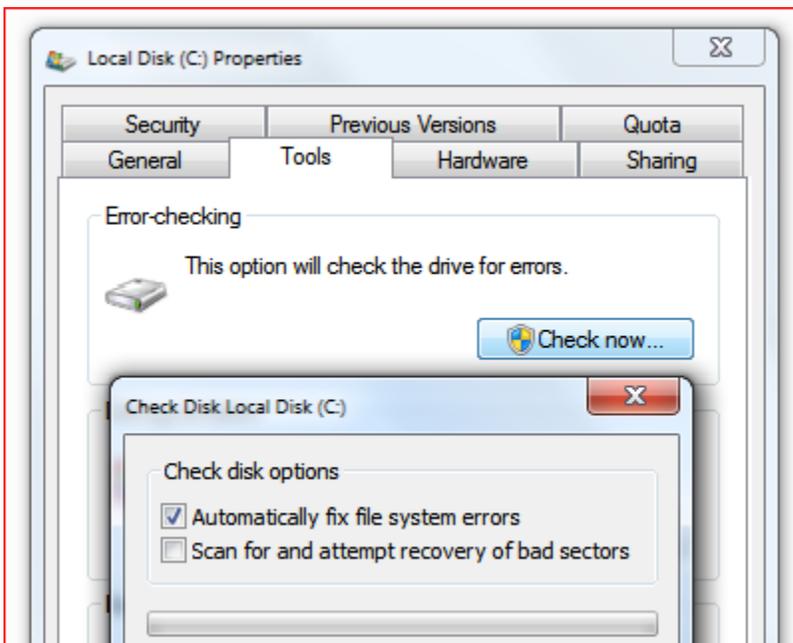
www.microsoft.com/athome/setup/optimize.aspx

For this class, we will discuss the following areas of improvement:

1. Check Disk – test for and correct disk errors.
2. Disk Cleanup – remove temporary and unneeded files.
3. Defragment – make your hard drive work faster and more efficiently.
4. Internet Explorer – adjust settings to improve speed and security.
5. Windows Update – always run with the latest software from Microsoft.
6. Security Essentials – Microsoft’s free Anti-Virus program.

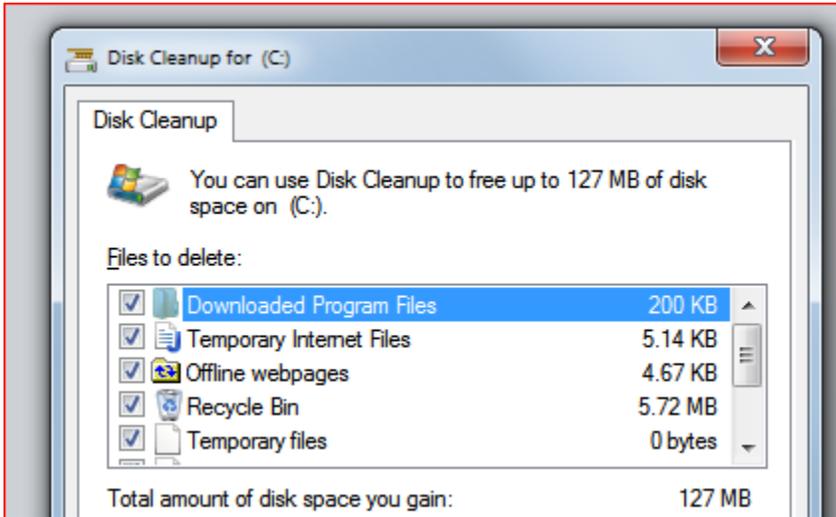
Check Disk

Photos, Music, and Documents are stored on your hard drive. Additionally, there are thousands of operating system files necessary for the proper functioning of your computer. This utility is part of the “Tools” that are accessible from “My Computer”, “C-drive”, “Right-click Properties”. Just hit “Check now”. If the computer asks to “schedule” at the next boot up, say yes.



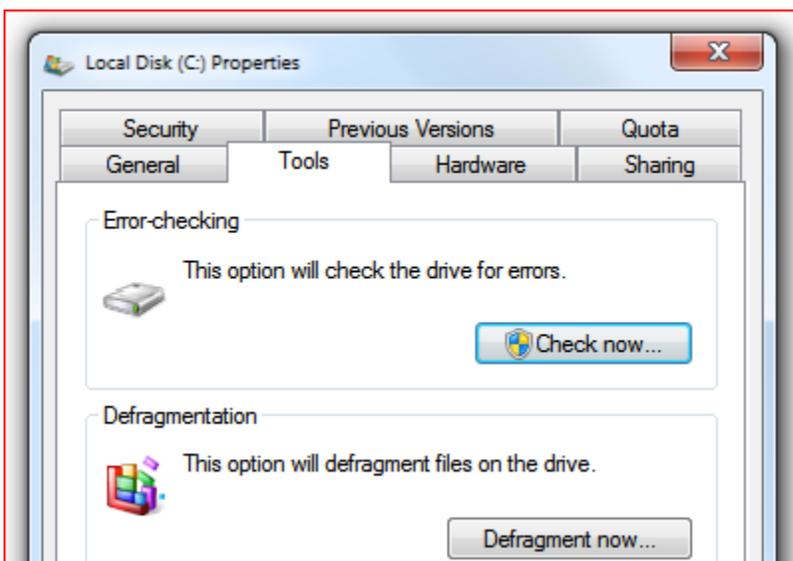
Disk Cleanup

The process of using your computer has as a side effect the creation of hundreds of temporary files that are only used for a few minutes. After a number of days, these files accumulate and actually slow the computer. Heavy computer users should “Clean” their computer about once a week. Go to the START ORB and type “clean” in the search box. Then select “Disk Cleanup”. XP users will have to go to Programs, Accessories, etc. since there is no search box. Select Drive C: and say OK.



Defragment

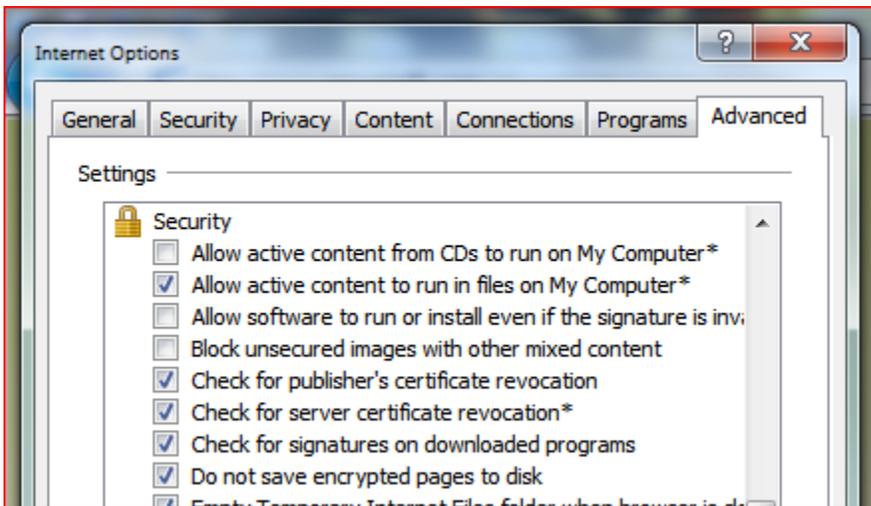
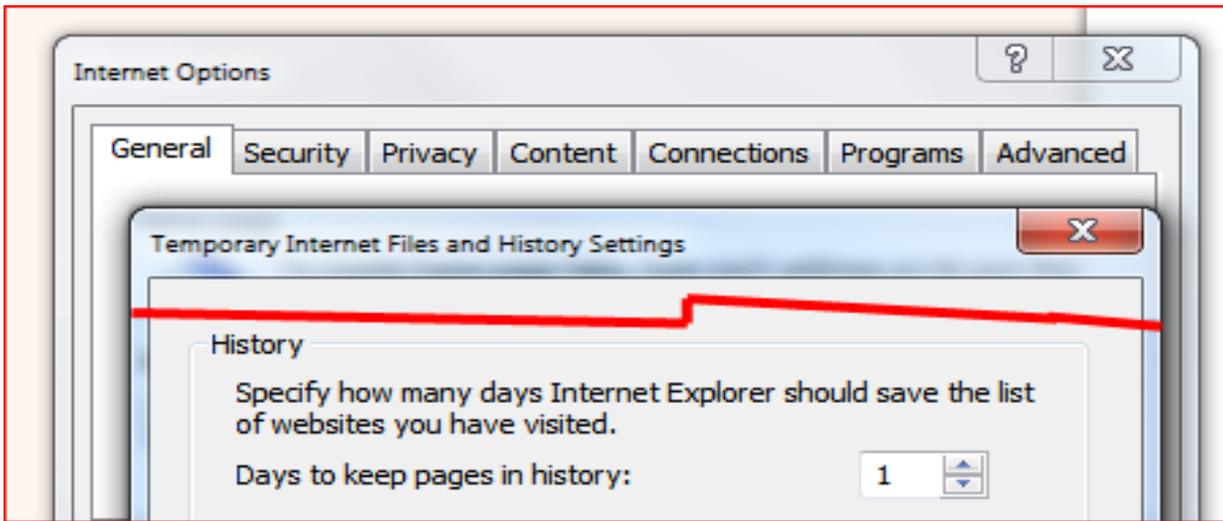
As you use your computer files get rearranged and fragmented. Sometimes a file can be broken into 50 small pieces. The computer is “smart” and knows how to put the pieces together but it slows down the performance. Heavy computer users should defragment about once every week. (Think: put all you ducks in order.) Like the Check Disk feature, this is also in the Tools menu. Go to “My Computer”, “C-drive”, “Right-click Properties”. Just hit “Defragment now”.



Internet Explorer

It's possible to make your browser (Internet Explorer) run faster by optimizing some settings. Reduce the Webpage History setting by going to IE "Tools menu", "Internet Options", "General tab", and "Browsing history". Under settings, set the number of days to just 1.

Here's a more complicated change: Check "Do not save encrypted pages to disk" in "Internet Options", "Advanced". This will speed things up as well as make the computer more secure.



Windows Update

Be sure the Windows files are kept up to date. Go to the START ORB and type "update" in the search box. Select "Window Update" and then "Change Settings". XP users should go the Control Panel and select "Automatic Updates". In the following screen shot, updates are scheduled to occur at 3:00 AM or the next time the computer is turned on. Usually, an update will only take a few minutes but every so often they take an hour. Let them finish before turning off the computer.

Choose how Windows can install updates

When your computer is online, Windows can automatically check for important updates and install them using these settings. When new updates are available, you can also install them before shutting down the computer.

[How does automatic updating help me?](#)

Important updates



Install updates automatically (recommended)

Install new updates: Every day



at 3:00 AM



Recommended updates

Give me recommended updates the same way I receive important updates

Security Essentials

All computers should have a good anti-virus program. Security Essentials from Microsoft is a free program that's available at their web site. If you wish to use it, be sure to completely uninstall your old anti-virus program before installing it.

