

# General Computer Maintenance Tips



## Protect your Device

Computers should be carried in a bag with lots of padding and protection. Alternatively, you can purchase a laptop sleeve to protect your computer (models with padding inside and a hard outer shell are preferred).

Don't place food, drink or other potentially harmful substances nearby, or in a bag with your computer. Liquid spills are all too common and often come with a hefty price tag. Be sure to include accident protection in your warranty if you are concerned about accidental damage or spills.

## Delete unwanted programs and files and avoid using lots of extra programs

There are many programs that run in the background of your computer and slow it down. Remove them by using Add/Remove Programs (PC) or by removing them from your applications folder (OS X). Additionally, emptying your recycling bin or trash and removing excess user accounts can clear up some space on your computer and remove any potential viruses or malware that managed to sneak onto your computer.

## Avoid Peer-to-Peer software (P2P)

P2P programs often come bundled with adware or spyware and P2P downloads can sometimes be bogus files and may contain viruses. The best way to protect your device against these hazards are to simply avoid P2P software all together.

So even though these software updates seem like a hassle, think of it as a preventative measure for your Internet safety. Next time that message comes up to update, resist procrastination and go ahead and hit that “Install Now” button.



## Secure Your Device

Your password is the key to your data and should be nearly impossible to crack.

### Choose a long, strong password

Choosing a secure password is vital for keeping your data secure

Strategies for creating a good password:

Easy to remember

Minimum length of 8 characters

Easy to type out quickly

Random mix of letters, digits, and punctuation

### PRO TIP

Pick a phrase that's easy to remember and turn it into a password by using a combination of UPPERCASE and lowercase letters, special characters, numbers and punctuation

Things to avoid:

**Names of any kind:** These include usernames, first or last names in any form, spouse's, child's or pet's name

**Any kind of easily obtained information:** This includes addresses, birthdays, telephone numbers, etc.

**Sensitive information:** This includes ATM PIN, Banner ID, Social Security Number, or credit card number

**Words contained in English or foreign language dictionaries:** These include obvious words such “secret,” “password,” “abc123,” etc.

## Keep your Device Updated

We all get them from time to time – those little windows that pop up, notifying us that there are software updates available for our computer. Chances are, these always seem to present themselves right when we are in the middle of doing something seemingly important, so it's all too convenient to click on that "Remind Me Later" button.

Later eventually rolls around, and our little pop-up friend is back once again, nagging us to install these updates and restart our computer. And just like during their last visit, we're right in the middle of something, and the cycle continues. However, that notification is not there just to pester us. There is actually significant importance in updating our software.

### Why should I install updates?

Patching your operating system and applications is critical to keeping your data safe. Software updates perform a myriad of tasks. They are available for both our operating system and individual software programs. Performing these updates will deliver a multitude of revisions to your computer, such as adding new features, removing outdated features, updating drivers, delivering bug fixes, and most importantly, fixing security holes that have been discovered.

### The dangers of software vulnerabilities

A software vulnerability is usually a security hole or weakness found in an operating system or software program. Hackers exploit this weakness by writing code to target a specific vulnerability. These exploits can infect your computer with no action on your part other than viewing a website, opening a compromised message, or playing infected media.

Once it infects your computer, this malware can then steal data, allow the attacker to gain control over your computer, and even use software in a way that it was not originally intended.

## Keep it Clean

A clean computer is a happy computer. Keeping your computer clean is not just a matter of looking professional in the eyes of the rest of the world. Regularly cleaning your device helps your computer run more smoothly and efficiently for longer and prevents issues such as:

Overheating

Slow Performance

Keyboard/Mouse malfunctions

Spreading germs

To keep your hardware in top working condition, try to dust off the outside of your computer at least once a week with a soft, dry cloth and wipe down your monitor with a screen wipe. Feel free to swing by the APLA IT office to snag some screen wipes!

## Backup. Backup. Backup.

Your data is the most important thing on your computer. Be it family photos, your portfolio, your graphic files, music, research papers, or anything else, losing it should not be an option. Unfortunately though, computers fail, and often. Having a backup plan set before anything goes wrong is one of the most important task you will undertake as a responsible computer user. Whether you go with an external hard drive or a Cloud based service, making sure that you have a back up in place will save you from future stress of losing all of your files.

## Power it Down

Just as your body requires sleep in order to function properly, your computer occasionally needs some down time in order to stay in top working condition.

Shutting down your computer on a daily basis allows it to recuperate from the stress of everyday use and gives your computer time to perform necessary updates outside of your typical working hours. In the long run, shutting down your device not only helps to extend the life of your device, but helps to maintain its performance speed.



**NEED ADDITIONAL HELP?**

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