

Michael's Guide to Using Computers Properly and Effectively

By Michael LoneWolf, www.MKRD.info
Rev A 19Jun11

© 2011 Michael LoneWolf, www.MKRD.info. No distribution allowed.

Scope and Target Audience

Let me get the following off my chest: if you choose to be a dumb user who all they do is play games on the computer, go on social networks, watch free movies online, and illegally download pirated movies and especially games and programs online or from peer-to-peer networks, instead of investing just a bit of your time to learn about how computers work and how to operate it properly, then you will pay by having a slow computer infected with many viruses. You will pay others to clean it up for you, and you are bound to lose your data when the computer gets worse. Your private data may already have been stolen anyways.

I will keep this portal lean on instructions, because it not my job to do all the work for you. I will list what you need to do, but it is up to you to research everything.

One of the most relevant problems with computers, especially over time, is the task of Disinfection, Cleanup, and Speedup. They are in principle one and the same: it takes a smart user to keep a computer clean, virus free, and always fast in operation.

When specific, the instructions listed here are for the Windows 7 edition. Vista and XP are similar in operation and steps.

Why is my computer so slow now? Do I need to purchase another one or reinstall Windows?

Your computer is so slow because of all the programs (software) that was installed on it, and that is presently running at the same time. You would not know that, because most of that software runs without giving you any benefit in everyday computer operation.

And re installation of Windows always results in data loss, no matter big or small. Someone who does this regularly, or suggests doing so, knows little about computers.

With a small amount of time and learning investment from you, your computer can be kept in top shape no matter how long you use it.

Following instructions in this e-book

I will now list many things that you would need to do to keep your computer up to shape. As you did not pay for this e-book, I do not have the resources to hold your hand at every step of the way. It is up to you to educate yourself to understand the advice given in this e-book.

Research online every instruction given and do not blame me for “messing up your computer”.

Before we begin

Before we begin anything, we create always create a backup first. Follow this advice always before changing something. Click the Start Menu, right click Computer, select Properties. Click on System Protection, find the button next to "Create a restore point...". Click that and name it with today's date.

Why does the computer slow down?

Your computer slows down because as you install software, most of it wants to run *all the time*, even if you are not using it. It also asks to be started when you turn your computer on or logon. 95% those programs have no business running all the time.

You can see the list of programs that start every time you turn your computer on or logon by Pressing the Start button, and typing in
msconfig
into the "Search programs and files" text box on the bottom.

A window should appear called System Configuration. Click the Startup tab. For you to operate your computer *properly and effectively* you will need to know what every one of those lines means. Everything with a checkmark will start running every time you start your computer. Unchecking the check mark and selecting Apply will stop that program from running next time you logon. If, after turning something off, you experience in a loss of some kind of convenience, such as some kind of utility that no longer appears, simply check it on again, and it will resume starting up.

Research the names of every startup item. Very few are supposed to be turned on. In particular, any items with the command containing "c:\Users\yourusername\AppData" are highly suspect, and probable viruses.

Pop-ups

If your computer has started displaying a popup up window, for example warning that your computer is infected, and that it needs to be scanned, or a window that shows a scan running, it is always an infection. If you press OK, or Submit, you will infect your computer. You must learn how to recognize fake windows/programs like that. Always close such windows, never press OK or Submit without understanding why you would need to press that button.

Uninstalling programs

While we have turned off some programs from starting in msconfig, they are still installed on your computer. Head over to Start Menu, Control Panel, Programs and Features. Same as with

msconfig, you must know what every entry is for, and why it was installed. Uninstall anything that you have no need for, and that you never used.

Cannot connect to the Internet

If you cannot connect to the internet, or some websites are OK while others do not load what you would expect (for example, microsoft.com does not load or redirects to a strange looking website), or Internet Explorer does not load websites while Firefox does, your computer has been infected.

Downloading and Installing software

You need to learn how to obtain only useful software, and how to not install bad software by negligence. Do not click OK, Next, etc. buttons if you do not understand what it all means. If you are browsing around on the Internet, do not agree to install something, install a toolbar, or click OK on pop-up dialogs. Also, if you illegally download pirated software and games from the Internet or Peer-to-Peer networks, your computer will be constantly infected.

Cleaning up files

Go to Computer. Right click on Local Disc (C:). Select Properties. In the window that appears, click Disc Cleanup. Select everything on the list (this will clean out your Recycle Bin as well), then click OK. Next, navigate to C:\Users\YourUserName\AppData\Local\Temp. Select everything, and delete. If you get a warning that “action can't be completed” then Skip. If you do not see the AppData folder listed in the folder named with your username, go to Start>Control Panel>Folder Options and select “Show hidden files, folders, and drives”. Undo this after you are done with this step of cleaning out temporary files. Next, navigate to C:\Windows\Temp, and delete those files as well. The importance of this step is due to the fact that some viruses hide in one of these locations.

Install helpful things

If you do not have a virus scanner program, obtain and install the free version of Avast! from their website. Also install MSN Messenger (this will be helpful if someone will later need to connect to your computer for Remote Assistance).

Update Windows

Go to Start>All Programs>Windows Update. Unless it says that “Windows is up to date”, then

you need to install all the updates listed. Restart your computer after updates are finished installing and recheck Windows Update again every time. This may have to be done multiple times to install all of the updates. If you get an error message that updates cannot be installed, or similar, then your computer is likely infected.

Running Avast!

Avast! will be your most useful program. It can repair *some* but not all computer infections. Install the program, and register it. Then click on the taskbar icon, click Scan Computer, Scan Now, check “Turn on” next to “Scan PUP”. And click Start across “Quick Scan”. This will take some time. If the scan finishes, and a number other than zero is displayed across “Infected Files” then your computer is infected. On the new window that appears, select to move to chest, click Apply. After that action is completed, you can close the window. I recommend restarting after viruses were found and disinfected to get rid of the infection.

Still infected

If your computer is still infected, and you have determined that to be the cause, a Boot-time Scan by Avast! is needed. This will take a long time (more than an hour). Go to Avast, Scan Computer, Boot-time Scan, Settings. Under “When a threat is found...” select “Move to Chest”. Restart your computer when you will not need it for several hours. Unplug external storage like USB memory sticks and external hard drives if you want the scan to complete faster. After restart, a black screen will appear with progress of the scan.

Still infected

If you are absolutely sure you are still infected, then a knowledgeable person will use more advanced methods to get rid of the infection. Not that a very under-appreciated friend or relative may know much more than the expensive retail/commercial computer services types.

Browser toolbars and extensions / add-ons

Many browser toolbars on your browser is a sign that you are clicking OK or Submit without understanding what you are doing. Uninstall those programs both from the Control Panel>Programs and Features, as well as the browser's extension / add-on managers. Those toolbars take up valuable screen space, slow your browser down, track you, and invite other infections.

Keeping the computer physically clean

Do not spill anything on the keyboard. Periodically, gently blow out the computer dust outside with a side cover removed. Do not blow for more than a burst directly at computer fans. If you get the fans spinning too fast from the compressed air, it will ruin the fans.

Keep your eyes healthy

Adjust screen brightness according to ambient room light level. Adjust it down when it is dark. Always illuminate your workspace from behind if the room is darker than the screen. Look away periodically from the screen to rest your eyes and blink.

How to keep your data secure

Maintain a notebook in a secure location with all of your passwords written down. Computers crash and lose data all the time. Purchase an external hard drive and keep your data there. If you use an external hard drive, you must buy two. Second one is for a required backup. Computer hard drives crash all the time. The bigger the hard drive capacity, the more valuable data to lose in an instant.

Useful software and utilities

- ⤴ Open Office (free Microsoft Office)
- ⤴ Avast!
- ⤴ VLC Media Player (plays all movie formats, do not agree to install DivX/XVid)
- ⤴ Firefox browser instead of Internet Explorer
- ⤴ Gadwin Printscreen: to save a picture of your screen if you do not understand something and to show it to someone later
- ⤴ WinRAR: the only utility you will need to uncompress files

How to get more help

More help can be obtained from your under-appreciated friend or relative who is good at computers. They were not born with that knowledge. What happened was them using their time to research computers instead of playing games and visiting social websites all day long. Also, help can be obtained online (on forums, for example), once you find out how to properly and politely to ask for help and be able to provide supporting information. Use your time wisely.

Additionally, it is not necessary for you to drive your computer to a tech, or for them to waste the time to come to you. Research Remote Assistance, install MSN Messenger, and they will be able to help you over the internet from their own computer.

Additional articles from my website

I have several more articles at my disinfection web page at <http://mkrd.info/articles/how-to-disinfect-computer-infection.html>

About the Author

Michael LoneWolf is the administrator, designer, and writer for the www.MKRD.info information website, commenting on many different areas, and doing his best to document experience and knowledge he comes across.

Professionally, Michael works in electronics engineering, and website services areas. He specializes in providing services for websites – converting old static HTML websites to a modern design, rescuing hacked websites, and website administration services.

He can be reached thru the online contact form at <http://mkrd.info/contact1.html>.