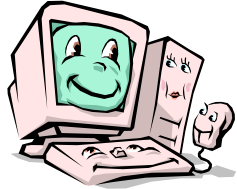


Intrex Online Services presents:

12 STEPS For Healthy Windows



Windows is a very powerful and complex operating system. On the one hand, it provides for us the interface through which we can talk to the world, express ourselves, or just have some fun. On the other, its very complexity causes a great deal of problems for itself.

We have compiled this list of "rules" that will help you keep your windows running quickly and without errors. How do you know when Windows is running badly? It will be very slow and you may get "This program has performed an illegal operation" notices and possibly the dreaded "Blue Screen of Death". Follow these rules, and you will reduce your chances of ever seeing these messages.

1. NEVER install any program that you don't absolutely need.

Every time you install a new program, you run the risk of damaging Windows so that it either won't start again, or it will run with errors. Additionally, the more programs you install, the slower Windows gets.

If you just want to evaluate something, first make sure it's worthwhile. Then make sure you uninstall it as soon as you're finished it. Windows will still be just a little bit slower than it was before, but you will have minimized the overall effect.

Stuff that isn't worth trying out: The demo CDs on the back of game magazines, AOL Trials, \$9 software from Superstore, "security" software that you download off the Internet, all those popup ads, etc.

2. Do NOT duplicate purpose of function.

What does THAT mean? It means, if you already have Corel WordPerfect Suite installed, don't put in Microsoft Office. If you already have Norton Anti-Virus, don't put in McAfee Anti-Virus, etc. Again,

you're unnecessarily slowing down Windows and running the risk of blowing it up.

Pick the software that will do the job for you, and stick with it.

3. Do NOT upgrade versions unnecessarily.

We have so many clients that do this for no reason other than it's a higher version number.

About versions: 4.3 to 4.7 is a minor version change, 3.0 to 4.0 is a major version change. Minor version changes are rarely worthwhile. Major version changes can be worthwhile, but you need to know if your machine is up to the job before you do the upgrade.

4. DO install Service Packs for Windows

This is a corollary to #3. We used to say not to do updates, but with every one getting connected to high speed internet, the process actually does work well now. If you run the Windows Update, or if you go to Microsoft and download a Service Pack, you are, in effect, changing your version of Windows. Your Windows CD is only good for reload once you have performed a Service Pack upgrade or a Windows Update, and the only recourse is for your hard drive to be erased and Windows reinstalled from scratch, off of your CD. However, the service packs do clean up a lot of problems.

5. Do NOT install Norton Utilities or McAfee Office, etc.

Utilities programs have widespread appeal in that they promise to make your Windows run better. They LIE.

Some components of these packages have some limited value, but taken as a whole, they have an overall detrimental effect on how your Windows runs. The main reason for this is the number of "resident programs" they install. These are programs which run ALL THE TIME, whether you know it or not. The other reason is that they tend to mess with intrinsic Windows subsystems, like the Recycle Bin, or the Virtual Memory Manager. Windows has a hard enough time running properly without these programs messing things up.

6. PopUps and Spam

Popups have become the most irritating thing about surfing the web. When you get a popup, just click the X in the corner, close the window. Do NOT click anywhere inside the window, this will install either a

program or a cookie which will make your problem worse. If your machine is already suffering from many popups, you will have to use either Adaware or Spybot to clean up your system.

The only sure cure for SPAM is a new email address. Do NOT type your e-mail address in on any web sites or newsgroups, unless you are sure of their intent. For example, the greeting card websites collect two valid e-mails everytime you send a greeting to a friend, in turn they sell your addresses to spammers. The only programs we recommend for spam filtering are SpamPal and Anti-Spam.

7. Uninstall programs you're not using anymore.

Every once in a while, you should go into Add/Remove Programs in the Control Panel and look through the list of installed programs. If you see stuff that you know you're not using anymore, uninstall it. Do not use your Windows Explorer to go and delete programs manually, you run the risk of corrupting the Registry, which keeps track of where everything is.

8. Check your Startup for Resident Programs

As a general rule, if the System Tray has more than say, 5 little icons in it, you're running too much stuff resident, or in the background. First, the System Tray is the spot on the end of the Task Bar that has the time in it. There should be a volume control, the time, an icon for your Anti-Virus program (more on that later) and that's about it. If the list of icons reaches halfway across the screen, you've got problems.

On the Programs Menu, there is a Startup folder (Start>Programs>Startup). In that folder are some of the programs that are being manually started after Windows boots up. Feel free to delete just about anything in there that you don't want running. Some good candidates include Microsoft Office, Find Fast, Perfect Print, internet download helpers and time trackers, Powerreg, etc.

Also, some stuff appears to be running even though it is not in the Startup folder. Frequently, you can right click on it in the System Tray, and then adjust startup properties. Corel WordPerfect is like this. It starts a thing called the Desktop Application Director or DAD. You can right click on it in the system tray, and one of the options is to not run it on startup. Since it fulfills no purpose whatsoever, turn it off.

Another common one is the AOL Instant Messenger. It's a little man shaped like an "A". Double click on it and select Setup. One of the pages that pops up

asks if you would like it run every time Windows starts, pick NO.

9. Anti-Virus Software

Everybody needs Anti-Virus software, right? Not necessarily. If you are not on the internet, you really do not need anti-virus software at all.

If you are on the net, you almost certainly do need something, though certain precautions will help avoid infections. First, never open any file attachments, even from trusted sources, they could easily be e-mail viruses spreading themselves. Some points:

- Anti-Virus software companies are now going to a subscription model, which means that they want you to pay at least 30 dollars per year to stay current, plus the initial cost of the product. The updates are almost always downloadable for free from the corporate web sites for the time period of the subscription.
- It generally costs 30-90 dollars maximum to get a machine repaired after it has been virus infected, provided that it hasn't been left so long that the virus has actually erased critical data, or destroyed your Windows system.
- Anti-Virus software is now starting to get bloated. You will notice a definite decrease in performance with a standard install of either McAfee or Norton. This can be alleviated greatly by selecting a custom install and installing only components you think you need, like the scan on demand that checks floppies on access. Remember, resident programs slow your system down. McAfee products are not good programs these days.

10. Internet Security Programs

If you are a broadband user, you probably need a firewall. If you have Windows XP, there is a good software one built in. Ideally, you would purchase a broadband hardware router which hides your computer(s) behind a firewall.

Programs like Zone Alarms, Black Ice, and Norton Internet Security have some limited appeal, though they tend to make your machine run awful. These programs are necessary only if you draw attention to yourself out on the net. For example, going into chat rooms and participating in flame wars will almost certainly arouse somebody's ire. The average hacker/anarchist is NOT interested in you or your machine; you've got nothing he cares about.

Some programs actually disguise themselves as security, when in fact they are the problem themselves. Back Orifice (BO) is a program which hackers use to give them access to your machine. There is a program called Anti-Back Orifice (Anti-BO) which is supposed to protect you from BO. In fact, it IS Back Orifice in disguise.

You won't experience any trouble if you don't go looking for it.

11. DirectX

DirectX is a subsystem of Windows that gives programs high speed or low level access to hardware that enhances the multimedia experience. It is primarily used by games.

The first rule is: Never install a newer version of DirectX, unless a program demands it. You run the risk of invalidating your current DirectX system, though that risk is rather low.

The second rule is: Never install a lower version of DirectX than what you already have. If you have 5, don't install 3. If you have 6.1, don't install 5, etc. Keep in mind that older games will AUTOMATICALLY install old versions, if you are not paying attention.

12. Scandisk and Disk Defragmenter

Once a month, you should run Scandisk (Start> Programs> Accessories> System). Don't bother with the Thorough option, it is only for diagnostic purposes. Scandisk will go through your hard drive and make sure that the table that keeps track of all the files on the drive is accurate.

Then run Disk Defragmenter (Start> Programs> Accessories> System). This program will reorganize *where* everything is located physically on the hard drive. It will optimize the location for each file based on number of uses, etc. It will also free up all the partially used areas of the drive.

One trick about these programs is that just about anything can interrupt their correct operation. You will need to boot up in Safe Mode (Press F8 just when Windows is booting), turn off your screen saver, and possibly even your power saving features. It is also a good idea to start the program, click on the start button and leave your mouse cursor over top of Run or Help or Find. This fools the system into thinking you are about to do something, so it won't interrupt the defrag process.

The larger your drive, the longer this process can take. A 40 Gb hard drive could take up to 8 hours to defrag, depending on how many files are on it, and how long it has been since the last defrag. It may only take 3 minutes.

Conclusion:

Follow these steps as a guideline only. They reflect our experience with Windows, both with the actual running of the operating system and with its continual repair.

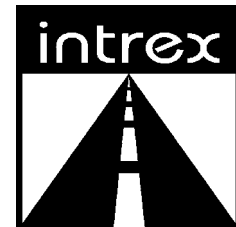
The beauty of Windows is that you can do anything you like with it. Just remember how fragile the whole thing can be.

SOFTWARE BLACKLIST

It is our experience that it is NEVER worth installing these programs:

I-Mesh, Kazaa, New.net, Morpheus, Limewire, Bearshare, Sonique, McAfee Firewall, McAfee AntiVirus 5 and 7, Norton Utilities, Norton Internet Security, Bonzi Buddy, Netscape 6 and 7, Comet Cursor, Gator, Mp3.com, SaveNow, Cydoor, B3D Proj., Gdivx, Zone Alarms, CommonName, Hotbar and many more.

We recommend **Kazaalite** for file sharing, **Winamp** for music, and **Windows Media Player 9** for streaming audio and video. Real Player is brutal right now, avoid it. Use **AdAware** and **Spybot** to remove advertising crud from your system, there's lots in there. Make sure they are both up to date before scanning.



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