

Computer Maintenance

Tips on Keeping Your Computer Running Smoothly

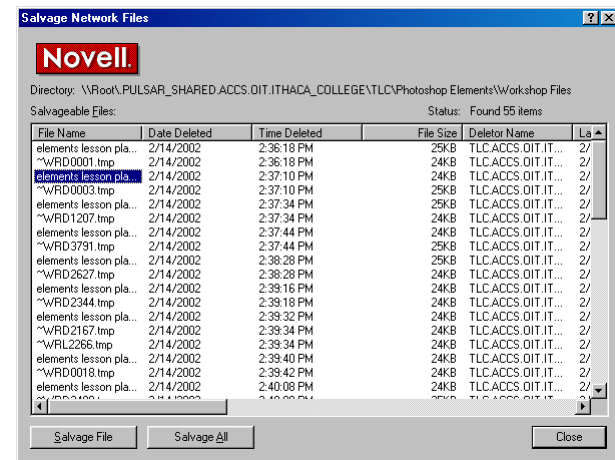
Preventative Maintenance for Computers

Most modern computers are fairly “low maintenance”, but there are some simple ways to help keep your computer running smoothly. These strategies include both using the safest way to save your files and basic computer care. Contained in this guide are a few common computer tips to consider.

1. Save **all** of your files to the network. This is arguably the most important strategy for keeping your data safe, as there is usually no way to tell when a hard disk is about to crash. Also, when your computer is to be replaced, there will be no need to perform the time-consuming task of finding all of your files on your hard drive and backing them up – they will be backed up already! Files saved to a folder on one of the servers such as Pulsar or Memphis are:

- Protected from unauthorized access by your username and password.
- Backed up nightly.
- Safe from hard-drive crashes.
- Protected from viruses.
- Usually recoverable, if accidentally deleted, by right-clicking on the folder and selecting **Salvage Files** using a Windows computer.
- Sharable – you can give other people access to folders in your personal account.
- Accessible, by you, from any computer connected to the Internet using a secure file transfer program.

Accidentally delete a file? If it's on the network, use Salvage to get it back!



2. Keep your virus protection software up to date. If you log in to your computer on a Windows machine, virus updates are automatically installed. New viruses come out all the time and can perform extremely undesirable actions, including deleting files, sending your documents to random email addresses, and preventing operation of your computer.
3. Keep the computer's ventilation free from obstacles such as papers or walls. Lowering the temperature inside of the computer will reduce the potential for crashes due to overheating and will help the computer's components last longer. This is becoming more and more relevant as computers become faster, and subsequently run their components at higher temperatures.
4. Remove any peer-to-peer file sharing programs from your computer. These programs turn your computer into a server that uses the bandwidth of the campus network to share files on your computer (sometimes unbeknownst to the user) with anyone connected to the Internet. This sharing of files can slow down both your computer and the Ithaca College Network, and also make your computer more susceptible to viruses.
5. Avoid installing any unnecessary programs on your computer. It is a general truism that as the number of programs installed on a computer increases, the stability and speed of that computer decreases. Not installing programs is far better than removing programs after they have been installed, as the uninstall process can sometimes leave unnecessary entries, or even remove necessary ones.
6. Defrag your computer at least once a week. It will detect and correct errors on your hard drive and keep it running faster. When files and programs become fragmented the computer must search the entire hard drive before the file can be executed. Defrag organizes the files thus preventing the hard drive from having to look all over the place for the files that go with the programs you use.
7. Clean files periodically by deleting trash, temp files, and files you no longer need. While in an ideal situation these temp files are deleted when the applications close but unneeded temporary files are

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always left on the hard drive. These files pile up and start eating up hard disk space and start impairing computer performance.

8. Eventually you'll find that you have hundreds of megabytes of photos, graphics or Mp3's on your hard drive taking up space. Periodically burn these files to CD or DVD to regain space.
9. Remove unwanted startup items in the task tray. If you have unwanted items starting with windows it can and will slow down the boot process and they will take up memory.
10. If your computer starts displaying erratic behavior or slows down, exit all running programs and restart your computer. This eliminates any "build up" of programs running in the background that may be using valuable system memory.
11. Write down any computer error messages you receive. If you do need to contact the Helpdesk, providing the exact text of the error message(s), and when such messages occurred will be very helpful in diagnosing the problem.

For More Information

For additional help, contact the ITS Helpdesk at helpdesk@ithaca.edu or 4-3282.