



COMPUTER MAINTENANCE AND PREVENTION TIPS

Important: Verify that your computer meets minimum specifications.

NOTE: Windows 95/98/ME or 2000 are not compatible
If you are an XP user, Service Pack 3 must be installed.

Requirements	
XP Service Pack 3	Vista (all versions)
Minimum Requirements Microsoft IE 7 or higher 500 MHz or higher processor 1 GB Memory (RAM) 1 GB hard drive space 1024 X 768 or higher resolution monitor, 16 bit color CD-ROM drive Adobe Acrobat Reader Printer recommended	Minimum Requirements Microsoft IE 7 or higher 1 GHz or higher processor 1 GB Memory (RAM) 1 GB hard drive space 1024 X 768 or higher resolution monitor, 16 bit color CD-ROM drive Adobe Acrobat Reader Printer recommended
For optimal performance: Microsoft IE 7 or higher 1 GHz or higher processor 1 GB Memory (RAM) 1 GB hard drive space 1024 X 768 or higher resolution monitor, 16 bit color CD-ROM drive Adobe Acrobat Reader Printer recommended	For optimal performance: Microsoft IE 7 or higher 1.5 GHz or higher processor 2 GB Memory (RAM) 1 GB hard drive space 1024 X 768 or higher resolution monitor, 16 bit color CD-ROM drive Adobe Acrobat Reader Printer recommended

If you wish to connect with Odyssey Academy using a MAC, please contact the administration office: 866-585-3774 or admin@odysseyacademy.com .

IMPORTANT: Odyssey Academy holds no responsibility for computer maintenance and offers no refunds or extended calendar time for downtime due to hardware issues resulting in the inability to connect or synchronize.

Information on How to Keep Your Computer Happy and Healthy

This document was created in order that we might give you information that will enhance your success with “Switched in Schoolhouse” (SOS) Distance Learning applications (Remote Access or Synchronization). Below will be information on general recommendations:

1. For computer “health”
2. SOS computer system requirements
3. SOS Distance Learning (homework) application information

Computer Health:

In today’s world of computer hacking, viruses and adware/spyware, it is vitally important that proper precautions are in place in order to protect your computer from these harmful programs. It is also important that general and regular maintenance is done on a regular basis (once a week). If the warnings and recommendations below are heeded you will go a long way in protecting your computer and maintaining optimal performance.

1. General maintenance:
 - a. The operating system must be continually updated immediately upon release from Microsoft. It is absolutely necessary to protect your computer from electrical surges by using a good quality surge protector. Electrical spikes will kill computers!
 - b. As you use your computer, installing and uninstalling programs as well as creating new files and documents, your hard drive will become fragmented. This fragmentation of files will slow your computer down and eventually cause some of your programs or files to simply not work. We recommend that you check your hard drives and all partitions regularly and “defrag” when it is recommended by your computer. Should you need a more robust defragging software, we would recommend “Diskkeeper” by Executive Software.
 - c. Connecting to the Internet REQUIRES these steps to insure computer health:
 - i. Install antivirus software and keep your subscription current. **Download the updated “virus definition” WEEKLY** or set your operating system to download them automatically when connected to the Internet. You should scan all hard drives on your computer and any partitions at the very least, once a week.

- ii. If your antivirus software has a firewall, do not enable it unless you are very familiar with it and can get the firewall to give permission for SOS to upload and download information to and from your computer. The Windows firewall will work just fine.
- iii. SOS CAN have problems with Norton Antivirus software. We recommend that you uninstall Norton and ALL its components and install Avast Home Edition. This antivirus software can be downloaded for FREE from: http://www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html ! (Just click on this link and it will take you to the website location.) This program will automatically update virus patterns from their website on a daily basis.

Another excellent free antivirus program is AVG Antivirus.
<http://free.avg.com/>

- iv. Spyware and malware has become a significant problem for the entire network of computer consumers around the world, both home users and commercial. Spyware will do harm to programs such as SOS and will affect the performance of your computer. It is very important that you protect your computer and your privacy by installing an anti-spyware program. There are a number of these programs on the Internet. We recommend “Malwarebytes”, as it currently the best-rated on the market. A FREE version of this program can be downloaded at www.malwarebytes.org/. The free version requires manually scanning your machine. We suggest purchasing the Pro version so that it is active anytime you are on the Internet. This is especially important if you use broadband, as you are on the Internet the moment you turn on your computer and are connected to a DSL or Cable connection. SpySweeper is another effective program. **It is highly recommended that you purchase a yearly subscription so that “Spy Sweeper” or Malwarebytes can stay current, because like viruses, new spyware is constantly being developed.**
- v. A Popup blocker is also a good little program to have running in residence on your computer when you are surfing the web. Many spyware and viruses are transmitted through these popup windows. You may be able to disable popups in your web browser. If not, we recommend “Popup Stopper”. A FREE version of this great little program can be downloaded at www.panicware.com.
- vi. If you have had an e-mail account for very long, no doubt you have been annoyed by e-mail advertisements (SPAM) that have found their way to your computer. Your e-mail is also a great conduit for viruses, especially worm viruses. Your antivirus software is capable of catching the majority of these viruses, but occasionally a virus may get past your antivirus software. If you download an e-mail to your computer with a virus and you have a preview activated in your e-mail software, it is already too late. Viruses that are part of the e-mail will be activated the second they arrive

on your computer, even though you have not opened the e-mail. A safe guard is to close any e-mail preview windows. A FREE program available for download is called “Mailwasher.” This program allows you to go out to your ISP and see your e-mail before it is downloaded to your computer. You have the option at that time to either bounce it back to the sender as well as blacklisting (spoofing the sender into thinking your e-mail address does not exist and thereby prompting the sending computer to delete you from their e-mail list), delete the e-mail, or accept the e-mail. “Mailwasher” becomes your first line of defense against harmful e-mail. Using this program, our policy has been to either bounce or delete any e-mail from a sender we do not know, especially e-mail with attachments or HTML e-mail graphics within the e-mail text box) from senders we do not know. A FREE copy of “Mailwasher” can be downloaded at: www.mailwasher.net.

If cost is not a deterrent, we suggest purchasing AVG’s Security Suite which will catch spyware, malware, and spam automatically. The cost is nominal, but well worth the headache of manually managing a lot of free programs.

- d. We also recommend that in Internet Explorer you delete your temporary files and cookies once a week. Failure to do this can cause Internet Explorer to slow down and eventually quit working. It is also best to set your “history folder” to no more than 7 days. You can delete these files by choosing Start...Programs...Accessories...System Tools...Disk Cleanup...Choose OK for the drive you need to clean. Make sure Temporary Internet Files is checked. (And Temporary files, if you don’t want them.) Choose OK...then yes.
- e. Next you need to defrag your hard drive. This organizes all your files so the computer can find them quicker. Defragging is like cleaning your house. If you didn’t clean your house for one year, imagine what it would look like. Choose Start...Programs...Accessories...System Tools...Disk Defragmenter. Choose Defragment.

Defragging should be done EVERY DAY. We strongly recommend purchasing a more heavy duty defragger program called Diskkeeper, which can be set to automatically defrag for you in the background. You never know it is optimizing your machine. Go to: <http://www.executive.com/diskkeeper/diskkeeper.asp>

- f. Backup your folder called “My Documents” frequently to a CD. BACKUP...BACKUP...BACKUP! An excellent backup program is PC Backup.

www.migosoftware.com

2. A “clean” reinstall or “re-image” of your operating system should be done once a year. The reason for this is that the operating system registry will grow to such an extent that the performance of your computer will be compromised. Below is our recommendation as to how this should be done:

- a. Once you have your computer settings etc. where you want them, it is recommended that you make an “image” of your computer on an external hard drive. Norton Ghost or Acronis True Image do great jobs of making “image” backups of your computer. We recommend Acronis “True Image” because of the ease of use and its cost effectiveness.
- b. Regularly backup up “My Documents” folder to an external hard drive or CD.
- c. Before doing a “clean” reinstall, again backup “My Documents” folder to an external hard drive or CD.
- d. When it is time to do a “clean” install, you can now use the software you used to make the “image” of your computer. Once this is done, you now have a relatively “clean” reinstall as long as the “image” you made was done early on in the life of your computer. Unlike the restore feature that often comes with new computers, an “image” created by either Norton Ghost or Acronis True image will have your personal settings recorded and you will be up and going in no time! All that will be left to do is copy your “My Documents” folder back to your computer and you are back to where you were before with the added bonus of a streamlined operating system.

Wow! You say? Taking the time and effort to follow through with these recommendations will save you countless time of downtime. We’ve seen students down for months due to computer problems resulting from lack of attention to their home computer.

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Should you encounter any issues, IMMEDIATELY contact

our Technical Support team at:

1-800-735-4193