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Clean Your PC

Follow these steps to keep your computer healthy.

By [Mike Nadelman](#)

If you want your computer to last, you need to clean it regularly. As Roger shows Chris on today's episode of "Call for Help," a little maintenance prevents some major hardware failures.

In case you missed the instructions on the show, this guide explains how to clean your hard drive, monitor, mouse, laser printer, fax, and scanner.

Before you begin, have the following supplies handy:

- Simple Green
- 409 cleaner (not in a compressed can)
- Rubbing alcohol
- Goof Off
- Compressed air -- 16-oz can
- Clean white rags
- Q-Tips -- the longer the better
- 3M toner vacuum

Since 1982, Mike Nadelman has owned his own computer repair business, [Advanced Computer Solutions](#).

Clean Your Hard Drive

1. **Fans:** Check the power supply fan for airflow and the processor fan for movement at least every six months. Take the case off of the computer and turn the computer on to check the processor fan. If one of the fans stops while the machine is on, you need to replace it immediately to prevent further damage.
2. **Computer case:** While the computer case is off, use a can of compressed air (available at most office supply stores) to blow out the dust.

One caveat: If you are using canned or compressed air, use short bursts to avoid condensation.

3. **Drives:** Clean the floppy drive(s), CD drives, and tape drive to help prevent errors during use. Clean with either Simple Green or 409 spray. Be careful not to get the insides of the drives wet.
4. **Tape drive:** If you have a tape drive, you may be able to clean it by using a long Q-Tip dampened with rubbing alcohol. Open the door and clean the rubber pinch roller and head located inside. If you have a DAT, SLT, or DLT drive, this may not be possible, since the pinch roller and heads are too difficult to access.

Clean Your Monitor

1. Clean the outside of the monitor with Simple Green, 409, or a similar cleaner.
2. Spray a cloth with glass cleaner and wipe the screen. If you attempt to clean an

LCD screen, be careful not to press too hard on the screen. Be sure to use a clean, soft cloth.

We do not recommend cleaning the inside of a conventional monitor (CRT) unless you are an experienced technician. The picture tube retains a high voltage even after the power is shut off.

Clean Your Mouse

Mechanical mice almost always need cleaning. The easiest way to clean them is to remove the mouse ball to access the X and Y rollers. A careful inspection of the small rollers usually reveals gunk.

This stuff can be removed using a Q-Tip dampened with rubbing alcohol and a steel dental pick or toothpick to help free the particles. The ball can also be cleaned with an alcohol-dampened rag.

Clean Your Laser Printer

1. Clean the outside of your printer with Simple Green or another similar cleaner.
2. Check the fan. It's important to check the operation of the fan while the printer is running. Some fans run only after the printer gets hot, so testing this may take some time. A stopped fan will cause a gradual overheating condition that is serious, but not instantly fatal to the printer.
3. Blow dust out of the printer only if there is no major toner spill.
4. Clean out toner spills. Toner -- especially color laser toner -- is hazardous to your health. If you have to vacuum the printer, use a toner vacuum with a micro-toner filter like the ones made by 3M.
5. Check and replace the fuser wand that is usually marked with the word "Hot." Caked-up toner on this wand will destroy your printer's fuser and cause image defects.
6. Clean the ozone filter. In most laser printers this filter is made of carbon. If there is a lot of dust on this filter you can order a new one to replace it. If a new filter is not available, simply remove it and blow out the dust with canned air.
7. Clean the roller. There are two types of rollers in printers: hard plastic and rubber. Plastic rollers can only be cleaned with alcohol. Rubber rollers can be cleaned with Goof Off, which is available at most office supply stores. It smells awful, but works well to rejuvenate rubber rollers. Try not to get Goof Off on any plastic parts, as it will damage them.

Clean Your Fax Machine and Scanner

1. Scanners and fax machines have lenses that get dirty. Remove the glass covers and clean them with Windex. Any dust inside these covers has to be blown out with compressed gas.
2. The rollers in the fax machines can be cleaned with alcohol. If the rubber is badly worn, use Goof Off. Be warned that Goof Off will damage plastic parts, and in some cases it will damage synthetic rubber rollers. If you're not sure, don't use it.
3. The outside of the cabinet can be cleaned with Simple Green or 409 cleaner.

What You Need to Clean Your PC

Most cleaning products can be substituted for common items you have lying around the house.

Here is a comprehensive list of cleaning agents I recommend.

- **Methanol:** Substitute rubbing alcohol or vodka. Use for cleaning screens, cabinets, or electronic connectors.
- **Fiberglas brush:** Substitute a toothbrush. Used for cleaning small parts or connectors.
- **CO2 Dust and Particle Remover:** Substitute canned air. Used for dust removal.
- **Lint-free rags:** Substitute old T-shirts. Use for cleaning screens and dust-sensitive equipment.
- **Light machine oil:** Substitute 3-N One oil. Use for drive rails or printer carriage assemblies.
- **LPS solvent/Label-Off:** Substitute D-Solvit. Use for removing gummed labels.
- **LCD cleaner:** Substitute Formula 409 glass cleaner. Use for LCD screens and monitor screens.
- **Soft Scrub:** Substitute any metal polish product. Use for removing minor scratches from plastic.
- **Plastic abrasive pad:** Substitute SOS non-metallic scrub. Use for cleaning with Soft Scrub or polish.
- **Rubber Rejuvenator:** Substitute Goof-Off. Use for rejuvenating rubber rollers.
- **Philips screwdriver #2:** Use for opening cases.
- **Magnifyer:** Substitute any magnifying glass. Use for examination of small parts.
- **Flux remover:** Use for removing varnish from PC boards.
- **Antistatic wrist strap:** Use as a grounding wire for antistatic protection.
- **Antistatic bags:** Substitute aluminum foil. Use for protecting circuit boards.
- **Antistatic solution:** Substitute Downey fabric softener. Use for antistatic treatment of carpets and cleaning rags.
- **Needlenose pliers:** Use for any case adjustments.

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