



# Performing a System Healthcheck

10 tips to make sure that your desktop or laptop computer works at its optimal level.



**Rendili**

Develop. Serve. Support.

Suite 8 Chatmohr Estate, Crawley Hill, West Wellow, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 6AP. Phone: 0845 642 7110. [www.rendili.co.uk](http://www.rendili.co.uk)

## Environment

### 1. Make sure your PC is positioned correctly

Try to ensure that the fan vents on your system are kept clear otherwise your system can overheat or get blocked with an accumulation of dust, particularly in a non office environment. Check that the main fans are still running by testing that air is still being pushed out from the vent. Very often when a fan fails, particularly a processor fan, the system will “blue screen” or keep rebooting as it has overheated.

Ensure that any cables are kept tidy and are not a safety hazard. Network cables that have been partially dislodged or strained can cause intermittent data loss making you wonder why you sometimes have access to e-mail, server data and the Internet and sometimes not. Make sure the cleaners in your office cannot cause problems by potentially catching loose cables or powering off vital devices, such as servers.

## Data Protection

### 2. Backup your data regularly

Identify your key data, ensure it is backed up centrally if your system is part of a network or make regular backups to a removable device such as a memory stick, so that it can be kept separately from your PC. In the event of a disaster at the office, you should at least still have your data.

If backups are done at a server level, ensure that regular test restores are carried out to maintain confidence in data integrity. This is the one task that many computer users fail to do. If disaster strikes and information is lost, it can mean the difference between still having a business or not.

## Security

### 3. Run Microsoft updates automatically to keep up to date

If you have a Microsoft operating system (such as XP) and are using Microsoft Office, then it is essential you run Microsoft updates. You can set these to download automatically and then install manually at a time to suit you, or set them to update automatically. Critical updates provide protection against security flaws in the software and are very often deployed in response to potential virus or hacking outbreaks.

### 4. Always install anti-virus software and always keep it up to date

I am always amazed when someone asks me whether they need to bother with anti-virus software! If you connect to the Internet, if you use e-mail, if you import data from sources external to your PC, you need anti-virus software *and* you need to maintain your subscription so that it's kept up to date.

The aftermath of a viral infection can be devastating. Files may have been damaged or deleted and data lost. You may be forced to reinstall applications. Valuable information such as usernames, passwords or account information may have been stolen.

### 5. Always install anti-spyware software and always keep it up to date

Some anti-virus software includes anti-spyware protection but there are several free products available such as Windows Defender, Ad-aware and Spybot Search and Destroy which can be installed to prevent infestation. Malware or spyware as it is referred to can range from tracking your movements on the net to capturing keystrokes – bad news if you use online banking.



**Rendili**

Develop. Serve. Support.

## Speed and usability

### 6. Keep your disk clean and as efficient as possible

A disk that is more than 50% full will start to affect the performance of your PC as it has less space to write files to and therefore takes longer to save and retrieve information. It is therefore vital that you monitor your free space, run disk cleanup and disk defragmenter (Accessories/system tools) regularly. Also clear down temporary Internet files periodically.

If you have downloaded programs you no longer use, remove them and free up even more space. Even if you have plenty of disk space, there may be unused applications cluttering your desktop, systray or running in the background that are impacting on your usage of the PC.

### 7. Reduce the load and speed up your start up time

Check that all programs that start up when you switch on your PC are needed. Use MSCONFIG/Startup to check what is running. Also ensure that your desktop is free of large files or folders as these will all need to be loaded as part of your profile when you log on and will therefore make your logon process that much longer.

If you've had your PC for a while and have added and removed programs, you may also like to try running a free tool such as Regseeker, which allows you to tidy up your windows registry and makes using your PC more efficient.

### 8. Add more memory

If you are still running slowly and you're not ready to go out and buy a new PC, then try at least doubling the memory. Depending on the kind of work you do on your PC will determine how much memory you need. A minimum amount should



be 512Mb, but by all means upgrade to 4Gb if you can afford it.

To check what type of memory you have and what slots are available, use Crucial's scanner ([www.crucial.com](http://www.crucial.com)) if you're not comfortable taking the case off and peering inside.

### 9. Keep your e-mail under control

Organise your e-mail. If you do need to keep old mail, save it at regular intervals in archived personal folders. Save archives to centralised storage if your PC is part of a network. Maintaining a large amount of e-mails slows down searching and uses disk space whether on your PC's hard disk or on a server.

Mail servers can have space limits whether imposed by quotas on each user or on maximum mail store limits on a mail server, so if you want a faster service sending and receiving mail keep it lean and mean.

### 10. Cut down spam to a minimum

Don't ever reply to any spammer asking them to remove your address from their mailing list. By doing this you simply confirm that your e-mail address is active. Most ISPs have filters on to remove spam at source so check carefully before you sign up with one. Failing that, if you are on a network, the e-mail server software should provide some level of protection. If not then try a free spamblocker such as Mailwasher.



**Rendili**

Develop. Serve. Support.

# Active-IT Support

Peace of Mind Guaranteed

Rendili Limited  
Suite 8  
Chatmohr Business Park  
Crawley Hill  
West Wellow  
Romsey  
SO51 6AP

Telephone: 0845 642 7110  
Email: [info@rendili.co.uk](mailto:info@rendili.co.uk)

[www.rendili.co.uk](http://www.rendili.co.uk)