

# **General Computer Maintenance Tips**

## **Carry your laptop in a protective case or bag, free from any potentially harmful substances.**

- Computers should be carried in a bag with lots of padding and protection.
- Alternatively, you can purchase a "laptop sleeve" to protect your computer. Models with padding inside and a hard shell are preferred.
- Don't place food, drink, or other potentially harmful substances nearby or in a bag with your computer, as liquid spills on laptops are all too common and often come with a heavy price tag.
- Be sure to include accident protection in your warranty, if you are concerned about accidental damage or spills.

## **Always power down your laptop before moving it around, and at night.**

- The hard drive, where your data is stored is a series of spinning discs with a read/write head (analogous to a record player). Thus, transporting or moving your laptop while powered on can cause corruption to the hard drive (analogous to a record scratch).
- To avoid long boot-up times, you can also put your computer into Sleep, Standby, or Hibernate modes.
- Shutting down your computer (or putting it into Sleep or Hibernate) will also extend the life of the hardware.

## **Take care with the screen and keyboard.**

- The laptop's compact design means sensitive components must be stored directly below the keyboard.
- Avoid slamming or punching down on keys with excessive force, as this may damage the components underneath.
- The LCD screen is also sensitive, so avoid poking the screen too hard or placing heavy objects on top of your laptop.

## **Keep the laptop on a flat surface when in use and avoid blocking air vents.**

- Blocking air vents will cause the computer to operate above the normal operating temperature range, which over time will decrease the lifespan of your computer.
- Avoid using your computer in a particularly dusty area.
- Consider purchasing a compressed "air" canister and blowing out the dust from the vents.

## **Back up your data regularly and backup important files to multiple locations.**

- Hard drive failure is difficult to predict and may even occur within the first few months of computer ownership

## **Install Antivirus Software, keep it updated, and perform scans regularly.**

- Be sure to install Antivirus Software. Your computer may come with a free trial of another antivirus, but we strongly encourage uninstalling the trial version provided and installing something more permanent like the one provided by Auburn University (<http://auburn.edu/software>).
- Keep the software updated by setting your Antivirus to check daily for updates.

## **Set strong passwords.**

- Be sure to set a strong password for your username, using numbers, letters, and capitals.

## **Delete unwanted programs and files, and avoid installing lots of 'extras'.**

- In Windows, There are many flashy programs that run in the background of your computer (usually showing up as little icons in the task bar, e.g. WeatherBug). Use 'Add/Remove programs' in Control Panel to remove these programs or any others not in use.
- In OS X, be sure to remove unwanted programs from your 'Applications' folder.
- Empty your Recycling Bin or Trash.
- Delete old files from your desktop or documents folders.
- Remove any excess user accounts that may be taking up space.

## **Update Windows/OS X regularly.**

- To have the best patches and security updates available, be sure to regularly update your computer.

## **Avoid P2P software.**

- P2P programs often come bundled with adware or spyware.
- P2P downloads can sometime be bogus files and may contain viruses.

## **Keep track of your software CD/DVDs and license keys.**

- Never discard the Windows, Office, or other discs that come with your computer, these can be invaluable in getting your computer running fast.
- Keep all official documents, receipts, and license keys for your software, which are needed if the software must be reinstalled.