How to Improve and Maintain Computer Performance & Security

Introduction:
I wrote these steps initially for friends. I perform these steps on all of our home computers and at my work routinely. I have also performed these steps on many computers for friends with no problems at all. You should not experience any problem doing these steps when following these instructions. I recommend you print this out to use while doing the steps. For the full benefits, do them all. These steps can take a while so be patience, and you don't have to do them all the same day.

These steps will advise you to download some software, if you don't already have them. If you have programs that you believe are similar to the ones I recommend, I would say keep what you are using. Also, during these download setups, pay close attention to any setup options offered, or already checked, make sure they fit your needs and if not, uncheck them. I recommend to **uncheck all boxes for anything automatic except for anti-virus updates**. Some setups may ask; "Run this program for me only" or "anyone who uses this computer", always select the "Anyone" option.

Warning: Although these steps are relatively simple, I do not know your personal computer experience, it's hardware, programs, capabilities, or capacities, therefore I assume no responsibility for any problems you may experience. If you are not sure, I recommend you ask someone knowledgeable to review this first and advise you if it's ok to do these steps. If you run these steps, you do so at your own risk. Also, if you use it, let me know how this works.

If you need a good local PC shop in Houston, check these 2 out. I use both, prices are fair and service is great.

http://www.pcpsinc.com/osc/eshop/default.php and/or http://www.altex.com/

Good Luck,
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Step 1. Clean out the "TEMP" Files:
a. The simple way to do this is use the "Run" command. For Windows 7 you must first right click on the start menu icon and select Properties, then click "Customize", now scroll down to find the "Run" option and check it, click apply and continue. Now go to Start, Run, Type in (Temp). (without the parenthesis'). In Temp you can delete all files possible. If folders named "Cookies", "History" and "Temporary Internet Files" are there, leave them there.

b. Once done, go back to Start, Run, and type in (%temp%). (without the parenthesis'). Again, I recommend you delete all these temp files, (except the 3 mentioned above), by highlighting the first, hold down on the "Shift Key" and scroll down to the last one and highlight it, this should highlight them all, now hit the delete key. If a file is in use, it cannot delete and a message appears stating that, click ok on message then hold down the "Ctrl" key and click that file once and it will un-highlight, then all others should be still highlighted so click delete again, repeat for any file in use until all but the in use files are gone.

c. If you have other folders there, (except those 3 mentioned above) open them to see if they are empty, which usually they are. If not, delete the contents, leaving the folder. (If you delete the folder, and if it's needed, windows will put it back anyway.)

Step 2. Clean out "Temporary Internet Files":
a. Right click on the Internet Explorer Icon on your desktop and select "Properties". Look for the "General" settings and click on "Settings". In here, change the value showing, usually a high value, to maybe 50MB but no more than 252MB for the amount of disk space to use.

b. Now look lower for the "History" Section and change the value there to 3, or maybe 5 days, for the number of days to keep history. Click "Ok" to go back to the "General" dialog.

c. Next, click the tab "Delete", in here check to delete "Cookies" "History" and "Temporary Internet Files" and then click the tab "Delete". Wait for it to delete all the files and then close this out now.

Step 3. Remove any unwanted software:
a. Go to Start, Settings, Control Panel, Add/Remove Programs. **For Win 7 it is named "Programs and Features".** Look to see if anything is listed in here that you know you do not want. If so, you can safely remove it here by double clicking on the file name and select remove. (NOTE: **Do not** just delete a program file or Folders. I do not recommend using any of the programs listed below. If you have any of them, I would suggest you remove them using the "Add/Remove" programs tab in the control panel.

b. List of Problem Programs: (Programs known to cause problems or slowness)
Any McAfee or Norton Utilities other than their stand alone Anti-Virus, KaZaa, My Web Search, FunWeb Products, My Search Bar, Napster, PC-Doctor, System Doctor, Weatherbug, Webhancer, Webscan-X, Windows Guardian.

Step 4. Remove Spy-ware, Hijackers & Mal-ware:
a. If you have SuperAntiSpyware, update it and run it now. If you don't have Superantispyware, go to www.google.com and do a search for Superantispyware, download and install it. Superantispyware is free, updateable and is very good.

b. To run SuperAntiSpyware, select the "Quick Scan". If you have known issues, run the "Full Scan". When it finishes, click NEXT, click ok to remove, when it finishes, close it. It too may prompt to re-boot, just click ok and reboot.

Step 5. Update your virus program and run a full scan:
Notes: 1. Always disable system restore if you think you have a virus.
2. If you are networked, disconnect from the network to prevent spreading the virus.

a. If your virus program doesn't work or has expired, **and you suspect a virus but not sure**, you can go to **www.trendmicro.com** and look for the free "**On-Line Scan**". Follow the prompts for the small download and then when the scan is ready, select your Drive C to scan (in the small window). When it finishes, it will provide a detailed report on the findings.

b. If you don't have a virus program, or it has expired, you can get a good free one. Do the on-line scan first if needed, then do a search for "AVG Free Edition". I recommend choosing the link at CNET downloads option. Follow the instructions to download it. **Uninstall** any old virus program you may have before running the AVG setup. I recommend AVG free edition over any paid Norton or McAfee.

c. During the setup it may prompt a reboot, go ahead. When you restart, AVG will continue the setup and auto update. Now run a full scan with AVG.

Step 6. Remove unneeded Automatic Startups:
a. Go to "Start", "Run" and type in "msconfig" and click ok. Click on the "Startup" tab and look in the window at what is booting up at startup. If you're not sure what some of these are, jot down the name showing by the check mark. An example is "sgtray".

b. Next, go to **http://www.sysinfo.org/startupinfo.html** - This webpage opens a list of usual startups. It is an alphabetical listing of most all startups. Scroll down to the first letter of the name(s) you wrote down, (i.e. S for sgtray). This list will show in the left column whether items are needed or not. See the Y=yes, required, N=No, U=User preference on the far right. (User preference is your call.)

Step 7. Run CCleaner:
a. If you have CCleaner already, open it and run to clean up stray temp and unneeded filtes. It is safe to use and does a fairly good job at cleaning out temp files.

b. If you don't have CCleaner, go to the Internet and run a search for "CCleaner, download and install it. To run, just click on the icon it creates on the desktop, then click "Analize", let it run for a few minutes, then when it's done, Click "Run Cleaner", then click OK and let it finish, then close it.

Step 8. Run Disk Cleanup:
a.Go to Start, Program files, Accessories, System Tools, and find "Disk Cleanup". Click on it and select C drive then select all the files it offers except "Downloaded Program Files". Be sure Recycle Bin and Compress Files is checked. For WinXP, you can click on "More Options" then look at the bottom and click to "clean up all but last restore point", then click ok, then click Yes to confirm. For Win 7 you can choose "Clean up System Files". Then it runs again, now select options above. Click ok to cleanup, when it finishes, it will close automatically.

Step 9. Defrag the Hard Drive:
a. Lastly, Go to start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools, select "Disk Defragmenter". When it opens, be sure the C: Drive is selected, click "Defragment". Let it run until it shows complete. **For Win7, it will not show a completed message but it will show idle.**

Last Step:
Re-boot your machine when this is all done. You should notice a significant improvement in the performance. **To maintain good performance, run these steps quarterly.**

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