

How to use and maintain your computer

Buying a computer is a major investment. Once you have made your purchase, you will want it to work reliably for many years to come. A computer can only do this if you know how to use and protect it. This guide will help you determine how to install your computer, how to secure it from theft and how to use it properly.

When you get home: It is important that you keep all packaging and documentation from your purchase. If your machine requires warranty service, you will be asked to produce a proof of purchase for your service provider. Your invoice should clearly show the model number, serial number and the date of your purchase. Keep a copy in a safe place, as it will be necessary in case of hardware problems or theft. Also, many products, should they prove to be defective, can be returned to your local dealer only if they are still accompanied by the original packaging.

Installation: As you open the boxes containing your new computer, you'll find a number of items such as manuals, disks, cables and a checklist that describes the components included with your system. If you've never used a computer before, you should read through the user's manual before undertaking any of the installation procedures. Once you have assembled your system and are satisfied that it is working properly, you will want to install your applications programs (software). Most software comes with simple step-by-step installation procedures.

Checking for Problems: Generally, computer hardware, software and other supplies are very reliable; however, if you are going to encounter problems, they usually occur soon after you begin to use your new equipment. It is recommended that you begin to work with your system soon after you pick it up. Keep a log of any problems that occur. If hardware purchased from the Campus Computer Store is not functioning properly, clearly document your problem and call us at 458-7912.

Software is supported by the manufacturer. If you encounter a software problem, check your software manuals for the company's telephone support line. We can supply you with the number if necessary.

Insurance and Security: The most effective deterrent against theft is leaving your computer safely locked in a secure place and protecting it as you would your television or stereo. Clearly engraving your student ID number or driver's license number on the front case of your system makes it unattractive to thieves. Security devices such as cables that are permanently attached to your system and allow you to lock it to a large object, such as your desk are available from the Computer Sales Centre. Especially for small,

portable notebook computers, it is especially important to keep your computer secured whenever it is being left unattended, even if that is only for a few seconds.

Consider insuring your computer against theft, fire and other possible risks through a homeowner's policy, tenant policy, or some other commercially available policy. Although a homeowner's policy does provide some coverage for personal computers, it is usually limited and does not cover some of the likely sources of damage - such as power surges or food or drink spills. Check with your insurance company to see if wider coverage is available.

Maintaining Your Hardware: Begin taking care of your hardware properly from the start. Place it in a clean, controlled environment. Computer equipment should be installed in a stable location - on a sturdy table, not on a stack of books. Equipment should be out of direct sunlight and away from other sources of heat, such as radiators. Air vents on the computer should not be blocked by papers or other equipment.

Surge protection is advisable. Buy a power bar that has built-in surge protection. Establish a power up and power down sequence for your equipment and stick to it. First, turn off your lower power equipment, then turn off your high power equipment (like your computer, monitor and printer). Always switch off your equipment before turning off your power bar. Unplug your equipment if you know you won't be using it for a number of days or weeks.

Dust and dirt leave a film on the monitor screen, get into the disk drives and clog up the keyboard and mouse. Keep your equipment away from open windows, fans, ducts and areas exposed to moving air. If your computer is at home, keep pets out of the computer room. Dust covers made of non-electrostatic material are available to fit most computers. Spills are probably the number one hazard to the keyboard, yet most of us continue to park a coffee cup or soft drink next to the computer. Don't do it! That goes for food and other items as well - the keyboard can't work properly clogged up with food particles, paper clips, eraser leavings and other debris.

Smoke is also a serious hazard to your computer's health. Smoke particles get into disk drives and cause sporadic read/write errors. Smoke leaves a film over the monitor and other external surfaces of your computer. It can also interfere with cable connectors, empty chip sockets, video display controls and switches. Handle computer disks carefully when they are in use, and store them away from dust, heat and any magnetic sources.

Always back up your work! Many a thesis has been lost due to equipment failure, user error and bad luck. It can be time consuming and expensive to restore lost data and in many cases it is simply impossible.

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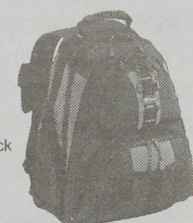
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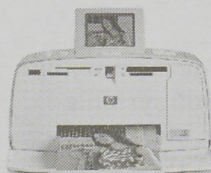
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