



## Spring Cleaning: Tidy Up That Hard Drive

Even people with tidy desks and pristine offices sometimes find themselves with a whole lot of clutter – on their computer hard drives. Just because storage is cheap these days doesn't mean you need to have a lot of spare bits and bytes hanging around. Keeping extra files on your hard drive can make it difficult to get to the information you want, leading to lost or duplicated files and a lot of wasted time. Here are a few simple ways you can keep your files in order.

Delete, delete, delete

You know the old adage about clothes: If you haven't worn something in a year throw it out. The same might apply to your computer files. If you haven't opened something in a year you're probably safe throwing it out. At the very least, you can take everything you're not 100% sure you're comfortable deleting and put it all in folder called 'Archive'

Use descriptive file names

This sounds simple but it's shocking how many people name important documents like 'Report.doc'. Put enough identifying detail in the file name that you'll be able to discern the contents at a glance. Under Windows XP and now 7 you have 255 characters to play with. So if you can describe it in less than a text message (160 chars) you'll be fine with even the most verbose description.

Don't save what you don't need

If a co-worker sends you a file for review, chances are you download it, make some changes, re-save and send it back. Once you've sent it, there's no reason to keep that file hanging around. Create a folder for these sort of one-off files and then empty it at the end of every week by either deleting the file or, if it's important, moving it to the appropriate directory

Defrag

Ideally, your computer would store documents and applications in big blocks on its disk. Over time, however, as files are added, deleted and moved around, new docs and applications can get broken into chunks and stored wherever there's space. Defragmenting your hard drive cleans up all those stray odds and ends and makes your computer run faster and more efficiently. To run a defrag just go to the 'Start' menu, select 'All Programs' then 'Accessories', 'System Tools' and finally 'Disk Defragmenter'. It can take a while, several hours, for the process to run, particularly if you've got a lot of data on your hard drive. For this reason, you might want to schedule it to run overnight.

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