

Tidying up your computer files

Many types of files will be stored on your computer, particularly if you use the internet. Some files are unnecessary, some are potentially dangerous and many of them will be your own documents which you will want to use in the future. As more and more files are stored, your computer will slow down and will cease functioning at its peak. This article will advise on how to remove unnecessary files from your computer, how to prevent dangerous files and how to arrange necessary files in an efficient order.

Files that build up on your computer include 'temporary files' which are left over from installing or updated programs. 'Offline webpages' are websites stored on your computer allowing them to load faster and for you to view them even when disconnected from the internet. The 'Recycle Bin' is where files you have deleted are stored in case you need to retrieve them. 'Temporary Internet Files' consist of 'cookies' which store customised website information such as preferred page layouts, 'history' which record the pages you have viewed so that you can visit them again and 'form data' which includes your name, address and other details regularly entered on online registration forms. These are stored to save time when you are next completing a form. Internet Explorer 7 allows you to store passwords, which is convenient when regularly accessing your email account from a home computer, but not a good preference to use on a public computer such as an internet café.

'Disk Cleanup' is a program used to clean up unnecessary files. To run 'Disk Cleanup' open Computer from the Start menu, right click the drive you wish to tidy and scroll down to properties. You will see a button called Clean Up. When you click it, the 'Disk Cleanup' program runs and searches the computer for unnecessary files. The program produces a list; tick the files you wish to delete and press ok. The program will ask for confirmation before the files are removed so you cannot accidentally delete something important.

To tidy Internet Explorer 7, open Internet Explorer 7, click on tools, internet options, browsing history and then the delete button. You will be given the option to delete 'temporary internet files', 'cookies', 'history', 'form data' and 'passwords'. Click on the

Delete All button if you wish to delete these all at once. If you wish to keep some, you will need to delete them one by one.

When browsing the internet you can acquire Spyware and Adware. These are types of viruses which slow down your computer and internet. These can be removed with a free program called Spybot Search and Destroy.

'Disk Defragmenter' is used to de-fragment your hard drive. A hard drive is like a book, with a table of contents of stored information. The table of contents allows you to see where data is stored so you can easily access it. When a hard drive becomes fragmented its files are assembled randomly rather than in logical sequence. Although the data will continue updating when fragmented, the process will take longer. Disk Defragmenter puts all the files back in order so they are quicker to access, helping the computer run more efficiently. Disk Defragmenter can be found by clicking Computer, right clicking on the hard drive you wish to de-fragment, then clicking on properties. When the properties window appears, click on the tools tab and then click Defragment Now.

Files on the C drive of a computer are much the same as files in a vertical filing cabinet. In a vertical filing cabinet there are a number of different draws which divide up the storage space. Then there are suspension files which are used to keep a number of manila folders together. Each manila folder then contains documents that are closely related. Folders on a computer are much the same. Each person in the family can have their own file (equivalent to a draw in the filing cabinet). Within this draw people can have several different folders (equivalent to the suspension files) and within these there can be many closely related files (equivalent to the manila folders). Keeping files in different folders rather than having all your documents randomly on one drive makes them easy to find particular if you are in a hurry.

To create a new folder right click in the location where you want your folder to be (e.g. Documents) click New then click Folder. Logical ways of storing all data is to break it up into members of the family or to use topics for example 'Christmas', 'birthdays', 'holidays', 'resumes', or 'letters to editor'. You can then break up the topics into years.

If you take a lot of photos and store them on your computer you will find that your computer will start to slow down. For this reason it is a good idea to store photos on an external drive such as a thumb drive, to keep your computer running at its best. This is also a good idea as it will serve as a backup if your computer gets a virus, or is damaged in a storm as otherwise all your data may be lost. If you don't wish to purchase an external drive, you can burn photos on a CD or DVD. Alternatively only keep the best photos and delete the bad ones.

Another trick to preserve space is to resize pictures so that they are smaller. However in doing so you may not be able to print these photos larger than a 6x4 as the quality will be too low. To resize a picture I use VSO image resizer (http://www.vso-software.fr/products/image_resizer/) Once downloaded and installed highlight the photos you wish to resize, and right click. Click the option of VSO Image Resizer and the program will open. Change the resolution to 800x600 then click ok. To make finding photos easier, try storing the photos by events and years rather than the date the photos were loaded on the computer which is the default setting on many cameras.

If you have programs that you haven't used for a long time or don't intend to use again (eg for old cameras or printers) you can remove them using the uninstall feature in 'Programs and Features' located in the control panel. This will free up more space on your computer so it operates at its peak.

If you have questions about organising your files, if your computer is running slowly and you would like your temporary files removed or if you need to update your internet security call in and see Josh at the CTC or ring him on 6343 1720.