Field Medic's Guide to Fixing your Own Computer

Gena Burke - 2022-10-31 - Comments (0) - Desktop Computing and Printing

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This article is for users who want to resolve performance issues on their personally-owned computers. If you are using a Brown-owned computer, please contact your IT support pro before proceeding.

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Software cleanup

- Run virus scans frequently if you've been affected by them in the past.
    - Windows Defender on Windows 10 is pretty good on viruses, and Macs often are OK without extra virus scanners.
    - But Malwarebytes is free on all platforms and can catch adware, malware, and other threats. OIT recommends Malwarebytes as a suggestion and is only meant to be run on personal, non-Brown devices.
- CCleaner cleans up system junk and your browser cache. It can also fix unpredictable browser issues.

What to do if you think your laptop is broken?

Below are some common scenarios students encounter with their hardware.

- **If it's been dropped or has liquid damage**, the person should consider bringing it in for repair with the manufacturer or through a third-party repair service (ex. Geek Squad, Apple Repair Location, etc.)

- **Most manufacturers include built-in diagnostic tools**. Running diagnostics on your laptop will help you identify the potential problem. Research the manufacturer to find out how.
    - You can sometimes access a computer diagnostics program by turning off the computer. Then turning it back on and pressing F12 soon after the power button. This could give you an option to run a hardware diag on your computer. (Dell, HP). Some manufacturers could have different options and might use a different F key.
    - How to run hardware diag on Apple
        - If your Mac was introduced before June 2013, it uses Apple Hardware Test instead.
- **Does your computer power off a few minutes after it is on?**
    - It could be overheating or hardware issues, move the laptop to a hard surface with airflow around it. Beds, couches, and carpets are not ideal.

    - Avoid blocking fan grills or vents, usually located on the bottom, back, or side of laptop computers.
- **Does your computer beep 3 times then pause for 1 sec then beeps 3 more times, consistently after power on?** Video
    - This could be a bad memory stick or memory bay. Reseating the memory or rotating the memory sticks can sometimes fix the issue.

    - When reseating memory chips, a pencil eraser can be used to burnish the contacts before reinstalling chips.
- **Does your windows-based laptop not want to boot up?**
    - Try removing the battery (if it's removable), disconnect the power adapter, and hold the power button for 20 seconds. Reinstall the battery and reinsert the power adapter. Then turn on the computer. This can sometimes solve a power-on failure.
- **On your Apple computer:**
    - **Does it boot up to a Folder in the middle of the screen?**
        - This could mean a missing system file or a corrupt operating system. Your data could be salvageable. You can run a repair on the drive. Turn off the computer, then power on and immediately hold the Command + R keys. This will load the repair mode. You can then run Disk Utility to run a repair on the hard drive.
    - **Are you getting the circle and the line across?**
        - This means the hard drive is not visible by the logic board. It could be a bad hard drive, bad hard drive connector or worst, a bad logic board.

Review your hardware support pages

Many answers can be found on the support pages of the laptop manufacturer. Here are a few of the most popular.

- Official Apple Support
- Dell Support
- HP Support for Technical Help and Troubleshooting

Contact us for more help!

Reach out and we'll do everything we can remotely to help you get up and running if we can. The IT Service Center's contact information can be found here and on the right-hand side of this page.