



How To Clean Your Computer and its Components Without Harming Them.
By Jennifer Ohl, Midwest Software Specialists, Inc.

Keyboard



A dirty keyboard is a hygiene hazard and is often the reason why some of the keys and functions do not work. You can purchase a keyboard cleaning kit from 3M (www.3m.com) or Fellows (www.fellows.com) for around \$6.00, or you could use items that you already have.

To clean your keyboard, shut down your computer (turning it off) and disconnect the keyboard. Turn the keyboard upside down over a garbage can and shake it to remove any debris that might have settled. Dip a cotton swab into a bottle of rubbing alcohol and use it to wipe the keys, one at a time. You could also use antibacterial/disinfecting wipes.

Mechanical mouse



The ball inside constantly picks up dust, dirt, and lint that is on your mouse pad. A dirty mouse ball can cause your mouse to function erratically and make it difficult for you to work.

To clean your mouse, shut down your computer. Turn the mouse over and find the small plastic ring that goes around the mouse ball. Slightly turn this ring (usually in a counter clock-wise direction) to release the mouse ball and expose the inside of the mouse.

Use a tweezer to dislodge any lint or objects that are inside the mouse. Dip a cotton swab in rubbing alcohol (the swab should be damp, not sopping wet. Do not drip liquid inside your mouse) and clean the inside of the mouse. Do the same to the mouse's ball. Wait until everything is dry before you reassemble the mouse. Clean or replace your mouse pad, depending upon its condition. Alternatively, switch to an optical mouse.

Optical mouse



(The underside has a red light instead of a mouse ball), wipe it with a damp, lint-free cloth. Pay particular attention to the area from which the red light shines. No need to open up an optical mouse.



Monitors and LCD (Liquid crystal display) screens

Use a dry, lint free cloth to clean your monitor or LCD. Don't use paper towels or rags on LCD's, as they can permanently scratch the surface. You can purchase a monitor/LCD cleaning cloth and kit at any electronics store and they work very well. If the dry cloth doesn't get the job done, moisten a separate cloth with water, or vinegar mixed with water, and then follow up with the dry cloth.

When cleaning a LCD screen, apply as little pressure as you can. Do not spray liquids directly on the LCD, instead, dampen a cloth and use the cloth to clean the LCD.

Desk top personal computer

A running computer generates heat and therefore fans are used to circulate air and keep the internal parts of the computer cool. It is important to remove the dust which accumulates on these fan covers and around components of your computer to avoid higher temperature inside you computer, which may eventually result in hardware failure.

Use a can of compressed air, such as "Dust Off" from Falcon Safety Products, or any other source of compressed air, for cleaning. It is important to hold the can in an upright position before and during use.

Shut down and power off your computer and then unplug the external cables (monitor, keyboard, network, etc...) and then open the main cover to expose the computer components. Place your computer on a clean, lint-free surface. It is a good idea to wear an electrostatic wristband (available at any electronics store) to discharge any static electricity.

Hold the can of compressed air upright and spray directly into the power supply vents. Next, spray the other components of the computer and pay extra attention to the fans. Spray through all of the ports and jacks on the back of the computer, but do not spray on your floppy diskette (if you even have one!), CD, DVD or zip drives.

*Laptop computer users should spray compressed air through open vents or fans. That is all that is needed.

About the Author

Jennifer Ohl is a maintenance and reliability consultant based in Chicago and Miami. She was Regional Manager of Consulting Services for a leading maintenance software manufacturer and subsequently founded her own company, Midwest Software Specialists in 2001. For twelve years, Jennifer has been helping companies implement maintenance systems that reduce costs and increase profits. Jennifer has an MBA in Finance and Operations and a BA in Business.