



Some Good Computing Habits

This article suggests some ways to keep your computer running well by using tools in Microsoft Windows XP and other resources.

1. Organize your Folders

We all know how easy it is to dump files into the wrong folder when we're in a hurry. One way to make sure you'll keep your files organized is to remove the clutter with a filing system that makes sense for the way you use your computer. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- **A Good Place to Start**

Begin by looking through the files in the My Documents folder. As you look through them, notice which documents are related to each other by topic, and therefore might be a good idea to store them together. Think of the papers you accumulate every day, and which manila folders you decide to store them in.

- **Think it through**

Take the time to plan the best way to organize your files. How do you spend your time on the computer and what do you create? Do you work with photos and image editing software, surf the Web, write short stories, research school projects, or play games? The folders you create in My Documents can be easily named to show you what kind of data or information they contain.

- **Use subfolders**

After you have an idea of the kinds of documents or files you create and want to save, create folders and subfolders in which to store your files. Be sure to use clear and easy-to-understand names. For example, within My Documents, you might create these folders:

-- Correspondence-Business

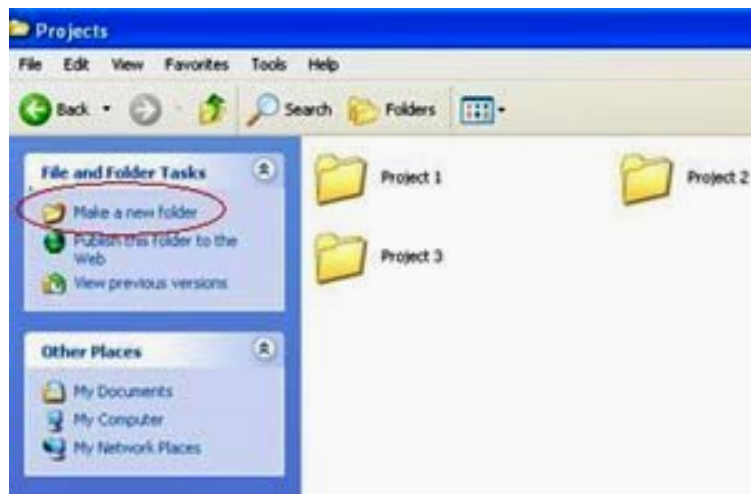
-- Correspondence-Personal

-- Newsletters

-- Banking

Within each Correspondence folder, you could create subfolders for each person you write to or receive documents from.

Tip: To create a new subfolder with Windows XP, open the My Documents folder to start. Click Make a New Folder in the File and Folder task pane on the left side of the window. Type the name for the new folder and press Enter.



Create a new folder using the File and Folder task pane.

2. Clean up your Hard Disk

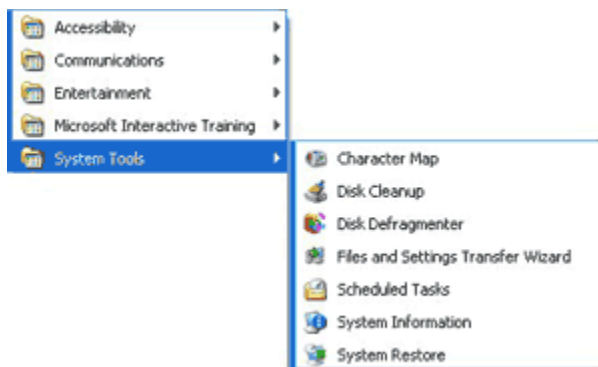
Now that you've organized your files and folders and cleaned up your desktop, you can organize the data itself. Windows XP includes two utilities—Disk Cleanup and Disk Defragmenter—that help free up more space on your hard drive and help your computer work more efficiently.

- Disk Cleanup deletes unnecessary files with the intention of recovering additional storage space.
- Disk Defragmenter scans your hard drive and consolidates files that may be scattered across the disk (the more you have stored on your hard

drive, the more likely this is to happen, and the longer it can take to open and access files you select).

You won't want to run Disk Defragmenter as often as Disk Cleanup. As a general rule, use Disk Cleanup every month or two, and run Disk Defragmenter once every several months or so, depending on how often you use your computer.

To find both programs, click Start, point to All Programs, then point to Accessories, and then choose System Tools. You can click Disk Cleanup and Disk Defragmenter in the System Tools menu.



Find Windows XP System Tools within the Start menu.

3. Use System Restore

System Restore is one of those programs that can be a life-saver when you've been the unfortunate recipient of unstable software, a badly timed power outage, or a damaging thunderstorm. System Restore records important documents, settings, and preferences on your computer at a certain point in time. If the unthinkable happens and your computer files are damaged or inaccessible, you can use System Restore to put your computer back the way it was before the problem occurred. This process will not harm your e-mail, documents, pictures, etc. It only restores the settings that were in effect before the damage.

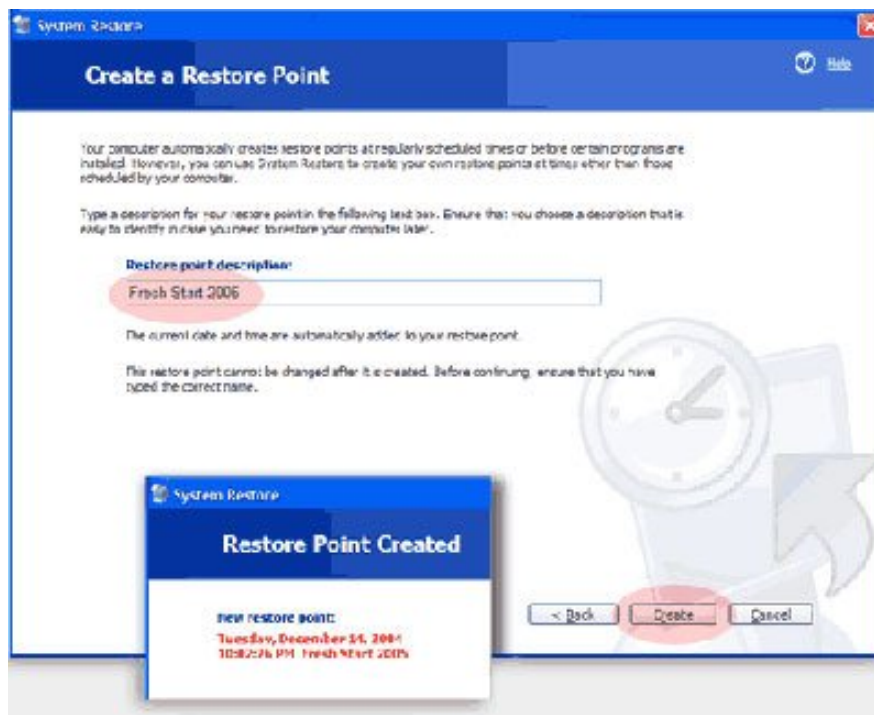
It is good idea to get into the habit of creating a system checkpoint (called a restore point) anytime you are about to add new software. This is true for software that you want to download from the Internet or install from a CD

or DVD. If anything goes wrong with the installation or the program causes a conflict, you can restore your computer to the point just before you began the installation.

Note: System Restore automatically adds restore points to your computer daily and before you install device drivers, automatic updates, unsigned drivers, and some applications.

To use System Restore:

1. Click Start, and choose All Programs.
2. Point to Accessories, then point to System Tools, and then choose System Restore.
3. When the program begins, choose Create a restore point and click Next.
4. Enter a description of the restore point (such as Before Adobe Install) and click Create. After a few seconds, the program will tell you the date, time, and description of the new restore point.
5. Click Close to exit System Restore.



NOTE: Using System Restore is NOT the same thing as backing up your files. System Restore is not a backup system, nor should it be used as one. You should back up your files as part of a regular backup system. Which files should you back up? Only those you cannot afford to lose! Please contact Silver Sage Learning at 720-989-4401 for additional information about how to back up your computer files.

4. Keep Windows and Office Up to Date

Computer programs are continually changed; problems are resolved, features are added, and security is improved. As a registered user, you should benefit from those improvements. Make sure Microsoft Update is running regularly.

To configure your computer to receive critical updates automatically:

1. Click Start, and then click Control Panel.
2. Click System.
3. In the System Properties window, click the Automatic Updates tab.
4. Select a setting. Microsoft recommends selecting Automatic: Automatically download recommended updates for my computer and install them. You can schedule Automatic Updates for any time of day. Your computer must be on at the scheduled time for updates to be installed. It makes sense to choose a time when you will not be using the computer for other tasks.



5. If you choose to have Automatic Updates notify you in step 4, you will see a notification balloon when new downloads are available to install. Click the notification balloon to review and install updates.

Important: If you choose an option in step 4 other than Automatic, you must download and install every critical update. If you download the updates, but forget to install them your computer will not be protected with all the latest enhancements.

5. Help Internet Explorer Run Faster

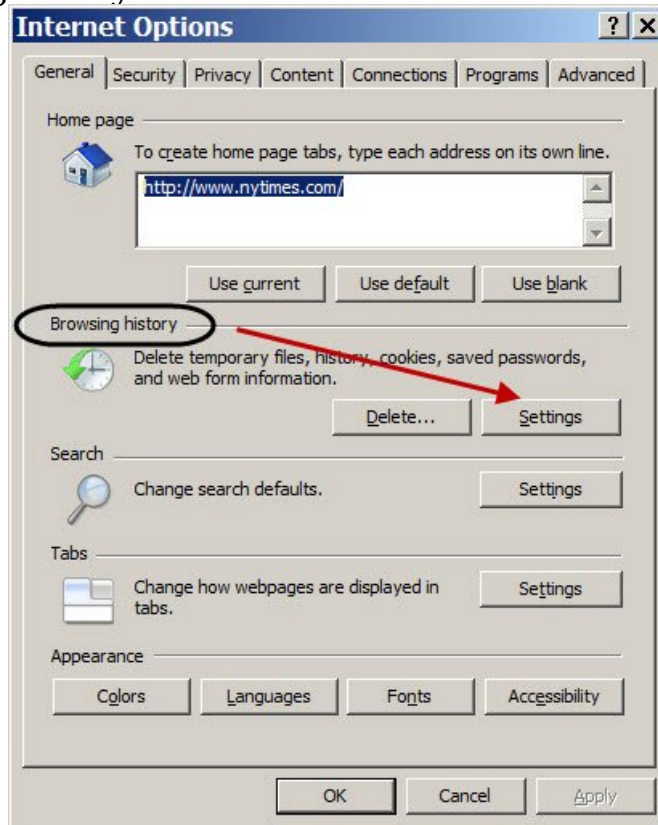
Reduce the Size of your Web page History

Internet Explorer stores Web pages you visit to your computer, organizing them in a section called History. The web pages are organized by day, and by week. It is probably useful to keep several days of Web history stored on your computer, there is no need to store more than a week's worth of web pages. If you store more than a week's worth, you may be slowing down your computer's performance.

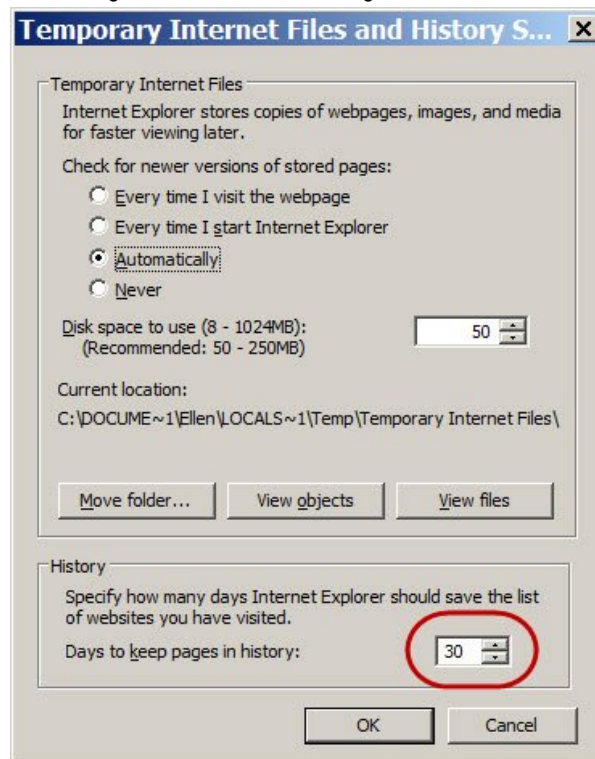
How?

1. Open Internet Explorer and click on the Tools menu. Click Internet Options in the menu.

2. In the Internet Options window, click on the Settings button in the Browsing history section.



3. In the Temporary Internet Files and History Settings window, look at the number of days in the History section (near the bottom of the window).



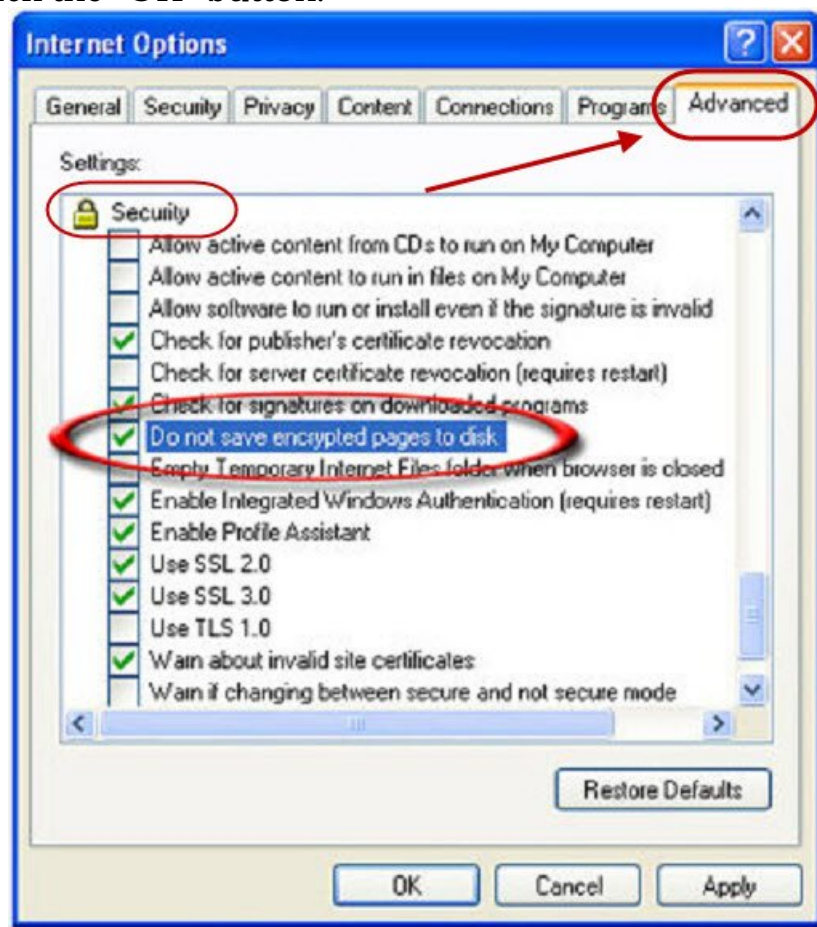
4. Change the number of days to 7 or less by clicking on the small arrow to the right of the number that faces down.
5. Click the "OK" button.

Don't save encrypted Web pages

Encrypted Web pages are those that ask you for usernames and passwords. These pages scramble the information you type to prevent others from reading it. You will free up space by saving fewer files to your computer, as well as keeping secure information off your computer.

How?

1. Open Internet Explorer and click on the Tools menu. Click Internet Options in the menu.
2. In the Internet Options window, click the Advanced tab.
3. In the white box area, (under the word Settings), scroll down to the Security section. Click into the box in front of the words "Do not save encrypted pages to disk" to place a check mark in the box.
4. Click the "OK" button.



6. Run Antivirus Software and a Spyware Detection and Removal Tool

Updating your Windows software is one step in keeping your computer safe. You also want to install antivirus software and keep it up to date. There are very good free antivirus programs; please contact Silver Sage Learning directly at 720-989-4401 if you would like a recommendation.

If your computer seems sluggish or if you begin to see lots of pop-up advertisements even when you're not on the Web, your computer may be infected with spyware, adware, or other unwanted software. Install an anti-spyware program on your computer to keep your computer running at its best. Again, please contact Silver Sage Learning for a recommendation.