

Emergency Computer Problem-Solving

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for the Cary Grove Chamber Of Commerce

We all know that sinking feeling, when the computer does something it shouldn't. Maybe it's a blank screen greeting your day, or an error message during a deadline. Many people don't know that there are easy ways to fix computer problems if you know the expert tricks.

The number-one computer solution is: Reboot! Turning your computer off and back on is more effective than Restart. It's always best to use your computer's shut down command (Start menu, Shut Down for PCs; Apple menu, Shutdown for Macs). If the computer is frozen, you may have no choice but to hit the power button, or even pull the plug! When the computer restarts, it will reload from scratch. This fixes most computer glitches.

Let's say you have a recurring problem that isn't fixed with a reboot. Keep a log of your computer's misbehavior, and ask Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.

- Who is the culprit? Try to narrow down the problem. Does it happen only when you use the Internet, or only when you try to print?
- What's changed? Has any new hardware or software been installed?
- When does the problem begin? At startup? After a period of time? When you perform a certain task?

- Where could you look for clues? Try the same thing in another way; if one file or program won't open, test another. This illuminates system-wide issues.
- Why not check the obvious? Loose cables and unplugged cords are simple to fix.
- How often are your computer's protections updated? All computers (yes, Macs too) should have current antivirus, but Windows users in particular also need anti-spyware and firewall software. A security suite consolidates these components.

It's best to avoid problems through routine maintenance. Cleaning programs help, but be wary of Web-advertised software that claims to “clean up your PC.” Some of these are scams that install malicious software.

There comes a time when the best thing to do is turn a professional loose on the problem. Look for a technician proficient in troubleshooting, and be sure to ask for references. Your computer person, like your doctor or dentist, is someone with whom to establish a trusted relationship.

With these emergency tips, you'll never be without computer help again.

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