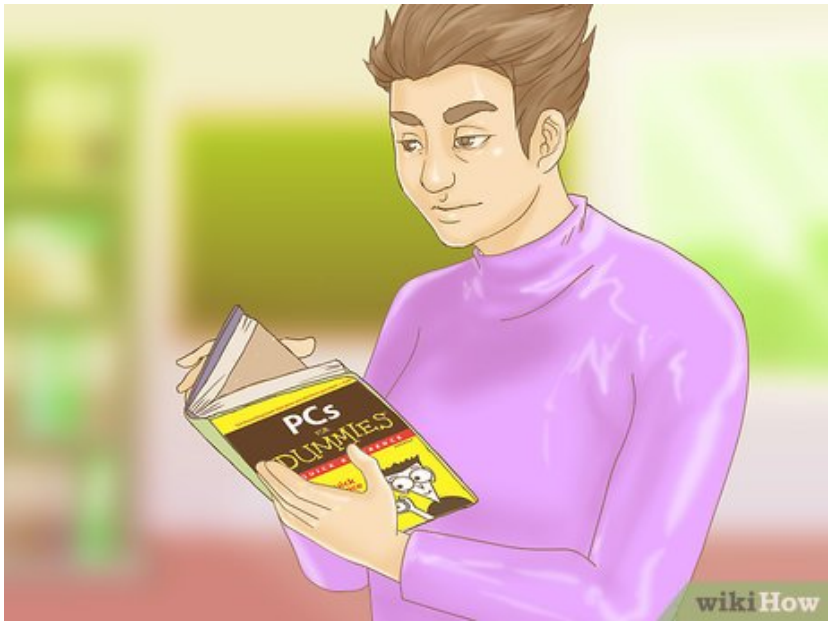
How to Be a Computer Genius

If you are passionate about learning new things, fascinated by computers, and enjoy problem-solving, you can become a computer genius. And don't worry if you can't pursue a computer science degree. You can build computer mastery by...

Method 1 of 6:

Learning Hardware Basics

1. 

Find (and read) a book for a beginner. Even if you are not brand new to using a computer, getting a book for beginners is a great way to fill the gaps in your knowledge. Ask your librarian to show you books for beginning computer users, search your favorite bookseller's website for 'computers for beginners,' or try one of these:

1. Any computer-related book in the 'For Dummies' series, such as *PCs for Dummies* or *Macs for Dummies*.
2. *How Computers Work* by Ron White
3. *Upgrading and Repairing PCs* by Scott Mueller

2. 

Learn the names of the hardware in your computer. To become a computer genius, you will need to understand how the different parts of a computer work with one another.

1. Everything inside of your computer is connected to the motherboard, including the CPU, which acts as the computer's 'brain.'
2. RAM stores data that's currently in use. Become familiar with how it works with and connects to the motherboard.
3. Peripheral cards add functions to the computer. Learn about sound, networking, and video cards.
4. Storage and disk drives are places to store data. Research hard drives, CD/DVD-ROM drives, and removable media like USB flash drives and SD cards.

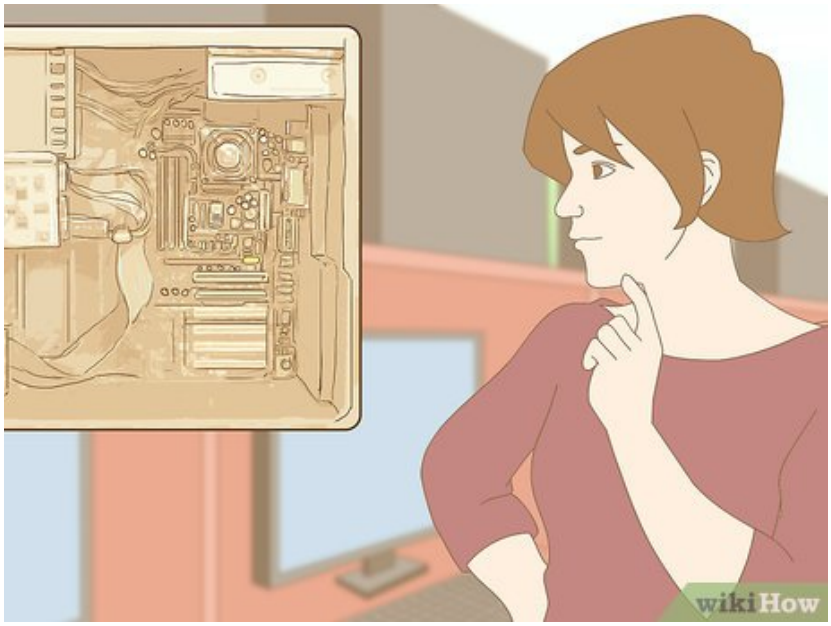
3. 

Go to a computer store and try out the latest technology. Each computer's hardware specs should be visible on a label or sign near the unit. Notice the different amounts of RAM, different CPU brands and speeds, and different screen resolutions.

1. Try opening the same program on different computers and notice differences in speed.
2. Ask a salesperson which computers they recommend for various tasks. For example, 'Which of these units is good for gaming?' or 'Which would you recommend to someone who just needs to write papers for college?' Then, observe the difference in specs between the different computers.

4. 

Watch YouTube videos of people opening their computers. Watch other computer geniuses install RAM or replace dead hard drives to get a sense of what these tasks entail.[1] Listen carefully as the person describes what they are doing.

5. 

Open your computer and locate each hardware component. If you're feeling confident, look inside your own computer to see how the different hardware components connect to one another.

1. If you feel apprehensive, ask someone who knows more about computers to walk you through the process.
2. Never open a computer unless the machine is on a sturdy surface and you are properly grounded.

EXPERT TIP

Picture 6 of How to Be a Computer Genius

Luigi Oppido
Computer Repair Technician & Owner, Pleasure Point Computers

Luigi Oppido is the Owner and Operator of Pleasure Point Computers in Santa Cruz, California. Luigi has over 25 years of experience in general computer repair, data recovery, virus removal, and upgrades.

Picture 7 of How to Be a Computer Genius

Luigi Oppido
Computer Repair Technician & Owner, Pleasure Point Computers

Try taking apart broken computers to see how they work. If you want to become an IT expert, buy broken devices and try to fix them. Everyone has a broken computer—you can check computer repair shops, or you can even ask your friends if they have any broken devices on hand. As you take them apart, you'll learn what you're doing through trial and error.

Score
0 / 0

Method 1 Quiz

What part of the computer stores data that's currently in use?

CPU

Close! Your computer's CPU (or Central Processing Unit) is what executes programs on the computer. Although it processes active data, it does not store it. There's a better option out there!

RAM

Exactly! RAM (or Random Access Memory) stores data that's currently in use. Long-term data storage happens on hard drives or removable media. Read on for another quiz question.

Hard drive

Almost! Hard drives store most of the data on your computer. However, when data is actively being used, it's stored elsewhere. Choose another answer!

SD card

Not exactly! An SD card is a type of removable media often used to store photographs. Active data is stored on a more integral part of a computer. Pick another answer!

Want more quizzes?
Keep testing yourself!

Method 2 of 6:

Using Different Operating Systems and Software

1. 

Learn the differences between different operating systems. There are pros and cons to using Windows, Mac OS X, Linux, Chrome OS, etc. Visit each operating system's website to familiarize yourself with its features. Then, search the web for blogs that cater specifically to users of those operating systems. Reading user blogs is a great way to discover how people use their computers.

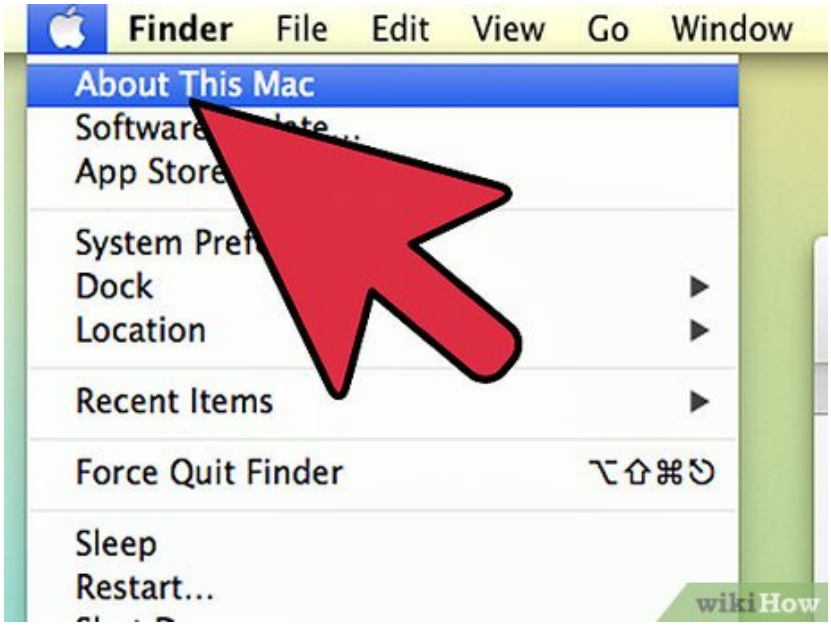
1. Windows is pre-installed on most PCs and is used by businesses as both servers and workstations. Windows is also popular with home users and gamers who love tinkering with hardware.
2. Mac OSX is known to be sleek and aesthetically pleasing. Made popular by artists, Mac OSX almost always runs on Apple hardware (although it can be installed on modern desktops) and has a familiar design that is gaining in popularity.
3. Linux a free (usually) flavor of 'Unix' used by more advanced computer users. It's highly customizable, secure, can be used on basically any type of hardware to perform any type of function.
4. Chrome OS is a simple operating system found on Google Chromebooks. It's geared toward people who are more interested in using the web (and web applications) than anything else.

2. 

Use every opportunity to play with operating systems other than the one you use. To be a well-rounded computer genius, you should have experience using all operating systems and a wide variety of software.

1. You can find Windows PCs at public libraries. Most college campuses have both PCs and Macs available for student use. Alternatively, you can ask a friend or a relative if you can try using their computer.
2. Try doing the same sort of task (like browsing the web) on a Windows, Linux, or Mac computer and notice the differences.

3. 



Explore the operating system you use on your own computer. Both Macs and Windows have built-in System panels that provide details about the computer. Try to explore a new area of the Control Panel (Windows) or System Preferences (Mac) every day. Just poking around and clicking to view the different options will add necessary information to your budding genius brain.

1. To open the Control Panel in Windows, press ? Win + S to launch the search, then type `control panel`. Click 'Control Panel' in the search results, then browse through the various panels.
2. To view System Preferences on your Mac: Click the Apple menu at the top-left corner of the screen, then click 'System Preferences.'

4. 

Install new software. If it's your first time, start with something easy, like a new web browser. If you're at a more advanced level, try installing Linux. Linux is a free operating system popular with the geeks (your team!) that can be installed on lots of different hardware configurations.

1. Because Linux is so popular with people who love computers, there's an entire community of Linux users active on chats and forums. Learning Linux is bound to make you new friends, perhaps even a mentor.

Score
0 / 0

Method 2 Quiz

If you want an operating system that's secure, highly customizable, and useful for a variety of functions, what should you use?

Windows

Almost! Windows is a super-popular operating system that's great if you love tinkering with hardware. It's not a very secure operating system, though. Guess again!

OSX

Not exactly! OSX (the Mac operating system) has a sleek, user-friendly design. Although it's usually considered very secure, it's difficult to customize. Try another answer...

Linux

Yes! Linux is a family of operating systems that are secure, flexible, and customizable. The main downside to Linux is that you need to be familiar with its terminal commands in order to use it effectively. Read on for another quiz question.

Chrome OS

Try again! Chrome OS is a very simple OS found in Chromebooks. It's very good for browsing the internet, but isn't designed for many other tasks. Click on another answer to find the right one...

Want more quizzes?
Keep testing yourself!

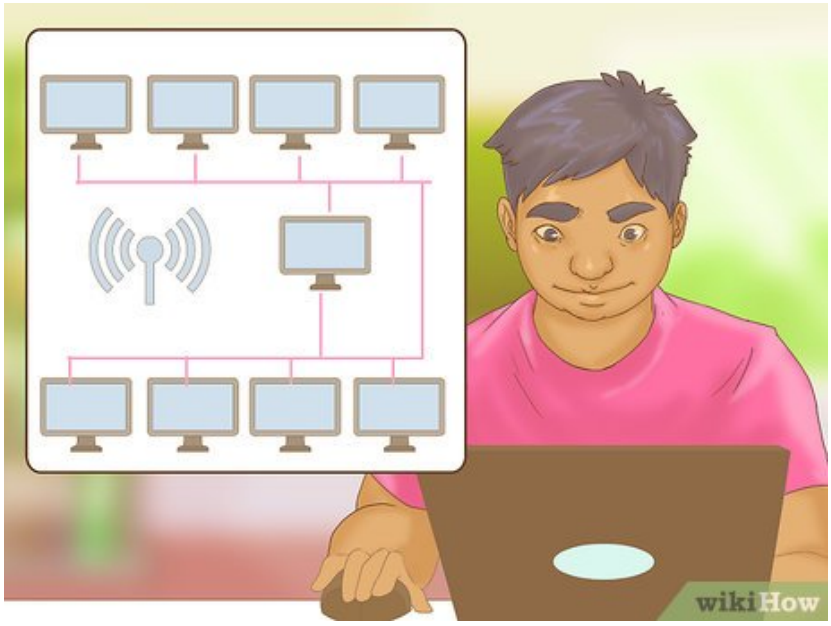
Method 3 of 6:

Gaining Advanced Skills

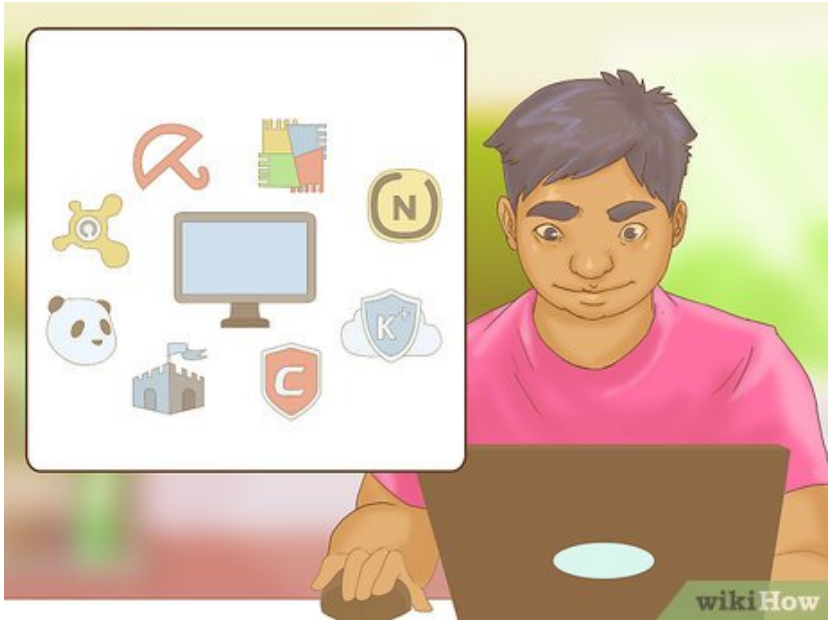
1. 

Study programming languages such as Java, SQL, Ruby on Rails, or PHP. Once you have nailed the basics, venture into advanced territory. Knowing how to code separates the computer geniuses from casual users. Research what different programming languages do and select one to study.

1. Get a book on the language. Starting with a beginner's book will build a great foundation for your advanced study
2. Look into classes that provide hands-on coding experience. You will have to pay for some of the more prestigious courses available through coding academies, but you'll find the occasional free class through Coursera and Khan Academy.[2]

2. 

Set up a network. Getting one computer on the Internet is simple, but what about configuring an entire network of computers? Challenge yourself to learn different ways to connect computers to the Internet, share files across systems, and set up firewalls.

3. 

Learn about (and protect yourself from) threats to your computers, code, and networks. Knowing how to set things up is a great start, but protecting your handiwork from security threats is a whole new world. Research things like Denial of Service attacks, code vulnerabilities, database hacks, and worm viruses to prepare yourself for what's possible.

4. 

Network with other computer enthusiasts. Having a community of computer geniuses (or those who are still in the aspirational stage) will allow you to ask and answer questions, as well as learn about new technology that might interest you.

1. Research local meetup groups in your area.
2. Discover chatrooms and forums full of computer users that are accessible 24/7.

5. 

Commit to a lifetime of learning. Becoming a computer genius will not happen overnight. It takes hard work, dedication, sharp problem-solving skills, and a genuine passion for information.

1. Technology is always evolving, so you will need to stay current. The information you know now may be obsolete next year. Read computer magazines, follow popular computing blogs, and stay familiar with the latest in software technology.
2. Upgrade to the newest operating systems when they are released.
3. Join beta-testing groups for various operating systems and apps so you can be among the first to get hands-on experience.

Score
0 / 0

Method 3 Quiz

How can you become one of the first people to experience new operating systems and apps?

Set up your own network.

Try again! If you want to be a computer genius, it's important to be able to configure your own network. However, doing so won't get you early access to any software. Choose another answer!

Join communities for computer enthusiasts.

Close! If you join these communities, you may hear about opportunities to try out new software products. However, just spending time in these communities won't get you access. Try another answer...

Join beta-testing groups.

Absolutely! Beta testers get early access to software in exchange for noting down any bugs they encounter. If you become a beta tester, you can get experience with new products before the general public does. Read on for another quiz question.

Want more quizzes?
Keep testing yourself!

Method 4 of 6:

Becoming an Expert Troubleshooter

1. 

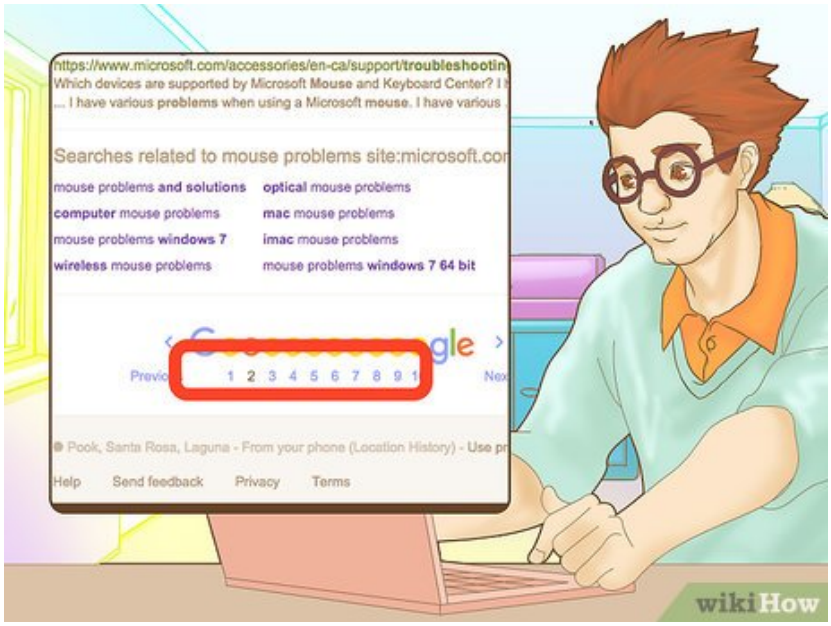
Define the problem. When it comes down to it, the way you will be able to show off your genius computer skills is by solving problems. Troubleshooting is one of the most important skills to have in the IT industry.[3]When you're experiencing a computer issue, start by figuring out what exactly is going on.

1. Defining the problem as 'The mouse doesn't work' is too broad—narrow it down to the precise behavior or error message, such as 'When I connect the mouse to the USB port, I see a message that says 'This IRQ is assigned to the keyboard.'

2. 

Sharpen your Google skills. One of the most important skills a genius-in-the-making must learn is how to find information. There's an art to getting accurate information about computer problems with Google.

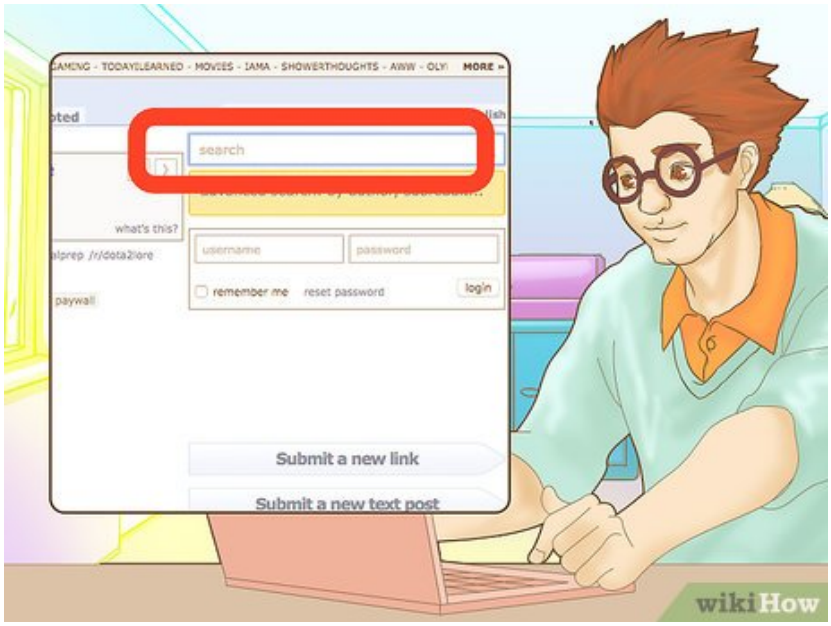
1. Use quotes (') around exact words and phrases (`'this IRQ is assigned to the keyboard'` instead of `irq assigned to keyboard`) to make sure your results match what you are looking for.[4]
2. Using Google to search a single site. If you're looking for information about wireless networking and prefer your results be from Microsoft.com, type `mouse problems site:microsoft.com` instead of `mouse problems microsoft`.
3. Filter results by date (often relevant, as computers are always changing) by clicking 'Search Tools' at the top of the search results, then change 'Any time' to a different time range.[5]

3. 

Read the search results thoroughly, and not just the first page. While the manufacturer's product pages may be among the first search results, some of the best troubleshooting information will come from user

forums.

1. It will not take you long to figure out which sites return good search results and which should be avoided. If your search for information brings you to a page that seemingly has little to do with what you searched, that source will not be useful to you.

4. 

Join forums to gain insight into problems experienced by users like you. Don't be afraid to ask questions—but before you do, try using the forum's 'search' feature to reduce the possibility of duplicating an already-resolved thread.

1. Many online forums will not allow you to search their content until you register for an account.

5. 

Fix your friends' and family's computers. Now that you've been practicing your troubleshooting skills, find opportunities to get hands-on experience. Ask people you know if they are having trouble with their computers, and then offer to fix them. Use your new skills to find other people online who've experienced similar issues and try implementing suggested fixes.

6. 

Set up a test computer. Computer geniuses learn how to troubleshoot by breaking things. Rather than messing with the computer you use every day, get yourself a test computer (or even better—a test lab with several types of computers) so you can really get your hands dirty.

Score
0 / 0

Method 4 Quiz

If you want to get search results related to a particular error, it's important to...

Put quotes around the text of the error.

Right! Google uses quotation marks to search for an exact phrase. So if you put quotation marks around your error, you'll get results relevant to that particular error. Read on for another quiz question.

Limit your search to your operating system's website.

Not necessarily! Depending on your error, the website of your OS may have answers. Other sites may be useful too, though, so you don't necessarily have to limit your search by site. Click on another answer to find the right one...

Filter for the most recent results.

Not exactly! Sometimes, looking at only recent results is key to solving a problem. But older results can be helpful too, especially if you're using an older computer. Try again...

Want more quizzes?
Keep testing yourself!

Method 5 of 6:

Upgrading Your Computer (By Yourself)

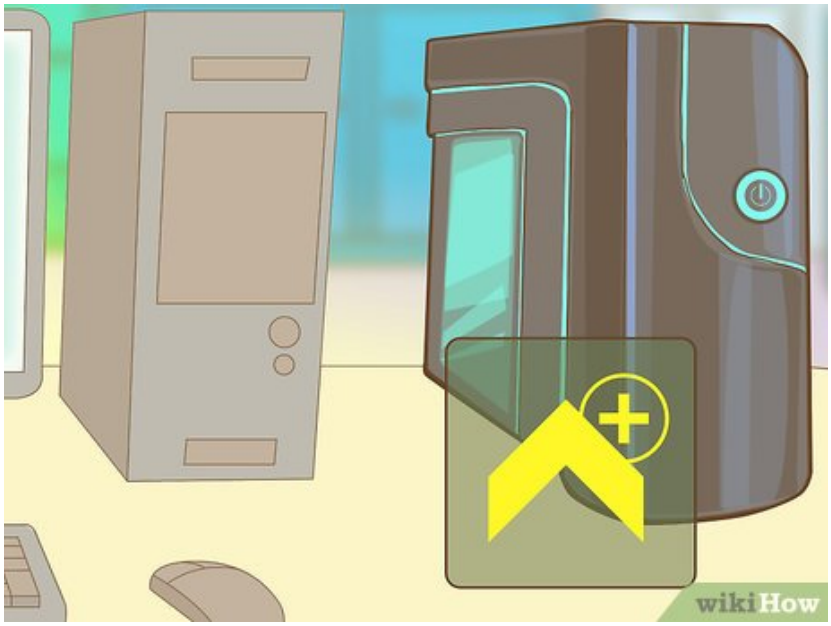
1. 

Run system updates. Make sure you are using the latest and greatest version of your operating system by checking for system updates.

1. Updating operating system software may cause older applications to break. Frustrating! However, finding fixes for such issues is great for improving your troubleshooting skills!

2. 

Think about what you might be able to add to your computer to make it better. Ask yourself some questions: What frustrates me about my computer? What can I not do with my computer that others can do with theirs? Once you have some answers, you should be able to determine what kind of hardware or software would improve your experience.

3. 

Browse forums for your specific type of computer to see what sorts of upgrades others are doing. Even if you decide not to do any upgrades, you'll still learn a lot about the different possible configurations for your computer.

Score
0 / 0

Method 5 Quiz

What's a downside of regularly updating your computer?

Your computer will be less secure.

Nope! As a matter of fact, system updates often patch old security flaws. Making your computer more secure is an important reason to keep it updated. Try another answer...

Your older applications may break.

Correct! Sometimes, old applications aren't compatible with an updated operating system. That can be very frustrating, but it also gives you a chance to work on your troubleshooting skills. Read on for another quiz question.

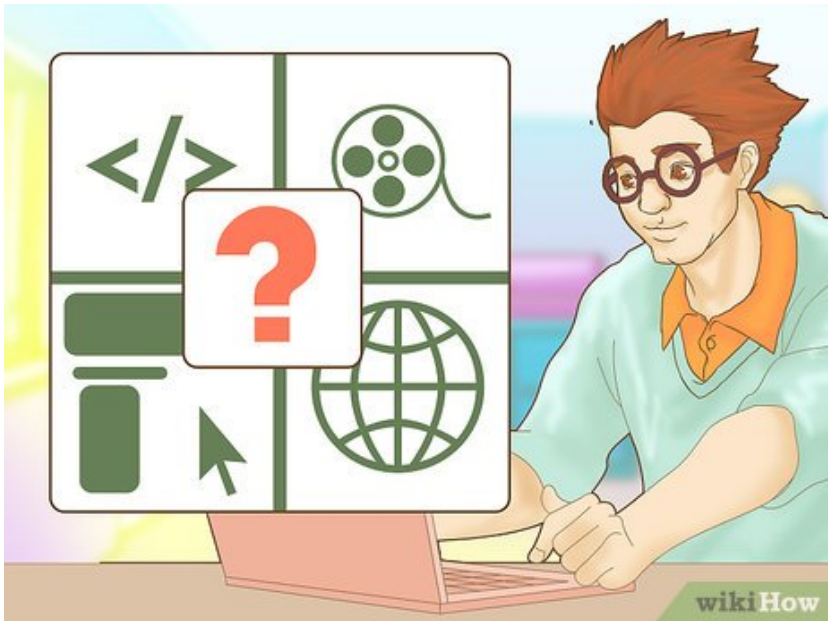
You'll need to update your computer's hardware as well.

Not necessarily! Typically, system updates will update your computer's software without requiring a hardware upgrade as well. You'll only have to update your hardware if your computer is very old. There's a better option out there!

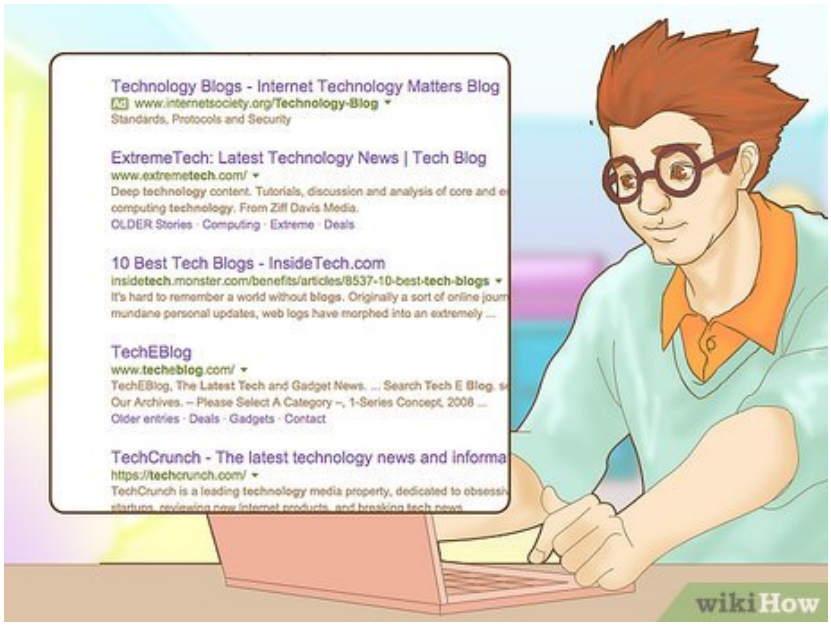
Want more quizzes?
Keep testing yourself!

Method 6 of 6:

Learning Everything You Can about One Computer Topic

1. 

Pick something about computers that interests you. Is it web design? Great-looking video? Programming in Python? Becoming an expert on a single topic is an excellent way to assert yourself as a computer genius.

2. 

Read articles about your topic online. Use your new Google search wizardry to find up-to-date articles about the topic that interests you. You should also:

1. Find (and follow) blogs that are dedicated to that topic.
2. Join forums for users who share your interest in that topic.

3. 

Watch YouTube instructional videos about your topic. Interested in learning how to set up Wordpress? Fixing broken motherboard components? You will find plenty of instructional videos for just about anything on YouTube.

4. 

Look into classes that focus on your topic. If you're enrolled in college, check to see if classes on that subject are offered. Don't forget community colleges—they provide a wide variety of courses at a cheaper rate than a university.

1. If you would rather learn from home, there are plenty of online courses available in a wide variety of topics.
2. Some courses are even available for free on sites like Khan Academy and Coursera. You may even find a course on Youtube.

Score
0 / 0

Method 6 Quiz

True or False: You can find free online courses on specific computer topics.

TRUE

Yup! There are a variety of websites that offer instruction on computer topics. Some of them require a paid subscription, but some of them are free, so be sure to look around! Read on for another quiz question.

FALSE

Try again! If you have the money, there are plenty of high-quality online courses you can pay for. But there are also some great free ones out there, so don't feel obligated to pay for courses. Choose another answer!

Want more quizzes?
Keep testing yourself!