

Set of PC maintenance tools: 5 steps to protect the system

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The first safe step is to make a full backup. A recent reader said he accidentally deleted an important article. Unfortunately, there is no copy on the floppy disk (or on any other removable media).

CD-RW, DVD \pm RW and external hard drives are the means for easy and inexpensive backups. External hard drive is a great backup tool in some specific cases. For only \$ 70 you can have a drive large enough to back up your programs and data. However, if you want to keep multiple backups (a good idea), external drives can be an expensive option.

In contrast, CD-RW and DVD \pm RW discs are all very cheap, and you probably already have one or both of these types of recorders available. Performing backups to rewritable discs (CD-RW) multiple times rather than single-write discs (CD-R), you will save costs in the long run.

Data files should be copied once a day. If you use Windows 98 or Windows Me, back up the following folders (you may not have all of them): My Documents, WindowsAll Users, WindowsApplication Data, WindowsDesktop, WindowsFavorites, WindowsLocal Settings, WindowsProfiles, WindowsSend To, and WindowsStart Menu . In Windows 2000 and XP, everything you need to back up is more likely to be in the Documents and Settings folder; but in that folder, don't back up the History, Temp, and Temporary Internet Files subfolders.

Automate full backups (copy all files in data folders and run once a week) and additional backups (copy only those files that have been created or changed since the last backup, and runs daily). You can perform backup procedure at the end of each working day. Refer to 'Customizing Windows at your disposal' article in June 2004 (page 112) or see how to perform automated tasks (such as backups) when close Windows.

Please introduce Datahjaelp's \$ zip Backup to CD program (see Figure 1). Go to find.pcworld.com/42628 to download this program. If you already have a WinZip compression program, you can use the Spector Backup System program; Check out the "Easy Backup with WinZip ." article - October 2003 (page 121) to get step-by-step instructions.

Backup the software

Picture 1 of Set of PC maintenance tools: 5 steps to protect the system

Figure 1 : Backup to CD, DVD or hard disk using Zip Backup to CD

Backing up Windows and applications is not as vital as protecting your data (you can always install these programs). However, in an emergency, software backups can save you time.

The complete system backup program will back up all Windows folders (except for Temporary and History subfolders), Master Boot Record files, boot files in the root directory, and optional program folders. It will store this information into a bootable CD or DVD for quick recovery, along with all your data.

V Communications' \$ 40 Recovery Commander closely follows this requirement. However, this program backs up to the hard drive instead of the removable disk, and it doesn't back up all the files you need to protect. Recovery Commander is also a member of the \$ 60 System Suite utility of VCom. Go to find.pcworld.com/42630 for more information.

At the very least, you must regularly back up the Windows Registry - especially when using Windows 2000. (Windows 98, Me and XP will automatically perform Registry backups). For backups in Windows 2000, please introduce to Lars Hederer the free Emergency Recovery Utility NT, go to www.pcworld.com.vn (Download, ID: 42636) to download. Check out the article "Protect your computer with a route through it" - April 2003 (page 106) or find out how to back up and restore the Registry.

The safest full system backup is to create a disk image - a copy of all sectors in the entire hard drive or hard partition. When restoring disk images, your drive will revert to the same state as when the image was created. Everything that is working now will work. However, you will lose all documents, e-mails, as well as the data you received, created, or changed since making this image. That's why you need additional backups for the data.

A popular disk image creation program is Acronis True Image, which can be purchased at www.acronis.com (for \$ 50). It is a simple and easy to use program. This program performs both full backups and additional backups, so it is very useful for daily backups.

Create a rescue disk

Picture 2 of Set of PC maintenance tools: 5 steps to protect the system

Figure 2: Prepare to deal with the problem in Windows 98 and Me with the rescue boot floppy

Are you fully prepared to deal with the inevitable accident, when Windows refuses to boot? For real availability, you must have more flexible means than disk image backups: an emergency boot floppy. (Of course, you must also have a recovery program to put the image on the hard disk). In Windows 98 and Me creating such a disk is quite easy: Select Start, Settings, Control Panel. Add / Remove Programs. Prepare a blank, formatted floppy disk, press the Startup Disk label, and then follow the prompts (see Figure 2).

Windows 2000 and XP do not have this capability, and DOS-based running tools that you have stored in your 98 / Me rescue floppy are useless for the NTFS file system used in Windows 2000 and most XP machines. However, if you have a Microsoft Windows CD-ROM, you can use a very good tool called Recovery Console. To use it, insert the Windows CD into the system and reboot, then press any key when prompted 'Press any key to boot from CD'. In the 'Welcome to setup' screen, you press 'r' to Repair.

Without a Windows CD, it's likely that your PC comes with a recovery CD to fix the problem. Use this disk to boot as described above and find out if there is a program that can repair the boot sector, scan the hard drive or perform similar functions. If the CD only allows you to restore the hard disk to the same condition when you leave the factory, remove this option and use another recovery solution.

The free Setup Disks for Floppy Boot Install program has a Recovery Console utility hidden inside. Setup Disks programs are installed on six floppy disks, the first of which is bootable. You must browse all 6 disks to find the Recovery Console. You go to pcworld.com.vn (Download, ID: 42662) to download. Refer to the article "When Windows XP or 2000 Does Not Start" - November 2003 National Library of India (page 134), go to find.bworld.com/42640 for more information on rescue booting capabilities in Windows 2000 and XP

Free hard drive

Picture 3 of Set of PC maintenance tools: 5 steps to protect the system

Figure 3: Automating consolidation using the Scheduled Task Wizard of Windows

You may not agree with the statement that defragmenting a hard drive will not improve PC performance. However, defragmenting will increase reliability: A drive with discrete files (fragment) will certainly encounter more problems. You have to defragment once or twice a month.

There is no need to buy a defragmentation program. The program that comes with Windows is enough to use. In Windows 98 and Me, select Start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Disk Defragmenter. In Windows 2000 and XP, open My Computer, right-click the C: drive, and select Properties. Tools. Defragment Now.

If you find it hard to remember, you can install Windows so that it automatically defragments the disk according to a predefined schedule. Windows 2000 users must first go to pcworld.com.vn (Download, ID: 42642) to download the free AutoDefrag program of Morphasys, then save the utility to the C: WINNT folder. In all versions of Windows, select Start, Programs (All Programs in XP), Access, System Tools, Scheduled Tasks. Double-click Add.Scheduled Tasks to start the Scheduled Task Wizard. When asked to choose a program, you choose any program, you will change it later. Name the task Defrag (see Figure 3). Make your own decisions in the rest of the Wizard, but when you reach the last page, check Open Advanced Properties for this Task when I click Finish and then click Finish.

In the Defrag dialog, you replace the ones in the Run box with the appropriate command for your current version of Windows: That is defrag c: / noprompt / f in Windows 98 and Me; in Windows 2000, type autodefrag c ::; and in XP type defrag c :. (Operators '/ noprompt' and '/ f' will automatically start defragmenting.) Click OK, exit Scheduled Tasks, and you are done installing - except if you are using XP, then the password will not work if there is no password. Refer to the 'Scheduling tasks in XP' section (in the 'Synchronizing folders .' article) - January 2003 Archives (page 100) or find.pcworld.com/42644 for more information.

Stop the bad guys

ANOTHER TECHNICAL TO HANDLING NETWORK INCIDENTS

In May 2004, the post of the 'A PC did not see each other' (page 124) showed how to solve the problem that LAN PCs can access the Internet but could not contact each other, some readers said. The firewall software can also prevent LAN pairing. If your networked PCs can't 'see' each other, check the firewall as well. If you're using ZoneAlarm, double-click the ZoneAlarm icon in the system tray and select the Zone label (if there is no such label, click the arrow icon in the lower right corner). To add another computer to the Trusted area, click Add.Host/Site. Guaranteed Trusted has been selected in Zone zone. Enter the computer name in the 'Host name' area and then click Lookup. When the firewall finds the computer, enter the description and click OK.

There are some bad guys snooping on the Internet. The first preventive measure is a firewall - a program that keeps the door between the Internet and your computer. Whenever something outside tries to infiltrate your PC, or there is a program on your computer that tries to access the Internet, this firewall will ask for permission.

Windows XP's built-in firewall program does not protect well with third-party firewall software such as Zone Lab's ZoneAlarm (see Figure 4). It is a thoughtful, powerful, easy to use and free program. Go to pcworld.com.vn (Download, ID: 42750) to download ZoneAlarm, and refer to the article 'Firewalls, concepts and effective uses' - December 2003 Archives (page 106) or find [pcworld.com / 42648](http://pcworld.com/42648) for more information.

You must also have an antivirus program to check incoming and outgoing messages, as well as files on the hard drive to hunt for viruses hiding on it. Trend Micro's \$ 50 PC-cillin Internet Security software, the most popular Best Buy security tool today, includes an excellent anti-virus tool, a very good firewall, a suite spam filtering (spam), and many other superior capabilities. Visit find.pcworld.com/42664 to download the trial version, and check out the 'Best free anti-virus utility' article - January 2004 (page 103) to [find.pcworld.com/ 42650](http://find.pcworld.com/42650) for more information.

Finally, keep an eye out for spyware - sneaky programs that install themselves on your computer and keep track of your activities to benefit from advertising agencies. Some of these programs report your online shopping habits, while others change the way your web pages are displayed, sometimes adding their own ads. Fortunately, both the best anti-spyware programs are free. Go to find.pcworld.com/42652 to download Lavasoft's Ad-aware program, and go to find.pcworld.com/42654 to download Patrick M.Kolla's Spybot Search & Destroy program.

Picture 4 of Set of PC maintenance tools: 5 steps to protect the system

Figure 4: Zone Alarm anti-intrusion system without spending any money

Firewalls, anti-virus, and spyware detectors are regularly updated. You maintain antivirus and firewall programs running in the background. Remember to scan for viruses and spyware for all recently downloaded files before installing them on your system. Don't forget this old-fashioned safety rule: never open an attached e-mail unless you know the sender well and are expecting the right message.

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