

Best ways to clean your computer of dirt, dust, and grime....

By A1 Computers And Service – 2012

Your computer is just like any other household appliance and it ***should be cleaned regularly***. It is important to be sure you understand what the best way to clean your computer is. If you are not careful, you could end up causing more harm than good. But if you follow our tips you should be able to keep your computer clean with no problems.

How often you need to clean your computer depends on the operating environment where it is used. A good rule of thumb is most computers should be ***cleaned at least every few months***. If you are in a busy office environment and the computer and keyboard are shared by multiple people maybe cleaning it once a month would be a good idea. If you are in a really dusty environment then a monthly cleaning would be a good idea also. But if you are in a general use setting then a good cleaning every few months should be enough.

To properly clean your computer you are going to need a few tools and supplies.

- 1) *Rubbing Alcohol - 70 % isopropyl or above and clear, no colors.*
- 2) *Cotton swabs.*
- 3) *Microfiber towels or rags – do not use paper towels.*
- 4) *Cans of compressed air.*
- 5) *Swifter duster or anything like it.*
- 6) *Shop Vacuum.*
- 7) *Screwdrivers – Phillips & Regular. For opening case.*

Before you begin it is important to properly shut your computer down. After computer is shut down unplug the computer from power outlet. ***DO NOT CLEAN COMPUTER WITH POWER ON.*** Unplug all other wires and accessories going to the computer. Be sure to ***label the wires*** so you know how to put them back. A good way to remember where the wires go is to take a picture of them with a digital camera or your cell phones camera. Once all the wires are free and unplugged you can carry the computer to a good table in order to be able to access it for easy cleaning.

The first step is I like to open the computer to gain access to the ***inside***. All computers are different on how to remove the side panels, covers or ways to gain access to the inside of your computer. Once you have gained access it might be a good idea to ***take a picture of the inside and the wires*** where they plug into just in case while you are cleaning some might become unplugged. Now I like to use the shop vacuum to clean up as much of the dust as possible. You need to be careful as you vacuum the inside to be sure you don't create a static shock or you remove any of the jumpers from you motherboard or peripheral cards.

The second step after vacuuming is to take the can of compressed air and blow any dust from ***inside*** the computer and fans that was no removed by the vacuuming. Take care when blowing or vacuuming any of the fans that you don't over spin the bearings. I recommend ***keeping the fan blades stationary*** while you blow or vacuum them. After all the dust is cleared from the computer look over the inside to be sure no wires came unplugged or are loose and can get into any of the fans. You can reference the photos you took earlier if needed. Once the inside is clear of dust and you are sure no wires are loose or unplugged go ahead and close the computer up.

The third step is a good wipe down of the **outside of the computer**. At this point we can use the can of compressed air to blow any dust from the external of the system. Once the dust is blown off the outside take one of the microfiber rags and get it damp with the rubbing alcohol. Clean the outside of the case thoroughly. **Be careful that the rag is not dripping wet but just damp**. If there is anything stuck to the outside of the case be sure to remove it at this time. If you need to get into any cracks or crevices then you can get the cotton swabs damp with rubbing alcohol and use them to clean those areas.

The fourth step is to clean the **keyboard**. I like to use the brush attachment for the shop vacuum and to go over the keyboard to get all the dirt and dust stuck between the keys. I then use the can of compressed air to blow the keyboard out of any dust and dirt. I usually go back and forth between the vacuum and the can of air a few times. After I am done getting all the dust and dirt out of the key board I get the **microfiber rag damp with rubbing alcohol** and wipe the whole keyboard off. I go over it a few times. Once I get the keyboard as clean as I can using the rag I then use cotton swabs dipped in rubbing alcohol to get any stuck on dirt form between the keys.

The fifth step is your **mouse**. If you have an optical or laser mouse then all you need is a microfiber cloth damp with rubbing alcohol. Lay the rag on a flat surface and run the mouse over the rag a few times to **clean the bottom**. Take the rag and wipe down the whole outside if mouse. You can take a cotton swab and dip it into rubbing alcohol and **clean the optical / laser opening** on the bottom. If you have a mechanical mouse that still uses a ball and rollers the steps are slightly different. Turn the mouse upside down. Twist the retainer ring to the unlocked position to remove the ball. Place your hand over the retainer ring and ball, and then turn the mouse right-side up, so that the retainer ring and ball fall out into your hand. Wash the ball in warm, soapy water then dry it with a clean cloth. Blow air carefully into the ball cage using the can of compressed air to dislodge dust and lint. Look for a buildup of dirt on the plastic rollers inside the ball cage. This build up usually appears as a stripe running across the middle of the rollers. If the rollers are dirty, clean them by using a cotton swab soaked in rubbing alcohol. Turn the rollers with your finger and continue swabbing them until all the dirt is removed. Be sure the rollers are still centered in their channels after you clean them. Remove any fibers from the swab that might be remaining on the rollers. Replace the ball and the retainer ring. Twist the retainer ring to the locked position.

The last step is to clean your **monitor**. I like to use a Swiffer duster on the whole outside of the monitor. Once I have all the dust off I get a microfiber rag damp with rubbing alcohol and gently wipe off the whole monitor. If you monitor is an LCD be careful not to apply to much pressure while cleaning the screen as you could crack it. A light gentle pressure is all you need to use. An important note is to make sure the microfiber rag is damp and not soaked; you shouldn't be able to wring anything out of the rag. Also be sure not to spray anything directly onto the monitor. Always use a damp rag. Never use paper towels as they can scratch a LCD.

Well there you have it, the basics of cleaning your computer. Again a general rule of thumb is every few months but really that depends on your environment and usage. If you find your computer getting dusty and dirty faster then go ahead and clean it. By keeping the inside of your computer clean and dust free it'll help the computer run cooler and that will help the computer to last longer.