A Complete PC Maintenance Checklist

1.   Update Antivirus Software (Daily)

2.   Download/Update/Run a Spyware Removal Tool -
Spybot Search & Destroy & Malwarebytes

How? A free copy of each program can be downloaded from www.download.com or by following the links below:

MalwareBytes : http://download.cnet.com/Malwarebytes-Anti-Malware/3000-8022_4-10804572.html?tag=mncol
Click Download Now!

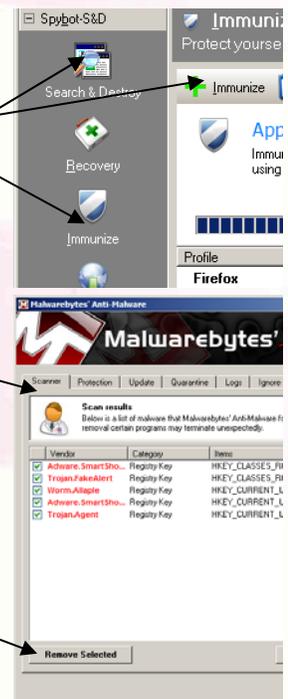**Malwarebytes Anti-Malware 1.41**

Download Now (3.86MB)
Tested spyware free

Spybot :

What? Download and install the above files under Normal mode. Make sure you update them from within the application. Then....

1. Turn your computer off
2. Enter Safe mode –
    a. This can be done by turn PC on and IMMEDIATELY start tapping F8 until you receive a black screen with white letters. There, select Safe Mode
    b. If you get the normal Windows splash screen and no menu- you have gone too far. Turn it off again, start Step 2 over.
3. In Safe Mode –
    a. Open Spybot
        i. Go thru prompts.
            1. Click Immunize on left
            2. Click Immunize on top tools bar
        ii. Click Search & Destroy
            1. Click Check Problems
            2. Click Fix problem after done running
    b. Open Malware Bytes
        i. Click Scanner Tab
        ii. Click Scan lower left corner of screen
        iii. Click OK
        iv. Click SHOW RESULTS – lower right corner
        v. Select all of them if not already done
        vi. Click Remove Selected

3.   Delete Temporary Files

How? Windows XP/2000 & Windows 98 (Disk Cleanup): Start - Programs - Accessories - System Tools - Disk Cleanup

What? What are Temporary Internet files and why should they be deleted?   Every time you go to a web site, a copy of what you see on your monitor is stored in a special place on your computer. In theory this makes your web surfing go faster. If you return to a site you went to yesterday (or last week), your web browser just accesses the copy stored on your hard drive. That's ok if you don't mind seeing the same thing all over again, but when I go back to a site I want to see the most current information, don't you? After a while the file that holds the Temporary Internet files can get so big it slows your computer's performance.

How? So on with deleting those files. In **Internet Explorer**, click on the **Tools menu** & select **Internet options**. Half way down is the button marked **'Delete Files'**. Go ahead & click on it.

Then put a check mark in the little white square that says **'Delete all offline content'** and click ok. Got an hourglass? Taking a long time for it to go away? You really needed to delete those files. But you are not through yet. To really finish the job you need to close all open windows for Internet Explorer.

You can also delete the Temporary Internet files from the Control Panel by clicking on your Start button on your Desktop, select Settings & the Control Panel. Look for the icon named Internet Options and use the same procedure explained above. AOL users can delete their Temporary Internet files this way.

 If you are using **Netscape**, click on Edit & select **Preferences**. On the left side of the new menu that opens, click on the plus sign in front of Advanced. Highlight **'Cache"**. In the same menu to your right, click on 'Clear Memory' and then click on 'Clear disk cache'. Then close your browser.

4.   Run Scandisk/Checkdisk/Error checking

How? Windows XP/2000 & Windows 98 (Error Checking) - Click on My Computer - Right Click on C: and go to Properties - Click Tools Tab - Click "Check Now" under Error Checking

What? This is a diagnostic and repair program that scans the data on your hard drive to verify the file and directory structure of your data and can perform repairs when problems are found. Scandisk can further run a surface scan on your hard drive to determine whether or not any physical damage is present and attempt to move and affected data to another section of the hard drive.

5.   Windows Update Your Computer - www.windowsupdate.com

6.   Run a Disk Defragmenter

How? Click Start button then go to Programs->ACCESSORIES-> SYSTEM TOOLS and select Disk Defragmenter

What? This is a program which optimizes your PC performance by rewriting the data on you hard drive to ensure that files are written together on the same part of the hard drive or are written in a manner to speed the boot process or the launch of resident applications. The more a PC is used, the more the hard drive is fragmented. Basic PC operation will create pockets of unused space all over the hard drive, then utilize those unused pockets to store data; in many cases, data from the same file or program will be written to these blank pockets all over the hard drive, often degrading the PC's performance. The operating system or an application program often has to access a wide area of hard drive space to make a program run or simply to bring up that last letter that was typed.

7.   Back Up Valuable Data

How? Windows XP/2000 & Windows 98 (Windows Backup Utility) - Click on My Computer - Right Click on C: and go to Properties - Click Tools Tab - Click "Backup Now" under Backup

What? It is important to place backup on a drive other than your hard drive. CD or DVD burners are great options.

8.   Run a Complete Virus System Scan

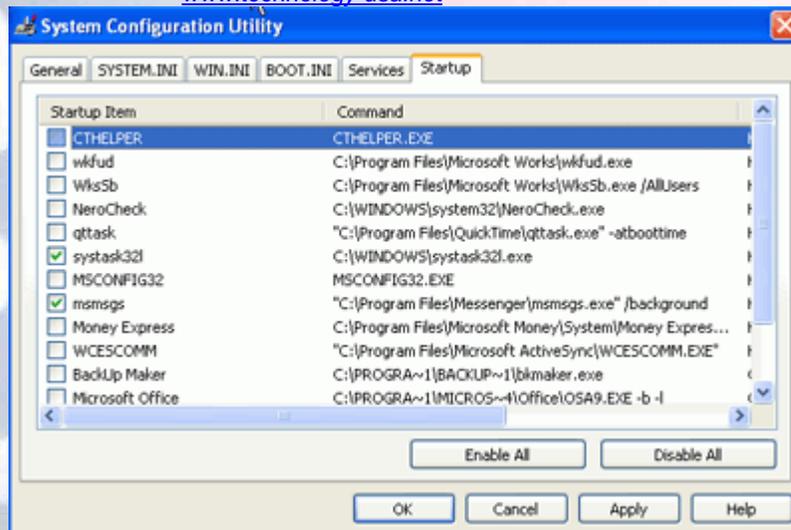## 9.   Remove Unnecessary startup programs

There are a few ways of removing unnecessary startup programs. You can go to 'start\programs\startup' which is a directory Windows XP uses to launch application shortcuts on boot-up. If you remove the shortcuts from this directory, the applications will not load on startup.

This directory can also be a repository for various badness such as spyware and virus software, so if there are files here which are not shortcuts and you don't recognize them, you may wish to consider removing them anyways, as Windows will not place critical files in this directory.

The next location for removing unnecessary startup files is the handy MSCONFIG utility that has been resurrected from the graveyard of Windows 9x specially for XP. Go to 'start\run' and type 'msconfig' to access the utility.

The 'startup' tab in MSCONFIG provides access to several other applications that are started at boot up and are running in the background. By examining their Filenames and directories, you should be able to get a feeling for what is necessary and what is not.

Be aware than several viruses and worms have a habit of disguising themselves with authoritative sounding Windows system file names, such as the Win32.spybot.worm present in the above screenshot as MSCONFIG32.EXE.

Leave these for now if you are not sure. The other method for removing these programs is through the programs themselves, as many applications, for example MSN messenger, contain the option to remove the software from startup

**MORE INFO: If you are uncertain of a certain item in the startup tab, try to Google it. Go to www.google.com and search for it. This may help identify what it is.

10.   Completely Shutdown Your Computer

COMPLETE PC HARDWARE MAINTANANCE

Introduction:

The best way to get rid of dirt and dust is to open up the case of your PC-being careful to first turn it off, unplug it, and ground yourself-and use canned air to blow away the accumulated dirt and dust. You can buy canned air in most computer stores.

Step 1: Swab Any Heavy Dust Areas

Debris and grime, in addition to dust, might have accumulated. To loosen it, use foam rubber swabs. Be careful not to use brushes, cotton swabs, or pieces of cloth, because they can leave a residue and produce static charges. Never use any kind of fluid at all, cleaning fluid or otherwise.

Step 2: Blow Out Accumulated Dust

Using the nozzle of the canned air, blow out any dust that might have accumulated on the motherboard and on the sides of the expansion cards. Be sure to blow the dust out from a variety of angles, to be sure you clean out the hidden areas. Also remove dust from all fans. Blow air at them from both sides. Be sure to blow air at the motor to remove dust.

Step 3: Spray the Power Supply

Dust and grime accumulating in your power supply can freeze it. So clear it by spraying air through all the supply's vent openings. Be careful not to open the power supply, because it retains a powerful electrical charge even when turned off. Also spray inside your floppy drives and/or CD Drivers. Spray their cable connections as well.

Step 4: Clean the Keyboard

A great deal of dust, hair, grime, grit, and paper accumulate inside your keyboard by falling through the cracks. Spray between the cracks of the keyboard, and turn the keyboard upside down to enable the particles to fall out.

Step 5: Clean the Monitor

Clean the monitor with a screen cleaner that counters static buildup. Household glass cleaners don't work as well as products designed for monitors, and might even damage the monitor. Cleaning the screen makes the image sharper, and removes the static charge that attracts dust, which might then find its way into your computer.