## General cleaning Tips

Below is a listing of suggestions to follow when cleaning any computer components or peripherals as well as tips to help keep a computer clean.

1. Never spray or squirt any liquid onto any computer component. If a spray is needed, spray the liquid onto a cloth.
2. You can use a vacuum to suck up dirt, dust, or hair around the computer. However,**do not** use a vacuum inside your computer as it generates static electricity that can damage your computer. If you need to use a vacuum inside your computer, use a portable battery powered vacuum or try [compressed air](http://www.computerhope.com/jargon/c/compair.htm).
3. When cleaning a component or the computer, turn it off before cleaning.
4. Be cautious when using any cleaning solvents; some people have allergic reactions to chemicals in cleaning solvents and some solvents can even damage the case. Try always to use water or a highly diluted solvent.
5. When cleaning, be careful to not accidentally adjust any knobs or controls. Also, when cleaning the back of the computer, if anything is connected make sure not to disconnect the plugs.
6. When cleaning fans, especially smaller fans, hold the fan or place something in-between the fan blades to prevent it from spinning. Spraying compressed air into a fan or cleaning a fan with a vacuum may cause damage or generate back voltage.
7. Never eat or drink around the computer.
8. Limit smoking around the computer.

## Cleaning tools

Although computer cleaning products are available you can also use household items to clean your computers and peripherals. Below is a listing of items you may need or want to use while cleaning your computer.

* **Cloth** - A cotton cloth is the best tool used when rubbing down computer components. Paper towels can be used with most hardware, but we always recommend using a cloth whenever possible. However, only use a cloth when cleaning components such as the case, a drive, mouse, and keyboard. You should not use a cloth to clean any circuitry such as the [RAM](http://www.computerhope.com/jargon/r/ram.htm) or [motherboard](http://www.computerhope.com/jargon/m/mothboar.htm).
* **Water or rubbing alcohol** - When moistening a cloth, it is best to use water or rubbing alcohol. Other solvents may be bad for the plastics used with your computer.
* **Portable Vacuum** - Sucking the dust, dirt, hair, cigarette particles, and other particles out of a computer can be one of the best methods of cleaning a computer. However, do not use a vacuum that plugs into the wall since it creates lots of static electricity that can damage your computer.
* **Cotton swabs** - Cotton swaps moistened with rubbing alcohol or water are excellent tools for wiping hard to reach areas in your keyboard, mouse, and other locations.
* **Foam swabs** - Whenever possible, it is better to use lint-free swabs such as foam swabs.

## Case cleaning

**Why?** Keeps the appearance of the computer looking new. While cleaning, if you see ventilation slots, these can be cleaned or cleared to help keep a steady airflow into the computer and keep all components cool.

**Procedure:** The plastic case that houses the PC components can be cleaned with a slightly damp lint-free cloth. For stubborn stains, add a little household detergent to the cloth. You should not use a solvent cleaner on plastics.

Make sure all vents and air holes are hair and lint free by rubbing a cloth over the holes and vents. It is also helpful to take a vacuum around each of the hole, vents, and crevices on the computer. It is safe to use a standard vacuum when cleaning the outside vents of a computer.

**Keyboard cleaning**

These steps are for cleaning a desktop keyboard. See the [cleaning a laptop keyboard page](http://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch000780.htm) for laptop steps.

**Dust, dirt, and bacteria**

The computer keyboard is usually the most germ infected items in your home or office, it may even contain more bacteria than your toilet seat. Cleaning it helps remove any dangerous bacteria and keeps the keyboard working properly.

**Procedure:** Before cleaning the keyboard first turn off the computer or if you are using a [USB](http://www.computerhope.com/jargon/u/usb.htm) keyboard unplug it. Not unplugging the keyboard can cause other computer problems as you may press keys that cause the computer to perform a task you do not want it to do.

Many people clean the keyboard by turning it upside down and shaking. A more efficient method is to use [compressed air](http://www.computerhope.com/jargon/c/compair.htm). Compressed air is pressurized air contained in a can with a very long nozzle. aim the air between the keys and blow away all of the dust and debris that has gathered there. A vacuum cleaner can also be used, but make sure the keyboard does not have loose "pop off" keys can be sucked up by the vacuum.

If you want to clean the keyboard more extensively [remove the keys from the keyboard](http://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch001241.htm).

After the dust, dirt, and hair has been removed. Spray a disinfectant onto a cloth or use disinfectant cloths and rub each of the keys on the keyboard. As mentioned in our general cleaning tips, never spray any liquid onto the keyboard.

**Substance spilt into the keyboard**

If the keyboard has anything spilt into it (e.g. pop, cola, Pepsi, Coke, beer, wine, coffee, and milk), not taking the proper steps can destroy the keyboard.

**Procedure:** Below are a few recommendations that can help prevent a keyboard from becoming bad after something has spilt into the keys.

If anything is spilt onto the keyboard turn the computer off immediately or at the very least disconnect the keyboard from the computer. Once done flip the keyboard over to prevent the substance from penetrating circuits. While the keyboard is upside down, shake the keyboard over a surface that can be cleaned later. While still upside down, use a cloth to start cleaning the keys. After cleaned leave the keyboard upside down for at least one night allowing it to dry. Once dry, continue cleaning the keyboard with any remaining substance.

If after cleaning the keyboard you have keys that stick [remove the keys](http://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch001241.htm) and clean below the keys and the bottom portion of the key.

Finally, if the keyboard still works but remains dirty or sticky before discarding the keyboard as a last resort try [washing the keyboard in the dishwasher](http://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch001242.htm).

If after doing all the above steps the keyboard still does not work we recommend [buying a new keyboard](http://www.computerhope.com/btips/input.htm).

* [Computer keyboard help and support.](http://www.computerhope.com/help/keyboard.htm)

## LCD cleaning

**Why?** Dirt, dust, and fingerprints can cause the computer screen to be difficult to read.

**Procedure:** Unlike a computer monitor, the [LCD](http://www.computerhope.com/jargon/l/lcd.htm) or [flat-panel](http://www.computerhope.com/jargon/f/fpdispla.htm) display is not glass and requires special cleaning procedures.

When cleaning the LCD screen it is important to remember to not spray any liquids onto the LCD directly, press gently while cleaning, and do not use a paper towel since it scratches the LCD.

To clean the LCD screen use a non-rugged microfiber cloth, soft cotton cloth, or Swiffer duster. If a dry cloth does not completely clean the screen, you can apply rubbing alcohol to the cloth and wipe the screen with a damp cloth. Rubbing alcohol is used to clean the LCD before it leaves the factory.

* [Computer Flat pannel and LCD help and support.](http://www.computerhope.com/help/lcd.htm)

## Mouse cleaning

**Why?** A dirty optical-mechanical [mouse](http://www.computerhope.com/jargon/m/mouse.htm) (mouse with a ball) can cause the mouse to be difficult to move as well as cause strange mouse movement.

**Procedure:** To clean the rollers of an optical-mechanical mouse, you must first remove the bottom cover of the mouse. To do this, examine the bottom of the mouse to see what direction to rotate the cover. As you can see in the below illustration, the mouse cover must be moved counter clockwise. Place two fingers on the mouse cover and push the direction of the arrows.

Once the cover has rotated about an inch, rotate the mouse into its normal position, covering the bottom of the mouse with one hand and the bottom should fall off including the mouse ball. If the cover does not fall off try shaking the mouse gently.

Once the bottom cover and the ball is removed, you should be able to see three rollers located within the mouse. Use a cotton swab, finger, or fingernail to remove any substance. Usually, there is a small line of hair and dirt in the middle of the roller, remove as much as this substance as possible.

Once you have removed as much dirt and hair as possible, set the ball back within the mouse and place the cover back on.

If the mouse still has the same problems repeat the above process. If after several attempts the mouse is still having the same problems your mouse has other hardware issues and should be replaced.

**Note:** Cleaning your mouse pad with a damp cloth can also help improve a computer's mouse movement.

**Why?** To help keep the mouse clean and germ free it can be helpful to clean the mouse.

**Procedure:** Use a cloth moistened with rubbing alcohol or warm water and rub the surface of the mouse and each of its buttons.

* [Computer mouse help and support.](http://www.computerhope.com/help/mouse.htm)

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  + Where (in the program) does the problem happen?
  + Why does the problem happen (what action causes it)?
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