



Going Unplugged



In this age of wireless technology, laptops (or notebooks) are at the peak of their existence. Modern laptops are easily a match for desktops in the normal business environment and they are very convenient but there are some basic things you will need to think about when purchasing or maintaining your laptop.

Firstly, if you are buying a new laptop, make sure you get one that suits you. Check the connections available – customise your laptop with USB2, Firewire, bluetooth, infrared, wireless, TV out, DVD Writer, and many other options. These are important considerations as the last thing you want is to carry around a large amount of peripherals and USB devices to provide for these requirements.

Remember the ergonomics of a laptop. Actually, a laptop goes against every ergonomic rule ever set for a PC, it's lower than your eyes, the keyboard is flat and small and the screen and keyboard are connected, so try and think about ways to prevent injuries or strains. Keep the laptop high up preferably on some sort of stand and think about the way you use your hands while typing. If you are planning to use your laptop regularly at the office or at home, considering using a docking station to connect a keyboard, mouse and even an LCD screen to ensure the monitor is at eye level.

Maintenance is just as important on a laptop as it is on a desktop computer. You still have to keep backups check for spyware, clean out temporary files and defragment your laptop! Virus scanners and firewalls are even more important now, as your laptop no doubt is equipped with the latest wireless networking and internet devices. This is especially important when wanting to use a public wireless network at the local coffee shop or internet café. Also don't forget to regularly update your virus, spyware and other bug scanners, especially when having left your machine offline for a long period.

A major consideration is theft, you can insure the laptop, but you must back up your data. Laptops are very easy to steal, but you may purchase security locking devices that will deter most thieves.

You need to clean your laptop. A simple clean of the screen and keyboard will help keep it running efficiently. Using special wipes and cans of compressed air can help you with this and your local Computer Troubleshooter can show you how to use them properly. Also, when not in use, keep your laptop in a padded or hard-covered case. This will prevent you from having that one slip, and losing everything.

Your battery is the biggest change to consider from a desktop to a laptop. When looking to buy a new laptop, try and get the longest battery life you can – you will regret it if you don't! You must look after your battery, otherwise the extra money spent on that longer lasting battery life will be wasted. Avoid frequent full discharges of your battery because this puts additional strain on it. Several partial discharges with frequent recharges are better for new lithium-ion batteries. Short battery life in a laptop is mainly caused by heat, so try and keep your laptop cool – avoid leaving it in a hot car.

Once you get into a routine, it's easy, but setting up your new laptop, or advice on buying a laptop that is right for you, is the hard part. Your local Computer Troubleshooter can help you out here as they regularly face issues like this every day.

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