

### 1 Protect your investment

Think of your computer as starting its life with a value equal to what you paid. From day 1 it will lose value until, after less than 5 years, it will become almost worthless.

But if it's still working, it will be worth something to you and that value lies not in the computer but in the data you've stored on the computer.

So think of the data on the hard drive of that computer as appreciating in value as time goes by. How much it appreciates will depend on the individual user, but for a business it will be a sharp rise.

Even for the home user, stored data is important. How much value do you place in those family photos, your letters to the bank, your emails to and from loved ones worldwide? Again, this value will differ from case to case but many people believe it quickly surpasses the value of the computer.

### 2 Look after your Data

Now we're agreed that the data on our computers has a significant value, how should we look after it?

Always remember that if your computer's hard disc drive fails, there is a risk that you will lose everything. So keep your valuable data in at least 2 places: on your hard disc and 'backed up' to another, portable device.

And ensure that you keep this second device separately. If you fall victim to a burglary or house fire, both devices could be lost and, with them, all your data.

These days, portable storage is inexpensive and easily carried in a handbag, in the car or, if you're travelling, in your luggage.

Duplicate and separate, you know it makes sense!

### 3 Protect against cyber-threat

Install good antivirus tools. These need not cost very much; indeed, many are free and highly effective.

Private users can legally use top-quality antivirus software completely free of charge. And don't feel that these tools are necessarily inferior to similar tools that cost tens of Euro to license.

New tools are being introduced and these offer a single, simple solution to everyday internet security needs.

### 4 Select the best programs for your needs

Think about what you need to do your work on the computer.

Do you need a word processor for writing letters or reports?

Or a spreadsheet for your business plans?

What about creating presentations or manipulating and ordering your photos?

You can buy these programmes but you don't have to. Much of the free software is reliable and very capable, so personal users need never feel that they need to pay for good products.

### 5 Look after your computer

Just like your car, a neglected computer will be slower and ultimately less reliable than one that has care and regular maintenance.

Think about where you've installed it. Is it adequately ventilated? Is there a threat from dust or dog hair? These things take their toll.

And what maintenance is necessary? Ensure that the interior is regularly cleaned and that all cooling fins, fans and ducts are free of obstructions. Make sure that fans are fully operational and unlikely to fail. If in doubt, fit a new fan.

### 6 Get Comfortable

Think about where the screen, keyboard and mouse are located. Try different places in relation to windows, doors or other sources of light. I dramatically reduced my susceptibility to headaches by changing things so that the window is now to the side of the screen rather than behind. Curtains or blinds can help if a nearby window causes unwanted reflections.

### 7 Look after your eyes

Make sure your screen is adjusted to give you the minimum of visual stress. There's a compromise between how much you can see on the screen and the size of the displayed text and icons. Set the correct balance and enjoy greater comfort and productivity. If you are unsure how to set up your computer screen, ask someone who knows.

And as we get older, the visual display becomes even more important if we are to enjoy and be relaxed as we work.

Above all, take regular breaks, ideally in the fresh air.

### 8 Consider the electrical supply to your computer

Urban electricity supplies are often more stable than rural ones so if you're 'out in the sticks' consider installing a good quality, high capacity Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS or, here in France, an Onduleur).

The UPS protects your computer from power surges and storm strikes. It will keep things running during power cuts of between several minutes and, with sufficient capacity, up to an hour or more.

### 9 Storm Damage

Think about your computer's connection to the internet. You have a direct connection to a telephone wire (unless you use 2-way satellite) and telephone wires are notoriously susceptible to storm strikes. Good, modern UPSs allow you to connect the telephone feed via a special channel to the modem and this gives the delicate modem another line of defence from storm damage.

### 10 Think before you click!

Don't click your mouse on 'Yes', 'OK' or anything if you feel that something's not right. If your computer starts behaving strangely, and you feel you're losing control, simply switch it off and seek advice.

