



Tips & Tricks

Good Habits for a Greener PC

You can reduce power consumption and achieve significant energy savings when using your PC simply by acquiring a few good habits. Read the handy tips below.

The monitor

In a PC, the display is greatly responsible for overall energy consumption. Some estimates for laptops show that the monitor accounts for 40% of total energy consumption. The figure is not much different for desktop PCs. LCD monitors typically require between 15 and 60 watts, while a CRT (cathode ray tube) screen requires between 50 and 125 watts.

In order to reduce energy consumption and in particular battery consumption, it is recommended to not change the standard configuration set by the manufacturer. In fact, after a certain period of inactivity, the monitor automatically "goes to sleep". In this mode, it consumes just 1 to 3 watts of energy.

Windows operating systems, in particular from Windows XP onwards, allow you to easily adjust the monitor's sleep cycle. To lower consumption, you can shorten the idle time, activating the sleep phase earlier and so saving energy.

Another important factor in energy consumption as regards the screen is its brightness. It's natural to write in black on a white sheet, but a very bright page is heavy on consumption, and strains the eyes. Therefore, experts suggest that screen brightness be reduced until your eyes are comfortable. In this way, especially for laptops, battery consumption can be greatly reduced and battery life lengthened.

PC hibernation mode

The most effective way of reducing consumption when your PC is not in use is to put it in hibernate mode. Rather than shutting down your PC everyday, restarting it, then re-opening all your applications, it is much better to "suspend" PC activity, because energy consumption in this mode is roughly 5watts for a desktop PC and 1 watt for a laptop.

In Windows Vista and later systems, you can also save energy by setting your PC to awaken from hibernation to execute scheduled tasks. For example, with the TV program recording function, you can set your PC to activate itself and record your

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favorite program at a set time. After completing the recording, the PC returns to hibernate mode.

Switch off the Wi-Fi antenna

Today's laptops and some desktop models are equipped with antennas for transmitting and receiving data via radio waves using hotspots, microcells equipped with Wi-Fi antennas that comply with wireless standards 802.11 a/b/g/n and allow Internet browsing in bars, airports, at work, or in the home.

Radio antennas consume a lot of energy and battery power when they kick into operation. Windows Vista and Windows 7 natively support the ability to disable the laptop antenna when not in use. This ability to disable the antenna for short periods of time helps to prolong battery life.

New Windows PCs normally have the Wi-Fi antenna enabled for best performance, meaning they are not configured for power saving. So it is up to you to use your wireless antenna in a way that maximizes battery life. If you don't need to browse the Internet or connect, you can switch the Wi-Fi antenna off completely.

Regulate Windows Search indexing

One of the most interesting changes in Windows Vista is the ability to index all PC content, from e-mails to documents to images. This is a task that Windows Vista performs in the background or while you are doing something else, but it's a task that inevitably consumes energy.

There are three possible settings for the Windows Search indexing system:

Maximum Savings: Windows indexes only files defined as high priority or e-mails.

Balanced: Windows indexes files defined as high or normal priority including searching for new content on the Internet.

Maximum Performance: All indexing functions are active, including searching for new content on the Internet.

Selecting a sensible indexing status, depending on the electrical or battery connection, can help you better manage and prolong the useful working life of your laptop.

Power Savings Features in Windows 7

Windows 7 runs with fewer background activities so your PC processor doesn't work as hard and draws less power. Other innovations include less power-hungry DVD playback (handy on long flights), automatic screen dimming, powering off unused ports, and a more accurate battery-life indicator.

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