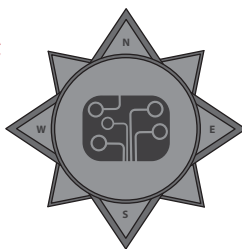


CLEAN THAT DIRTY COMPUTER

It's a dirty job, but someone's gotta do it. We think of computers as this high-tech item. We forget that just by sitting in our homes they are constantly sucking up air (that is essential for cooling). With that air, they are sucking up dust, skin cells, carpet fibers, dirt, and so on. If you own a pet, they are also filling the computer with fur. Ever eat and drink near a computer? That'll do it too. All this can seriously affect the performance of your computer or cause it to overheat and shut down. In extreme cases, it can destroy the processor and other parts. In the case of a laptop, it'll destroy your battery.

FLIP OVER FOR YOUR NEXT CHALLENGE



EARN THIS NUGGET

Complete a computer cleaning for yourself. If possible, see if you can get hold of an old computer to get you started.

LEVEL 1

PERIOD 2

TASK 2

For this study, we will deal with a desktop computer with a tip for laptops at the end:

1. Shut down your computer and remove all cables.
2. Take the computer to a well-ventilated area, outside in the yard, if it's dry, is a good option.
3. Open the case of your computer. Be careful when removing it that there are no wires attached to the side panel. You don't want to wrench anything out. Carefully disconnect anything you need to in order to remove the access panel. I personally like to take pictures, in case I have any doubt about reattachment. These make a great visual reminder of how things go together.
4. You may need a screwdriver or your case may simply slide apart. There are lots of different case styles. If you struggle, consult your computer manual or go online for more information.
5. For a thorough cleaning, it is relatively easy to remove the hard drive, RAM, and video cards. If you are going to attempt this, it is essential that you don't build up static charge. A small static shock can destroy electronics. You certainly don't want to shuffle around on the carpet and then touch any circuitry.
6. Canned air is your friend. Don't use a vacuum cleaner. That can really build static electricity. Canned air will safely blast that dust out, no matter how bad the computer looked. You may want to use a small, clean, soft-bristled brush to get to any stubborn areas. Pay particular attention to the CPU and the graphics card, these tend to get super-hot when clogged with dust.
7. Finally, make a visual inspection. Make sure the fans look in good condition and are not missing fins.
8. Reassemble and take her for a test ride.

Laptop

Unless you have a super extreme situation, it usually suffices to simply use the canned air to blast out the vents on the bottom and rear of the computer. Keep doing this until no more dust comes out.

Your system should now run as cool as the day you first got it. For more extensive cleaning, you'll have to dismantle the unit. This is a much tougher task especially with ribbon connectors for the keyboard and such. Dismantling a laptop without professional help for the average user should probably be a last resort.

