

# Summer-ize Your Computer

By Lorrie Jackson

## WHY A TECHTORIAL?

### What will I learn today?

You will learn how to prepare your computer and files for the upcoming summer break!

### What hardware and/or software does the techtorial apply to?

The techtorial applies to any computer, at home or at school.

### Which National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers does the techtorial address?

The techtorial will help teachers accomplish standard IIb in particular.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed a set of National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers. Standards or Performance Indicators are included for each techtorial to help teachers and administrators improve technology proficiency. For a complete description of the standards indicated, go to [NETS for Teachers](#).

## TECH MAINTENANCE ABC'S

It's the end of the school year and you probably are more than ready for the long-awaited summer break. Before you lock up your classroom or start searching for the best travel deals, however, be sure to also get your computer ready for vacation. The five simple tips in this techtorial will ensure that your computer -- like you -- will be in tip-top shape in the fall!

### TIP 1: REMEMBER YOUR ABC'S

#### A = Antivirus

How long has it been since you ran an antivirus program on your computer? Computer viruses are programs deliberately created to damage or hamper the operation of your computer. Take the time to run an antivirus program to make sure your files and/or computer efficiency won't be compromised when you come back. Often, antivirus programs can be run on a set schedule, at a time when no one will be using the machine.

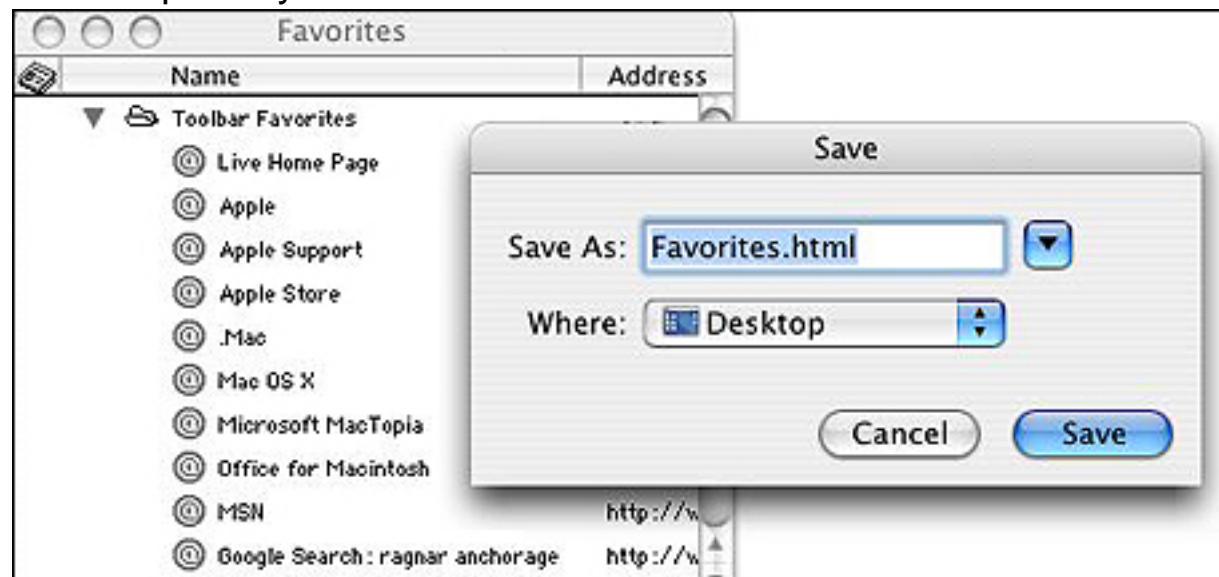
Note to Mac users: No longer are Macs ignored by those who create malicious programs. A few Mac-specific viruses and worms are out there. More importantly, you can inadvertently spread PC viruses that attach

themselves to your e-mail. So, help protect others and yourself by running antivirus software as well.

## B = Back-Up

Are all your important school-related documents, photos, or other files safely stored in at least two different locations? Power surges, lightning strikes, theft, and mechanical breakdowns can cause files saved on your computer's hard drive to disappear or become damaged. Save important files to one other location -- such as USB drives (also called jump drives or memory sticks), CDs, the school server, or e-mail attachments sent to another computer.

While you're at it, be sure to back up your browser's bookmarks or favorites. Otherwise, when your computer dies, all the links you've been saving are gone as well. The process for backing up those varies, depending on your platform and program. In Internet Explorer for Mac, for example, click Window>Favorites to open the Favorites Window; click File>Export Favorites; and then click Save. That will save a file called Favorites.html to your Desktop. You can rename the file and save it wherever you want; just be sure to back it up with your other files!



## C = Clean-Up

Okay, you were in a rush. You were late for a parent meeting and named a file "Letter.doc" when it really should have been named "EricJohnsonMtgJan06.doc). If you'll need this file later, now's the time to rename it, file it in the right spot, and print a copy just to be safe. If you won't need it again, delete it.

As long as we're talking about cleaning up, what's on your computer's desktop? You'll hate coming into school in August to find a jumbled mess on your computer screen, so take the time now to do some spring cleaning. Make sure all the files you want to keep

are in clearly labeled folders. Delete any unneeded or duplicate files. Empty your recycle bin.

## **TIP 2: SECURE YOUR STUFF**

During the summer, school buildings often are not as secure as you might like. The use of schools by maintenance crews, summer enrichment programs, camps, training workshops, continuing education classes, and more makes your computer and your data vulnerable to theft and tampering. Ask your school how secure your classroom will be during the summer. Depending on the answer, you might want to:

- Take home anything that can be put in a purse or backpack -- USB drives, paper printouts, external hard drive, and so on.
- Obtain -- either from your school or from an office supply store -- locks that secure to your desk larger pieces of hardware, such as printers, scanners, and desktop computers.
- Use as many passwords as possible to protect files and prevent anyone else from logging on to your computer. If a computer is present and can be turned on, it will be, and someone -- for fun or for evil intent -- will try to crack your password. Don't use your child's name, favorite sports team, pet's name, middle name, or other familiar word as your password. *Never* use a password you're also using at the bank or in another personal/financial arena. If that password is broken, *everything* is vulnerable.
- Protect your files with passwords that are a combination of letters and numbers. Of course, you do want your password to be something you'll remember. One suggestion is to use a hobby or other item you are fond of, and add numbers in front of or behind the word. Say you first kayaked in 1998 off the coast of Washington: your password could then be *98kayakWA*. Ask your tech staff or colleagues for help, or request district/school password guidelines.
- Find out whether your school allows teachers to check out their classroom computers during the summer. Such a program would help ensure the safety of the machines and their contents during the summer and help you get a leg up on next year's work.

## **TIP 3: PREPARE FOR A MOVE**

Painting projects, equipment upgrades, and classroom relocations often require moving your computer. The more you can do to help your maintenance or tech staff, the easier the move will be -- and the greater the chance that your hardware will be intact and running when you return in the fall. To prepare your computer for a move:

- Turn off the computer, unplug any power or network cables, and tape or rubber band cords together. Use masking tape and a sharpie to write your name on all equipment and peripherals. If you're worried about some equipment being moved without your permission, place a small piece of tape with your name on it in a hidden spot, and be sure to write down and save the model number.
- Disconnect the mouse, printer, scanner, or other peripherals and clearly mark each piece with your name and room number.
- If new equipment will be arriving in your classroom, do as much as you can to prepare space for it. (Move chairs and desks, clear off tables, and so on.) Make signs to show where the equipment should be placed (recognizing that network drops, power outlets, and other limitations might prevent your choice from being the best choice).

## **TIP 4: MAKE A WISH LIST**

Do you need more memory? Is your monitor getting darker? Does your mouse seem to have a mind of its own? Look at your school's end-of-year checklist to see if it includes a spot to list needed technology repairs or upgrades. If not, type a note containing your needs and e-mail it to the tech person in charge of repairs and purchases. Be sure to include

- your name and room number.
- the ID of the computer that has the problem. Often schools label their machines in some way; use that method of identification, if possible. If not, describe where the machine is "The second center machine closest to my window."
- a detailed description of the problem. (For example: "Every time I try to open Microsoft Excel, I get an alert that says, 'This program has performed an illegal operation.' I never can actually get into the program.")
- the specific solution you're looking for. (For example: "A keyboard with a number pad will help me enter grades faster.")
- an explanation of how the repair or upgrade will help you teach better and the students progress faster. Just wanting better technology sometimes isn't enough. You'll jump to the head of the repair/replace line if you can show the computer won't sit idle once your request is granted. (For example: "Connecting my student computer to the Internet will help students use the Web to improve basic skills, conduct research, and use current news in our classroom activities.")

## **TIP 5: REFLECT AND PLAN**

Take 15 minutes to reflect on the questions below about your technology use during the past year. Write down your thoughts to increase the chance for real change.

- What were your computer-related goals -- both for classroom management and for teaching with technology -- for this year?
- Did you achieve those goals? If not, what prevented you from doing so?
- What were your top three technology achievements? What made those efforts successful?
- How did technology help -- or hinder -- your students' learning?
- How did technology make your job easier -- or harder?
- Who at your school helped you most with technology?
- Who at your school made the most progress with technology?
- Who needs to make the most progress?

Use your answers to set goals and objectives for teaching with technology in the coming year. Unless you're really chomping at the bit, however, don't spend too much time actively preparing for next year. Give your brain a break! Leave the sorting of your thoughts and the real planning for August.

## **TELL ME MORE!**

### **Where can I find more information?**

Don't miss the dozens of great how-to articles found at Education World's [Techtorials Table of Contents](#).