

These steps are based on recommendations from [Tech Toolshed's Ultimate PC Preventive Maintenance Checklist](#).

Even if you support PCs in a spanking clean environment, your equipment will accumulate dust—the arch-enemy of electronics. Of course, most environments fall well short of spanking clean. So while it doesn't have the glamour of, say, protecting your company from a major virus outbreak, regularly cleaning PC equipment plays a big part in preserving your systems. The following seven steps represent best practices for keeping dust at bay and equipment functioning optimally.

## #1: Perform a periodic full system cleaning

Take the system apart and have a canister of canned air available. Remove all dust and clean the external and internal surfaces of the computer to get rid of dust and any other particles. Don't neglect the power supply and CPU fan, which are especially prone to accumulating dust. If you do not have an electronics cleaning product, you can make a simple solution of 1:1 rubbing alcohol and water for external surfaces. Be sure to unplug the electronic components when introducing a solution and allow it to dry fully. As always, when working inside the case, make sure you dissipate static electricity.

## #2: Clean the keyboard and mouse

Use a dust vacuum and the alcohol/water solution to clean these dust- and dirt-collecting components. The keyboard can become very unsightly and even send erroneous keystrokes if foreign particles become lodged between keys.

## #3: Run a CD-ROM cleaner

As with audio systems, CD-ROM drives can be cleaned with special kits and/or discs. This is especially useful if you are in a dusty environment.

## #4: Clean the display device

Use a cleaner on the surface of the display unit to remove fingerprints, dust, and/or other imperfections on the screen. Always spray the cleaner on a cloth to clean a monitor rather than spraying cleaner directly on the screen. If you're cleaning an LCD, use a product designed for that purpose and don't press too hard on the screen. It's also a good idea to take the canned air to the vents on the top of monitor cases to get rid of accumulated dust and dirt.

## #5: Clean the floppy drive with canned air

A good blast of air can remove dust collections inside floppy drives. Use covers/panels if your systems provide them to help keep dust out of the drives.

## # 6: Run a cleaning tape

If your systems have tape drives, run the cleaning tape through to keep the tape heads clean.

## # 7: Keep it covered

Use a keyboard, CPU, and monitor cover to keep dust out of systems when not in use. If a system is used only partly during the day and turned off most other times, plastic covers can keep dust and airborne particulate out. Just be careful not to cover up a powered-on system in a way that will block airflow, as this may cause thermal damage.

## A little spit and polish

Cleaning PCs may not be the most interesting or challenging part of your job, but it can improve performance and stretch the life of your equipment. It's best to set up a schedule to clean all the systems on your network on a regular basis. This can translate into happier, more productive users, fewer repairs and replacements, and less downtime.