

# Nine Good PC Habits You Should Have

Lincoln Spector, Windows Secrets, 10/9/18

## Good Habit #1: Back Up Daily

When I wrote PCWorld's Answer Line column, I got several emails a week from desperate people who had lost their data. When I asked if they had a backup, the usual response was "I was going to get around to that." Back up to an external drive, even if you're backing up to the cloud.

The first rule of computing: Never have only one copy of anything. Second rule: Each copy should be on a different storage device.

Arguably, this may no longer need to be a habit. With online backup tools such as [Carbonite](#), you can set up your backup and forget about it.

But a local backup adds additional safety. At the end of every workday, plug in an external hard drive, run a backup program (Windows' own File History will do), then, when the backup is done, safely remove the external drive.

## Good Habit #2: Scan for Malware Weekly With a Second Program

Your antivirus program constantly protects your computer. But it's good to get a second opinion.

Get a second opinion on probable malware from an online antivirus scanner.

Once a week, scan for malware with something other than your regular AV program. Several anti-malware companies offer free, online scans. Generally, they download a small program file that runs the scan without installation.

I rotate between four of these: Bitdefender, Eset, F-Secure, and Trend Micro.

<https://www.bitdefender.com/toolbox/>

<https://www.eset.com/us/home/online-scanner/>

[https://www.f-secure.com/en/web/home\\_global/online-scanner](https://www.f-secure.com/en/web/home_global/online-scanner)

[https://www.trendmicro.com/en\\_us/forHome/products/housecall.html](https://www.trendmicro.com/en_us/forHome/products/housecall.html)

<https://www.malwarebytes.com/>

## Good Habit #3: Be Smart about Passwords All the Time

Passwords should be long, complex (upper- and lowercase letters, numbers, and punctuation), and impossible to guess. And never use the same password for two or more different services. Why? Because if a crook gets, say, your Google password, and you use that password for everything, they can also access your Facebook, Amazon, and bank accounts. *Keep track of your passwords with KeePass or a similar program.*

And no, you don't have to memorize all those passwords. A good password manager program can not only save your passwords in an encrypted database; it can also create random passwords that no one will figure out. The only password you need to remember is the one that opens your password manager.

I use [KeePass Password Safe](#). It's free, small, open source, and as far as I know, it hasn't been hacked. But it's not the most user-friendly program around. That's why I recommend [LastPass](#) for the less technically inclined. It easily works inside your browser and is available across all of your devices.

## Good Habit #4: Check Social Media Privacy Settings Every Two or Three Months

Things change, and among the things that change are your privacy settings. And even if a website's privacy settings don't change, your own feelings about the website might.

Regularly check your privacy settings in Twitter, Facebook, and other social websites.

Every so often, visit your privacy settings for the social media services you use.

In Facebook, click the down-pointing triangle at the right end of the Facebook bar and select Settings. Click Privacy in the left pane. Study your options and pick what makes sense.

In Twitter, click the small version of your avatar near the top-right corner of the page. Select Settings and privacy. Click Privacy and safely in the left panel. Make some wise choices.

### **Good Habit #5: Always Be Careful on Public Wi-fi**

The Wi-fi in your favorite café sure is handy, but despite the password, it's not safe. Someone might have bought a latte in hopes of stealing your data.

Never log onto your bank, make a purchase, or open your password manager unless you're on your own home network. You might also want to check my 2015 article on safe public Wi-Fi.

### **Good Habit #6: Clean Out Your Spam Folder Daily**

Your email client filters out spam and sends it to a special folder, but it doesn't always get it right. Completely honest email often lands in that cursed folder. Make sure you don't let an important email disappear as spam. So, once a day, visit your spam folder and look for anything that doesn't belong there. If you find anything, move it to your inbox, then delete everything in the spam folder.

### **Good Habit #7: Don't Keep the PC Running 24/7**

Electricity costs money, and more likely than not, it's being created in a way that contributes to climate change.

If you're going to be away for an hour or more, put the PC in sleep mode before you get up. If you're going to be gone for a longer time, such as overnight, put it into hibernation, which takes more time to wake up but saves more power.

When you activate Hibernate, you can save more electricity when you're not at your PC.

Your PC probably doesn't have a Hibernate option, but you can fix that. In Windows 10, right-click the Start button and select Power Options. In the Settings window, click Additional power settings (near the bottom). In the resulting Control Panel window, click Choose what the power buttons do in the left pane.

In the resulting window, click Change settings that are currently unavailable (you may have to enter a password), and check Hibernate.

### **Good Habit #8: Frequently Give Your Hands Some Exercise**

Hands that spend hours at a keyboard and mouse are not happy hands. When you're not typing or mousing, rotate your wrists. Move your fingers. Keep tennis balls nearby to squeeze.

If you have a touchscreen, use it. Instead of clicking an icon with your mouse, tap it - sometimes with the right hand and sometimes with the left.

You may also want to consider an ergonomic keyboard and/or mouse. Or to try these hand exercises from Premier Orthopaedics.

### **Good Habit #9: Look Away and Walk Away Hourly**

It's not healthy to spend hour after hour sitting in a chair and staring at the same glowing rectangle.

Every hour or so, get up and do some stretches. Close your eyes for a few seconds, then open them and look at something far away.

If you have the time, take a walk. But be careful about walking through the kitchen if you're trying to lose weight.