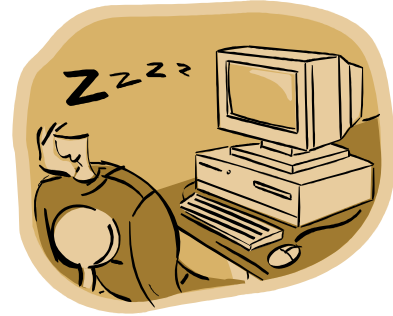


File Maintenance – Part 4

Defrag

Computers store files in a different manner than happens with our physical files. Instead of pushing things apart around an existing file to make room for new material in that file, the computer puts that new information in one or more pin-hole places that it finds large enough to contain the new data. It then adds pointers to the original file so that when you look at the file everything looks the way you last left it.

All this following of pointers means that it takes longer to open the file and view its contents. Sometimes the extra time is infinitesimally small so that you don't notice it. Other times, there is a noticeable delay from when you last opened the file.



Think of all the files you open every day. Not only do your document files update, but any setting that you change on your computer (or new program that you load, or computer game that you progress in) makes changes to system files that you never see.

Defragmentation (typically shortened to “defrag”) shuffles all the files on your computer (including those system files that you never directly access) and pulls all the pieces of a file into the same area for faster access off the hard drive. The various Windows operating systems have a built in disk defragmenter that can be used. While the more recent versions (in the recent operating system versions) perform better than earlier versions, it is still not as robust as many of the other defragmenter programs that are available for purchase.

I am lamentably not current on available defragmenter programs. Diskkeeper was one defragmenter program that I enjoyed using at work several years ago. For current suggestions, I would recommend checking some of the larger computer-focused sites to get reviews.

Defragmentation will take a long while (multiple hours) to run the first time you run it. (Be sure to temporarily disable your screensaver – some defragmentation tools will pause while a screensaver is running.) Plus, the larger the hard drive (and the more you have on it), the longer the tool will have to run. Run times after that will require less time, as long as you keep fairly regular with running the defragmentation tool. As soon as the tool has finished re-shuffling your files into consecutive space, the defragmentation of files will start again as you make updates.

How often you use a defragmentation tool is determined by how often you update files. At a minimum, it should be used once a month. For those frequently updating files, once a week is usually often enough. Be sure to work through our other three previous

File Maintenance tips, first. Why spend the time pulling file fragments together when you're going to be deleting those files.

About The Author

Marie Rice is the founder and editor of PartOfTheWhole.com - wellness for body, mind, and spirit. She enjoys helping others reach their goals. When she's not online, Marie's spending time with her family, gardening, doing crafts, or **most likely** – reading a book!

© 2010 by Marie Rice