

The Rest is Tech

The Rest is Tech series of short articles on IT Best Practices;

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Best Practice - Be skeptical of unexpected emails or message

Beware of emails or messages asking you to ring or text a certain number.

Check with people directly in a conversation in person or via a known phone number.

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Best Practice - Data backups and test restores

Make regular backups of your important data both to physical drives like an external hard drive or to Cloud services this ensures you don't lose your data during system failures.

Encrypt sensitive data.

Flash drives are more robust than external hard disk drives.

Best Practice - Wi-Fi

Avoid public Wi-Fi (those in coffee shops or airports can be less secure; it is entirely possible for someone to intercept your internet traffic) for sensitive tasks such as online banking.

Secure your Office or Home Wi-Fi network with a strong password.

Avoid using the default username and password and consider using WPA encryption.

Change your Wi-Fi's network default SSID to something unique.

Best Practice - Securely dispose of old hardware

Before disposing of or selling old computers, smartphones or storage devices ensure all personal and sensitive data is properly erased.

Files are recoverable even if the recycle being is empty.

Reputable WEEE recycling companies can destroy items correctly and provide a certificate as proof.

Best Practice - Email attachments

Be wary of unexpected attachments even if it looks like a PDF or other document have the file scan by your antivirus software before opening.

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Watch out for emails that have another email as an attachment don't open it and ask the sender to forward the email directly most cyber attacks start with a phishing email.

Best Practice - Clear Browser cache and cookies

Clean the digital footprint periodically, Periodically clear your browser history, cache and cookies.

Review app permission and revoke unnecessary ones.

Delete old unused accounts.

Not only can this resolve some browser issues but also protects your privacy by removing stored session data.

Best Practice - Hard drive health

Use built-in tools like Windows check disk or third-party software periodically check the health of your hard drive this can alert you to potential failures before they happen.

Use cleanup tools to remove unnecessary files from your hard drive freeing up space and improving performance.

Uninstall unnecessary programs via control panel, programs and features.

Clear temporary internet files regularly check for duplicate files and use Cloud storage for large datasets.

Best Practice - Screen locks and timeouts

Enable screen locks on all your devices including smartphones, tablets and computers this prevents unauthorised access if you leave them unattended.

Get in the habit of locking your computer when stepping away even for a short time.

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Best Practice - Software licenses

Always store and back up licenses and keys for software you've purchased it will save time and hassle if you ever need to reinstall.

It's very painful having to pay a second time.

Best Practice - Social engineering defense

Tactics such as posing as tech support or as a utility company are tricks that ask for sensitive data to slowly build enough information to hack in.

Be cautious about the personal information you share on social media.

Always check the url (Website address) before entering personal details

Look for "https://" and padlock symbol on all websites

Avoid clicking on suspicious links or downloading files from unknown sources

Use ad blockers and script blockers for added safety.

Best Practice - MFA / 2FA / Passwords

MFA (Multi Factor Authentication) or 2FA (2 Factor Authentication) are more secure than passwords. Look to upgrade your systems to support MFA or consider alternatives but if you must use passwords ensure they are strong unique passwords for each service.

Create longer passwords which are more secure than shorter complex passwords.

i.e. The Rest is Tech independent outcome focused experts is better and tougher to crack than "i n t 3 R n 3 T"

Avoid using easy guessable information like birth days.

Use a reputable password manager to keep track.

Best Practice - Laptop selection

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Opt for SSD (Solid State Drive) over HDD (Hard Disk Drive) if you're upgrading or buying a new computer.

SSDs are faster and have no moving parts making them more durable.

Best Practice - Switching between programs

Holding down the “alt” then “ tab “ key to cycle through open programmes.

Best Practice - Software Updates

Regularly update all software including the operating system to patch vulnerabilities don't delay critical software updates ensure automatic updates are enabled where possible.

To update drivers click on the Windows icon, search for “device manager”

Right click on a device and click update driver to ensure the drivers are updated for optimal hardware performance .

Perform system scans of your computer with reputable antivirus and anti malware software at system startup.

Don't ignore threats or warnings.

Take prompt action.

To prevent Windows installing updates at any time click on the Windows icon, search update options.

Select update notifications means Windows will have to ask for permission before installing an update.

Best Practice - Screen capture

Press “print screen” to capture the entire screen.

Press “alt” & “print screen” to capture the active window

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Use “Windows” & “shift” & “S” for selective screen capture.

Common problem - Deleted important files

Check the recycle bin for the files.

If the recycle bin has been emptied and the files are not there you can try some recovery software.

Search online for “file recovery software”.

Formatted a disc now files are missing. With a USB stick or other storage device which you just formatted it is possible to recover some or all of the files.

First stop using the drive immediately and unplug it from the computer.

Download specialist software to recover the files such as Disk Drill.

Common problem - Computer won't turn on

Unplug any external devices drives before any attempt to turn It On Again.

Check power supply by connecting the lead directly into a wall socket.

Your computer could have a serious hardware issue and could fail in the near future if you can get it up and running as a precaution to back up all your files.

Common problem - External devices not recognised

External hard drives, USB Devices or peripherals not detected when connected to your computer.

For USB devices try a different USB port. If still not recognised unplug the device and restart the computer.

For other devices update system drivers in Device Manager.

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Ensure the device has a format compatible with your system i.e. Windows cannot read a Mac only format.

Common problem - Network connection

On the network icon on the taskbar, right click to run the troubleshooter.

Follow the steps.

From Windows key, type "CMD" then type "ping 8.8.8 .8"

For external connectivity issues simply restarting the router can resolve connectivity issues.

Common problem - Computer slow to start

If your computer takes a long time to start up you can stop certain programs from starting immediately. This should reduce the boot up time.

Hold all three at the same time "alt", "control" & "delete" to open the Task Manager.

Select the Startup tab.

Click on the programs that you don't need immediately when you turn your computer on

Select disable.

NOTE: if you're unsure if you need a program on startup do not disabling.

Common problem - Computer battery draining too fast

Battery performance will unfortunately reduce over time but you can do the following to reduce power consumption.

Reduce screen brightness

Check battery settings for power hungry apps

Turn off background apps

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Consider replacing the battery.

Do not have your laptop plugged in all the time. You need to exercise your battery.

Common problem - Printer stopped working

Open control panel

Select programs and features

Turn Windows features on and off.

Make sure that the appropriate features are checked under print and document services

Common problem - Cannot open PDF files

Change the default program for PDFs to an Adobe Acrobat Reader.

Still not working try running a repair in “add or remove programs” under” control panel”

Common problem - Access denied error when opening files or folders

Ensure you have the appropriate permissions.

Right click on the folder or file properties

Then security tab

Edit change permissions for the users

Click “apply”.

Common problem - Files not opening

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Click on the file icon
Select properties
Click open
Set the default application for future
Settings
Default apps
Choose default applications by file type

Common problem - Sound not working

Ensure cables are properly connected
Right click on the sound icon to open sound settings
Check the sound volume is turned up
Update audio drivers