



# Computer Connection

## Maintaining Your Computer: What You Need To Know

(NAPSA)—How much do you know about maintaining your computer? The answers to some commonly asked computer maintenance questions may help keep your computer running smoothly:

**Q:** Lately my computer has been running really slow. Could it have a virus?

**A:** Possibly. It could be infected with spyware. Sluggishness could also be caused by running too many programs at once or not having enough RAM (system memory) or not having enough storage space on your hard drive.

**Q:** What is a firewall?

**A:** Firewalls are software programs or pieces of hardware that shield your computer from digital threats while connected to the Internet. They allow you to filter and control information that enters or exists in your computer. Firewalls are crucial for computers that use high-speed, always-on Internet connections known as broadband but are also recommended for computers that use dial-up Internet services.

**Q:** What device should I use to back up my computer data?

**A:** Go with an external hard drive or a rewritable DVD burner. Since external hard drives are prone to electrical failure, the DVD burner is a more permanent solution. These devices let you burn data onto a slim DVD disc that can be stored in a home safe or in a security deposit box at your bank. Since these discs have a much smaller storage capacity than hard drives, span your backup job across multiple discs.



**The reasons for a sluggish computer could be spyware, a virus, or not enough RAM.**

**Q:** How do I know if an e-mail attachment is safe to open?

**A:** Avoid opening e-mail attachments containing file extensions .exe., .scr or .vbs. Also, avoid opening other types of attachments unless you are expecting to receive them or unless you are 100 percent positive they are safe.

**Q:** How often should I update my antivirus software?

**A:** Most modern antivirus programs automatically update themselves several times each week, so as long as you have the automatic update settings turned on, you'll stay current. Don't forget: antivirus software needs to be renewed annually, just like a magazine subscription.

This information comes from the experts at Geeks On Call, certified technicians who deliver PC service on-site at homes and businesses around the country.

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