

ASK THE COMPUTER SURGEON

What If I Can't Fix My Computer Problems?

This is the sixth in a series on the serious matter of Internet Threats. What we want to bring to light through these articles is an awareness of the dangers and knowledge on how to protect your computer and your identification.

In Part 1 of this article on "*What If I Can't Fix My Computer Problems?*" we discussed the suggested steps to take **BEFORE** you bring your computer in for repair. Now we will present some thoughts on what to do "*after the repair*".

After The Repair:

Let's take a look at a few things that could present themselves when you get your computer home: Setting up your computer (after general repair) – Was hardware added or changed, software deleted or installed, product updates/upgrades, etc.? You may have to reinstall devices; like printers, keyboard/mouse, monitor, or flash (thumb) drive. The operating system dictates whether the drivers for those devices will need to be reinstalled or if they will be automatically installed. The operating system could be Windows 98, ME, XP, or Vista. Windows 98 and ME most likely will have to have the drivers installed manually. It is important to always hang on to the manufacturer's original CDs that came with the computer. If you don't have them, again, as mentioned in the previous article, you can order them from the manufacturer at a nominal cost.

If you have a newer computer with either Windows XP or Vista installed on it, chances are you may not need to worry about the drivers. These operating systems are established to "pick the right driver out" automatically.

Your background picture may have changed. Your desktop icons may not be present either or may have been moved around. Those kinds of personal preferences, that may also include the display setting resolution, might have to be readjusted.

Running your computer (after spyware/malware related repair) – If you brought your PC in to have it cleaned from viruses, spyware, trojans, worms, and all the other creepy things that bring computer infections into your on-line world, you should notice an appreciable boost in performance and thus speed, as a result of the work done on it.

To maintain the operating efficiency you just regained, please remember **not** to rely solely on the anti-virus or anti-malware programs to protect your PC on their own. They won't. True protection still requires you to be involved as a sentinel. You still need to scan on a weekly basis to make sure the protective software isn't compromised. Run updates yourself regularly (i.e., daily). Install Windows updates as you are prompted to. These are very important to prevent security holes from being exploited.

Backing up your computer – Always backup the important information that is stored on your computer's hard drive (i.e., Local Disk C:). The best way to do that is to invest in an external hard drive that connects through a USB port. Many such drives have a backup program built into them. At the very least, make a copy of critical information. Or you can make a complete duplicate of your C: drive onto the external drive. If the external drive you purchased does not have a backup program on it, Windows has a basic version already installed on your computer. You can find it by going to: *Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Backup*.

It is to your advantage that you ask questions. If you don't understand something – ask and keep asking. Don't be passive about your role as the customer AND owner of the computer. Please practice 'safe-surfing'!

If you have comments, suggestions or questions, please email them to questions@compusurgeon.com.