

9 FREE PROGRAMS EVERY PC SHOULD HAVE



By Ian 'Gizmo' Richards

Introduction: Nine Free Programs Every PC Should Have

All of us would like our PCs to run a little faster and to work a little better. We'd also like them to be easier to use.

The good news is that we can achieve these goals by using the nine utility programs in this guide. And we can do it without spending a cent, because every one of these programs is free.

The programs in this guide, chosen by me with the assistance of the 60+ editors at <http://www.techsupportalert.com>, are the standout picks from the hundreds of outstanding freeware programs listed at our site.

In this guide, I'll show you where to get these programs, how to install them and how to use them.

Once you have them installed and set up, you're going to be very pleasantly surprised at the improvement in your PC.

So let's get started...

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Program 1: CCleaner

What it does

CCleaner is a cleanup program that removes unnecessary files from your PC. This frees up disk space, allows your PC to work more efficiently and also removes a potential privacy risk.

These unnecessary files are created on your computer as temporary files or working files by Windows itself, or by other programs you use, such as your internet browser. These files are not essential and can be safely removed.

CCleaner will also optionally remove files on your PC that contain private information that you may not want others to see. A simple example is your browser history file, which records all the websites you've visited. Another example is the names of movie files that you've recently opened in your media player.

Some folks don't want others to see this information; CCleaner gives you the option of erasing this historical information from your PC. And it's not just for your browser and media player. CCleaner can remove private information that is stored in more than a dozen commonly used programs, including Firefox and Opera.

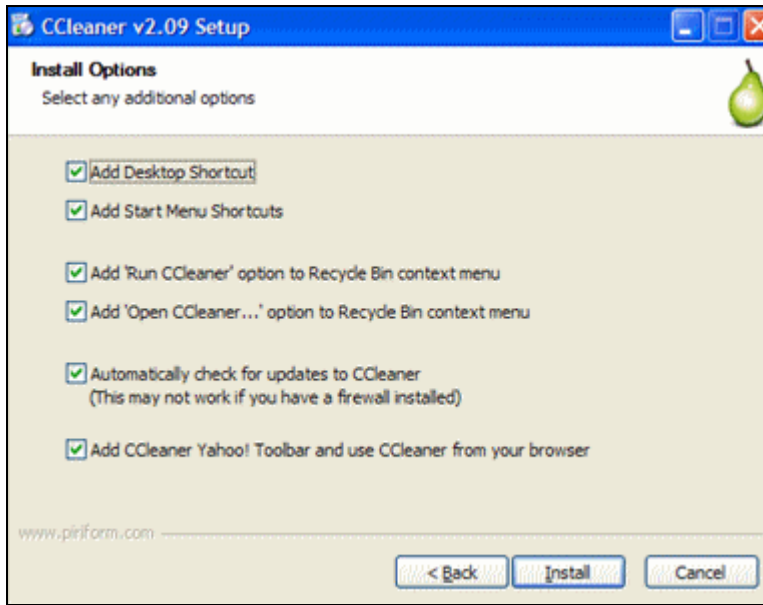
Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section. Run the setup program by double-clicking the file "ccsetup209.exe".

Select "English" as the language and click OK to start the setup wizard.

Read and agree to the licensing agreement.

Accept the default location for the installation file. You should now see a screen listing the installation options that looks like this:

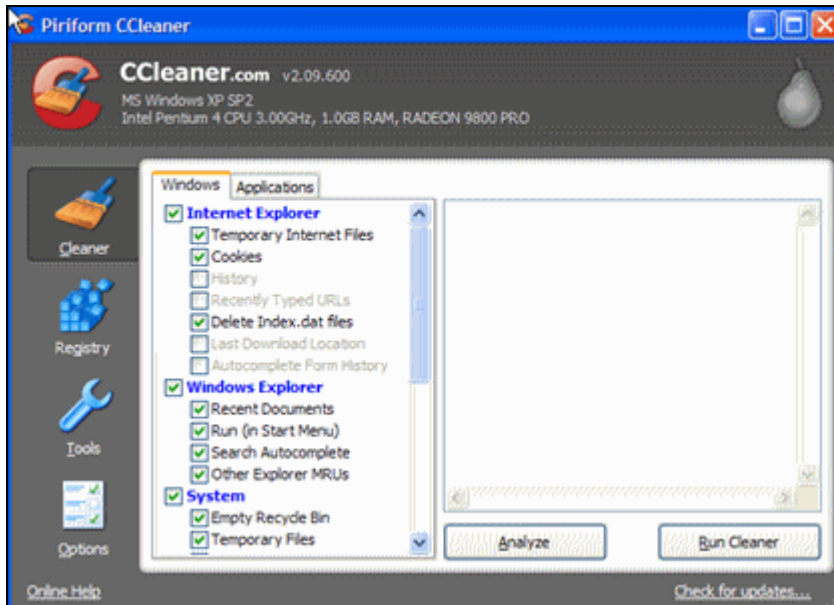


I suggest that you uncheck the last option, “Add CCleaner Yahoo! Toolbar”, unless you really want the Yahoo Toolbar installed on your browser. Personally, I prefer the Google Toolbar, because I find Google searches to be more accurate than those using Yahoo.

Finally, click “Next” and you’re finished.

Usage

Double-click the CCleaner icon on your desktop. This will bring up the following screen containing the cleaning options:



Most of us would just accept the default options, but if you are particularly concerned with the privacy issues, you may want to check some or all of the unchecked boxes as well.

Before you do, just be aware that your browsing and program history will become irretrievable, and that may be inconvenient. For example, I consult my Internet browsing history a lot, and I also find that my browser's web address auto-complete feature is very handy. Both of these features will be lost if you erase all stored browser information by checking all unchecked boxes.

And a word of warning: Don't check any of the unchecked boxes in the "Advanced" section.

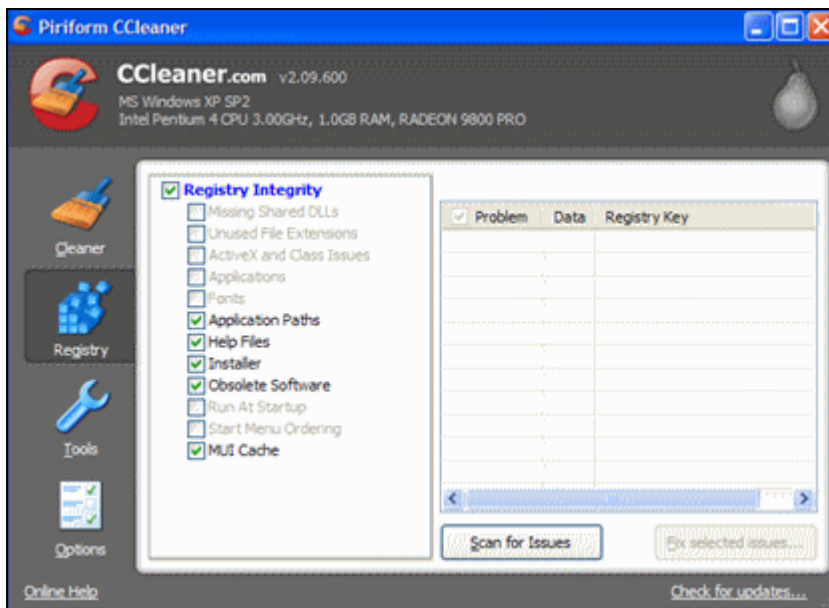
Once you've set your required Windows cleaning options, click on the "Applications" tab and select the cleaning options for the programs on your PC. Again, most of us can safely accept the default values, although those of us with extreme privacy requirements may want to check more boxes. My warning in the preceding paragraphs also applies here.

Once this is done, click on the "Analyze" button at the bottom of the CCleaner screen. This will show you which files will be deleted using the cleaning options you've selected. It will also show you the amount of disk space that will be freed when you delete these files. If you're happy with this, press the "Run Cleaner" button at the bottom of the screen, and the listed files will be deleted.

Now, one final step: As well as cleaning out unneeded files, CCleaner will also clean up the Windows Registry. It's not the most sophisticated or thorough registry cleaner that's available, but it's a very safe cleaner and that's a good thing.

If you don't use a separate registry cleaner, I suggest that you use CCleaner to sort out any major issues with your registry.

To use CCleaner's registry cleaning function, click the "Registry" icon in the left hand toolbar. You will see the following screen:



Don't change the default cleaning options. Click the "Scan for Issues" button at the bottom of the screen. Once the scanning is complete, click the "Fix All Selected Issues" button. CCleaner will give you the option of creating a backup and you should accept this option. Note the name and location of the backup file. If your computer is not functioning correctly after the registry cleanup you can restore the registry to its original condition by double-clicking the backup file.

Once you have saved the backup file, click the "Fix All Selected" button and you are finished cleaning your PC.

I recommend that you clean your computers' hard drives at least once a month. Those of you who have serious privacy concerns should clean your PC each time you use it.

CCleaner

Website: <http://www.ccleaner.com/>

Download link: <http://www.ccleaner.com/download>

Author: Piriform Ltd.

Current version: 2.23.999

License: Freeware

Download Filesize: 3,216KB

Operating Systems Supported: Win9x/Me/NT4/2000/2003/XP/Vista

Additional Software Required: None

64 Bit Capable: No

Portable Version Available: Yes

Non-English languages supported: Albanian, Arabic, Bosanski, Bulgarian, Català, Cesky, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Dansk, Deutsch, Español, Français, Galego, Greek, Hebrew, Italiano, Japanese, Korean, Lietuviu, Macedonian, Magyar, Nederlands, Norwegian, Polski, Português, Português (do Brasil), Romana, Russian, Serbian Cyrillic, Serbian Latin, Slovensky, Suomi, Svenska, Türkçe

Other relevant information: None

Alternative programs: <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-file-cleaner.htm>

Program 2: MyDefrag (formerly JkDefrag)

What it does

When you store information on a hard disk drive, your data may not be stored in a single location. Instead, it may be scattered over many different locations on the surface of the disk.

This process is called file fragmentation. Fragmentation slows down the rate at which your computer can read and write data to your hard drive, because the magnetic heads that read and write the data are forced to jump all over the surface of the disk.

When a disk drive is new and contains little data, there is hardly any fragmentation. However, fragmentation rapidly builds up as your disk drive fills up, particularly if you add and delete a lot of files.

Windows comes with a disk defragmentation utility, and you can use it to reduce the degree of defragmentation on your drives. However, it's not a particularly effective defragmentation program; it's slow to run and prone to freezing during the defragmentation operation.

Instead, I suggest you use MyDefrag for hard drive defragmentation. It's one of the most effective programs of its type and it's extremely easy to use.

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section.

Unzip the download file to a folder on your desktop. I called my file MyDefrag, but any name will do.

Inside the folder, you will see a file: MyDefrag.exe. Double-clicking this file will run the defrag program immediately and without installation, so don't click it until you are ready to go.

