

Computer Tips

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Power Usage & Your PC

As we all are not doubt aware, the cost of electricity keeps going up and up. Often we are asked for tips on how to use a computer in the best way to conserve power. In this article we will share some of those tips.

Lets say you are running a big high-end computer with gaming level graphics card, and 22" LCD screen, and you leave your PC on 24/7. That's about 250 watts x 24 hours x 365 days/yr = 2,190,000 watt—hours, or 2190 kilowatt hours. If you are paying \$0.20 per kWh, you are paying about \$440 a year to run your computer.

In contrast, if you run a laptop with a 15.6" screen, loaded with Windows 7, and use it two hours a day, five days a week, that's 80 watts x 10 hours/week x 52 weeks/year = 41,600 watt-hours, or 41.6 kWh. If you are paying \$0.20 per kWh, then you are paying about \$8.30 a year to run your laptop. Clearly, the type of computer, how you use it, and your local kWh price greatly affects the overall cost of running your PC.

Lets look at some ways to reduce the amount of energy used by your PC, while at the same time not too greatly impacting on your usage habits.

The best and most effective way to reduce your power usage, is the put your PC into standby mode when it is not being used. Standby mode (or sleep mode) is when your computer, monitor, and hard drives are placed in an almost off mode. This mode only uses between 1 to 6 watts, and is better than actually turning your PC off when not in use. Turning a PC off and then on again several times a day actually wears out the components inside, and will shorten their usable life.

Standby mode is also to be contrasted with Hibernation mode. Standby mode simply puts your PC into idle, where as Hibernation mode will save your current workarea, then switch your PC off. This is not the best for two reasons: 1) the PC takes a lot longer to come back on, and 2) file corruption and/or file loss is common through Hibernation mode. The best standby mode settings are monitor and hard drives sleep after 20 minutes of no activity, and PC sleep after 30 minutes of no activity. Even if you do nothing else to conserve electricity, setting your PC's power options to Standby for those times will greatly reduce the cost of running your PC.

Setting the power options is done through Control Panel. Click Start, then Control Panel, then Power Options, in all versions of Windows from 98SE to Windows 7. Change the settings in Power Options, then click OK to save them.

Another tip to conserve energy is when using a screensaver, have it set to Blank screen, instead of a moving image. A third tip, use an LCD or LED monitor instead of an old CRT monitor. The new LED screens use much less energy and will save you in the long run.

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