

How to protect your computer

With the New Year well under way now, it's likely that you're getting tired of hearing about all the resolutions that you should have made — or did make and, perhaps by now, have broken.

However, there's one set of resolutions you should make that will help protect your home or business computer.

And these resolutions might actually be something that you can live with since they don't involve dieting or exercise.

Moreover, they could make you feel better, more organized and help protect your identity. This will keep your checking account balance and sanity in place.

So in 2011, resolve to:

■ Purchase a top-rated anti-virus software for my computer and take the time to configure it (or have a professional do it) and keep it updated.

■ Not horde 10,000 e-mails in your inbox. Instead, archive old e-mails and delete what isn't necessary.

■ Keep two separate person-



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al e-mails. One will be used for family and friends and the other for signing up on websites.

That will cut down on spam.

NOTE: Business e-mails should always be separate.

■ Be mindful of the websites you go to and stick to known, reputable sites whenever possible.

■ Not place your laptop on anything soft while it is powered on, thereby blocking the fan that circulates air in the unit. That includes laps, sofas, carpets or soft kitties.

■ Be careful about whom you allow to "fix" your computer, including armchair experts, friends and family. Also, be wary of any television or Internet advertisement that

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says it can "fix" a computer with one simple call or click of the mouse.

■ Not subject your computer to free anything (anti-virus software, games, sweepstakes, ring tones, music, movies, etc.) as these might infect a system and be illegal.

■ Not open attachments through e-mail or social networking sites without giving them careful consideration.

■ Never enter your credit card information on an unsecure site. Look for "https://" in the URL to ensure it's a secure site.

■ Always use complex passwords and never write them down.

■ Not use your laptop as a plate or cup holder.

■ Have a professional do a checkup on your computer once a quarter in order to quickly remove any infections or malicious software. These cannot be completely avoided even with the best anti-virus program. The check-ups also will optimize your computer's overall performance and extend its life.

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