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Windows 8 was officially released yesterday and it's now time to decide whether or not to upgrade. If you have chosen to upgrade a Windows XP, Windows Vista, or Windows 7 computer to Windows 8, you probably want to make sure that your system can support Windows 8 before you purchase the upgrade. To verify that your PC is compatible with Windows 8, you can download and run the Windows 8 Update Wizard. The Upgrade Wizard scans your hardware, programs, and even all connected devices to make sure they work with Windows 8. Windows 8 requires certain CPU features like PAE, NX, SSE2, etc., so it's a good idea to use this tool if your computer is a little older. The tool also gives you a compatibility report for your programs and tells you if you need to uninstall the program or upgrade the program before upgrading. Once you download, install, and run it, the program will automatically begin scanning your computer for apps and devices. It will then tell you which apps are compatible and which apps you need to check. There are some new features in Windows 8 such as safe booting, snap and fast booting. The Upgrade Wizard notifies you if any of these items are not supported by your system: If you didn't know, Windows 8 does not include built-in software to play DVDs. If you want this feature, you need to buy the Pro package and get Windows Media Center. Note that if you already have Windows 8 Pro, you can use Windows Media Center Pack for free until January 31, 2013, so you get it quickly! In addition, Microsoft Security Essentials in Windows 8 will be replaced by Windows Defender. It's basically the same, but for whatever reason they're built into Windows 8 including Windows Defender. Therefore, if you have Security Essentials installed on Windows 7, you must remove it before upgrading. You'll also get a list of compatible software and hardware that works with Windows 8: When you click Next, you'll be asked what you want to keep. This determines which version of Windows 8 works best for you. Note that depending on the version of Windows, you can only upgrade to certain editions of Windows 8. For example, if you have Windows 7 Ultimate, you can only upgrade to Windows 8 Pro. If you have Windows 7 Pro, you can upgrade to Windows 8 Pro or Enterprise. If you have Windows 7 Enterprise, you can only upgrade to Windows 8 Enterprise. Check out the Wikipedia article for more details. In my case, since I have Windows 7 Ultimate, every option I selected gave me the Result: Windows 8 Pro for 39.99 USD. That's all there is for the Windows 8 Upgrade Assistant. It is especially useful to find out which hardware and software does not work on Windows 8. It is also useful if you have an older PC and you are not sure if your CPU is supported by Windows 8. Enjoy! There is a multi-billion dollar business built around the sale of PC and Mac cleaning software. They are available in all shapes, sizes sizes Prices and the need to clean, optimize and fix your computer so that it runs smoothly and efficiently. I've even written about many of these programs myself on Help Desk Geek and Online Tech Tips. But do you really need all this software? Are there real wins or is it just a bunch of fluff? Well, the answer is, it depends. Sometimes a third-party program can provide a valuable service if you know how to use it. However, I have found that most of the utilities recommended on the Internet are full of options and settings that can do more harm than good to your computer in the end. Not only that, many of the utilities themselves install malware on your system, devastating damage. When you talk about cleaning up a computer, whether it's a Mac or a PC, it can refer to any number of things. Let's break down what each of these categories are and see if it makes sense to use them or not. Registry Cleaners A long time back, I wrote a typical 10 best registry cleaner article and basically a list of popular and semi-popular registry cleaners without really explaining anything. What does a Registry Cleaner actually do? Well, it basically (and theoretically) is meant to remove unused or old entries, thereby speeding up your computer. Even if you remove only those entries that are not needed, the impact on performance is minimal. If you try to perform a search for actual performance tests performed before and after using a registry cleaner, you will find that there are very few actual tests, and there is basically zero performance difference in the tests. So that is point one. The second problem is that many registry cleaners clean the wrong entries. The only one I have used and continue to use is CCleaner. It's the only one that won't break your system. There really isn't another one for which I can fully vouch for. It is best to download the free version to see the benefits first, but the Professional version includes real-time monitoring, automatic updates and unlimited support, which I recommend on any PC. At the end of the day, registry cleaners can break your computer, not provide real performance enhancement, and waste your time. If you want to speed up your computer, read my articles about speeding up startup times in Windows and five ways to speed up Windows 10. Also, uninstall useless programs on your system. This brings much more in terms of performance than cleaning your registry. File Cleaners File Cleaners are tools that do their best to get junk or unused files on your computer This includes temporary files, cookies, Windows hotfixes, cache files, history files, log files, clipboard data, and so on. In my opinion, there are only two decent programs you would ever need: CCleaner and PC Decrapifier. CCleaner does a great job of cleaning files that you may no longer need. Again, I have never really saved a significant amount of space from using the tool, but if you are really super neat and and that's all you need. On average, I save about 1 GB of storage space if I run it every few months. Not a huge amount, but good if you have a small hard drive. You should also read my other post on how to clean up space in Windows by adjusting the Windows settings. PC Decrapifier is a program that allows you to uninstall crap software equipped with new PCs that you buy from Dell, HP, etc. Personally, I only recommend a clean installation first and then with your computer. Here is my guide to performing a clean installation of Windows 10. Uninstallers If you install a lot of software on your PC, you can easily uninstall it yourself. However, there is a whole category of software that helps you uninstall programs. Is that necessary? A kind. Personally, I try not to install anything on my main PC that I won't use every day. If I want to try something or my kids want to play a game, etc., I use a secondary computer and install all the garbage. This machine is then wiped off every few months and starts anew. I also use a virtual machine and load other software there. If you don't have a second PC or don't know how virtual PCs work, you may have software on your system that you no longer want. Most software have uninstallers to properly remove all files, but many times they leave things behind. In addition, some programs just don't come with uninstallers, which is really annoying. In these cases, I only propose Revo Uninstaller. It's been around for a long time and does the best job. It's not free, so I'd only spend the money if you have a lot of programs that didn't come with proper uninstallers. Otherwise, you can uninstall them and then run CCleaner to clean up all old or unused entries from these programs. Also, as with most of these tools, it comes with some other utilities that you really don't need. However, it is still ok in my book for some users, as uninstalling programs is not necessarily a smooth experience in Windows. Startup Cleaners Startup Cleaners are the really useless programs if you ask me. Windows has built-in tools to see all the startup programs on your system, and there's really no need to see the startup drivers, DLLs, etc. that some of these programs are targeting. Beyond simple programs, it really doesn't make any difference unless you're a tech geek. Many of the programs claim that they will give you descriptions and details about each of the programs, and although this may be true, you need no program for this information. Just read my article about how to change startup programs in Windows 7/8/10, then do a Google search on any startup item you're not sure! I definitely do not recommend installing a startup cleaner as it is something that can be done by the user with a little time and research. Can disabling startup programs make a difference now? Yes! Startup programs can really slow down your PC, so it's a good idea to disable anyone you think you don't need. Again, it's like registering, because if you disable the wrong one Your computer may not function properly. Just make a little googling before you disable something and you'll be fine. Duplicate File Finders Another set of tools is designed to remove duplicate files. I had many occasions where I copied the same photos or videos from my camera and then a few extra space was used for this reason. A duplicate file finder can save space if you have many photos, videos, or music that can be duplicated. Also, make sure you don't buy anything. There are a lot of great free programs that can find duplicates, so don't let yourself be sucked into buying anything just to remove duplicates. Browser/History Cleaners For the most part, you really don't need browser and history cleaners. You can delete your own history quite well and make sure it can't be restored. Most people end up buying this software because they have some shady browsing they need to hide and they are afraid that someone will find it unless they use one of these tools that claim only their program can really delete your browsing history. Complete SB. Here are some previous articles I wrote about: Delete Google Search History How to remove and delete cookies Basically, you want to delete your browsing history with the browser and clear the cache. That's it. You don't need a fancy tool to do that. No one has ever been able to restore my story. I even tried to find my own story to see if this was good enough and it was. Internet Speed Booster Internet Speed Boosters are another useless category of software that you should never install. These programs are more likely to break their Internet connection or slow it down more than speed ingessing anything. You want a faster internet connection? Get a faster wireless router, clarify interference in your wireless network, and boost your Wi-Fi signal. There are some occasions when changing some TCP or network settings can speed up the read/write performance of files over the network, but this is typically for LAN traffic and not for your Internet connection. Call your ISP and increase your download speed, but don't install a speed booster! Conclusion As you can see from above, I do not recommend installing too many so-called optimizers and tune-up utilities for your PC. There are some good programs out there, but the majority suck. Try to do as much as possible yourself and then use only trusted programs like the one I mentioned above. What do you think cleaning utilities? Do you use any? Enjoy! Enjoy! Enjoy!

