

The Cost of Owning a Computer?

My topic this month is how much households need to budget for the actual upkeep and maintenance of a computer, an important asset. The minimum maintenance would be:

- **Do you have enough memory installed?** Upgrading your installed memory will add years of use to your computer.
- **Is your computer installed with an anti-virus product, an anti-malware product and an anti-spyware product?** Prevention is essential for low cost maintenance.
- **Have you configured Windows Automatic Update to run nightly?** This means you really need to leave your computer running over night, so you will Logoff but not Shutdown.
- **Do you have passwords enabled on your login accounts?** Without passwords on the accounts having full control, a hacker has a free ticket to using your machine for his/her own purposes.
- **Do you have an online backup system in place?** I recommend online backup because if you don't how to restore from your external hard drive, it's worthless to you. I've restored 27GB of data with Mozy, in two clicks and a couple minutes.



Figure 1: 256MB memory stick

Memory can be bought online for between \$25-60 a stick, most people need only one. The older the computer, the more the memory costs.

The free security products I recommend are AVG Free, Malwarebytes and Spybot. Malwarebytes' \$25 license lets you schedule updates, scans and Internet protection. It stops you from visiting bad websites, which you cannot avoid. My teenage daughter is stopped 30-50 times a day! Each visit could be an infection. *This is the best \$25 you will ever spend.*

Configuring Windows Update to run nightly is free, and I will email anyone the steps with screenshots on how to do this, no charge. This takes 2 minutes.

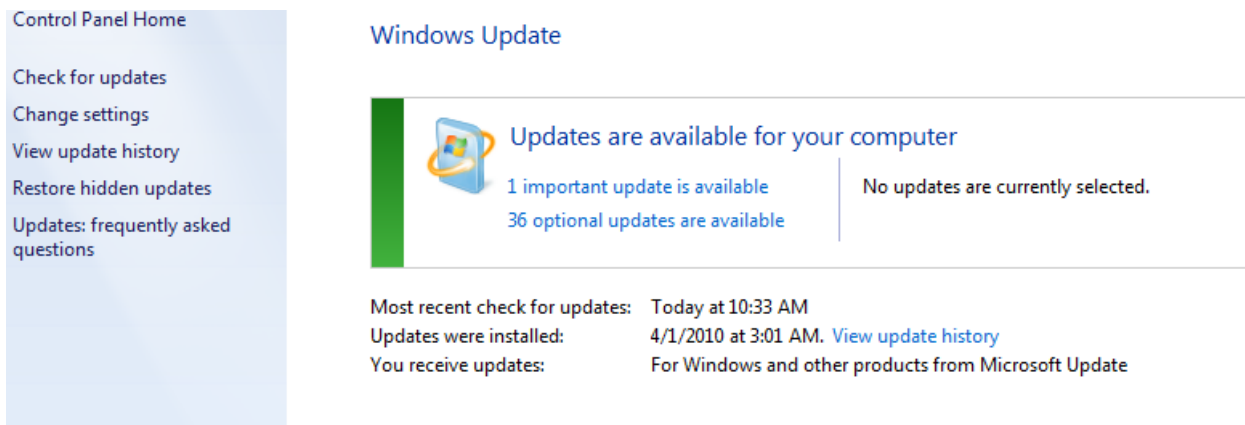


Figure 2: Windows Update in the Windows 7 operating system

Creating accounts with passwords is free, and I will email anyone the steps with screenshots on how to do this, no charge. This takes 2 minutes.

Backing up online is free for up to 2GB of data, which will suit most of you. It took me 5 minutes to create an account and let the product configure itself to do its thing, continually and automatically.

So far, we could spend \$75 for upgrading memory and the Malware license. The installs and initial configurations will take between 1-1.5 hours. Once you have confirmed that your new security products are updating, upgrading and protecting, you will check the logs on all three once a month - about 20 minutes at most (per computer). **So for an annual time factor of 4 hours, your computer is protected, backed up and updated daily.**

How much time each month do you spend washing your car, or cleaning lint from the dryer filter, replacing air conditioner filters, or wiping out your microwave?

Your computer is a valuable asset that enriches your world, extends your reach to family and friends, helps you find a job, a home, lets you purchase many goods and services more cheaply and gives you access to just about all your account services i.e., banks. **So isn't 20 minutes a month worth all that access and connection and communication?**

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