

Building a digital defense with some spring cleaning

May 6, 2021



TECH TUESDAY: Spring Cleaning

- Delete unused apps from your phone.
- Delete outdated software from your computer.
- Remove old browser extensions.
- Get rid of old devices. Make sure to wipe any personal info off the device first.
- Report fraud to www.ic3.gov.

 **FBI** FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Portland Field Office

Take advantage of the next rainy spring Saturday and do some deep cleaning of your digital devices. In the end, you will be safer from bad actors trying to steal your money and your identity – and your device may actually run more efficiently.

Delete apps from your phone

Remember that game that your child just had to download on your device? But hasn't been touched in two years? Or that yoga app you are sure you will use next week (but next week has come and gone dozens of times already?) Get rid of them. Both Android and iPhones give you the option to see how long it has been since you've used an app. Make sure you physically go in and uninstall the app – don't just delete it from your home screen.

Android

Open the Play Store.

Tap the hamburger menu in the top-left corner.

Tap My Apps & Games > Installed > Change “alphabetical” to “last used.” For any app you don’t use anymore, tap the name of the app, and then tap “uninstall” to get rid of it.

iPhone

Head to Settings > General > iPhone Storage, to find a list of all your apps, organized by size. This section also lists the last time you used an app. Tap the app, and then tap the “delete app” button.

Delete software from your computer

Outdated software can be a huge security risk. Haven’t updated your PC since Windows 7? Still have a copy of your tax software from 2009? Really? Why? Uninstall them! While you are at it, make sure you've got automatic updates enabled so your operating system stays up-to-date.

Of importance, be sure to uninstall Adobe Flash Player as it is no longer supported and is a prime pathway for malware.

Windows

Open Settings > System > Storage, and then click on Apps & Features.

Under the “sort by” dropdown, select “install date.”

Go through and remove anything you don’t need. If an app is unfamiliar, search for it online to see if it’s something you need or if you can safely get rid of it.â€”

Mac

Click the Apple icon > About This Mac, and then select Storage > Manage > Applications.

Go through to see if there are any apps you no longer need and delete them. If you have many apps, it’s useful to click the “last accessed” option to sort by the last time you opened the app.

Delete old documents from your devices or accounts

It’s a good idea to go through your documents and other files, too. Getting rid of big, old files can help improve your computer’s performance in some cases. Also, be sure to clear out your “downloads” folder periodically to ensure you don’t accidentally click on anything you didn’t intend to download. Finally, check any online storage accounts you have for no-longer-needed items and get rid of them.

Remove Old Browser Extensions

You installed an extension years ago and used it once. Extensions can be handy, but nothing comes for free. Some browsers steal your data. Remove the ones that don't "spark joy" for you anymore.

Chrome

Click the puzzle icon > Manage Extensions.

Click the “remove” button on any extensions you don’t need.

Firefox

Click the three-dot icon > Add-Ons.

For any extensions you no longer need, click the three-dot icon next to the extension, and then select “remove.”

Safari

Click Safari > Preferences > Extensions.

Click the “uninstall” button on any extensions here you do not need.

Get rid of old devices

Finally, time to ditch that 10-year old cell phone in the drawer... or that desktop that’s been sitting unused in your basement forever. Before you recycle or donate the items, though, make sure you wipe the device of any personal info. The U.S. Computer Emergency Response Team can tell you how to do that: <https://us-cert.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/DisposeDevicesSafely.pdf>