

Practical Help Tip Sheet

TOD #006: Recycle or Donate Your PC – Tips for Recycling Your Old Computer

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v1.0)

Tip #1: Before you recycle or donate your computer, wipe or scramble the hard drive – here are seven ways to do it:

1. Use the computer's system restore disks (or the manufacturer's system restore partition on the hard drive) to restore it back to factory specs – that wipes the drive. Then you can donate/recycle the whole computer.
2. Use a hard drive eraser program (like these free programs: [Eraser](#) from Heidi Computers or [Active@ KillDisk](#) from LSoft Technologies) to wipe the hard drive, then donate/recycle the whole computer.
3. Use a professional hard drive recycling service (like [Shred Ace](#) or [Back Thru the Future](#)) – this may be less expensive than you'd imagine.
4. Remove the hard drive and smash it with a hammer (you would need to really break it open and make sure the internal platters are all broken as well)
5. Remove the hard drive and take it to a computer or office supply store (like Staples or Office Depot) – they may be able to wipe the drive for you (and recycle it unless you want to put it back in the computer to donate)
6. Remove the hard drive from the computer, and scramble it with a very strong magnet (one capable of lifting 10lbs or more of metal) by running the magnet over every external surface of the hard drive – do this several times and leave it in place for a few minutes. Then you can replace the hard drive in the computer. If the computer starts up in Windows, you'll know your magnet wasn't strong enough, otherwise it's ok to donate/recycle.
7. Remove the hard drive and just hang onto it until you get the chance to have it wiped, and donate/recycle the computer immediately.



Tip #2: Know which method is best for you

1. Method #1 is good enough for most people – it would take an amazing amount of work to reconstruct your personal data – nobody would spend that much.
2. Method #2 may have options for government-level security wiping that will make sure nobody can get to the data.
3. Method #3 is the most reliable, as long as you choose a reputable company. Many of these companies operate on a truck, come to you, and will destroy your hard drive while you watch!