

101 Tips For Making The Most Of Your Laptop

By Gary Hendricks

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Introduction

Are you at a loss when it comes to laptops? The laptop you purchased usually costs a thousand dollars or more and is a very significant investment. Learning how to use the laptop in a more efficient manner would certainly benefit you. Not only will your laptop last longer, you will also have a more fun and pleasurable usage experience.

In this book I've written down 101 laptop tips which address the most common laptop headaches and problems. You'll be surprised by the content – many of these tips would not have occurred to you before– but they are extremely relevant and important to take note of.

Let's get started right away – I hope you'll enjoy reading this ebook as much as I did writing it.

1. Buying Your Laptop

If you're in the market for a new laptop, it's good to review the following tips. They will help make a more informed purchase decision and avoid scams.

Tip 1: Ruggedized Laptops

If you're always on the go and tend to do your computing in rough conditions, then you might want to invest in a "ruggedized" laptop. Rough conditions in this context includes extreme sunlight, cold or watery conditions. Laptop manufacturers usually produce a sturdier chassis for such laptops to make them withstand extreme conditions.

Tip 2: How Will You Use The Laptop?

One of the problems when you buy a laptop is that you pay for features you don't really need. One of the best ways to avoid paying too much is to consider how you will use the laptop. If it is mostly for word processing, then settle for a cheaper machine. If it is for gaming, then you need a more powerful one.

Tip 3: Think Of Features You Will Not Compromise

When shopping for a laptop, you should also be aware that there are some basic features in a laptop you should NOT sacrifice. For example, for me, if I were buying a laptop, I'd choose (as a minimum) - an Intel Core Duo or Core 2 Duo processor, 2GB of RAM, 160GB of hard drive, a very small screen size and a super long lasting battery. Your list of critical features may vary.

Tip 4: Remember You Can Pick And Choose

Most vendors will let you custom-build your own laptop. This is a good thing, because you can just pick those features you need and not pay any extra. You can easily purchase a faster notebook by accepting a smaller hard drive or DVD drive, for example.

Tip 5: Think Carefully About Extended Warranties

If you're shopping for a laptop (or any other consumer electronics for that matter), be wary of extended warranties. Extended warranties are a way for the dealer to get extra cash from you upfront "in case" your laptop fails in the future. Now seriously, the build of most laptops nowadays is pretty solid, I've not seen many laptops fail for the first few years unless you do something silly like drop it on the floor. If you take care of your laptop carefully, you should not need an extended warranty.

Tip 6: Laptop Manufacturers Have Good Deals Online

If you want to buy a Dell, HP or Lenovo laptop, do note that most of these brand name manufacturers have solid deals online. So visit these online stores and see if you can save any money. Chances are, there are some very attractive deals going on during different seasons (e.g. Back to School or Christmas sales). Don't miss out on these.

Tip 7: Question The Laptop Salesman

Don't believe in everything the laptop salesman says. Get the specs of the laptop you want and do some of your own research. Then question the laptop salesman and ask him to recommend alternative or cheaper models with the same functionality. If the salesman is worth his salt, he will be pretty good at suggesting alternatives so you get the best deal. Remember, a laptop is a big investment and I'd definitely feel more comfortable shelling out cash if I know exactly what I'm paying for.

Tip 8: Be Careful Of Auction Sites

There are many, many laptops on sale in eBay or other auction sites. While I would not discredit used laptops, be sure you check up on the seller and try to view or test the laptop before paying money. There are a lot of laptop scam artists sitting on eBay and most of the scam stories I hear don't have happy endings.

Tip 9: Keep Those Laptop Accessories In Mind

A good shopping tip is to remember that you usually need to buy some accessories to accompany a laptop. Try to see if the laptop dealer has a good deal that packs in these extras. For example, you might want to get an extra battery module, or perhaps a pen drive or more RAM. If you can, see if the dealer can structure a good deal for you that includes these extras.

Tip 10: Inspect That Laptop

When shopping for a laptop, too many people trust the laptop dealers. You should always check and inspect the contents of a new laptop you are buying. Check the screen to see if there is damage. Check the chassis for scratches or discoloring. Also, switch on the laptop and see if you can perform normal stuff like web surfing and word processing. Play a DVD or a movie file and see if the sound and color produced by the laptop is ok.

Tip 11: Check The Replacement Period

If a new laptop you purchase is faulty, most laptop manufacturers allow you to return it for a new unit. But they only allow this within a couple of days of purchase. Check to make sure you can return the laptop to the dealer when you return home to find it faulty. A rough guideline for this replacement period should be about 7 to 14 days.

Tip 12: Consider Refurbished Laptops

If you don't have a real need for a spanking new laptop with all the latest bells and whistles, consider a refurbished laptop. These can be purchased for a fraction of the price and are usually just as usable as a regular laptop. Check online for deals on refurbished laptops – you will be amazed at the range of options available.

Tip 13: Many Niche Websites Have Good Laptop Deals

Many folks think that buying laptops online is not a good idea. They prefer to inspect the product up close and personal first, before paying the cash. This is fine, but do remember that many small online retailers really have deep discounts on laptops – you might want to check them out. Some examples are

<http://www.notebookreview.com>, <http://www.apple.com> (it has a nice Special Deals section), <http://www.techbargains.com> and <http://www.dealcatcher.com> are just some of the sites to check out.

Tip 14: Find Out Which Are The Best Laptop Makers

If you are knowledgeable about the best laptop makers, you will be in a good position to get the best functioning laptop for your use. Some of the bigger brand names in the laptop world are Lenovo, Sony, Apple, HP, Dell, Fujitsu and Toshiba. Find out more about their products so you can compare and evaluate your next laptop purchase.

Tip 15: Find Out About Laptop Prices First

Before you buy a laptop, it's important to get a feel of what the market prices are. A simple check is to go into your neighborhood electronics store and pick up a brochure. Another way is to go online to <http://www.newegg.com> (one of my favourite online computer shops) and check out the prices there. Once you have some idea of the laptop prices, you can then proceed to buy your new laptop with confidence.

Tip 16: Do You Need Those Cinematic Widescreens?

The trend these days is for new laptops to come with glossy, 19-inch widescreens. While these are excellent for games and movies, consider whether you need this feature. A large widescreen, in my opinion, adds to the weight (and cost) of the laptop. If you intend to use it more for business, consider a small screen version instead.

Tip 17: Try Out The Keyboard

You will be amazed how many people I know who bought laptops with badly designed keyboards. The keyboard is an underrated component of the laptop (compared to screens, processors and RAM) – but ignore it at your own peril. Make sure you give the laptop a “typing test” – try typing some sentences out and see if you like the click and response of those keys.

Tip 18: Trackpad Or Pointing Stick

Some laptops come with trackpads while others come with pointing sticks. Remember that trackpads are slightly less precise for control, so are more suited for surfing around. If you need to do precision work (e.g. graphics editing), it might be a better idea to get a machine with a point stick.

Tip 19: Do You Need A CPU Speed Of More Than 2 GHz?

Another thing to take note of in a laptop – don’t over-invest in the CPU speed. For general usage, a CPU with 2 GHz or slightly lower speed is perfectly fine. If you purchase a CPU with more than 2 GHz speed, it is usually because you need it for graphics intensive applications like 3D games. So save some money and buy a slower CPU if you don’t need the extra computing horsepower.

Tip 20: Invest In A Big And Fast Hard Disk

For laptops, hard disk drives should follow one simple rule – the bigger and the faster the better. You can get laptop hard disk drives ranging from 30 GB to 200 GB in size, along with speeds of 4200, 5400 or 7200 rpm. My advice is to go for the biggest and fastest hard disk your budget will allow.

Tip 21: Different Laptop Optical Requirements

The standard laptop out there comes with a dual-layer DVD writer. Many of the lighter laptops these days come without a DVD drive to save some weight. Others come with Blu-Ray drives which are the latest talk of the tech world. So consider what you need and buy an appropriate model – if you don’t think you need a fancy DVD or Blu-Ray writer, then save some money and try to remove it from your laptop purchase decision.

Tip 22: Do You Really Need A Fingerprint Reader?

Many new laptops come with fingerprint readers to store passwords. I personally find this a bit of a hyped up technology, especially in laptops. It's your own preference, but I'd say that fingerprint readers are definitely an "optional extra" in a laptop purchase. Spend the money you save elsewhere, maybe on an extra stick of RAM.

Tip 23: Classify Your Laptop Needs

I find it helpful to classify laptops into different categories. When you're buying a laptop, it is helpful to consider if you need a desktop replacement, a gaming laptop, an ultraportable laptop, a student laptop, etc. You can also consider budget, mid-priced and high-end categories when classifying laptops. Categorizing laptops help you sort out what kind of laptops you really need so you make an informed purchase decision.

Tip 24: Get A Good Graphics Card To Play 3D Games

If you intend to play a lot of 3D games on the laptop, make sure you get a laptop with a solid graphics card. Ideally this should have at least 256MB of graphics memory so you can power your intensive 3D graphics games and applications.

Tip 25: Find A Laptop Suited To Your Usage Conditions

You should try to find a laptop that is suited to your usage conditions. For example, if you intend to use the laptop in rough conditions (e.g. heavy rain or in cold weather), you should go for a "rugged" laptop model. There are manufacturers that do in fact sell such laptops. If you intend to use the laptop at home or the office, then a normal mainstream laptop will do. The thing is, you should be aware that there are different types of laptop suited to different usage conditions.

Tip 26: Keep Your Original Laptop Warranty Card, Accessories And Box

It's usually quite important to keep your original laptop warranty card, accessories and box. The warranty card comes in handy if you need to repair the laptop when it breaks down. In addition, if you intend to sell off your laptop (via eBay or some or other means) - it always helps if you can show the buyer that you have the original warranty card, accessories and box. So do keep this in mind when you purchase a new laptop and are thinking of throwing stuff away.

Tip 27: Check If The USB Ports Are Too Close

Many laptops these days come with 2 USB ports. Sometimes, these ports are situated extremely close to each other. I've encountered laptops where the USB ports are so close that I can't plug in two USB devices at the same time. So it's definitely a good idea to do a check on the laptop to see if the USB ports are too close. If you imagine you have a mouse plugged into one USB port, and have to remove it before plugging in a pen drive, then you will understand the frustration here. So do bear this point in mind when buying a new laptop.

3. Your Laptop Battery

The laptop battery is one of the most common headaches for laptop owners. Usually it has to do with running out of battery power. Here are some tips to help you get better mileage out of your laptop battery.

Tip 28: Fully Discharge Your Laptop Battery Before Recharging

Always remember to extend your laptop's battery life. To do this, remember to always fully discharge the battery before recharging it. If, for example, your battery is still at 45% power, do not plug in the AC adaptor. Allow the battery to reach the critical low battery warning before plugging the adaptor in.

Tip 29: Go Into Hibernate Mode Rather Than Standby

Many laptop users place their laptops on "Standby" mode. Although this saves some power and allows you to instantly resume where you left off, you should note that it doesn't save as much power as the "Hibernate" mode. If you intend to leave the laptop for an extended period of time, then placing the laptop in hibernate mode will save your PC's state as it is and also completely shut itself down.

Tip 30: Power Down The Display

Do you know one of the most effective ways to conserve laptop battery life is to lower the brightness of the screen display? Its been known that lowering one level of screen brightness will yield up to 10 more minutes of battery life. You can easily do this by going to *Start > Settings > Control Panel > Display* and clicking the Settings tab. You can also disable those cool effects like ClearType fonts and fade effects to reduce the CPU's power consumption.

Tip 31: Turn The Display Down To Minimum Brightness

Here's another trick to save battery life – turn down the display to minimum brightness. This is particular useful if you're in a dark environment. Not only is a bright screen glaring in such conditions, it eats up battery life as well. So turn down the display brightness if you don't need it.

Tip 32: Turn Off Unused Devices

And here's another tip for you. As you may know, many modern laptops have a Wi-Fi built in. Unknown to many people, that Wi-Fi connection is a power guzzler! Make sure you turn off the Wi-Fi connection using the external Wi-Fi on-off switch. If your laptop does not offer such a switch, you should go to the *Control Panel > System > Hardware > Device Manager* and disable the infrared transceiver, Ethernet adapter and Bluetooth radio.

Tip 33: Decrease Hard Drive Activity

Your laptop hard drive is another power eating culprit. To save power, you should reduce the frequency with which your hard disk has to spin. To do this, you can try defragmenting your hard drive regularly. This can be done using the Disk Defragmenter in the Start > Programs > Accessories > System Tools menu.

You can also optimize the Windows' paging file - the area of the laptop hard drive that serves as virtual memory whenever your RAM is full. Optimizing the paging file size ensures your hard drive is accessed less frequently when you run out of system memory. To change it, go to the *Control Panel > System > Advanced > Performance Settings > Advanced > Virtual Memory Change*. Set both the initial and maximum paging file size to 1.5 times the capacity of your installed RAM size.

Tip 34: Condition The Battery

One thing you should remember about laptop batteries. You need to condition it. When you first buy your laptop, charge the battery to 100 percent and then discharge it completely. Next, charge it to 100 percent again. This is not a pointless exercise - it 'conditions' the battery and helps it remember exactly how much electrical charge it can hold. After you do that, you will never need to completely discharge the battery again.

Tip 35: Turn Off Wireless Connectivity

One of the best ways to save battery life in the laptop is to turn off the wireless port when it is not in use. For example, if you're just typing out a Word document and have no need for online access, then switch off the wireless connectivity. This trick will extend your battery life for possibly an hour or more.

4. Using Your Laptop

When using your laptop, remember that it runs well only if you treat it well. Here are some good tips for using your laptop properly at home and at work.

Tip 36: Save Your Keyboard And Screen

The laptop keyboard is frequently abused. Specks of dirt, grime and other stuff end up between the keys and often cause the laptop keys to respond poorly. Keep it clean by regular vacuuming it. The laptop screen is another culprit. Fingerprints and dust also tend to collect there. Make sure you use a clean wipe to wipe off dirt from the screen to improve its clarity.

Tip 37: Work Offline And Be More Productive

You don't always need to be hooked to the Internet. If you predict you're just doing some typing or performing some calculations, turn off the wireless switch on the laptop. Or pull out the Ethernet connector. Being online distracts you a lot. Get offline

and focus on your work – you'll be amazed at the improvement in your productivity.

Tip 38: Secure Your Data

Your laptop data is never safe. Don't think that there are no prying eyes out there. There are those who will try to hack into your credit card numbers, passwords and other sensitive information. Secure your data by password protecting your files. For example, Word or Excel documents can be password protected. Also, at the minimum, set a screensaver password when you move away from your laptop.

Tip 39: Disable Startup Items

Here's another tip. Disable your unneeded startup items! I find it very irritating whenever my laptop boots up and I've to wait like 20 seconds for all manner of little program bits to load into memory. You can disable those startup programs. Go to the associated programs and click on the Options or Preferences menu to do this. You can also go to the Startup tab in your Start Menu and clear programs you don't want to run at boot time.

Tip 40: Don't Leave The Laptop On The Floor

Too many people leave their laptops around in unsafe places. And one of the most common places is on the floor. That opens the laptop up to all sorts of dangers – coffee spills, people stepping on it, the dog messing around with it, etc. So be sure to place your laptop on a proper table or corner if you need to go away for a while.

Tip 41: Don't Keep Paperwork Between The Screen And Keypad

Sometimes, if you're engrossed in work, you tend to keep the paperwork or documents between the laptop screen and your keyboard. That is not a good idea. The key reason being that heat will tend to build up. Remember, laptops need air to circulate. If you block the laptop's vents in any way, be it with a piece of paper, or by placing it on a mattress, you tend to encourage heat build up, which is not a good thing.

Tip 42: Shut Down Your Laptop Properly

When shutting down your laptop, be sure to go through the proper steps. Don't just press the reset button to shut it down. You should first save all your work and ensure the files are properly stored. Next, click the Start button, and select the shutdown option. Be sure you respond to the *Turn Off Computer* box message that pops up. Only then is your laptop properly shut off.

Tip 43: Never Place Drinks Near Your Laptop

One of the most common causes of laptop damage is spillage from drinks. Please do not place your coffee mug or orange juice near your laptop. By all means, have that drink, but don't let any of the fluid touch the laptop. If liquids seep into the laptop,

you can imagine the havoc that will wreak on the components.

Tip 44: Don't Dismantle The Laptop

Unless you understand what is inside your laptop, or if you're a qualified laptop repairman, don't tinker and open up the laptop. There are far too many components inside a laptop. Mess up any one of them, and the laptop will cease to work. I've seen many users open up the laptop, take out some components and not being able to put it all back together again. If there is a problem with the laptop (especially a hardware problem), bring it back to a qualified service shop. Don't attempt to repair it yourself.

Tip 45: Don't Paste Stickers On Your Laptop Chassis

I find some folks like to paste stickers on their laptop chassis. This is quite bad for the laptop chassis's appearance – especially when you decide to remove the sticker. Stickers leave a residue that can cause permanent damage to the polish of the laptop chassis. So do think twice before you mar the laptop's surface with a sticker.

Tip 46: Read The Laptop Manual

A piece of advice that is important – always read your laptop manual. Even if you only skim through it, make sure you read it at least once. I've seen many business travellers go overseas with a new laptop and have very little idea on what features or what components it has. If you spend some time understanding the machine, it becomes a lot easier to work with, especially if you are out and about.

Tip 47: Be Nice In Internet Cafes

If you're using your laptop in an Internet café, please be nice. What do I mean? Well, buy a drink or something. It's rude to sit down and just use your laptop without buying something – trust me, I've seen this happen many times in the shopping malls.

Tip 48: Take Down Your Laptop Serial Number

Usually, laptop manufacturers keep track of their laptops using serial numbers. If you bring your machine into a manufacturer for repair, chances are they will require you to quote that serial number. So make sure you have it handy and written down in a safe place.

Tip 49: Don't Scratch Or Push On The Screen

This one happens all the time. I've seen laptop owners pushing on the screen to emphasize a particular point. Remember, the laptop screen is very sensitive. If you push it too hard, you might damage the screen or cause dead pixels to occur. You will also get ugly fingerprints all over the place. So be very careful try to tap the screen with a pen if you really need to touch it.

Tip 50: Be Careful With The Power Adapter

If your power adapter is connected to the laptop and the wire stretches a long way to the power socket, be very careful. I've seen many users trip over the wires and jerk the power cord off the laptop. This is potentially very damaging to both the power adapter and the laptop.

Tip 51: Wrap The Power Cord Correctly

If you are done with your work and storing up the power cord, be sure to wrap it correctly. Don't wrap the cord tightly around itself. Instead, the best way to store the cord is to loosely wrap it in a figure eight pattern.

Tip 52: Be Careful When Removing CDs or DVDs

Be extra careful when removing your CDs and DVDs from drives. The CD or DVD writer in the laptop is extremely fragile. Make sure that you open and close the drive, you gently insert or remove media. I've seen some folks snap their DVD drive bays simply because they were not careful when removing media.

Tip 53: Clear Objects On The Keyboard Before Closing The Lid

Be careful when you are closing the laptop lid. Sometimes, you might leave a pencil or a pen on the keyboard and close the lid. If that happens too often, you can be quite sure your screen will get damaged sooner or later. Make sure you inspect and clear all debris and objects from the keyboard before closing the laptop lid.

Tip 54: How To Connect Your Laptop To The TV

This is one of the most common questions I get from my website visitors. It would be great if you could hook up your laptop to the TV to watch movies on the big screen with surround sound eh? Well, it's very to do this – here's a website which explains the procedure very well: <http://www.geekwithlaptop.com/how-to-connect-laptop-to-tv>

5. Carrying Your Laptop Around

Your laptop is a fragile (and expensive) piece of equipment. When transporting your laptop from one place to another, be sure to take note of the following tips.

Tip 55: Carry It Well

Your laptop is a sensitive and fragile piece of equipment. Even a slight, forceful knock can sometimes damage your laptop components. Always remember to transport it carefully from place to place. Invest in a good laptop bag, preferably one with padding to help protect it from shocks. And please, carry the machine with two hands – carrying it with one hand is just inviting disaster.

Tip 56: Careful Storage

Another tip is to always store your laptop properly. It is easy to just dump your laptop into the backseat of the car, leave it on the sofa or even place it near food and drink. That exposes it to unnecessary damage. To properly store the laptop, always switch it off, keep it in its bag and then store it in a cupboard or the boot of the car.

Tip 57: Carry your Laptop or Pack It Away?

If you travel a lot, you might be tempted to check in your laptop together with your other baggage into an airplane. Do not do that. The laptop stays with you at all times. Bring it with you on the flight as carry-on baggage. Remember, baggage handlers move your suitcases and checked-in baggage quite roughly, so a sensitive electronic device like a laptop might get damaged.

Tip 58: Visual Inspection (Hand checking)

If you pass through airport security, you might be requested to show the Customs Officer that the machine is indeed a laptop. If you anticipate this happening, then you might want to turn on the laptop beforehand and leave it in suspend mode. This will save you a lot of time when passing through inspection.

Tip 59: Should You X-Ray Your Laptop?

Remember that passing a laptop through an airport security X-ray machine will not damage it. The magnetic field generated by the machine is not enough to damage your hard drive or any other laptop component. However, do note that metal detectors can cause damage. Always request politely that the Customs Officer does not use a metal detector but performs a hand check instead.

Tip 60: Get A Padded Laptop Bag

Investing in a good laptop bag is important for protecting your laptop. A good laptop bag should always have ample padding to protect the machine from shocks and knocks. Getting a flimsy laptop bag is as good as having no protection at all. Some of the bags from Targus are excellent for this purpose, so do check them out.

Tip 61: Avoid Magnetic Fields

Take note that many objects in the house contain magnets that can damage your laptop if you're not careful. For example, the television set and the hair dryer are two culprits. These contain magnets and create magnetic fields. So if you place your laptop on the TV or near the hair dryer for long periods of time – don't be surprised to find that it malfunctions after a while.

Tip 62: Be Aware Of Power Requirements

If you are travelling overseas, the power adapter to be used can be quite different. Make sure you check and know what adapters are required in your destination

country. Then purchase a proper travel adapter so that you can plug in when you arrive there.

Tip 63: Do You Need That DVD Drive?

If you have no need for a DVD drive, look for a laptop model that doesn't have one. That saves you a lot of weight and makes your laptop more travel friendly. Some ultraportable laptops out there fit this category, providing you with a USB DVD drive option. You can then hook up the drive to the main laptop unit if and only if you want to do so.

Tip 64: Bring The Purchase Receipt When Travelling

If you own a laptop, it might be a good idea to bring your purchase receipt for the laptop overseas. This serves two purposes. One is access to service – if your laptop breaks down, the receipt can be solid proof of purchase to find service in your destination country. The second purpose is to prove you own the laptop. In some places you might get questioned where you got the laptop from, due to import restrictions.

Tip 65: Do Not Turn Your Laptop Sideways

If you're using a lightweight laptop, you might sometimes turn your laptop slightly sideways while typing on it. Try not to do this – remember that there are moving parts in the laptop which were designed to be running on a flat, horizontal position. Turning your laptop sideways might cause those components to malfunction.

Tip 66: Attach Something Unique To Your Laptop Case

Remember that laptop cases can be very similar, especially if you use the bag provided by the manufacturer. You will want to attach something unique to the case so that you can distinguish it from your colleagues' laptops. Small key chains or little name tags will be very useful for this purpose.

Tip 67: Hold The Laptop Correctly

When carrying the laptop, always hold the laptop by the bottom (keyboard half). Never take up the laptop using the screen. And oh please use both hands when carrying the machine. Too many people use only one hand and that is potentially very dangerous.

Tip 68: Take Breaks When Using The Laptop On A Plane

If you're using the laptop on a plane, be sure to take frequent breaks. Get up, walk around or go to the rest room. Try not to get stuck and hunch over the laptop all the time. Remember, you need to move your feet around to get the blood flowing in your legs. Also, try to avoid eyestrain by closing your eyes to rest or looking away (maybe out the plane window) from time to time.

6. Your Laptop's Temperature

Laptops are susceptible to damage if they run too hot (or too cold). This section lists out some tips regarding your laptop's temperature.

Tip 69: Let It Warm Up

If you use your laptop in cold weather, then bring it into a warm environment, condensation will appear on the laptop. Be sure to give the laptop some time to warm up (and dry out) inside before turning it on. Usually you might need about an hour for the condensation to evaporate. Once it has evaporated, then it is safe to turn the laptop on. Another good idea is to throw a desiccant pack or two in the laptop bag. This will help cut down on the moisture.

Tip 70: Avoid Incorrect Warming Methods

Now, if you work in a cold environment and want to warm up a laptop, you should use the correct approach. Never, ever use things like mug warmers or pocket warmers to keep a laptop warm. The correct way to warm up the laptop is to let it warm up on its own naturally. It may take a bit longer, but you will protect the laptop better.

Tip 71: Use A Laptop Warm To Keep The Laptop Warm

Now, you should also know there are approved laptop warmers designed to keep a laptop warm. These products have been tried and tested, so they should be safe to apply to laptops which need to be kept warm. I'd suggest you invest in one of these if you intend to use your laptop in extremely cold temperatures.

Tip 72: Buy A Laptop Cooler

If you've bought a laptop, especially a heavy desktop replacement laptop, it is definitely a good idea to invest in a laptop cooler. These take the form of a cooling stand and can do wonders for dissipating the heat from your machine. Protect your machine by making sure the cooler is in place when using the laptop for a long time.

Tip 73: Prevent Excessive Heat Build-Up

Remember, using your laptop while it is still inside its laptop bag is a dangerous thing. You are preventing the air from circulating and causing heat to build up. What you should do is to use the laptop on a flat surface and leave the air vents open, so cooling can occur.

Tip 74: Stay Out of the Cold

Laptops are not really designed to be used in cold weather. Hence, whenever possible, you should stay out of direct exposure to cold weather conditions. A good way is to stay in a car, inside a building or other type of shelter. Exposing your laptop to cold weather will result in condensation, excessive dampness or even wetness from snow. Keep away from cold weather to avoid these problems.

Tip 75: Change Power Settings

Here's another trick to keep your laptop warm. You can change the power settings from power save mode, which will help keep the laptop warm as it continues to run. Remember that when your laptop hard drive spins, it generates heat and keeps the laptop warm.

7. Protecting Your Laptop From Theft

Being expensive pieces of equipment – laptops are naturally a target for theft. Make sure that you are aware of the following tips so that your laptop doesn't fall into the wrong hands.

Tip 76: Keep A Low Profile

If you are worried that your laptop will be stolen, then one of the most important tips is to keep a low profile. Don't draw attention to yourself. In particular, if you are waiting to board a plane, sit in an area where you can have some privacy and don't have to worry about someone looking over your shoulder. You never know who is looking over your shoulder, searching for a laptop to steal.

Tip 77: Don't Let Your Laptop Out Of Sight

Remember, your laptop is a huge investment. Don't ever let it out of your sight. Let's say you are in an airport or a café, and you need to go to the washroom. Make sure you place your laptop into its bag, then bring it all along with you. The other point concerns Customs screening. Many laptops (believe or not) are stolen at customs screening points due to the confusion. Keep a close view of your laptop if you are required to place it down for whatever reason.

Tip 78: The Airport Laptop Scam

Some folks may be familiar with this scam. It occurs at the airport security checkpoint area and is a tactic deployed by some laptop thieves. What happens is that two people will get in line ahead of you at the security area. You place your laptop on the conveyor belt and it proceeds to move ahead. The first person goes through with no problems but the second will start having difficulties. That second person distracts you so that you can't get pass. The next moment, the first person takes your laptop and leaves. So always be vigilant at airport security counters.

Tip 79: Keep Your Laptop Case Locked

Some folks place their laptops in the laptop case but fail to lock it. Remember, your laptop case has your laptop and other accessories, making it a prime target for thieves. You should always lock it so that your laptop, mobile gear and documents are protected from theft. Another reason for locking the laptop case is so that other folks can't drop an item into it. For example, someone trying to smuggle something through

customs and will conveniently drop it into your bag first, then try to pick it up later.

Tip 80: Contact The Manufacturer Of The Laptop If It Is Stolen

This tip is important. If your laptop gets stolen, inform your laptop manufacturer. Many manufacturers will make a record of your report. If someone subsequently calls or sends the laptop in for service, the manufacturer can notify you and / or the police. You might ask, how does the manufacturer know that a laptop brought in is owned by you? Well – if you registered your product, the manufacturer should be able to tie the serial number printed on the laptop to your name. So it's a good idea to get your laptop registered when you buy it.

8. Your Laptop Software

When using your laptop, there are some good tips regarding laptop software you should take note of. Read on and find out more.

Tip 81: Defragment Your Laptop Hard Disk Regularly

You need to ensure that you run *Disk Cleanup* and *Defragmenter* on your laptop on a regular basis. I would say that at least monthly would be about right. These software tools are found in Windows under *Start > Programs > Accessories*. Make sure you turn off any screen savers before performing defragmentation.

Tip 82: Back Up When You Get Home

You always need to backup your laptop data, just like in a desktop. Don't assume that your laptop's hard disk will not crash, or that your laptop will not die a sudden death. Invest in a good external hard disk and a disk copy program to back up your data. You don't want you lose those precious photos and videos of friends and family do you?

Tip 83: Pre-install Phone Synchronization Software

If you intend maintain your phone contacts and appointments in your phone and synchronize that with, say Outlook or Lotus Notes in your laptop, be sure that you pre-install the phone synchronization software in the laptop. Also, if your phone communicates with the laptop using Bluetooth, you should consider bringing an USB Bluetooth dongle along with you on the road. Sometimes when I'm on the road and I find that I either failed to install the phone software or failed to bring the Bluetooth dongle and I end up not being able to synchronize my contacts and appointments. That is usually quite troublesome, so make sure you don't end up in such a situation.

Tip 84: Consider A Lightweight Operating System

Windows Vista may have all the solid, state-of-the-art features in an operating system, but sometimes you may not need such a beast. Open yourself to options like Ubuntu Linux and Windows XP. These tend to be more stable than Windows Vista and

consume less power as well. Check with the manufacturer if you want to have these operating systems installed in your laptop.

Tip 85: Be Careful With Laptop System Management Software

When you purchase a new laptop, there is usually a whole bunch of manufacturer specific software installed in the system. Be careful when using these – most of these system management software backs up or restores you entire operating system. So if you are not careful, you might end up losing data. Check with the manufacturer if you're not sure how their software works.

Tip 86: Be Careful Of Downloaded Software

You need to be conscious of the software and screensavers you download. Very often, these programs can cause conflicts or take up valuable memory. The laptop is an important investment for you, so do remember to keep it clean and free from unnecessary programs – it will run faster and be more efficient.

9. Your Laptop Accessories

Laptops owners usually end up buying quite a number of accessories. Here are some useful tips regarding laptop accessories.

Tip 87: Bring An External Laptop Mouse

This is an obvious tip – remember to bring an external laptop mouse along if you intend to work for extended periods of time on the road. You don't want to be working on the laptop navigation pad as it becomes very unproductive and tiring on your fingers after a while.

Tip 88: Carry A Surge Protector

If you are using your laptop in the midst of lightning and thunderstorms, be sure to hook up that surge protector. You'd think it will never happen, but I've seen laptops fried to a crisp internally due to surges that occur during thunderstorms. A surge protector is a must have to protect your fragile machine.

Tip 89: Bring Your Laptop Adapter

Try to bring your laptop adapter with you wherever you go. You never know when your laptop will run out of juice and you need to plug into a socket. Usually, if you're in an airport or in a café, there will be sockets where you can plug in and re-charge that laptop.

Tip 90: Consider External Laptop Speakers

If you find your laptop audio lacking power, invest in a set of good external laptop speakers. This is useful if you have a laptop with weak audio, or if you have your laptop used as an entertainment device for movies or music.

Tip 91: Bring A Pen Drive

One of the most important pieces of equipment that go along with your laptop is the pen drive. It is extremely useful for transferring data from one laptop to another and also serves as a backup for your important documents. Don' leave home without one of these, especially if you are travelling to another country.

Tip 92: Invest In An USB Light

Sometimes, a small USB light is very useful. If you are lying in bed with the laptop and would like to do some reading or typing, but find the lighting too dim – then an USB light will come in very handy. These devices are very cheap and you can find them easily in a good electronics store.

Tip 93: Use A Docking Station

If you can, try use a docking station for your laptop. These devices resemble regular desktop workstations where input devices can be attached. They are great for folks who don't like hooking up the power cable and an external keyboard whenever they use a laptop. With a docking station, these things can be pre-hooked up. All you need to do is to click your laptop straight into the docking station and you're ready to go.

Tip 94: Consider Hooking Up An External Keyboard

If you find that your laptop keyboard is too small (especially in the newer, pint-sized ultraportable laptops), you might want to consider hooking up an external keyboard. These days you can easily buy an external, full-sized keyboard that attaches to a laptop's USB port. You can then type in comfort on the laptop, without having to navigating your hands and fingers on a small little keyboard. It's also a good idea to get an external mouse to go along with that keyboard as well.

10. Laptop Ergonomics

One thing to note about laptops is that extended usage leads to stiff necks, bad posture and tired eyes. You should remember the following tips to ensure that you use your laptop in the most ergonomic way possible.

Tip 95: Use A Small Pillow

If you're typing on your laptop for extended periods of time, make sure you use a small pillow to support your lower back. Too many of us hunch over a laptop and it tends to be very bad for our back and our posture. A small pillow at the lower back helps to maintain posture and balance.

Tip 96: Try To Decrease Your Laptop Load

When carrying your laptop, try to lighten your load. It helps you prevent back strain. The obvious way to do this is to buy a lightweight laptop. The other alternative is to remove unnecessary items such as extra battery packs and cables.

Tip 97: You Don't Always Need To Bring The Laptop Around

If you are simply transporting data around, do consider copying the data into a memory stick or flash card, or uploading the data to the Internet for retrieval. No need to lug the laptop around if all you need is one simple document.

Tip 98: Find A Good Chair

It's important to reduce neck and eye strain when using a laptop. Try to use a chair that supports a comfortable upright or slightly reclined posture. Maintain a neutral neck posture and use a towel roll or lumbar pillow to support your lower back.

Tip 99: Don't Stare At The Laptop For Too Long

If you tend to work or play games on the laptop for extended periods of time, be sure get up and stretch frequently. Relax your eyes by cupping them or by looking far away at some greenery.

Tip 100: Use A Document Holder

If you need to refer to a document while working on a laptop, a good tip is to invest in a proper document holder. Angle the document properly so that you can maintain a neutral neck posture while typing.

Tip 101: Reduce Glare On The Laptop Screen

Remember to reduce glare on the laptop screen - if you don't do so, you will cause eye strain. Try to turn the laptop so that it is at right angles to the window and keep it

away from overhead lighting. You might also want to invest in a small USB laptop light to provide more light.

Conclusion

I hope this ebook has shown you some good tips on how to make the most of you laptop. Follow the above tips and you'll definitely have a more pleasurable laptop usage experience. By the way, if you have any ideas or suggestions on how to improve this ebook, do feel free to [drop me a note](#).

Until next time, here's wishing you good luck and happy computing!

Gary Hendricks runs a website about laptops. To learn more about laptops, laptop accessories and access a wide variety of how-to articles, be sure to visit his website at <http://www.best-laptop-guide.com>.
