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61 Make your new computer run like new

Millions of Americans were projected to buy a new computer in 2010. In fact, the 2010 holiday season saw a 25% increase in computer hardware purchases, according to research firm comScore.

New computers often come with pre-installed demoware, or trial versions of software applications, many of which start running as soon as the computer is turned on. These third-party programs help subsidize costs for the manufacturer, lowering prices for the consumer. Some of these programs can be helpful and may even introduce computer users to new software. However, many demoware programs are rarely or never used and unnecessarily harm the system's performance by consuming memory and slowing the machine down.

"It's important to check a new computer for signs of demoware and delete the programs you don't need," said Scott Ciesluk, a technical support representative for Missouri phone and Internet provider Socket. "Removing unnecessary software from the computer will free up more memory and help your new system run more efficiently." □

Ciesluk says new computer owners can spot demoware by looking for icons on the computer's desktop. The software is usually a trial version and typically expires in 30 to 90 days, at which time it becomes limited or disabled on the computer. Information is then provided on how to purchase the full commercial version. Common demoware applications include Microsoft Office, McAfee Antivirus and Norton Internet Security.

Some new computers also include advertisements for software or services. These icons link users to a Web site where they can order a product or sign up for a service. Unwanted advertisements can also appear in the form of toolbars that work in conjunction with Web browsers like Internet Explorer. While these toolbars can provide helpful search suggestions and other conveniences, many computer users find the clutter to be an uninvited irritation.

According to Ciesluk, the easiest way to clean a new computer is to use a free program called PC Decrapifier (www.pcdecrapifier.com). While the name may not be very sophisticated, many experts recom-

mend this program for its easy removal of demoware and adware. Users can select which programs should be kept and which should be removed. After this cleansing process is complete, PC Decrapifier can be deleted from the computer.

Programs can also be manually uninstalled via the Control Panel. However, Ciesluk cautions users to research any unfamiliar programs before deleting them, in order to prevent potential system problems.

"Demoware and advertisements on new computers serve important purposes," Ciesluk said. "However, by removing the software you don't need, your new computer will run much more smoothly."

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