

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. As this year draws to an end, you may be thinking of getting a new computer or two. So what do you need to do with the old computers before they are discarded or given away?

First of all I don't recommend just discarding the computer. You should think about taking it to a recycling place or donating it. If you are going to discard or recycle it, take out the hard drive(s) and destroy them so that any data on them cannot be recovered. If you're going to donate them or give them to friends and relatives you need to make sure personal data is removed.

The best way to remove your personal data is to repartition and reformat the hard drive(s) and reload the operating system. Most computer vendor have supplied a CD or two that has all of the installed programs on them, it would be great if you could reload the system to the point where it was when you got it. Although, you should download and install all of the operating system updates. This is a lot of work, so what is the next best thing to do?

A good way of removing your personal data is to search for it on the hard drive(s) and delete it. Now, it would be wise to copy this data to your new computer before deleting it. Actually just deleting it and then emptying the recycle bin isn't a good way as files that were in the recycle bin can be easily recovered. You should actually use a file shredder program that actually overwrites the file on the hard drive multiple times. There are a number of good freeware file shredders on the net.

So where are all of your data files? Most of them are in your "My Documents" folder, but some programs may have put them in folders under the folder where the program is installed. Also you need to clean your internet cookies and cache files. Don't forget about your emails and address books. Depending on the email program you use these items can be in a number of places.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is [meggert@wi.rr.com](mailto:meggert@wi.rr.com), my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.