

Formatting your Hard Drive and Reinstalling Windows

There are times when Windows becomes so damaged or so compromised by hackers and Trojan programs that the only thorough solution is to essentially start all over. This is accomplished by formatting your hard drive, which means erasing all of the programs and the data on your machine, and reinstalling Windows.

Most of the major computer vendors (Dell, HP, Gateway, etc.) provide a system restoration CD along with their computers. This CD will do most of the work for you: it will format the hard drive, reinstall Windows, and then reinstall any of the programs that came with the computer. The only thing this CD cannot do is back up any data files on your hard drive that you want to save, so before you run your system restoration CD, make sure that you save the data files (academic papers, resumes, contact information, etc) onto floppy disk or CD if you can.

If you no longer have the system restoration CD that came with your computer (or you are unsure about whether you received one or not), try contacting your computer vendor to see if they can provide you with a new copy. Be ready to tell them the information they may need to give you the disk that matches your computer, such as the model number and the serial number.

If your computer was not built by a major computer vendor or you cannot get another copy of the system restoration CD from your vendor, then you will have to manually format your hard drive, reinstall Windows, and then reinstall your programs. Again, before you start this process, you should try and save any important files you need to a floppy disk or CD so you don't lose them during the formatting process.

The method you use to format and reinstall Windows can depend on what version of Windows you have and your computer hardware. However, the one item you have to have no matter what is a Windows CD in order to reinstall Windows. Make sure that your Windows CD is **NOT** an upgrade CD (upgrade CDs should be labeled as such on the CD): an upgrade CD will only work if you have an older or equivalent version of Windows already running on the computer, so it won't work once the hard drive has been formatted.

If you have a Windows 95 CD, you should really purchase a newer version of Windows, as there is no easy way to run the Windows 95 CD once you have reformatted the computer.

If you have Windows 98 or Windows ME, create or acquire a Windows 98 or ME startup floppy disk. This disk can be created using the Add/Remove Programs feature in the Control Panel. Once you've backed up your data files, turn off your computer, put the startup disk in the disk drive, and then restart your computer. A menu will appear when the computer boots off of the floppy disk: leave it on the option to start up with CD-Rom support (so you can use the CD-Rom drive). Once the computer is finished loading the

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files on the floppy disk, use the format command to format the hard drive that had Windows on it (usually it's your C drive, so the command is format c:).

Once the format is complete, insert your Windows CD in the CD-Rom drive, switch over to your CD-Rom drive (if your CD used to be drive D, it is probably now drive E, so use the command e: to access the CD drive), and run the setup program by typing setup.

Once Windows is reinstalled, you will have to reinstall your other programs individually.

If you have Windows NT, Windows 2000, or Windows XP, you can format your hard drive as part of the Windows installation process. If your computer is only a few years old and can boot off of the CD-Rom drive, simply turn off your computer, put your Windows CD in the CD-Rom drive, and restart your computer (if the Windows setup does not begin, check your BIOS settings to make sure your computer is configured to try and boot off of a CD). If your computer is an older system or you cannot figure out how to make it boot off of the CD, you will need to create setup disks (note: there are no setup disks for Windows XP--you have to run the installation from the XP CD). To create the setup disks, put your CD into a working Windows computer and do the following:

- Windows NT (3 disks): Click on the Start button, choose Run, and type D:\i386\winnt32 /ox, where D is the letter for the CD-Rom drive.
- Windows 2000 (4 disks): Go into the bootdisk directory on the Windows 2000 CD and double-click on the makebt32.exe file.
- Windows XP: If you have a broadband connection that is always on, you must take countermeasures to prevent your Windows XP machine from being reinfected. Please view and print [these cautions](#) prior to proceeding.

Turn off your computer, then restart it with either your Windows CD or the setup disks. During the setup process, you will have the option of formatting your hard drive--choose that option to erase your damaged/hacked Windows installation, and proceed with the reinstall.

Once Windows is reinstalled, you will have to reinstall your other programs individually.

If you need additional information on formatting your hard drive and reinstalling Windows, you can search for that information with a search engine such as Google (www.google.com). Try search terms such as "how to format your hard drive" and "how to reinstall Windows". There is one particular website that is dedicated to the topic of reinstalling Windows called <http://www.windowsreinstall.com> that may also be helpful.