

Your Computer Keyboard Is Covered With Germs

As I was looking down at my poor laptop covered with dust and grime this weekend while entering in data at our county fairgrounds, I thought now would be a good time to cover how to clean your laptop, or for those of you with desktop computers, how to clean your keyboard, monitor and mouse.

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Just like any other surface, your keyboard accumulates bacteria and germs that require a disinfectant routine. Use these few items to easily clean your laptop and kill germs without damaging it in any way.

Things You'll Need

- Cleaning rag
- Compressed air
- Dry toothbrush
- Disinfecting wipes OR Isopropyl Alcohol and cotton swabs and cotton balls
- Lint-free cloth (microfiber clothes are great)
- Screen cleaner (*many brands available – 3M makes one that is available at [Wal-Mart](#), [Staples](#), and [Amazon](#).*)



The following instructions are geared more for laptops, but the same method can be applied to regular keyboards and monitors.

- 1 - Turn off your laptop, remove the charger and disconnect any external accessories.
- 2 - Dust off the laptop with a cleaning rag to remove loose dust.
- 3 - Tilt laptop or keyboard upside down and remove dirt stuck between the keys on your keyboard with compressed air or a computer vacuum.
- 4 - Remove dirt from your laptop's vents with the bristles of a dry toothbrush. (Compressed air is **not** recommended for use on computer vents because the propellant may contain moisture, and neither are computer vacuums as they have the potential to damage electronic components.)
- 5 - Wipe the entire keyboard, built-in mouse pad, wrist rest, mouse and outer casing of your laptop. (*You can use wipes or cotton balls slightly-dampened with alcohol.*)
 - Wrap the edge of a wipe around a cotton swab (or slightly-dampen swab with alcohol) and rub gently between keyboard keys to remove any additional bacteria from the hard-to-reach areas.
 - Dampen the end of another cotton swab (never put fluid directly onto the mouse) and gently wipe the area under the mouse where the lens and led light are located to remove any dust or residue, be very careful not to put any pressure on the LED or lens, and also, ensure that no excess fluid gets squeezed out of the cotton bud into the mouse. (You may find turning the cotton bud between your fingers can be effective in removing excess moisture.) Once done, use a dry cotton bud to gently wipe over the area to ensure it is dry. Place the mouse, right way up, and allow 2 minutes to dry.
- 6 - Wipe the screen of your laptop gently with a lint-free cloth, dampened with hot water to kill bacteria OR use the screen cleaner mentioned above.
 - Do not press hard in an attempt to scrub off harder to remove dirt or oil. Pushing directly on the screen can often cause pixels to burn out.
 - Never spray screen cleaner directly on an LED, LCD, or plasma screen. It could run inside the monitor and cause damage. (This applies to cleaning the glass on a copier as well.)
- 7 - Let the laptop/keyboard air dry before turning on.

Notes:

- If using **disinfecting wipes**: According to Bill Rutala, a Professor for the Division of Infectious Diseases at the University of North Carolina's School of Medicine, Clorox Disinfecting Wipes, Sani-Cloths and CaviWipes are all safe to use on keyboards and all kill bacteria while keeping it from re-growing for at least two days. Do not use disinfecting wipes on the screen, as they will cause streaking.
- **Alcohol-based electronics wipes** are also available at electronics stores and are designed to clean the entire laptop surface including the laptop screen.

How often should you clean your equipment?

Since bacteria can start re-growing after a couple days, it may be a good idea to buy wipes to keep at your desk. A good schedule to follow would be to do a quick wipe every one to two days and a more detailed cleaning at least once a month.

CNET Video on how to clean your keyboard: http://howto.cnet.com/8301-11310_39-20092793-285/how-to-clean-and-disinfect-your-keyboard-and-mouse/

Sources: http://www.ehow.com/how_12005246_germs-off-laptop.html#ixzz21jyNtLOG, <http://pcsupport.about.com/od/maintenance/ht/cleanflatscreen.htm>,
http://www.helpwithpcs.com/maintenance/mouse_problem_maintenance.htm