Tips for Cleaning a PC

What
Instructions for physically cleaning a PC and its components.

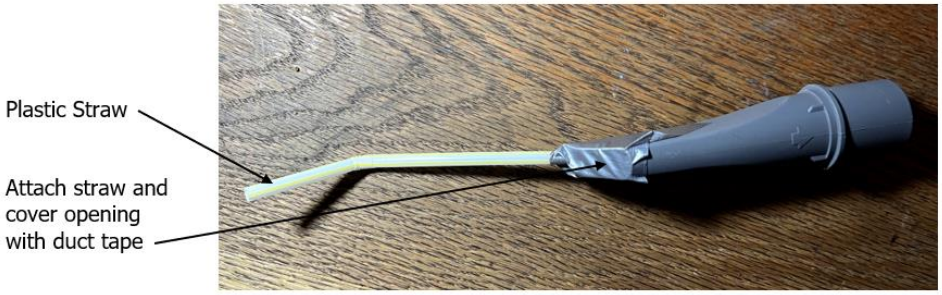
Why
Electronic components create heat when in use and unless that heat can be removed it will destroy the component. Usually that heat is removed with fans and air flow. Anything that restricts that air flow causes heat build up and the early demise of that component. Keeping that air flow unrestricted equals keeping your components running. The build up of dust on vents, fan blades, and cooling fins restricts the air flow to the components. Routine removal of this dust build up will make your electronic components last longer and give you more dependable service.

How
Note: The following instructions are for cleaning a Desktop PC. See below for instructions for cleaning a laptop PC.

Step 1
You will need a vacuum cleaner to vacuum all the dust. There are special vacuum cleaners designed for this purpose, but you can do a great job with the vacuum cleaner you probably already have. A regular household vacuum cleaner that has a crevice tool attachment (as shown below) will do.

Vacuum Cleaner Crevice Tool

Attach a plastic straw (the kind that bends is best) to the crevice with duct tape so that the straw is in the opening of the crevice tool and the rest of the opening of the crevice tool is covered by the duct tape as shown below. This yields a small flexible non-conductive suction tube with very strong suction power.



Shutdown the PC and disconnect the power cord to the PC.
Start cleaning on the outside of the PC case to prevent the dust on the outside of the case entering the PC when the case is open. Vacuum the dust from all the sides, top, and bottom of the PC case.
Open the PC by removing the left panel.
Vacuum dust at intake air vents, fan grills on all fans, all fan blades that your straw can reach, CPU cooling fins, and anywhere you see dust build up. If you have a graphic card, it will have cooling fins for its CPU.
Once you have vacuumed all the dust you can see and reach, use can air to blow out and residual dust. Use small bursts as long blasts of can air will cause the component to cool down so fast that condensation can occur. Moisture and electronics never a good mix. Also cooling the connection points of the components to the motherboard slots causes the metal to shrink creating gaps in the connection where the blown dust can penetrate.
After cleaning and replacing the side panel be sure to clean the area where the PC stays so any dust in the area will not be sucked up when the PC 's fans start up again.

Step 2
While the PC is off, vacuum the dust from vents on external drives.
To clean the keyboard: take the keyboard outside, hold upside down, spray can air into the keys to dislodge and have fall out any foreign debris or dust.
While cleaning, open your printer and vacuum and dust collection there.

Step 3
For the laptop, vacuum the air vents on the exterior case with the crevice tool/straw. Do not blow air into these vents, vacuum only. Also vacuum all ports (USB, earphone, etc.). Do not open the laptop case. Vacuuming these vents is about all the safe cleaning you can do.

Comments
How often you should clean your PC depends mainly on the environment the PC is stored in. Start with cleaning every 6 months. If the PC is really dusty, then shorten the time frame for the next cleaning. If the PC is not that dusty, then lengthen the time frame to the next cleaning.