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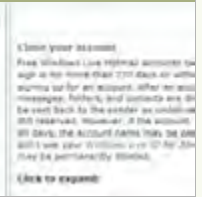
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Top 10 Computer Hardware Fixes and Upgrades

By Kevin Purdy, 9:00 AM on Sat Aug 1 2009, 31,166 views

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If your desktop or laptop parts have died or seen better days, you've got a friend. All of your Lifehacker editors—and many helpful net denizens—have upgraded or repaired faulty systems, and we've rounded some of their most helpful tutorials.

Photo by Garrette.

10. De-bulk your MacBook's power cord



For all their design emphasis on elegance and minimalism, MacBooks come with rather bulky power cords that aren't easy to coil up and tuck away. Gizmodo editor Brian Lam travels quite a bit with his MacBook Pro and doesn't dig the bulk of the cord leading up to the two-prong "brick," so he details the not-so-tough technique of swapping it out for a lighter, more flexible PlayStation cord, which shares the same adapter at the end. (Original post)

9. Install your own RAM

It almost always costs less to buy your own RAM from a reliable source and install it yourself than to let the Lenovos, Dells, HPs, and Apples do it for you, either when you first purchase your system or as an upgrade. On most

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Driver Sweeper Cleans Up Uninstalled Driver Leftovers

Windows only: When you upgrade your video card—or even just the drivers—the old version

leaves settings and registry entries cluttering up your system—but you can clean them up. Driver Sweeper works by removing all the extra stuff that the driver uninstaller leaves... More »

HARDWARE



The Computer Hardware Chart Identifies Your PC's Parts

Whether you're a first-time computer builder or a seasoned pro, deviantART user

Sonic480's computer hardware poster, which helps you identify countless different types of hard drives, RAM, ports, CPU sockets, power connectors, and more, is a great reference. Chances are you don't know the ins and... More »



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out or add on a memory chip. Adam details [how to install a new stick of RAM in your desktop PC](#) and took us on a [video tour of MacBook RAM upgrading](#). From what this editor has seen, that process is nearly identical on non-Apple laptops: find where the RAM is kept, unscrew a plate, pop the memory sticks in and out at an angle, then re-seat it to be back on one's way. Not sure which chips you need to buy? Try the How-To Geek's guide to [determining what kind of memory your computer has installed](#).

systems, laptops included, it's a beginner-level hardware project to swap

**8. Quiet a noisy hard drive**



with small rubber inserts, or, for a nearly complete vibration elimination, [suspending the drive from elastic straps](#). If you're rocking a laptop, or looking for other ways of quieting any kind of system, try searching and digging around at [Silent PC Review](#), [End PC Noise](#), or check out PC Magazine's [multi-step guide to a quiet PC](#).

You don't notice the sound of your hard drives when you first boot up a new system, but over time, the hum, whir, and clicking of all those disks and moving parts can become maddening low-level irritants. A lot of the noise is usually caused by the hard drive vibrating against a metal desktop case, which can be [eliminated](#)

**7. Get good at soldering**



packed with good tips and answered beginner questions. Planning to jump into a more advanced, detail-oriented project like the [MintyBoost?](#) Aaron's Homepage has a guide on [how to solder on circuit boards](#). (Original post)

Most DIY gadget projects, and a lot of computer or electronics repairs, require the use of a hot soldering iron, some solder, and occasionally flux. If all that sounds pretty foreign and new to you, Instructables' [guide to basic parts fusing and circuit mending](#) will be worth every minute you spend absorbing it. It's

**6. Turn a PC into a Hackintosh**

Getting Apple's OS X running on hardware you didn't buy from Apple doesn't require magic powers, a 128-character



greater ease of use than his [first go-round](#). If you've got a desktop system looking for a few new parts, or you'd like to try out the Mac world without paying Mac premiums, it makes for a rewarding weekend project.

secret code, or much more than just the patience to follow a few work-around steps, really. Adam showed us how to take some gear nabbed from [NewEgg](#) and assemble it into a "Hackintosh," with

#### 5. Replace a power supply



down the basics of unplugging and removing your power supply and re-seating a new one in its place. That answers one half of the equation, but how do you know what PSU to replace it with? Online parts megastore [NewEgg](#) offers a convenient [Power Supply Calculator](#) that figures out power supply needs from the components already installed. Just as with a house, you can sometimes get by with less than you should, but you don't want to find out what happens when you're wrong.

Power supplies are not something you want to cheap out on, or hang onto if they're on their way out. They're often the noisiest component of a desktop system, they're fickle, and they can bring down other components if they fritz out. Lifehacker alumnus [Rick Broida](#) ran

#### 4. Install a new hard drive

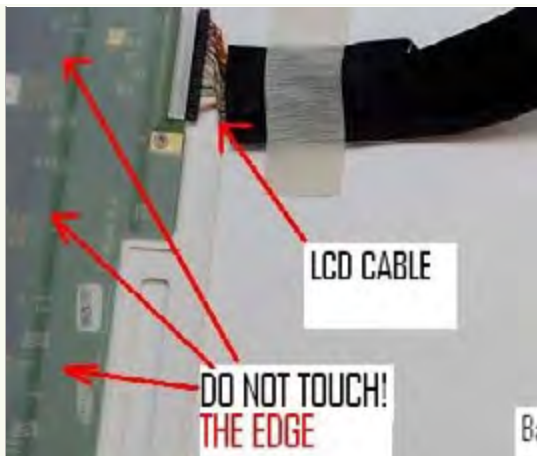


on [MacBook upgrades](#) from the [Houston Chronicle's TechBlog](#) and [Popular Mechanics'](#) [general laptop hard drive guide](#). All the techniques, of course, also apply if your drive goes dead and you need to yank it out for a replacement.

Every hard drive seems like it will be way, *way* too big for your uses when you first get it. A few months of willy-nilly downloading later, and you're looking for bigger digs for your data. Adam broke down [the desktop installation process](#), but for the increasing number of folks jamming all their stuff onto laptops, we offer up guides

#### 3. Replace a busted laptop LCD

LCD screens are often the second-most expensive component of a laptop, so when they go bad, most folks just swing for a full



replacement. If you can find an LCD replacement for your model, though, there's a good chance you can save yourself some pretty serious cash, especially if your laptop's screen went dark early in

its life. The [This Is My Defective Kit](#) site runs down a step-by-step process for replacing a faulty display, which is mainly a matter of being careful and not losing very tiny screws. If that sounds a little beyond your powers or patience, you can turn that working-but-not-visible laptop into a [headless system](#) that hides away easily. ([Original post](#))

## 2. Upgrade to a new motherboard and CPU



Replacing the other parts of your computer is akin to attaching arms and legs to a Frankenstein's system. When you add an entirely new CPU and motherboard to your case, that's when you've truly become a mad scientist. Actually, it's not all that hard, as Adam demonstrates, and on a system where everything

runs well but the brain just needs to move a bit quicker, it's a relatively cheap and efficient upgrade—and one that instills a lot of confidence in your computer hardware skills.

## 1. Build a whole computer from scratch



As Gina notes in her comprehensive run-down of building her own PC, from choosing the parts to (finally) getting to a log-in screen, you don't build your own PC because you want to save a whole lot of money (though you can, depending on the build). You build it yourself because you want complete control over the quality and features of

every single piece of it, and you learn a heck of a lot about how they operate together. Do yourself a favor, though, and learn from Gina's "several WTF moments" before giving it a go yourself.

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Where do you turn when you're looking to fix or replace some hardware? Which hardware projects are worth the time and effort, and which have you left to the pros? Relate your repair tales in the comments, and feel free to offer up other worthwhile hardware links.

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