



## Sustainable IT tips: Desktop systems

### Configuring your desktop to save energy

- While the impacts of the machine are important, the time the user spends sitting in front of the machine is often more significant in terms of the ecological impacts – therefore improving our personal skills and methods of using the system *is* an ecological issue. Always configure the operating system's power management settings to minimise energy use, both by the machine and by the monitor attached to it.
- Besides configuring the shutdown of the monitor after a period of inactivity, if the function is available, configure the system to dim the brightness of the monitor when it is not actively in use. Also configure the sleep or hibernation function when the machine has been left idle. You can include icons on the desktop to activate the suspend/hibernation function easily, or to lock the desktop when it is not in use.
- Use a monitor, speakers and USB devices that are able to power-down automatically when the machine hibernates or is shut down.
- Operating systems that allow the configuration of a lightweight desktop environment, or the lowering of the display resolution, can be used for older hardware to increase the performance of the system and/or reduce energy consumption.
- On newer machines, try not to inadvertently plug USB peripherals into the yellow “sleep and charge” ports unless they require power when the machine is shut down.
- Use a printer that meets the demands you require. Ink-jet printers are better for low volume, but for higher volumes laser printers are better suited to the task – and in all cases it is better to share a printer between multiple users rather than each user having their own printer. For regular large print runs using the services of a commercial printer is more efficient than using a photocopier.
- For information which is not time-sensitive or does not date quickly, and is to be widely shared, printing a hard copy on recycled paper for many people to read often requires less resources than each individual reading that information from a computer system.
- Where possible use 100% recycled paper, and ensure that white office paper is collected separately where a segregated collection can be arranged.
- Take care with data capture devices – such as digital cameras, scanners and sound recording applications – to store or encode the data at a quality or resolution that is compatible with the types of application you require the data for. Storing excessively high-definition data requires far more hard drive space.
- To simplify finding or locating information on the computer, use an organised system of directories/subdirectories to hold the files, and also configure a desktop search/indexing system to make finding individual files easier and quicker.
- When creating documents or files, always try and complete the metadata properties provided with that file format to allow easier and more accurate indexing by desktop search systems.

*This checklist was extracted from a new publication by the APC, **A sustainable guide to IT**, written by environmental activist and ICT expert Paul Mobbs. To read the other Sustainable IT tip sheets, or to download the publication, visit [greeningit.apc.org](http://greeningit.apc.org). For more information, email [info@apc.org](mailto:info@apc.org).*