Do the "PC" Thing:
Donate Computers

A working computer is a terrible thing to waste. Donating computers to schools, charities, and low-income individuals is a win-win situation for business and the community. Reusing computers benefits communities, helps us use valuable materials wisely, and keeps working PCs out of landfills.

Getting Started

Locate a Nonprofit Organization or Refurbisher

Nonprofit umbrella organizations, such as the National Cristina Foundation or Computers for Learning, act as a clearinghouse for connecting unwanted computers to those in need of technology—primarily people with disabilities, at risk students and disadvantaged persons. Such charities direct equipment donated for reuse to a range of organizations based on an assessment of their specific needs, combined with their capacity for technical support and ability to refurbish any equipment they might receive. Information about the working order of the machines, including equipment specifications such as the amount of memory, and processor speed, is taken into account and is central to making successful matches.

Many local nonprofit organizations may also accept computer donations. Some organizations refurbish reusable computers or demanufacture non-working equipment into reusable components. Newer computers might be incorporated into a career-training program, or used at a school. Not every organization can accept your old computer, so always check before donating.

Microsoft Authorized Refurbishers (MARs) retool donated computers to bring them up-to-date so that schools and charities can better use them. The MAR program was created to increase the number of usable PCs available to nonprofits, schools, and low-income families across the globe by reducing the cost of software to refurbishers. MARs are authorized by Microsoft to install Windows 98 Second Edition and Windows 2000 Operating Systems and Microsoft Works 7.0 software on eligible refurbished computers, provided these computers are supplied to eligible recipients. The new owner of the refurbished computer can then use the operating system and does not need to purchase a new copy.

Do the PC Thing:

What do you want to do?
Donate
Upgrade
Refurbish
Recycle

OK CANCEL HELP

Donate

Call Ahead When Donating to Local Charities

Many organizations cannot use donated electronics and end up having to dispose of them at a significant cost. Contact the charity in advance to make sure they accept electronic donations and any specific requirements.

Many refurbishers will also clear all corporate data from the machines using software that follows U.S. Department of Defense 5220.22-M guidelines. These software packages systematically overwrite all addressable locations on your hard drive with a character, then its complement, and then a random character, then verifies that this was done. In the fall of 2004, the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA Advisory LAA-006-2004) found that a single overwrite using Dept. of Defense 5220.22-M compliant software is sufficient to render electronic files unrecoverable. Check with your selected refurbisher to find out what procedures are in place for clearing data.

Clearing Corporate Data

Federal Regulations Require Data Cleansing

To protect sensitive personal and business information, corporations operating in the United States are obliged under a variety of laws and regulations to cleanse data from computers they donate, recycle, or dispose of. Businesses are responsible for finding out which regulations apply to them, as well as researching any other regulations in the state where they are located. Federal regulations include:

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
  www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa

- Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act
  www.ftc.gov/privacy/privacyinitiatives/glbact

- Sarbanes-Oxley Act
  www.aicpa.org/info/sarbanes_oxley_summary.htm

- Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act
  www.ftc.gov/os/statutes/itada/itadact.htm

- Children's Online Privacy Protection Act
  www.ftc.gov/ogc/coppa1.htm

In addition, the Federal Trade Commission has issued its final rule regarding the proper disposal of consumer report information and records under the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003 (FACTA) and the Fair Credit Reporting Act. The latest FACTA rule requires any business that collects and keeps consumer information, like credit card information or employee background reports for a business purpose, to properly dispose of such information. The new rule covers any record about an individual, including paper, electronic, or other form. It is designed to cut down on identity theft by, among other methods, restricting the ability of thieves to go "dumpster diving" for valuable consumer information in discarded business records. Also, it is in the best interest of companies to make sure that their confidential business information, such as business plans and product designs, are protected and removed from hard drives before they are passed on to the next user. A plain language description of FACTA can be found at **<www.entrepreneur.com/article/0,4621,320700,00.html>**.

Clearing Data Yourself

If you decide to clean your computer yourself, you can purchase software via the following commercial sites, or obtain them for free at shareware sites:

Commercial Windows Disk Cleaning Software

- Blancco Data Cleaner
  www.blancco.com

- WipeDrive
  www.accessdata.com/products/wipe

- CyberCide Data Destruction
  www.cyberscrub.com/products/cybercide/index.php

Pass It On!

- DataEraser
  www.ontrack.com/dataeraser

- DiskEraser
  www.comtechnologies.com

- Clean Disk Security
  www.diskcleaners.com/clndisk.html

- DriveScrubber
  **www.batchconverter.com/
  DriveScrubber-download-13267.shtml**

- East-Tec Sanitizer
  www.east-tec.com/disposesecure

- Stellar Disk Wipe
  www.stellarinfo.com/file-eraser.htm

- Paragon Disk Wiper
  www.disk-wiper.net

- Pinion Sanitizer
  www.infraworks.com/sanitizer.php

- UniShred Pro
  www.lat.com/Our_Products.html

- Wipedrive
  www.whitecanyon.com

- Wipe Info feature in Norton Utilities and System Works
  www.symantec.com

Freeware Windows Disk Cleaning Software (all available at www.shareware.com)

- Active@ Kill Disk Hard Drive Eraser
  www.killdisk.com/eraser.htm

- Darik's Boot and Nuke (DBAN)
  dban.sourceforge.net/

- BCWipe
  www.download.com/3000-2092-10397897.html

Macintosh Disk Cleaning Software

- ShredIt
  www.mireth.com/pub/sxme.html

- SuperScrubber
  www.superscrubber.com

- Wipe Info feature in Norton Utilities (using this, you can delete single documents and files)
  www.symantec.com
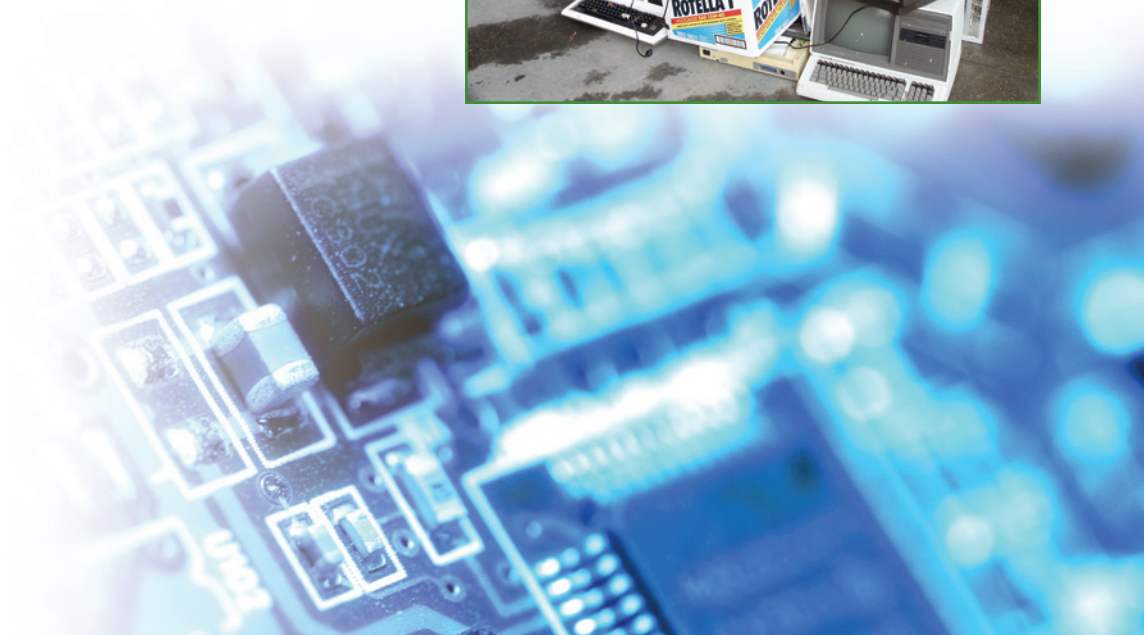
Other Resources

In addition to the following resources, Internet searches on "donating computers" will also turn up potential nonprofit umbrella organizations or clearinghouses:

- Reusing and Donating Electronics on EPA's eCycling Web site provides general information on the subject.
  www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/recycle/ ecycling/basic.htm

- National Cristina Foundation provides computer technology and solutions to nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and schools in all 50 states to give people with disabilities, students at risk and economically disadvantaged persons the opportunity, through training, to lead more independent and productive lives.
  www.cristina.org

- Check with your local Goodwill before donating.
  www.goodwill.org/page/guest/about/ howweoperate/donations/ tipsfordonatingacomputer

- Computers for Learning (CFL) places computers in our classrooms and prepares our children to contribute and compete in the 21st century. The CFL Web site connects the registered needs of schools and educational nonprofit organizations with computer equipment made available free of charge from government agencies and the private sector.
  www.computers.fed.gov/public/aboutProg.asp

- The MAR Program was created to increase the number of usable PCs available to nonprofits, schools, and low-income families across the globe by reducing the cost of software to refurbishers. The MAR Program also benefits the environment by giving new life to a significant number of computers that may otherwise be destined for landfills.
  www.techsoup.org/mar/default.aspx

- The Federal Electronics Challenge's (FEC's) Introduction to Donating Electronics addresses liability management issues related to donations and guidance to provide recipients of electronic equipment. This resource also has information on donation programs within the context of the FEC.
  www.federalelectronicschallenge.net/tools/ reusepr.pdf

- FEC provides a detailed checklist to assist you in selecting a refurbisher.
  www.federalelectronicschallenge.net/Tools/ select.pdf

- The Electronic Industries Alliance provides links to reuse and recycling organizations.
  www.eiae.org

- eBay ReThink's data migration and erasure tools.
  pages.ebay.com/rethink/pcsz/datatools.html

- NAID (National Association for Information Destruction) certified recyclers and refurbishers.
  www.naidonline.org/certified_members.html

- Federal Electronics Challenge – U.S. government recommendations for end-of-life management of electronic equipment.
  www.federalelectronicschallenge.net/ eolmngt.htm

- Technical Asset Protection Association (TAPA) - Association of security professionals from high technology companies and the logistics industry, organized to establish and maintain asset protection—generally during shipment of products—for the technology industry by leveraging best practices and common experiences of its membership.
  www.tapaonline.org/new/engl/index.html

- Information Security Product Destruction News – A bi-monthly trade journal on data destruction.
  www.ispdnews.com

- Recycling Today Magazine online section on secure destruction business.
  www.recyclingtoday.com/categories/ subcategory.asp?CatID=36

- SDB – Secure Destruction Business Magazine – another data destruction trade publication.
  www.sdbmagazine.com