

Safe and Secure Computing: What You Should Know

While Castleton students aren't required to own a computer, most do and many bring them to campus. Included here is some information about Castleton's computing and networking standards, as well as some tools that can help keep your computer working trouble-free and hopefully virus-free. This information is useful whether you use your computer on-campus or off-campus.



1. Minimum Requirements:

The standard software package that Castleton uses is Microsoft Office Professional. For most students, this software is all that's needed to complete coursework. It is available at an academic price of \$199 from academic retailers such as JourneyEd (<http://www.journeyed.com>) or SchoolWorld (<http://www.schoolworld.com>).

In order to get on the Castleton State College network, you need to have a computer with a pre-installed Network Interface Card (NIC) that supports 10/100Base-T Ethernet with an RJ45 connector or wireless capability. The NIC card is standard and usually comes pre-installed in most desktop computers and laptops. They're also readily available for purchase at places like Staples or OfficeMax, usually for less than \$50.

Windows computers need to be running Windows 95 or higher (98, Me, NT, 2000, XP). Macintosh computers need to be running OS 8.X or higher.

Wireless access is available in all residence halls on campus and most common areas, such as the library, Campus Center, Coffee Cottage and dining hall.

Whether working on-campus or from home, be sure to have all of your operating system and restore CD's as well as any special driver CD's that came with your computer. It's not uncommon that students need to restore their operating systems or reformat their hard drives from scratch.



2. Getting Your Computer Fixed:

IT Services is not able to repair student owned equipment. If you need to get your computer repaired, we can help make a diagnosis and recommend some reputable local companies that can do the job. If you are getting a new computer, we recommend that you purchase it with a three- or four-year warranty.

Also, as mentioned in section #1, be sure to have on-hand any operating system, restore, and driver CD's that came with your computer. This will make repairing your computer faster and easier.



3. Protect Your Identity!!

We work hard in IT Services to keep your data safe and secure. You need to help us in this mission.

Your password is your key to your data. Never share it with anyone. Giving your password to someone gives them access to your grades as well as other personal information. It's your responsibility to keep it safe.

Beware of "phishing" scams, emails that ask for personal account information. More information on these scams is available at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt127.htm>.

Be careful about sharing your personal information publicly. Many students are involved in online communities such as Facebook or MySpace. Unfortunately, we are seeing students posting personal information that is enough to lead to identity theft. The credit problems with identity theft often take years to clear up.

Also, think twice about posting information about yourself that you wouldn't want your mother, a professor, or a future employer to see. These sites are viewable to the public and owned by private companies. The content that you post about yourself

immediately becomes their property of that and they can publish it wherever they want, even if you delete it. Please keep this in mind.



4. Storing and Transporting Your Data

Most people store their data on their computer's hard drive. However, you should always backup important data, and there may be times when you want to put your files on a removable storage device in order to work with it in a lab. The student lab computers at Castleton can accommodate a variety of removable storage media. Here are some details:

USB Flash drives – We love these! These will work in Windows and Macintosh computers. Most lab computers allow you to plug these little drives right into the front of them. Standard sizes range from 512MB to 2GB and getting bigger every day. Prices generally start at about \$20-\$25. They're great for transporting large files.

CD's – All Windows and Macintosh computers can read CD's and write to CD, most to DVD as well. These are great for backing up files!



5. Viruses and Worms and Spyware –

Oh my!!

Internet worms and viruses can easily destroy the data on your computer or bring the campus network to standstill. Any student who connects a virus or worm infected computer to the network will have his or her network access turned off until the computer is completely cleaned and properly patched. It is your responsibility to keep your computer free of viruses and worms. *Note: Since we rarely see any virus activity directed toward the Mac OS, the directions in this section are primarily geared toward Windows computers.*

The first step in properly protecting your Windows computer is to be sure that you have all of the latest Microsoft security patches and updates installed. You should configure your machine to do this automatically. Instructions for doing this, and other built-in Windows security measures, can be found at Microsoft's Trustworthy Computing site at the URL: <http://www.microsoft.com/security/protect/>.

Next, install anti-virus software. Castleton has made McAfee VirusScan available to all students, free of charge. To download, login to the Blackboard Portal and look for the McAfee box on your main page. This license also allows you to get all of the regular virus definition updates, free of charge.

IT Services also recommends Mozilla Firefox as a better choice of browser than Internet Explorer. Firefox is currently less vulnerable to pop-ups and browser hijackings than IE is. *Note: Don't delete Internet Explorer from your computer; there are some legitimate web sites out there that require it.*

The last step in keeping your computer running trouble-free is to protect it from spyware and adware. While these aren't generally categorized as viruses or worms, they can sometimes do just as much or more damage to your computer. These are invasive and sometimes malicious programs that may come hidden with other downloaded programs, such as LimeWire, Kazaa (BIG offender) and other peer-to-peer programs. They can also install themselves through malicious websites. This is called "hijacking".

The best way to keep from getting this stuff is to be wary of what you install. If you do find that something has installed itself on your computer, there are tools that can help get rid of them. Some of these are: Ad-Aware, Spybot Search and Destroy, CoolWeb Shredder and Stinger. Links to these and other tools can be found at IT Services web site at <http://www.castleton.edu/csv/> and through the Portal at <http://blackboard.vsc.edu>.

If you have questions about bringing a computer to campus, or about any computing or networking resources at Castleton, please feel free to contact IT Services (802) 468-1221 or via email at ithelp@castleton.edu. We are happy to help.