

4 Tips for Selling or Donating Your Used PC

Written by Johann Taylor
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So you're finally fed up with your old computer slowing you down and are ready for an upgrade. We've covered tips on buying a new computer, but what do you do with the old one? If the computer is still working, but just a little old for you, you may consider selling or donating it. What's the best way to avoid identity theft and liability while also getting the best price for your used computer? Here are a few tips to get you started.

1. **Securely Wipe Your Hard Drive** - Before getting rid of a used computer, whether you are recycling or selling it, ALWAYS wipe the hard drive to make sure that all of your personal data has been destroyed. A simple format is not enough, unfortunately. Criminals regularly buy used computers on EBay and online classifieds just to steal personal information. Two good programs to consider are DBAN and Eraser. Both are free, but be careful with DBAN because it will permanently destroy everything on the hard drive. If you need the manufacturer's recovery partition intact, Eraser is going to be the tool of choice. Both programs have decent instructions on their websites, but if you don't understand them, it is best to take the computer to a qualified computer repair shop for professional wiping.

2. **Restore the Computer to Factory Settings** - This is not absolutely necessary, but will help you get a better asking price for your used computer and avoid potential liability. If the manufacturer's utility partition hasn't been damaged, this is a fairly simple process. Google "access <your brand> recovery partition" for instructions. Usually this simply involves holding F11 or some other key when you turn on the computer. Follow the instructions that appear and you are good to go. If you have trouble, you may be able get away with skipping this step. It probably won't be worth paying a computer repair technician to do it for you, and if you are selling your used computer to a computer repair shop, this step is entirely unnecessary. Just make sure that you uninstall any programs that you won't be selling the license to as well. If not, you may be unwittingly committing software piracy.

3. **Have Your Used Computer Tested & Appraised** - Most computer repair shops will do this for free or a minimal charge. This way you know that the computer is in good working order and you get a good idea of an asking price. Being able to provide a receipt from a computer technician, giving your used computer a clean bill of health, will also help you raise your asking price a bit. This will also be beneficial for any tax deductions you may be taking for donating the computer.

4. **Make sure you get a bill of sale or receipt** - Always have the buyer sign a dated receipt that says that the sale was "as is where is" with no implied warranty. Keep this receipt with your records to protect yourself against future liability. If you are donating the computer, get a receipt to keep for your tax records. Be as detailed as possible.

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If this seems like too much work for you, consider selling the computer to a computer repair shop and either keeping or donating the cash from the sale. You generally won't get as much as if you sold it yourself, but you will get the money a lot quicker and with less hassle. Most reputable computer repair shops will do all of the above themselves including wiping the drive. If you want to be extra careful, wipe the drive yourself first, but otherwise you should be good to go.