Does your laptop hate you?

Probably, but we can help!

Sometime in the last five years, laptops got cheap and suddenly, they were everywhere. Once the domain of high level executives with fancy jobs and fancy budgets, you now see them at coffee houses, parks and even fast food joints. With everyone's favorite tech toy becoming so portable, the question becomes whether or not you are treating yours right!

Jack it up!
Somewhere on the bottom of your laptop is a vent desperately trying to do its job. If you set your laptop flat on a table top, it is probably just fine. Despite its name, you have to be careful about air flow if you have it actually sitting on your lap. Like all computers, your lap top desperately needs to stay cool in order to function. Check out your machine to find its bottom and side vents and make sure they are clear to blow.

Your whole private life all in one neat little package . . .
Every laptop should be passworded without exception! Should it get lost or stolen, that login password may be the only thing keeping all your banking info, addresses, and last night's chat session private!

And while you are at it, set the password screen to come up as a screen saver if you are away from your laptop for more than 5 to 10 minutes. Just one more precaution to keep it where it should be: private!

Pack it up? Then back it up!
And like ALL computers, make sure to back up your data regularly! Being portable makes it all the more likely that you will lose it or damage it. Make sure that everything that is important on it is backed up with a reputable system like MozyPro.

Assaulting your battery?
First off, are you using your laptop as your on-the-go mobile office? Then your laptop's battery life span will be longer if you plug it in early and often!

If you are using your laptop as a desk pc replacement, you might be better off either discharging and recharging it daily or removing the battery all together.

A typical laptop battery life span is based on number of charge cycles it goes through and a cycle starts as soon as you use the battery, even if it is only half way charged. You will use up the battery faster if you actually USE the battery, but that may be what you bought your laptop for in the first place!

The screen is not a handle . . .
Wanna see IT folks cringe? Just try picking up your laptop by its screen and watch their skin crawl. No laptop is designed to be able to support its weight from its fragile hinges. Once the connections break, they are almost impossible to fix. Instead, ALWAYS pick up your laptop by its base.

Hot hot hot? or Cold cold cold!
Like all things you love, don't leave your laptop in the car on hot and cold days. Even if it is not turned on, the blazing heat of a closed car in summer can do expensive and irreparable damage to your machine. "Out of Direct Sunlight" won't cut it. You will actually have to just take it with you to some place cooler.

Extreme cold in winter can also do damage to your laptop, so be sure to take it inside each night if it usually travels with you.

The "Take Care of Your Computer" Speech . . .
Don't forget that your laptop/notebook is still a computer. Make sure it gets all its regular updates, patches, and software. And, did I mention, BACK IT UP!

Keep it clean!
Because your laptop goes more places, it seems to be more likely to be the victim of food and drink mishaps. When your keyboard dies on your desktop PC, it is easy and cheap to replace. Not so easy on your laptop. Don't eat over your keyboard and keep drinks lidded and well away from your system.

Keep it clean Part 2!
Laptop screens seem to pick up a lot of gunk during their travels. Whatever you do, do NOT use an ammonia based window cleaning product! Ever! It will ruin your screen's protective coating and leave permanent white spots.

Many tech folks recommend isopropyl alcohol but others say it can yellow your screen over time.

Your best bet is a product made specifically for the job of cleaning LCDs. Apply the spray directly to a cotton or microfiber cloth (some products come prepackaged on disposable cloths) and then LIGHTLY wipe the screen. Don't spray it on to the screen itself and DON'T let it pool at the bottom of the screen.

The End? Not for a while . . .
With love and care, you can expect most laptops to last between 2-4 years. Many go past that, but their performance starts to lag as technology moves forward. Treat it gently and kindly though, and you should have many hours of computing life tucked away in that chunk of technology. Love your lap top and it might just love you back!

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