Windows Tips and Tricks Sleep and Hibernate

There has long been a discussion as to whether it is better to turn your computer off or leave it on. Windows has some tools to help solve (or further complicate) the issue.

Instead of shutting your computer down there are two other choices, Sleep and Hibernate.

Sleep mode uses just enough electricity to keep your computer's memory active while turning off your video and hard drive. This allows you to almost turn it off but all of your active programs stay open where they were. If you were in the middle of a word processing document and had found a web page you were looking for you will come right back to those when you wake up your computer. Most manufacturers claim their systems go to about 1 watt of power usage in sleep mode.

Hibernate is a combination of sleep and turning your computer off. It takes a snapshot of the status of your system and saves it as a file. It then turns your computer off. When you turn your computer back on it boots from that snapshot file which results in your computer coming back to the state it was in when you hibernated, so any open programs and files at shutdown will be open after you restart.

Sleep and Hibernate can be activated from the start menu shut down key (Windows 7) and from the power icon on the Windows 10 start menu. All windows computers also have the ability to enter sleep mode after a period of inactivity which you can set for how long you want to wait before it happens.

If your computer is in sleep mode it can usually be awakened by hitting a key on the keyboard or moving your mouse while some systems require you to press the power switch. If your system is brought back from sleep mode it will come up in far less time than if you turned it off and booted from scratch. If you are going to hit a key it is advisable to use a non-functioning key such as Ctrl, Alt or the shift key. These will register with the system but they will not get passed through. Using a functional key can pass that key through to the system when it restores so if you were on a web page that was asking if you wanted your identity stolen and you used the enter key to wake your system you will have just agreed to the on screen question.

If your computer is in hibernate mode you must press the power switch just as you would to start after a normal shutdown. Generally your system will come back faster and any open programs as shutdown will be restored in their previous condition.

If you are going to use sleep or restore while you have active work such as a word processing document or a spreadsheet it is a good idea to save it before entering sleep or hibernation. Today's systems do a good job of coming back but there is still the occasional hiccup where things don't go as planned.

Bonus Tip: Your power button doesn't really control your power, it simply notifies your system that a power change is needed. If your system totally freezes you need to hold your power button down for at least 6 seconds to force a turnoff. Depending on how your system is configured just pushing the power button may initiate a shutdown or put your computer to sleep. The actual action can be set from your systems screen saver settings.

Presented by Jim Tubb, March 13, 2017