

## Leaving your computer on or off after use ...

A common email question:

**Client:** I've been meaning to get your opinion on something I've heard. Do you recommend just shutting off one's monitor at night and leaving the cpu on, or not? Somebody told me to do that, but I haven't tried it.

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**After Hours:** I suggest you shut your Mac down when you don't expect to use it for three or more hours. Turn it off at night. The shortening of lifespan (maybe 50-100 hours) of any component is greatly offset by the cost of the electricity used and possible damage (voltage flux, surge, etc.) which is more likely while the machine is operating. Let's do some math: your box and peripherals might use 400 Watts of power. That's an average, some are higher and some less. But burned over a day, that's 9600 watts, or 9.6 KWh. Your electricity costs 10 cents a kilowatt-hour, so that's 96 cents a day, or roughly \$350/yr. Now, your Mac might lose 100 hours out of the 10000 - 20000 hours it'll eventually run. So let's say by turning it off at the end of every day, you shorten the lifespan of the machine by 1%. How much did your Mac cost? Let's say you bought an average system and spent \$3000 on it. So, 1% of \$3000 is \$30. Not \$30 a year, just \$30. But to save that \$30, you have wasted \$220 per year (assume that the computer is used only 1/3 of the day or roughly 1/3 of that \$0.96). Over five years, that's \$1100.00. I can't tell anyone it is smart to spend \$1100.00 to save \$30.

I don't think the math supports these urban myths about leaving your machine on. However, most of these type of questions aren't about math, or electric bills, so much as they are about time. It generally takes one to two minutes for a computer to start up. In that time, you are totally unproductive - no files to work on, no print jobs getting done, no progress made - just down time. And if you took the above care and maintenance tip to heart, you'd turn off your computer during lunch breaks and meetings. While doing so would save electricity, let's be realistic here: your time is probably more valuable than the electricity. So compromise: in our offices, if we'll be away from our desks more than three (3) hours, shut down. Otherwise, just let the screen saver run and be on your way.

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