

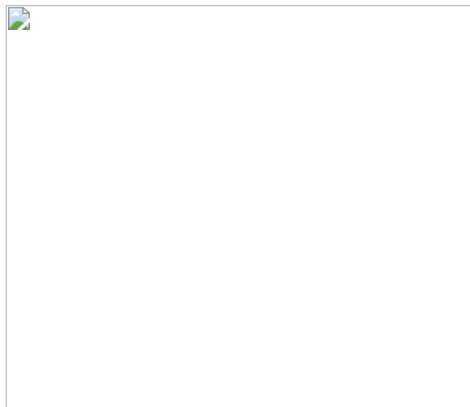
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Here are some offbeat suggestions to keep you busy when you're off-line



DISCONNECTED? Never mind. Consider it clean-up time

Yes, it happens. Just to remind you of non-google days. Your Internet connection is off. A disconnect somewhere. Between you and the network. Click, refresh, will the firefox/Explorer icon spring to life? But the distant, virtual world remains that. Distant. Messages travel furiously across the world, while you stay in the dark. You have been de-globalised.

You gripe about the ISP, bandwidth, the guys who fixed the wires, in charge of AMC. Then you blame the "system." You stamp your feet, fist your palm, get disoriented, restless. Actually, there's no need to be. Think. The world is not a matrix you have to be wired to. Creativity has nothing to do with connectivity. Hey, this is opportunity, a no-ball, a wide. Try a different stroke.

1. Take this as clean-up time. Start with the over-flowing recycle bin. Scroll up and start sweeping. No reusable files and may-need-later folders? Empty the garbage dump. Good riddance.

2. Turn your attention to the front screen. Sure, it looks like a colourful salad, but salads don't taste good the next day. How many security centres do you need on the desktop? How many music players? VLC, iTunes, Windows media player, two kinds of Real Player and what's that? The MVI. How many sets of photo(easy)share software did you download for free? Thinking of free, do you have those Skype set-ups too? Now, keep the latest and remove the rest. Stash what you need in the control panel, safely out of sight. (Tip: How about Important URLs?) Stuff on the desktop, they say, slows down booting.

3. Categorise files for easy access. PDF, GIF, WINZIP... My Documents will be happy to store them. Drag visuals into My Pictures. Axe mercilessly. At home, we throw away anything that has not been used for three months. Good idea.

4. Give the Bookmarks drop-box a critical look. A desperate collection, right? Go in for group therapy. Arrange them in clusters under titles. Delete those you clicked in for research. The information may be outdated.

5. Look down at the keyboard - that receptacle of all that's liquid, solid and dirty. Ever tried to invert it and give it a gentle tap? This is the best time. Only be ready for the "treasure" you may find. Use a brush. People have retrieved bugs and long-lost bills. Who knows what YOU will find?

6. Are you the hands-on type? Unplug the computer. Pry loose the cover. Use a long-handled soft brush to detox the box. It's mind-boggling how much dust this little machine can collect. Enough for several bouts of cold. If you have a dog or a cat, enough fur for a coat. Cockroaches could be non-paying occupants. Maybe you could use a vacuum cleaner to blow out the muck. Whatever you do, use a surgical mask, er, tie a handkerchief around nose and mouth.

7. Mmm... disk space retrieved, workstation airbrushed. Better defrag maybe? With a sense of pride, plug the computer back. No connection yet? Fine. Run an offline maintenance programme. It's bonus time. Write your blog post. On something offbeat.

8. Geek friends suggest starting a password book. Note down all that you have committed to memory — logins, passwords and codes for virtual doors — to open sites, e-mails, whatever. How safe this is, you need to decide.

10. Time to catch the creative bus. Use Word. Write a short story — Life in the Internet-free Lane. Add original visuals with Powerpoint or Photoshop. Got a Math angle? Solve equations, prove theorems. Dig out more roots for pi. Compose music. Try re-mixing. Give "Guru" a different ending. Craft solutions for Chennai's traffic/noise problem. Plan how to reduce CO2 emissions and win \$2 billion from Richard Branson. Play Solitaire.

Open Excel. Make simple crossword puzzles. Print and pass on to kids in the nearest corporation school. Write an article/letter for the newspaper, design a website, put together a slideshow of your family photographs. What you can do offline is limited only by your imagination.

Or simply step outside. Talk to family. Get a life! Read a book, watch a movie. And ha, dump the cellphone for a stroll on the beach. Stay detached, disengaged and free from karma. Even temporarily

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" Even If I fall, I fall like a seed to germinate not like a leaf to die "
--Vaishnavi