

SIESTA: as Interpreted by Computers

For years people have owned PCs and, depending on one's habits, have left their machines either asleep, hibernating or shut down completely. (The advent of Windows Vista and 7 operating systems now include something called the "hybrid sleep" option too.) But what are the real differences and benefits of these options?

Simply put, "**Sleep**" mode requires more power and boots up quickly, requires a constant but reduced use of power (0-6 watts); "**Hibernate**" requires less power but takes longer to go online; "**Hybrid-Sleep**" is a combination of "Sleep" and "Hibernate," designed to keep the RAM alive (like in "Sleep" mode) while it stores your RAM content onto your hard drive....a good thing if you have a power failure. Furthermore, it stores any open docs prior to going into a diminished power state.

From an environmental point, "**Shut down**" naturally conserves the most energy.....enough said.

"**Sleep**" mode, which uses the most power of all the 'power-off' modes, enables the PC to keep enough juice to keep the RAM alive. This option is usually best if you leave your PC for a short time....to have lunch, take a shower, or leave for a few hours....(think of it as putting your DVD on "pause").....it will be ready to get back to work when you are.

"**Hibernate**" mode came into more popularity when laptops did. This option allows you to save power when not using the machine. When in "Hibernation" mode, the contents of your RAM are stored in your hard drive and when re-started, the information is read back into the RAM.....startup time may be a bit longer but you do save energy.

The PC industry is quickly tending to move away from hard shutdowns, favoring "Sleep" or "Hibernate" modes, in large part due to customer demands for laptop/tablet/notebook usage. "Hybrid-Sleep" and "WOL" ("Wake-on-LAN" – a technology that allows you to awaken your PC remotely) modes are the latest directions being taken for energy conservation and consumer usage purposes. It seems apparent that hardware fabricators believe that a complete shutdown is never necessary. Some tech users are known to leave their desktop PCs on, 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week while using their laptops primarily and leaving them always on "Sleep" mode. The only times they truly power anything down is during an operational system conversion or a hardware change. Do, however, bear in mind that these are users who routinely upgrade their systems every 3 years or so, therefore hardware or battery failures are inconsequential.

The average consumer needs to decide what works best for them based on the way they use their PCs. Generally speaking if you are on-and-off the computer all day, use the "Sleep" or if available "Hybrid-Sleep" modes, and complete "Shut-down" for the night. And beyond all this, always set up a backup process for your files: pictures, music, etc. should a power failure occureven battery-run laptops can be adversely affected. It is worthwhile to invest in an external hard drive of a reasonable size (500 GB, 1 or 1.5 TB) to store your most desired files. The longevity of our PCs is only as good as the care we take of them.....getting a good night's sleep works best for them too!