How to Safely Remove Hardware in Windows 7
By Woody Leonhard from Windows 7 All-in-One For Dummies

Before you can disconnect a device from your Windows 7 computer, you must first prepare Windows for the change using the Safely Remove Hardware feature. When you click the Safely Remove Hardware icon in the taskbar, Windows stores any data back on the device and releases it from its hold. If you remove the device without using the Safely Remove Hardware feature, you run the risk of damaging your files.

In most cases, the devices you attach to your Windows 7 computer will have USB connections. The USB has become the most common type of connector because it's Plug and Play compatible and because you can plug in or remove a USB device without restarting your computer using the Safely Remove Hardware feature in Windows 7.

1. **Click the Safely Remove Hardware icon in the system tray, near the clock.**

A pop-up menu will appear listing the devices that can be removed.

Because most devices connect to PCs using USB connections, the Safely Remove Hardware icon looks like a USB connector with a green check mark on it.
2. Click the item you want to remove on the pop-up menu. Windows will release the device's internal connections.

3. When you see a pop-up message saying that it's safe to remove the hardware, you can unplug the device.

If you want to remove multiple devices, you must go through the entire process for each item.