

My computer is running slow... what steps can I do to fix it

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Author: Suada Štitkovic

Below are steps for Microsoft Windows users that can help speed up the computer or determine why the computer is running slow.

Reboot

1. The process of a working computer system restarting is known as a reboot. Rebooting is sometimes necessary to recover from an error, or to re-initialize drivers or hardware devices. A reboot may also be cold or hard (meaning the power was physically shut off then back on), as well as warm or soft (meaning the system restarted without loss of power). The term restart refers to an operating system closing all programs before a warm reboot. For example, the image shows the Turn off computer prompt in Windows XP; with the aforementioned Restart option.

Note: Users should only perform a hard reboot if the computer is completely frozen as it may damage hardware components

If your computer has not been rebooted recently, make sure to reboot it before following any of the steps below.

Background programs

One of the most common reasons for a slow computer are programs running in the background. Remove or disable any TSRs and startup programs that automatically start each time the computer boots.

If you have an antivirus scanner on the computer, spyware protection program, or another security utility, make sure it is not scanning your computer in the background. If a scan is in progress, it can decrease the overall performance of your computer. If this is the case, allow the scan to complete and the computer's performance should improve afterwards.

Delete temp files

As a computer runs programs, accesses web pages, and is being used in general, temporary files are being stored on the hard drive. Deleting these temp files can help improve computer performance.

First, we suggest using the Windows Disk Cleanup utility to delete temporary files and other files no longer needed on the computer.

Temporary folder Unfortunately, the Disk Cleanup may not delete all of the files in the temp directory. Therefore, we also suggest deleting temporary files manually by opening the Start menu and type %temp% in the Search field (in Windows XP and prior, click the Run option in the Start menu and enter %temp% in the Run field). Press Enter and a Temp folder should open. You can delete all files found in this folder and, if any files are in use and cannot be deleted, they can be skipped.

Free hard drive space

Verify that there is at least 200-500MB of free hard drive space. This available space allows the computer to have room for the swap file to increase in size, as well as room for temporary files.

Bad, corrupted or fragmented hard drive

Run ScanDisk, chkdsk, or something equivalent to verify there is nothing physically wrong with the computer's hard drive.

Run Defrag to help ensure that data is arranged in the best possible order.

Use other software tools to test the hard drive for any errors by looking at the SMART of the drive.

Scan for malware

Today, spyware and other malware is a big cause of many computer problems, including a slow computer. Even if an antivirus scanner is installed on the computer, we recommend running a malware scan on the computer. Use the free version of Malwarebytes to scan your computer for malware.

Scan for viruses

If your computer is infected with one or more viruses, this can cause your computer to run slow. If your computer does not have an antivirus program installed, you can run Trend Micro's free Housecall online utility to scan for viruses on your computer, as well as remove them. It is also recommended that you install an antivirus program for active protection against viruses.

Hardware conflicts

Verify that the Device Manager has no conflicts. If any exist, resolve these issues as they could be the cause of your problem.

Update Windows

Make sure you have all the latest Windows updates installed on the computer.

If you are on the Internet when your computer is slow, make sure all browser plugins are up-to-date. You can also try disabling browser plug-ins to see if one of them is causing the slowness.

Update your drivers

Make sure you have the latest drivers for your computer hardware, especially the latest video drivers. Having out-of-date drivers can cause an assortment of issues, including slow performance.

Reboot computer again

If you have done any of the above steps but your computer is still acting slow try rebooting the computer again at this point.

Memory upgrade

Computer memory aka RAM If you have had your computer for more than two years, you may need more memory. Today, we suggest computers have a minimum of 1GB of memory (RAM) for 32-bit system and 2GB for a 64-bit system. By having enough memory for programs to run within memory, your computer will not need to swap information stored within memory to the swap file. If your computer hard drive light is constantly active, it's a good indication that your computer is continuously swapping information between your memory and hard drive because of the lack of space in memory.

Hard drive upgrade

One of the biggest bottlenecks of a computer is the hard disk drive. For anyone with a slow computer or just looking for something to upgrade in the computer to improve overall system performance, upgrading from a traditional hard drive to a Solid State Drive (SSD) will significantly improve the overall system performance.