

Speeding Up Your Computer

We all realize that as we grow older we seem to slow down a tad bit. And, so it is with our computers. Over a period of time they seem boot up more slowly and operate more slowly. With our computer, however, it is not because it is “getting old”, but rather it becomes slower because of what we, ourselves, have done and do to the computer.

As an example, the first thing almost all of us do when we get a new computer is to add additional programs to it. Sometimes we add very large programs that help us become more productive, and sometimes we add just small, fun type programs, or add-ons. Adding programs, for the most part, is an absolute must. But, the question here is, are these programs that we add to our computer needlessly running in the background, or are they programs which we have to have on start up?

When we say “running in the background” we are talking about a program, or programs, that open when we start up our computer but then lie and wait for us to call upon them, if and when we might need one. Yes, it is nice at times to have programs waiting for our beckoning call, but by having them wait in the “background” they are using up valuable, precious RAM, (random access memory). Granted, in many cases it is an absolute necessity to have programs running in the background. The Windows operating system, for example, will not function without a number of required programs running in the background. Another prime example is your anti-virus program.

On the other hand, if we have programs running that we don't use or need on a regular basis then it is in our best interest to not have these programs running, conserving our RAM. We then open a program only when it is needed. A prime example of this might be Adobe Reader. The bottom line here is that every time we add a program that runs in the “background”, and it needs RAM to do so, we are slowing our computer down another notch.

So, what we need to do is to find out which programs start up when we boot up our computer, and see if we can't keep those programs that we absolutely don't need from starting. In Win XP click on Start, click on Run, and in the box that comes up type “msconfig” (no quote marks) and hit “enter”. In Vista & Win7 click on Start (the “ball”) and in the Search & Files box type “msconfig” (no quote marks) and hit “enter”. The System Configuration screen will then appear.

Click on the Startup tab to view those programs that start up when your computer starts up. Decide which of these programs you can live without on boot up and remove the check mark next to the program. Remember, you can still start up a program that you want to use after your computer is up and running by clicking on the programs icon on your desktop, or going to programs in the start menu. And, if you find you have disabled a program that you do want to start up when you boot up, you can always go back into MSCONFIG and re-check the program. I have read reports from people who have deleted every check mark on the programs on the Startup Tab, to get better performance from their computer.

On the Services tab most of the programs listed are required for your operating system to function properly. However, a few services can be disabled from the boot up process without causing a conflict. (It is suggested that you set a Restore Point before making changes to any of the services. Also, write down which services you are disabling, along with their original settings)

The following Win XP services (and probably Vista & Win7 also) can be disabled: Computer Browser, Error Reporting Service, Indexing Service, Infrared Monitor, Remote Registry, Secondary Logon, Server (unless your computer is connected to a server), Telephony (unless you have a dial-up connection), Windows Time and Wireless Zero Config (unless you use a wireless network).

Increase your computer's memory

The easiest way to increase the speed of your computer is to add RAM (Random Access Memory) to your computer's motherboard. If you have less than 1 GB of RAM you definitely need to add additional RAM, to at least 1 GB. If you are running Vista you should have 2 GB and for Win7 you should consider having 3 to 4 GB of RAM. Yes, all of the operating systems will run with less than the above mentioned amounts, but you will definitely have a slower operating computer.

When adding RAM it is extremely important, and necessary, that you add the proper RAM to your computer. There are numerous types and speeds of RAM. Your manual should tell you what type of RAM you have, and how much RAM you can have on your motherboard. Older laptops, for example, may only recognize a max of 1 GB of RAM.

Adding RAM to a laptop is really quite easy. You simply open the panel on the bottom of the laptop and replace the memory stick (or add to it) with your new RAM. Flip out, flip in.

For a desktop PC the replacement, or addition, is a tad bit more complicated, but still very doable. You have to open your case to add or replace the memory stick, being careful to seat the new memory stick properly.

Clean up your hard drive

If you have not done a "Disk Cleanup" or "Disk Defrag" lately, you need to do that. Both can be found by going to Programs > Accessories > System Tools. Be sure and do the "Disk Cleanup" before defragmenting. Performing both of these will decrease the "seek time" that is required by the hard drive to find information being requested.

And finally,

If you have performed all of the items listed above and your computer is still running at a snails pace it might, just possibly might, be time to do a total reinstall of your operating system. No one likes considering doing this, but it is the one true way of getting all of the "garbage" off of your computer and giving it a fresh start. I've done it. It's time consuming, but it works wonders.

Problems ??

If you have any problems with the info given here please feel free to give me a call at 895-2322. And, I would also be happy to help you with installing new RAM, if you would like. My services are free to club members. Rollie Baumann