

Speeding up a slow PC... on 3 pages.

Every day, in our shop, computers get dropped off that can take 10 minutes or more to boot. We consistently are able to restore them to a state that not only makes the owners happy, but the computers actually startup (and continue to operate) faster and better than when they did when first taken out of the box. I would love to tell you what we do.

When the button is first pressed on the PC:

- What happens
 - Bios initialize and direct boot location (usually the hard drive)
 - Windows and 3rd party processes initialize
 - Startup programs turn on (with windows and other processes)

When a PC takes a long time to boot, it means that the bios or some process or a startup program is causing a hang-up. A good rule of thumb is that the more complex the system or configuration, the more likely it is to cause a slowdown.

- How to speed it up.
 - The bios is a very simple program and usually is not the problem.
 - However, if it does take a while to get past the bios splash screen.
 - Turn off the memory check.
 - If you have lots of ram, this can take a while.
 - Make the hard drive #1 in the boot order.
 - When the PC starts... finally... look for and kill malware.
 - This stuff slows down the system the worst.
 - Fake security programs.
 - Use 'Smitfraud' in safemode (free to scan).
 - Multiple Popup generating programs.
 - Use 'Malwarebytes' (free to scan).
 - Viruses.
 - 'AVG FREE 8.0' (free to use).
 - Trojans and other junk.
 - 'AVG FREE 8.0' (free to use).
 - Remove bloated programs and bloated groups of programs.
 - These bloated programs are very complex. They are the 2nd most likely culprit for slowdowns.
 - Sometimes we'll reduce the startup time from 10 minutes to 2 by simply removing a single, glitched service. The responsible service is often belonging to some security suite.
 - Some security suites...
 - A security suite has a much larger footprint and has more ways to glitch-up than does a simple antivirus program.

- If you want a firewall, use a hardware firewall instead of a firewall in your security software.
 - It will not use up your RAM and processing power to protect your computer.
 - One less complex program with a chance to glitch-up and crash your system.
 - Most wireless routers are also firewalls.
- Multiple, conflicting security systems or antivirus programs.
 - We see computers with 3 and 4 different programs to handle their security.
 - Unless you have a super-computer it will not handle this gracefully.
 - It greatly increases your chances of a conflict or glitch that can slow your PC to a crawl.
- Photo editing software.
 - Go figure... it just waits for a camera or a picture... but it waits for it 24-7; whether you are using it or not.
 - Google's Picassa2 is a great picture program that doesn't slow down your PC. It is free.
 - You don't necessarily need to remove your beloved picture software. Just use msconfig to disable the auto-start. When you need to use your picture software, double-click it.
- Uninstall redundant software.
 - I often see 2 programs running to handle pictures and 3 to handle music and 4 to keep the computer safe from hackers... it makes the PC so slow!
- What does the user really need? Simple = fast!
 - Disable unnecessary startup programs.
 - msconfig makes this very easy.
 - If the user doesn't want programs to auto-update, turn off that functionality.
 - Windows updates itself on boot.
 - Turn this off and you can check manually. This service can often be very RAM hungry.
 - So do many other programs.
 - You can often click 'Advanced' or 'properties' and uncheck auto-update.
 - Haven't used that software in years? Remove it.
 - Auto-virus scan on boot = big slow down.
 - Set it to scan at 4:00am.
- Setup elegant solution to security needs.
 - AVG FREE 8.0 works wonders to kill virus and spyware.
 - It even works with Google to pre-scan search results and puts a happy green check next to sites that have been dubbed 'malware free'.
 - Hardware firewall (zero performance hit).
 - Safe browsing habits.

- Don't download free stuff unless you know why it is free. Lots of stuff is 'free' because it is bundled with popup ad producing programs.
- The internet is like a city. There are happy nice places like Amazon and Google and Ebay. They want your computer to work and they want you to come back. There are also dark alleys. If you wander down those alleyways too much, you are going to catch something...
- The system is now quicker than when it was new.
 - When it was new it had these:
 - Multiple trial security suites.
 - Various free software trials set to auto-start.
 - Manufacturer's utility programs.
 - More miscellaneous and unneeded free software.
 - These programs have been removed or culled thoroughly. The system is fast!
- What to do now?
 - Upgrade RAM.
 - It is so cheap now... \$30 for 2GB of new, fast RAM.
 - Many xp computers come to us with 256-512MB of RAM. For \$30 we can usually give them 5 times as much.
 - When programs are forced on the swap file, the system takes a huge performance hit. More RAM stops this.
 - Hard drives are considerably slower than RAM.
 - Run a check disk.
 - It will check your drive for file system errors or surface defects.
 - Run a defrag.
 - It will speed up your hard drive read/write by reorganizing data.

By following these steps, we change customer from saying, "I think I should get another computer... this one is just so old and slow." To saying, "Wow this is like a brand new machine! Thanks!" It is very gratifying. 😊

I don't know what level of detail you are looking for, Erin. So I just went in the middle somewhere. Let me know if you need more... or less. I guess the main point to take from this is that we do this multiple times every week with phenomenal results. If we didn't have good results, I wouldn't be able to eat. There are many detailed underlying changes that are made to the startup when one goes through this process, but from a functional standpoint it just doesn't matter. What matters is whether the system will boot quickly or not. Following these steps will accomplish this, and the system will run better than new. I hope this info helps many-a-reader! 😊