

# How to make Windows faster

## Give an old Windows computer a new lease on life

by [Sebastian Anthony](#) | Last updated 2:00PM EDT on June 14, 2011

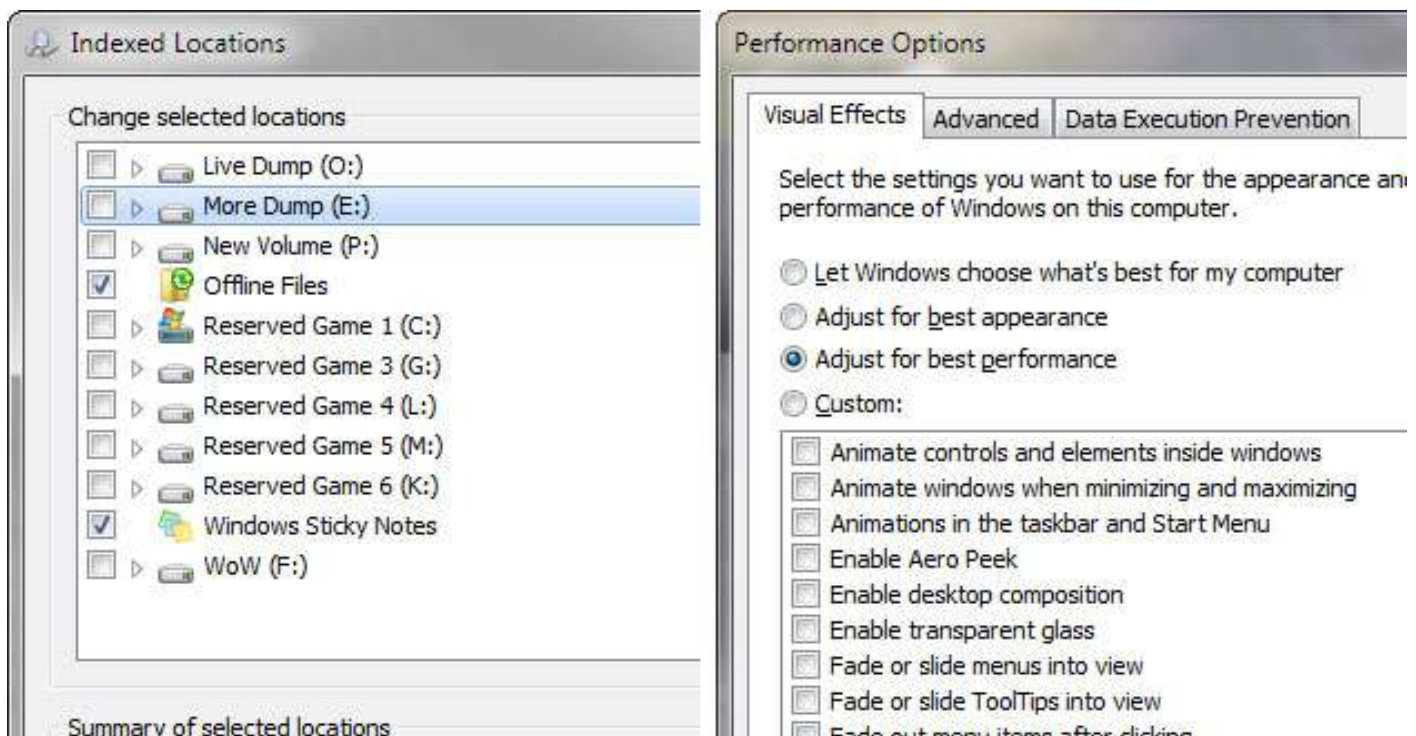
One of the greatest things about buying a new [Windows computer](#) is turning it on for the first time and being amazed at just how fast it is. It starts up quickly, and when you click to open a program, it pops up nearly instantaneously. You can run multiple programs and keep a dozen web browser tabs open, and it still runs quickly — and it even shuts down in a matter of seconds!

But then... your new computer starts to slow down. First, it takes a little longer to boot up, but gradually the entire system grows sluggish, and eventually it gets to the stage where you have time to make a cup of coffee while your [web browser](#) loads. Your once-snappy computer has become *old*.

Fortunately, by performing a few simple tasks, you can speed it back up again. You may not get it back to its good-as-new speed — and even if you do, as the state of the art marches forward, it will still seem a little slow compared to newer and more powerful equipment — but you can definitely squeeze a few more months (or even years) out of it.

### Before we start

For the most part, making the current versions of Windows (especially Vista and Win7) faster will require you to disable some features. In most cases, you won't even notice these features are gone, but you should still proceed with caution. If your computer is really, really slow, it's probably better to get a handyman in to fix it — or maybe consider it time to [upgrade your entire system](#).



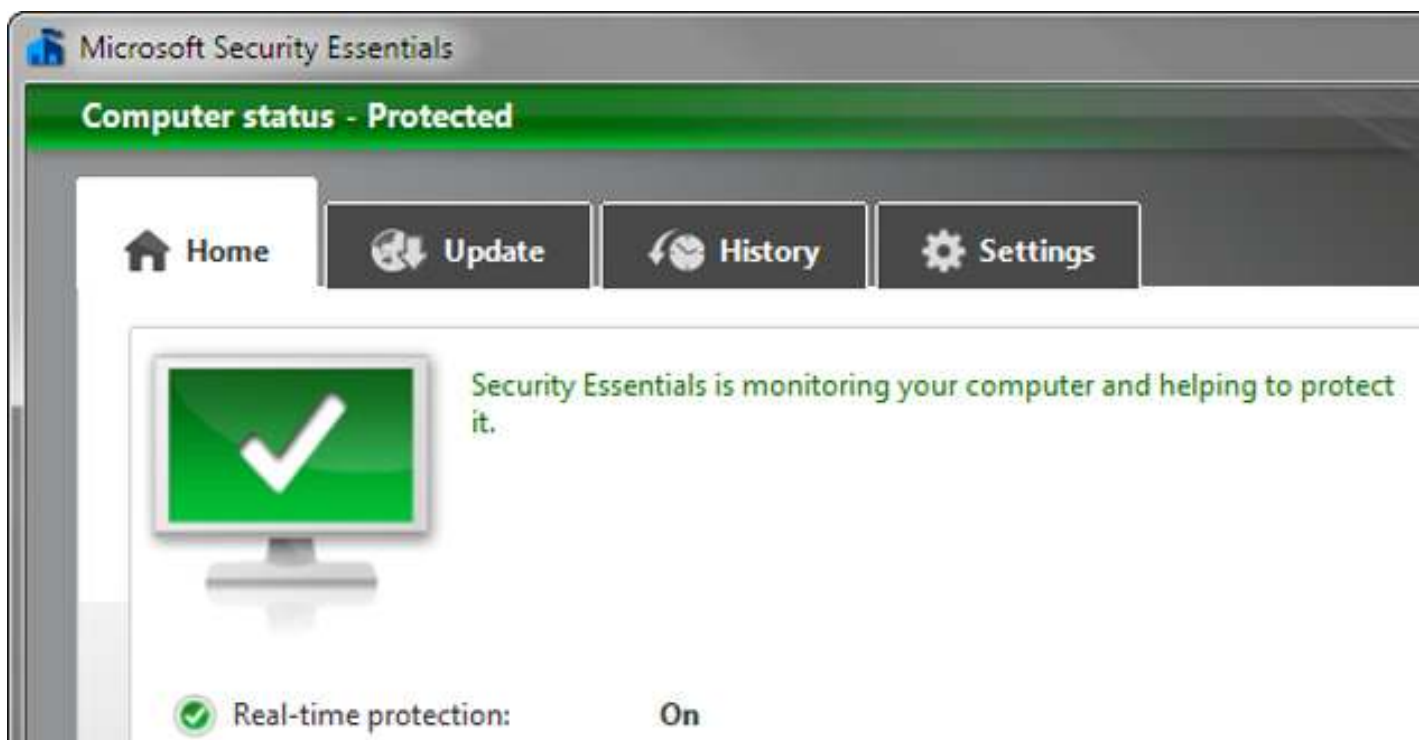
## First steps

To begin with, your best bet is to disable the Windows eye candy. After all, what good is a pretty interface if it's unusably slow?

Click the Start (Flag) button, right click Computer, and select Properties. Click "Advanced system settings" and then, underneath the Performance section, click the Settings button. Select the "Adjust for best performance" radio button and click OK. Click OK again and you're done. This will make Windows look rather plain — a lot like Windows 98, in fact — but it should make your computer feel a lot faster, too.

Next, we're going to disable indexing, a feature that speeds up Windows' Search functionality. If you regularly use search to find documents and photos on your hard drive, you probably want to skip this step, however.

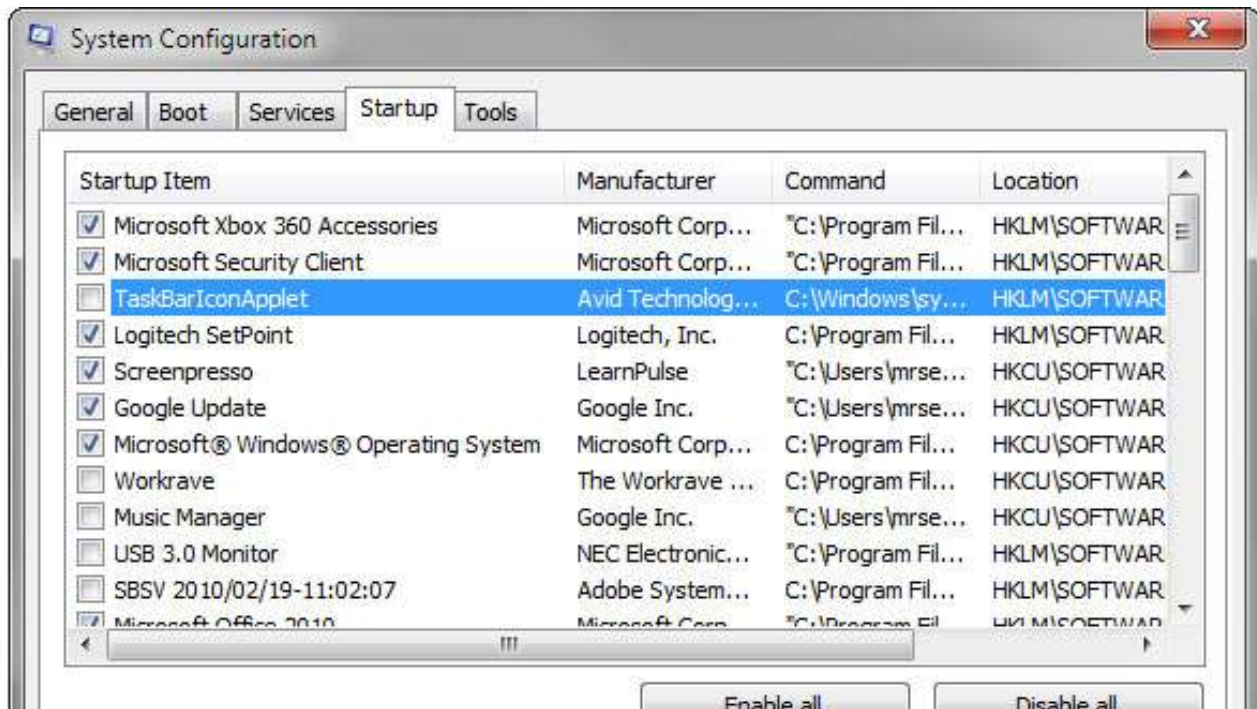
Click the Start (Flag) button, type "indexing options" and then press Enter. Click Modify, and you'll be shown a list of locations that are indexed by your computer. Remove the check mark from all of the boxes and click OK.



## Aggressive action

With those easy steps out of the way, you should now [defragment and clean up your hard drive](#). After that, [clear your computer of malware](#). These processes can take up to a few hours and may require that you stop using your computer while they run, but you can set them up before you go to bed and let them run overnight.

If you use a laptop or netbook, you can opt to squeeze a bit more performance out of your computer at the expense of shorter battery life; if you work with your laptop plugged in, you need not worry. Click the Start (Flag) button, type "power options" and press Enter. On the next screen, select the "High performance" radio button. Desktop users can also enable "High performance," but the performance boost will probably be less dramatic. You can also customize your power plan to change behaviors based on whether your computer is operating on AC or battery power; we'll cover doing that another time.



## Finishing touch

Finally, we're going to disable programs that automatically run when your computer starts. This can be a little dangerous, but it's also one of the best ways to speed up your computer — so proceed with caution!

Click the Start (Flag) button, type "msconfig" and press Enter. Click the Startup tab and you will see a (probably huge) list of programs that load when you start your computer up. Now... the trick is to disable as many non-important programs as possible. The problem is, there's no hard-and-fast way to work out which programs are non-essential. Basically, if it sounds important, don't disable it. If the program has "monitor" in the name or "updater", you can go ahead and disable it. If there's anything you don't recognize, go ahead and disable that too. If you're unsure, you can type the name of the program into Google — you'll be surprised at the wealth of information that you can find, even about the most esoteric of Startup items.

When you're done, click OK. The next time you turn on or reboot your computer, it should boot up a lot faster.

# 5 more ways to make your Windows computer lightning fast

This article was written by [Liz Patt](#) and originally appeared [on Tecca](#)

Nobody enjoys using a slow computer. You want your computer to be fast and responsive, whether it's [brand spanking new](#) or [four years old](#). Follow our tips to keep you zooming along the information superhighway, regardless of your PC's age!

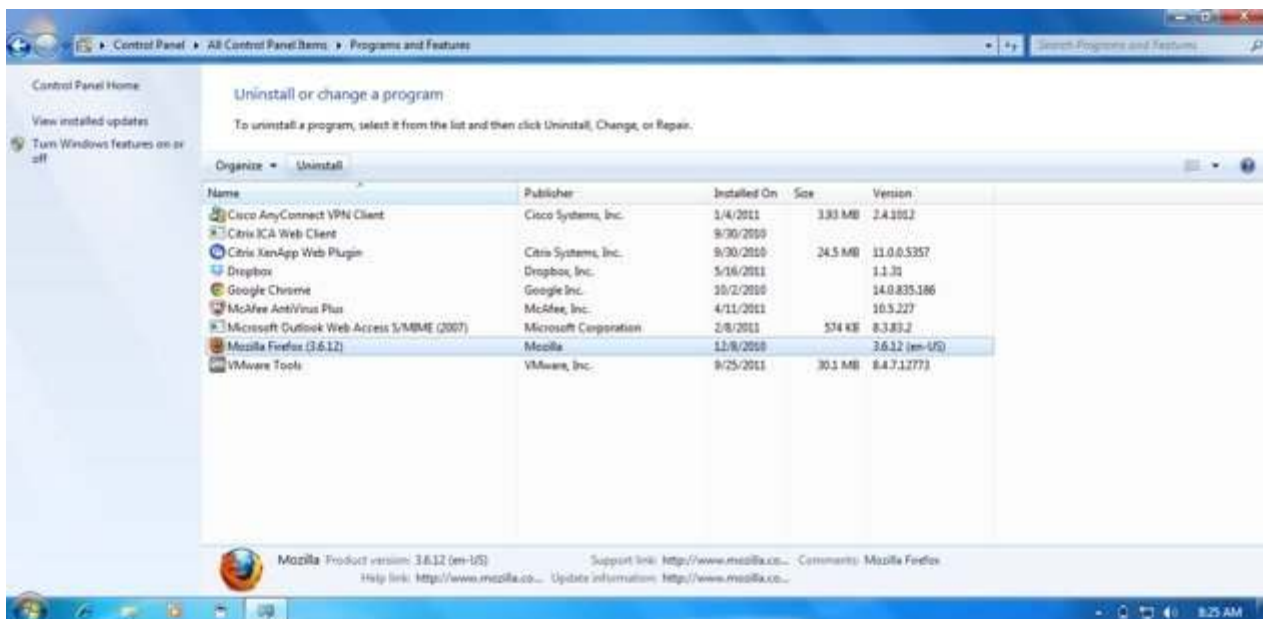
## 1. Run the essentials

The most basic thing you can do to speed up your computer is also one of the fastest changes you can make — close unneeded applications! If you're working in Excel, the odds that you'll need Word open at the same time are slim. Limit open software to what you are using at the time. This also cuts down on distractions and helps you get your work done more quickly.

If you have a stubborn application that won't close, treat it as a frozen application and [kill it via Task Manager](#) by hitting Ctrl+Alt+Del and selecting Start Task Manager.

Your computer automatically starts some programs when you turn it on. Some of these are necessary parts of the Windows operating system, but you may be able to disable some applications. Open the program in question and go into Properties or Options. Usually, auto-start options are found under General or Launch settings and will be labelled "Launch when Windows starts." Uncheck the check box and save the setting change to keep the application from coming back up the next time you reboot.

If you don't find an option like that, [there's one more place to look](#) for applications that auto-start. Be forewarned, this option is for advanced users — disabling essential startup items can have catastrophic results. Don't kill the auto-start settings for anything you don't recognize!



Scour your programs list for items that can be deleted

## 2. Fluff not necessary

Unless you've built your PC from scratch and manually installed Windows, hands have touched your computer before. Heck, you may have even had some kind of setup service performed at the store immediately following your purchase. The downside to all this pre-use activity is that applications that you will likely *never* touch have likely been installed and are running on your computer.

To deal with this preinstalled mess, go to Control Panel > Programs and Features and [uninstall the unwanted items](#). Things to avoid removing include standard Microsoft software bundles such as Office, software you have actively paid for such as Photoshop, and your antivirus package. If you're not sure where something came from or what it does, do your online homework and search for software's name before uninstalling — better safe than sorry!

Extra software can also end up on your computer after you install applications you actually want. As you go through the installation process, be sure to keep your eyes peeled for additional install prompts. These will look something like "Install *Utility Name* for Internet Explorer/Firefox" with a check box next to it. Make sure the checkbox is *not* checked, to keep the junk software at bay.

## 3. Safe and simple browsing

Current versions of popular browsers (such as [Internet Explorer](#), [Firefox](#), and [Chrome](#)) let you do much more than the mere web surfing of their predecessors: extensions and add-ons let your browser do all sorts of things. Have you set up something in your browser that displays an unread emails count icon, or maybe clips web sites to [Evernote](#) with one touch? Then you're using extensions!

Did you know these extensions require additional resources beyond the standard browser requirements to run? You can disable these items when you want to speed up your computer (and your browser). The process varies a bit based on your browser:

- **Internet Explorer and Firefox** Go to Tools > Add-ons or Manage Add-ons (depending on your version) and disable individual add-ons that you don't use.
- **Chrome** Right-click on any of your add-on icons (located between the address bar and the wrench icon) and select Disable. You can also click Manage Extensions to go through your installed/enabled add-ons in one page.



Browser add-ons can seriously hinder your speed

Internet Explorer comes with an option to launch entirely without add-ons, so you don't have to disable individual add-ons on a session-by-session basis. To access this version of IE, click the Start Button and type in Internet Explorer. You should see two versions come up: Internet Explorer and Internet Explorer (No Add-ons). Select the second version, and IE will launch without any add-ons or plugins. To use a version with add-ons, simply launch IE from your regular shortcut.

#### 4. Timing your antivirus scans

You may think that running your antivirus program at all times is the epitome of safe browsing. While it's true that running scan jobs during peak hours may keep your computer marginally safer, it comes at a serious expense to speed. Most antivirus packages have a background task that runs at all times and scans new files when they are downloaded, while operating with a lower demand to your computer's resources.

To keep your top browsing hours free of any unneeded antivirus burden, configure full scans during hours that you are definitely not on your computer.

- **Workday hours (9 a.m.-5 p.m.)** This works best if you use a different computer for business purposes.
- **Early evening (6-7:30 p.m.)** Scan while cooking dinner or unwinding after the workday.
- **Late night (1-4 a.m.)** Let it run while you're asleep.

Find the hours that work best for you, and configure your scanning schedule accordingly. Make sure that your real-time or on-demand scanning is also enabled when setting up your schedule!

#### 5. Add a physical boost

If you've done everything above and your computer is still sluggish, your last option is to upgrade the [memory \(RAM\)](#) in your computer. RAM acts kind of like short-term memory for a person, giving your programs more room to keep data while they're running. However, figuring out what kind of RAM your computer needs and installing it can get complicated: so if you want to upgrade your computer's memory, we recommend calling your local computer repair shop and letting them take care of it.

#### Good housekeeping

Keeping your computer in top form requires regular maintenance. Follow a [maintenance schedule](#) for your standard activities, perform a little [seasonal cleanup](#) to keep your PC at its speediest!