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# Five tips for speeding up a slow PC

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*When PC performance slows to a crawl, a few simple techniques can make a huge difference. Jack Wallen explains the first steps he takes to perk up a sluggish system.*

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We've all experienced it. That PC you know should be zipping along but isn't. You add more memory, but it's still barely chugging. Fortunately, it's fairly easy to troubleshoot those ailing machines. Here are five steps you can take to help your machines run much faster.

## 1: Defragment

This one should go without saying. However, I am always surprised at how few people regularly do this — or how many IT admins neglect to set up machines to do this regularly. Regardless of which Windows desktop OS you use, make sure you either manually defragment or set the machine up to automatically defragment. When machines get too fragmented, they suffer serious performance degradation. Usually, the built-in Windows defrag tool works fine. If you are looking for something a little better, try Defraggler. It can work on a whole disk or just a part of one.

## 2: Clean up the disk

Have you ever filled up a disk to 100%? If that disk contains both your OS and your data files, your machine is going to come to a screeching halt. One of the first things I check on a machine that's running slowly is how much of the hard disk has been used. If there isn't roughly 10% of the hard disk free, it's time to clean house. One of the tools I like is CCleaner. It quickly clears out all temp files for you. Once that's done, it's time to attack the obvious locations: Recycle Bin, Pictures, Music, Videos. Once you have cleared those out, you can remove old Restore Points and Shadow copies (from System Restore) and installed programs from your Downloads directory. If that doesn't clear up enough space, it's time to start removing unused applications.

## 3: Clean up the registry

I've seen plenty of machines get bogged down simply because of errors in the registry. Of course, the registry isn't something just any old user (or administrator) should attack. Instead, you want to use an application whose purpose is to clean up the registry. One of my favorite tools for that task is, again, CCleaner. When you run CCleaner, make sure you back up your registry (it will prompt you to do this). Then, run it a few times. The first time through, it won't catch all the errors. It usually takes about three times before all errors are removed. Once you've removed those errors, you might want to reboot to ensure the process is complete (and the machine is back to speed).

## 4: Remove spyware/malware

This one always shocks me. If you are using a Windows operating system you BETTER have anti-malware on board or your machine is sure to get bogged down in the muck and mire of spyware. I tend to lean toward Malwarebytes for this. But don't just use the free version. It's good, but it doesn't include any sort of scheduler. And we know end users are horrible about running maintenance applications. For this, you will want to spend the coin to make sure your anti-spyware is up to date and running on a schedule.

## 5: Check the disk for errors

With a machine that's aging or whose hard drive has seen excessive use, sectors on that drive can wind up bad. To remedy this, you'll need to issue a command and reboot your machine. The command I generally use is `chkdsk X: /f/r` (Where *X* is the drive letter you want to check). The *f* switch tells the command to automatically fix errors and the *r* switch locates bad sectors and recovers readable data.

## Other solutions?

These steps aren't foolproof, but they're the first ones I take when a Windows-based PC is showing signs of slowing down. Do you have other means? What tools or tasks do you use to reverse this "aging process"? Share them with your fellow readers.

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