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IN THIS ISSUE

★ IMPROVING
THE PER-
FORMANCE
OF YOUR
COMPUTER

Improve Computer Performance

Maintenance tasks that improve performance

If your computer seems slower than it used to be, it probably is. Over time, computers get slower because files become disorganized and resources are consumed by unnecessary software. Fortunately, Microsoft Windows XP includes tools to clean up your computer and restore its performance. The five steps in this article will walk you through the use of these tools to tune up your computer. Before you do anything, *back up your computer*. Some of the steps in this article can cause pre-existing but hidden problems to surface, which may keep your computer from starting. A backup allows you to restore your important files in the unlikely event that something does go wrong.

1. Remove unused programs

First, remove programs you don't use anymore. Programs take up space on your computer, and some run in the background without your knowledge. Removing programs you don't use can help restore your computer's performance.

2. Install and run antispyware software

Most programs can be removed using the Add or Remove Programs function accessible from Control Panel, but spyware programs are more stubborn. Windows Defender (a free download from Microsoft) or another antispyware program can detect and remove these programs. You should always have an antispyware program installed, because spyware might install itself on your computer without your knowledge. After you install the antispyware program, run it to detect and remove any unwanted programs.

3. Free up wasted space

Removing unused programs is a great way to free up disk space, which will speed up your computer. Another way to find wasted disk space is to use the Disk Cleanup tool.

To run the Disk Cleanup tool

1. Click **Start**, and then click **My Computer**.
2. Right-click **Local Disk**, and then click **Properties**.
3. On the General tab, click the **Disk Cleanup** button. Disk Cleanup will spend a few minutes Examining your disk.
4. The Disk Cleanup dialog box will appear. Select each of the check boxes in the Files to be Delete list, and then click **OK**.
5. When prompted, click **Yes**. Disk Cleanup will spend several minutes removing these files, which will provide you with more space.

* If you have more than one hard disk drive, repeat this process for each hard disk drive listed in My Computer.



4. Defragment your hard disk drive

Files on your computer can either be *fragmented* or *unfragmented*. Over time, more and more files become fragmented. When a file is fragmented, it takes longer for the computer to read it because it has to skip to different sections of the hard disk drive. Defragmentation improves your computer's performance by reorganizing your files.

To defragment your computer

1. Click **Start**, and then click **My Computer**.
2. Right-click **Local Disk**, and then click **Properties**.
3. Click the **Tools** tab, and then click **Defragment Now**.
4. The Disk Defragmenter appears. Click your **hard disk drive**, and then click **Defragment**.
5. Disk Defragmenter will work for at least several minutes, although it might take several hours.

When prompted, click **Close**.

5. Disconnect unused network connections

If you have, or ever have had, a network with more than one computer, you probably found it useful to share files between the computers by mapping a network drive. Mapping network drives allows one computer to read and write files to another computer's hard disk drive as if they were directly connected to each other.

The problem with network drives is that Windows XP will attempt to connect to the network drive when it starts up. If the remote computer does not respond immediately, Windows XP will wait, which will slow down your startup time. Additionally, some programs will attempt to connect to the network drive when you browse for files and folders. If you have ever tried to open a file and had to wait several seconds, it is probably because the program was trying to establish a network connection—even if the file you are opening is on your local computer.

To reduce the problem, disconnect any unused drives

1. Click **Start**, and then click **My Computer**.
2. On the **Tools** menu, click **Disconnect Network Drive**.
3. Select the network drives that you no longer need, and then click **OK**.

Performing the five steps in this article once a month will help you keep your computer running at peak performance.





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