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## Improve Your Laptop's Performance

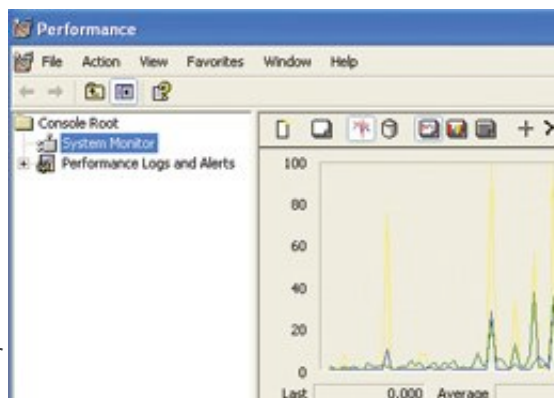
URL: <http://www.laptopmag.com/advice/tips/improve-your-laptop-performance.aspx>

by John R. Delaney on Friday, September 07, 2007

**Has your laptop's performance ground to a halt? Follow these ten steps and give your system a kick in the you-know-what.**

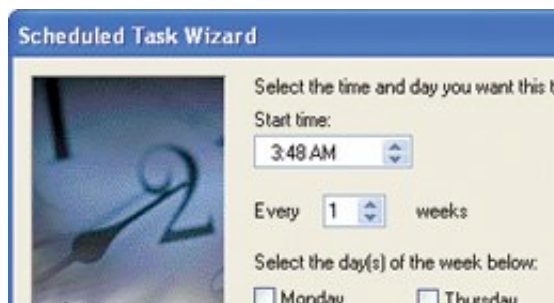
Your laptop is a lot like your car. The more you use it, the more effort you must put in to keeping your system running at peak performance. But instead of the occasional oil change, filter replacement, and an annual tune-up, your notebook requires constant vigilance to keep it running smoothly. There are a million ways to clog your system, from clandestine spyware you didn't even know existed to system-hogs like [Vista's Aero interface](#) right in front of your face. Here, we'll show you how to streamline your system so that you can coax the maximum performance out of your notebook.

Want to see if the apps you run are maxing out your system? Windows' Performance Monitor (Control Panel -> Performance and Maintenance -> Administrative Tools -> Performance) will show you in real time the load on your PC's CPU, memory, and disk subsystems. If they're pushed to the limit when you're running routine chores, it might be time for an upgrade.

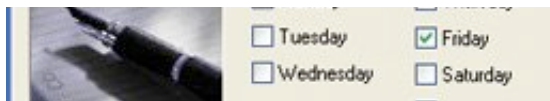


If it takes forever to boot into Windows, there's a good chance that you have too many programs starting up unnecessarily. If you use [Vista](#), try typing "msconfig" in the Run dialog box to see what applications are loading during startup. Simply uncheck the programs that don't need to be running all the time. This tactic also works with XP, but the program descriptions are far more cryptic. Instead, pick up VCOM Fix-It Utilities 7 Professional (\$49.95; [www.v-com.com](http://www.v-com.com)), which includes an intuitive Startup Commander utility and a full suite of maintenance tools to diagnose problems and tweak performance.

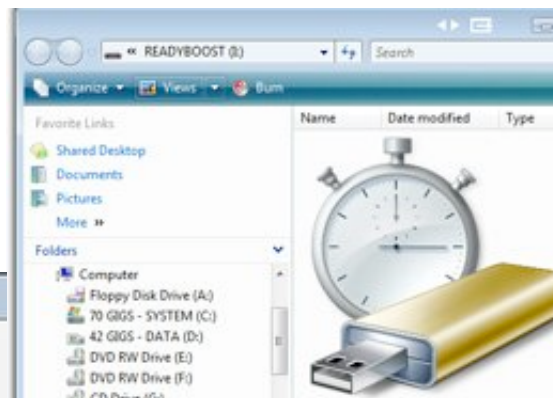
The System Tools folder in Accessories lets you schedule tasks like Disk Cleanup and Disk Defragmenter to keep your hard drive running at peak performance. Disk Cleanup searches your hard drive for temporary files and old program files that are no longer needed and gives you the option of



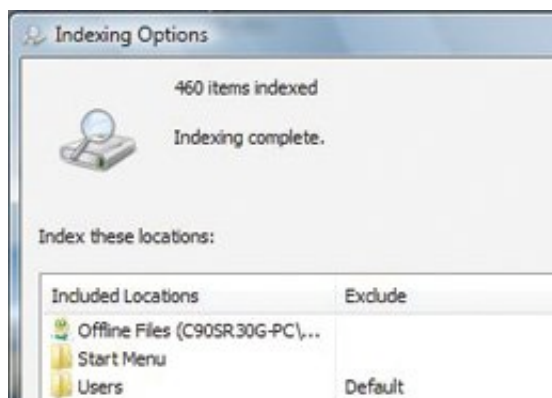
deleting them. The Defragmenter scans the drive and consolidates your files for faster access and increased drive performance.



Included in Vista is Windows ReadyBoost, a technique for improving performance using memory from a USB flash drive to complement your existing system memory. When you plug in a ReadyBoost-enabled flash drive, Vista will ask if you want to use it to speed up your system. You can also right-click on the flash drive icon in the Computer applet, click on Properties, and go to the ReadyBoost tab to enable the drive as a memory-caching device. Corsair's TurboFlash USB Flash Drive ([www.corsairmemory.com/products/turboflash.aspx](http://www.corsairmemory.com/products/turboflash.aspx)) is ReadyBoost-certified and is available with 512MB (\$16.99) and 1GB (\$24.99) of memory.



Vista's search engine utilizes an indexing service to speed up file searches, but if the service is looking in too many locations it may slow down your notebook. You can limit indexing to just one location, preferably just the Start Menu, via the Indexing Options applet in Control Panel. Your overall performance will increase, but search functions will be much slower.



Keep your system free of those annoying pop-up ads, spyware, and other malicious programs that can drain performance and compromise your notebook's security. Programs such as [Microsoft's Windows Defender](#), which is included in Vista; [Lavasoftware's Ad-Aware](#); and Safer Networking's Spybot Search & Destroy ([www.safer-networking.org](http://www.safer-networking.org)) are available as free downloads and will automatically scan for intrusive files while providing real-time protection.



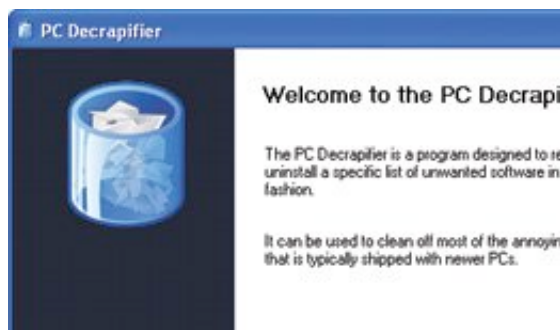
### Die, Vista Pop-Ups, Die!

Here's how to disable the most annoying feature in computing history. No offense, Clippy. Tired of having Vista ask you for permission to carry out simple commands? You can speed up your computing experience by turning off the User Account Control (UAC) alerts, but we must warn you that you'll be losing a measure of security when you do. Still, if you have decent antivirus and firewall protection you should be fine. Simply open the User Accounts applet in Control Panel and select Turn User Account Control On or Off to enable or disable this feature.

Enable Windows Update to make sure you're using the most current hardware drivers and software patches to achieve maximum performance. You can easily schedule Windows Update to automatically download and install the latest updates, or you can manually search for updates and install them at a time that's convenient for you. By default, automatic updates are set to be installed every day at 3 a.m., but you can change the time and frequency by clicking the Windows Update icon and selecting Change Settings. If your system is turned off during the specified install time, the updates will automatically install when you power up the system.



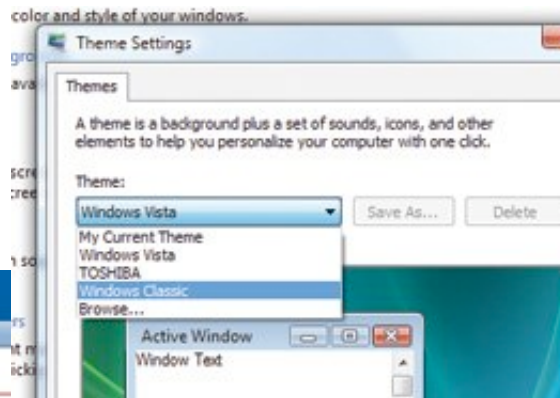
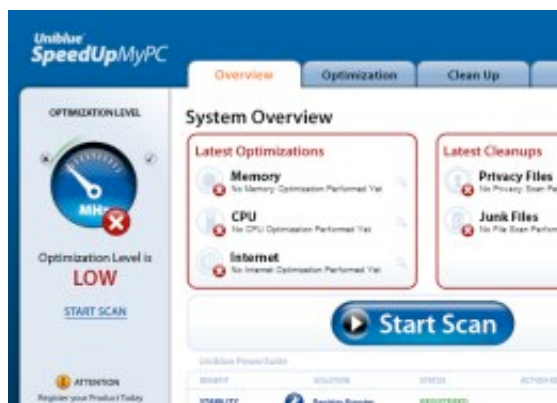
Both Windows Vista and XP include tools for keeping your system free of programs that can slow down system performance. Use the Programs and Features option in Vista (Add/Remove Programs in XP) to safely and completely remove unwanted applications and free up that valuable hard drive real estate. If you want to get rid of trial



software you know you'll never use, try [PCDecrapifier](#). You'll be able to see a list of bloatware and then decide what you want to remove, whether it's Corel Paint Shop Pro, MusicMatch, or NetZero Installers.

Windows Vista comes with all sorts of cool visual effects that can eat up your system resources, including the Aero interface. (There's a reason Aero automatically gets disabled when playing a [Blu-ray](#) movie on a notebook.) Go into the Control Panel Advanced tab and turn off Windows Animation. The same goes for those Sidebar gadgets; if you can live without them, disable them by right-clicking on the system tray icon and unchecking the "Start Sidebar when Windows starts" box, or you can close individual Sidebar items manually by right-clicking on them.

There are plenty of applications available that will help you speed up your system by performing many optimization tasks for you. SpeedUpMyPC 3 (\$29.95; [www.uniblue.com](http://www.uniblue.com)) is an easy-to-use program that automatically scans your system for possible bottlenecks and provides utilities to increase performance, including a disk defrager, a memory-usage and CPU monitor and optimizer, and a file-cleanup tool that also shreds unwanted files. You can also stop unnecessary background processes to increase performance, and you can disable autostart programs to speed up the boot process.



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