

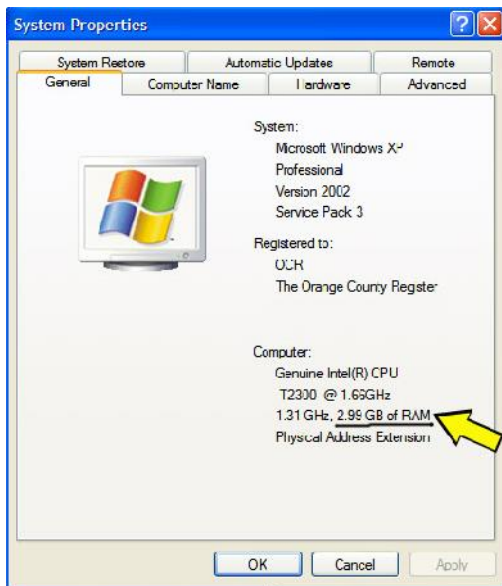
[Speed up a slow computer in 4 steps](#)



*Stump the PC Club is a free tech-advice column written by members of the **North Orange County Computer Club**, which has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at noccc.org. And don't forget to stop by the Gadgetress' home for the PC Club, at ocregister.com/link/pcclub, to find out how to ask a question and read past answers.*

QUESTION: I have a Dell Inspiron 6400 it has been running slow. Are there things I can do to clean it up? I am not smart when it comes to this and need easy directions. ~ Tami

PC CLUB: A slow computer is no fun and it's one of the most frequent complaints that I run into. I sympathize with your need to keep it simple but this is one of those problems that does not lend itself to an easy fix. In spite of all of the programs advertised on the Internet to speed up your PC, there is no 1-click solution, so don't succumb to any marketing hype. There are several things that you can do however. Here are the most likely causes for slow performance and possible solutions:



1.

1. You have insufficient memory or RAM. XP runs well with a minimum of 500 megabytes and even better with 1 gigabyte.

For Vista, double these numbers. To see how much RAM is installed right-click “My Computer” (for Vista right-click “Computer”), select “Properties” and you will see the amount of installed RAM. Click image on right to enlarge.

There are several web sites that can interrogate your system over the Internet and let you know how much RAM you have and what to buy to increase it. These include 4allmemory.com and crucial.com. The companies have very competitive prices and can provide technical support for installing the memory. As an alternative, you can have a local computer store install it for you.

(You also might want to read earlier posts: PC Club’s “[Add RAM, drive to speed up that old PC](#)” and the Gadgetress’ “[The Memory Guide: A cheap way to speed up a PC.](#)”)

2.

Your PC is infected by a virus or spyware. Make sure that you have an anti-virus program installed and that it is updated periodically. Next, run a full system scan to see if you are infected. To check for spyware you can try the free Spybot Search and Destroy at safer-networking.org and to check for adware you can try the free Adaware available at lavasoft.com. For any software, always go to the main site to make sure you are downloading the latest version.

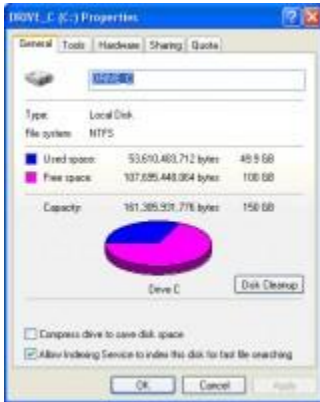
3.

You have too many programs starting up when Windows boots up. Frequently, having too many programs starting up when Windows boots can rob you of valuable system resources and slow your PC. A quick way to identify all of the startup programs is to click “Start,” “Run” and type “msconfig” in the box without the quotes and click “OK.” If there is no Run command available you can also press the Windows logo key and tap the R key. Select the Startup tab and uncheck any programs that you do not need.

A better way to control startup programs is to download the free program named “StartupRun” at nirsoft.net/utils/what_run_in_startup.html. In Vista, right-click the program’s icon Desktop icon and select “Run as Administrator.” Knowing what starts up is half the battle. The other half is determining which programs you can live without. Some tips:

- To find out if the program is required, record the name of the program for each entry in the StartupRun window or msconfig window and look it up in one of the online databases.
- These sites, www.sysinfo.org/startuplist.php and bleepingcomputer.com/startups are two of the best. They have a guide at the top of the page letting you know if the program is necessary or not.

- When using StartupRun, it's a good idea to use the "Disable" rather than "Delete." After going through this tedious process (there's no other way), you should re boot the system to make the changes effective.
- It might be wise to disable a few items at a time. If something stops working, you can always re-enable these items.



4.

Your hard drive is cluttered. It's always a good idea to cleanup your hard drive periodically, especially the temporary Internet files. The best way to do this is to download and install the free "CCleaner" program from ccleaner.com. The CCleaner program should require a few minutes to perform its duties but if you haven't done this for quite some time, it could take quite a while. Also, you should open "My Computer" ("Computer" within Vista), right-click your C-drive and select "Properties" (see image on right). Make sure that your C-drive is no more than 60% full. If it's almost full, you will need to free up some space by uninstalling unnecessary programs or removing or relocating some of your data.

If none of these steps help, you can always take your PC to your local computer store such as Staples or Best Buy. They can scan your PC and make recommendations. Remember though that their goal is to sell you something so ask lots of questions. - Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member. View his blog at www.edwardns.com/blog.