

How to Breathe New Life Into an Old Computer

Written by Johann Taylor
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It happens to all of us eventually. The computer that only a few years ago was blazing fast, has now slowed down to a crawl. The shiny new computers at the local electronics store look more and more tempting every time you wait an eternity for a new program to open. Unfortunately, in today's economy, few of us can afford to buy a new computer every few years.

Fortunately, there is a lot that can be done to breathe life into an old machine, and many things will cost you little more than an afternoon of your time.

- The first thing to do is clean out the dust. Not just figuratively, but literally. Dust bunnies are not a protected species, and there is no reason for you to hold onto that wildlife refuge inside your computer. Electronic equipment prefers cold, and the colder your computer is, the faster it will run. Dust insulates the components inside your computer and keeps it from cooling off properly. Not only does this rob you of speed, but it will shorten the useful life of the computer as well. The performance gains that we sometimes see in the shop after a good dusting can be quite impressive.

- Next, you will want to figuratively clean out the dust on your computer. Start by uninstalling any unnecessary programs (if you aren't sure whether or not something is

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important, Google it). Your computer has a limited amount of resources, and the more programs that are running in the background, the less resources there are available for you to use. You may also want to take this time to clean out any old files you may have lying around and don't need any more. Once you have finished, run a disk defrag utility to clean up your hard drive and improve performance.

- If your computer is still running too slow, your next option is to upgrade a few components. By far a RAM, or memory, upgrade will give you the biggest perceived speed increase for your money. A CPU, or processor, upgrade is sometimes cost-effective, but not always.

*Resist the urge to upgrade to a newer version of Windows, unless absolutely necessary. A newer version will not increase speed, but will usually significantly decrease it.

Avoid downloading and installing programs carelessly as this slows down the computer and is a good way to get infected by malware. Also, avoid registry optimizer and computer optimizer programs like the plague. At best, these are just modern snake oil, at worst, they can make your computer unstable or infect it with malware. It is better to just stay away.

- Last and not least, if your computer is still just too slow, consider finding a new use for it. Give it to your kids as a decoy to keep them away from your new computer, or let them tear it apart and learn from it. That is how most technicians got their start.

If anything here seems too difficult to do on your own, most of what we have covered is included in our Basic Tune-Up & Optimization package. Please give us a call or see our main website for more information.