

Tech Bit 16

Speed Up That PC, Add RAM

You've optimized your hard drive, deleted all the extraneous stuff in your registry and minimized the number of start up programs, yet your computer still seems sluggish.

Before going out and buying a new one, there are a couple of things left to try (one even works if you do buy a new computer).

If your current computer is running Vista, and you can get the drivers for your system for XP, one option is to "downgrade" to Windows XP. It uses fewer resources (processor and memory) than Vista and for most people it has all the features they'll need. The biggest problem with downgrading is you need to re-install all your applications and put your data back...

If you are already running XP, or are stuck with Vista, the next best option is more RAM memory. Doubling the amount of memory in a PC or notebook from 1 gigabyte to 2 gigabytes will often give a 20-25% improvement in speed. You can get a feeling for how much improvement you will get by watching the hard disk light on your system. If it is always on, Windows is using it like memory and adding more RAM will help.



The good news is more RAM is relatively inexpensive. You should be able to get 1 gigabyte of RAM for either a desktop or notebook for under \$25 on sale, I've seen 2 gigabytes for that, but it is more uncommon. More memory is something you should watch Spoofee (<http://www.spoofee.com>) for. Sometime in any 30-45 day period you'll see several RAM specials listed. Just make sure you get the same speed as your system requires (e.g. PC2700 DDR memory absolutely won't work in a system that requires PC5300 DDR2 memory).

There is a point of diminishing returns, but generally more memory means faster.

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