



Tech4Me2 Action Guide

Why Is My Computer So Slow?

A simple, step-by-step guide to diagnosing and
fixing common computer slowdowns

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Introduction

When your computer starts running slowly, it can be frustrating.

Programs take longer to open, your system feels unresponsive, and even simple tasks can become a chore. The good news is that often the cause is something simple—and the fix is as well.

This guide is designed to help you identify what's causing the slowdown and take practical steps to improve performance.

You won't need technical expertise. What you will need is a few minutes and a willingness to work through the steps in order.

How This Guide Is Organized

This guide is structured to help you move from quick wins to more targeted solutions:

- **Start Here: Quick Fixes**
Simple steps that often improve performance right away
- **What's Causing the Problem?**
A clear explanation of the most common reasons computers slow down
- **Step-by-Step Fixes**
Practical actions you can take based on what you're seeing
- **What You Can't Fix (and When to Upgrade)**
Guidance for situations where the issue may be due to hardware limits

Start with the quick fixes. If your computer improves, you may not need to go further. If not, continue through the guide step by step.

Section 1: Is It Your Internet or Your Computer?

When something feels slow, it's not always obvious where the problem is. A slow-loading website, buffering video, or sluggish response could be caused by your internet connection—or by your computer itself.

Before trying to fix anything, take a minute to narrow down the cause.

Ask yourself:

- Are websites slow to load or not loading at all?
- Are videos buffering or stopping?
- Do programs feel slow even when you're offline?
- Is the problem happening on one device or all devices?

❗ If multiple devices are slow, the issue is likely your internet. If only one device is slow, the issue is more likely that device.

Section 2-Start Here: Quick Fixes

Before digging deeper, try these simple steps. In many cases, one of these will resolve the problem quickly.

Restart Your Computer

Restarting your computer is one of the simplest and most effective ways to improve performance. Why is that?

Over time, background activity and temporary processes build up. When you restart, all open programs are closed, temporary files are cleared, and any downloaded updates are fully applied, giving your system a fresh start.

Close Unused Programs

Many people don't realize that programs continue running even when they are not actively being used. This is especially true for web browsers with multiple tabs open.

Each program uses a portion of your computer's resources. Closing programs you are not using—particularly browsers and large applications—can free up resources and improve responsiveness right away.

Restart Your Browser

Modern web browsers do far more than display web pages. They run tabs, background processes, and extensions, all of which can use system resources.

If your computer feels slow while browsing, try closing your browser completely and reopening it. Simply refreshing the screen may not fix the issue. Also consider reducing the number of open tabs and reviewing any extensions you no longer use.

Section 3 – Identify the Cause and Fix It

If none of the quick fixes improve your PC's performance, try the following:

Too Many Startup Programs

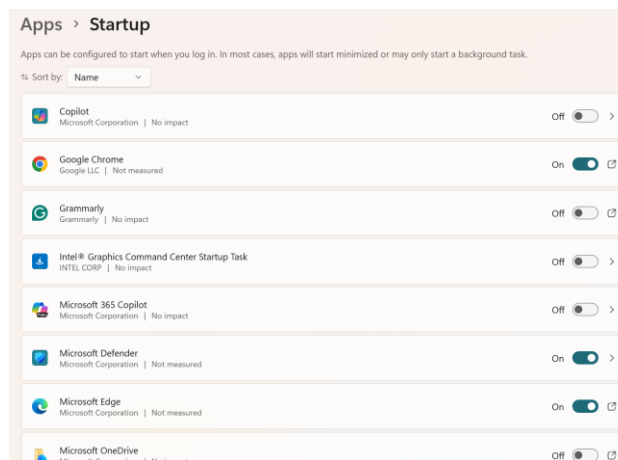
What's happening:

Some programs are set to start automatically when your computer turns on. Over time, this list can grow, slowing both startup time and overall performance. Even if you don't use these programs right away, they may still be running in the background.

What to do:

Go to Settings → Apps → Startup and review the list of startup programs. Disable any programs you don't need immediately after startup.

 Disabling a startup program does not remove it. It will still be available when you choose to open it.



Background Processes

What's happening:

Your computer may be running tasks you don't see, such as updates, syncing services, or helper applications. Each of these uses system resources, which can reduce performance when too many are active.

What to do:

Open Task Manager (Ctrl + Shift + Esc) and look for programs using a high percentage of CPU or memory. Close anything unnecessary and see if performance improves.

Name	Status	11% CPU	42% Memory	0% Disk	0% Network	Power usage	Power usage trend
Apps (5)							
> Calculator (2)		0%	20.4 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
> Clock (2)		0%	27.7 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
> Notepad		0%	13.4 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
> Paint		0%	38.1 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
> Task Manager		0.6%	28.5 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
Background processes (39)							
AggregatorHost.exe		0%	1.8 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
> Antimalware Service Executable		0%	144.7 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
Application Frame Host		0%	17.9 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
COM Surrogate		0%	1.4 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
COM Surrogate		0%	1.2 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
COM Surrogate		0%	3.3 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
COM Surrogate		0%	1.5 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
CTF Loader		0%	3.2 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
Google Crash Handler		0%	1.2 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
Google Crash Handler (32 bit)		0%	1.1 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
Host Process for Windows Tasks		0%	3.1 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low
> Hyper-V Host Compute Service		0%	1.5 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	Very low	Very low

If you have many browser windows or tabs open, you may find that Chrome (or Edge) is using a surprisingly high percentage of CPU. Close all tabs that you are not actively using, then close and reopen your browser. Check its CPU usage in the Task Manager again. You may see a significant decrease.

Low Available Storage

What's happening:

When your storage is nearly full, your system has less room to operate efficiently. In simple terms, your computer needs working space to process tasks efficiently. When that space is crowded, everything becomes slower.

What to do:

First verify how much free space is available. The easiest way to check the space available is to open File Explorer and click This PC In the lefthand margin.



As a general guideline, try to keep at least 15–20% of your storage free. If you're close to full, performance may be affected.

Free up space by deleting files you no longer need, emptying the Recycle Bin, or moving files to external or cloud storage.

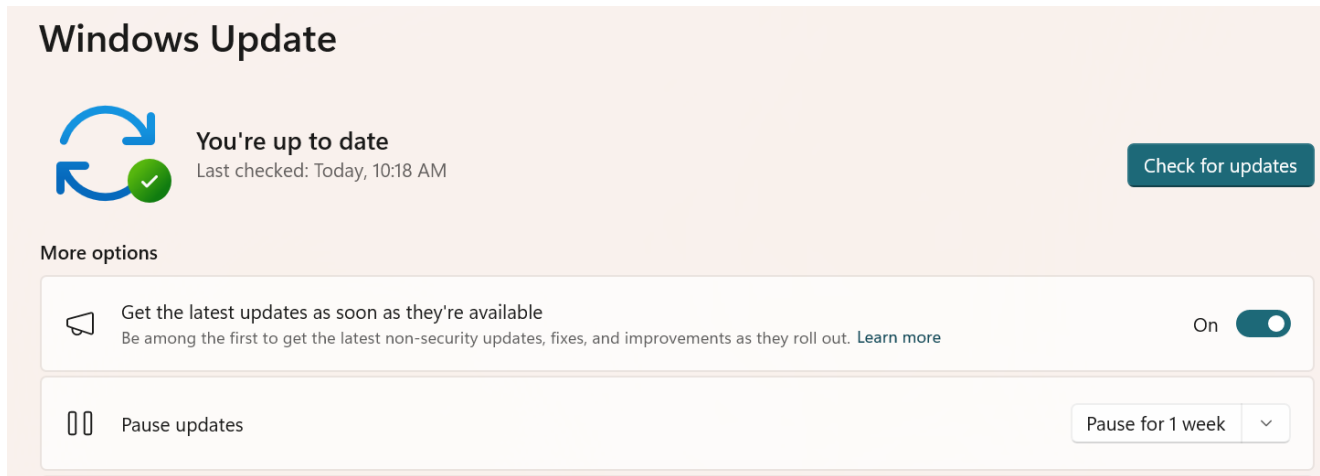
Outdated Software

What's happening:

Programs and your operating system may not run as efficiently if they are not up to date.

What to do:

Windows updates are often downloaded automatically and then activated the next time you boot up your computer, or you may receive a notification that an update is available. However, if you have switched off the option to receive the latest updates, or paused updates, you may not be running the most recent version. Check your settings (Settings > System > Windows update).



Many applications operate in the same way. Updates are often downloaded behind the scenes. However, if you don't regularly restart your computer, these updates won't be activated.

i Putting your computer to sleep will not activate updates. You must turn it off or restart it.

⚠ Once an update has begun, do not interrupt the process. It is also best practice to have your PC plugged in during the process to avoid running out of power partway through.

Older Hardware

What's happening:

As computers age, they may struggle to keep up with newer software and everyday demands.

What to do:

If your computer is several years old, consider whether an upgrade (such as adding memory or replacing a hard drive with an SSD) might improve performance. The price of computers continues to fall, and you may decide that the investment in a new one is worthwhile.

Overheating

What's happening:

Overheating is a serious but often overlooked source of computer slowdown. If your computer gets too hot, it may automatically slow itself down to prevent damage. This can lead to inconsistent or reduced performance.

What to do:

For desktops, make sure vents are not blocked and that your computer has adequate airflow. Avoid placing laptops on soft surfaces that can block ventilation. You should also consider buying a laptop cooling tray, available for \$15-\$35.



Malware or Unwanted Programs

What's happening:

In some cases, unwanted software can run in the background and affect performance.

What to do:

Run your security software to check for unwanted programs. If needed, refer to your security tools or trusted resources for further guidance.

Section 4 – What You Can't Fix (and When to Get Help)

If you've tried the earlier steps and haven't seen much improvement, this section will help you understand why—and what your options are.

One or more of the following may apply to your setup.

Hardware Limitations

Every computer has limits. Over time, those limits become more noticeable. Factors include:

- **Older hard drives (HDDs)**, which are slower than newer solid-state drives (SSDs)
- **Limited memory (RAM)**, which can affect performance when running multiple programs
- **Older processors**, which may struggle with newer applications

Age of the Computer

As a general guideline, computers that are more than 4–5 years old will often begin to show noticeable slowdowns, especially if they are used regularly.

This is not a failure—it's simply the result of software demands increasing over time.

When an Upgrade May Help

In some cases, a small upgrade can make a noticeable difference. These upgrades don't require replacing your entire computer and can often provide a noticeable improvement. Upgrades to consider include:

- Replacing a hard drive with an SSD
- Adding additional memory (RAM), if your system supports it

These upgrades can often extend the useful life of your computer considerably.

When to Consider Replacement

However, you may want to consider replacing your computer if:

- Performance remains slow after trying the steps in this guide
- Everyday tasks feel sluggish or frustrating
- Your computer struggles with newer applications or updates (This one is a red flag)

When to Get Help

You may want to seek help if:

- You're unsure what's causing the issue
- You're not comfortable making changes to your system
- The problem persists despite your efforts

A knowledgeable friend, technician, or local service provider can often identify the issue quickly.

Keep the Momentum Going

If you've worked through this guide, you've already taken an important step toward improving your computer's performance. You've identified issues, applied fixes, and gained a better understanding of how your system works.

Most computer slowdowns are not caused by a single major problem. They're usually the result of small issues that build up over time. Now that you know what to look for, you'll be in a much better position to keep things running smoothly going forward.

Still Experiencing Slowness?

If your computer is still not performing as expected, there's one more possibility to consider:

👉 The issue may not be your computer—it may be your internet connection.

For that, you may find this guide helpful:

[Why Is My Internet So Slow?](#)

Additional Tech4Me2 Resources

If you'd like to continue building your confidence with everyday technology, these resources may be helpful:

- [PCs Made Simple](#) – A no-jargon guide to buying, setting up, maintaining, and troubleshooting your computer
- [PCs Made Simple Course & Workbook](#) – Step-by-step video guidance with an implementation workbook
- [Routine Maintenance Action Guide](#) – Simple habits to keep your PC running smoothly over time
- [Emails Made Simple](#) – Practical systems for keeping your inbox organized and under control
- [Emails Made Simple](#) – Step-by-step video guidance with an implementation workbook

All Tech4Me2 resources are designed to be clear, practical, and easy to follow—without unnecessary jargon or complexity.

Questions or Suggestions?

If there's a topic you'd like to see covered, I'd love to hear from you.

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