



How do I speed up my computer?

Your computer may show signs of running slower over a period of time for a number of reasons, but particularly so if any or all of the following conditions exist:

10 most common reasons for Windows start up and general performance problems

1. The hard disk is running out of available free space
2. Too many applications are running in the 'start up tray'
3. Hard drive has corrupt sectors, or is badly fragmented
4. Windows is not up to date
5. Computer is infected with spyware or malware
6. Hardware conflicts
7. Device drivers are out of date
8. Damaged hardware
9. Insufficient RAM installed
10. Computer is overheating

If you follow the instructions in this, and the forthcoming articles, you should be well on your way to improving the operating speed of your computer. Each of the above factors will be covered individually as a step-by-step guide. This week we are covering hard disk space issues.

1. CHECK AVAILABLE HARD DISK SPACE

How to check the size of your hard disk drive space is slightly different depending on your operating system. The methods used to check total disk space and how much space is available for each of the more popular operating systems, are detailed below.

Windows Vista / Windows 7

Double click on the 'Computer' icon on the desktop (or click on 'Computer' in the Start Menu). In the computer explorer window you'll see each disk drive with a graphic showing a percentage bar of how much disk space is free and the total size of the disk (Figure 1).

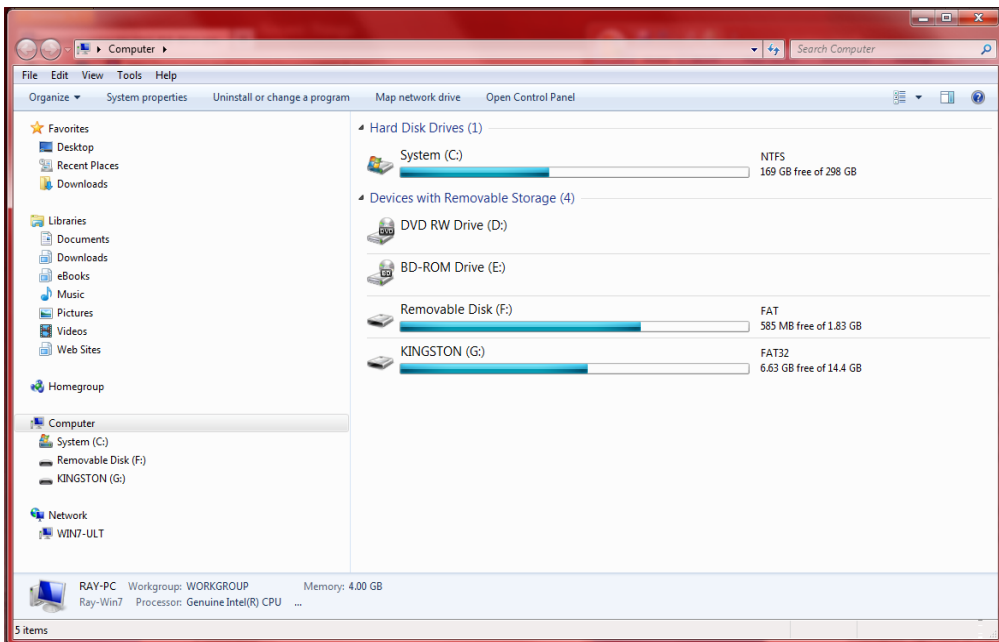


Figure 1

Windows XP

1. On the desktop, double click on the 'My Computer' icon (or click on 'My Computer' in the Start Menu).
2. In 'My Computer' right-click the **C: Drive** (or the drive you wish to check the capacity of), then select 'Properties'.
3. The Properties window will display the used space, free space, and the total capacity of the hard disk drive (Figure 2).

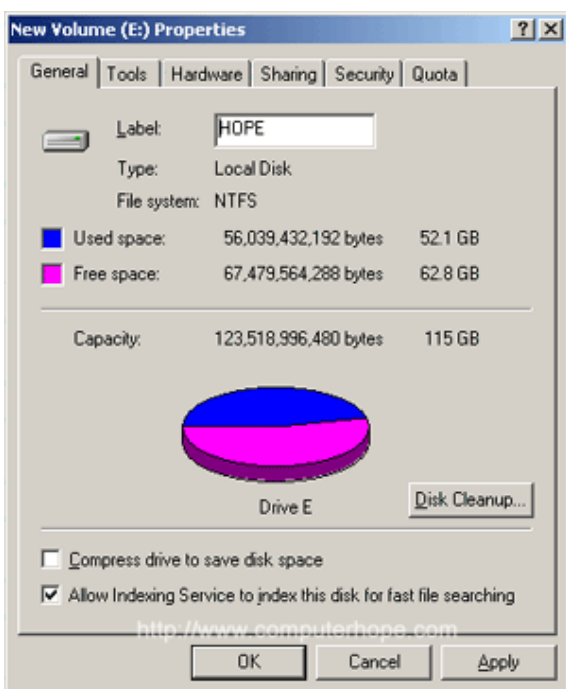


Figure 2

How much 'free' space do I need?

In order for windows to perform efficiently, you will need at least 20% of the total disk space available. This is to allow the operating system to perform background activities while you are working.

If you find that you do not have at least 20% available, or even if you are getting close to this margin, you should take the following steps:

- a. Uninstall programs no longer used or not required
- b. Remove temporary files and redundant files that are taking up unnecessary space

Uninstall programs no longer used or not required

To uninstall programs which you consider you no longer need or have not used for some time, follow the steps below (according to the operating system you have installed).

Windows Vista or Windows 7

1. Click on the 'start menu' button, select 'Control Panel'
2. From the 'Control Panel' select 'Programs' (uninstall a program)
3. Examine the list for any programs you have installed in the past which you no longer use or require

Windows XP

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Part 2

Remove temporary files that are taking up unnecessary space

We particularly recommend using a program called CCleaner. This program is recognised throughout the computer industry as one of the best programs for removing 'junk' files from your computer – more importantly – it's completely free. CCleaner can be downloaded by typing the following link into your browser (or by typing 'CCleaner' in the Google search engine):

http://www.filehippo.com/download_ccleaner/

Download and install this program, then run the program. After the program has started, click on the 'Run Cleaner' button in the bottom right corner (Figure 3)

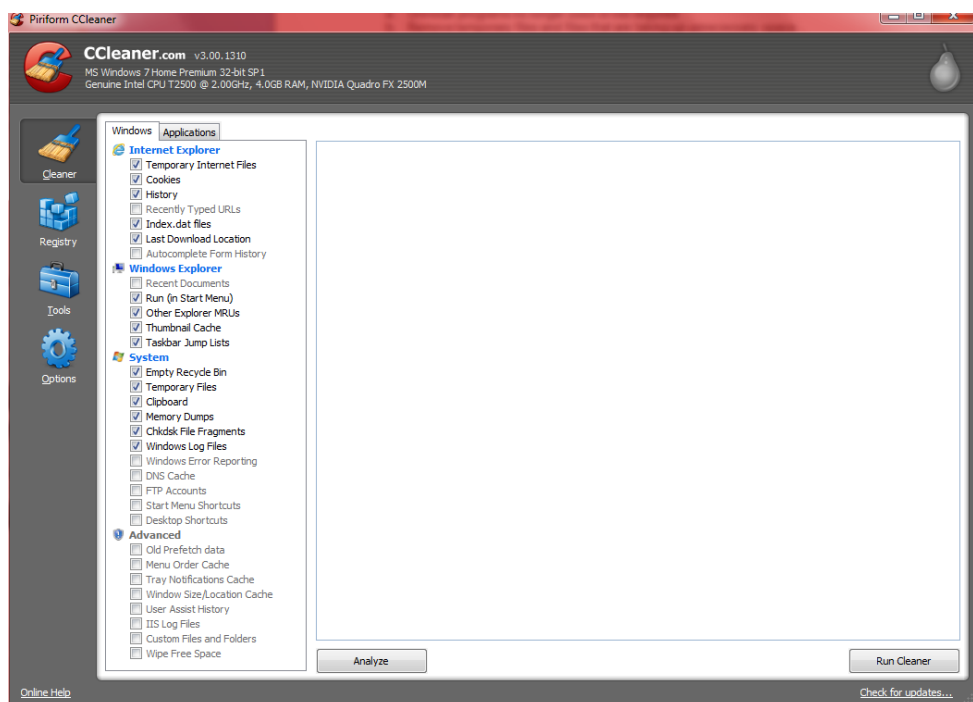


Figure 3

Once the program has completed you will see how much space the program has freed up – you may be surprised by how much, especially if you have not used this program before. Click on the red box in the top right corner of the CCleaner window to close the program.

Hint: If you want to keep the history of sites you have typed into the address bar of your browser, remove the tick from the list on the left hand side for the item labelled "Recently Typed URLs". Similarly, if you want to keep a history of the recent documents you have opened, remove that tick also.

By clearing out the temporary areas of windows, this program serves a number of purposes. On the one hand it will remove unnecessary temporary files, but it will also remove left over redundant installation files and 'Cookies'. Cookies are text files

generated from web sites you may have visited and which contain information about your activity on that web site. These files are then used by the web site the next time you visit to determine such things as where you normally fly from and to etc, but they are also exploited by malicious software to record such things as key strokes used when accessing on-line banking. For this reason all cookies are treated as something which should be deleted on a regular basis.

We recommend running CCleaner at least once per week. CCleaner contains many other tools, but we'll cover those in a later feature article.

I still don't have enough 'free' space!

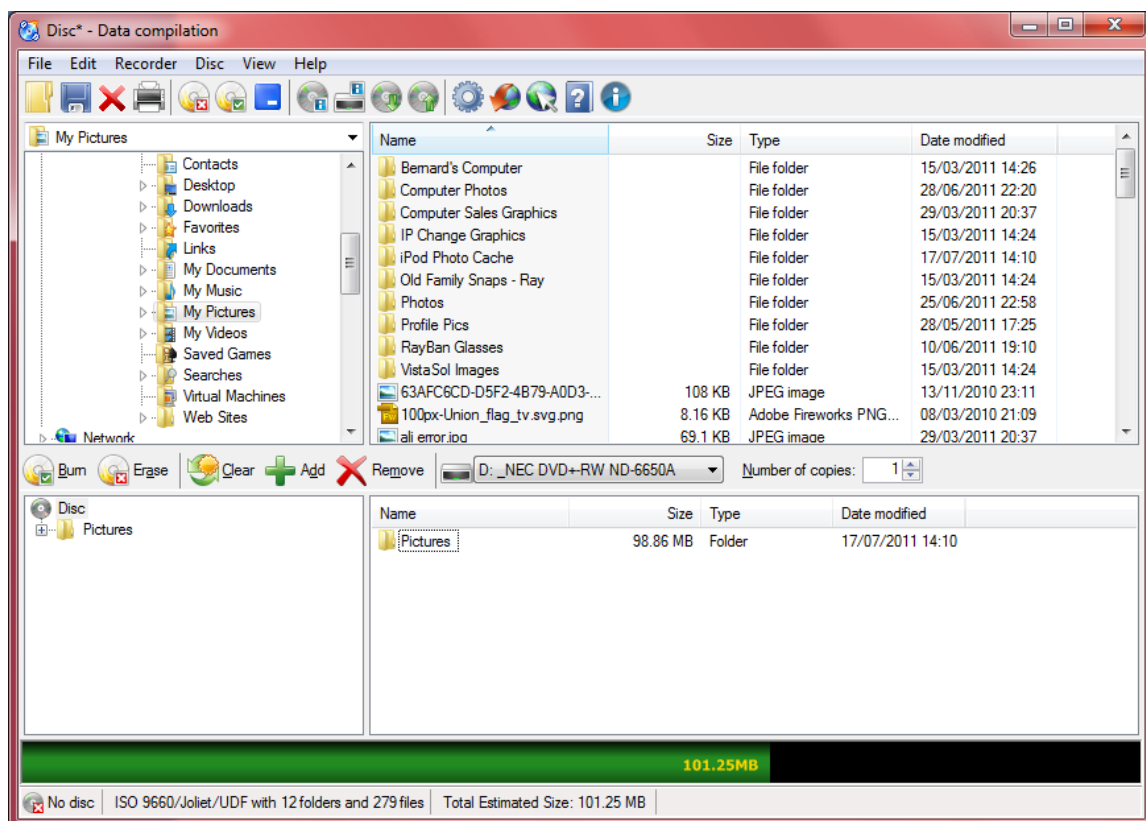
If you find that even after following the above steps, you still don't have enough free space available, don't despair, there are a couple more things you can do.

Backup your data files (documents, photos, etc)

Use whichever CD burning software you have installed to create a DVD backup of all data files contained in the 'My Documents' folder (for XP and Vista users) or the 'Libraries' folder (for Windows 7 users). If you do not have CD burning software installed you can download and install CDBurnerXP by typing it in Google search, or by typing the following link into the address bar of your browser:

http://www.filehippo.com/download_cdburnerxp/

Open CDBURNERXP and click on the option for 'Data Disk', then click 'OK'



Navigate to 'My Pictures' in the folders list (top left quarter). Hold down the 'left' mouse button while clicking on the above folder. Now drag this folder down into the area of CDBURNERXP as shown in the figure above (bottom right quarter). Make sure you have a DVD/CD in your optical drive, and then click on the 'Burn' option

Alternatively, if you have a USB Flash Drive, or an external Hard Disk Drive, you can copy these folders to that drive.

You may also find that your hard disk has been split into two drives by the manufacturer; this is known as 'partitioning'. You may notice therefore that you have a 'C: Drive' and a 'D: Drive'. If this is the case you may be able to copy all of those data files to the D: Drive, providing there is sufficient capacity on the drive.

Previously Downloaded Files

The first area to check for files you can delete are any program installation files in the 'Download' folder (and/or on your desktop). You will probably find that most of these files are old versions, or that you no longer need them.

Deleting the Data Files from the Hard Disk

When you are happy that all files have been copied over to either a DVD, or external drive, you can then delete these files from your computer. Start with Photos first (double check to make sure you have copies of everything), then check to see if this has freed up enough space to provide you with the 20% free space margin discussed earlier. Then move on to Documents if necessary, followed by Music if you really have to. Remember also that any Movies you may have downloaded in the past will take up the most disk space, so you would be wise to delete these if you no longer need them.

In our next article we will be covering:

1. How to stop programs from running in the 'start up tray'
2. How to repair hard drive corrupt sectors
3. How to 'Defragment' files on the Hard Disk Drive

If you have any questions about the steps covered in this article, you can contact us by emailing us at: fixit@vistasol.co.uk