# 12 Tips to Speed Up Windows 10

By Michael Muchmore | July 24, 2019 | pcmag.com

As PC hardware continues to speed up, so does software, and Windows 10 is no exception. This is especially true of startup time: If you upgrade from Windows 7 or earlier, you'll be pleasantly surprised by how fast your machine is ready for action. But there are other performance factors to consider after you're up and running. Even the latest, shiniest Windows version isn't immune to slowdowns.

The problem with a lot of Windows speedup stories is that they tell you to turn off some of the operating system's more fun features, such as visual animations. Most of our tips show you ways you can speed up your Windows 10 system without compromising its appearance and functionality. Most are also free, but some involve spending a little cash on software or hardware. For people with older, lower-power machines who want a speed boost but don't care about extra goodies, a couple of the tips towards the end can boost system performance at the expense of some visual bling.

Note that you should beware of those "Speed Up Your PC!" ads for registry cleaners, which often lead to malware. Microsoft categorically does not support the use of registry cleaners for Windows 10.

Something that is recommended is keeping your OS version up to date. This seems perhaps a bit too obvious to include below as a separate step. Periodically head to the Settings app's Windows Update section to see whether there are any security and reliability updates you should install. Your PC may run faster after one of these, since they also can include hardware driver updates. Do this even if you don't want yet want a big feature update—you can delay those major updates in the same section of Settings.

## 1. Run a Tune-Up Utility
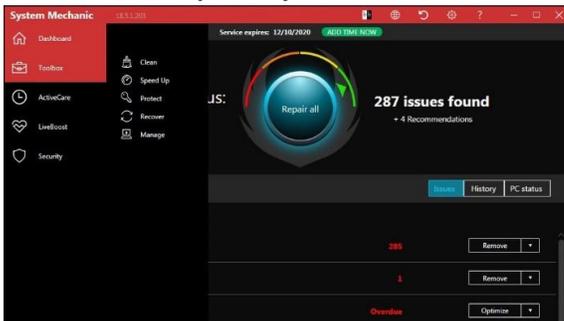


PCMag's Jeffrey Wilson has painstakingly evaluated the best third-party system speedup and cleanup utilities for Windows 10. He's found that most of them actually do boost PC performance, even if it's only a modest performance boost. Of course, there are plenty of malicious downloads out there claiming to speed up your PC, so be sure to stick with Wilson's list of tested products. Iolo System Mechanic does best in his testing, but others are worth a look for their range of features and price points.

## 2. Uninstall Crapware
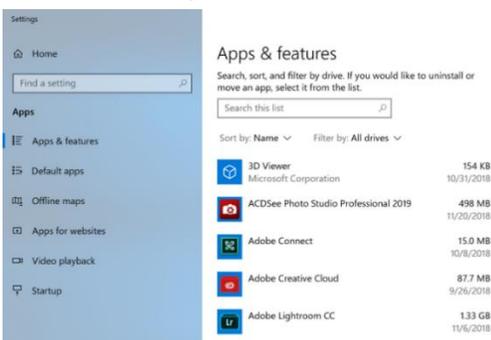


Though the situation is improving, unnecessary preinstalled software installed by PC makers continues to be an issue with some new computers. A couple of years ago, a Lenovo PC we tested had nearly 20 so-called helper programs installed, and these would occasionally and unwantedly pop up and interrupt what we were doing on the computer. More recently, the count of preinstalled, unnecessary software has dropped. A new HP laptop included just nine of these apps, while a recent Asus model only had five. Even Microsoft is not blameless in this game, though, including a couple of games from King and perhaps some mixed reality software you may not be interested in.

You can simply right-click on any unwanted app tile in Start and choose Uninstall. This will immediately uninstall the program. You can also right-click on the Windows logo Start button, and choose the top choice Programs and Features. Or just type Programs in the Cortana search box next to the Start button.

You can usually find the culprits by sorting the list of installed apps on the name of your PC maker. Other good options are to sort by Recent to see if there are any programs you didn't know you installed; or by Size, to get rid of very large items you don't need. When you've found junk apps you don't want, simply select them and click Uninstall. Unfortunately, you can only remove one at a time, so set aside a half hour or so for this project if you have a bunch of bloatware. Don't forget to take the hatchet to apps you installed yourself but no longer want, and for software you don't want that was installed alongside software you did want.

Keep in mind, with Windows 10 there are two kinds of applications, traditional desktop ones and modern Windows Store apps. You'll see both kinds in the modern Settings app's Apps & Features page. But for non-Store apps, Control

Panel opens, where you can uninstall good old desktop programs. In either, you can sort by size, date installed, or name, or search for a particular app.

One reason removing apps helps performance is that many programs load processes at boot time and take up valuable RAM and CPU cycles. While you're in the Programs and Features section of Control, you can also click Turn Windows Features On or Off and scan the list to see if there's anything you don't use.
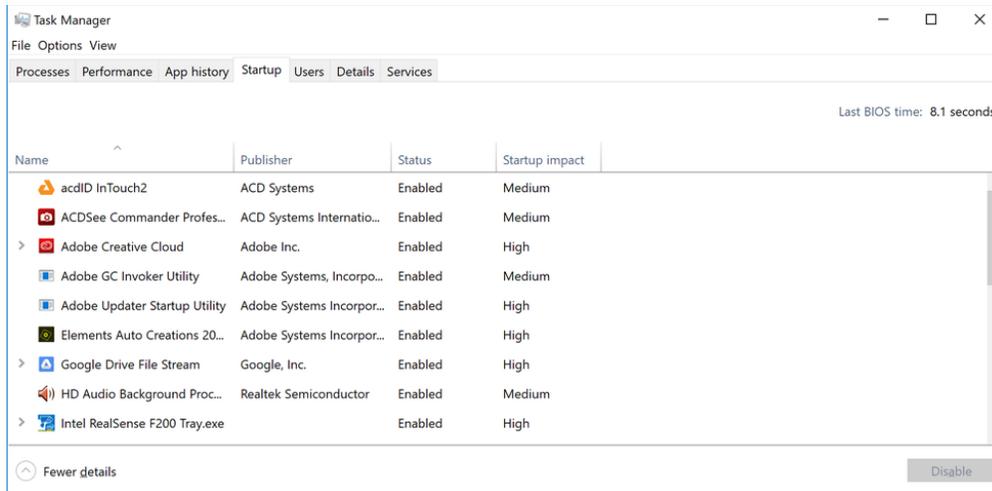


**3. Limit Startup Processes**

As mentioned in the last entry, a lot of programs install side processes that run every time you start your PC, and some of them are not things you need running on your system all the time. Compared with Windows 7, in which you had to run the MSCONFIG utility, Windows 10 (and Windows 8.*x* before it) gives you an easier way to limit what runs at startup—from the updated Task Manager.

The easiest way to invoke the Task Manager is by pressing Ctrl-Shift-Esc. Switch to the Startup tab, and you'll see all the programs that load at Windows startup. The dialog box even has a column that shows you the Startup impact for each. The Status column shows whether the program is enabled to run at startup or not. You can right-click on any entry to change this status. It's usually fairly easy to see things you don't want to run. For example, if you never use iTunes, you probably don't need iTunesHelper running all the time.

**4. Clean Up Your Disk**
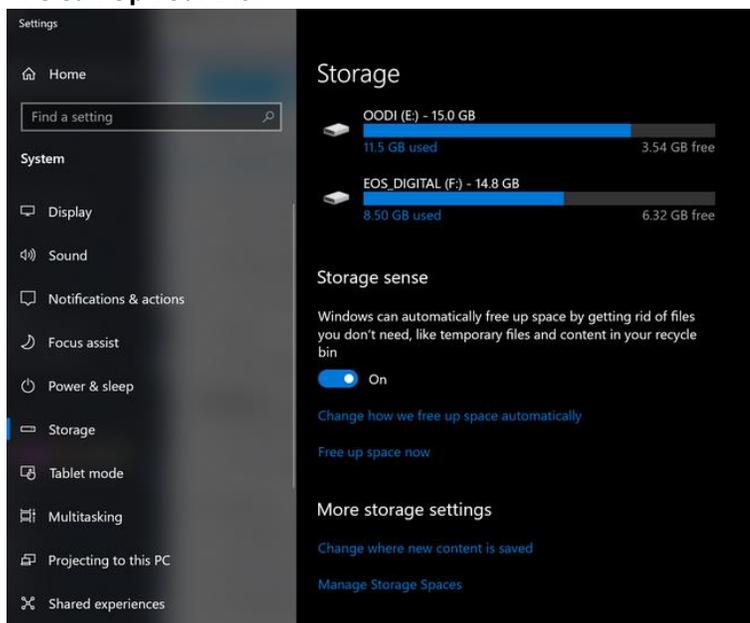


From the Start menu, type Disk Cleanup. This opens the trusty Disk Cleanup utility that's been part of Windows for several generations of the OS. Disk Cleanup finds unwanted junk such as temporary files, offline Web pages, and installer files on your PC and offers to delete them all at once. You may even find that your Recycle Bin is bulging at the seams. This will generally only have a noticeable effect on speed if your drive is getting close to full, however.

If you don't have disk defragmentation scheduled regularly, set that up in the Optimize Drives tool, which you can find by typing its name in the Cortana search box next to the Start button. Note that if your main disk is an SSD, then you needn't bother with defragging, since there aren't any moving parts reading the disk.

An even newer way to keep storage use is by enabling the Storage Sense option (see image above). This automatically frees up space by removing temporary files and Recycle Bin items

## 5. Add More RAM

Windows 10 manages memory more efficiently than earlier versions of the OS, but more memory always can potentially speed up PC operations. For a lot of today's Windows devices, such as the Surface Pro tablets, however, adding RAM isn't an option. Gaming and business laptops often still allow RAM upgrades, but that's becoming more rare. The new, slimmer ultrabooks and convertibles are usually fixed. If you still use a desktop tower, this article can show you how to add RAM. The bigger RAM makers' (Crucial, Kingston, Corsair) websites all offer product finders that show you which type of RAM your PC takes, and prices are pretty reasonable. You can get 8GB high-performance DDR4 RAM for about $60.

## 6. Install an SSD Startup Drive

Not does Windows startup benefit, but loading and using demanding applications such as Adobe Photoshop happens much faster with an SSD. Windows Store apps can even easily be moved from a spinning hard drive to an SSD in Settings' Apps and Features page.

For system speedup, it makes sense to replace your internal startup hard drive, and if you use a laptop, this may also be an option. But an external SSD with a USB 3.0 connection can also give you a speed boost in applications that use a lot of storage.
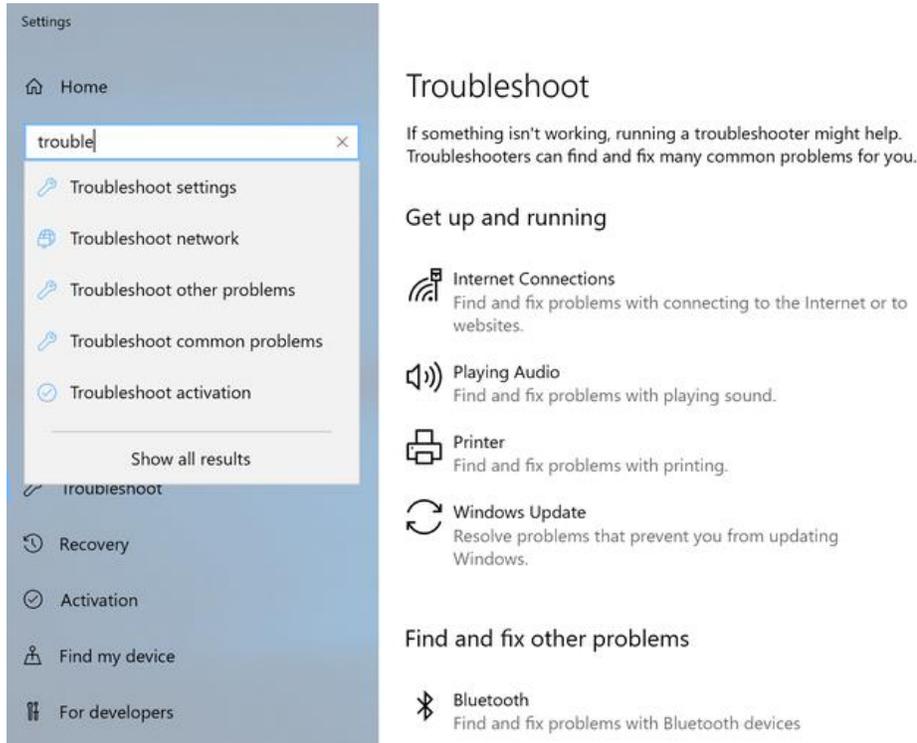
## 7. Check for Viruses and Spyware
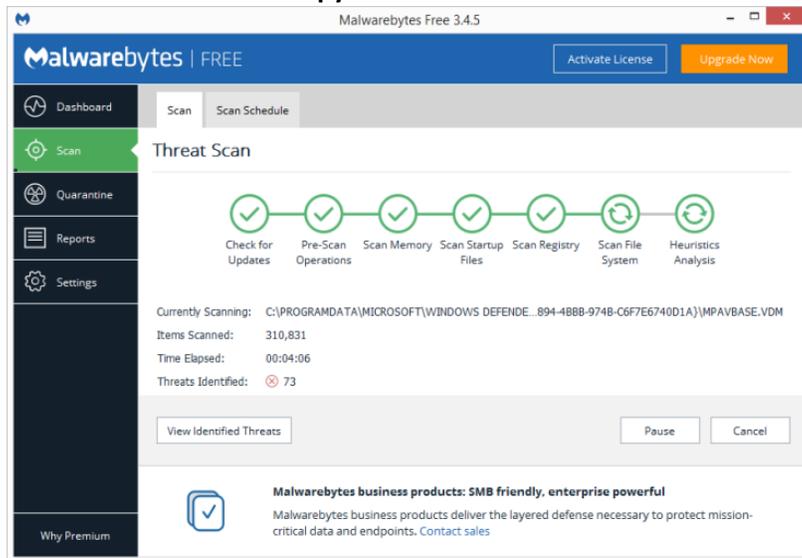


You can run the built-in Windows Defender or a third-party app to do this, but you're best served by PCMag security guru Neil Rubenking's top pick among malware-cleanup programs, Malwarebytes Anti-Malware—it's free! But don't forget to use ongoing anti-malware protection, too. Some of the AV products have a lighter footprint on system performance than others, and the lightest of all, according to Rubenking, is Webroot SecureAnywhere AntiVirus. Rubenking also awards 4.5-star-rated Editor's Choices to Bitdefender's and Kaspersky's AV software. See his complete roundup of the best antivirus software for full details.

## 8. Change Power Settings to High Performance to Optimize Speed
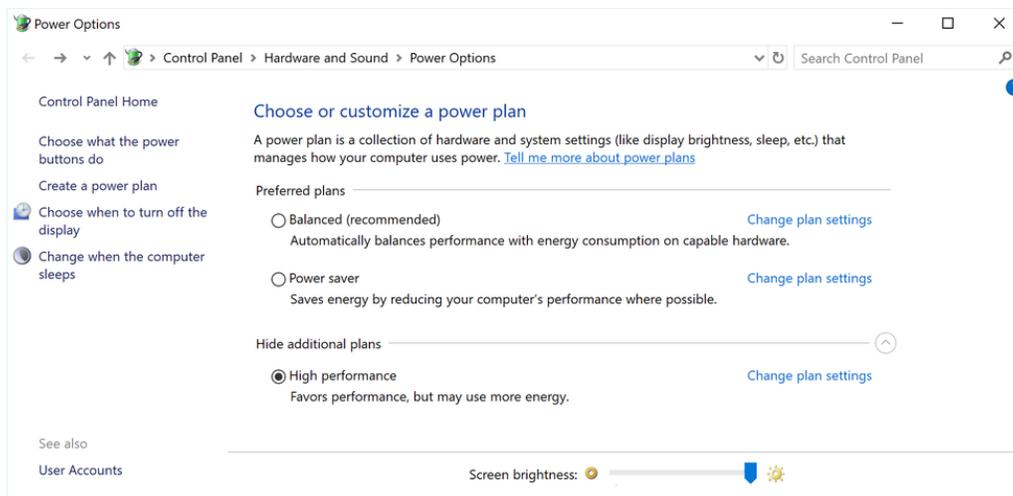


Of course, this isn't a good choice if you want to save electricity, but it could boost your computing speed. Head to Control Panel > System and Security > Power Options. From here, click on the dropdown arrow on the right side to "Show additional plans" and then choose High Performance.
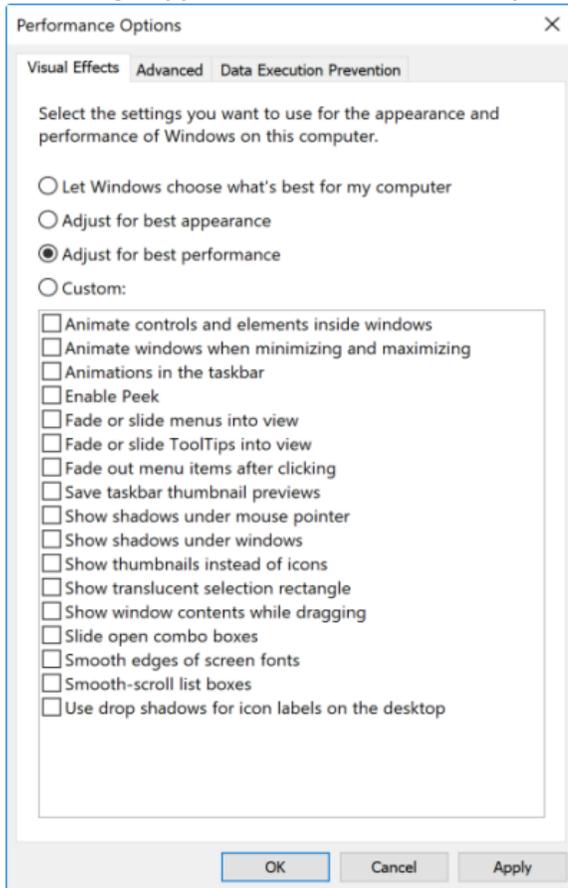
## 9. Use the Performance Troubleshooter

Open the Control Panel and search for *troubleshooting.* Run the troubleshooters under System and Security, and it may find the root cause of your slowdown. For good measure, run through the other troubleshooters, including Search and Indexing, Hardware and Devices, and Windows Store Apps. Also go to the old-style Control Panel's System and Security > Security and Maintenance page, click on Maintenance, and hit Start Maintenance. This happens automatically on a schedule, but if you're experiencing slowdowns, it's worth trying.

If your PC is still hopelessly bogged down, you can use the Windows Security app's Fresh start option, but be warned that doing so removes your installed programs.

## 10. Change Appearance in Performance Options

You can easily get to this setting by typing *adjust appearance* in Cortana. In the dialog, you can use the radio button at the top labeled *Adjust for best performance*or select which eye-candy features you can live without from the long list of checkboxes below these choices. If you do choose the overall best-performance button, you'll lose all of the visual effects. For example, you won't see the contents of a window you're dragging move, but rather just a rectangle representing the window's edges. Keeping the effects that you enjoy checked in the dialog is probably a better way to go. You can also get to this tool from the new Settings app and searching for "maintenance" or "performance."

## 11. Turn Off Search Indexing
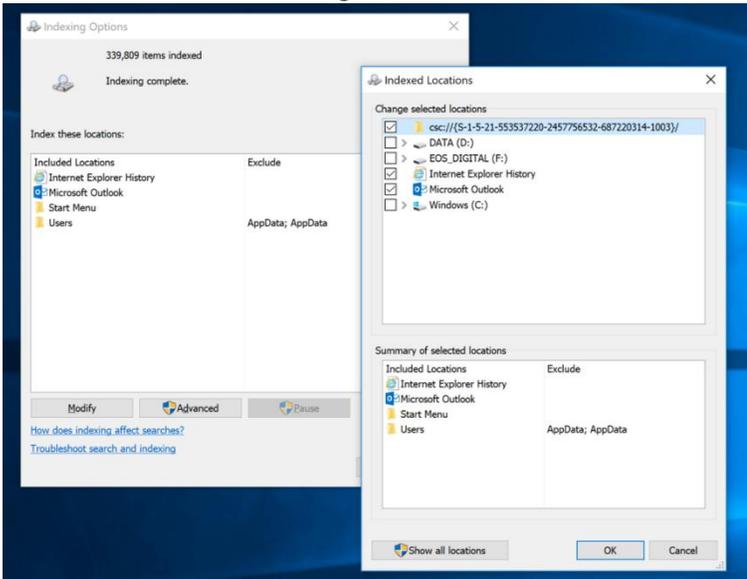


Especially for lower-powered PCs, search indexing can eat up system resources, if only temporarily. If you do a lot of searching, this won't appeal to you, as some searches will be slower. To turn off indexing, open the Indexing Options Control Panel window (you can also just type *index* in the Start button search box and you should see Indexing Options at the top of the result list). Click Modify and uncheck locations you don't want indexed. Choosing Advanced lets you decide which file types should and shouldn't be indexed.

If you want to leave search indexing on but find that it occasionally slows you down, you can stop its process when you need extra speed. Right-click on This Computer on the desktop, choose Manage. Then double-click Services and Applications, then Services. Find Windows Search, and double-click on that. From this Properties dialog, you can choose a Startup type of Manual or Disabled to have the process silent by default. The *Automatic (Delayed Start) startup type* according to Microsoft help, "is preferred over the Automatic startup type because it helps reduce the effect on the system's overall boot performance." That may be turned on by default.

A final option is to go to the right-hand panel, click More options, and then Stop. You can also simply hit the stop button above the center section. Don't forget to turn it back on at some point if you want to be able to search your system.

## 12. Turn Off Tips and Notifications
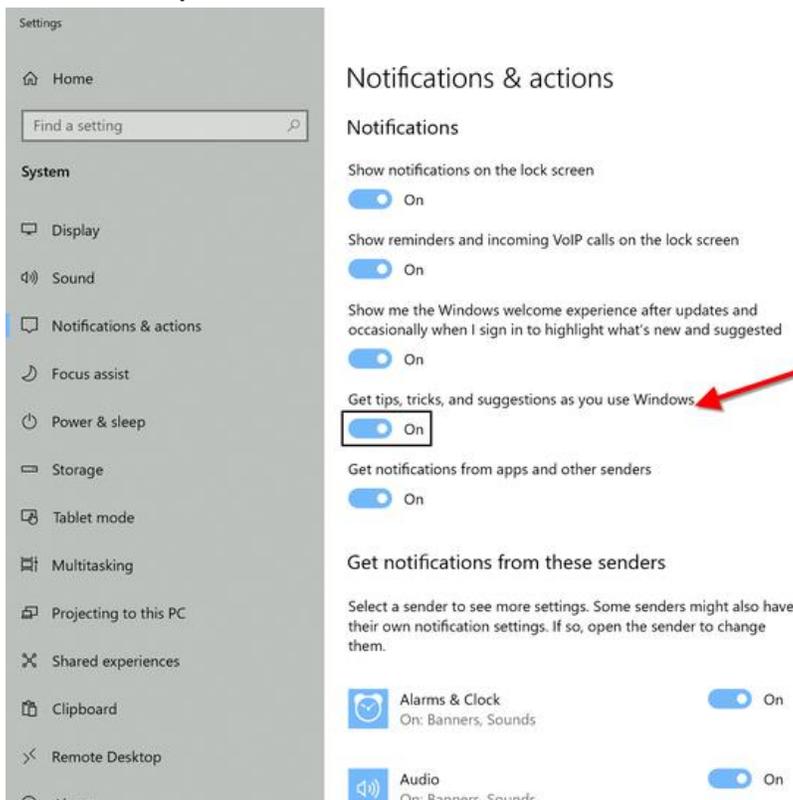


It may seem odd for a tip article to tell you to turn off Windows 10's Tips feature, but it can reduce processing that Windows needs to do to display relevant tips for your system. The same can be said for Notifications. If Windows doesn't need to generate a notification, your computing will go faster. I have over 40 apps that are capable of sending notifications. If you have a lot of these, too, go through the list and you're bound to find sources from which you have no need to be notified. The distraction savings alone can speed up your PC use, if only in terms of your perception of computing speed.