

How to find power hogging software with Windows Task Manager

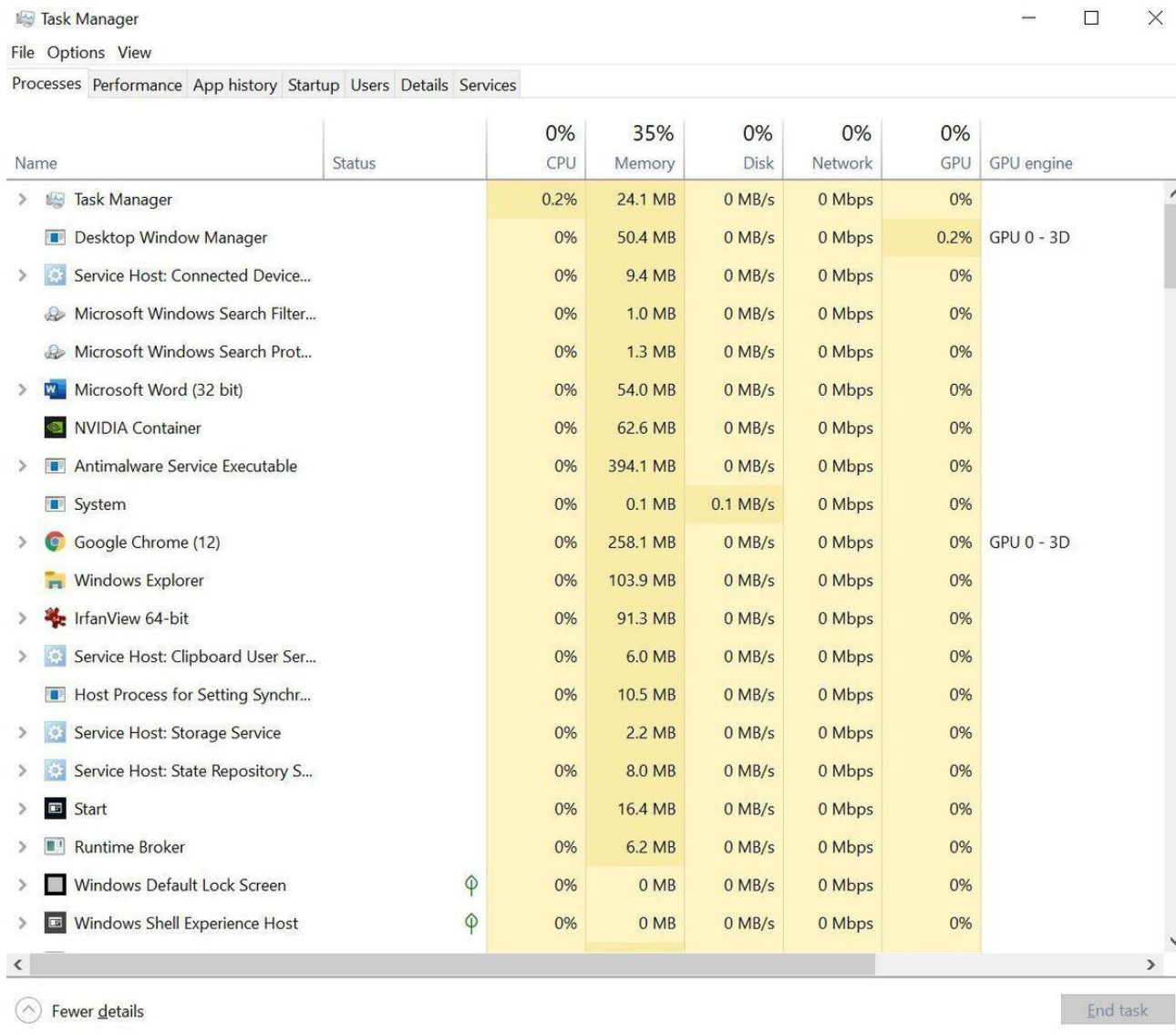
By Brad Chacos, Executive editor, PCWorld JUN 14, 2023

Salvage every last bit of battery life on your laptop with this tip.

Closing every possible program can help you eke out more endurance when your laptop is running low on battery. But not every program fully closes when you exit its window, and sometimes background processes can suck up a surprising amount of computing power.

Fortunately, the Task Manager in Windows 10 and 11 includes tools that let you quickly identify the power hogs on your computer, though the information isn't straightforward to locate. You can use its insights and [these three crucial Windows settings tweaks](#) to conserve energy when power's running low, to ensure your laptop lasts long enough to reach an outlet. (If you're constantly struggling with notebook endurance, it might be time to [consider a new laptop](#).)

Start by pressing **Ctrl + Shift + Esc** to summon the Windows Task Manager. By default, it will open to a tab showing all the processes running on your system.

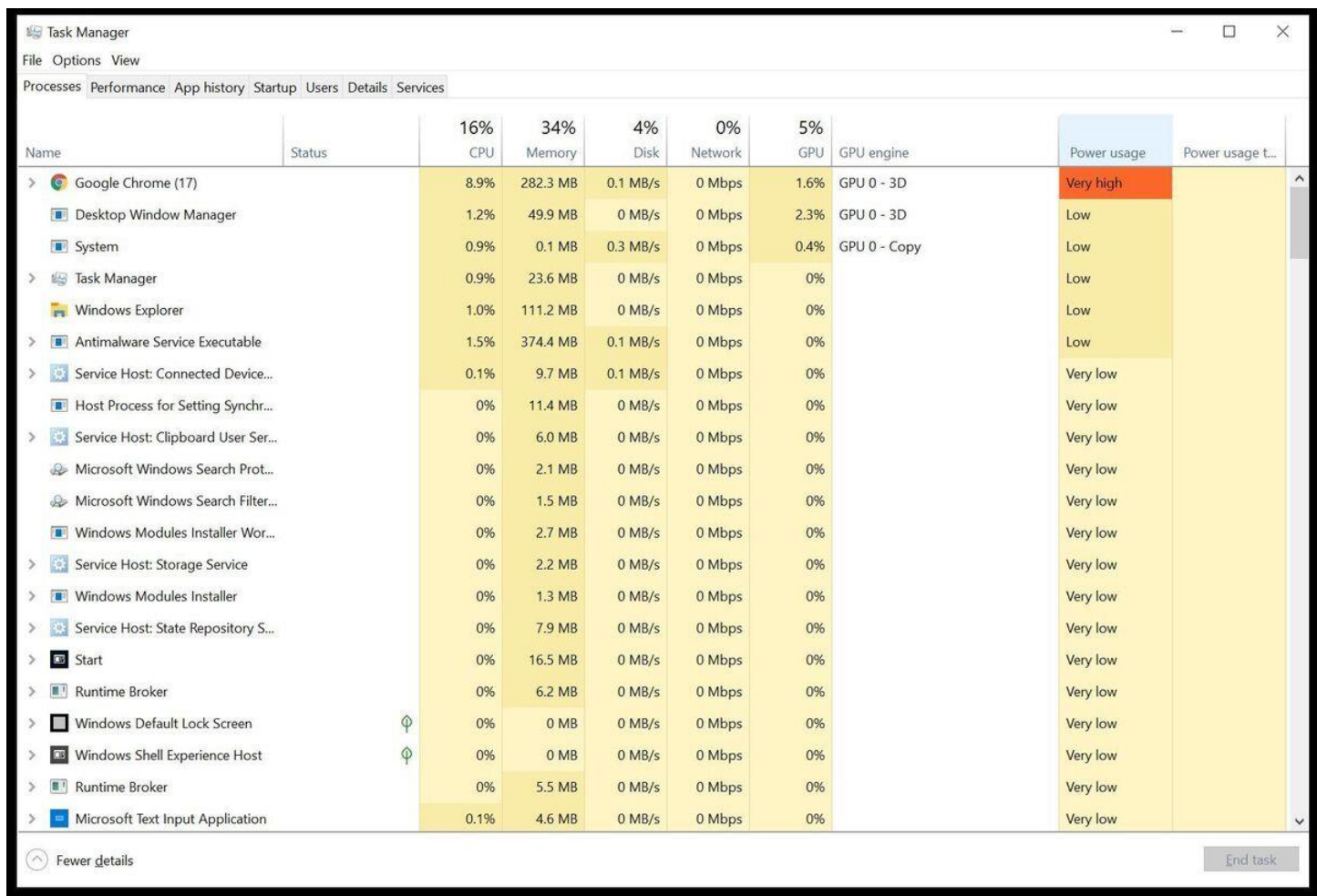


The screenshot shows the Windows Task Manager Performance tab. The 'Processes' tab is selected, displaying a list of running processes with columns for Name, Status, CPU, Memory, Disk, Network, GPU, and GPU engine. The CPU column shows 0% usage for most processes, while the Memory column shows 35% usage for the system. The GPU column shows 0% usage for most processes, while the GPU engine column shows GPU 0 - 3D for several processes.

Name	Status	0% CPU	35% Memory	0% Disk	0% Network	0% GPU	GPU engine
Task Manager		0.2%	24.1 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Desktop Window Manager		0%	50.4 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0.2%	GPU 0 - 3D
Service Host: Connected Device...		0%	9.4 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Microsoft Windows Search Filter...		0%	1.0 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Microsoft Windows Search Prot...		0%	1.3 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Microsoft Word (32 bit)		0%	54.0 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
NVIDIA Container		0%	62.6 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Antimalware Service Executable		0%	394.1 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
System		0%	0.1 MB	0.1 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Google Chrome (12)		0%	258.1 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	GPU 0 - 3D
Windows Explorer		0%	103.9 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
IrfanView 64-bit		0%	91.3 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Service Host: Clipboard User Ser...		0%	6.0 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Host Process for Setting Synchr...		0%	10.5 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Service Host: Storage Service		0%	2.2 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Service Host: State Repository S...		0%	8.0 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Start		0%	16.4 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Runtime Broker		0%	6.2 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Windows Default Lock Screen		0%	0 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	
Windows Shell Experience Host		0%	0 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%	

Task Manager's default view. (Your processes and programs will vary.)

The information you need to sniff out power hogs is right here, but you probably can't see it yet. Task Manager opens in a minimized window rather than full screen, and as you can see above, the layout of the Processes tab make it look like that "GPU engine" listing is the end of the information. It's not, though—notice the scroll bar at the bottom of the window?



The expanded view shows the power tracking options. What are you doing, Chrome?!

If you scroll to the right—or better yet, resize your window to show a wider horizontal view with all columns in view—you'll find "Power usage" and "Power usage trend" columns at the end of the row for each process. The "power usage" information details how much energy the process is using currently, while the "power usage trend" column shows power usage over the last two minutes. Clicking the name of each column sorts all the processes from worst to best, or vice-versa if you click it again, so you can find troublesome programs lickety-split.

6%	45%	1%	1%	15%	GPU eng	Power usage trend
CPU	Memory	Disk	Network	GPU		
1.0%	1,215.6 MB	0.1 MB/s	0 Mbps	13.0%	GPU 0 -	moderate
0.8%	9.0 MB	0.1 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%		low
0.7%	0.1 MB	0.1 MB/s	0 Mbps	0.1%	GPU 0 -	low
0.9%	24.2 MB	0.1 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%		low
0.5%	36.6 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	9.0%	GPU 0 -	
0%	2.5 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%		
0%	2.3 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%		
0.4%	41.4 MB	0.8 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%		low
0.2%	93.5 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%		low
0%	32.8 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%		low
0%	52.6 MB	0 MB/s	0 Mbps	0%		low

If you don't see those columns for whatever reason, right-click any column in the Task Manager's process tab and make sure "power usage" and "power usage trend" are selected in the menu that appears, as shown above.

Simply right-click a process and select *End Task* if it's sucking down power.

Note that accidentally shutting down a critical system process can require you to restart your computer, and this isn't a method you'll want to perform regularly aside from spot checks for power-hungry rogue software. But if your laptop is on its last legs and you're trying to squeeze every last ounce of juice from it, this Task Manager trick can help out.

Don't forget to turn down your screen brightness too! You'll find it in Windows 10 and 11's display settings options. It's one of the [3 crucial tweaks that can help your laptop battery last longer](#) when you're running low on juice.