

7 Reasons Why Computers Run Slower As They Get Older

SUMMARY: Seven reasons why computers seem to run slower the longer you use them, including drive fragmentation and faulty software uninstallers.



It never fails - awhile back, perhaps it was a few years, perhaps it was only a few months, you bought a new super-fast, top-of-the-line desktop or laptop computer. At first it ran fantastic - there were few software crashes, browser pages visually popped onscreen, and games ran smoothly at high frame rates.

Unfortunately as the computer got older, problems started occurring. Crashes became more frequent, web pages took longer to load, games appeared slightly jerky, and the overall computing experience lost its luster. Why did this happen? Is there a conspiracy among computer and software manufacturers to make computers run slower so you'll give up and buy a new machine? While conspiracy theories are questionable, here are seven **valid** reasons why your computer may start to run slower as time passes:

1. Slower boot due to installed software

If you install software, device drivers, or other applications that request to be loaded upon a computer's boot, naturally your computer will start up slower. Security software such as firewalls and antivirus applications must start up immediately to help increase your security. Some software partially loads at boot so when you launch applications they seem to start faster. Plus, device drivers and helper software for printers, multimedia devices, and other peripherals may require being loaded at boot to make using such devices in a plug-and-play environment as seamless as possible. All of this increases your overall boot time.

2. Slower overall experience due to installed software

Just as loading these applications slow your computer's boot time, they also may require additional CPU cycles, causing your main applications such as web browsers or word processors to run slower. Plus, more tasks require additional RAM, requiring your computer to use your hard drive as virtual memory. Paging information to and from your hard drive increases the disk thrashing, slowing down your computer further.

You can help offset this somewhat by installing additional RAM if supported by your computer.

3. Uninstall software doesn't always work well

While most applications support an uninstall procedure, these don't always work perfectly. Uninstallers may leave temporary files, items in the Windows Registry, startup tasks to now non-existing files, device drivers that now are not needed, etc. Install and uninstall many applications and the leftover garbage can drastically slow your computer's overall speed.

4. Hard drive fragmentation

As you write and delete files on your hard drive, the locations of files become scattered throughout, and files themselves can become fragmented. This causes longer times to seek for and load individual files, slowing down your computing experience.

This is more of a problem on Windows computers, and while it comes with defragmentation software, it may not automatically run by default and need to be executed manually. Plus, it is debatable how well it actually works. Third-party software claim to do a much better job in defragmentation, potentially increasing your computer's performance.

5 Updates require more power

Updates to your device drivers, software, and operating system just may require more computing power than older versions. This can be due to sloppy programming or the addition of newer features. Plus, as security holes are fixed and workarounds created, such software may require more CPU cycles, RAM, and overall storage space on your hard drive.

Security is one reason why an older version of Windows may run much faster than a newer version. While the older version may seem to work fine, its lack of protection features can expose your computer to all types of security risks.

6. Possible hardware problems

In some circumstances, failing hardware may be to blame. Bad sectors can form on hard drives, and if the drive repeatedly tries to access a file on a failing sector or has to block off certain sectors as unusable due to minor failures, this can increase file access time. Other problems such as software that never used to crash but now aborts continuously can be linked to malfunctioning RAM. Diagnostic programs found on the Internet can help confirm either of these problems if they are suspect.

7. The dreaded malware

Of course, viruses, spyware, and other malware may be to blame. These create additional processes that put more strain on a computer and can increase its overall boot time. Other users may be lurking around your PC via an open port, causing all sorts of nastiness. Malware may be running in the background using your computer to relay e-mail messages, attempt to shut down websites via denial of service (DoS) attacks, and more. Thus, while security software may decrease your computer's overall speed slightly, not having such software (and keeping it updated) can cause an even worse situation.

As you can see, perhaps the debated conspiracy theory of hardware and software makers teaming up to slow computers down as they get older may not be accurate. Installing and updating software can increase your boot time and decrease speed of other applications. Faulty uninstallers leave junk behind that can slow your computing experience. Hard drive fragmentation causes increased file seek and read time. Hardware failures may be to blame for other problems. And of course, there's always the possibility of a malware infection slowing the machine. By understanding the **true** reasons computers may slow down with age you can take steps to offset these problems.