

# Tips for Windows 98

By  
M. Habibullah Pagarkar of S.E.-I.T.

Most brand new PC's come pre-loaded with Windows ME, but there are many guys out there who haven't jumped to the hype and are still using Windows 98. That doesn't mean that we like 98 more than ME. It's just choosing the lesser of two evils. But cool it dude 'coz if you follow these tips that I have for you, you can definitely speed up your computer. Of course I don't promise to make your PII into a PIV, but what the heck!

## Delete Junk Programs

Unused programs clutter your hard drive, robbing you of valuable space and ultimately slowing down system performance. Hard drive clutter also causes conflicts with the useful apps on your system. My computer showed significantly faster performance and increased stability when I simply removed a few unused programs.

To get your hard drive squeaky clean, use an uninstaller application, such as the Norton CleanSweep Deluxe from Symantec. CleanSweep keeps track of unused files, schedules cleanup jobs, and removes applications more completely than the Windows Add/Remove Programs utility. Or you can always try a shareware uninstaller, or keep a close watch on the applications you install, and remove any that cause problems.

## Lose the Extra Fonts

If you have more fonts than you really use, you're wasting precious disk space. To find out how many fonts are on your system, open the Fonts Control Panel (Start/Settings/Control Panel/Fonts). There you'll find a list of all your installed fonts. Double-click a font's name to get copyright info and file size, as well as an example of what the font looks like at sizes up to 72 points. Delete any unnecessary fonts, and you'll free up a bunch of disk space.

## Tidy Up the Registry

The Windows Registry is a database of all your system's settings and software. Whenever a Windows 95 or 98 program is installed, removed, or modified, Windows updates the Registry to reflect the change--or, at least, that's how it's *supposed* to work.

Real life is less tidy. System crashes, buggy uninstall programs, and plain old bad luck can clutter your Registry, leaving it full of improper associations, bogus lists of installed programs, and all sorts of other junk that can slow down and even crash your operating system. If you *really* know what you're doing, you can clean the Registry with RegEdit (the Windows Registry editor). For most users, though, I suggest a safer alternative: Microsoft's RegClean. This download hunts down and removes bogus Registry entries automatically. It can also reverse any changes you make and restore your previous Registry if something goes wrong. Most uninstallers, such as CleanSweep, also clean your Registry--and they do a better job than the free

RegClean. Make a routine of cleaning the Registry, and Windows 98 will run faster and be more reliable.

### **Defrag Regularly**

Removing data from your system leaves empty spaces on your hard drive. When Windows saves new data, it fills in these cracks, often splitting up files and thus increasing the amount of time it takes to access that file. To help reorganize your hard drive into continuous chunks and consequently speed up system performance, Microsoft includes a defragmenting program in its OSs (and has since DOS 6.0).

The Windows 98 defrag utility is better than its predecessors. It records the way Windows accesses files when you run a program, then reorganizes those files to fit how Windows works. For example, it organizes files sequentially, in the order Windows reads them, and places your most frequently accessed programs on the fastest parts of your disk. The end result? A speed boost for all your programs, and a bigger boost for your favorites.

### **Get FAT**

Compressing your data with the Windows DriveSpace utility is a really bad idea. It does save disk space, but it also slows down system performance. That's because compressing and expanding files hogs resources that could be used for running other programs. Even Microsoft agrees: since the release of Windows 98, the company has suggested converting your disk to FAT32 format instead of using DriveSpace.

Unfortunately, FAT32 format has its share of problems, too. Most users probably won't notice the difference, but if you really need the speediest performance you can get, stick with an uncompressed FAT16 drive and buy an extra hard disk.

### **Go Easy on Video**

If your screen redraws slowly or you experience other video glitches, your video card may be working too hard. Some video cards claim to offer screen resolutions and color depths they can't actually support. If you think your card might be maxed out, try bumping down the color depth or screen resolution a notch in the Display Control Panel (Start/Settings/Control Panel/Display), or right-click the desktop and choose Properties. Unless you are a graphic designer, you won't notice the difference anyway!

### **Upgrade Your Hardware**

No matter how much you tune up the engine, you won't turn a Fiat into a Ferrari. The same is true with computers: sometimes you just have to take the plunge and buy some new hardware. There's a hardware upgrade for almost every speed problem. Here are a few of the most common problems and solutions.

Problem: System runs slowly, hard drive always spinning.

Solution: Buy more RAM. If your Windows 98 system is running on less than 64MB of RAM, an upgrade will speed things up considerably.

Problem: Plenty of RAM, but system still slow.

Solution: Upgrade your processor and/or motherboard. RAM is generally the biggest processing bottleneck, but if you're running less than a Pentium-166 MMX, a new processor should give you the horsepower you need for number crunching. If you run processor-intensive applications such as Photoshop, or if you plan on upgrading to Windows NT, look for a Pentium III or its equivalent. And remember: Adding a second processor to your motherboard will speed up only NT. Windows 98 won't even recognize it, so don't bother!

Problem: Slow game performance.

Solution: Buy a new video card. Today's 3D games demand so much computing power that even the fastest CPU can't handle the job. Instead, a game's speed often depends on the video card, and if yours is short on RAM or runs a 2D-only processor, you're out of luck. You can find plenty of decent 3D accelerator cards with 32 Mb RAM for around Rs. 4500

### Update Your Drivers

Although many Windows 95 drivers will run under Windows 98, most of them work less efficiently with the newer OS--and some don't work at all. To ensure the best performance of your hardware, you need the latest driver. And that may not be the one that was with your original Windows 98 CD-ROM. Why? Because several vendors didn't create Windows 98 drivers in time for them to ship with the OS. Thus, Microsoft included interim drivers whose performance was less than ideal.

The good news? By now most vendors have completed their Windows 98 drivers. The best way to get the latest drivers is to hit the vendor sites and look for upgrades. If you're as lazy as we are, have an online software updater such as CyberMedia's OilChange do the searching for you.

### Don't Autostart Anything

Nothing's slower than having to wait for your computer to launch a bunch of programs each time it starts up. To stop a program from launching at start-up, just open C:\Windows\StartMenu\Programs\StartUp in Windows Explorer and delete that program's shortcut.

Windows 98's System Information tool (Start/Programs/Accessories/System Tools/System Information) gives you an even more detailed list of autostarting programs. Just expand the Software Environment menu and choose Startup Programs. This will show you any programs that are automatically launched by the Registry. To keep these programs from autostarting, consult each application's help file.

## Stop the Floppy Scan

When Windows 98 boots up, it wastes time scanning for new floppy drives. You can reclaim these lost seconds via the System Control Panel applet (Start/Settings/Control Panel/System, or right-click My Computer and choose Properties). Select the Performance tab; click the File System button; select the Floppy Disk tab; and uncheck the option "Search for new floppy disk drives every time your computer starts." Voilà!

## Speed Up Reboots

If you think Windows 98 takes too long to boot, you can remove the built-in two-second delay in the OS's start-up sequence. Here's what you need to do:

- Under the Start button, select Find/Files or Folders.
- Enter **msdos.sys** in the Named box and **C:** in the Look In box. Then click Find Now.
- When the file appears, right-click it and select Properties from the pop-up menu.
- Click to remove the check marks from the Read-Only and Hidden attributes, then click OK.
- Right-click msdos.sys, select Open With from the pop-up menu, enter **Notepad** as the opening program, and then click OK.
- Under Options, enter **BootDelay=0** or **BootDelay=1** on its own line. (This represents respective delays of zero seconds and one second, both of which are faster than the default).
- Close Notepad and save your changes on the way out.
- Return msdos.sys to its hidden, read-only state. (Right-click it, select Properties from the pop-up menu, and check the Read-Only and Hidden check boxes. Then click OK.)
- Quit and restart Windows.

**Warning:** Any time you make changes to your SYS files, it's a good idea to back up your important files and have your original Windows disk on hand in case you need to reinstall.

## Use Keyboard Shortcuts

These tips won't speed up Windows 98, but they will make the person using it more efficient. Even the most mouse-happy user can save time with a few simple keyboard shortcuts. Here are a few:

<b>Alt-Tab:</b>	Switch between open applications
<b>Ctrl-Esc:</b>	Bring up the Start menu
<b>F2:</b>	Rename a file or folder
<b>F5:</b>	Refresh folder or desktop contents
<b>Shift-Del:</b>	Delete without sending to the Recycle Bin
<b>Alt-F4:</b>	Quit the application (or shut down if no apps are open)

If you have a Windows keyboard (with a Windows logo on the key between Ctrl and Alt), here are a few more:

<b>Shift-Windows key-M:</b>	Reopen minimized windows
<b>Windows key-F:</b>	Launch the Find menu
<b>Windows key-M:</b>	Minimize all open windows
<b>Windows key-D:</b>	Minimize all open windows
<b>Windows key-E:</b>	Open Windows Explorer
<b>Windows key:</b>	Bring up the Start menu

You can also create your own keyboard shortcuts to launch frequently accessed applications or files. Just create a shortcut to a file, then right-click and choose Properties. Enter a key combination (such as Ctrl-Alt-X) in the Shortcut key field, click OK, then launch the program at any time with just the keyboard.

### **Control Panel Shortcuts**

Your Control Panel makes easy work of configuring Windows 98, but if clicking through Start/Settings/Control Panel gets on your nerves, here's a quick fix: Open the Control Panel folder, select the icons of your frequently used applets (hold down Ctrl while you click for multiple selections), then drag them onto your Start button. The Start menu will open, allowing you to place your new Control Panel shortcuts wherever you want.

We suggest leaving them in the root of the Start menu and renaming them something unique (go to C:\Windows\Start Menu in the Windows Explorer, right-click the icon, and choose Rename). That way, you can access them with just a click of the Windows key (or Ctrl-Esc if you don't have a Windows key) and the first letter or number of the shortcut's name.

I hope these tips are as useful to you as they were to me. C ya!