

PC Troubleshooting

For the average computer user, troubleshooting a PC problem can be a daunting endeavor. They take one look at a PC, and all they see is a bunch of complex circuitry, wires, and computer chips. That is enough to scare anyone away. These people are of the ERA that dictates *"if you don't know what it is, leave it alone"*. Because of that, they tend to be intimidated when it comes to trying to find the cause of an error, for fear of "screwing the computer up".

I'm here to tell you that you need not be scared anymore. During this series of newsletters, we are going to help you (the average computer user) at the very least, overcome your fear of "looking a little closer at the PC", and who knows, you might even be willing to get your hands a little dirty.

Troubleshooting a Computer is very much like following a detailed road map. The difference is that a computer troubleshooting roadmap has certain criteria that need to be addressed in order to get from point-A to point-B. These criteria (or additional information) help to determine what route to take.

Let's say for example, your computer keeps restarting by itself. Well, that little bit of information isn't enough for us to get from Point-A to Point-B. This is where the criteria (or additional information) comes in to play. We need to know things like possible Virus Infections, corrupt Windows Software or even faulty Hardware. All these factors are relevant. Once we have fulfilled the criteria and compiled all the information, we can take steps outlined in our roadmap to take us straight through to Point-B.

Fixing or repairing computers is not an art, but a systematic process.

"90% of all computer slowdowns are caused by multiple conditions. These include fragmented hard drives, windows registry errors, improper windows settings, to many programs loading at startup, and Adware and Spyware infections."

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Let's start with a common problem that most people run into.

Your computer is running really slow and taking forever to start, or open programs.

Your first steps should be to take care of the obvious.

- Take a look at your system tray. Your system tray is at the bottom-right hand corner of your screen with all the icons in it. The icons showing in the system tray represent all the programs running in the background. These programs are using precious system resources that would otherwise be available for other applications. Browse through the icons showing in the system tray, and determine which programs are necessary. and which ones aren't.

{ Hint: Norton AntiVirus is known to use approximately 30% of your system resources. } That is a *HUGE* percentage. We recommend using AVG or AntiVir over Norton. Both are excellent, and come with free versions available for Personal Use. For more information on Viruses and AntiVirus Programs, see our October Newsletter at <http://www.tsgcs.ca/articles/oct08.pdf>

- Update your AntiVirus Software and run a Virus Scan on your computer. You might have to run the VirusScan from "Safe Mode" if you run into Malware that is difficult to remove. "Safe Mode" is achieved by rapidly pressing the **F8** key on system startup prior to seeing the Windows splash screen.
- Make sure Windows is set to manage your Virtual Memory on your Computer. Some people set their Virtual Memory to a predefined size. This prevents Windows from increasing and decreasing the size of your Virtual Memory as it sees fit. To set it so that Windows maintains control, follow the instructions listed below.
 1. right click on "My Computer" and click properties
 2. click on the "advanced" tab
 3. click on the "settings" button under the performance section
 4. click on the "advanced" tab again
 5. click on "change" in the Virtual Memory section
 6. highlight C Drive, and select "System Managed Size", if it isn't selected already
 7. click "set" and then "ok"
 8. click ok and/or apply to work your way back out.
 9. **You may have to restart your system for the changed to take effect.**
- Remove programs from your computer that you no longer use. These programs take up space in your registry as well as your Hard Drive. If you don't use them, you should get rid of them. You can accomplish this by:
 1. going to your "Control Panel"
 2. select "Add/Remove Programs"
 3. go through the programs listed on your computer and determine which programs are not needed.

4. remove these programs.
- The next program we are going to use is called "SPYBOT Search & Destroy". We are going to download it, install it, run it, then uninstall it. This is because even though the program itself is one of the best at removing SpyWare, it has a tendency to use system resources as well.
 1. go to <http://www.safer-networking.org/en/ownmirrors1/index.html> and download the program.
 2. when the option is presented, select "open", instead of save.
 3. follow the installation instructions. Make sure "tea-timer" is selected when you get to that portion of the setup routine.
 4. launch the program "SpyBot Search & Destroy"
 5. watch and follow SpyBot tutorial at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdKqwN61BJY>.
 6. shut down SpyBot.
 7. go to your "Control Panel"
 8. select "Add/Remove Programs"
 9. remove SpyBot.
 - The next program we are going to use is called "Glary Utilities". We are going to download it, install it, run it and keep it.
 1. go to <http://www.glaryutilities.com/gu.html?tag=download> and download the program.
 2. when the option is presented, select "open", instead of save.
 3. read and follow the installation instructions carefully. It will ask you if you would like to install the "ask toolbar". Un-check this.
 4. click "Scan for Issues".
 5. click "Repair Problems".
 6. Close Glary Utilities, and restart your system.
 7. **You should run Glary Utilities once a month.**
 - Run Disk Cleanup. Disk Cleanup is located under:
>>START >>Programs >>Accessories >>System Tools
 - Run Disk Defragmenter. Disk Defragmenter is located under:
>>START >>Programs >>Accessories >>System Tools
 - Run **Glary Utilities** once more, and again restart your system..
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To Recap,

Speeding up your computer system doesn't have to be a daunting task. As we have seen, by simply running a few programs and changing some settings, we can literally bring a computer back to life.

Watch for our next newsletter titled "Mastering your Master Boot Record(MBR)".

You can also check out our past articles at www.tsgcs.ca/articles.htm

Chad Rushka



604-272-3607

604-803-2824

chad@tsgcs.ca

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