

Improve start-up and shutdown times

Tired of twiddling your thumbs or taking a coffee break while XP boots up or shuts down? These tweaks and hacks will speed up both for you.

Speed boot-up with boot defragments

The simplest way to speed boot-up is to do a boot defragment so that all the boot files are next to one another on your hard disk. By default, XP performs a boot defragment, but there's a chance that it's been turned off. Here's how to make sure it's turned on.

1. Open the Registry Editor by typing `regedit` at a command prompt or the Run box.
2. Go to `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Dfrg\BootOptimizeFunction`.
3. Change the Enable string value to Y if it is not already set to Y.
4. Exit the Registry and reboot.

The next time you reboot, you'll do a boot defragment.

Tweak your BIOS for faster start-ups

Each time you turn on your PC, it performs a set of BIOS start-up procedures before XP loads. Speed up those start-up procedures, and you'll speed up boot times.

You change the start-up procedures by changing the BIOS settings with your system's built-in setup utility. How you run this utility varies from PC to PC, but you typically get to it by pressing the Delete, F1 or F10 keys during start-up. A menu of choices then appears. Here are the settings to tweak for faster start-ups:

Quick Power On Self Test (POST): With this option, your system runs an abbreviated POST rather than the normal, lengthy one. Turn it on.

Boot Up Floppy Seek: When was the last time you used a floppy, much less booted from it? If you're like most of the world, the answer is never. Disable this option. When it's enabled, your system spends a few extra seconds looking for your floppy drive.

Boot Delay: Some PCs let you delay booting after you turn on your PC so that your hard drive gets a chance to start spinning before boot-up. It's unlikely you need this boot delay, so turn it off. If you run into problems, however, you can turn it back on.

HOW NOT TO SPEED UP BOOTING

There's a tip about speeding up XP boot times that's been circulating on the Web for years -- follow it and you'll most likely slow down your PC, not speed it up. The tip recommends that you delete all the files in your `C:\WINDOWS\Prefetch` directory on a regular basis. But in fact, doing that will lead to a more sluggish PC.

The reason? Windows uses `C:\WINDOWS\Prefetch` make your applications launch more quickly. Windows XP analyzes the files you use during start-up and the applications you launch, and it creates an index to their locations. Using the index, XP launches files and applications faster.

By emptying the directory, you are most likely slowing down how quickly those applications launch. And in my tests, I've found that after emptying the directory, it takes my PC a few seconds longer to get to my desktop after boot-up.

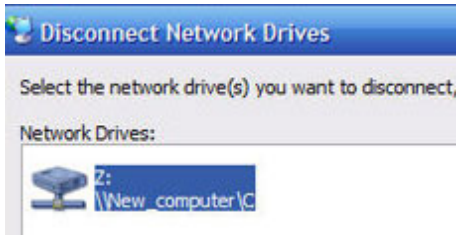
Disconnect dead network connections

Windows XP has a very useful feature that lets you map a network drive to your local PC. So, for example, if there's a drive on another PC on your network or on a network server that you

frequently browse to, you can make it look to XP as if it's a local disk, such as the F: drive. That way, you can quickly get to the network drive instead of having to navigate through a complex maze of paths.

That's the good news. Here's the bad news: If any of those network drives is no longer alive, it can slow down your system. Every time you start XP, it tries to connect to all the network drives you've mapped. If the remote drive doesn't respond, XP waits to start and will try to connect again until it gives up.

In addition, when you use some programs, they'll try to make the connection as well, further slowing your system. The result? When you try to open a file on your local PC, you may have to wait several seconds.



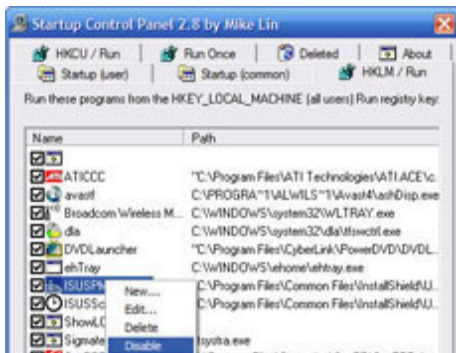
Speed start-up by disconnecting unused network drives.

Disconnecting dead network drives is simple. Right-click My Computer and choose Disconnect Network Drive. You'll see a screen like one pictured nearby, which lists all your network drives. Select any drives you want to disconnect, then click OK. Things should now speed up.

Remove extraneous start-up programs

You've most likely got many programs that load into your system on start-up. These programs do worse things than just slowing down start-up -- they can bog down your PC by constantly taking up RAM and CPU power. Unfortunately, in XP, there's no single place to go to find all those start-up programs and decide which ones to keep and which to kill.

That's where Mike Lin's [Startup Control Panel](#) applet comes in. It shows you all the programs and services that load on start-up, then lets you kill any you don't want to keep.



Reviewing start-up programs with Startup Control Panel. [Click to view larger image.](#)

The program is multitabbed, with one tab for every place where a program or service may be launched on start-up. Click each tab and examine the listings. Right-click any program you don't want to run, and select Disable so that it no longer runs.

If you're not sure what a particular program does and whether you need it, do a Google search on the program name or file name for more information. The process is laborious, to be sure, but what you gain in start-up speed is well worth your efforts.