Have a Slow System? Try These Free Fixes
Tips to get your system to run faster

What do 300 files in the root folder and 2,500 temporary files have in common? Besides record-breaking events, they'll slow your system down to a crawl. Throw in a couple of rogue malware programs and a few gigabytes in your Internet cache folder, and you'll get better performance from the '486 in the closet.
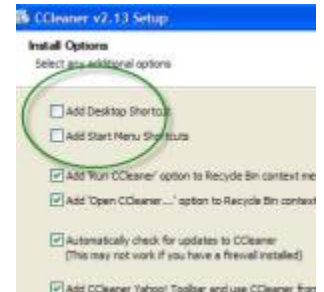
You're laughing, sure, but the above examples are true and I'll bet you know someone with a machine with clogged folders. (And I wouldn't even *dream* of asking when you last did some PC housekeeping.)

Start by downloading and installing CCleaner. It's the smartest and safest program to get rid of files you don't need on your system. (When you get to the page, it's easier to download the tool from the Alternate Download location rather than from FileHippo.) As you install, de-select the first two items. You'll decrease desktop clutter and access CCleaner through the Recycle Bin icon (see screen below).

Once you install and run the program, check boxes as shown on the two screen captures below. As you can see, CCleaner will take care of the temp files as well as the Internet cache folder; just ignore those apps you don't use. By the way, you can protect your privacy by selecting the History, Recently Typed URLs, and Last Download Location boxes. Be careful, though, and uncheck the Cookies box; otherwise you'll have to log into all your favorite Web sites all over again.

De-select these two items for a cleaner installation.

Here's how to setup CCleaner's deletion skills.

Now open CCleaner by right-clicking on the Recycle Bin and choosing Open CCleaner; then select **Analyze** and **Run Cleaner**.

The one thing CCleaner won't do is remove corrupted temporary files -- and those can create havoc. So spend another few minutes and clean the Temp folder again to delete these wonky files CCleaner can't handle. Click **Start**, **Run**, type *%temp%*, and press **Enter**. Press **Ctrl-A** to select all the files, and then press the **Delete** key.

While you're here cleaning house, check all your ActiveX files for corruption. This won't necessarily speed up your system, but it might help reduce system crashes. Here's how to do it: Click **Start**, **Settings**, **Control Panel**, **Internet Options**, choose the General tab, click **Settings in Browsing history**, and then click **View Objects**.

Delete every item that says anything *except* Installed or Unknown. Now right-click each "unknown" item and try to determine if it belongs to a program you can identify. If it doesn't, right-click and choose **Remove it**. Don't worry, Windows won't scold you. If your system needs the ActiveX control, it'll reinstall it.

Next, right-click each item and choose **Update**. (This is a one-item-at-a-time process.) Agree when the dialog asks if you want to download and install the updates.

In the opening paragraph, I mentioned the root folder. That's the "C:/" folder you see in Windows Explorer. It should have a just a handful of system files. Explaining which files to keep and which to delete is risky, and if you dump the wrong ones, there will be holy hell the next time you boot -- for both of us. The safest advice is that if you have fewer than 40 files, don't worry. If you have more, find yourself a knowledgeable friend and let him or her have a look.

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