

17 ways to speed up Windows 10

By Preston Gralla, Contributing Editor, Computerworld | NOV 9, 2023 12:35 PM PST

If you want to optimize Windows 10, take a few minutes to try out these tips to speed up your PC and make it less prone to performance and system issues.

Want your Windows 10 PC to run faster? We've here to help. By tweaking some of the operating settings, your machine will be zippier and less prone to performance and system issues.

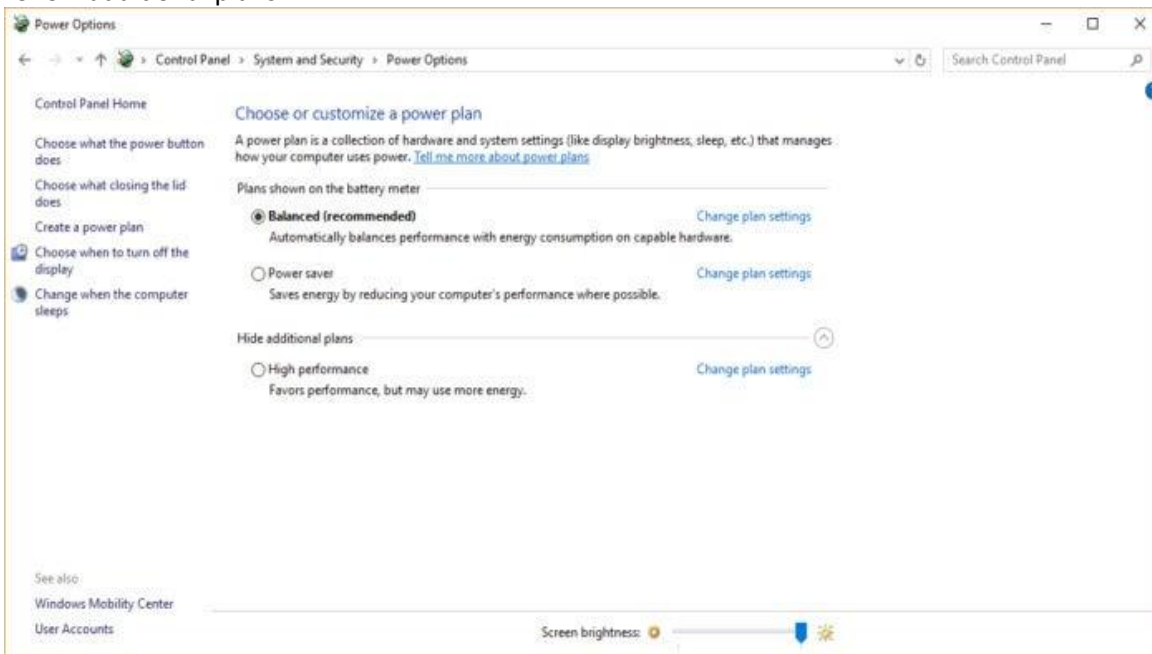
And if you're already running Windows 11, we've got you covered there. Check out our top 12 ways to [keep Windows 11 devices chugging along smoothly](#). Here's our list of tips for Microsoft's current OS.

You may notice that that last tip is the most tried-and-true way of (hopefully) smoothing out any problems in Windows 10. There's a reason it's effectively an internet meme.

1. Change your power settings

If you're using Windows 10's "Power saver" plan, you're slowing down your PC. That plan reduces your PC's performance in order to save energy. (Even desktop PCs typically have a "Power saver" plan.) Changing your power plan from "Power saver" to "High performance" or "Balanced" will give you an instant performance boost.

To do it, launch the Control Panel app, then select Hardware and Sound > Power Options. You'll typically see two options: "Balanced (recommended)" and "Power saver." (Depending on your make and model, you might see other plans here as well, including some branded by the manufacturer.) To see the "High performance" setting, click the down arrow by "Show additional plans."



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Change your power settings in Control Panel to give your PC a performance boost. (Click image to enlarge it.)

To change your power setting, simply choose the one you want, then exit Control Panel. "High performance" gives you the most oomph, but uses the most power; "Balanced" finds a happy medium between power use and better performance; and "Power saver" does everything it can to give you as much battery life as possible. Desktop users have no reason to choose "Power saver," and even laptop users should consider the "Balanced" option when unplugged — and "High performance" when connected to a power source.

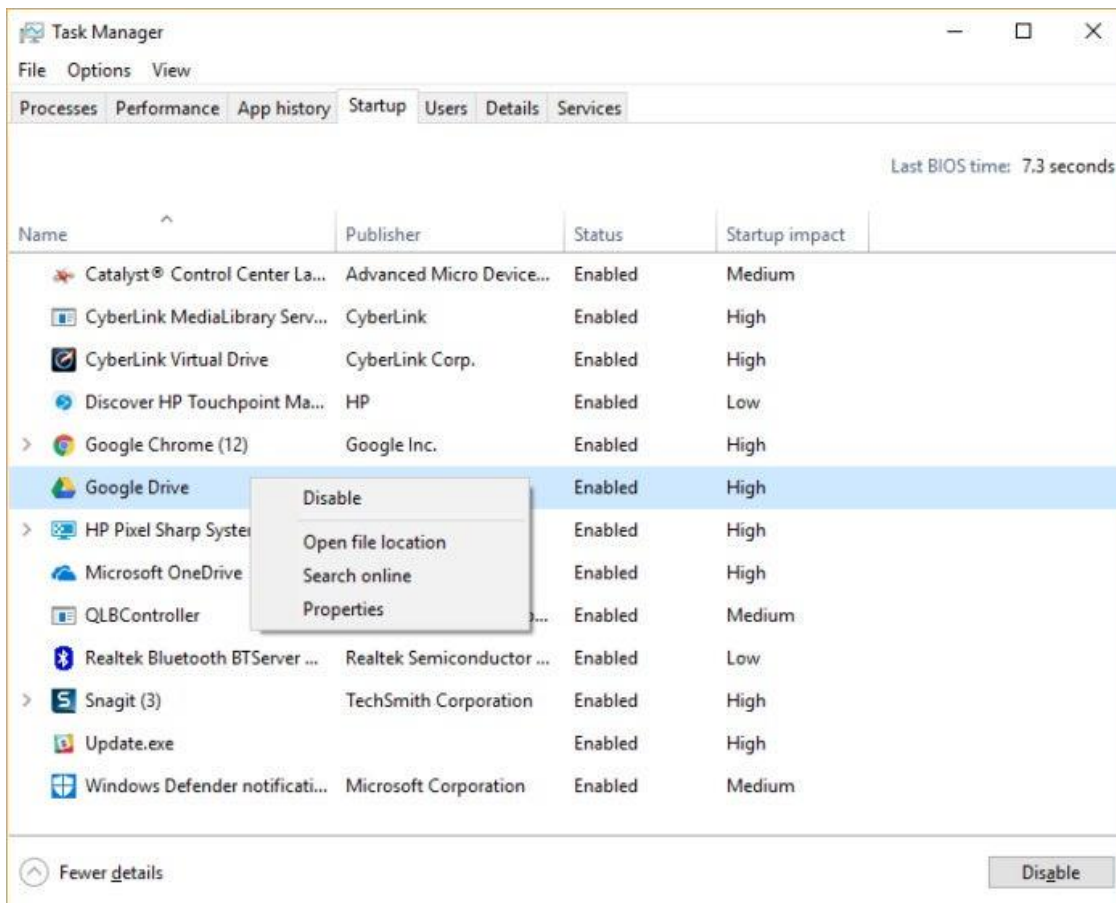
2. Disable programs that run on startup

One reason your Windows 10 PC may feel sluggish is that you've got too many programs running in the background — programs that you rarely or never use. Stop them from running, and your PC will run more smoothly.

Start by launching the Task Manager: Press Ctrl-Shift-Esc, right-click the lower-right corner of your screen and select Task Manager, or type **task manager** into the Windows 10 search box and press Enter. If the Task Manager launches as a compact app with no tabs, click "More details" at the bottom of your screen. The Task Manager will then appear in all of its full-tabbed glory. There's plenty you can do with it, but we're going to focus only on killing unnecessary programs that run at startup.

Click the Startup tab. You'll see a list of the programs and services that launch when you start Windows. Included on the list is each program's name as well as its publisher, whether it's enabled to run on startup, and its "Startup impact," which is how much it slows down Windows 10 when the system starts up.

To stop a program or service from launching at startup, right-click it and select "Disable." This doesn't disable the program entirely; it only prevents it from launching at startup — you can always run the application after launch. Also, if you later decide you want it to launch at startup, you can just return to this area of the Task Manager, right-click the application and select "Enable."



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You can use the Task Manager to help get information about programs that launch at startup and disable any you don't need. (Click image to enlarge it.)

Many of the programs and services that run on startup may be familiar to you, like OneDrive or Evernote Clipper. But you may not recognize many of them. (Anyone who immediately knows what “bzbui.exe” is, please raise your hand. No fair Googling it first.)

The Task Manager helps you get information about unfamiliar programs. Right-click an item and select “Properties” for more information about it, including its location on your hard disk, whether it has a [digital signature](#), and other information such as the version number, the file size and the last time it was modified.

You can also right-click the item and select “Open file location.” That opens File Explorer and takes it to the folder where the file is located, which may give you another clue about the program’s purpose.

Finally, and most helpfully, you can select “Search online” after you right-click. Bing will then launch with links to sites with information about the program or service.

If you’re really nervous about one of the listed applications, you can go to a site run by Reason Software called [Should I Block It?](#) and search for the file name. You’ll usually find very solid information about the program or service.

Now that you’ve selected all the programs that you want to disable at startup, the next time you restart your computer, the system will be a lot less concerned with unnecessary programs.

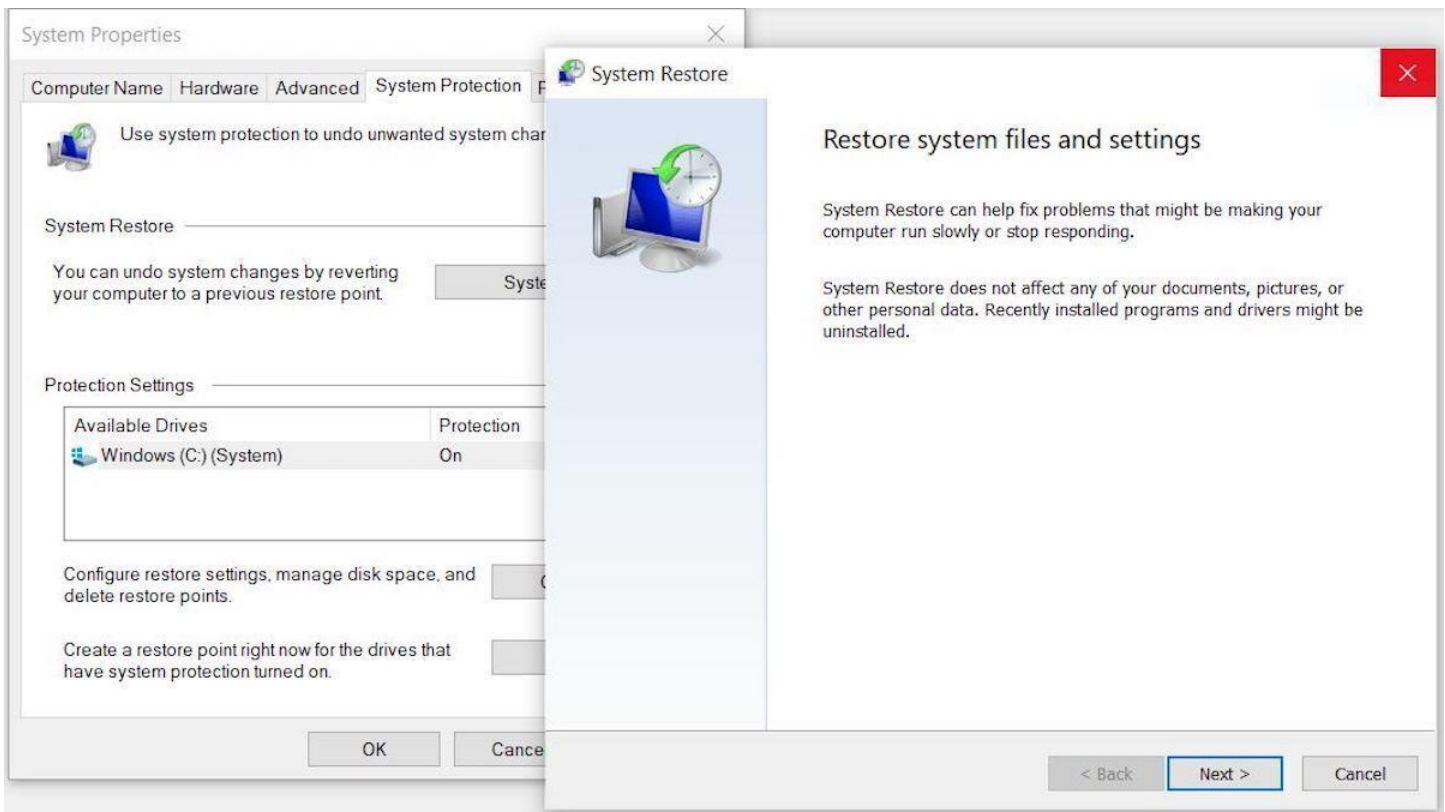
3. Go to a Previous Restore Point

As you use Windows 10, it automatically creates restore points that are essentially snapshots of your system at specific moments in time, including installed software, drivers and updates. Restore points are a kind of safety net so if something goes wrong, you can always restore your PC to a previous state.

They can also be used to speed up your PC if you notice — for no reason you can fathom — it’s started to slow down. Recently installed problematic drivers, software, or updates could be to blame, so going back to a previous restore point could speed things up again because the system will be returned to the state it was in before the problems started. Keep in mind, though, that you’ll only be able to restore your system to the state it was in during the last seven to 10 days. (Restore points don’t affect your files, so you won’t lose any files by going to a restore point.)

To go to a previous restore point:

1. Save any open files and close all your programs.
2. In the search box type **advanced system** and then click **View advanced system settings**. You’ll be sent to the Advanced tab of System Properties in the Control Panel.
3. Click the System Protection tab.
4. In the System Restore area, click System Restore. From the screen that appears, click Next.
5. You’ll see the most recent restore point. Click Next if you want to go that restore point. To see others, click Show more restore points. Highlight the one you want to use and click Next.
6. Click Finish from the screen that appears.
7. Your system will restore to the restore point you chose and shut down. Restart your PC.



Microsoft

Going to a restore point can help speed up your PC if you've recently installed drivers, software, or updates that have slowed down your system.

Note: there's a chance System Restore isn't turned on, meaning you won't be able to use this tip. If that's the case, you should turn it on to solve any future problems. To do so:

1. In the search box, type **create a restore point**, then click **Create a restore point**.
2. On the System Protection tab and select Configure.
3. Select Turn on system protection. Leave the other settings on the page as they are.
4. Click OK. From now on your PC will automatically create restore points.

4. Use ReadyBoost to speed up disk caching

Windows 10 regularly stores cached data on your hard disk, and then when it needs the data, fetches it from there. The time it takes to fetch cached data depends on the speed of your hard disk. If you have a traditional hard disk instead of an SSD, there's a trick that can help speed up your cache: use Windows' ReadyBoost feature. It tells Windows to cache data to a USB flash drive, which is faster than a hard disk. Fetching data from that speedier cache should speed up Windows.

First, plug a USB flash drive into one of your PC's USB ports. The flash drive needs to support at least USB 2.0, and preferably USB 3 or faster. The faster your flash drive, the more of a speed boost you should see. Also, look for a flash drive that is at least double the size of your PC's RAM for maximum performance.

After you plug in the drive, open File Explorer and click "This PC." Look for the flash drive. It may have an odd name, like UDISK 28X, or something even less-obvious. Right-click it, choose Properties and click the ReadyBoost tab.



Microsoft

Turn on ReadyBoost from this screen to speed up your PC.

You'll come to a screen that asks whether you want to use the flash drive as a cache and recommends a cache size. Leave the cache size as is or change it if you like. Then select "Dedicate this device to ReadyBoost" and click Apply and then click OK.

(Note that if you see the message, "This device cannot be used for ReadyBoost" when you click the ReadyBoost tab it means your flash drive doesn't meet ReadyBoost's minimum performance standards, so you'll have to insert a new one.)

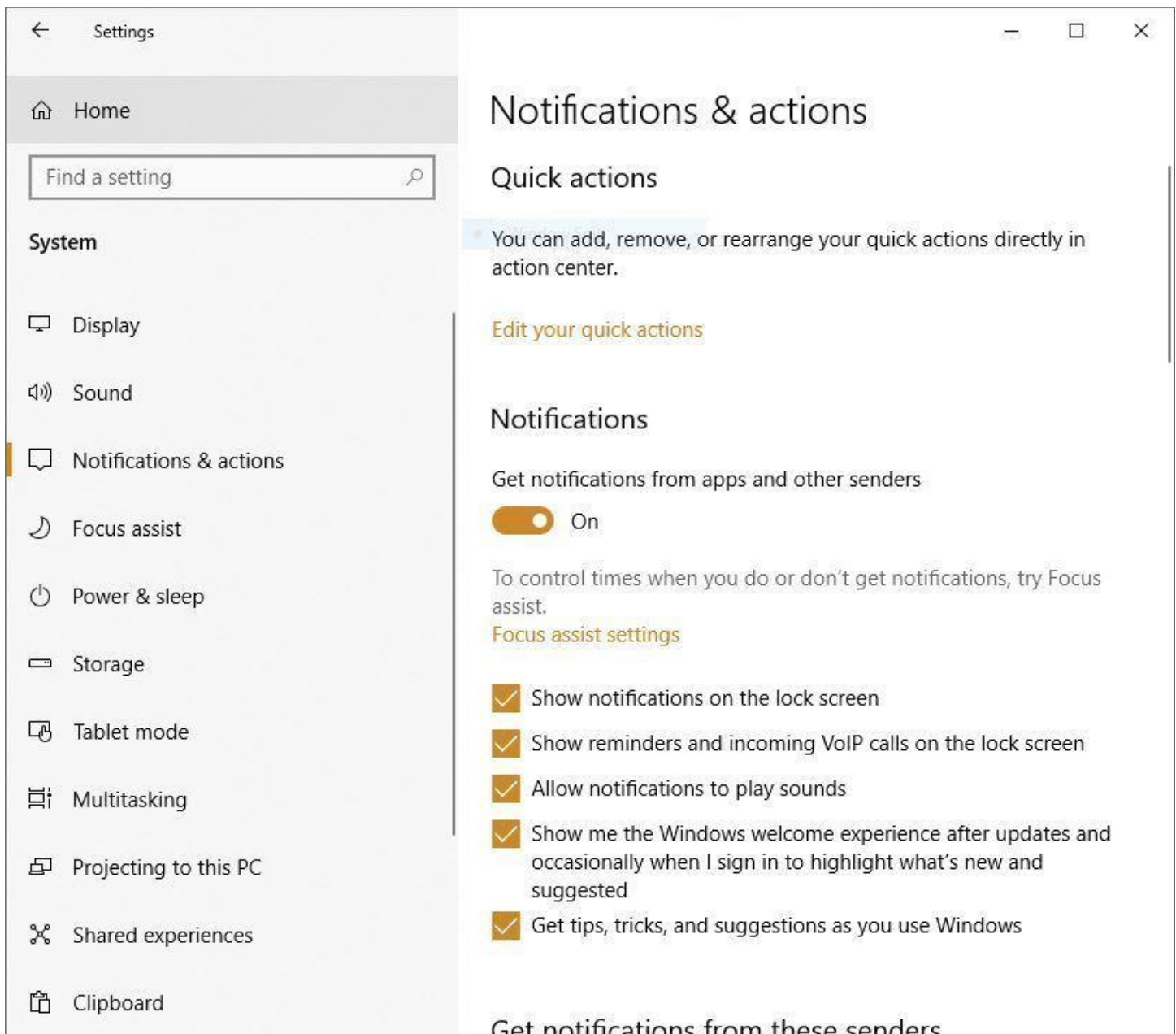
As you use your computer, ReadyBoost will start filling the cache with files, so you may notice an increase in disk activity. Depending on how much you use your PC, it can take a few days for your cache to fill and offer maximum improved performance. If you don't see an increase in performance, try a flash disk with more capacity.

Note: If you have an SSD, you won't get any extra speed from ReadyBoost, and it might even *hurt* performance. So don't use this on a system with an SSD.

5. Shut off Windows tips and tricks

As you use your Windows 10 PC, Windows keeps an eye on what you're doing and offers tips about things you might want to do with the operating system. In my experience, I've rarely if ever found these "tips" helpful. I also don't like the privacy implications of Windows constantly taking a virtual look over my shoulder.

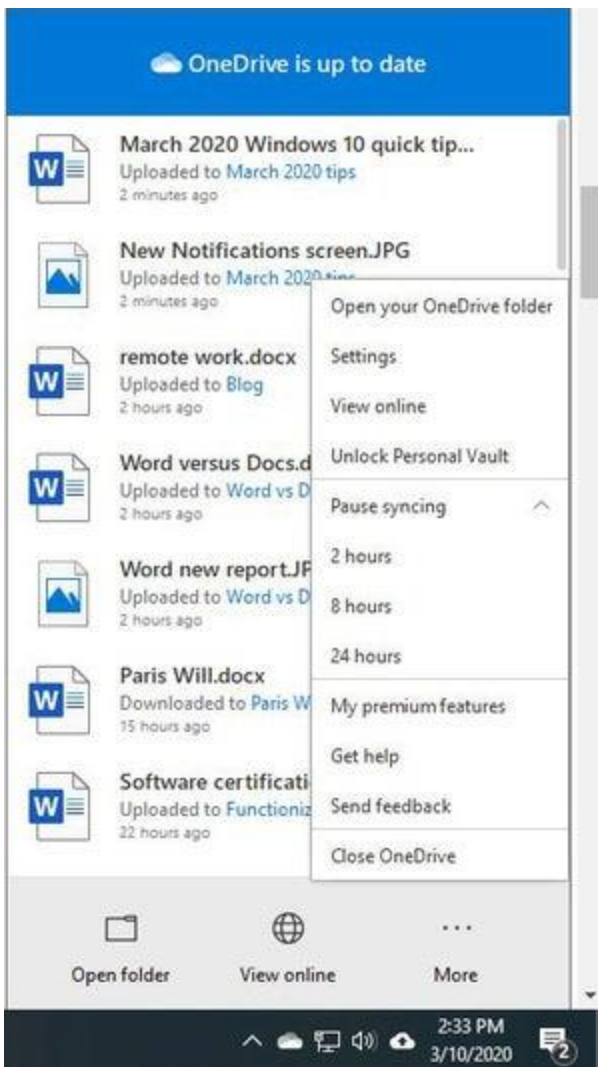
Windows watching what you're doing and offering advice can also make your PC run more sluggishly. So if you want to speed things up, tell Windows to stop giving you advice. To do so, click the Start button, select the Settings icon and then go to *System > Notifications & actions*. Scroll down to the Notifications section and uncheck the box marked "Get tips, tricks, and suggestions as you use Windows."



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Turning off Windows' suggestions for you should help things run more smoothly (and give you back a measure of privacy). (Click image to enlarge it.)
That'll do the trick.

6. Stop OneDrive from syncing

Microsoft's cloud-based OneDrive file storage, built into Windows 10, keeps files synced and up to date on all of your PCs. It's also a useful backup tool so that if your PC or its hard disk dies, you still have all your files intact, waiting for you to restore them.



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Here's how to turn off OneDrive syncing temporarily, to see if that boosts system performance. (Click image to enlarge it.)

It does this by constantly syncing files between your PC and cloud storage — something that can also slow down your PC. That's why one way to speed up your PC is to stop the syncing. Before you turn it off permanently, though, you'll want to check whether it is actually slowing down your PC.

To do so, right-click the OneDrive icon (it looks like a cloud) in the notification area on the right side of the taskbar, then click the More button at the bottom of the screen. From the popup screen that appears, click "Pause syncing" and select either 2 hours, 8 hours or 24 hours, depending upon how long you want it paused. During that time, gauge whether you're seeing a noticeable speed boost.

If so, and you decide you do indeed want to turn off syncing, right-click the OneDrive icon, and from the popup, select *Settings* > *Account*. Click "Unlink this PC," and then from the screen that appears, click "Unlink account." When you do that, you'll still be able to save your files to your local OneDrive folder, but it won't sync with the cloud.

If you find that OneDrive slows down your PC but prefer to keep using it, you can try to troubleshoot OneDrive problems. For info on how to do that, check out Microsoft's "[Fix OneDrive sync problems](#)" [page](#).

7. Use OneDrive Files on-Demand

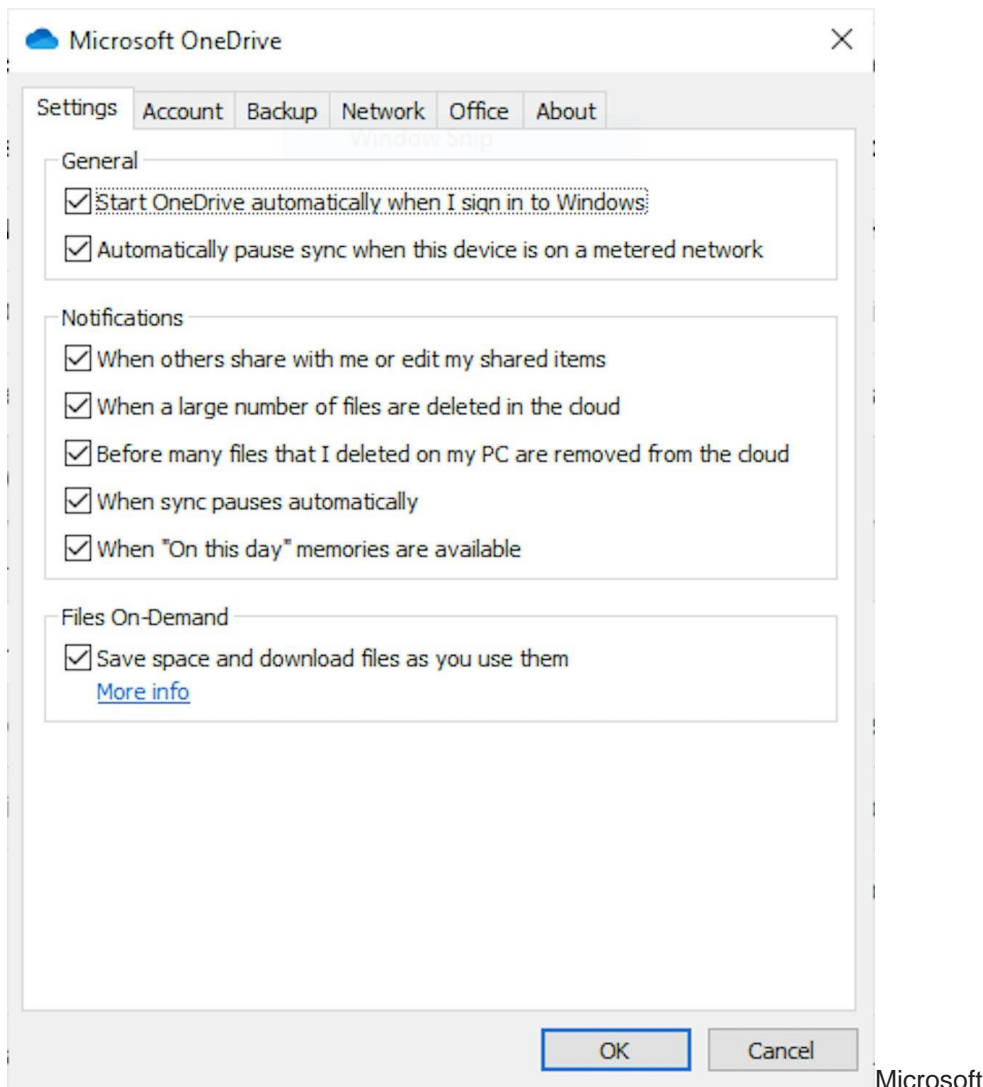
Some users may not want to stop OneDrive from syncing; doing so defeats its purpose of making sure you have the latest files on whatever device you use. And it would also mean you won't be able to use OneDrive as a way to safely back up files.

But there's a way to get the best of both worlds: You can keep syncing to an absolute minimum and only do it when absolutely necessary. You'll speed up performance, and *still* get the best of what OneDrive has to offer.

To do this, you use Windows' OneDrive Files on-Demand feature. With it, you can choose to keep only certain files on your PC, but still have access to all your other OneDrive files in the cloud. When you want to use one of those online files, you open it directly from the cloud. With fewer files on your PC sync, you should see a performance boost.

Right-click the OneDrive icon on the right side of the Taskbar and select Settings, then click the Settings tab on the dialog box that appears. Check the box next to Files On-Demand. Now click the OneDrive icon and select Open Folder. OneDrive appears in a File Explorer window. Right-click a folder whose files you want stored only in the cloud, but not on your PC, then select "Free up space." Files from that folder will be removed from your disk, but still kept in OneDrive in the cloud.

For every folder whose files you want kept on your PC, right-click the folder and select "Always Keep on this Device." You can change the options on any folder at any time by right-clicking it and choosing what you want done.



Use this dialog box to turn on OneDrive Files on-Demand

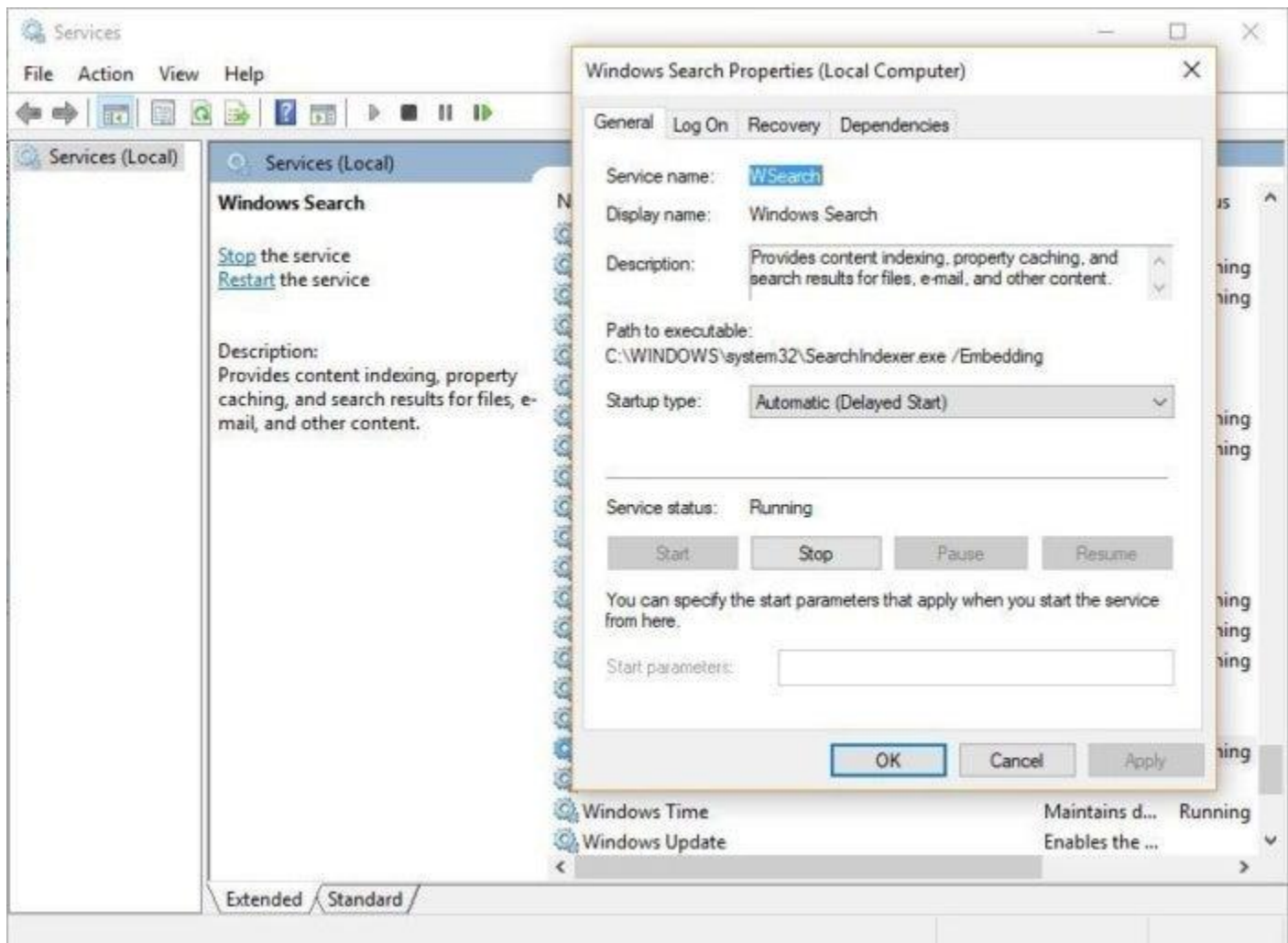
If you change your mind and want all your files stored locally and kept in sync via OneDrive, go back to the OneDrive settings dialog box and uncheck the box next to Files on-Demand.

Note that OneDrive Files on-Demand is available only on Windows Version 1709 and higher.

8. Turn off search indexing

Windows 10 indexes your hard disk in the background, allowing you — in theory — to search your PC more quickly than if no indexing were being done. But slower PCs that use indexing can see a performance hit, and you can give them a speed boost by turning off indexing. Even if you have an SSD disk, turning off indexing can improve your speed, because the constant writing to disk that indexing does can eventually slow down SSDs.

To get the maximum benefit in Windows 10, you need to turn indexing off completely. To do so, type **services.msc** in the Windows 10 search box and press Enter. The Services app appears. Scroll down to either Indexing Service or Windows Search in the list of services. Double-click it, and from the screen that appears, click Stop. Then reboot your machine. Your searches may be slightly slower, although you may not notice the difference. But you *should* get an overall performance boost.



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Here's how to turn off Windows 10 indexing. (Click image to enlarge it.)

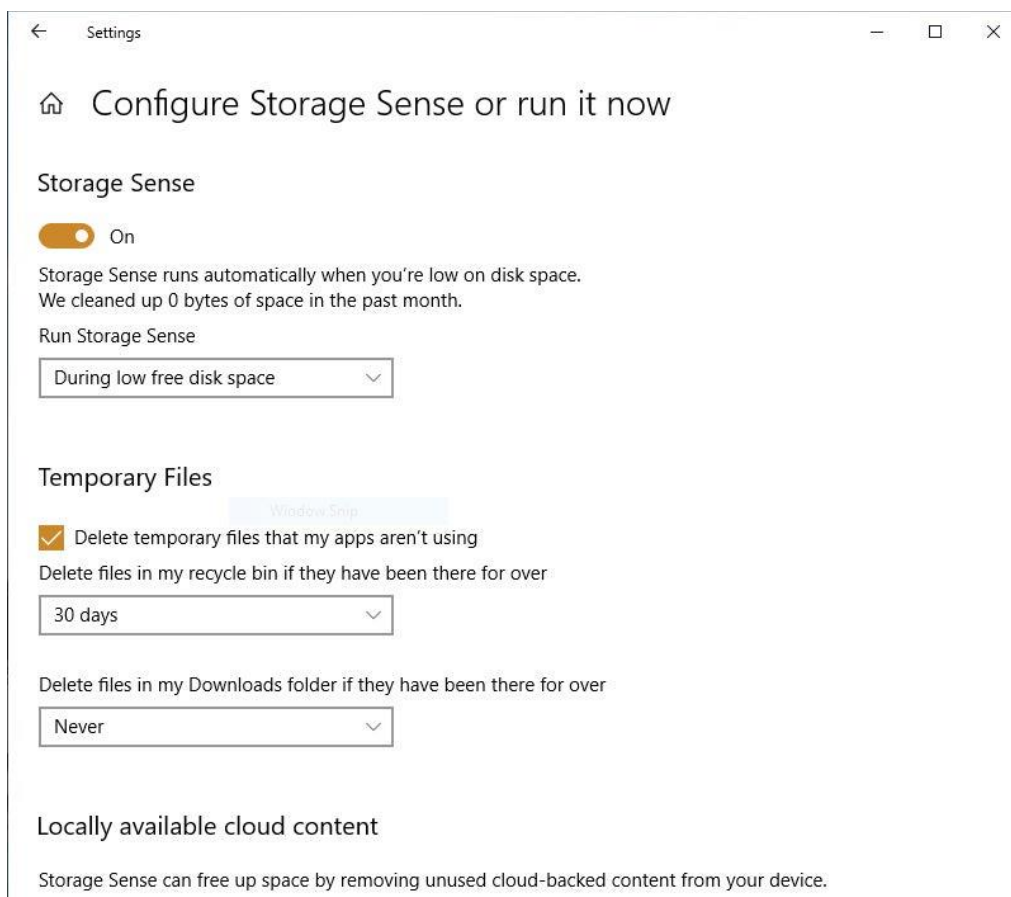
If you'd like, you can turn off indexing only for files in certain locations. To do this, type **index** in the Windows 10 search box and click the Indexing Options result that appears. The Indexing Options page of the Control Panel appears. Click the Modify button, and you'll see a list of locations that are being indexed, such as Microsoft Outlook, your personal files, and so on. Uncheck the box next to any location, and it will no longer be indexed.

9. Clean out your hard disk

If you've got a bloated hard disk filled with files you don't need, you could be slowing down your PC. Cleaning it out can give you a speed boost. Windows 10 has a surprisingly useful built-in tool for doing this called Storage Sense. Go to *Settings > System > Storage* and at the top of the screen, move the toggle from Off to On. When you do this, Windows constantly monitors your PC and deletes old junk files you no longer need — temporary files, files in the Downloads folder that haven't been changed in a month, and old Recycle Bin files.

You can customize how Storage Sense works and also use it to free up even more space than it normally would. Underneath Storage Sense, click "Configure Storage Sense or run it now." From the screen that appears, you can change how often Storage Sense deletes files (every day, every week, every month or when your storage space gets low).

You can also tell Storage Sense to delete files in your Download folder, depending on how long they've been there, and set how long to wait to delete files in the Recycle Bin automatically. You can also have Storage Sense move files from your PC to the cloud in Microsoft's OneDrive cloud storage if they're not opened for a certain amount of time (every day, or every 14 days, 30 days or 60 days).



Here's how to customize the way Storage Sense works, and to tell it to delete old versions of Windows. (Click image to enlarge it.)

You can also delete old versions of Windows that might be hogging space. At the bottom of the screen, check the box next to "Delete previous versions of Windows." Storage Sense will then delete old versions of Windows ten days after you've installed an upgrade. Note that if you do this, you won't be able to revert to the older version of Windows.

10. Clean out your Registry

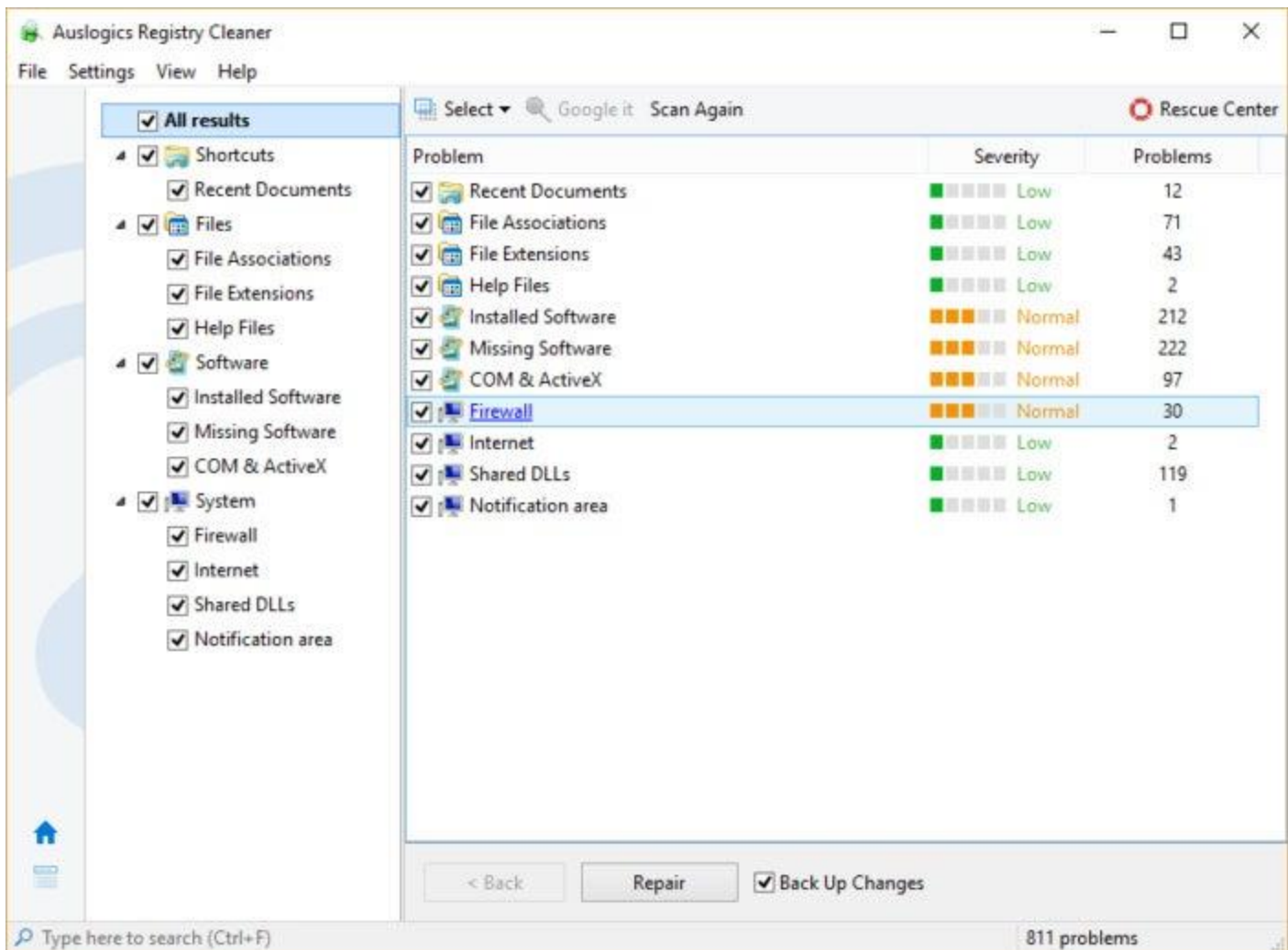
Under the Windows hood, the Registry tracks and controls just about everything about the way Windows works and looks. That includes information about where your programs are stored, which DLLs they use and share, what file types should be opened by which program, and just about everything else.

But the Registry is a very messy thing. When you uninstall a program, for example, that program's settings don't always get cleaned up in the Registry. So over time, it can get filled with countless outdated settings of all types. And that can lead to system slowdowns.

Don't even think of trying to clean any of this out yourself. It's impossible. To do it, you need a Registry Cleaner. There are plenty available, some free and some paid. But there's really no need to outright buy one, because the free [Auslogics Registry Cleaner](#) does a solid job.

Before using Auslogics or any other Registry Cleaner, you should back up your Registry so you can restore it if anything goes wrong. (Auslogics Registry Cleaner does this for you as well, but it can't hurt to have it backed up twice.) To do your own Registry backup, type **regedit.ext** in the search box, then press Enter. That runs the Registry editor. From the File menu, select Export. From the screen that appears, make sure to choose the "All" option in the Export range section at the bottom of the screen. Then choose a file location and file name and click Save. To restore the Registry, open the Registry editor, select Import from the File menu, then open the file you saved.

Now download, install and run Auslogics Registry Cleaner. On the left-hand side of the screen you can select the kinds of Registry issues you want to clean up — for example, File Associations, Internet or Fonts. I generally select them all.



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 Auslogics Registry Cleaner scans for and fixes problems in your Windows Registry. (Click image to enlarge it.)

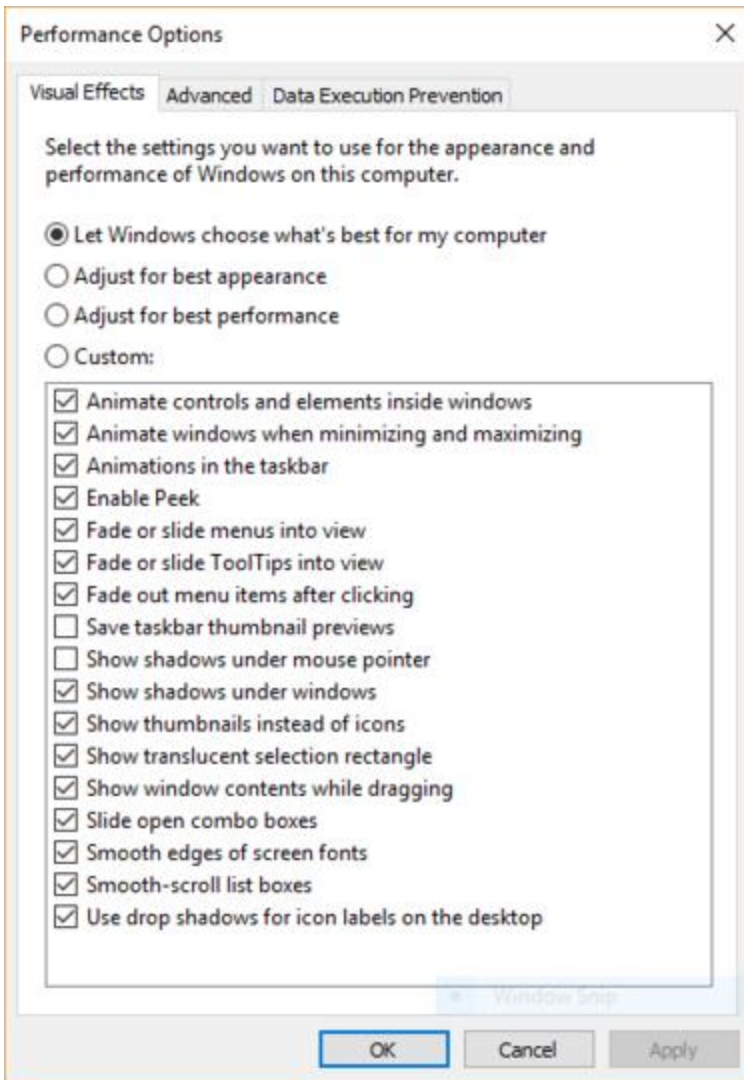
Next, tell it to scan the Registry for problems. To do that, click “Scan Now,” and from the drop-down menu that appears, select Scan. That lets you first examine the Registry problems it finds. If you instead choose “Scan and Repair,” it makes the fixes without you checking them.

It now scans your Registry for errors, then shows you what it found. It ranks the errors according to their severity to help you decide which to fix. Click Repair when you’ve made your decision, and make sure that “Back Up Changes” is checked, so you can restore the Registry easily if something goes wrong.

11. Disable shadows, animations and visual effects

Windows 10 has some nice eye candy — shadows, animations and visual effects. On fast, newer PCs, these don’t usually affect system performance. But on slower and older PCs, they can exact a performance hit.

It’s easy to turn them off. In the Windows 10 search box, type **sysdm.cpl** and press Enter. That launches the System Properties dialog box. Click the Advanced tab and click Settings in the Performance section. That brings you to the Performance Options dialog box. You’ll see a varied list of animations and special effects.



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The Performance Options dialog box lets you turn off effects that might be slowing down Windows 10. (Click image to enlarge it.)

If you have time on your hands and love to tweak, you can turn individual options on and off. These are the animations and special effects you'll probably want to turn off, because they have the greatest effect on system performance:

- Animate controls and elements inside windows
- Animate windows when minimizing and maximizing
- Animations in the taskbar
- Fade or slide menus into view
- Fade or slide ToolTips into view
- Fade out menu items after clicking
- Show shadows under windows

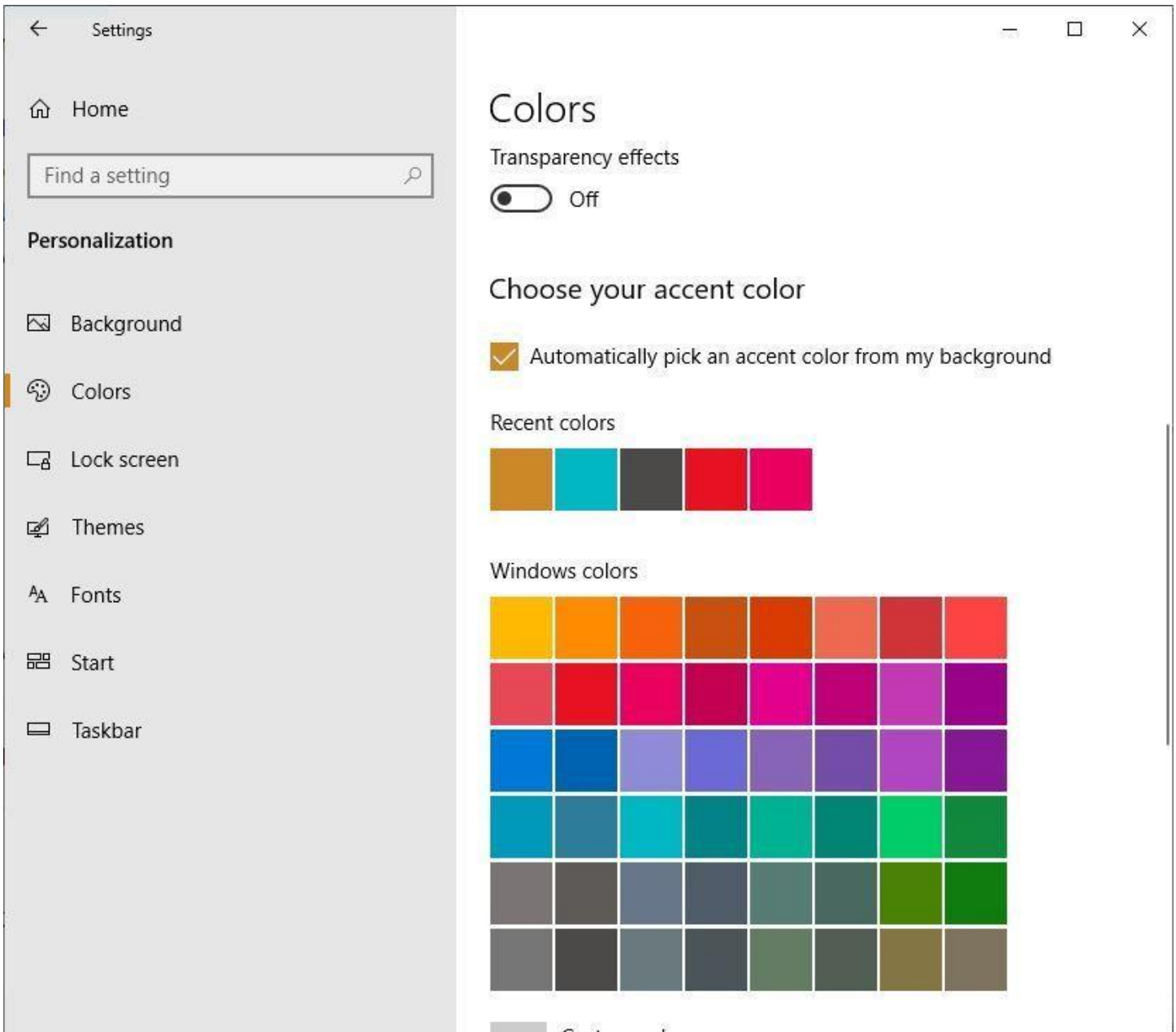
However, it's probably a lot easier to just select "Adjust for best performance" at the top of the screen and then click OK. Windows 10 will then turn off the effects that slow down your system.

12. Disable transparency

In addition to turning off shadows, animations and visual effects, you should also disable the transparency effects that Windows 10 uses for the Start menu, the Taskbar and the Action Center. It

takes a surprising amount of work for Windows to create these transparency effects, and turning them off can make a difference in system performance.

To do it, from Settings, choose *Personalization* > *Colors*, scroll down to “Transparency effects” and move the slider to *Off*.



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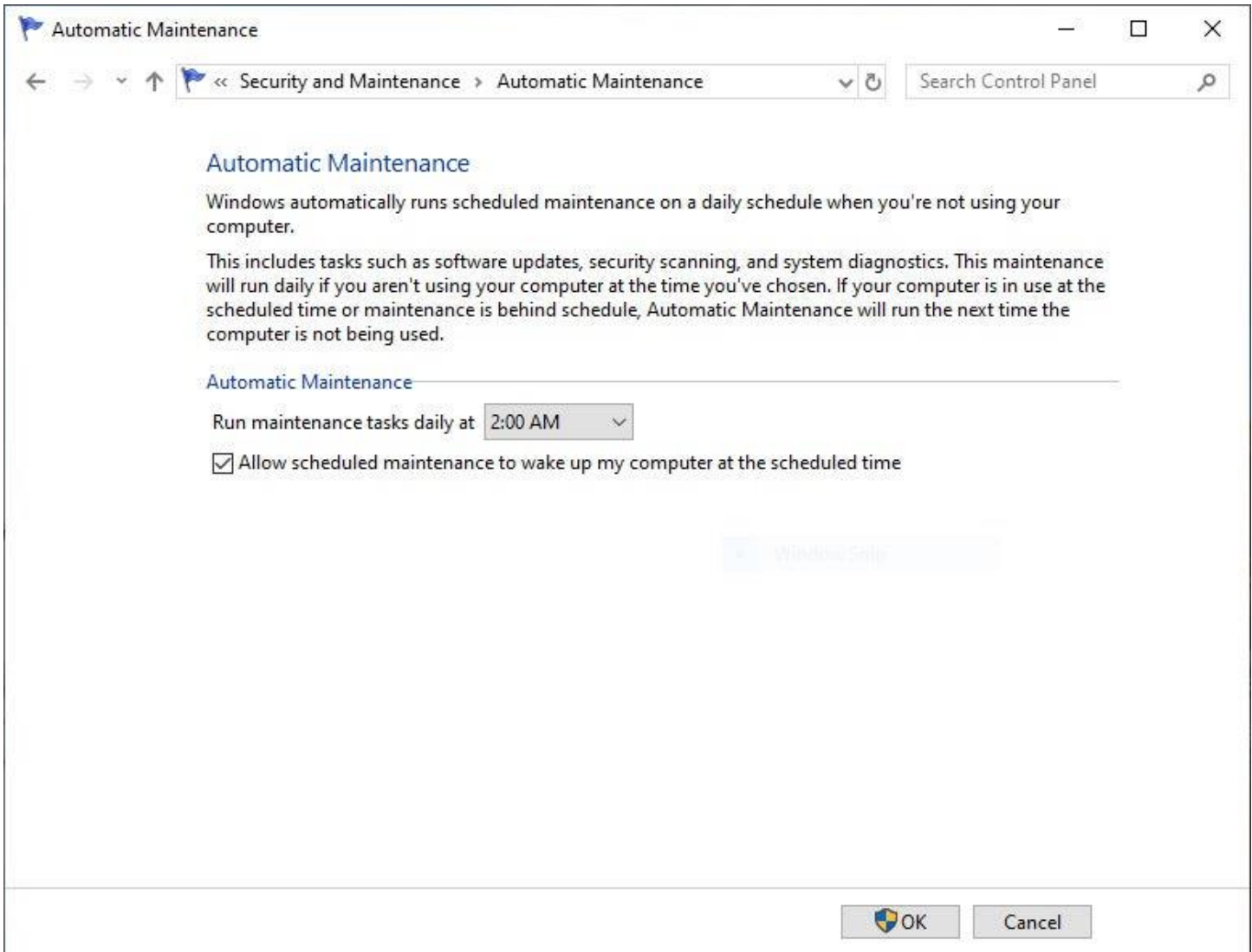
Turning off Windows 10's transparency effects can help speed up performance. (Click image to enlarge it.)

13. Turn on automated Windows maintenance

Every day, behind the scenes, Windows 10 performs maintenance on your PC. It does things like security scanning and performing system diagnostics to make sure everything is up to snuff — and automatically fixes problems if it finds them. That makes sure your PC runs at peak performance. By default, this automatic maintenance runs every day at 2:00 a.m., as long as your device is plugged into a power source and is asleep.

There's a chance, though, that the feature has been accidentally turned off or you haven't had your PC plugged in for a while, so the maintenance hasn't been done. You can make sure it's turned on and runs every day, and run it manually if you'd like.

Run the Control Panel app and select *System and Security > Security and Maintenance*. In the Maintenance section, under Automatic Maintenance, click "Start maintenance" if you want it to run now. To make sure that it runs every day, click "Change maintenance settings," and from the screen that appears, select the time you'd like maintenance to run, and check the box next to "Allow scheduled maintenance to wake up my computer at the scheduled time." Then click OK.



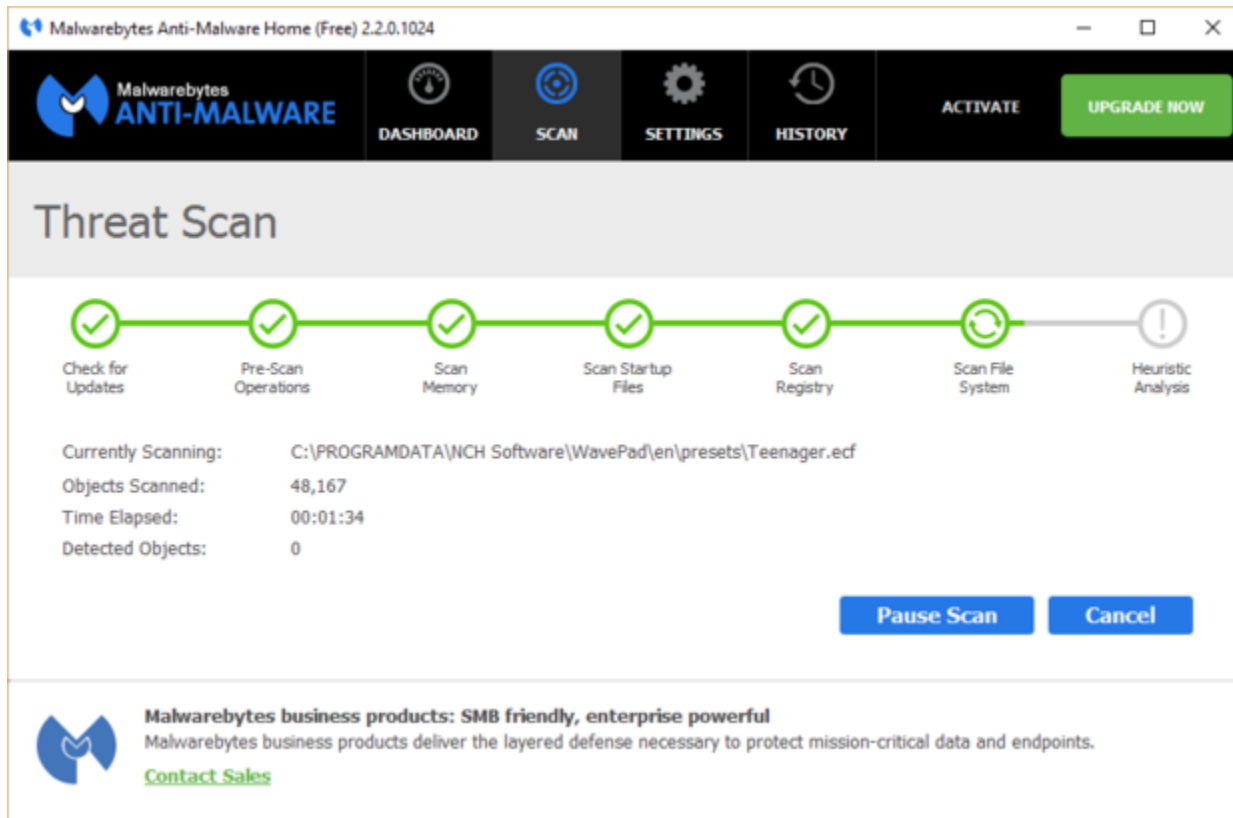
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You can designate a time each day for Windows to run its maintenance tasks. (Click image to enlarge it.)

14. Kill bloatware

Sometimes the biggest factor slowing down your PC isn't Windows 10 itself, but bloatware or adware that takes up CPU and system resources. Adware and bloatware are particularly insidious because they may have been installed by your computer's manufacturer. You'd be amazed at how much more quickly your Windows 10 PC can run if you get rid of it.

First, run a system scan to find adware and malware. If you've already installed a security suite such as Norton Security or McAfee LiveSafe, you can use that. You can also use Windows 10's built in anti-malware app — just type **Windows Defender** in the search box, press Enter, and then click Scan Now. Windows Defender will look for malware and remove any it finds.

It's a good idea to get a second opinion, though, so consider a free tool like [Malwarebytes Anti-Malware](#). The free version scans for malware and removes what it finds; the paid version offers always-on protection to stop infections in the first place.



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Malwarebytes Anti-Malware is a useful application that will scan for and fix Windows 10 PC problems. (Click image to enlarge it.)

Now you can check for bloatware and get rid of it. Several free programs will do this for you; your best bet is to run several of them, because no single one will find all the bloatware on your PC. Good choices are the [PC Decrapifier](#), [Should I Remove It?](#) and [SlimComputer](#).

For more details about removing bloatware, check out Computerworld's article "[Bloatware: What it is and how to get rid of it.](#)"

15. Defrag your hard disk

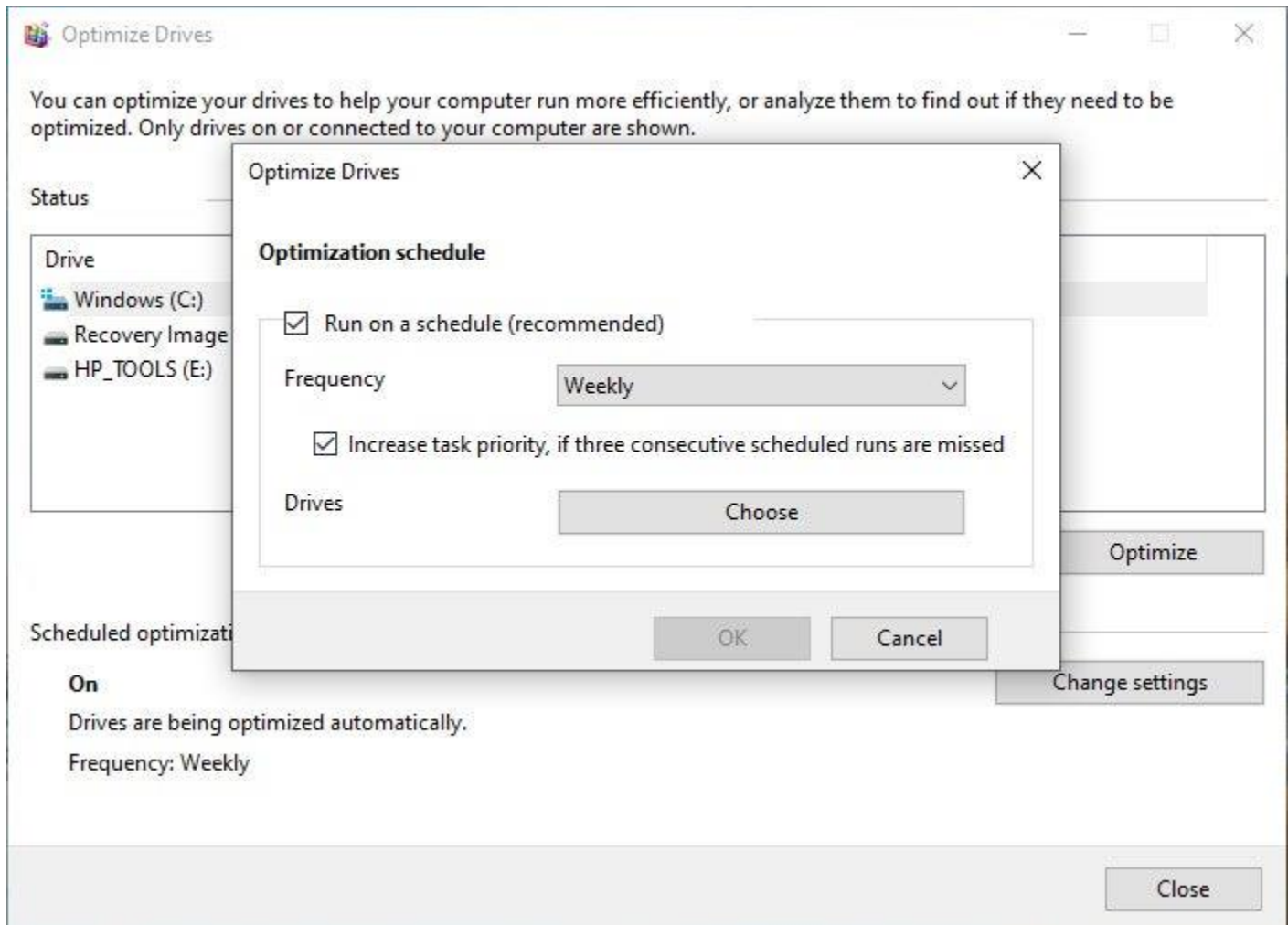
The more you use your hard disk, the more it can become fragmented, which can slow down your PC. When a disk gets fragmented, it stores files willy-nilly across it, and it takes a while for Windows to put them together before running them.

Windows 10, though, has a built-in defragmenter you can use to defragment your hard disk. You can even tell it to run automatically so it stays constantly defragmented.

To do it, type **defrag** into the search box and press Enter. From the screen that appears, select the drive you want you want to defragment. Click the Optimize button to defragment it. Select multiple disks by holding down the Ctrl key and clicking each you want to defragment.

If you want to have your disk or disks defragmented automatically, click the Change settings button, then check the box next to “Run on a schedule.” Now select the frequency at which you want the disk(s) defragmented by clicking the drop-down next to Frequency and selecting Daily, Weekly or Monthly. (Weekly will be your best bet.) From this screen you can also choose multiple drives to defragment.

Note: If you have an SSD, defragging won't offer any noticeable performance boost, and it could cause wear on the disk. So it's not worth your while to defrag SSDs.

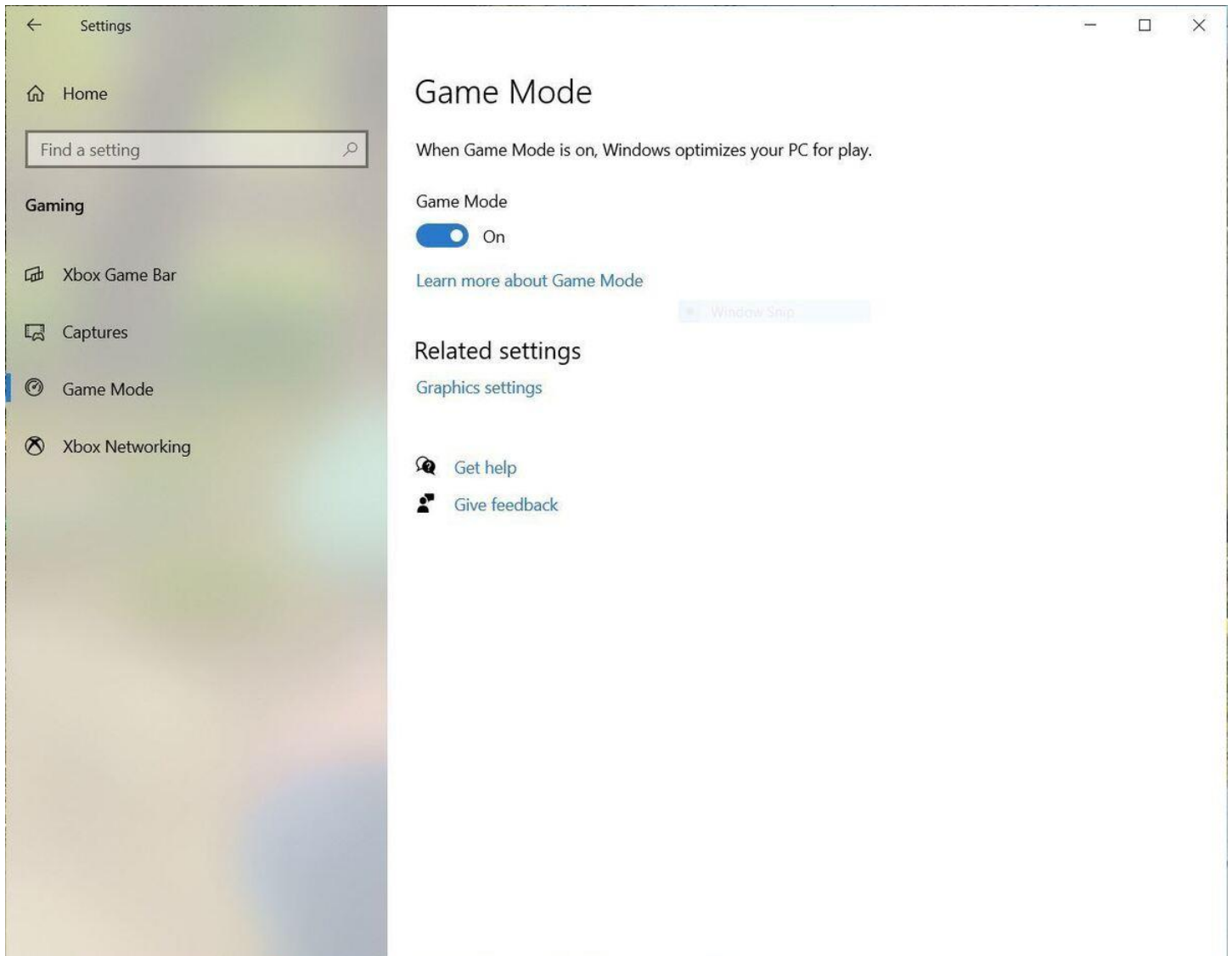


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You can set Windows 10's built-in disk defragmenter to run automatically on a schedule. (Click image to enlarge it.)

16. Disable Game Mode

If you're a serious gamer, you probably know all about Game Mode, which optimizes your PC for playing games. That's great for when you're doing just that, but it can slow down your system when you're not playing because it keeps some system resources in reserve in case you start playing a game and has occasionally been linked to stability issues. So turning off Game Mode can give your PC a quick boost. (You can always turn it back on again when you want to play a game.)

Game Mode is turned on by default, so even if you've never played a game on your PC, it's probably enabled. To turn it off, go to *Settings > Gaming > Game Mode* and move the Game Mode slider to *Off*.



Microsoft
Turning off Game Mode can give your PC an instant boost.

17. Shut down and restart Windows

Here's one of IT's not-quite-secret weapons for troubleshooting and speeding up a PC: Shut it down and restart it. Doing that clears out any excess use of RAM that otherwise can't be cleared. It also kills processes that you might have set in motion and are no longer needed, but that continue running and slow your system. If your Windows 10 PC has turned sluggish over time for no apparent reason, you may be surprised at how much more quickly it will run when you do this.

Try just some of these tricks, and you'll find that you've got a faster Windows 10 PC — and one that is less likely to have any reliability problems.

This article was originally published in February 2016 and most recently updated in August 2022.