Not everyone thinks that Microsoft Windows is too slow for human endurance. Those who like a calm, laid-back lifestyle find it reassuring. Users who have recently spent thousands of dollars on blindingly fast hardware either aren't bothered by Windows' performance or don't want to admit it. And there are still others who don't notice the speed problem between system crashes.

But if speed is important to you, and if you bought your once blindingly fast hardware more than six months ago, you may be getting tired of looking at hourglasses. What follows are a few tips for making Windows run faster. Use them wisely, and you could make Windows on your 386 scream like DOS on an 8088.

• Aside from looking at pretty pictures, multitasking is the main reason to use Windows. But if you're not careful, multitasking can slow your system to a crawl. The solution? Only multitask one program at a time.

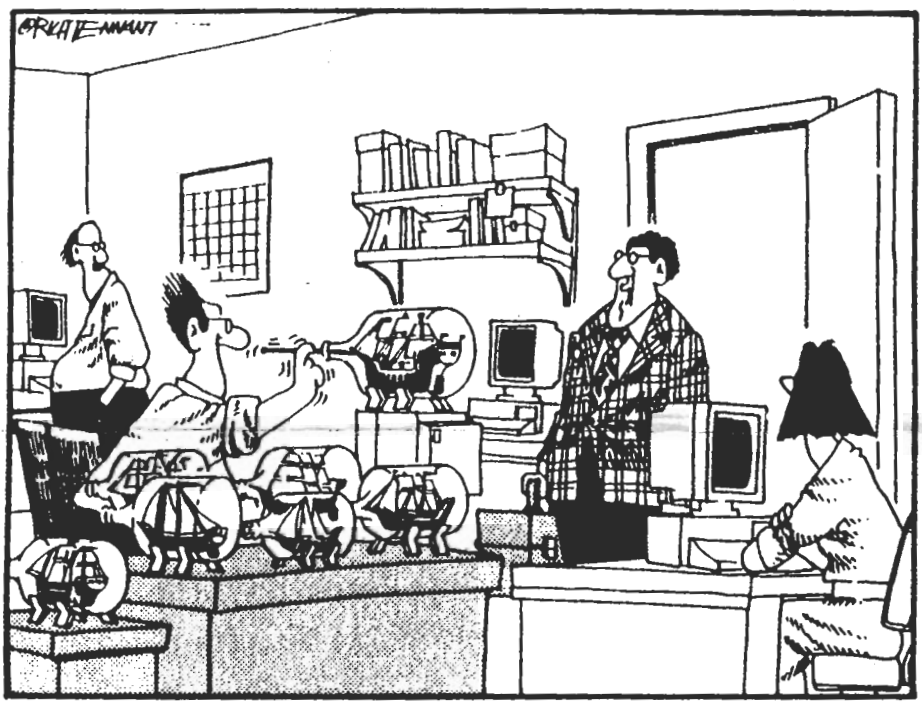
• Everyone likes fancy icons, beautiful wallpaper, charming mouse cursors, psychedelic screen savers, and other GUI-based productivity gains. Unfortunately, these never translate into good performance. The solution? First, turn your wallpaper option to "[None];" this will give you a plain, light-blue background. Then use an icon editor, such as the one that doesn't ship with Windows, to turn the icon for each of your programs into a solid block of light blue. Replace the bitmap for your mouse cursor — via a commercial utility like The Scorsesi Cursor — with a small patch of light blue.

• And your screen saver? Don't worry — a burned-in screen won't create a significant problem.

• Buy more RAM.

• I don't care what kind of CPU you have — it's not fast enough and you should replace it with something better. But when you do, remember to

Windows At the Speed of Windows



"WHO'S GOT THE COMPUTER WITH THE SLOW RESPONSE TIME?"

install an exhaust duct leading out through your roof.

• A lot of CPU cycles are wasted through poorly-written hardware drivers, such as those that come from Microsoft and other developers. However, faster, leaner drivers are available via online services like CompuCharge. By spending as little as one hour a week searching and downloading (at only ten cents a minute), you can find new drivers that will save you up to five minutes every day.

• A large, permanent swapfile will increase disk efficiency, speeding up your system. However, too large a permanent swapfile will increase disk access, slowing down your system. To find out exactly how large a swapfile you should create, multiply the RAM in your system by four, add your free disk space, divide by sixteen, subtract the size of your favorite Windows program, add the number of files in your SYSTEM directory, raise this to the power of your name as an ASCII value, and divide by forty-eight. If the resulting number is too large, multiply the RAM in your system by two and repeat the process.

• Buy still more RAM.

• A disk cache will reduce disk access and speed up your system. You'll get the best performance from a cache that reduces disk writes as well as reads, and no cache reduces writes like Sum Software's Magnetic Sweep. While using standard cache algorithms to keep frequently-used data in RAM, Magnetic Sweep reduces disk reads by blocking those extra-slow writes completely. You'd be amazed how quickly you can save a file when it's not going anywhere!

• A disk cache will reduce the amount of available RAM, forcing Windows to access the disk more often. No one in his right mind would use a disk cache with Windows.

• When you defragment your hard disk, arrange it so that Windows can quickly get to its most-used files. Using whatever Byzantine menu options

your defragger makes available, place the following files and directories as close to the middle of your hard disk as possible: 386SPART.PAR, your WINDOWS directory, your WINDOWS/SYSTEM directory, every .DLL file you own, your Windows applications, your DOS utilities, letters to Aunt Martha, your budget worksheets, the temporary files that disappear when you exit Windows, MSDOS.EXE, that stupid program that makes belching sounds when you delete a file, your .BAK files, and all the blank space on your disk. If you can get all of this within 5MB of the center of the disk, Windows will work like lightning.

• Buy more RAM than you bought the last time.

• Remove every file from your WINDOWS directory except WIN.COM. That way, when you type WIN at the DOS prompt, you'll be in and out of Windows in no time flat.

• If you've ever printed 200 pages from a Windows application, you know how excruciatingly slow it can be. To speed up the process, make sure your printer is connected to your computer, use only one font, and print only one page 200 times.

• However much RAM you have, buy more.

• Surprisingly, Windows works best when it's on floppies, specifically the ones it came on. For optimum performance, don't install it at all.

Following all of these rules won't fix all of Windows' speed problems, but it will help. At least until you can buy yourself some more RAM.

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"Gigglebytes" is a satirical column loosely based on computer industry events, trends and people. The opinions expressed in this column are the writer's and do not necessarily reflect those of *Computer Currents*.