

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This is another article with Questions & Answers. This month's question is: **I am having a problem with my computer slowing down and locking up. Someone told me to check my resources, I did and have 35% System Resources Free. Isn't this enough?**

This is a very good question! I can tell that you're using either Windows 95, Windows 98, or Windows ME. These versions of Windows allow you to see your Free System Resources. Actually, 35% Free System Resources is getting low and may be causing you problem. If you're using one of the three versions of Windows above, you can check you Free System Resources by opening the Control Panel and then opening the System Icon. This will bring up a dialog box and the last tab will be Performance. The second item under this tab is System Resources and it shows you the amount Free. The System Resources are made up on a number of things but the majority, and the one you have most control of, is System Memory. System Memory is the first 640KB of RAM in your computer and this is a holdover from DOS. Since all three of these versions of Windows are built on DOS they all have to use this System Memory to run programs. Actually, each program that runs on your computer places a stub, a small pointer in the System Memory that holds key information about the program, and then runs the rest of the program in regular RAM memory. So each program you run uses up a small amount of the System Memory. So you should be able to run a large number of programs. There is a problem though with running programs in these versions of Windows when you quit a program it should completely remove the stub but it doesn't! So as you start and stop programs the System Memory gets used up. These versions of Windows should startup with between 70% and 80% Free System Resources and they should run very well until they get down to about 40%. At this point Windows becomes unstable.

So what can you do about this? First, you can limit the number of programs that load when Windows starts up. Second, you can try to avoid starting and stopping programs. That is, once a program is started leave it running instead of quitting it and restarting it. Lastly, you can upgrade to either Windows 2000 or Windows XP as they are not built on DOS so they don't have this problem.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.