

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 an interesting one and it ties back to my first article about computer maintenance. **There must be a lot of software and other stuff I saved sometime ago and have never used. Should I try to recover that memory capacity? Or buy new memory chips? Or what?**

I should start by saying there is a little confusion here where software and other files are stored in a computer. Software and other files are stored on the hard drive and in memory. When the computer is running some of this software and other files are moved into the computer's memory when they are being used. So there are two things to address here.

One is the software and other files that are stored on the hard drive. You should periodically go through these files and remove unused ones. This will free up space on the hard drive which actually causes the computer to run fast and could possibly delay the need to upgrade the computer. Software applications should be uninstalled to be removed from the computer as this will properly remove all files and associations with the operating system (i.e. Windows). The other files can just be deleted but you may want to back these files up before deleting them.

The other thing to address here is the actual memory in the computer. This memory called RAM (Random Access Memory) is used to hold software and data files temporarily while the computer is running. When the computer is turned off this memory is cleared. For computers running the Windows operating systems the easiest thing to do to increase performance is to increase the memory. Now for Windows there is a task tray on the right side of the taskbar, it has all of those icons in it. Each one of those icons is a program running which is using memory. A lot of software applications install these programs so that you can have quick access to the application. In most cases these programs aren't necessary for the operation of the computer and can be removed. **Please, be very careful when removing these programs!** But by removing as many as possible frees up memory for the computer to use in running other applications or increasing its performance.

So by getting rid of unused software and other files and by removing some of the programs from the task tray you can increase the computer's performance and delay the need to upgrade the computer.

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](mailto:meggert@wi.rr.com), my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.