BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 2129

Updated November 2026

My Computer Got Slow — The No-Cost Speed-Up Checklist

The free fixes that bring back the speed, in the order a pro would try them

Plain-English tech help from:

Bill's Home Tech

Portage County, Ohio

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

The 60-Second Version 3

The Short Version 3

First, Understand What "Slow" Means 4

Step 1: Restart Properly 4

Step 2: Thin Out Startup Programs 5

Step 3: Tame the Web Browser 6

Step 4: Give the Drive Some Room 6

Step 5: Finish Pending Updates 7

Step 6: Check for Junk and Scareware 8

Laptop-Specific Slowdowns: Heat and Battery 8

The 10-Minute Tune-Up Routine 9

Habits That Keep It Quick 9

When It Really Is the Hardware 10

When to Call Bill 11

Everyday Cheat Sheet 12

A Note From Bill 13

Your Visit — and My Promise 14

SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A slow computer is usually bogged down, not broken — and every fix here is free. Start by restarting properly (not just sleeping). Then thin out the programs that launch at startup, tame the web browser (close tabs, remove add-ons, clear the cache), free up drive space with the built-in cleanup tools, and install any pending updates.

Watch for junk "booster" software and scary pop-ups, and never call a number a pop-up shows you. Only if it is still slow after all that is it worth considering hardware — and on an older machine, a solid-state drive upgrade is often a cheap transformation.

1 The Short Version

A computer that got slow is usually not broken or worn out — it is bogged down by things that quietly piled up: too many programs launching at startup, a browser stuffed with tabs and add-ons, a nearly full drive, and updates waiting to finish. Every one of these is free to fix.

We will go through them in order, from the thirty-second restart to the deeper cleanups, and you can stop as soon as the computer feels right again. Only at the very end, if nothing helps, is it worth thinking about hardware or a professional look.

- Most slowdowns are clutter and habits, not a failing computer.
- The usual causes: startup programs, browser overload, a full drive, pending updates.
- Every fix in this guide is completely free.
- Try them in order and stop when the speed comes back.

TIP

Start with the simplest thing of all: fully restart the computer, not just close the lid or let it sleep. A proper restart clears out temporary clutter and ends background tasks that may be dragging everything down, and it fixes a surprising number of slowdowns on its own.

2 First, Understand What "Slow" Means

Slowness is a symptom, not a single problem, and pinning down when it happens points to the cause. A computer slow to start up points at startup programs; one slow only in the web browser points at the browser; one slow at everything points at the drive, memory, or updates.

You do not need to diagnose it perfectly — the checklist handles the common causes regardless. But noticing the pattern can save you time by pointing you to the right chapter first.

GOOD TO KNOW

A computer that is slow only when browsing the web almost always has a browser problem, not a computer problem. That is good news, because a cluttered browser is one of the quickest things to fix, covered below.

3 Step 1: Restart Properly

It sounds too simple, but a genuine restart is the most effective single step, especially on a computer that has not been turned off in weeks. Many people only ever close the laptop lid, which puts it to sleep rather than restarting it, so the clutter never clears.

1. Save any open work.
2. Choose Restart (not Shut Down and not just closing the lid).

3. Let it come all the way back up before judging the speed.
4. If it felt slow because it had been on for weeks, this alone may fix it.

> **TIP**
> Make a habit of restarting once a week. It clears memory, finishes pending updates, and ends runaway background tasks — the single best habit for a computer that stays quick and reliable.

4 Step 2: Thin Out Startup Programs

Over time, many programs quietly set themselves to launch the moment the computer starts — updaters, helpers, chat and cloud tools you rarely use. Each one steals a little speed and memory, and together they can make the computer crawl for minutes after you turn it on.

Turning off the ones you do not need from the very start is safe — it does not uninstall anything, it just stops them launching automatically. You can still open any of them whenever you want.

1. Windows: open Task Manager (right-click the taskbar), click the "Startup apps" tab, and turn off things you do not need at startup.
2. Mac: System Settings, General, Login Items, and remove items you do not need launching at login.
3. Leave anything from your security software or the computer maker that you are unsure about.
4. Restart and notice the difference in how quickly it is ready to use.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> We have a separate guide devoted to exactly which startup programs are safe to turn off and which to leave. If you are unsure about an entry, that guide — or a quick call — saves you from disabling something the computer needs.

5 Step 3: Tame the Web Browser

For most people, the browser is where the computer feels slowest, because it is where we spend our time and where clutter gathers fastest. Dozens of open tabs, a pile of add-ons, and years of cached data all drag it down.

Tidying the browser often makes the whole computer feel new, because the browser is using a big share of its memory. None of this loses your bookmarks or saved passwords.

1. Close tabs you are not using — each open tab uses memory, and some keep working in the background.
2. Remove browser add-ons or extensions you did not deliberately install or no longer use.
3. Clear the browser's cache and history (in its Settings, under Privacy).
4. Make sure the browser itself is up to date.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Be especially wary of browser add-ons promising coupons, "PC cleaning," or search "improvements" — several of these are junk that actively slows the browser and show unwanted ads. Removing them often gives the biggest single speed-up.

6 Step 4: Give the Drive Some Room

A computer needs free space on its drive to work smoothly, the way you need clear counter space to cook. When the drive is nearly full, the whole computer slows down, because it has no room for the temporary files it constantly creates.

Freeing space is free and often brings back noticeable speed. Our storage-cleanup guides cover this in depth, but the quick version is enough for most people.

- Empty the Trash or Recycle Bin.
- Clear old installers and files from Downloads.

- Use the built-in cleanup tools (Windows Disk Cleanup and Storage Sense; Mac Storage recommendations).
- Aim to keep a healthy chunk of the drive free, not running right at the edge.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> If your drive is almost completely full, that alone can be the entire cause of the slowdown. Freeing a healthy amount of space often restores the speed on its own, with nothing else needed.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

7 Step 5: Finish Pending Updates

A computer part-way through installing updates, or nagging you to restart for them, often runs slowly until the updates are done. Letting them finish — rather than postponing forever — clears that drag and keeps the computer secure.

1. Windows: open Settings, Windows Update, and install anything waiting, then restart.
2. Mac: System Settings, General, Software Update, and install what is offered.
3. Update your main programs and browser too, as outdated ones can misbehave.
4. Give it time — updates can run slowly while installing, then speed up once done.

> **TIP**
>
> Do updates when you have time to let them finish, such as the end of the day, rather than when you are in a hurry. An update interrupted midway is one of the few things that can genuinely cause problems.

8 Step 6: Check for Junk and Scareware

Sometimes the real cause is unwanted software that sneaked on — a fake "speed booster," a toolbar, or scareware that pops up warnings. These actively slow the computer and often got on through a misleading download or ad.

Removing them helps, but it needs care, because some are designed to resist and others are disguised as helpful. This is one area where a careful eye matters.

- Look in your installed programs for things you do not recognize or remember adding.
- Be suspicious of anything named like a "cleaner," "booster," or "PC optimizer."
- Never call a phone number shown in a scary pop-up — that is a scam.
- Use only your computer's built-in security tools, which are good and free.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> If you suspect unwanted software or you are seeing alarming pop-ups, stop and get help rather than clicking around — some of those pop-ups are traps. Safely removing junk software and confirming the computer is clean is a common, straightforward visit for me.

9 Laptop-Specific Slowdowns: Heat and Battery

Laptops have two slowdown causes that desktops do not, and both are easy to miss. The first is heat: when the vents get clogged with dust or the laptop sits on a soft surface like a bed or sofa, it overheats and deliberately slows itself down to cool off. The second is a tired battery or power-saving mode throttling the speed.

Neither means the laptop is failing. A laptop that is fast when plugged in but slow on battery is usually in a power-saving mode, and one that slows down after running a while is usually running hot. Both have simple fixes.

- Use the laptop on a hard, flat surface so its vents are not blocked.

- Gently clear dust from the vents with a puff of air if they look clogged.
- Check the power mode — set it to "Balanced" or "Better performance," not strict battery-saving, when plugged in.
- If the fan runs loud and constant, heat may be the cause worth looking at.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A laptop that has grown hot and loud over the years is very often just full of dust inside. A careful internal cleaning can bring back both the speed and the quiet — a worthwhile, inexpensive fix compared with replacing the machine.

10 The 10-Minute Tune-Up Routine

If you would rather not diagnose anything, here is a simple routine that addresses all the common free causes in one short sitting. Run it whenever the computer starts to feel heavy and it will handle most slowdowns.

1. Restart the computer properly.
2. Trim the programs that launch at startup.
3. Close extra browser tabs and remove add-ons you do not use.
4. Run the built-in cleanup tool to free some drive space.
5. Install any pending updates, then restart once more.

> *Ten minutes of simple, free housekeeping brings back more speed than most people expect — and far more cheaply than any purchase.*

11 Habits That Keep It Quick

A few light habits keep a computer feeling fast for years, so you spend far less time doing rescue cleanups. None of them takes real effort once they become routine.

- Restart properly about once a week rather than only ever sleeping it.

- Keep browser tabs to what you are actually using.
- Install updates when they appear instead of postponing forever.
- Keep a healthy amount of drive space free as a matter of course.
- Decline the extra toolbars and "helpers" that programs try to add during installation.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Of all of these, the weekly restart is the single most valuable habit. It clears memory, finishes updates, and ends runaway tasks — quietly preventing the majority of slowdowns before they ever start.

12 When It Really Is the Hardware

If you have worked through the whole checklist and the computer is still slow, then and only then is it worth considering the hardware. Even here, there is often a cheap fix before replacement.

Sign	Likely fix
Slow even when clean and empty	An older hard drive — a solid-state upgrade transforms it
Struggles with many things open	More memory (RAM) may help
Very old and unsupported	It may simply be time to replace it

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> On many older computers, swapping a traditional hard drive for a modern solid-state drive is the single biggest speed-up possible, and it costs far less than a new computer. It can make a tired machine feel genuinely new.

13 When to Call Bill

Most people bring back real speed with the free steps here, and you should go as far as you are comfortable. But if the computer is still slow after the checklist, if you suspect unwanted software or are seeing scary pop-ups, or if you want an honest answer on whether a cheap upgrade or a new machine makes sense, there is no need to guess.

I come to you, work through the whole checklist properly, safely remove any junk software, and tell you honestly whether a free fix, an inexpensive upgrade, or a replacement is the right call for your computer and your budget. You end up with a quicker machine and a clear picture of why it slowed down.

- Still slow after working through the checklist.
- You suspect unwanted software or are seeing alarming pop-ups.
- You want honest advice on an upgrade versus a new computer.
- You would simply rather have it tuned up properly in one visit.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by the computer. Work down the list; stop when it feels right.

I want to…	Do this…
The first move	Restart properly (not just sleep)
Speed up startup	Turn off programs that launch at startup
Fix a slow browser	Close tabs, remove add-ons, clear the cache
Give it room	Free drive space with the built-in cleanup tools
Keep it secure & quick	Install pending updates, then restart
If still slow	Consider a solid-state drive — ask Bill if it's worth it
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

Call or text (330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.