

# MANAGE THE PROGRAMS THAT ARE RUNNING IN THE BACKGROUND

Beginners' Kaffee Klatch  
Presented by Bill Wilkinson  
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A computer's poor performance could be due to the number of programs that run automatically at system start-up.

Virtually all program applications that you install using the default installation decide that they should start-up when Windows starts. If you allow these to take control, you can end up with a situation where every program slows down to the point of being unusable. The reason for this is that all of these programs use a portion of the system memory and resources (RAM) which leaves a smaller percentage for other programs once they're opened.

The major problem with getting rid of startup items is that they can be hidden in one of several places on your PC.

## First Place to Look:

1. Click Start.
2. Select Run.
3. Type **msconfig**.
4. Select the Startup tab.
5. **Deselect** the offending program(s). [Refer to one of the Websites below for clues as to which programs are safe to deselect.] Please note that you are not uninstalling the program from your system. You are merely causing it to refrain from running at startup and, thus, becoming a resources hog!

**These two links will provide up-to-date lists of all the programs (over 24,000 possibilities as of mid-May 2009!) that might be operating in the background. It will save you many minutes of frustration as you attempt to decipher the identity codes for many of the programs.**

<http://www.bleepingcomputer.com/startups/>

<http://www.sysinfo.org/startuplist.php>

6. Click OK.
7. Restart your computer.

NOTE: When stopping programs from running at start-up, it's best to deselect them one or two at a time rather than in larger groups. You want to make sure that you're not causing any system problems by stopping them. During each cycle, write down the names of the two programs that you have stopped so that you can restart them should there be a system problem. So stop one or two, then restart your PC. If it runs fine, then stop another set of two and restart. Continue doing this until you've cleared all the programs you don't want to run automatically.

### **Second Place to Look:**

1. Click Start.
2. Select **All Programs** (XP)
3. Select the **Startup** folder. If the offending program is in that file folder, just delete it. (This action deletes the shortcut only, so you will not be deleting the actual program.)

**A Third Place to Look** would have you drilling down deep within the registry. This is a dangerous procedure, however, for anyone who does not have complete self-confidence in accessing the registry editor. It's best not to go there unless you are very comfortable with your computing skills. A mistake in dealing with the registry could cause your system to become inoperable.

### **AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO LOOKING IN THE REGISTRY, TRY ONE OR BOTH OF THESE FREEBIES!**

**StartupRun** displays the list of applications that are launched automatically when Windows boots. For each application, additional information is displayed in order to allow you to easily identify the applications that are loaded at Windows startup. If StartupRun identifies a spyware or adware program that runs at startup, it automatically highlights it in pink color. In addition, you are allowed to edit, disable, enable and delete the selected startup entries.

<http://www.nirsoft.net/utils/strun.html>

**Autoruns** shows you what programs are running "in the background" during system bootup. These programs include ones in your startup folder, msconfig, and other Registry keys. There are a lot of programs running at startup. You will be able to see how much you can increase the speed of your boot up time. Always backup first before making changes.

<http://www.sysinternals.com/utilities/autoruns.html>

Each time you uncheck a box and restart your PC, you'll get a warning that you've used the System Configuration Utility to disable a program from starting automatically. If you don't want to see that warning, disable it by checking the box in the dialog itself. Be advised, however, that it will reappear at bootup every time you make a change to the System Configuration Utility.

A truly outstanding third-party utility that you should consider is **StartupMonitor** (free; <http://tinyurl.com/33jgz> ) It lets you know when any application secretly tries to register itself when you start up your computer. You won't have to worry about your Notification Area (System Tray) getting cluttered. As an added feature, the utility also protects your system from Trojan horses. After you download the small file, the utility runs transparently. You won't know it's there until a program attempts to load at startup. Then a screen pops up on your Desktop that gives you the option of accepting or refusing the change to your system startup.

Less-than-reputable programmers try to sneak in secret applications you don't want along with the program you download. With StartupMonitor, you'll have the power to keep them out. That's why this little utility is a huge help.