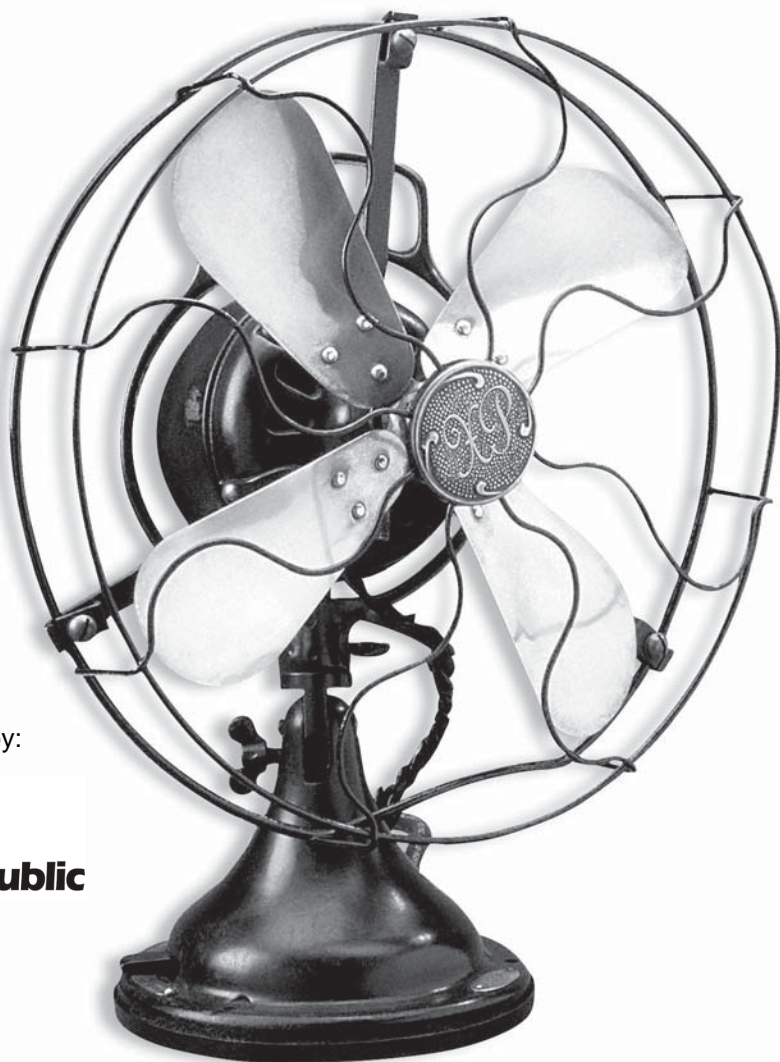


# WINDOWS XP HACKS™

**2nd  
Edition**  
Covers SP2

*Tips & Tools for Optimizing Your OS*



Presented by:



O'REILLY®

*Preston Gralla*

HACK  
#3

## Speed Up Boot and Shutdown Times

Shorten the time it takes for your desktop to appear when you turn on your PC, and make XP shut down faster as well.

No matter how fast your PC boots, it's not fast enough. Here are several hacks to get you right to your desktop as quickly as possible after startup.

### Perform a Boot Defragment

There's a simple way to speed up XP startup: make your system do a boot defragment, which will put all the boot files next to one another on your hard disk. When boot files are in close proximity to one another, your system will start faster.

On most systems, boot defragment should be enabled by default, but it might not be on yours, or it might have been changed inadvertently. To make sure that boot defragment is enabled on your system, run the [Registry Editor](#) [Hack #83] and go to:

```
HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Dfrg\BootOptimizeFunction
```

Edit the `Enable` string value to `Y` if it is not already set to `Y`. Exit the Registry and reboot. The next time you reboot, you'll do a boot defragment.



I've found many web sites recommending a way of speeding up boot times that might in fact slow down the amount of time it takes to boot up and will probably slow down launching applications as well. The tip recommends going to your `C:\WINDOWS\Prefetch` directory and emptying it every week. Windows uses this directory to speed up launching applications. It analyzes the files you use during startup and the applications you launch, and it creates an index to where those files and applications are located on your hard disk. By using this index, XP can launch files and applications faster. So, by emptying the directory, you are most likely slowing down launching applications. In my tests, I've also found that after emptying the directory, it takes my PC a few seconds *longer* to get to my desktop after bootup.

### Hack Your BIOS for Faster Startups

When you turn on your PC, it goes through a set of startup procedures in its BIOS before it gets to starting XP. So, if you speed up those initial startup procedures, you'll make your system start faster.

You can speed up your startup procedures by changing the BIOS with the built-in setup utility. How you run this utility varies from PC to PC, but you

## Speed Up Boot and Shutdown Times

typically get to it by pressing the Delete, F1, or F10 keys during startup. You'll come to a menu with a variety of choices. Here are the choices to make for faster system startups:

### *Quick Power On Self Test (POST)*

When you choose this option, your system runs an abbreviated POST rather than the normal, lengthy one.

### *Boot Up Floppy Seek*

Disable this option. When it's enabled, your system spends a few extra seconds looking for your floppy drive—a relatively pointless procedure, especially considering how infrequently you use your floppy drive.

### *Boot Delay*

Some systems let you delay booting after you turn on your PC so that your hard drive gets a chance to start spinning before bootup. Most likely, you don't need to have this boot delay, so turn it off. If you run into problems, however, you can turn it back on.

## Fine-Tune Your Registry for Faster Startups

Over time, your Registry can become bloated with unused entries, slowing down your system startup because your system loads them every time you start up your PC. Get a Registry clean-up tool to delete unneeded Registry entries and speed up startup times. Registry First Aid, shown in Figure 1-3, is an excellent Registry clean-up tool. It combs your Registry for outdated and useless entries and then lets you choose which entries to delete and which to keep. It also creates a full Registry backup so that you can restore the Registry if you run into a problem.

Registry First Aid is shareware and free to try, but it costs \$21 if you decide to keep using it. Download it from <http://www.rosecitysoftware.com/Reg1Aid/index.html>.

After you clean out your Registry, you might want to try compacting it to get rid of unused space. The Registry Compactor, available from <http://www.rosecitysoftware.com/RegistryCompactor/index.html>, will do the trick. Compacting your Registry reduces its size and decreases loading time. It's shareware and free to try, but it costs \$19.95 if you decide to keep it.

## Speed Up Shutdown Times

It's not only startup times that you'd like to speed up; you can also make sure that your system shuts down faster. If shutting down XP takes what seems to be an inordinate amount of time, here are a couple of steps you can take to speed up the shutdown process:

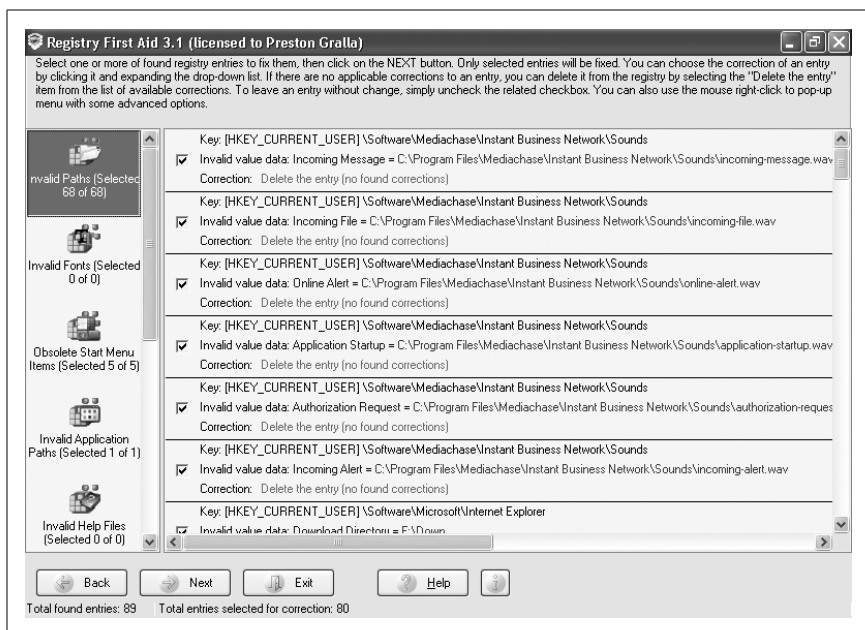


Figure 1-3. Cleaning the KEY Registry with Registry First Aid

**Don't have XP clear your paging file at shutdown.** For security reasons, you can have XP clear your paging file (*pagefile.sys*) of its contents whenever you shut down. Your paging file is used to store temporary files and data, but when your system shuts down, information stays in the file. Some people prefer to have the paging file cleared at shutdown because sensitive information, such as unencrypted passwords, sometimes ends up in the file. However, clearing the paging file can slow shutdown times significantly, so if extreme security isn't a high priority, you might not want to clear it. To shut down XP without clearing your paging file, run the Registry Editor and go to:

```
HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager\Memory Management
```

Change the value of `ClearPageFileAtShutdown` to 0. Close the Registry and restart your computer. Whenever you turn off XP from now on, the paging file won't be cleared, and you should be able to shut down more quickly.

**Turn off unnecessary services.** Services take time to shut down, so the fewer you run, the faster you can shut down. For information on how to shut them down, see "Halt Startup Programs and Services" [Hack #4].

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### **Additional resources**

- Sign up for the [Windows XP newsletter](#)
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- See all of [TechRepublic's newsletter offerings](#)
- [Configuring Windows XP security after you install Service Pack 2](#) (TechRepublic)
- [The Anatomy of Windows XP's System Information tool](#) (TechRepublic)
- [Add Safe Mode to the standard Windows XP boot menu](#) (TechRepublic)