

“My Computer Seems Slow”

Is your computer losing its moxie? Does it take, like, forever to load web pages? Read on....

Computers do not get slower as they age or when they have “too many” files.¹ When folks tell us their computers seem slow, it’s usually because 1. They have an older computer with a slow processor and a mechanical (spinning) disk that can’t handle today’s software and data demands, or 2. Their internet connection isn’t up to the task.

Old(er) Equipment and Slow Processors

Generally, Windows and Mac computers over five or six years old may be candidates for replacement. This is especially true if they have Intel Core i3 or Pentium processors², which aren’t efficient at multi-tasking (e.g., simultaneously printing a picture, opening a document, and updating software in the background—things computers do all the time.) They may work for email but can quickly bog down when showing graphics-laden web pages or retrieving data from your hard drive.

If you’re in the market for a new Windows computer, you should opt for one that uses an Intel Core i5 or (AMD Ryzen 5) processor that can ease through concurrent tasks. **All new Mac computers use Apple’s M-series processors**; even Apple’s lowest-tier M1 processor is super-efficient.³

Most new laptops use “solid-state” main storage drives that are many times faster than spinning disks.

Pokey Internet Connections

A slow internet connection may be the culprit if you have a fairly new, whiz-bang computer but are plagued with glacially slow websites, jittery Zoom performance, or lagging file downloads. Your internet provider may be delivering sub-par service, or your Wi-Fi network could have “issues.”

Most Xfinity and Verizon service plans provide data at speeds of at least one hundred megabits/second (check your contract). However, the internet speed measured at your computer depends on its distance from the router (which you should not hide in a closet or behind the sofa.) You can test your internet speed at <https://www.speedtest.net>. One hundred MB is good. Ten is too slow.

If you think your computer is slow, mozey over to **Tech Lab – Center for Modern Aging Princeton** (cmaprinceton.org). We’ll be glad to check it out.



It appears that Steve is ready to replace his computer.

1 There are are few exceptions to the “too many files” problem. But most folks have tons of unused disk space.

2 The processor is the doo-hickey that makes things happen on your computer.

3 Complex tasks, like video editing, might require faster processors, like Core i7 or i9, or M2 Pro or Max.