

COMPUTERS MADE EASY

SIMPLE GUIDES TO GET THE BEST FROM YOUR COMPUTER

Do I need a new computer?

This is a question I get asked a lot. And the answer I always give is: “what do you do with your computer?”.

For most, they use it for word processing or basic accounts, Internet and E-Mail, and printing out the odd photograph.

For such usage, most computers even as old as 5 years old are sufficient, with perhaps a system re-install if it has become painfully slow, and most computers benefit from a Memory (RAM) upgrade. Combine the two, and chances are, the PC will run faster than it did when it was new, assuming there are no other problems, like overheating.

Other people are a little more demanding, and want to edit large digital photographs or to edit video. This is where most computers start to show their age. However, once again, a system re-install (if necessary) and a RAM upgrade, and (almost certainly, for video editing) a larger or second hard drive will give the PC a new lease of life so long as it is no older than 3-4 years.

Contrary to popular opinion, computers do not slow down much: the system software (the “Operating System, e.g. Windows) does, and also, we tend to ask more of the computer over the years. For instance, if you bought a new PC 7 years ago and a digital camera, then those photos were probably 3 megapixel or less: now they're 10 and even 14 megapixels. This means bigger file sizes and therefore they take up more room on the Hard Drive and need more memory (RAM) to be able to work on them.



Contrary to popular opinion, slow internet is not usually the computer's fault

In a hierarchy of needing more computer power:

Word processing, Internet, Email, basic photo editing and the like: least computing power needed.

Editing larger photos, or simple video editing and similar tasks: more computing power needed.

Modern 3D games and advanced Video editing or 3D modelling: most computing power needed.

I am also often asked about upgrades: can my old PC have one of the new CPUs (Processors)? The answer, unfortunately, is almost always “no”, unless the PC is less than a year old. Computer architecture and technology changes almost overnight. However, as stated above, memory and hard drives are two things which are cheap and easy to have upgraded, and Memory (RAM) is good value for money, usually less than £50 to double the amount for an average desktop PC.

So, to sum up: that old machine may not be as old as it's acting! Why waste money on a new PC, (although, admittedly, a new machine will always be faster), when your old one may well be perfectly adequate for yourself? Just seek the help of a good ICT Technician (rather than a salesperson at one of the big retailers!), and he could save you a lot of money and effort.

See also: "your computer explained".

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