

COMPUTERS MADE EASY

SIMPLE GUIDES TO GET THE BEST FROM YOUR COMPUTER

your computer explained

Some misconceptions laid to rest!

These are some very common misunderstandings about computers. By explaining these simple facts, I can hopefully help you to understand how the PC works, and so how to use it more efficiently, and how to spot problems.

Many people believe that where their programs and files are kept is memory. Thus, when their PC slows down, they delete files, programs and this often stops the PC from working altogether.

The component of the computer that stores files (your work, photos etc.), programs and the Operating System (Windows, Mac OS or whichever) is called a Hard Drive. It is a metal box, 3 ½ inches by roughly 2 inches high, and approximately 5 ¾ inches long.



A PC's Hard Drive

Memory (correctly known as RAM – random access memory) is a flat circuit board with chips on it. It is flat, about 13mm long, and about 2 inches high. It sits vertically on the PC's system board, often in pairs.



Once you've seen the two together you'll never mistake one for the other again.

Computer slowdowns are often caused by lack of memory (RAM). But deleting files or programs will not help much, if at all, because all this does is make more space on the Hard Drive. Which is a separate component!

So why does a computer have RAM and a hard drive?

It works like this: Hard drives are merely storage. So, when you click an icon to start up a program, the program is read off the hard drive, and loaded into memory (RAM). RAM now acts as workspace, like your desk. However, RAM is volatile, and if you close the program without saving, the PC crashes, or the power cuts out, your work is lost. When you save the work, it is saved to storage (Hard Drive).

To use our “desk” analogy: books are like a hard drive: they contain data. Your desk is like RAM: the larger the desk, the more “books” (programs) you can have open at once.

When you've finished reading or writing your books, you put them away and clear the desk. Computers work like that, too.

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The “shortage of memory (RAM)” problem mostly occurs because your computer may need an upgrade (Memory is cheap), and usually because lots of programs have access to RAM all the time: anti-virus software, updaters and, of course, the Operating System (Windows or Mac OS). This tends to get worse over time.

Symptoms of memory (RAM) shortage are: hard drive light on the computer's case constantly flashing, slow system, instability and crashes and freezes when opening large programs or files.

Be kind to your computer: a skilled computer technician can install more memory for you and stop so many programs using it and slowing down the PC. RAM is an inexpensive upgrade and can revitalise an older computer. And did you know that a RAM upgrade is the biggest performance booster per pound spent?

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