

Advice from Middle Aged Female Tech
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I have been in the industry with my own company since 1994. The entire time I have worked in this field there have been very few times any two techs ever agree completely. The advice I give here is based on my experiences, testing, and what I know works or to be true.

Speed Up Your Internet Connection!

Want to speed up your Internet? A slow, crawling Internet connection is a source of great frustration. Sometimes the slowdown is beyond your control; the Internet is subject to traffic jams just like any other highway. But there are some things you can do to maximize whatever speed you are able to get. Here's a bucket of tips and tools that can help you go faster on the information highway...

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Get a Faster Internet Connection

Let's start with the wire that connects your computer to the Internet. If you have a dialup connection, you're traveling the information superhighway in a horse and buggy. If DSL service is available from your phone company, upgrading will make the Internet seem like a different place. If you have DSL, consider moving to cable or a fiber optic connection, which can be 10X faster.

For those in very rural areas, satellite and mobile broadband may be good alternatives. If you've already got some type of "high-speed" internet connection, sometimes a problem with the wiring, cabling or fiber optic lines between the utility pole and your computer can cause a degradation in speed. Loose cable connections can slow down the Internet. If your computer is hardwired to your router, unplug the cable connections at both ends and reseal them firmly. Also reseal the cable that brings the Internet into your router or modem.



Also, it's not unheard of for Internet service providers to throttle your connection speed without telling you. That's happened to me more than once. You can ask your ISP to test your connection and certify that you are getting all the bandwidth for which you are paying. Or do it yourself!

Slow Internet -- Hardware Factors

I had a problem once with a slow cable internet connection, which turned out to be caused by the wires rubbing against a tree in my yard. Squirrels have also been known to chew on these cables. Lightning can damage utility cables and weather may cause rusty or loose cable connections. If you think the problem lies between your router and the pole, contact your service provider to have the wires and any splitters checked.

If you have a router that was installed by your Internet provider, and your Internet speed seems to bog down often, try rebooting the router. I recommend that you shut off the router, wait a minute, then restart it and wait for it to reconnect to the Internet. If that makes a big difference, your router may be defective, and should be replaced. It's also possible that your router or modem is not capable of handling the speed you're paying for. After upgrading my Verizon FIOS connection from 20Mbps to 50Mbps, I discovered that my actual download speeds hadn't changed a bit. A free router upgrade solved the problem.

Wireless networks can have flaky connections, too. If you are not getting a five-bar signal from your wireless router, reposition the router and/or your computer's WiFi adapter until reception is as good as you can get. You might consider a USB high-gain WiFi adapter, or a high-gain antenna.

And although it has nothing really to do with networking, there is one hardware upgrade that can make a significant difference in your Internet speeds. Insufficient RAM memory can really bog down your computer, and make even a fast Internet connection frustratingly slow.

Slow Internet -- Software Factors

Software upgrades are key to getting the best Internet speed possible. Check with your ISP or the router manufacturer to see if there are any available updates for the router's firmware. Be sure to keep your operating system, your software and security tools up to date. A computer that's infested with viruses or spyware (malware) can come to a crawl when accessing the Internet.

You can also try an alternative DNS service provider, which may speed up the lookup of Web sites. I covered OpenDNS, Google Public DNS, and others.

One reader told me that her Internet speed seemed to depend on what web browser she was using. When she experienced slow Internet speeds with Internet Explorer, closing that browser and opening FireFox or Chrome suddenly made it better. When that browser slowed down, she would switch browsers again. I've experienced a similar thing, but switching browsers isn't actually the cure here. In my experience, the longer you keep your browser open (especially if you open and close lots of tabs) the slower your web pages will load. Simply closing down the browser and re-opening it solves this problem for me. No need to play the round-robin browser game.

Internet Speed Up - What (Probably) Doesn't Work

Turning off unnecessary network adapter properties supposedly boosts Internet speeds. But in my experience, tweaking these properties does not increase speed and it can limit other functionality. For example, turning off the QoS Packet Scheduler is rumored to reclaim up to 20 per cent of your bandwidth that is allegedly reserved for things like Windows Update. But that simply isn't true. Turning off QoS can, however, interfere with VoIP and other applications. Disabling file and printer sharing is a good idea if you don't need to share, but it has negligible effect in Internet speed.

Tweaking esoteric settings hidden deep in the Windows registry, e.g., MTU and RWIN, is an old-school way to boost Internet speed. The problem is that the optimal values for these settings vary depending on network conditions. In older versions of Windows (Windows 95/98/ME/XP) these tweaks might have been somewhat useful. But Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8 have incorporated an auto-tuning function that does this sort of tweaking on the fly. It really is not necessary or advisable to fiddle with the registry.

There are many utilities on the Web that claim to "optimize" your Internet connection. Some do, some don't. The best such utility that I have found is [TweakMASTER](http://www.rosecitysoftware.com/tweakmaster/)-<http://www.rosecitysoftware.com/tweakmaster/> by Rose City Software. It asks a couple of questions about the type of Internet connection you have. Then it creates a restore point so you can recover if you don't like the changes it makes. Finally, you try several different "strategies" - each a combination of tweaks - to see which gives you the best speed boost. Another free utility you can try is [TCP Optimizer](http://www.speedguide.net/downloads.php)-<http://www.speedguide.net/downloads.php> . I've not tried it, but one reader mentioned that it was helpful to him.

I've been asked if upgrading from a G-router to an N-router will boost speeds on a wireless Internet connection. The answer is NO. Even the older G-routers can sling data at 54Mbps, which is probably MUCH faster than your incoming Internet pipe. DSL operates at about 1.5 Mbps, cable is typically 5-20 Mbps, and residential fiber optic service might get you as high as 50Mbps. The only exception to this would be those lucky enough to have access to super-fast Internet connections.

Finally, consider upgrading your Internet speed by paying a little extra for more bandwidth. Some folks aren't even aware that their ISP offers such an option, and there may be other ISPs servicing your area that can provide a faster connection. A little research may even net you a faster connection at a lower monthly price!

I am always about saving money and not spending it on things you don't need to

Remember ANY questions, email me at: **Montgomery@Hollyecho.com**. If possible, I will include the answer to your questions in my next article.