

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 173: Defragmenting the Registry

Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR
715 N. Dries Street, Saukville, WI 53080-1664
(262) 268-1949 skaplan@mcw.edu

This is yet another topic suggested by Ed (AA9W). First, what the heck is the Registry? It is a huge database listing configuration data for: 1. All the **hardware** in your machine, including the necessary device drivers. 2. All the **software** programs you have installed, 3. All of the **personal settings** you have made (such as desktop icons, or preferences in many programs). In other words, the Registry contains almost everything about your machine! Each and every operation of your machine either adds to or removes from or at least accesses information in the Registry. This happens more than a hundred times per second when your machine is on! Organized in several chunks called hives, it is truly the heart and brain of your computer. And, it resides entirely in memory when your computer is on.

When you uninstall a really well-written program, the registry entries are removed. However, most programs simply do not clean up the mess left when you uninstall them. Therefore, irrelevant information is left behind in the Registry, and with time the database gets bigger and bigger. Even when registry entries are properly removed, empty areas are left behind, so the Registry still gets bigger and bigger with the addition of new programs, and fragmentation can result. All of this – the Registry getting bigger and bigger AND the fragmentation of information that is present – can slow down your machine over time.

Therefore, maintaining a clean and compact Registry is really a two-part task. 1 Cleaning out the unused or incorrect entries, and 2 Defragmenting and compacting the whole database.

That is a daunting task if one were to do it manually, and it would require knowledge much beyond the average user's capabilities besides being somewhat dangerous. But there are tools out there to do it for you.

The first is CCleaner (<http://www.piriform.com/ccleaner>) (a.k.a. Crap Cleaner, but they don't use that moniker anymore because it is socially inappropriate). I have written about it before – it is probably the most widely used utility program on the planet, and it is free. The first item in CCleaner is the general cleaner, which you should run first. The second is the registry cleaner, which you should run second. That cleans out all sorts of Registry errors – right in the Registry itself. Missing shared DLLs, unused file extensions, ActiveX and class Issues, and at least a dozen more categories that can contain errors. So now your general junk and Registry errors are dealt with. But what about defragmentation? CCleaner does not defragment the Registry.

There are a number of free Registry defragmenters out there, but the stand-alone one I like best is Auslogics Registry Defrag, which you can get here:

<http://www.auslogics.com/en/software/registry-defrag/>.

This company makes good software and this package will do the job. Give yourself time when you run it and prepare to let it reboot during the process, a step that is necessary to do the job correctly. Be patient when it reboots ... you may think you have the "blue screen of death" for a few moments, but it will start eventually and do the job. It will probably wish to do a quick reboot again when it is finished. This will be something you want to do only once every 3 – 6 months or so, not a weekly task! But it will result in a cleaner, meaner, faster machine.

There you have it. A Registry with no errors and minimal fragmentation! Happy Computing!

"640k ought to be enough for anybody." Bill Gates, 1981