

## What is MSCONFIG? Why tweak it?

Built into Windows 98, 98SE, ME & XP is a special tool called the “Microsoft System Configuration Utility” or simply “MSCONFIG” for short. Designed to help you troubleshoot problems with your computer, MSCONFIG can also be used to ensure that your computer boots faster and crashes less often.

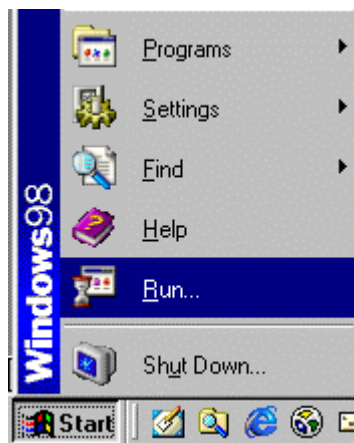
Most people know that the more programs you have running on your computer at any one time, the more likely it is that your computer will either crash, run slower or even hang for long periods.

What most people don’t know is that every time you boot your computer a whole mess of “hidden” programs loads in the background that you don’t physically see.

Only some of these hidden programs are essential to make the computer run, but most of them are not. Turning off some of these hidden programs can significantly increase your computer’s reliability and performance.

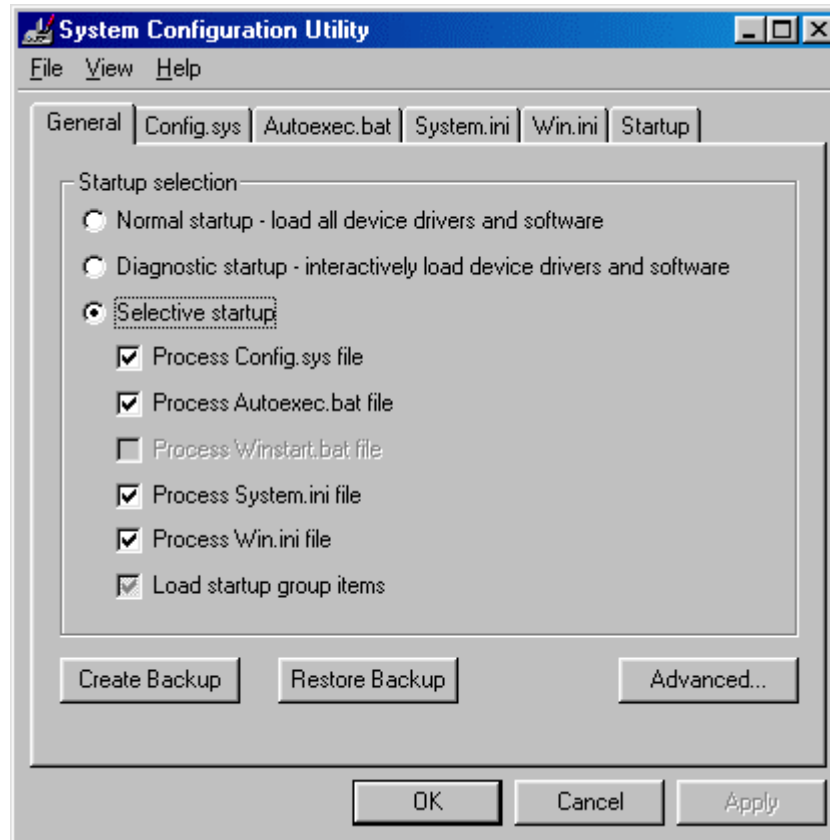
Here is how to use MSCONFIG on Windows 98, 98SE and ME to disable some of the unnecessary programs that automatically load during start-up.

1. Go to Start --> Run



2. Type MSCONFIG

3. This will launch Microsoft’s System Configuration Utility. Click on the Start-up tab (the tab at the far right).



4. This takes you to a page with a list of “start-up items.” As mentioned earlier, start-up items are programs that are automatically loaded every time you turn on your computer. Some start-up programs are absolutely necessary; others are simply just a waste of RAM.

The only start-up items you absolutely need are the following:-

- ScanRegistry
- TaskMonitor
- SystemTray
- LoadPowerProfile

Also, your antivirus program (trust me, you won’t have a hard time figuring out which one is your antivirus program. It is pretty obvious.)

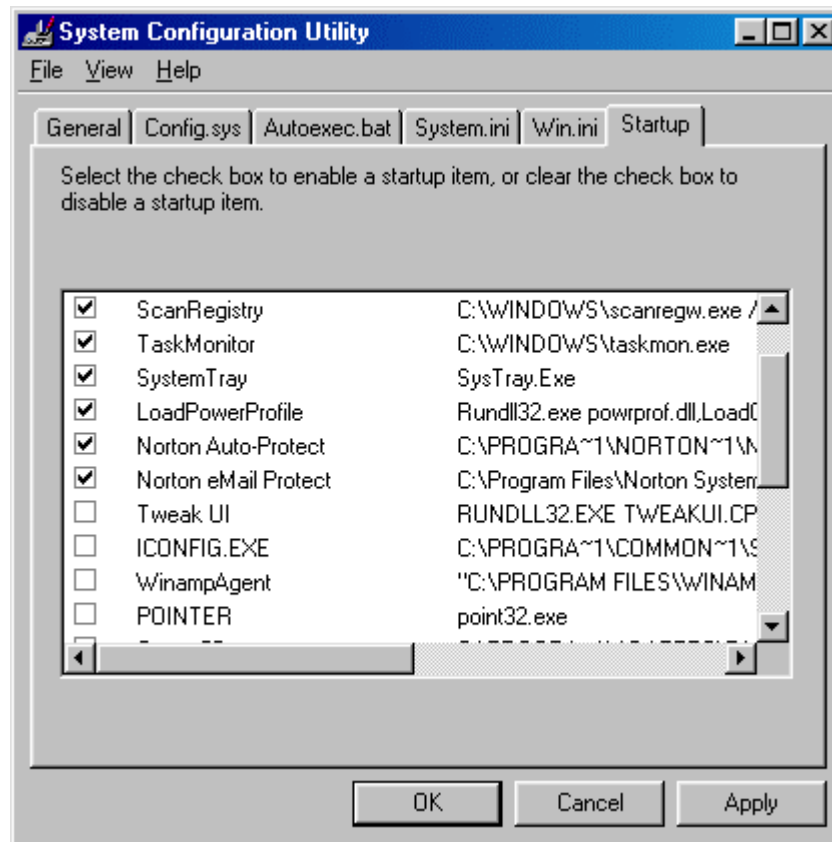
Since you need these start-up items to be running all the time in order for your computer to work properly, make sure there is always a check mark next to all of these start-up items.

If you don’t see one or two these items in your list of start-up items, that’s cool. For example, some people may not have a LoadPowerProfile while others may have two. The big thing to remember is that you don’t want to uncheck any of these files if you have them.

The rest of the start-up items, however, are completely optional. Whether you leave these optional start-up items on or turn them off is completely up to you. A good rule of thumb is to disable only those programs that you recognize and don’t need to have running all

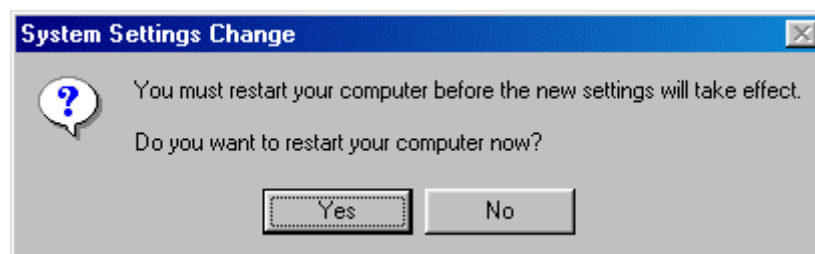
the time. When in doubt, leave it on.

Here's a good example. On my computer I have a mess of MP3s (music files) and I listen to those MP3s with a program called WinAmp. For some reason or other, WinAmp decided that it should always be running on my computer even when I am not using the program. That's silly. To prevent WinAmp from automatically starting every time I boot my computer, I ran MSCONFIG and unchecked "WinampAgent." That's it. Remember, disable only those programs that you recognize and don't need to have running all the time. When in doubt, leave it on.



5. Click on the OK button.

6. A message will pop up telling you that you must restart your computer before these changes will take effect. Click on "Yes" and your computer will automatically reboot.



7. And That's it! Your computer should now boot faster and crash less.

And if you ever want to turn on any of the start-up items you disabled with MSCONFIG, just run MSCONFIG again.

## USER NOTES:

Remember that the Startup Tab is truly selective. In a way, “selective” startup is strangely named. What it really does is disable all or many of your auto-loading services. What you’ve done here is selectively disable services and programs, using MSCONFIG’s Startup tab listing of the individual programs, system services, and in some case device drivers or programs that support devices on your system. Notice that in this window, you can stretch MSCONFIG’s window borders so you can look at all the many things running on your system at once.

Anything you change in this part of MSCONFIG can be changed back. So the trick is, don’t make a big bunch of changes at once. If your goal is to free up system resources, try to identify programs you don’t really care about. A lot of times these are utilities or little bits of software that came preinstalled on your machine or get installed with a printer, scanner, camera, etc.. Junky stuff, sometimes. Start by eliminating the four or five items you’re most sure of, then click OK and reboot. If you’re trying to narrow down a software conflict of some sort, try disabling only the program — again the one you think that’s the most likely culprit. Reboot your computer. Did the problem go away? Whatever you’re doing, try to be methodical about it. Trial and error is the order of the day. But keep track of the changes you make.