

Upgrade your computer or is it time for a new one?

Rich Osborne

This is one of a series of articles provided by the Oakmont Technology Learning Center on the use of technology by seniors.

Has your PC or Mac slowed down or are you wondering whether to upgrade to the newest operating system? Over time computers start to run slower and slower until you find yourself waiting for apps to open, documents to save, or e-mail to display. As time passes and hardware improves, updates to operating systems, drivers, and applications are designed to take advantage of these improvements, leaving your Mac or PC behind. These software upgrades can leave your older hardware struggling to keep up. In addition, hard drives with mechanical moving parts that are used hundreds of times a day, may struggle and have read/write errors.

But aging hardware is far from the only reason you have a slow computer. Most of us spend a large chunk of our time working in a web browser. If your Internet speeds are slow, it can feel like the whole computer is running slow. Use www.speedtest.net to ensure that your provider is giving you the promised speed.

Next, as you download updates and install new apps, you fill up your hard drive with all sorts of files. The more space these files occupy on your hard drive, the less room there is for basic computer operations. The more apps you have installed, along with all the files you have on your computer, the more time your computer spends checking for updates, which slows things down even more.

Finally, browser extensions can be a cause of a computer slowing down. If you have lots of browser extensions installed, it can make your web browser sluggish.

Should you attempt to upgrade your slow Mac or PC to a new operating system? For most of us in Oakmont, upgrading our computer hardware or operating system is considered a drastic step and might best be left to your favorite technician. Make sure you are up-to-date on your operating system and drivers - these updates include security updates.

If you are running the latest version of your Mac or PC operating system and all your drivers are up to date, and if it is still running slow after you update, you might need to talk to your favorite technician for challenging or expensive steps such as: installing more RAM, installing a larger hard drive, reinstalling the operating system as a clean installation, uninstalling applications, disabling autorun apps, or other optimizations.

On the other hand, computers have a limited lifespan, depending upon how well-configured they are. You might want to make a trip to your favorite computer store and inquire about the latest Mac, PC, or Chromebook hardware that would come with the operating system and some apps factory-installed.

For an electronic copy of this article or other tech articles, visit www.oakmont-learning.org.