Stopping automatic starting of installed programs
By Milt Hull

Have you ever noticed that since you got your computer, it is now taking longer and longer to startup?   Well, there are several things we can do to shorten the loading of your Operating System on your computer. First let's examine what might be the problem.

Pre-Loaded Programs
When we purchase a new computer, it is loaded with lots of extras. The OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) usually installs lots of trials and proprietary programs to help the user run their new computer. These programs might be from the company's own resources, like for example, Hewlett Packard might install extras to help promote more business. They might install a special program to help run a peripheral. If you have a Laptop, you might have a program that runs the wireless adapter, separate from the built-in program that comes with Windows itself. Lots of these programs are set to automatically start within the session of the current Operating System.   Even though you can write to a CD or a DVD with the built-in Windows environment, many OEM manufacturers might include programs like Nero or Roxio. This is usually because they have an agreement with this OEM to install their program to help promote their own business.

System Backup
Before going on, I want to express fully that before you try any of the following suggestions, please do a complete system backup and even a System Restore Point before trying anything to your system.

Uninstalling
If you know what you are doing, you can remove most of these installed programs within the Add and Remove section of the Control Panel. This is usually the first line of attack to speed up your computer. In Windows Vista and Windows 7, it is under Programs and features. I am a stickler for removing all the add-on Toolbars that most people have installed. I saw a browser once that had five toolbars including Bing, Google, Yahoo, Ask and some sort of shopping toolbar. The browser menus took up more of the screen than the actual browser screen. Please remove these toolbars as they even slow down the start of the browser itself.
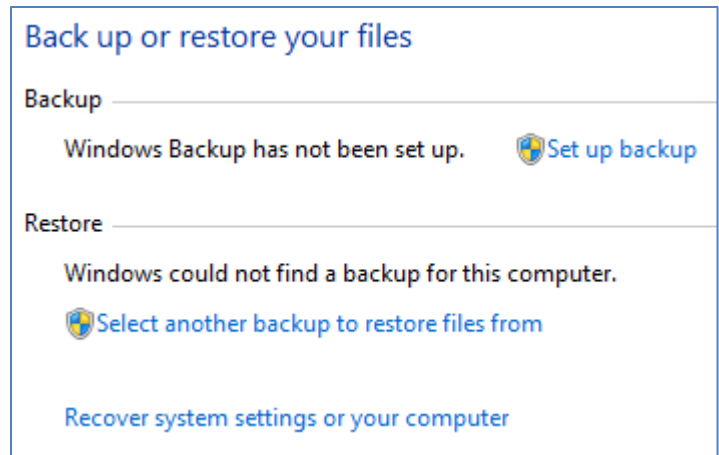
While looking at programs to remove, also look especially at any web helper programs. Usually these programs are more dangerous than helpers. Look for any program that might have been installed that you don't use anymore. Also, look for support programs. One of my other pet peeves is what Apple does. I installed QuickTime and it installed six different programs. It installed an Apple Updater program, which always wants to install more programs like iTunes and many other unwanted programs. I had to un-install almost everything to clean up my machine. I hate Apple because of this.

Be very careful about un-installing any program that you are not sure of. Also, make sure that you have a complete system backup of any system before un-installing anything.

Startup Folder

Another very easy way to speed up your system is to just look in the startup folder of the current user as well as the All Users Startup. You can remove these shortcuts simply by right-clicking the shortcut from the Start Button menus and deleting the Shortcut right there. Make sure that you are not required to run any program before removing any program. Also, make sure that you have a backup of these before removing anything.
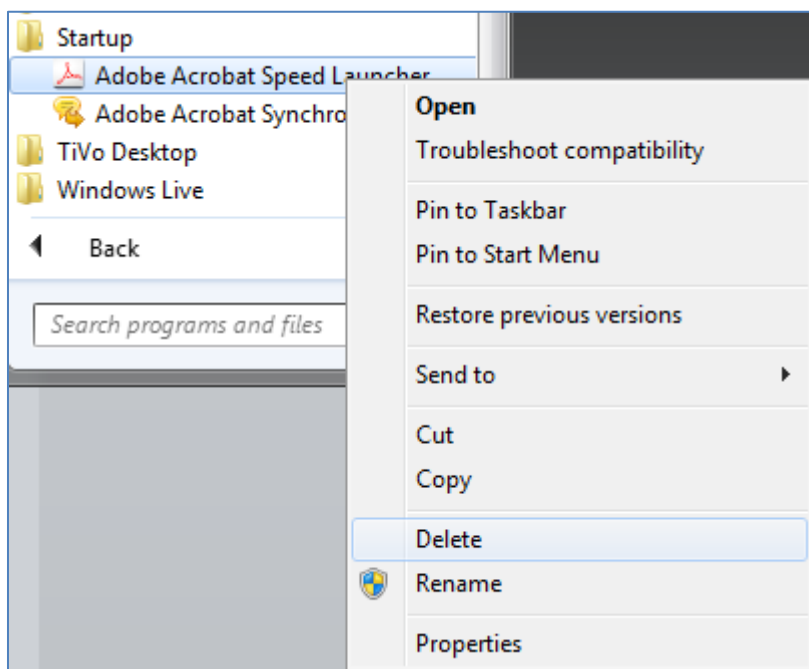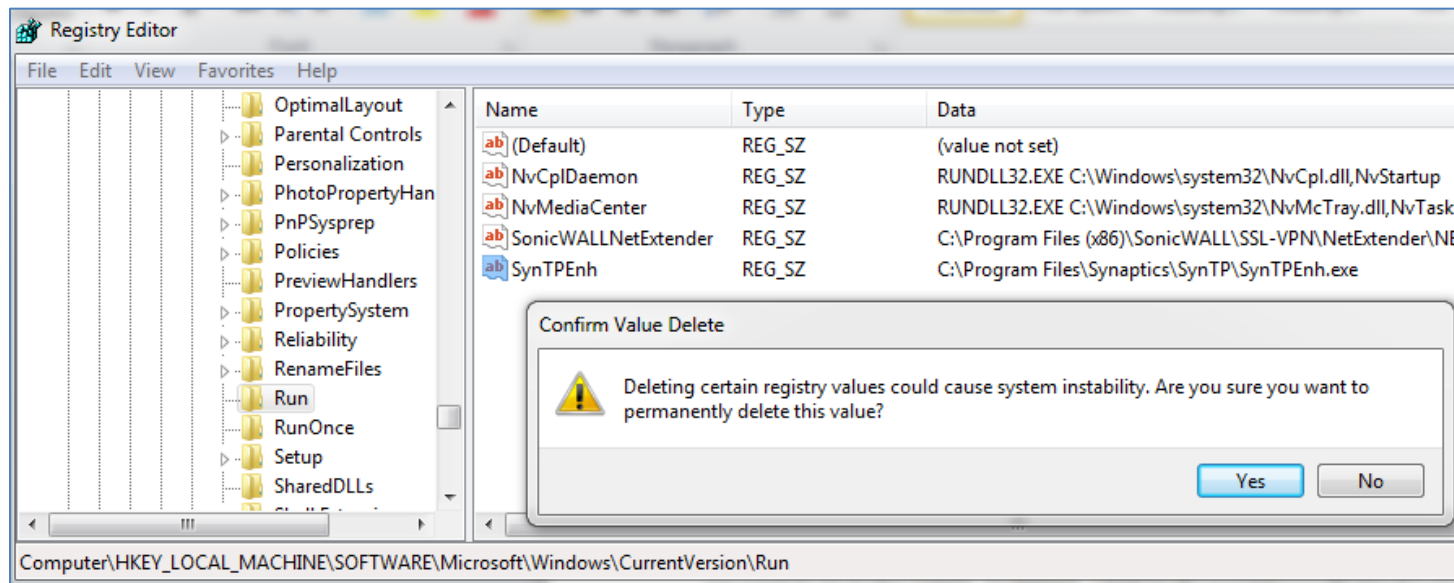
Registry

Before going on with this section, I am going to express that most people do not know enough about this very dangerous program. It holds all the settings for your computer. One screw-up and your computer can stop working correctly. It is very important to export your settings before going forward with any modifications to the registry. First, I am going to show you how. Click on the start button and type in "regedit.exe" and hit the enter button. This is the Registry. We are going to look at two different sections. The first section is the Current users run area. Drill down using the plus key for every section. Hit the plus key next to HKEY_CURRENT_USER, then hit the plus key next to Software and so forth. So we want to go to the \HKEY_CURRENT_USER|Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run. Click on the run section on the left hand side. It should look like this:
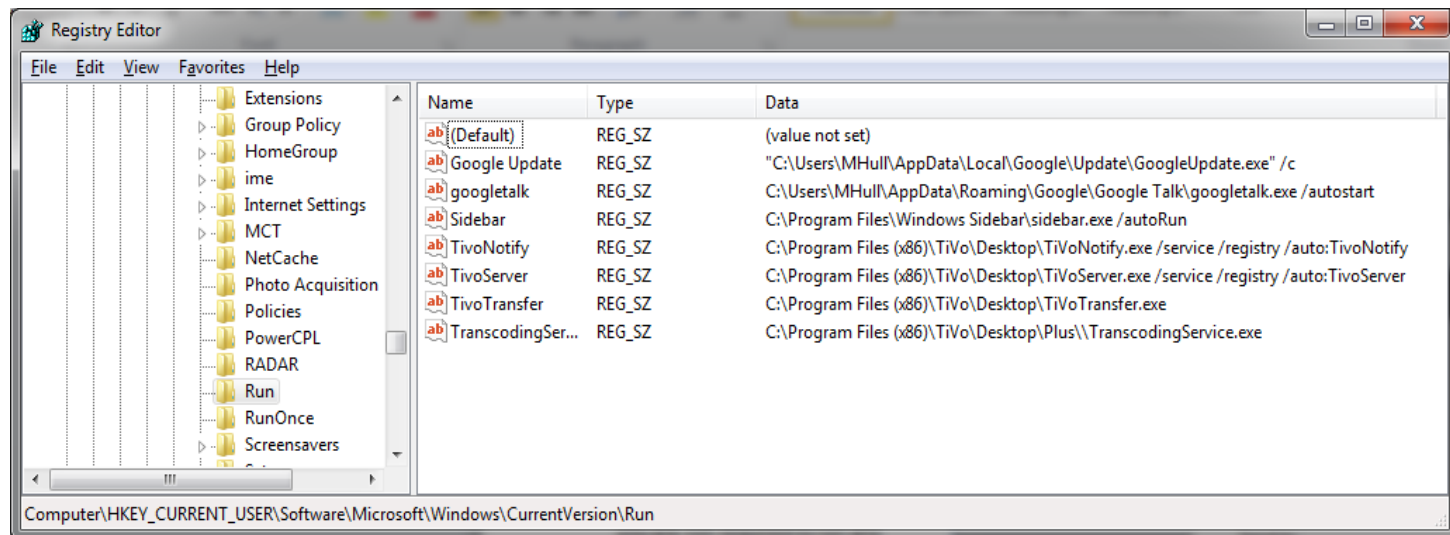
As you can see in this example, there are plenty of programs that startup each and every time this user logs in. The first thing we need to do is click on the File and then click on Export. Save the file in a location that you know and name it "current_User_run.reg".

Now that we have saved the settings in a file, we can now delete programs that we do not want running each and every time we startup our computer. Right-Click on the name of any entry we do not want anymore and click on the delete key. Do this for any and/or all of the programs you do not want to automatically start.

Remember, you have a backup so if you screw up and need the program back, just double-click on the "current_user_run.reg" program and it will put them all back. Now that we modified the current user area, it is time to modify the machine settings. While in the Regedit editor, click the plus key next to the following. \HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run and do the same. Remember to export the settings first to a file named "local_machine_run.reg" before deleting any key. It will ask you to confirm in the following example:

MSCONFIG

If you do not feel comfortable with modifying the registry, you can always have Microsoft do it for you by using MSConfig. MSConfig keeps the setting for you and allows you to choose which ones run at startup. Here again, click on the Start Button and type in "msconfig.exe" and hit enter. Now click on the Startup button near the top.

Uncheck any program you want to disable during startup. See example on right.

Now you should see a significant difference in the starting of your computer. Remember though, always backup everything before an modification of your system.

Happy computing!