

# RESIDENT PROGRAMS

Most people are familiar with the process of starting a program, whether it is Solitaire or Internet Explorer. The user double-clicks an icon or single-clicks a menu item and the program starts up. There are many other programs that run on Windows without any user intervention, these are **Resident Programs**.

Resident programs are normally started during Windows startup, and then run continuously in the background while you do your other tasks. A good example is your anti-virus software. It needs to be running to intercept any infection from hostile programs like viruses or Trojans. To accomplish this, Windows allocates some RAM to the anti-virus program to allow it to run and do its job. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that lots of free RAM is critical to Windows' speedy operation, resident programs slow it down. As long as these programs are beneficial to the user there is no problem. Unfortunately, there are many resident programs that get installed that are not beneficial to Windows or to the user, but they all use RAM as well.

Some common examples of resident programs are:

Registration programs – Remember when you installed your digital camera software and it asked you if you wanted to register and you said no? And now it asks you over and over again if you would like to register? This is a resident program that is continuously running on your PC, waiting for the next best time to bug you about registering. It needs to be turned off.

Update programs – Your anti-virus software definitely needs to be updated regularly, but does Adobe Acrobat, Real Player, Java, Winamp or Quicktime? Again, these need to be turned off.

Picture Transfer Software – Depending on your make and model of camera, you may actually need this. I favour the cameras that pop up as a drive when you connect them, and then I don't need their transfer software running resident in my Windows all the time.

Scanner Software – How many people need to be ready to do OCR (optical character recognition) on their scanner at any time? Unfortunately, many scanners will come with software that installs a pile of unnecessary resident programs.

Calendars – This software is frequently installed with card making programs, it is meant to remind you that someone's birthday is coming. This is very useful, IF you actually use it. Otherwise, it is just slowing down your PC.

Audio/Video Driver apps – These are little applets that are installed with your sound card or video card drivers. They give the user access to device settings that may or may not be available to the user through the Control Panel. If you rarely make device settings changes to your audio or video, then these can be safely turned off.

Messaging – Chatting programs obviously need to be running so you can stop your real work to talk about nothing, at a moment's notice.

Security, Anti-Virus, Firewall, Anti-Spam, Pop-up Blockers, etc. – These all have varying degrees of usefulness and load on your Windows. I will be addressing each in columns to come, but it is fair to say that since most problems are user-induced, any and all of these can be done without. It really depends on your user-savvy, you don't have to be a geek to stay out of trouble.