My Internet is SLOW – Beginner

I provide traditional and extra-ordinary technology support to families, businesses, and professional practices.

As part of my efforts, I highlight technologies that will help you save time, make better presentations, and enhance your bottom line.

This article, *My Internet is SLOW – Beginner*, is designed for the *non-techie* who needs to resolve simple Internet access problems.

Visit [Workflow and Style](#). In my blog and video series, I show you how to make the most of your personal technology. Please contact me if you have any questions or comments – Fred@FamilyTechnology.com

What's going on?

Optimum, FIOS, and Road Runner continue to upgrade their infrastructure to provide lightning fast Internet access. Oddly, however, your Internet response may seem slow. What's the problem? What's the solution?

In this article, I detail my strategy to identify the cause of the poor performance – and provide you with options to return your Internet access to lightning speed.

You WILL have a problem

Sadly, you will probably have a problem with your Internet service every six to twelve months. The Internet, the world's largest network, is dependent on an endless number of products and services that move data around the world – and within your home.

Most of these components work with 99.99% reliability. Some fail occasionally. Sometimes, bad people will use the Internet to corrupt your PC – and scam you. Don't worry, this article will provide you with a solid strategy to identify Internet problems – and help you resolve most issues with minimal effort.

Process of elimination

Restoring the speed of your Internet access starts by locating the source of the problem. Is it your PC, your router, or something else?

My method focuses on testing certain items in a very specific order. If you follow this sequence, the process of elimination will identify the problem. Once the problem is identified, I will recommend the appropriate solution.

While properly identifying the problem is important, getting the right help is critical. If you are lucky, the solution is simple and you can resolve the issue by yourself. However, sometimes the problem is complex and technical assistance is required.

When seeking professional IT advice, try to find someone local and recommended. Avoid on-line fix-it services you found in a Google search. Most are expensive and ineffective – and some are scams. If you need help, please feel free to contact me.

The testing sequence

Your PC and operating system

In some cases, your personal computer hardware or operating system (Microsoft Windows, Apple OS X) is the cause of slow or failed Internet access. Many PC users never restart their PC, which can be a problem. Sometimes the operating system has become corrupted by a software update or malware attack.

So, let's begin by SHUTTING DOWN your PC. Turn it off. Unplug it from the wall, wait 60 seconds, re-plug it. Turn it on. Assuming you have been using this PC for a while, you know how it should respond. Wait at least FIVE minutes before using any programs – this allows the operating system to launch necessary startup programs.

Listen carefully to your PC. Is it making any unusual noises? If so, your hard drive may need attention. An obvious loud clicking or groaning sound often identifies a failing hard drive. If you believe your hardware is the problem, turn off your PC and seek professional assistance immediately. Your important documents, photos, and emails may be at risk.

If your PC starts *painfully* slowly or constantly freezes, the problem probably is your operating system – and you should seek professional assistance.

If everything starts properly and seems normal, move on to the next item.

Software updates

Microsoft Windows and Apple OS X ask you to install minor software updates with growing frequency. I always recommend that you install these updates.

Microsoft has been encouraging Windows 7/8 users to upgrade to Windows 10. Be careful here. Monitor your Internet performance before and after a major upgrade. If there are problems, you may need to uninstall something. You will need professional assistance to undo a software update or operating system upgrade.

The browser

Your browser is the program that allows you to access your email, visit web sites, and much more. Microsoft Edge and Internet Explorer, Apple Safari, Google Chrome, and Mozilla Firefox are the most popular desktop and smart device browsers. They are all excellent products.

For most PC users, their browser is where they spend most of their on-line time. As such, this is where software developers, ecommerce providers, *and hackers* focus their efforts. Too often, your browser will fail as an outsider convinces you try a new product or fix a non-existent problem. You may have been tricked into installing *malware*.

Malware is a program that you are deceived into installing. Someone wants to steal something from your PC or trick you into buying a service you don't need. Malware often appears in the form of a pop-up that freezes your browser and convinces you to call an 800 number for help. It's a scam. If you suspect malware, seek professional assistance.

If your PC starts properly and your problem only appears when you open your browser, you have two choices. First, try a different browser. If this works, then you have found your problem (your browser) and have solved it by using a different browser. If the second browser fails, then you have a more serious problem. Let's now focus on the modem.

The modem

If your personal computer and operating system are working fine, you need to direct your attention to the modem provided by your ISP – Internet Service Provider (Optimum, FIOS, Road Runner). You must get to know this device. The role of the modem is to translate the communications language of your ISP into a language that your home/office PC and network can understand.

Option 1. Unplug the modem power cord from the wall, make sure all of the lights go out, wait 60 seconds, then re-plug the device. Wait a few minutes, then return to your PC and access the Internet.

Option 2. If the above doesn't help, unplug the modem power cord AND un-screw the coaxial cable in the back of the modem. Wait 60 seconds. Reconnect the coaxial cable, re-plug the power cord, wait for the lights to appear. Return to your PC and access the Internet.

Option 3. If you have difficulty handling wires and plugs, contact your ISP. Ask them to make a house call.

NOTE: If your modem is over 5 years old, it probably needs to be upgraded. Even if it is working fine, replace it. Contact your ISP for details.

The router

A typical home router is a multi-function device. Its primary function is to permit more than one PC and smart device to access the Internet. Most consumer routers (Netgear, Cisco) include Wi-Fi capability that permits wireless access.

Verizon provides their own combination modem/router. Optimum and Road Runner give you the option of buying and installing your own router – or renting a combination modem/router from them.

Unplug the power cord(s) for both the modem and router (or the combination unit). All lights should be off. Wait 60 seconds. Re-plug the modem/router. Wait until all of the lights are on. Restart your PC. In 90% of failure/slowness problems, your problem is solved.

Verizon customers: If Verizon has provided you with a brownish combination modem/router that has a vertical antenna, replace it ASAP. It's a dinosaur with limited Wi-Fi range.

Wiring, jacks, and connections

When using a modem and a router, one or more network cables will be involved.

Too often, when moving these devices, cables are unplugged and then improperly reconnected. Then, magically, there is no Internet access. The fix is simple, but will require the assistance of a network professional or your ISP to re-establish the proper device connections.

Working with your Internet Service Provider

If your PC is working properly, you have restarted your modem and router, and you continue to have a problem, you will need to contact your Internet Service Provider and speak with a technician. ISPs have come a long way in providing user friendly support, but this can still be a daunting experience.

Below, I offer some tips to help you minimize your anxiety and speed the solution of your problem. Most of these items should be addressed BEFORE YOU CALL – they will save you a lot of time.

1. If you are uncomfortable working with computer devices, ask a friend or family member for help. There may be some cables to unscrew and unplug as well as some technical instructions that must be followed. Phone technicians speak *tech-talk* and use headsets that make understanding them very difficult.
2. Locate your last ISP invoice. The representative will want to confirm your account information. Without this, you will be amazed how much time you will waste solving even the simplest problem.
3. Locate and copy the MAC ID on your modem. Every modem has a unique letter-number identification code called a MAC address (Media Access Code). It is typically located on a white sticker. This code tells your ISP which device you are using. Have access to this information before you call. It will save you 10 minutes.
4. Use a phone with a speaker capability. You will be plugging and unplugging, screwing and unscrewing cables and plugs. Listening to and following instructions while holding a phone makes troubleshooting a nightmare. Turn on the phone speaker whenever working with a technician.
5. If you are using a laptop, bring it to where the modem is located. If your problem is complex, you will probably be asked to connect your laptop directly into the modem using an Ethernet cable.
6. Listen, follow instructions, and speak concisely. Avoid telling the technician every small detail of your problem – it's not as helpful as you think. Both of you want to solve the problem as quickly as possible. Let the technician lead you. Be concise when you do speak. Say something like *I can't access the Internet* – then stop speaking. The technician will ask for specific information and will guide you from that point. In most cases, no matter what your problem is, they are going to put you through the same drill.

Getting help – make sure it's local and recommended

If you continue to have a problem with slow or failed Internet access, seek the help of a technology professional that is local and recommended. Please do not pay someone you found over the Internet. This may turn a small problem into a catastrophe.

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