

## HEATHER NEWMAN: Three easy fixes can give computers their old zip

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Computer graphics, even in everyday programs, are becoming big, beautiful and three-dimensional. Unfortunately, that means computers are slower to run these programs, even if they have more firepower than past generations of PCs.

If your computer is grinding away, here are three simple things you can do to kick up the speed.

- **Buy RAM.** For most systems, this provides the single-biggest increase in speed, and it doesn't cost much. For \$20 to \$50, you can buy enough memory to boost most systems.

If your hard drive grinds when you're running programs, inadequate RAM is likely the problem.

RAM is easy to install. The tiny circuit boards can only be placed in one set of slots, facing in one direction. Typically, they slide in at an angle and snap up. Some plug right in. You can tell by looking at the RAM you already have. ...

### Donate your computer here

Typically I suggest that you donate your computer to a local organization in need of a gently used PC. (I'm always taking nominations for new agencies to feature -- hint, hint.) But today, how about donating your old PC to advance computer science?

Ball State University in Indiana has put together a supercomputer using used PCs. The Cluster Computing Research Project is accepting donations, so if you ever head down that way (or don't mind paying \$10 or so for shipping), this might be a good place to send along your PC -- monitor not required.

The university also accepts network cards, racks, memory, cables, surge protectors -- you name it. For information, visit <http://robert.spinweb.net/ccr/donate>.

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