Stop Windows 98 from Wildly Accessing your Hard Disk

Many users have complained about Windows 98 seizing up for up to a minute because of random, pointless disk activity. This is due to the way that Windows 98 is set to handle disk caching and virtual memory. Although Windows 98 instructs you to "let Windows handle disk cache settings" for best results, this obviously does not yield the best results. Here's how to eliminate the random disk activity and improve system performance:

Part One: Virtual Memory

Right click on My Computer, and select Properties. Click the Performance tab, and then click Virtual Memory. Choose Let me specify my own virtual memory settings. If you want to choose a different drive for your swapfile, run Disk Defragmenter first. Specify the same value for the Minimum size and the Maximum size, so Windows 98 won't spend so much time resizing the file. A good size is roughly 2 1/2 times the amount of installed RAM (i.e. create a 40MB swapfile if you have 16MB of RAM). Press OK, and then OK again, and confirm that you want to restart your computer.

Part Two: Defragmenting the Swapfile

Once you've set the swapfile size to be constant (see Part One), you won't have to worry about a fragmented (broken up) swapfile again. However, you'll need to defragment it at least once for it to remain that way in the future. If you have Norton Utilities, you'll be able to optimize the swapfile with Speedisk. Otherwise, if you want to take the time, you can defragment it manually:

If you have more than one partition or hard disk in your system, defragment all drives first. Then, move the swapfile (using the configuration procedure in Part One above) to another drive, defragment the first one, and then move it back. Although it's also possible to disable the swapfile entirely while you defragment the drive (and then re-enable it so it will be recreated whole), it isn't advisable because Windows 98 may not start without a Swapfile.

Part Three: Virtual Cache (only if you have 16 megabytes of RAM or more)
Open **SYSTEM.INI** for editing.
Add the following two lines to the **[vcache]** section (add the section if it's not there):

```
MinFileCache=4096
MaxFileCache=4096
```

These values, in kilobytes, regulate the size of the VCache, so you can stop it from filling up all available RAM and paging all loaded apps to disk. If you have more than 16 MB of RAM, then set the above values (both of them) to about 25% of the amount of installed RAM.

Part Four: **RAM**
You may've thought we overlooked the obvious - add more RAM! The more memory you have, the less frequently Windows 98 will use your hard disk, and the better your system performance will be.
Since Windows 98 isn't very efficient or compact (by any stretch of the imagination), you'll need to feed it as much memory as you can afford. 16 megabytes is the absolute minimum, but 32 is better. If you have the money, 64 or even 128 megabytes will literally make Windows 98 fly.

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