Basic Speedup of Windows XP
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If you PC is running slow there are a few simple things you can do to speed things up:
1)Use Disk Cleanup
2)Update your Virus Scanner and do a FULL Scan
3)Apply all security patches from Microsoft Update
4)Shutdown all unnecessary programs
5)Defrag Your Hard Drive
6)Add/Remove Programs
7)Manually Delete Files
8)Check Swap Space Size
9)Add Memory
10)Add Another Hard Drive
11)Reformat Hard Drive

1) Disk Cleanup
If your primary Hard Drive is cluttered, it might affect your available Virtual Memory.
You can access disk clean up by doing the following:
a) Open My Computer
b) Right Click on your Primary Hard Drive and Select Properties
c) Goto General Tab
d) Observe and click on Disk Cleanup Button

2)Update your Virus Scanner and do a FULL Scan
Viruses can compromise your personal information, slow down your computer and cut down on its lifespan. Make
sure your firewall is active and that your virus definitions are up to date. Some companies provide virus scanner
licenses to its employees free of charge.

3)Apply all security patches from Microsoft Update
Start->Control Panel->Windows Update
[May have to switch to Classic View to find...]
You should also turn on Automatic Updates if you see it in Control Panel

4)Shutdown all unnecessary programs
a) Right Click on TaskBar and select properties.
b) Choose Start Menu Tab
c) Choose Clasic Start Menu
d) Click Customize
e) Click Advanced
f) Expand Programs Folder
g) Open Startup Folder
h) Remove Items if you see them

You can also try the following:
a) Ctrl-Alt-Delete
b) Click Task Manage Button
c) Goto Processes Tab
d) Using the End Process tab to terminate processes that seem to be taking a lot of CPU power.

5)Defrag Your Hard Drive
Start->All Programs->Accessories->System Tools->Disk Defragmenter

Sometimes computers with fragmented hard drives run slower

6)Add/Remove Programs
Start->Control Panel->Add/Remove Programs

It should allow you to sort programs by size. There may be programs on your computer that you are no longer using.

7)Manually Delete Files
You need to be careful about this, but sometimes you just need to open up Windows Explorer and delete things that you aren't using anymore. If you accidentally delete something you need, remember to get it out of the recycle bin before you dump it forever with disk cleanup.

8)Check Swap Space Size
1) Start->Control Panel->System->Advanced [Tab]
2) Click Setting Button in Performance Section
3) Click Advanced Tab
4) Look for Virtual Memory Category.
5) Ensure that you have at 2X as many megs of Virtual Memory as you do physical memory.

9)Add Memory
These days, you really need to have at least 1 Gig of physical memory for your PC to perform well.
1) Start->Control Panel->System->General Tab
2) Look under Computer it should say how much RAM you have.

If you don't have enough RAM a good place to get some might be DELL or HP if you bought your computer from either of them or
http://www.crucial.com/store/drammemory.aspx
or
http://www.ec.kingston.com/ecom/configurator_new/mfrmod.asp?root=us&LinkBack=http://www.kingston.com
you should be able to enter the specific of your PC and have the website tell you what kind of memory you need.

You will need to also get an antistatic wrist strap or gloves before installing the memory
http://www.tigerdirect.com/applications/SearchTools/item-details.asp?EdpNo=4242578&CatId=4748
http://www.tigerdirect.com/applications/SearchTools/item-details.asp?EdpNo=1472803&CatId=4748
Also try not to stand on the carpet when upgrading your PC.

10)Add Another Hard Drive
Internal Hard drives are cheap and they MAY give you a performance boost especially if you move your virtual memory swap file onto a new HD. Running multiple hard drives in the same computer allows for greater throughput in some situations

http://www.tigerdirect.com/applications/SearchTools/item-details.asp?EdpNo=5550452&CatId=139
before you purchase, you will need to determine if you have and EIDE (wide ribbon cable) or SATA (skinny cable) interface.

11)Reformat Hard Drive
This doesn't cost any money and its works really well but it should only be done as a last resort because it is very destructive. You need to be very careful because you would loose something that you forgot to backup.

If you bought a DELL, you probably have a Microsoft Windows XP CD, you can use the CD to do a fresh installation of Windows XP Pro. After you are done, your computer will run like it never has before, but be careful to back everything up!!! You might acidentally delete somehting you need.   If you bought and HP, you can still do a system restore, but it won't be as clean as if you bought a DELL. Many HP System Restore disks have value added software and HP "thinks' you want installed on your computer. Often times, most people just thing that "value added" software is junk though...