

Windows laptops & PCs | Medium | 2 min read

'Your computer is low on memory' and virtual memory basics

Windows can show a message saying **Your computer is low on memory**. This means there is not enough working memory (RAM) for everything you have open. In most cases you can solve it by closing things, without changing any technical settings.

What is RAM?

RAM is the PC's short-term workspace. Every open program and browser tab uses some. When it fills up, Windows borrows space on the drive, called virtual memory, which is much slower. That is why the PC crawls.

Easy fixes

1. Save your work, then close programs you are not using.
2. In your browser, close tabs you do not need. Browsers can use a lot of memory.
3. Restart the PC, which clears a lot of leftover use.
4. Open **Task Manager** with **Ctrl + Shift + Esc**, click the **Memory** column to sort, and see what is using the most.

Reduce what starts with Windows

In **Task Manager**, open the **Startup** tab (Windows 11: **Startup apps**) and disable programs you do not need. This does not uninstall them.

Virtual memory: the safe approach

Windows manages this by itself, and for most people the best choice is to leave it alone. You can look at it to be sure it has not been changed:

1. Open **Settings**, **System**, **About**, then **Advanced system settings**.
2. Under **Performance**, click **Settings**, then the **Advanced** tab, then **Change** under **Virtual memory**.
3. Check that **Automatically manage paging file size for all drives** is ticked.

Do not set the file to tiny values or switch it off. Doing so can cause crashes.

Virtual memory needs spare room on the **C:** drive, so aim to keep at least 15% free.

The real fix

If you see the message often, even with few programs open, you probably need more RAM. Many modern laptops cannot be upgraded, so check the make and model before buying anything.

When to get more help

Get in touch if the message appears all the time, if one program uses nearly all your memory, or if you want to know whether your PC can have more RAM. We can check for you.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.