COMMON WINDOWS 10 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Windows 10 is a blend of the best features of Windows 7 and 8.1 but many people are frustrated when they can't find a feature or fix they were used to in one of the older versions.

Here are some of the questions people raise when we are discussing Windows 10.

Windows Media Player lost the ability to play DVD videos in Windows 10 (and 8 but people didn't seem to notice that!). You can purchase the Windows DVD player for $15 from the Windows store but if you are like me, I would rather get something for free. The answer is to download the VLC media player, which is a free and open source cross-platform multimedia player and framework that plays most multimedia files as well as DVDs, Audio CDs, VCDs, and various streaming protocols. Go to http://www.videolan.org/vlc/ website for the download. A quick tip: before playing any DVD movies open the "Video" menu and choose "Deinterlace > Automatic" which will improve the picture quality.

Windows Media Center has also been dropped from Windows 10. For those who don't remember this program it was also a DVD player, could stream Netflix movies, with correct connections you could record and playback TV shows etc. There are several free alternatives but the most popular is "Kodi" which can be downloaded at http://www.kodi.tv. This also includes a built in DVD player and with another program NextPVR you can record live TV with a TV tuner. Details are on the website.

After you have had Windows 10 for a while, the number of programs and applications you have seem to grow like weeds and the list on the Start menu "All apps" is tedious and time consuming to find the program you want. A quick short cut is to click on the "All apps" and when the list opens alphabetically click on the letter "A" and a complete alphabet appears (see image at left). Just click on the first letter of the program you want (i.e. for "Quicktime" click on the letter "Q")   and the menu will go to that letter.

Pin to Start
Pin to taskbar
Uninstall
Run as administrator
Open file location
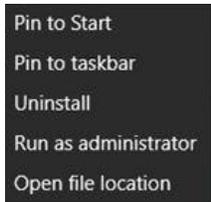
For programs you use frequently, it might be easier to attach them to either the start menu or the taskbar for quick access. To do this go to the program in the apps list, right click with your mouse and select to pin to start or taskbar.

I have had several people ask about the fact they don't have a Windows 10 program disc and what they can do if a computer problem necessitates a reinstallation of Windows 10.

First, let's assume Windows 10 fails to boot for some reason. The easiest solution is to try a system recovery drive that gives you access to the Windows 10 repair options.

To create a recovery drive to have on standby press a spare 1GB (or larger) flash drive into service. Plug the formatted blank drive into your PC, type , "recovery" into the search box on the taskbar and select "create a recovery drive". Uncheck the "Backup system files to the recovery drive" and follow the prompts to create your drive. Should you need to use it start your computer with the drive plugged in to access the tools.

To create a reinstall disc for Windows 10 you will need a blank DVD or a spare 8GB flash drive. First download the Windows 10 Media Creation Tool from:

https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/software-download/windows10 and choose 32-bit or 64-bit depending on your system (right click on the start button and select system if you are not sure of your configuration). Launch the tool and select "create installation media for another PC, click "next" and follow the prompts to select language, architecture. Insert the flash drive or create an ISO file that you can then burn to as single DVD. Of course, this is not something you should need to do unless you have a hard drive failure or something of a similar nature.

In my view, a very important feature of Windows is the System Restore feature. System Restore helps you restore your computer's system files to an earlier point in time. It's a way to undo system changes to your computer without affecting your personal files, such as e-mail, documents, or photos.

However on some systems for reasons known only to Microsoft and God (and he is a little confused about the matter) System Restore is disabled by default.

Sometimes, the installation of a program or a driver can cause an unexpected change to your computer or cause Windows to behave unpredictably. Usually, uninstalling the program or driver corrects the problem. If uninstalling doesn't fix the problem, you can try restoring your computer's system to an earlier date when everything worked correctly. If you suspect that system restore is not functioning it is easy to check and switch it on if required.

First open the system properties as described above and you will see an image similar to the
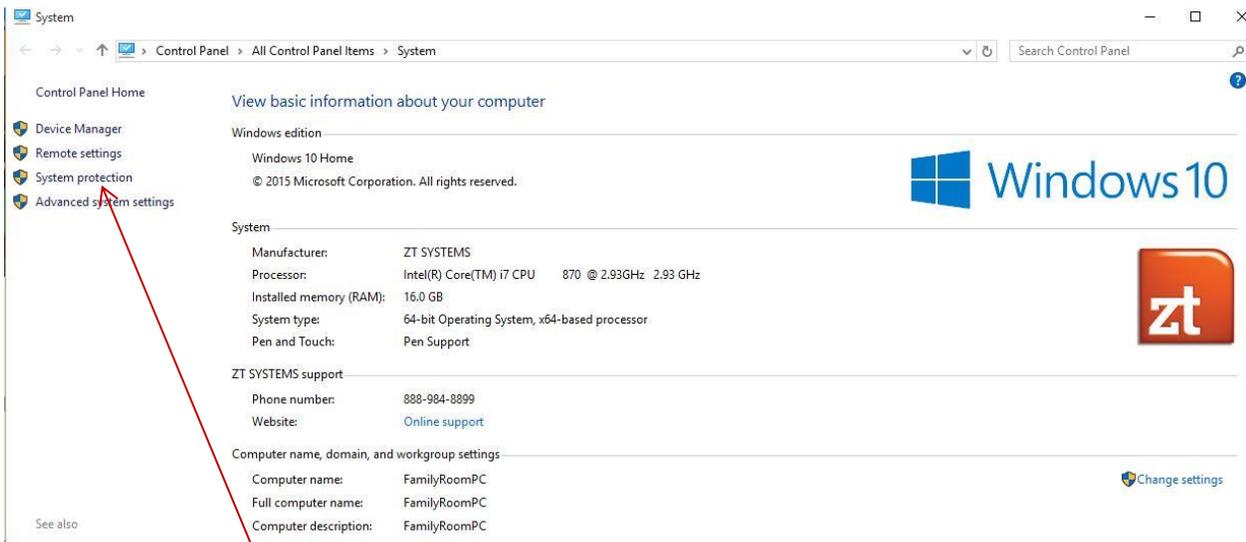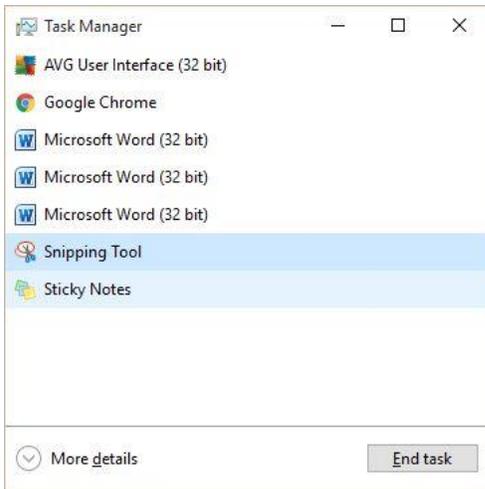

one below::

Click on the system protection and the system restore box will open. Make sure the drive containing Windows (usually drive "C") is turned on. (See below).
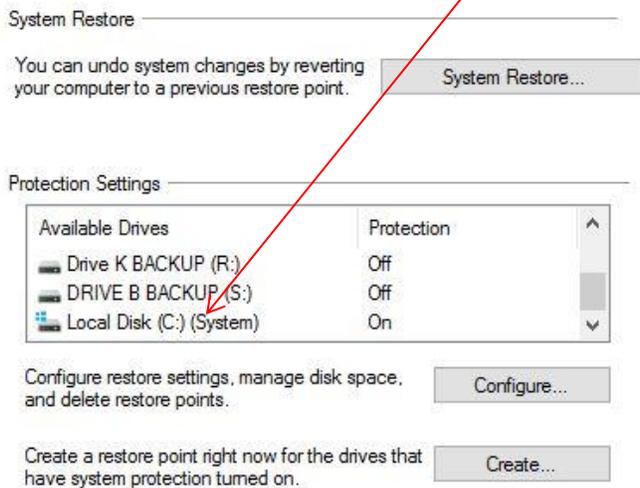
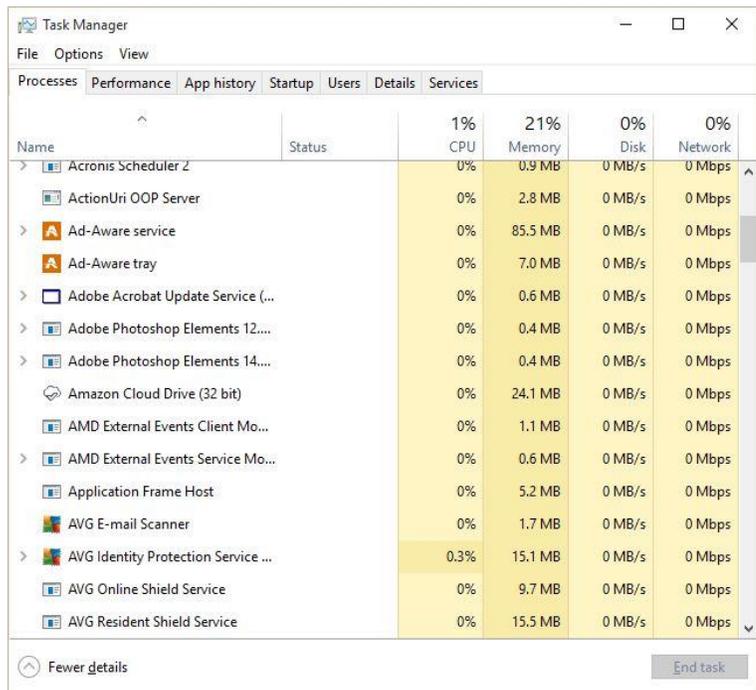System restore will now be active. Remember to create a restore point any time you are doing something that may affect the registry such as installing a new software program. If there is a glitch with the program, it is easy to restore the system back to the condition prior to installation.

There is a lot of talk about how Windows 10 is much faster to load than previous versions but I have had people complain that they have not noticed any difference. One thing to check is what programs are starting when you boot up. My experience is that every software creator believes that their program is the one and only reason you have a computer and therefore their software should start when the machine does! This as you know is not the case and therefore if you have a slow boot check what programs are starting without you being aware of them. The easy way is to open the "task manager". This can be done by the keyboard shortcut ctrl+shift+esc that will bring up a window like the one on the left. If you get one like the one below

Simply click on the box on the lower left corner labelled "fewer details" and one shown above will appear. This is the programs that are active now and is quite acceptable but if you get a list of programs which you aren't using but are showing that they are active then close them. You should then check which programs are starting with the boot up. Go to the "more details" view and on the top click on the startup tab and see what programs ar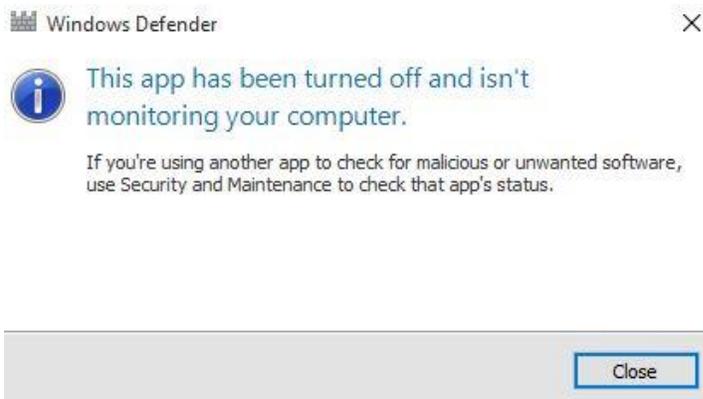e enabled. If you see something in the list that you'd like to disable, just select the application from the list and then click the disable button at the bottom of the window If you change your mind, just come back to this tool and enable it again.

Many people have questioned the purpose of Cortana the speaking assistant. This is a personal choice; if you like talking to your computer it can be helpful in finding answers to your questions by searching the web and your computer. This is easy to do and although not 100% most of the time Cortana does a good job. The secret to getting the results you are looking for is to speak clearly and slowly and if necessary take the time to practice with talking.

My choice is to use Cortana to find things on my computer and I find everything on the web myself using Google search. By default, Cortana favors web searching over locally stored content when you use generic search terms. To disable Cortana as a web search tool click on the notebook icon on the left, choose settings. Flick the top switch to "off" and a new switch is revealed: "search online and include web results". Flick this off and now your search box says "Search Windows".

Free up disc space. If you upgraded your computer from a previous version of Windows and have decided that you will stay with this and not revert to your previous Windows version then you can free up space on your "C" drive by opening file explorer and verifying the existence of "windows.old" folder. Right click on your "C" drive, choose properties. Click "Disk clean-up" wait for the scan and then click "clean up system files". Select the "Previous Windows installation" entry.

Windows Defender is an Anti-Malware component that is part of Windows 10 - providing all users with some form of protection, even if they don't purchase an anti-virus product. If you do install your own protection, they will often disable Windows Defender automatically - as it isn't wise to have two competing solutions running at the same time. If you have a third party antivirus program such as McAfee, Norton AVG etc. you should make sure Windows Defender is inactive to avoid conflicts with the other program.
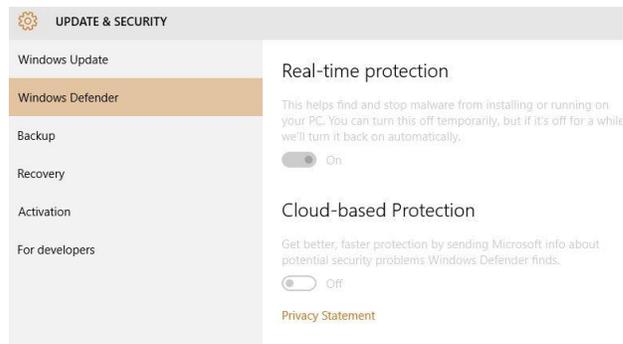
To check the status of Defender click on the start button and check out the entry under Windows System. If you try to open it the box shown on the left will appear.

You can also go to:

Settings>Updates & Security>Windows Defender and the program will appear with the details greyed out as shown at the right.

Should you wish to reinstate Defender it will be necessary to uninstall the other anti-virus program first.

Programs and Features
Power Options
Event Viewer
System
Device Manager
Network Connections
Disk Management
Computer Management
Command Prompt
Command Prompt (Admin)

Task Manager
Control Panel
File Explorer
Search
Run

Shut down or sign out   >
Desktop

I have had people complaining about finding the control panel, Task Manager and all of the other features of your machine, that were easy to find in Windows 7 & 8. For quick access go to the start button and right click you mouse and a context menu with links to many of the features you need to access regularly. (See Image at left). For the average user these will be sufficient for virtually all your needs but for those of you who want to check out every setting there is a hidden folder which gives you access to over 200 customizations for your PC. The best part is that it is easy to install and not complicated. The hidden tweak, which not many know about, was available for Windows 7, 8 and Windows 8.1 and still works for Windows 10. This has been nicknamed the "GodMode" feature and offers users easy access to the innumerable features on Windows, as well as the customization options, all in a single interface. It also sorts them into categories, such as Administrative Tools and Display, to make life a lot easier. So if you're looking to change the resolution of your monitor or alter the taskbar's notification space, it's all available at a single click thanks to GodMode.

It is simple to install, first right click on your desktop and create a new folder. Click on the name and paste the following as a new name:

GodMode.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}

It is probably easiest if you copy and paste this to avoid typos! You can actually change the "Godmode" to whatever you want, JediMode, DerekMode etc. just ensure the period is after the name and the rest of the dialog is exactly as shown.

BarryMode
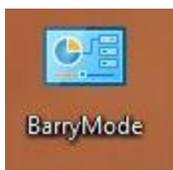
The folder will change to resemble the control panel's look with the name below.

When you open that folder, you'll have god-like access to 260+ functions and tools, some of them different from previous Windows versions. You can also drag and drop any of the commands to your desktop to create a shortcut for the command, which is especially helpful since the settings that have moved to the Settings app, while pinnable to the Start screen, aren't able to be drag-and-dropped into shortcuts. You can also right click on the icon and pin it to the "start menu".

Administrative Tools (11)
- Create and format hard disk partitions
- Defragment and optimize your drives
- Diagnose your computer's memory problems
- Free up disk space by deleting unnecessary files
- Manage computer certificates
- Schedule tasks
- Set up iSCSI initiator
- Set up ODBC data sources (32-bit)
- Set up ODBC data sources (64-bit)
- View event logs
- View local services

AutoPlay (3)
- Change default settings for media or devices
- Play CDs or other media automatically
- Start or stop using AutoPlay for all media and devices

Backup and Restore (Windows 7) (2)
- Backup and Restore (Windows 7)
- Restore data, files, or computer from backup (Windows 7)

Color Management (1)
- Change advanced color management settings for displays, scanners, and printers

Credential Manager (2)
- Manage Web Credentials
- Manage Windows Credentials

Date and Time (4)
- Add clocks for different time zones
- Automatically adjust for daylight saving time
- Change the time zone
- Set the time and date

Default Programs (2)
- Make a file type always open in a specific program
- Set your default programs

Devices and Printers (10)

The functions are grouped into sets alphabetically (see at left) and to adjust any of them click on the description and follow the instructions.

A word of caution, if you are not sure what you are doing, DON"T!!!

If you must play with something please set a restore point prior to fiddling with your computer and if everything does not work as you had assumed you can use "system restore" to return to the state you were in prior to fiddling!

One final thing that people sometimes ask about is How can I boot straight to the desktop without having to enter a password?"

If you are, the only user of your PC here is a solution.

Press (windows key) R to open the "run" dialog box and type "netplwiz" and press enter.

The user accounts box opens as shown on the right.

Make sure your user account is selected and untick the "user must enter a username and password to use this computer" and click "Apply".

In the box that appears type in a password (that you **will not** forget!) and click "OK" twice.

Windows also requires you to enter your password after your PC wakes from sleep. If security isn't an issue go to:

Start>settings>accounts>sign in options and change the required sign in drop down to "never".

STOP PRESS!!

It has come to my attention that several of our members have been complaining that since upgrading to Windows 10 their computers are still slow to boot and there is no improvement over previous versions (both 7 and 8). Unfortunately, Windows 10 is not a miracle operating system, if your machine was slow to boot prior to upgrading it will still be slow with Windows 10. However, there is a way that you may be able to improve performance especially on machines with limited amounts of RAM (4 GB or less). This is called "Ready Boost" and has been available since Windows Vista but not publicized much. The idea behind this is to use a USB drive as additional memory and hopefully get a faster computer. Note if you already have 8GB + of RAM or an SSD as your boot drive, this is not for you. You also need a USB 2.0 or 3.0 port for the external drive.

The first thing you need to do is ascertain what your present system attributes. First, check the file format of your hard drive by clicking on the drive (usually drive "C") and checking the file system under properties. Most computers today are using NTFS file format (**N**ew **T**echnology
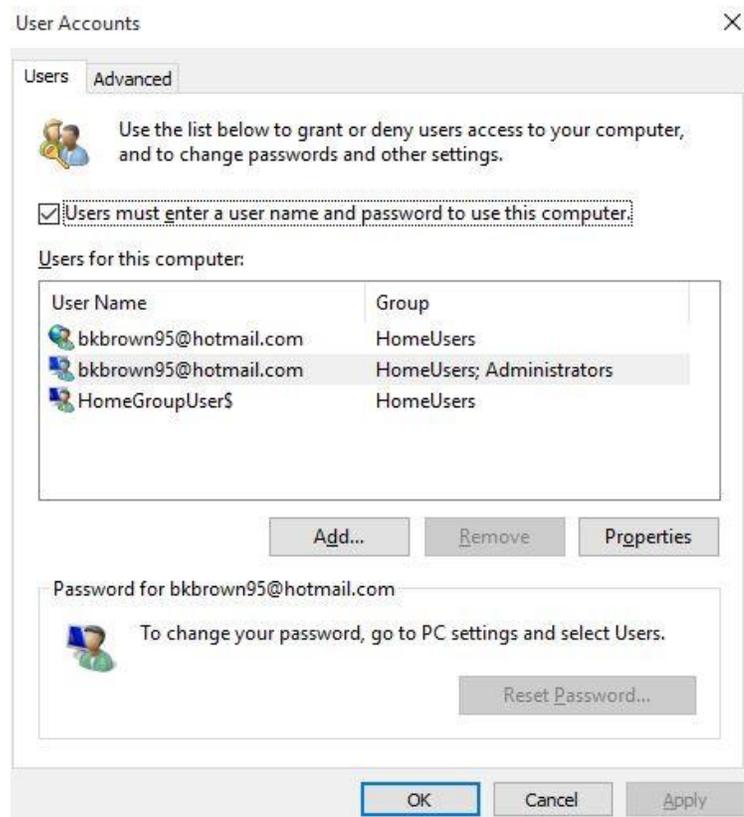
File **S**ystem) but if your unit shows FAT (**F**ile **A**llocation **T**able) with a number (16 or 32) it is an old system and can be updated but that is beyond the scope of this paper. FAT systems can still use a USB "ReadyBoost" but are limited to 2 GB total memory on the FAT16 and 4 GB on the FAT32.

Windows edition

Windows 10 Home

© 2015 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

System

Manufacturer:	eMachines
Model:	EL1850
Processor:	Intel(R) Celeron(R) CPU 450 @ 2.20GHz 2.19 GHz
Installed memory (RAM):	4.00 GB
System type:	64-bit Operating System, x64-based processor
Pen and Touch:	No Pen or Touch Input is available for this Display

To do this, right click on search button (Windows flag at lower left-hand corner of your screen) and select Control Panel>System and Security> System and a screen similar to that shown above   should appear. The main thing we are interested in is the "Installed memory" which in this case is 4.0 GB. This is quite small and could definitely take advantage of "ReadyBoost".
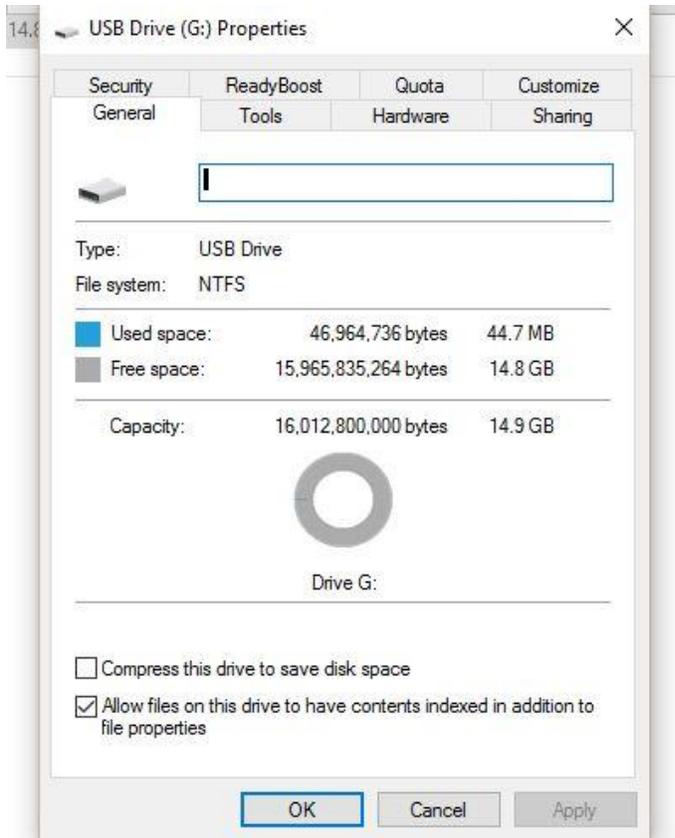
Now you are ready to set up a USB thumb drive for "ReadyBoost". It is recommended that a drive of at least 8GB be used, larger if you like there is no upper limit.

Plug in the drive and locate the drive in the file explorer screen. (See below, drive "G").

Devices and drives (4)

eMachines (C:)	DVD RW Drive (D:)	USB Drive (G:)	Lexar (H:)
361 GB free of 449 GB		14.8 GB free of 14.9 GB	6.13 GB free of 7.34 GB

Right click on the drive and select "Properties" to show the drive features.

You will notice in this instance we are using a 15 GB drive (14.9 GB useable) with the NTFS file system.

Along the top of the properties box is an option to select "ReadyBoost".

Click on this and a screen similar to that below will be shown.

This shows the drive is suitable for use as additional memory, if the drive you use is not suitable a message to that effect will appear advising you that it cannot be used for "ReadyBoost". This is usually due to low performance from a very old device. Unless you are planning to use some of the space on the drive as storage check the "Dedicate this device" button. If you were going to use the drive for storage as well as performance enhancing Windows recommends reserving some MB for optimal performance and some space for file storage but this is not recommended. With dedication to ReadyBoost this is irrelevant and the space to reserve will automatically go to the maximum. Windows then creates a special
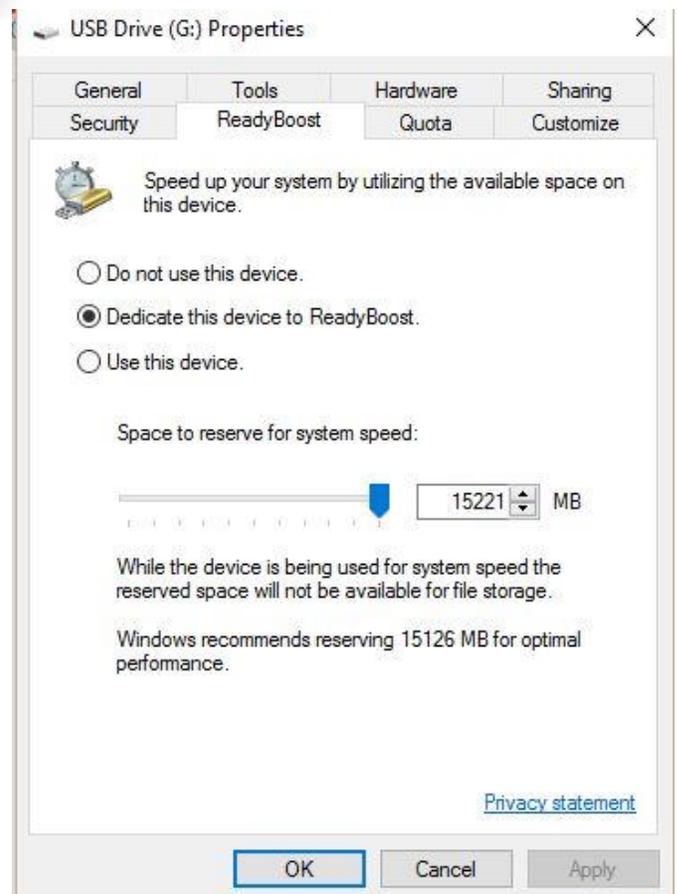
encrypted and compressed file named ***ReadyBoost.sfcache*** on the disk.

It takes some time for the cache to fill with data - system files related to Windows are added first, followed by open apps/programs, and then programs or apps you launch. This causes temporary bump in disk activity. Allow ReadyBoost to do its work for at least two or three days and see if applications start and run faster. Generally, Windows and installed programs should be more responsive if ReadyBoost has enough disk space for its cache.

To turn off ReadyBoost, open the Removable Disk Properties again and select the "Do not use this device" option, do not just remove the drive from the port as this can cause problems!

The computer I used for this example was an E-machines low budget machine (I believe it cost around $250 when bought in 2000) with Windows 7 installed. The owner (a 94 year old) skipped installing Windows 8 and 8.1 but could not resist the free offer for Windows 10!

I installed it for him last year and at the same time set up the "ReadyBoost". He is very pleased with it, he claims that surfing the web (his main task) is much faster and downloading images from e-mails is greatly improved.

If you have a machine that you think is slow, check out the specs as described here and if they are similar try the flash drive boost, it might just work for you!