FREE GUIDE

The Definitive Windows Optimization Checklist

by ELIZZAR

This is the honest version. No registry voodoo, no "god mode" myths, no scripts that quietly break Windows Update. Every step below is something we actually do on client machines and on our own. Work top to bottom, tick each box, and skip anything that does not apply to your hardware.

A few items can change system behaviour. Read the "Reverting changes" section first so you always know how to undo a step. When in doubt, leave a setting at its default.

1. Before you start

- ☐ Create a System Restore point (System Properties > System Protection > Create) so you can roll back in minutes.
- ☐ Note your current Windows build (winver) and back up anything irreplaceable to a second drive or the cloud.
- ☐ Update Windows fully, then reboot, before measuring anything. A pending update skews every benchmark.
- ☐ Install the latest GPU and chipset drivers from the vendor, not just whatever Windows Update offers.

2. Debloat safely

- ☐ Uninstall apps you do not use from Settings > Apps, rather than running aggressive third-party debloat scripts.
- ☐ Disable, do not delete, preinstalled Store apps you are unsure about. They are trivial to disable and reversible.
- ☐ Avoid tools that strip Microsoft Store, Defender, or Windows Update; the breakage is rarely worth the few MB saved.
- ☐ Turn off Suggested content and tips (Settings > Privacy > General) to cut nagging without touching the OS.

3. Startup and boot

- ☐ Open Task Manager > Startup apps and disable high-impact entries you do not need at login.

- [ ] Keep audio, GPU, and security software enabled; disabling them to chase boot time usually backfires.
- [ ] Use Settings > Apps > Startup as a second view to catch background launchers Task Manager hides.
- [ ] Re-measure boot time after each change so you can attribute improvements to the right toggle.

4. Services and background apps

- [ ] Leave Windows services at their defaults unless you can name the exact reason to change one.
- [ ] Limit which apps run in the background (Settings > Apps > app > Background apps permissions).
- [ ] Disable unnecessary scheduled tasks only if you recognise them; unknown tasks are best left alone.
- [ ] Never set Windows Update, Defender, or Plug and Play services to Disabled.

5. Gaming and FPS

- [ ] Enable Hardware-accelerated GPU scheduling (Settings > Display > Graphics) and test for stability.
- [ ] Set demanding games to High performance per-app in the same Graphics settings panel.
- [ ] Turn on Game Mode and, if your panel supports it, enable variable refresh / G-Sync / FreeSync.
- [ ] Cap background recording and overlays you do not use; they cost frames and add latency.

6. Privacy and telemetry

- [ ] Review Settings > Privacy & security and disable advertising ID and tailored experiences.
- [ ] Set Diagnostic data to the minimum your edition allows; do not expect zero telemetry on consumer Windows.
- [ ] Audit app permissions for camera, microphone, and location, and revoke what is not needed.
- [ ] Be sceptical of tools promising total telemetry removal. Many break updates or activation.

7. SSD and storage myths

- [ ] Do NOT defragment an SSD. Windows already runs TRIM on a sensible schedule, so leave it on.
- [ ] Keep at least 10 to 15% of an SSD free so the controller has room for wear levelling.
- [ ] Ignore advice to disable the pagefile; let Windows manage it unless you have a specific, tested reason.
- [ ] Use Storage Sense (Settings > System > Storage) to clear temp files instead of risky cleaner apps.

8. Power plan

- [ ] On a desktop, choose Balanced or High performance; on a laptop, Balanced preserves battery and

thermals.

- [ ] Check that your CPU is not stuck at a low maximum processor state in advanced power settings.
- [ ] Set the display and sleep timers to suit how you actually work, not just the lowest possible value.
- [ ] After changing a plan, confirm temperatures stay sane under load before calling it done.

9. Verify and benchmark

- [ ] Re-run the same benchmark you used at the start; compare like for like, same resolution and settings.
- [ ] Watch 1% lows and frame times, not just average FPS. Smoothness matters more than a bigger number.
- [ ] Confirm boot time, idle RAM, and temperatures improved or held steady; regressions mean undo a step.
- [ ] Keep a short log of what you changed so future-you can connect a result to a cause.

10. Reverting changes

- [ ] If anything feels worse, roll back to the System Restore point you created in step 1.
- [ ] Undo changes one at a time and re-test, so you isolate which toggle caused the issue.
- [ ] Re-enable any service or startup item you disabled if a feature stops working as expected.
- [ ] When unsure, return the setting to its Windows default. Default is a safe, supported baseline.

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