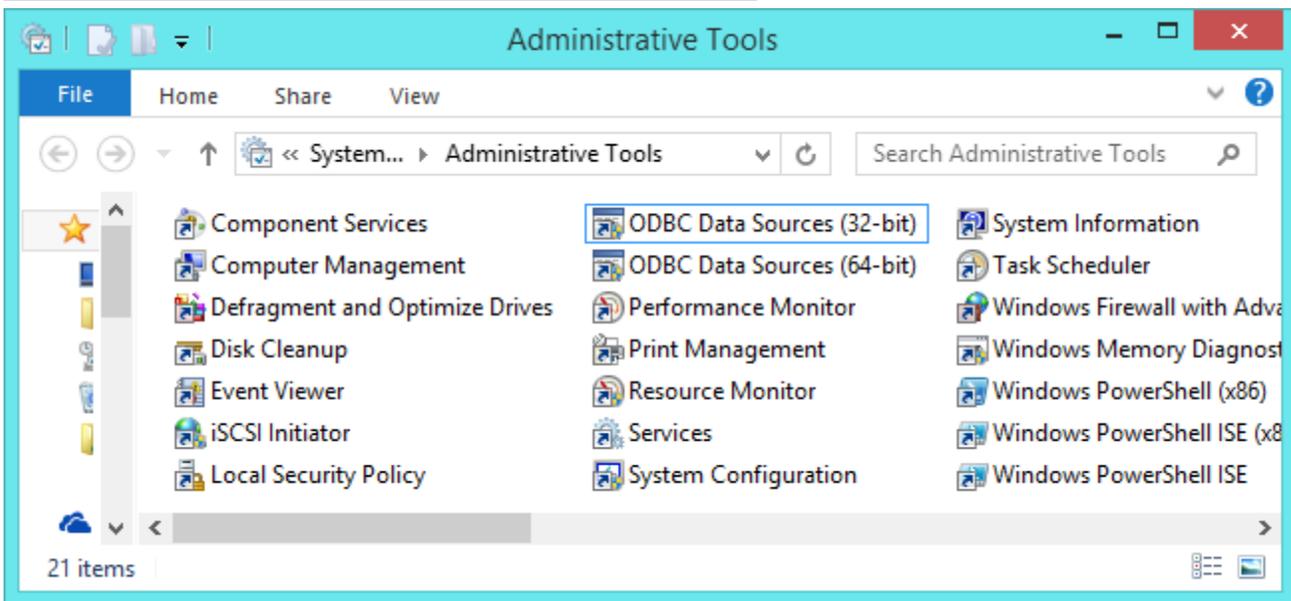


21 Windows Administrative Tools Explained

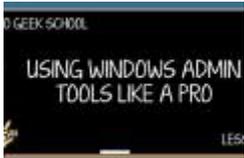


Windows is packed full of system tools, and many of them are in [the Administrative Tools folder](#). The tools here are more powerful and complex, so they're hidden where most Windows users won't stumble across them.

Some of these tools are only available on [Professional or Enterprise versions of Windows](#), not the "core" or Home versions of Windows 8.1, 8, and 7. The list of tools here is from a Windows 8.1 Professional system.

Component Services

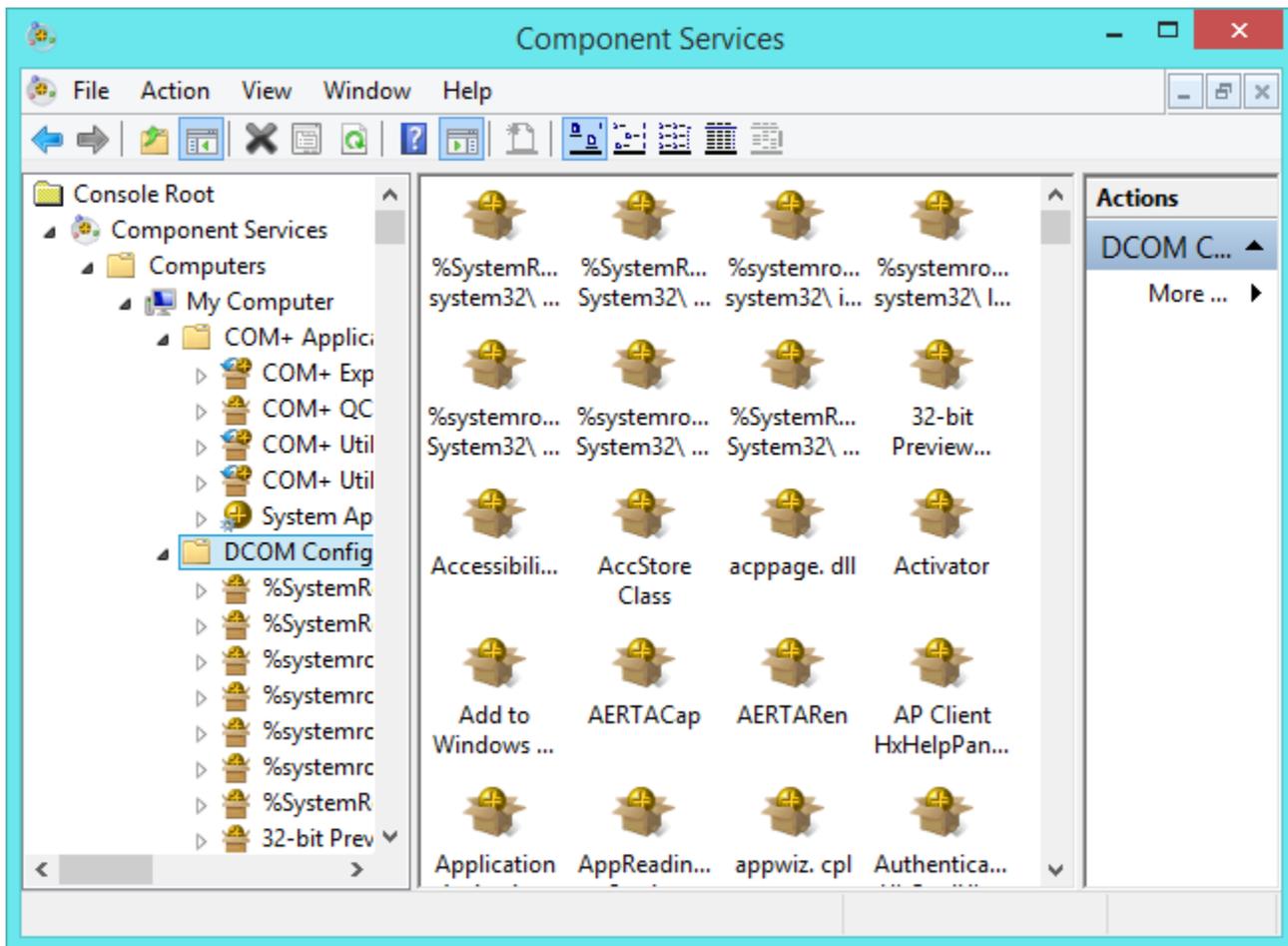
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The Component Services tool allows you to configure and administer COM components and COM+ applications. If you don't know what this means, you don't need this tool. Most Windows users should never need to touch this, which is why it's buried here in the Administrative Tools folder.



Computer Management

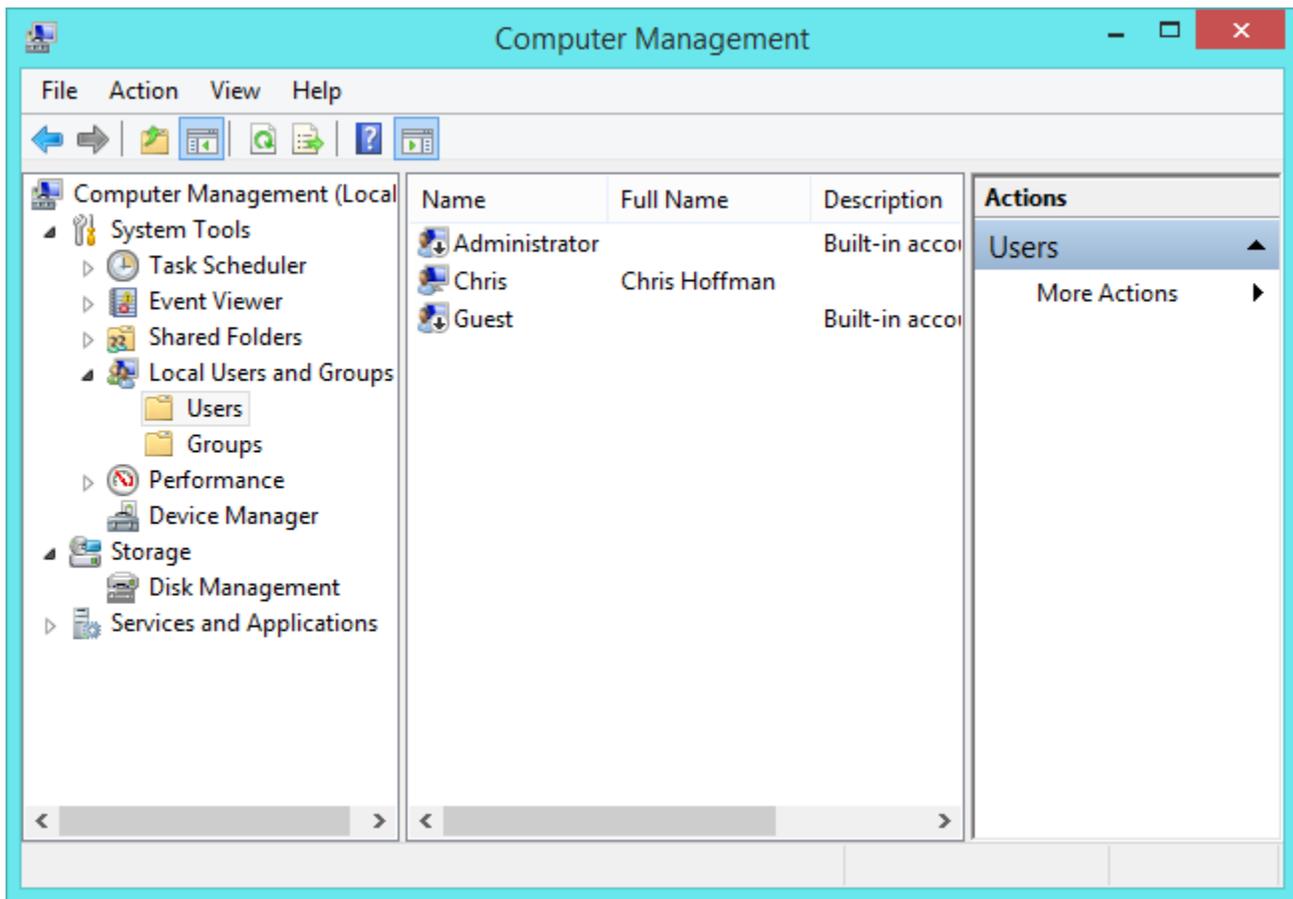
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The Computer Management application provides a variety of tools in one window. For example, the Shared Folders and Local Users and Groups tools provide you with a more powerful interface for viewing and managing shared folders and groups on your PC. The [Disk Management drive partitioning tool](#) is also available here.

Some of the tools here — such as the Task Schedule, Event Viewer, and Performance tools — also have their own shortcuts in the Administrative Tools folder.



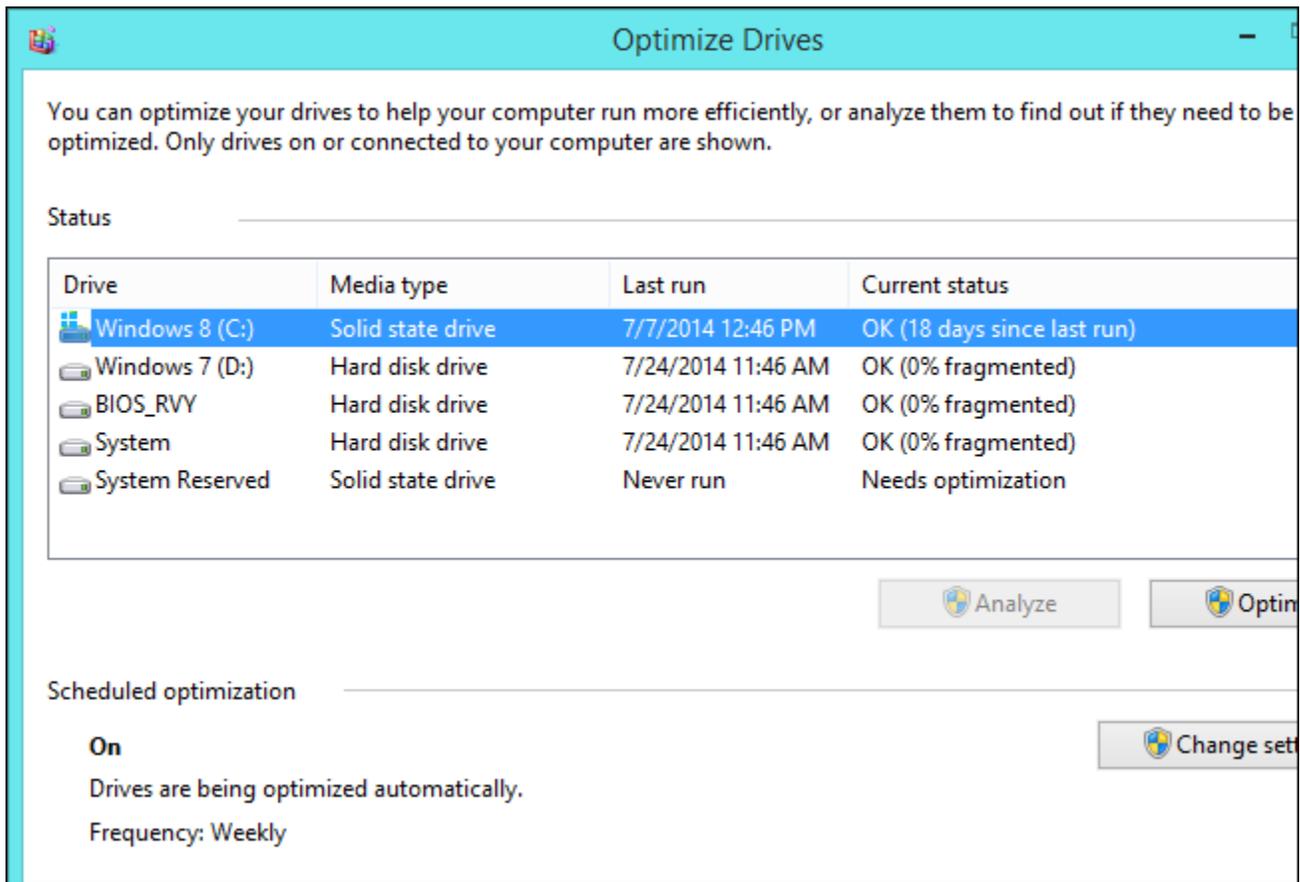
Defragment and Optimize Drives

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This is the standard Disk Defragmenter tool most Windows users are familiar with. On Windows 8 and 8.1, it's named Optimize Drives and can also optimize solid-state drives as well as defragment mechanical drives. [Windows defragments your drives automatically](#), so you shouldn't need to run the tool on your own.



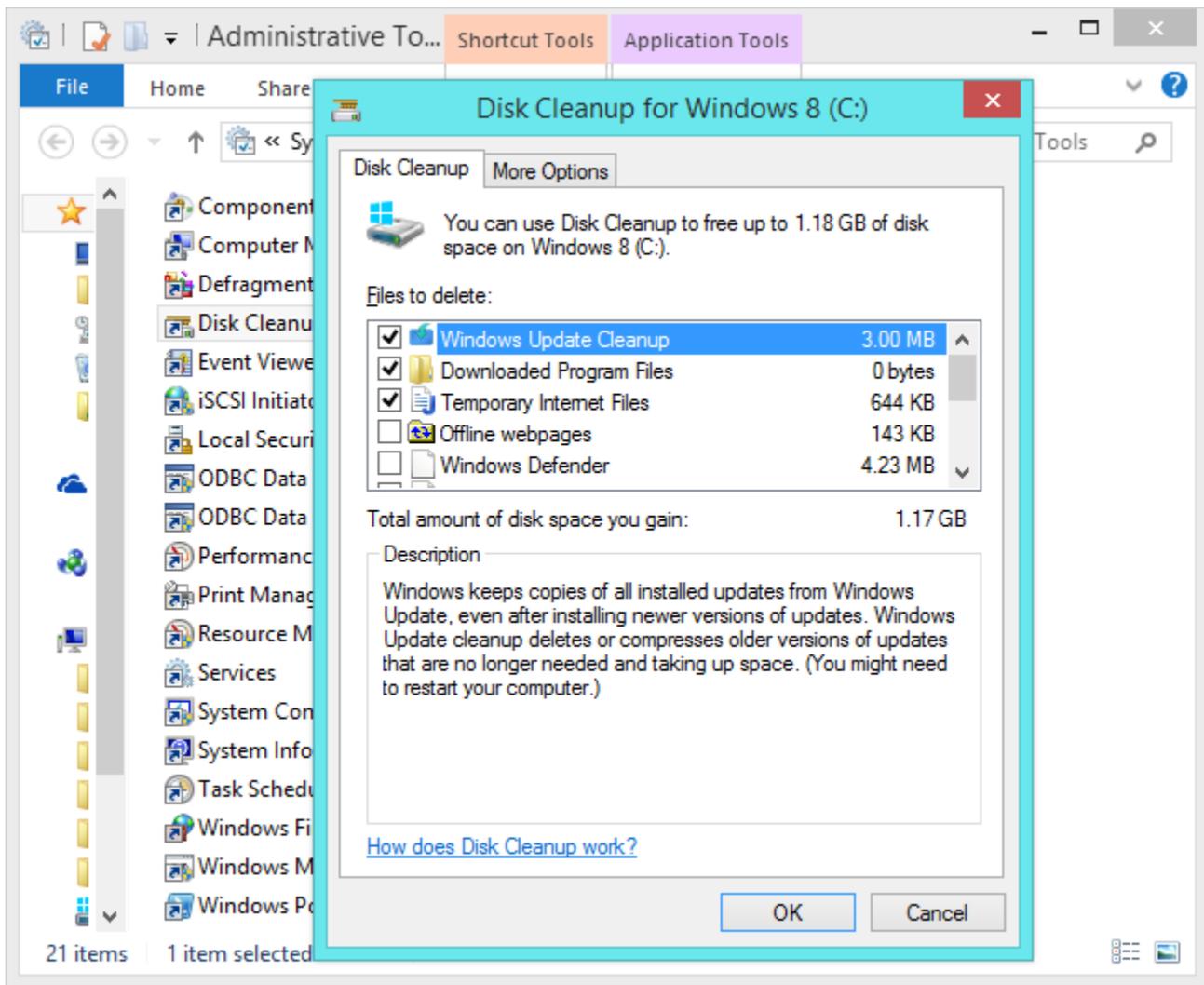
Disk Cleanup

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Every Windows user can benefit from the Disk Cleanup tool, so it's a bit out-of-place here. This tool scans your system for unnecessary files — temporary files, Windows update uninstallation files, and other junk — and can quickly remove them to [free up space](#).



Event Viewer

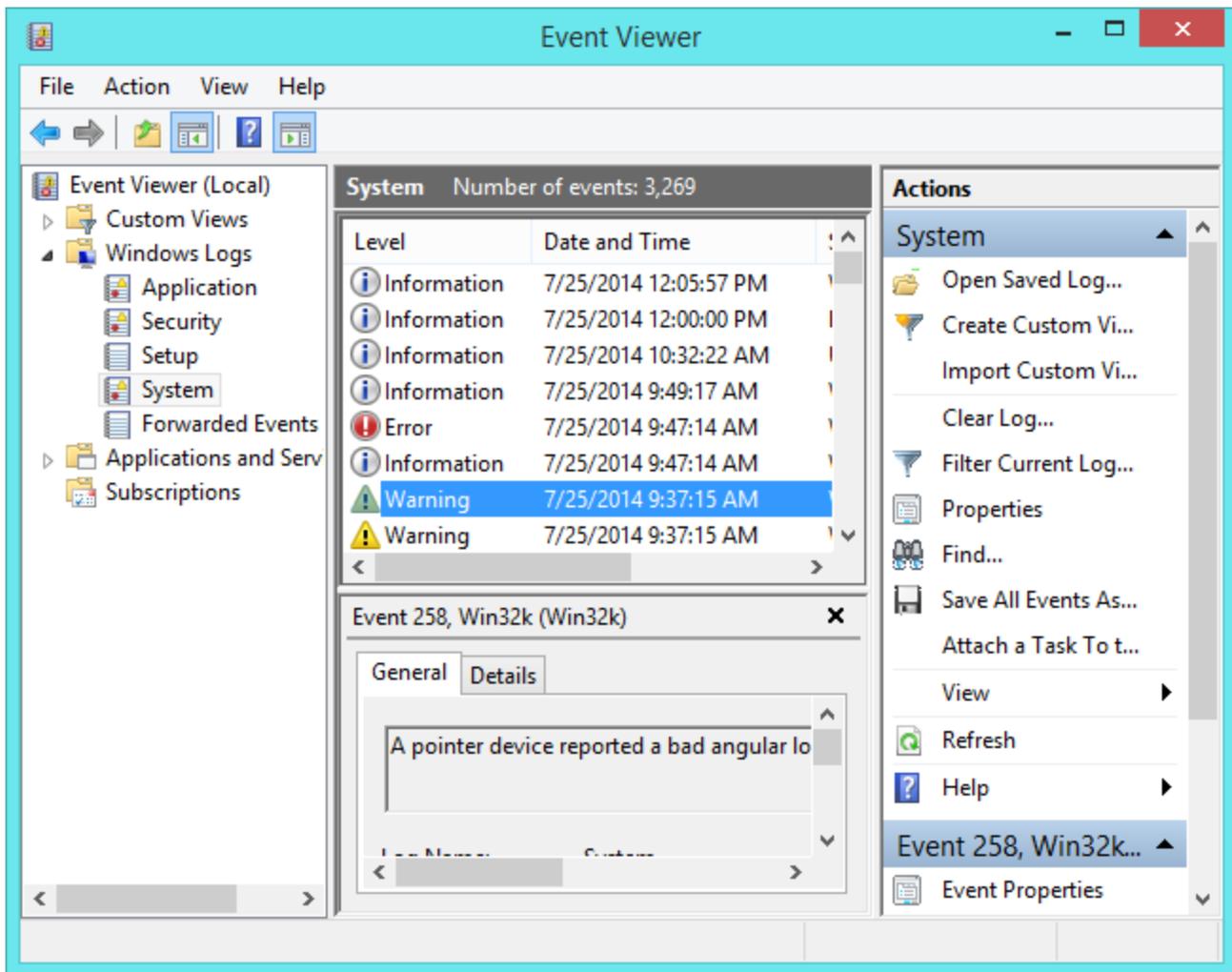
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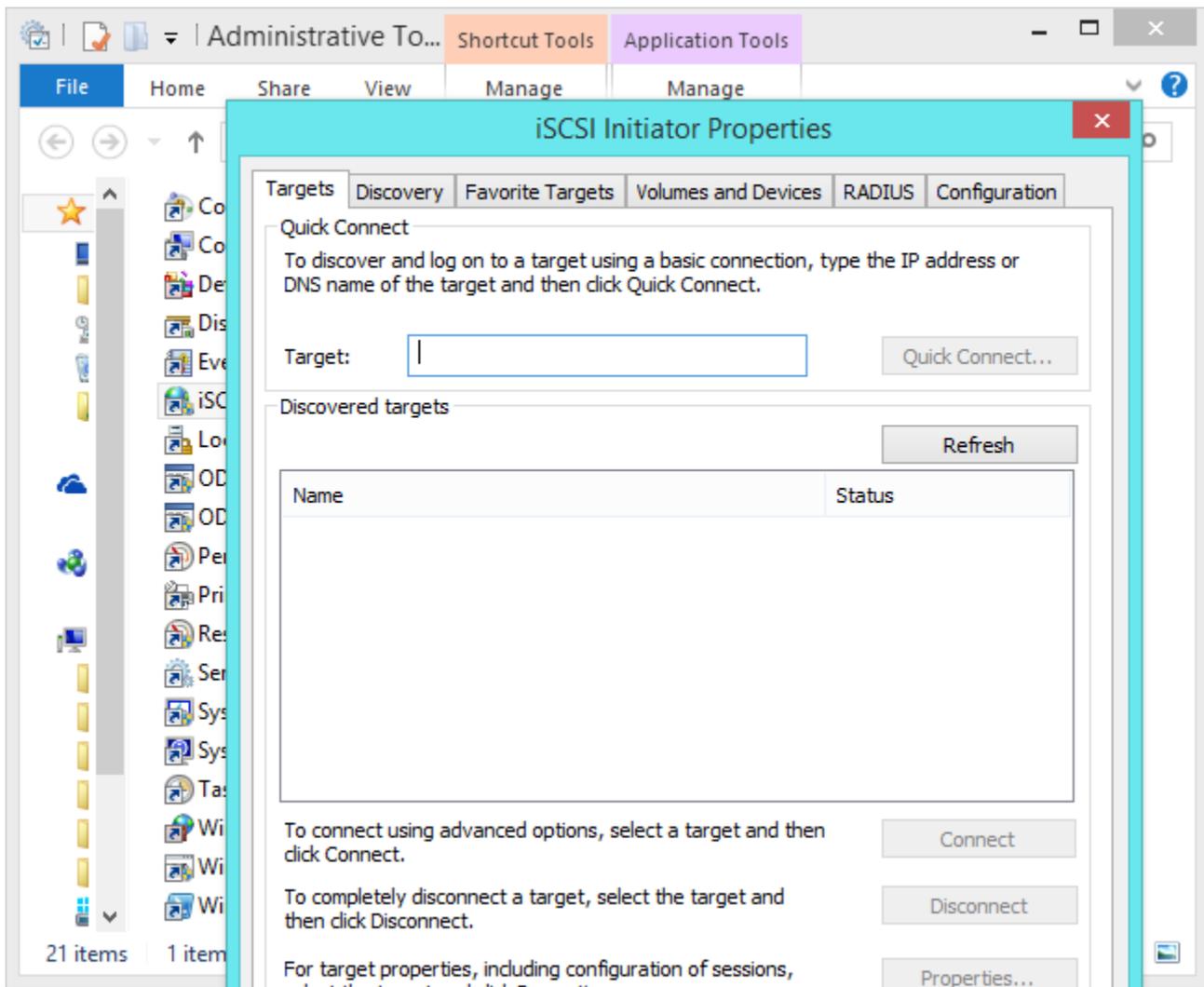
[The Event Viewer](#) displays the Windows event log. Applications, services, and Windows itself write messages to the event log. Viewing the log can sometimes help you identify a problem and look up a specific error message, but most of the messages here aren’t important.

[The Windows tech support phone call scam](#) relies on the Event Viewer to scare users. Don’t fall for the tricks — it’s normal to see error messages in here.



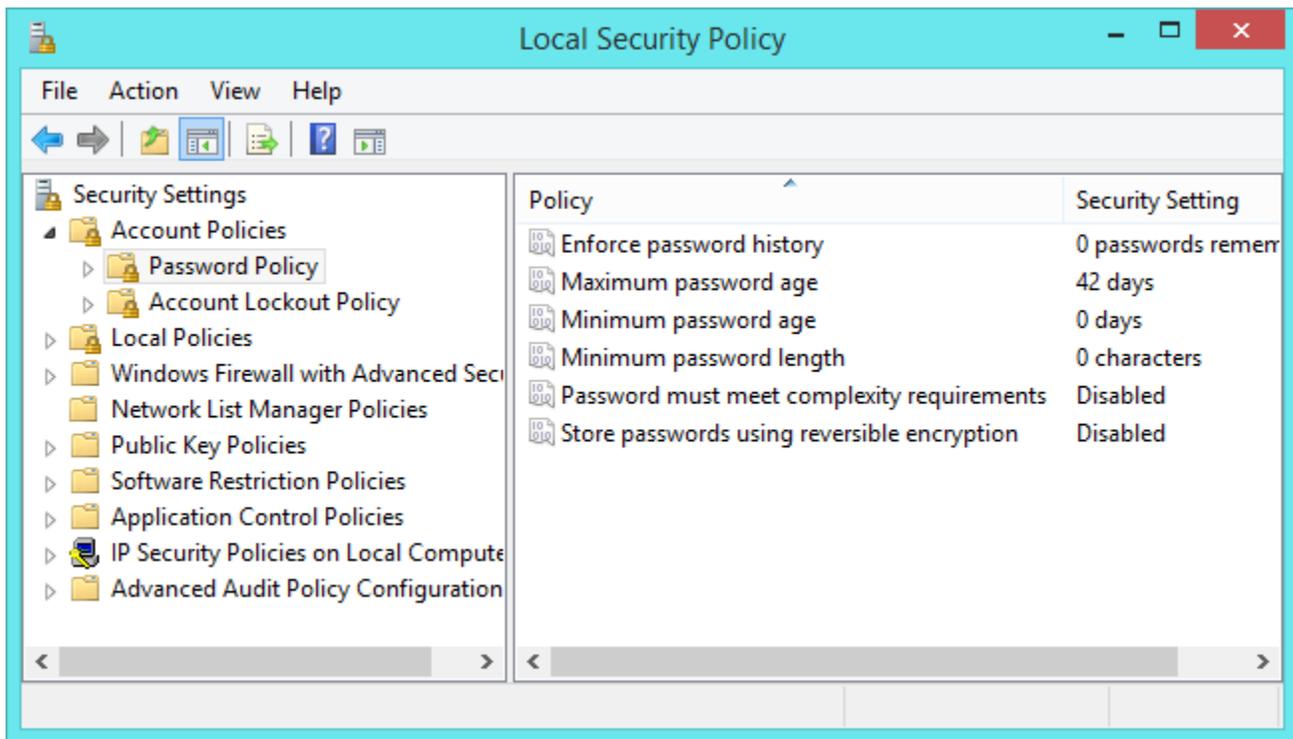
iSCSI Initiator

This tool allows you to connect to an iSCSI-based storage array through an Ethernet cable. Unless you need to connect to iSCSI storage arrays in a data center, you won't need this tool.



Local Security Policy

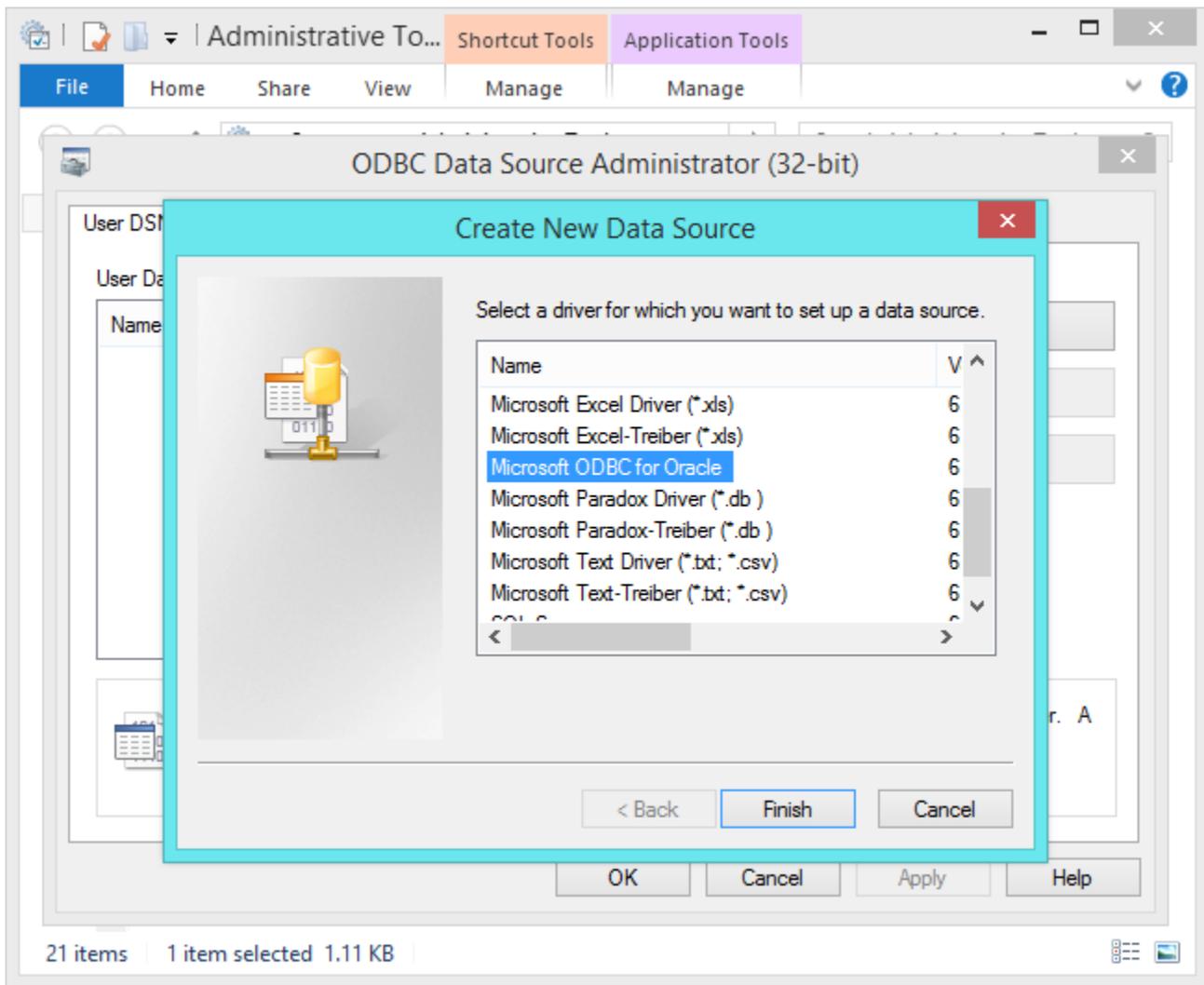
Security policies are combinations of security settings that help lock down a PC. The Local Security Policy tool allows you to set security policies on your current computer. For example, you can use password polices to set a minimum password length or force users to change their password regularly.



ODBC Data Sources (32-bit) & ODBC Data Sources (64-bit)

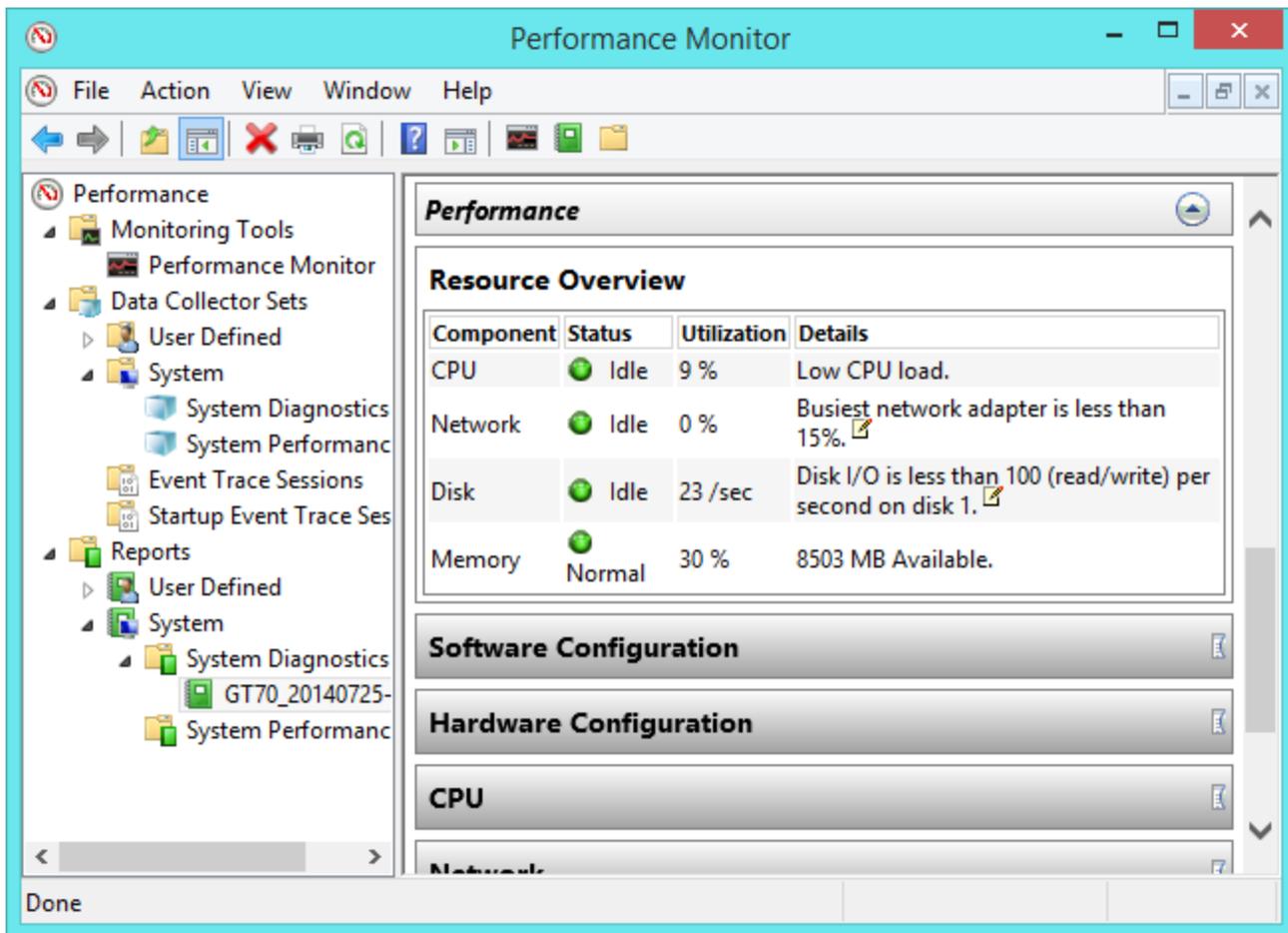
Open Database Connectivity (ODBC) is a standard that allows ODBC-compliant applications to communicate with each other. For example, you could move data back and forth between Microsoft Access and another ODBC-enabled application. This requires the appropriate ODBC drivers installed on the system. The ODBC Data Sources tool allows you to set up ODBC drivers and data sources. You'll know if you need this — most people won't.

On 64-bit versions of Windows, you'll have both 32-bit and 64-bit versions of this tool. This allows you to manage the data sources used by both 32-bit and 64-bit applications.



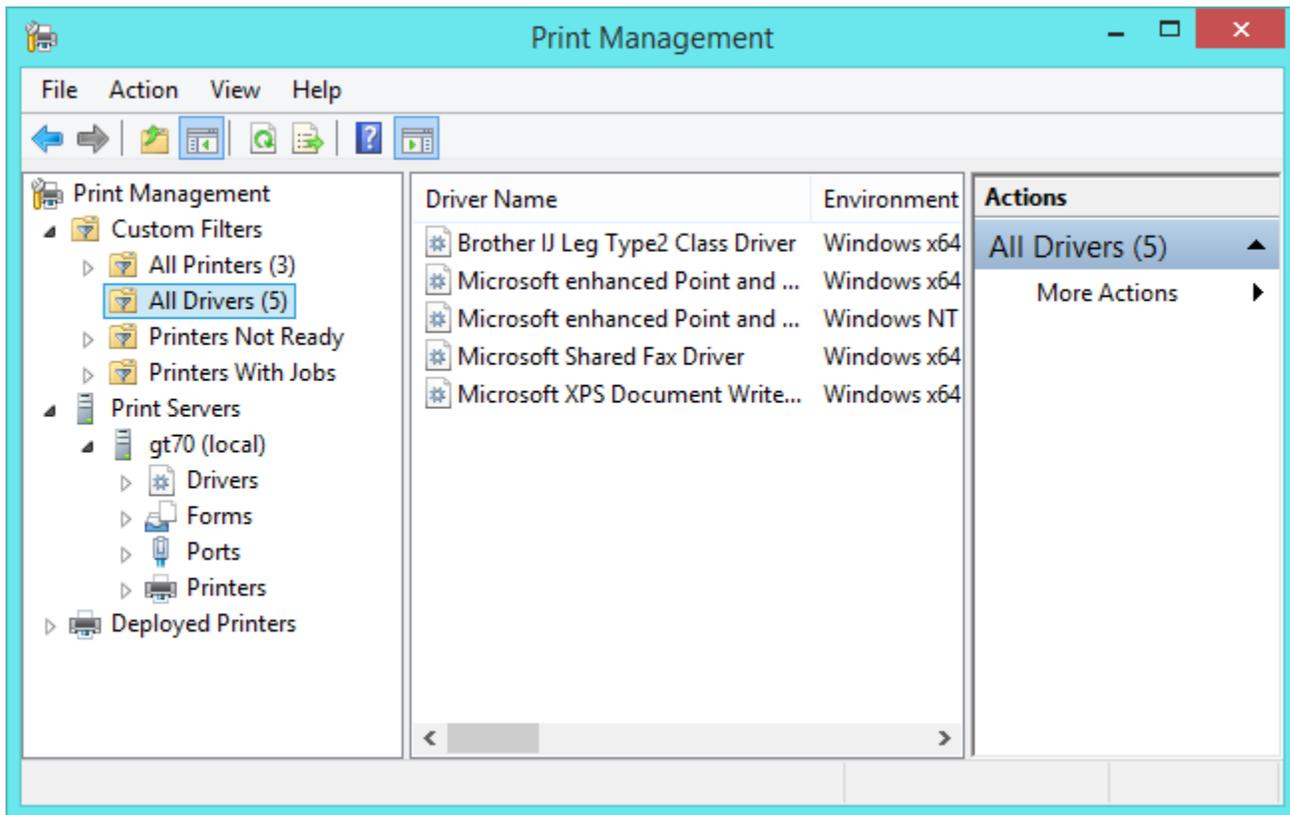
Performance Monitor

The Performance Monitor tool allows you to generate performance and system diagnostic reports. While this tool can be interesting, it's clearly more intended for system administrators than for average Windows users.



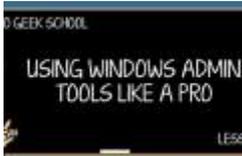
Print Management

The Print Management window provides a more powerful, detailed interface for viewing and managing printers on your system. Unlike the Control Panel, you can also see which printer drivers are installed on your system and browse printers by whether they have print jobs or not. You can also view and manage print servers from here.



Resource Monitor

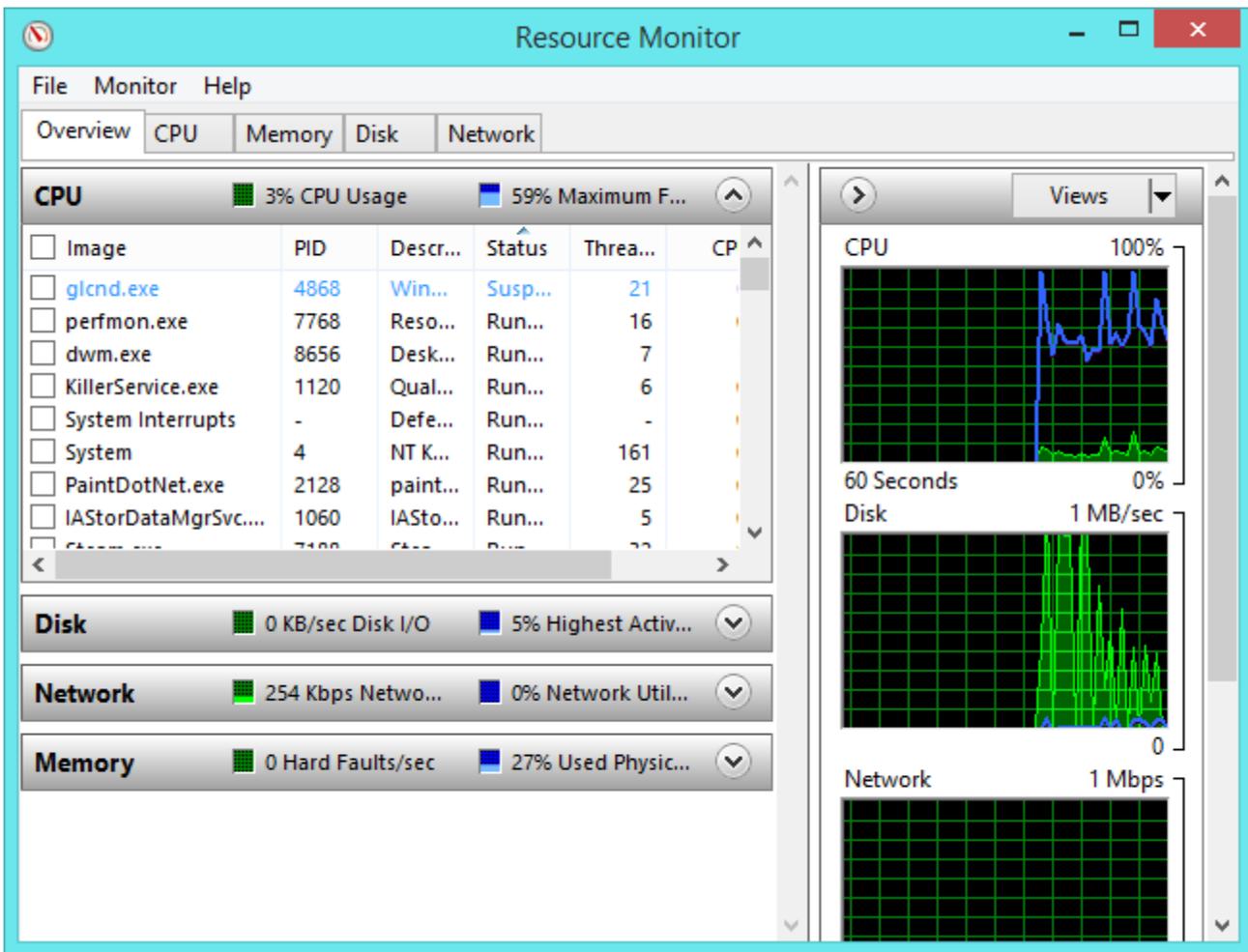
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[Monitoring Your PC with Resource Monitor and Task Manager](#)

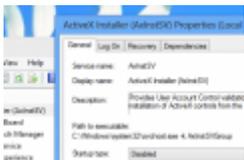
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The [Resource Monitor tool](#) displays information about your hardware resource usage — CPU, disk, network, and memory. The tool also breaks down usage by application, so you can see which applications are writing to your disk drive or which running processes are using the most network bandwidth.



Services

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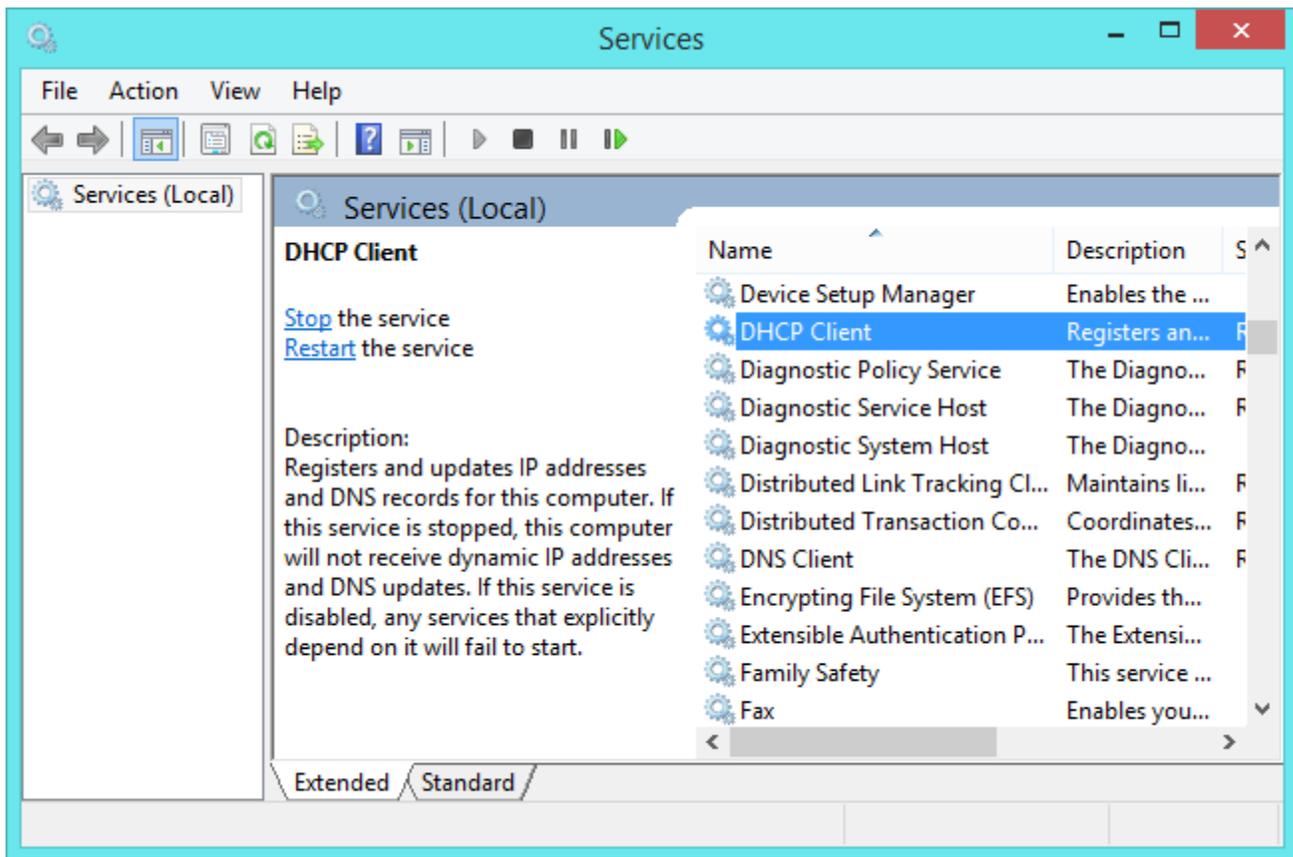


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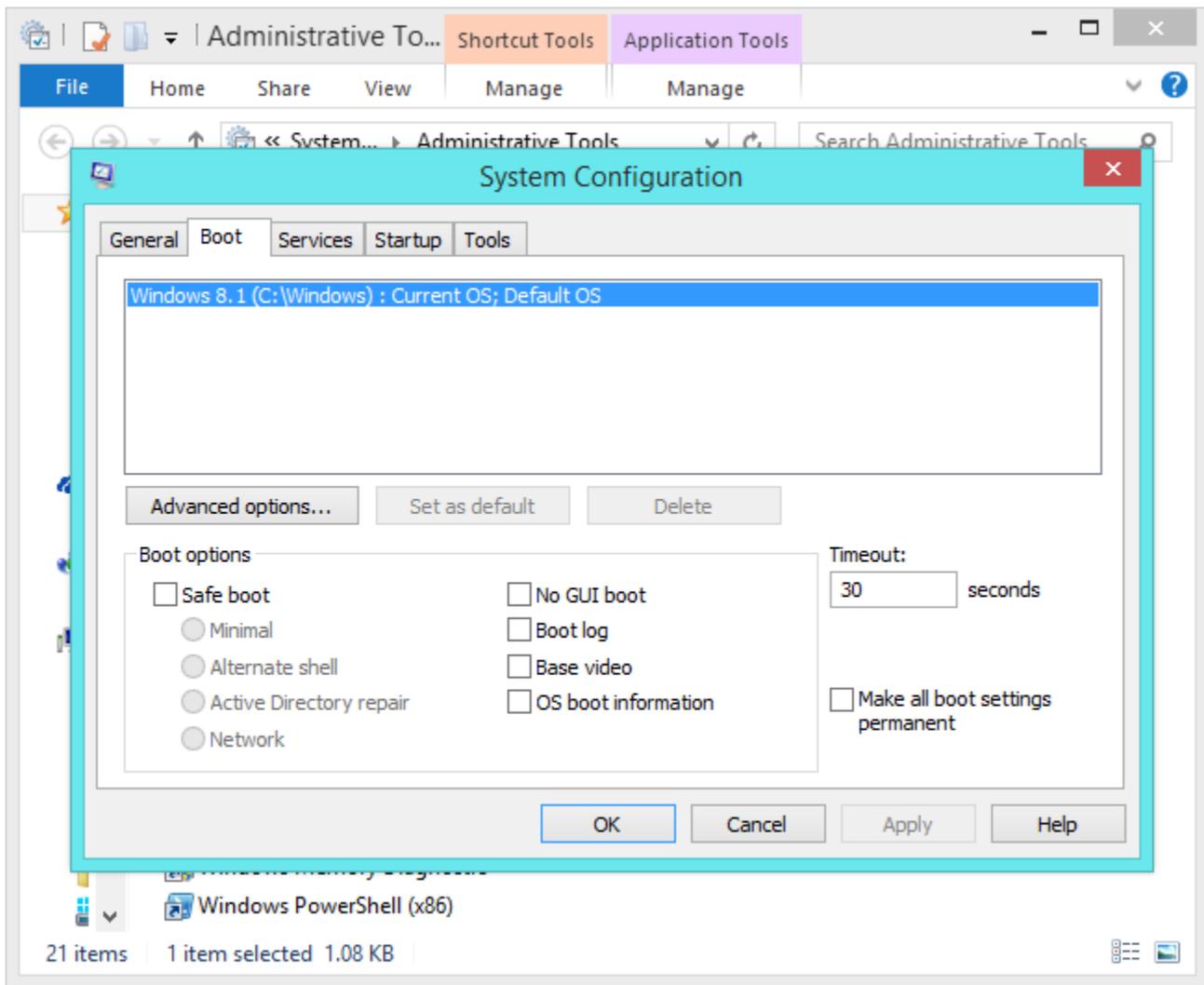
The Services tool displays the services installed on your Windows system and allows you to manage them. Services are low-level programs that run in the background. Many of these services are included with Windows and perform essential system tasks.

[We don't recommend disabling services](#) — you won't see a noticeable speed-up with modern systems. You could also cause problems if you disable necessary services.



System Configuration

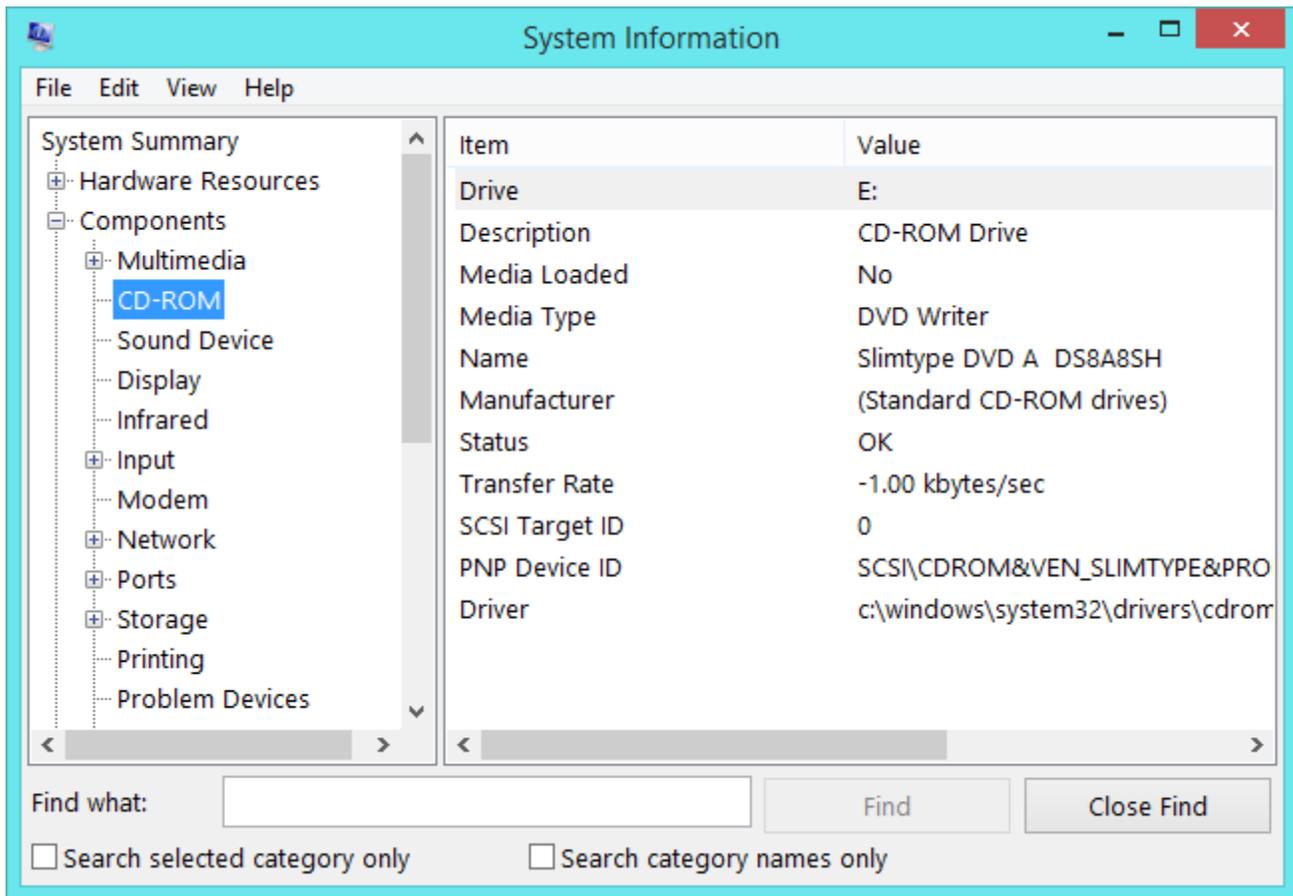
The System Configuration window is the same as the MSConfig tool you can use to tweak your startup and boot settings. On Windows 7, it can also be used to manage startup programs — but you should [use the startup manager integrated into the Task Manager on Windows 8 and 8.1](#).



System Information

The System Information window displays information about the hardware components installed in your computer and your Windows configuration. You can view the exact model numbers of your hardware components from here. It's not the most user-friendly hardware listing tool, but it is integrated into Windows.

This tool also shows you some information about your Windows system — for example, you can see a list of [environment variables](#) and their values.



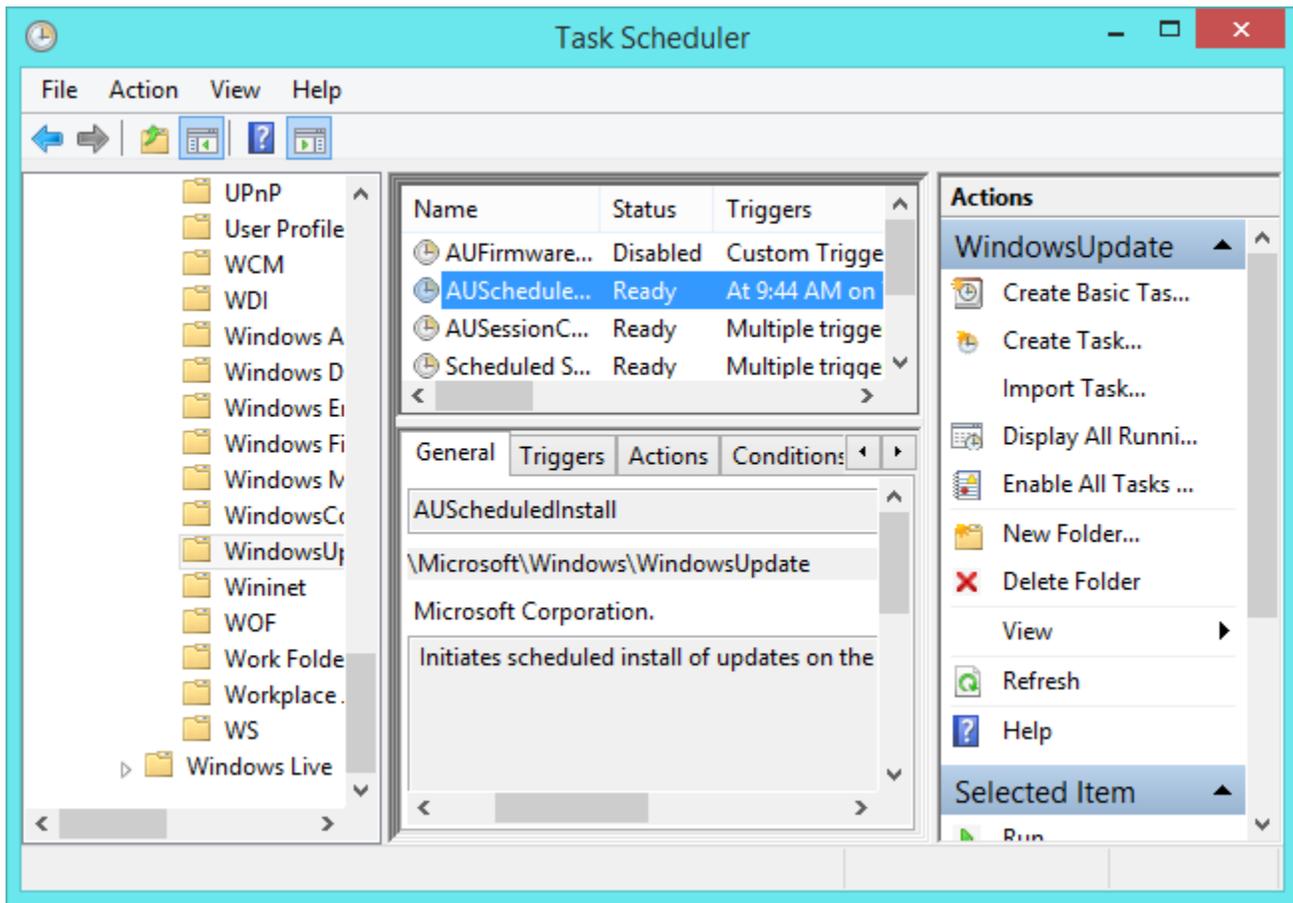
Task Scheduler

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[Windows uses the Task Scheduler](#) to automatically run processes at scheduled times. The Task Scheduler application allows you to [set your own programs to run on a schedule](#), view your system's scheduled tasks, and manage them.



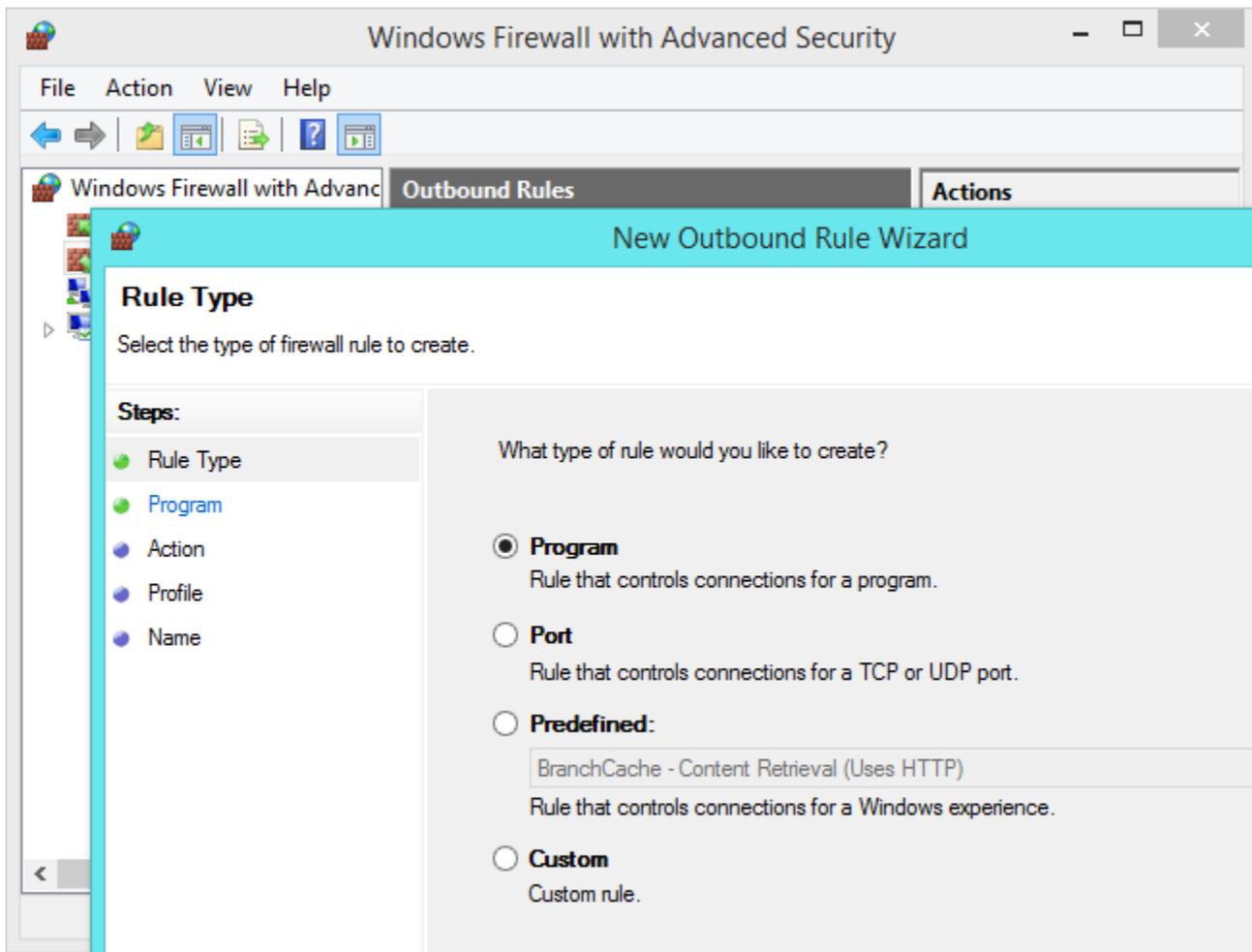
Windows Firewall with Advanced Security

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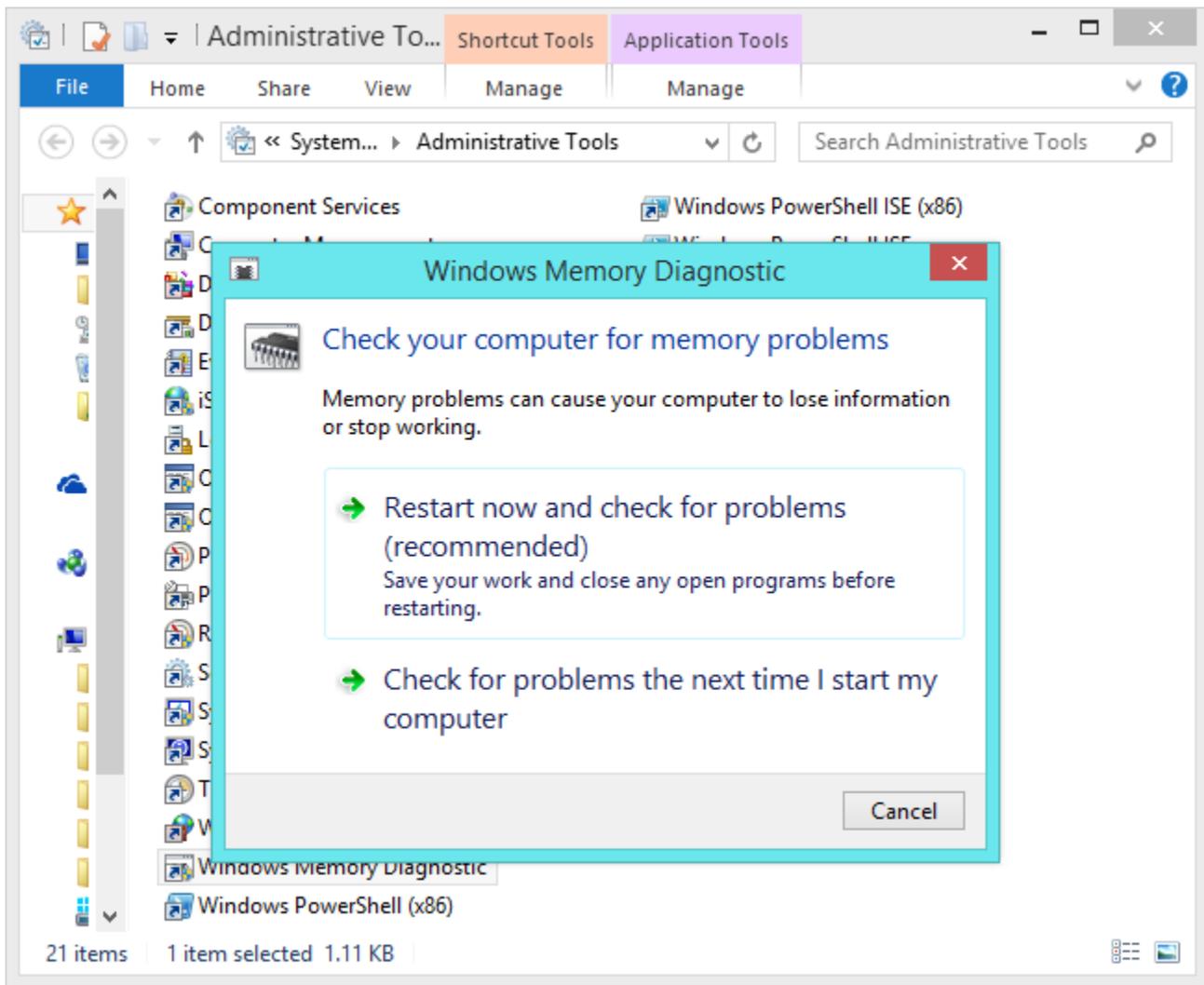
The Windows Firewall may seem like a simple tool, but it's actually very powerful. The advanced firewall configuration application allows you to [create and manage advanced firewall rules](#). For example, you could use this tool to block specific applications from connecting to the Internet or only allow connections to a server program from a specific IP address.



Windows Memory Diagnostic

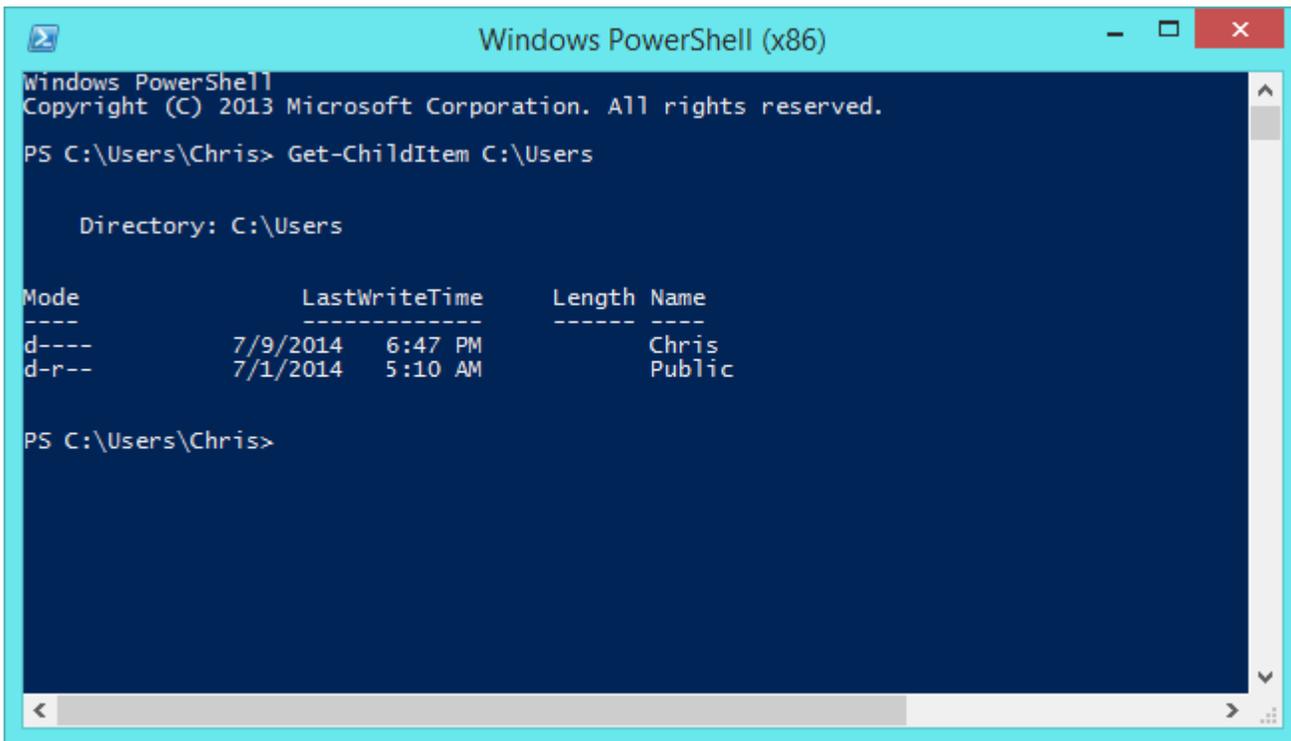
The memory diagnostic tool checks your random access memory (RAM) for defects. Run it and your computer will restart.

This tool works like [memtest86+](#) — it writes data to different sectors of your RAM and reads it back. If it gets different data back, it knows your RAM is malfunctioning. This is usually a hardware problem and can generally be solved by [replacing at least one stick of RAM](#).



Windows PowerShell (x86)

[PowerShell is an advanced scripting environment.](#) For people who actually need a command-line interface on Windows, PowerShell is [a powerful successor to the Windows Command Prompt.](#) If you don't need a powerful command-line interface, this isn't for you.



```
Windows PowerShell
Copyright (C) 2013 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

PS C:\Users\Chris> Get-ChildItem C:\Users

    Directory: C:\Users

Mode                LastWriteTime         Length Name
----                -
d-----          7/9/2014   6:47 PM             Chris
d-r--          7/1/2014   5:10 AM             Public

PS C:\Users\Chris>
```

Windows PowerShell ISE (x86) & Windows PowerShell ISE

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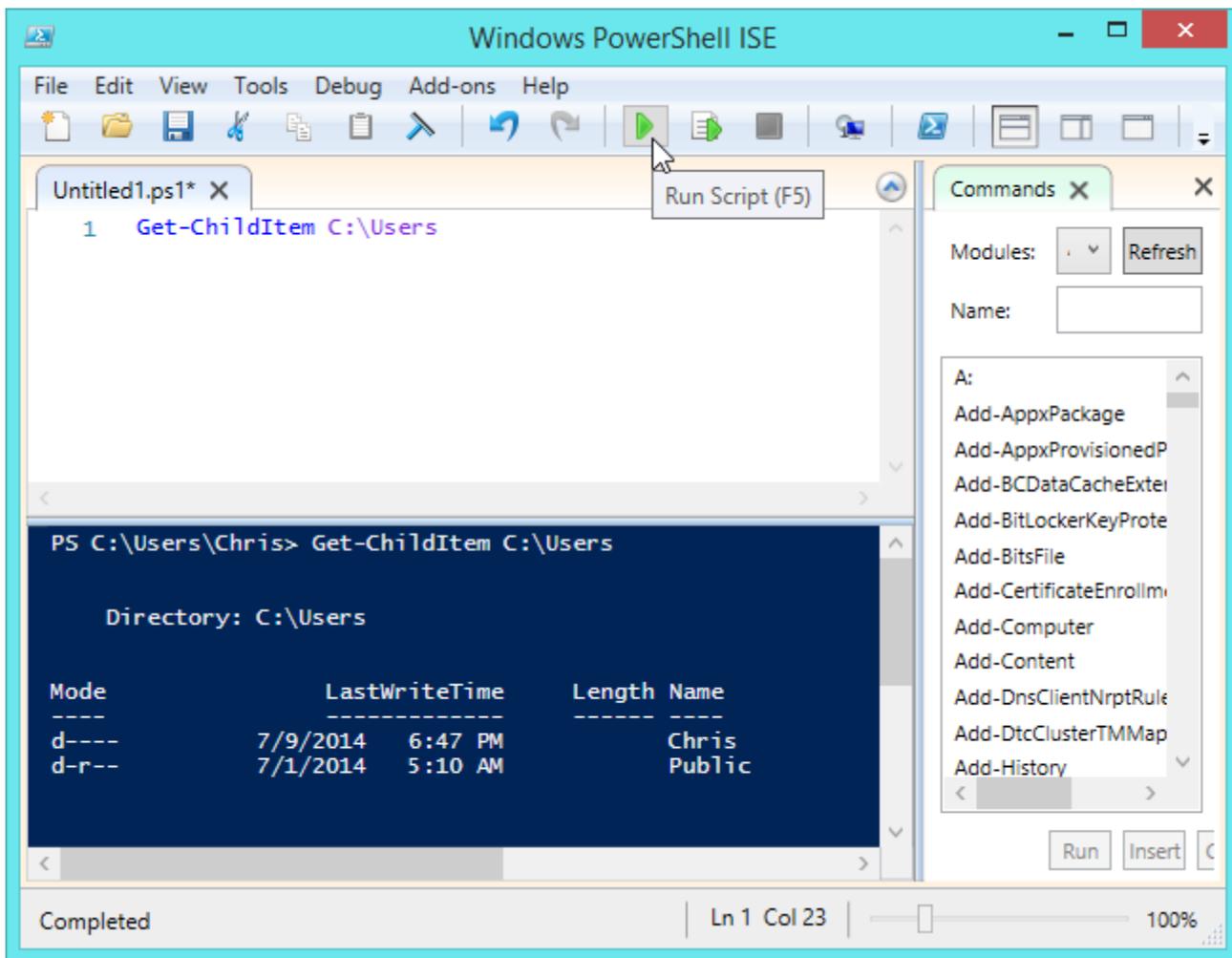


[Geek School: Learn How to Automate Windows with PowerShell](#)

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The PowerShell Integrated Scripting Environment (ISE) provides a graphical interface on top of PowerShell. This tool was added later and provides a more powerful, full-featured interface than the standard PowerShell console.

Both 32-bit (the “x86” version) and 64-bit versions are available if you’re using a 64-bit version of Windows.



Many of the tools here shouldn't be tampered with unless you know what you're doing. For example, you could disable important system services or scheduled tasks, causing problems with Windows.