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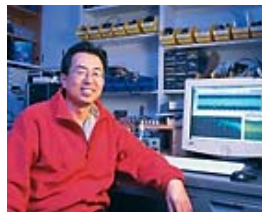
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20 Things You Didn't Know Your PC Could Do

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Give You a Little Peace and Quiet



Don't you occasionally wish that your PC would just shut up already? The job of cooling hot CPUs, high-rpm drives, and heat-pumping graphics cards in current PCs has become a noisy affair--to the point where shutting down your PC can make sense if you need to think clearly.

But it doesn't have to be that way, as Mike Chin, editor and publisher of [Silent PC Review](#), found out after he moved a third PC into his home office and got fed up with the noise. "That's when I started tearing them apart and trying to make them quieter," Chin recalls, and that's how his Web site got started. Now Chin tests PC parts from fans to hard drives to power supplies, trying to find the quietest components.

If you want a quieter PC, you need to find and replace the loudest part in your case, and then work from there. As a quick test, open your case and carefully cover each fan, noting any change in noise. When you identify a particularly loud component, look for a replacement.

Silent PC Review features a section that recommends parts it has noise-tested, but those parts can be hard to find. Online specialty stores such as [Directron](#) and [Silicon Acoustics](#) are your best bet.

According to Chin, one of the loudest components is usually your CPU's fan and heat sink. A replacement heat sink like the \$45 [Thermalright SLK-800](#) or one of Zalman's Flower models can run with a nearly silent fan. Be careful when unclipping and removing your heat sink, and install its successor according to the manufacturer's directions to avoid damaging your CPU.

Hard drives are another likely culprit. Most of a drive's noise comes from the vibration produced by constantly spinning the discs at high rpm. If you have an extra 5.25-inch drive bay, you can use a product such as NoiseMagic's \$30 NoVibes III drive enclosure to suspend the drive in rubber O-rings, drastically reducing noise. As for noisy CD and DVD drives, there isn't much you can do beyond running a software utility to slow them down.

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Finally, look at your power supply and at the other fans in your case--especially small ones, which can emit a high-pitched whine. Some, like the fan on your motherboard's chip set, can be replaced with noiseless heat sinks. Graphics cards require extensive cooling, making quiet replacements tough to build. One made by Zalman includes a top-mounted fan and covers an adjacent PCI slot.

What does all this work get you? Chin says it goes beyond a more enjoyable computing experience: "My ability to concentrate on my work is about twice what it was when I had noisy PCs. It's not just about making it pleasant, it's about productivity."

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