

Vista Excessive Disk Activity

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For the past few weeks I have been attempting to create a Vista Home Premium configuration on a new Core 2 Duo PC. I thought that I had finally created a stable config with all the proper hardware drivers and many of my apps. I then noticed that the disk activity light was on solid – and I couldn't figure out why.

I ran a number of process tools, the only one that seemed to provide useful information being Perfmon. Perfmon showed two distinct types of disk activity.

The first, was causing the disk activity light to stay on solid, and was caused by the reading of files on my D: data disk. I found that by stopping/starting the SysMain Superfetch service I can turn off/turn on this constant disk read activity. It appears that Superfetch looks through previously opened user data files – even if they were used only once, are 4+GB in size, and may never be used again from within VISTA. It is beyond my comprehension what possible good this type of activity would do me, or any other VISTA user. After I get to the point where I've installed Lightroom/Photoshop/Picasa/PaperPort and other apps that routinely access and/or index GB of user files – will access to my D: drive ever stop? Why would Superfetch bother with non-executable data files on a non-system partition? After reading the MS VISTA Kernel description I know that turning off SuperFetch will impact certain VISTA features – so what?.

Second issue: I noticed a secondary disk activity that consists of continuous writes to various files on C: that occur at the rate of a few each second. Again, I attempted to isolate that IO activity with Perfmon, including noting the PIDs and then attempting to stop the Applications with that PID – with no success.

In an attempt to further diagnose the issues, I restored a C: partition backup for the first OOTB Vista configuration (no updates, drivers, apps installed). The steady drone of repeated disk writes to C: also occurs in that base build. The disk writes involves areas such as:

files lastalive0.dat and lastalive1.dat
from svchost LocalSystemNetworkRestricted.

c:\windows\system32\config\SOFTWARE
c:\\$LogFile (NTFS Volume Log)
c:\windows\System32\config\DEFAULT
from System

This is my only Vista system, so I have none other to compare it to.

I've turned off Indexing, turned off Defender, uninstalled AVG, turned off disk defrags, and disabled all items

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in the Scheduler – the C: disk activity goes on.

I find all this disk IO activity unwanted, distracting, and possibly damaging to disk drive health in the long term. I don't understand why this type of activity should be necessary for a single-user desktop PC and why it is so darned difficult to determine what is causing it.

I'd appreciate any assistance in explaining what this constant disk C: write activity might be, what other diagnostic tools I could use to isolate the causes, and how to stop it (other than to install WINXP or buy a Mac).

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