An OPCUG Product Review

AppControl—a better Task Manager

by Chris Taylor

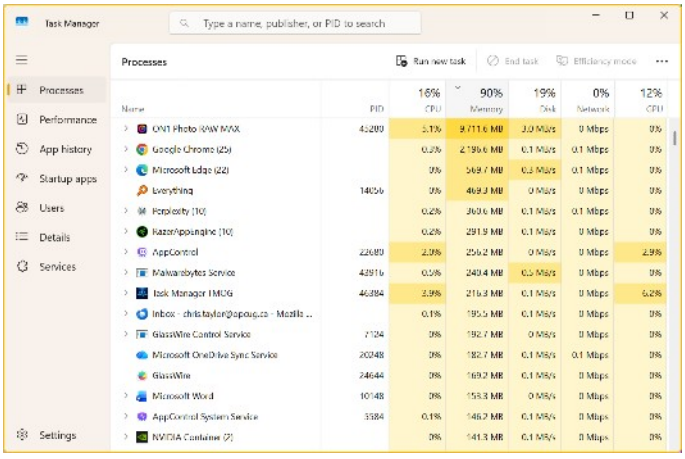
When it comes to tracking down performance problems in Windows, Task Manager has been the go-to tool for the last 30 years. Yes really, Task Manager first appeared in Windows NT 4.0, released to manufacturing August 24, 1996. It allows you to see resource usage for memory, CPU, and disk activity. It has remained largely unchanged through these 30 years.

Task Manager is great for showing:

- a rolling graph of resource usage totals over the *last 4 minutes*, and
- a chart with the specific processes' resource usage *right now*.



Aggregate resource usage over 4 minutes



Resource usage right now

Task Manager doesn't provide details about what processes were consuming excessive resources a few minutes or a day ago. This makes it much more difficult to track down short-lived performance problems.

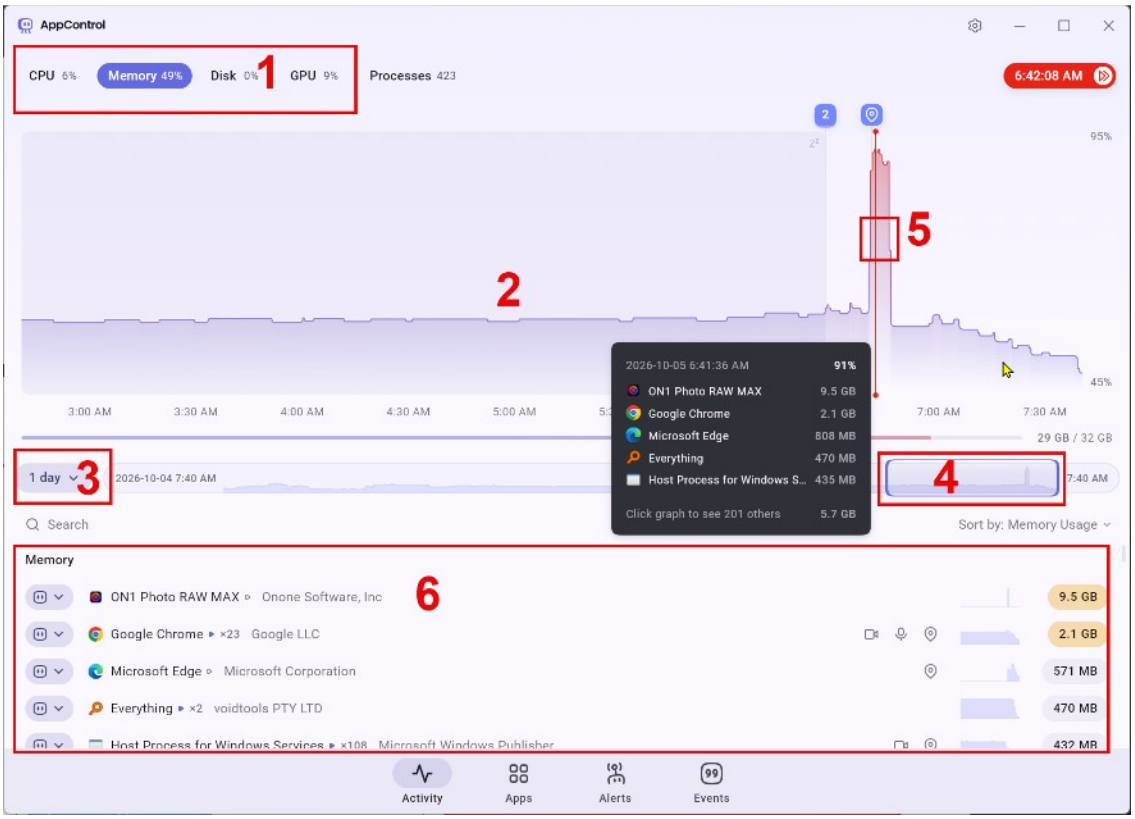
AppControl to the rescue

Enter Jon Hundley. Jon co-founded three companies: ManyCam, maker of virtual webcam software in 2006; GlassWire, a network monitoring and firewall control program in 2014; and AppControl, which released the free namesake program in February 2026.

AppControl's main advantage over Windows Task Manager is that it keeps a rolling, per second timeline of CPU, GPU, memory, disk, and temperature activity, by process, for the last 3 days. This helps you to diagnose intermittent problems that occur while you are away—such as an overnight Windows Update, a short CPU spike, unexpected disk activity, or a high-temperature event.

AppControl gives you a busy screen—necessitated by the wealth of details and control over what is shown. You can:

1 – choose the resource to monitor;
2 – see the rolling graph of resource usage over time;
3 – choose the period to display;
4 – use the slider to view resource usage not in the current window;
5 – click a time in the graph; and
6 – see processes and their resource consumption *at that point in time*.



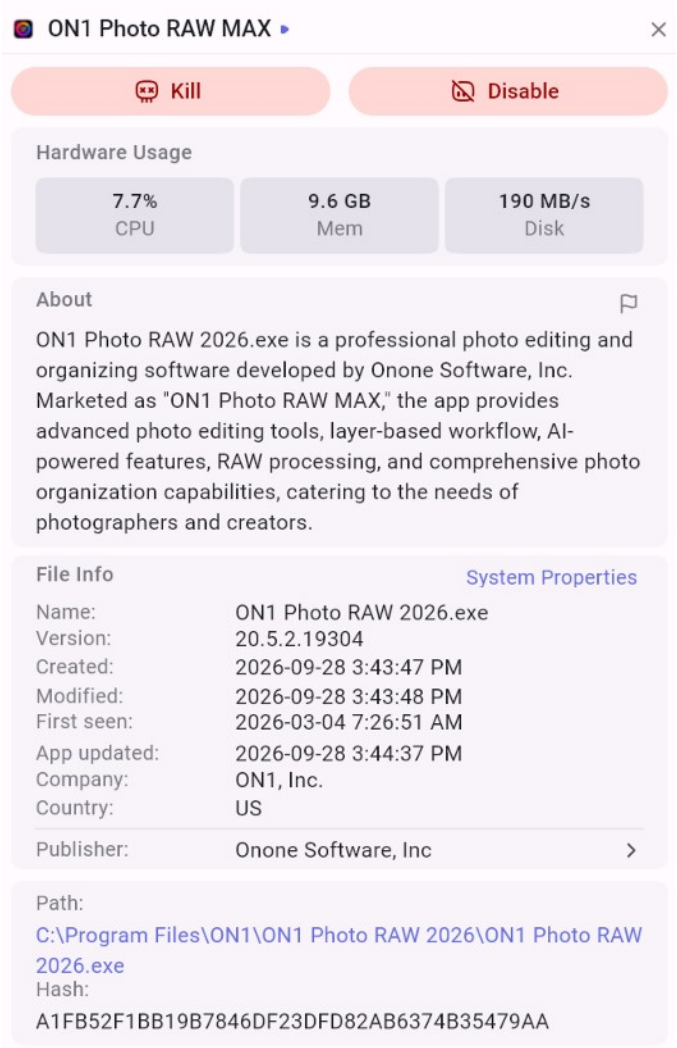
The last two bullets— selecting a point of interest on the graph and displaying the resource usage at a time in the past—is what really sets AppControl apart from Task Manager.

AppControl includes other significant capabilities. It can alert you to various events:

- when a program requests access to your webcam, microphone, or location;
- when a program is run for the first time;
- when a suspicious app runs;
- changes in services installed on your computer;
- when a program runs that is not digitally signed; and
- when a program silently updates in the background.

If you turn on all possible alerts, you will get *a lot* of pop-up notifications. Fortunately, you can choose which categories of alerts you want to have pop up. If you turn off any pop-up alerts, you can still access the complete list of alerts from within the program.

As well, you can find detailed information about any processes, which can help when it comes to unfamiliar programs.



Details about programs that have run on your computer

With AppControl, you can kill processes and prevent them from running in the future. This can be particularly useful if you get infected with malware.

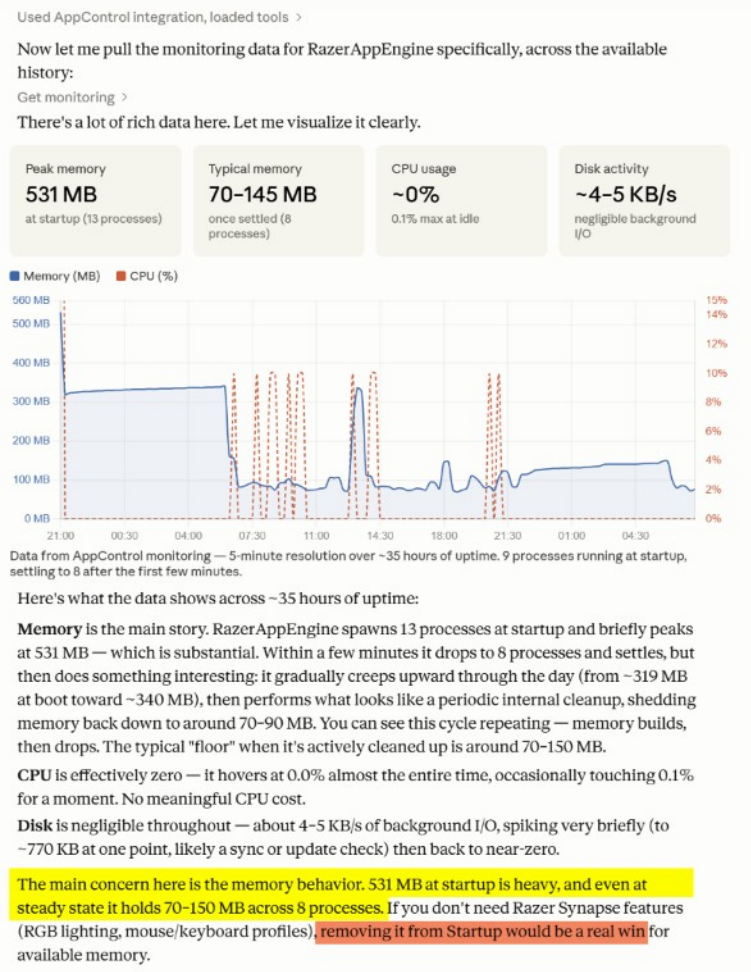
AppControl 1.2
Released in April 2026, AppControl 1.2 added a significant new capability—connecting AI agents like Claude AI, Cursor, Windsurf, and Gemini directly to resource history gathered by AppControl. I found the integration with Claude AI relatively straight-forward. Detailed instructions are at https://www.appcontrol.com/mcp/.

I can now ask Claude AI questions about performance issues and events that have been happening on my computer. Just some examples:

- When I unlocked my idle PC just now, the temperature of my PC was hot. What was going on?
- What apps accessed my webcam in the past 24 hours?
- What programs were updated recently on my computer?
- What apps currently auto-starting with Windows should I remove from auto-starting to speed up Windows and only start when I need them?
- *Brother ControlCenter4* is auto-starting with Windows. What is the resource usage impact including memory, CPU, and disk?
- Give me a PowerShell script to list all scheduled tasks from Lenovo on my computer, sorted by last run.

Sometimes, queries provide an incredible level of detail. For example:

- RazerAppEngine.exe is auto-starting with Windows. Query AppControl to find the impact on system performance over time including CPU and memory.



Resource usage analysis of a program over time

It's worth noting that a free Claude AI account provides relatively few queries per day. While this can be a bit annoying… it is free.

It's important that a program monitoring resource usage be, itself, nimble. AppControl shines in this regard. When its graphical window is closed, it consumes almost no resources. When you open it, CPU and/or GPU use can increase somewhat because it is drawing graphs.

Bottom line:
AppControl
https://www.appcontrol.com/
Price: Free
System requirements: Windows 10 or greater

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