Windows Reliability Monitor: to Fix and Fine-Tune your PC

Reliability Monitor is a built-in part of Windows that's been around since the introduction of Windows Vista back in January 2007. It's always been a somewhat hidden feature of the Windows operating system, and therefore easy for users to overlook. Nevertheless, it's a great tool that provides all kinds of interesting insight into system history and stability. Reliability Monitor is particularly useful when troubleshooting glitchy systems, and can provide insights into possible causes as well as important clues to fixing things.

Understanding Reliability Monitor

Reliability Monitor taps into the Windows Event Manager to elicit data about your system, with a focus on events that impact reliability, as well as performance counters and configuration data. Reliability monitor tracks five different categories of information, namely:

- **Application failures:** Tracks application failures or errors (e.g., "MS Outlook … stopped working")
- **Windows failures:** Tracks OS failures or errors (e.g., "Windows hardware error")
- **Miscellaneous failures:** Tracks other failures or errors, typically peripherals (e.g., "Disk failure")
- **Warnings:** Tracks failures or errors that don't necessary impact system behavior (e.g., "Unsuccessful driver installation")
- **Information:** Tracks system changes and updates (e.g., "Successful Windows Update" and "Successful driver installation")

Interestingly, though Reliability Monitor visually tracks errors in the five categories already discussed, it provides details in only three categories in text form at the bottom of its console window, where details or solution lookup is available on an item-by-item basis. Those three categories are:

- **Critical events:** Lumps Application failures, Windows failures and Miscellaneous failures together in chronological order
- **Warnings:** All warning messages (marked with a yellow exclamation warning flag) together in chronological order

- **Informational events:** All information messages (marked with a lower-case "i" on a blue circle) also in chronological order

Launching Reliability Monitor

As is the case with many Windows tools and utilities, there are many ways to launch Reliability Monitor on a PC. One way is simply to type "reli" in the search box, and let Windows produce the "View reliability history" prompt that launches this console in response. The explicit, step-by-step way to get to this program is as follows:

1. Open Control Panel
2. Open Security and Maintenance.
3. Expand the Maintenance Category, then select "View Reliability history" under the heading that reads "Check for solutions to problem reports."

Either way, you'll be presented with the Reliability Monitor interface for your PC.

Using Reliability Monitor for troubleshooting

In general, working with Reliability Monitor requires looking at the causes of errors, and deciding what might be done to address them. When fixes are possible, they will usually be fairly easy to figure out. Often, though, one must simply steer clear of programs or features that don't work the way they should so as to avoid unnecessary errors. As is so often the case with Windows: "If you can't fix it, avoid it," is a watchword to live by.