



TECHNOLOGY TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS

1. DON'T PANIC.

Relax. Take a breath.

Many computer problems appear more serious than they really are.

It may look like the computer has crashed and all your data is lost forever. But there are a host of problems that keep you from reaching your data or the network that can be fixed, sometimes in a matter of minutes.

If it's your computer at the school, all the documents on the "H" drive (your "My Documents folder) are saved on the server and not on the individual computers in the classroom and labs so they're most likely still there. Even if they've been saved on the "C" drive of your home computer, they may still be there waiting for you.

That's not to say catastrophic data loss doesn't happen – it can, but not very often.

2. MAKE SURE THERE REALLY IS A PROBLEM.

Can't start your computer? Check the basics.

- A. Examine the cables, connectors, and power cords to make sure they're plugged in securely. Often times a loose cable or connector (power, network, keyboard, mouse, speaker, monitor cable, etc.) is the cause of the problem.
- B. If you're using a power strip or a surge protector, make sure it's on and that it works. Remember that a surge protector may not be working because it is designed to self-destruct. When an electric jolt is too much, your surge protector takes the hit saving your more expensive hardware from the voltage.
- C. Try plugging something else directly into the electrical outlet to make sure there isn't a power problem.
- D. Check to see if your monitor is on. Sounds silly, but it has solved my own problem more than once.

3. CAN'T GET ON TO THE NETWORK OR THE INTERNET?

- A. Check to see if anyone else around you is having a similar problem. If so, there may be a service outage affecting a wider area
- B. Check to make sure the network cable is connected to both the computer and the wall.
- C. Check where the network cable connection is made to the back of the computer, you should see a little green light right where the cable connects. If the light isn't on or flashing, then you are not getting a signal to the computer. If rebooting doesn't fix it, contact the Help Desk or your ISP.

4. ERROR MESSAGES - WRITE THEM DOWN.

- A. What tipped you off to the problem? Sometimes it's an error code or message displayed on screen. Be sure to write it down — it may describe the problem and how serious it is. Be sure to document the exact wording of any error messages. This can make the job of the Help Desk much faster. **WRITE DOWN THE ENTIRE MESSAGE!!**
- B. Other times you get no warning — everything just freezes. Message or no message, be sure note what was going on when the problem occurred. Were you starting your computer? Were you on the Windows Desktop? Were you in a particular application? Surfing the Web?

5. THINK ABOUT WHAT CHANGED RECENTLY ON YOUR COMPUTER.

Try to pinpoint when the trouble first started. Did the problem coincide with any recent changes?

- A. Did you change any settings? If you did you might want to change them back the way they were.
- B. Any peripherals been added or removed recently (such as a printer or external Memory Card reader?)
- C. Has anyone else been using your computer recently?
- D. Have downloaded anything off the Web? File sharing and free MP3's are an easy way to get a virus on your machine.

6. THE COMPUTER IS ON BUT...

- A. Everything on the screen is frozen and the keyboard and mouse are not responding. Try tapping on the Num Lock key. It's located on the right-hand side of the keyboard above the number 7. While tapping the Num Lock key, notice whether or not the Num Lock light goes on and off. If it doesn't, the computer is completely locked up. You'll have to REBOOT the computer. If the light does go off and on, wait a minute before giving up hope. It may come back to life on its own.
- B. Pressing Alt + F4. If a software program stops working or freezes up, try pressing the ALT+F4 keys to close the window that you're currently working in. This can shut down a frozen window and bring the computer back to life. If the keyboard is frozen as well, you'll have to reboot.
- C. The "Blue Screen" has appeared. The dreaded "Blue Screen of Death". There's not a lot to be done except to reboot the machine. If it keeps occurring, this is an indication of a major problem with the computer.
- D. The computer is on, but there is no sound. Is there a speaker icon next to the clock on the taskbar? (It's in the lower right side of the screen) If you can find it, double click the speaker icon to bring up the audio controls for the computer. See if any of the volume controls have been muted or turned all the way down. Uncheck any Mute boxes that are selected.
- E. The computer is on, but the keyboard doesn't work. Swap the keyboard or try plugging the keyboard into another computer. If it doesn't work on the other computer, there is likely something wrong with the keyboard. If it does work on the other computer, there is likely something wrong on the computer or the connection to the computer.
- F. CTRL-ALT-DEL. When you press the Ctrl-Alt-Delete buttons together, you will bring up a control panel where you can select "Task Manager" and see if any of the programs are shown as "not responding". You may be able to shut down the offending program from there. If you can't get to this screen, you'll have to reboot.

7. REBOOTING CAN DO WONDERS.

Don't just pull the plug!

A simple reboot may clear up the problem. Go to the Start Menu and select Shutdown. Didn't work? It's time to try a forced reboot — with, unfortunately, no way to save your work — by pressing the keys CTRL-ALT-DEL simultaneously twice in a row.

If that didn't work, you have no choice: you have to turn the computer off manually with the power switch. Hold the power button down (for about 5 -10 seconds) and the computer will shut down. Wait at least 10 seconds for the hard drive to stop spinning and then restart the machine.

If the computer starts up, start the applications you were using when the crash occurred. Some programs, like Microsoft Word, make timed backups of your work and may bring up recovered files. If the program notifies you that there is a “recovered document” save the file under a different name and compare them to your previously saved files.

8. PRINTER ISSUES

Printer does not have power indicator

First, make sure that the printer is on. When a printer is on it should have some light (usually green) indicating it's receiving power and is on.

If you do not have any indicator light make sure the printer is connected to a working power outlet by verifying each end of the power cable. Next, press the printer power button.

If after following the above steps your printer still cannot get a power status indicator it's likely you're encountering a serious printer issue and we suggest contacting the printer manufacturer for additional steps and instructions on repair or replacement.

Cables not connected properly

Your printer should have two cables connected to it. The power cable and the data cable, the power cable should have already been verified as being connected if your printer has a power indicator light as mentioned above. Make sure the data cable (parallel cable or USB cable) is also connected from the printer to the computer.

Printer error (orange or blinking light)

After your printer has completed its initial startup you should have a solid green light. If the light indicator is blinking or orange often this is an indication of a printer error. For example, this could indicate a paper jam, issue with the ink or toner cartridge, or other serious error.

Because there is no standard to what a blinking light or orange light means if you're getting either of these we suggest referring to the printer documentation for troubleshooting steps or methods of determining what the status indicator is reporting.

No paper or paper jam

Without paper your printer will not be able to print. Make sure you have paper in the paper loaded into the printer paper cartridge or tray. Next, verify that no printer paper is jammed or partially fed into the printer. If you have one or more pieces of paper stuck in the printer these will need to be manually removed before the printer will print again.

Inkjet printer ink related issues

Often when you're encountering an ink related issue your printer status indicator light (mentioned above) should be flashing. If this is not occurring you may want to skip to the next section. However, if you've recently inserted a new ink cartridge you may want to try the below suggestions.

- * Replacing ink cartridges and printer not working.

Printer self tests

Most printers have a way of printing a test page. This page allows you to determine if the printer is physically working or not. This test is usually accomplished by holding down a series of keys. If you are not sure if your printer has this feature or how to perform it then refer to your manual or visit your printer manufacturers web site.

In addition to testing the printer using the printer self-test Microsoft Windows users can also perform software self-test to determine if their computer is able to see the printer and it's able to print. Follow the below steps to perform this test.

Microsoft Windows 98, 2000, ME, XP, 2003, and Vista users

- A. Click Start, Settings, and open Control Panel.
- B. Double-click the Printers or Printers and Fax icon.
- C. Right-click on the Printer you wish to test and click Properties. If you do not see your printer listed your printer is not installed.
- D. In the Printers Properties window click the Print Test Page button.
- E. If the printer is able to print a test page, your printer is installed and setup properly. However, if you're unable to print in other programs it's possible that the program you're attempting to print from has issues.