



## MacExpertise - A Mac Doctor On-Site

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### QUICK FIXES

Here are a few things you can try to get you out of a spot and beat that deadline. If the problems persist you can always call MacExpertise.

These Quick Fixes assume you are an administrator of your computer. That is, you have the password.

#### Check your connections

It may seem obvious, but it is amazing how often unplugging and plugging in a cable fixes problems.

#### Disconnect peripherals

All too often, a device connected to your Mac is the source of your problem. The test this is simple. Disconnect everything that is connected to your Mac (USB, FireWire, Ethernet, etc.) and then Restart. If the problem goes away, it's time to figure out which device was the cause and how best to deal with it. Once again, feel free to call MacExpertise for help.

#### Relaunch the Finder

You'll be spending some time in the Finder. As such, it's also the most common source of complaints. Windows that don't display properly or icons that are incorrect. A variety of possible causes and cures may come into play here. The best and simplest place to start is to relaunch the Finder.

1. Hold down the Option key and click-hold the Finder icon in the Dock.
2. When the menu pops-up, one of the items should be Relaunch. Select it.

#### Log out and back in

If relaunching the Finder failed to do the trick, next up at the plate is logging out. To do this, simply go to the Apple menu and select the command at the bottom: Log Out {your account name}. Then log back in.

#### Force Quit

If your problem is a frozen application (that is, one that has stopped responding to your mouse or keyboard actions), rather than attempt to log out, simply force quit the application.

Go to the Apple menu and select Force Quit. Command-Option-Escape does the same thing. You can also hold down the Option key and click-hold the mouse button on the Dock icon for the application that is frozen. - Select the name of the problem application and click the Force Quit button. Actually, if you are having any problem with an application, quitting (or force quitting) the application and relaunching it is worth a try. With some luck, the problem will not return on relaunch.

#### Restart your Mac

It's surprising how often this can be the answer to your prayers. Whether your Mac is generally running too slow or a specific application crashes on launch or almost anything else, a restart may fix it. It's especially critical on those few occasions where your Mac gets so hung up that you can't even get the Force Quit window to appear. Again, with a bit of luck, the symptom will not return on your next startup. If the problem returns as you start launching more and more applications, it probably means your Mac does not have enough memory. Either add additional memory, or make sure you keep fewer applications open at the same time.

In a few cases, the cause may be limited to a specific application (such as Safari). A work-around is to make sure you quit the application when you are not using it.

## Repair Disk Permissions

There's an application in your Utilities folder called Disk Utility. Launch it. In the left-hand column, select the name of your startup hard drive. Now click the Repair Disk Permissions button. Wait a few minutes while it works its magic. When it's done, check to see if your problem has vanished.

## Run Repair Disk

To do this for your startup volume, you need to startup from the Install CD or DVD that came with your Mac (or, if you purchased a newer version of Mac OS X, from the disc that came with that purchase). To do this:

1. Insert the CD and restart. Hold down the C key. The Mac should now start from the CD.
2. When startup is over, go to the Installer menu. Select Disk Utility. This will launch the same utility that we just described for repairing disk permissions.
3. This time, however, select Repair Disk. Wait for it to finish. If it reports that it found problems but fixed them. Run it again. Keep doing this until it reports finding no problems.

If Disk Utility finds problems that it claims it cannot fix, it's time to try a different utility (such as DiskWarrior or TechTool Pro, if you own any of these programs) or give us a call at MacExpertise.

To repair disks other than the startup volume, you can run Disk Utility right from your hard drive. No need to restart.

Repairing the disk is an especially good thing to try if you are having a problem starting up from your normal startup volume.

Running Repair Disk Permissions and Repair Disk is also worth doing on a regular basis (say once a month) even if you are not having any problems. It can fix minor issues that might eventually blow up into major ones if left alone.

One more note: While you have Disk Utility open, and a drive selected, look at the bottom of the window. There should be an item that says "S.M.A.R.T. status." To the right of this text, it should ideally say "Verified." If it says anything else (and especially if it is a recently manufactured drive), it suggests a possible problem with your hard drive, one that even Repair Disk will not fix. If so, you may need to replace the drive.

## Check for font conflicts

Fonts installed on your Mac can be a source of problems. Symptoms can vary from the wrong font displaying in a document to applications crashing. There are three common causes here: duplicate fonts, corrupt fonts and corrupt font cache files. In rarer cases, a particular font can cause problems (usually linked to a specific application) simply by its presence or absence on your Mac. If you start having problems after adding a font replacing it with a fresh copy could be the answer.

To deal with duplicate fonts, go to the Applications folder and locate the Font Book application. Launch it. From the Edit menu, select Resolve Duplicates. This will automatically disable one copy of any duplicate fonts you have installed. A potential glitch here is if Font Book disables the "wrong" member of a pair of duplicate fonts (that is, you wanted the other one disabled). If you are concerned about this, you can disable a font manually, by selecting the font's name in the list in the Font Book window. Then select Disable Font from the Edit menu.

To deal with corrupt font cache files, the solution is to Trash them. We could list all the font cache files, where they are, and how to delete them. However, a much easier solution is to use a freeware/shareware utility that does all this work for you. One such utility is [Font Finagler](#), a \$10 shareware utility we think is worth every penny.

## Resolve Network Problems

If you are having trouble connecting to the Internet or your local Intranet, there are a host of potential causes. The problem may not even be of your own making. For example, if you use a cable modem, the cable company's connection may be temporarily down. However, there are two quick things you can try that will fix most temporary hiccups:

1. Restart all network peripheral devices. If you have a cable modem, AirPort Base Station, router, or any other network-related peripheral: turn each one off, count to 5 and turn them back on. Wait for the device(s) to finish any startup sequence. See if your problem is fixed.
2. Toggle the Location setting in Network. To do this, open System Preferences, select Network. Next, select the Location pop-up menu. If only one location is listed, select "New Location" to create a new one. With two or more locations set up, select a location other than the one currently in use. Click the Apply Now button at the bottom of the screen. Then select the previous default location and click Apply Now again. Check to see if your problem is gone.

If these don't work, it's probably time to start checking and fiddling with the actual Network and or router settings. Quite often a power spike can scramble the settings in your router so you can not log on. Here is where you may want to call MacExpertise for help.

## Update / Reinstall the application

If your problem is specific to a single application, and none of the above has helped, especially running disk repair programs (and you've checked for possible preference file problems as described above in "Login as another user"), check to see if there is an updated version that may fix a bug that is causing your symptom. Try the web site of the manufacturer or try [www.versiontracker.com](http://www.versiontracker.com) for a comprehensive list or updates available. For Apple software, you can do this simply by selecting "Software Update" from the Apple menu.

Otherwise, you'll want to re-install the existing version of the software. To do this, use the software's Installer application (if the program came with one) or its .pkg file (which works with Mac OS X's Installer application). If the program has neither, simply delete the old copy and replace it with a fresh copy obtained from your personal archives (if you maintain one) or via the Web.

If you want to reinstall an application that is a component of Mac OS X (such as Mail or Safari) or completely reinstall all of Mac OS X, this can get a bit more involved. If you are unsure how to do this, it would be a good time to call MacExpertise.

## Reset PRAM

Resetting the PRAM is a simple fix that can resolve a variety of mysterious symptoms, from preferences settings that refuse to be retained on restart to problems restarting altogether. The simplest way to do this is to restart your Mac and immediately hold down the Command-Option-P-R keys. Wait until the Mac restarts itself three times, then let go of the keys.

## Reset Open Firmware

1. Hold down the Command-Option-O-F keys at startup until a command-line interface appears.
2. From here type `reset-nvram` and press Return.
3. Type `set-defaults` and press Return again.
4. Type `bye` and press Return a final time.

For PowerBooks and iBooks, there is related procedure, called resetting the Power Management Unit, that may help. Exactly how to do this varies with different models. See this Apple Knowledge Base article for details: <http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=14449>.

## Run the Mac's maintenance routines

If you keep your Mac on 24 hours a day (without letting it go to sleep, and you stay up all night, you will likely find that the Mac appears to start doing some work on its own during the wee hours. This is the Mac running useful maintenance procedures at a time when it figures you are asleep. If you regularly turn your Mac off or put it to sleep at night, your Mac may never get to do this maintenance. This, in turn, can precipitate assorted problems, such as a mysterious decline in your unused hard drive space. To fix this, you can simply leave your Mac on all night for a month. Or, for faster results, you can run the maintenance routines yourself. Several third-party utilities can help out here (such as MacJanitor and Macaroni). If you want to just stick with just Mac OS X software, here's what you can do:

1. Launch Terminal.
2. Type `sudo periodic daily weekly monthly` and press Return.
3. Enter your administrator's password when asked, and press Return again.
4. Wait until the command line prompt reappears (it may take several minutes) and you are done.

## QUICK DIAGNOSTIC CHECKS

These Quick Checks won't usually fix your problem, but may help you figure out what the cause is. Telling MacExpertise the results of these tests can greatly speed up your diagnosis and solution.

## Login as another user

Many of the problems you are likely to have are due to files, often corrupted in some way, that reside in your Home directory, especially its Library folder. To determine if such a file is the cause, you can log in as another user, ideally one that has never been modified from its initial default state. If the "pristine" user account does not have the same symptom, it's a sure sign that the cause is some file in your account that was added or got corrupted.

You need to have an additional account. To create one, if it does not already exist:

1. Launch System Preferences and select Accounts.
2. At the bottom left of the window, click the + button. Fill in name and password.
3. Still from the Account System Preferences pane, click the Login Options button. Make sure the checkbox that says "Enable fast user switching" is enabled.

Now, from the User menu, which should be in the upper right corner of the menu bar, select the name of the newly created user. Log in. Test to see if your problem still occurs and note the result. Log out.

If the problem does not occur when logged in as a different user, it means something in your Home directory is causing the problem. Often, the culprit is a preferences file. The solution is to remove the file. At this point, you can try to figure out on your own which file is the culprit (and what to do about it), or you can call MacExpertise for assistance.

### **Re-login with login items disabled**

Launch System Preferences and select Accounts. From the list on the left, select your own account. From the row of buttons that appear to the right, select Startup Items. If you have any items listed here, they are a potential source of trouble. To determine if this is the case, you can login with startup items disabled. To do this:

1. Select Log Out from the Apple menu.
  2. When the Login window appears, enter your name and password.
  3. Hold down Shift and click to log in. Continue holding until the desktop items begin to appear.
- Now check to see if your problem still remains. If it is gone, it means that a startup item was the cause. At this point, you can try to figure out on your own which one of the items is the culprit, or you can call MacExpertise for assistance.

### **Safe boot**

A safe boot is most useful if you are having problems starting up your Mac. It disables certain files on your Mac that may be interfering with a successful startup. When running a Mac from a Safe Boot, you may be unable to connect to your network or use connected FireWire and USB devices -- but at least you will have succeeded in completing a startup.

To do a Safe Boot, start by turning on your Mac. Press and hold the Shift key down immediately after hearing the startup chimes. Continue to hold down the Shift key until the words Safe Boot appear on the blue screen. That's it.

When doing a Safe Boot, the Mac automatically performs disk repairs, similar to what happens when you select Repair Disk from Disk Utility. The advantage here is that you do not have to locate and startup from the Install CD to get this to work. This alone may fix your problem. That's why it pays to restart normally immediately after a Safe Boot. If you can now startup successfully, your problem may be fixed! Otherwise, one of the files that got disabled is the likely cause of the problem. Unless you are familiar with these files and how to fix problems with them, it's now time to call MacExpertise.

If even the Safe Boot fails to get your Mac to start up, and especially if you hear a sound other than the normal startup tones, either you have a serious software problem (which may require either a complete reinstall of Mac OS X and possibly an erasure of the entire drive) or you have a hardware problem. To check for hardware problems, you can run the Hardware Test software that came with your Mac. It will either be on a separate CD or included on the Install DVD (depending on the Mac model you have). If you need help in doing this, it's time to call MacExpertise.

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