

## Learn how to fix common problems in Windows.

### **My PC Crashes During Windows Start Up**

You turn on your computer, see the Windows logo appear on the screen, and then wait what seems to be an eternity for your computer to start: Windows has a startup problem. Fortunately, Windows offers a number of tools you can use to hunt down the problem and fix it.

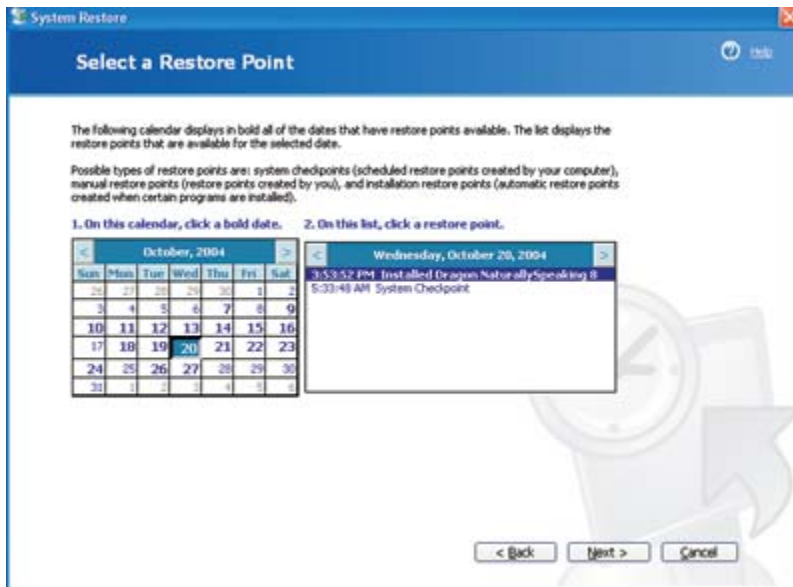
1. Try to get Windows started by using the tools on the Windows Advanced Options menu. Remove any media from optical drives and floppy drives and restart your computer. Just before Windows starts, press the F8 key to bring up the Windows Advanced Options menu.



**Tip:** There's only a brief window of time when you can press the F8 key to access Windows Advanced Options. If you're not sure when to press the key, repeatedly press the key throughout the boot process until you see the menu.

2. If you have just installed a new graphics card driver, use the arrow keys on your keyboard to select Enable VGA Mode from the Windows Advanced Options menu. This forces Windows to start with a resolution of 640x480, bypassing any conflict with your monitor in the current driver settings. If Windows starts, check your monitor's manual and set the graphics driver at a resolution supported by your monitor.
3. If you've just installed new hardware or software and rebooted your computer, try selecting **Last Known Good Configuration (Your Most Recent Settings That Worked)**. This loads the basic Windows settings that were used the last time Windows started successfully.
4. Try starting Windows in Safe Mode. Safe Mode loads a stripped-down version of Windows XP that runs on the bare minimum of drivers and services. If Windows starts in **Safe Mode**, you can try to correct problems caused by hardware and software settings. To start Windows in Safe Mode, select Safe Mode from the Windows Advanced Options menu.
5. Windows will ask you which operating system you want to load. If you only have one operating system installed, press ENTER.
6. When you are in Safe Mode, the words "Safe Mode" will be displayed in each corner of your monitor screen. Don't be surprised if Windows looks different in Safe Mode; it uses a plain vanilla, VGA driver for your graphics card, which may set your display to different resolution and color depth settings.

7. If you've installed new hardware or software and you suspect it's causing a problem, use Safe Mode to uninstall them.
8. Use Device Manager to look for hardware conflicts. Use the Windows Configuration Utility to perform a clean boot and track down poorly behaving software.
9. If none of these methods work, use System Restore to roll back your computer's settings to a past date when it was running trouble free, as shown below.



Run System Restore to get Windows up and running.

## My PC Intermittently Crashes or Behaves Badly

Unfortunately, intermittent problems ranging from a misbehaving mouse to a complete system crash are a common occurrence even on today's computers. And the more you use your PC, the more frequent problems become. Newly added hardware and software programs are often the causes of problems, but sometimes these problems take time to surface and occur at seemingly random times, making them very difficult to resolve.

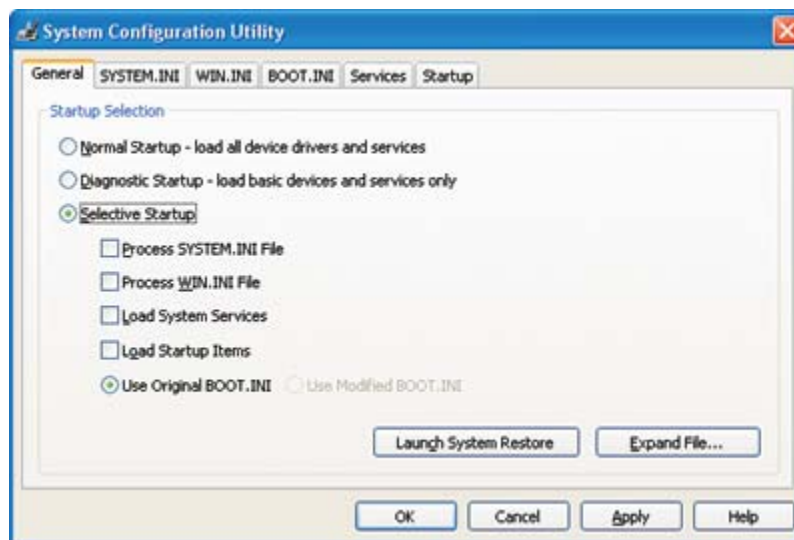
1. Remove recently installed hardware or software.
2. Use the process of elimination to isolate and remove the troublesome hardware or software.
3. Restore your system to an earlier configuration with System Restore.
4. Replace damaged, corrupted, or missing Windows files by performing an upgrade reinstallation of Windows.
5. If none of these processes work, you have two choices: get professional help or completely reinstall Windows yourself. Each option has its pluses and minuses: reinstalling Windows and all of your application software can take a lot of time. On the other hand, a repair technician can be expensive

because tracking down an intermittent problem can be very time consuming — and if you've done everything listed in this section, there is a good chance the technician will end up reinstalling Windows anyway.

## Perform a Clean Boot

A clean boot strips Windows of unnecessary programs, settings, and services. (Services are like small programs that are always running in the background of Windows.) The Windows System Configuration Utility lets you do this quickly and effectively. If intermittent problems disappear after performing a clean boot, you can identify the offending software program or service by re-enabling them one at a time until the problem reoccurs. If you have lots of software and services that automatically start with Windows, expect this process to take some time; you have to reboot after enabling each service or program.

1. Start the System Configuration Utility by typing **msconfig** under **Start | Run**.
2. On the General tab, click **Selective Startup** (as shown below), and then uncheck the **Process System.ini File** and **Process Win.ini File** boxes. These files hold the Windows configuration settings. Also uncheck the **Load Startup Items** box to disable all software programs that automatically start with Windows.

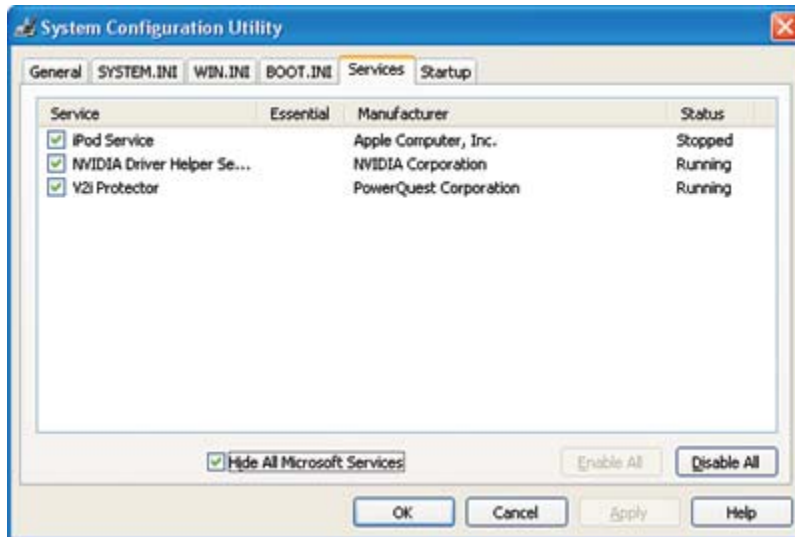


Use Selective Startup on the General tab to disable software and services.

**Caution:** Take care not to uncheck the Load System Services check box. This disables basic Windows services and results in the loss of all the saved Restore points used by System Restore.

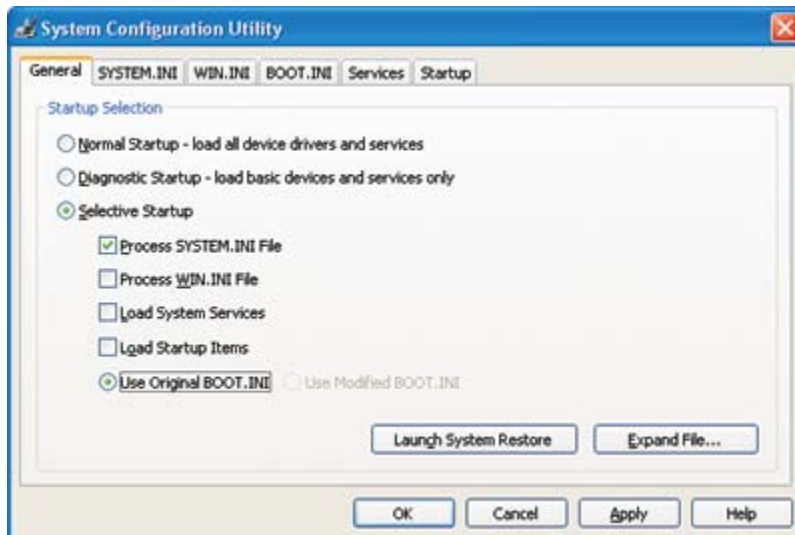
3. Go to the **Services** tab to disable Windows services. First, select the **Hide All Microsoft Services** check box, and then click **Disable All**. Click **OK**,

and then click **Restart** to restart your computer (as shown below). Now you can also uncheck the Load System Services box on the General tab.



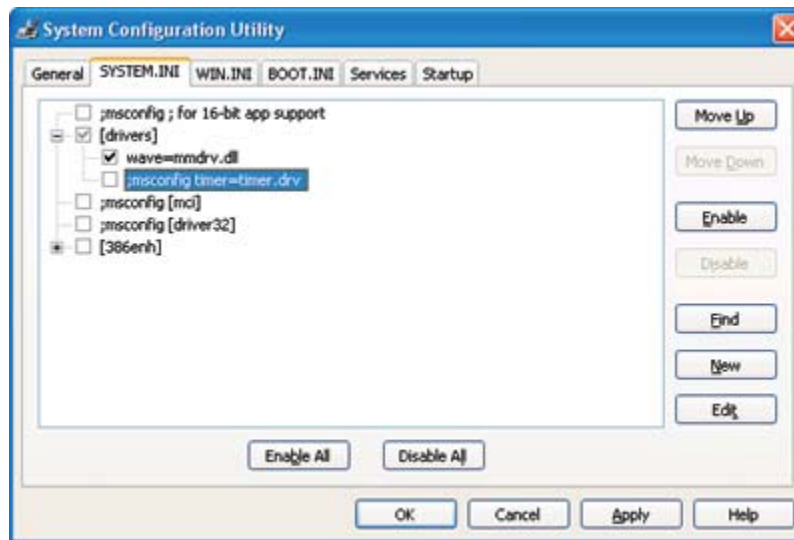
On the Services tab, check the Hide All Microsoft Services check box to avoid disabling important Windows XP services.

4. Now that you've disabled everything, has the problem with your computer disappeared? If yes, start re-enabling the disabled items to track down the problem's cause. Start by replacing the check mark next to **Process System.ini File**, click **OK**, and when prompted, reboot your PC.



Enable one item at a time and reboot the PC. Start with the Load System.ini Files.

5. If the problem with your computer returns, you know it's caused by one of the entries in the System.ini file and you should move to the next step. If not, repeat the above step for the Process Win.ini File, Load System Services, and Load Startup Items categories until you find which, if any, is responsible for your problems.
6. Once you've identified the offending category, open its tab in the System Configuration Utility. For example, to take a closer look at the System.ini file, select the **SYSTEM.INI** tab as shown below.



Disable all the entries on the System.ini tab by removing the check from each item's box.

7. Continue the process of elimination by unchecking all of the items listed on the SYSTEM.INI tab and rebooting your PC. The problem should disappear. Now re-enable each item one at a time — by rechecking the box next to the item — and reboot the PC. As before, when the problem appears, the most recently checked item is the cause of the problem and needs to be permanently disabled (unchecked).