

How to Repair Windows XP – A Beginner's Guide

There are several things that you can do when your computer with Microsoft Windows XP won't boot.

1. First, check to see if your hardware is operating correctly. Check all of the cables and listen for the boot-up tones, which check the memory, keyboard, mouse and video connections. Typically a single “beep” indicates that all is well.

2. Troubleshooting Your Windows XP Operating System. Troubleshooting your Windows XP Operating System starts when the operating system is working correctly. Create a Windows Startup Disk using your floppy drive and a floppy disk. Follow the following steps:

- a. Format a blank floppy disk
- b. Find the following files on the C hard drive – Boot.ini, NTLDR, Ntdetect.com
- c. Copy the three files to the floppy disk
- d. Label the floppy disk and store it in a safe place

Check the newly created floppy disk by inserting the disk into the floppy drive and press [Ctrl][Alt][Delete] to reboot. When you boot from your floppy disk, Windows XP will bypass the active partition and boot files on the hard disk and start Windows XP normally.

3. Access the Windows XP startup menu. When the computer is booting, press the F8 key before the Windows XP logo appears. You will get the Windows XP startup menu.

4. Use the Last Known Good Configuration. The Last Known Good Configuration feature replaces the contents of the {CurrentControlSet} Registry Key with a backup copy that was saved when the system started up successfully the last time. Since this creates a backup copy each time it is used, you have only one shot at using it. If it fails, and you try it again, the backup copy is probably also corrupt.

5. Use System Restore. System Restore runs in the background as a service and continually monitors system-critical components for change. When an impending system change is detected, a backup is made. The default is to create restore points every 24 hours.

To use System Restore, first restart the computer by pressing the [Ctrl][Alt][Delete] keys. When you see the message *Press select the operating system to start* or hear the single beep, press [F8] to display the Windows Advanced Options menu. Select the Safe Mode item from the list and press [Enter].

Once Windows boots into Safe Mode, then click the start button, access All Programs|Accessories|System Tools menu, and select System Restore. Because

you're running in Safe Mode, the only option on the opening screen of the System Restore wizard is Restore My Computer to an Earlier Time, and it's selected by default, so just click next. Follow the wizard to select a restore point and begin the restoration procedure.

How you can create a System Restore point in Windows XP. Normally System Restore will create system restore points as needed. However, you might want to create System Restore points manually. For example, if you install a new application, Microsoft suggests creating a System Restore point before you install the application. See Microsoft article - [Windows XP System Restore](http://www.microsoft.com/technet/prodtechnol/winxppro/maintain/xpsysrst.mspx), (<http://www.microsoft.com/technet/prodtechnol/winxppro/maintain/xpsysrst.mspx>) which explains the process.

To create a manual System Restore point, use the following procedure. Start |All Programs|Accessories|System Tools menu|, and select System Restore. Select Create a System Restore Point, and follow the wizard. Name the system restore point so you can return to it later if necessary. This will ensure that you can restore your system to this point in time.

One thing to remember about System Restore is that you need at least 200 MB of free space on any hard drive that you want to use the program on. This is a requirement.

To check and see if System Restore is running on your computer, use the following steps. Select |Start|Control Panel| and then select Administrative Tools. Select Services and scroll down to System Restore Service. Make sure it is running.

Note: If you need to troubleshoot the System Restore Service you can use SRDiag.exe. It will both diagnose and troubleshoot the System Restore program. To use it, click |Start|Run|, type in srdiag.exe, and press [Enter].

More Severe Boot Problems

If your boot problem is more severe, you may need to take a more drastic approach. The Windows XP CD-ROM is bootable and will you access to a tool called Recovery Console.

To boot from the Windows XP CD, put the CD into the CD-ROM drive, and press the [Ctrl][Alt][Delete] keys. This will reboot your computer. Once the system begins booting from the CD, follow the onscreen prompts. This will load all of the basic files needed to run Setup. When you see the Welcome to Setup Screen, press [R] to start the Recovery Console.

At the Microsoft Windows XP Recovery Console, you will be prompted to choose the operating system that you want to log onto. Select the appropriate number and you will be prompted to enter the Administrator's password. The Recovery Console menu will start.

You can check the commands available by typing [Help] and hitting the [Enter] key at the command prompt. This will give you a list of Recovery Console commands and a short description of the command. The following Microsoft article explains the Recovery Console commands: [Description of the Windows XP Recovery Console](#), and can be found at: <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;EN-US;314058>

Another Microsoft article that is helpful with the Recovery Console is: [Recovery Console overview](#), found at: http://www.microsoft.com/resources/documentation/windows/xp/all/proddocs/en-us/recovery_console_overview.msp?mfr=true

Several main Recovery Console commands are listed below.

Bootcfg Tool:

The Bootcfg tool will fix the Boot.ini file. The Ntldr program refers to the Boot.ini file to determine where the operating system files reside and which options to enable as the operating system continues to load. If there is a problem in the Boot.ini file, Windows may not boot correctly. Use Bootcfg tool to fix it.

To create a bootable floppy disk, format a blank floppy disk under Windows XP and copy the following files onto it: Boot.ini, NTLDR, and Ntdetect.com. See the following Microsoft article for more information: [How to use System files to create a boot disk to guard against being unable to start Windows XP](#), at <http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=314079>

Fixboot Tool:

The Fixboot tool will fix a partition boot sector. For additional information, see the Microsoft article: [Computer stops responding with a black screen when you start Windows XP](#): at <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;EN-US;314503>.

Fixmbr Tool:

The Fixmbr tool will fix the master boot record. For additional information see the Microsoft article: [Fixmbr](#), at http://www.microsoft.com/resources/documentation/windows/xp/all/proddocs/en-us/bootcons_fixmbr.msp?mfr=true

Other Methods to Repair Windows XP

There are several other ways to repair a Windows XP System that won't boot. Two these methods are [Restore from a Backup](#) and [Perform an in-place upgrade](#).

Restore from a Backup depends upon the backup utility that you used to make the backup. You will need to follow the utility's instructions on how to perform a restore operation.

Perform an in-place upgrade is done by booting from your Windows XP CD.

Continue to the Windows Setup screen and launch the Windows Setup procedure. Acknowledge the License Agreement page and continue to the second Windows XP Setup screen. This screen will prompt you to repair the selected Windows XP installation or to continue installing a fresh copy of Windows XP.

Press [R] to repair the selected Windows XP installation. Follow the prompts on the screen.

Additional Resources

One excellent article is entitled 10 Things you can do when Windows XP won't boot\ by Greg Shultz. This article is located on the TechRepublic website. Visit <http://techrepublic.com.com/2001-6240-0.html> for more information.

Another resource is the Microsoft website. Visit <http://www.microsoft.com> and search the website for the phrase **Repair Windows XP**.

If you have a laptop computer, or are considering getting one, visit our WritersLaptop website at <http://www.writerslaptop.com>. Our **Ten Most Needed Features of a Laptop** ebook will give you additional information about using your laptop computer, or about getting a new of used laptop.

By H. Court Young
Promoting awareness through the written word
<http://www.hcourtyoung.com>
<http://www.tmcco.com>
©April 2006