

Basic PC Troubleshooting Tips

1. Don't panic. Relax. Take a deep 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 "K" drive are saved on the server and not the individual computers in the classroom and labs so they're most likely still there.
2. 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 surge protector, make sure it's on and that it works. Remember that a surge protector may not be working because it is designated 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 problems 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 this, contact the Help Desk.
4. Error Messages – Write them down.
 - a. What tipped you off to the problem? Sometimes it's an error code or message displayed on the 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 must faster.
 - b. Other times you get no warning – everything just freezes. Message or no message, be sure to note what was going on when the problem occurred. Were you starting your computer? Were you on the Windows Desktop? Surfing the web?
5. Think about what changed recently on your computer.
 - a. Try to pinpoint when the trouble first started. Did the problem coincide with any recent changes? Did you change any settings? Has anyone else been using your computer?
6. The computer is on but...
 - a. Everything on the screen is frozen and the keyboard and mouse are not responding.
 - i. Try tapping 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 where or not the Num Lock light goes on and off. If it doesn't, the computer is completely locked up. You will need to reboot the computer.

- b. Pressing Alt & F4.
 - i. 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 will have to reboot.
- c. The "blue screen" appeared.
 - i. 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.
 - i. Is there a speaker icon next to the clock on the task bar? If you can't find it, double click the speaker icon to bring up the audio controls for your 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.
 - i. 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. Rebooting can do wonders. Don't just pull the plug!
 - i. 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 by pressing the keys CTRL-ALT-DEL simultaneously twice in a row. Please note there is no way to save your work.
- g. Stumped? The GSD Technology Team Help Desk is ready to assist you with your computer problems.