

# Help is at Hand

[IT Department Help]



## Basic PC Troubleshooting Guide

### Unable to login to your computer:

Check that your caps lock is not on, and that your shift key is not stuck down. You can test your password out in the username box. This way you can ensure that when you type it, and you see the dots replacing characters, the correct information is going into the box.

If you are sure that your username and password are correct, the next step is to ensure you have a working network connection. Most companies keep all the usernames and passwords on a central database. If your computer can't access the network, it has no way to authenticate itself with the database, and it won't be able to let you login.

The easiest way to confirm whether or not you have a network connection, is to look at the back of your computer. The network port, (probably the only port with lights) should have a cable going into it, and the lights should be flashing. If the lights are flashing, you will need to ring the help desk for them to look at your login.

If the lights aren't flashing, check that the network cable is securely in place at both the wall and computer ends. Ensure you apply pressure to the connection rather than simply looking at it. Often cables can be slightly disconnected.

If you are unable to get the lights flashing, check if other staff around you are able to login, and if they can't, check with them to see if the help desk has been informed. If the help desk hasn't been informed, give them a call. This will let the help desk focus on the problem at hand, rather than answering more calls reporting the same issue.

### Unable to access the Internet or receive Email:

The most likely cause for this is that your network connection is currently unavailable. If you know that other staff members near you are on the same network as you, check with one of them to see if they are able to receive email or access the Internet. A wireless network may be working, while a wired network is not, and vice versa.

If they aren't able to get on the network, ensure the help desk is aware that the network is down in your area, either by asking staff if the help desk has been phoned already (preferable), or by ringing the help desk yourself.

If they are able to access the network, you have narrowed the problem down to being your computer only. The next step is to check that your network cable is plugged in correctly. This may have been knocked out by a cleaner.

Network cables go from the wall (normally) to the back of your computer. Check on the back of your computer to see if the cable is plugged in. Network ports have lights on them. If the lights are flashing, you know that the cable is connected properly. If there are no lights, push the cable in at both the computer and wall, to ensure a secure connection.

If the lights come on during this check, your network may well have come back up for you. Try your Internet and Email again to see if it working. If you are unable to get lights, or you have had lights flashing since your check, there is not much more you can do but call the help desk. The information you have gathered will surely speed up the technician in finding a solution for you.

Let the help desk know...

1. When the problem started to occur.
2. If colleagues are able to connect to the Internet.
3. If there are lights flashing on the network port of your computer.
4. If you are using a wireless or cabled network.
5. If you are sure the cables are plugged in securely.

## **Unable to print:**

There are a few quick checks you can do to find out why you are unable to print. These tips are mostly for networked printers. Local printers often don't have displays, so they are harder to fault find.

First off, check that you are able to access your Internet or Email. The problem may be bigger than simply being unable to print. If you are able to get the Internet, read on. Otherwise scroll up for tips on how to check your network.

Check to see if the printer is turned on, or if there are any error messages on the printers display. There are a number of messages that can hold up printing. Incorrect paper size, paper jams, no paper or the requirement of a PIN can all stop the printer. Try to clear these messages by following the prompts.

If the error message is "Offline", check that the network cable is securely plugged into both the wall and the printer.

Go into the Control Panel on your computer and open up Printers and Faxes. Under the printer you are trying to print to, check to see if the printer says ready or offline. This is useful information for the help desk.

You can also double click on the printer, so you can see the print queue. You will be able to see what print jobs are waiting to be printed, and possibly, who has printed them. It may be that the person who is first in the queue has disconnected their computer before their print job was completed. If you can track this person down, they can clear the blocked job out of the queue.

Also ask a colleague if they are able to print to the same printer. If they can print, you can assume that there is something wrong with your setup. If they can't print, you can assume that there is a problem with the wider network or the printer itself.

A printer is often fixed by turning it off, waiting a few seconds and turning it back on. This will clear a lot of errors and allow the printer to reconfigure itself with the network.

You may have successfully fixed it following these steps, as a loose cable is often the cause. If not ring the help desk and inform them of your findings.

1. Does your computer reporting the printer to be offline or ready?
2. Are there any error messages?
3. Can others print to the printer?
4. Does the printer report as being offline?
5. Is the network cable secure?

All this information will greatly speed up the fix for the help desk or technician.

## **Mouse or Keyboard not working:**

Corded mice and corded keyboards are very reliable. Ensure that the cables are plugged into the computer and that the cables are not damaged. If you are getting a little bit of movement with your mouse, ensure that under the mouse is clean and not clogged up with dust or a hair. The same goes for keyboards. If some keys work but not others, it is most likely that there is some dirt or other objects under the keys. Be warned, cleaning out a keyboard is not an easy task.

Cordless mice, the most likely and frequent cause is that the batteries are dead. Try replacing them to see if that fixes the problem.

The next step is to ensure they are “connected”. Click the connect button on the receiver and then on the mouse or keyboard.

If you are not up and running with these tips, give the help desk a call. Let the help desk know if there are any lights, under or on the mouse. Also tell them the checks you have already done.

1. Is it a corded or cordless mouse?
2. Are there lights on the mouse?
3. Have you tried changing batteries?
4. Have you tried to “connect” your mouse or keyboard to the receiver?
5. Are you getting any movement or key presses?

There are some really odd problems that can affect the keyboard and mouse, and how they respond. It is sometimes nothing to do with the mouse or keyboard at all. They are just how the problem shows itself. This is something the help desk can help you with.

## **Error Messages:**

Please note down any error messages received that are preventing you from carrying out your duties and notify them to the Help Desk who will be able to resolve the issue quicker.

If you receive a blue screen with a page of writing, try to note down the last few lines of the text as these usually contain most of the problem.

## **Turning on the computer to find a blank screen:**

The most common cause for this is loose cables. Ensure the computer is turned on. Check that there are active lights on the computer itself. Also, check to see if there are any active lights on the monitor.

Physically check that the video cable (usually blue headed) is firmly in place at both the monitor and computer. Apply pressure to it, as well as this, ensure that power cords are securely plugged in.

If you are using a laptop, and you are trying to view the picture on an external monitor, try pressing the Fn+f? combination. This will cycle the output of the laptop from the internal display to the various external displays.

These tips will fix most of the problems associated with a blank display. If they have not fixed it, give the help desk a call. Let them know...

1. Are there any lights on the monitor?
2. Are all the cables securely connected?
3. Is your computer a laptop or desktop computer?
4. When did the problem start occurring?

## **No Power to the PC:**

Before starting, make sure you’ve turned on every power switch and power button on your computer:

- Power button/switch on the front of the computer
- Power switch on the back of the computer
- Power switch on the power strip, surge protector, or UPS (if you have one)

Verify that the power supply voltage switch is set correctly. If the input voltage for the power supply does not match the correct setting for your country, your computer may not power on at all.

Check for disconnected computer power cable connections. A loose or unplugged power cable is one of the top reasons why a computer doesn’t turn on.

Perform a “lamp test” to verify power is being provided from the wall. Your computer isn’t going to turn on if it’s not getting power so you need to make sure that the power source is working properly.

## **Calling the help desk**

It is important to have as much information as possible before ringing the help desk, no matter what the problem is. A common example is that "an error has occurred". There are thousands of error messages in computing. The information that will be helpful to the help desk is what the error code is, and what program it happened in. This will surely speed up the technician in finding a solution to your problem.

It is important to give the help desk the most accurate information you can. Telling them incorrect information will often result in the help desk operator being unable to help you, and when the job is logged for a technician to come out, they are likely to try fixing the problem based on what you have told them. Incorrect information will often send the technician down the wrong path, and take much longer to fix.

It is OK to say "I don't know", as this will not plant false ideas in the technicians head as they think through a few possible solutions before they visit you.

Technicians don't normally mind if the problem is caused by something the user shouldn't be doing. Being open and honest is the best way to have your back in working order.