

Software Snags

Every now and then, you may come across situations where an application unexpectedly quits (and gives you a message telling you that it's done so), stops responding (your arrow may turn into a spinning colored disc that won't go away), or starts behaving in an unexpected manner (it won't sass you, but it may show a decrease in performance). If you run into any software issues on your computer, follow our steps to resolve the issue at hand.

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My application unexpectedly quits

There are a number of different reasons why an application may unexpectedly quit. Try the following things to see if any resolve your issue.

- Some applications (such as Safari and Final Cut Pro) need to access various items in your Home folder's Library. If permissions are askew, these applications may unexpectedly quit. To fix this:
 1. Open Disk Utility (it's in /Applications/Utilities).
 2. Select your hard disk volume in the left column.
 3. Click the First Aid tab.
 4. Click Repair Disk Permissions.
- The application that quits may not be compatible with the version of Mac OS X that you're using. Make sure that you have the latest versions of all software, including Mac OS X, and be sure to read any text notes that are included with the application installers.
- If you are using a file within an application that unexpectedly quits, there may be something wrong with the file. Try opening another file in the same application. If the application appears to be working fine, the issue could be with your file.
- There could be something wrong with the application's preferences file. To generate a fresh preferences file for the application, do this:
 1. Quit the affected application.
 2. Open any of the following folders to locate the application's preferences file: /Library/Preferences, ~/Library/Preferences, or ~/Library/Preferences/*application or manufacturer's name*.
 3. Locate the preferences file for your affected application (it'll look something like "com.*manufacturer's name*.*application name*.plist).
 4. Drag the file to the Trash.

5. Reopen the application (you will need to reset your application preferences).
- If you are using a peripheral device with the application (for example, you're using a printer with iPhoto), make sure that the device is compatible with your current Mac OS.
 - Apple applications can unexpectedly quit when you do certain tasks, such as import something into one, export something from one, or do something else. If an Apple application unexpectedly quits, [search](#) for your issue in our vast technical articles database; just type the application name along with "unexpectedly quits" in the search field. We may have an article that resolves your particular issue.

I can't open an application or file

There are a number of reasons why you may not be able to open a particular application or file on your computer. Here are some things you can do to resolve this issue.

- If you are not an administrator of your Mac, your administrator may be preventing you from accessing certain applications and items. Talk to the person who administers your computer to see what kind of access you have.
- The application or file may be damaged. If you're trying to open an application, try reinstalling it. If it's a file, try opening another file within the same application to rule out any application issue. If the file opens fine, your affected file may be corrupt.
- If you installed a new version of system software using the Archive & Install feature, some applications may need to be reinstalled to work correctly.
- If you're trying to open a file, make sure that you have an application that can open it. While Mac OS X includes applications that can open a variety of text, image, audio, PDF, and other types of files, your file in question may require that you have the application that created it installed.
- If you're trying to open a file that you downloaded from the web, the file may not have completely downloaded. Try downloading the file again.
- If you're trying to open an email attachment, check the file type and make sure that you have an application that can open that type of file. If the file lacks a file extension (such as .jpg or .mp3), verify what type of file it is, then try adding an extension. For example, if someone sent you a resume, but you can't open it, try adding a .pdf, .rtf, or .txt extension to the file name to see if it'll open.
- If you're using the Fast User Switching feature, which lets you quickly and easily switch from one user account to another on the same computer, some applications, including iTunes, iDVD, and Backup (.Mac), only allow you to open it in one account at a time.
- If you get a message that says you don't have permission to open the file, do one of the following:
 - If you're an administrator, select the file, press Command-I to open the Info window, click the Ownership & Permissions disclosure triangle, and choose **Read & Write** from the **You can** pop-up menu.
 - Fix disk permissions: Open Disk Utility (/Applications/Utilities), select your

hard disk volume, click the First Aid tab, and click Repair Disk Permissions.

My application stopped responding

You may come across a situation in which you can't do anything in an application—not even quit it—and your arrow turns into a colorful, spinning disc. You can select another application or the Finder and use it fully, but when you go back to the affected application, it still won't respond. Here's how to resolve this issue. (Please note that you will lose any unsaved changes.)

1. Press the Command, Option, and Escape (Esc) keys simultaneously.
2. In the resulting Force Quit Applications window, select the affected application.
3. Click Force Quit.

After force quitting an application, try using it again to make sure that it's working as expected. If it still presents issues, you may need to reinstall the application.

I see error messages

Error messages are generally specific to what application (or applications) you have open and what you're trying to do. You can get an error message if your system finds a device incompatibility or can't find a particular file, when you try to copy files to a server, when you try to print, when you try to burn a disc, and lots of other scenarios. If you keep getting error messages, here's what you can do.

- If you keep getting error messages with a [third-party](#) application, contact the manufacturer for information about software compatibility.
- If an error message is preventing you from doing what you want to do with an Apple product, your best bet is to do a search for your error in our technical articles database on the Apple [Service & Support](#) site. Just type the name of the application and a phrase from the error message in the Search box and press Return. You'll find some troubleshooting articles in the search results page.

Everything on my Mac is behaving oddly

If Mac OS X is exhibiting unexpected behavior, and applications and files aren't working the way they're supposed to either, use Disk Utility to repair your disk.

1. Insert the Software Install disc that came with your computer into the disc drive.
2. Restart your computer and immediately press and hold the C key to start up from the disc.
3. When you see the Installer screen, choose **Open Disk Utility** from the **Installer** menu.
4. Select your hard disk volume in the left pane.

5. Click the First Aid tab, then click Repair Disk.
6. After Disk Utility finishes repairing the disk, restart your computer and test it.

If your Mac still isn't working as expected, you may need to reinstall a fresh copy of Mac OS X. The Software Install disc that came with your computer features a way to reinstall Mac OS X while preserving your existing files and settings. It's called Archive and Install.

If you think that you may need to reinstall Mac OS X, be sure that you [back up](#) all your important files first, then do this:

1. Insert the Software Install disc that came with your computer into the disc drive.
2. Restart your computer and immediately press and hold the C key to start up from the disc.
3. When the Installer appears, follow the onscreen instructions to install Mac OS X until you get to the screen that asks you to select a volume to install to.
4. Select your hard disk, then click Options.
5. In the resulting dialog, select Archive and Install.
6. Select the volume that already has Mac OS X installed on it.
7. Select "Preserve Users and Network Settings" to keep all network data and Home directory settings, then click OK.
8. Click Continue to start the installation.

Once the Installer finishes the installation and you've restarted your computer, you may need to reconfigure a few things. Look in the Previous Systems folder that was created during the Archive and Install process, and compare it to your current System folder. If anything is missing, you can move the files over. If any applications don't work as expected after doing an Archive and Install, you may need to reinstall them.

I can't install software

If your computer won't let you install software, first note that you need to be an administrator of the computer in order to install software. If someone else set up your computer for you and didn't make you an administrator, check with him or her about getting access so you can install software.

If you are an administrator but can't install software, try the following things to resolve the issue:

- Make sure that the software you're trying to install can be installed on your computer. Check the system requirements, and make sure you're not trying to install an "update" instead of the actual software (if that's your intention).
- If you're trying to install a file that you downloaded from the Internet, make sure that the file doesn't end with a .exe extension. These types of files don't work on a Mac.
- Try repairing Disk Permissions: Open Disk Utility (/Applications/Utilities), select

your hard disk volume in the left pane, click the First Aid tab, then click Repair Disk Permissions.

- Check with the manufacturer of the software you're trying to install. There could be something wrong with the file or the media that contains the file.
- If you downloaded software from the web, try downloading the file again.
- Try creating a new admin user account:
 1. From the **Apple** menu, choose **System Preferences**.
 2. Click Accounts.
 3. Click the plus sign (+) button to create a new account.
 4. Enter information for the new account in the designated fields.
 5. Click the Security tab, then select the "Allow user to administer this computer" checkbox.
 6. Log in to your computer as the new administrator.
 7. Try to install the software.

If the software installs in your new account, there's something in your other account that's preventing you from installing software. If the software doesn't install, there could be a problem with the software itself, or you may need to reinstall Mac OS X (see "[Everything on my Mac is behaving oddly](#)" for instructions on doing an Archive and Install).