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SOLVE COMMON PROBLEMS

Although Windows XP is arguably the most stable and reliable version of Windows thus far, isn't perfect. Occasionally you might hit a few digital potholes that throw XP out of alignment. To ensure a smooth ride and eliminate common XP problems, follow the 5-minute fixes in this chapter.

Close an Unresponsive Program

Occasionally, a program may throw the digital equivalent of a temper tantrum and refuse to close. When that happens, you can force it to shut down by using the Task Manager, as follows:

1. Simultaneously press the Ctrl, Alt, and Delete keys on your keyboard, which opens the Windows Task Manager. (However, if your version of Windows is configured differently, then pressing these keys might open a Windows Security box. In that case, simply click the Task Manager button.)
2. Click the Applications tab.
3. Click the name of the unresponsive program.
4. At the bottom of the Task Manager, click the End Task button.
5. If the troubled program doesn't close immediately, a message alerts you that the program is not responding. Click the End Now button.
6. If the program still does not respond, or if Windows feels sluggish, then shut down your computer and restart it.

Do It Yourself

Close an unresponsive program

Delete an undeletable file

Restore Windows to a healthy state

Use system restore when Windows won't start

Protect Windows from a botched software installation

What to do if a program won't start or run properly

Delete an Undeletable File

Sometimes files can become corrupt, in which case Windows XP prevents you from deleting them and displays an error message that says the files cannot be deleted because they are currently in use. Even if you reboot your computer and try to delete the files again, usually you see the same error message. To force Windows to delete the files, try the following steps.

To delete common files:

1. Close all open documents and programs that are currently running.
2. Shut down your computer, and then reboot it.
3. Return to Windows and try to delete the file again.
4. If you still can't get rid of the file, shut down your computer.
5. Turn on your computer and immediately press the F8 key on your keyboard several times until the Windows Advanced Options Menu screen appears.
6. Use the up or down arrows on your keyboard to select Safe Mode, and then press the Enter key.
7. The next screen displays the message "Please select the operating system to start." Assuming you have only Windows XP installed on your system, press the Enter key. If you have more than one operating system installed, use the up or down arrows on your keyboard to select Windows XP, then press the Enter key.
8. Windows loads some software, which could take a minute or two. Depending on how your version of Windows is configured, a login screen or the Welcome Screen appears. If you see the login screen, type your account name and password (if you have one), and then press Enter. If you see the Welcome Screen, click the icon for the account labeled Administrator or an account that has administrative privileges, and then type your password (if you have one).
9. A message alerts you that Windows is running in Safe Mode. To proceed, click the Yes button.
10. You can use Safe Mode in much the same way that you use the regular Windows mode. Locate the undeletable file, and then try deleting it again.
11. If you are successful, reboot your computer and return to the regular Windows mode. If your efforts are not successful, seek the help of a certified computer professional like Geeks On Call.

To delete videos with the file extension .avi:

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click the Run button.
3. A window opens. Type **regedit** in the blank, and then click the OK button or press the Enter key.

4. Click the OK button or press the Enter key.
5. The Windows Registry Editor opens. In the left window pane, double-click the registry key labeled HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE. If you can't find it, do the following:
 - a. In the left window pane of the Registry Editor, scroll to the top.
 - b. If any of the HKEY registry keys are open — as indicated by a minus sign (-) on their left side — then close them by clicking that minus sign. When a registry key has been properly closed, it will have a plus sign (+) next to it.
 - c. Repeat this process for the remaining HKEY registry keys until the only things visible in the left window pane are the five HKEY keys (see Figure 1-1).

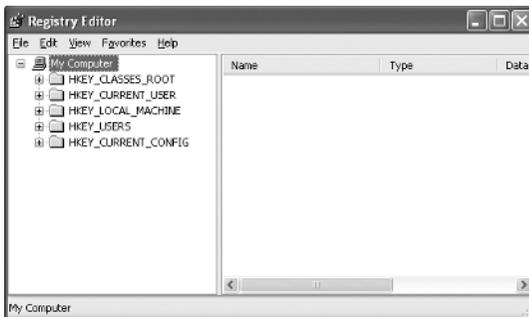


Figure 1-1

Double-click the HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE registry key.

6. A new column of registry keys appears. Double-click the Software registry key.
7. Open the Classes registry key.
8. A long list of registry keys appears. Scroll down and double-click CLSID (see Figure 1-2).

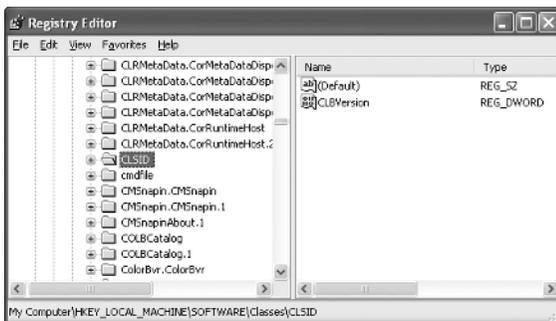


Figure 1-2

9. Another long list of registry keys appears. Scroll down and double-click the one labeled {87D62D94-71B3-4b9a-9489-5FE6850DC73E}.
10. Right-click the InProcServer32 registry key, and then select Delete (see Figure 1-3).

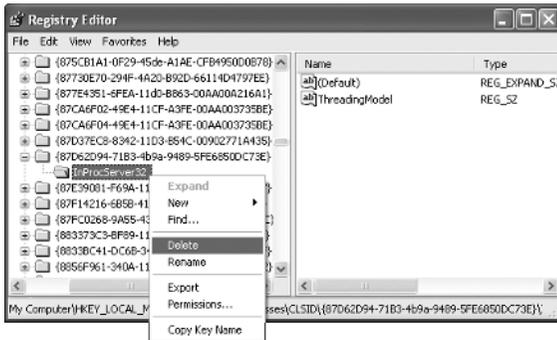


Figure 1-3

11. You are asked to confirm the deletion. Click the Yes button.
12. Exit the Registry Editor by clicking the X button in the upper-right corner.
13. Shut down your computer and restart it.
14. When you return to Windows, you should now be able to delete the .avi file.

Restore Windows to a Healthy State

In a pinch, the Windows XP System Restore feature is a reliable way to recover from a software crisis. In a sense, System Restore sends your computer back in time to a day when it was working properly. If Windows seems like it is undergoing a complete meltdown, try restoring it back to a healthy state, as follows:

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click All Programs.
3. Select Accessories.
4. Select System Tools.
5. Click System Restore.
6. The System Restore window opens. Click the Restore My Computer to an Earlier Time button (see Figure 1-4).

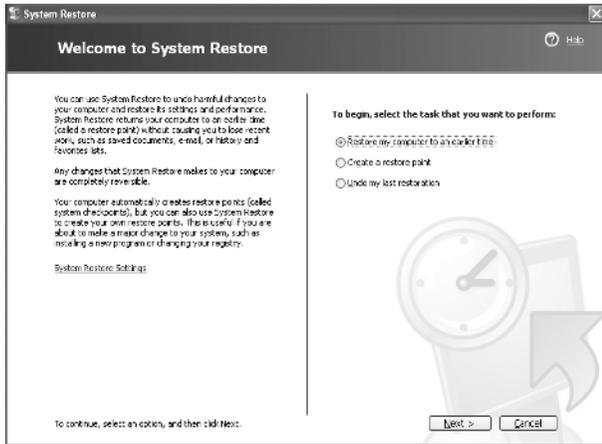


Figure 1-4

7. Click the Next button, located near the lower-right corner of this window.
8. A calendar appears. In it, click on a day when your computer was working properly, then click the Next button .
9. To confirm your choice, click Next.
10. The System Restore process begins. Moments later, your computer automatically restarts itself. When it boots up, follow the on-screen instructions.
11. To make it easier to access System Restore the next time you need it, you can “pin” it to your Start menu (but only if your Start menu is in XP mode rather than classic mode), like this:
 - a. Follow Steps 1 through 4 in this procedure to access the System Tools folder.
 - b. This time, right-click System Restore and select Pin to Start Menu.
 - c. A shortcut to System Restore is placed on your Start menu. From now on, whenever you need to restore your computer to an earlier time, simply click the Start button and then click System Restore.

Use System Restore When Windows Won't Start

When your computer is going haywire, System Restore can be a virtual lifesaver. But what if your high-tech troubles are so severe that Windows can't even start up? In that case, try using the Safe Mode with Command Prompt to access System Restore:

1. After turning on your computer, press the F8 key several times until the Windows Advanced Options Menu screen appears.

2. Use the up or down arrows on your keyboard to select Safe Mode with Command Prompt, and then press Enter.
3. The next screen displays the message, “Please select the operating system to start.” Assuming you only have Windows XP installed on your system, press Enter. If you have more than one operating system installed, use the up and down arrow keys to select Windows XP, and then press the Enter key.
4. Windows loads some software, which could take a minute or two. Depending on how your version of Windows is configured, a login screen or the Welcome Screen appears. If you see the login screen, type your account name and password (if you have one), press Enter. If you see the Welcome Screen, click the icon for the account labeled Administrator or an account that has administrative privileges, and then type your password (if you have one).
5. Next, a command prompt appears. Type `%systemroot%\system32\restore\rstrui.exe` in the blank, and then press the Enter key.
6. After several seconds, the System Restore window appears. Click the Restore My Computer to an Earlier Time button.
7. Click the Next button, located near the lower-right corner of this window.
8. A calendar appears. In it, click a day when your computer was working properly, and then click the Next button.
9. To confirm your choice, click Next.
10. The System Restore process begins. Moments later, your computer automatically restarts itself. When it boots up, follow the on-screen instructions.

Protect Windows from a Botched Software Installation

Before you install any new program, you should create a “restore point.” Doing so will enable you to undo any problems or damage caused by the software installation. Here’s how:

1. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
2. Click All Programs.
3. Select Accessories.
4. Select System Tools.
5. Click System Restore.
6. The System Restore window will open. Click the Create a Restore Point button (see Figure 1-5).

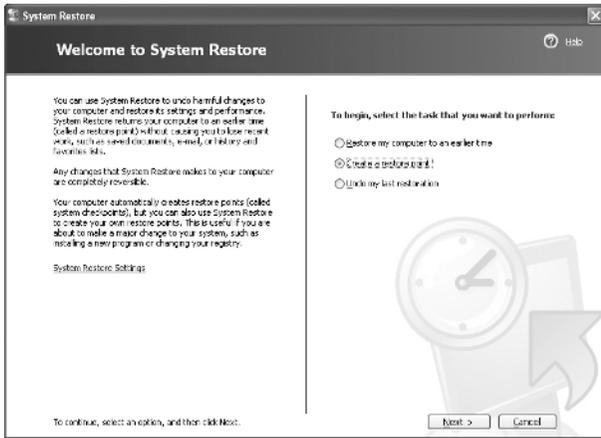


Figure 1-5

7. Click Next.
8. Under the Restore Point Description heading, type some words or sentences that will help you to remember why you are creating this restore point. For example, if you just bought a new antivirus program, you could label this restore point “Before Installation of New Antivirus Software.”
9. Click the Create button.

If a Program Won't Start or Run Properly

If you suddenly discover that one of your programs will not open or run properly, it could be the result of a software conflict. Occasionally—for some unknown reason—certain programs cannot coexist peacefully on the same computer. In that case, there are some remedies you can try.

Download a Newer Version

Many companies release new versions of their software on a regular basis that offer improved features and resolve problems that were discovered in the previous versions. To update a program:

1. If you can successfully open the troubled program, search for an option with a name like Check for Updates. Usually this can be found in one of the drop-down menus located at the top of the program.
2. If you find this option, you must connect to the Internet so the program can update itself.
3. If you can't update the program, or if the update doesn't resolve your problem, check the program manufacturer's website to see if a newer version is available. If you own a legal copy of the software, you may be able to download the newest version for free.

Download a Patch

Often companies offer small patches that can be downloaded from their websites to fix problems or glitches in their software. To locate and download a software patch:

1. Connect to the Internet and visit the website for the program's manufacturer.
2. Near the top of the website's main page, search for a link with a name like Support or Customer Service.
3. After clicking this link, look for a section labeled Updates or Downloads.

Temporarily Disable Antivirus or Antispyware Software

Although antivirus and antispyware software are essential for the protection and security of your computer, sometimes they can interfere with the actions of other programs. If updating or patching your troubled program doesn't solve its problems, try temporarily disabling or shutting down your antivirus and/or antispyware software. Here's how:

1. If you are connected to the Internet, disconnect from it. For users of dial-up services like AOL, MSN, or Earthlink, this is done simply by logging off your Internet service. For users of high-speed Internet (DSL or cable), this is done by engaging the Internet lock feature of your software firewall or by unplugging the Ethernet cable from the back of your computer.
2. Right-click the icon for your antivirus or antispyware program, which is usually located in the lower-right corner of Windows near the clock.
3. Select the option to Close or Disable or Shut Down.
4. Restart your troubled program to see if it works properly. If it does, then keep your antivirus or antispyware program turned off until you are finished using the troubled program.
5. When you are ready to resume normal computer activities like using e-mail or surfing the Internet, remember to turn on your antivirus software by right-clicking its icon near the Windows clock and selecting Enable or Restore. If the antivirus icon is not there, then you must manually restart the program by doing the following:
 - a. Click the Start button in the lower-left corner of Windows.
 - b. Click All Programs.
 - c. Select the folder containing the name of your antivirus software. For example, if you use Norton AntiVirus, then select the folder labeled Norton AntiVirus.
 - d. Click the shortcut to launch the program.