



## It's Broken? Here are the Quick Fixes

I keep hearing about lost passwords. Printers that don't print. Common issues, but they're mostly diagnosed wrong. Like "How long does it take to fix a bad password?" Well, first step for me is to watch what happens during a login, and find out if the problem is something else, because mostly, that's what it is.

So knowing what failed is the first step, and most users get that wrong more often than they think. So here's what you tell me is happening, and the quick fix for what's really going on.

## **I lost my Windows password.**

Usually, not. Mostly, your computer has two or more accounts. Every Windows-based computer I set up has an Admin account, and an account with your name on it, and maybe some additional accounts. And Windows offers to log you into the last account that was used. So look in the bottom-left of the login screen, and select your name, and use your usual password.

## **Half my desktop icons are missing.**

No, that doesn't happen. But if you logged into the wrong account, all your desktop icons, wallpaper, and documents are missing, but the software icons will mostly remain. Sign out, and as above, select your name from the bottom-left of the login screen, and log in again.

## **I lost my password, on some social media site.**

Well, it's possible that could happen. But mostly, your password was terminated or wiped because that site was hacked, and several million email/password pairs were downloaded, possibly including yours. Responsible sites would announce that you will need to use the 'forgot my password' link to reset your account credentials, but most sites are not remotely responsible, or they're resetting passwords now, and will follow up with a carefully-drafted and lawyer-approved announcement days later, buried where it's hard for stockholders to find it.

This one issue is why you must NEVER reuse a password. Hacked accounts, or email and password pairs, are shared among criminals and tested on the top 50 banking sites, and everywhere else that stores your credit card numbers.

## **I can't log in, and I do know my password.**

Well, see above. But also, a statistic: Over half of the password calls I get are caused by using the wrong user name with the correct password. That's in logins, email software setups, anywhere. Check the user name.



## **My printer is broken.**

Yes, they break. But if it just won't print, and won't even react to sending a print job with a flashing led that means 'receiving', it can be either a bad printer driver, or the wrong printer driver. If you look in the printer list and see something like 'HP Laserjet (copy 2),' then Windows is playing 'detect the printer again' games, yet again. So when there are several drivers for the same printer, with all but one of them ending in 'copy' and a number, the one that works will have the highest number after 'copy'. The others can be deleted, from an Admin-level account.

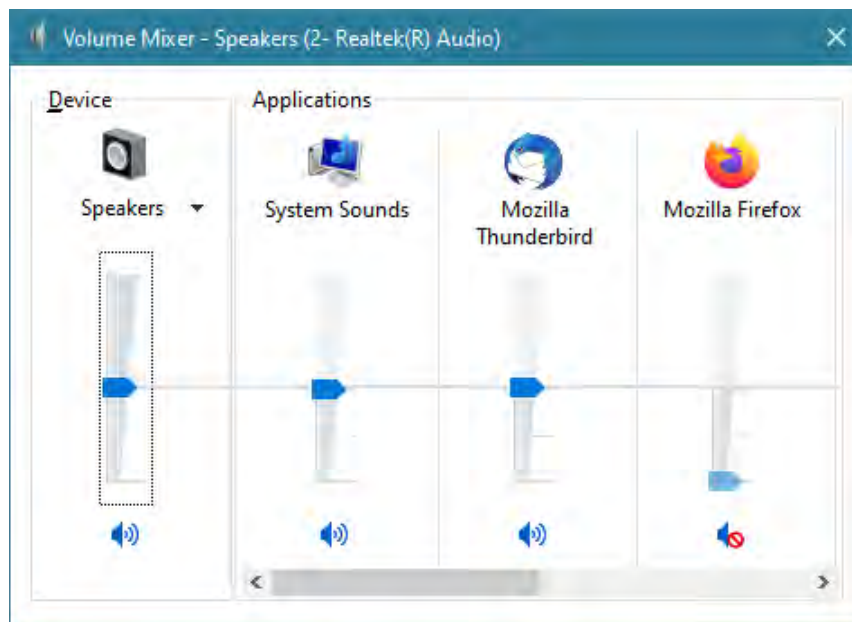
## **My program doesn't work, and I rebooted.**

Well, maybe you think you rebooted, and Windows kept you logged in. Windows doesn't make that obvious. In the old days of DOS, there was a 'warm boot' that was done from the keyboard (ctrl-alt-delete), or a 'cold boot' of completely shutting down and unplugging the system from power for a few seconds. We used those to fix issues of varying types. And the basic concept of rebooting to fix computers, cell phones, televisions, anything with software, still applies.

But Windows 10 and 11 have 'restart' in two places, and they're different.

Restarting from a logged-in account leaves your account logged in, and not all the background services are wiped out and restarted. Even shutting down doesn't completely wash out the crashed junk sitting in memory if the Microsoft on-by-default 'Fast Startup' feature is turned on. So a proper restart that clears out all work from memory has two steps. Sign out, and then in the login screen, click that bottom-right icon for the small popup menu, and choose restart from there. That resets everything that isn't hardware-related.

And a cold boot is still useful if there's a hardware issue, usually junk on screen that won't go away. The complete shutdown wipes the memory on the video card to fix that.



## My speakers are broken.

No, that's extremely rare. No sound has always been a top Windows issue. The problem is that there are so many places to turn off sound, and multiple locations to change the volume. I've found 10 ways to break sound. Some are buried deeply in the settings, and rare. Here are the quick ones to check:

- The speaker volume on the speakers is too low.
- The speakers aren't plugged into power.
- The speaker cable isn't plugged into the green audio socket.
- The volume on the System Tray icon is too low, or off (shows an x).
- The volume in the System Mixer (from right-clicking the system tray icon) is too low or off on one of the sound categories. (See the picture above.)

And then there are several more muting possibilities under Control Panel, Hardware and Sound, Sound. You may have to call for help on those.

## **My mail is broken.**

Well, that can happen. But most business users consider mail to be the Internet, and it's only a small piece of it. Usually, the issue is that the internet connection is down, or there's a local issue between you and the mail server (called a 'routing failure') but most web pages are working. When in doubt, check if you can look at the web page for any major web site. Most of the news sites are good for testing, like [cnn.com](http://cnn.com) or [nbc.com](http://nbc.com).

Put another way, don't test the internet by checking mail. There are too many moving pieces that can break that, and first, you have to have a solid internet connection, or nothing else is going to work.

## **My computer won't start. The screen is black, and the fans are on.**

First thing I think of when I hear that is 'is it Wednesday?' The day after 'second Tuesday', which is when the Microsoft patches arrive? That's when the big (slow) download called the 'Windows Malicious Software Removal Tool' shows up every month, and then the next reboot after that takes a few seconds or minutes longer while Microsoft is searching your computer for the worst malicious software, basically anything bad enough to cause problems for Microsoft, like malware in the 'worm' category that can spread itself through the internet. That first reboot takes a little longer, especially on slow computers, and it may look like nothing is happening. Be patient; interrupting patches can cause bigger problems.

Something else is wrong? Pause for a moment. Consider if the symptom is a cause or an effect. Is it what's broken, or just pointing at it? And yes, it's OK to cold boot the system to be sure.



*Copyright © 2022 Science Translations, All rights reserved.*

You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website or by discussion with me.

**For computer help, call 410-871-2877**  
**Missed a newsletter? [Back Issues](#)**