Fix your Mac

Problems & Solutions Guide
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Slow or Crashing Mac Problems

Why is my iMac (MacBook Pro, MacBook Air) so slow?

The dreaded OS X spinning beach ball or rainbow wheel

Top Ten Reasons why your Mac is slowing down or freezing:

1. Mechanical hard disk – The latest versions of OS X do not play well with mechanical hard disks resulting in chronic slowness and lots of "spinning beach balls".

2. Cluttered desktop – While you might get away with a messy desktop in Windows, OS X is OCD about having an uncluttered desktop. Large folders stored on your desktop can really slow down your Mac.

3. Runaway Processes – Some applications can use up more CPU and RAM than they are assigned. This can result in your Mac drastically slows down.

4. Siri – Unfortunately, the futuristic voice control software from Apple can cause performance issues on some versions of OS X. If in doubt, disable it.

5. Low RAM – When you first bought your Apple Mac, the amount of pre-installed RAM was probably sufficient, but with today's RAM intensive systems – running your MAC with insufficient RAM can result in your Mac becoming breathless performing even the most basic tasks.

6. Too many Login items can slow down your Mac. These should be trimmed regularly.

7. Reboot required – Infrequently rebooting your Mac will cause system slowdowns.

8. Mind your AV – Some anti-virus applications for Mac can take an octopus-like hold over your operating system exerting a substantial performance overhead on your Mac. Choose and monitor your AV application carefully.

9. iCloud Drive – At heart Apple is a hardware company and It's never really perfected it's "hard drive in the sky" iCloud service. Unfortunately, the iCloud service running in the background of your OS can result in Mac slowdowns.

10. SMC and NVRAM – These hardware and software control features are needed to make your Mac run smoothly. However, sometimes they need to be re-set to fix quirky Mac performance problems.

This list is not exhaustive. There are many more advanced solutions which can be deployed to speed up or fix a slow Mac which go beyond the scope of this booklet!

I'm running Mavericks 10.9 on my 2013 iMac. Lately, it has been running very slow, so I tried to copy some important files from its hard disk but it keeps on freezing. A friend suggested that I run "Disk Utility" but this returns the error message "Disk Utility can't repair this disk?"

It sounds very much like your hard disk is failing. Repeated retries to read or copy from it might exacerbate the condition of your disk. The disk needs to be removed from your iMac by an experienced technician and the data professionally recovered.

I keep on getting the spinning beach ball on my MacBook Air. However, it only happens when I'm using Safari?

There are many possible reasons why your Mac is continually "beachballing" when using Safari. First of all, make sure that you're running the latest version of the browser. Make sure that you delete any extensions on Safari. When the browser is open, go to **Preferences > Extensions** and remove any unnecessary ones. Failing this, you should clear the Safari cache file by starting your Mac in Safe Mode by holding down the Shift Key. Then navigate to the following folder:

~/Library/Caches/com.apple.Safari/

And send content to the Trash folder. Then restart your Mac and try your Safari browser again.

Will upgrading (increasing) the RAM (memory) make my Apple Mac go faster?

In most cases increasing the RAM on your Mac will make your system go faster and run smoother. For example, an Apple Mac system with just 4GB of RAM on-board would benefit greatly from another 4GB. But RAM upgrades will not always make a slow Mac go faster. For example, if your OS X operating system is corrupt or your hard disk is reaching full capacity, a RAM upgrade will have minimal impact on system performance. Any underlying issues with your Apple Mac system must be resolved first before a RAM upgrade takes place. Likewise, if you have sufficient RAM installed in your system already (e.g. an iMac with 16GB RAM) and you're using your Mac for non-intensive tasks such as word processing and internet browsing, more RAM will make a barely perceptible difference. RAM upgrades follow the law of diminishing returns which means that after a certain level of RAM has been reached, the effects of adding more of it become less noticeable.

Using OS X 12.5 Sierra, Adobe Creative Cloud keeps on crashing on me. How do I stop this?

There could be many reasons why your Adobe Creative Cloud is crashing. However, for troubleshooting purposes, you should setup a new administrator account on your Mac and see if Adobe Creative Cloud runs more smoothly under a new account. This will indicate whether the problem resides with your operating system or with Adobe Creative Cloud.

When running Excel 2016 on my Mac (Sierra), it is always crashing?

There could be many reasons why Excel 2016 is crashing on your Mac. However, one possible solution is to turn off "Auto Proxy Discovery" or "Automatic Proxy Configuration". Go the **System Preferences > Network > Advanced >** click to clear the checkmark beside "**auto proxy discovery**" and "**automatic proxy configuration**".

Mac Not Booting
and other start-up Problems

When I turn on my MacBook, I get a white screen with a flashing question mark?

This is usually indicative of a failed hard disk drive. In a small number of cases, however, the cause can be attributed to a defective HDD-to-logic board cable.

My 2013 iMac, which I recently upgraded to OS X Sierra is slow and continually showing a spinning beach ball, how do I fix this?

Your 2013 iMac probably has a mechanical disk installed. Unfortunately, Sierra OS does not play well with mechanical hard disks. The best solution might be to install a new SSD drive to bring your iMac back to speed again and it should help eliminate your spinning beach ball problem.

Every time I start my MacBook Pro, even though the main volume control is set to low or mute the start-up chime is really loud?

This is usually caused by corrupt audio PLIST files.
Go to **/Library/Preferences** and delete the following audio PLIST files:

• com.apple.alf.plist
• com.apple.audio.DeviceSettings.plist
• com.apple.audio.SystemSettings.plist
• com.apple.iPod.plist
• com.apple.loginwindow.plist

My iMac crashed. When I turn it on, all I get is a white screen with the Apple logo, and a status bar that just freezes?

This is likely to be a failing hard disk or GPU chip.

Every time I start an iMac in our office, it automatically logs into the "administrator" account even though there are two other users?

You need to turn off the automatic login feature in OS X. Firstly, login into your Mac's administrator account. Then, go to **System Preferences > General Tab >** enter administrator password > check box beside "**Disable Automatic Login**". When you re-start the system, you will be presented with the option to login to the other accounts.

Internet and Wi-Fi Problems

My iMac keeps on disconnecting from Wi-Fi?

Top 10 reasons why your iMac is disconnecting from your Wi-Fi:

1. Wrong frequency – Apple devices tend to work best on the 5Ghz wireless networks. Configure your router or access point so that it runs at 5Ghz as opposed to 2.4GHz.

2. Corrupt Network Preference Files may cause intermittent wireless dropouts.

3. Sleep Mode – This energy saving mode of OS X is notorious for disconnecting wireless connections between your system and the network.

4. The default network settings of OS X can be incompatible with some routers or access points. Sometimes custom MTU and DNS settings need to be configured to prevent your Wi-Fi connection dropping.

5. Using older versions of iTunes software can cause wireless connection dropouts. Make sure your version is fully up-to-date.

6. SMC and NVRAM resets can sometimes fix quirky WLAN issues.

7. Bluetooth can interfere with some Mac wireless networks – try disabling it.

8. Make sure you're using the latest version of your operating system.

9. Apple's file sharing software AirDrop can sometimes cause Mac Wi-Fi issues. Fortunately, it can be disabled using Terminal.

10. Some iMacs shipped with faulty WLAN cards which overheat with usage causing intermittent wireless problems. In such cases, the only fix is a replacement wireless network card.

I've just bought a new Mac and need to access a Windows server at my workplace using a VPN connection? Is this even possible with a Mac?

Of course! Set-up your VPN, then install Microsoft Remote Desktop available from the App store. Once setup, you should be able to connect to the server in the same way as you would with a Windows system.

Using OS 10.12, all my browsers (Safari and Chrome) cannot connect to the internet. However, I can send and receive emails using Outlook just fine?

OS X keeps a cache of DNS queries. Sometimes this cache gets corrupted and needs to be reset. To refresh the cache, go to Terminal, and type "**sudo killall -HUP mDNSResponder**". Reboot your system and your internet connectivity should be restored.

Using the Safari browser, I cannot download attachments from my Gmail account?

When Safari is open. Go to **View > Reload with Plugins > Select** "**Turn off Silverlight**".

Apple Storage

What is the best SSD for my Mac?

Transitioning from a conventional mechanical hard disk to an SSD can make a world of difference to your Apple computing experience. SSD drives perform around ten times quicker than a conventional disk. On average, they draw less power than a conventional disk, meaning that your Mac's battery life will be greatly improved. And seeing that SSDs don't use any moving mechanical parts, they are less likely to fail from shock damage - very useful if you're a road warrior user. From our experience, models from Samsung, Toshiba and Kingston (HyperX) offer good performance and reliability.

What is the best external hard drive for Mac?

There is no "best" external hard disk for Mac. Every hard disk is liable to fail at some stage. Every hard disk manufacturer has released models which have failed prematurely. But from our own experience, external hard disks from G-Tech (HGST) and Toshiba have slightly lower-than-average failure rates.

I keep on getting the message "Your start-up disk is almost full. You need to make more space available on your start-up disk by deleting files" on my MacBook Air. How do fix this?

This message is basically telling you that you're running out of hard disk space. This is a common problem with MacBooks especially those using 128GB or 256GB solid state drives. Your best option might be to transfer folders or files which you do not access frequently to another medium or delete those which are no longer required. Typically, movie files such as MPEG, picture files (JPEG), graphics files (such as PSD) and application files take up the most space on a Mac's hard disk. Another option of course is to upgrade to a higher capacity disk.

I bought a new WD My Passport external hard disk. However, it's not recognised by my MacBook Pro.

Most WD external hard drives come pre-formatted with NTFS; the file system used by Windows. You need to format your disk with HFS+; the file system used by Apple.

I have a Seagate External hard drive which keeps on disconnecting from my Mac?

This is a recognised issue with Seagate external hard disks. Thankfully, Seagate released a firmware fix for this issue which is available to download from their website. It is strongly advisable to perform a complete disk backup before executing this procedure.

My WD My Book external hard drive which was connected to my MacBook crashed. There are photos stored on it which are really important to me. Can you recover them?

In most cases, yes! We have a lot of experience recovering data from WD hard disks. We offer a full repair service for hard disks which have experienced logical failure (e.g. HFS+ partition problems), firmware failure and hardware failure (e.g. head disk assembly).

Who makes the best Thunderbolt drives for Mac?

G-Tech (HGST) offer a good selection of Thunderbolt disks (RAID 0-5) with good performance and build quality.

Will Time Machine backup my Parallels partition which stores Windows?

Yes, Time Machine will back-up all your files including any virtual machines.

My Time Machine disk is getting full?

Time Machine is designed to automatically remove very old incremental files when it runs out of space. You can set your Time Machine software to warn you when backups have been deleted by going to Time Machine preferences and enabling the "Notify after old backups are deleted" notification feature. Better still, configure Time Machine to use a second hard disk. It's always worth having two TM backup disks instead of relying on just one.

I'm using iCloud on my iPhone to sync photos, but currently the photos are taking up a lot of space. Can I just delete them from my iPhone altogether?

If you delete them from your iPhone, they will be also deleted from your iCloud account. If you need to back-up your photos, you can sync your iPhone with iTunes and back them up to your computer.

OS X Crashing, Rebooting and Shutdown Issues

My 2011 iMac is randomly rebooting. How do I fix this?

An iMac continually rebooting could be symptomatic of several issues. Your system could have defective RAM, it could be overheating or your GPU chip could be failing (which is a very common problem on 2011 iMacs). An experienced Mac technician should be able to determine the root cause.

My MacBook keeps on shutting down unexpectedly?

This could be caused by a myriad of factors such as logicboard issues, the GPU, RAM, hard disk or corrupt OS X system files. An experienced Apple technician should be able to pin-point the problem for you.

My MacBook will not boot. The progress bar goes about half way across the screen and then stops?

There are many possible causes for this problem. Firstly, you should perform an Apple Hardware Test to see if that reveals anything. If not, boot your system up whilst pressing **CMD+R**. This should open up Disk Utility. From here, select Verify Permissions followed by Repair Permissions. Then select "**Verify Disk**" followed by "**Repair Disk**". Then reboot. If that proves unsuccessful, try an SMC or NVRAM reset.

Security for Mac

What is the best anti-virus software for Mac?

Relative to the competition, Sophos Home for Mac performs quite well. However, anti-virus software alone is not enough to protect your data or system. There are thousands of virus and malware variants floating around in cyberspace, specifically designed to attack OS X. While this was not always the case, usage of Apple's operating system has now reached critical mass for hackers to take an interest in exploiting it.

Some of these nasties are undetectable to even the most sophisticated anti-virus software. For this reason, you need to adopt a more layered approach to security. Your browser, operating system and applications should be kept up-to-date. But ultimately the best anti-virus scanner is you. Operate extreme prudence when visiting untrusted websites, when opening email attachments and URLs sent via email.

How do I best protect against ransomware attacks on my Mac?

There is no foolproof way to protect from ransomware attacks. However, there are some precautions you can follow which include:

- Having multiple backups on different mediums e.g. hard disk, online storage or DVD.
- Having an "air gap" between your network and your backups.
- Making sure your operating system is up-to-date.
- Keeping all your OS X applications up-to-date.
- Exercising extreme caution when opening up URLs and email attachments.
- Be wary of any out-of-the-blue telephone callers purporting to be from Apple who want to "help you" with your Mac problems.

My MacBook Pro running El Capitan keeps on joining a neighbour's unsecured wireless network. How do I stop this?

Go to System **Preferences > Network > Wi-Fi** and make sure the option "Ask to join networks" is checked.

OS X Internet Problems

Every time I try to open up a website such as Google, I get the error message "Safari can't verify the identity of the website www.google.ie" How do I fix this?

This could be because your Mac's time and data settings or incorrect or because your security software is blocking access to HTTP sites. Check the time and date settings on your Mac or temporarily disable any security software on your system.

Mac Hardware Problems

I bought a new battery for my 2016 MacBook Pro but it holds a charge very erratically. For example, when browsing the internet, it will discharge normally, but sometimes for no apparent reason, it will suddenly display the "dead battery" symbol?

The battery could be defective. But before you return it, try performing an SMC reset. Connect the power adapter to the Mac. On the MacBook's keyboard, hold down the **Shift+Control+Option** keys and the **power button** simultaneously. Bootup your Mac. Then release all keys and the power button at the same time – the little light on the MagSafe adapter may change colours briefly to indicate the SMC has reset.

All my iMac desktop icons on my iMac have disappeared?

There are a number of possible reasons why your Mac's desktop icons have disappeared. You might have signed into the wrong account or you have disabled iCloud on your iMac, which has caused the icons to disappear. Try logging into a different account or re-enabling iCloud.

I cannot empty the Trash on my MacBook running Sierra 10.12.4?

Sometimes when the Trash won't empty using normal GUI commands you need to execute the following Terminal command: "**sudo rm -rf ~/.Trash./**". Once completed, reboot your system and your Thrash should empty normally.

Mac Printing Problems

My Canon AirPrint printer keeps on disappearing from the network?

Make sure that you're using an up-to-date Canon driver. If the problem persists, find out the IP address of your printer and assign it an "IP reservation" in your router's DHCP reservation table. This should help "lock" your printer onto your network without it continually disconnecting.

iCloud and iTunes Problems

I need to sync folders from my MacBook Air onto my iMac, how can I do this without resorting to the "Cloud"?

A great utility to sync files between two Mac systems is Chronosync. It is fast, reliable and has a great incremental scanning feature which means that only modified files get synchronised instead of the whole volume.

My family is using Family Sharing for iTunes. However, one family member cannot join as she keeps on getting the message "Sorry the email address you are trying to verify is not associated with the Apple ID information provided". How do I fix this?

If you're the administrator for Family Sharing, remove the user's ID. Then re-add the ID in the Family Sharing settings and then re-invite the user which should resolve the problem.

My iPad needs an update, but it keeps displaying my old Apple ID and does not present any option to change it. The email address associated with this ID does not even exist anymore. How do I fix this?

The solution is relatively simple. Create a new Apple ID. Then, using your iPad, go to **Settings > General > reset > reset all settings**. This does not delete any data. Restart your iPad. You should now be able to delete your old Apple ID and re-input your new one along with your new password. This should allow you to update your iPad.

My family is using Family Sharing for iTunes. However, one family member cannot join as she keeps on getting the message "Sorry the email address you are trying to verify is not associated with the Apple ID information provided". How do I fix this?

If you're the administrator for Family Sharing, remove the user's ID. Then re-add the ID in the Family Sharing settings and then re-invite the user which should resolve the problem.

On my iPad I keep on getting prompted for the wrong Apple ID? How do I fix this?

Go to **Settings > iCloud >** and sign out. Then reboot your iPad and re-insert your existing Apple ID.

Microsoft Office on a Mac

Every time I use Microsoft Word on my Mac I get the error message "Microsoft Word has encountered a problem and needs to close"

First of all, delete your Microsoft Word for Mac Preference files. These can be located at **User > Library > Preferences > com.microsoft.Word.plist**. Then reboot your system. If this proves unfruitful, try deleting the **Normal.dotm** template file. This can be found by going to **Go > Home > Library > Application Support > Microsoft > Office > User Templates**.

How do I set up my MacBook and iPad so that I can finish off tasks started on my MacBook on my iPad?

This feature is called Handoff. To use it, you must first sign into each device using the same Apple ID. Each device should have Bluetooth turned on and be connected to Wi-Fi. You must then ensure that Handoff is enabled on each device. Go to **System Preferences > General >** click "Allow Handoff between this Mac and your iCloud devices". On your iPhone or iPad, go to **Settings > General > Handoff > turn on Handoff**.

Mac Email Problems
(Gmail, Outlook for Mac, etc.)

I'm trying to add my Gmail account to Mac Mail but keep on getting the message "Mail can't connect to the account Gmail"

When Mac Mail is open go to **Preferences > Accounts > Account Information > Edit SMTP** and make sure that your username is using **@gmail.com** as a stem. Sometimes entering your Gmail username in Mac Mail without the @gmail stem results in syncing difficulties.

I've just setup my Gmail account in Outlook 2016, I think all the settings are correct. However, I still cannot send or receive any emails?

First of all, make sure that your Gmail is configured correctly sync with Outlook. Then double-check all mail server and authentication settings in Outlook.

For manual set-up, your settings should include:

- **pop.gmail.com**
- **smtp.gmail.com**
- screen name box = use full email address

Under "**more settings**" use:

- Tab-outgoing server, put a check in the top box.
- Tab-Advanced, incoming: **995** and check SSL.
- Outgoing, select SSL, then type **465**.

When I try to send email using Gmail I get the message "Cannot send message using the server Gmail" and some of my email accounts will appear as "offline"?

Check that all password boxes are filled correctly for IMAP and SMTP. Secondly, check that your Gmail account settings are correct. Typically, Gmail account settings are:

*   server name: smtp.gmail.com
*   Port: 587
*   SSL: checked

Windows on a Mac

I'm trying to boot my MacMini with OS X and Windows 10 using BootCamp. However, it takes well over 15 minutes for OS X (Mountain Lion) to complete the boot process?

Peripheral devices such as keyboards, mice and printers can slow down the boot-up process when BootCamp is used as a boot manager. Disconnect all peripheral devices and re-boot. If this does not solve your problem, consider using a different bootloader such as Clover EFI. Alternatively, using an application like Parallels, you could just setup a virtual Windows machine in your OS X operating system.

I'm using Parallels on my Mac, but when I attempt to open Windows 10, it appears frozen?

To restart Windows within Parallels, go to **Actions > Reset**.

General Apple Annoyances

I'm running Sierra 10.12 on my MacBook Air. However, when I use Spotlight no applications can be found?

Go to **System Preferences > Spotlight > Privacy >** remove your hard disk from the list by clicking on the minus symbol. Spotlight will now re-index your files, but please be patient as this process can take anywhere between 2 to 10 hours to successfully complete.

My iPhone keeps on disconnecting from my MacBook during charging.

This could be a cable issue especially if the cable is from a third-party. Otherwise, performing an SMC and NVRAM reset will sometimes resolve this problem.

My Dock keeps on disappearing from my Mac's desktop, how do I stop this?

Go to S**ystem Preferences > Dock >** Uncheck the box beside "Automatically hide and show the dock". This should stop your Dock from disappearing.

How do I use my iPad as a second display with my MacBook Air?

You can download an app like Duet onto your MacBook. Then connect your iPad with your MacBook using a Lightening cable. Once setup, your MacBook's screen is extended onto your iPad giving you some extra screen real estate.

Can you recommend a good accounts package for Mac?

Every business will have different requirements from their accounting software. The best way to discover what best suits your business is to trial some accounting applications. We strongly recommend that you look into applications such as Xero, Kashflow and FreeAgent. These applications have been on the market for a number of years and are trusted by thousands of SME's. Because they are cloud-based, they allow accounts processing to be securely performed from almost any computer, making your workflow quicker and more flexible.

I'm trying to update the operating system on my MacBook, but keep on receiving the error message "an error occurred while preparing the installation". How do I fix this?

This error can normally be fixed by changing the date on your system. Go to **Utilities > Terminal**. Then type in "**date**" followed by the correct date in the format mmddHHMMyyyy (mm = two digit month, dd = two digit day, HH = 24 hour, MM = minute, yyyy = 4 digit year). For example, if the time and date is 11:45am on the 15th of August 2017 the Terminal command would be "**date 081511452017**". Once the date has been refreshed, it should clear the error message.

I would like to connect my MacBook to a monitor. How is this done?

You can connect your MacBook to most external monitors using a special display adaptor. For example, if you're using an older monitor, a USB-C VGA Multiport adaptor should work. Use a USB-C Digital AV Multiport Adaptor to connect to an HDMI port (for newer monitors with an HDMI port).

I used to receive text messages on my MacBook, but can no longer receive them?

On your iPhone, go to **Settings > Messages > Text Message Forwarding** and make sure that it is enabled.

How do I transfer photos from my iPad to my MacBook Air?

The quickest and simplest way to transfer photos from your iPad to your MacBook Air would be to use AirDrop. To initiate this feature, make sure that AirDrop is enabled on both devices. Then select the photos you would like to transfer. Tap on "**Share**", tap on your own name and the device which you would like to share to.

Contact Us
It's Good to Talk

We hope that you have found this edition of our Essential Technology Guide useful. Whilst we have tried to cover as many topics as possible, it presents only a tiny snapshot of what Computer Ambulance does.

If you would like further information on a specific I.T. related issue and need a solution, or you simply just need a computer fixed - **call us on 01-685 4838**. We're here to help (and our phones are answered by real humans).

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