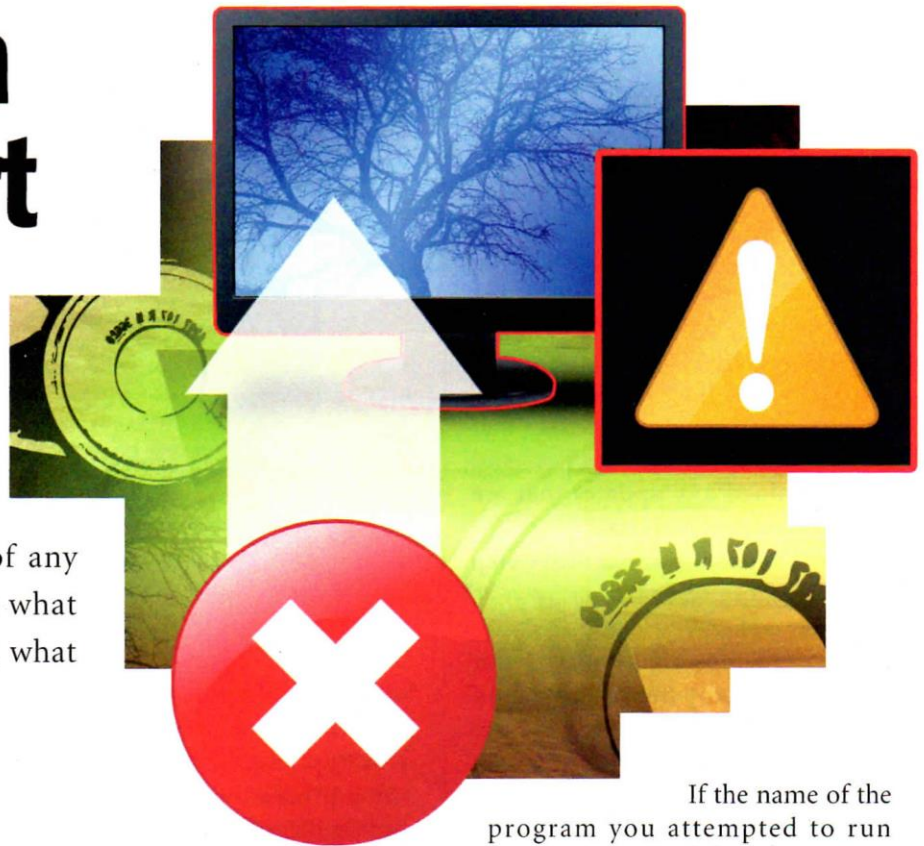


WHAT TO DO WHEN . . .

# A Program Won't Start

Every computer user dreads the moment when a quick double-click on a program's icon yields no response. The application ran smoothly the day before, and you aren't aware of any changes made to the computer. So what could be wrong? More importantly, what do you have to do to fix it?



## What's Happening?

Many factors can keep a program from starting. Most often, a program won't open because it's missing a file that is necessary for it to start up or one of the files has been corrupted. This will usually be accompanied by some type of error message. Another possibility is a lack of system memory. In this case, clicking the program's icon may appear to do nothing, but it could simply be loading slowly due to insufficient memory. Whatever the case may be, you simply want your programs to start up without a hitch. All you need is some troubleshooting advice.

**Step 1: Reclick it.** It may seem like common sense, but it's possible that the computer was busy completing another task and didn't recognize the first time you tried to open the program. Reclick the application's icon when your computer is not devoted to any other task. This will ensure that your computer is responding only to the current action and not something else running in the background.

**Step 2: Check the Taskbar.** Sometimes, programs will open in minimized mode, meaning the program won't appear on-screen but will have a tab in the Taskbar. The Taskbar is found at the bottom of your screen and contains the Start menu, as well as a tab for each application that is currently open. Check to be sure the program didn't minimize itself to the Taskbar. If you find a tab with the program's name and logo, click it to return to maximized (full-screen) mode or right-click the tab and choose Maximize.

**Step 3: Check the Task Manager.** You can use the Task Manager to determine whether the program initialized or failed to run completely. In Windows XP, press CTRL-ALT-DELETE and select Task Manager. The Applications tab will list every program currently running.

If the name of the program you attempted to run is listed, it may be labeled as "Not Responding," which means that the program initialized but did not fully run. You can force the program to quit by selecting the program and choosing End Task. After the program is closed, try reopening it a second time.

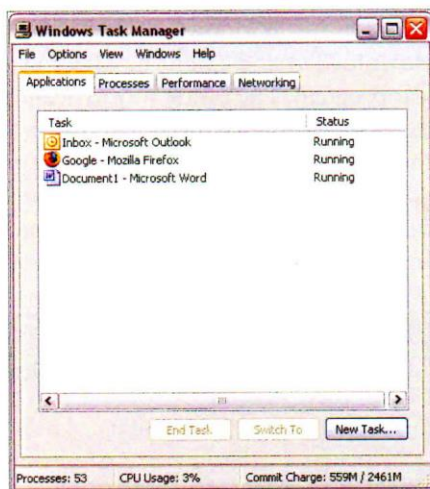
If the program still doesn't open, a useful step would be to check for Windows Updates that have been downloaded and might be affecting your particular program. The easiest way to determine if a single update is affecting your program is to open the Add Or Remove Programs utility and make a list of the most recent Windows Updates. In WinXP, click Start and choose Control Panel. Double-click Add Or Remove Programs and wait while the list of currently installed programs loads. Select the Show Updates checkbox. The latest Windows Updates will be listed in the programs list under Windows XP – Software Updates. Make note of the updates that occurred around the time your program no longer opened. Search [www.microsoft.com/support](http://www.microsoft.com/support) to find potential information about software incompatibilities. You may find that one of the updates is incompatible with your program, or that your program is incompatible with your OS (operating system), which occurs frequently

when users upgrade from WinXP to Vista. If you find that an update is incompatible with your program, simply click the update in the Add Or Remove Programs list and choose Remove.

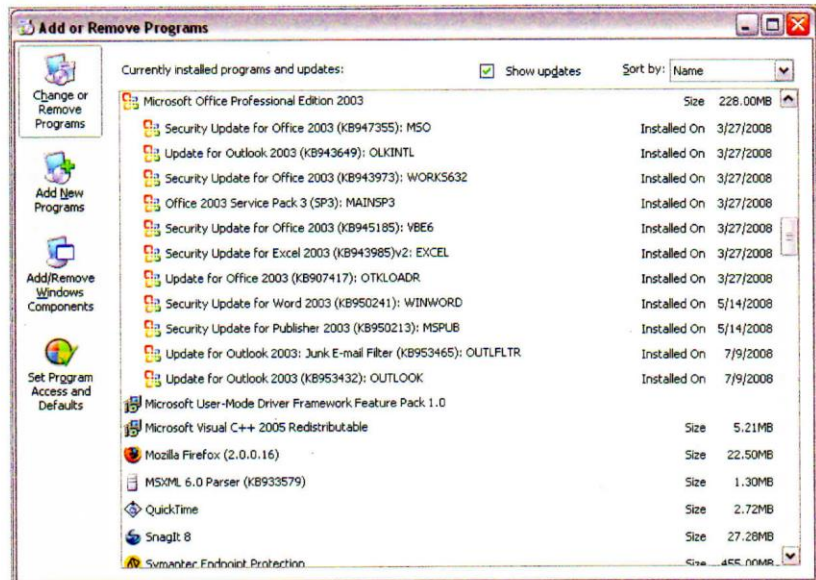
If the name of your program doesn't appear in the Task Manager list, the next step is to check for updates specific to your program. Methods for this will vary depending on your program, but in most cases visiting the manufacturer's Web site and searching its support and/or updates pages should lend you suggestions on how to troubleshoot. Search for the error that is occurring for further advice, and also download any updates that are available for your program.

**Step 4: Reboot.** A fundamental step to troubleshooting is rebooting your computer. When you reboot, you are reloading the operating system, your files, and the computer's applications. Hopefully, as the computer situates itself, whatever was out of place, such as a missing file, will be aligned for the program to start properly.

**Step 5: Uninstall and reinstall.** Sometimes, rebooting your computer isn't enough to put a program back into place. The next step is to uninstall the program and then reinstall it.



Along with system information, the Windows Task Manager tells you which programs are running on your computer, making it easy for you to see whether your program started or won't start at all.



The Add Or Remove Programs utility in Windows XP allows you to make changes to the programs currently installed on your computer.

Reinstalling a program will restore its Registry files and override any missing or corrupt files. To uninstall and reinstall a program in WinXP, open the Add Or Remove Programs utility.

In the center of the Add Or Remove Programs window is a list of all the programs installed on your computer. The file size for each item is shown to the right. The default view is alphabetical, but you can change how you browse programs by clicking Sort By in the upper-right corner.

Before you uninstall any program with the intent of reinstalling it, be sure that you have the original software disc or are aware of where to download the software. Once you've checked to make sure you will be able to reinstall, find the correct application on the list of currently installed programs and click it once. Information about the program will appear, such as how often it is used and the last date it was run. You are given the option to Change or Remove the program. Choose Remove. The uninstall process will take a few moments, and depending on the program, may ask you to verify or answer a question. Follow the on-screen directions until the uninstall process is complete.

To reinstall your program, locate the software disc or the executable file on your hard drive, or download the software from the manufacturer's Web site. For disc software, place the disc in the optical drive, and when prompted, follow the directions until the installation is complete. For software that is on your computer's hard drive or that you need to download, double-click the .EXE file to begin installation. Once installation is complete, the program should run without errors.

### Further Steps

If you find that none of the previous troubleshooting tips enables you to open your program, don't give up hope. You may want to explore the Windows System Restore tool, which allows you to "roll back" your computer to a point before there were difficulties. You should also try contacting the software manufacturer and inquiring about any known issues with the program. In most cases, your troubleshooting experience won't extend to these lengths. ■

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