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Microsoft Windows Locks Up, Hangs Unexpectedly or an Error Occurs



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Article Summary:

This article helps to resolve issues with a computer running Microsoft Windows becoming nonresponsive after the user has logged in.

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Step 1: Search for Error Codes

Windows may display an error code associated with the lockup or error. Use the text box below to enter the error code or message displayed and select from the options to search for your specific issue:

Search: [input field] [Dell] [Microsoft] [Google] [Bing]

Step 2: Run a Computer Diagnostic

To determine if your computer is experiencing a hardware problem, run the Dell Preboot System Assessment (PSA) Diagnostics. For information on how to run Diagnostics, and to determine the issue, refer to Dell Knowledge Base Article: Pre-Boot System Assessment (PSA) Diagnostics Error Codes

Step 3: Run Routine System Maintenance

Be sure to regularly run maintenance tasks on your computer to keep it at peak performance. Refer to Dell's Optimization and Maintenance of Microsoft Windows article for more information. Also, use the System File Checker to verify the system files and folders on your computer. To run System File Checker, click Start. For Windows XP click Run... and then type sfc /scannow in the box provided and press Enter. For Windows Vista and Windows 7. type sfc /scannow in the Start Search box

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in the Start menu and press **Enter**.

Step 4:	Update Drivers and BIOS
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In many cases lockups can be caused by outdated drivers or BIOS settings. Be sure to regularly update your drivers to take full advantage of your hardware and software.

Generally speaking, you should update your drivers and BIOS in the following order:

1. BIOS
2. Chipset Driver
3. Video Driver
4. Audio Driver
5. Network Driver
6. Other drivers

Try updating each of these drivers individually and then retest the system to see if the problem continues.

[Get the Latest Drivers for Your Dell Computer!](#)

Step 5:	Update Windows
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Be sure that your computer is running with the latest updates for Windows. Visit the [Windows Update](#) website to be sure your computer is fully updated.

Step 6:	Uninstall, Reinstall and Update Software
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If your computer is locking up or hanging while using a particular application, try uninstalling the application completely from the computer, then reinstall it and visit the software vendor's website to update the software to the latest version.

Step 7:	Look for Multiple Antivirus Programs
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The use of multiple anti-virus programs may cause your system to lockup. Anti-virus programs come pre-installed on most Dell Computers, so customers sometimes install other anti-virus programs without realizing that there is already a system installed. If you decide to install an alternate anti-virus software, it is important that you first uninstall any other anti-virus programs that may be running on your computer.

Choose only one anti-virus program and reinstall it. It is not recommended to have more than one anti-virus software package installed on your computer.

Multiple anti-spyware packages that do not have an AV component do not conflict and can remain on the computer.

Step 8:	Check for Malware
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Malware (Virus, Spyware, etc.) can definitely cause a Windows system to lock up or appear to hang. To check for malware on your system and to ensure that your computer is up to date on security software, visit Dell Knowledge Base Article, "[Protect Your Computer or Remove Malware in Microsoft Windows](#)"

Step 9: Use System Restore


Windows XP, Windows Vista and Windows 7 contain a feature known as System Restore to roll back changes to the computer based on "restore points" that are commonly scheduled by Windows. To access and use this feature, refer to the link below and select the System Restore option:
[How To Restore or Reinstall Microsoft® Windows® on a Dell™ Computer](#)

Step 10: Run a Full Computer Diagnostic


You should run a thorough scan of the computer to verify that the hardware is fully functional and has not failed. To run the Dell 32-bit Diagnostics, refer to Dell Knowledge Base Article:
[How to Run the Dell™ Diagnostics Utility](#)

Step 11: Reinstall Microsoft Windows

If you are still experiencing lockups in Windows, and the troubleshooting steps above have not resolved the problem, there is likely an underlying issue with the operating system. To restore Microsoft Windows to the original factory configuration, refer to Dell Knowledge Base Article:
[How To Restore or Reinstall Microsoft® Windows® on a Dell™ Computer](#)

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