

Quickly Fix the Most Common Errors in Microsoft Word

With the information in this article you can:

- Recover information from corrupt Word documents
- Know exactly what to do when Word stops working
- Repair corrupt registry entries that cause Word to crash

Microsoft Word is the world's most commonly used word processor and is designed to be easy-to-use, but it has so many features and abilities that users are bound to run into trouble at some point. Whether you can't open a file, are having difficulties with templates, or keep receiving error messages, the following tips should help solve the majority of Word's most common problems. Over the course of this article we'll be taking a look at some common errors that often occur within the MS Word environment, and if you've used Word regularly then doubtless you'll have been troubled by them at some time. While most can be solved fairly easily with the right know-how, others will require a more complex solution.

Dave Harris:

"Despite its workaday nature, Microsoft Word is an incredibly complex application. Like any complex tool, machine or software, Word is prone to errors. The information in this article will help you overcome the most common errors suffered by Microsoft Word users."

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Solve error messages caused by corrupt paragraph markers.

Fix Faulty Documents that Cause Word to Crash

Sometimes, when you try to re-open an MS Word document the following error message will appear:

The document caused a serious error the last time it was opened. Would you like to continue opening it?

This usually appears after the second time you try to open a document that causes Word to crash. Word will mark the file as a problem and place the file on a list of disabled files. Further attempts to open the problem file will result in this message every time you try to open it until you correct the problem. You can click Yes in order to try to open the document and correct the problem in Word, but it is possible that this will cause Word to crash again.

Find and remove corrupt paragraph markers.

If Word opens properly with a blank document and your other documents do not experience these errors, you may have a corrupted paragraph marker in your document. Documents in Word store their paragraph formatting in the paragraph marker at the end of each paragraph and the formatting for the whole document in the final paragraph marker of the document. You can see the paragraph markers by clicking the paragraph icon on your toolbar.

Look for a paragraph that has strange formatting or fonts; remove the marker from the end of that paragraph, and save the file. If one paragraph does not stand out, try removing the final paragraph marker from the document. Once you think you have resolved the original problem, you can remove the document from the disabled files list and try restarting. Find your disabled files by following the steps below:

1. Open MS Word, and click **Help > About Microsoft Office**.
2. When the About Microsoft Word dialogue appears,



Remove documents from the disabled items list.

click on the button marked **Disabled Items**.

3. When the Disabled Item dialogue box appears, select the relevant file by left-clicking on it, then click the button marked **Enable** to remove it from the list.

Solve Errors Caused by Page Margin Settings

Sometimes when you try to print a document, the following error message will appear:

```
The margins of section 'n' are set
outside the printable area of the page.
Do you want to continue?
```

This occurs when parts of your document have wider than normal margins and will manifest itself shortly after you have sent the document to print. While it's not the most serious error, this can be very inconvenient when a document is needed urgently. To solve it, you must reset the document's margins. First make a note of the section number that appears in place of 'n' in the example above, then follow the steps below:

1. Click **Edit > Go To... > Section** and enter the relevant section number into the Section Number field (the 'n' in the above error message). Then click the button marked **Go To...**
2. Close the **Go To...** dialogue box and click **File > Page Setup**. Click the tab marked **Margins**, then click the box marked **OK**.
3. A dialogue box will appear displaying the message: **One or more margins are set outside the printable area of the page. Choose the Fix button to have Word set the page margins within the appropriate range.**
4. Click the **Fix** button to increase the margin in the unprintable area to the minimum setting for the selection.

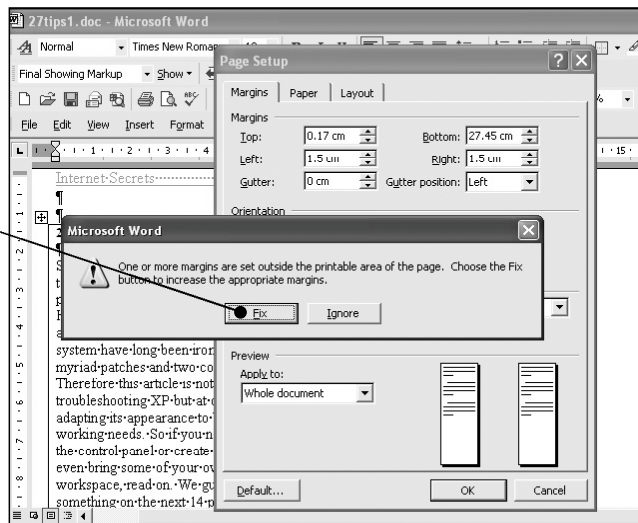


Reset page margins
and avoid
printer errors.



Fix errors caused
by page margins.

Click Fix to repair the margin problem.



Solve margin problems in Word

Alternatively, if you just choose to print the document as it is, you'll probably find that parts of the document will be cut off.



Solve problems caused by MS Word's global template.

Repair a Corrupt NORMAL.DOT File

Sometimes when opening or saving a Word document, the following error message will appear:

Your Normal.dot template is corrupt or otherwise damaged and you need to replace it.

NORMAL.DOT is the global template that stores the majority of your formatting settings and application-wide macros for MS Word. Template files use a file format that is different from a regular document file's format. If the NORMAL.DOT template gets stored as a Word document (that is, as a .DOC file), you will get a fatal error with this error message and, if you are using Word 2003, the usual prompt to report the error to Microsoft. After you receive the error above, follow these steps to rectify the problem:


Word 2003

1. After you choose **Send Error Report** or **Don't Send** from the error message, you'll see an additional message.
2. Select **Yes** to delete the incorrect **NORMAL.DOT** file and replace it with a new one that has the standard format defaults. You will lose all of your customised settings and will need to recreate them.



Create a new global template in Word 2003.

Versions prior to Word 2003

1. Close all Office programs and open the Windows Search tool by pressing  + **F**. Windows XP users also have to click **All files and folders**.
2. In the search box type: **Normal.dot** and press **Enter**.
3. When the search is complete, right-click the file's name or icon in the right pane, click **Rename**, and rename it **Normal.bak**
4. If there are multiple **NORMAL.DOT** files, rename all of them. Restart Word and a fresh copy of **Normal.dot** should appear automatically.



Create a new global template in older versions of Word.

Troubleshoot Common Fatal Error Messages

If you are a Word 2003 user, then you may occasionally come across the following error message from time to time:

Microsoft Word 2003 has encountered a problem and needs to close. We are sorry for the inconvenience. Please tell Microsoft about this problem.

We have created an error report that you can send to help us improve Microsoft Word 2003. We will treat this report as confidential and anonymous. To see what this error report contains, [click here](#).



How to solve fatal errors in Word.

Error signatures provide details of errors in Word.

This type of error dialogue box includes a link that allows you to view the details of the error, called the error signature. This seemingly incomprehensible string of letters and figures can provide clues to the cause of the problem and this next section will offer some explanations of the most common. Unfortunately, users of older versions of Word do not have this error dialogue to help them diagnose problems. Note that in all of these cases, you will have already seen the fatal error message and then clicked the link that reads **To see what this error report contains, click here** to view the detailed signature.

Word 2003 and Windows Compatibility Mode

Fix error messages caused by Windows XP's Compatibility Mode.

This error normally occurs when Word 2003 is running in Windows Me/98 Compatibility Mode on Windows XP:

```
Application Name: Winword.exe. Application
Version: 11.0.5604.0. Module Name:
Mso.dll. Module Version: 11.0.5606.0.
Offset: 00059890
```

Windows XP's Windows Compatibility Mode feature allows you to run applications created for earlier versions of Windows on Windows XP. If you have enabled this feature and you're working with a document created in an earlier version of Word, you may see this error signature after receiving the initial fatal error message. Word 2003 will work perfectly with documents created in earlier versions of Word; there's no need to invoke Windows' Compatibility Mode feature. Turn off the feature by taking the following steps:



Stop Word 2003 running in Compatibility Mode.

1. Click **Start > Search** and then select **Files or Folders**.
2. When the search dialogue box opens, type: **winword.exe** in the **Search For...** field and press **Enter**.
3. Once the search is complete, you should see an icon and file listing for the Winword application. Right-click the Winword icon and select **Properties**.

4. Select the **Compatibility** tab at the top of the Properties dialogue box. Click to clear the tick next to the **Run This Program in Compatibility Mode For** box, and then click **OK**.

Object Linking and Embedding problems

Object Linking and Embedding (OLE) is the process of creating a document in one application and embedding it in another. It is different from cutting and pasting because the embedded object uses the original program from within the host program, in this case MS Word. If you receive the following error signature, then OLE might be the cause.

```
Application Name: Winword.exe. Application
Version: 11.0.5604.0. Module Name:
Winword.exe. Module Version: 11.0.5604.0.
Offset: 003606fc
```

You may see this fatal error message when saving or printing a document or when trying to exit Word 2003 if you have OLE objects embedded in your Word document. Microsoft has issued a Service Pack update to Word 2003 that fixes this problem. You will find a link to download Word 2003 Service Pack 2 on the CD that accompanies this update.

However, if you just want a temporary fix for the problem, you can disable the Background Save feature in Word 2003 and continue to save Word documents with OLE objects embedded in them. Background saving is the process that allows you to keep working on a document while it is being saved to your hard drive. To disable this feature, follow the steps below:

1. Open Word 2003, and select the **Tools > Options > Save**.
2. Remove the tick from the **Allow Background Saves** box. Click **OK** to close the dialogue box and you'll be able to save OLE objects in your Word 2003 document.

Solve fatal error messages caused by OLE.



Disable the background save and fix problems caused by OLE.

How to solve conflicts with MS Word and DirectX.

Faults with MS Word and DirectX

If you're using MS Word 2003 with a graphics heavy application running in the background then the following error signature may occur:

```
Application Name: Winword.exe. Application
Version: 11.0.5604.0. Module Name:
Gdiplus.dll. Module Version: 6.0.3260.0.
Offset: 00082f1d
```

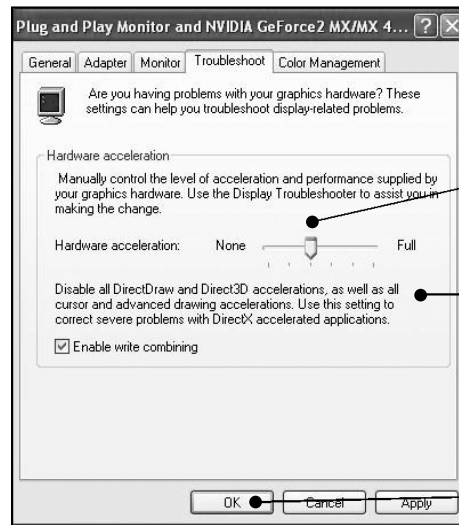
This is especially likely if you are using an application with a heavy reliance on graphics enhancements, like DirectX. DirectX is an application developed by Microsoft, and is designed to enhance audio, video, and 3D applications. Other manufacturers also use the DirectX components to enhance the multimedia aspects of their products. The error message above indicates a resource conflict with DirectX.

The simplest solution to this problem is to close the graphics-intensive application when you are using Word, but another solution is to turn off the graphics hardware acceleration on your machine. To do this, follow the steps below:



Disable hardware acceleration to prevent DirectX conflicting with Word.

1. Click **Start > Control Panel**. In Windows XP, ensure the Control Panel is in Classic Mode and click the icon marked **Display**.
2. When the Display Properties dialogue appears choose the **Settings** tab. Then click the button marked **Advanced**.
3. You will see a sliding adjustment for **Hardware Acceleration**. Move the slider to the third position from the left and the message pictured below will appear.
4. Click the button marked **OK** to complete the adjustment and then click **OK** on the Display Properties dialogue box to close it.



Move the slider to this position ...

... until this message is displayed.

Click OK to finish.

Fix problems caused by graphics acceleration

Steps to Take when a Document won't Open

Sometimes a Word document won't open even though it was created in the same version of Word or uses a file format that Word recognises. This can indicate that the file may be damaged or corrupt. You can use the following workaround to save damaged or corrupt files in MS Word:

1. Create a new MS Word document by clicking **File > New > Blank Document > OK**.
2. When the new document opens, click **Insert > File** and select the corrupt or damaged file from the Insert File dialogue box. Then click the button marked **Insert**.
3. This will insert the text from the corrupt file into a new Word document.

While this method will often save your corrupt document you might well find that it removes all the formatting in the process. So you will have to spend a little time re-formatting your work which can be a little tiresome.

If this process doesn't work, or you are trying to recover a corrupted file that was saved in a format other than Word's



What to do when a document refuses to open.



Load text from a corrupt document into a new one.

If the document still won't open try using this method.

default .DOC format, Word 2003/2002/2000 users can try following the steps below. Note that you will also lose all graphics, charts and special formatting that your document contains.



1. Click **File > Open** and select the corrupted file.
2. Click the arrow next to **Files of Type** and select **Recover Text From Any File** from the drop-down menu.
3. Click **OK**. A special file converter launches and recovers all of the text from the file and loads it in a fresh uncorrupted file.



Edit the registry to fix spell checker problems.

Repair the Spell Checker when it will Not Run

The Spell Checker is possibly the best feature in Word and that's no mean feat in such a powerful and feature-packed application. However, many users have reported that they can't access the Spell Checker and it simply refuses to run. You won't receive an error message as such, but the Spell Checker will simply not start. If this happens to you then editing the registry will very often hold the solution. Before you edit the registry make sure you have created a registry backup using the steps given in article R6.

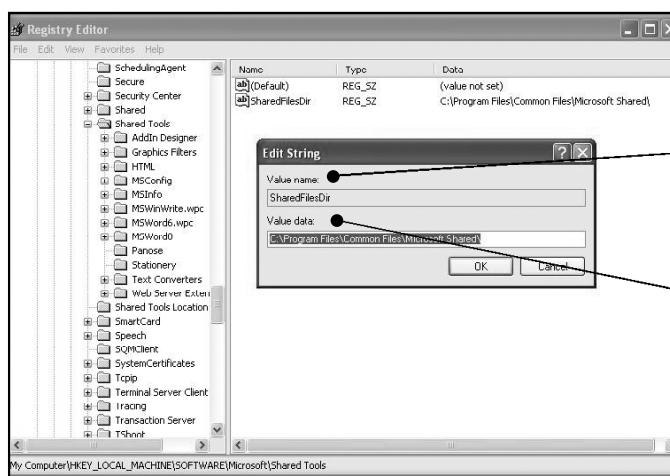
This problem is caused by the registry entries for Microsoft Word's proofing tool being either corrupt or incorrectly set-up. To edit your registry and correct this problem follow the steps below:



Repair registry entries for Word's proofing tools.

1. To open the Registry Editor, click **Start > Run** and type: **regedit** into the box. Then click **OK**.
2. When the Registry Editor opens, navigate to the following key:
HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Shared Tools

3. Double-click on the value `SharedFilesDir` and check that it has the value:
`C:\Program Files\Common Files\Microsoft Shared\`
4. Pay particular attention to the backslash at the end of this value and if it is missing make sure you add it.
5. Close the Registry Editor and re-boot your PC before launching MS Word.



Solving Word errors in the registry

Use the registry to solve other Word problems

Editing the registry can hold the key to many other Microsoft Word problems. So, should you suffer from any of the following problems, such as Missing Toolbars that don't appear after clicking **View > Toolbars** or Missing menus, editing the registry could well provide a solution. This is especially true if you have tried uninstalling and re-installing the software and have already followed our advice on troubleshooting the `NORMAL.DOT` template.

If these problems persist after re-installing Microsoft Office, then a bad registry key is probably to blame. This can often be solved by deleting the Word data key. Follow the steps below to do just that.

1. To open the Registry Editor, click **Start > Run**, and type: `regedit` into the box. Then click **OK**.

Editing the registry can help you fix various MS Word problems.



Delete the Word data key.

2. Navigate to the following key:
HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Office\
<version number>\Word\Data
3. Right-click the Data folder and select Delete.
4. Restart Windows and launch Word. Just like with the global template, Word will look for this Data key and recreate a fresh version if it can't find it.



Fix problems caused by the Startup folder.

Cure Problems with Word's Startup Folder

If Word refuses to start and you receive the following error message, then you have a problem related to your Word Startup folder:

Microsoft Word cannot install the necessary files due to Windows Installer Error 1605. This action is only valid for products that are currently installed.

The Startup folder is the location where Word stores templates containing add-ins and macros that you create. These templates start automatically when you start Word. To resolve the problem, you need to find out which template is the source of the problem and delete it from your Word Startup folder.

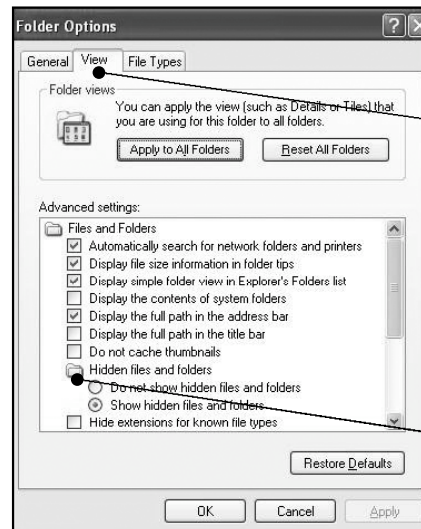
Finding the Startup folder

The Startup folder is a hidden folder, so first you need to make it visible by opening Windows Explorer and following the steps below:

1. Click Tools > Folder Options.
2. When the Folder Options dialogue box appears, click the View tab.
3. A list will appear, click the radio button next to the item Show hidden files and folders.
4. Click Apply > OK.



Configure Windows to show hidden files and folders.



Click the tab marked **View** to access the list of advanced settings.

Click here to reveal hidden system files and folders within the Windows environment.

Finding hidden Word files

Once you've done this, you need to navigate to the location of the Startup folder within MS Word. This will depend on your version of Windows, your version of Word and where you might have installed it. If you installed to default locations you'll find the Startup folder in the locations below:

- Windows XP/2000 users should look in C:\Windows\Documents And Settings\Owner\Application Data\Microsoft\Word\Startup (C:\WINNT in Windows 2000)
- Windows Me/98 users should look in C:\Windows\Application Data\Microsoft\Word\Startup

Find your MS Word Startup folder.

Once you've located the Startup folder, follow the procedure below to remove any templates that might be preventing Word from loading:

1. Make a new folder within the **Startup** folder by clicking **File > New > Folder**. Name the folder **Temp Startup**.
2. Select the first template listed in the Startup folder and drag and drop it into the Temp Startup folder.
3. Once the file is out of the Startup folder, try to start Word. If it starts, you have identified the culprit. If



Identify and delete problematic templates from the Startup folder.

Word doesn't start, repeat the process until you find the offending template file.

4. Once you have located the problem file, move all the other files back to Startup and delete the Temp Startup folder.



Fix problems with pictures and graphics.

If pictures appear as red Xs in your document follow these tips.

Repair Disappearing Pictures in Word Documents

Sometimes MS Word users may find that graphics and pictures inserted into MS Word are displayed as red Xs when the document is re-opened. This is often caused by saving the document when your computer is low on resources, be it RAM or hard drive space. Sometimes you can recover these graphics by right-clicking them and selecting **Edit** from the pop-up menu that appears. To reduce the chances of this happening, follow these tips:



- Have as few applications open as possible when working with lengthy/large documents.
- Disable the Fast Save option found under **Tools > Options > Save**.
- Save your document frequently, especially if editing graphics or Word drawing objects.
- If you notice Word starting to slow down, quit Word immediately and go back in, to free up resources.
- Delete your temporary files regularly, and always delete them immediately after a system crash or if Word crashes (see next section for details of deleting temporary files).



Solve Problems with Locked Word Documents

If you find that Word is opening your documents in read-only mode and that you are unable to edit them, you

should act on following the advice. When Word opens files as read-only, it is often an indication that some Windows locking files are not being released correctly. There are many things that can cause this, but it often happens shortly after a system crash and a good clean up of your system should solve the problem. Follow the steps below to remove any unwanted temporary files that might be lurking on your hard drive:

1. Close all applications and re-boot the computer.
2. Run the Disk Cleanup utility by clicking **Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Cleanup**.
3. Open Windows search utility by pressing  +  and search for *.tmp, *.do?, *.wbk. Delete any files that are found.
4. Re-boot the PC again.
5. Open the **Display Properties** dialogue by right-clicking on an empty area of the desktop, then left-click **Properties** in the pop-up menu that appears.
6. Click on the **Screensaver** tab. Set Screensaver to **none** and then click the **Power Button**. Deselect all power saving options.
7. On the desktop, right-click on the **Recycle Bin** and select **Empty Recycle Bin**.
8. If the problem still persists try running the Disk Defragmenter found at **Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Defragmenter** (**Start > Programs** in Windows 2000/Me/98).

If your files are locked for editing try this procedure.



Free up system resources to release locked MS Word documents.

Fix Faulty Page Numbering Problems

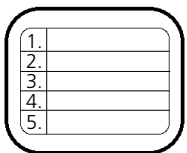
Sometimes, versions of Word older than Word 2000 will show the wrong page number when the Auto Text entry Page x of y is used. Since this information is very often inserted as headers or footers, the problem can at first seem a little



Fix page numbers in older versions of MS Word.

tricky to solve. You might think that you've specified the wrong header or footer options but the problem, in fact, lies with the NUMPAGES field. You need to update this field so that it will show the correct current page number and number of pages. It will also need to be updated whenever more pages are added to the document or when the document is closed and reopened. You can do this in any of the following ways:

- Switch document views from the View menu. It doesn't matter which view you choose and you can switch back immediately.
- Click **Print Preview** from the Standard Toolbar. Again, you can close Print Preview immediately and return to your document.
- Print your document. Word will recount the pages and send the correct number to the printer.



Microsoft Word is such a complex and capable piece of software that it's surprising it doesn't go wrong more often. When it does go wrong it can cause major headaches, especially if you have lost a long document that you have spent ages working on. During the course of this article we've taken a look at some of the more common errors that can occur while using Microsoft Word, and have provided some tips, techniques and advice and know-how as to their resolution.

Methods for correcting these errors range from the simple, such as restarting your computer, to the more complex, such as editing the Windows registry. We've all run into problems with Word from time to time, so next time it happens to you, look to this article to help you troubleshoot the problems you might be having.