

creativetechs



# My Mac Won't Start!

A Tiny Troubleshooting Guide

Co-created by CreativeTechs, Inc.  
and Forget Computers, Ltd.

# What's The Problem?

## Empty Blue or Grey Screen

Commonly caused by disk or permission problems, 3rd-party software problems, or occasional hardware issues.

**Recommend:** Proceed with Fixes 1-4.

## "No" Sign, Broken Folder, Flashing "?"

Indicates your Mac can't find or use the needed System. May indicate disk problems.

**Recommend:** Skip to Fixes 3 & 4.

## Black Screen, No Sound

Your problem may be caused by power issues, a dead logic board battery, bad RAM, or other hardware issues.

**Recommend:** Turn to "Still Need Help?"

## Fix 1: Start in Safe Mode

Startup Key: Shift

- 1 Hold down Shift while you turn on your Mac.
- 2 Release Shift when you see a gray Apple with a spinning gear.
- 3 Done properly, the words "Safe Boot" should appear during startup or in the login window.

**Tip:** Starting in Safe Mode takes longer than starting up normally because the system performs a directory check on the startup disk. Be patient.

- 4 To leave Safe Mode, restart the computer, without holding any keys during startup.

## Fix 2: Single-User Mode

Startup Key: Command (⌘) + S

- 1 Hold down Command-S while you turn on your Mac. You should see a black screen with white text. Don't panic.
- 2 At the prompt type: `fsck -fy`
- 3 Press return. If you receive the message "File System was Modified," repeat step 2 until it says "No problems were found."
- 3 Type `reboot` and hit return.

### An Alternative Solution: AppleJack

If you installed AppleJack (before your Mac has problems) the process is simpler:

- 1 Type: `applejack auto restart` and hit return.
- 2 Wait several minutes. Your Mac will restart when repairs are completed.

Available at [applejack.sourceforge.net](https://applejack.sourceforge.net)

## Fix 3: Start off Apple CD/DVD

Startup Key: C

- 1 Insert a Mac OS X Install disc.

**Tip:** Hold down the mouse button while you turn on your Mac to open the CD tray.

- 2 Hold down the C key while you turn on your Mac. Let go when the gray Apple appears.

- 3 **Mac OS X 10.2.x through 10.3.x:** Choose Installer > Open Disk Utility.

**Mac OS X 10.4.x:** Choose Utilities > Disk Utility.

- 4 Select your hard drive icon on the left and click Repair Disk in the First Aid tab.

- 5 When your disk reports no errors, click Repair Disk Permissions.

- 6 Reboot your Mac without holding any keys during startup.

**Tip:** In addition to Apple's tools, consider purchasing [Disk Warrior from alsoft.com](http://alsoft.com).

## Fix 4: Target Disk Mode

Startup Key: T

When other techniques don't work, Target Disk Mode lets you access your Mac's hard drive from another computer.

This lets you perform additional diagnostics, repairs, or backup important work files.

- 1 Hold down the T key while you turn on your Mac. Let go when you see a FireWire icon on the screen (shown here).



- 2 Connect the troubled Mac to a good Mac via a FireWire cable.
- 3 Open Disk Utility on the good Mac (located in Applications/Utilities).
- 4 Select the troubled Mac's disk icon on the left and click Repair Disk in the First Aid tab.
- 5 If possible, recover or backup important data files if the troubled Mac's drive is visible on the good Mac's desktop.

## Still Need Help?

If these quick troubleshooting steps don't fix the problem, it's time to look elsewhere:

- Your local Apple Store
- If under warranty, call AppleCare at 800-275-2273
- <http://apple.com/support>
- <http://macfixit.com>
- <http://www.thexlab.com>
- <http://fixa.troubledmac.com>
- <http://www.creativetechs.com/tips>

**If all else fails...** *bring in the big guns!*

Turn to [CreativeTechs](#) in Seattle or [Forget Computers](#) in Chicago for expert creative professional Macintosh consulting and support.

# About This Tiny Guide

*My Mac Won't Start!* was co-created by Mac support companies CreativeTechs, and Forget Computers. Print it out, fold it up, and keep it handy — before you need it!

## Your referrals wanted!

Both CreativeTechs and Forget Computers rely on word-of-mouth introductions. Know a Seattle or Chicago area creative team who needs great Mac support? Please introduce us. We are never too busy for your referrals.

### **CreativeTechs, Inc.**

206-682-4315 or [creativetechs.com](http://creativetechs.com)

*Left brain support for right brain professionals.*

### **Forget Computers, Ltd.**

312-602-5345 or [forgetcomputers.com](http://forgetcomputers.com)

*Forget Computers. Get Creative.*