Troubleshooting Your Mac

A Joe ON Tech Guide

THE CHEAT SHEET

In a Nutshell

Lots of things can go wrong with your Mac, but many of them aren't serious and can be solved with simple, do-it-yourself fixes. This cheat sheet includes just a tiny selection of techniques and fixes from the book *Troubleshooting Your Mac: A Joe On Tech Guide.*

Prevent Problems

Solving problems is good; keeping them from happening in the first place is even better!

- **Use a surge protector or UPS:** Power surges and brownouts can kill your Mac.
- **Back up your Mac:** Great backups let you recover from almost any problem more easily than you could otherwise. I suggest both versioned backups (like Time Machine) and a bootable clone (using Carbon Copy Cloner or similar).
- **Keep your software up to date:** The latest versions of both OS X and third-party apps contain key bug fixes.

Prepare for an Emergency

- **Get a third-party disk utility:** Disk Utility can't fix every disk problem. Alternatives like DiskWarrior are often better.
- **Set up another user account:** A second account lets you log in and check for problems in your main account.
- **Consider buying AppleCare:** This paid plan extends your Mac's warranty to 3 years.
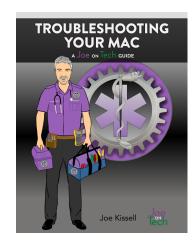
Key Techniques

You should know these basics:

- **Force-quit an app:** Press ⌘-Option-Esc, select the app, and click Force Quit.
- **Restart your Mac:** Choose → Restart. If that doesn't work, hold down power button for 10 seconds then press it again.
- **Use OS X Recovery:** Restart and hold down ⌘-R until the Apple logo appears. Click Disk Utility, select your disk, and click First Aid or Repair Disk.
- **Start up in safe mode:** Hold down Shift key while restarting until the Apple logo appears.
- **Reset SMC:** See [alt.cc/4b](alt.cc/4b) for instructions.
- **Use Activity Monitor:** Open `/Applications/Utilities/ Activity Monitor`, click CPU at the top, and sort by `% CPU` to see your busiest apps.
- **Check free disk space:** Select your startup volume in the Finder, press ⌘-I, and look next to "Available." It should be at least twice the amount of RAM you have installed.
- **Check your RAM:** Hold down D while booting your Mac to run Apple Hardware Test or Apple Diagnostics.

Quick Fixes

The following techniques solve many everyday problems.

- **Close extra windows, tabs, or apps.**
- **Restart:** A quick restart solves many common problems.
- **Unplug peripherals:** Faulty USB devices can interfere with startup and cause crashes.
- **Try Disk Utility:** Using First Aid or Repair Disk can fix many simple disk problems.
- **Perform a safe boot:** Safe mode temporarily disables potentially problematic items.
- **Boot from a clone:** Hold down Option while restarting and select the backup volume.

For many more quick fixes—plus ready-made solutions to 21 common problems and advice on solving novel problems—see *Troubleshooting Your Mac.*

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Read more at joeontech.net/books/troubleshooting-your-mac