

QUIVAL TECH · FREE GUIDE

10 Common PC Problems & How to Fix Them at Home

A free guide for homeowners, parents & small offices — from your local computer technician.

(805) 750-3255

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Serving Thousand Oaks & Conejo Valley, Ventura County

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10. My PC shuts down by itself

Every problem follows the same simple format: **Symptoms** → **Try this first** → ⚠ **Stop here if…** → **When to call a technician**. If a fix ever feels risky, skip it — that's what we're here for.

A note before you start

Hi — I'm the technician behind Quival Tech. I've spent 10+ years fixing computers in people's homes across Thousand Oaks and the Conejo Valley, and most of the problems I see are the same ones, over and over. The good news: many have simple, safe fixes you can do yourself in a few minutes.

Five ground rules for every fix in this guide:

- **Back up first.**
  If your computer still turns on, copy important files (photos, documents) to a USB drive or cloud storage before trying anything.
- **Never open the power supply.**
  That metal box where the power cord plugs in holds a charge even unplugged. It's the one part you should never open yourself.
- **Unplug before you clean.**
  Dusting vents or fans? Shut down fully and unplug first.
- **One change at a time.**
  Try a step, restart, and see what happens before moving on — so you know what actually fixed it.
- **It's okay to stop.**
  No prize for DIY. If anything feels risky or confusing, stop — that's exactly what we're here for.

PROBLEM 1

My PC is painfully slow

SYMPTOMS

Everything takes forever — starting up, opening programs, loading websites. It was fine when new but got slower over time.

Try this first

1. **Restart it (for real).** A full shutdown and restart — not just closing the laptop lid — clears temporary glitches. If you haven't restarted in a week, start here.
2. **Trim startup programs.** On Windows press **Ctrl + Shift + Esc**, open the **Startup** tab, and disable what you don't need at boot. On a Mac: **Settings → General → Login Items**.
3. **Free up disk space.** A nearly full drive slows everything down. Empty the Recycle Bin / Trash, clear old downloads, uninstall programs you no longer use.
4. **Run a malware scan.** Slowdowns are a classic sign of unwanted software. Run a full scan with Windows Security or your antivirus.
5. **Install pending updates.** Outdated Windows or macOS drags performance. Update, then restart.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

The computer is so slow you can't open programs at all, or you hear clicking/grinding noises from inside — that can mean a failing hard drive. Don't keep forcing it.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

If it's still slow, the likely culprits are a dying hard drive or not enough RAM — quick, affordable fixes done right. This is the #1 reason people bring us computers that "just need replacing" — and most of the time, they don't.

PROBLEM 2

My PC won't turn on at all

SYMPTOMS

You press the power button and nothing happens — no lights, no fans, no sounds. Or it lights up for a second and dies.

Try this first

1. **Check the power basics.** Is the cable firmly plugged into both the wall and the computer? Try a different outlet. If you use a power strip, plug directly into the wall to rule it out.
2. **Laptops: do a hard reset.** Unplug the charger, hold the power button 20–30 seconds, plug the charger back in, and try again.
3. **Check the charger.** Look for cable damage. If the charging light doesn't come on, try a different compatible charger.
4. **Listen and look.** Any beeps, flashing lights, or fan movement? Note the pattern (e.g. “three beeps”) — it's a diagnostic code and very useful.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

You smell burning, see smoke, or the power-supply area feels extremely hot. Unplug immediately and do not plug it back in.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

A dead PC is usually a failed power supply, bad battery, or motherboard issue — internal parts, not DIY territory. We diagnose it at your home in one visit, and most power issues are resolved the same day.

PROBLEM 3

The fan is loud and the computer gets very hot

SYMPTOMS

The fan sounds like a jet engine, the laptop burns your lap, or the desktop feels hot. It may slow down or shut off when overheated.

Try this first

1. **Give it air.** Don't use a laptop on a bed, couch, or blanket — vents get blocked. A hard, flat surface makes a huge difference.
2. **Clean the vents.** With the computer **shut down and unplugged**, use short bursts of compressed air on vents and fan openings. Hold fans still so they don't spin wildly.
3. **Close heavy programs.** Video calls, games, and dozens of tabs strain the processor. Check Task Manager (Ctrl + Shift + Esc) for unusual CPU use.
4. **Elevate it.** A laptop stand or cooling pad (under $25) improves airflow dramatically.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

It shuts down within minutes of turning on, or you see swelling/bulging on a laptop (especially near the battery). A swollen battery is a fire risk — unplug, don't charge, don't open it.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

If cleaning doesn't quiet it, the cooling system needs a deep clean or new thermal paste — routine for us, but it requires opening the machine. We do it at your home, and it often makes an old laptop feel new again.

Stuck on one of these? We fix this at your home.

You don't have to haul your computer anywhere. **Quival Tech comes to you** — Thousand Oaks, Conejo Valley, and nearby areas.

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PROBLEM 4

Blue screens or constant freezing

SYMPTOMS

Windows shows a blue screen with an error and restarts, or everything freezes and you must force it off — repeatedly, not just once.

Try this first

1. **Write down the error.** Note the stop code (e.g. “MEMORY_MANAGEMENT”) or take a photo. One random blue screen is nothing; a pattern is a clue.
2. **Update your drivers.** The most common cause. Go to **Settings → Windows Update** and install everything, including optional driver updates.
3. **Uninstall the last thing you changed.** Did it start after a program or update? Remove it and see if the problem stops.
4. **Run a memory check.** Search “Windows Memory Diagnostic”, run it, and restart when prompted — it checks your RAM automatically.
5. **Check the temperature.** Overheating causes freezes too — if it's also hot and loud, go back to Problem 3 first.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

Blue screens happen during startup before Windows loads, or the memory diagnostic reports hardware errors. Don't replace RAM or internal parts yourself — static electricity can damage components.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

Recurring blue screens point to failing RAM, a dying drive, or a deeper driver conflict. We run full hardware diagnostics at your home and pinpoint the exact cause in one visit — instead of you guessing and buying parts you don't need.

PROBLEM 5

No internet / Wi-Fi won't connect

SYMPTOMS

The Wi-Fi icon says “no internet”, pages won't load, or the computer can't find your network — while other devices work fine.

Try this first

1. **Restart everything in order.** Turn off the computer, unplug the router/modem 30 seconds, plug it back in, wait for lights to stabilize, then turn the computer on. This fixes most cases.
2. **Forget and rejoin the network.** Windows: **Settings → Network & Internet → Wi-Fi →** Forget, then reconnect (have your Wi-Fi password handy).
3. **Toggle airplane mode.** On, wait 10 seconds, off — it forces the wireless adapter to reset.
4. **Run the built-in troubleshooter.** Right-click the network icon → **Troubleshoot problems**. It resolves common issues on its own.
5. **Check if it's just one device.** If your phone connects fine, the problem is your computer's Wi-Fi adapter, not your internet service.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

You've reset the router and multiple devices still can't connect — that's likely your internet provider, not your computer. Call your ISP first.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

If only your computer refuses to connect, the Wi-Fi card or its drivers may be failing. We test it on the spot and replace it if needed — a quick in-home fix.

PROBLEM 6

Pop-ups everywhere / possible virus

SYMPTOMS

Constant pop-up ads, browser homepage changed on its own, new toolbars, programs you didn't install, or a sudden slowdown.

Try this first

1. **Disconnect from the internet.** Unplug ethernet or turn off Wi-Fi — this stops malware from sending data or downloading more junk.
2. **Run a full antivirus scan.** Use Windows Security or your antivirus — a **full** scan, not a quick one. Remove or quarantine everything found.
3. **Uninstall suspicious programs. Settings → Apps**: look for programs you don't recognize. Search unfamiliar names online before removing.
4. **Reset your browser.** In Chrome/Edge settings find “Reset settings” to restore your homepage and clear unwanted extensions.
5. **Change passwords — from a clean device.** If you entered banking or email passwords on the infected computer, change them from your phone, starting with email and banking.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

The antivirus can't remove it, pop-ups return after cleaning, or you see ransom messages demanding payment. Do not pay — and don't use the computer for banking or email until it's clean.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

Some infections bury deep and survive basic scans. We do professional virus removal at your home, make sure it's truly gone, and set up protection so it doesn't return. If you banked on an infected machine, don't wait on this one.

Dealing with a virus or a PC that won't behave? We come to you.

Virus removal, tune-ups, and diagnostics — done at your kitchen table, not at a repair shop across town.

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PROBLEM 7

“Disk full” warnings / no space left

SYMPTOMS

Warnings that the drive is almost full, you can't save files or install updates, and the computer feels sluggish.

Try this first

1. **Empty the obvious.** Recycle Bin / Trash, old installers in Downloads, duplicate photos.
2. **Use the built-in cleanup tool.** Search **Disk Cleanup** (or **Settings → Storage → Cleanup recommendations**) — safely removes temp files and old update files, often several gigabytes.
3. **Uninstall what you don't use. Settings → Apps**, sort by size, remove the big ones you haven't opened in months. Games are the usual hogs.
4. **Move big files off the drive.** Photos and videos eat space fast — move them to an external drive or cloud (Google Drive, OneDrive, iCloud), then delete local copies.
5. **Check what's using the space. Settings → System → Storage** shows a breakdown by category so you target the biggest offenders.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

The drive fills up again within days after cleaning, or “disk full” returns right after deleting files — that can signal a runaway program, a stuck update loop, or a failing drive.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

If you're constantly fighting for space, the real fix is often a larger or faster drive — we clone everything to a new SSD at your home with zero data loss. Most customers are shocked at how much faster their computer feels after.

PROBLEM 8

Laptop battery won't charge (or dies instantly)

SYMPTOMS

The laptop only works plugged in, the percentage is stuck, it drops from 60% to 0% in minutes, or the charger must be held at an angle.

Try this first

1. **Inspect the charger and port.** Look for frayed cables, bent pins, or lint in the charging port. Try a different outlet — and a different compatible charger if you have one.
2. **Check the battery report (Windows).** Open Command Prompt, type **powercfg /batteryreport**, and open the generated file. Below 50% of original capacity = worn-out battery.
3. **Reset power management.** Shut down, unplug everything, hold the power button 30 seconds, plug in, restart. Also check your manufacturer's support page for BIOS/firmware updates.
4. **Adjust the obvious.** Lower brightness, turn on battery saver — if the battery is weak, this buys meaningful extra time.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

The battery is swollen (trackpad/keyboard bulging, case not closing flat), gets extremely hot while charging, or smells strange. Unplug immediately — do not charge or press on it. A swollen lithium battery is a fire hazard.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

Batteries are consumables — after 2–4 years they wear out, and that's normal, not your fault. We replace laptop batteries at your home, test the charging circuit to confirm the battery is truly the problem, and recycle the old one safely.

PROBLEM 9

Keyboard, mouse, or printer not responding

SYMPTOMS

Keyboard misses keystrokes, the mouse lags or doesn't move, or the printer shows up but won't print.

Try this first

1. **Unplug and replug.** USB: unplug, wait 10 seconds, try a different USB port. Wireless: replace the batteries first — dead batteries cause most “broken mouse” cases.
2. **Restart the computer.** It reloads device drivers and fixes a surprising number of peripheral issues.
3. **Check Device Manager (Windows).** Look for a yellow warning triangle → right-click → **Update driver** or **Uninstall device**, then restart (Windows reinstalls it).
4. **Printers:** remove the printer from **Settings → Bluetooth & devices → Printers**, restart, add it again. Get the latest driver from the manufacturer's site, not the Windows default.
5. **Test on another computer.** If the device fails everywhere, the device itself is the problem — not your PC.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

Multiple USB ports fail at once, or devices work for minutes then disconnect repeatedly — that suggests a motherboard or power issue, not a bad peripheral.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

If ports fail across the board or drivers won't install, there's usually a deeper hardware or system issue. We sort it out at your home — and we'll tell you honestly when the answer is just “buy a $20 mouse” instead of a repair.

PROBLEM 10

My PC shuts down by itself

SYMPTOMS

The computer powers off randomly — mid-work, on a video call, while gaming — with no warning. Sometimes it restarts on its own.

Try this first

1. **Check for overheating.** Random shutdowns are the #1 symptom of heat. Loud fan? Clogged vents? Sitting on a soft surface? Fix airflow first (see Problem 3).
2. **Test the power source.** Plug directly into a wall outlet, bypassing power strips temporarily. On desktops, make sure the power cable is fully seated.
3. **Run a virus scan.** Certain malware forces shutdowns or restarts — a full scan rules this out (see Problem 6).
4. **Check Reliability Monitor.** Search “Reliability Monitor” on Windows — a timeline of crashes with dates, showing whether it's hardware or software.
5. **Undo recent changes.** Started after a Windows update or new program? Roll back the update or uninstall the program.

⚠ STOP HERE IF…

Shutdowns happen within a minute or two of turning on, you smell burning, or it won't stay on long enough to do anything. Unplug it and leave it off.

WHEN TO CALL A TECHNICIAN

Random shutdowns are where guessing gets expensive — heat, power supply, RAM, or motherboard. We diagnose it properly at your home with real testing equipment, so you fix the actual cause instead of replacing parts blindly.



QUIVAL TECH

Still stuck? We'll come to you.

You've just seen the 10 most common computer problems — most are fixable in a single visit. **We come to your home or office**, diagnose on the spot, and most repairs finish the same day.

- **PC & laptop repair** — all brands, at your home
- **Custom gaming PC builds & upgrades** — built for you
- **Virus removal & tune-ups** — plus data recovery & backups
- **Small business IT support** — Thousand Oaks & Conejo Valley

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