

Technology Problem Solving Guide:

We apologize if this looks a lot like the problem solving worksheets you may have filled out at some point in your schooling – but the truth is that the process is same for technology problems as it for almost everything else:

Know that this process is the same process we go through, and that in spite of the fact that we sometimes seem to just know things off the tops of our heads, it's all smoke and mirrors – we're working through these very steps every time we field a support request.

What's the Problem? [use this space to describe the problem in as much detail as possible, include any relevant error messages]:

Initial:___ Date: _____

Next Steps:

1. Reboot, see if the problem is still there (you'd be surprised how often that fixes things).
2. Consult the help feature of the program or operating system you're using.

Still not working?

What's Changed? [use this space to list all the things that are different about the system since it was last working. Think about recently installed or removed programs, power fluctuations, unplugged cables, possible viruses]:

Initial:___ Date: _____

Next Steps:

1. Undo or otherwise resolve the things that changed:
 - a. Uninstall or reinstall programs that were or were not present when the system was working
 - b. Search software vendor's website to see if there are updates that solve the issue you're having.
 - c. Suspect a virus? Check to see if your virus definitions are up to date. If not, update your definitions and re-scan for viruses. If any are found, follow directions from your software vendor for removing the virus (you may need to download a virus removal tool from the vendor's website).
 - d. Network related problem? Troubleshoot your LAN (see attached sheet on how your LAN works).

- e. If not aware of any changes that have been made, try running Norton Utilities' WinDoctor, and have it repair and problems it finds.
- f. Still not working? Try checking the documentation or help function built into the program or operating system.

That didn't work either?

Try Searching the Web. Keep in mind that when you're looking for information about a computer problem, either on the web or on the phone with someone, it makes everyone's time much more productive if you can effectively describe the problem you're having. Saying (or searching for) "Windows is broken" doesn't really help anyone because it's not a good description of what the problem is. Saying "when I try to download my email, I get a "connection to server failed" message" in outlook, but I can ping the server and it seems to be there" is much better because it narrows down the list of what could be wrong, and gives you a clearer sense of how to view the problem. With this last example, good keywords to search by would be "outlook connection to server failed."

Places to search:

- Google and Google's archive of newsgroups (go to groups.google.com or just use the groups tab on Google's search page)
- Try the website for the company that makes the product you're having trouble with.

Enter in any relevant information you find here, as well as any suggested fixes:

Initial: ___ Date: _____

If you find information or examples that suggest solutions, try them! Chances are good that you'll find a solution that fixes the problem. Please be aware though that it can be hard to find exactly what you're looking for – sometimes the search terms that see obvious aren't so obvious to everyone else, so if nothing turns up with your first search, try different search terms. Also keep in mind that solutions will differ for different versions of the same program or operating system, do be sure to pay attention to those details. Finally, please bear in mind that there may be bad information out there that may not fix the problem. If you come across a solution that seems extreme or just doesn't sound or feel right, don't try it – research it more and see if other people are suggesting the same thing. You're ultimately the only person responsible for fixing the problem, so take as much time as you need to be certain that the solutions you try are ones that make sense to you and other credible sources [For example, it may unwise to heed advice about Windows from a Mac website].

Enter in the solution that worked and fixed your problem:

Initial:___ Date: _____

If you've exhausted these strategies, and still haven't found a solution, contact us by email (if possible). Include a detailed description of the problem (use this form if you'd like), the steps that you took to troubleshoot it, what those steps lead you to believe about the nature of the problem, and when you're available to talk about how to resolve the problem.

Finally, if you solved the problem, please send us this worksheet so that we can enter the problem and solution that you found into our database and make it available to everyone. By doing this, you're helping us make tech support information more accessible to everyone, and you're also making sure that if someone else in your organization has this same problem later, you'll be able to easily find the information for fixing it.