

Windows XP From A to Z

Cannot Start Windows XP if the System or Software Hive Is Missing or Damaged (Q303012)

SYMPTOMS:

When you try to start or restart your Windows XP-based computer, you may receive one of the following error messages:

Windows XP could not start because the following file is missing or corrupt: \WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\CONFIG\SYSTEM

Windows XP could not start because the following file is missing or corrupt: \WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\CONFIG\SOFTWARE

Stop: c0000218 {Registry File Failure} The registry cannot load the hive (file): \SystemRoot\System32\Config\SOFTWARE or its log or alternate

CAUSE

This issue can occur if the System or Software hive for the Windows XP installation is missing or damaged.

RESOLUTION:

To resolve this issue, use one of the following methods.

Use the Recovery Console Tool:

To restore a damaged registry hive, use the Recovery Console to restore the backup copy of the hive from the Repair folder. The Repair folder contains a copy of the system's registry hives that were created after the first successful startup of Windows XP.

WARNING : Although data should not be affected by the following procedure, you may need to restore changes you previously made to programs or system settings since the first time you successfully started Windows XP.

To replace the damaged registry hive and restore the backup copy of the hive from the Repair folder: Start your computer to the Recovery Console.

Determine if the file that is mentioned in the "Symptoms" section of this article is present, and if it is, rename it:

In Recovery Console, change to the c:\Windows folder.

Type `cd system32\config` , and then press ENTER.

Type `dir system` , and then press ENTER.

If you cannot run the preceding command successfully (because the file is missing), skip to step 3. If

you can run the preceding command successfully, type `ren system system.bak` , and then press ENTER.

NOTE : If the message that you received referred to the software file, replace "system" with "software" in the preceding command. For example, you would type `ren software software.bak` (instead of `ren system system.bak`), and then press ENTER.

Type `copy c:\windows\repair\system` , and then press ENTER.

NOTE : If the message that you received referred to the software file, replace "system" with "software" in the preceding command. For example, you would type `copy c:\windows\repair\software` (instead of `copy c:\windows\repair\system`), and then press ENTER.

You should receive a "One file copied" informational message. For additional information about how to use Recovery Console during startup, click the article number below to view the article in the Microsoft Knowledge Base:

Q307654 HOW TO: Install and Use the Recovery Console for Windows XP

IMPORTANT : If you encounter problems when you run the preceding commands, you may need to use the Change Directory command (`cd`) one folder at a time before you run the preceding commands. For example, type `cd system32` , press ENTER, type `cd config` , and then press ENTER.

Type `exit` , and then press ENTER to quit Recovery Console and restart the computer.

You Cannot Start from the Windows XP CD-ROM or Use Recovery Console

If you cannot start from the Windows XP CD-ROM or use Recovery Console and you are using the FAT file system (not the NTFS file system):

Use a startup disk from one of the following operating systems to start your computer to a command prompt:

Microsoft Windows Millennium Edition (Me)

Microsoft Windows 98

Microsoft Windows 95

At the command prompt, type `c:\windows` .

Follow the steps in the "Use the Recovery Console Tool" section of this article, beginning with step 2b (type `cd sytem32\config` , and then press ENTER).

IMPORTANT : After you complete the steps in the "Use the Recovery Console Tool" section of this article, remove the startup disk, and then restart the computer.

Use System Restore to Revert to the Most-Recent Restore Point

You may want to use System Restore to revert to the most-recent restore point if you have replaced the specific registry hive, but the issue has not been resolved.

For additional information about how to use System Restore to revert to the most-recent restore point, click the article number below to view the article in the Microsoft Knowledge Base:

Q307545 How to Recover from a Corrupted Registry Run a Repair Installation of Windows XP

You may need to run a repair installation. For additional information about how to do so, click the article number below to view the article in the Microsoft Knowledge Base: [Q312369 You May Lose Data or Program Settings After Reinstalling, Repairing, or Upgrading Windows XP](#)

MORE INFORMATION

By default, the administrative password for Windows XP Home Edition is blank.

For additional information about how to use Recovery Console, click the article numbers below to view the articles in the Microsoft Knowledge Base:

[Q307654 HOW TO: Access the Recovery Console During Startup](#)

[Q240831 How to Copy Files from Recovery Console to Removable Media](#)

[Q229716 Description of the Windows Recovery Console](#)

*XP Support- 07/28/2005 03:53 AM - Home Page WinXP
© Copyright Kelly Theriot MS-MVP(DTS) 2002 All rights reserved.*