

Vision Tech

Mac & Chromebook Handbook

26 free step-by-step guides in plain English

Free to print and share.

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Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Mac: my Mac is slow or shows the spinning wheel

The spinning rainbow wheel means your Mac is busy and cannot keep up with what you have asked it to do. Most of the time the cause is simple and you can fix it yourself.

Wait, then check which app is the problem

If the wheel appears only in one app, give it a minute or two. If it stays, see our Force Quit guide.

Restart your Mac

Many Macs are left running for weeks, which slowly clogs them up. Click the **Apple menu** in the top left, then choose **Restart**. Save your work first.

Find what is using the power

1. Open **Activity Monitor**. Press Command and Space, type Activity Monitor and press Return.
2. Click the **CPU** tab, then click the **% CPU** heading to sort the list.
3. Look at the top few entries. If an app you do not need is using a lot, close it normally first.

Only use the cross button in Activity Monitor on apps you recognise. Never end something you do not know.

Reduce what starts up with your Mac

Open **System Settings**, then **General**, then **Login Items**. On older versions this is **System Preferences**, then **Users & Groups**, then **Login Items**. Remove apps you never use by selecting them and clicking the minus button.

Check storage and updates

A Mac that is nearly full runs slowly. Go to **System Settings**, **General**, then **Storage** to see how much room is left. Also check **Software Update** in the same General section, as updates often include speed fixes.

Other common causes

- Too many browser tabs open at once. Close the ones you are not using.
- An older Mac that does not have much memory (RAM). Newer apps may simply be too demanding for it.

When to get more help

Contact us if the wheel appears constantly even after a restart, if your Mac is more than about eight years old and struggles with everyday tasks, or if you hear loud fans or notice the Mac getting very hot. We can check whether a clean-up, more storage or a replacement makes the most sense.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Mac: my Mac will not start up

If your Mac does not start, do not panic. Your files are very likely still safe. Work through these steps one at a time and stop as soon as it works.

Check the basics first

- Make sure the charger is firmly plugged in at the wall and into the Mac. Try a different socket.
- Look for a charging light on the cable or the lit charging port. Leave it plugged in for 30 minutes if the battery may be flat.
- Unplug everything else: printers, USB drives, adapters and screens.

Check the screen

Sometimes the Mac is on but the screen is dark. Press a key and turn the brightness up. If you hear the fans or the startup chime, the Mac may be running with a screen problem.

Try a forced restart

Hold down the power button (on newer Macs this is the Touch ID button) for about 10 seconds until everything switches off. Wait 10 seconds, then press it again once.

Look at what the screen shows

- **A folder with a question mark:** the Mac cannot find its system. Contact us.
- **A circle with a line through it:** the Mac may not be able to use the system on its disc.
- **A progress bar that never finishes:** leave it for up to an hour, as it may be finishing an update.

Try Recovery tools

Hold the power button on a newer Apple silicon Mac until you see **Loading startup options**, then choose **Options** and **Continue**. On an older Intel Mac, hold Command and R while it starts. From there you can open **Disk Utility** and choose **First Aid** on your startup disc.

Do not choose **Reinstall macOS** or **Erase** unless you have been told to. Reinstalling is usually safe for your files, but erasing will delete everything.

When to get more help

Contact us if none of this works, if the screen stays black with no sounds or lights, or if you see a warning about your disc. Please do not keep trying to force it, and do not erase anything. We can often get at your files even when the Mac will not boot.

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Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Mac: storage is full and what is System Data

A message saying your startup disc is almost full can stop updates and slow your Mac. System Data is one of the biggest mysteries on the storage screen, so this guide explains it and shows how to free space safely.

See what is using the space

Open the **Apple menu**, then **System Settings**, **General** and **Storage**. On older versions, choose the Apple menu, **About This Mac**, then **Storage** and **Manage**. Wait a moment for the coloured bar to fill in.

What is System Data?

System Data is a mix of things macOS needs: temporary files, caches, logs, and some other items that Apple does not sort into other groups. It can grow to be quite large. It is normal for it to take a share of the space. It is not something you should try to delete by hand, because removing the wrong files can stop your Mac working.

Safe ways to free up space

1. Empty the **Trash**. Right-click the Trash icon in the Dock and choose **Empty Trash**.
2. Open your **Downloads** folder and delete old installers and files you do not need.
3. In the Storage screen, look at the recommendations from Apple, such as **Store in iCloud** or **Empty Trash Automatically**. Read each one before turning it on.
4. Delete apps you no longer use from the **Applications** folder.
5. Move large photos and videos to an external drive. Check they open from the drive before deleting the originals.

Restart

System Data often shrinks after a restart, because temporary files are cleared. Restart, then look at the Storage screen again.

Avoid cleaning apps

Be careful with free clean-up apps or tools that promise to clear System Data. Some delete the wrong things and some are scams. If you are unsure, ask us first.

When to get more help

Contact us if System Data stays huge (for example over 100 GB) after a restart, if your Mac keeps saying the disc is full, or if you are unsure what is safe to delete. Back up your Mac before any big clear-out.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 1 min read

Mac: Wi-Fi keeps dropping or will not connect

When the Wi-Fi on your Mac stops working, the fault is often with the router or the connection, not the Mac itself. These steps help you find out which.

Check other devices

Does your phone connect to the same Wi-Fi and load web pages? If not, the problem is the router or your broadband. Switch the router off, wait 30 seconds, then switch it on again and wait five minutes.

Check Wi-Fi is on

Click the **Wi-Fi symbol** at the top right of your screen. Make sure the switch is on and your network name is selected. If there is no Wi-Fi symbol, open **System Settings** and choose **Wi-Fi**.

Try these steps in order

1. Switch Wi-Fi off, wait 10 seconds, then switch it on again.
2. Restart your Mac.
3. Move closer to the router. Thick walls and distance weaken the signal.
4. If it says the password is wrong, open **System Settings**, then **Wi-Fi**, click **Details** next to your network, and choose **Forget This Network**. Then pick it again and re-enter the password carefully.

Only forget a network if you know the password. It is on the sticker on most routers.

Check for updates

Go to **System Settings**, **General**, then **Software Update**. Updates sometimes fix Wi-Fi bugs.

Use the built-in checker

Hold down the **Option** key and click the Wi-Fi symbol. Choose **Open Wireless Diagnostics** and follow the on-screen steps. This gives a report you can show us.

When to get more help

Contact us if only your Mac has the problem while other devices work fine, if the Wi-Fi drops many times a day, or if the router needs frequent restarts. Our team can check your router, your settings and your Mac to find the cause.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Mac: how to close a frozen app (Force Quit)

When an app stops responding, you can close it without restarting your whole Mac. This is called Force Quit. It is safe, but unsaved work in that app will usually be lost.

First, be patient

Give the app a minute. Apps sometimes appear frozen while they are busy saving or loading. Try clicking once on the desktop, then back on the app.

Force Quit from the keyboard

1. Press **Option, Command and Esc** together.
2. A small window called **Force Quit Applications** opens.
3. Click the app that says it is not responding. It often shows in red.
4. Click **Force Quit**, then confirm.

Force Quit from the Dock

Right-click or hold Control and click the app's icon in the Dock. Hold down the **Option** key and the menu changes from Quit to **Force Quit**. Choose that.

Force Quit from the Apple menu

Click the **Apple menu** in the top left and choose **Force Quit**. Choose the app from the list.

After the app closes

Open it again. Many apps such as Pages and Numbers offer to recover your last saved version. If the app freezes every time, restart your Mac and check **Software Update** in **System Settings, General**.

If the whole Mac is frozen

If the screen will not move at all, hold down the power button for about 10 seconds until it switches off. Wait a moment, then start it again. Use this only as a last resort, as unsaved work may be lost.

Prevent it happening again

- Save your work often.
- Keep apps and macOS updated.
- Avoid having too many large apps open at once.

When to get more help

Contact us if the same app keeps freezing, if Force Quit does not work, or if the whole Mac freezes every day. It could mean a faulty app, low storage or a hardware fault.

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Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Mac: sound, microphone or camera not working

If you cannot hear anything, or people cannot hear or see you on calls, the cause is usually a setting rather than a fault. Here is how to check.

Sound problems

1. Check the volume keys on your keyboard and that the sound is not muted.
2. Open **System Settings**, then choose **Sound**. On older versions use **System Preferences**, then **Sound**.
3. Under **Output**, make sure the correct device is selected, such as the Mac's own speakers and not a TV, monitor or Bluetooth speaker you are not using.
4. Unplug any headphones and try again. Turn off Bluetooth if the sound might be going to a device nearby.

Microphone problems

In **Sound**, choose the **Input** section. Speak and watch the input level bar move. If it does not, pick another input. In the call app, check you have not muted yourself.

Camera problems

The Mac camera has a small green light beside it when on. If your call app shows a black screen:

- Close other apps that might be using the camera.
- Check the app's own settings and choose the correct camera.

Give the app permission

Open **System Settings**, then **Privacy & Security**, then **Camera** or **Microphone**. Make sure the switch beside your app, for example Zoom, Teams or your browser, is turned on. You may need to quit and reopen the app after changing this.

Still no luck

- Restart your Mac.
- Check **Software Update** in **System Settings, General**.
- Try the same app on another device to see whether the problem is the Mac or the app.

When to get more help

Contact us if there is no sound at all in any app, no input options appear, or the camera shows nothing even with permission on. These can point to a fault that needs a closer look.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Mac: how to set up and fix printing

Most modern printers work with a Mac without any extra software. If yours will not print, these steps usually sort it out.

Check the printer first

- Is it switched on, with paper and ink, and showing no error lights?
- Is it on the same Wi-Fi as your Mac, or plugged in with a USB cable?
- Try switching it off and on again.

Add a printer

1. Open **System Settings**, then **Printers & Scanners**. On older versions this is **System Preferences**, then **Printers & Scanners**.
2. Click **Add Printer, Scanner or Fax** (or the plus button).
3. Pick your printer from the list. If it appears with the word **AirPrint**, that is ideal.
4. Click **Add**. If asked, allow your Mac to download software.

If a print job is stuck

1. Open **Printers & Scanners** and click your printer.
2. Open the print queue (it may be called **Open Print Queue**).
3. If there is a job stuck in the list, select it and click the cross to cancel it.
4. If the printer says it is paused, click **Resume**.

If the printer is missing or offline

- Restart the printer, the router and the Mac.
- Remove the printer by selecting it and clicking the minus button, then add it again.
- Make sure your Mac is on the same Wi-Fi network as the printer, not a guest network.

Update

Open **System Settings**, **General**, then **Software Update**. Printer support is updated through macOS.

Be careful with downloads

Only download printer software from the printer maker's own website. Do not trust a search result that promises a free printer fix.

When to get more help

Contact us if your printer is not found at all, if it prints blank or faint pages after checking ink, if it only works on one computer, or if you are not sure which software to use for an older printer.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Advanced | 2 min read

Mac: how to use Safe Mode

Safe Mode starts your Mac with only the essentials. It can help when the Mac is slow, crashing or will not start normally, because it stops extra items from loading. It does not delete your files.

Before you start

Make sure your Mac is plugged in. If you can start normally, it is a good idea to back up first. See our Time Machine guide.

Start in Safe Mode on a Mac with Apple silicon

Most Macs from late 2020 onward use Apple silicon (M1, M2 and later).

1. Shut down your Mac completely.
2. Press and hold the **power button** until you see **Loading startup options**.
3. Choose your startup disc.
4. Hold down the **Shift** key, then click **Continue in Safe Mode**.
5. Release the Shift key and log in.

Start in Safe Mode on an Intel Mac

1. Shut down, then press the power button.
2. Immediately press and hold the **Shift** key.
3. Let go when you see the login window.
4. You may be asked to log in twice.

Check you are in Safe Mode

The words **Safe Boot** appear in red in the top right of the login window. You can also open the **Apple menu**, hold **Option**, choose **System Information** and look for **Boot Mode: Safe**.

What to expect

Your Mac will be slower, graphics may look rough, and some features such as certain Wi-Fi or video apps may not work. This is normal.

What to try inside Safe Mode

- See if the problem you had has gone. If it has, a start-up app is likely the cause.
- Check **Login Items** in **System Settings, General**.
- Run **Software Update** if the internet works.

Leaving Safe Mode

Restart the Mac normally, without holding any keys.

When to get more help

Contact us if the Mac will not start even in Safe Mode, if the problem comes straight back after restarting, or if you are not comfortable making changes. Do not erase or reinstall anything without a backup.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Advanced | 2 min read

Mac: forgotten your Mac password

Forgetting a Mac password is common, and Apple provides official ways to get back in. Which one works depends on how your Mac is set up. Try the gentlest option first.

Before anything else

- Try your password again with Caps Lock off. Try an older password you may have used.
- Check for a password hint. On the login screen, a hint may appear after a few wrong attempts.

Use your Apple Account

If your Mac login is linked to your Apple Account, after several wrong tries you may see an option to restart and show password reset options. Click it, sign in with your Apple Account details and follow the steps. You will be asked to make a new password.

Use another admin user

If another person with an administrator account uses the Mac, they can open **System Settings**, then **Users & Groups**, choose your account, and reset your password. On older versions this is in **System Preferences**.

Use Recovery

If neither works, shut the Mac down. On a Mac with Apple silicon, hold the power button until you see **Loading startup options**, then choose **Options** and **Continue**. On Intel, hold Command and R at startup. Then look in the **Utilities** menu for a password reset option, if it is offered for your Mac.

Important warnings

- A recovery key may be needed if FileVault is on. This is a long code shown when it was set up. Keep it safe.
- Do not choose **Erase Mac** just to get back in. This deletes everything, and without a backup your files will be gone.
- Be wary of websites or people who offer to unlock your Mac for a fee. Only use Apple's own routes.

Afterwards

Make a password you will remember and keep a note of it somewhere safe. Consider a password manager.

When to get more help

Contact us if you do not have your Apple Account details, if the Mac says it is locked by someone else, or if you are unsure which option is safe. Apple may ask for proof you own the Mac, so keep your receipt.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Mac: how to install macOS updates safely

Updates keep your Mac secure and working well. Installing them takes a little time, but doing it the right way avoids problems.

Before you start

- Plug your Mac into its charger.
- Back up first. See our Time Machine guide. An update is normally safe, but a backup protects you if anything goes wrong.
- Check you have enough space. Large updates can need 20 GB or more.
- Make sure you have a good Wi-Fi connection.

How to update

1. Click the **Apple menu**, then **System Settings**.
2. Choose **General**, then **Software Update**. On older versions of macOS this is in **System Preferences**, then **Software Update**.
3. Wait while your Mac checks. If an update appears, click **Update Now** or **Restart Now**.
4. Enter your Mac password if asked.
5. Leave the Mac alone. The screen may go dark and restart several times.

Update or upgrade?

Smaller updates fix problems and security holes. A big upgrade moves you to a new version name. Upgrades can change how things look, and some older apps may stop working. If you rely on a particular app or printer, check it works with the new version before upgrading.

Turn on automatic updates

In **Software Update**, click the small **i** button beside **Automatic updates**. You can then switch on the options to install macOS updates and security responses automatically, if you want your Mac to handle this for you.

Be careful of fake update messages

A pop-up on a website telling you to update your Mac is a scam. Only update from **System Settings**.

When to get more help

Contact us if your Mac says it cannot install the update, if it gets stuck for more than a few hours, if there is no update showing and you think there should be, or if your Mac is too old for newer versions. We can tell you what is safe to do.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Mac: Time Machine backup basics

Time Machine is the backup tool built into every Mac. It saves copies of your files so you can get them back if something is lost, deleted or your Mac fails.

What you need

An external hard drive or SSD that is larger than the amount of data on your Mac. A drive at least twice the size of your Mac's storage works best. Plug it in using the right cable or adapter.

Set up Time Machine

1. Plug in the drive.
2. Open **System Settings**, then **General**, then **Time Machine**. On older versions, open **System Preferences** and choose **Time Machine**.
3. Click **Add Backup Disk** (or **Select Disk**) and choose your drive.
4. If asked, you may choose to encrypt the backup. This is a good idea. Write down the password and keep it safe, as nobody can recover the backup without it.
5. Confirm to set up the disk.

Be careful: your Mac may offer to erase the drive first. Only agree if there is nothing on it that you need.

Keep it running

The first backup can take hours. Leave your Mac switched on and plugged in. After that, Time Machine backs up every hour while the drive is connected. Reconnect the drive regularly if you unplug it, as a backup that is months old will not help much.

Get a file back

1. Open the folder where the file used to live.
2. Click the **Time Machine** icon in the menu bar and choose **Browse Time Machine Backups**.
3. Go back through time, select the file, and click **Restore**.

Good habits

- Check the date of the last backup in the Time Machine settings.
- Keep the drive in a safe place.
- For extra safety, also keep important files in iCloud or another storage service.

When to get more help

Contact us if Time Machine says the backup failed, if the drive is full, if the drive is not showing up, or if you want help getting a whole Mac back from a backup.

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Mac: how to take screenshots and record your screen

A screenshot is a picture of what is on your screen. A screen recording is a short video. Both are useful for showing us a problem.

Take a screenshot of the whole screen

Press **Shift, Command and 3** together. You will hear a camera sound and a small picture appears in the corner. By default the file is saved to your desktop.

Take a screenshot of part of the screen

1. Press **Shift, Command and 4**.
2. Your pointer becomes a cross. Drag across the area you want.
3. Let go to take the picture.

To capture one window, press **Shift, Command and 4**, then press the **Space bar**. The pointer becomes a camera. Click the window you want.

Use the toolbar

Press **Shift, Command and 5** to open a small toolbar. It has buttons for the whole screen, a window, a selected part, and recording. Click **Options** to choose where files are saved and to set a timer.

Record your screen

1. Press **Shift, Command and 5**.
2. Choose **Record Entire Screen** or **Record Selected Portion**.
3. Click **Record**.
4. To stop, click the stop button in the menu bar at the top, or press **Command, Control and Esc**.

If you want your voice recorded, click **Options** and choose a microphone first. Be careful not to record passwords or private information.

Find and share your picture

The files are named with the date and time. Click the small picture when it appears to mark it up. You can attach it to an email, or add it to a Vision Tech support request.

Tips

- Hold the **Control** key as you press the shortcut to copy the picture instead of saving it, then paste with **Command and V**.
- Check what is visible before sharing. Hide names and account numbers.

When to get more help

Contact us if the shortcuts do nothing, files do not appear on your desktop, or you cannot find where they were saved.

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Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Mac: useful keyboard shortcuts for everyday use

Keyboard shortcuts save time and make a Mac feel easier to use. Most start with the **Command** key, which sits next to the space bar.

Everyday shortcuts

- **Command and C**: copy what you have selected.
- **Command and V**: paste it.
- **Command and X**: cut it (copy it and remove it).
- **Command and Z**: undo your last action. Add Shift to redo.
- **Command and S**: save your work.
- **Command and P**: print.
- **Command and A**: select everything.
- **Command and F**: find a word on the page.

Opening, closing and switching

- **Command and Space**: open Spotlight search, to find apps and files quickly.
- **Command and Tab**: switch between open apps.
- **Command and Q**: quit the app. Command and W closes just the window.
- **Command and N**: a new window or document.
- **Command and T**: a new tab in a browser.
- **Command and comma**: open the settings of the current app.

Files and the desktop

- **Command and Delete**: move the selected file to the Trash.
- **Command, Shift and Delete**: empty the Trash. You will be asked to confirm.
- **Space bar**: preview a selected file in Finder without opening it.

Handy extras

- **Control, Command and Space**: show the emoji and symbols box.
- **Option, Command and Esc**: open Force Quit when an app is stuck.
- **Command, Shift and 5**: screenshots and screen recording.
- **Control, Command and Q**: lock your screen.

Learn them slowly

Pick two or three and use them for a week before trying more. If you are not sure what a shortcut does, look at the menus at the top of the screen. Shortcuts are shown beside many menu items.

When to get more help

Contact us if a shortcut does nothing, if the keys type the wrong characters, or if you want a Windows keyboard to work properly with a Mac.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Switching from Windows to a Mac: what is different

Moving from Windows to a Mac can feel strange at first, but most things have an equivalent. This guide shows where to find the basics.

The screen layout

- The **menu bar** at the very top shows menus for the app you are using. The **Apple menu** in the top left is where you shut down, restart and open System Settings.
- The **Dock** at the bottom holds your apps. A small dot under an icon means it is open.
- **Finder** is like File Explorer. Click the smiling face icon in the Dock.

Closing is not quitting

Clicking the red button at the top left of a window usually closes the window, but the app often stays open. To fully quit, press **Command and Q**, or choose **Quit** from the app menu.

Keyboard differences

- **Command** works like Ctrl does in Windows. Command and C copies, Command and V pastes.
- **Delete** on a Mac removes the character before the cursor, like Backspace.
- **Return** is the Enter key.
- To delete forwards, hold **Fn** and press Delete.

Where things are

- Settings: **System Settings** (called **System Preferences** on older versions).
- Install apps: from the **App Store**, or by downloading a file and dragging the app into **Applications**.
- Uninstall: open **Applications** in Finder and drag the app to the Trash.
- Search: **Command and Space** for Spotlight.

Your files

Many Windows files open on a Mac, including Word and Excel documents if you have Microsoft 365. External drives formatted for Windows (NTFS) can usually be read but not always written to. Ask us before you copy anything important.

Right-click

Hold **Control** and click, or click with two fingers on the trackpad.

Your first week

Spend time exploring, and ask us about moving your photos, emails and bookmarks. A good plan is to keep your old PC until you are sure everything has been copied across.

When to get more help

Contact us for help moving files, setting up email, finding Mac versions of Windows programs, or getting a printer working.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Chromebook: it will not turn on or charge

A Chromebook that seems dead is often just out of battery or has a charging problem. Work through these checks before assuming it is broken.

Check the charger and socket

- Plug the charger firmly into the wall and into the Chromebook. Try a different socket.
- Use the charger that came with the Chromebook, or one from a trusted maker that matches it. A weak or wrong charger may not charge it.
- Look at the charging light. Many Chromebooks show an amber or orange light when charging and white or blue when full. Check the manual for your model.
- Look at the cable and ends for damage or bent pins.

Leave it charging

If the battery is completely flat, it may need 30 minutes or more before it will start. Leave it plugged in and then press the **power button**.

Check the screen

Press a key and turn up the brightness. The Chromebook could be on but have a dim screen.

Try a hard restart

1. Unplug the charger and anything else connected.
2. Hold the **power button** for about 10 seconds, then let go.
3. Plug the charger in and press the power button again.

Some models have a different hard reset method, for example holding **Refresh** and tapping power. Because it varies, look up your model or ask us.

Be careful

- Do not open the Chromebook or use a damaged charger. Swollen batteries and damaged cables can be dangerous.
- Stop using it if the case is bulging or very hot.

Good habits

Do not leave it flat for weeks. Charge it occasionally even when not in use.

When to get more help

Contact us if there is no light and no sign of life after trying a different charger, if the battery drains in minutes, or if the charging port feels loose. A new battery or charger may be needed, and we can help you choose the right one.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Chromebook: how to speed up a slow Chromebook

Chromebooks are built to be quick, but they slow down when memory, storage or the browser gets overloaded. These steps help.

Restart it

Many people only close the lid. Switch the Chromebook off properly now and then. Press and hold the **power button** and choose **Shut down**, then turn it on again.

Close tabs and apps

Each open tab uses memory. Close the ones you are not using. You can see what is using the most by pressing **Search and Esc** together to open the **Task Manager**. Select a tab or app that uses a lot and choose **End process**. Only end things you recognise, and save your work first.

Remove extensions you do not need

1. Open Chrome and click the **puzzle piece** icon next to the address bar.
2. Choose **Manage extensions**.
3. Turn off or remove extensions you do not use. Remove anything you do not recognise.

Free up space

Open the **Files** app and delete old downloads. Check **Settings**, then **System preferences**, then **Storage management** to see what is using the space. A nearly full Chromebook slows down. See our storage guide for more.

Update ChromeOS

Open **Settings**, then **About ChromeOS**, and click **Check for updates**. Restart when asked.

Check for unwanted apps and notifications

Remove Android apps or web apps you do not use. Look at Chrome's **Settings**, then **Privacy and security**, and be wary of sites sending lots of notifications.

Is the Chromebook just old?

Chromebooks with a very small amount of memory (2 GB or less) or old processors struggle with modern websites and video calls. If your Chromebook is more than five or six years old, this may be the reason. Read our guide on update expiry too.

When to get more help

Contact us if it is still slow after these steps, or if it freezes often. We can check whether a reset, a new device or different ways of working would suit you better. Do not use Powerwash without reading our guide and backing up first.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Chromebook: Wi-Fi problems and how to fix them

When the internet fails on a Chromebook, the cause is often the router or a simple setting. Follow these steps to narrow it down.

Check other devices

See whether your phone or another device can use the same Wi-Fi. If not, restart your router. Switch it off, wait 30 seconds, switch it on and wait five minutes.

Check Wi-Fi is on

Click the **time** in the bottom right corner to open the quick settings panel. Click the **Wi-Fi** button and make sure it is on. Choose your network name.

Basic steps

1. Switch Wi-Fi off and on again.
2. Restart your Chromebook.
3. Move nearer to the router.
4. If it asks for a password, type it carefully. It is case sensitive.

Forget and reconnect

1. Open **Settings**, then **Network**.
2. Click **Wi-Fi**, then click your network name.
3. Choose **Forget** if it is offered, then connect again and re-enter the password.

Only do this if you know the password, as you will need it again.

Connected but no internet

- You may be on a public Wi-Fi that needs a sign-in page. Open a new tab and try visiting a website.
- Try the **Chrome browser** in a new window.
- Check the date and time are correct in **Settings**, then **System preferences**, then **Date and time**.

Update

Go to **Settings**, then **About ChromeOS**, and choose **Check for updates**. This sometimes fixes network faults.

Managed devices

If your Chromebook is from school or work, some Wi-Fi settings may be locked by the organisation. You may need to ask their IT team.

When to get more help

Contact us if the Chromebook cannot see any networks, if it drops the connection often while other devices are fine, or if you see a message such as a certificate error. We can help check your router and Chromebook settings.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Chromebook: sign-in problems and school or work managed accounts

Sign-in problems on a Chromebook are usually about the Google account, not the device. This guide also explains why some Chromebooks seem to have extra rules.

Check the basics

- Make sure you are online. Chromebooks usually need the internet to sign in the first time.
- Type your email address in full, for example name@gmail.com.
- Check Caps Lock and try typing your password in the box, using the eye icon to see it.
- Check the date and time are right.

Forgotten password

Go to **accounts.google.com** on any device and choose **Forgot password** to follow Google's recovery steps. You will need access to your recovery phone or email. Do not enter your password on a site that you reached from an email link.

What is a managed account?

Chromebooks from schools or workplaces are often controlled by an organisation. The signs are a message saying **This device is managed by your organisation**, or a lock icon in the settings. The organisation can then:

- Choose who is allowed to sign in.
- Limit which websites, extensions and apps you can use.
- Control settings such as updates and Wi-Fi.

This is normal. It also means you cannot remove these rules yourself.

Why you may be unable to sign in with another account

Some Chromebooks only allow certain accounts, such as a school email. If you see a message that **only certain accounts are allowed**, that restriction has been set by whoever owns the device.

Good practice

- Do not try to bypass management or use tricks you find online. They can break the rules of the school or workplace and risk your data.
- Ask the organisation's IT team to reset your password.
- If the Chromebook is second-hand and still managed, the previous owner or organisation may have to release it.

When to get more help

Contact us if you cannot tell whether the Chromebook is managed, if a second-hand Chromebook will not let you sign in, or if you cannot recover your Google account. Have your account email ready. We cannot remove management on a device that belongs to someone else.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Chromebook: storage full and how to free space

Chromebooks often have small storage, so they can fill up quickly. When that happens, the device slows and may not update. Here is how to make room.

See what is using space

1. Click the **time** in the bottom right, then the **Settings** cog.
2. Choose **System preferences**, then **Storage management**. On some versions, look under **Device**, then **Storage management**.
3. You will see a breakdown of items such as **My files**, **Browsing data**, **Apps and extensions** and **Android storage**.

Delete files you do not need

Open the **Files** app and look in **Downloads**. Right-click files you no longer need and choose **Delete**. Check items before you delete them because deleted files are gone for good unless saved somewhere else.

Use Google Drive

Move big files such as photos and videos to Google Drive. Drag them from **Downloads** to **Google Drive** in the Files app. Check they have uploaded and open correctly, then delete the local copies.

Clear browsing data

In Chrome, press **Ctrl, Shift and Delete**. Choose **Cached images and files** and click **Clear data**. Do not clear passwords or **Cookies** unless you want to be signed out of sites.

Remove apps and extensions

Right-click apps you do not use in the launcher and choose **Uninstall**. In Chrome, click the puzzle piece and choose **Manage extensions** to remove extras.

Use an SD card or USB drive

Many Chromebooks have an SD slot. Files saved there do not use internal storage. Keep a copy of anything important in more than one place.

Careful with offline files

Offline Google Drive files, downloaded films and Android app data can be large. Switch off offline copies for things you do not need.

When to get more help

Contact us if storage stays full after these steps, if the Chromebook says it has no space for updates, or if you are unsure what is safe to remove. Do not Powerwash just to gain space without a backup.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Chromebook: keyboard, touchpad and screen problems

If part of your Chromebook is misbehaving, a few simple checks fix most problems. Try these before anything drastic.

Restart first

Switch the Chromebook off and on again. Many glitches clear after a restart.

Keyboard

- Keys not working: clean around them gently. Turn the Chromebook upside down and tap lightly to remove crumbs.
- Typing the wrong letters: open **Settings**, then **Device**, then **Keyboard**, and check the language and input method. You may also need to check the **Region** in **Settings**.
- Caps Lock: Chromebooks have no Caps Lock key by default. Press **Alt** and the **Search key** (the magnifying glass) together.
- Function keys: the top row controls brightness, volume and more. Check **Settings**, **Device**, **Keyboard** to change how they work.

Touchpad

1. Open **Settings**, then **Device**, then **Touchpad**.
2. Check that **Tap-to-click** is on if you want it, and adjust speed.
3. Try cleaning the touchpad with a dry cloth, as greasy fingers can cause problems.
4. Connect a mouse to see whether the cursor moves. If it does, the touchpad may need attention.

Screen

- Too dark: press the brightness keys on the top row.
- Flickering or blank screen: restart. Plug in the charger, as low power can cause screen faults.
- Cracked screen or lines across it: this is a hardware issue. Do not press on the damaged area.
- Touchscreen not responding: wipe it with a dry cloth. Hold the power button to restart.

External screens

If an external monitor will not work, check the cable and open **Settings**, then **Device**, then **Displays**. Try a different cable or port.

Check for updates

Open **Settings**, **About ChromeOS** and choose **Check for updates**.

When to get more help

Contact us if a key, the touchpad or the screen has stopped working even after a restart, or if there is physical damage. We can tell you whether a repair is worthwhile.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Chromebook: how to update ChromeOS

ChromeOS updates itself in the background, but it does help to check, especially if something is not working properly. Updates keep your Chromebook safe and fast.

Check for updates

1. Click the **time** in the bottom right corner.
2. Click the **Settings** cog.
3. Choose **About ChromeOS** at the bottom of the left-hand list.
4. Click **Check for updates**.

If there is an update, it will download. When it finishes, you will see a **Restart** button.

Restart to finish

An update does not apply until the Chromebook restarts. Save your work, then click **Restart**. A restart usually only takes a minute or two. You may also see an arrow or an update icon near the time. Click it and choose **Restart to update**.

Connect to power and Wi-Fi

Plug in the charger and use a stable Wi-Fi network. If you are on a mobile data connection, Chromebook may not download large updates unless you allow it.

If updates will not work

- Make sure the date and time are correct.
- Restart the Chromebook and check again.
- Free up some storage. See our storage guide.
- Try a different Wi-Fi network.

If the Chromebook is managed

At school or work, the organisation may control when updates happen. In that case you cannot change the schedule yourself.

Does it say it cannot update?

If **Check for updates** says your device is up to date, then you are on the latest version available for it. If it says your device has reached the end of its support, see our guide on Chromebook update expiry.

Updating Chrome browser

The Chrome browser updates with the system. You can also check by clicking the three dots in Chrome, then **Help**, then **About Google Chrome**.

When to get more help

Contact us if the update stops partway, if you see an error message, or if the Chromebook keeps asking to restart but never completes. Take a photo of any error message. We can guide you through the next step.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Advanced | 2 min read

Chromebook: how to Powerwash (reset) safely

A Powerwash is a factory reset for a Chromebook. It wipes the local data and returns the device to how it was when new. It can fix serious problems but should be a last resort.

Warning: this erases data

A Powerwash removes all local files, such as everything in **Downloads**, along with settings, accounts and some app data on the Chromebook. Files stored in Google Drive or in your Google account stay safe online, but only if they have synced.

Before you start

1. Open the **Files** app and copy anything you want to keep from **Downloads** to **Google Drive** or an external USB drive or SD card.
2. Check that your files appear in Google Drive on another device.
3. Write down any Wi-Fi password you need.
4. Make sure you know your Google account password. You will need it to set the Chromebook up again.
5. Plug in the charger.

Check ownership first

If the Chromebook belongs to a school or workplace, do not Powerwash it. Doing so can remove it from their system and you may be unable to use it. Ask their IT team instead.

How to Powerwash

1. Sign out of your Chromebook.
2. Press **Ctrl, Alt, Shift and R** together at the sign-in screen.
3. Choose **Restart**, then choose **Powerwash**, and then **Continue**.
4. Follow the on-screen steps and sign in with your Google account.

You can also open **Settings**, then **System preferences**, then **Reset settings** (it may be listed as **Advanced** on some versions) and choose **Powerwash**. The exact wording varies by version, so use the sign-in screen method if you cannot find it.

After the reset

Sign in with your Google account. Your apps, extensions and settings usually come back from your account, though large files will need to be copied back.

Try gentler fixes first

Restart, update, remove extensions, free space and try a different Google account before resetting.

When to get more help

Contact us before resetting if you are unsure what is saved where, if the Chromebook is managed, or if you have no way to back up your files. We can help you back up and reset.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Chromebook: how to connect a printer

Chromebooks can print to most modern printers that connect by Wi-Fi, without needing any special software. Here is how.

Before you begin

- Switch the printer on and make sure it has paper and ink.
- Connect the printer to the same Wi-Fi network as your Chromebook. Most printers have a small screen or a button that helps with this. See the printer's manual.
- If your printer is old and only works with a cable, it may not work with ChromeOS at all.

Add a printer

1. Click the **time** in the bottom right, then the **Settings** cog.
2. Choose **Advanced**, then **Printing**, then **Printers**. On some versions, you may find **Printing** directly in the list on the left.
3. Click **Add printer**.
4. If your printer appears under **Nearby printers**, click **Save** or **Add**.
5. If it does not appear, choose **Add manually**, type a name and the printer's address if you have it, and follow the steps.

Take care when typing in an address. If you do not know it, ask us.

Print something

Open a web page or document, press **Ctrl and P**, and choose your printer from the **Destination** list. Click **Print**.

If the printer is not found

- Restart the printer, the router and the Chromebook.
- Check they are on the same Wi-Fi network and not a guest network.
- Look for **AirPrint** or **IPP** or **Mopria** in the printer's description, as these work well with ChromeOS.

Printing from your phone with Google Account

Some printers can be linked with other tools. Check the printer maker's instructions.

School and work Chromebooks

If your Chromebook is managed, the organisation may control which printers you can use.

When to get more help

Contact us if the printer is not found after the steps above, if documents are stuck in a queue, or if you are unsure whether your printer supports Chromebooks. Tell us the make and model of your printer.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Chromebook: using Android apps and Google Play

Many newer Chromebooks can install Android apps from the Google Play Store, such as games and other tools. Not every Chromebook supports this, and managed Chromebooks may block it.

Is Google Play available?

1. Open **Settings**.
2. Look for **Apps** in the left-hand list.
3. If you see **Google Play Store**, you can turn it on. If you do not, your Chromebook may be too old, or the organisation may have blocked it.

Turn on Google Play

Under **Apps**, click **Google Play Store**, then **Turn on**. Read and accept the terms, and wait for it to finish. A **Play Store** icon will then appear in your launcher.

Install an app

1. Open **Play Store** from the launcher.
2. Search for the app name.
3. Check the developer name and reviews, then click **Install**.
4. When it has finished, click **Open**, or find it in the launcher.

Is it safe?

- Only install from the Play Store and only from developers you trust.
- Be wary of apps that ask for lots of permissions that they should not need.
- Do not enter bank or payment details in an app you do not trust.

Apps that do not work well

Android apps are made for phones, so some look odd on a laptop screen. If an app opens in a small window, try the maximise button or check app settings. If an app will not work, many have a website version that you can open in Chrome.

Remove an app

Right-click the app in the launcher and choose **Uninstall**.

Storage

Android apps take up storage, so remove those you do not use. See our storage guide.

Updates

Apps update from the Play Store. Open it, click your profile picture and choose **Manage apps and device**.

When to get more help

Contact us if the Play Store option is missing, if apps fail to install, or if you want to know whether a particular app works on your Chromebook. Tell us the make and model.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Easy | 2 min read

Chromebook: how to take screenshots and record your screen

Screenshots are pictures of what is on your screen. They are very helpful for showing a problem. On a Chromebook they are easy to take.

Take a full screenshot

Press **Ctrl and the Show windows key**. The Show windows key is on the top row and looks like a box with lines on its right. The whole screen is captured and a small picture appears in the bottom right.

Take part of the screen

Press **Ctrl, Shift and the Show windows key**. A small toolbar appears. You can drag to pick the area you want. You can also choose a window.

Use the Screen capture toolbar

1. Press **Ctrl, Shift and the Show windows key** to open the toolbar.
2. Choose **Screenshot** or **Screen record**.
3. Choose **Full screen**, **Partial** or **Window**.
4. Click **Capture** or **Record**.

If you cannot find the Show windows key, you can click the **time** in the bottom right and choose **Screen capture** from the quick settings panel.

Record your screen

Choose **Screen record**, then pick what to record and click **Record**. To stop, click the stop button near the bottom right. If you want your voice recorded, turn on the microphone option first. Avoid recording any passwords or private details.

Find your pictures

Click the small picture that appears, or open the **Files** app and look in **Downloads**, where the screenshots and videos are usually saved. You can also paste a copied picture straight into an email.

Tips

- Some tablets and Chromebooks with a touchscreen can use the power and volume down buttons together.
- Check what is shown before you share. Hide email addresses and account numbers.

Attach it to a support request

You can add a screenshot to a request in the Vision Tech App, which helps us to fix faults faster.

When to get more help

Contact us if the shortcuts do nothing, if the screen capture option is missing (it may be limited on managed Chromebooks), or if you cannot find where the files are saved.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Chromebook: automatic update expiry (AUE) explained

Every Chromebook has an end date for updates, called the Auto Update Expiration (AUE) date. After this date, Google no longer provides new ChromeOS updates for that model. It is important to know before you buy or when you are planning to replace one.

What it means

The Chromebook will still switch on and work after the date. But it stops getting security fixes and new features. Over time, some websites, apps and school or work services may stop working properly, and it becomes less safe to use for banking or shopping online.

How long do updates last?

Google has said that newer Chromebooks released from 2021 onward receive updates for ten years from the date the model was released, and older models had a shorter period, often around eight years. The end date is counted from when the model first launched, not from when you bought it. A Chromebook bought new today could therefore have fewer years left than you expect if it is an older model. Dates can change, so always check your own device.

How to check your date

1. Click the **time** in the bottom right, then the **Settings** cog.
2. Choose **About ChromeOS**.
3. Click **Additional details**.
4. Look for **Auto Update expiration date** (or similar wording such as **Update schedule**). The date is shown there.

If you cannot see it, search for the model name and "Auto Update Expiration" on Google's Chromebook help pages. The model name is on the same About screen or under the device.

Before you buy

Check the AUE date for the exact model on Google's list. Avoid buying second-hand Chromebooks without checking.

What to do when the date arrives

- You may keep using it for light, offline tasks with care.
- Avoid entering sensitive details on it.
- Back up your files to Google Drive.
- Plan a replacement.

Some people try to install other systems on old Chromebooks. This can be risky and may erase everything, so ask us first.

When to get more help

Contact us if your date is close, if the Chromebook says it has reached the end of support, or if you need help choosing a replacement and moving your files across.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.