

Vision Tech

Printers, monitors & devices Handbook

27 free step-by-step guides in plain English

Free to print and share.

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Printers, monitors & devices | Easy | 2 min read

My printer will not print

A printer that will not print is usually down to a connection, a paper or ink problem, or a stuck print job. Work through these steps from the simplest.

Quick fixes to try first

- Check the printer is switched on and shows no error lights or messages.
- Check there is paper, that it is loaded straight, and that there is no jam. Gently remove any paper stuck inside.
- Check the ink or toner. Some printers will not print at all if one colour is empty.
- Switch the printer off and on again, and restart your computer.

Step by step

1. If it connects by Wi-Fi, check it is joined to the same network as your computer. If it uses a cable, push both ends in firmly.
2. Open the print queue. Windows 11: open **Settings**, then **Bluetooth & devices**, then **Printers & scanners**. Windows 10: open **Settings**, then **Devices**, then **Printers & scanners**. Choose your printer, then **Open print queue**.
3. If an old job is stuck, cancel it from that window. Warning: this removes the job, so you will need to print it again.
4. Mac: open **System Settings**, then **Printers & Scanners**, choose your printer and look at its queue. Older versions use **System Preferences**.
5. Try printing a test page from the printer's own settings.

If that did not work

- Check your printer is chosen as the default, and not something like "Save as PDF".
- Look for a printer update from the maker's official website, typed in yourself. Do not download from adverts.
- iPhone: AirPrint printers should show in the share and print menu when on the same Wi-Fi.

When to get more help

Stop and ask for help if the printer makes grinding noises, shows an error code you cannot clear, smells hot or burnt, or is not found even after a restart of everything. Tell us the make and model, how it connects, and any message on its screen or yours.

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.

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My printer says it is offline

When a printer shows as offline, your computer has lost contact with it, even though the printer may look perfectly fine. This is very common and usually quick to put right.

Check the basics first

- Make sure the printer is switched on and the screen shows no error message.
- If it uses a USB cable, check both ends are pushed in firmly.
- If it is wireless, look for a Wi-Fi or network light on the printer. A light that is off or flashing often means it has lost its connection.

Restart everything

Restarting clears most temporary faults. Do it in this order:

1. Turn the printer off and leave it for 30 seconds.
2. Restart your computer.
3. Restart your Wi-Fi router if the printer is wireless.
4. Switch the printer back on and wait until it settles and its Wi-Fi light is steady.
5. Try printing a test page.

Check the printer is selected properly

On Windows, open **Settings**, then **Bluetooth & devices**, then **Printers & scanners**, and choose your printer. Look for an option such as **Open print queue**. In the queue window, check that **Use Printer Offline** is not ticked if that option appears. The exact wording can vary between Windows versions.

On a Mac, open **System Settings**, then **Printers & Scanners**, and check your printer is listed. If it is not, you can usually remove it and add it again with the **Add Printer** button.

Wireless printers

If the printer has moved, or you have a new router or changed your Wi-Fi password, it may need reconnecting. See our guides on connecting a printer to Wi-Fi and setting up a wireless printer.

Also check your computer and printer are on the same Wi-Fi network, not a main one and a guest one.

When to get more help

If the printer still shows offline after a restart and re-adding it, there may be a driver or network problem that is hard to spot. Please do not keep changing settings at random. Make a note of the printer make and model and what the screen or lights show, and we can take it from there.

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.

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My printer will not connect to Wi-Fi

A wireless printer can only work if it is joined to the same Wi-Fi as your computer or phone. When it will not connect, the fault is usually with the password, the Wi-Fi band or the router rather than the printer itself.

Common reasons

- The Wi-Fi password was changed or typed wrongly
- You have a new router
- The printer is too far from the router
- The router is on a different network name from your computer
- Some printers can only use the 2.4 GHz band, so they cannot see a 5 GHz-only network

Step 1: Restart

1. Turn the printer off.
2. Unplug your router for 30 seconds, then plug it back in.
3. Wait a few minutes for the router to come back fully.
4. Turn the printer on.

Step 2: Move it closer

Place the printer near the router for now. Thick walls and distance weaken the signal. Once it connects, you can try moving it back.

Step 3: Connect it again

On most printers, there is a **Wi-Fi** or **Wireless** setup option in the printer menu or on its screen. Choose your network name from the list and type the password carefully. Passwords are case-sensitive, so capital letters matter. Some printers also offer a button-press method with your router, often called WPS. Check your printer manual, as it varies.

If your router offers separate names for 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz, choose the 2.4 GHz one for the printer if the other will not work.

Step 4: Check the computer

Make sure your computer is on the same network. Then try printing a test page.

What to avoid

Do not keep resetting the printer to factory settings unless you have to. It removes all saved settings and means starting setup again.

When to get more help

If the printer still will not join, the router may be blocking it, or the printer's wireless part may have a fault. Have your Wi-Fi name ready and the printer make and model, but please keep your Wi-Fi password private and only share it with someone you trust.

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.

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How to reinstall a printer driver

A driver is the small piece of software that lets your computer talk to the printer. If printing is odd, or the printer is not found, removing it and installing it again often fixes the problem.

Before you begin

- Note down your printer's make and model, usually on the front or back.
- Make sure you are online, as the new software may need downloading.
- Make sure the printer is switched on, and connected by USB or Wi-Fi.

Step 1: Remove the printer (Windows)

1. Open **Settings**, then **Bluetooth & devices**, then **Printers & scanners**.
2. Choose your printer, then select **Remove**.
3. Next, open **Settings**, then **Apps**, then **Installed apps**. If you see software with your printer's name, you can choose to uninstall it. Windows menu names vary between versions, so look carefully.
4. Restart the computer.

Step 2: Remove the printer (Mac)

1. Open **System Settings**, then **Printers & Scanners**.
2. Select the printer and use the **minus (-)** button to remove it.
3. Restart the Mac.

Step 3: Add it again

Connect the printer, then use **Add device** on Windows or **Add Printer** on Mac. For most modern printers, the computer finds the right driver automatically.

If you need the maker's software, go to the printer maker's own website, search for your exact model and choose the download for your system. Avoid sites that offer "driver updater" tools or look like adverts. They can bring in unwanted software.

Step 4: Test

Print a test page and a simple document.

Good to know

Some printers have both a standard driver and a fuller package with scanning tools. If the simple version works, you may not need the extra software.

When to get more help

If the driver will not install, or you see an error message, write down the exact words and the model, and stop there. Repeated installing can leave a mess behind that is harder to clear, and we can do it for you.

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.

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How to clear a stuck print queue

Sometimes a print job gets stuck, and everything behind it waits. New jobs do not print, and the stuck one cannot be cancelled. Clearing the queue usually solves this.

Step 1: Try the easy way

On Windows, open **Settings**, then **Bluetooth & devices**, then **Printers & scanners**, and select your printer. Choose **Open print queue**. Right-click the stuck job and choose **Cancel**. Try **Cancel All Documents**, which is often under the **Printer** menu in that window.

On a Mac, open **System Settings**, then **Printers & Scanners**, select the printer and choose **Open Print Queue**. Select the job and click the **X** button to delete it.

Step 2: Restart the printer

If the job still shows, turn the printer off and on. Some printers hold a job in their own memory, and a restart clears it.

Step 3: Restart the print service on Windows

If a job refuses to go, the Windows print service can be restarted. This is a little more technical, so go slowly.

1. Press the **Windows** key, type **Services** and open the app of that name.
2. Find **Print Spooler** in the list.
3. Right-click it and choose **Stop**.
4. Leave the window open and, in File Explorer, go to the spool folder for printing, which is normally inside the Windows system folders. Delete only the files inside it, not the folder.
5. Go back to **Services**, right-click **Print Spooler** and choose **Start**.

If you are unsure about step 4, stop here and ask for help rather than guessing.

Step 4: Mac

Resetting the printing system is possible on a Mac, but it removes all printers and you must add them back. Only do this if you are happy to re-add them.

Why it happens

A job may be stuck because a file was damaged, the printer went offline halfway, or a very large file was sent.

When to get more help

If new jobs get stuck again straight away, the printer or its driver may be at fault. Tell us what you printed, the printer model and any message shown.

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.

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My printer prints blank or very faint pages

Blank or pale pages are frustrating, and the cause is often simple. Work through these checks before buying new ink or toner.

Check the ink or toner levels

Look at the printer screen, or the printer software on your computer, to see the estimated levels. These are only estimates, so a cartridge shown as low may still print, and one shown as full could still be faulty.

Remove protective tape

New cartridges sometimes have a plastic tab, tape or cap that must be removed. If you have just fitted one, take it out and check. Handle cartridges by their edges and avoid touching any metal contacts.

Check the paper

- Make sure the paper is the right way up. Most printers print on one side only, and the paper packet usually shows an arrow.
- Use fresh, dry paper. Damp paper can print poorly.
- Check the paper type setting in the print window matches what you loaded, such as plain paper.

Run the printer's own clean and test

Most printers have a menu, either on the printer screen or in its software, with options such as **Nozzle check**, **Print head cleaning** or **Test page**. The names differ between makes, so look through the printer menu or manual. Print a test page, and if it is patchy, run one cleaning cycle and test again.

Cleaning uses ink, so try one or two cycles, then stop.

Try a different document

Print a simple page of text. If that works, the fault is in the original file, not the printer.

Laser printers

If a laser printer prints faint pages, the toner may be running low. Follow your manual for replacing the cartridge, and do not open anything else. Never touch the hot parts inside, as they stay hot after use.

When to get more help

If test pages are still blank after fitting a good cartridge, the print head or another internal part may have failed. Please do not take the printer apart. Tell us the make and model and what you have already tried, and we will advise whether a repair makes 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.

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Streaky prints and cleaning the print heads

Lines, bands or missing colours across your prints usually mean the nozzles that spray ink are partly blocked. This is most common on inkjet printers that are not used regularly.

What the problem looks like

- White or coloured lines running across the page
- A colour missing or the wrong shade, such as pictures looking too green
- Text that looks fuzzy or has gaps in it

On a laser printer, streaks are more often caused by the toner cartridge or drum, which is a different fix. See the last section.

Print a nozzle check

Most inkjet printers have a built-in **Nozzle check** or **Test pattern**. It may be on the printer screen or in the printer software on your computer. The wording differs between makes, so look through the menus. The test page shows whether any colour is missing or broken.

Clean the print head

1. Make sure there is paper loaded and enough ink.
2. Find the option often called **Print head cleaning** or **Clean heads**.
3. Run one cleaning cycle and wait for it to finish.
4. Print the test page again.
5. If it is still poor, run one more cycle, then wait a few hours before testing again.

Do not run cleaning many times in a row. Each cycle uses a lot of ink, and it can make the waste ink pad fill up faster.

Help prevent it happening again

- Print something in colour at least once a week.
- Turn the printer off using its own power button, not at the wall, so it can seal the print head properly.
- Keep it away from direct sunlight and radiators.

Laser printers

Streaks on a laser printer usually point to the toner cartridge or drum. Switch off, let the printer cool fully, and follow your manual to replace the cartridge. Do not touch the hot parts inside.

When to get more help

If streaks remain after two cleans and a fresh cartridge, the print head may be worn or damaged. Some printers have heads that can be replaced, others do not. Contact us with the make and model, and we can tell you whether a repair is worth it.

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.

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How to clear a paper jam safely

Paper jams happen to every printer. Pulling the wrong way can damage it, so a calm, gentle approach is best.

Before you start

- Turn the printer off and unplug it if you can reach the plug easily.
- If you have just been printing, wait several minutes. Some parts inside get very hot, particularly in laser printers.
- Never use tools, knives or tweezers inside the printer.

Find the jam

Most printers show where the jam is on the screen, or with a flashing light. Common places are:

- The paper tray at the front or bottom
- The rear cover or flap
- The area behind the front door or lid
- The sheet feeder at the top, on printers with a document feeder

Remove the paper gently

1. Open the tray or cover that the printer shows. Use only the doors and flaps meant to be opened.
2. Take hold of the paper with both hands, if you can.
3. Pull it out slowly and steadily, in the direction the paper normally travels. Pulling slowly helps stop it tearing.
4. If it tears, find and remove every bit. A small scrap left inside will cause the next jam.
5. Close all covers firmly.

Do not reach into dark areas inside a laser printer. The fuser, which heats up to melt toner onto the paper, can burn you. If the paper is stuck there, stop and get help.

Stop it happening again

- Fan the paper before loading, and do not overfill the tray.
- Do not mix old and new paper, and avoid damp, curled or folded sheets.
- Slide the paper guides gently against the edges of the stack.
- Use the paper size and type the printer recommends.

When to get more help

If jams keep happening with fresh paper, or you can hear grinding, or you cannot reach the paper, please stop. Pushing on may damage the rollers. Tell us the make and model and where the paper is stuck.

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.

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My printer says the ink is not recognised or not genuine

Sometimes a printer shows a message saying a cartridge is not recognised, is not genuine, or cannot be used. It looks alarming, but there are a few possible causes.

Why it can happen

- The cartridge is not fitted properly
- The contacts on the cartridge are dirty
- The cartridge is the wrong type for your printer
- It is a compatible or refilled cartridge, and the printer is set to reject those
- The cartridge was used in a different printer, or has been registered to another account

Simple checks first

1. Turn the printer off, then take the cartridge out.
2. Check the model number printed on the cartridge matches your printer's manual.
3. Look at the metal contacts. If they look dusty, wipe gently with a dry, lint-free cloth. Do not use water or cleaners.
4. Put it back until it clicks, then switch the printer on.

Genuine or compatible ink: a fair view

Genuine cartridges from the printer maker are made to work with your printer, and are the safest choice if you want no fuss. They tend to cost more.

Compatible cartridges from other companies are cheaper, and many people use them with no problems. However, some printers are designed to refuse them, and a software update can make a cartridge that worked yesterday stop working today. Quality varies too, and a poor cartridge can leak or give weaker colours.

It is your choice. If you buy compatible ones, buy from a seller with a clear returns policy, so you can get your money back if the printer rejects them.

Be careful with updates

Printer updates may block certain cartridges. If you rely on compatible ones, check your seller's advice before accepting a printer update.

What to avoid

Do not try to bypass messages by taping over contacts or using unknown tricks. They can damage the printer.

When to get more help

If a cartridge from the maker is still rejected, the printer may have a fault. Please tell us the make and model, the exact words on the screen, and where the cartridge came from.

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.

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How to set up a new wireless printer

Setting up a wireless printer takes about 15 minutes if you do things in the right order. The steps below are general, as each make has its own setup screens, so also check the leaflet in the box.

Before you begin

- Find a spot near your router with a power socket.
- Have your Wi-Fi name and password to hand. They are often on a sticker on the router.
- Make sure your computer or phone is on that same Wi-Fi.

Prepare the printer

1. Remove all packing tape and plastic from outside and inside, as shown in the leaflet.
2. Plug it in and switch it on.
3. Fit the ink or toner cartridges that came with it, following the instructions on screen.
4. Load plain paper in the tray.
5. Wait while it prepares itself. This can take several minutes the first time.

Connect it to Wi-Fi

On most printers, the screen guides you through a **Wi-Fi setup** or **Wireless setup** menu. Pick your network and type the password. When connected, a light usually stops flashing and stays steady. Some printers without a screen use a button-based method or a phone app instead.

Add it to your computer

On Windows, open **Settings**, then **Bluetooth & devices**, then **Printers & scanners**, and choose **Add device**. Wait for the printer to appear, then select it.

On a Mac, open **System Settings**, then **Printers & Scanners**, and use **Add Printer**. Most modern printers show up automatically.

The maker's website, or app, can also provide the full software and extra features such as scanning. Only download these from the printer maker's own website, and be careful of search results that look like adverts.

Print a test page

Print a test page from the printer menu, then print something from your computer.

When to get more help

If the printer is not found, or the setup keeps failing, a quick look by someone experienced often finds the cause. Please keep the box and leaflet handy and have the model number ready.

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.

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How to scan a document to your computer or email

Scanning turns a paper page into a file on your computer. Most modern printers can scan, and there are a few ways to do it.

Which method is easiest?

- **From the printer:** Some printers can scan and send the file by email or save it to a computer on your network. This needs setting up first.
- **From your computer:** Use the scanning app on your computer to pull the page in. This is often the simplest.
- **From your phone:** Your phone camera can scan a document with its built-in scanner or notes app.

Scanning with Windows

1. Place the page face down on the glass, lined up with the corner marks. Or load it in the feeder if your printer has one.
2. Open the **Start** menu and look for the **Scan** app. If it is missing, search for Windows Scan in the Microsoft Store.
3. Pick your scanner, choose the file type and use **Preview** to check it.
4. Select **Scan**, then save it somewhere you can find it, such as Documents.

Scanning with a Mac

1. Place the page on the glass.
2. Open **System Settings**, then **Printers & Scanners**, select your printer and look for a **Scan** tab or the **Open Scanner** button.
3. Use **Show Details** if you want more choices, then press **Scan**.

The Mac **Image Capture** app can also be used with many scanners.

Choosing a file type

Choose PDF for letters and forms. Use JPEG for photos. A resolution of around 200 to 300 is fine for most paperwork. A higher number makes a larger file.

Sending by email

Once saved, attach the file to a new email as usual. Check the file size, as very large scans may not send.

Keep private papers safe

Scans of ID or bank letters should not be left in obvious folders or emailed unprotected. Delete them once they are no longer needed.

When to get more help

If your computer cannot see the scanner, you may need to reinstall the printer software or check the connection. Tell us the make and model and which method you were trying.

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.

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How to print from your phone or tablet

You can print straight from a phone or tablet without a computer, as long as your printer is on Wi-Fi and supports wireless printing from mobile devices.

What you need

- A printer joined to your home Wi-Fi
- Your phone or tablet on the same Wi-Fi
- A printer that supports **AirPrint** (Apple) or **Mopria** (Android). Many modern printers do. Check the box, the manual or the maker's website for your model.

iPhone and iPad (AirPrint)

1. Open the photo, web page or document you want to print.
2. Tap the **Share** button, which looks like a square with an arrow.
3. Scroll down and tap **Print**.
4. Tap **Select Printer** and choose yours from the list.
5. Choose the number of copies, then tap **Print**.

If your printer is missing, check both devices are on the same Wi-Fi, and that the printer is switched on.

Android phones and tablets

On many Android devices, printing is built in. Look for a **Print** option in the three-dot menu or Share menu of an app. Menus differ between phone makes and Android versions, so it may be slightly different on yours. Look for a service called **Mopria Print Service** if your printer needs it.

Using the printer maker's app

Most printer makers also have a free app that can print and scan. Download it only from the official App Store or Google Play, and check that the developer is the printer maker.

If it does not work

- Restart the printer and your phone
- Make sure the printer is not asleep or showing an error
- Check guest Wi-Fi, as some guest networks stop devices seeing each other

When to get more help

If your printer does not show up on any device, it may not support wireless mobile printing, or there may be a network setting stopping it. Tell us the make and model and we can check.

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.

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How to set up a second monitor

A second screen gives you more room to work, for example email on one and a document on the other. Setting one up is usually simple.

What you need

- A second monitor with its power lead
- A cable to join it to your computer, such as HDMI, DisplayPort or USB-C. See our guide on cables explained.
- A spare video port on your computer

Check which sockets your computer has, and which your monitor has. They do not always match, so you may need an adaptor or a different cable.

Connect it

1. Switch the monitor on and plug in the power.
2. Join the video cable to the monitor and the computer.
3. Use the monitor's buttons to choose the correct input, such as HDMI 1 or DisplayPort.
4. Wait a few seconds. The computer normally detects it on its own.

Choose how it is used on Windows

Press the **Windows** key and **P** together. You will see these choices:

- **Duplicate** shows the same on both screens
- **Extend** gives you one large desktop across both
- **Second screen only** and **PC screen only**

Most people choose **Extend**.

To set which screen is on the left or right, open **Settings**, then **System**, then **Display**. Drag the numbered boxes into the same order as your screens on the desk.

Choose how it is used on a Mac

Open **System Settings**, then **Displays**. Your second screen should be listed. Look for an option to use it as an extended display or to mirror. In the arrangement area, drag the screens into the same order as on your desk.

If the screen stays blank

Check the cable is firm, the input is right and the monitor is switched on. Try a different cable or port. See our guide on a monitor saying no signal.

When to get more help

If your computer only has one video port, or the cable shapes do not match, we can recommend the right adaptor. Tell us the make and model of the computer and the monitor.

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.

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My monitor says no signal

"No signal" means the monitor is working but is not getting a picture from the computer. The fault is often a loose cable or the wrong input.

Check the computer first

- Make sure the computer itself is on. Look for lights or listen for the fan.
- Move the mouse or press a key, as it may be asleep.
- If it is a laptop, try pressing the **Windows** key and **P** to switch the display mode, as it may be sending the picture elsewhere.

Check the cable

1. Turn the monitor off.
2. Unplug the video cable at both ends and plug it back in firmly.
3. If it has screws, tighten them gently by hand.
4. Switch the monitor back on.

If you have a spare cable, try it. Cables do fail.

Check the monitor input

Monitors often have several inputs, such as HDMI 1, HDMI 2 and DisplayPort. Use the monitor's buttons to open its menu and choose **Input** or **Source**. Pick the one your cable is plugged into. Some monitors have an auto option, which can sometimes pick wrongly.

Use the right socket on desktop computers

On a desktop computer, there may be video sockets on the graphics card and also on the motherboard. If your computer has a separate graphics card, the cable normally goes into the card, not the one above it. If you are not sure, check the manual rather than moving things around inside.

Try a restart

Turn the computer off, wait 30 seconds, unplug the monitor power lead for a minute and then start again, with the monitor switched on first.

Test another way

If you can, try the monitor with another computer, or your computer on a TV. This shows whether the fault is with the screen or the computer.

When to get more help

If you still have no signal with a good cable and the right input, either the monitor or the computer's graphics may have a fault. Please do not open the computer. Tell us what you see, including any beeps or lights, and the makes of the monitor and computer.

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.

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My screen looks blurry or the wrong size

If text looks fuzzy, icons are huge or everything seems stretched, the screen resolution or scaling is probably set wrongly. This is usually easy to fix.

What resolution means

Resolution is the number of tiny dots your screen shows, such as 1920 by 1080. Every monitor has a best setting, called its native resolution. If the computer uses a different one, the picture looks soft or stretched.

Fix it on Windows

1. Right-click an empty part of the desktop and choose **Display settings**. Or open **Settings**, then **System**, then **Display**.
2. Find **Display resolution**.
3. Choose the one marked **Recommended**.
4. Choose **Keep changes** if the picture looks sharp.

If the text is sharp but too small, do not lower the resolution. Instead, use **Scale** in the same screen and try a larger percentage.

Fix it on a Mac

Open **System Settings**, then **Displays**. Choose the default setting for your display if offered. Some Macs show options such as larger text or more space. Choose the one that suits your eyes.

If there is no good choice

- Check you are using a proper cable, as an old or poor cable can limit quality. HDMI or DisplayPort is usually better than the old VGA type.
- Make sure the monitor is on the right input.
- Unplug extra adaptors if you can, as some cheap ones limit the picture.

Stretched picture on a TV or monitor

Look for options on the screen itself, such as **Aspect ratio** or **Fit to screen**. Set them to the native or full-size choice. Exact names vary.

When to get more help

If the recommended resolution is missing, the graphics software may need attention. Please do not install driver tools from adverts. Tell us the monitor and computer make and model and we can help safely.

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.

Printers, monitors & devices | Medium | 2 min read

My monitor flickers or flashes

A flickering screen is distracting and can cause headaches. The cause may be a cable, a setting, or occasionally a fault.

Look at when it happens

- All the time, or only sometimes?
- Only with one program, such as a game or video?
- Does it also happen on the laptop's built-in screen? If so, the monitor is probably not the cause.

Step 1: Check the cable

1. Turn the monitor off.
2. Unplug the video cable and plug it in again at both ends.
3. Look for bent pins or damage.
4. If you can, swap in a different cable. A worn cable is a very common cause.

Step 2: Check the power

Make sure the monitor power lead is pushed in firmly. If it is on an extension lead with many items, try plugging it into a different socket. Keep it away from large speakers or motors, which can interfere with the picture.

Step 3: Check the refresh rate

The refresh rate is how often the picture is redrawn. A wrong one can cause flicker.

On Windows, open **Settings**, then **System**, then **Display**, then **Advanced display**. Look for **Choose a refresh rate** and try the highest one on offer, or 60 Hz if unsure. Menu wording can differ by version.

On a Mac, open **System Settings**, then **Displays** and look for a **Refresh rate** option, where available.

Step 4: Restart and update

Restart the computer and install any waiting system updates. These sometimes fix display faults. Then try the monitor on a different computer. If it still flickers there, the monitor is likely at fault.

What to avoid

Do not open the monitor or its power adaptor. Even when switched off, parts inside can hold dangerous electricity.

When to get more help

If the flicker continues after a new cable and checking settings, we can help find out if the screen or the computer is at fault. Note the make and model and when it happens.

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.

Printers, monitors & devices | Easy | 2 min read

Cables explained: HDMI, USB-C and DisplayPort

Cables look alike, but they do different jobs. Knowing the basics can save you buying the wrong one.

HDMI

HDMI carries both picture and sound. It is found on televisions, monitors, games consoles and many laptops. If you want to connect a laptop to a TV, HDMI is usually the easiest choice.

DisplayPort

DisplayPort also carries picture and sound and is common on computer monitors. The plug looks a bit like HDMI but has one corner cut off squarely. You cannot plug a DisplayPort cable into an HDMI socket, but a special adaptor or cable can join them. Check which way the adaptor works before buying.

USB-C

USB-C is a small, oval plug that works either way up. What it does depends on the device it is plugged into. It can carry charging, data and sometimes video too. Unfortunately, not all USB-C ports or cables do everything. A cable that charges your phone may not carry a picture. Look for a small symbol next to the port, or check the manual.

Older plugs

The larger rectangular USB-A plug is still very common on mice, keyboards and memory sticks. VGA and DVI are older, chunky plugs with screws. VGA carries picture only and can look soft on modern screens. If you have a choice, use HDMI or DisplayPort instead.

Tips when buying

1. Check the sockets on both devices first.
2. Decide what you want to do, such as charge, show a picture or move files.
3. Avoid very cheap cables if you have trouble with flickering or dropouts.
4. Keep the cables that come with devices, as they are usually the right ones.

Looking after cables

Do not bend them sharply or pull on the lead rather than the plug. Do not use a cable with exposed wires or a bent plug.

When to get more help

If you are not sure which cable or adaptor you need, send us the makes and models of both devices and what you want to do, and we can point you to 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.

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My computer does not recognise a USB device

You plug something in, such as a printer, mouse or memory stick, and the computer ignores it or says it is not recognised. There are a few steps that fix most cases.

Try the quick things first

1. Unplug the device, wait 10 seconds and plug it in again.
2. Try a different USB port. On a desktop computer, ports on the back are often more reliable than ones on the front.
3. Try a different cable if the device uses one. Some cables only carry power and not data.
4. Plug it straight into the computer, not into a hub or a long extension.
5. Restart the computer with the device unplugged, then plug it in once it has started.

Check for power problems

Some devices, such as external hard drives and certain hubs, need a lot of power. If your device has its own power lead, make sure it is plugged in and switched on. Unplug other USB items to see if that helps.

Look at the computer's device list

On Windows, right-click the **Start** button and choose **Device Manager**. Look for devices with a yellow warning symbol. If you see one, right-click it and look at its options. A choice to update or reinstall the driver may appear. Names differ slightly between versions.

On a Mac, click the Apple menu, hold the **Option** key and choose **System Information**, then look for **USB** in the list on the left. If your device appears there, the Mac can see it.

Test it elsewhere

Try the device on another computer. If it fails there too, the device or cable may be faulty.

Be careful

- Do not use "driver fixer" programs from adverts
- Do not download software from random websites
- If the device is a memory stick or drive with your files, do not accept any message to format it

When to get more help

If a device with important files is not recognised, stop trying new things and contact us. Repeated attempts can sometimes make data harder to recover. Tell us the type of device and what message you see.

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.

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My USB drive is not showing or asks me to format it

Seeing a message such as "You need to format the disk before you can use it" is worrying. Please do not click Format. Doing so usually wipes the files.

Important first rule

That message often means the computer cannot read the drive, not that the drive is empty. Your files may still be there and recoverable. Formatting would erase the way the files are listed and make recovery much harder.

If the drive holds anything important, such as photos, work or documents, stop here and get help.

What to do

1. Click **Cancel** or close the message. Do not choose **Format disk**.
2. Remove the drive safely, if you can.
3. Try a different USB port and, if possible, a different computer.
4. Try plugging it in directly, not through a hub.

Check if the drive is seen at all

On Windows, right-click the **Start** button and choose **Disk Management**. Look for your drive in the list. Do not delete or format anything you see there.

On a Mac, open **Disk Utility** from Applications, then Utilities. If the drive appears in the left list, the Mac can see it, even if it will not open. Avoid choosing **Erase**.

Common causes

- The drive was pulled out without being ejected
- The file system is damaged
- It was last used on a different type of computer
- The memory stick or drive is wearing out

What not to do

- Do not format or erase
- Do not run repair programs from adverts
- Do not keep re-plugging it many times if it makes odd noises

If it is a drive you do not need

If it is a blank drive with nothing you need on it, formatting is safe. Be sure first.

When to get more help

If the files matter, contact us before trying anything else. We can often copy data off safely. Tell us what the message says, and whether the drive was recently removed without ejecting.

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.

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How to safely remove a USB drive or external hard drive

Pulling out a drive while the computer is still using it can damage the files or the drive. Taking a few seconds to eject it first helps keep your data safe.

Why it matters

Your computer often keeps writing small bits of data to a drive in the background, even after a copy looks finished. If you pull it out too soon, files may be lost or damaged, and the drive may ask to be repaired or formatted next time.

On Windows

1. Finish copying or saving, and close any files stored on the drive.
2. Look at the right side of the taskbar, near the clock. You may need to click the small **up arrow** to show hidden icons.
3. Click the **Safely Remove Hardware and Eject Media** icon, which looks like a USB plug.
4. Choose your drive from the list.
5. Wait for the message saying it is safe to remove, then unplug it.

You can also open **File Explorer**, right-click the drive and choose **Eject**.

On a Mac

1. Close any open files on the drive.
2. Open **Finder** and look in the sidebar for the drive.
3. Click the small **eject** symbol next to it.
4. Wait until the drive disappears, then unplug it.

If it says the drive is in use

- Close any programs or windows that might be using it
- Wait a minute and try again
- As a last resort, shut the computer down fully and then unplug the drive

External hard drives

Wait for the drive to stop spinning, if it has moving parts, before moving it. Do not knock or carry it while it is running.

When to get more help

If a drive has been removed without ejecting and now shows errors or will not open, do not format it. Contact us and tell us what the message says so we can try to save your files.

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.

Printers, monitors & devices | Medium | 2 min read

My external hard drive is clicking or beeping

An external hard drive that clicks, grinds or beeps is warning you of a problem. The most important advice is to stop using it straight away.

What the sounds can mean

A hard drive with spinning parts normally makes a soft whirring or occasional gentle sounds. These are not normal:

- Repeated clicking or ticking
- Grinding or scraping
- Loud beeping
- The drive spinning up and down again and again

These often mean a part inside is failing or damaged. Drives with no moving parts, called solid state drives, are silent, so this guide applies to the older spinning type.

What to do right now

1. Stop using the drive. Do not try to copy more files.
2. Safely eject it if the computer will let you. If not, switch off the computer and unplug the drive.
3. Do not shake it, tap it or put it in a freezer. Freezing is an old myth and can make things worse.
4. Do not keep plugging it in to see if it works. Each try can cause more damage.

What not to do

- Do not open the drive. The inside is very delicate and dust ruins it.
- Do not run repair or format programs.
- Do not drop or knock it while it is running.

If you have a backup

If your files are safely stored somewhere else, you can replace the drive. Make sure that you really do have a recent copy and can open it.

If you do not have a backup

Do not panic. A specialist can often recover data from a failing drive, but the sooner you stop using it, the better the chance. It can cost money and does not always work, so we can talk you through the options.

Prevent it happening again

Keep at least two copies of anything important. See our guide on backing up your files.

When to get more help

Please contact us before trying anything else. Tell us the make of the drive, what you hear, and what is on it. Leave it unplugged until we speak.

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.

Printers, monitors & devices | Medium | 2 min read

My camera or microphone is not working on video calls

When your camera or microphone does not work on a video call, it is usually down to a permission, the wrong device being chosen, or another app already using it. Most fixes are quick.

Quick fixes to try first

- Look for a physical camera cover or switch, or a mute button on a headset or keyboard.
- In the call app, check the camera and microphone buttons are not crossed out.
- Close other apps that might be using the camera or microphone, such as other video call apps.
- Restart the call app, or your computer.

Step by step

1. In the call app, open its settings and check the right camera, microphone and speakers are chosen. Laptops often have more than one.
2. Check permissions. Windows 11: open **Settings**, then **Privacy & security**, then **Camera** or **Microphone**. Windows 10: open **Settings**, then **Privacy**, then **Camera** or **Microphone**. Make sure access is on, and allowed for your app.
3. Mac: open **System Settings**, then **Privacy & Security**, then **Camera** or **Microphone**, and make sure your app is switched on.
4. On a website call, look for a camera icon in the browser's address bar. Click it and choose to allow access.
5. iPhone: open **Settings**, find the app in the list, and check **Camera** and **Microphone** are on. Android: open **Settings**, then **Apps**, choose the app, then **Permissions**.
6. Try the call again after each change.

Good to know

Updating the call app and your device can fix many problems. If you use an external webcam or headset, try a different USB port and check it is plugged in firmly.

When to get more help

Stop and ask for help if no camera appears anywhere in the device list, the camera works in one app but never in others, or you hear nothing even on headphones. Please do not download "driver" programs from adverts. Tell us the device, the app you use and what you see.

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.

Printers, monitors & devices | Easy | 2 min read

Bluetooth will not connect

Bluetooth lets devices such as headphones, speakers and keyboards connect without cables. When it will not connect, the usual causes are the device not being in pairing mode, being out of range, or an old pairing that has gone wrong.

Quick fixes to try first

- Check the Bluetooth device is charged and switched on.
- Make sure Bluetooth is on for your phone or computer.
- Bring them close together, within a metre or two, and away from other devices.
- Switch Bluetooth off and on again on your phone or computer.

Step by step

1. Put the accessory in pairing mode. This usually means holding its power or Bluetooth button until a light flashes. Check its instructions, as buttons differ.
2. iPhone: open **Settings**, then **Bluetooth**. Android: open **Settings**, then **Connected devices**, though this varies by make. Look for the device under available devices and tap it.
3. Windows 11: open **Settings**, then **Bluetooth & devices**, then **Add device**. Windows 10: open **Settings**, then **Devices**, then **Bluetooth & other devices**.
4. Mac: open **System Settings**, then **Bluetooth**, and click **Connect** next to the device.
5. If it will not connect, find it in the list, choose **Forget** or **Remove device**, and pair again from the start.
6. Restart both devices and try once more.

Good to know

- Most headphones can connect to only one or two devices at once. Switch the others off first.
- Some devices need to be reset to pair again. The instructions for the device will explain how, and this is usually safe.
- Keep your device software up to date.

When to get more help

Stop and ask for help if the accessory will not appear anywhere, it works with other devices but not yours, or the battery gets very hot. Contact the maker if the accessory itself seems faulty. Tell us the device, your phone or computer and what happens.

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.

Printers, monitors & devices | Easy | 2 min read

Wireless mouse or keyboard not working: pairing and batteries

Wireless mice and keyboards are handy, but they can stop working because of flat batteries or a lost connection. Most faults are quick to put right.

Start with the batteries

This is the most common cause.

1. Switch the device off, using the switch underneath if there is one.
2. Replace the batteries with fresh ones of the same type, making sure the plus and minus ends face the right way.
3. Switch it back on.

If it is rechargeable, charge it for at least an hour, using the cable it came with. If a battery looks swollen or leaks, stop using it and dispose of it safely.

Check the type of connection

Wireless devices connect in one of two ways:

- **A USB receiver**, which is a tiny plug in the computer, often kept in a slot on the mouse
- **Bluetooth**, with no receiver

If it uses a USB receiver

1. Unplug the receiver and plug it into a different USB port.
2. Move it closer, ideally within a metre or so.
3. Check the device is switched on.
4. Some devices have a small **Connect** button. Press it as the leaflet describes.

If it uses Bluetooth

On Windows, open **Settings**, then **Bluetooth & devices**. On a Mac, open **System Settings**, then **Bluetooth**. If the device is listed but not working, remove it and add it again. Put the mouse or keyboard into pairing mode, which usually means holding a small button until a light flashes. The leaflet shows how. See our guide on Bluetooth not connecting.

Other tips

- Keep metal objects and Wi-Fi routers away from the receiver
- A glossy or glass desk can confuse an optical mouse, so try a mouse mat

When to get more help

If a new battery and re-pairing do not help, try the device on another computer. If it fails there too, it may need replacing. Tell us the make and model and how it connects.

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.

Printers, monitors & devices | Medium | 2 min read

My webcam is not detected or not working

If your webcam shows a black picture or the video app says no camera was found, the cause is usually a setting rather than a broken camera.

Check the simple things

- Look for a physical cover or sliding shutter over the lens and open it.
- Some laptops have a camera switch or a function key, often with a camera symbol, that turns it off.
- Close any other app that may be using the camera. Only one app can normally use it at a time.
- If it is a USB webcam, unplug it and plug it into a different USB port, directly into the computer.

Check the privacy settings on Windows

Open **Settings**, then **Privacy & security**, then **Camera**. Check that camera access is on, and that the app you want to use is allowed. The wording can vary a little between Windows versions.

Check the privacy settings on a Mac

Open **System Settings**, then **Privacy & Security**, then **Camera**. Make sure the app you are using has its switch turned on. You may need to close and reopen the app afterwards.

Check inside the app

Video apps such as Teams or Zoom have a settings area where you pick the camera. Look for **Settings**, then **Video** or **Camera**, and choose your webcam from the list.

Restart and check the device list

Restart the computer with a USB webcam unplugged, then plug it in once the computer has started. On Windows, you can right-click the **Start** button, choose **Device Manager** and look for **Cameras** or **Imaging devices**. If a camera has a warning symbol, ask us for help rather than using driver tools from adverts.

Test somewhere else

Try a USB webcam on another computer. If it works there, the first computer has a software or settings issue.

When to get more help

If the camera is still not found, there may be a driver problem or a hardware fault. Tell us the make and model, and what message appears in the app.

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.

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My headset or earbuds microphone is not working

If people cannot hear you on a call, or the sound goes only one way, the microphone is probably muted, switched off or not chosen as the one to use.

Check the headset itself

- Look for a mute switch or button on the cable or earcup. A light often shows when you are muted.
- Make sure the microphone boom, if it has one, is lowered towards your mouth.
- If it is wireless, check the battery and make sure it is switched on and connected.
- Try unplugging and plugging it in again, or use another USB port.

Check which microphone is chosen on Windows

1. Open **Settings**, then **System**, then **Sound**.
2. Under **Input**, choose your headset from the list.
3. Speak and watch the bar move as it picks up your voice.

Also check **Settings**, then **Privacy & security**, then **Microphone**, and make sure access is on.

Check which microphone is chosen on a Mac

Open **System Settings**, then **Sound**, then the **Input** tab. Select your headset and speak to see the level move. Also check **Privacy & Security**, then **Microphone**, to be sure the app is allowed.

Check inside the call app

Apps such as Teams, Zoom and WhatsApp have their own settings for **Microphone**. Open the settings in the app and pick your headset there.

With Bluetooth earbuds

Earbuds sometimes work for sound but struggle with the microphone. Try removing the earbuds from your Bluetooth list and adding them again. See our guide on Bluetooth not connecting.

Other tips

- A 3.5 mm headset plug may need to be pushed in firmly
- Some laptops have one socket for both, and need a headset with a plug made for that

When to get more help

If other people still cannot hear you, test the headset on a different device. That tells you whether the headset or the computer is at fault. Tell us the make and model and which app you use.

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.

Printers, monitors & devices | Advanced | 2 min read

My docking station is not working properly

A docking station lets a laptop use a monitor, keyboard, mouse and other items through one cable. When it misbehaves, a set order of checks usually finds the cause.

Check the power

- Most docks have their own power supply. Make sure it is plugged in at the wall and at the dock.
- Look for a light on the dock to show it is on.
- Do not open the dock or any power adaptor. If a power lead looks damaged, hot or smells odd, unplug it and stop using it.

Check the cable to the laptop

Unplug the cable between the dock and the laptop, wait 10 seconds and plug it in firmly. Some laptops have several USB-C sockets and only one may work with a dock, so try another. A cable that looks right might only carry power, not video, so use the one supplied with the dock if you can. See our guide on cables explained.

Do a full restart in order

1. Unplug everything from the dock, including the power.
2. Shut the laptop down fully.
3. Plug the dock's power in again, then connect the laptop to the dock.
4. Start the laptop.
5. Plug in your monitors and other items one at a time, checking each works before adding the next.

Common problems

- **No picture:** check the monitor input, and try another cable or port on the dock.
- **Only one screen works:** some docks and laptops cannot run several screens. Check the manual for limits.
- **Keyboard or mouse drops out:** try another dock port, or plug it straight into the laptop.
- **Laptop not charging:** some docks give too little power for some laptops.

Check for updates

Dock makers sometimes release updates. Check the maker's own website for your model, and avoid download sites that look like adverts. Install system updates for the laptop too.

When to get more help

Docks and laptops from different makers can have odd compatibility issues. Connect one item directly to the laptop to see if the dock is the cause, then tell us the make and model of both and what happens.

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.