

Windows laptops & PCs | Advanced | 2 min read

Blue screen stop codes in plain English

A blue screen shows a stop code, which is the name of the problem in capital letters. The code will not tell you for certain what is wrong, but it points to where to start looking. This guide is a decoder, and our separate guide tells you what to do generally.

Getting the code

Take a photo of the screen with your phone. Note the text beside **Stop code**, and a line starting **What failed**, which may name a file. Ignore the QR code.

Common codes and what they hint at

- **CRITICAL_PROCESS_DIED**: an important part of Windows stopped. Often a faulty driver, update or damaged system files.
- **IRQL_NOT_LESS_OR_EQUAL**, **SYSTEM_SERVICE_EXCEPTION** and **SYSTEM_THREAD_EXCEPTION_NOT_HANDLED**: usually a driver or program misbehaving.
- **PAGE_FAULT_IN_NONPAGED_AREA** and **MEMORY_MANAGEMENT**: memory problem, either a faulty memory stick or a software fault.
- **KERNEL_SECURITY_CHECK_FAILURE**: a driver or a failing memory or drive.
- **INACCESSIBLE_BOOT_DEVICE** and **UNMOUNTABLE_BOOT_VOLUME**: Windows cannot read its own drive. This may be an update problem or a failing drive.
- **DPC_WATCHDOG_VIOLATION**: often a driver, sometimes an old drive firmware.
- **WHEA_UNCORRECTABLE_ERROR**: a hardware fault, often heat or a failing component.
- **CLOCK_WATCHDOG_TIMEOUT**: processor trouble, which can be overheating.

Safe steps to try

1. Unplug USB devices, then restart.
2. Install Windows updates from **Settings, Windows Update**.
3. Think about what changed just before the crashes, and use **System Restore** to go back.
4. Run **Windows Memory Diagnostic**: press the **Windows key**, type its name, and choose **Restart now and check for problems**. Save your work first, because the PC restarts. It takes a while.
5. Check the PC is not overheating.

Do not

Do not download "blue screen fixers" or driver packs from search results. Many are scams or contain unwanted software.

When to get more help

Get in touch if the same code appears more than once, if you cannot reach the desktop, or if the PC makes clicking noises. Send us a photo of the screen, and the make and model. Back up your files while you still can.

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.