

2.1 Startup Problems

One of the common problems in PCs has to do with the startup process. Problems in computer startup are usually due to hardware issues (but not always), so I've classified it under the "Troubleshooting Hardware" section here.

Usually, when you boot up the PC, you should expect to see a POST (Power On Self Test), as shown below.

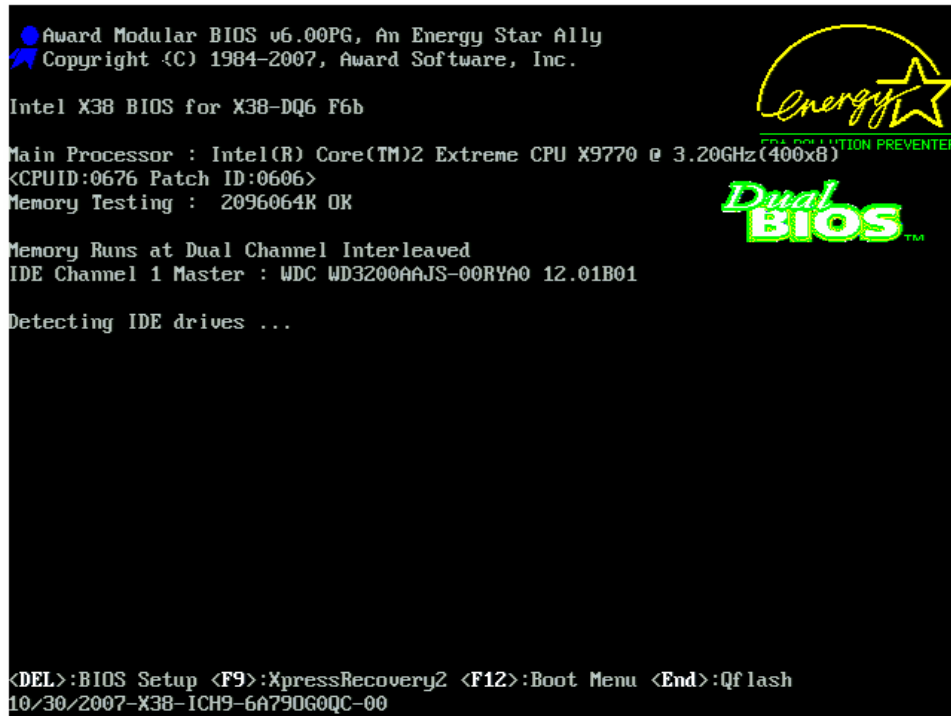


Figure 2: A picture showing the POST screen just after a PC boots up

The Windows logo should come on, and eventually lead you to the Windows log in screen. After entering your user ID and password, you will be able to get into Windows and do your normal work.

However, there are instances when things are not so fine and dandy, so you need to know what to do to troubleshoot the situation.

Problem: *The PC does not perform a POST.*

If your PC fails to go 'beep' and perform a post, then it indicates quite a serious problem. Here are the things I'd check in this case:

- **Check the power supply connection.** Is the power supply connected properly to your computer? You'd be surprised. Many users have a loose power connection which leads to their PC not being able to POST. Check that those power connections are tight and secure, then try booting up again.
- **Check the monitor.** If the problem is not due to a loose power supply connection, then the next thing you should check is the monitor. If that monitor is not turning on, then obviously you can't see your PC do a POST. Refer to Section 2.6 to see how you can fix your monitor problems.



- **Check the computer's RAM.** What if the PC still does not boot up after you've checked the above? Then I'd say it could be a problem with the computer RAM. Sometimes, faulty RAM modules will cause your PC to fail the POST. So what you need to do - and be warned that this is quite tedious - is to remove one of your RAM modules and check if the system can boot up. If it still doesn't, remove another RAM module and check the boot up again. Continue this until you've exhausted all your RAM modules.
- **Check the hard disk.** Another issue could lie with your hard disk. If you've checked the above and the system still does not post, it could be a serious hard disk problem. You will need to swap your hard disk out to another PC, then back up your critical data. Next, reformat of the hard disk and install Windows again.

Check if the system boots up now. If it still doesn't, then you might have to send in the hard disk for repair. Yup, it's a thing we'd want to avoid, but this is one scenario where you have no choice but to send it in for repairs.

Problem: *The PC performs a POST, but fails to get to the Windows Login screen.*

This is another common problem. Usually there might several reasons why your PC does not get to the Windows login screen. Let's look at them here:

- **Check the network card.** Firstly, there might be a problem with your network card. I find that if my network card is faulty, I might get a long delay at the Windows boot p process, and the PC just never gets to the login screen. Try removing your network card and see if the system manages to boot to the Windows login screen.

- **Check your expansion cards.** Secondly, another possibility is one of your expansion cards. For example, your sound card or video card can sometimes cause problems with the Windows boot up process. So try swapping out those components and see if the boot up process is now successful.
- **Abnormal shutoff.** Thirdly, Windows sometimes complains if you shutdown the computer inappropriately and the hard disk was just shut off. This causes Windows to do a forced file check the next time you boot up. If this is the case, Windows will let you know ... all you do is to be patient and let the system do the checking it needs to do.
- **Check the hard disk.** Finally, you could have a hard disk issue. If Windows does not get to the login screen, and especially if you hear a lot of hard disk noise, it could point to a problem with your hard disk. Which is never a good thing - and in fact quite a serious scenario.



Under such cases, you might have to look at swapping your hard disk out to another PC, then backing up your critical data. Then what you do is to do a reformat of the hard disk and install Windows again.

Check if the system boots up now. If it still doesn't, then you might have to send in the hard disk for repair.

Problem: *The PC gets through the POST and Windows startup process, but you can't log in to the Windows login screen.*

If you get to the Windows login screen, but are unable to login, then it almost certainly points to a problem with your Windows login ID and password. Check and double check your Windows login ID and password to make sure they are correct before you try again.

Sometimes, you cannot log into Windows due to other reasons (e.g. you're on a Windows network and you've not specified the correct Windows domain). However, for home and individual users, this scenario probably doesn't apply.