If your computer won't start…
TRY SAFE MODE

After starting Windows in Safe Mode (see the procedures starting on page 2 of this document), you can perform most of the regular system maintenance and troubleshooting tasks to fix your computer:

- **Scan for Malware**: Use your antivirus application to scan for malware and remove it in Safe Mode. Malware that may be impossible to remove in normal mode—because it's running in the background and interfering with the antivirus—may be removable in Safe Mode. If you don't have an antivirus installed, you should be able to download and install one in Safe Mode. Of course, if you're using Windows Defender in Windows 10, you might be better off performing an offline malware scan.

- **Run System Restore**: If your computer was recently working fine but it's now unstable, you can use System Restore to restore its system state to the earlier, known-good configuration. Assuming your computer is unstable and crashing, it may be possible to run System Restore without crashing from Safe Mode.

- **Uninstall Recently Installed Software**: If you recently installed software (such as a hardware driver or an application that includes a driver) and it's causing your computer to fail, you can uninstall that software from Programs and Features. Your computer should hopefully start normally after you've uninstalled the interfering software.

- **Update Hardware Drivers**: Assuming your hardware drivers are causing system instability, you may want to download and install updated drivers from your manufacturer's website and install them in Safe Mode—the hardware drivers won't interfere and make your computer unstable in Safe Mode.

- **See Whether a Crash Occurs**: If your computer is unstable normally but works fine in Safe Mode, it's likely that there's a software problem causing your computer to crash. However, if the computer continues to crash in Safe Mode, this is often a sign that there's a hardware problem with your computer. (Note that stability in Safe Mode doesn't necessarily mean it's a hardware problem. For example, your graphics card may be faulty and causing crashes under load. However, it may be stable in Safe Mode because your computer isn't performing demanding operations with it.)

How to Access Safe Mode in Windows 10

Note: Your Windows 10 computer is designed to automatically start in Safe Mode if it crashes more than once while trying to start normally. However, you can also boot into Safe Mode manually. Hold the Shift key while clicking Restart on the Start Menu.

Once you are in Safe Mode:

Get to the Advanced Troubleshooting Tools in the Recovery Environment

Most of the ways you access Safe Mode involve getting into the Windows recovery environment first. The recovery environment includes a number of troubleshooting options, and Safe Mode is one of them. How you get there depends on whether or not your PC can start Windows normally.

IF YOUR PC CAN START WINDOWS NORMALLY

If your PC can successfully get to the Windows login screen when you start it up (or you can actually sign into Windows), the easiest way to get to the recovery environment is to hold down the Shift key while clicking Restart (either click on the sign in screen or from the Start menu).

You can also get to the recovery environment through your Settings app. Press Windows+I to open **Settings**, and then click the **Update & Security** option. In the left pane, click on the **Recovery** tab. In the right pane, scroll down a bit, and then click the **Restart Now** button in the "Advanced Startup" section.

Either the Shift+Restart or the Settings app takes you to the recovery environment, which will be described later.

IF YOUR PC CANNOT START WINDOWS NORMALLY

If your PC won't start Windows normally twice in a row, it should automatically present you with a **Recovery** option that lets you see advanced repair options.

When you get to the advanced troubleshooting tools (whether that's by using the Shift+Restart trick or using a recovery drive), you'll arrive at a screen that lets you access the troubleshooting tools. Click the **Troubleshoot** button to proceed.

Step Two: Use the Advanced Troubleshooting Tools to Start Safe Mode

On the "Troubleshoot" screen, click the *Advanced Options* button.

On the "Advanced Options" page, click the *Startup Settings* option.

And finally, press the *Restart* button in the lower right corner.

You'll see a version of the Advanced Boot Options menu. Press the number corresponding to the startup option you want to use.

Press the 4 key and your computer will be placed in Safe Mode where you can troubleshoot the issues described earlier in this document.