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# Solving Problems

## Dell™ Dimension™ 4550 Series

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## Finding Help Information

### To access the *Tell Me How* help file —

1. Click the **Start** button, and then click **Help and Support**.
2. Click **User and system guides**, and then click **User's guides**.
3. Click **Tell Me How**.

### To access Microsoft® Windows® help —

1. Click the **Start** button, and then click **Help and Support**.
2. Type a word or phrase that describes your problem, and then click the arrow icon.
3. Click the topic that describes your problem.
4. Follow the instructions shown on the screen.

**To locate additional information for your computer —** See "[Finding Help Information](#)."

## Battery Problems

 **CAUTION:** There is a danger of a new battery exploding if it is incorrectly installed. Replace the battery only with the same or equivalent type recommended by the manufacturer. Discard used batteries according to the manufacturer's instructions.

 **CAUTION:** Before you begin any of the procedures in this section, follow the steps listed in "[Safety Instructions](#)."

**Replace the battery —** If you have to repeatedly reset time and date information after turning on the computer, or if an incorrect time or date displays during start-up, replace the battery. If the battery still does not work properly, contact Dell.

## Drive Problems

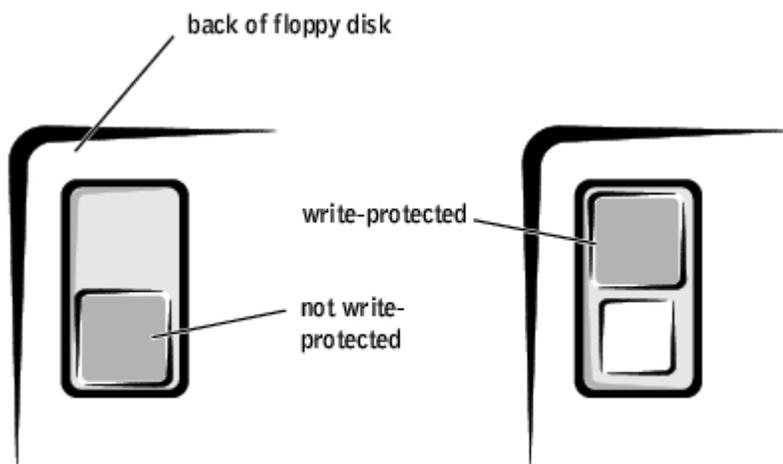
### Floppy drive problems

**Ensure that Windows® recognizes the drive** — Click the **Start** button and click **My Computer**. If the floppy drive is not listed, perform a full scan with your antivirus software to check for and remove viruses. Viruses can sometimes prevent Windows from recognizing the drive.

**Test the drive** —

- Insert another disk to eliminate the possibility that the original floppy disk is defective.
- Insert a bootable floppy disk and reboot the computer.

**Ensure that the disk is not full or write-protected** — Ensure that the disk has available space and that it is not write-protected (locked). See the following illustration.



**NOTICE:** Do not attempt to clean drive heads with a swab. You may accidentally misalign the heads, which can render the drive inoperable.

**Clean the drive** — Use a commercially available cleaning kit.

## CD drive problems

**HINT:** High-speed CD drive vibration is normal and may cause noise. This does not indicate a defect in the drive or the CD.

**Adjust the Windows volume control** — Click the speaker icon in the lower-right corner of your screen.

- Ensure that the volume is turned up by clicking the slider and dragging it up.
- Ensure that the sound is not muted by clicking any boxes that are checked.

**Test the drive with another CD** — Insert another CD to eliminate the possibility that the original CD is defective.

**Check the speakers and subwoofer** — See "[Sound and Speaker Problems](#)."

**Ensure that Windows recognizes the drive** — Click the **Start** button and click **My Computer**. If the CD drive is not listed, perform a full scan with your antivirus software to check for and remove viruses. Viruses can sometimes prevent Windows from recognizing the drive.

**Clean the disc** — See the [Tell Me How](#) help file for instructions on cleaning your CDs.

## Problems writing to a CD-RW drive

**Close other programs** — The CD-RW drive must receive a steady stream of data when writing. If the stream is interrupted, an error occurs. Try closing all programs before writing to the CD-RW.

**Turn off Standby mode in Windows before writing to a CD-RW disc** — For information on power conservation modes, see the [Tell Me How](#) help file or search for the keyword *standby* in Windows Help.

## DVD drive problems

 **HINT:** Because of different regions worldwide and different disc formats, not all DVD titles work in all DVD drives.

**Test the drive with another DVD** — Insert another DVD to eliminate the possibility that the original DVD is defective.

**Ensure that Windows recognizes the drive** — Click the **Start** button and click **My Computer**. If the DVD drive is not listed, perform a full scan with your antivirus software to check for and remove viruses. Viruses can sometimes prevent Windows from recognizing the drive.

**Clean the disc** — See the [Tell Me How](#) help file for instructions on cleaning your DVDs.

**Check for interrupt request conflicts** — See "[Resolving Software and Hardware Incompatibilities](#)."

## Hard drive problems

### Run Check Disk —

1. Click the **Start** button and click **My Computer**.
2. Right-click the drive letter (local disk) that you want to scan for errors, and then click **Properties**.
3. Click the **Tools** tab.
4. Under **Error-checking**, click **Check Now**.
5. Click **Start**.

## E-Mail, Modem, and Internet Problems

 **HINT:** Connect the modem to an analog telephone jack only. The modem does not operate while it is connected to a digital telephone network.

**Check the telephone line connection** — Verify that the telephone line is connected to the jack on the modem. (The jack has either a green label or a connector-shaped icon next to it.) Ensure that you hear a click when you insert the telephone line connector into the modem.

**Check the telephone jack** — Disconnect the telephone line from the modem and connect it to a telephone. Listen for a dial tone.

**Connect the modem directly to the telephone wall jack** — If you have other telephone devices sharing the line, such as an answering machine, fax machine, surge protector, or line splitter, then bypass them and use the telephone to connect the modem directly to the telephone wall jack.

**Use a different telephone line** — If you are using a line that is 3 m (10 ft) or more in length, try a shorter one.

**Run the Modem Helper diagnostics** — Click the **Start** button, point to **All Programs**, and then click **Modem Helper**. Follow the instructions on the screen to identify and resolve modem problems. (Modem Helper is not available on all computers.)

**Verify that the modem is communicating with Windows® —**

1. Click the **Start** button, and then click **Control Panel**.
2. Click **Printers and Other Hardware**.
3. Click **Phone and Modem Options**.
4. Click the **Modems** tab.
5. Click the COM port for your modem.
6. Click **Properties**, click the **Diagnostics** tab, and then click **Query Modem** to verify that the modem is communicating with Windows.

If all commands receive responses, the modem is operating properly.

**Turn off call waiting (catch-phone) —** See your telephone directory for instructions on deactivating this feature. Then adjust the dial-up networking connection properties.

1. Click the **Start** button, and then click **Control Panel**.
2. Click **Printers and Other Hardware**, and then click **Phone and Modem Options**.
3. Click your connection type to highlight it.
4. Click the **Dialing Rules** tab, and then click **Edit**.
5. Click the **To Disable Call Waiting** box to place a checkmark in it.
6. Select the disable code from the drop-down menu (for example, \*70).
7. Click **Apply**, and then click **OK**.

**Ensure that you are connected to the Internet —** With the Outlook Express e-mail program open, click **File**. If **Work Offline** has a checkmark next to it, click the checkmark to remove it and connect to the Internet.

**Ensure that you have subscribed to an Internet service provider —** Contact an Internet service provider to subscribe.

**Contact your Internet service provider —** Contact your Internet service provider for assistance.

## Error Messages

If the message is not listed, see the documentation for the operating system or the program that was running when the message appeared.

**A filename cannot contain any of the following characters: \ / : \* ? " < > | —** Do not use these characters in filenames.

**A required .DLL file was not found —** The program that you are trying to open is missing an essential file. To remove and then reinstall the program:

1. Click the **Start** button.
2. Click **Control Panel**.
3. Click **Add or Remove Programs**.
4. Select the program you want to remove.
5. Click the **Change or Remove Program** icon.
6. See the program documentation for installation instructions.

**Insert bootable media —** The operating system is trying to boot to a nonbootable floppy disk or CD. Insert a bootable floppy disk or CD.

**Non-system disk error —** A floppy disk is in the floppy drive. Remove the floppy disk and restart the computer.

**Not enough memory or resources. Close some programs and try again —** You have too many programs open. Close all windows and open the program that you want to use. In some cases, you might have to restart your computer to restore computer resources. If so, try running the program that you want to use first.

**Operating system not found —** Contact Dell. See "Contacting Dell" in the Dell *Owner's Manual* for the correct number to call.

**The file being copied is too large for the destination drive** — The file that you are trying to copy is too large to fit on the disk. Try copying the file to a blank disk or using a larger-capacity disk.

**x:\ is not accessible. The device is not ready** — The floppy drive cannot read the disk. Insert a floppy disk into the drive and try again.

## General Problems

### The computer stops responding

**Turn the computer off** — If your computer locks up and you are unable to get a response by pressing a key on your keyboard or moving your mouse, press and hold the power button for at least 8 to 10 seconds until the computer turns off. Then press the power button again to turn on the computer. You might lose data if you are unable to perform an operating system shutdown.

### A program stops responding

#### End the program —

1. Press <Ctrl><Shift><Esc> simultaneously.
2. Click **Applications**.
3. Click the program that is no longer responding.
4. Click **End Task**.

### A program crashes repeatedly

 **HINT:** Software usually includes installation instructions in its documentation or on a floppy disk or CD.

**Check the software documentation** — Many software manufacturers maintain websites with information that may help you solve the problem. Ensure that you properly installed and configured the program. If necessary, uninstall and then reinstall the program.

### A program is designed for an earlier Windows operating system

#### Run the Program Compatibility Wizard —

Windows XP provides a Program Compatibility Wizard that configures a program so it runs in an environment similar to non-Windows XP operating system environments.

1. Click the **Start** button, point to **All Programs@ Accessories**, and then click **Program Compatibility Wizard**.
2. In the welcome screen, click **Next**.
3. Follow the instructions on the screen.

### A solid blue screen appears

**Turn the computer off** — If the computer does not respond to a keystroke or a proper shutdown, press the power button for at least 8 to 10 seconds until the computer turns off. Press the power button again to restart the computer. The chkdsk program automatically runs during the start-up process. Follow the instructions on the screen.

## Other software problems

**Check the software documentation or contact the software manufacturer for troubleshooting information**

**Back up your files immediately** — If your computer has a CD-RW drive or a zip drive installed, see the drive's documentation for instructions.

**Ensure that you have not made an error while entering data** — See the program documentation to make sure that the values or characters you are entering are valid.

**Check for viruses** — Use a virus-scanning program to check the hard drive, floppy disks, or CDs.

**Restart the computer** — Save and close any open files, exit any open programs, and then shut down your computer through the **Start** menu instead of pressing the power button. Otherwise, you may lose data.

**Check for compatibility** —

- Ensure that the program is compatible with the operating system installed on your computer and that your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements needed to run the software. See the software documentation for information.
- If necessary, uninstall and then reinstall the program.

**Ensure that you properly installed and configured the program** — See the software documentation for information. If necessary, uninstall and then reinstall the program.

## Other technical problems

**Go to the Dell Support website** — Go to [support.dell.com](http://support.dell.com) for help with general usage, installation, and troubleshooting questions. The support website offers several different tools to help you, such as Dell Forum—a chat room where you can communicate with other Dell customers about their computers and gain access to technical support through e-mail. See "Dell Support Website" in the *Owner's Manual* for more information about the website.

**Call Dell** — If you cannot solve your problem using the Dell Support website or e-mail service, call Dell for technical assistance in the *Owner's Manual*. See "Dell Technical Support Policy (U.S. Only)" in the *Owner's Manual* for a description of the hardware and software support provided by Dell.

## General hardware problems

If your computer exhibits one or more of the following symptoms, a device conflict may exist:

- Your computer locks up, particularly while using a specific device.
- A recently added device does not work.
- A sound card emits noise or demonstrates other problems.
- Unintelligible characters print from the printer.
- The mouse pointer does not move or "stutters" when it moves.
- Messages appear stating that the computer is not operating at maximum performance.
- Errors occur and programs crash for no apparent reason.
- Nothing displays on the monitor.

**Remove any recently added hardware to see if it resolves the conflict** — If removing the

hardware resolves the conflict, see the hardware documentation for configuration and troubleshooting instructions. If the problem persists, contact the hardware manufacturer for technical assistance.

**Check your operating system documentation for additional troubleshooting information**

**Check for interrupt request conflicts** — See "[Resolving Software and Hardware Incompatibilities](#)."

## Keyboard Problems

### Restart the computer —

- If the mouse is functioning, shut down the computer through the **Start** menu. After the computer shuts down, press the power button to restart the computer.
- If the computer does not respond to a keystroke or the mouse, press the power button for at least 8 to 10 seconds until the computer turns off. Press the power button again to restart the computer.

### Check the keyboard cable —

- Ensure that the keyboard cable is firmly connected to the computer.
- [Shut down the computer](#), reconnect the keyboard cable as shown on the *Start Here* setup diagram for your computer, and then restart the computer.
- Ensure that the keyboard cable is firmly connected to the computer.
- Check the cable connector for bent or broken pins and for damaged or frayed cables. Straighten bent pins.
- Remove keyboard extension cables and connect the keyboard directly to the computer.

**Test the keyboard** — Connect a properly working keyboard to the computer, and try using the keyboard. If the new keyboard works, the original keyboard is faulty.

**Check for interrupt request conflicts** — See "[Resolving Software and Hardware Incompatibilities](#)."

## Mouse Problems

### Restart the computer —

1. Simultaneously press <Ctrl><Esc> to display the **Start** menu.
2. Type **u**, press the keyboard arrow keys to highlight **Shut down** or **Turn Off**, and then press <Enter>.
3. After the computer turns off, press the power button to restart the computer.

### If you connected the mouse before turning on the computer, reconnect the mouse cable —

1. Simultaneously press <Ctrl><Esc> to display the **Start** menu.
2. Type **u**, press the keyboard arrow keys to highlight **Shut down** or **Turn Off**, and then press <Enter>.
3. After the computer turns off, reconnect the mouse cable as shown on the *Start Here* setup diagram for your computer.
4. Start the computer.

**If you connected the mouse after turning on the computer, remove the power cable, and then reconnect the mouse cable** — If the mouse is connected after the power is turned on, the mouse appears to be nonfunctional. To make the mouse function properly:

1. While your computer is on, remove the power cable from the back of the computer.
2. Connect the mouse to the computer.
3. Reconnect the power cable.
4. Turn on your computer.

Pressing the power button does not clear the computer's settings and does not restore mouse functionality.

#### Check the mouse cable —

- Check the cable connector for bent or broken pins and for damaged or frayed cables. Straighten bent pins.
- Ensure that the cable is firmly connected to the computer.

**Test the mouse** — Connect a properly working mouse to the computer, and try using the mouse. If the new mouse works, the original mouse was faulty.

#### Check the mouse settings —

1. Click the **Start** button, click **Control Panel**, and then click **Printers and Other Hardware**.
2. Click **Mouse**.
3. Try adjusting the settings.

**Reinstall the mouse driver** — See "[Drivers](#)."

**Check for interrupt request conflicts** — See "[Resolving Software and Hardware Incompatibilities](#)."

## Network Problems

**Check the network cable connector** — Ensure that the network cable is connected as shown in the Dell *Owner's Manual*.

**Check the network lights on the back of the computer** — No light indicates that there is no network communication. Try replacing the network cable.



**Restart the computer and try to log on to the network again** —

**Check your network settings** — Contact your network administrator or the person who set up your network to verify that your network settings are correct and that the network is functioning.

**Check for interrupt request conflicts** — See "[Resolving Software and Hardware Incompatibilities](#)."

## Power Problems



**CAUTION:** Before you begin any of the procedures in this section, follow the steps listed in "[Safety Instructions](#)."

**Adjust the Power Properties** — Your computer may be in standby or hibernate mode. For information on power conservation modes, see the [Tell Me How](#) help file, or search for the keyword *standby* or *hibernate* in Windows® Help.

**If the power light is blinking green** — The computer is in standby mode. Press a key on the keyboard or move the mouse to resume normal operation.

**If the power light is off** — The computer is either turned off or is not receiving power.

- Reseat the power cable into both the power connector on the back of the computer and the

electrical outlet.

- If the computer is plugged into a power strip, ensure that the power strip is plugged into an electrical outlet and that the power strip is turned on.
- Ensure that the electrical outlet is working by testing it with another device, such as a lamp.
- Bypass power protection devices, power strips, and power extension cables to verify that the computer turns on.
- Ensure that the main power cable is securely connected to the [system board](#).
- Ensure that the front panel cable is securely connected to the [system board](#).
- If the problem persists, contact Dell.

**If the power light is amber and green** — The computer is receiving electrical power, but an internal power problem might exist.

- Ensure that the voltage selection switch is set to match the AC power at your location.
- Ensure that the microprocessor power cable is securely connected to the [system board](#).
- If the problem persists, see "Contacting Dell" in the Dell *Owner's Manual* for the correct number to call.

**Eliminate interference** — Electrical appliances on the same circuit or operating near the computer can cause interference. Other causes of interference are:

- Power extension cables
- Keyboard and mouse extension cables
- Too many devices on a power strip
- Multiple power strips connected to the same electrical outlet

## Printer Problems



**HINT:** Dell does not cover the printer's warranty. If you need technical assistance for your printer, call the printer's manufacturer. See the printer documentation for the correct phone number.

**Check the printer documentation** — See the printer documentation for setup and troubleshooting information.

**Ensure that the printer is turned on** — See the printer documentation for power button information.

**Verify the printer cable connections** —

- See the printer documentation for cable connection information.
- Ensure that the printer cables are securely connected to the printer and the computer as shown in the Dell *Owner's Manual*.

**Test the electrical outlet** — Ensure that the electrical outlet is working by testing it with another device, such as a lamp.

**Verify that the printer is recognized by Windows®** —

1. Click the **Start** button.
2. Click **Control Panel**.
3. Click **Printers and Other Hardware**.
4. Click View installed printers or fax printers.

If the printer is listed, right-click the printer icon.

5. Click **Properties**, and then select the **Ports** tab. For a parallel printer, ensure that the **Print to the following port(s)**: setting is **LPT1 (Printer Port)**. For a USB printer, ensure that the **Print to the following port(s)**: setting is **USB**.

**Reinstall the printer driver** — See the printer documentation for instructions.

## Scanner Problems

 **HINT:** Dell does not cover the scanner's warranty. If you need technical assistance for your scanner, call the scanner's manufacturer. See the scanner documentation for the correct phone number.

**Check the scanner documentation** — See the scanner documentation for setup and troubleshooting information.

**Unlock the scanner** — Ensure that your scanner is unlocked if it has a locking tab or button.

**Restart the computer and try the scanner again**

**Check the cable connections** —

- If your scanner has a power cable, ensure that the power cable is firmly connected to a working electrical outlet and that the scanner is turned on.
- Ensure that the scanner cable is firmly connected to the computer and to the scanner.

**Verify that the scanner is recognized by Microsoft® Windows®** —

1. Click the **Start** button.
2. Click **Control Panel**.
3. Click **Printers and Other Hardware**.
4. Click **Scanners and Cameras**.

If your scanner is listed, Windows recognizes the scanner.

**Reinstall the scanner driver** — See the scanner documentation for instructions.

## Sound and Speaker Problems

### No sound from speakers

 **HINT:** The volume control in some MP3 players overrides the Windows® volume setting. If you have been listening to MP3 songs, ensure that you did not turn the player volume down or off.

**Check the speaker cable connections** — Ensure that the speakers are connected as shown on the setup diagram supplied with the speakers.

**Ensure that the subwoofer and the speakers are turned on** — See the setup diagram supplied with the speakers. If your speakers have volume controls, adjust the volume, bass, or treble to eliminate distortion.

**Adjust the Windows volume control** — Click or double-click the speaker icon in the lower-right corner of your screen. Ensure that the volume is turned up and that the sound is not muted.

**Disconnect headphones from the headphone connector** — Sound from the speakers is automatically disabled when headphones are connected to the computer's front-panel headphone connector.

**Test the electrical outlet** — Ensure that the electrical outlet is working by testing it with another device, such as a lamp.

**Enable digital mode** — Your speakers do not work if the CD drive is operating in analog mode. To enable digital mode:

1. Click the **Start** button, click **Control Panel**, and then click **Sounds, Speech, and Audio Devices**.
2. Click **Sounds and Audio Devices**.

3. Click the **Hardware** tab.
4. Double-click the name of your CD drive.
5. Click the **Properties** tab.
6. Check the **Enable digital CD audio for this CD-ROM device** box.

**Eliminate possible interference** — Turn off nearby fans, fluorescent lights, or halogen lamps to check for interference.

**Run the speaker diagnostics** — Some speaker systems have self-diagnostics. See the speaker documentation for diagnostics instructions.

**Reinstall the audio (sound) driver** — See "[Drivers](#)."

**Check for interrupt request conflicts** — See "[Resolving Software and Hardware Incompatibilities](#)."

## No sound from headphones

**Check the headphone cable connection** — Ensure that the headphone cable is securely inserted into the headphone connector.

**Disable digital mode** — Your headphones do not work if the CD drive is operating in digital mode. To disable digital mode:

1. Click the **Start** button, click **Control Panel**, and then click **Sounds, Speech, and Audio Devices**.
2. Click **Sounds and Audio Devices**.
3. Click the **Hardware** tab.
4. Double-click the name of your CD drive.
5. Click the **Properties** tab.
6. Uncheck the **Enable digital CD audio for this CD-ROM device** box.

**Adjust the Windows volume control** — Click or double-click the speaker icon in the lower-right corner of your screen. Ensure that the volume is turned up and that the sound is not muted.

**Disable digital mode** — Your headphones do not work if the CD drive is operating in digital mode. To disable digital mode:

1. Click the **Start** button, click **Control Panel**, and then click **Sounds, Speech, and Audio Devices**.
2. Click **Sounds and Audio Devices**.
3. Click the **Hardware** tab.
4. Double-click the name of your CD drive.
5. Click the **Properties** tab.
6. Uncheck the **Enable digital CD audio for this CD-ROM device** box.

## Video and Monitor Problems

### If the screen is blank



**HINT:** See the monitor documentation for troubleshooting procedures.

**Check the monitor power light** — If the power light is off, firmly press the button to ensure that the monitor is turned on. If the power light is lit or blinking, the monitor has power. If the power light is blinking, press a key on the keyboard or move the mouse.

**Check the monitor cable connection** — Check the connector for bent or broken pins. (It is normal for monitor cable connectors to have missing pins.) Ensure that the video cable is connected as shown on the *Start Here* setup diagram for your computer.

**Test the electrical outlet** — Ensure that the electrical outlet is working by testing it with another device, such as a lamp.

**Swap the power cables** — Swap the computer and monitor power cables to determine if the power cable is defective.

**Test the video extension cable (if used)** — If you are using a video extension cable and removing the cable solves the problem, the cable is defective.

**Test another monitor** — If another monitor is available, connect it to the computer.

**Check the diagnostic lights** — See "[Diagnostic Codes](#)."

## If the screen is difficult to read

**Check the monitor settings** — See the monitor documentation for instructions on adjusting the contrast and brightness, demagnetizing (degaussing) the monitor, and running the monitor self-test.

**Move the subwoofer away from the monitor** — If your speaker system includes a subwoofer, ensure that the subwoofer is at least 60 cm (2 ft) away from the monitor.

**Move the monitor away from external power sources** — Fans, fluorescent lights, halogen lamps, and other electrical devices can cause the screen image to appear "shaky." Turn off nearby devices to check for interference.

**Rotate the monitor to face a different direction** — Eliminate sunlight glare, which can cause poor picture quality.

### **Adjust the Windows® display settings** —

1. Click the **Start** button, and then click **Control Panel**.
2. Click **Appearance and Themes**.
3. Click **Display**, and then click the **Settings** tab.
4. Try different settings for **Screen resolution** and **Color quality**.

**Restore the recommended settings** — Restore the original resolution and refresh rate settings. See the [Tell Me How](#) help file for instructions.

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