

Handy Tips, Solutions and Answers to Common PC Questions

Do you have a question about a Windows Advisor article, or need help with a computing problem? If you do, just drop us a line by email to editorial@windowsadvisor.co.uk and we'll do our level best to help!

When you write, please remember to include your customer number, your postcode, and the version of Windows you use (Windows 10, Windows 8.1 or Windows 7). Give us as much detail as you can about the problem to help us understand what's happening, and feel free to attach a screenshot or document if you think it would help to illustrate the problem or error.

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Word: Why is My Typing Suddenly Red and Underlined?

Everything you type appears in red text!

Question: *In the Word document I'm working on, everything I type is coming out in red, underlined text. If I try to change the colour or remove the underlining, all that happens is that a note appears in the margin saying I've changed the formatting. What's going on?*

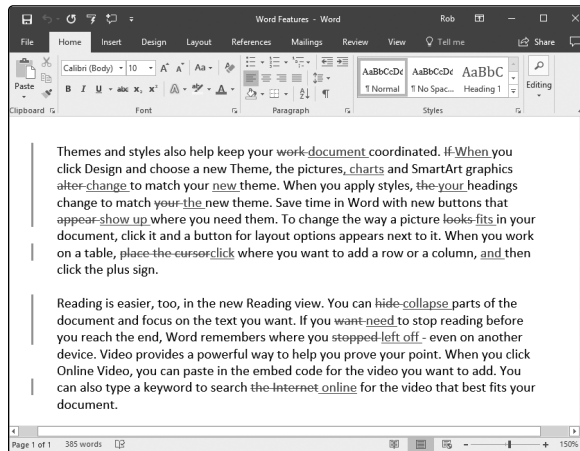
Peter Rumfelt

You've switched on Track Changes

Answer: If the new text you type appears in a red, underlined font, and any text you try to delete or replace turns red with a line through it, you've turned on a Microsoft Word feature named Track Changes.

It highlights the changes made in a document

As its name hints, this feature keeps track of all the changes you make in a document. New text is shown in red and underlined, deleted text is shown in red with a strike-through, changes to formatting appear in notes in the right margin, and any line containing a change gains a thin vertical line beside it in the left margin. The result looks like the screenshot below.



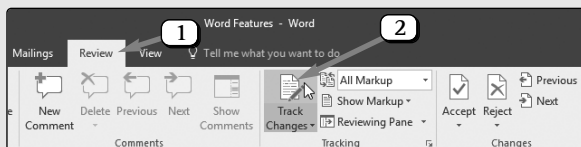
You obviously didn't intend to switch on Track Changes, but it's easy to do by accident. The key combination to switch it on is **(Ctrl) + (Shift) + (E)**, so all it takes is a slight fumble when you try to type a capital 'E' (**(Shift) + (E)**).

Although switching it on was easy, switching it off again involves a little extra work because you also need to get your document to look the way it should. Here are the steps to follow:

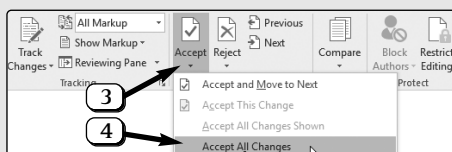
Easy to switch on by accident!

Switch it off and put things back to normal

1. If you haven't done so already, start Word and open the document with the Track Changes problem.
2. Switch to the Review tab **(1)** on the Ribbon. In the 'Tracking' group, click the top half of the Track Changes button **(2)**. This switches off the Track Changes feature.



3. A little way to the right, in the 'Changes' group, click the lower half of the Accept button **(3)**. On the menu that appears, click on Accept All Changes **(4)**.



4. In 'accepting' all the changes, you're effectively telling Word to put your document back to normal. Any text you've deleted (shown as red with a strike-through) disappears; any new text you've typed (shown as red and underlined) now appears in normal

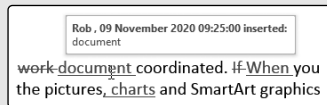
Accept all the 'changes' you made

Your document looks normal again

Useful when collaborating on a document

black text; any notes about formatting changes in the right margin will vanish. You haven't lost any of your text along the way, and you can now carry on working as normal.

In case you're wondering, the main point of the Track Changes feature is for collaborating on a document with others (for instance, when sending a document to an editor who suggests changes and sends it back to you): it allows you to see what changes were made without losing track of the original text. Each change is tagged with the name of the person who made the change and the date and time: you can see this information by moving the mouse over a revision:



It can be helpful when revising your text

However, it's a feature you might find useful for your own purposes, too. If you're trying to improve a tricky document, you might like to switch on Track Changes first so that you don't immediately commit yourself to the changes you make. At any time, you can choose whether to keep a particular change or switch back to the original text in that spot by right-clicking the change and choosing either the **Accept** or the **Reject** item on the menu. Alternatively, as we did above, you can choose to accept (or reject) all the changes in the document in one quick action.



Open the CD/DVD Drive Without Using the Button

Eject button broken or awkward?

Question: *The button for opening the CD/DVD drive on my notebook PC is stuck. The only way I can get the drive tray*

open is with a lot of rattling and prodding. Will I have to replace the drive or is there another way?


Frank Scott



Answer: On notebook computers in particular, the CD/DVD drive trays and their components are notoriously flimsy, so it's not unusual for the eject button to give up the ghost. But, on any computer, you might find that the drive's eject button stops working, gets stuck, or just isn't easy to reach.

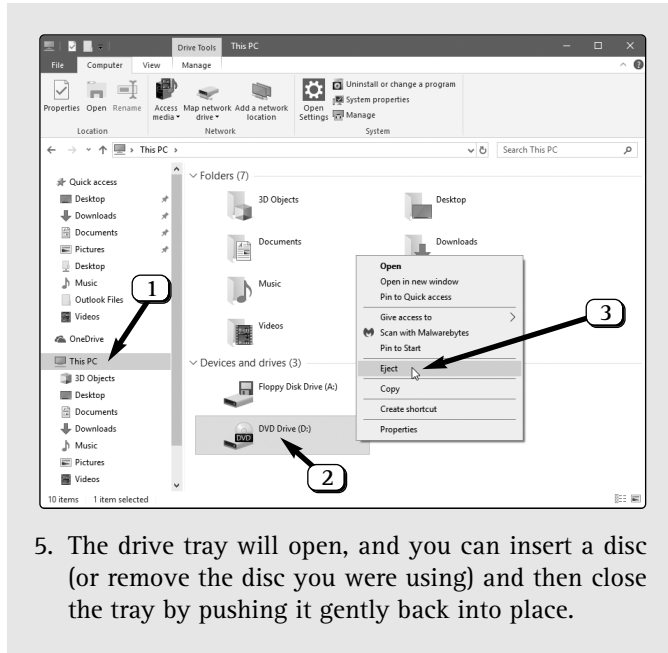
There's another way to open the drive tray

If you can't use the drive's eject button, there's another trick you can use to open the drive tray:

1. Start File Explorer (aka Windows Explorer in Windows 7) by pressing the key combination  + **(E)**.
2. In the left-hand panel of the File Explorer window, click on **This PC** **(1)** in Windows 10 or 8.1, or **Computer** in Windows 7.
3. The right-hand side of the window will now show icons for all the drives connected to your PC, including your CD/DVD drive **(2)**.
4. Right-click the icon for your CD/DVD drive, and then click **Eject** **(3)** on the context menu that opens.



Right-click the drive's icon and choose **Eject**



5. The drive tray will open, and you can insert a disc (or remove the disc you were using) and then close the tray by pushing it gently back into place.



Should I Install an Automatic Driver Updater?

Update
device drivers
automatically?

Question: Lately, while reading the Microsoft News app in Windows 10, I've seen a lot of adverts for a Driver Updater program that says it downloads the latest drivers automatically and, by doing so, helps to speed up your PC. Do you think something like this is worth a try?

Peter Hudd

Drivers explained

Answer: First, what's a driver? In simple terms, it's a piece of software that enables your operating system (Windows)

to communicate with one of your hardware devices, such as your printer. You probably have several devices connected to your PC, and there are certainly many more inside the PC, and each of those will have its own driver installed so that Windows can work with it.

Whenever a hardware manufacturer launches a new device, they provide a driver that makes it work. If you buy the device, you may receive that driver on a CD or you may be prompted to download it from a website. Every so often, too, the manufacturer might release a newer version of the driver which fixes bugs or adds new features: that new driver would necessarily only be found on its website.

New version can be downloaded and installed

An automatic driver updater program aims to scan your PC's hardware, see which drivers you have installed, and install newer versions where they're available. On that basis, that might sound like quite an attractive proposition.

This could be automated

I take a different view, based on two computing principles I've come to live by over the years. First: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Second: don't invite third-party software to make sweeping changes to your PC.

But is that wise?

Let's start with the first of those. Yes, there may be a newer driver available for some device you use. On the other hand, that device works as it is, and that's all you really want from it! Newer isn't always better, and I've certainly updated drivers in the past only to run into problems with them and have to go in search of the old version again.

Newer isn't necessarily better!

On the second principle, it's far better to be in control of your PC. If you have a reason to update a driver, visit the manufacturer's website and download it yourself. That way, you'll know exactly what you've done, and if you have reason to regret it, you'll know where you need to go to find the solution. Just as importantly, you've only updated one

Keep control of what's going on

What about speed?

driver rather than several, so if your PC does start misbehaving in some way afterwards, you'll easily pinpoint the culprit.

Finally, though, what about that tempting claim to speed up your PC? Well, that's what they all say! You'll be hard-put to find any system utility that doesn't claim to speed up your PC, because everyone wants a faster computer. There's no particular reason to think your current drivers are slowing things down, or that newer drivers would make a difference either way.



Can I Start a Screensaver Manually?

Question: *I have set up a screensaver to start 15 minutes after I leave my PC. But I was wondering if it's possible to start it whenever I like, so that I can put it on the moment I stop using the computer?*

Alison Forte

Switching off the monitor is better...



...but you can add a screensaver icon to your desktop



Double-click your **C:** drive...

Answer: At the risk of being boring, a better option would be to switch off your monitor. It's not as attractive as a screensaver, but it does save electricity!

However, if you'd like to be able to switch on a screensaver as you leave your PC, you can do it. By following the steps below, you'll be able to choose a favourite screensaver and add its icon to your desktop so that you can start it whenever you like with a quick double-click:

1. Press  +  to open File Explorer (aka Windows Explorer).
2. In the main section of the window, can you see an icon for your computer's hard drive, named C:?. If you can, double-click it. If you can't, have a look for it in the left-hand section and then click it: you may

have to scroll down a little way, and you may also have to expand the item named **This PC** (in Windows 10 or 8.1), **Computer** (in Windows 7) to find it.

3. Now the main section of the window will show icons for all the folders on your hard drive. Find the folder named **Windows** and double-click it to open it.
4. Next, find the folder named **System32** and double-click that to open it.

...then the **Windows** folder...

...then **System32**

In the 'System32' folder you've just opened, you'll see a huge collection of files and folders. These are all vital to the smooth-running of Windows, so make sure you don't delete anything while you're here!

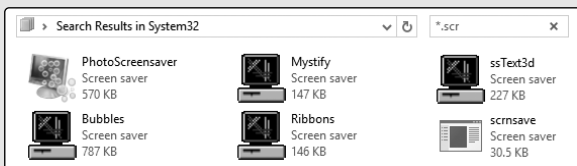


5. The screensaver files are all somewhere in this folder, but they're not going to be easy to find amongst all these other files, so let's make them easier to see: click in the search box at the top-right of the window and type ***.scr**.

Track down the screensaver files

6. Now the contents of the window will change to show only the files we've just searched for – those with the extension **.scr**, which are screensaver files. The next step is to choose your favourite. The one named **scrnsave** just turns your screen black (which is economical, but perhaps a bit dull); for the rest, just double-click one to see it in action, and it will keep going until you move the mouse to stop it.

Double-click them to try them out



Send your favourite to the desktop

Double-click it to start the screensaver

7. When you've decided which you like best, the final step is to add its icon to your desktop. To do that, right-click it, move the mouse down to **Send to** and click **Desktop (create shortcut)**. A copy of the icon will immediately appear on your desktop. (If you'd like to add any others, you can right-click those and 'send' them in the same way.)
8. Finally, close the window containing these icons. If you choose, you can rename the icon you've placed on your desktop: just click it and press the **(F2)** key, then type a new name and press **(Enter)**. In future, whenever you want the screensaver to start, just double-click this icon.



What is a 'TinyURL'?

Links to the website tinyurl.com

Question: *I receive a monthly email newsletter which includes links to websites. All these links begin with **https://tinyurl.com/** followed by a combination of letters and numbers.*

When I click one of the links, I end up at a different web address which contains no mention of 'tinyurl.com'. I'm sure I'm in the right place, as the web page I reach tallies with what the newsletter was talking about, but it's all a bit puzzling. Can you explain what's happening?

Anthony Batton

Some web addresses are very long

Answer: The addresses of some web pages can be very long, possibly extending over several lines if printed in a newspaper or magazine article or included in an email message. The website tinyurl.com is a free service that turns a long web address into a much shorter one. In fact, given that the technical term for a web address is a 'URL' (short for Uniform Resource Locator), it turns a long address into a tiny URL.

In effect, TinyURL works as a kind of translator for web addresses. If you need to quote a long web address, you can visit TinyURL and generate a short one from it which will begin <https://tinyurl.com/>. (I'll explain how to do that in a moment). TinyURL stores the long address and its tiny counterpart in its database.

TinyURL creates short addresses

If someone types the short address, they'll arrive at the TinyURL website. In the blink of an eye, TinyURL looks up the short address in its database, finds the long address that was stored with it and automatically redirects the visitor to that address.

TinyURL looks up the short address in its database

As an example, let's say I want to tell you about a particular product (in this case, a Nokia smartphone) on Amazon's website. This is the address I'd ordinarily have to give you:

A typical example

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Nokia-Lumia-635-SIM-Free-Smartphone/dp/B00KM10ITK/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1437034664&sr=8-1&keywords=lumia+635

As you can see, it takes up an unreasonable amount of space on the page. Worse still, if you wanted to visit the page, you'd have to type all that into your browser with no mistakes!

Too long to type

If I sent the same address to you in an email message instead, it would still be split over several lines. You should be able to click it rather than type it, but in some email programs only the first line would be turned into a link. If you clicked that link, you'd be visiting an incomplete address and it wouldn't work.

It doesn't fit on a single line

Using TinyURL solves all these problems. Instead, either in print or in an email message, I could give you this address:

Here's the 'tiny' equivalent

<https://tinyurl.com/djdhfz6v>

It leads to exactly the same page on the Amazon website, but it's quick and easy to type if you see it on a printed page, and there's no risk of it being split over several lines in an email message.

Here's how it's done:



Enter the URL to be shortened

Copy your 'tiny URL' to use anywhere

1. If you want to create a 'tiny URL' for a web page you're currently visiting in your web browser, click in your browser's address box to highlight the address of the page and then press **(Ctrl) + (C)** to copy that address to the Windows clipboard.
2. Next, go to the website tinyurl.com (perhaps in a new browser tab).
3. When you arrive, click in the box labelled **Enter a long URL to make a TinyURL**. Either type the address you want to shorten or, if you've copied it to the clipboard, press **(Ctrl) + (V)** to paste it into this box.
4. Click the **Make TinyURL!** button or press **(Enter)**.

5. Now you'll arrive at the page pictured below. This shows you the long address you've just entered and, below that, the new 'tiny URL'. You can use a similar copy-and-paste technique to copy this short address to wherever you need to use it. Either swipe over the short address with the mouse to highlight it and then press **(Ctrl) + (C)**, or click the **Copy** button below the short address. Having done that, you can switch to your email message or text document and press **(Ctrl) + (V)** to paste this short address into it.

