

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, Windows 7, Windows Vista or Windows XP). 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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Microsoft Word Has Stopped Saving Files

Word refuses to save your work?

Question: *I'm using Office 2010 and Word suddenly won't save files. Although I press **(Ctrl) + (S)** to save, when I close the document, Word still asks if I want to save it. I click Yes, go to close it, and again the same question. I've tried clicking Save As and nothing happens at all. Do you know of a way to fix this?*

Martin Jolly

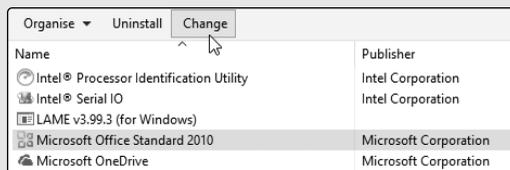
You need to reinstall (or repair) the program

Answer: That's certainly peculiar, but there's no doubt that your copy of Word (or Office in general) has broken in some way. With any program that seems to have gone seriously haywire, the best solution is usually to reinstall it, in the expectation that this will replace whatever files or settings have been damaged.

With Microsoft Office, that's a straightforward job because it provides a simple 'Repair' option that should fix problems like this. Here's what to do:



1. Start by opening Control Panel. In Windows 10 or 8.1, press the **(Windows)** key to open the Start menu or Start screen, type **control** and click the link to **Control Panel**. In Windows 7, go to **Start > Control Panel**.
2. In the Control Panel window, below the 'Programs' heading, click on **Uninstall a program**.
3. Look down the alphabetical list of programs to find **Microsoft Office (1)** and click it once to select it. On the bar above the list, click **Change (2)**.



4. Click **Yes** in the security prompt that appears, and after a moment you'll see the window similar to the one pictured below. Here, select **Repair** (3) and click **Continue** (4).

Select the **Repair** option



5. The rest happens automatically and takes only a few minutes. When the process finishes, click the **Close** button. If you see a message telling you your PC must reboot, be sure to restart the PC before trying to use an Office program. After this, you should find that Word is behaving itself once more.

Restart the PC if prompted



How Do I Use a Program in a Zip File?

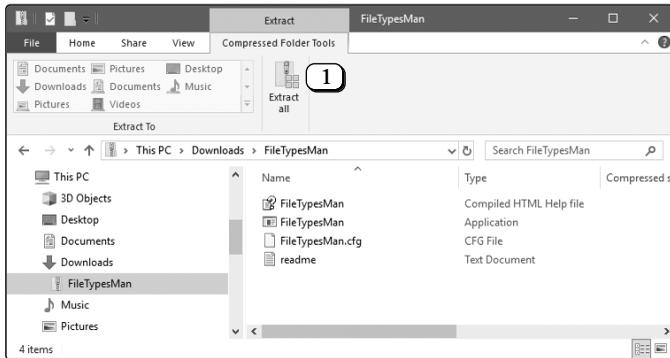
Question: *I've downloaded a program from a website, but it appears to be in a zip file. When I open it, I just see a collection of files and nothing has been installed. How do I use the new program?*

New program arrived in a zip file

Stephanie Lucas

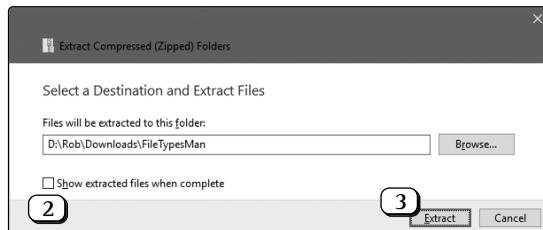
All you see is a list of files

Answer: Presumably this zip file has landed in your Downloads folder. When you double-click the zip file to open it, you'll be looking at something like the screenshot below (albeit with different files in the list):



Extract the files to a new folder

The first job is to 'extract' these files from the zip and into their own folder, so start by clicking the Extract all button (1). In the dialog that opens, remove the tick beside Show extracted files when complete (2) (since that would just complicate things) and click the Extract button (3).



Find the folder that's just been created

At the left of the window you were using a moment ago, click your Downloads folder to see the entire contents of that folder. You'll see that along with your zip file, you now have an ordinary folder with the same name as your zip file. This folder now contains all the files from the zip, including your new program. The problem is, it's still stuck inside your

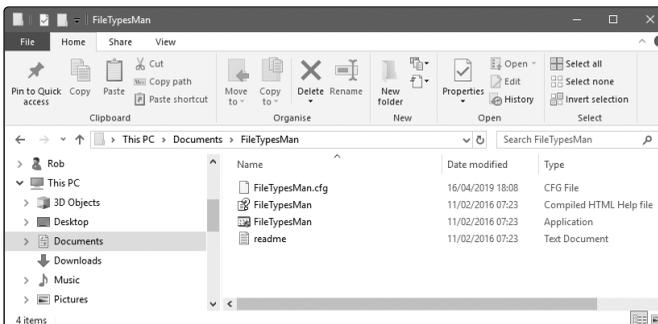
Downloads folder, and that's not a good place to leave it, so we'll move it elsewhere. Click that folder once to select it and press **(Ctrl) + (X)** (or, if you prefer, right-click it and choose Cut).

Now, at the left of the window, click on your Documents folder. Either press **(Ctrl) + (V)** or right-click a blank space in the window and choose Paste, and that moves the new folder into your Documents folder – a far better place to keep things permanently.

Now double-click the folder containing your new program to open it and see the files it contains. Make sure you're looking at it in 'Details' view, as pictured below: if necessary, switch to the View tab and click on Details.

Move it to a better location

Now look at the files it contains



From here, much will depend on what program you've downloaded – they're all different, of course. But have a look at the 'Type' column and you should see that one of the files in this folder is noted as an **Application**: that's the program itself. Other useful items to look out for are anything noted as a Text Document (particularly with a name like 'ReadMe') which should give you some more information about using the program, and any file noted as a Compiled HTML Help File which should be the program's instruction manual.

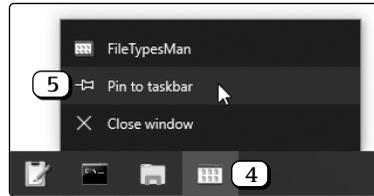
One should be an 'Application'

In the absence of any other clues about what to do next, try double-clicking the file noted as an **Application** and this should start your new program.

Pin the program to your taskbar

Assuming it does, you'd probably like an easier way to start it in future than to have to go hunting for it in your Documents folder. In that case, with the program now running, right-click its icon on the taskbar (4) and choose **Pin to taskbar** (5).

When you close the program, this icon will remain in place and you can click it whenever you want to start the program in future.



How Can I Hide What I'm Working On?

Need to conceal your work quickly?

Question: *My computer is in a rather public part of the house, and recently a friend walked in when I was working on a confidential memo for an organisation to which I belong. Trying to close everything fast didn't really work because I had lots of notes open, and a website we use for legal opinions, etc.. My question is simply this: can I with one touch put up a temporary blackout?*

Eric Grimshaw

These methods will hide your open windows

Answer: In this situation, one option is certainly to try to close (or, more safely, minimise) the window you're using, but if you have a number of windows open, that's not a quick job. What you'd really like to do is leave everything open but hide it – the equivalent of throwing a blanket over the screen – and there are several quick ways of doing that:

- Click the tiny rectangle at the extreme-right of the taskbar. That instantly hides all the windows you're using, and clicking the same rectangle again later brings those windows back into view.
- Rather than reaching for the mouse, press  +  (remember 'D' for 'Desktop'): this does the same job, and another press of  +  brings them back.
- For something closer to that 'temporary blackout', press  +  (for 'Lock') instead. This 'locks' your PC, taking you back to the sign-in screen, thus having the benefit of also hiding the taskbar so no-one can tell what programs you had open. Type your Windows password to sign in again and resume work.
- One other sure-fire blackout on a desktop PC is simply to switch off the monitor!

If there's a drawback to the options above, it's that they all arouse suspicion: why are you sitting there looking at an empty screen? Windows 10 offers a solution to that with its 'Virtual Desktops' feature.

A better solution in Windows 10

Before you start your confidential work, open some innocuous program – perhaps your web browser showing a news website – and leave that running.

Now open a second desktop: press  +  and click the **New desktop** button at the top of the screen. To the right of that button, you'll see a thumbnail of your current desktop ('Desktop 1', with your browser window in it) and a thumbnail of another empty desktop, 'Desktop 2': click the empty one.

Create a second 'virtual desktop'

This switches you to your new, empty desktop, and here you can open the programs you'll use to do your confidential work and get on with it. In the event of an interruption, do either of the following to switch quickly back to your first desktop with its web browser:

Quickly switch between the two

- Press  +  again and click the thumbnail for 'Desktop 1'.
- Press  +  +  to switch straight back to that first desktop.

There's nothing on the screen to suggest that you have other programs open, or another desktop in existence. And when you're ready to get back to work, you can press  +  and click 'Desktop 2' again or press  +  + .



Excel: Automatically Highlight the Highest/Lowest Values

Make high and low numbers stand out

Question: *Every day I measure my blood pressure and pulse rate and keep the results in an Excel spreadsheet. I understand that Excel could highlight the highest and lowest figures in each column for me to make them stand out, but I can't see how it's done. Can you help?*

June Smith

Conditional Formatting in Excel 2007 and later

Answer: You can do this in Excel 2007 and later using a feature named Conditional Formatting. With this feature, you specify a 'condition' (such as identifying the highest number in a column of figures) and a format (such as highlighting the figure in red text), and Excel does the rest automatically. Here's how to set it up:



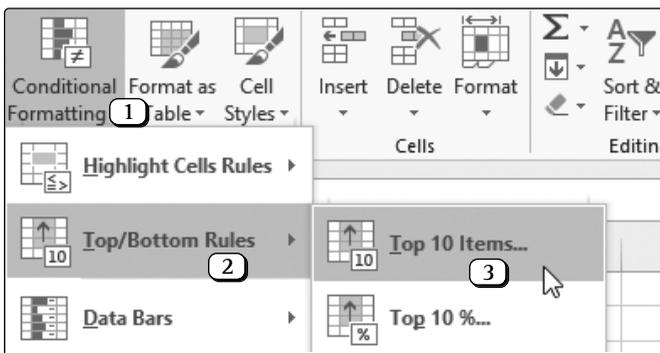
Select the figures (or entire column)

1. Open the Excel spreadsheet containing your figures.
2. Select the desired column of figures by pressing and holding the left mouse button in the topmost cell and dragging downwards until you reach the bottom of the required area, then release the mouse button. (Alternatively you could select an entire column by clicking its column header letter.)

	A	B	C	D	E
1					
2		Blood Pressure (measured at 9.00 am)			
3		Date	High	Low	Pulse
4		01-May-19	140	80	74
5		02-May-19	134	75	79
6		03-May-19	143	95	80
7		04-May-19	138	85	80
8		05-May-19	125	79	78
9		06-May-19			
10		07-May-19			
11		08-May-19			

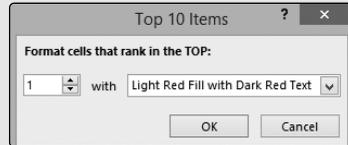
3. Switch to the **Home** tab on the Ribbon, if you're not already there, and in the 'Styles' group click the **Conditional Formatting** button (1).
4. We'll start by setting up highlighting for the highest figure in the column. On the menu that opens, move the mouse to **Top/Bottom Rules** (2) and choose **Top 10 Items** (3).

Choose Top 10 Items



Highlight only
one item

5. Now you'll see a little Top 10 Items dialog. First change the figure shown from 10 to 1 (4) (since you only want to highlight the single highest figure, not the 10 highest). To the right, choose how the cell containing that highest number should be formatted (5): in this example, I've used the default setting of a light red fill with dark red text.



The drop-down list containing available formats doesn't offer much choice. However, if you choose **Custom Format** at the bottom of the list, another dialog will open in which you can choose a font style (such as bold or italic), a font colour, and (using the tabs at the top of the dialog) a border and fill colour for the cell.

The highest
number is now
formatted
differently

6. Click the **OK** button (6), and you'll see that Excel has highlighted the cell containing the highest value by colouring it light red and showing its text in darker red. (If there are two or more cells containing the same 'highest value', Excel will highlight each of them.)

Highlight
the lowest
number too

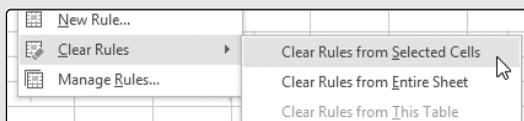
7. You also want to highlight the lowest number, so keep the same column of cells selected and click the **Conditional Formatting** button again. As before, move the mouse to **Top/Bottom Rules**, but this time choose **Bottom 10 Items**. Once more, change the figure shown from 10 to 1, then open the drop-down list to choose a format (ideally a different format from the one you chose for the 'highest' value, so that you can tell which is which at a glance), then click **OK**.

8. Done! Excel now highlights the highest and lowest values in the column and, if you ever enter a higher or lower number, Excel will automatically spot it and highlight that one instead. This is just one column of figures, of course: if you want to do the same for another column, go back to step 2 to highlight the figures in the next column and set up similar Conditional Formatting rules for that in the same way.

High	L
140	
134	
143	
138	
125	

If you decide you're not keen on this Conditional Formatting after all, it's easily removed. Highlight the group of cells (or the entire column) to which the formatting was applied, then click the **Conditional Formatting** button as you did before. Move the mouse to **Clear Rules** and choose **Clear Rules from Selected Cells**.

How to remove conditional formatting



Windows 8.1: Prevent the Annoying Charms Bar Appearing

Question: *I'm using Windows 8.1 and there's one thing that continually annoys me about it. If I have to move the mouse into the top-right corner of the screen to close a program, that bar appears with the Search, Share, Start, Devices and Settings buttons. Is there any way I can turn it off?*

The Charms bar opens automatically

Richard Barry

Answer: For reasons known only to Microsoft, that bar is called the 'Charms bar', and the five buttons it contains are

It appears when the pointer is in the top-right corner

Tell Windows to stop doing this

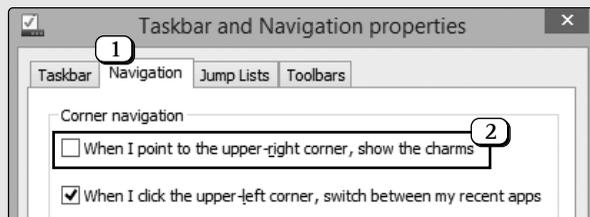


called 'Charms'. They can be useful at times – particularly the Search and Settings buttons – but there's no doubt that this bar tends to make an appearance at inopportune moments.

On any computer with a mouse, the Charms bar is designed to appear whenever you move the mouse pointer into the upper-right corner of the screen. However, if you tend to have your programs and windows maximised to fill your screen, that's where a window's close (x) button will be, causing the Charms bar to appear whenever you try to close a window.

Fortunately, you can stop this happening. That doesn't remove your access to the Charms bar itself – you can open it by pressing **Windows** + **C** – it just prevents it from appearing when you move your mouse into that corner of the screen:

1. Right-click a blank space on the taskbar (not on an icon) and choose **Properties** from the context menu.
2. In the dialog that opens, switch to the **Navigation** tab **1**.
3. Below the tab, remove the tick beside **When I point to the upper-right corner, show the charms** **2**.



4. Click **OK** to confirm this change and close the dialog. From now on, the Charms bar will only appear when you press the key combination **Windows** + **C**.



Windows is Showing the Date in American Format

Question: My nephew has given me his old notebook computer and the date on the taskbar is shown in US format (month/day/year). My email program shows the dates of my email messages the same way, so I presume that somewhere there's a single setting for this. How can I change it?

The date is shown as month/day/year

Peter Lomax



Answer: Windows is designed to be used in countries all over the world, and those countries have their own languages, alphabets, keyboard layouts, and preferences about the way dates and times are displayed. Therefore, Windows has to support them all.

Windows supports various countries' preferences

Generally, our PCs are set up to use our own country's settings, but there's nothing to stop someone choosing a different option for the date format (or, of course, it may have been changed accidentally during a bout of exploration).

Someone has switched to the US date format

Fortunately, it's easy to put right. Just follow these steps:

1. Windows 10 or Windows 8.1: press the  key, type control and then click the link to Control Panel.
Windows 7: open the Start menu and click on Control Panel.
2. In the Control Panel window, click the large heading Clock and Region in Windows 10, or Clock, Language and Region in Windows 8.1 or 7.

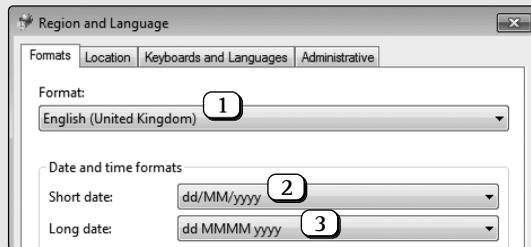


Choose UK
English formats
Check the
formats are
correct

3. Windows 10 or Windows 8.1: below the large 'Region' heading, click on **Change date, time, or number formats**.

Windows 7: below the large 'Region and Language' heading, click on **Change the date, time, or number format**.

4. In the dialog that appears, open the drop-down list at the top and choose **English (United Kingdom)** (1).
5. Just below this option, make sure the Short date is shown as **dd/MM/yyyy** (2) and the Long date is shown as **dd MMMM yyyy** (3). If either is different, open the appropriate drop-down list and choose the correct option.



Done

6. Finally, click the **OK** button at the bottom of this dialog, and then close the Control Panel window by clicking the x button in its top-right corner.

If you look at the clock on your taskbar now, you'll see that the date is shown in the traditional UK format (day/month/year). Similarly, wherever else dates appear in Windows (such as in your email program or to note the dates on which files were created or modified), the same format will now be used.

