

Several users who have run into a problem with Windows XP which rendered their systems temporarily unusable because they were unable to start Windows at all. Windows goes directly to a blue screen error that says "Unmountable Boot Volume". Yes, the good ole BSOD (Blue Screen Of Death)--as they call it--is still alive and well (pardon the pun) and still occurs in XP. Luckily, like most problems discovered with Windows XP, there is a relatively easy fix for this, unless you've suffered some serious damage to your hard drive. Usually though, this is just the result of a boot sector becoming corrupted, which can happen if you lose the power on your computer without properly shutting down, or there's some other sort of glitch which results in a damaged boot sector.

When this happens the user usually panics--and rightfully so--because they don't know if their entire hard drive has been lost which includes all of their important data and documents! I would estimate that 90% of the time this is not the case, and all that is needed to correct the situation is the following procedure. Please note as you're reading this, however, that once you run into this problem you won't be able to get onto the Internet to look up this solution! So it's a good idea to either print it out now, save the text of this tip to a boot floppy, or just keep the existence of the tip in the back of your mind so you can use a lifeline and "phone a friend" to logon and read it back to you so you can attempt to restore your computer to a functioning state. Here's the steps to take:

1. Insert your Windows XP Pro or Home Edition CD into your CD-ROM Drive.
2. Boot your computer. When you see the message "Press any key to boot from CD" press any key immediately. If you DON'T see the message to boot from CD and the system instead tries to boot normally, still giving you the blue screen error, then you first need to change your Boot settings in your BIOS to set the system to attempt to boot from CD before booting from Hard Drive or Floppy. To do this you need to know the magic startup key to get into your BIOS settings when you first turn on your computer. On most systems this is displayed quickly at startup in one of the corners of the screen. It'll say something like "Press F2 to load Setup" or "Press DEL for Setup". Those are the two most common keys for this function--F2 and DEL. So if you've never seen that message, try F2 first then DEL and see if one of them works. You need to turn on the power to the computer and then press the key every 2 seconds or so to make sure it registers. Don't continuously hold it down or you'll get a keyboard error (the BIOS will think a key is stuck and disable the keyboard), but repeatedly press it until you get into the Setup program.

Once you make it into Setup you need to find your BOOT settings. You'll probably see 3 or 4 devices in the list of boot devices. These will be in the order they are checked at bootup. You only need to change the first device to CD-ROM. You can leave the others as they are. Refer to the on-screen instructions for the keys to use to change the BIOS settings. After changing it, make sure you save your changes. Then reboot with the Windows XP CD in the CD drive. When you get the message to "Press any key to boot

from CD" do that--press any key.

3. When you see the "Welcome to setup" message press the letter R. You will get a DOS prompt.

4. Type "chkdsk /p" without the quotes and hit ENTER.

5. When that is done type "fixboot" and hit ENTER. Press "Y" and ENTER at the prompt.

6. Type "exit" and hit ENTER.

7. The system will now reboot into Windows. If for some reason that don't work for you, you can boot to the recovery console like above and type "chkdsk /r" then press ENTER. When done type "exit" and hit ENTER.

This will take a lot longer, but the system should now boot back into Windows.