

Repair Windows XP Using the System File Checker

Problem

You are worried that the core operating system files may have been corrupted or overwritten by viruses or spyware. There are many possible symptoms of this including operating system programs not opening or the incorrect program opening.

This article explains how to repair Windows XP using the System File Checker (SFC.exe).

Applies To

Microsoft Windows XP

Solution

Windows XP has a feature called Windows File Protection (WFP) monitor which is used to prevent third-party applications overwriting important system files. By protecting these files, there is a greatly reduced risk of instability with Windows XP and other programs. In particular, WFP protects files that are installed with the operating system such as .dll, .exe, .ocx, and .sys. If a program tries to replace protected files another way, then WFP will restore the originals.

Windows File Protection looks after system files in two ways. First, it's invoked when a change is made to a file that is in a protected directory. WFP will check the file that has been altered and if it is protected will check to see if the new file is the correct version. If not, it will be replaced from the cache folder, found at `C:\WINDOWS\System32\Dllcache`. If the required file cannot be found here then you will be prompted for your Windows XP CD.

The other method of protecting system files is via the System File Checker tool. This can be run manually to check all protected files and to verify their versions. It can also be used to check and update the cache folder if it has been damaged or corrupted in some way.

To use System File Checker to verify the files on your computer:

- 1) Click *Start | Run*.
- 2) Type `sfc /scannow` and click *OK* to run it immediately or `sfc /scanonce` to run it after the next reboot.
- 3) Insert your operating system CD if prompted.
- 4) Restart the computer when prompted in the System File Checker has made any changes.



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