

```
NTLDR is missing
Press Ctrl+Alt+Del to restart
_
```



How to fix: NTLDR is missing, press any key to restart

What happened?

When your computer starts, the BIOS attempts to find the primary hard drive's active partition to read the first sector for the MBR (Master Boot Record), it uses that info to load the rest of the OS. For Windows NT4/2k/XP the [NTLDR](#) (New Technology Loader) takes it from there. If you get the "NTLDR is missing, press any key to restart" what's most likely going on is the BIOS either didn't look for the right drive, didn't find the right partition, it wasn't active, didn't find the MBR, or the MBR didn't list NTLDR in the right place, the location of NTLDR changed, or you are looking at a hardware failure situation (memory/cables/drive/motherboard/etc). Windows Vista does not boot this way, you can still use my floppy to boot into an existing installation of 98/nt/xp, but I've not had a chance to test Windows Vista.

If possible, try to change back whatever hardware or software change you just made (this could be as simple as leaving a floppy disk in the drive or you need to recheck the cables). ([What if I made new changes that I want to keep?](#)).

Make a NTLDR boot disk to get back into Windows.

The quick test to make sure your OS installation is still good is to create an MBR and NTLDR on a floppy disk and check your partitions, this disk will check many of the partitions for a working windows installation. Here are the instructions to do this:

1. Get a blank floppy (whatever is on it will be erased), and put it into a working computer ([What if the computer doesn't have a floppy drive?](#)).
2. Download [fixntldr.exe](#) onto a working computer ([fixntldr-winnt](#) if you are using Windows 2000 or Windows NT4) ([What if I don't want to download a file from a website I don't trust?](#)). ([What if my backup system is Mac / Linux or another alt OS?](#)).
3. Run the fixntldr.exe file by double clicking it. Click OK to overwrite the blank floppy disc in the working computer, you should see some screens about writing a new floppy disk.
4. Do you remember if the folder you had your Windows installation in was named "Windows"? If you can't remember just keep going ([What if it was not named Windows but WINNT like in NT4 or 2000?](#)) .
5. Put the new floppy (or cd/usb drive) you have just created into the computer that gets the

NTLDR is missing error message, turn the broken computer off.

Using the boot disk in the computer with the "NTLDR is missing" error.

Start back up the broken computer with the floppy in the floppy drive (or cd in cd drive or flash drive in usb port). Once your computer gets past the BIOS screen your computer should try to access the floppy drive and you should see a black screen with white letters that says: ([What if I don't see this screen?](#)).

1ST TRY THIS seleccione esto primero
2ND TRY THIS essayez ceci en deuzieme
3RD TRY THIS wahlen Sie diesen Third
4TH TRY THIS selezioni questo fourth
5TH TRY THIS selecione este fifth
6TH TRY THIS seleccione este sexto
7TH TRY THIS essayez ceci en septieme
8TH TRY THIS wahlen Sie dieses achte
9TH TRY THIS selezioni questo nono
10TH TRY THIS selecione este decimo

(I threw in some Spanish / French / German / Italian / Portuguese for international flavor.)

This file is set up to automatically select the "1ST TRY THIS" choice after 30 seconds. Try it first, if it was the wrong selection, you will likely get one of these four errors:

1. Windows could not start because file "<Windows Root>\system32\hal.dll was missing or corrupt
2. Windows could not start because of a computer disk hardware configuration problem. Could not read from the selected boot disk. Check boot path and disk hardware. Please check the Windows documentation about hardware disk configuration and your hardware reference manuals for additional information.
3. I/O Error accessing boot sector file multi(0)disk(0)fdisk(0)\BOOTSECT.DOS
4. Immediate reboot

If you get the immediate reboot or some other weird error, try pressing F8 at the "1st Try This" selection screen, it will give you a prompt where you can select Safe Mode, and then try the "1st Try This" option again. Safe Mode is a special "minimal" version of Windows that doesn't load certain parts of the operating system that might have caused the problem.

One of the choices should eventually boot you back into Windows. ([What if none of the options worked?](#)) .

Use windows to fix the boot files on the hard drive.

If you got back into Windows, stop whatever you are doing and backup your most important information from this computer.

Now that you are done backing up the most important info, try to change back whatever you were last doing and boot normally, if that doesn't work, put the floppy back into the broken computer and double click the fixntldr.bat file on the floppy drive, if it asks you to overwrite a file, just type in y for yes (the file copies boot.ini, ntldr, ntdetect.com from the floppy to the C:\ drive and removes the read only attributes). That process take a few minutes, then remove the floppy and reboot.

If you are using the cd or usb solution, copy the boot.ini, ntldr, and ntdetect.com files to My Computer > Local Disk C:\ > and overwrite whatever files might be there, then right click each file, choose properties, uncheck the Read Only attribute, and click OK.

If you get back into Windows again, you can change that "1st Try This" menu by going into Start > Control Panel > System > Advanced tab > Startup and Recovery section, Settings button > System Startup; then change the "Default Operating System:" to the selection that worked for you, and change the box that says "Time to display list of operating systems" to however many seconds you want (usually 1 second). Click OK twice. ([What if the bootdisk worked, but I can't get into Windows without it?](#)) .

([What if I want to do further research?](#)) .

It worked! Please help me back. - Keeping website in "maintenance mode"

All done? Hi, I'm [Miles Comer](#) and I developed this "solution" back in 2002 when I had to fix my relatives computer without me standing over their shoulder. If the floppy fixed it for you, might I humbly suggest you use a credit card or PayPal to donate for \$5 or whatever amount you choose (even \$3 would be fine).

If you don't have a credit card or pay pal account, you can mail a check to me, use the form below to send me your email address and I'll send you the address to mail the check to you.

I added this button because I am sometimes told that the other Donate button doesn't show up.

For \$25 you can get a banner ad on this page for 1 month, new advertising opportunities available now.

Ad revenues help, but it's your donations that are the force that keeps this site up and able to make improvements. Before it was much more difficult to create the boot floppy, but with

WinImage Pro (for \$80!) it's much simpler. I then had a bounty out of \$50 for a USB solution which was paid, then I donated \$50 to Gilles Vollant Software for the BootPart program that's on the inside of it. At some point I'll make the "rename boot.ini" instructions to just "double click this .bat file". Luckily, Windows Vista does not give this error, thought it may still have the problem, I'm not 100% sure. However with Windows 98 still used by millions 7 years later, I'm sure Windows XP won't disappear anytime soon and thus this page must stay.

A free way to help me would be to link back to my webpage. Either from your own web page, or if you belong to any discussion forum that has to do with computers, or has a lounge section, why not let everyone know I helped you out by making a post and in that post, link back to my webpage? Use this address in case I change something in the future:

<http://ntldrissing.com/>

If you would like, try providing feedback where everyone can see it (no login required) on "[The Corkboard](#)".

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What if I made new changes that I want to keep?

Adding a new hard drive or a new drive array often causes your computer to miss the NTLDR, to fix it you'll want to specify in the BIOS which device to boot from first, and you'll want it on your IDE0 channel and as the master (first on the chain) with jumpers set to Master, and then use fdisk to make sure that the first partition is a primary partition (and set as active), and that none of the other drives or partitions are set to active. Try setting the BIOS to it's defaults or clearing the CMOS memory. If you made changes as drastic as a new motherboard you may want to run a repair install as described here:

<http://www.techspot.com/vb/topic8356.html>

Come back if you still get the error after that. [Go back](#)

What if the computer doesn't have a floppy drive?

I have also created a cd-r and usb drive solution.

CD-R CD-R/W

For CD, burn the [FIXNTLDR ISO image for Windows XP](#) or [FIXNTLDR ISO image for Windows NT4 and Windows 2000](#); you will have to unzip the file then burn the iso image with a CD burning software, try download.com for free iso burning cd software: [MagicISO](#).

Download it and save it to your desktop.

Extract the file, and see if you can just double-click it. If it brings the program you use to burn new CD's, go ahead and burn it, place it in the broken computer, and try to boot.

If it brings up a box about "Windows cannot open this file" we need to download some more software. By default, Windows doesn't include the software you need to burn iso images, but some free software exists here:

http://www.download.com/MagicISO-Maker/3000-2646_4-10191803.html

Click Download now, run the setup program, go back to your desktop and open MagicISO, (choose the Try It) button. Once it opens, click Tools>Burn CD/DVD with ISO.

There will be a white box in the middle with an open folder to the right, click the open folder, and find the fixntldr.iso file I had you save to the desktop earlier (it might be in a folder named fixntldr.iso).

Once you select it, click "Burn it!" and have it create the CD, put that into the broken PC and turn it on, it should give you the boot options, and go ahead and boot the PC. [Go Back](#).

USB Flash Drive

For USB flash drive, download this file: [ntldrusb.zip](#) ([ntldrusb-winnt](#) for Windows NT4 or 2000 or upgrades from). Expand the contents out to the folder named ntlrusb.

Then Insert your USB Stick into the working computer;

Double-click HPUSBFWE.EXE in the ntlrusb folder;

Check "Create a DOS startup disk" and "using DOS system files located at" then press the grey button with the "...";

A box will come up asking you which folder to select, point it to the "dos system files" folder; Press OK; Press Start; Press Yes; Let it run for just a few minutes till a new box comes up; Press OK; Press Close;

Open the "putonusb" folder, copy all the files, paste them onto the usb stick (just in the root of the drive, like E:\);

Eject the USB Stick; Remove it from your computer;

Place it into the computer with the "NTLDR is missing" issue, reboot it.

You will see the Windows 98 screen pop up for a second, then you will see a black screen with white letters prompting you to "replace boot sector of the drive C: (y/n)", press the y key;

It will go to a C:\ prompt, reboot the computer by pressing Ctrl+Alt+Del;

Now you should be able to select the different options 1-10;

Pick back up on step 5 above about placing the disk in the drive. [Go Back](#)

What if I don't want to download a file from a website I don't trust?

If you want to make a floppy yourself, format it using a Windows NT/2000/XP computer (it can't be Windows 95/98/ME) and then get a copy of 3 files from a working Windows NT/2000/XP computer: NTLDR, ntdetect.com, and boot.ini come off the root of the C:\ drive. Either put those on the floppy and boot up with it, or somehow copy those to the C:\ drive of the broken computer.

If you can't get access to those files, but still don't want to run an executable from a website off the internet, download and expand onto the floppy this zip file: [fixntldr.zip](#).

What's in fixntldr.zip?

Two program files copied from a Windows XP installation named "ntldr" and "ntdetect.com" these assist in booting your existing installation.

And a text file named "boot.ini" that is what you use to make the selection of which partition and disk you are trying to boot from. The contents of boot.ini are as follows:

[Boot Loader]

timeout=30

Default=multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition(1)\Windows

[Operating Systems]

multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition(1)\Windows="1ST TRY THIS seleccione esto primero" /
fastdetect

multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(1)partition(1)\Windows="2ND TRY THIS essayez ceci en deuzieme" /
fastdetect

multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition(2)\Windows="3RD TRY THIS wahlen Sie diesen Third" /
fastdetect

multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(1)partition(2)\Windows="4TH TRY THIS selezioni questo fourth" /
fastdetect

multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition(3)\Windows="5TH TRY THIS seleccione este fifth" /fastdetect

multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(1)partition(3)\Windows="6TH TRY THIS seleccione este sexto" /fastdetect

multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition(4)\Windows="7TH TRY THIS essayez ceci en septieme" /
fastdetect

multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(1)partition(4)\Windows="8TH TRY THIS wahlen Sie dieses achte" /
fastdetect

C:\="9TH TRY THIS selezioni questo nono"

D:\="10TH TRY THIS seleccione este decimo"

winxp.ini has "Winxp" instead of Windows, and Winnt.ini has "Winnt" instead of Windows.

I threw in some Spanish / French / German / Italian / Portuguese for international flavor.

The contents of fixntldr.bat file is:

```
%systemdrive%
cd\

rename boot.ini boot.ini.bak
rename ntldr ntldr.bak
rename ntdetect.com ntdetect.com.bak

copy a:\boot.ini boot.ini /-Y
copy a:\ntldr ntldr /-Y
copy a:\ntdetect.com ntdetect.com /-Y

attrib boot.ini -h -r -s -a
attrib ntldr -h -r -s -a
attrib ntdetect.com -h -r -s -a
```

(It is renaming the files on C:, copying the files from A:, then removing the hidden, read only, system, and archive attributes. My sincere thanks to Jorge Toscano for providing the code for the bat file and the Portuguese translation) [Go Back](#)

What if my backup system is Linux or another alt OS?

I made the disk an executable to make it easier to make a floppy. Of course that only works for Microsoft OS's. If you back up system is Linux or any other alternative operating system, then use [xpnt4lix.zip](#) / [xpnt4lix.rar](#) for Windows XP installs or [2knt4lix.zip](#) / [2knt4lix.rar](#) for Windows 2000 or NT4 installs, you will need to uncompress those files). (These are previous versions in case those img files don't work for you: [fixntldrimg.zip](#) or [fixntldrimg.rar](#)). You'll need a program like [rawrite.exe](#) (which works in DOS if you can get there from a [Win98 boot disk](#)) but for your OS. [Read RedHat talk about making a floppy from an image](#) (and I have it on good word that the command in linux is "dd if=filename.img of=/dev/fd0" or do a [search on Google](#). You may also be able to do that linux command line in a Mac. But if you have an easy way to make a boot floppy on a Mac I don't know about, please let me know milescomer@gmail.com , or just send it along using one of the forms. If you give me a solution. I'll give you \$10 from the pay pal account on this site.

If none of these options work for you, check out the [What if I don't want to download a file from a website I don't trust?](#) section to try and find a way you can create the disk yourself with your current configuration, then drop me a line to let me know how you did it. [Go Back](#).

What if it was not named Windows but WINNT like in NT4 or 2000?

Instead of just the fixntldr.exe, use the [fixntldr-winnt.exe](#) file if your system is NT4, or 2000, or was upgraded from a previous installation of NT4 or 2000.

If you named your windows directory something like "shinyhappypeople" then open the boot.ini file and change any mention of "windows" to "shinyhappypeople" like so:

```
multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition(1)\shinyhappypeople="1ST TRY THIS"
```

Save changes, and put the disk back in and continue on trying the 10 choices. [Go Back](#)

What if I don't see this screen?

If you do not see the screen come up with the different selections and immediately goes back to the "NTLDR is missing, press any key to restart" error, then you will need to change the "boot order" in your systems BIOS to first select the Floppy Drive (sometimes called "Removable Media Drive") before it tries to boot to the Hard Disk (sometimes called "Fixed Disk" drive). If you are using the cd or usb solutions, move those before hard drive.

To get to the BIOS, when the computer first starts try pressing the CTRL or ESC or END or DELETE or F1-12 keys to get it to stop trying to load windows and instead go to a screen that allows you to make configuration changes to your machine. Once there, try looking for a "Boot Order" screen that will list your floppy, cd-rom, and hard drives with a number, (typically 1-3), look for instructions on the screen on how to make changes, and move your floppy to 1 and CD-ROM to 2, find a way to exit and be sure to save your changes. [Go Back](#)

What if none of the options worked?

If using the boot disk to create a new MBR and NTLDR did not help, or copying the files to the root of the C:\ drive and you remove the disk and still get the message when you boot up, your options for a solution diverge into different areas. Then we know that the programs are fine, and the 3 startup files are fine, but perhaps the MBR is incorrect. Correcting the MBR takes a few different directions, choose any of the following sections:

Installation CD Option

Performing a "Repair" installation of windows. Get an installation CD: (the full version of the Windows XP CD, the upgrade version is non-bootable). Start your computer with your XP (or 2000) CD (in your BIOS "Boot Sequence" the CD-Rom will need to be accessed before the hard drive, and a dialog will appear that says "Press any key to boot from CD..." and you need to press a key on the keyboard to have it begin booting from the CD)

See screenshot of the repair install in action:
<http://www.techspot.com/vb/topic8356.html>

Recovery Console Option

You can choose to repair a windows installation from the recovery console. Once you are logged

in to your recovery console, select the number that represent your C: drive more than likely it will be 1. It will ask for your admin password, enter it you have one or just hit enter if you don't know it. Follow the recovery console instructions from here:

<http://www.5starsupport.com/faq/booting.htm#7-9>

Then try using the floppy again. [Go Back](#).

Hardware Problems

If neither of those options worked, try checking your hardware, replace cables, try different power cable, ensure jumpers are on properly, ensure that the drive you want to boot from is on the Primary IDE connection (IDE 0) and is set as the first device on the IDE cable (Master). At best your data is still intact, so you can put the drive in another computer and back it up. You can most likely save your data, but if your okay with losing it, fdisk to erase all your partitions, recreate one as primary, set it to active, and format it, run sys c: and see if you can't reboot to at least a C:\ prompt.

You also may be having hard drive failure problems, here's a handy thread to check for those problems:

<http://www.techspot.com/vb/showthread.php?s=&threadid=7602>

Still nothing?

If your still looking for help, of all the other online write ups, I found this the most helpful (be sure to first select what you were doing that got you into the NTLDR situation):

<http://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch000465.htm>

and

http://www.short-media.com/articles/repair_windows_xp

If reading stuff online feels like you are going in circles and you need some serious help, for a \$3 donation, I'll provide at least 5 email responses and see what I can do, use this form to send me the note and you don't have to make your donation until I reply back (usually within 12 hours).[Go Back](#)

What if the bootdisk worked, but I can't get into Windows without it?

Stop - Backup your important files - Then proceed

Inside Windows Option

Once back into Windows, right click on the My Computer option, choose the Manage option. The Computer Management window will open, click on "Disk Management" on the left pane. One of the disks it lists, and one of the drives on it, will need to be marked as active. It will be

which drive letter you have placed the 3 boot files into (this will likely be the C: drive on Disk 0). Right click on that drive letter and select "Mark Partition as Active". Close and reboot.

If that doesn't work, go into "My Computer", right-click each hard drive, select "Properties", switch to the "Tools" tab, click the "Check Now" button, check both options then click "Start"; if you selected the system partition it will require it to be rebooted and done outside of Windows. When you reboot you will see a message about "Disk checking will begin in 7 seconds", let it do this and don't skip it. It may take awhile and will boot back into Windows when it's done.

If that doesn't immediately work, and you have more hard drives than just C:, try placing the 3 boot files into other drives like D:, E:, F:, etc. Reboot each time to check if that was the one that fixed it, and when you find the correct one, mark it as active.

Win9x Boot Disk Option

Get a Win9x floppy and boot with it and when you get your A:\ prompt type:

fdisk

and make sure that the correct partition and hard drive are labeled "active" (usually the first hard drive with the first partition).

If you had a Win 9x install on this machine you may need to also run the command: sys c: (or d, e, or f for the installation).

Recovery Console Option

Go into the recovery console by booting up with a Windows XP cd and go through the options till you get to the recovery console, you will need the admin password for this option (if you do not know it, just hit enter, that will work if it is blank). Then issue the command: fixboot

New Hard Drive Option

Purchase a new hard drive, remove the old one, install the new one as master, install your OS, install the old one as slave (remember to change [jumpers](#)), copy all the data off the old hard drive, burn CD's or DVD's of the most important stuff, perform a low-level format of the old drive, make a partition on it and use it as backup storage drive or just another place to store your stuff.

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What if I want to do further research?

If you want to do your own research on this topic, here are links to relevant Microsoft KB articles:

[Windows XP Resource Kits: Initial Startup Phasee](#)

[NTLDR is missing when you install or upgrade Windows XP over 95/98/ME](#)

[You receive an "NTLDR is missing" error message when you start your computer](#)

[How to Troubleshoot NTLDR is missing in W2k](#)

[How To Create a Boot Disk for an NTFS or FAT Partition in Windows](#)

[The computer does not start after you change the active partition by using the Disk Management tool](#)

[Error message when you start your computer with a non-system disk](#)

[Windows 2000 Disk Concepts and Troubleshooting](#)

[Windows XP Resource Kits: Replacing the Boot Sector](#)

[Windows XP Resource Kits: Using Recovery Console to recover from startup problems](#)

[How to create a bootable disk for an NTFS or FAT partition](#)

[How to recover from a corrupted registry that prevents Windows XP from starting](#)

[How to perform an in-place upgrade \(reinstallation\) of Windows XP](#)

[Cloning OS partition using Ghost 2003](#)

Or try a search on

Google for

NTLDR



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