

CDRW Troubleshooting October 2000
How to get that CDRW Drive working! System Troubleshooting Tips.

If your CDRW is burning you up instead of burning CDs, then maybe the following suggestions will help. Let's start by troubleshooting your system.

I'm going to assume you have your CDRW drive correctly installed as a master drive in your system and that you don't have any IRQ (Interrupt Request Lines) conflicts.

If your CDRW drive is not recognized by your computer, check that the IDE cable which is installed on is properly connected and that there aren't any bent pins causing your trouble. (Remember, red stripe on the power cable is placed closest to the power connector, jumpers positioned correctly, only use the "cable select" jumper setting on ATA66 cables, and re-check the jumper settings of your other drives installed in your system.)

Enter the BIOS of your computer and locate the setting in the BIOS to "auto detect" your drives. Be sure that the IDE bus is enabled, save your settings and exit.

While you are inside your case, ensure that the sound cables are correctly hooked up from your CDRW/CDROM to your sound card.

If your sound card has a single audio connector, you could pop for a new sound card with dual audio inputs (the best option). If you don't wish to get a new sound card, another option is to purchase an audio Y cable to connect the single input connection of your existing sound card to both your CDRW drive and a CDROM drive that you may have installed in the same system. Y Audio connectors are available from an electronics supply shop like Cables 'N More

If, after installing your CDRW drive, your system inexplicably hangs or freezes, or you find that you are able to drag and drop files to write to a disc but are unable to burn a complete copy of a CD) you might want to continue your system troubleshooting by checking your hard disk controllers.

Owners of systems whose motherboards have VIA, ETEQ or SIS chipset installed on them may not have standard non-bus mastering controllers installed.

You can check the type of controllers in your system by right-clicking on My Computer > Device Manager > Hard disk controllers. Highlight each controller in turn, click Properties and then on the General tab, see if it reads "Manufacturer: Standard hard disk drivers."

If the manufacturer isn't Standard hard disk drivers, then owners of VIA and ETEQ chipsets can go to the Via Technologies web site, and SIS chipset owners can go the Silicon Integrated Systems web site to for the correct IDE controller drivers.

You should confirm that you've correctly updated your controllers by going back and double-checking that your hard drive controller's properties on the General tab of System Properties reads "Manufacturer: Standard hard disk drivers" and that the Driver Provider listed on the Driver tab of System Properties reads "Microsoft".

Owners of systems with Intel, Ali or Aladdin chipsets should already have the correct standard hard disk drivers by Microsoft installed, as should systems with antiquated chipsets in them like C&T, LSI, UNI, UMC or VLSI. If not, you should be able to return to the Driver tab of System Properties and click Update Driver and follow the wizard's steps to install the standard hard disk drivers from Microsoft off of your Windows 98 CDROM.

If your system continues to act erratically after the installation of your CDRW drive and you have checked that the correct hard disk controllers are installed, then there are a few more

places that can be fine-tuned to get that CDRW working trouble-free.

See if your software has placed any commands in your autoexec.bat file or if your system is loading any device drivers listed in your config.sys file. You can check these two files by going to Start > Run, and type msconfig in the Run: box, click OK.

Once your System Configuration Utility is opened, de-select Normal startup, choose Selective startup and un-check both the Process Config.sys file and Process Autoexec.bat.file. Click OK and reboot for the changes to take effect.

De-selecting these files shouldn't affect any Windows applications.

Except for the new Plextor CDRW, almost all current and older CDRW drives require that the DMA (Direct Memory Access) be disabled for the CDRW drives to function correctly. It's a shame, too. Using DMA capable drives is a more efficient method of transferring data to your system's RAM, which as a consequence lightens the workload of your processor.

To disable the DMA function of the CDRW drive within your system, select Start > Settings > Control Panel and open System choose the Device Manager tab, highlight your CDRW and select Properties > Settings tab, un-check DMA.

(While you are there, your problematic CDRW that's wreaking havoc in your system may benefit if the Auto insert notification and Sync data transfer are also un-checked.)

After you've disabled your DMA in your System Configuration Utility, shut down your computer system and enter your BIOS setup utility. Locate your IDE controller that your CDRW drive is located on and select disable UDMA and slow down the IDE PIO Mode to 3. (In some systems, slowing the IDE PIO Mode down to 4 may be helpful.)

Return to your System Configuration Utility after you've re-booted to ensure that the DMA has remained un-checked.

If the CDRW drive you've installed is connected through a parallel port to your system, be sure to enter into your BIOS and locate the onboard Parallel Port setting. Change the setting option to EPP (Enhanced Parallel Port). (EPP is a bit slower than the ECP (Extended Capabilities Port) setting.

If the CDRW drive you've installed is connected through a USB port, avoid using any other USB devices except for possibly a USB mouse or USB keyboard to avoid disrupting the CDRW's ability to function properly.

If the CDRW you've installed is a SCSI drive, be sure you've enabled the SCSI Disconnect for the SCSI CDRW.

Hopefully these system-troubleshooting tips will have stopped the blue screens, ended your system instability problems and halted the freezing that may have been troubling you.

If you are still experiencing system problems, your CDRW may be conflicting with VXD(s) (Virtual Device Drivers) that are loading in your system. For a complete list of VXD's that conflict with your CDRW model, contact your drive's technical support. Fixing the offensive VXD's after you've identified them is simply a matter of renaming them to regain control over your system.