

Regardless of the problem there are a few steps that must be taken whenever troubleshooting a hardware problem. These may seem rather insulting to most people, but one must never forget to do them; if they are not done you might very well waste a lot of time and possibly create a new problem from fiddling around in your computer chasing down a phantom. Here are some quick steps:

1. **Power Cords** - Make sure that all of the power cords are firmly in place on all of the devices that could possibly be causing or attributing to the symptoms you are experiencing (i.e. If nothing shows up on the monitor make sure that the cords are attached to both the monitor and the computer itself). Then trace the cords back to the wall and make sure that the other end of the cord is attached to a power outlet or surge protector.
2. **Outlet Power** - It is not uncommon to blow a fuse; if the outlet in question is not receiving power than you should not expect any of the devices connected to the computer to receive power. You can test this simply by looking at the device and seeing if any LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes) are lit. If there are no LEDs lit, try plugging in a device that you know works into the outlet, such as a clock or radio.
3. **Power Button** - This step goes hand-in-hand with the last step. Many people don't think to check for this because many computer devices stay on all of the time (i.e. monitors, printers, power supplies), and as such do not check the power button. Also, some devices have two power switches on them, and both must be in the "on" position in order for the device to work (i.e. there is a power button both on the front, and on the back of most computers).
4. **Communication Connections** - Once you've settled that the power to your devices is fine, the next step is to make sure that the device has all of the connections needed for it to communicate. This step consists of making sure that these cables are firmly connected at each end, and that they are connected at the correct port/interface. Do not forget to check internal connections; if your computer has been bumped it is possible for some connections inside to pop loose.
5. **Device Configuration** - This steps provides both hardware and software configuration. There may be jumpers or switches on the hardware that need to be configured. If these accidentally got moved or switched the device would fail to work properly. Also, most hardware ships with configuration software (i.e. Wireless cards); make sure that the software configurations are compatible with what you are trying to accomplish.
6. **Follow Instructions** - Computers are not evasive when they report errors; all too often we just do not understand them, or are confused by the amount of information that is given. Many times there are suggestions on how to fix a problem accompanied with an error message. Simply follow the steps the message suggests; even if the suggestion seems to be ridiculous follow it so that you can discard it as a possibility.
7. **Windows Recognition** - If you go into the Control Panel, open the System dialog, click on the Hardware tab, and then open the Device Manager, you will see a tree-like structure of all of the hardware that is attached to your computer. Look under the appropriate category (Monitors, Graphic Adapters, etc.) and click on the item/items that you are having problems with then click on properties. The dialog that opens will inform you if the operating system is having any know troubles with the device.
8. **Update Drivers** - If possible, try connecting to the internet and going to the manufacture's web site to download the latest drivers for your hardware (this requires that you now the model specifications of your hardware). Often conflicts can arise when you install new hardware and software; although these are unanticipated, once found the developer will fix the problem and post updated drivers.

9. Refresh Device Manager/Reinstall Device - This step falls into the "I don't care what the problem is, I just want it fixed" category. Open the device manager again and delete the devices that are not working properly. You will probably be prompted to restart your computer, if not restart it manually. When the computer restarts the hardware you deleted will be detected again and be reinstalled with the default configurations. If you cannot find the device in the device manager try to uninstall all software that came with it and reinstall using the disks that were provided.