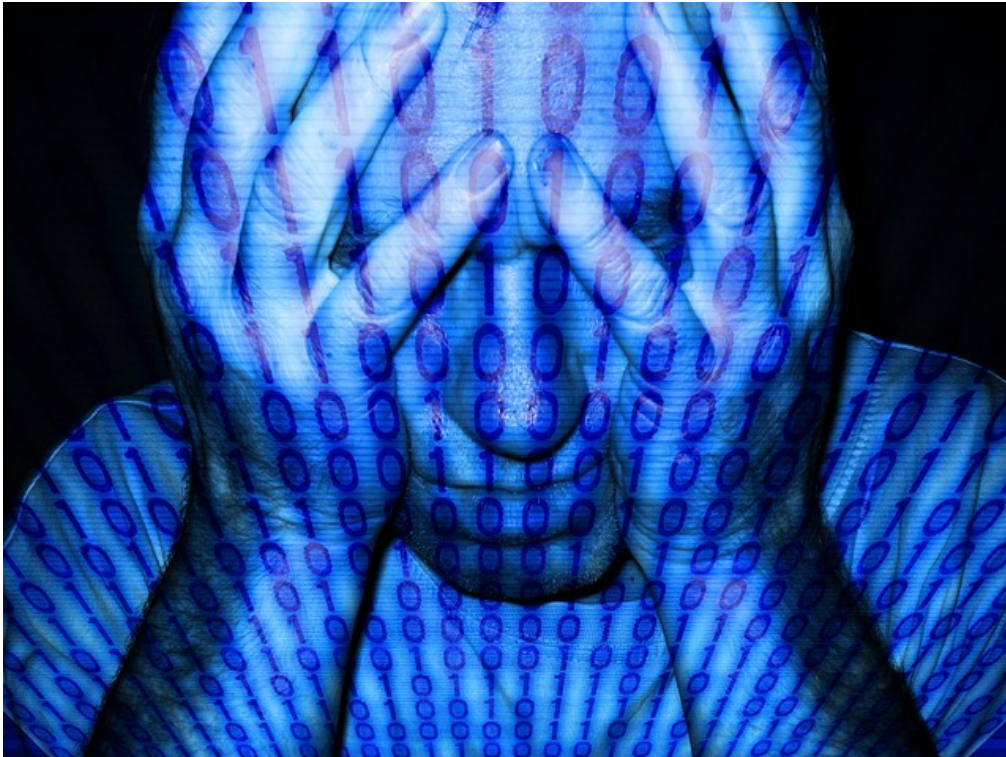




ARTICLES: TWO GREAT GO-TO FIXES FOR A TEMPERAMENTAL MAC

pram, nvram, smc, slow, battery issues, fix, quick fix, mac help, reset, diy



In all my infinite wisdom after three weeks on the job, I've discovered that two of the main go-to fixes for Mac computer issues are to reset either the PRAM (aka NVRAM) or the SMC, sometimes both.

First, let's learn a little about the what the PRAM/NVRAM and SMC are and what they do.

From Apple's [website](#): "A small amount of your computer's memory, called 'parameter random-access memory' or PRAM, stores certain settings in a location that OS X can access quickly. The particular settings that are stored depend on your type of Mac and the types of devices connected to it. The settings include your designated startup disk, display resolution, speaker volume, and other information."

[Upon further reading](#), you'll see that the PRAM in previous models is now called the NVRAM (non-volatile random-access memory) on Intel-based Macs. NVRAM is a little different, but it controls pretty much the same thing as the PRAM did.

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WHEN TO RESET PRAM / NVRAM

Lately, your Mac just hasn't been its good, reliable self. You're frustrated because whenever your Mac wakes up from sleep, the screen resolution is all wonky, or perhaps the sound is muted or speakers blaring. Your Mac seems to be suffering from short-term memory loss. Maybe your fan won't stop running or your battery isn't charging properly. Your mouse is jumpy or slow, or the Mac just feels bogged down. Sometimes a reboot fixes these, at least temporarily, but it's likely time to reset the PRAM / NVRAM.

Before doing anything to your Mac, always ensure you have a recent backup. In fact, if you haven't yet set up Time Machine, I can't recommend it highly enough. It takes all the guesswork and reminders out of backups, as it backs up everything automatically. [PowerMax has some great deals on external HDs](#) for this very purpose.

It's also beneficial to disconnect all peripherals before resetting the PRAM / NVRAM, including the mouse (but not the keyboard).

HOW TO RESET PRAM / NVRAM

1. Shut your Mac all the way down
2. Press the power button and immediately press COMMAND + OPTION + P + R all at once, before the gray screen appears or immediately after you hear the startup sound.
3. Hold down these keys until your Mac starts up a second time or you hear the startup sound again.
4. Release the keys.

Yep. It's really that simple! You just reset the PRAM / NVRAM!

You might need to reconfigure the speaker/monitor/mouse, etc. settings after this process, but that hopefully will fix the issues that have been plaguing your day and workflow.

SYSTEM MANAGEMENT CONTROLLER (SMC)

Another quick-fix is to reset the SMC, or System Management Controller (Intel-based machines only). This component stores important settings dealing with power and temperature management, fan control, status and keyboard lights, and other peripheral settings.

Symptoms that indicate you might need to reset the SMC include:

- The machine won't turn on
- It's running too hot or the fan won't shut off
- You can't dim the display
- Battery * Keyboard * Mouse problems
- The Mac sleeps or shuts down on its own
- It hangs on the blue or gray screen (won't start properly)
- When you put it to sleep, it won't wake up
- It won't connect to WiFi
- It runs so so so slowly

HOW TO RESET THE SMC

As above for PRAM / NVRAM, be sure everything is backed up. ([External HDs... right here!](#)) You might try to just restart your machine to see if that fixes your issues, but if not, resetting the SMC is just about as simple as resetting the PRAM / NVRAM, although a few details are different depending on the type of computer you have.



IF YOU HAVE A NOTEBOOK WITH A REMOVABLE BATTERY:

1. Shut down the computer all the way
2. Unplug and remove the battery
3. Press the power button for 5 seconds
4. Put the battery back in and reconnect the MagSafe cord
5. Turn the machine back on

IF YOUR NOTEBOOK DOES NOT HAVE A REMOVABLE BATTERY:

1. Shut down the computer all the way (see a pattern here?)
2. Keep the MagSafe adapter plugged in
3. Simultaneously, press SHIFT + OPTION + CONTROL + Power Button
4. Let go at the same time
5. Turn machine back on

DESKTOP MACS AND XSERVE:

1. You guessed it (shut down machine completely)
2. Unplug it from the power source
3. Wait 15 seconds
4. Press and hold the power button for 5 seconds
5. Plug it back in and turn it on

Easy Peasy.

You might notice after this process the computer starts up more slowly or the MagSafe indicator is acting a little weird, but both of those things are normal. It will be running better soon thereafter.

If these things don't fix your problem, it's time to dig deeper. Either [contact me for extra help](#) or schedule a Diagnostic Exam for your machine. It will be in capable hands with our knowledgeable service department. Out of warranty? No worries. A Diagnostic Exam is a mere \$49, which goes toward any parts or labor your computer might need depending on its diagnosis.

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Christine is a Technical Support Specialist and Content Writer for PowerMax. Follow her articles as she takes you "**Behind the Sasquatch: A Look Inside PowerMax,**" an inside look at the day-to-day operations from the perspective of a



Woman in Tech. She'll also post great **Tech Tips**, helping you get the most of your Mac apps as well as write about some common technical issues and how to fix them. Finally, Christine will periodically post some **Tutorials** that teach readers how to do things like make podcasts and iPhone apps. Find what you're looking for in the categories on the right.

If you have a tech question or issue, please don't hesitate to [contact Christine](#) for help.

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