

NT LDR is missing

What happened? (How NTLDR works and why your PC can't find it)

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 MBR is pointed to the [NTLDR](#) (New Technology Loader) and it 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).

The first thing to do is 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 reseat the cables). If the contents of the drive are especially important and you have no backups, I would recommend removing the hard drive, placing in an enclosure, and backing up the data first, in fact, backup all of your computers. ([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 if you can just boot back up into your system, 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/cd-r/usb (whatever is on it will be erased), and put it into a working computer.
2. If you have a working Windows machine download my fix: Floppy [fixntldr.exe](#) | CD-R [fixntldr.iso.zip](#) | USB [ntldrusb.zip](#) onto a working computer (Backup copies of these files available at <http://ntldrmissing.com>)

([What if I don't want to download a file from a website I don't trust?](#))

(64 bit WinXP Floppy [64ntflop.exe](#) | CD-R [64ntiso.zip](#) | Files [64ntfile.zip](#))

Do you remember if the broken computers had the Windows installation in "Windows"? If you can't remember just keep going ([What if it was not named Windows but WINNT like in NT4 or 2000?](#))

(If your backup system is NT4 or Windows 2000: [What if my backup system is Mac / Linux or another alt OS?](#))

3. Make the new boot disk:

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*Floppy: Don't put the fixntldr.exe on your floppy drive, but the file on your desktop or anywhere on your C:\ drive. 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. (If you don't like running an exe from me, you can run [fixntldr_RawRite.zip](#) and just replace the RawRite.exe file inside with one you trust) (now go to step 4)

*CD-R: This is not a normal file you burn to a CD, it is an "ISO" file, you must first extract the fixntldr.iso.zip file by right clicking it and choosing "Extract All" then Next>Next>Finish then download a program called "ISO Recorder" from here <http://isorecorder.alexfeinman.com/isorecorder.htm> (Windows 2000 users use [Active ISO Burner](#) IsoBurner-Setup.exe) and install it. Once it's installed, right click the fixntldr.iso file and choose to "Copy image to CD" or "Burn ISO file" and let it burn the cd (now go to step 4)

*USB: Right click the ntldrusb.zip file and choose "Extract All" Next>Next>Finish

Then Insert your USB Stick into the working computer (remove any other USB sticks, and be sure there isn't anything on the USB stick that you want since we are about to erase it);

Double-click HPUSBFW.EXE in the ntldrusb 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 go to step 4)

4. Put the new floppy/cd-r/usb 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/cd-r/usb inside it/plugged into it. Once your computer gets past the BIOS screen your computer should try to access the boot disk and you should see a black screen with white letters ([What if I don't see this screen?](#)) that says:

1ST TRY THIS seleccione esto primero

2ND TRY THIS essayez ceci en deuzieme

3RD TRY THIS wahlen Sie diesen Third

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4TH TRY THIS selezioni questo fourth

5TH TRY THIS seleccione 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 seleccione 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.

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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 > PerformanceAndMaintenance/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. ([screenshots](#))

If you copy the file over and boot up and get a "NTLDR is compressed" error message, be sure to uncheck "compress contents to save space" on the hard drive.

Stop - Backup your important files - Then proceed

Try setting BIOS to default, reseating IDE cables, double checking all of your settings basically.

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", you may first have to convert the partition to a Primary partition before you can mark it as active. Close and reboot.
- [Mark Partition as Active with diskpart from Jim the Bean](#)
- 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. ([step-by-step](#)).