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Computer Troubleshooting Field Guide

A calm, practical checklist for figuring out what broke before panic takes over.

STOP
Don't click wildly.

CHECK
Notice what changed.

TRY
Change one thing.

TEST
See what happened.

Computer is frozen

- Wait 30-60 seconds.
- Try Ctrl + Shift + Esc and check Task Manager.
- Close only the app that is not responding.
- If nothing responds, restart the computer.

Internet stopped working

- Check whether one device or every device is affected.
- Turn Wi-Fi off and back on.
- Confirm airplane mode is off.
- Restart the router only if multiple devices are affected.

Everything feels slow

- Restart if the computer has been running for days.
- Close apps and browser tabs you are not using.
- Check free storage space.
- Let Windows Update finish before diagnosing further.

An app will not open

- Try opening it once more after a restart.
- Check for an app update.
- Note the exact error message.
- Do not uninstall it until you know where its files/settings live.

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Before You Change Anything

The details you capture now can save a lot of guessing later.

Write down the exact message

- Take a screenshot if possible.
- Copy error codes exactly - punctuation and all.
- Record what you were doing immediately before it appeared.

Ask: what changed?

- New update? New app? New device? New password?
- Did the problem begin today or gradually?
- Does it happen every time or only sometimes?

Use the one-change rule

- Try one fix at a time.
- Test after each change.
- If it did not help, undo it when practical.
- This keeps you from creating three new mysteries while fixing one.

Know when to stop

- Stop if you are asked to erase, reset, format, or delete important data.
- Stop if a message asks for money, remote access, gift cards, or passwords.
- Back up important files before major repairs.
- When the stakes rise, getting help is troubleshooting - not failure.

The normal-person rule:

You do not need to know what every technical term means. You need to notice what changed, make one sensible move, and see whether it helped.