ADOBE INDESIGN CC 2017

troubleshooting how-to guide

how to reset preferences as well as a step-by-step checklist strategy of what to do when your InDesign app crashes or your document becomes corrupted

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Adobe InDesign CC 2017 Troubleshooting How-to Guide

What do you do when InDesign CC 2017 or older versions are crashing? Here is a checklist of troubleshooting ideas.

1.   Isolate the source problem

Is the problem the InDesign program itself, or something wrong with your file? InDesign won't start? Or your file won't open? Or the file opens and then crashes? Or it crashes on the same page?

2.   Do you have enough RAM?

Your computer needs at least 16GB of RAM to run effectively. With less RAM, it crashes more frequently.

3.   Restart your computer

Quit InDesign, restart your computer, and try to start it again, with no other programs running.

4.   Run your Mac or Windows Utilities

Before you start any programs, try running housekeeping operating system utilities like DiskWarrior or CCleaner before starting InDesign again.

5.   Force a screen redraw

Sometimes the screen is not redrawing properly. Try:

Shift-F5 to force the screen to redraw. What looks like a bug or mistake will often vanish. *Cmd+Opt+/* (Mac) or *Ctrl+Alt+/* (Win) will force InDesign to recompose the text and this also refreshes the screen.

6.   Turn off Type Contextual Controls

Preferences > Advanced Type > Type Contextual Controls. This is a new feature that shows you alternate glyphs. In CC 2017, this feature is proving to be buggy. Turn them off.

7.   Round up the usual font suspects

Font Doctor (http://www.extensis.com/font-management/fontdoctor/) can diagnose and repair fonts, a common reason for crashing.

8.   Same problem in a new file?

Do you get the same problem in a new file, or does it only happen in one problem file? This can help you determine if its the InDesign application program or a corrupted file.

9.   Export to IDML

IDML (File > Export > InDesign Markup IDML) is a way to write an InDesign document to XML code. Simply exporting your file to IDML, then closing the original file, and opening the IDML file sometimes cleans the file of corruption and fixes the problem.

10. Close docked and floating panels

Sometimes files crash with certain panels open, but when the panels are closed, the file doesn't crash. A quick way to temporarily hide all panels on the screen is to press the *Tab* key (when you don't have text selected), or *Shift-Tab* to hide all panels except the Tools panel.

11. Turn off GPU Performance

If you are using InDesign CC 2015.4 (or later) on a GPU-equipped Mac with Retina display, disable the GPU Performance feature in *Preferences > GPU Performance* or *View > Preview on CPU* and see if your problem clears.

12. Move from network to hard drive

Working over a network, where your files are stored on a network server drive can work very well. But, if you are having trouble, a troubleshooting step is to package the InDesign file *(File > Package)* to a folder on your local hard drive, and work local. Network congestion and file server upgrades seem to cause occasional problems that can cause crashing.

13. Keyboard shortcuts not working

Usually caused by a 3rd-party software which might include a browser plug-in. Try rebooting and loading InDesign. If it works, then load the browser and see if it breaks.

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14. Reset (aka trashing) preferences

InDesign remembers your custom preferences. This info is written to the preferences files each time that you successfully quit InDesign. But these files can get corrupted if InDesign crashes.

Simply delete them and restart. InDesign will write a new set of preferences. You do this by pressing the modifier keys on the keyboard immediately after you click on the InDesign icon. Press *Cmd+Opt+Ctrl+Shift* (Mac) or *Ctrl+Alt+Shift* (Win). If you are quick, you will see this message (and you click Yes):

If you want to to protect a backup copy, do this:
① Start InDesign CC 2017
② Open Scripts panel (Window > Utilities > Scripts)
③ Right-click on the User folder, and choose Reveal in Finder or Reveal in Explorer
④ This is a folder named *Scripts Panel* in the Mac Finder or Windows Explorer. One level above this folder is the preferences file named *InDesign Defaults*. If you make a backup copy of this file, you can restore it any time that the original file becomes corrupt, without losing any preference settings.

Here is the folder location for the *InDesign Defaults*:

Mac OS X: Home > Library > Preferences > Adobe InDesign > version > language > InDesign Defaults

Windows 10: Users > UserName > AppData > Roaming > Adobe > InDesign > version > language > InDesign Defaults

15. Delete cache files

InDesign temporarily saves, or caches, information about the documents you are working on, so that they can be recovered if InDesign crashes. But, a file might cause InDesign to crash. When you restart, InDesign attempts to recover and reopen the problem file, causing it to crash again, and the process repeats. The solution to this is to delete the cache files. The files are located here:

Mac OS X: Home > Library > Caches > Adobe InDesign > version > language > InDesign Recovery >

Windows 10: Users > Username > AppData > Local > Adobe > InDesign > version > language > Caches > InDesign Recovery >

I usually visit the Caches folder to delete the *InDesign SavedData* file (when I manually reset preferences by

finding and deleting *InDesign Defaults* and *InDesign SavedData*), but you might need to go into the InDesign Recovery sub-folder and delete all the files inside if you are caught in a restart/crash loop.

16. Remove third-party plug-ins, if any

The most common problem is font activation plug-ins, since they rely on the OS, InDesign, and the plug-in all to work well together. A change to any one of these can cause problems. Try shutting down font management software.

Look in the Plug-ins folder in the InDesign folder in Applications (Mac) or Program Files (Windows) to remove plug-ins from InDesign.

17. Divide and conquer

Delete half the pages, and see if the problem goes away. If so, now you know which half of the file is the problem. Return to the original file, and remove half of the section you previously removed, and see if the problem goes away. Keep deleting segments of the file until you've narrowed down the problem to a single page or pages. Rebuild those pages to heal the problem.

18. Delete all text frames

A single corrupt story can be the source of the problem. Try exporting all the text, then deleting some or all of the text frames and see if the problem clears. If the file behaves well, replace the exported text into new text frames.

19. Delete styles and swatches

Try deleting (first the unused) paragraph, character, object, table, and cell styles, and color swatches, and see if the problem clears.

20. Push damaged pages into a new file

Use the Move Pages command in the Pages panel menu to push pages from a damaged document into a new document with the same page setup.

21. Export text to recover assets

Sometimes you might need to get the text out of the file so that you can rebuild the project. Try exporting the text *(File > Export > Text Only)*, or try ExportAllStories.jsx script.

22. Convert a PDF to a new InDesign file

Try exporting to PDF, and using PDF2ID (https://www.recosoft.com/products/pdf2id/) to convert back to InDesign.

23. Acrobat DC's Export To command

Acrobat's File > Export To command can extract to a Word .docx or PowerPoint .pptx so you can rebuild.

24. DTP File Recovery Service

Markzware offers a File Recovery Service (http://markzware.com/products/file-recovery-service/). You pay the larger fee only if they are able to successfully recover your file.

25. Component Information dialog

Hold down the *Cmd* key while you choose *InDesign > About InDesign (Mac),* or the *Ctrl* key while you choose *Help > About InDesign (Windows).* This will display the Component Information dialog, which can tell you potentially useful info about the history of your file.

26. Missing File Info dialog

Missing the File Info dialog? Locate and delete the *DVADialogPrefs.xml* file and then restart InDesign CC 2017.

27. Crash on Print or Export to PDF

First, try the export to IDML trick. Next, try the Divide and Conquer technique. If you isolate a page, move half the objects to the pasteboard and test again.

If it is a graphic, open the graphic file and re-save to a new filename and different format, too. Place it back onto the page. If it is a textframe, copy the text out to a simple text editor to remove all formatting. Try to replace back in.

28. Adobe help documentation

Damaged documents: (https://helpx.adobe.com/indesign/kb/troubleshoot-damaged-indesign-documents.html)

Recover InDesign documents: (https://helpx.adobe.com/indesign/kb/indesign-document-recovery.html)

29. Adobe InDesign user forums

https://forums.adobe.com/community/indesign

https://indesignsecrets.com/forums

30. User cannot start InDesign

With admin privileges, create a new user and launch InDesign from there. This will tell you whether the user account is corrupted in some way.

Preventive advice

31. Save-As frequently

InDesign files are databases of all the objects that you've ever placed on your page, even those that you've deleted. Occasionally do a File > Save As and just save over the original file. This will compact and clean up the file, keeping the database small and tidy, and less prone to corruption.

32. Keep a chain of version backups

Practice iteratively-named backups as you work. If the document corrupts, you can go back to a workable version without too much loss. If you save your files in Dropbox, its automatic versioning feature makes this easy to do. A plug-in called Radish also saves versions for you.

33. Don't build in a single document

Some say it is better to break the large project into smaller files, and use the Book feature (File > New > Book) to help manage the individual document files.

34. Don't fill pasteboard with objects

The area beyond the physical page is called the pasteboard. Don't store much there. It makes the file larger, and printing slows down. Instead, use Libraries (*File > New > Library*) and/or CC Libraries (*Window > CC Libraries*) to store extras. Or make XML Snippets (*File > Export > InDesign Snippet*) for storing objects that you might re-use later.

35. Use linked graphics

Don't copy and paste artwork from Illustrator and other programs into InDesign. This makes the file larger and more prone to corruption. Instead, always save your graphics from Photoshop (.PSD) and Illustrator (.AI) as files, and use File > Place to place the graphics on the page. If InDesign always crashes on a particular page, it might be that placed graphic that is corrupt, therefore replacing the graphic can be an easier operation. ▪

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mikewitherell@jetsetcom.net | **Adobe Certified** | urszulawitherell@jetsetcom.net

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