

Things that go wrong with data projectors...

We often get enquiries from people who have experienced problems setting up a data projector. Here are the answers to the most frequent questions.

Please note, however, that this guide is not a replacement for the fact that you should **always** test your data projector before use - preferably in the place you're going to be using it. It's a rare occurrence, but you should also note that bulbs do blow in data projectors. If you need to guarantee that a data projector will work, the only way to do so is to have a back-up projector.

My data projector won't work! Help!

Work your way through the following list a step at a time to work out the source of your problem.

1. Do both the data projector and the laptop have power?

No, I'm not being sarcastic – with all the different leads that you end up dealing with when you have a data projector and a laptop, it is not uncommon for a power lead to get missed out. Check that both the laptop and the data projector are plugged in and the LED light to indicate power is showing on both. (If you think that you can get away without plugging your laptop in as it has batteries, then you've never watched a laptop die slowly as the battery power runs out mid-presentation.)

2. Is the projector switched on?

The projector may be showing an LED light, but it often needs to be switched on. Put your hand in front of the lens – is there light coming out? If not, try pressing the on switch, holding it down for a second or two if necessary.

3. I've tried everything to switch the projector on, but it still won't emit light. What now?

If you've tried the advice in step 2, and you have a power light on the projector but you cannot get it to output a beam of light no matter which button you press and for how long, get ready for some bad news. Check the top of the projector – there's usually a "replace lamp" or "warning" light (or a "status" light that may be red), and one of these is probably showing. You need to send your projector to get fixed, and find another one to use in the meantime.

4. Is the laptop connected to the data projector?

In the projector bag should be a lead like the one pictured below, which you need to connect to the laptop and the projector in order for pictures from the laptop to reach the projector. It's pretty easy to connect this lead, as there's usually only one place on the laptop (usually on the back but sometimes on the side – usually the left side towards the back) where it will fit. There's also usually only one place on the projector where it will fit – occasionally there's two slots, in which case use the one marked "input" or "1" (or in, the screenshot shown, "Computer In"). It's best to connect this after the laptop is switched on, but you won't do any harm if you do things in a different order.



Above, the port is on the left hand side of the laptop whilst below, it's at the back.



NB: If you're using a DVD player instead of a laptop, you'll be using a different lead here – usually a yellow phono plug from the DVD player to the yellow socket on the projector.

5. Have you tried switching output from the laptop to the data projector?

Every laptop that has a socket to allow you to connect the lead from question 4 will also have a key that allows you to switch output between the laptop screen and the external output (the data projector in this case). This usually has three options:

- a. Laptop screen only
- b. External output (data projector) only
- c. Both laptop screen and external output display the same

What usually happens is that pressing the key cycles through each of these options in turn. You should be patient here, as what will happen when you change the setting is the laptop will try to output a picture to the new source(s) and this will typically take a couple of seconds to take effect. Pressing buttons quickly in a panic will not do you any favours here.

The key to control this is usually accessed by pressing the *Fn* (or Function) key down, and then pressing one of the F keys along the top of the keyboard. You should be able to spot the correct F key by looking carefully at the small icons on them. F4 seems to be the most common choice, but it does depend on the laptop – you'll see that it's F5 in the second screenshot below. The usual method is to hold the Fn key down, and then press the (probably F4) key once, pause, and then twice, pause and see if anything happens.

If you really can't find which F key you need to be using, then you are unlikely to do any harm by trying this with each F key in succession. The F keys usually control settings on the laptop, so don't be surprised if you suddenly alter the volume level, eject the CD tray, or alter the brightness slightly as you do this.



6. Have you checked your display settings?

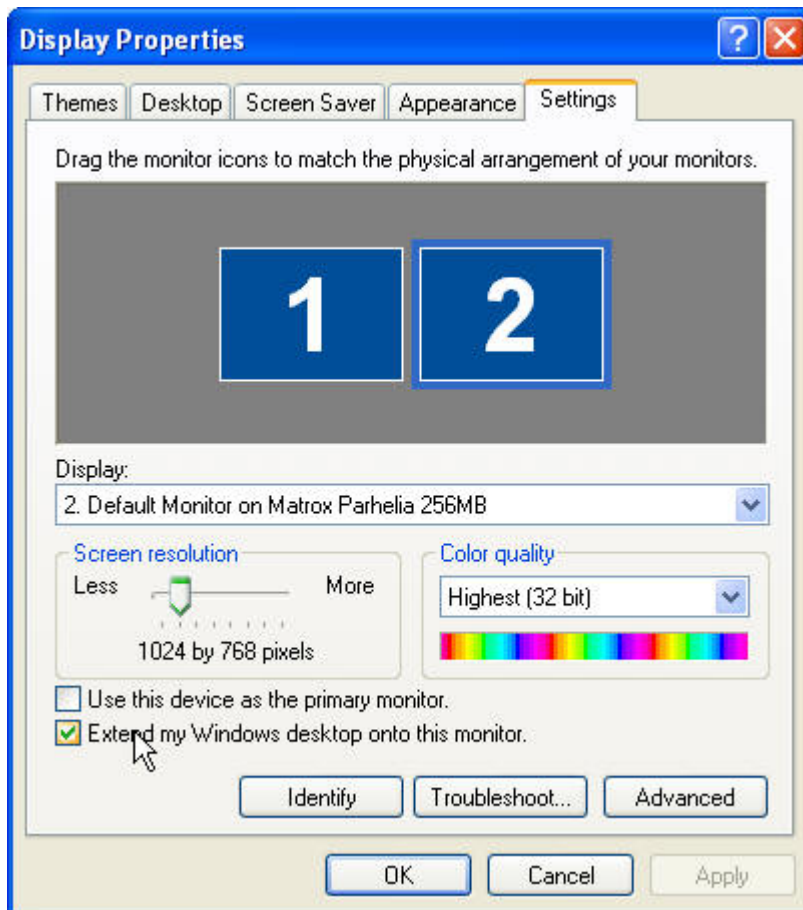
As long as you are using a PC and not a Mac, you can right-click anywhere on the desktop and choose "Properties" from the menu that appears.

Alternatively, you can go to the Control Panel and choose "Display" – both will get to the same place. What you see should be something like the window pictured below, and you need to select the "Settings" tab at the top.

If you can see more than one monitor appear in the little box at the top, then your laptop supports multiple monitors, where the data projector screen will become another screen on your laptop – usually immediately to the right of

your laptop screen (meaning that if you move your mouse to the right of your laptop screen and across, it will appear on the left of the data projector screen).

Select the number “2” screen by clicking on the image at the top of the window, and make sure that a reasonable size is selected (usually 1024x768, as pictured), and that the “Extend my Windows desktop onto this monitor” checkbox is checked, as pictured.



Please note that this way of working is different to the way we looked at in the last question. As soon as you enable the “Extend my Windows desktop onto this monitor” checkbox, **you will no longer be able to use the F key option.**

Typically, Windows will only let you activate this option if it detects a device connected, so this will not work if you haven’t connected your data projector (as in step 4) or switched it on (as in steps 1 and 2). It will not let you choose this option when you have used the F key (see step 4) to display output on the data projector – if you want to use this option, switch output back to the laptop screen only.

Further to this, Windows will deactivate this option when it detects that the device has been disconnected from the laptop or switched off. If, for

example, you disconnect your laptop to allow someone else to give a presentation, you will have to return to this screen to change your settings when you reconnect your laptop in order to continue.

There are a number of extra settings available via the "Advanced" option at the bottom of the screen which are too complex to go into, but which can have an effect. Our advice is always to try the **simpler** method in step 5 first before trying this method.

7. Is the input on the Data Projector set incorrectly?

If, after trying steps 5 and 6, you still haven't succeeded in viewing a picture or mouse cursor on the data projector, there's one more important check to make before you get desperate. Data projectors will usually accept either computer or video (e.g. DVD) input. They usually auto-detect which of these settings to use, based on what you've plugged into them, but sometimes they need to be reminded to display the computer output. This is done by pressing the button on them that reads "Input" or "Source", which usually outputs some kind of text onto the image being displayed by the projector, such as "Video" or "PC" or "Computer". Again, this will take a couple of seconds each time to change, so be patient. If you can't find an "Input" or "Source" button, then try pressing menu and use the arrow keys to navigate through the menu options until you find this option.



8. It still won't work! Everything is going wrong, and I've only got two minutes before my presentation...

If none of the above has worked, there is one last option. Make sure that the projector and the laptop are both switched on as per steps 1 and 2, and that the laptop and projector are connected as per step 4. Now reset/restart the laptop. What should now happen is that when the laptop restarts, it will detect that the projector is connected and display on that and that only

(similarly, the projector should pick up the input from the laptop and accordingly display it).

If this works, you can then go back to steps five and six to try and restore a picture to the laptop, or you can just decide that a picture on the screen is good enough for you to be able to continue.

9. It's still not working. What now?

If all of the above has failed to work, and your projector is showing white light onto the wall, then you probably have some kind of a software issue. This is especially the case if the "Extend my Windows Desktop onto this Monitor" in step 6 checkbox is greyed out despite the presence of two monitors in the picture at the top of that "Settings" tab in the Display Properties box or if no-one has ever successfully used your laptop with a projector before.

At this stage, you probably need to consult someone who knows more than you do, and you're almost certainly not going to get it fixed within the next 24 hours. The first thing to try is to search online for some updated drivers for your graphics card and try installing these if they're available. The next step is to take a look at Device Manager and see if there are any conflicts or problems with your graphics card. If you don't know how to find Device Manager, that's probably a good sign that you need to seek advice from someone else.

10. It's working but the image is blurred – how can I fix this?

Most projectors have two movable rings either around or above the lens – one to control the zoom, and the other to control the focus. Play with these to get the image to look better. If the corners of the image look wrong, then look for an option to change the "keystone" – either on the remote control or in the menu.

If your image still looks terrible, try moving the projector further away from the wall, and check that the lens doesn't need cleaning. If you've still got problems, check that the cable you connected in step 4 is well attached, and that the settings you looked at in step 6 have a reasonable size for the monitor (no less than 800x600, preferably 1024x768).