

Common Browser Error Messages and What They Mean

When something goes wrong online, your browser tries to explain what happened. The problem is you don't always understand the language it's speaking. After all, how are you supposed to know what 404 or 500 means? There are quite a few browser error messages you might encounter. The most common ones aren't always fixable, but at least you'll know what they mean when you do see them.



404. That's an error.

The requested URL /wahtelaw was not found on this server.
That's all we know.



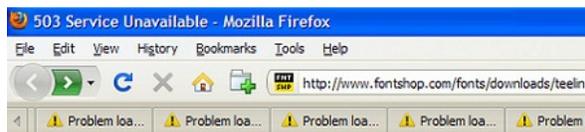
Error Codes in The 400s

You'll likely see at least four different error codes in the 400s at some point while browsing. Some will list more than the number while others may not. These errors include:

- 400 – Bad Request – This means the request you sent, such as a URL, didn't go through properly. Check to see that you entered the URL correctly. Refreshing the page may also help, especially if your Internet connection malfunctioned as you sent the request.
- 401 – Unauthorized – This message explains itself. If you get this, it means you do not have the right login, IP or other identifying information to access a specific website or page. Check that you've entered your credentials correctly and try again.
- 404 – Not Found – This is the most common browser error message. It means the page or site you're trying to visit wasn't found. You may see custom versions of this error. Resolve this issue by refreshing the page and double checking the URL you entered. If neither works, the link or address may no longer be valid. Visit the site's home page and perform a search for the information you're looking for.
- 408 – Request Timeout – Your browser expects to receive a response within a certain time frame. If it doesn't, you get this error message. This error usually happens due to a bad connection on the user or site's end. Wait a few minutes and refresh the page.

Most of these errors come from simple human error or changes to a website. They're not serious and shouldn't be anything to worry about.

Error Codes in The 500s



Error 503 Service Unavailable

When you see an error code in the 500s, it usually means something went wrong on with the website's server and there's nothing you can do to fix it. If the errors only occur at certain times of the day or on specific pages, contact the site owner to let them know you're receiving error messages. The most common codes you'll see include:

- 500 – Internal Server Error – This is a generic code that appears when an error occurs with the site's server, but the exact cause is unknown.
- 502 – Bad Gateway – This means two servers are not communicating correctly. This can happen when trying to perform certain actions on a website, such as loading a new page, logging in or shopping.

- 503 – Service Unavailable – This error can be temporary or long term and simply means the site is unavailable at the moment. Try visiting the site in a few hours. The problem could stem from server maintenance or too many visitors. Some sites list a maintenance message instead of the 503 error.
- 504 – Gateway Timeout – This is similar to the 408 error. The difference is the timeout occurs between two servers instead of between your computer and a server. The problem could be that a server is down or temporarily unavailable. The site may load without any problems in a few minutes or few hours.

Other Errors

You won't always get an error code. You'll most likely see a message with details describing the cause of the error. These are easier to understand. A few of the most common errors include:

- Certificate errors – This means the site you're trying to visit either doesn't have a legitimate security certificate, the certificate has expired or no certificate exists. This could mean the site has been compromised or that the site just needs to update its certificate. It is usually best to avoid visiting the site until the certificate error has been resolved. If possible, contact the site owner to find out what's wrong and when it will be fixed.
- Security warnings – All the major browsers have security measures in place to protect you from visiting sites known for regularly having malware or using phishing scams. These may appear more frequently if you have your browser security settings set to High versus Low or Medium. Trust your browser and do not visit the site. If you do, you increase the risk of getting malware on your computer, even with anti-virus or malware protection installed.

You may also get error messages based on any plugins or add-ons you have installed. These vary greatly based on the specific plugin. You can usually fix these by uninstalling and reinstalling the problematic plugin or updating to the latest version.

If you receive connection errors stating your computer could not connect to a specific site, try another site. If you still can't connect, your network settings may be to blame. Test your Internet connection for any problems.

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