Finding Safe Mode in Windows 8 Isn't Easy

By Ryan Pierson

When Windows starts behaving badly, booting in Safe Mode has long been a key troubleshooting tool.

Like its predecessors, Windows 8 includes a safe-mode boot option, but – as with many things in the new OS – it works a little differently.

Stripping Windows down to its core elements
If you're lucky, you've forgotten how Safe Mode works simply because you haven't needed to use it. When trouble strikes, Safe Mode attempts to boot Windows using just the essential components and drivers needed to run the OS. It ignores nonessential software and apps that normally load during a Windows start-up. With Windows up and running – even at a minimal level – you can more effectively apply numerous diagnostic tools and techniques to find and fix a problem.

A corrupted video driver, for example, can leave your system practically unusable until the driver is removed or replaced. Sure, you might be able to use a third-party recovery tool to fix the problem, but the simplest method remains booting into Safe Mode and rolling back a faulty driver via System Restore or some other built-in, Windows troubleshooting tool.

Need a refresher on Safe Mode? See Microsoft's page (http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-vista/Start-your-computer-in-safe-mode), "Start your computer in safe mode," or search the Web for any of the many how-to on the topic.

Windows 8 might be less susceptible to system faults than any previous Windows version, but it's not infallible; it can still suffer from driver issues, intermittent slowdowns, and system crashes.

Setting up Win8′s advanced recovery options
In Windows 8, Safe Mode is part of the Windows Recovery Environment (RE). Introduced with Vista, RE includes several automated and manual system-repair options such as Start-up Repair, System Restore and Windows Memory Diagnostics. It also includes a command-prompt window for running other system commands.

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