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Laptops are great for working and playing on the go, but sometimes the small screen can become a nuisance. Most laptops allow you to connect an external monitor or TV if you need a bigger display or want to show someone what you're doing.

If you want to connect a monitor or TV to a MacBook or MacBook Pro, [click here](https://www.wikihow.com/Connect-a-Macbook-to-a-TV).

**Part1**

**Connecting the Monitor**

**1**

**Determine what kind of connection your laptop supports.** Most laptops have a single display connection along the back, though some may be located along the side. There are three main types of connections that your laptop may have:

* + HDMI - This is the most common connection if your laptop is newer. It looks like a USB port except skinnier and longer.
  + VGA - This is the older standard that you are likely to find on aging or budget laptops. The connector is trapezoidal and contains 15 pins. There are screw holes on each side
  + DVI - This type of connection isn't as common as HDMI or VGA. It looks similar to VGA, but has more pins and a more rectangular port. Like VGA, there will be screw holes on each side.

**2**

**Ensure that your monitor is compatible with the laptop port.** If the monitor cable is a different type of connection, you'll need an adapter.

* + For example, if your monitor has a DVI cable but your laptop has an HDMI port, you'll need an HDMI-to-DVI adapter.
  + If your monitor has an HDMI cable but your laptop only has a VGA port, you'll need to HDMI-to-VGA adapter.

**3**

**Power down the laptop.** This really isn't required anymore since modern monitor cables only transfer data and not power, but there is always a very slim chance that you could damage your equipment when you plug or unplug the monitor. Power your laptop down if you don't want to run the risk, but most modern equipment should have no problem being connected and disconnected while the computer is powered on.

**4**

**Connect the monitor cable to the port on the laptop.** All monitor cables can only be inserted in one direction, so don't force it. Apply gentle pressure so that the entire connector is evenly and firmly inserted.

**5**

**Secure the cable with the screws (VGA and DVI).** If you are using a VGA or DVI cable, make sure to secure the cable by tightening the screws on each side of the plug. You don't need to over-tighten them, as you'll want to be able to easily remove it if necessary.[[1]](https://www.wikihow.com/Connect-a-Laptop-to-a-Monitor#_note-1)

**6**

**Plug the monitor into a power outlet and turn it on.** Once the monitor is powered on, you can move on to setting it up.

**Part2**

**Changing Screens**

**1**

**Press the "Monitor" button on your laptop (if necessary).** Some laptops require you to press a special button on the keyboard in order to activate the monitor connection. It is usually one of the F# keys, and you may have to hold the Fn key to access it.

**2**

**Right-click on the desktop and select "Screen Resolution".** If you're using Windows XP, select "Properties" and then click the "Settings" tab.

* + If your second monitor does not appear in this window, check the Troubleshooting section.

**3**

**Click the "Multiple displays" menu to select how you want your image displayed.** There are several options that you can pick from:

* + "Duplicate these displays" - If you want someone else to be able to see what you're doing, you can use this function to make the same image appear on both displays. This is usually the default setting when a monitor is first plugged in.
  + "Extend these displays" - You can use your newly-attached monitor to extend the working space on your computer. This can be great if you work with lots of windows or want to do some dual-screen gaming. Extending the desktop is not available in Windows 7 Starter.
  + "Show desktop only on *#*" - Each of your displays is labeled with a number, and your laptop's screen should be labeled "1". You can use this option to set your external monitor as your main display.[[2]](https://www.wikihow.com/Connect-a-Laptop-to-a-Monitor#_note-2)

**4**

**Adjust the display resolution.** Your external monitor is likely a different resolution than your laptop monitor. The resolution is the number of pixels that make up the screen's display. Select your external monitor in the Screen Resolution window and then click the "Resolution" menu.

* + The resolution for each of your displays should be set to the "Recommended" resolution for the clearest image.

**5**

**Adjust your laptop's power settings so that you can close the laptop while using the monitor.** If you are using the external monitor as a replacement for your laptop's display, you can change your power options so that the computer stays on while the laptop is closed.

* + Click the Start menu and select "Control Panel". Windows 8 users can press Ctrl+X and select "Power Options".
  + Select "Hardware and Sound" and then "Power Options".
  + Click the "Change plan settings" link next to your active plan.
  + Click the "Change advanced power settings" link and then expand the "Power button and lid" tree.
  + Select the "Lid close action" option and then set "Plugged in" to "Do nothing". You can change the "On battery" option too, just make sure you keep an eye on the battery.

**6**

**Use keyboard shortcuts in Windows to quickly switch between displays.** If you are using Windows 7 or 8, you can use keyboard shortcuts to quickly switch between the different view modes.

* + Hold ⊞ Win and press P to open the "Project" or "Presentation" menu. Each time you press P, you'll cycle through the available options. Release the ⊞ Win key to select the mode you want.

**Part3**

**Troubleshooting**

**1**

**Keep in mind that, if you can't extend your desktop, you may need to upgrade Windows.** If you can duplicate your display but not extend it, this is likely because you are running a version of Windows that does not support extending the desktop. You will need to upgrade your version of Windows to access this feature.

* + Windows 7 Starter users will not be able to extend the desktop.

**2**

**Upgrade your drivers if your monitor is not detected.** If the monitor is on but Windows is not detecting it, it's usually caused by a problem with your video card's drivers. [Download and install the latest drivers available for your video card](https://www.wikihow.com/Find-and-Update-Drivers) and then try again.

* + Make sure that the monitor is turned on, or you won't be able to adjust its settings.

**3**

**Determine if the monitor is faulty.** If you've tried everything and your monitor still isn't showing up, you'll want to run a few tests to figure out if your monitor is malfunctioning.

* + Try a different monitor cable if possible. A bad cable could keep the monitor from working.
  + Try connecting the monitor to a different computer. If the monitor works on the other computer, then the issue is with your laptop. If the monitor doesn't work on another computer, then the monitor is likely faulty.

**4**

**Contact your laptop manufacturer.** If no monitors are working on the laptop and you've updated all of your software, there may be something wrong with the laptop's hardware. If you are still under warranty, you may be able to get it repaired or replaced for free.

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* My laptop screen is broken. Can I use my laptop screen with an external monitor?

Khumbulani

Yes, you can as long as you've got the required cable to connect the two.

Thanks!

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* Can I just plug in?

wikiHow Contributor

Pretty much; if you have an old monitor you should plug in a vga cable and the power cable. If you have a newer monitor, you need an hdmi cable with the power cord.

Thanks!

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* How do I hook up two monitors to my laptop? My laptop will only use one at a time. Both are hooked up, one to VGA and the another connected to HDMI.

wikiHow Contributor

Maybe your laptop has hardware restrictions. Check your graphics card to see the maximum monitors it supports.

Thanks!

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* My laptop has crashed. It is 10 months old, and now I can't get into the files. Can I use a monitor to get out important files?

Hypercharge2

The monitor just lets you see the image on the screen or add an extra display. You should try the disc recovery tool.

Thanks!

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* Why does the sound cut out when I use the monitor?

wikiHow Contributor

That is probably because your monitor doesn't have any speakers; try plugging in speakers or headphones and see if that works.

Thanks!

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* The screen on my Toshiba C350-1LQ keeps going dark. A torch shows it's all happening on the screen, but hard to see. It keeps happening, then the screen was replaced two weeks ago, and now it's happened again. What do I do?

wikiHow Contributor

Maybe you could try making the screen brighter. Most laptop computers will come with hotkeys that adjust the screen brightness.

Thanks!

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* Why is my DVI not sourcing on my monitor?

wikiHow Contributor

Go to Settings, System, Display, and click on Detect to find the monitor. Then you can choose the way you want to expand your display.

Thanks!

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