

HOW BOOT-SECTOR VIRUSES SPREAD

Win 98

Create a Windows Startup Disk.

- A. At control panel, click the Add/remove Programs icon.
- B. Click the Windows Startup Disk tab
- C. Follow instructions given to create disk.
- D. Date, name and store in a safe place.

It makes no difference to a boot sector virus whether a disk is Bootable (note: means that it has on it the necessary system info to start your computer.) or not, contains only data files, or even has no files. To this type of virus, the boot sector is what's important. Here's how they work. At boot, **if a virus infected device is attached**, the PC's BIOS reads the boot sector (or a virus written there) into memory first, even before the operating system (or an antivirus program) loads into memory.

At that point, a virus can spread from an infected floppy disk to the hard disk. The process is almost instantaneous: The virus program in the floppy's boot sector gets read, then it takes control of memory--and most boot-sector viruses infect the hard disk immediately. If the floppy is not bootable, the boot process may halt, usually with a Non-System Disk message, but the virus is in memory nevertheless and can spread, usually by copying to the hard disk's boot sector or to its MBR (master boot record).

By infecting those areas of the hard disk, this type of virus loads into memory every time you turn the PC on, even before the operating system loads. This gives the virus an opportunity to restart the cycle by copying to more floppy disks as they pass from user to user.

Win XP

Creating an XP boot disk is much more involved and so I recommend that you have the RECOVERY Disks that came with your computer, or create a set of the disks and keep those in a safe place just in case a crash occurs and you have to reinstall the applications or do a full format and recovery. IF your XP will not power up so you can get to the Recovery disks stored in a partition of your C:\drive, you're going to need something to power up. In most computer's setup that has the XP operating system and stores the Recovery Disks on a partition (D:) of the hard drive, instructions are given for creating Recovery CDs. **IF you did not do that and do not have a SET OF RECOVERY DISKS for your computer, then TODAY is the time to create those Recovery CDs...before you need them.**

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