

# MSUCOM Computer Based Testing Best Practices and Common Issues

9/19/2016

## Contents

Pre-exam Checklist.....	2
Commonly Observed Issues.....	2
Mac OSX.....	2
Desktop background has changed .....	2
Difficulty uploading answer files.....	2
Slow Start .....	2
Updates and Upgrades.....	3
Windows (version 7, 8, or 10).....	3
“Bloatware”.....	3
Disable Antivirus Software.....	3
Missing features after an exam .....	4
Slow Start .....	4
Update Settings and Upgrades .....	4

## Pre-exam Checklist

Before beginning an exam, be sure you have done the following.

- Disable antivirus.
- Disabled automatic updates or schedule updates to occur outside of the exam time.
- Ensure that you have an active network connection.
- Close all programs except SofTest.

In most cases, following this simple checklist will prevent many common issues with SofTest.

## Commonly Observed Issues

ExamSoft has a comprehensive support website filled with useful information: [ExamSoft Support](#).

In addition, the following is a list of issues that are commonly seen in MSUCOM Computer Based Tests.

### Mac OSX

#### *Desktop background has changed*

- ExamSoft has a helpful tutorial on how to fix this: [How to fix a changed background in Mac OSX](#).

#### *Difficulty uploading answer files*

- You can change the amount of time that SofTest waits before attempting to upload an answer file by clicking “options...” on the SofTest home screen. Try increasing the length of the delay, which will give your computer my time to connect to a network.
- Some Macs take a long time to finally connect to a network. If you need to reconnect to a different network, open a browser and navigate to msu.edu to confirm that your device has successfully connected to the network and to agree to the end user agreement if you connected to the guest network.
- Rebooting your device may solve your connectivity issue. After rebooting, start SofTest, and it should upload your answer file.
- Your computer may be trying to start up many other programs after you exit an exam. Remove any unnecessary programs from the list of apps that are started automatically: [Change the apps that automatically start in Mac OSX](#). If you install new software in the future, be aware of options to “start program automatically at start up”. This includes programs like Spotify and Skype.
- If you cannot upload after several attempts, you can attempt a manual upload: [Manually upload answer files on Mac OSX](#). If your computer is completely unable to connect to a network, you can put the answer files on a thumb drive and work with a proctor to manually upload your answers on a different device.

#### *Slow Start*

- SofTest is designed to turn off as many programs on a computer as possible before starting an exam. If you have many programs running on your computer, this can increase the amount of time it takes to start and exam.
  - Try closing all programs that are running in your dock.

- You can view a more comprehensive list of applications by holding Command+Option+Escape. This opens the “Force Quit Applications” window. CAUTION: if you have unsaved data on an application, force quitting will likely cause a loss of data. Use force quit only if you know your data is saved or a program is non-responsive.
- Many applications are set to start automatically when your computer starts. Remove any unnecessary programs from the list of apps that are started automatically: [Change the apps that automatically start in Mac OSX](#). If you install new software in the future, be aware of options to “start program automatically at start up”. This includes programs like Spotify and Skype.

### **Updates and Upgrades**

- If your computer is set to perform automatic updates, be sure that the updates will not start installing during an exam.
- SofTest works best on a fully updated computer. Whatever your update settings, remember to install updates on your device frequently: [Update the software on your Mac](#).
- When a new version of OSX is available, please check the SofTest minimum system requirements before installing the upgrade: [Minimum system requirements for a Mac](#). ExamSoft usually does not support a new version of OSX until a few weeks after the upgrade is available.

### **Windows (version 7, 8, or 10)**

#### **“Bloatware”**

- “Bloatware” is software that your device manufacturer preinstalls on your device that is not native to Windows. This can include
  - Trial antivirus software
  - Games
  - user interface “enhancements”
- While not always harmful, “bloatware” can cause issues with SofTest, including slow starts or locking your device during an exam. If you do not use the software, you should uninstall it from your device: [Repair or remove programs from Windows](#).
- If your device continues to have issues running SofTest, this may require installing a clean copy of Windows on your device.
  - If you already have Windows installed, installing a clean copy of Windows is free.
  - Please, contact Alex Seddon ([Alexander.Seddon@hc.msu.edu](mailto:Alexander.Seddon@hc.msu.edu)) or Mary Gebbia-Portice ([mary@msu.edu](mailto:mary@msu.edu)) if you would like to reinstall Windows. We can advise you on the best way to reinstall windows to ensure that it actually fixes your issues with SofTest.

#### **Disable Antivirus Software**

- Before an exam, turn off any “live scan” functions in your antivirus. ExamSoft has instructions on disabling several popular antivirus software programs: [Disabling antivirus software](#).
- **Important:** Be sure to turn on your antivirus software after an exam.
- Remove any preinstalled antivirus software if you are not using the software
  - Many manufacturers pre-install trial versions of antivirus or antimalware software.

- Uninstall any preinstalled antivirus software, unless you plan to purchase a license for the pre-installed antivirus. Microsoft has instructions on how to uninstall programs: [Repair or remove programs from Windows](#).
- Windows comes with its own anti-virus software called “Windows Defender”. You can find instructions on disabling Windows Defender here: [Disabling Windows Defender](#).

### ***Missing features after an exam***

- When you enter an exam, SofTest temporarily modifies security settings on your device to maintain the integrity of the exam. Occasionally, SofTest fails to restore your settings after an exam.
  - If you are still able to open the File Explorer on your computer, you can follow these instructions to restore your settings: [Running EsWinsr to restore security settings](#).
  - If you are completely locked out of your device, you can use these instructions to restore your settings:
    - [Rebooting in safe mode and running EsWinsr for Windows Vista and 7](#)
    - [Rebooting in safe mode and running EsWinsr for Windows 8 and 10](#).

### ***Slow Start***

- SofTest is designed to turn off as many programs on a computer as possible before starting an exam. If you have many programs running on your computer, this can increase the amount of time it takes to start an exam.
  - Try quitting all of the programs in your task bar.
  - You can open up the Task Manager to look at all of the processes running on your computer. To do this, hold Ctrl+Alt+Delete, and select the Task Manager.
- Many applications are set to start automatically when your computer starts. You can use the following instructions to modify the programs that start automatically: [Modify your start up services in Windows 10](#). If you install new software in the future, be aware of options to “start program automatically at start up”. This includes programs like Spotify and Skype.

### ***Update Settings and Upgrades***

- Be sure that your automatic updates are not set to install updates during an exam
  - In Windows 7, 8, and 8.1, you can turn off Automatic Updates, or you can schedule them outside of exam times. This webpage provides information on modifying update settings: [Modify update settings on Windows 7, 8 and 8.1](#)
  - In the Home edition of Windows 10, it is not possible to disable automatic updates.
    - However, you can prevent your device from restarting by setting active hours: [Scheduling automatic updates in Windows 10](#). Most exams take place between 6:00 AM and 5:00 PM.
    - Windows 10 won’t install updates on a metered connection. Because we take exams in many of the same venues, you can set the Wi-Fi networks in the testing room to be metered connections: [Setting metered connections in Windows 10](#).

- Whatever your update settings, remember to install updates on your device frequently. SofTest works best on a fully updated computer.
- When a new version of Windows is available, please check the SofTest minimum system requirements before installing the upgrade ([Minimum system requirements for Windows](#)). ExamSoft usually does not support a new version of OSX until a few weeks after the upgrade is available. Please note, starting with the Class of 2021, we no longer support the use of Surface Pros.