

ExpressVPN Unexpected Error in Windows - How to Fix?

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By Vipin PG | Published January 22, 2021 | Updated July 22, 2025 | Format: Article | 6 min read

In brief

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ExpressVPN is still one of the best VPNs available if speed, polished apps, and broad device support matter to you. But on Windows, things can go sideways without much warning. One of the more maddening situations is when the app throws an "Unexpected Error" on launch or just refuses to open properly. That message is vague by design, and that's exactly why it's so frustrating. In practice, the problem usually comes down to one of a handful of things: a broken app update, a stuck Windows service, corrupted system files, an antivirus conflict, or a failed install that left leftover junk behind. Here's what most older guides get wrong: the fix isn't always some massive batch script you paste blindly into Notepad. In 2026, the smarter approach is to start with the official ExpressVPN and Microsoft troubleshooting steps first, then move into deeper Windows repair only if the simpler fixes don't pan out.

How to Fix ExpressVPN Unexpected Error

If ExpressVPN has suddenly stopped opening, crashes on startup, or just shows that generic unexpected error message, work through the steps below in order. Don't jump straight to the most aggressive fix. That's how a small app problem becomes a bigger Windows problem.

1. Download the Latest ExpressVPN App First

This should be your first move, not your last. ExpressVPN has kept its Windows app updated, and older builds are being phased out. The company has been nudging users toward newer releases as legacy versions hit end of life. So before you troubleshoot anything else, grab the latest ExpressVPN app and install that version, don't rely on some old installer sitting in your Downloads folder. If your current installation is already partially broken, don't just install on top of it and hope for the best. Remove it cleanly first.

2. Reinstall ExpressVPN Properly

Corrupted app files are still one of the most common reasons this error shows up. A clean reinstall often clears it right up, especially after a failed update or a forced shutdown mid-install. Use the official ExpressVPN uninstall guide to remove the app, restart the PC, then install the newest Windows version fresh. If Windows won't uninstall it cleanly, Microsoft also offers a program install troubleshooter that can fix broken uninstall entries. Honestly, in some cases that alone does the trick. If the issue is still hanging around, keep going.

3. Install Pending Windows Updates

I know , this sounds like boring advice. But it actually matters here. ExpressVPN's own Windows troubleshooting documentation points users toward pending system updates because broken services, missing runtime components, and installer failures often trace back to Windows not being fully current. Head to Settings > Windows Update and check what's waiting. Or follow Microsoft's Windows Update instructions if you want the full walkthrough. Install everything pending, restart, then try opening ExpressVPN again. Don't skip the restart. A lot of Windows-side VPN issues only clear once the full update cycle finishes , not before.

4. Restart the ExpressVPN Services Manually

This is the fix that catches most people off guard. On current Windows builds, ExpressVPN can fail because its background services didn't start correctly , even when the app itself is installed without any obvious problems. ExpressVPN's official service troubleshooting suggests starting the services manually from an elevated Command Prompt. On newer Version 12 builds, run these one at a time: 'net start "ExpressVPN System Service" net start "ExpressVPN VPN Service" net start "ExpressVPN App Service"' If you're somehow still on the older Version 10 app, the service command looks like this instead: 'net start ExpressVpnservice' After that, close Command Prompt and try launching the app again. This lines up much more closely with ExpressVPN's current service troubleshooting guide than the older catch-all WMI script approach that floats around older forums.

5. Check Whether Antivirus or Firewall Is Blocking It

Security suites love interfering with VPN software. Sometimes they block the installer. Sometimes they block the VPN service itself. And sometimes they quietly kill the connection layer and leave you staring at a useless error message with no obvious explanation. ExpressVPN recommends testing whether your antivirus or security software is the culprit by temporarily disabling it and then trying the app. If that works, add ExpressVPN as an allowed app rather than leaving your protection off permanently. Microsoft explains how to allow an app through firewall in Windows Security. This step matters even more if you recently added a new antivirus, internet security suite, or one of those "PC optimizer" tools. Those are frequent troublemakers.

6. Repair Windows System Files

If reinstalling ExpressVPN and restarting its services didn't change anything, the next suspect is Windows itself. Corrupted system files can quietly break VPN services, installers, networking components, and background dependencies in ways that aren't obvious at first. Open Command Prompt as Administrator and run: 'DISM /Online /Cleanup-Image /RestoreHealth sfc /scannow' Microsoft's system file repair guide recommends running DISM first, then SFC. Let both commands finish completely before doing anything else. Then restart and test ExpressVPN again. This is a far safer general repair step than pasting a batch file you found in a five-year-old forum thread.

7. Only Use WMI Repair as an Advanced Last Resort

Older articles often recommend resetting Windows Management Instrumentation , WMI , with a long batch script. That advice came from a real place: some app and service failures do involve WMI. But let me be direct about this. Manually re-registering DLLs and recompiling MOF files should not be your first fix, or even your second. Microsoft documents WMI as a core Windows management component, and there are supported commands for checking repository consistency before doing anything drastic. If you genuinely suspect WMI corruption, start with the official WMI tools and documentation around 'winmgmt' , not a blind script copied into Notepad. Microsoft's WMI management reference and broader troubleshooting guidance are the right place to begin. That means the script below should be treated as an advanced workaround , not the default answer for every ExpressVPN launch error.

Restart the Windows Management Service

If you've already tried reinstalling the app, updating Windows, restarting the ExpressVPN services, and repairing system files, you can move to this last-resort method. Step 1: Open Notepad and paste the following code into it. '@echo off sc config winmgmt start= disabled net stop winmgmt /y %systemdrive% cd %windir%\system32\wbem for /f %%%s in ('dir /b *.dll') do regsvr32 /s %%%s wmiprvse /regserver winmgmt /regserver sc config winmgmt start= auto net start winmgmt for /f %%%s in ('dir /s /b *.mof *.mfl') do mofcomp %%%s' Step 2: Save it as a Windows batch file. Select File in Notepad, click Save As, change Save as type to All Files, and save the file with a '.bat' extension. E.g., WSM.bat Step 3: Right-click the WSM.bat file and select Run as Administrator. Step 4: Wait for the process to finish, then restart the PC and test ExpressVPN again. Go carefully here. WMI repair is not a casual tweak. If this step makes you uncomfortable, skip it and go straight to support , that's genuinely the better call.

8. Try a Clean Boot If the Error Keeps Coming Back

If ExpressVPN works sometimes but fails after startup apps have loaded, you're probably dealing with a background software conflict. A clean boot starts Windows with only essential services running, which helps you figure out whether another program is getting in the way. Microsoft has an official clean boot walkthrough for Windows 10 and 11. This is particularly worth trying if you run other VPN tools, endpoint security clients, packet filters, network monitors, or older "internet accelerator" software. Those apps can conflict with each other in genuinely ugly ways.

When You Should Contact ExpressVPN Support

If the app is still failing after all of the above, stop guessing. ExpressVPN support runs 24/7, and this is exactly the kind of issue they're set up to handle , with actual logs and version-specific guidance rather than generic advice. That's also the point where older generic troubleshooting becomes less reliable. ExpressVPN's Windows app has changed quite a bit over the years, service names have changed, and the right fix really depends on whether you're dealing with an installer issue, a service startup problem, or a networking conflict. It is the primary troubleshooting method to fix the Unexpected Error Issue in ExpressVPN. If the problem persists, please contact customer care using the chat option. ExpressVPN's support team is quick and genuinely helpful , they'll get you sorted out far faster than random scripts from old forum posts ever will.

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