

Surface Pro 9 suddenly won't boot - now I see a hard drive icon with an X in UEFI. Is this the end?

TechRounder Help Center PDF

Live article:

<https://www.techrounder.com/help/surface-pro-9-suddenly-wont-boot-now-i-see-a-hard-drive-icon-with-an-x-in-uefi-is-this-the-end/>

By Vipin PG | Published August 14, 2026 | Updated August 14, 2026 | Topic: Solution | 3 min read

That X sitting on top of the drive icon isn't Microsoft telling you the tablet's dead. It just means the firmware booted into UEFI and couldn't find (or couldn't read) a bootable operating system on the internal drive. Most of the time that's fixable from the UEFI screen itself. And even in the rare case where it's actually the SSD, the Pro 9 is one of the few Surfaces where the drive isn't soldered to the board - so "the end" is a lot less final here than it would've been on, say, a Surface Pro 7.

Work through these in order. Don't skip to the SSD swap until you've ruled out the software stuff first.

Force a Restart

Sounds too simple, but a corrupted boot cache or a stuck power state causes this exact screen more often than people expect.

1. Press and hold the power button for about 20 seconds, until the screen goes fully black.
2. Let go, wait a few seconds, then press the power button again to turn it back on.
3. Watch for the Windows logo. If it loads normally, you're done - go into Windows Update and grab any pending Surface firmware updates so this doesn't repeat.

If it boots straight back to the X icon, move on.

Check the Boot Configuration in UEFI

This is the fix that actually resolves it for most people, because the drive itself is fine - the boot order just got scrambled, usually after an interrupted update.

1. From the error screen, select OK to dismiss the dialog if one's showing.
2. Go to Boot configuration on the left-hand menu.
3. Make sure all four options are checked: Windows Boot Manager , Internal Storage , USB Storage , and PXE Network . If Internal Storage got unchecked somehow, that alone explains the X.
4. Exit and restart.

Quote: If you don't remember how to get into UEFI manually: hold volume-up and press power, then release volume-up once the Surface logo appears.

Boot from a USB Recovery Drive

If the boot config looks fine but Windows still won't load, the next step is booting from external media to see if the problem is with Windows itself rather than the hardware.

1. On a working PC, create a USB recovery drive (search "Create a recovery drive" in Windows, plug in a 16GB+ USB stick, and don't check "backup system files" unless you specifically need offline reinstall media).
2. Plug that drive into the Surface Pro 9.

3. Press and hold volume-down , then press and release the power button . Keep holding volume-down until the Surface logo shows up.

4. If it boots into the recovery environment and can see your internal drive, run Troubleshoot > Recover from a drive or a Startup Repair first before wiping anything.

If the recovery environment loads fine but can't see the internal drive at all in Boot Configuration or Disk Management, that's your answer - this has moved from a software problem to a hardware one.

If the Internal Drive Isn't Detected at All

Here's the part that actually matters for your "is this the end" question: unlike the Pro 8 and earlier, the Surface Pro 9 uses a user-replaceable M.2 2230 NVMe SSD tucked under the kickstand, not a soldered chip. Microsoft even sells the exact replacement part directly and publishes a service guide for swapping it.

- Removing it needs a Torx T3 screwdriver and a plastic pry/SIM tool to pop the small door under the kickstand.

- If you've got a spare M.2 2230 NVMe drive (not the more common 2280 size - it won't fit), you can drop it in, boot from your USB recovery drive, and do a clean install.

- Before you do that, if there's anything on the drive you care about, pull it and try reading it externally with an M.2-to-USB NVMe enclosure first. Once you reinstall, that data's gone unless you back it up beforehand.

If you'd rather not open the case yourself, Microsoft's self-repair program will sell you the part and the guide, or you can send it in / use an authorized service center and let them confirm it's actually the drive before anything gets replaced.

One Thing Worth Ruling Out First

Before you assume it's the SSD, check if the Type Cover or a dock is interfering - some users have seen this exact X icon triggered by a flaky USB-C dock or a Type Cover with a stuck key holding the system in a weird state during POST. Disconnect everything except power and try the force restart again before you commit to opening the device.