

How do I customize the color of the Windows blue screen?

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In videos on his YouTube channel [Dave's Garage](#), my longtime former colleague Dave Plummer discusses his home computer projects and has a side gig digging into Windows history. In early 2021, he discussed [the history of the Windows blue screen](#).

A correction to Dave's video: At 9:23, he says that I was responsible for the Windows 3.1 blue screen. It wasn't until Windows 95 that I took over responsibility for blue screen messages from the original author. I don't remember off-hand who the original author was, but I can guess: The 32-bit virtual machine manager was written by basically three people, one of whom had a unique coding style, and it is my recollection that the code that displays blue screen messages was written in that style, so I have a pretty good idea who it was that wrote the original code to display Windows blue screen messages.

Mind you, the code that displays blue screen messages merely displays the message. It doesn't decide when to display the message, or what the message text should be. That's the job of other components.

Windows 3.1 had configuration options to let you change the color of the blue screen messages. I dimly recall being told that the critical error message was originally red, but it was changed to blue for readability, as well as to make it less dramatic. My guess is that Windows 3.1 left an escape hatch in case they needed to change the color again.

Those configuration options were not carried forward into Windows NT. The color is hard-coded to blue, or green if you're running a prerelease build.

But all is not entirely lost. One of Mark Russinovich's party tricks is changing the color of the blue screen. He does this by doing it the Mark Russinovich way: He installs a driver that patches the hard-coded value in the kernel.

He made this party trick available for download and gave it the very Mark Russinovich name [Not My Fault](#).

Totally not supported by Windows, but if you need to perform a party trick, you can use Mark's.

Bonus reading:

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