

## USB Hard Disk Connects but Fails to Assign Drive Letter

A common problem is that a USB disk is plugged in and it doesn't show up in Windows Explorer. If you click on the *Safely Remove Hardware* icon in the Tray, the disk shows up there but you can see that there is no drive letter assigned, and the drive does not appear in *Computer, This PC* (Windows 8.1), or with a drive letter in *Devices*.

The USB drive has been recognised correctly, but Windows has failed to assign a drive letter, so the drive is inaccessible. In the following image, there is a USB disk called "My Book" successfully connected, yet when I click on the *Safely Remove Hardware* icon,  it is clear that there is no drive letter.



The most common cause of this is that the Windows *Automatic Disk Mounting* has somehow been disabled. The first thing to do is enable *Automount*. Then if that doesn't resolve the problem, you can manually assign a drive letter (see p.4).

### **Before making these changes, you can optionally create a new System Restore point in case something goes wrong.**

Windows 7

Click Start and type into the start search box *create a restore point*, click it and it will open a new window System Properties.

Windows 8

On the Start Screen, click the *Search Charm* then choose *Settings* and type *restore* in the search box, click on *Create a Restore Point*

Windows 8.1

On the Start Screen, click the *Search Charm* and type *restore* in the search box, click on *Create a Restore Point*

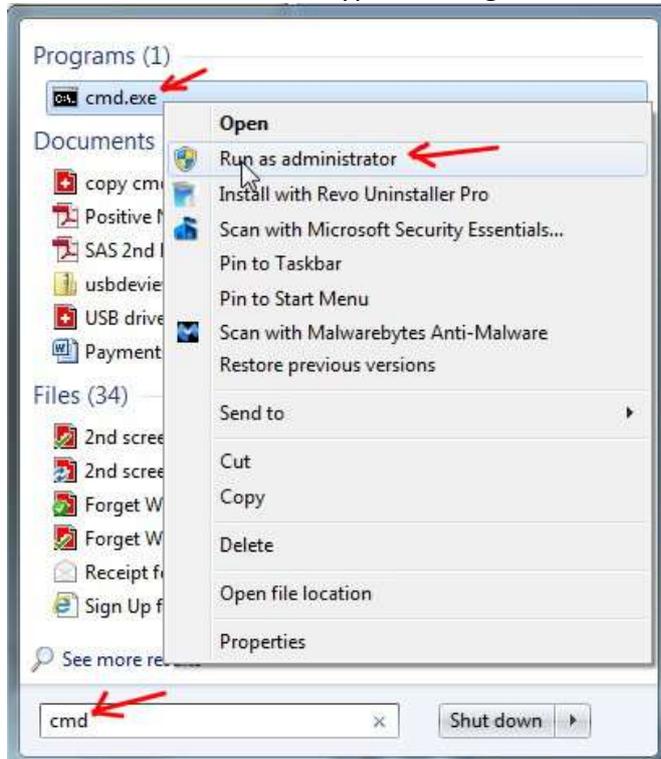
Then click *Create*, a small box will pop up to ask you what you want to call it, give it a relevant name say *Pre USB drive letter fix*, and then click *Create*, this will now appear on the restore points if you need to use it.

Some computers have System restore turned off; to turn it on, repeat the last operation but in the System Properties choose *configure* and make sure the first option is selected.

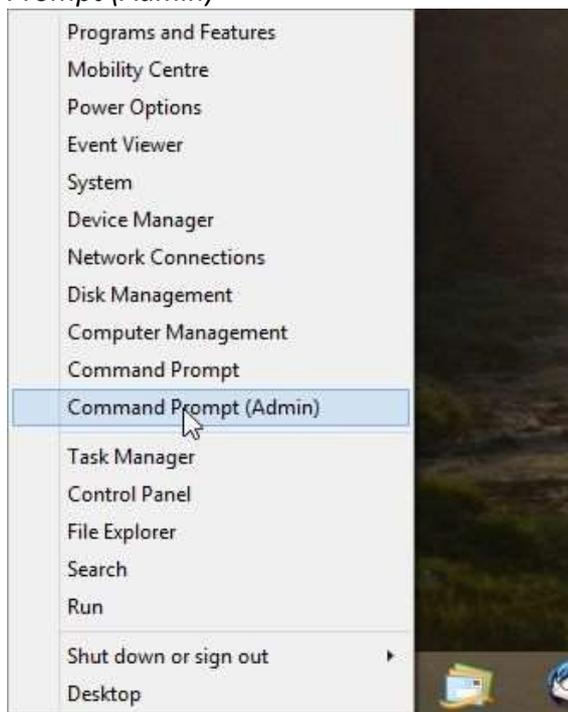
## Checking and enabling Automount:

First, disconnect your USB drive, then you need to open an “elevated command prompt” (ie with admin privileges) and type a couple of things:

*Windows 7* – Click Start, type *cmd*, right click on *cmd.exe* then left click *Run as Administrator*



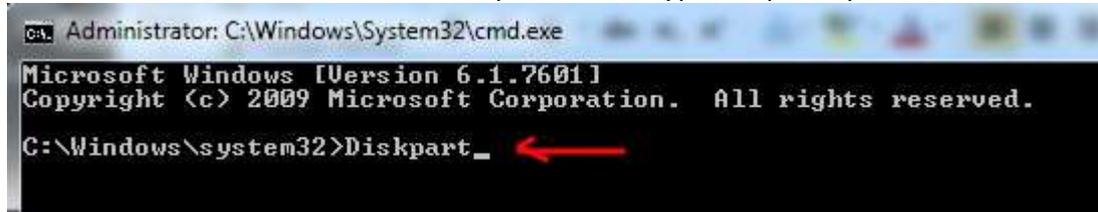
*Windows 8/8.1* – on the Desktop, right click in lower left hand corner and choose *Command Prompt (Admin)*



The following applies to all Windows systems:

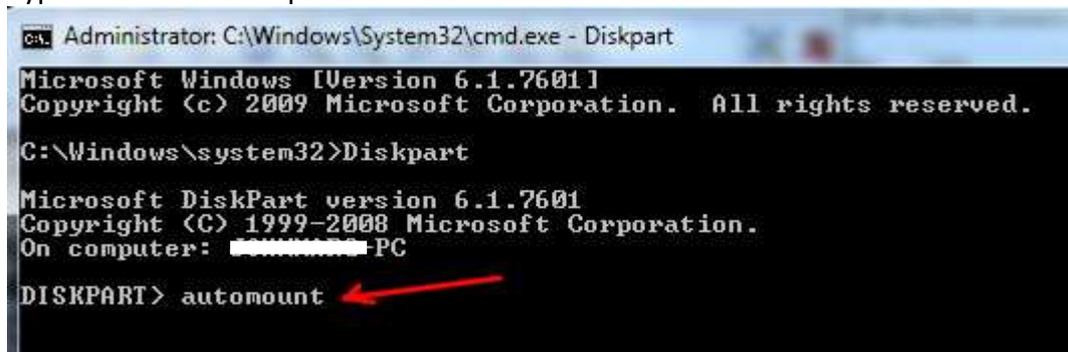
Click Yes to the User Account Control warning.

You will then see the *Command Prompt* window, type *diskpart* , press Enter



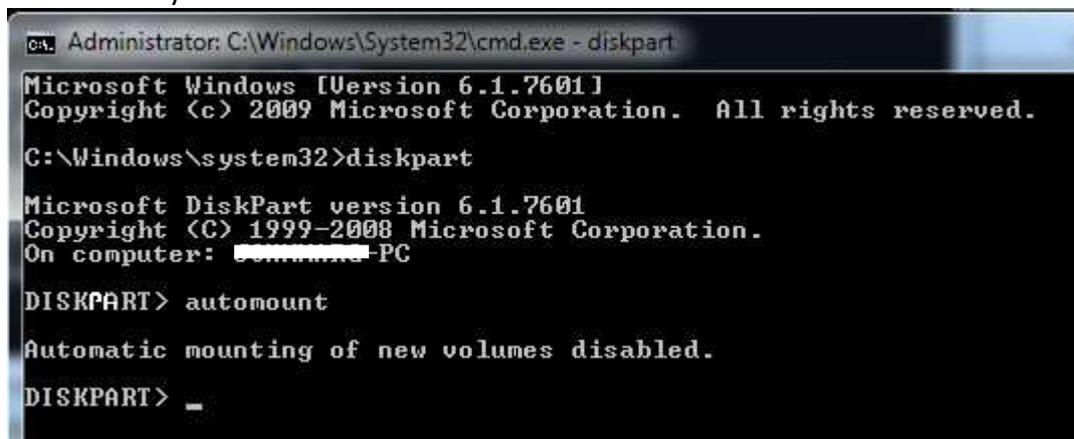
```
Administrator: C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
C:\Windows\system32>Diskpart_
```

Type *automount* and press Enter



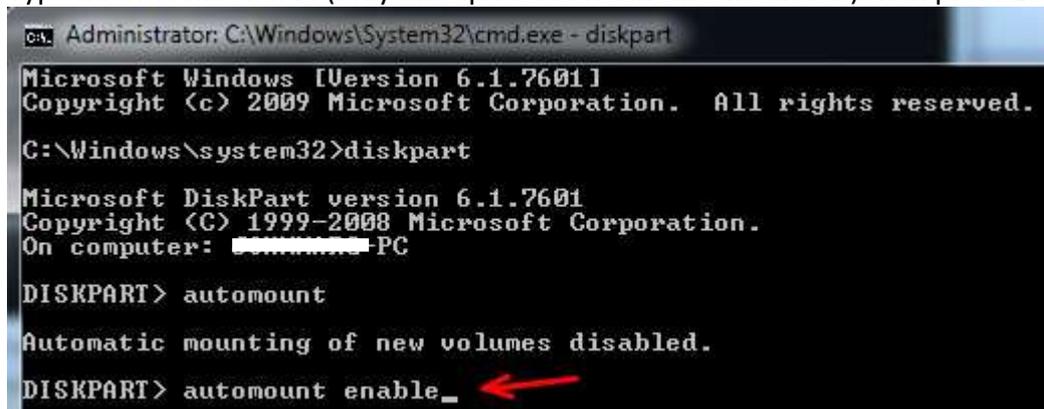
```
Administrator: C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe - Diskpart
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
C:\Windows\system32>Diskpart
Microsoft DiskPart version 6.1.7601
Copyright (C) 1999-2008 Microsoft Corporation.
On computer: ██████████-PC
DISKPART> automount
```

This will tell you if Automount is disabled or enabled. In this case it is disabled



```
Administrator: C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe - diskpart
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
C:\Windows\system32>diskpart
Microsoft DiskPart version 6.1.7601
Copyright (C) 1999-2008 Microsoft Corporation.
On computer: ██████████-PC
DISKPART> automount
Automatic mounting of new volumes disabled.
DISKPART> _
```

Type *automount enable* (only one space between the two words) then press Enter



```
Administrator: C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe - diskpart
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
C:\Windows\system32>diskpart
Microsoft DiskPart version 6.1.7601
Copyright (C) 1999-2008 Microsoft Corporation.
On computer: ██████████-PC
DISKPART> automount
Automatic mounting of new volumes disabled.
DISKPART> automount enable_
```

It should now show that it is enabled. Type *exit* then press enter

```
Administrator: C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

C:\Windows\system32>diskpart

Microsoft DiskPart version 6.1.7601
Copyright (C) 1999-2008 Microsoft Corporation.
On computer: ██████████-PC

DISKPART> automount
Automatic mounting of new volumes disabled.
DISKPART> automount enable
Automatic mounting of new volumes enabled.
DISKPART> exit ←
Leaving DiskPart...
C:\Windows\system32>
```

Then type *exit* again and press enter

Now plug in your USB disk and it should work. If it doesn't then you need to manually assign a drive letter.

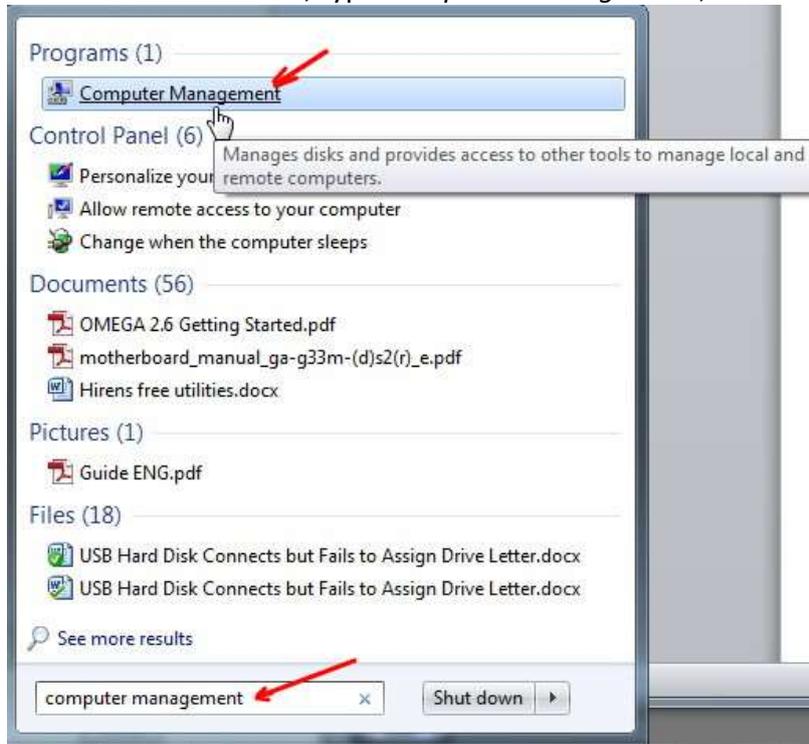
Next – Manually Assigning a Drive Letter .....



## Manually assigning a drive letter when no drive letter appears

If enabling *Automount* does not fix the problem then you will need to manually assign a drive letter (possibly every time you insert the USB drive). You do this using the *Disk Management* facility:

Windows 7 - click *Start*, type *Computer Management*, click on *Computer Management*

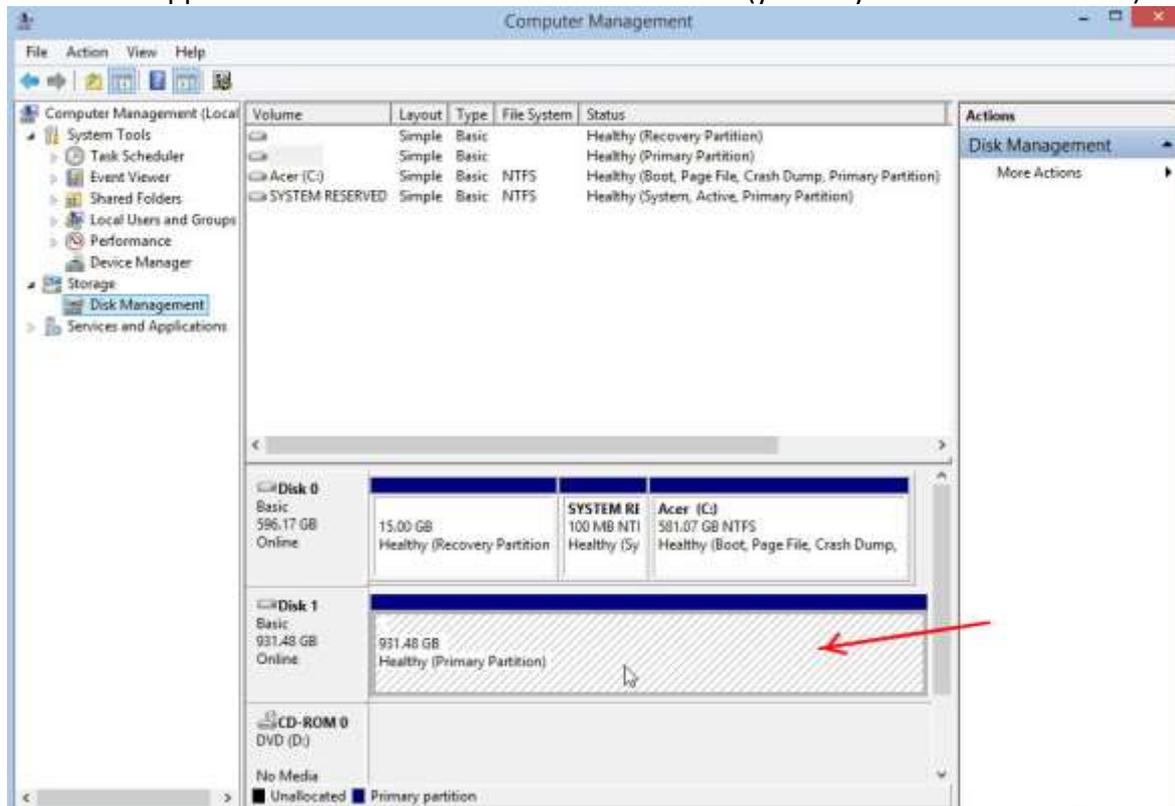


Windows 8/8.1 – on the Desktop, right click in the lower left corner and click *Computer Management*

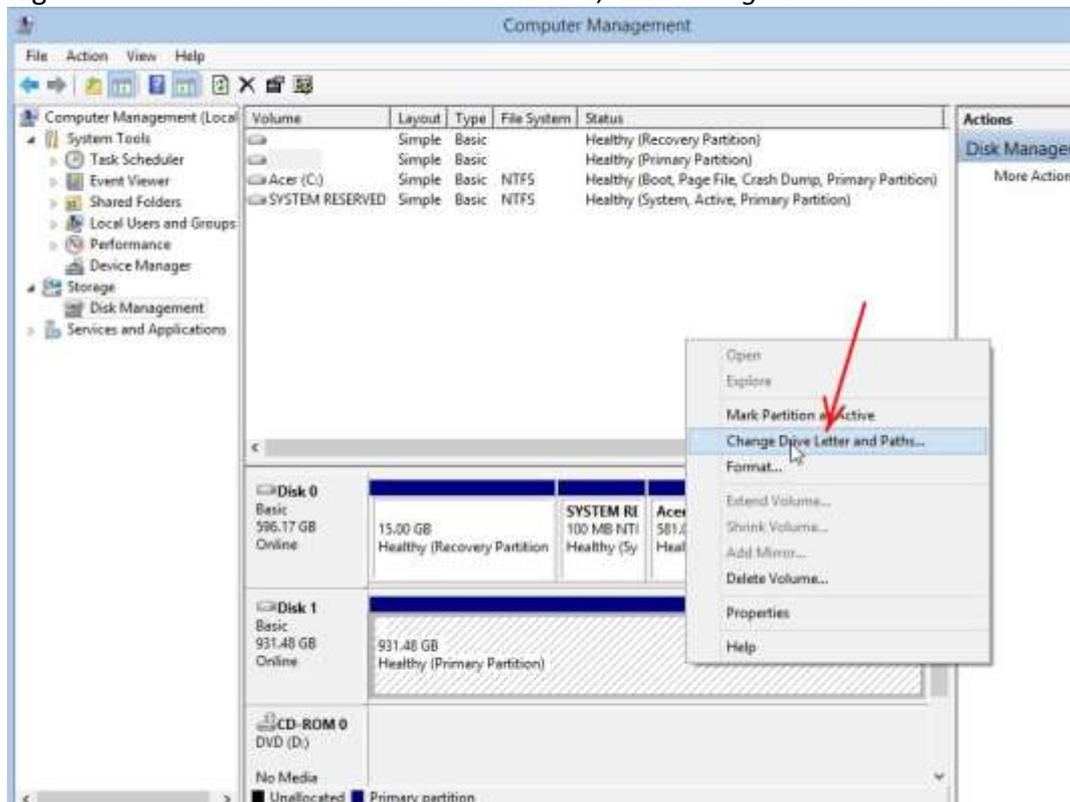


The following applies to all Windows systems:

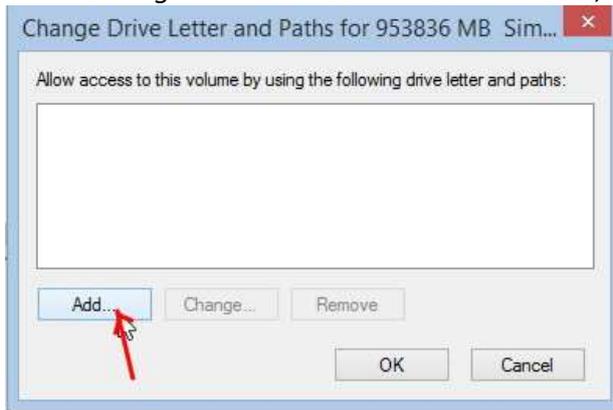
When the *Computer Management* Window appears, click on *Disk Management*, wait until the details appear. Find the disk that has no drive letter (you may need to scroll down)



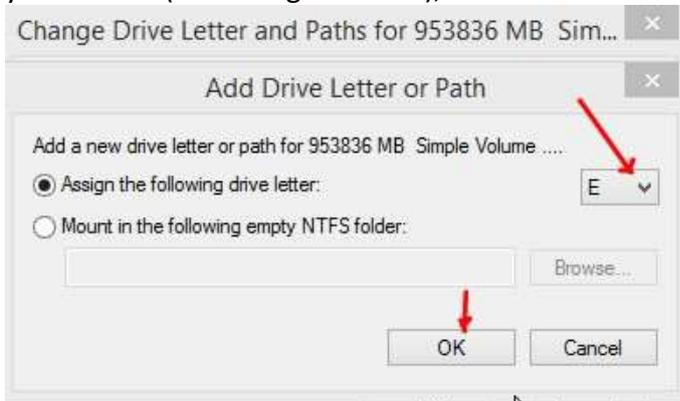
Right click on the disk that has no drive letter, click *Change Drive Letter and Paths*



In the *Change Drive Letter and Paths* window, click *Add*



Select *Assign the following drive letter* then choose either the one offered or another of your choice (with a higher letter), click *OK*



The drive letter will be assigned and if you open *My Computer* (or *This PC* in Windows 8.1) you will see the disk there. You will also see that the *Safely Remove Hardware* icon in the *Tray* now has a drive letter.

