

Beginning Computers

File Management

Lesson 4

Sue Klein, Facilitator

Where are my files?

Right click on your start button on the bottom of the screen. Click on Explore, you have opened Windows Explorer. Windows Explorer is where you find information about your hard drives and your files. Finding your files or “where did I put that?” is one of the most frustrating things in home computers.

When you open Windows Explorer you have two screens one on the left and one on the right. The one on the left is a list of different drives and the folders that are saved. Make sure that your list on the left should start at the top with desktop. Also, it will show folders with names and your hard drive, which is called the C Drive.

In order to help you understand what drives are and folders I want you to think about a filing cabinet. It is like being in an office with a filing cabinet in the corner. This filing cabinet is your hard drive. In your machine you have what is called a hard drive. Located inside your computer is a hard drive which is made up of metal discs where your files are automatically saved. This is also the location where your programs are saved. Today’s hard drive is measured in gigabytes; 1 gigabyte is One Billion bytes. A byte is one space with or without a character that you save as a file. If you bought a new computer today even a laptop you would get at least 40 GB hard drive.

A file is saved to your hard drive in a specific folder. This folder may have a smaller folder inside of it. Then the file is put into the smaller folder. Think of it this way; the filing cabinet is the drive and each drive has a letter name. You have the C drive which is your hard drive in the machine: you can have a drive (D:) for your DVDs, you can have a drive (F:), where you plug in a memory stick or an external hard drive. You can have a number of drives. So it is like having a number of filing cabinets against one wall; filing cabinets C., D., E., and F. In filing cabinet C: the top draw could be labeled with a folder name such as My Documents. In the drawer labeled My Documents you could have a hanging file named letters. In that folder named letters you could have a file named John's letter. You have a cabinet named C: with a drawer named My Documents with a hanging file named letters with a file named Jones. This is essentially what a computer does in Windows Explorer. It is in Windows Explorer that you can see the different drives and where your files are saved in what folder. It is important to remember that when you save a file it is saved to a particular drive. It is not saved to the other drives on your machine or to temporary drives that you have plugged in. If you want to have them saved to another drive then you have to save the file again to that particular drive.

Returning to Windows Explorer when you click on one of the folders or drives on the left you will see a list of folders or files appear on the right. The right hand side shows you the files that are contained in the folder you chose on the left. Clicking on View will give you a dialogue box where you can choose how the files are listed on the right. If you choose Details, you will see the name and date the file was modified, size of the file and the folder path. The folder path tells you the drive name, the folder name, and a sub folder name. Compare this to the name of the filing cabinet, the hanging full, and the file in the hanging folder.

Deleting Files

In your files list, to delete a group of files: if the files are listed in a row, hold the shift key down, click on the first file and click on the last file you want to delete. This should select all the files between the first and the last; click the delete key, selected files should be deleted. If you want to select separate files not in order; hold the control key down and click on the individual files. After you selected the files, click on the delete key; selected files should be deleted.

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In the writing area type “Today is a happy day!”, click on File, click Save As. You use save when you want to name a file or change the name of a file. Save this file and call it “practice”. Notice in the title bar that the name of the file appears next to the name of the program you are using. After you have saved the file click on the white X to exit the program. If we go back to the beginning of this handout we can again click on start and Explorer. We will find in Windows Explorer our file called practice. From the symbol in front of the file we can tell that this file was saved in Word Pad. Files saved in other software will have a different symbol at the beginning. For example Microsoft Word has the symbol of a blue W in front of the file name. In Excel, a money management program, a green X will appear before the name of the file.

Your computer automatically saves to My Documents unless you place it into another folder. All folders and drives are managed from Windows Explorer, this is the place you look for your files and manage your files. At home practice using Windows Explorer.