

Hard Drive Organization

Questions:

I saved a letter (spreadsheet / picture/ song...) but now I can't find it!

When I try to save a file, the computer asks for a name. How should I know what to call it?

Answer:

Your hard drive is like an enormous filing cabinet. If you just toss things in, how will you find anything when you need it? You need to have a system, so that whenever you save a file you know **what to call it** and **where to put it**.

1. What do I call it?

File names

Everything you save onto your computer is a file (aka document), and must have a name. File names have two parts (eg. SmileyFace.jpg)

The first part can be anything you want (with a few rules). The last part of the name (after the dot) is the *file extension*, which tells the computer what kind of file this is: eg. music, email, picture. It will probably already be set by the program you are using.

For example:

.jpg, .bmp, .gif : are picture files
 .mp3, .mpeg, .au are sound files
 .doc is a word-processing file

Your computer's operating system associates these file extensions with specific programs. Which programs? It depends on what you have installed and chosen to use.

A file is just a collection of data, formatted so that it can be read by a specific program (application). Many file formats are proprietary: they can only be read by the program that created them. Since extensions are 3 or 4 characters, there is bound to be duplication among applications. WordPad, MS Word and WordPerfect all may create .doc files, but a .doc file created by WordPerfect can't be read (translated) by MS Word.

This means you can't assume that other people will be able to use files you create on your computer. There are a few "safe" standard formats. For instance, text files (.txt) and pictures saved as either .jpg or .gif can be read by most computers.



File Associations: In *Windows Explorer* choose *Tools / Folder Options / File Types*. What is the file extension for Text documents? What program is used to open them?

2. Where do I put it?

Folders (aka Directories)

Files are stored in folders. Folder names follow the same rules as File Names, but don't require an extension.

Folders can be "nested" within other folders. A "plus sign" next to a folder means there are folders within it. Click on the plus sign to expand the folder, and the "minus sign" to collapse it.



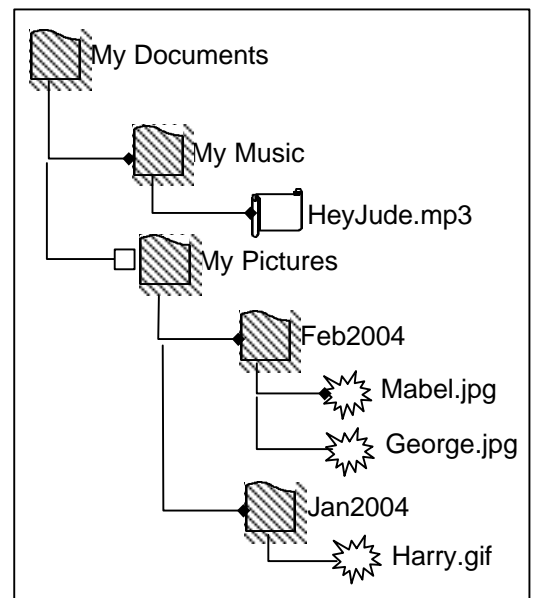
Windows Explorer: Expand *My Documents* and the folders within it. What kind of documents are there?

Create a new folder called *TestDocs* within *My Documents*

Using the right mouse button, copy a file from *My Documents* into *TestDocs*

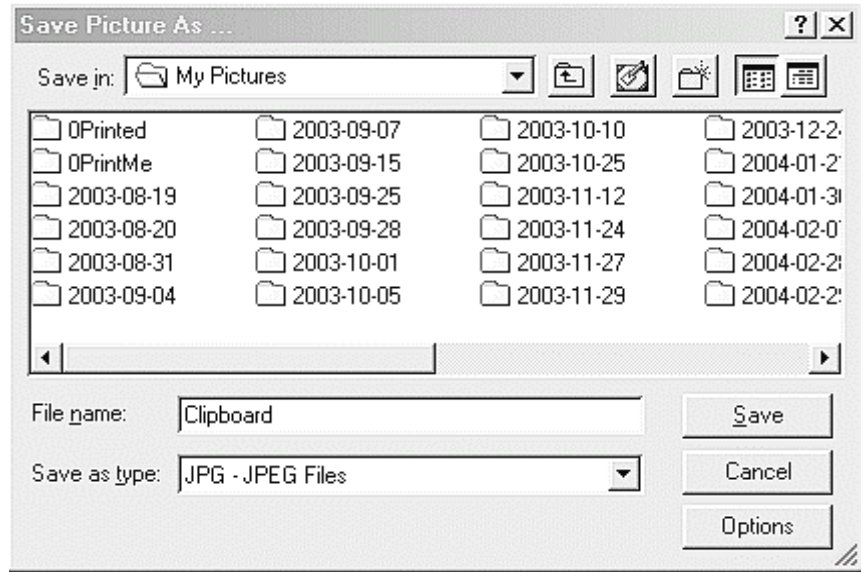
Rename the file (highlight, or use F2). Delete the renamed file.

Practice using Shift & Cntl with the mouse to copy multiple files.



3. Tips

- Plan a file structure that suits your needs, just as you would do with paper files
- Use meaningful names, but reasonably short to avoid typos
- Use consistent naming rules. Eg. date format YYYYMMDD
- To simplify backups, separate data from programs (applications). You don't need to back up applications. Many programs automatically create data directories within *Program Files* directory, but you can choose to override this during the install procedure, or change it later.
- Organize for backups: eg. put all tax files together, all music files, etc
- Include the file name in the header or footer of printed documents (eg. word processor or spreadsheets)




4. Saving documents

In the *Save* (or *Save As*) pop-up window click on the ▼ to expand the list of folders. Navigate up or down the tree to find the destination folder. When you click on a folder, it appears in the *Save In* box.

To overwrite an existing file: When you have the right folder name in the *Save In* box, find the destination file in the centre window. When you click on it, the file icon is highlighted, and the file name appears in the *File Name* box. If that is the correct name, click *Save*.

To save a new file: When you have the right folder name in the *Save In* box, type the new file name in the *File Name* box. Click *Save*.

To create a new folder, within the folder shown in the *Save In* box, click on the □* (new folder) icon.


 Use Notepad to create a new text file. Save it in as TestYYMMDD.txt in new folder called TextFiles within TestDocs (substitute today's date for YYMMDD).

5. Finding Lost Files

Start Menu: *Find / Files or Folders*

Type the name of the file in the *Named* box. You can use wildcards (*).

Use the *Browse* button to tell the computer where to start the search. If you don't know, start at the root (C:)

 Find all the *.txt files in My Documents. Sort them by date (click on Modified).

