Understanding Files and Folders

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What is a file? Are they all the same? What is a folder? Can I have more than one folder inside a folder? What about libraries? Do they have books I can borrow? (just kidding!). How do I copy files and folders or move them from one place to another? Can I name them whatever I like? Can I change the name later if I don't like what I originally said? How does the computer know which program to open when I doubleclick on a file? How can I see those hidden file extensions?

Files are actual objects stored on your hard drive (or flash drive, external drive, CD, etc). They are defined by the extension associated with them. That is the 3 or 4 characters to the right of the dot after the actual name.

Below is the most common file extensions used with text files and documents.

- .doc and .docx - Microsoft Word **file**.
- .odt - OpenOffice Writer document **file**.
- .pdf - PDF **file**.
- .rtf - Rich Text Format.
- .tex - A LaTeX document **file**.
- .txt - Plain text **file**.
- .wks and .wps- Microsoft Works **file**.
- .wpd - WordPerfect document.

Are there limits on the number of files in a folder? Yes, but for all practical purposes that number will never be reached by us. Our drives are formatted as NTFS drives and each folder can contain a little over 4 billion files. Way back under DOS and FAT16 formatting the limit was 512 files in each folder. For more details on this topic see http://tinyurl.com/2nhrbu

Files can be named with one or more "words". But you have to be careful about the characters you use. I try to limit mine to letters, numbers, and dashes. Spaces are okay. If you include a date in the filename be sure to use dashes and not slashes. Slashes in a filename take on a whole new meaning. In Windows upper and lower case characters do not matter.

So files take space on the drive. They may be fragmented, but when accessed they are put back together for use. The size of a file is a minimum of 4,096 bytes and grows in increments of 4,096 bytes. So a file contain 50 words will take the same amount of disk space as one with 200 words.

Folders are containers used to organize files and other folders. For example, there is a folder named Windows where all the operating system files are located. And another called Program Files where all nonWindows programs are kept. A special one named Desktop contains all the data you see on your desktop.

Libraries do not contain anything at all. They are simply ways to group folders for easy access. For example, say you have a few places that contain images (pictures). You can create a library name My Images and when you open that library you will see the folders that contain images.

Windows comes with a number of libraries already established for you.

If you let Windows save files without doing any organization, all documents will end up in Documents, images in Pictures, and downloads from the Internet in Downloads. This is fine until you want to locate a file or group of files.

I just finished publishing a book on Amazon and Kindle. I ended up with over a dozen files associated with that project. Had I not saved them in a folder specifically for that book it would be impossible to gather them all together later. I would have to search one at a time to locate them.

To open File Explorer (NOT Internet Explorer), click the picture of a folder usually found at the left of the taskbar. Then click on Documents to see a list of all your folders and files within the Document folder. Another way to open File Explorer is Win E.
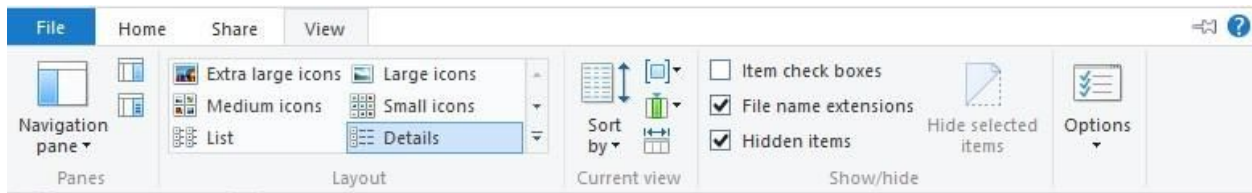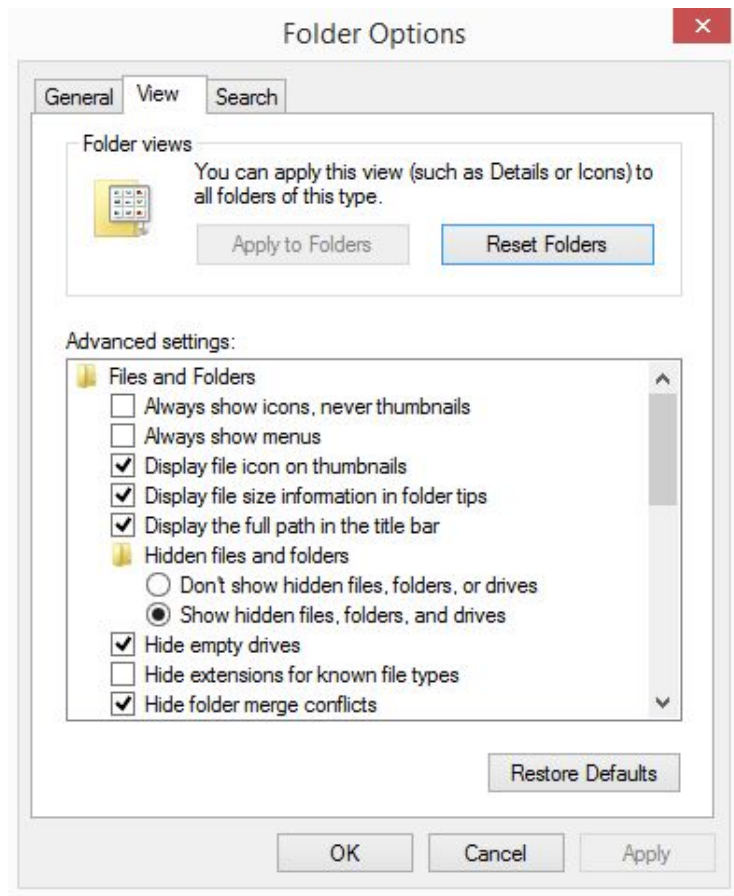

There are six types of View you can choose from.

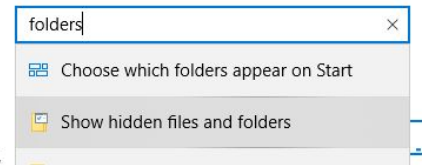| Name	Size	Date modified	Type
Healing Handbook	1 KB	12/17/2013 11:50 ...	Internet Shortcut
Healing+Handbook.mobi	1,379 KB	12/17/2013 11:13 ...	MOBI File
Healing_Handbook_Cover_for_Kindle.jpg	434 KB	12/17/2013 11:08 ...	JPG File
Healing_Handbook_Interior_for_Kindle from Creat.DOC	506 KB	12/17/2013 11:08 ...	Microsoft Word 9...
Healing_Handbook_Interior_for_Kindle.DOC	509 KB	12/17/2013 11:07 ...	Microsoft Word 9...
Order 10 copies of healing handbook.pdf	122 KB	12/17/2013 10:53 ...	Adobe Acrobat D...
Healing_Handbook-CSP-Proof-12-17-13.PDF	729 KB	12/17/2013 10:27 ...	Adobe Acrobat D...
dick n dianne at lunch 10-13-2013_clipped_rev_4.JPG	22 KB	12/16/2013 7:01 PM	JPG File
Healing Handbook by The Evans Ministries 1.2.doc	506 KB	12/16/2013 5:56 PM	Microsoft Word 9...
Healing_Handbook-CSP-Proof-11-25-13.PDF	727 KB	11/25/2013 9:56 AM	Adobe Acrobat D...
BookCoverPreview.jpg	308 KB	11/24/2013 9:02 AM	JPG File
dick n dianne at lunch 10-13-2013_clipped_rev_3.JPG	20 KB	11/24/2013 8:54 AM	JPG File
dick n dianne at lunch 10-13-2013_clipped_rev_2.JPG	110 KB	11/24/2013 8:52 AM	JPG File

Details gives you the most information including dates and sizes of the files.

If you are not seeing the file extensions in the list of files, you need to open Settings (Win I)

Click Show hidden files and folders

Folder Options ×

General | View | Search

Folder views
You can apply this view (such as Details or Icons) to all folders of this type.

Apply to Folders | Reset Folders

Advanced settings:

Files and Folders
- [ ] Always show icons, never thumbnails
- [ ] Always show menus
- [x] Display file icon on thumbnails
- [x] Display file size information in folder tips
- [x] Display the full path in the title bar
- Hidden files and folders
  - ( ) Don't show hidden files, folders, or drives
  - (•) Show hidden files, folders, and drives
- [x] Hide empty drives
- [ ] Hide extensions for known file types
- [x] Hide folder merge conflicts

Restore Defaults

OK | Cancel | Apply

Click the View tab. Then uncheck the box next to "Hide extensions for known file types". I like to also check the box for displaying the full path and to show hidden files.

Extra large icons are nice for image folders as you can see what the image looks like. Keep the check mark on File name extensions so you can can see what they are.
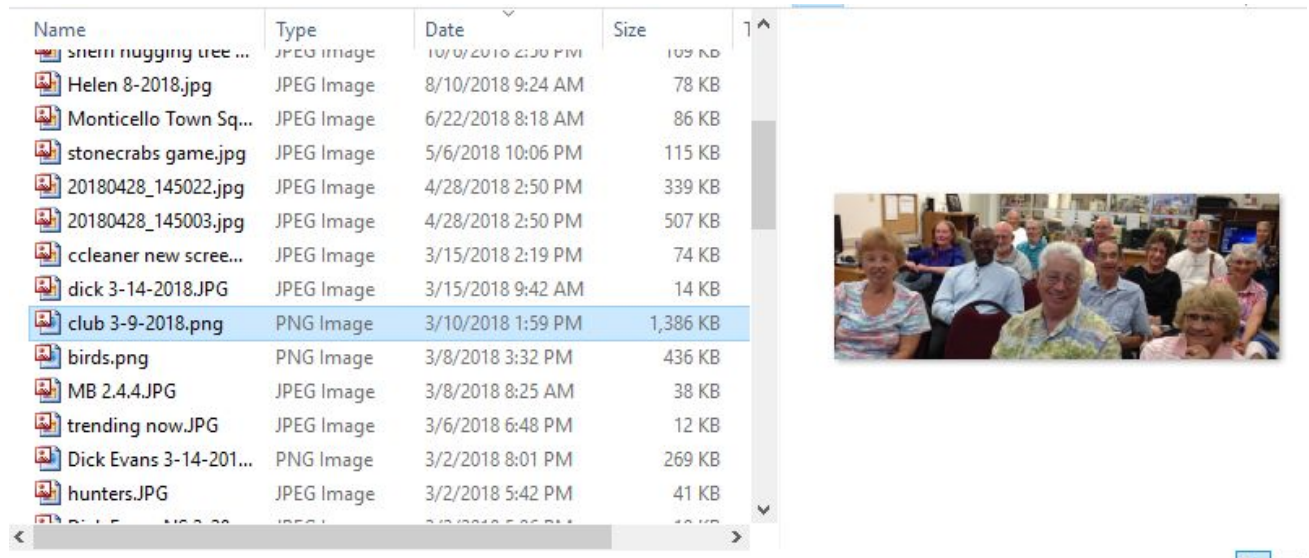
If you click Alt P you can toggle the Preview pane.

You can change the name of any file or folder by right clicking on it and typing a new name. Be very careful not to change the file extension when you change a file name. The extension tells Windows what program to use to open the file. Each program automatically saves the file with the correct extension for that program. Word creates a DOCX extension. You can also click the file or folder name and then press F2.

You CANNOT change the file to open it in a different program by changing the extension. The extension does tell Windows what application to open the file, but when a program tries to access the file it knows that the file was not created in it and the file fails to open. So leave the extensions alone and make sure when you do rename a file you do not remove or change its extension.

You can copy any file or folder by right clicking on it and selecting Copy. Then open the folder you want to place it in and right click and Paste. You can also drag files from one place to another by opening two Explorer windows. Use Win E to open a second window. When you drag a file/folder from one location to another it is Moved (see the words that display as you drag it). If you want to copy the file/folder hold the Ctrl key down while you drag and you will see a

+ sign appear. This indicates that the operation is a copy rather than a move. If you are copying from one disk drive to another (like a USB drive) dragging automatically copies.
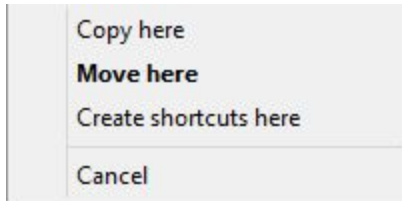
I suggest right dragging as it gives you a choice to Copy, Move, or Create a shortcut. This avoids making a mistake.
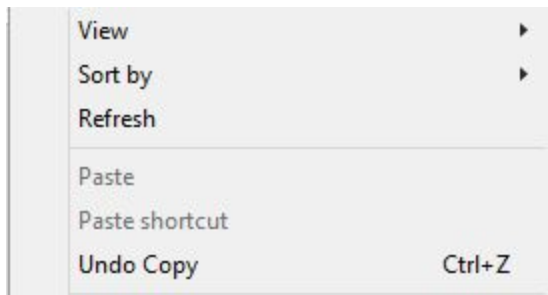
However, you can undo your action by right-clicking on the desktop after a move or copy and selecting Undo Move or Undo Copy. Alternatively you can press Ctrl Z.

Getting familiar to using File Manager will help you become more at home with what you have stored on your hard drive and where to find those files when you need them.