

Some Tips for Folder and File Management

Your computer puts information at your fingertips. Over time, however, you might have so many files that it can be difficult to find the specific file you need. Just like a physical filing cabinet, your computer files can benefit from better organization.

In order to keep your information organized, try these tips:

First, create a folder structure that organizes your files according to category.

Once you've done that, you will be able to find most files by simply clicking the folder. If a folder has a large number of files, you can use the Details view to locate the file you need.

If you aren't sure which folder contains the file you need, you can search your computer for the file.

The most effective way to organize your files is to create a folder structure that fits how you use your computer. For example, you might have folders within **My Documents** for:

- **Finances:** Documents related to your budget and taxes
- **School:** Class notes and reports
- **Work:** Your résumé and other work-related documents
- **Shopping:** Notes comparing different products and stores
- **Home:** Records relating to home maintenance and improvements

Within these folders you can create sub-folders as the need develops. Under Finances you might decide later to divide up the documents into several finance related folders like **Taxes, Banks, Bills, Accounts** and a **Miscellaneous** folder for everything else.

Other folders in **My Documents** would depend on your personal lifestyle, hobbies, organizations, memberships, activities and correspondence. If you belong to a golf or bowling league, a bridge or quilting club or a volunteer organization, each of these could eventually require a separate folder.

Of course, if there is more than one user for the computer, then each individual may want to have his/her own group of folders under **My Documents**. In this case there could be a folder directly under **My Documents** for “**Bill**” and another one for “**Mary**”. Within the **Bill** folder there could be all the folders mentioned above.

Photographs can be handled differently. Here are some recommendations:

1. Remember that photos downloaded from cameras or scanners usually get saved in the **Pictures** folder (**My Pictures** in **Windows XP**), so you will need to create a folder structure within this folder.
2. Always keep your original photos exactly as they were first downloaded to your computer. For example, if your camera delivers a 1200 x 1400 pixel JPEG image, save and preserve that picture in the same size and format (.jpg) as the camera provided. If you scan a photo or 35mm slide, save that scan exactly as delivered by the scanner.
3. If you subsequently make any crops, edits or modifications to your original pictures save those changes under a different file name (Hint: Get in the habit of simply appending a number or letter to the original file name when you save an edited photo. Eg. If the original photo is named *filename001.jpg*, then save the first edited photo as *filename001-a.jpg* or

filename001-edit.jpg. That way the original and all subsequent edits will reside together in the folder)

4. Organize and label your pictures and folders in a way that you will remember years from now. Remember that the PC will arrange your files and folders numerically and then alphabetically. You can take advantage of this organization by using a numeric system for labeling your folders (**2010-01**, **2010-02**, etc.) based on the month that the picture was taken. Inside those folders you can create sub-folders, if necessary, for specific events (**Becky's Graduation, Family Reunion**, etc.).
5. For scans of old photos, you can use this date system if the approximate date of the original photo is known. Another method for scans would be to create a folder under **Pictures** for **Scans** and then have subfolders for the scan dates (i.e., the date the scan was entered into the computer).
6. If possible, when downloading pictures from a camera, scanner, e-mail or internet, think of descriptive filename titles to give each group of photos so that, years from now, you will recall the specific event.