

Windows File Management

A Hands-on Class Presented by

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Author's Notes: 1. The information in this document is written for the Windows XP operating system. However, even though some of the visuals in the Windows Vista operating system are different, the file management module is basically the same. The reader should be able to make the analogy from Windows XP to Windows Vista using these notes. Some specific differences are noted in brackets.

*2. These notes contain a **Tutorial**. Follow the exercises for practice.*

DEFINITIONS

Windows uses folders and files as a way to organize data on your computer in much the same way as you would use a file cabinet with manila file folders into which you place your documents.

1. **Folders** hold Files and/or other Folders.
2. **Files** are a collection of data stored as a single unit. Files can be text such as letters or essays, spreadsheets, photographs and other graphics, music and so forth.
3. **Documents** is a term used interchangeably with files.

CATEGORIES OF FILES

1. **System Files** are a unified set of files which instruct the computer how to function. The Windows family of programs (95, 98, ME, XP and Vista) are **Operating Systems** (OS) and the files found in these systems are **System Files**.
2. **Program Files**, also known as **Application Files**, are sets of instructions that tell the computer to do something useful such as create a letter or edit a photo. Word processing programs such as *WordPad*, *MS Word* and *Word Perfect*, spreadsheets such as *Excel*, e-mail programs such as *Outlook Express*, games and so forth, are examples of applications.
3. **Data Files**, also known as **Document Files**, contain information created by the user with a program. If you write a letter using *MS Word* and save it, the result is a Data or Document File. Data files cannot be accessed without a matching Program.

SAVING FILES

1. If you want to keep a copy of a document that you create, you need to save it in some permanent storage device.
 - a. hard disk (drive), usually called your c drive and named c:\
 - b. removable storage devices
 - 1) CD-RW drive: you can read and write to a CD-RW disk
in addition, your computer probably has a CD-ROM drive; ROM stands for read-only memory; you cannot save to a CD-ROM disk but you can read the data on it
 - 2) flash or thumb drive

2. File names consist of 2 parts
 - a. user given description
 - 1) can use upper and/or lower case and spaces between words
 - 2) may not use the following characters: \ / : * ? " < > !
 - b. file extension
 - 1) written as .xxx
 - 2) supplied by the application program being used
 - 3) used to match file to the program that created it or that can open it

USING WINDOWS EXPLORER

Description: Windows stores data in a hierarchy of folders, subfolders and files. Windows Explorer is where you may visualize the contents of your computer. It is a very powerful tool that will help you to copy, move, and rename a file or folder. Note that this is **not** Internet Explorer, the Microsoft Internet browser.

1. **Opening Explorer:** There are several ways to access Windows Explorer. We'll use one of the following 3 methods:
 - a. Click and hold the Windows Key, click once on the E key, let go of all keys. This opens Windows Explorer to My Computer
 - b. Insert a CD with text files into your CD drive. Windows Explorer opens to let you see the CD drive.
 - c. Right click on the start button; left click on "explore."
2. **Examining Windows Explorer:** Windows Explorer has two panes which work independently of each other but are interrelated.

In Windows XP, the left pane has two views. View 1 is a task pane. View 2 is the folders pane described below. To toggle between views, left click on the folders tool button on the tool bar.

The following exercises utilize View 2 (Folders Pane).

- a. The **left pane** in the Windows Explorer window is known as the **folder pane** and lists the folders only. A plus (+) sign beside a folder name means that there are subfolders. Click on one of the plus signs and note the other folder or folders that appear. The (+) changes to a (-) to indicate that there are no more hidden folders. Note also the indentations which show which subfolders are in which folders.

[In **Vista**, a white wedge () has the same function as the plus sign. It indicates that there are subfolders that are not visible. Clicking on this arrow will reveal the hidden folders. The white wedge will then change to a black wedge () slightly tilted to indicate that there are no more sub-folders. The black wedge has the same function as the minus sign.]

- b. The **right pane** is known as the **contents pane**. Unlike the folders pane, the contents pane lists files as well as folders. When you click on a folder in the left pane, the right pane shows the contents of the folder highlighted in the left pane. Usually folders are listed alphabetically first, followed by files listed alphabetically. You can change this sort by clicking on the column header.

The **right pane (contents pane)** has several views. Go to the View menu. The views are listed in the second section. Click on each view to see what it looks like. The Details view is the more informative about both the files and the folders.

- c. The **address bar** identifies which folders you are examining. Look at the following example:

Address bar reads c:\...\my documents\letters and contents pane reads Mom25. This means that on your hard disk (c:\) in a folder named My Documents there is a subfolder named Letters and in that subfolder is a file (document) named Mom25.

Note that the folders are separated by a back slash (\) and that the address bars lists all folders and subfolders but does not list the file name.

[In **Vista** the address bar is at the top of the screen, but has no name identifying it. Folders are separated by arrows. Resting the mouse on a folder icon will reveal the full path name (folders) separated by back slashes as in Win XP.]

- 3. **Creating a New Folder:** Windows comes with a My Documents folder already created. Windows assumes that you will want to save all your files either in the My Documents folder or in a subfolder you create inside My Documents. This organizational method is highly recommended.

- a. Creating a folder inside the My Documents folder, Method 1 (Preferred): You can create a sub folder directly in the folder you are viewing.
 - 1) In the Folder pane, click on the folder you want to open; in this case, use My Documents
 - 2) Right click in a blank spot in the folder in the Contents pane (not on a file name)
 - 3) Click on New ➔ Folder
 - 4) Name your folder Folder 1.
 - 5) **To change the folder name**, right click on the folder name and left click on rename. Rename your folder to My First Folder.
- b. Creating a folder inside the My Documents folder, Method 2
 - 1) Click on the My Documents folder in the left pane
 - 2) Click on the **FILE** menu, click on New, click on Folder.
 - 3) A new folder will appear in the right (contents) pane. The words “new folder” will be highlighted and a blinking insertion point will indicate that you can name this folder. Name the folder My Second Folder.

- 4) **To change or correct the folder name**, right click on the folder name and left click on rename.
- c. Creating a folder inside the My Documents folder, Method 3: In Windows XP you can use the task pane to create a sub folder directly in the folder you are viewing.
 - 1) Click on the My Documents folder to open it.
 - 2) To see the task pane, left click on the folders tool button on the tool bar.
 - 3) In the task pane, click on Make a New Folder.
 - 4) Name the folder.
4. **Creating a Subfolder**, follow the above steps, but first click on My First Folder. This tells Explorer that you wish to place a folder into My First Folder. Create 2 folders and name them Subfolder 1a and Subfolder 1b. Now create Subfolder 1c inside My Second Folder.

You can follow the same procedure to create folders on read/write CDs or on a thumb drive. **The first step is always to left click on the folder or drive into which you want to place a folder.**

5. **Moving a folder**: We'll use the **drag and drop** method. You can also use the task pane to move a folder or you can use the Edit Menu → Cut and Paste.

To drag and drop, right click on the folder and hold the right mouse button down. Drag the folder to its new location and drop it by letting go. (You can let go of the mouse button when the desired location turns blue.) On the context menu, click on "move here".

Exercise:

- a. right click on Subfolder 1b
- b. drag it to My Second Folder
- c. click on "move here"

CAUTION: move only the folders you create. Do not move system or application folders.

6. **Putting a New File into a Folder:** When you create a new file and save it, you tell Explorer where you want the file to go, that is, into which folder or subfolder you wish to store the file.
 - a. Open your word processing program and create a short file.
 - b. Click on the **FILE** menu.
 - c. Click on **Save As**
 - d. In the Save As Window, look at the Save In line. It probably defaults to My Documents, but you can change that by clicking on the arrow at the end of the Save In line and then clicking on the folder you wish. You can also choose the CD-RW drive or any subfolder by double clicking on them. For this exercise, choose Subfolder 1a
 - e. Name your new file Test File One, ignore the file type line for the moment, and click on Save.
 - f. Return to Windows Explorer and open the Subfolder 1a. Test File One will be listed.

7. **Moving a File:** You can move a file in the same way you moved a folder. You open the folder, find the file to be moved and right drag it to its new location.

Exercise

- a. In the left pane, click on My Documents, then click on Subfolder 1a to open it if it is not already open. (Remember to periodically look at the address bar to see where you are.) You should see your newly created file, Test File One, in the right pane.
- b. Right click on Test File One, drag it across to the left pane and drop it into Subfolder 1c
- c. Click on "move here".

CAUTION: Be sure to move only files that you created. Do not move files that belong to Windows or to any application.

Let's examine what you now have. Remember, the left pane will only show folders.

The right pane will show folders, subfolders and files.

1. Highlight My Documents on your c drive. In the left pane, you should see

+My First Folder

+My Second Folder If you don't see the subfolders, click on the +

Now you should see

- My First Folder

Subfolder 1a

Subfolder 1b

-My Second Folder

Subfolder 1b

Subfolder 1c

Test File One

2. Highlight Subfolder 1a. The right pane should be blank because you have nothing in the folder. Do the same for Subfolder 1b. Highlight My Second Folder, and you should see Subfolder 1c in the right pane. Highlight Subfolder 1c and in the right pane you should see Test File One.

3. Look at the Address Bar whenever you highlight something, notice how it changes and compare it to the contents in the right pane. Remember that the left pane shows all the folders and subfolders on your computer, the address bar shows the folder and subfolders that have been highlighted in the left pane, and the right pane shows the contents, both the folders and files, of the folder that has been highlighted in the left pane.

- 8. Copying a File:** Sometimes you need to have a copy of a file on your computer or on a removable storage device. Making a second copy of a file is a good way to create a backup file. When you right click on a file name and drag it to a folder, the menu that opens gives you a choice of moving or copying the file. To backup your file, click on “copy here”.

Exercise

- a. Open My Documents, My Second Folder, Subfolder 1c.
- b. Right click on Test File One.
- c. Drag Test File One into My First Folder and drop it.
- d. On the context menu, click on “copy here.” You now have two identical copies of Test File One, one in My Second Folder, Subfolder 1c and one in My First Folder

If you wish, you can copy Test File One into any of the folders or the subfolders on your CD-RW or a thumb drive. Follow the same procedure as above. If you can't see the folders, you may have to scroll before dragging. Here's how:

- a. Highlight the folder in which you have a file to copy. You should see that file in the right pane.
- b. Scroll the left pane until you see your CD-RW. Do not click on the CD-RW drive. You may, however, click on the (+) so that all folders are visible.
- c. In the right pane, right click on the file name, drag it across to the left pane and drop it into whichever folder you choose. Click on “copy here.”

9. Deleting a File

1. Open the folder containing the file you wish to delete.
2. Right click on the file..
3. Left click on “delete.” You will get a warning that says “are you sure you want to send this file to the recycle bin? Click yes.
4. Now try the same thing with a file on your CD-RW. Note that the warning is different. It says: “are you sure you want to delete this file?” Files and folders deleted from a removable storage device do not go to the recycle bin. Therefore, before deleting items from a removable storage device be absolutely sure that you want to do so. You won't get a chance to undo the delete.

Note: Right Click whenever possible, because it is safe. A right click always results in a context sensitive menu of choices. All of the possible actions are listed on this menu and you can cancel a move if it was not what you want to do.

10. Deleting a Folder

Follow the same procedure as for deleting a file. The warning will read: “are you sure you want to send the folder **and its contents** to the recycle bin? Therefore, be sure you don't want to keep any of the subfolders or files before deleting the folder. Deleting a folder from a removable storage device will be a permanent delete.

11. Selecting Multiple Files or Folders: You can select more than one folder or file and drag groups of folders or files at one time.

- a. To select files or folders that are contiguous, click on the first item to highlight it. Hold down the **shift** key on the keyboard and click on the last item to be selected. All the items in between will be highlighted and ready to be right dragged or deleted.
- b. To select files or folders that are not contiguous, click on the first item, hold down the **control (ctrl)** key and click on the other items.

RESTORING ITEMS IN THE RECYCLE BIN

1. On your desktop, double left click on your Recycle bin to open it.
2. Right click on the data file or folder you wish to restore. You may select one or more files by holding either the shift or the control key down while highlighting the file(s).
3. Click "restore" on the context menu. The files and folders will go back to their original places.
4. Deleting items in the recycle bin is a permanent operation. Deleted items cannot be restored.

EDITING A FILE

If you want to make changes to a file you previously created and saved, you must open an application or program to give it instructions.

Method 1: Using Windows Explorer. Double left click on a file name. The application program will open first and then your document will be displayed ready for you to read, edit or print.

Method 2. Open the application, for example, *MS Word*. Click on the **FILE** menu, then click on Open. In the Open dialogue box, find the folder in which your file is stored, click on its name and click on Open.