

File Management(2/19/18)

Any time the discussion of a new machine is mentioned, the topic of file management becomes very relevant. MS Office documents (Word/Excel/PowerPoint) are files, which represent correspondence, stories, budgets, investment data, important lists (like lists of passwords) and names/addresses that often need to be categorized and kept track of. Pictures and Songs, also saved in a computer as files, need to be sorted and managed. What follows is a brief description of some items that pertain to this subject.

File Explorer (aka Windows Explorer)

It is first important to note that this is not a web browser and is, therefore, different from Internet Explorer or Chrome or Edge. File Explorer (called Windows Explorer in Win 7 and older) opens a two-paneled window that shows how files are stored on your hard drive or any drive/CD/DVD/Flash Drive/Camera connected to the computer. In the left pane is the structure or hierarchy of files and in the right pane is a detailed view of what is highlighted in the left pane.

The most common way to open this feature is to right click on the start button and then choosing the words File Explorer (Win 10) or Windows Explorer (Win 7). In all versions of Windows you can click on the icon in the task bar that looks like a manila folder. Another method is to hold down the Windows Key and hit the letter "E".

Once open you may notice subtle difference in the way they are displayed in each version of Windows. The way the right pane is viewed can be changed by using choices in a dropdown menu. List, Details and Large Icons are the most common choices. Pick the one that meets your needs.

List - just gives the file names in several columns

Details - gives file names along with file size, date last changed as well as the file type (probably most used view).

Large Icons - especially useful with pictures because it shows you a miniature picture.

There is a place in the Control Panel under Folder Options that lets you see the three-letter extension after a file name. Unfortunately this feature is off by default (Microsoft doesn't do everything right). Under Folder Options, choose View and take the checkmark away from the line that says "hide extensions of know file types". This makes life much easier.

Folder Creation and Moving (or Copying) Files

Creating a new folder is often desirable as you can save things (files) by subject, by date or by occasion (e.g. birthday, vacation or reunion). To create a folder, highlight the folder you want the new one to be under. Then right click and select New, then Folder. After you click on Folder you will see a new entry waiting to be named. If you just hit enter a folder called "New Folder" will be created. Better to name it something meaningful.

Arranging/moving/copying files it is best done across the panes in File Explorer. Find the file you want to manipulate in the right pane, note the target folder in the left pane. Then click and hold the left button down while you drag the folder across the "pane line" and hover over the destination. Let go and the file will be moved or copied according to these rules: If you are within the same drive (e.g. "C:" drive) the file will be moved. If you go to a different drive it will be copied and there will still be a copy where you started. If you hold down the control button (CTRL) on the keyboard while you are clicking and dragging within a drive, it will copy instead of move.

Multiple files can be selected to move/copy by clicking while holding down the shift or CTRL key. Also CTRL and "A" highlight "All" the files in a directory. CTRL+Click allows you to choose a number of non-contiguous files. Use the same rules here that you use to highlight emails. BTW, you can use these rules to move email messages from one folder to another. Also entire folders can be moved. Be careful here, if you click and drag in an uncontrolled manner you may accidently relocate a folder and then have trouble finding it.

Backing Up Your Files

Use the procedures from this page, with an external drive, to backup pictures, documents, songs and important data such as Quicken or Tax stuff. Plug an external device into a USB port and the computer will assign it a letter. Make some appropriately named folders on that drive and then use File Explorer to drag files, that you want backed up, to the external drive. Remember they will be copies not truly moved. If your computer's main disk is critically full, you will have to delete from the source drive in order to free up space. Backing files up also facilitates moving them to a newly purchased machine. There are commercial services, such as Carbonite, that back up you files automatically for a monthly fee.