

Beginning Computing: Files & Folders

These instructions are for an IBM compatible Personal Computer running Windows XP or Vista, however earlier (and later) versions of Windows are similar in principle if different in appearance.

It is assumed that you can switch your computer on and launch an application.

Files

A computer's file is just a collection of information given a specific name. The software application (program) you use creates files which can contain letters, invoices, pieces of music, photographs etc

Files need to be named so that they can be identified.

When you are asked by an application to name the file you have just created, there are two rules:-

- ⊕ Make the name meaningful to you (you will want to find it at some stage)!
- ⊕ Make it unique.

Some characters on the keyboard are not permitted (/ ? < > \ : * | ") but you will be warned if you try to use them.

When you have saved your file you may notice a three-character suffix appears after the name you specified. This helps the computer identify the type of file and what application can open it.

Some examples of file names and suffixes:-

- ⊕ **New_file.doc** A word processed document from MS Word (97-2003)
- ⊕ **Tunnel of love.mp3** A music file which can be played by any MP3 player
- ⊕ **Sydney Opera House.jpg** An image file (ie a picture) possibly a photograph
- ⊕ **RestoreButton.gif** An simple image file possible for a website
- ⊕ **August 2006 Accounts.xls** A spreadsheet file

*Tip: If you can't see any suffixes when you look in **My Documents** choose **View** from the **Menu bar** and select **Details***

Folders

Once you have become familiar with your PC you will find that you have created an astonishing number of files and will need to develop a systematic filing system. Continuing the office analogy you can create **folders** in which to put your files (some people call folders, **directories**). You will usually be using the hard drive on your computer to store your files and will be very well advised to keep everything in the 'My Documents' folder. Within this you can create as many folders as you like. Within those folders you can create sub-folders and so on, creating a hierarchical folder structure.

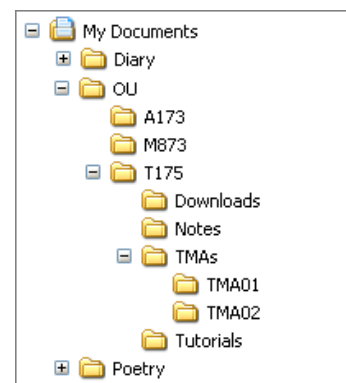
The key is to devise a system that is meaningful for you so that you can find your files quickly.

Folders don't have suffixes as they may contain a variety of different file types.

This is part of one student's filing system ⇨

This part of their My Documents folder contain 3 main folders (Diary, OU and Poetry)

- ⊕ The OU folder contains 3 course folders (A173, M873 and T175)
- ⊕ The T175 folder contains 4 folders (Downloads, Notes, TMAs and Tutorials)
- ⊕ The TMAs folder contains folders for two TMAs and presumably



this folder will each contain a number of different files.

➤ **Working with files and folders**

Whenever you do any work on your computer you must save it as a **file** before you switch off, or you work will be lost (fortunately most applications will remind you).

You will always be asked: -

- ⊕ What name you wish to use for the file
(the application may suggest one but you can always overtype this)
- ⊕ Where you want to put the file
(again the application will make a suggestion, which you can change)

Folders you have to create yourself (although you can always do this "on the fly") and it's worth thinking about the structure of you filing system before you begin, but you can always change it later if you get it wrong although moving lots of files later can be tedious!

➤ **Viewing your Folders**

Click on the **My Documents** icon (or **Document** in Vista)



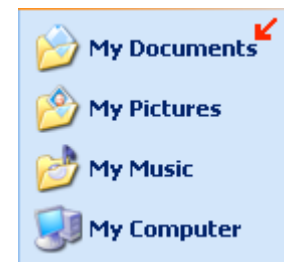
If you don't have this icon

Click on the green **Start (or in Vista Windows) button**

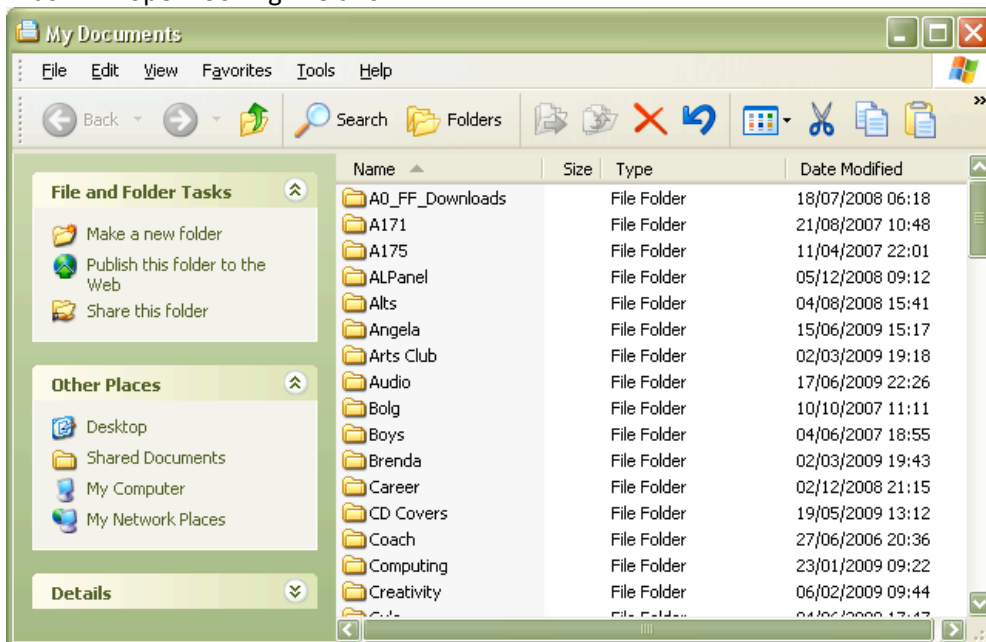


A screen something like this ⇨ will appear.

Click on the **My Documents** icon (or **Document** in Vista)

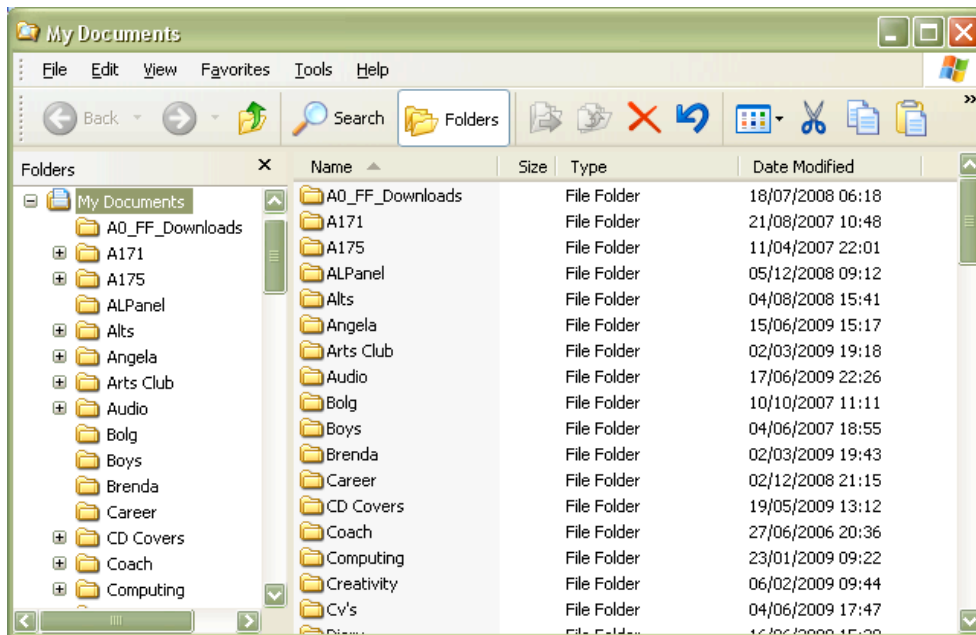


A box will open looking like this



(Depending on how you computer is set up the appearance of this screen can vary considerably)

To make this screen more usable Click on the Folders icon ⇨
And it will change in appearance ↓



The folder highlighted on the left side of the screen shown which folder you are looking in.
(in this case My Documents)

The right hand half shows the content of this folder

To view the content of any of the folders on the left : -

- ⊕ Double click on the folders name on the left side of the screen
- ⊕ To return to the previous view use the green Back button (top left of screen)
(Greyed out on this example)

➤ **Creating a new Folder**

- ⊕ On the left side -double click on the existing folder in which you want to put your new folder
- ⊕ Then Click on The **Make new Folder icon** ⇨ and the new folder will appear



The new folder which appears will have the imaginative name of **New Folder** which you can immediately overtype with your chosen name and then press **return** on your keyboard to fix the name. (You can rename a file or folder at any time)

➤ **Finding a file or folder**

At some stage you will be unable to find a file or folder you have created and Windows has a useful search facility to help you: -

- ⊕ Close (or minimize) any applications, which are running to get back to the desktop
(The first screen you see when you switch on)
- ⊕ Click the green **Start (or in Vista Windows) button** then click on **Search**
- ⊕ Follow the instructions on the left-hand side of the screen
- ⊕ Note you don't need to fill in every piece of information but the more you put in better the result will be

Eventually you will be presented with a list of files that will match your search parameters.
You can open any file directly from this list by double clicking on its name.

➤ **Deleting a file or folder**

There are many different ways of deleting a file or folder!

But are you sure you want to delete it?

Most computers now have massive storage capability and you could create a special Archive folder for the files, which you think you have finished with.

To delete a file or folder:-

- ⊕ Click on the green **Start** (or in Vista **Windows**) button
- ⊕ Click on the **My Documents** icon
- ⊕ Find your way to the file or folder you wish to delete
- ⊕ Select the file or folder (one left mouse click) and press the **Delete** key on your keyboard

OR select the file, and click the **Delete** icon (red **X**) on the toolbar

OR select the file, then right click on the name and select **Delete** from the menu that appears

It's usually best (for your own safety) to delete all the files in a folder before you delete the folder. If you do delete a file by accident you can usually recover it from the recycle bin.

However, if you delete a file from an external device (USB flash memory or floppy disk etc) you may not be able to recover it.

➤ **Recovering a deleted file or folder**

If you do accidentally delete a file or folder from your hard drive

- ⊕ Double click on the recycle bin on your desktop ⇒
- ⊕ Select the deleted file or folder by clicking on its name.

Then either

- ⊕ Click the underlined text alongside the list (**Restore this item back to its original location**)

OR

- ⊕ At the **Menu bar** click **File** and then **Restore**



Recycle Bin

➤ **Making a folder "on the fly"**

You may discover part way through saving a file that you need to create a new folder for it.

At the top of the **Save** (or **Save As**) box you will find **Create new Folder icon** ⇒

- ⊕ Click on this and you will be asked to name your new folder
- ⊕ Type in the name and press the return key

Tip: don't forget to open the new folder if you wish to save your new file in it!

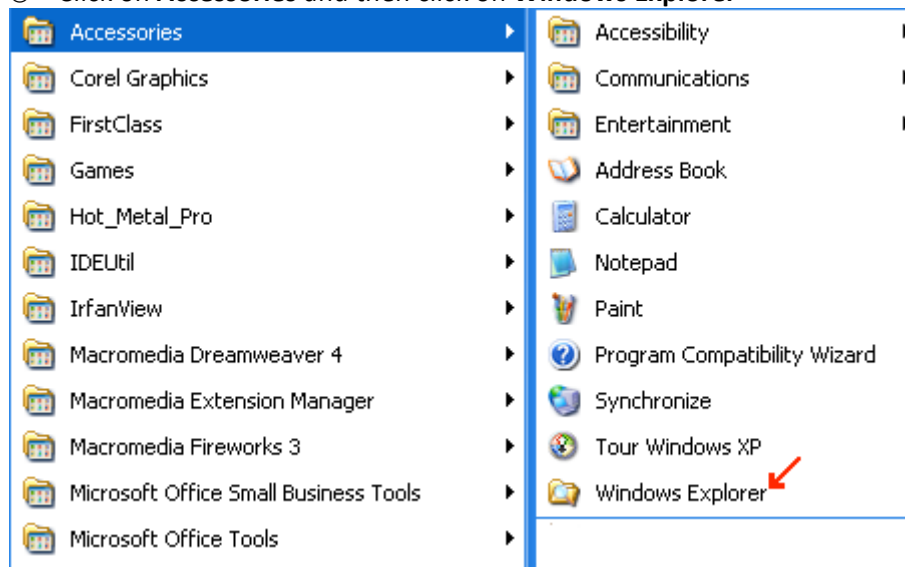


Windows Explorer

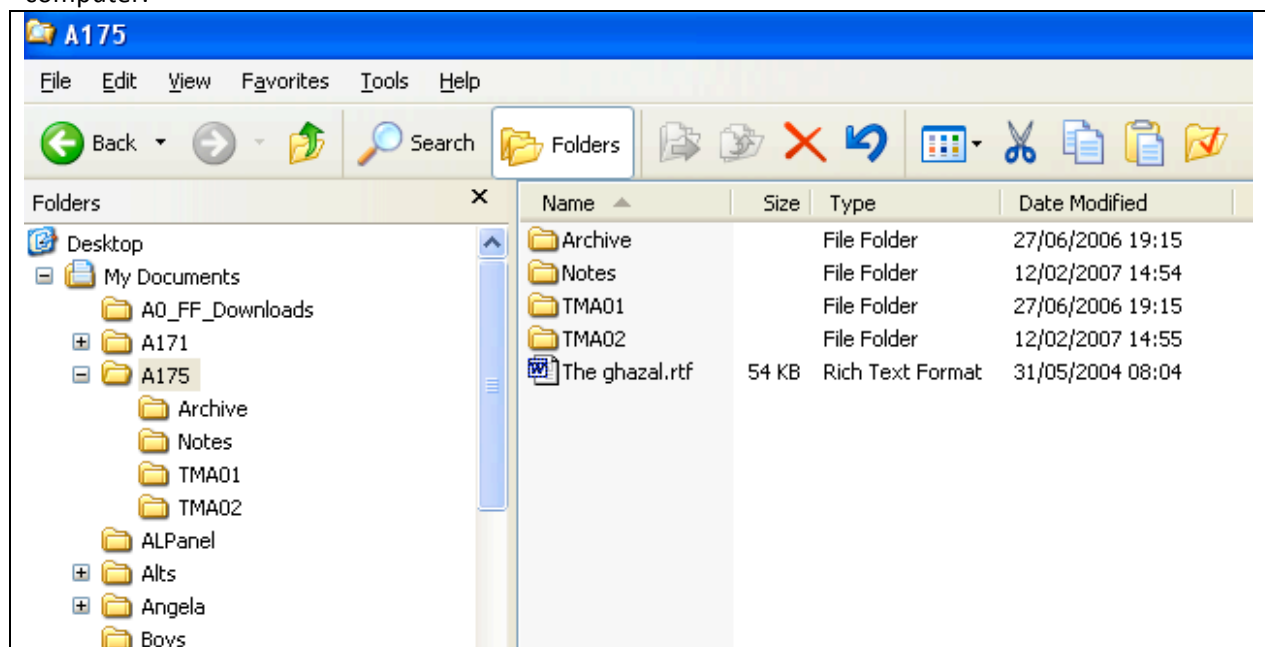
Windows has a special program called Windows Explorer (not to be confused with Internet Explorer) to help you organize your files and folders and it is well worthwhile learning how to use it.

To start Windows Explorer:-

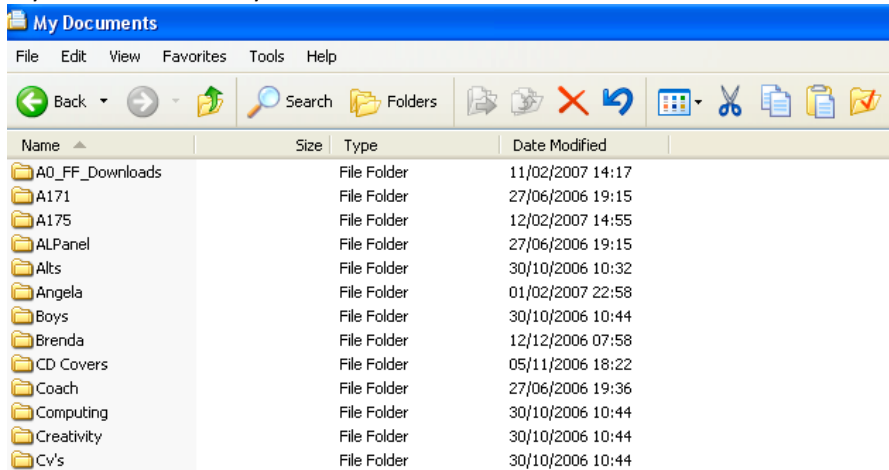
- ⊕ Click on the **Green Start** (or in Vista **Windows**) button
- ⊕ Click on **All Programs**
- ⊕ Click on **Accessories** and then click on **Windows Explorer**



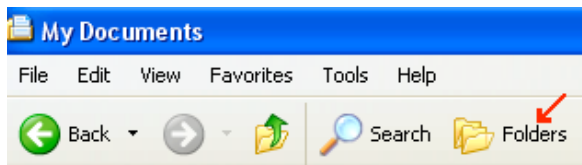
You should get a screen in two sections like this but the details will reflect what you have stored in your computer.



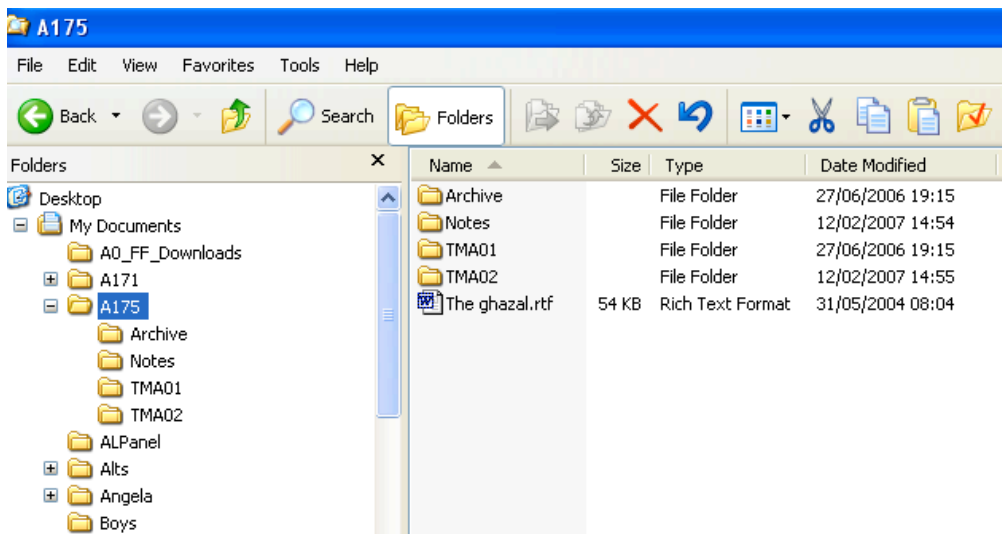
If your screen has only one section like this



Click on the **Folders** button



Windows gives you considerable freedom in the way you display this window and so yours may not look exactly the same.



Here the A175 Folder has been selected on the LHS (left Hand Side) of the screen and its contents are displayed on the RHS (Right Hand Side).

To the left of the A175 name is a tiny box with a minus sign in it.

If you click on this sign the list associated with this name collapses and the sign changes to a plus. This just indicates that there is something contained in the folder, which is not currently being displayed.

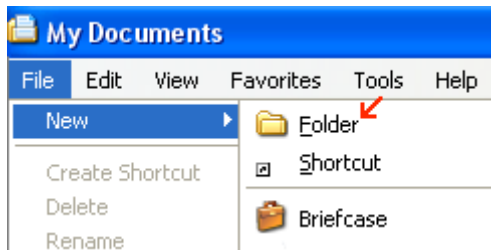
If you click on the plus sign the folder will expand again.

This facility just helps you control the appearance of the LHS of the screen

To look at the contents of a folder just click on its name on the LHS of the screen and the contents will appear on the RHS (you may have to use the + sign on the left to find the correct folder).

➤ **Creating a New Folder**

- ⊕ If necessary Open **Windows Explorer** and click on **My Documents**
- ⊕ On the left side of the screen find you way to the folder which will contain your new folder
- ⊕ At the **Menu bar** click on **File** then **New** then **Folder**



The new folder will appear in the RHS of the screen

You can then overtype the name **New Folder** with your desired folder name

➤ **Moving a file or folder**

You can easily move files from one folder to another if you decided to rearrange your filing system. There are a number of different techniques.

1) Using cut and paste

- ⊕ If necessary Open **Windows Explorer** and click on **My Documents**
- ⊕ Ensure your destination folder is visible on the **LHS** (using the + and – buttons)
- ⊕ Find the file or folder you wish to move in the **RHS**
- ⊕ Select it using a single mouse click, (it will highlight)
- ⊕ Click on the **Cut** icon
- ⊕ Find your new destination folder in the LHS
- ⊕ Double click on it to make it open
- ⊕ Click on the Paste icon



The file or folder will now appear at its new location.

2) Using drag and drop

This is simpler process than Cut and Paste but requires good mouse control

- ⊕ If necessary Open **Windows Explorer** and click on **My Documents**
- ⊕ Ensure your destination folder is visible on the **LHS** (using the + and – buttons)
- ⊕ Find the file you wish to move in the **RHS**
- ⊕ Select it but continue to hold down the left mouse button.
- ⊕ Move the cursor (with the file "stuck" to it) to the **LHS**
- ⊕ Position the "stuck" file over the destination folder (which will highlight)
- ⊕ Release the mouse button.

The file will move from the old folder to the new

➤ **Copying a file**

To copy the file and leave the original where it is, you use a slightly different sequence of steps. For example you may wish to copy a file from your hard drive to a USB flash memory or floppy disc.

- ⊕ If necessary Open **Windows Explorer** and click on **My Documents**
- ⊕ Find the file you wish to move on the **RHS**
- ⊕ Select the file (using a single mouse click)
- ⊕ Click on the **Copy** icon ⇨
- ⊕ Find the folder you wish to copy the file on the **LHS**
- ⊕ Double click on it to open it (it will highlight)
- ⊕ Click on the **Paste** icon



A copy of the file will appear at its new location.

➤ **Renaming a file or folder**

You may want at some stage to rename a file or folder as part of the reorganization of your filing structure.

- ⊕ If necessary Open **Windows Explorer** and click on **My Documents**
 - ⊕ Find the file or folder you wish to rename
 - ⊕ Right click on its name
 - ⊕ Select the **Rename** from the menu that appears
 - ⊕ Overtyping the old name with your chosen name and then press **return** on your keyboard.
- Don't change the file suffix if it is visible, to do so will cause lots of confusion later!

➤ **Opening a file from Windows Explorer**

If you have created a file but can't remember what application (program) you used to create it, you can use Windows Explorer to open the file with the correct application.

- ⊕ If necessary Open **Windows Explorer** and click on **My Documents**
- ⊕ Find the file you wish open
- ⊕ Double click on the file name and it will open in a suitable application

(Windows Explorer uses the three character file suffix to determine what application to use).

Advanced Skills

➤ **Creating a short cut icon on your desk top**

If there's an application (like Window Explorer) which you use frequently, it is useful to have an icon on your desktop. If you don't have a particular application icon it is easy to create one.

- ⊕ Click on the green **Start (or in Vista, the Windows) button** then
- ⊕ Click on **All Programs** and identify the application you want to create a short cut for
- ⊕ **Right click** on the application name within the list
- ⊕ Select **create short cut** from the drop down list
- ⊕ A second listing for the application will appear
- ⊕ Drag and drop this second listing onto your desktop

Now you can start the application by double clicking on its desktop icon.

This is called a short cut; shortcut icons always have a small arrow in the bottom left corner.