

Windows Basics

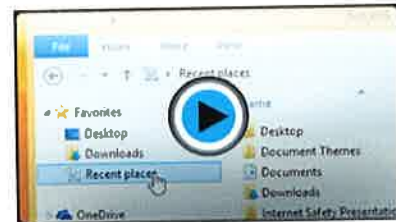
Finding Files on Your Computer



Finding your files

In the [previous lesson](#), we talked about how folders can help to keep your files **organized**. However, there may be times when you'll have trouble **finding a certain file**. If this happens to you, don't panic! The file is probably still on your computer, and there are a few good ways to find it. In this lesson, we'll show you different techniques you can use to find your files, such as **searching** and looking in **common places**.

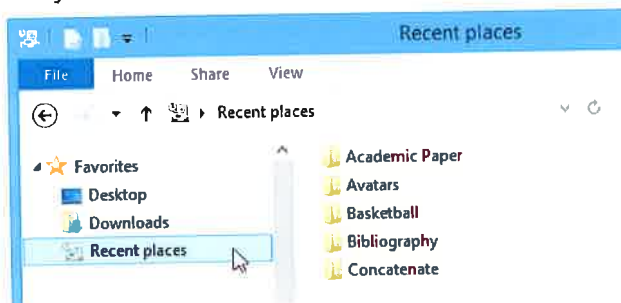
Video: Finding Files on Your Computer



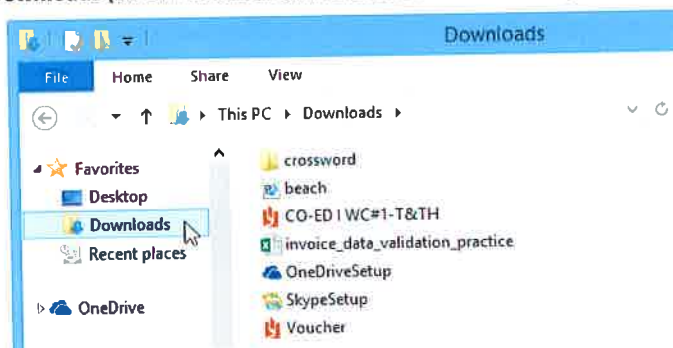
Common places to look for files

If you're having a difficult time finding a file, there's a good chance you can find it in one of the places below:

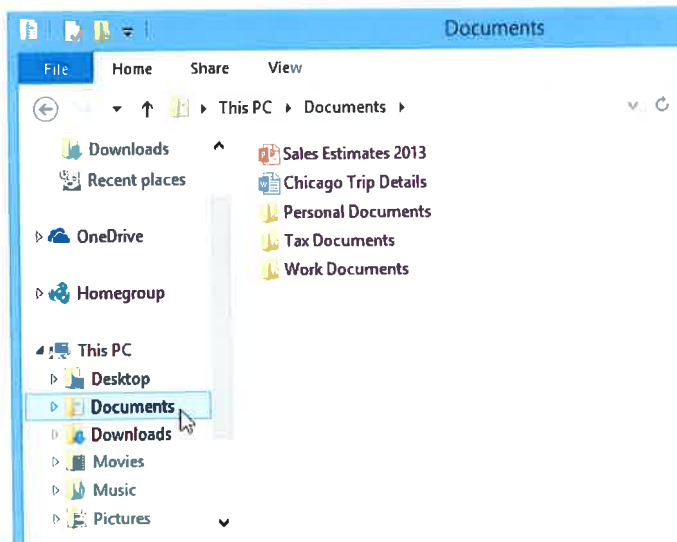
- **Recent places:** If you recently edited the file you need, you can try looking in the **Recent places** folder. To view the Recent places folder, open **Windows Explorer** (also known as **File Explorer**), then locate and select **Recent places** (below **Favorites** on the left side of the window). A list of recently used folders and settings will appear. Try looking in some of the recently used folders to see if you can locate the file.



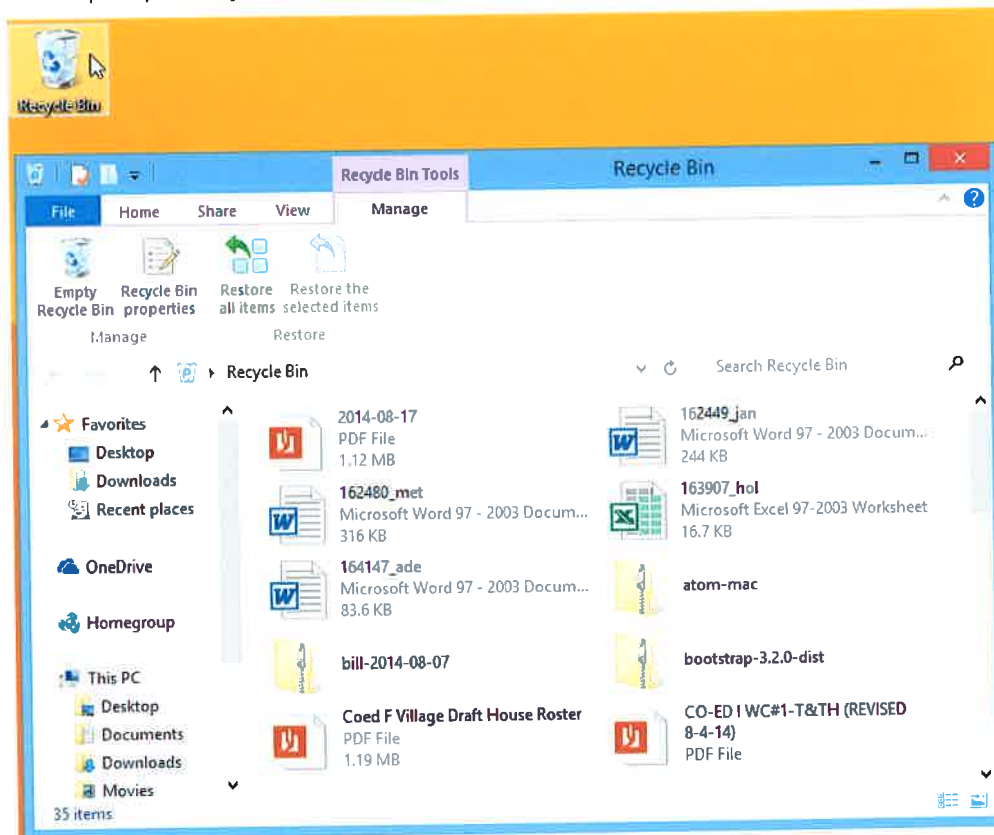
- **Downloads:** By default, your computer will place downloaded files in a specific folder, known as the **Downloads** folder. If you're having trouble finding a file you downloaded from the Internet, such as a photo attached to an email message, this is the **first place** you should look. To view the Downloads folder, open **Windows Explorer**, then locate and select **Downloads** (below **Favorites** on the left side of the window). A list of your recently **downloaded files** will appear.



- **Default folders:** If you don't specify a location when saving a file, Windows will place certain types of files into default folders. For example, if you're looking for a Microsoft Word document, you could try looking in the **Documents** folder. If you're looking for a photo, try looking in the **Pictures** folder. Most of these folders will be accessible on the left side of the Windows Explorer window.



- **Recycle Bin:** If you deleted a file by mistake, it may still be in the Recycle Bin. You can double-click the Recycle Bin icon on the desktop to open it. If you find the file you need, click and drag it back to the desktop or to a different folder.

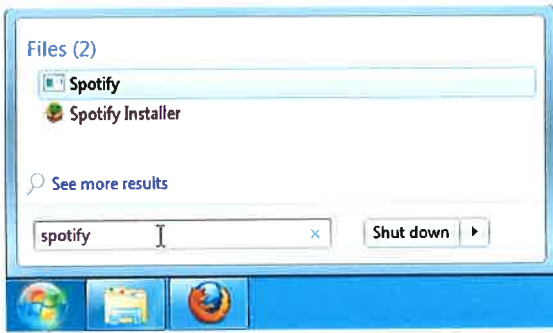


Searching for files

Let's suppose you recently downloaded a few photos that were attached to an email message, but now you're not sure where these files are on your computer. If you're struggling to find a file, you can always **search for it**. Searching allows you to look for **any file** on your computer.

To search for a file (Windows 7 and earlier):

Click the **Start button**, type the **file name** or **keywords** with your keyboard, and press **Enter**. The search results will appear. Simply click a file or folder to open it.



To search for a file (Windows 8):

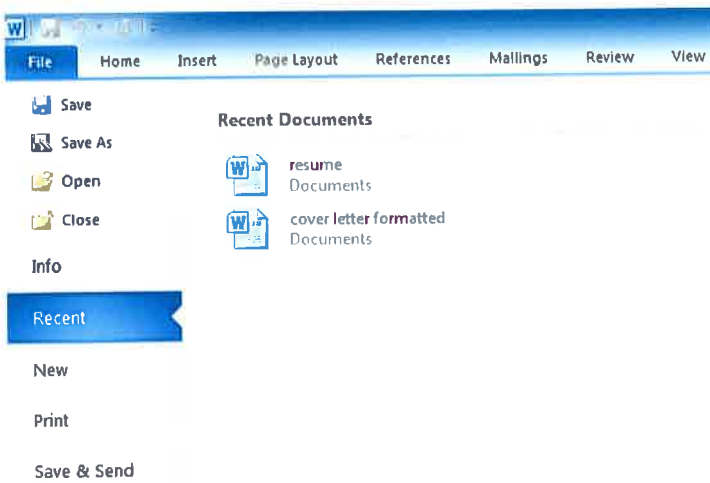
Click the **Start button** to go to the **Start screen**, then start typing to search for a file. The search results will appear on the right of the screen. Simply click a file or folder to open it.



Tips for finding files

If you're still having trouble finding the file you need, here are some additional tips:

- **Try different search terms.** If you're using the search option, try using different terms in your search. For example, if you're looking for a certain Microsoft Word document, try searching for a few different file names you might have used when saving the document.
- **Open the last application used to edit the file.** If you know you used a certain application to edit a file, open that application and select **File** → **Recent** from the menu. The file may appear in the list of recently edited files.



- **Move and rename the file after finding it.** Once you've located the file, you may want to **move it to a related folder** so you can find it more easily in the future. For example, if the file is a picture, you might move it to your **Photos** folder. You may also want to give it a file name that will be easy to remember. You can review our lesson on [Working with Files](#) to learn more about managing files.