

Computer Skills: Files and Folders Tutorial

Files, Folders, and Drives

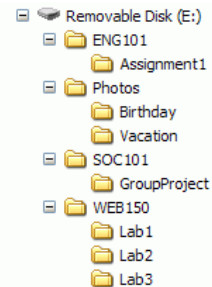
Large amounts of information -- such as documents, spreadsheets, photographs, MP3 files, and Web pages -- can be stored on computer storage media such as hard disk drives and flash memory drives. This information can be organized into files and folders.

A computer **file** is a collection of information which is stored (saved) on computer storage media such as a hard disk drive or flash drive. Since a hard drive usually contains thousands of files, it is useful to organize these files into groups, called folders (also known as directories).

A **folder** is a collection of related files that you (or a program) have grouped together and given a name. A folder may also contain other folders (referred to as subfolders or subdirectories).

The folders on storage media are arranged in a tree-like structure with subfolders branching out from their parent folders. Each storage media has one root folder which contains all other folders.

The figure shows the directory structure or folder tree of a flash drive. In this example, the root folder is identified as "**Removable Disk (E:)**" and folders named **ENG101**, **Photos**, **SOC101**, and **WEB150**. Each of these folders may contain one or more subfolders. Any of these folders may also contain files.



Naming Files

Every drive, folder, and file used by your computer must have a name.

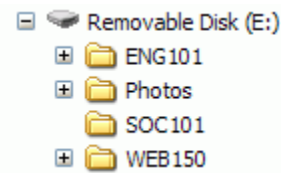
Drive Designations

The operating system assigns drive designations for hard drives, CD-ROM drives, floppy drives, Flash Memory Drives, network drives, and so on. A drive designation consists of a single letter followed by a colon ":"

- A: and B: are reserved for the computer's floppy drives.
- C: is reserved for the primary hard disk drive.
- D: is usually assigned to the CD-ROM or CD-RW drive.
- Other letters can be used to designate external storage such as USB Flash Memory drives, USB external hard drives, and network drives.

Creating a Folder

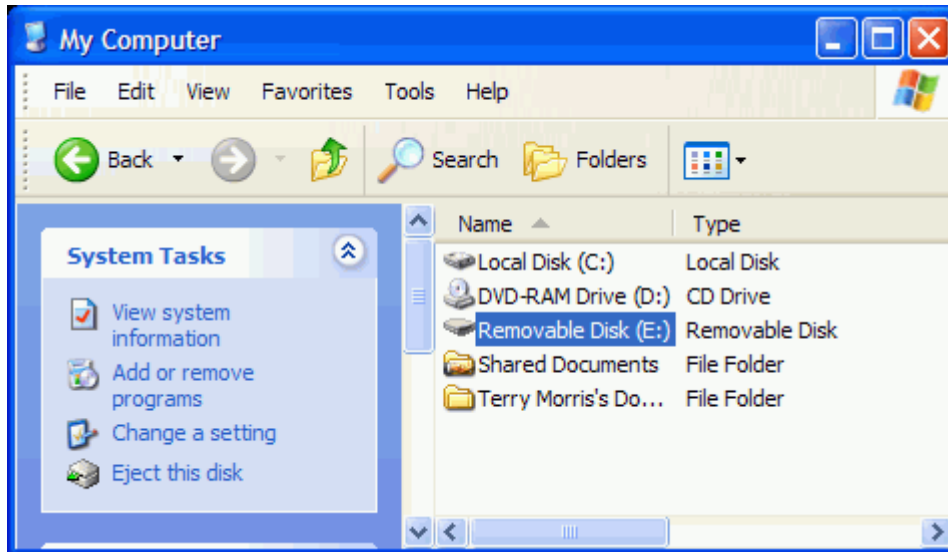
Most computer users organize their files in folders. The figure at the right shows a Flash Drive designated as Removable Disk (E:) with the following folders: ENG101, Photos, SOC 101, and WEB150.



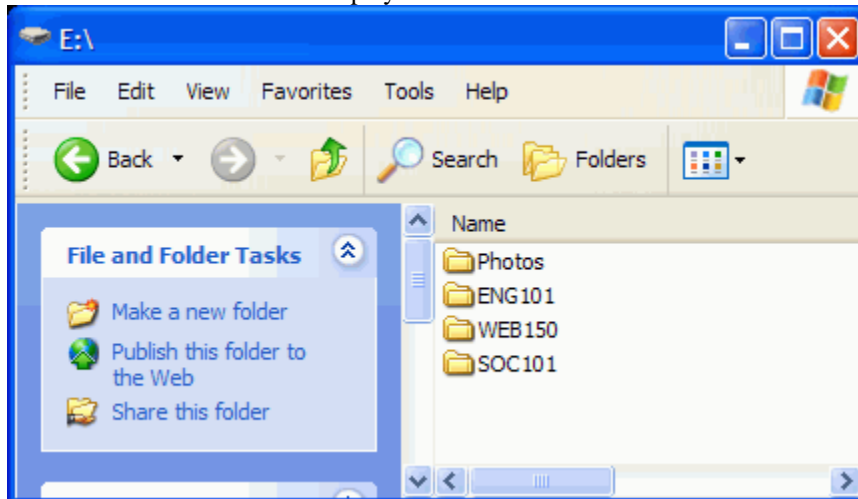
This example will use the My Computer application to create a new folder on this drive. Select **Start > My Computer**.



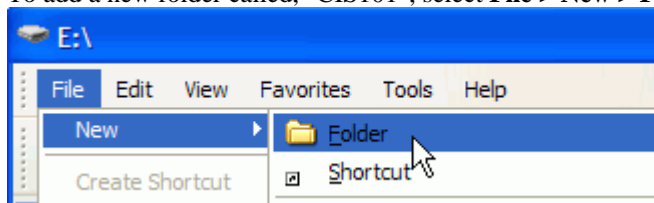
The **My Computer** window displays as shown below.



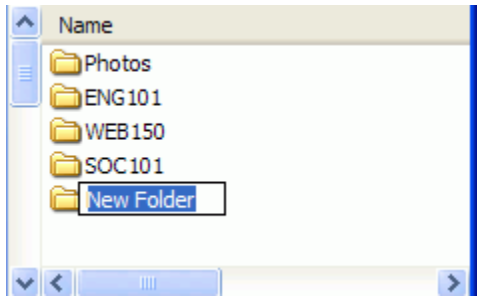
To access file Flash Memory Drive designated as E:, click on Removable Disk (E:). The contents of the drive are displayed as shown below.



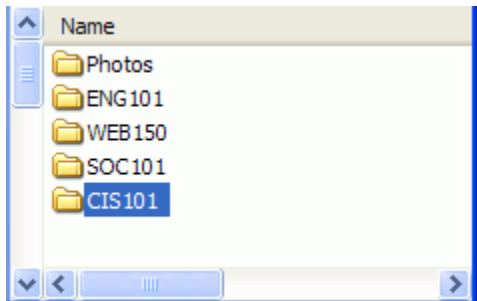
In this example, we are adding a new folder to contain files for the CIS 101 class. To add a new folder called, "CIS101", select **File > New > Folder** as shown below.



A folder is created with the default name of "New Folder".



Type the name you want to assign to the folder, in this case "CIS101".



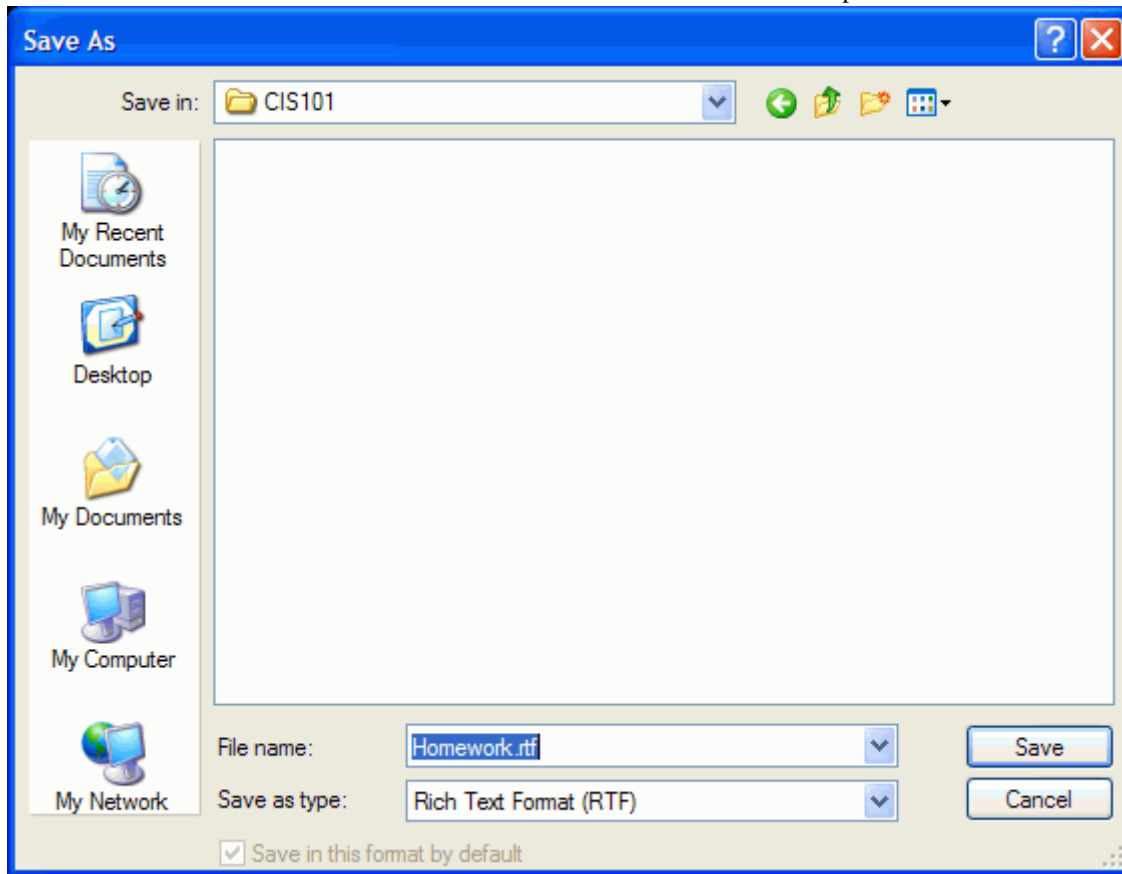
File Names

Although there used to be many restrictions when naming files, Windows XP and other recent versions of Windows (such as Windows 98, Me, and 2000) allow flexibility in choosing a name for a file.

A file name can contain up to 255 characters, including spaces. It's a good idea to avoid punctuation symbols. The following symbols cannot be used in file names:

colon ":", vertical bar "|", quotation mark "\"", slash "/", backslash "\", question mark "?", and asterisk "*".

Documents or data files are normally created within a specific application. For example, if you start WordPad, type some text, and save the document, you will assign it a file name as you save the file.



In the figure above, a file named **Homework.rtf** is saved in the folder called CIS101.

File Name Extensions

Most applications automatically configure a **file name extension**. A file name extension usually consists of three characters. In the example above, WordPad automatically configured the rtf file name extension. It's usually a good idea to use the default file name extension configured by an application. Changing the file name extension can have unpredictable results -- sometimes the file becomes unreadable.

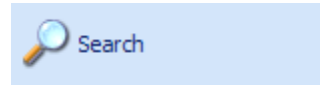
The table below lists commonly used file types and file extensions.

File Type	File Extension
Microsoft Word document	.doc
Microsoft PowerPoint presentation	.ppt
Microsoft Excel spreadsheet	.xls
Microsoft Notepad text file	.txt
Microsoft WordPad document	.rtf
Adobe PDF document	.pdf
Web pages	.htm or .html
Images, photos, graphics	.gif, .jpg, .png
Audio files	.mp3, .wav, .au, .midi

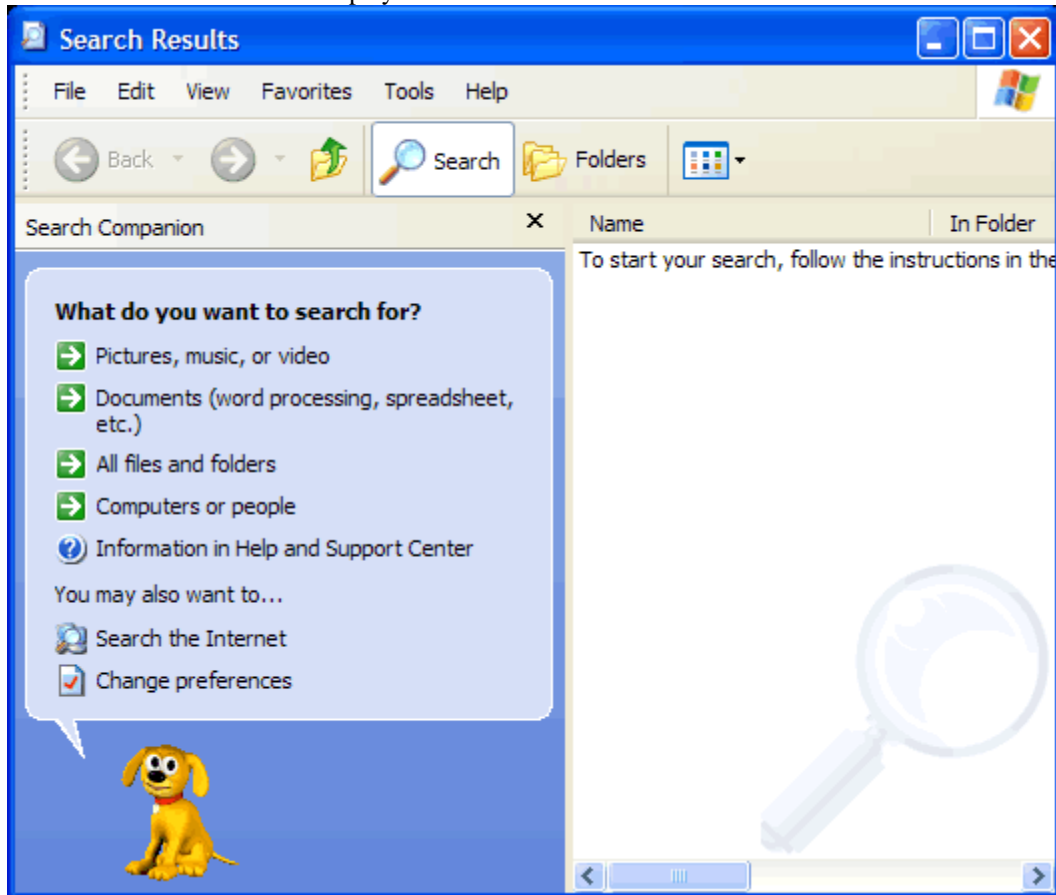
Finding a Lost File

To find a file or folder:

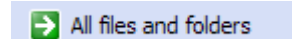
Select **Start > Search**



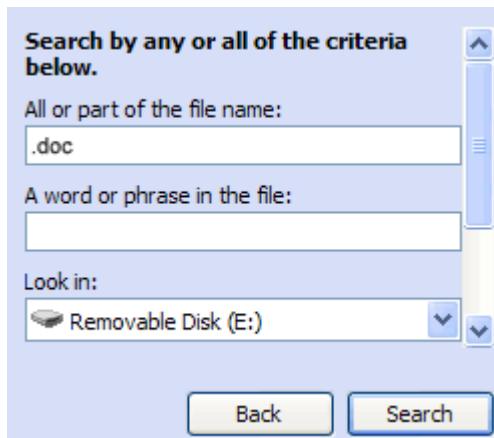
The Search Results Window displays as shown below:



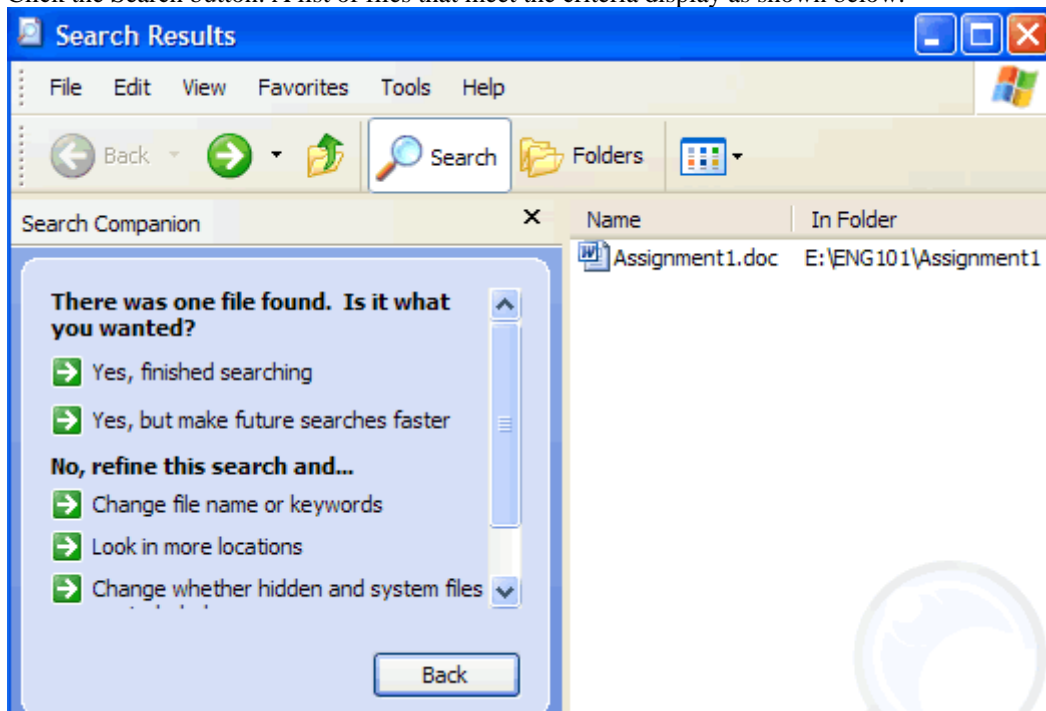
You can choose to search for just image files or specific types of files such as Word documents. In this example, we'll select "**All Files and Folders**".



You can enter some information to help your computer find the file. In this case, we are looking for our English assignment: (a Word document) and know that it was saved on our flash memory drive Removable Disk (E:). So, we've entered the information shown below:



Click the Search button. A list of files that meet the criteria display as shown below.



In this case, only one file was found. You can click on the file name to open the file.
If you need to change your search criteria or look for a different file, click the Back button.