

Files and Filing Systems

Computer programs (notice the spelling) that do something – such as **Word** for writing documents or **Firefox** for navigating the internet – are known as **applications** – mobile phone use has shortened this to **apps**.

Many applications will already be installed on your computer – they can be found scattered over the desktop as small pictures called **icons** or, alternatively, inside the desktop section **All Programs** (click on **Start**, then follow the **green arrow**).

Note: Windows 8 does it slightly differently (of course!) - click on the **Filer icon** on the **task bar** at the bottom of the desktop screen.



To start up (techies say **launch**) an application just **double click** (left-hand mouse button) on the appropriate icon. Try it now – launch **Open Office** from the desktop.

A large window appears in the centre of your screen – click on the square labelled **Text Document** (be patient – the first time it loads it may take a while). The data that application produce such as text documents or photo images are generally known as **files**.

We will come back to this empty document later overleaf – for the moment **minimise** it.

Creating a folder

For this course, you will create documents and other **files** which will be saved to a special place on your computer's **hard drive**. For this to work properly, you will need to use the same machine for each session since all of your data will be saved on that machine, and that machine only. For the moment, however, our first task is to create that 'special place' on your computer – we call that place a **folder**.

Create a **new folder** (if your home computer uses a different Operating System the following may be slightly different, but the same principles apply). Click (left) **once** on **Start**, then once on **Documents (My Documents)** in Windows XP or earlier).

A window will open with lots of icons in it – this is your (My) **Documents** folder. The yellow ones are **folders** – you are going to create a new one with your own name.

Place your **mouse pointer** anywhere inside the window over a white area. Now **right-click once**. A **menu** appears; near the bottom you will see the word **New** with ► pointing right, move your mouse pointer over this ►. At the top of the menu that pops up, you will see the word '**folder**' – **left click once** on it. A new folder will appear in the window called (no surprises!) *New Folder*.

Renaming folders

Now we want to re-name this **New Folder** with your own name. If *New Folder* has a blue background, you can wipe it clean by simply typing your name into the little box. Press **Enter** or **Return** to confirm the title.

If a folder's name is not shown with a blue background, you can still change its name at any time as follows:

Put your mouse pointer over the folder. Right-click once, you will see a menu with the word **Rename** near the bottom – click once on **Rename** and the folder's name gets the blue treatment and you can continue as we described above. Remember to press **Enter** to confirm the new name.

Changing the ways files are displayed

Look for **View** at the top of the 'filer' (or Windows Explorer as Microsoft call it) window. The arrow to the right, or drop-down menu if no arrow is shown gives you a range of options – try them!

Continued overleaf...

Saving a file into my own folder

Now we will show you how to **save** a document file to your own, private, folder.

First, you will need to write a few lines of text into the document you minimised earlier. Click on the **OpenOffice icon** that you minimised earlier to the **task bar** (bottom of screen).

Copy a few lines of text from this worksheet – or compose something yourself – into the word processor on your screen.

To **save** your work, do the following:

- a. Go to **File ► Save As ...**
- b. In the **File name:** box (near bottom) change the name with a blue background (as before) to one of your choice.
- c. In the main part of the Save As... window, you should see **your own yellow folder** – double-click on it to open it. If you didn't see your own yellow folder, you will need to search for it as described below (**Find that file**).
- d. Finally, click on **Save** at bottom right of the Save As... window. That's it!

Next time, we'll find out how to get our document back to make changes to it.

Find that file

One of the commonest problems we all suffer at times is not being able to find the file or folder that we know exists on our computer!

The first, and most important, way to avoid this problem is to have set up your filing system in a logical way – so that all of your correspondence, for instance, is filed in a folder called (wait for it!) *Correspondence*.

The second is very similar – give each file a memorable or at least easily recognisable name. If you save a letter in your *Correspondence* folder, name the letter by the intended recipient **and include the date in the file name**. For instance, a letter to your bank sent on 22 June 2011 could be **Bank (22 Jun 2011)** or something similar (do remember to delete account details before saving such a letter as a security measure).

A little bit of thought at the point of saving a file can make a huge difference to the efficient organisation – and time saving – of your filing system.

If you really have lost your file or folder but can remember its name, try using the **Search programs and files** option at the very bottom of the Start window.

Re-organising your filing system: folders within folders

Our tried-and-trusted copy and paste or drag-and-drop techniques can be used to move files between folders and also to put folders inside other folders. Using our earlier example, for instance, we might want to create a **Bank** folder inside our **Correspondence** folder and then move all of the relevant files into the new Bank folder.

We would create this new Bank folder as in **Creating a folder** above. Then we could either drag-and-drop the appropriate files onto the Bank folder or copy* all of the required letters and then paste them into the Bank folder. Either approach works fine. The same approach can be used to put folders within folders.

*Copy actually leaves a file in its original location – using **Cut** + paste instead of copy + paste effectively moves it. Using copy means you have to delete the originals once you have moved files.