

Files & Filing Systems and using a Flash Drive

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**.

All of the information on your computer is stored in **files**; a file is nothing more than a collection of digital data.

Every file has its own unique **file name** which can usually contain *most* of the letters, numbers (and spaces) on your keyboard – so you can make them meaningful so you will recognise them later.

Most computer systems also add a **file-type** extension or 'tag' to the end of filenames which allows the Operating System to recognise and process properly that particular file. This file-type extension usually appears after the 'dot' at the end of a full file name. A few examples might help here:

Application	Example file name
Microsoft Word 2003	examplefile.doc
Microsoft Word 2010	examplefile.docx
OpenOffice Writer	examplefile.odt
Digital camera card	examplepicture.jpg

Because the extension is so important, creating it is usually done by your computer and the extension is often invisible to the user – stops us meddling! All we have to do is create the *filename* and the computer does the rest. These extensions also make displays of files in your computer's *filer window* appear with recognisable icons.

Folders

Your computer could very quickly fill with a vast number of files with just the sort of confusion you'd get if your real-world desk was cluttered with hundreds of paper files. We need a filing cabinet! This is exactly how a computer is designed – you can create folders and put them in large drawers, all with easy-to-recognise names. Let's have a look at our computer now.

1. Tap the 'Windows' key on your keyboard or click on the Start 'smartie' at bottom left of your desktop. **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.
2. You will see a number of 'cabinet drawers' labelled Documents, Pictures, Music, Games and so on. To open a drawer, simply double-click on it. Try it for **Documents**.
3. The window now opens showing the inside of the Documents section which may contain a lot of files – possibly of different types – and also some yellow **folders**.



We are going to explore these files and folders in more detail by showing you how to create a folder on your own flash drive, then create a text document that you will save into that folder so that you can take it home to extend the text file further before bringing it back to the next class.

Using a Flash Drive

There are a couple of things you need to be able to do before you can use a flash drive reliably:

- a. how to plug it into your computer and access its content.
- b. how to unplug it when you have finished.

For details see the separate **Safely Remove USB Flash Drive** worksheets.

Continued...

Creating a folder on your own flash drive

1. Insert your own flash drive and open it up as described on our **Introduction to USB Flash Drives** worksheet.
2. A **filer window** will open showing the content of your flash drive – which may be empty, of course, if it is a new drive.
3. Now, **to create a new folder** do the following;
 - (i) place your pointer anywhere on the white background of this main window.
 - (ii) right-click once. A menu pops up with **New** near the bottom. Follow the ► to a sub-menu that has **Folder** at the top. Left-click once on this.
 - (iii) A new yellow folder appears in the filer window with the name *New folder* highlighted in blue.

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 its new name into the little box. **Give it a meaningful name now**, then 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!

Your task

Using your skills from our previous lesson, launch OpenOffice or your own word processor and copy the section *Renaming folders* above into a new document.

When you have completed that, you are going to save the text file to your flash drive as follows:

- a. Go to File ► Save As...
- b. Look down the left-hand side of the window that pops up and also check the little strip across the very top of the window – if it doesn't show something like **Computer ► Removable disk (F:)** then scroll down the left-hand list until you see your flash drive named and click once on it.
- c. Now type a meaningful name (such *RenamingFolders*) into the **File name** box – it probably has initially a blue background which you've met before. Otherwise, use the back space key to wipe out the **Untitled 1** name and type in our suggested one.
- d. Finally, run your eye over both of these bars to check all is well before clicking on the **Save** button at the bottom of the Save As... dialogue window.

To finish this task when you get home, reload the above file into your work processor and add to it the section **Changing the way files are displayed** and then save the expanded text document back to your flash drive *with the same file name*.