

## Organizing Your Computer Files

Browsing through folders on your computer should be a relatively stress-free process. As time goes on, you may download hundreds of files, whether they are documents, pictures, or music. Creating a folder structure allows you to be able to find these files easily on your computer can be a tricky process if proper organization isn't done at some point. Depending on the last time you did Spring Cleaning on your computer, this can take anywhere from a couple hours to a few weeks at worst.

The first thing you should do before starting is gather everything into one main folder or area. Having your content split between multiple USB drives and folders initially will make it more complicated to start filtering everything as you go. A large, generic folder name like "everything\_backup\_1.27.2025" will give you a checkpoint in case you are constantly adding more files to your computer after you start this process.

### Tip 1. Use a Consistent File Naming Convention

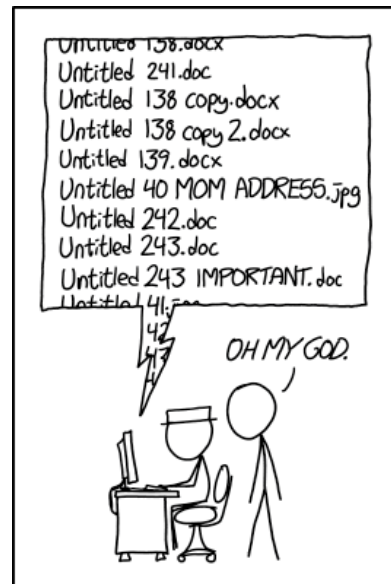
As obvious as this may sound, staying consistent will save you headaches. The first part of the file name should be the most important piece of info about the file within that folder. You can rename anything by right-clicking on the file or folder and selecting the "Rename" option. You can also press F2 to rename files.

As an example, if you have a phone bill from April and a phone bill from May in the same folder, and you call the April bill "Phone bill" and the May bill "Phone Bill 2" then it will be much more challenging to find those bills later in the year. Using a number system for monthly files will make them easier to find. Another thing to consider is adding 01 for January files instead of just 1, as the system will keep things sequential by default, meaning you'd see 1, 10, 11, 12, 2, 3... in a folder which could get confusing quickly. Starting with 01 ensures the order is not lost.

Different versions of the same file should also be marked with either a date at the end or a v1, v2, v3, etc. Filenames don't need to be long strings of text, as not all programs can display longer filenames. The use of special characters or blank spaces should be avoided. Not all programs recognize these characters and can cause filing issues.

### Tip 2. Create a Logical Folder Structure

Your system might work well for you today, but the relevant and specific info you setup will not be as relevant a year from now when filing taxes. If you have subfolders, a system of labeling that starts with the year will be much easier to find in the future. 2024-03-15 is much quicker to find than March 15, 2024 in a search index, especially if you're using a smaller device like a tablet or phone to search.



PROTIP: NEVER LOOK IN SOMEONE ELSE'S DOCUMENTS FOLDER.

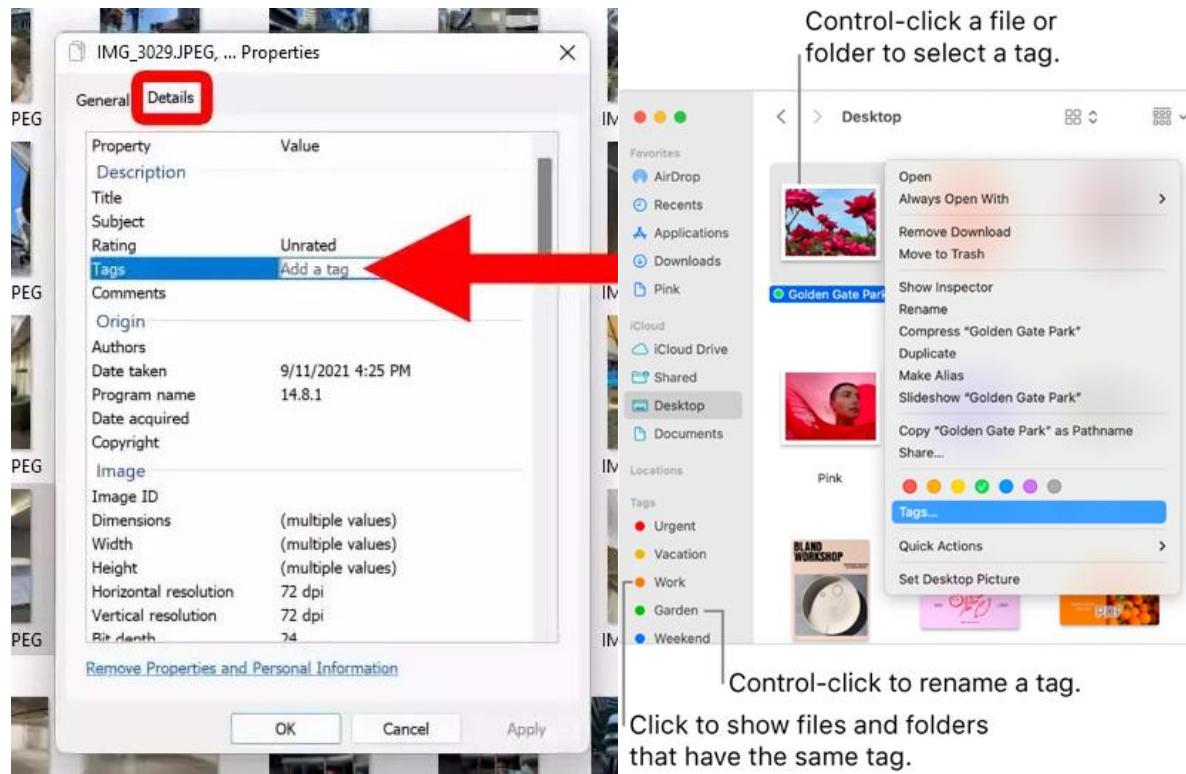
### Tip 3. The K.I.S.S. Rule – Keep It Simple, Sweetie

Especially when in a hurry, a simpler plan will always be easier to navigate. The first level of your folders, where all subsequent folders and files will go, should be the most easily understood categories. Categories can be named things like Documents, Pictures, and Music. Folders nested inside these categories would get slightly more specific, such as folders by year, event, or genre. From there you could get more into the specific categories like Taxes, Bills, and Bands.

### Tip 4. Tagging

The tagging function allows files to be grouped together by themes or locations without having to be moved or duplicated to new folders. Tagging is a useful way to declutter or highlight specific files, like if you wanted to show a selection of photos to a friend after a vacation instead of every single photo.

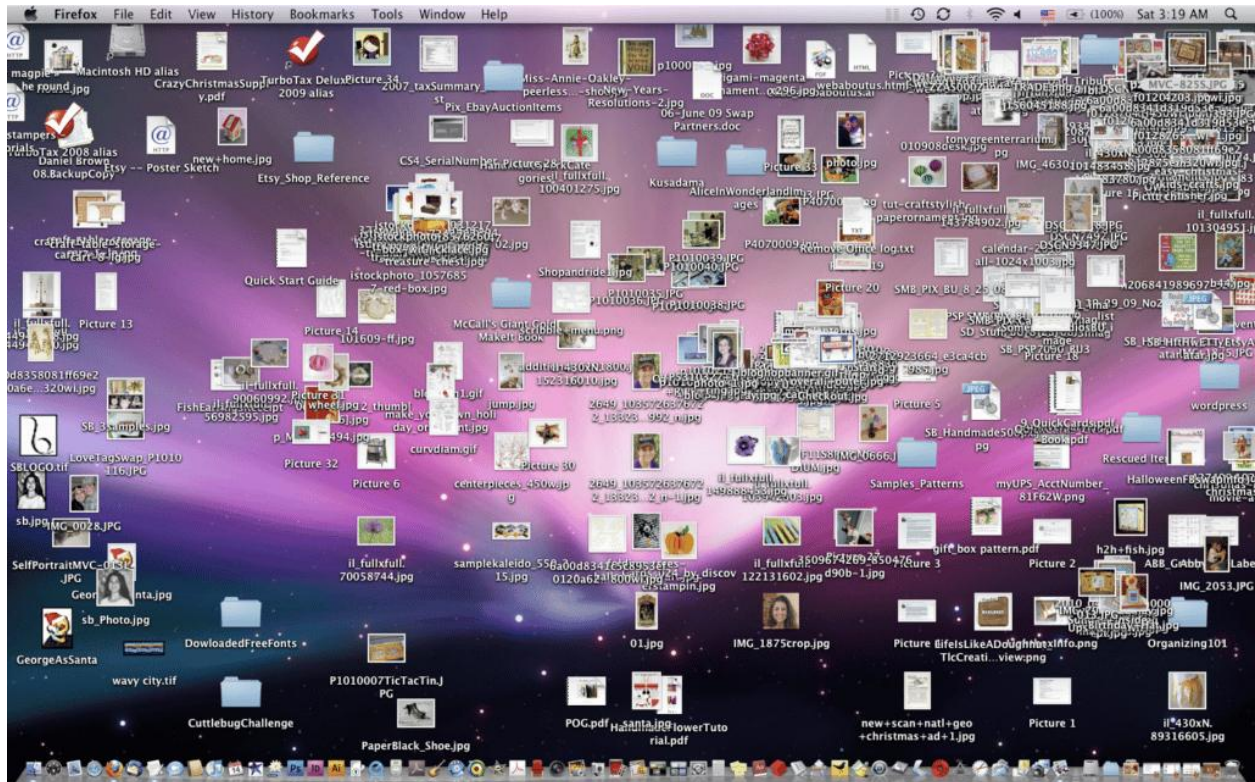
Tags can be added in Windows by right-clicking on a photo, selecting Properties, and going to the Details tab. You can add Tags in the Value box on the right, and add a semicolon between if you'd like to make multiple tags. On Mac, this can be done by Control-clicking the file and choosing a color or selecting the Tags option.



Tagging examples for PC (left) and Mac (right)

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Getting Started: Organizing and Backing Up Your Computer Files

**Bad workflow for desktop organization**



**Good workflows for different situations**

<p><b>Project-Based</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting Notes             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Committee A</li> <li>○ Committee B</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Events             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Launch Event</li> <li>○ Volunteer Benefit</li> <li>○ Award Show</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Marketing             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In-house demos</li> <li>○ Advertising</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Financial             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2023 Expense Reports</li> <li>○ 2024 Expense Reports</li> <li>○ 2025 Expense Reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Client-Based</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client A             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Meeting notes</li> <li>○ Project X                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Draft 1</li> <li>▪ Draft 2</li> <li>▪ Final Version</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Project Materials</li> <li>○ Invoices</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Photo-Based</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Month</li> <li>○ Event</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## Backing Up Your Computer Files

### Backup files with Cloud storage methods

Most online storage options will use some type of monthly subscription cost to store your data. There are a number of free and paid options that offer various levels of storage, multiple device syncing, and security options, so it is important to research the options to find what fits your needs best. If you don't plan on storing a lot of data online, Google (15 GB) and Apple (5 GB) accounts both have free cloud storage included automatically that can backup your device and be accessed via computer.

How big is a file anyways?

*1,000 MB (megabyte) = 1 GB (gigabyte), 1,000 GB (gigabyte) = 1 TB (terabyte)*

iPhone standard picture size = 5MB

Microsoft Word document = 30 MB

1080p HD movie = 2 GB

### Backup your PC with Windows

1. Sign into your Microsoft Account. Start > Settings > Accounts > Your Info > Sign In
2. Open Windows Backup. Settings > Account > Windows Backup
3. Click the Folders tab to dropdown the list of folders to backup. These can be toggled on or off.
4. The App List, Preferences, and OneDrive icons at the top will say "Backed up" when done.

### Backup files and folders to a USB drive

1. Insert your USB drive into the PC.
2. Files and folders can be copy-pasted as needed.
3. If you want an extra reminder, the USB can be renamed MMDDYY-backup or labeled with tape.
4. Make sure to store the USB drive in a secure location.

### General File Organization Tips & Tricks

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/business-insights-ideas/resources/11-ideas-for-how-to-organize-digital-files>

<https://zapier.com/blog/organize-files-folders/>

<https://lastingorder.net/5-steps-to-organizing-computer-files/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/guides/how-to-organize-your-digital-files/>

<https://www.pcmag.com/news/the-beginners-guide-to-pc-backup>

<https://zapier.com/blog/how-to-use-tags-and-labels/>