

## **File Recovery**

Virus attacks, computer crashes, an unsupervised toddler, even an inadvertent mistake on your own part...all things that can lead to important files being deleted from your system. But all is not necessarily lost. There are steps you can take to find and restore deleted files to your computer.

### **Searching for files**

First things first, do a thorough search of your computer to make sure the file just hasn't been inadvertently saved in the wrong folder. Many programs, such as most Microsoft Office software, save a list of most recently used files under the File menu, so it's a good place to start your search. If the file doesn't appear here in the recently used list, then you can run an automatic search of your computer to locate the file.

1. In the Start menu, go to "Find", and then "Files and Folders."
2. In the "Name" field, type the name of the file you'd like to find. If you can't remember the exact file name, you can enter part of it, and the search will return any files that contain that fragment in the title. Alternatively, you can enter a key word or phrase from the text of your document and search by that.
3. In the "Look In" field, select "My Computer." This will search every directory on your hard drive. You can narrow the search (and shorten the time the search takes) by selecting only specific folders to search. Be sure the "include subfolders" box is checked.
4. Hit "Find now". Any matches will appear on screen. In the case of numerous matches, you can use the "Advanced" tab to further refine your results by file type and size.

### **Your recycling bin**

When you delete a file in Windows, the file is not immediately erased from your hard drive. Rather, it is placed in the Recycle Bin, a temporary storage area, from which it is as easy as point-and-click to restore the file to your system.

1. Double click on the Recycle Bin icon.
2. Locate and highlight the file or files you wish to recover.
3. Open the File menu and click on "Restore" or click and drag the file to its new or original location.

When you empty the Recycle Bin, however, Windows changes the catalog or file allocation table to indicate that the drive space used by the deleted file is now available to be written over by new data. If you haven't saved new files or installed any new software since emptying the Recycle Bin, it is possible that the file has not yet been overwritten and can be recovered using a third-party program, such as Norton Utilities. Such a utility is also your best bet if your system is suffering from a more serious malady such as a crash or virus attack.

Do note that files deleted from a removable media source (a floppy or zip disk, for example) will not be moved to the Recycle Bin. You will need to use your recovery software to restore these files.

**Protect yourself**

Of course, its always best to protect yourself from the need to recover lost files by keeping regular back-ups of your most important files. You won't need to back up everything on your hard drive. You should still have your Windows install disk and any master disks for applications you have installed, and can always use these to reinstall. But you will want to make backups of any files that you have created yourself.

Here are five things you should definitely back up:

1. My Documents Folder
2. Saved Games
3. Any System Settings
4. Drivers
5. Anything else you don't have a copy of, such as applications for which you no longer have the disks.

Back up these files to an a CD, flash drive or another hard drive and keep them in a secure location so you will have them if you need them.

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