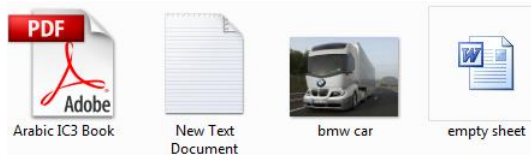


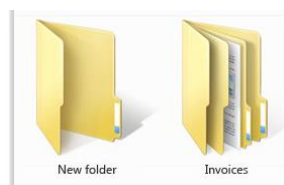
Working with files and folders

A **file** is an item that contains information, for example, text or images or music. When opened, a file can look very much like a text document or a picture that you might find on someone's desk or in a filing cabinet. On your computer, files are represented with **icons**, this makes it easy to recognize a type of file by looking at its icon.



There are hidden files, Although you usually can't see a hidden file, it's an ordinary file in all other respects. You can choose whether a file is hidden or visible by changing its attribute feature of its properties to become **hidden**. If a file is hidden and you want to display it, you'll need to show all hidden files to see it. You can hide rarely used files to reduce clutter, but remember that hidden files still take up space on your hard disk. Although you can hide confidential files so other people can't see them, you shouldn't rely on hidden files as your only means of security or privacy

A **folder** is a container you can use to store files in. If you had thousands of paper files on your desk, it would be nearly impossible to find any particular file when you needed it. That's why people often store paper files in folders inside a filing cabinet. On your computer, folders work the same way. Here are some typical folder icons:



An empty folder (left); a folder containing files (right)

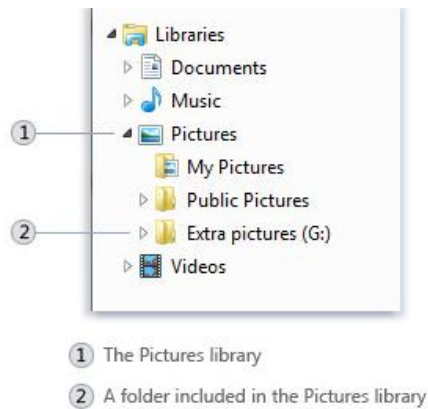
Folders can also store other folders, a folder within a folder is usually called a **subfolder**. You can create any number of subfolders, and each can hold any number of files and additional subfolders.

From the [Computer folder](#), you can access locations such as hard disks, CD or DVD drives, and removable media. You can also access other devices that might be connected to your computer, such as external hard drives and USB flash drives. A common reason to open the Computer folder is to view the available space on your hard disks and removable media. If you right-click an item in the Computer folder, you can perform tasks such as ejecting a CD or DVD, viewing the properties of a hard disk, and formatting a disk.

Each time you turn on your computer, Windows keeps track of the way your computer starts and which programs you commonly open. Windows saves this information as a number of files in the prefetch folder (PF). This Windows prefetch folder is a specific location within the Windows operating system (subfolder of the Windows system folder) that contains small files detailing the startup activities and frequently-used application programs. Prefetching is beneficial to the Windows operating system because a typical Windows startup involves a multitude of files that often must be opened multiple times. This multiple-access behavior can take considerable time and slow the boot-up process, whereas the next time you turn on your computer, Windows refers to these files to help speed the start process. The prefetch folder is self-maintaining e.g. Windows maintains the prefetch folder automatically, and there's no need to delete it or empty its contents. If you empty the folder, Windows and your programs will take longer to open the next time you turn on your computer, this will not damage the OS, but it will force Windows to re-create the prefetch files for the operating system and applications.

[*Using libraries to access files and folders*](#)

[Library](#) is a collection of items, such as files and folders that are assembled from various locations, the locations might be on a computer, an external hard drive, etc. You can use *libraries* to access your files and folders, and arrange them in different ways. In libraries, you can include folders from different locations so that you can see the files in one place. This is a good way to keep your files organized so you don't have to search multiple locations to find what you're looking for. In some ways, a [library](#) is similar to a [folder](#). For example, when you open a library, you'll see one or more files. However, you can't store files or folders in a library. This is a subtle, but important, difference between file and library.



*There are **four default libraries**:*

- **Documents library**: Use this library to organize and arrange word-processing documents, presentations, and other text-related files. By default, files that you move, copy, or save to the Documents library are stored in the My Documents folder.
- **Pictures library**: Use this library to organize and arrange your digital pictures, whether you get them from your camera, scanner, or in e-mail from other people. By default, files that you move, copy, or save to the Pictures library are stored in the My Pictures folder.
- **Music library**: Use this library to organize and arrange your digital music, by default, files that you move, copy, or save to the Music library are stored in the My Music folder.
- **Videos library**: Use this library to organize and arrange your videos, such as clips from your digital camera, or video files that you download from the Internet. By default, files that you move, copy, or save to the Videos library are stored in the My Videos folder.

Some things you can do with libraries:

- **Create a new library**. There are four default libraries (Documents, Music, Pictures, and Videos), but you can create new libraries for other collections.
- **Arrange items** by folder, date, and other properties. Items in a library can be arranged in different ways using the Arrange by menu, located in the library pane (above the file list) in any open library. For example, you can arrange your Music library by Artist to quickly find a song by a particular artist.
- **Include or remove a folder**. Libraries gather content from included folders, or library locations.
- **Change the default save location**. The default save location determines where an item is stored when it's copied, moved, or saved to the library.




Parts of Windows

When you open a folder or library, you see it in a [window](#). The various parts of this window are designed to help you navigate around Windows or work with files, folders, and libraries more easily. Here's a typical window and each of its parts:



- 1 Navigation pane
- 2 Back and Forward buttons
- 3 Toolbar
- 4 Address bar
- 5 Library pane
- 6 Column headings
- 7 File list
- 8 The search box
- 9 Details pane

What it's useful for

Navigation pane	Use the navigation pane to access libraries, folders, saved searches , and even entire hard disks . Use the Favorites section to open your most commonly used folders and searches; use the Libraries section to access your libraries. You can also use the Computer folder to browse folders and subfolders. For more information, see Working with the navigation pane .
Back and Forward buttons	Use the Back button  and the Forward button  to navigate to other folders or libraries you've already opened without closing the current window. These buttons work together with the address bar; after you use the address bar to change folders, for example, you can use the Back button to return to the previous folder.
Toolbar	Use the toolbar to perform common tasks, such as changing the appearance of your files and folders, burning files to a CD, or starting a digital picture slide show. The toolbar's buttons change to show only the tasks that are relevant. For example, if you click a picture file, the toolbar shows different buttons than it would if you clicked a music file.
Address bar	Use the address bar to navigate to a different folder or library or to go back to a previous one. For more information, see Navigate using the address bar .
Library pane	The library pane appears only when you are in a library (such as the Documents library). Use the library pane to customize the library or to arrange the files by different properties. For more information, see Working with libraries .
Column headings	Use the column headings to change how the files in the file list are organized. For example, you can click the left side of a column heading to change the order the files and folders are displayed in, or you can click the right side to filter the files in different ways. (Note that column headings are available only in Details view. To learn how to switch to Details view, see 'Viewing and arranging files and folders' later in this topic.)
File list	This is where the contents of the current folder or library are displayed. If you type in the search box to find a file, only the files that match your current view (including files in subfolders) will appear.
The search box	Type a word or phrase in the search box to look for an item in the current folder or library. The search begins as soon as you begin typing—so if you type "B," for example, all the files with names starting with the letter B will appear in the file list. For more information, see Find a file or folder .
Details pane	Use the details pane to see the most common properties associated with the selected file. File properties are information about a file, such as the author, the date you last changed the file, and any descriptive tags you might have added to the file. For more information, see Add tags and other properties to files .
Preview pane	Use the preview pane to see the contents of most files. If you select an e-mail message, text file, or picture, for example, you can see its contents without opening it in a program. If you don't see the preview pane, click the Preview pane button  in the toolbar to turn it on.