

Digital Decluttering

By now, most of us have gigs and gigs of data on our hard drives (be they on our phones, tablets, or computers) and no idea how to deal with all these pictures and songs and videos and files—many of which we’ll never look at again.

Hopefully this will give you some ideas as to how to begin the process as well as systems that you could maintain to keep things from getting cluttered again.

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File Organization

This is what gets everyone—including me. If you don't organize your files in a manner that makes sense to you, it will take you forever to find what you are looking for. It doesn't matter what anyone else tells you, the best organization structure is one that *makes sense to you*.

This handout has an entire section for [photo organization](#), which shows one method you can use, because, what works well for photos might not be the best method for other files.

Here is one kind of organization method:

Within **Documents** I have a folder for Bills & Statements, and within, there are subfolders for each bill.

This organization works because of how I use the files—say comparing the water bill from this July to last July.

Documents > Gas Bill

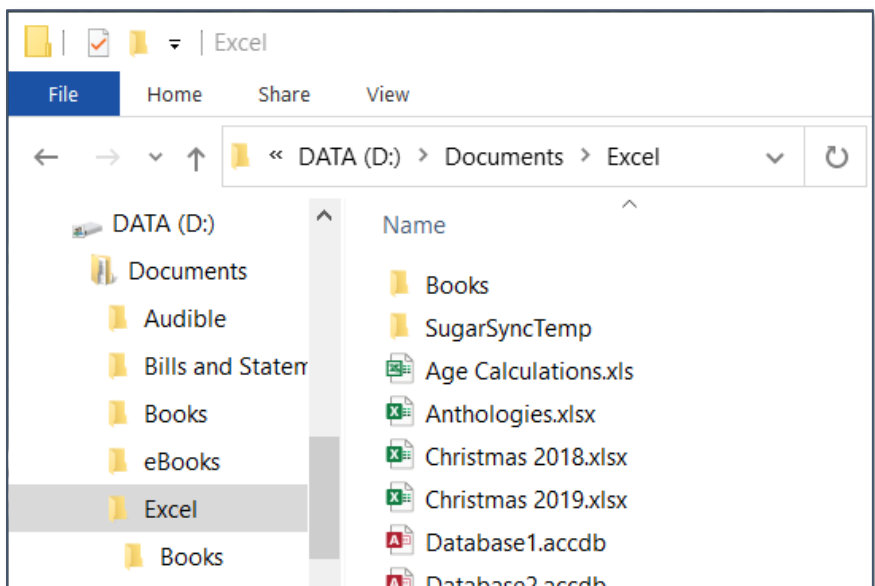
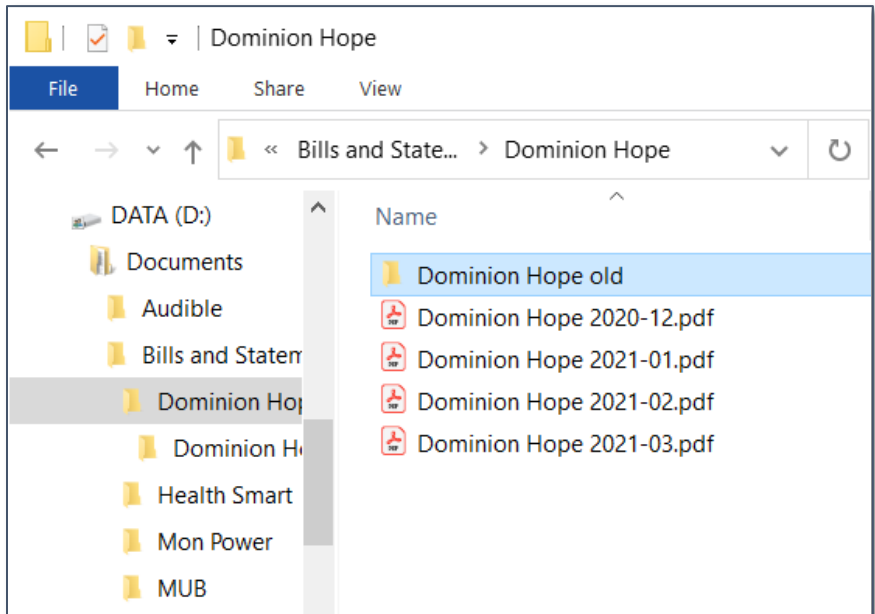
Here is a slightly different organization method:

Within **Documents** I have subfolders for Excel and Word, and within those folders I have (obviously) Word and Excel documents.

This organization works, because I may forget the *name* of a document but remember what *kind* it was.

Documents > Excel

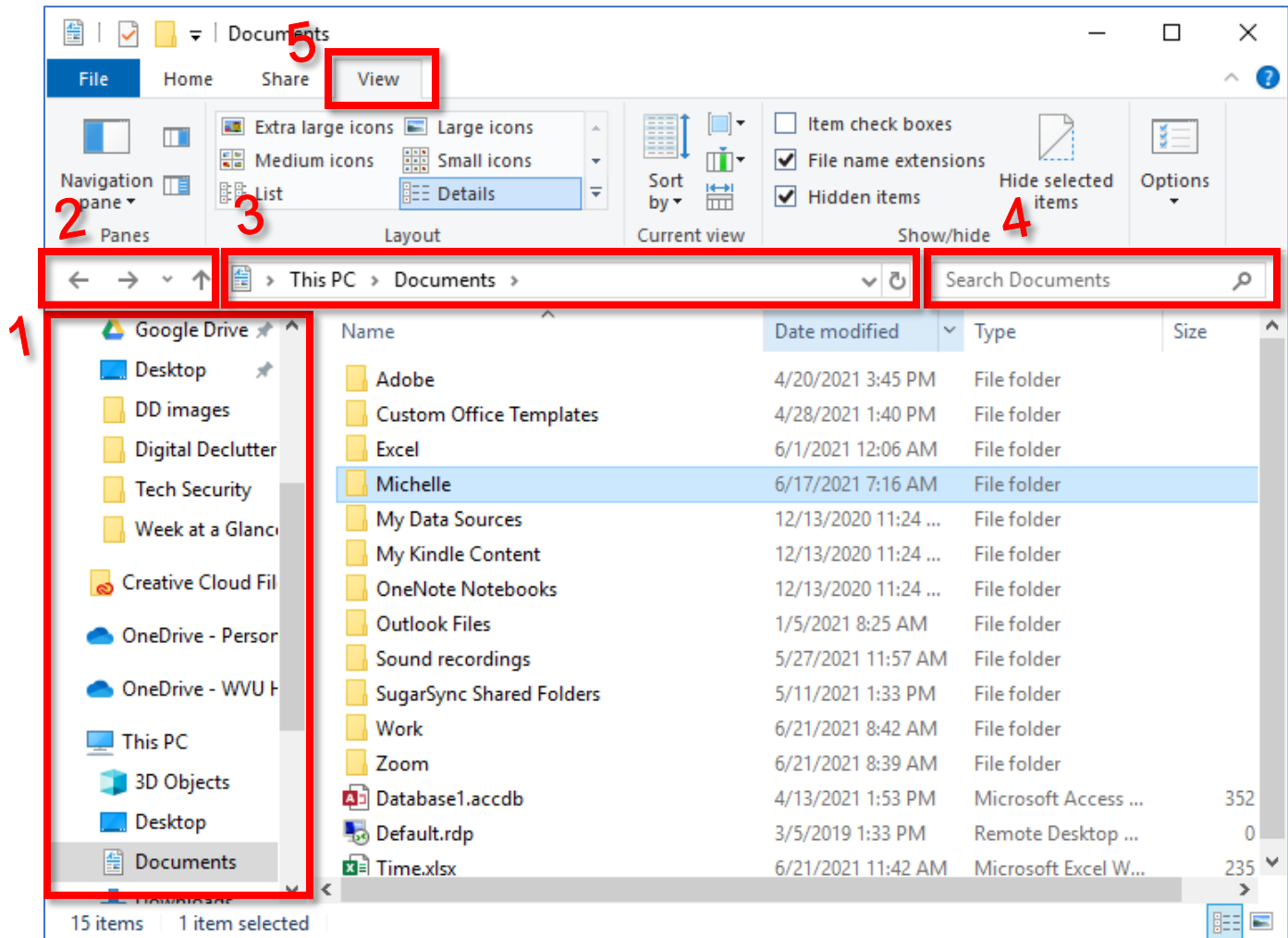
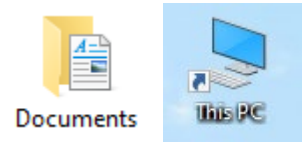
Something you might want to keep in mind is that you can use a combination of systems.



For example, saving all current bills to a “current bills” folder and then filing them into another location after they are paid. You can have “current files” in one location, and then when they are no longer current move them into long term storage. Such a system allows for ease of finding things for day-to-day use but reduces the clutter for things you don't use as often.

File Explorer

File Explorer (also called Windows Explorer) is the window that opens to show you places and folders on your computer. Using it is akin to walking around the house and opening a drawer or cupboard to grab something.



- 1 **Navigation Pane** – Allows you to view the folder structure of your computer, and quickly access files and folders. You can “pin” frequently used folders to the **Quick Access** area of the navigation pane.
- 2 **Navigation Buttons** – These are the same as your **Back** and **Forward** buttons on your web browser. Additionally, if you have a “back” button on your mouse that you use for web browsing, this button also works in File Explorer.
- 3 **Address / Location Bar** – This answers the question, “where am I?” If you’ve clicked around so much you no longer have any idea where you are, this bar will tell you.
- 4 **Search Box** – Type into this box to search for a file by name, type, date created, etc. Search is akin to yelling to someone in your house, “Have you seen / do you remember where X is?” Except a lot faster, and quieter as well.
- 5 **Ribbon / View Tab of the Ribbon** – This is where you find your “menu” options. The View tab of the File Explorer window allows you to change how files are displayed, as well as to change sorting, grouping, and display columns.

Finding Files in Windows

The more complex your filing system is, the more likely you are to have trouble finding things. This is why knowing how to use Search is important.

Sort

[Sorting](#) is a way to help you find files at-a-glance. If you know the *name* of your file in a specific folder, sorting alphabetically can help you find it quickly. If you know when you created / modified a file, sorting by date is helpful.

There are multiple ways to sort.

1. Open **File Explorer**.
2. Select the **View** tab.
3. Click the **Sort by** button.
4. Select your sort method from the drop-down menu.

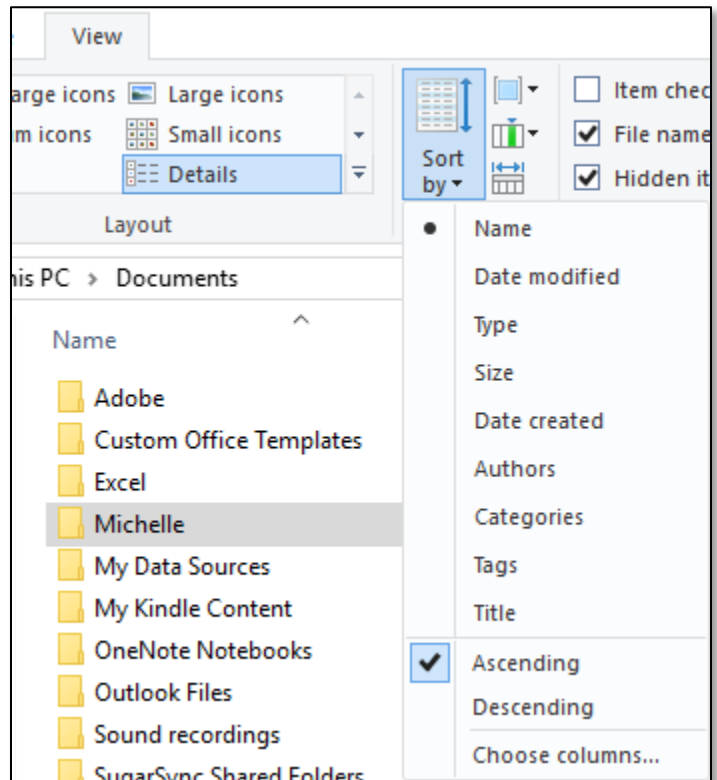
OR

1. **Right click** in the main area of File Explorer.
2. From the pop-up menu select your desired method.

OR

1. If you are viewing by **Details**, click the column head by which you want to sort.

If you have no idea *where* you stored your file, you're going to need to use search. If you haven't used search before, know it does a lot more than letting you look for a file name.



Search

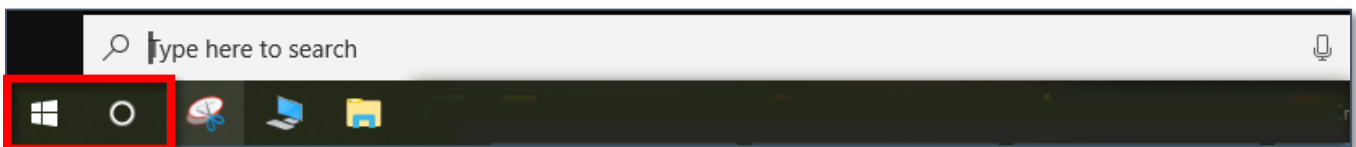
Search is used when you have no idea where something is but maybe you know its name or when you worked on it.

There are two primary places to search: **File Explorer** and the **Start** menu from the **Taskbar**.

**I just used that
file! Where did
it go?!**

Search from the Task Bar

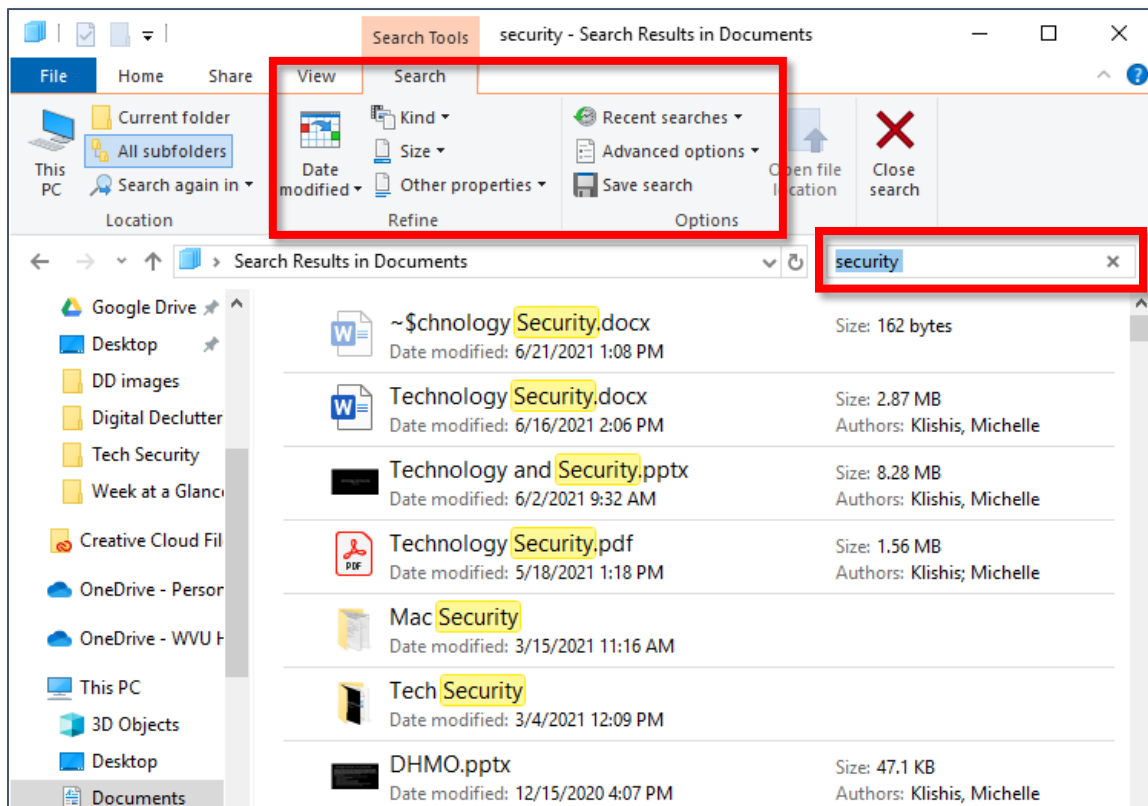
You can search from the taskbar using the Windows / Start icon. This will typically search your entire system.



Click on the icon (or tap the Windows key on your keyboard) and type in your search term.

Search from File Explorer

If you are in [File Explorer](#), the simplest search is to type the term you're looking for into the *search box*. This will search the *current* folder and all *subfolders*, which can be faster than searching your entire computer.



Once you have clicked in the search box, the **Search Tools** tab of the ribbon appears, allowing you to refine your search.

Common File Extensions

Extensions are used when you want to know what kind of file it is.

Audio	.mp3 .wav .wma
Excel	.xlsx .xls
Image	.jpg .gif .png .tif
Portable Document Format	.pdf
Text	.txt
Video	.avi .mpg .wmv
Word	.doc .docx

Where did I put
all those Excel
files?

Date Values

These are important because you can sometimes remember *when* you worked on a file, but maybe not what you named it. You can give an exact date or a general date.

Where is that
file I worked on
yesterday?

today, yesterday, last week, past month, past year, 3/15/2020

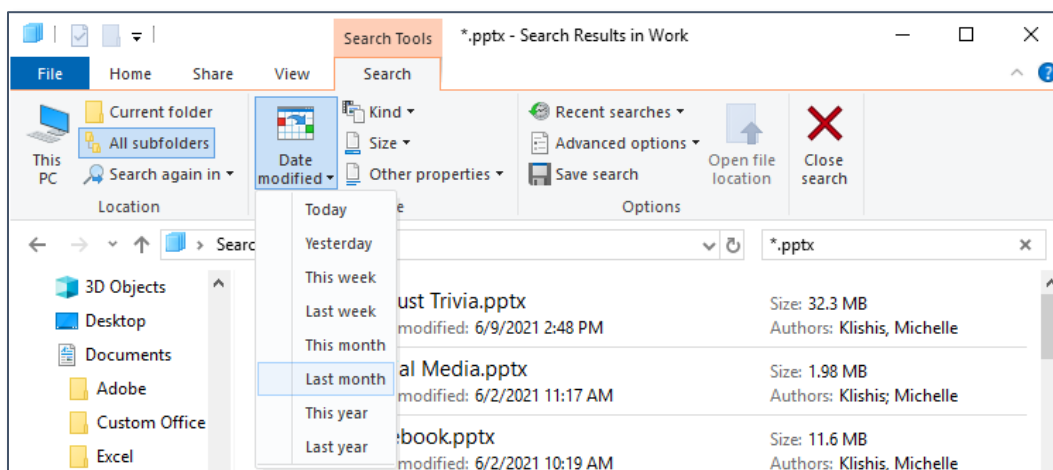
Basic Boolean Operators

[Boolean](#) is a notation system that denotes logical propositions. These operators allow you to be more precise in your search.

**Maybe it had
'family reunion'
in the title?**

()	All words in any order	(security tech)
“ ”	Exact phrase	“tech security”
AND	Find both	Technology AND security
OR	Find either item	technology OR tech
date:>	Find items after a date	Date:>3/15/2020
date:<	Find items before a date	date:<today date:<3/15/2020
modified	Find items by when they were last saved	modified:last week
NOT	Find one without the other	security NOT tech
*	Wildcard (often used with extensions)	*.docx *.pdf

Once you've got all these basics, you can use all or none of the options to help you refine your search. Let's say you can't find a PowerPoint presentation you worked on two weeks ago.



In the search box we entered ***.pptx** because we are looking for a PowerPoint File. In the **Search** tab, from the **Date modified** icon, we can select **Last month**. The search results should return every presentation we worked on during the previous month. All these refinements allow you to find a specific file without looking through every subfolder on your computer.

**Where is the
presentation I
created last
month?**

File Naming

One of the best things you can do is to name your files in a way that lets you know what their contents are. You can search by contents, but in the long run it will be easier if your files have helpful names like: “2019 tax info” or “2018-06 resume” or “Family history 2020 update”.

**'IMG_163511'
What on earth is
that picture of?**

There are a [variety of programs you can use to batch rename files](#), although this is more useful with images than with Word or Excel documents.

Cloud Services

[Cloud storage](#)—when you put files on a [server](#) so they are available from any device with an internet connection—is incredibly convenient. However, a free cloud service is not a good choice to store personal files such as tax files or genealogy records. Although these services are an excellent location for files you use all the time across multiple computers, such as an address book or recipe collection.

What's the easiest way to get a file from my phone to my computer?

Backups

Backups are where we can get into trouble. We want to make sure that if our computer dies, our important files are saved. But what is the best way to do this? And what is “important”?

If my computer crashes, will I lose everything?

The latter question is subjective, but you might want to consider “important” files those that only you have access to, and that other people might want. For example, scanned photos and genealogy documents are probably files that are irreplaceable (or at least not easily replaceable) and others may want.

For these types of files, you want a backup that is *not in your house*.

I pay for a [backup](#) service because I take and have scanned a lot of digital pictures, *and* I constantly add more pictures. I subscribe to a service that automatically encrypts and backs up selected folders on my computer which can then be restored in the event my computer dies or is lost.

Another option is to back your important files to external storage and put that in a safe place or give them to a family member. This would be good for something like a completed genealogy project. If the house burns down, your files are still safe, and you can restore them at your leisure.

External storage uses items like an external hard drive, a [thumb drive](#), an [SD card](#), or a [DVD](#) to save your important files. However, hard drives, thumb drives, and DVDs is these media can degrade over time and are subject to physical damage. So don't create a single backup medium and assume everything will be ok.

Email

If you're like most people, your email box is so full you don't read most of what you receive, and maybe sometimes miss important messages. This next section is going to be familiar for anyone who has taken tech security, but bears repeating.

This may not be intuitive, but it is a good idea to have multiple email accounts.

You should have different email accounts for different purposes, such as an account for friends and family, an account for online shopping, and an account for bills and banking. This adds an additional layer of security to your logins, since [phishing](#) emails sent to your personal account are obviously fake.

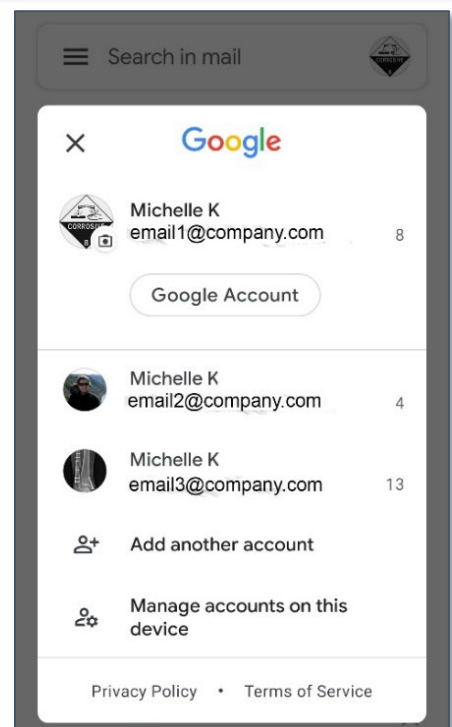
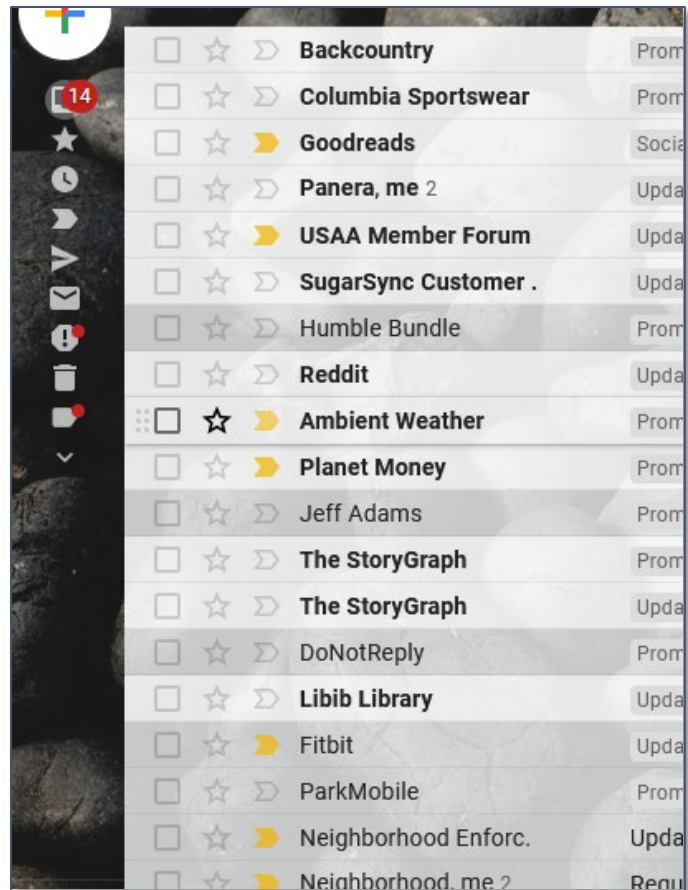
Multiple email addresses are easy to set up with free online services, and you can generally create as many accounts as you want.

How do MORE email addresses to check help you declutter? They help because different types of email go to different mailboxes.

When you open your bills & banking email, you are prepared to pay bills and reconcile accounts. When you open your friends & family email, you know you're probably going to have some chatty messages to read, and maybe a long message to reply to. When you open your junk or newsletter email, you are going to be looking at coupons and updates from organizations.

This means that instead of opening your email and feeling overwhelmed, you are only dealing with one type of thing at a time.

There are several different ways to handle multiple email accounts.



Cell Phone App

One is to keep those accounts open on your [web browser](#) all the time. Most services will display an unread message number in the title, letting you know when a new message comes in. (All browsers have an option to “Restore previous session” in their settings so they are just there when you open your browser.)

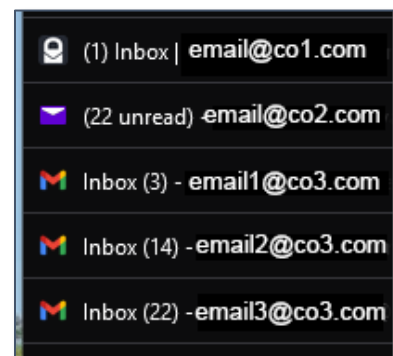
Another option is to install an [email program](#) on your computer. This lets you download all your mail onto your computer, within a single program.

Smart phones have an email program installed by default, but there are third party applications for phones and tablets.

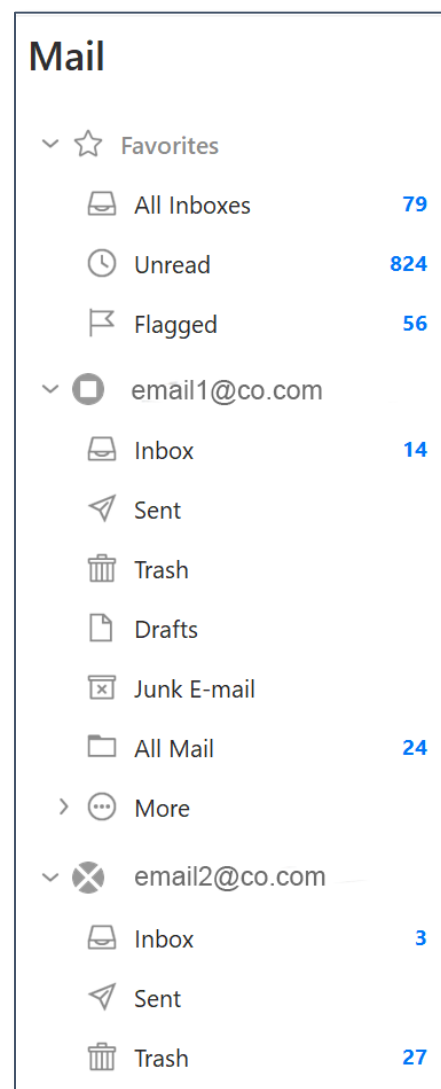
An email program (app) allows you download all your messages into a single location, and gives you the option to view a single mailbox at a time (although you can view all your mail in a combined mailbox as well).

Once you get your new accounts created, next time you go to pay a bill, change your email address for that bill (and change your password while you’re at it). When you shop from an online store, change your email address (and your password) there. It’ll take a while, but eventually all your important emails will be in their new accounts, and you won’t be overwhelmed when you open your mail.

You can also take some time to go through all your junk mail, and unsubscribe from that coupon site you never use, and ask the cooking site to send you a monthly wrap-up instead of a daily message.



Web Mail



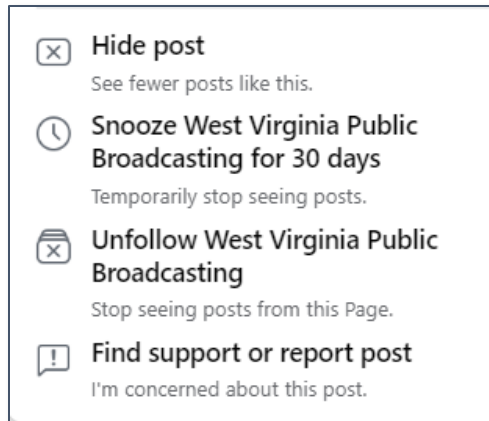
Email Software

Social Media

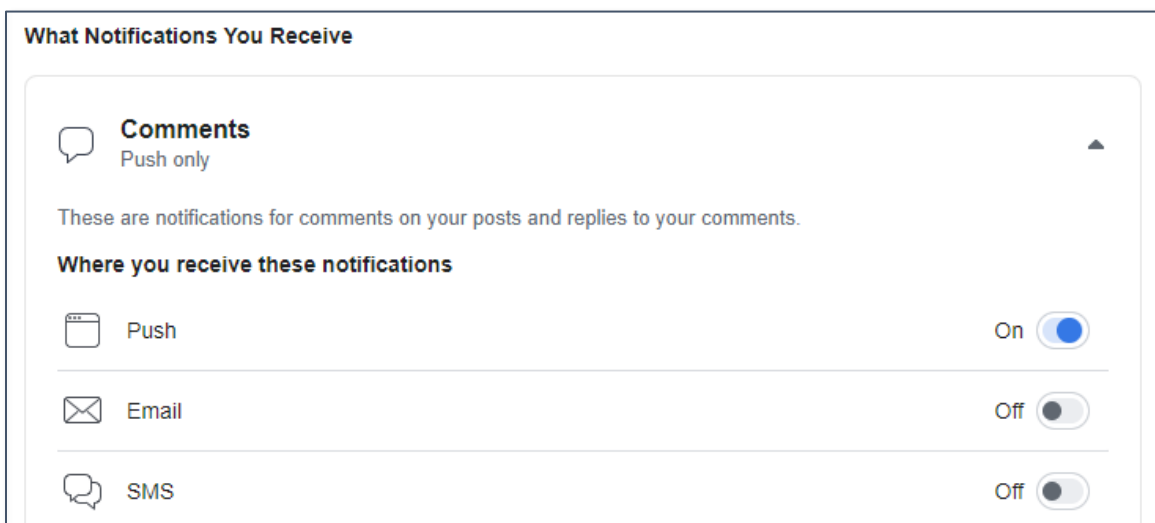
Most of us aren't willing to unfriend people we know on [social media](#)—especially Facebook. But you can *unfollow* that one family member who has the political posts that make you want to drop a house on them, or that other friend who posts nothing but pictures of their pet rock.

Next time you open [Facebook](#), take a few minutes to go through your feed and snooze, hide, or unfollow the people, groups, and companies that fill up your feed.

You can find step-by-step instructions on how to do this in the Facebook handout available from the [OLLI website](#).



[Notifications](#) are updates you can receive about what has happened on social media. By default, these companies want you to know ABSOUTELY EVERYTHING ALL THE TIME. This is designed to keep you using online and can be overwhelming. You can turn these notifications off or allow some notifications but not others.



Mobile Devices

Now that cell phones are no longer out of date 15 minutes after purchase, it's common to be notified that you are "running out of space". Luckily, there are things you can do to free up space on your device.

Micro SD Cards for Androids

Many [Android](#) phones come with a [micro SD card](#) slot, which allows you to increase the amount of storage available on your device.



First you need to determine if your device has a micro SD slot. You can do this by going to your device settings and searching for “storage”. Then you need to find out the maximum size your device can use. You can discover this by searching online for the model of your phone and “micro sd size limit”.

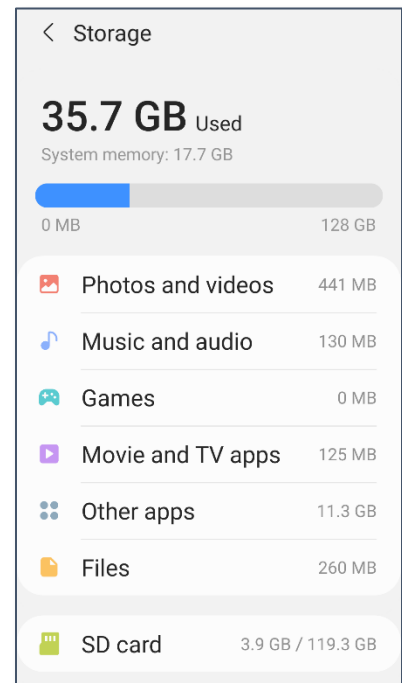
After that, all you need to do is purchase a card and install it.

Warning: These cards are tiny and the process can be fiddly. I recommend finding someone with small and agile fingers to add the card for you if you get easily frustrated.

Once you’ve done that, the first thing you’ll want to do is change the default storage location of your camera to SD card. Open your settings and search for “Camera” and look for “Camera settings” and you should find an option to change the storage location.

You can use “My Files” on your phone to move the location of existing pictures from Internal storage to the SD card.

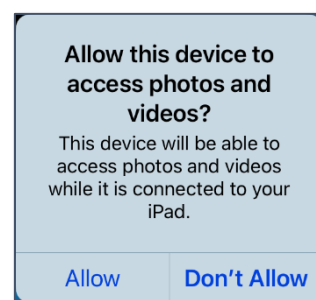
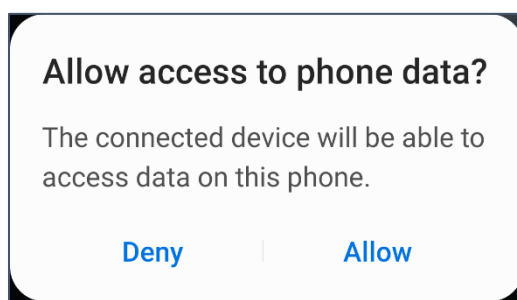
You can also use a micro SD card to transfer files from your phone to your laptop or desktop.



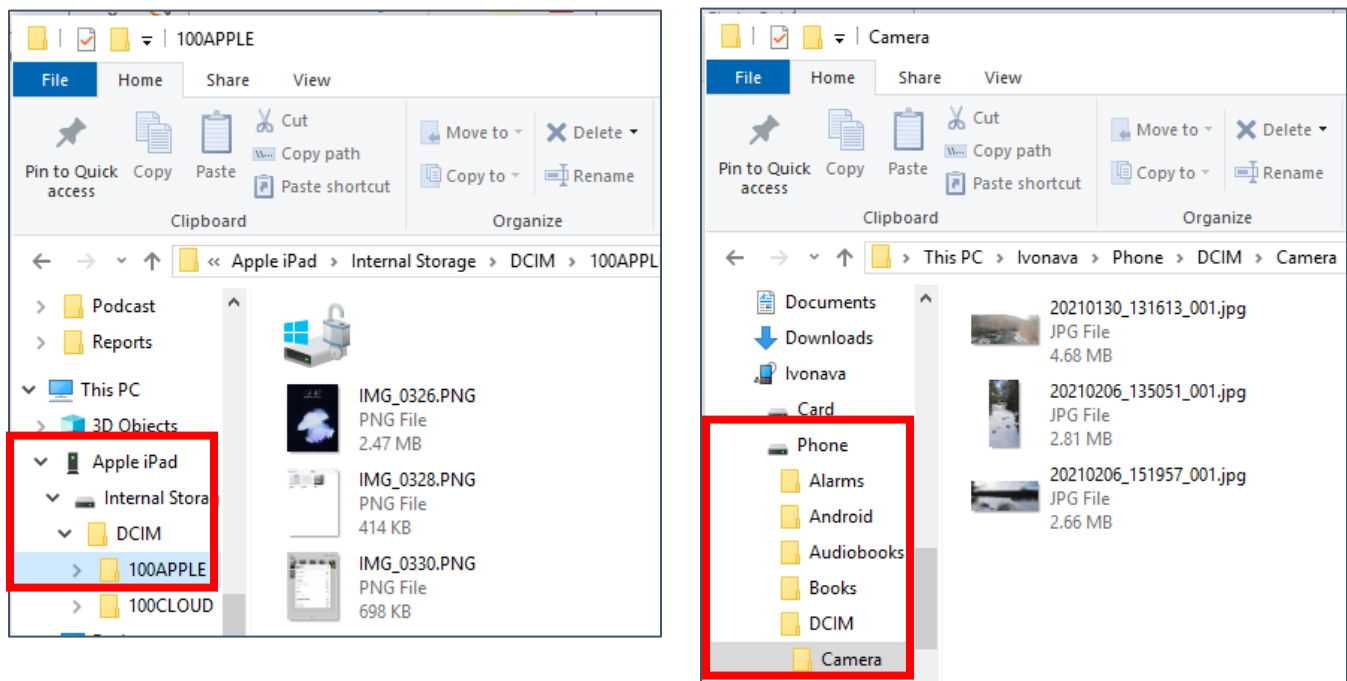
Copying Files via USB Cable on a PC

Another way to make space on your mobile device is to move files (especially pictures) from your phone to your laptop or desktop.

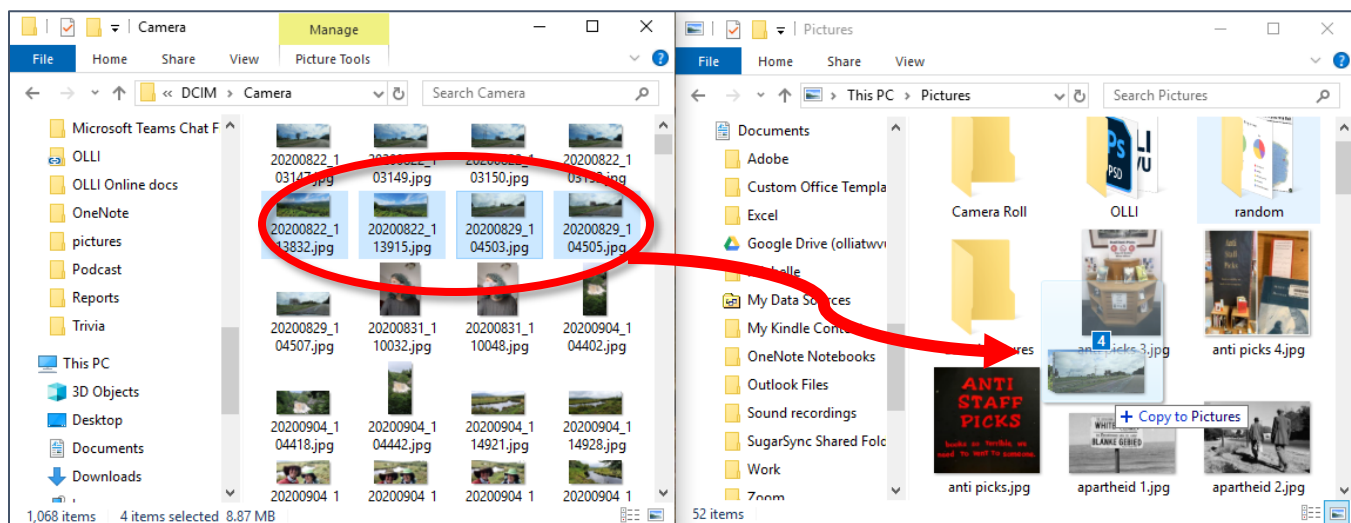
Start by plugging [your cable](#) (micro-USB, USB-C, or lightening) into your phone, and then plug the other end into your computer.



Once the device is plugged in, agree to any prompts. Then open [Windows Explorer](#) and copy the files from the device into a folder on your computer.



You can do this by opening one instance of windows explorer for your device, and another window for the location on your computer where you are storing your files (such as the “pictures” folder). Select the files in the “phone window” and the drag (or copy and paste) to the “storage window”.



Cloud Services

[Cloud](#) storage—when you put files on a server they are available from any device with an internet connection—is incredibly convenient. It allows you to put your files in one location and access those files from multiple devices—and for any changes made to a file to be updated across all devices, assuming you have internet access.

Cloud Services as Backups

Unless you use a paid service, a [cloud service](#) is not likely to have enough storage space for you to back up all your files. Additionally, a free cloud service is **not** a good choice for personal files but **is** an excellent location for files you use across multiple computers or share with others.

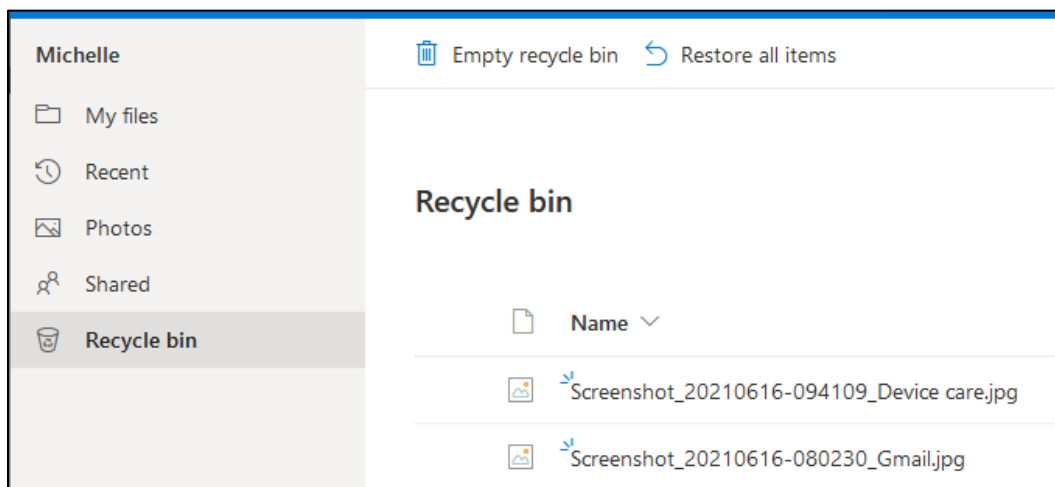
Most free services give 5 to 15 GB of space. For comparison, on my computer I have 121 [GB](#) of music, and 1.22 [TB](#) of photos.

Copying / Moving Files via the Cloud

Cloud services may not be the best for long-term backups, however, they are excellent for moving files between devices.

Just keep two things in mind.

1. Know and follow your process. Once you've copied pictures into your cloud drive, move them *immediately* into the designated folders on your computer.
2. You may need to occasionally log into your [cloud service](#) on the web to delete “removed” items. If you use a cloud service to move videos from one device to another, even when those videos are “deleted” items in the recycle bin still count against your limit.

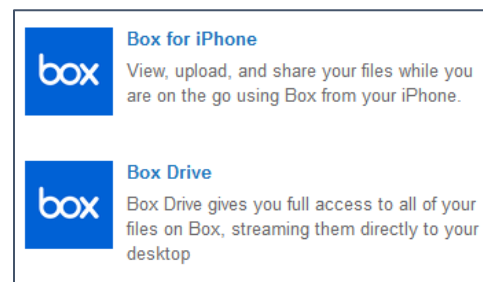


If a service says you are low on space, the first thing you should do is empty your recycle bin / deleted files by accessing the web site for the app.

Although every cloud service is different, the setup and transfer are very similar.

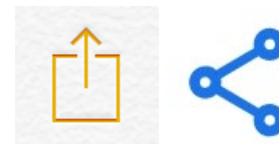
Setting Up a Cloud Service

1. Sign up for the cloud service.
2. Download and install the app for your computer.
3. Log into the service from your computer, using the email and password you set up when you signed up.
4. Download and install the app for that service on your mobile device.
5. Log into the app on your phone using the email and password you created on your computer.



Transferring Files via a Cloud Service

1. Select the file(s) you want to copy.
2. Select the appropriate “share” icon for your device.
3. Browse until you see your cloud service.
4. If desired, you can save files directly to a sub-folder.
5. Log into your computer.
6. Open [File Explorer](#), and browse to the folder for your cloud service.
7. Drag and drop the files to the location on your computer where you want to save them.



Digital Photos

If you take a lot of pictures—with your phone or a dedicated camera—you are going to have an overwhelming number of pictures.

Naming Conventions

I have an important recommendation here, which is that all your pictures should start with the date they were taken, and dates should be formatted YEAR-MONTH-DAY. The reason for that is computers sort files and folders alphabetically.

2020-01	2020-April	Feb-2020
2020-02	2020-Feb	Feb 2021
2020-03	2020-Jan	Jan 2020
2020-04	2020-Mar	Jan 2021

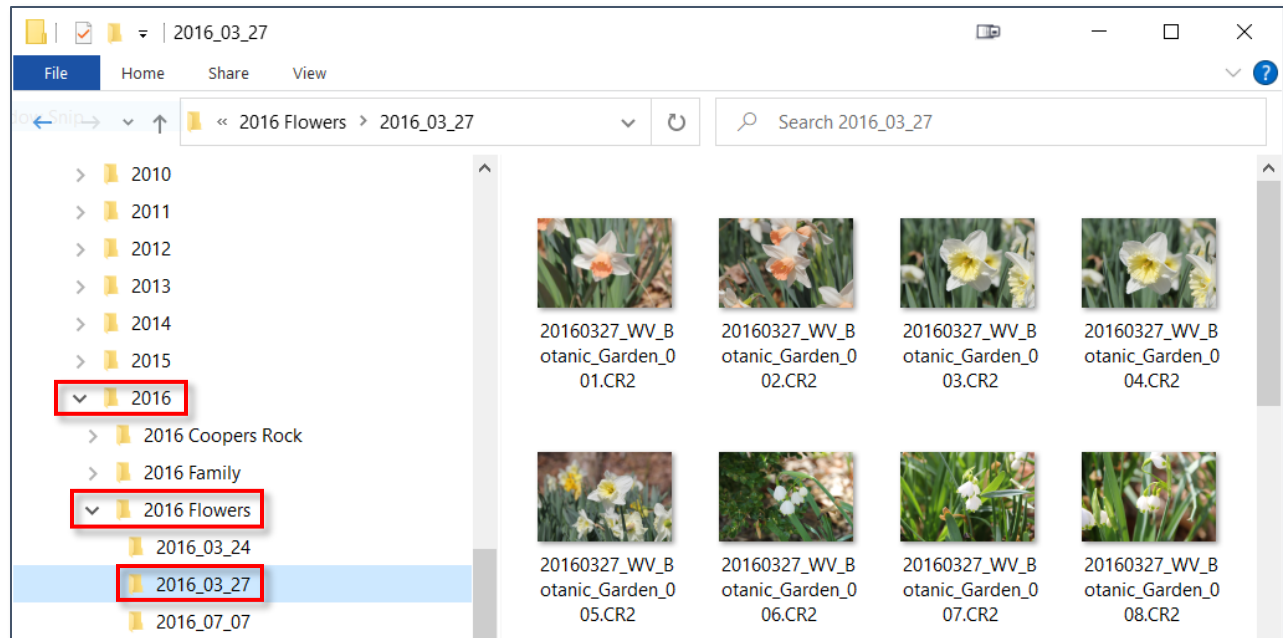
You can see that using words instead of numbers quickly becomes confusing.

Photo Organization

After deciding upon your naming convention, you need to set up your method of organization. This is going to be time consuming, so if nothing else, create a structure and start using it immediately. Then go back later and organize older pictures.

The best organization structure is *the one that works for you*. This is my organization method, but what works for you is what *you* should use.

My base folder structure is: Year > Subcategory > Day

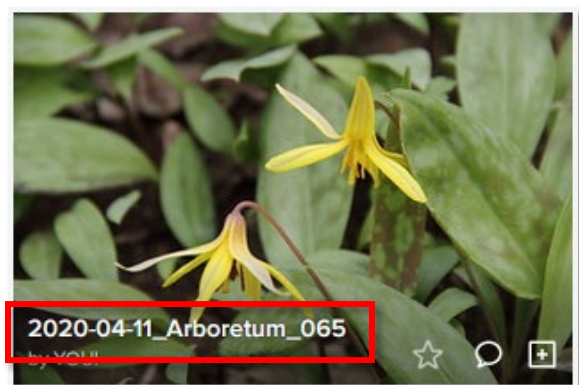
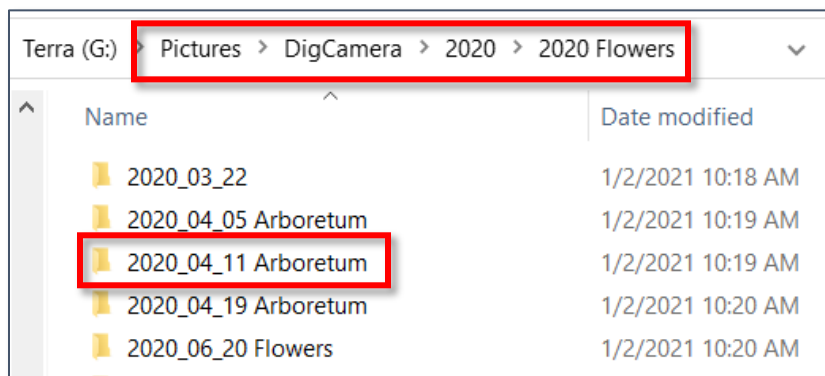


Within each subcategory, I'll usually append a location or subject, to make finding things easier.

I use specific naming conventions, ie, 2020-04-11_Arboretum_065.

This lets me easily find a specific photo because the file name gives me all the information I need to locate it.

There are a [variety of programs you can use to rename your photos](#), from software that comes with your camera to windows explorer. The important thing is to pick a naming convention and stick with it.



Process

If you want a system to work, you must keep up with it. That means creating a process for regularly renaming and organizing your images. Again, what system you use doesn't matter; you just need to keep up with it.

Here is my process: After taking pictures, I download them from my camera to a computer folder named with the date taken. (Luckily, much camera software can do this automatically.) Pictures taken on a phone are moved onto my computer via a [cloud service](#). Once the pictures are in the correct folder(s), they are [renamed](#), and (if I want) edited. Good pictures are processed and uploaded to a [photo sharing site](#) or shared with family members via a private folder on a [cloud service](#) (be especially wary of publicly posting pictures of kids).

Because I generally process photos on my laptop, but store them on my desktop, once a month or so I transfer the images from my laptop to my desktop, via a cloud service. This is unnecessary if you have only one computer and is also how I end up with so many duplicate copies of images.

NOTE: Once kids are old enough I recommend asking them which pictures they want posted online. The Internet is *forever*, and a picture you think is cute, a kid might find embarrassing.

Duplicate Files

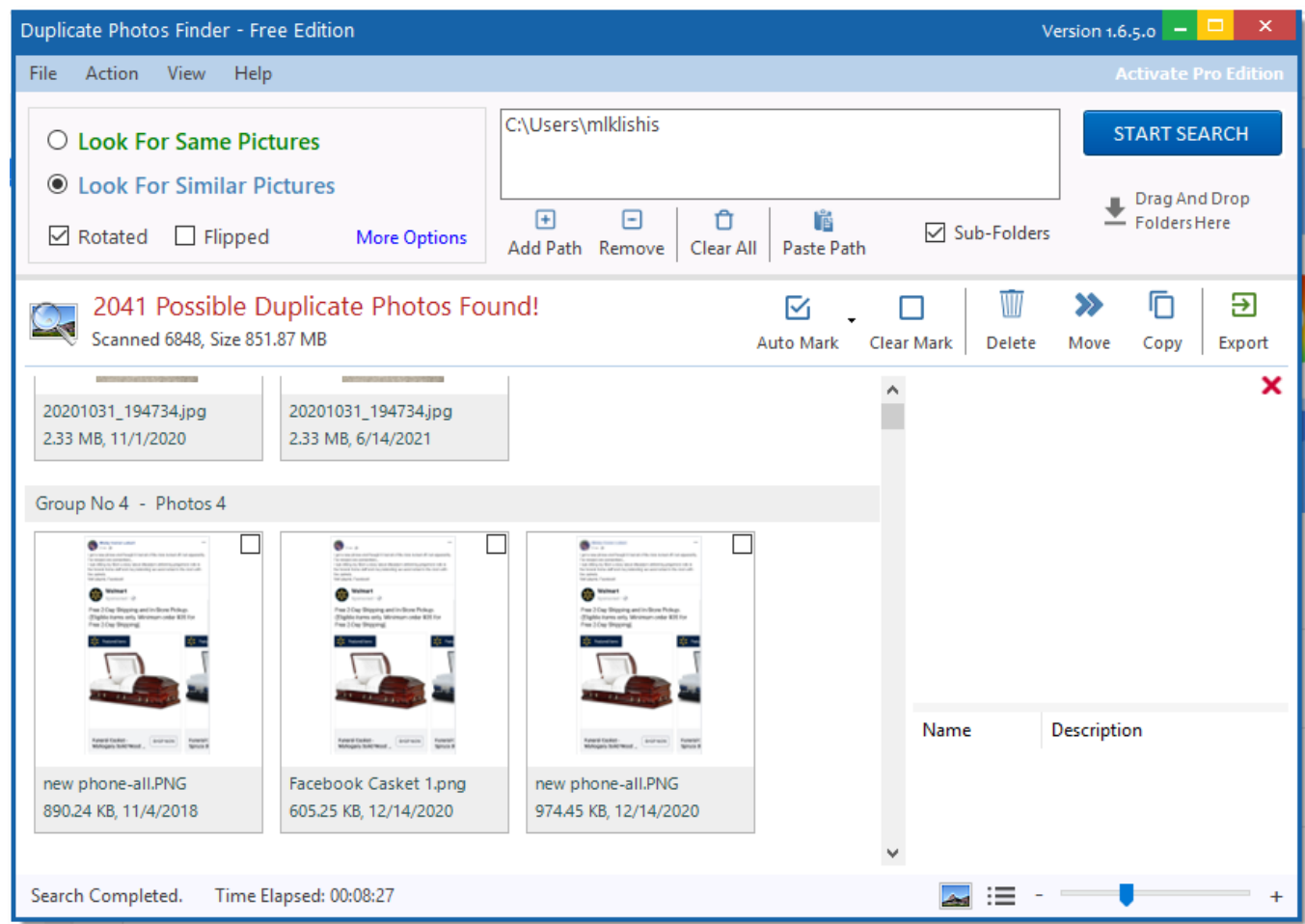
Your computer is undoubtedly full of multiple copies of the same file. These files (especially pictures) can take up a lot of space and can make it difficult to find a specific file you're looking for.

"Did I already download these pictures? I can't remember so I'd better download them again, just to be safe."
~ Me (countless times)

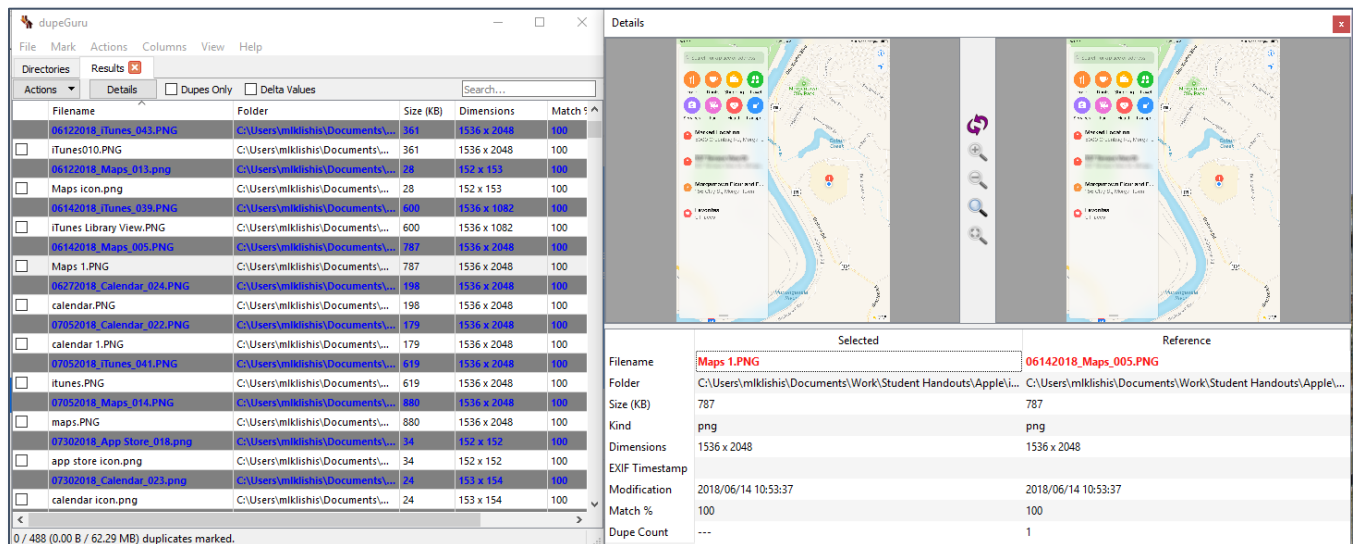
Unless you have multiple monitors, a really good memory, and a LOT of patience, this isn't something easy to do; you're going to need [a program to help you find \(and deal with\) those dupes](#). Be aware that a free program is going to **require you to read the manual** to figure out how to use it. If you do not have the patience for this, purchase a program that has support.

A good [dupe finder program](#) should show you all the information about a file, and the ability to compare two images. A *really* good program will find pictures that are similar, but not exactly the same (such as a cropped picture).

Duplicate Photo Finder



Dupe Guru



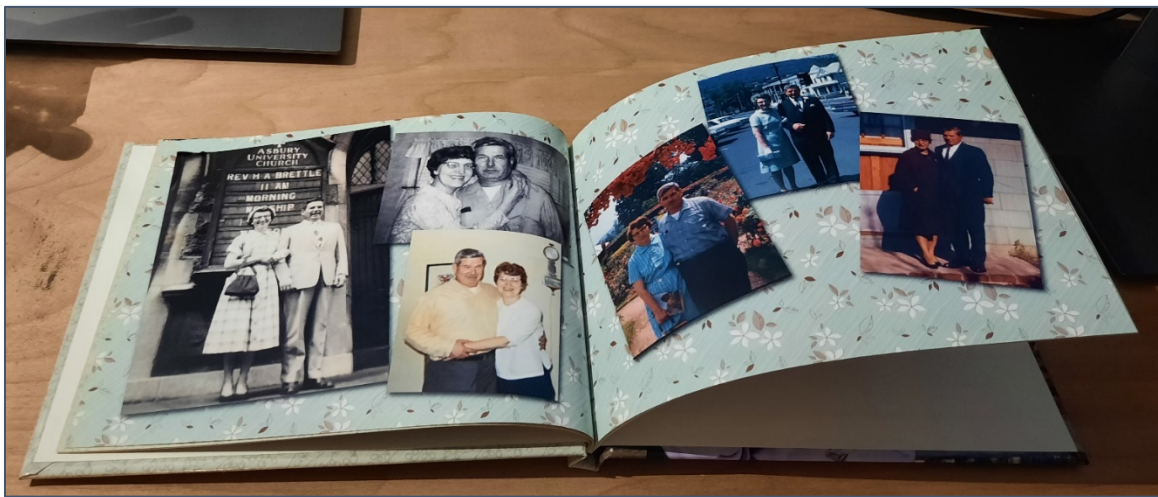
I Have All These Pictures—Now What?

This is—as they used to say—the \$64,000 question. If you have great pictures you should show them off!

Digital photo frames are popular, however, for many you have to upload the pictures you want to a frame, so you'll want to make sure that's not a cumbersome process or something you'll have problems remembering how to do on a regular basis.

Another option is to print your pictures and frame them. This is great if you have a lot of empty wall or shelf space. However, not all digital images look good enlarged. You don't want to spend money to get a picture printed and then end up a blurry photo.

A third option is to create a photo book. There are tons of [different places that will print your books](#) for you, and the results are typically fantastic. Every year I make at least two photo books: one of my niece and one of all my cousins' kids for my aunt & uncle.



Another option is a [photo sharing site](#). Just make sure you know the [EULA](#) for the site you are sharing your pictures to, if you do not want those images shared/used without your permission.

So! Many! Cables!

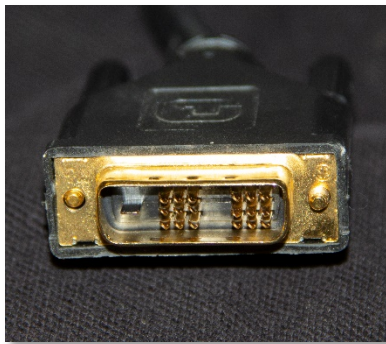
You possibly have a box. Or a drawer. And it is full of cables. Cables you have been collecting for the past twenty years. Cables you have no idea what to do with, because you don't know what they are or what they go to or if you need them.

Although I cannot tell you what that one funny cable that doesn't look like anything else goes to, I can tell you this: most phones and devices now use one of a handful of standard cables.

If you don't know what a specific cable does, put it in a box, with the date, and if after a year or so you haven't found the device it goes to? Recycle it.

Video / Monitor Cables

These are the cables that run from your computer to your monitor, or from your DVD player to your TV.



DVI



VGA



HDMI

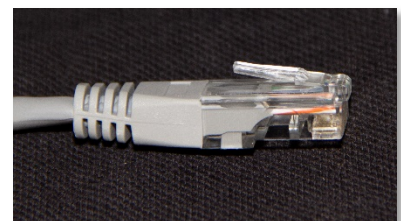
[VGA](#) is the oldest type of cable, and was the standard for years and years. For a while, [DVI](#) cables were common, but they were soon replaced by [HDMI](#) or [Displayport](#). Check the back of your computer to see if you have any ports that look like they match these cables.

It's probably a good idea to have a spare VGA cable, and HDMI cables can be used for all sorts of devices, so keep those. But if your computer doesn't have a DVI port, you can most likely get rid of any DVI cables. For Displayport, the jury is still out on what might become the standard, so keep those for now (as they have higher quality).

Network Cable

A network cable is used to connect your computer to your modem and looks like an extra-wide phone cable.

Even if your computer is wireless, it's often helpful to have a network cable, both for network security and for testing if your wireless goes out.



**How many
micro-USB
cables do I
really, truly
need?**



Displayport

Cable Comparison

Here are a variety of different types of cables, side by side and next to a ruler, to help you figure out which specific of cable you have.



HDMI

USB-A

mini-USB

micro-USB

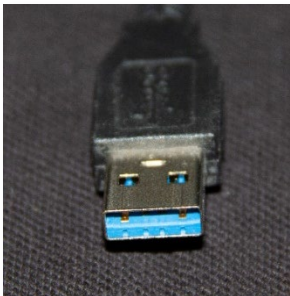
USB-C

Lightning

30-pin

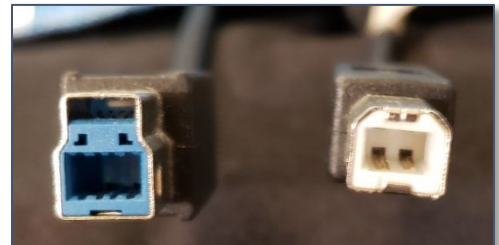
USB-A Cables

USB-A was the standard for many devices for years. Printers, USB hubs, and external hard drives are just a few of the kinds of devices that used USB-A.



Just to make things more frustrating, there are different versions of USB-A cables.

USB 2.0 cables are generally white, while USB 3.0 cables are typically blue, and the “fatter” connector is taller, and won’t fit into a USB 2.0 port.



USB 3.0

USB 2.0

It’s always good to have a spare USB-A cable.

Mini-USB Cables

Mini-USB cables are frequently used with cameras and small external hard drives.

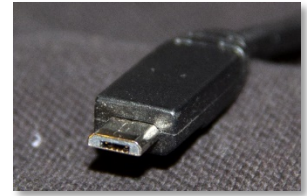
Mini-USB cables are wider on the bottom than on the top, are a bit taller than micro-USB cables, and usually have a USB-A plug on the other end, for plugging your device into your computer to allow you to transfer files.



I keep a mini-USB cable at each computer, and one in my camera bag.

Micro-USB Cables

Micro-USB cables were the standard data and charging cables for most Android phones, and are still the standard for various Bluetooth speakers, headphones, rechargeable mice, and mini power packs, because the port is so slim.



Micro-USB cables are just the tiniest bit wider on the bottom and the top, and you have to look closely to see that. I highly recommend using nail polish or a sharpie to mark the “top” (smaller side) of the cable, to make it easier to plug in devices.

I keep micro-USB cables at each computer, and spares in my purse and camera bag.

USB-C Cables

These are the new standard for Android phones, as well as for many new devices as well as docking stations for laptops. Unlike earlier USB cables, these are reversible, so you can’t put them in upside down.

I keep USB-C cables at my computers, carry one in my purse, and have them in all my bags.



USB-C looks to be the new standard for most devices, so keep all USB-C cables.

Apple Cables

Apple has always had proprietary cables, so if you are part of that ecosystem, you likely have cables that only work for those devices.



If you have an older iPod, iPad, or iPhone, you may have a 30-pin cable for those devices.

Newer iPads and iPhones use Lightning cables, which are reversible, so there is no wrong way to plug them in.



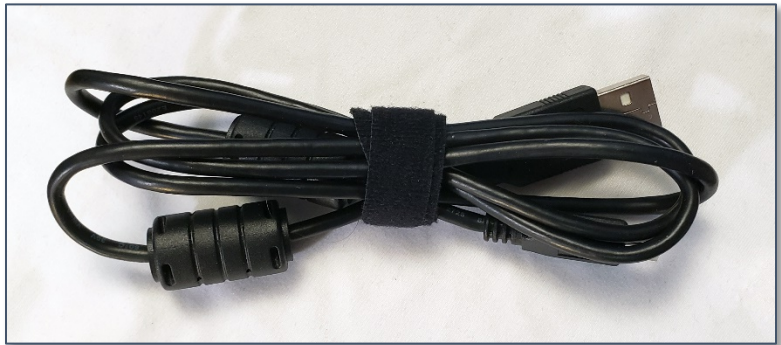
Cable Management

For bonus points, bind each cable with a Velcro tie,

For double bonus points, separate the cables you are keeping into labeled Ziploc bags and put them all into one box so you can easily find the precise cable you are looking for next time you need one.

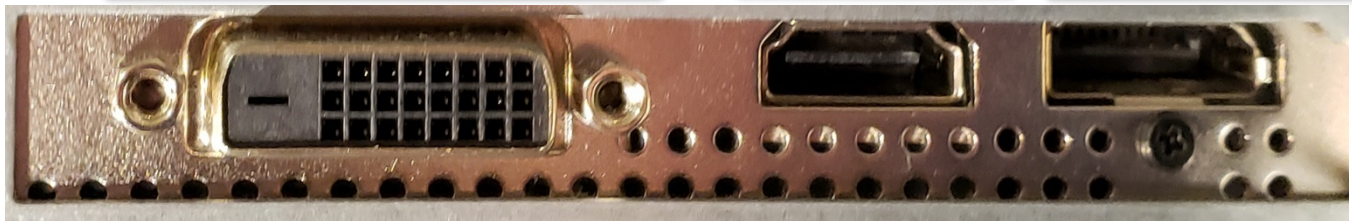
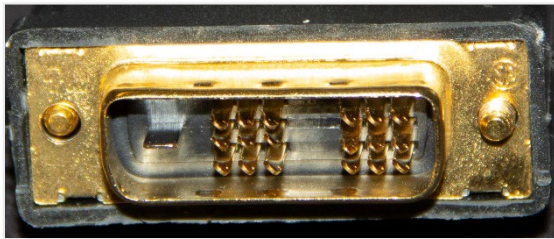


For triple bonus points, get colorful Velcro ties, and use a specific color for each type of cable. (Micro-USB is red, Mini-USB is green, etc.)



Cables and Ports

Here are the video cables and the ports into which they go.



DVI

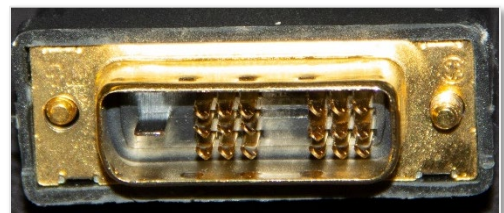
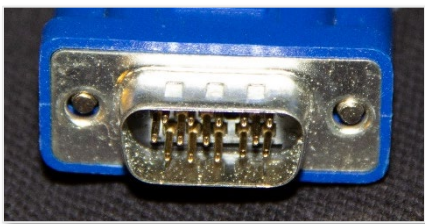
HDMI

Display
Port

VGA

HDMI

DVI



Other Ports and Cables



USB-A 3.0



USB-C



HDMI

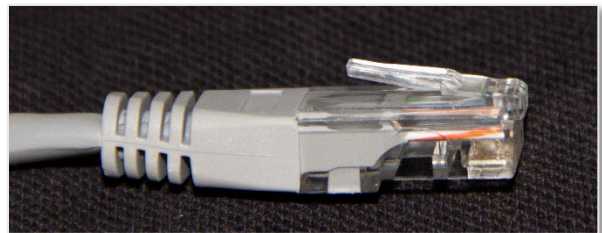


Display Port

USB-A 2.0



Network



Music

If you have the option, it's a fantastic idea to [rip](#) all your old CDs and then store the discs CD binders.

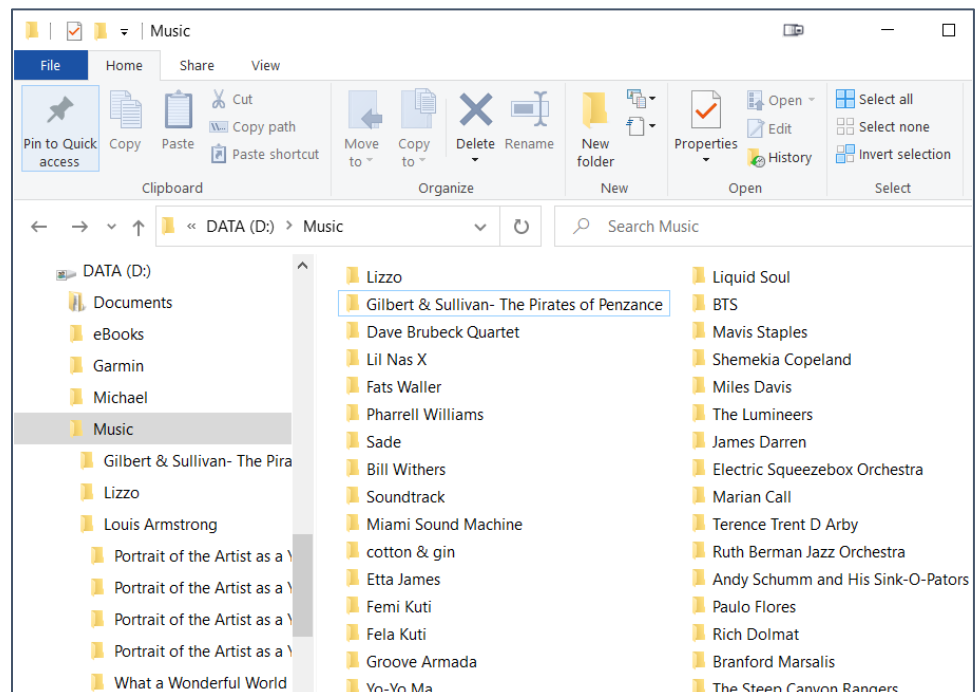


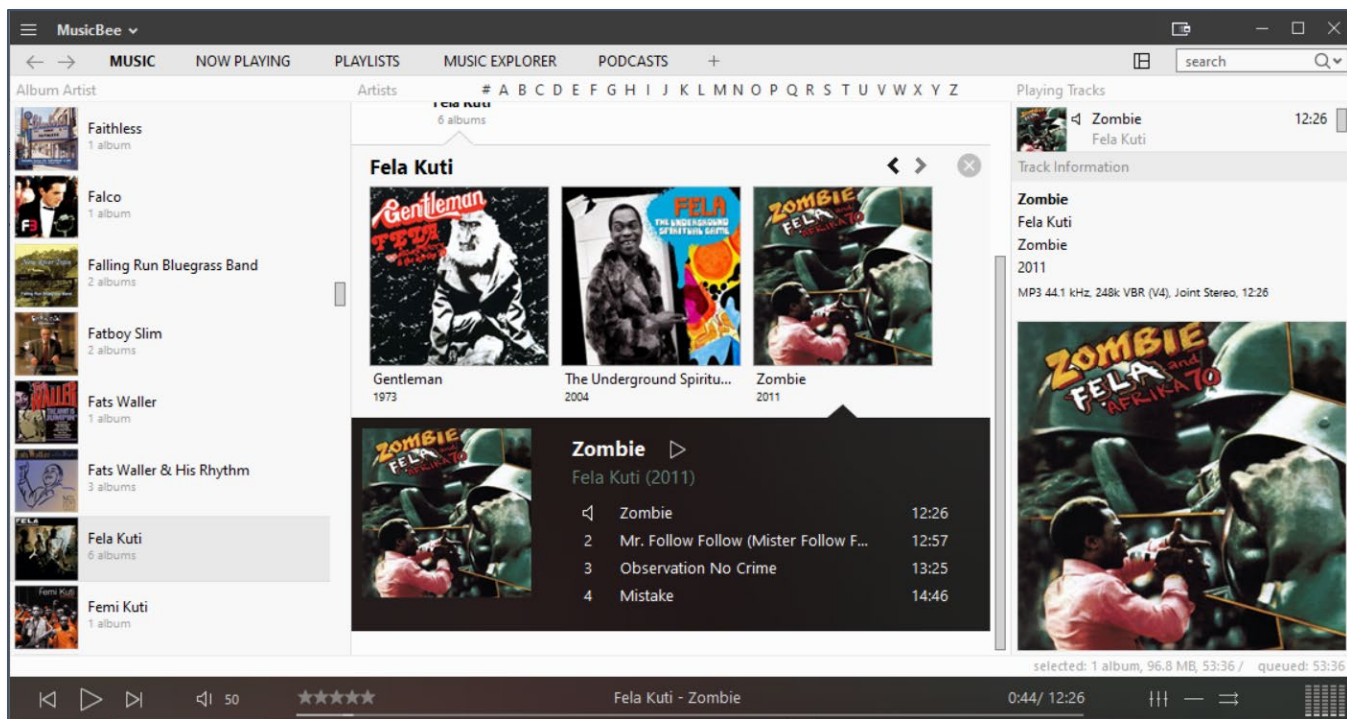
~148 CDs in a 13" x 23" x 3" space. With a handle.

Once you've done that, you will want to make sure your [digital music is organized](#) in a way that will allow you to find the albums / artists / songs you want to hear. (I don't rip DVDs but still put them in books similar to the above.)

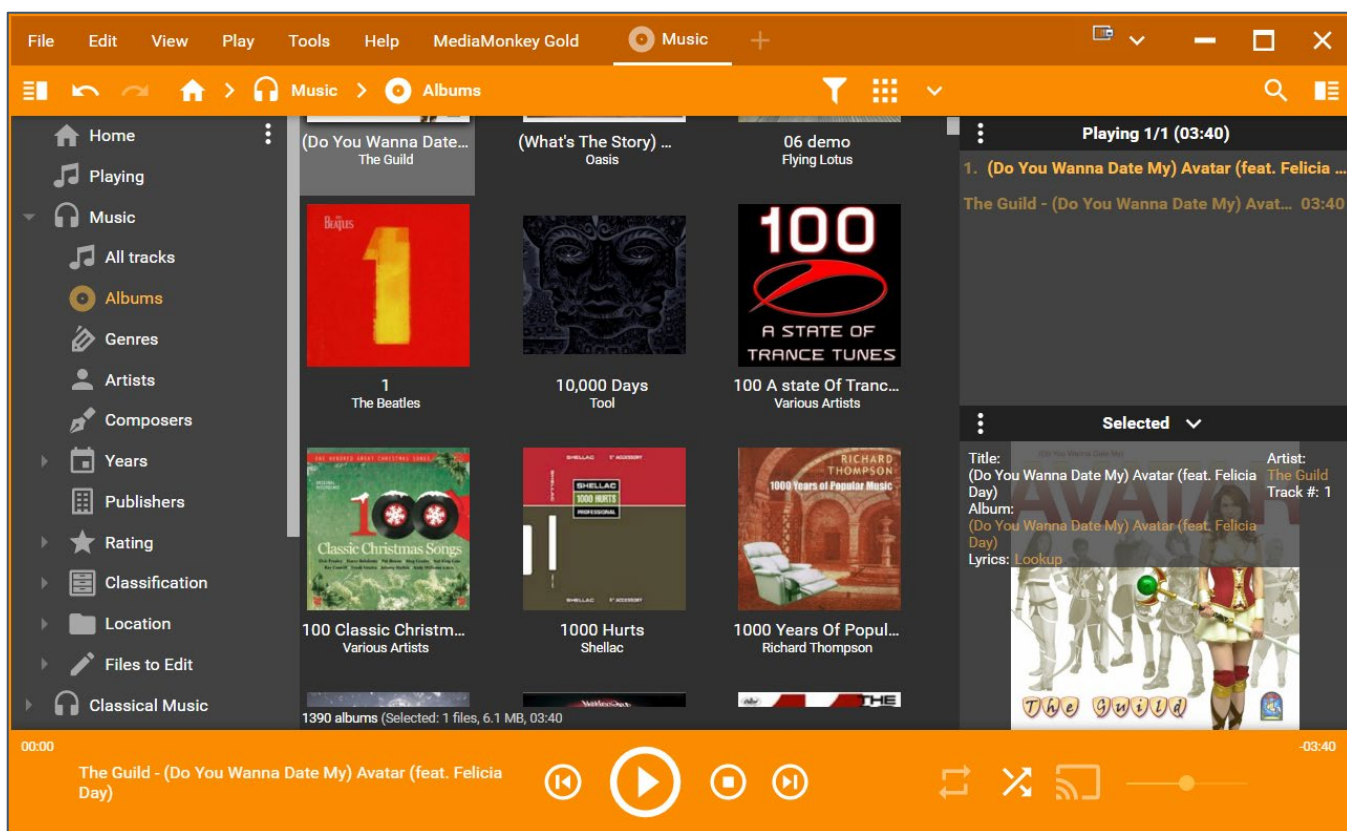
For the most part, when a CD is ripped, information is appended to each song, including, artist, album, genre, length, etc. If the information doesn't come over, there are programs that will do this for you, though it can be time consuming.

If you purchase music electronically, you will want to make sure all your music files are being stored in the same place (instead of allowing each store to save music files in its own folder).





Music Bee



Media Monkey

eBooks

If you use an eReader, I strongly recommend downloading your digital library, and storing those files on your computer. There are a variety of complicated reasons for this, but a short answer is that it's good to have access to all your books even if the internet is down.

There are different kinds of programs you can use to organize your digital library. One program (Alfa) even allows you to (relatively) easily create a database for your *physical* books by scanning the [ISBN](#) code with a smart phone [app](#). (NOTE: This is just the names of your books, it does **NOT** create electronic copies of those volumes for you to access on an eReader or on your computer.)

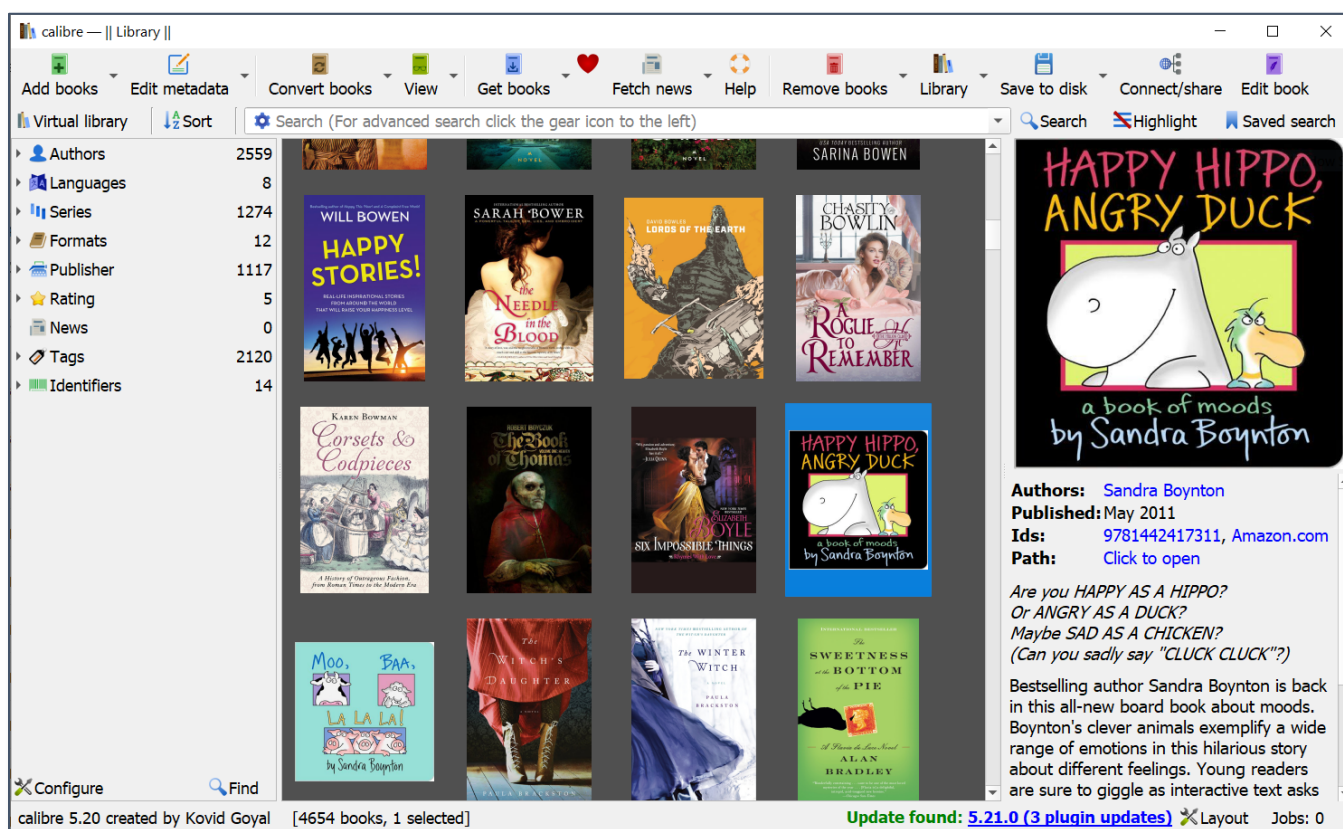
And don't forget that you can [borrow ebooks and audio books from your local public library](#).

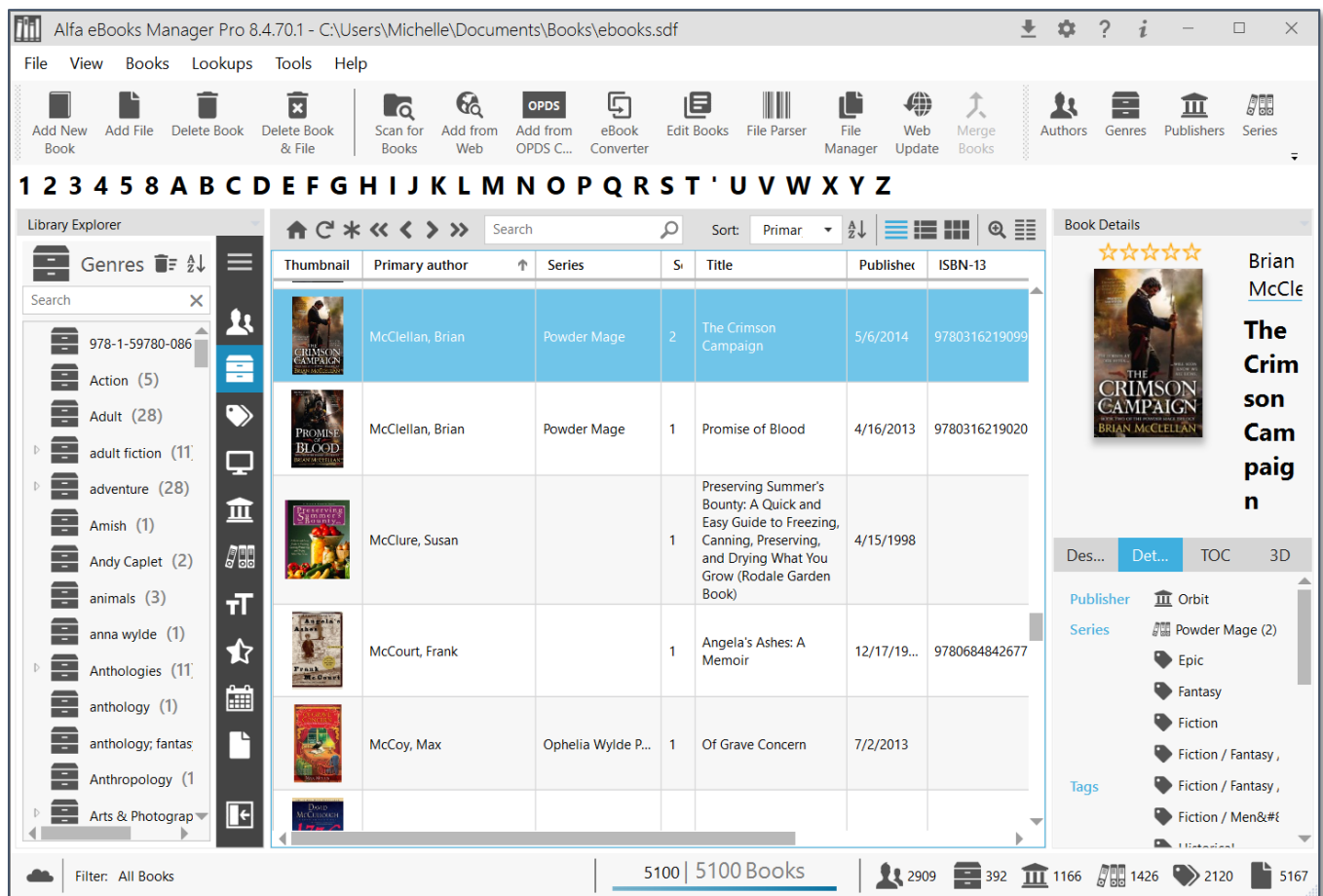
Morgantown Public Library: http://morgantown.lib.wv.us/WV_DELI.html

Charleston Public Library: <https://www.ccpl.org/ebooks-magazines>

Marion County Public Library System: <http://mcpls.org/elibrary>

Calibre





Alfa

NOTE: [ISBN](#) scanners generally do not work for older books.

You can check this by seeing if the bar code number matches the ISBN.



Miscellaneous

Documents you need to keep physical copies of for all eternity.

- Birth and death certificates
- Tax file numbers
- Superannuation documents
- ID cards and passports
- Marriage certificates
- Business licences
- Insurance policies
- Wills and powers of attorney
- Vehicle registration and loan documents
- House deeds and mortgage documents

However, having a scanned copy of these documents is an excellent idea.

Documents that can be purged after a time.

- Tax records and notice of assessments (keep for five years)
- Pay stubs and bank statements (keep for a year)
- Home purchase, sale or improvement documents (keep for at least six years after you sell)
- Medical records and bills (keep at least a year after payment in case of disputes)
- Warranty documents and receipts (keep as long as you own the items to which they correspond)
- Bank statements
- Annual insurance policy statements

Just as you should with paper documents, you should set aside some time every year to get rid of electronic documents you no longer need. Did you replace your washing machine? Ditch the old owner's manual and make sure you have the new one. When you do your taxes, go back and delete all the files older than five years.

To be completely clear, this is ***not*** going to be a quick and easy project. Expect it to take time. Give yourself months, rather than days, to complete some aspects of your decluttering.

And remember to keep up with whatever processes you decide to use, so things don't get so overwhelming in the future.

Resources & Links

File Renaming Software

Advanced Renamer	https://www.advancedrenamer.com	Free *
Bulk Rename Utility	https://www.bulkrenameutility.co.uk	Free *
File Renamer	http://www.sherrodcomputers.com/products_filerenamer.cfm	Free / \$10

* Free for Personal Use

Duplicate File Finder Software

DupeGuru	https://dupeguru.voltaicideas.net	Free
Duplicate Photo Finder	https://www.ashisoft.com/duplicate-photo-finder.htm	\$49.95
Duplicate Photos Fixer Pro	https://www.duplicatephotosfixer.com	\$69.95
Easy Duplicate Finder	https://www.easyduplicatefinder.com	\$39.95 / yr

* Free for Personal Use

Music Management Software

Media Monkey	https://www.mediamonkey.com	Free / \$24.95
Helium	https://www.imploded.com	Free / \$39
Music Bee	https://getmusicbee.com	Free

eBook Management Software

Alfa eBooks Manager	https://www.alfaebooks.com	epub, mobi, pdf	\$19.95
Calibre	https://calibre-ebook.com	epub, mobi, pdf	Free

EPUB Reader Software

Adobe Digital Editions	https://www.adobe.com/solutions/ebook/digital-editions.html	epub, pdf	Free
Alfa	See above		
Calibre	See above		
Ice Cream EPUB Reader	https://icecreamapps.com/Ebook-Reader	epub, mobi, pdf	Free / \$19.95
Kindle	https://www.amazon.com/kindle-dbs/fd/kcp	epub, mobi, pdf	Free
Kobo	https://www.kobo.com/us/en/p/ereaders-apps	epub, mobi, pdf	Free

Photo Sharing Sites

500px	https://500px.com	Free, \$47.0/year
Flickr	https://www.flickr.com	Free, \$100/2 years
PhotoBlog	https://www.photoblog.com	Free, \$19.95/year
Photobucket	https://app.photobucket.com	\$6/month
SmugMug	https://www.smugmug.com	\$55/year

Photo Book Services

Artifact Uprising	https://www.artifactuprising.com	Starting \$15
Mixbook	https://www.mixbook.com	Starting \$16
Picaboo	https://www.picaboo.com	Starting \$20
Shutterfly	https://www.shutterfly.com	Starting \$15
Snapfish	https://www.snapfish.com	Starting \$13

Cloud Services

Amazon Drive		https://www.amazon.com/cloudrive	100GB - \$19.99/year
Box	10 GB	https://box.com	100GB - \$5/month
Dropbox	2 GB	https://www.dropbox.com	2TB - \$9.99/month
Google Drive	15 GB	https://www.google.com/drive	100GB - \$19.99/year
iCloud	5 GB	https://www.icloud.com	50GB - \$0.99/month
MS OneDrive	5 GB	https://onedrive.live.com	1TB - \$69.99/year
SugarSync	0	https://www.sugarsync.com	250 GB - \$9.99/month
Sync.com	5GB	https://www.sync.com	2TB - \$8/month

Desktop Email Programs

eM Client	\$49.95	https://www.emclient.com
Mailbird	\$39 / year	https://www.getmailbird.com
Outlook	MS Office subscription	https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365
Thunderbird	Free	https://www.thunderbird.net

NOTE: Free is usually going to be more complicated, so if you do not have the patience to [read a manual](#), go for a paid software package.

Technology Glossary

Add-on

An accessory piece of software designed to increase the capability of the software to which it is appended.

Address Bar

In a web browser or windows explorer, it is a rectangle, usually towards the top of the window, that shows you the current location or address of your web page or file.

Address Book

See [Contacts](#)

Alexa

Amazon's virtual assistant.

Algorithm

A set-of rules to be followed in calculations or problem-solving operations. Algorithms are frequently used to manipulate data sets.

Android

Googles mobile operating system, built on open source software.

Anti-Virus

A program that protects you from malicious software. Most anti-virus programs have options for purchasing additional security measures such as firewalls, email scanning, etc.

App

Short for [Application](#).

Apple ID

This is the username and password that you create with Apple to link a specific device to your Apple account. If you have an iPad and an iPhone, you use the same Apple ID with both of those devices.

Apple

Technology company that designs and develops hardware and software.

Application

An application is a piece of software that lets your device do something, like play music or give directions. An application is the same thing is a program.

Autocorrect

Auto correct is when your phone automatically changes what you were typing to what *it thought* you wanted to type.

Autoplay

When you visit a website and music or video starts playing without asking.

AVI

Audio Video Interleave. A multimedia format for audio and video files.

Backup

A copy of computer data that is taken and stored somewhere else, to be used in the event of data loss.

BCC

Blind carbon copy. Covertly send a copy of the message to a third party. The primary recipient cannot see the person was added.

Blockchain

Also Block Chain. A list of records (blocks) linked using cryptography. These records are a cryptographic hash of the previous block, a timestamp, and transaction data. Blockchains are generally used on a peer-to-peer network. Data in one block cannot be altered without changing all other blocks.

Bluetooth

A wireless technology that allows data to be shared over short distances using short-wave UHF radio signal.

Boolean

A system of logical propositions. Common Boolean operators: AND, OR, NOT, “ “, () . Based on the work of George Boole.

Browser Add-on

See [Browser Extension](#).

Browser Extension

A small software module that is used to customize a web browser.

Browser Hijack

Where a malicious piece of software modifies a web browser's settings without your permission.

Browser

Short for [Web Browser](#).

Brute Force Attack

Where a hacker tries many passwords for passphrases in an attempt to break into an account. The longer the password (or passphrase) the harder it is for someone to succeed with this type of attack.

Byte

A unit of digital information that consists of eight bits. A byte is the number of bits used to encode a single character of text.

Cache

Temporary storage space that allows your computer to quickly bring up information, such as previously viewed web pages.

Cambridge Analytica

A British political consulting firm that used misappropriated digital assets, data mining, and other processes to influence political elections around the world.

CC

Carbon copy. Send a copy of the message to someone else. The primary recipient can see this person received the message.

Cellular Data

The connection a cell phone makes to a cell tower that allows you to do things like surf the internet, download emails, and send MMS messages.

Cloud

Storage that is physically somewhere other than where you are. Cloud storage is generally accessible from multiple devices, because those files are stored on a hard drive that belongs to a company that hosts the cloud service. Cloud storage is like a self-storage unit for your electronic files, except you can access your stuff from anywhere.

Cloud Service

A service provided by a third party or company that allows you to provide access to files and applications remotely.

Codec

A device or program that encodes/decodes a data stream, such as an audio file, for storage.

Contacts / Contact List

A collection of screen names and the various data associated with them, such as email addresses and telephone numbers.

Cookie

A piece of data that a website saves on your computer. Cookies were designed to save user information such as preferences or logins but can sometimes be read by third parties. Cookies are also used to collect browsing data long-term.

Cortana

Microsoft's virtual assistant.

CPU

Central Processing Unit. The bit of a computer or electronic device that processes information.

Cryptocurrency

A digital asset that uses strong cryptography and is designed to work as a form of money. They used decentralized control, or a public financial database to keep track of who owns what.

Cryptography

Greek for "hidden writing", it is the study of secure communication—creating protocols to keep third parties from reading private messages.

Data Breach

The release of secure or private information. A data breach can be accidental or malicious, such as when an individual hacks into a system to steal information.

Database

An organized collection of information. Complicated databases link information between multiple tables allowing for analysis of the contained information. An address book is a basic database.

Denial of Service Attack (DOS)

A cyber-attack where the malefactor seeks to make a network resource (such as a website) unavailable by flooding the target with requests or visits.

Directory

A system that catalogs / organizes computer files.

Displayport

A high-quality audio-visual cable capable of transmitting HD and 4k.

DNS

Domain Name System. The phonebook of the Internet.

DNS Hijacking

Where a malefactor redirects visitors from a valid website to a different destination—often one that exists to steal data.

Domain Name

The string of text that identifies a place on the Web. A basic domain name is a word or abbreviation followed by a period followed by the domain extension: wvu.edu

Domain

The sometimes arbitrary grouping that designates what a website does or where it is based. The most common domains are .com .net .edu and .org. The domain is what you should check first when you want to verify the authenticity of a website.

Download

To move data and files from the internet or a server to your computer or mobile device.

DRM

Digital Rights Management. A format that protects electronic media from being illegally copied.

DVD

Digital Video Disc / Digital Versatile Disc. A digital optical disc data storage system.

DVI

Digital Video Interface. A video display interface that connects your computer to your monitor.

Email Header

The portion of an email message that contains the routing information. The header can be used to help determine if a message is fraudulent.

Email

Email is an electronic letter sent from one email address to another email address. Email addresses always have an @ (at sign) in them. Sending an email on your phone requires the use of cellular data. Each email address is unique, and email addresses are often used as unique identifiers or login credentials by databases.

Emoji

Small images used to represent emotions, ideas, or expressions. 😊

Emoticons

Representations of facial expressions using keyboard characters. These are used to portray moods or feelings. For example, a smiling face could be :) or ☺

Encryption

The encoding of data so that only authorized persons or devices can read/view the information. The stronger the encryption, the more unlikely it is that a malfeasant could decode the intercepted data through a brute force attack.

EPUB

Electronic Publication. A digital book format that allows you to read your eBook on any electronic device. EPUB files are reflowable.

eReader

eBook reader that use black and white eInk screens that give a similar reading experience to physical books.

EULA

End-User License Agreement. The legal contract between a software vendor and the user of that software. It specifies the rights and restrictions which apply to the use of the software.

External Storage

Devices that store data outside of a computer or other electronic device. They are often removable, such as USB thumb drives.

Facebook

An online media and networking company.

Facial Recognition

Technology capable of identifying or verifying a person from a digital image. Facial recognition can be used to unlock an electronic device.

File Extension

Also called a filename extension or file type, is the identifier suffix for a computer file name, and tells you the kind of program needed to open the file. By default, these extensions are hidden, but can still be used in search. If you change a file extension, that file will most often break.

Firewall

A security system that monitors incoming and outgoing network traffic to prevent unauthorized access to a system.

Folder

See [Directory](#).

Follow

Choose to see another user's posts in their content feed.

Force Stop

A way to completely stop an app that is running in the background. An app that has been closed may still have bits active and collecting data.

GB

Gigabyte. A computer memory unit equal to 1000 megabytes. The prefix giga means 10^9 .

GIF

Graphics Interchange Format. An image format that is often used in logos and animated pictures.

Google

A technology company that specializes in services and products related to the internet.

GPS

Global Positioning System is a piece of hardware that allows a device to contact a satellite to determine the location of the device in latitude and longitude. On most devices, software makes these data points usable to the end user by placing them on a map.

GUI

Graphical User Interface (pronounced gooey). The windows, icons, menus, and pictures that allow you to interact with your computer using your mouse. Windows 10 and Mac OS (Big Sur) are operating system GUIs.

Hard Drive

A data storage devices that stores and retrieves digital data. In your computer, this is where all your programs are installed and files saved.

Hardware

The electronic components of a device; the bits you can touch. A cell phone, a keyboard, and a CPU are all hardware.

HD

High Definition. Generally a higher resolution and quality than standard definition video.

HDMI

High-Definition Multimedia Interface. Audio/video interface for transmitting uncompressed data. Cable that connects your computer to your monitor, or your DVD player to your TV.

HDR

High Dynamic Range. A photographic process where a camera takes multiple pictures at different exposures and combines them into a single image—this allows all areas of your image to be well-exposed, but can also look unreal if used too much.

Home Screen

The main screen of a computer or mobile device. Home screens are typically personalized by the user so that no two home screens will look alike.

Hotspot

A type of Wireless Access Point. A device that allows you access the internet from a public place. Hotspots are generally open and unsecured and you should assume any data you submit is visible to people with ill-intent.

Hover text

When you hold your cursor over a hyperlink, the document should display the URL for that link. This allows you to verify links.

http

Hypertext Transfer Protocol is how data is moved between a website and an end user.

https

Hypertext Transfer Protocol (Secure) is an encrypted form of http. This protects against interference or snooping by third parties.

iCloud

Apple's cloud service.

Icon

A graphic representation of a program, file or function.

Information Security

The protection of data and the mitigation of risks, generally on computer networks.

Install

A process that writes the code used to run the program (application) onto the hard drive of your device. Installing a piece of software embeds it into the device and allows it to work.

Internet

A system of inter-connected computer networks.

iOS

Apple's mobile operating system.

iPad

Apple's tablet computer, running iOS.

iPhone

Apple's cellular phone, running iOS.

iPod

Apple's music player. The iPod is general similar to an iPhone, only without cellular service.

ISBN

International Standard Book Number. A numeric commercial book identifier that is unique for every edition and variation of a book.

iTunes

Apple's music service.

JPG / JPEG

Joint Photographic Experts Group. A [lossy](#) compression format for digital images.

Keylogger

Keystroke logger (also keyboard capture). A piece of hardware or a software program that can record every key struck on the keyboard.

Location Bar

See [address bar](#).

Location Services

Information from GPS, wireless access points, cell towers, and Bluetooth devices that helps your phone know where you are.

Lock Screen

The opening screen or interface of an operating system. A lock screen keeps unauthorized users from accessing the data and information on a device.

Lossless Compression

A form of data encoding that maintains the original quality of the file but at the cost of having a large file size.

Lossy Compression

A form of data encoding used to reduce file size at the cost of data quality.

Messenger

An app that allows users to send text messages and images to other users in a system.

Metadata

A data set that give you information about other data. A card catalog contains metadata.

Micro-SD

Micro-Secure Digital Card. Smaller size [SD card](#), used in phones and lightweight devices. Comes with an adapter that allows for the transfer for files from a portable device to a computer.

MMS

Multimedia Messaging Service is a kind of text messaging that allows you to send text messages that contain pictures or audio, as well as messages longer than 160 characters or to multiple people.

MOBI

Mobipocket. The proprietary ebook format for the Amazon Kindle. MOBI files are reflowable.

Mobile Carrier

A wireless service provider that allows users to connect portable devices (such as phones) to the internet through a cellular service.

Mobile Data

Wireless internet access through a cellular data connection.

MP3

Moving Pictures Experts Group Layer-3. A coding format for digital audio.

MP4 / MPEG4

Moving Pictures Experts Group Layer-4. A coding format for digital multi-media, commonly video.

MPEG

Motion Picture Experts Group. A standard for encoding and compressing video.

Network

A group of computers connected for the purpose of sharing resources. A network can be as small as two computers or as vast as the Internet.

News Feed

The main page of Facebook, where you see content posted by users you have chosen to follow. These content can be text or images.

Notification

A message displayed by an electronic device to provide an alert, reminder, or other communication.

Online Chat

Real time communication over the internet through (generally short) text messages.

OS

Operating System. The base upon which software and apps are added. An Apple device generally uses iOS (iPhones) or macOS (laptop computers). PCs typically used the Windows OS, but there are other operating systems, such as Linux that can be installed. Non-Apple cell phones frequently use some form of the Android OS. How your device looks and works is dependent upon the operating system installed.

P2P

[Peer-to-Peer](#)

Passcode

This is the secret code to get into a specific device. If you have an iPhone and an iPad, they can have different passcodes. You can sometimes use a fingerprint instead of a passcode to get into a device.

Password Manager

A program that stores electronic passwords.

Password

The secret code to access a restricted resources. Passwords are usually required to use a minimum of eight characters, and contain special characters, such as numbers or upper case letters.

PayPal

A method of online money transfer and payments.

PDF

Portable Document Format. Once an Adobe proprietary format, now one of the most common formats for sharing digital documents.

Peer-to-Peer

A distributed that shares tasks or work between devices of the same level.

Phishing

A fraudulent attempt to gain personal or sensitive information, by sending an email or creating a website that pretends to be from a real company or person, but is not.

Play Store

Goggle's app store, where users can download or purchase programs to run on their Android devices.

PNG

Portable Network Graphics. A [lossless](#) compression type for digital images.

Podcast

A digital audio file made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer or mobile device, typically available as a series, new installments of which can be received by subscribers automatically.

Post

A message, comment, image, or other item that is placed on the internet, generally on a website.

Predictive Text

An input technology that guesses what you want to type both from what you are currently typing and, if you have allowed the software to learn, from what you have typed in the past. Predictive text makes typing faster and easier if you have good software on the back end.

Privacy

The information that is shared between your device and the external resources to which it is connected, as well as how that information is used, and with whom that information is shared.

Program

A program is a piece of software that lets your device do something like send a text message or video chat. A program is the same thing as an application.

Public Network

An electronic connection where the traffic between devices is visible to anyone.

Reflowable

An ebook format that layout depending upon the output device. MOBI and EPUB are reflowable formats, which means the number of words on the page change, depending upon the page / text size.

Reply All

A response to an electronic message that is returned to ALL recipients of the original message.

Reply

A response to an electronic message.

Ripping

Extracting digital content from a container, such as a CD or DVD. Ripping a CD means that the music is copied without loss from the CD to your computer.

ROT-13

One of the most basic forms of encryption; a substitution encryption where characters are rotated 13 places.

Router

A networking device that forwards data between networks.

RTFM

Read The *Fantastic* Manual.

Scraping

Web scraping, web harvesting, web data extraction is extracting data from websites—gathering up information available on a public website.

SD Card

Secure Digital Card. Removable memory that is used in devices like cameras, because it can be easily switched out when full. Allows for easy transfer of files from device to computer without a cable.

Search

A computer command that allows you to find specific files on your computer that meet a designated category, such as file type, or date modified.

Search Engine

A software system designed to find information on the web. The results from a search engine can be webpages, files, or images. Generally, behind the scenes a program runs an algorithm that crawls through the web cataloging everything it sees. This catalog is then organized by a different program where pages are associated with various terms.

Security

Protecting electronic systems from theft or damage. This can be protection from physical theft, but often refers to electronic damage, where systems can be disrupted or data stolen.

Server

A device (or program) that allows you to access something not on the device you are physically touching. A mail server stores your email and drops it to your device upon request. A web server allows you to connect to the internet.

Settings

An app that allows you to customize your computer, device, or program.

Siri

Apple's personal assistant.

Smart Device

An electronic device that connects to other devices or the internet through a wireless protocol such as Bluetooth or Wi-Fi.

SMS

Short Messaging Service. A brief message that is sent from one phone number to another phone number. SMS does not use cellular data.

Snooping

Unauthorized listening in to data transmission.

Snopes

One of the first internet fact-checking resources, Snopes started as a site to debunk urban legends, but expanded into general fact-checking. (<https://www.snopes.com/>)

Social Media

Interactive computer technologies and websites that allow for the sharing of information. Facebook is the most famous social media site, and allows friends to connect automatically, but LinkedIn is another type of social networking site, that focuses on career and job networking.

Software

The programs that run on your computer or phone. Can also be called an application.

Sort

To organize information in a prescribed sequence, such as alphabetically, or oldest to newest.

Spam

Unsolicited electronic messages (especially advertising).

Spoofing

When a person or program pretends to be someone else, by falsifying data, to gain access to your account or data.

Spyware

A piece of malicious software that secretly installs itself to gather information about the user or device.

SSD

Solid State Drive. A storage device for your computer that saves data on chips instead of a mechanical platters.

Status Bar

A graphical element, usually at the top or bottom of a device's screen, that displays information about the state of the device. Some settings commonly found on the status bar are sound/volume, time, and battery life.

Sync

See [synchronize](#).

Synchronize

When a file is synced, changes to that file are saved are pushed from one device to all other devices with access to that file, via a remote server.

Tag / Tagging

A keyword or term added to the metadata of a piece of information. In social media, when someone is tagged, they are alerted to a post made by another user.

Taskbar

A graphical user interface (GUI) that is typically along the bottom of your window, and usually shows you what programs are actively running as well as important information about the operating system.

TB

Terabyte. A measure of computer storage equal to 1000 gigabytes or trillion bytes. The prefix tera means 10^{12} .

Terms of Service

The rules you agree to abide by when you sign up use an online service.

Text Message

A brief message that is sent from one phone number to another phone number via a protocol called SMS. Text messages are generally limited to 160 characters, and messages with more characters than that will be broken down into multiple messages when sent. Text messages are asynchronous:

a message sent to someone whose phone is off is delivered when their phone is turned back on.

Text messages generally do not require cellular data but do require a cellular connection.

Thumb Drive

[USB Flash Drive](#)

TIFF / TIF

Tag Image File Format. Lossless digital image format that was developed originally for scanners as an alternative to multiple proprietary formats.

Timeline

A display of items in chronological order. Twitter has a timeline; Facebook has a news feed.

TL;DR

Too Long, Didn't Read

TOS

Terms of Service

Trojans

A type of malicious computer virus that presents itself as a useful item, such as a document.

Two-Factor Authentication

This is a way to make both your device and your account more secure. When you log into your Apple ID on a new iPad (or iPhone) for the first time OR you log into iCloud from a computer you have never used before, Apple wants you to verify that YOU are the person attempting to access your account.

TXT

[Text message.](#)

Unfollow

To stop seeing a user's posts in your timeline or news feed. On Facebook, you can unfollow someone by still remain friends with them.

Uninstall

The removal of a software program or application from the operating system of a device. Although uninstall removes the visible aspects of a program, there are often bits and pieces of the program left behind.

Unique Identifier

A piece of data that is unique to a record. Telephone numbers and email addresses are often used as unique identifiers, because no two individuals have the same ones. Unique identifiers allow data records to be linked across databases.

Upload

To move files from your computer to a cloud service or network.

URL

Uniform Resource Locator is the address of a space on the web. Every website has a unique address, and that address can often tell you something about the web page you are visiting.

URL Bar

See [address bar](#).

USB

Universal Serial Bus. This is the industry standard for cables that connect devices and their peripherals through a wire. This connection can be used for both communication and power. There are several types of USB connections: USB-A, USB-A 3.0, mini-USB, micro-USB, and the newest standard, USB-C.

USB Flash Drive

Also: USB thumb drive. A small USB data storage device that is removable, rewritable, and can be easily carried in a pocket.

User Data

Any type of data generated by people interacting with software programs. User data includes: Explicit Data, which is given by a user directly such as name, address, email, and phone number; Implicit Data, which is not provided by the user directly but gleaned through analysis of user interactions, such as pages visited, session duration, or type of device; and finally External Data which has been gathered from third parties with whom an organization has a relationship.

Username

Also called account name, login ID, user ID. The credentials you use to access an electronic resources, such as your computer or a website. Every account on a website or device must be unique to that service, so as to keep account information separate.

VGA

Video Graphics Array. A connector that takes video signal from a computer and takes it to the monitor (or projector).

Virtual Personal Assistant

A software program that preforms tasks or services based upon verbal commands. Some of the most well-known services are Siri and Alexa.

Viruses

A piece of malicious software that inserts itself into another software program that it uses to replicate itself. Ransomware is a software virus.

WAV

Waveform Audio File Format. An audio file standard for uncompressed audio.

Web

Also called the World Wide Web, this is an information space on the Internet that is accessible from devices such as computers, cell phones, and tablets, using a URL as the address.

Web Browser

A software program that allows you to access sites on the Internet, or web.

Web Cookie

See Cookie.

Website

a location connected to the Internet that maintains one or more pages on the World Wide Web

Wi-Fi

Short for wireless (the “fi” is an arbitrary syllable added on)

Widget

A graphical element that displays information or provides quick access to certain parts of an app. Mobile devices frequently have a weather widget that is linked to your weather app, and which tells you the current temperature and forecast.

Wireless Access Point

A device that allows your device to access the internet. If a wireless access point (or router) does not have a password, it is unsecure, and you should assume that anyone can see what you are doing on your device.

Wireless Router

A piece of hardware that allows devices to connect to the internet without being plugged into the wall. Your wireless at home should be password protected, so that strangers cannot access all devices in your home using that wireless network.

Wireless

A technology that allows computers to connect to a network and/or the internet without using a physical connection. Wireless is available in an area when a wireless access point (also called a hotspot) has been created and made accessible to devices. Public wireless is less secure and caution should be used (ie, don't make purchases or send private emails over a wireless network). Private wireless networks (such as in your home) should be secured with a password.

World Wide Web

An information system on the Internet which allows documents to be connected to other documents by hypertext links, enabling the user to search for information by moving from one document to another.

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