

# The Scary Stuff

also known as The Basics –

a little boring, but necessary to understand what you are doing

## *What is a Computer?*

A computer is nothing more than a really big Filing Cabinet.

Inside your computer is stored all kinds of information.

This information, or data, is stored in the computer in **Files**.

Some of this information might be specific instructions that your computer reads causing programs to run, which enables you to manipulate other data.

Some of the information may be the photos that you took last week.

Some of the information will connect you to the Internet, where you can look into other people's filing cabinets, and swap recipes, flirt, look at their porn collection, or purchase a new washer and dryer.

The possibilities are endless, but it is very important to understand how your own computer is organized, because sooner or later, you are going to want to copy a file or download a program file, and if you don't know where it is stored on your computer you will not be able to find it and run it, or view it.



## *What are Drives, Folders and Files?*

If you think of your computer as a BIG filing cabinet...

.....the Drives are what you use to open the Drawers.



A **Disk Drive** is nothing more than a set of instructions telling the computer to access a **data file Storage Area**, whether it is located in the computer itself, or is on a CD, DVD, flash drive, external hard drive, PDA, digital camera, or whatever. Each of these devices is just a data storage device.

(Your computer has many different types of drives, mostly due to the changes in technology that make data transfer and storage bigger, faster and better. For instance, a DVD will hold more information than a CD, and an external hard drive will hold a lot more information than a DVD. With the explosion of the handheld electronics devices market, (up to and including phones, for chrissakes), there are many ways to keep your data handy.)

The Drives are labeled with a letter from A through G (or H or I or J or K), depending on how many different types of data transfer media your computer will accept, and how many external data sources you have currently plugged in to your computer. Since many of the newer data storage devices (flash drives, external hard drives, thumb drives, PDAs) come with USB Plug-and-Play capability, the contents of your computer drives can **change** depending on what you have plugged in at the time.

A description of common drive types is given on the next page.

<b>A: drive</b>		<b>3 ½ inch floppy drive</b> ....lets the computer read 3 ½ inch floppy disks & stores data to those disks. Most of these are now defunct after the advent of CD & DVD drives.
<b>B: drive</b>		<b>5 ¼ inch floppy drive</b> (now completely defunct) computers don't have them anymore
<b>C: drive</b>		<b>hard drive</b> ..... accessed by human typing on keyboard or using mouse, it stores data directly into the drive storage area. Extremely large, and the main data storage area.
<b>D: drive</b>	Or	<b>CD-RW drive</b> ....lets the computer <i>read and write</i> data to a CD <b>DVD-ROM drive</b> .....lets computer only <i>read</i> data from a DVD or CD
<b>E: drive</b>	Or	<b>CD-ROM drive</b> .... lets computer only <i>read</i> data from a CD
	Or	<b>DVD-RW drive</b> ...lets the computer <i>read &amp; write</i> to a DVD or CD
	Or	<b>Digital Camera</b> .....can transfer pictures from a camera
	Or	<b>Flash Drive, Thumb Drive, or External Hard Drive, etc</b> .....
<b>F: drive</b>		<b>Camera, Flash Drive, Thumb Drive, or External Hard Drive, etc</b> .....
<b>G: drive</b>		<b>PDA, Flash Drive, Thumb Drive, or External Hard Drive, etc</b> .....
<b>Etc:</b>		

Think of that filing cabinet again, with each of the drawers

Labeled with a Letter.....

Inside the **A & B Drawers** you have stored a bunch of old 3 ½" and 5 ¼" floppy disks,

but you've lost the key, so basically, you can't use those drawers anymore. (grin!)

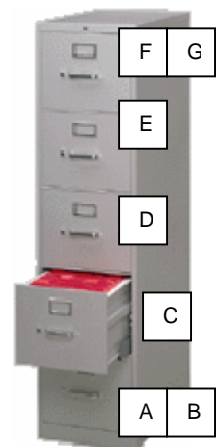
The **C Drawer** is really stuffed....full of folders and files, papers and pictures,

operating instructions, etc. It's your main storage area.

The **D Drawer** is full of CD's or DVD's with data on them, or pictures, or programs.

The **E, F & G Drawers** hold your Digital Camera, your PDA, thumb drives, and external hard drives with another bunch of data files that you want to eventually file in your main **C Drawer**.

Basically, you will have a different "drawer" for each **method** that you use to put data into your computer. (Or take data out.)



Now let's talk about folders...

A **Folder** is exactly the same thing as a folder in a file cabinet. Inside each of these Folders, there may very well be more sub-folders, or Files. A **Folder** is just a way to group together a bunch of files or data that has a common purpose.

For instance, every time you install a new program on your computer, a Folder is automatically created during the installation and stored on your C: Drive. Inside this folder are the files and instructions necessary to cause this program to run, or *execute*. You don't have to do a thing, all of this is created for you.

You can and should create your own Folders to help keep your data files organized. For instance, if you have a lot of recipes that you want to save, you can create a Folder called **Recipes**, and store all of your **recipe files** in it. Or if you want to sort your picture files, you can create a Folder called **My Vacation Photos**, with a sub-folder called **Maui** and another sub-folder called **Honolulu**, and another sub-folder called **Oahu**.

Windows automatically creates some Folders on the **C: Drive** of your computer, to use in storing certain specific types of files, and these Folders should never be deleted, or the programs that cause the computer to function may cease to operate. Usually, if you get into one of these folders, Windows will issue a warning that you could mess up the computer if you fool around in them. These special folders are listed below, along with a couple of the other Folders that Windows creates for your use.

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Program Files</b> | This is where most of your Program Folders will go when they are installed. It's usually not a good idea to mess with these unless you know what you are doing.  |
| <b>Windows Files</b> | This is where all of your Windows Operating System Files are stored. It is <b>never</b> a good idea to mess with these unless you know what you are doing.       |
| <b>My Documents</b>  | A folder that Windows creates for you to store your own documents.<br>(Feel free to mess with this folder as much as you like, it isn't going to hurt anything.) |

And inside the **My Documents** Folder:

- |                    |                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>My Pictures</b> | You can guess what this is for. |
| <b>My Music</b>    | Ditto.                          |

There can be other System Folders and Files on your computer, but they will vary based on what type of Speakers you have, what kind of Modem, whether you have a Dell or a Compaq or a HP, etc.

Basically, if you want to store your own data, you want to keep it in the **My Documents** folder, so you know where to go to look for it later.

## ***What's inside all these folders?***

Data.

But data in a thousand and one different forms. The data is grouped together in a specific type called a File, and the file can do different things, depending on how it was stored.

Below are a few examples of some of the different file types stored on your computer:

**Program Files:** These files contain *thousands* of lines of instructions, telling your computer to perform a certain way when you press a certain key or move the mouse a certain way. These files are called **Executable** Files, since when you open the file, they start running or executing. The little icon on your desktop that you click to make a program run is called a **Shortcut**, and by clicking on this shortcut you are actually opening the program file and causing it to execute.

**Document Files:** These files contain documents that you have typed up, such as a letter, or a journal entry or a note.

**Spreadsheet Files:** These files contain spreadsheets – useful in calculations, and may contain programs within called Macros.

**Picture Files:** These files contain digital data that defines a picture. It is not really a picture folks, it's a bunch of instructions that tells the computer to create a picture on the screen by putting a blue pixel here, a pink pixel next to it, a red pixel there....and on and on and on.....

**Music Files:** Also known as MP3 files (due to the method used to compress the data) these files will play a song on your computer and can be converted to Audio files for playing on a CD player with the proper software.

**Sound Files:** Also known as WAV files (sound waves) cause your computer to speak to you, make ringing noises or clicking noises or moo-ing if you prefer. (Of course, you have to speakers attached to your computer to hear them.)

**Video Files:** Also known as Mpeg files. I can't remember what Mpeg is the acronym for, but opening this type of file with the Windows Media Player (Which is also a program!) will cause a little movie to play.

Etc.

**Update:** Okay, this set of instructions was originally written back in the dark ages (about 6 years ago) and obviously now there are about a hundred different formats for video and music and picture files. Rather than go into all of the file types here, which you don't really need to know to do your work, I'll put together a general list of the common current file types and a bit of a description for them if anyone is interested. But if you run into trouble with a file type that you can't open, Windows now tells you that you don't have the correct program to open that file type and sends you to the internet to find the program. So it's not likely to be an issue unless your grandkids send you a video of the recital and you need to go find the player for that particular file.

Okay, that's it for the basic structure of the computer. I'd recommend printing this out and reading through it a couple of times until you get comfortable with the idea, but you don't have to memorize it. Future videos and tutorials will go into more detail on how to move data around and manipulate it, and organize it inside of the filing cabinet. For those, you'll just need to understand these basic concepts.