

Most files on your computer have a 3-character “file extension” that gives a clue as to what type of file it is. (Some file extensions are only 1 or 2 characters, and some are 4.)

Go into “My Computer” or “Windows Explorer” and open a folder. If you don’t see file extensions for all the files, this is what you need to do:

Displaying File Extensions

In Windows 98:

1. Click on the “View” menu and select “Folder Options”.
2. Click on the “View” tab.
3. Clear the check mark in the “Hide file extensions for known file types” box.
4. You may also want to select “Show all files” under the “Hidden files” heading.
5. Click OK.

In Windows 95:

1. Click on the “View” menu and select “Options”.
2. Click on the “View” tab.
3. Clear the check mark in the “Hide MS-DOS file extensions for file types that are registered” box.
4. You may also want to select “Show all files”.
5. Click OK.

Showing More Information About A File

In “My Computer” and “Windows Explorer”, there are 4 ways you can display files: “Large Icons”, “Small Icons”, “List”, and “Details”. Click on the “View” menu and select “Details”.

Now you will see column headings “Name”, “Size”, “Type” and “Modified”. If you click on a heading, the list will be sorted in that order. For example, if you click on “Size”, the files will be sorted by size. Click on the heading again to sort the files in reverse order.

In the “Type” column, you’ll see a description of the file based on two things:

- The file extension
- An associated program installed on your computer

For example, a file with an extension of “.htm” may have a description of “Netscape Hypertext Document” or “Internet Explorer Document” depending on whether you have Netscape or Internet Explorer installed on your computer.

Another example: A file with an extension of “.doc” might have a description of “WordPad document”, “Microsoft Word Document”, or “Word Perfect Document” depending on what program you use on your computer.

If Windows doesn’t have a particular program associated with a file, the description might simply be something like “XYZ file” (for a file ending in “.xyz” for example).

Common File Extensions

Here's a table of some common file extensions.

Extension	Description
.exe	<u>Exec</u> utable program or application. This can either be a program file, or it may be what's called a "Self-Extracting Archive" or "Self-Extracting Zip file" (see ".zip").
.com	Also a program file, but is very small and runs in DOS. Sometimes a ".com" program will run other ".exe" programs.
.bat	A DOS " <u>ba</u> tch" file. This is like a program or macro that executes a number of commands one right after the other. Batch files can be edited in Notepad. Batch files run in DOS. A file present on almost every computer is called AUTOEXEC.BAT and may execute certain commands in DOS before Windows actually loads.
.zip	A compressed or "zipped" file. A "zip" file is one or more files that have been compressed into a single file. This makes it easier and quicker to download files from the Internet. But, you need a program like "WinZip" or "PKUnZip" to uncompress or "un-zip" a "zip" file. If you have a registered version of WinZip (or similar program), you can create a self-extracting zip file with an "exe" extension so the user doesn't have to have WinZip installed on their computer to un-compress the file.
.arc	This is an older type of zip file called an " <u>ar</u> chive" file. You'd need a program like "PKXArc" to un-archive an "arc" file. I don't think anyone uses this type of file format any more.
.htm or .html	This is a web page file. "HTML" stands for HyperText Markup Language. Double-click on this kind of file and it will usually open whatever browser you happen to use.
.gif	This is a picture file. "GIF" stands for "Graphics Interchange Format". In Windows Explorer, it might be described as a "CompuServe GIF file" because this type of file format was copyrighted by CompuServe. If you installed a program such as "Paint Shop Pro", it might have a description such as "Paint Shop Pro Image" instead (or any other paint-type program!)
.jpg or .jpeg	This is also a picture file. JPEG stands for "Joint Photographic Experts Group" and is usually used for photographic images. JPEG and GIF files are used as images on web pages.
.txt	A <u>te</u> xt file. You can use Notepad, or any word processor to open a text file.
.doc	Some kind of <u>do</u> cument usually. Any number of programs such as WordPad, Word, WordPerfect, or even Notepad could have been used to create this file.
.xls	This is the file extension commonly used by Microsoft Excel. If you download an "xls" file, you still may not be able to open it if you don't have the same (or better) version of Excel that created it.
.wk1 or .wks	This is the file extension commonly used by Lotus 1-2-3. Sometimes, Microsoft Excel can open Lotus 1-2-3 files, and vice-versa.