

Computer Skills: Files and Folders

Large amounts of information — such as documents, spreadsheets, photographs, MP3 files, and web pages — can be stored on computer storage media such as hard disk drives and flash memory drives. This information can be organized into files and folders.

File

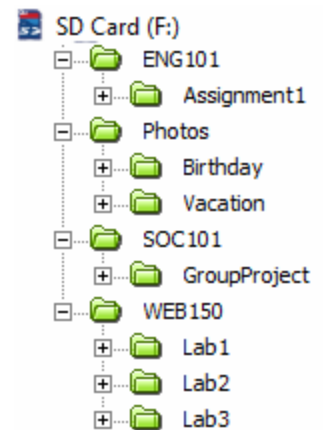
A computer **file** is a collection of information which is stored (saved) on computer storage media such as a hard disk drive or flash drive. Since a hard drive usually contains thousands of files, it is useful to organize these files into groups, called folders (also known as directories).

Folder

A **folder** is a collection of related files that you (or a program) have grouped together and given a name. A folder may also contain other folders (referred to as subfolders or subdirectories).

The folders on storage media are arranged in a tree-like structure with subfolders branching out from their parent folders. Each storage media has one root folder which contains all other folders.

The figure shows the directory structure or folder tree of a flash drive. In this example, the root folder is identified as "SD Card (F:)" and folders named ENG101, Photos, SOC101, and WEB150. Each of these folders may contain one or more subfolders. Any of these folders may also contain files.



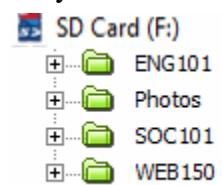
Drives & Folders

Every drive, folder, and file used by your computer must have a name.

Drive Designations

The operating system assigns drive designations for hard drives, CD-ROM drives, floppy drives, Flash Memory Drives, network drives, and so on. A drive designation consists of a single letter followed by a colon ":"

- A: and B: are reserved for the computer's floppy drives.
- C: is reserved for the primary hard disk drive.
- D: is usually assigned to the DVD drive.
- Other letters can be used to designate external storage such as USB Flash Memory drives, USB external hard drives, SD Cards, and network drives.



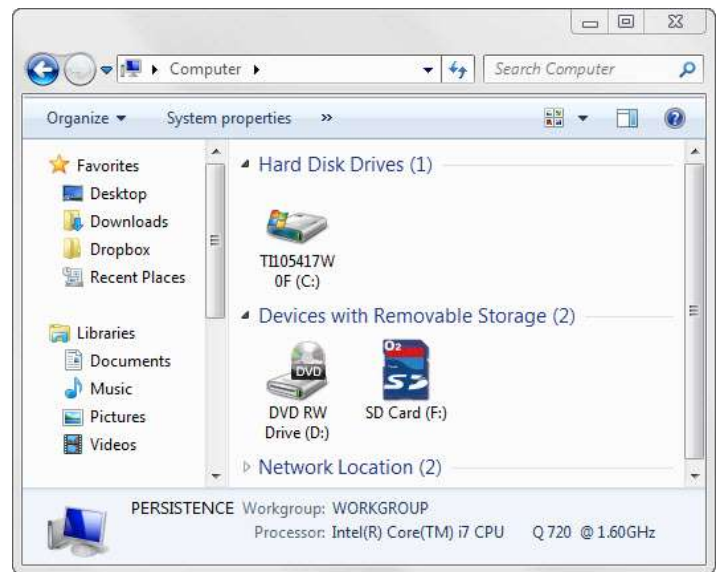
Creating a Folder

Most computer users organize their files in folders. The figure at the right shows an SD Card designated as Removable Disk (F:) with the following folders: ENG101, Photos, SOC101, and WEB150. This example will use the Windows 7 operating system to create a new folder on this drive. If you are used to older versions of Windows, this is the equivalent of the “My Computer” application. The Computer application can be used to display and access the drives, files, and folders on your computer.

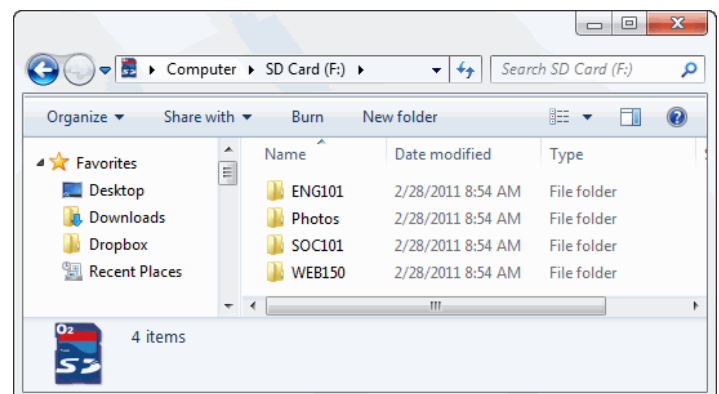
1. Select the round **Start Button** in the lower left corner of the monitor and then select **Computer**.



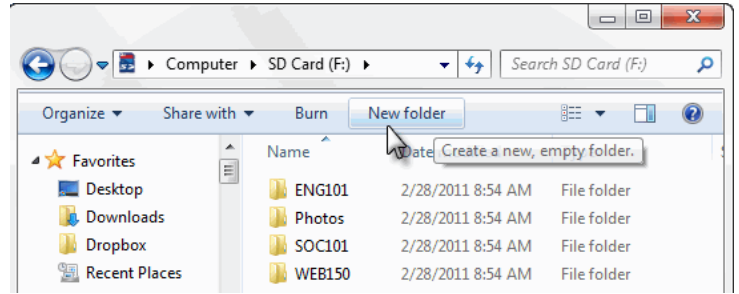
2. The **Computer** window displays as shown at the right.
3. To access the SD Card designated as F:, double click on the SD Card (F:) icon.



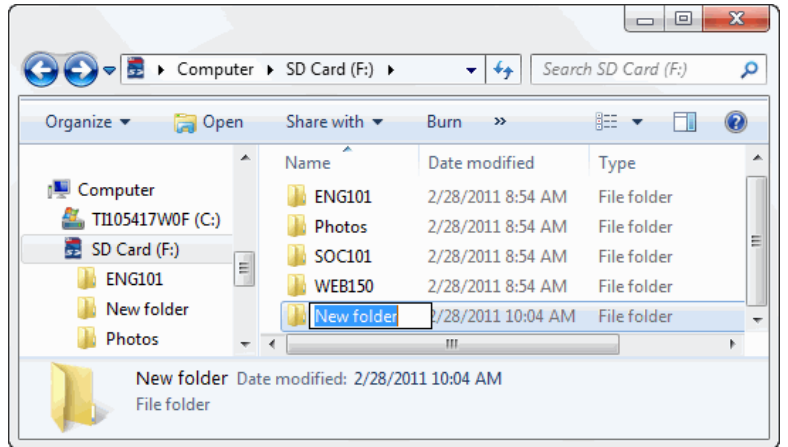
4. The contents of the drive are displayed as shown at the right



- In this example, we are adding a new folder to contain files for the CIS 101 class. To add a new folder called, "CIS101", select **New folder** as shown below.

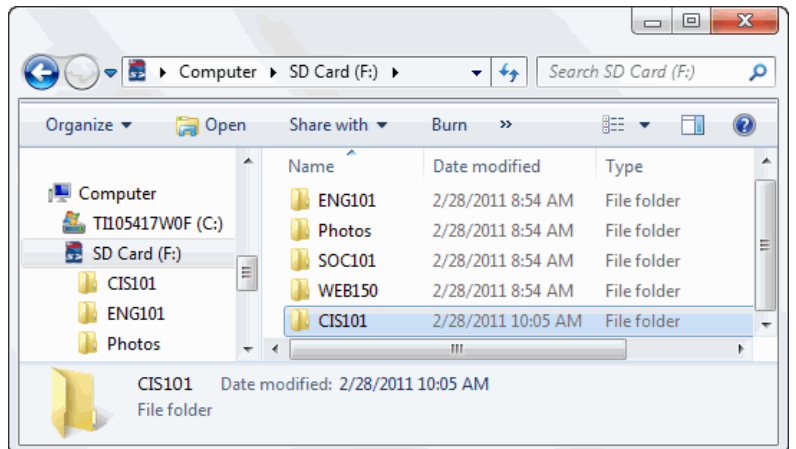


- A folder is created with the default name of "New folder".



- Place your cursor in the textbox and type the name you want to assign to the folder, in this case "CIS101".

Note: if the textbox no longer displays click once on the "New folder" text to select it and then click again to cause a textbox to re-display.



Naming Files & Folders

File Names

In older operating systems there used to be many restrictions when naming files. More recent Windows operating systems allow flexibility in choosing a name for a file. A file name can contain up to 255 characters, including spaces. It's a good idea to avoid punctuation symbols. The following symbols cannot be used in file names:

colon ":", vertical bar "|", quotation mark "\"", slash "/", backslash "\", question mark "?", and asterisk "*".

Documents or data files are normally created within a specific application. For example, if you start WordPad, type some text, and save the document, you will assign it a file name as you save the file. In the figure below a file named **Homework.rtf** is saved in the folder called CIS101.



File Name Extensions

Most applications automatically configure a **file name extension**. A file name extension usually consists of three or four characters. In the example above, WordPad automatically configured the rtf file name extension. It's usually a good idea to use the default file name extension configured by an application. Changing the file name extension can have unpredictable results — sometimes the file becomes unreadable.

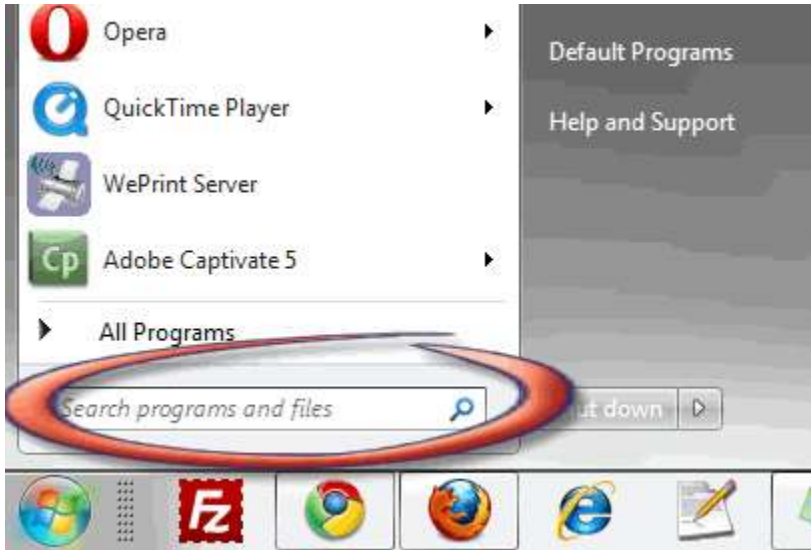
The table below lists commonly used file types and file extensions.

File Type	File Extension
Microsoft Word 2003 document	.doc
Microsoft PowerPoint 2003 presentation	.ppt
Microsoft Excel 2003 spreadsheet	.xls
Microsoft Word 2007-2010 document	.docx
Microsoft PowerPoint 2007-2010 presentation	.pptx
Microsoft Excel 2007-2010 spreadsheet	.xlsx
Microsoft Notepad text file	.txt
Microsoft WordPad document	.rtf
Adobe PDF document	.pdf
Web pages	.htm or .html
Images, photos, graphics	.gif, .jpg, .png, .bmp
Audio files	.mp3, .wav, .au, .midi

Finding a Lost File

If you have no idea where you saved it:

Click on the Start Button and notice the "Search programs and files" text box that at the bottom of the application menu.



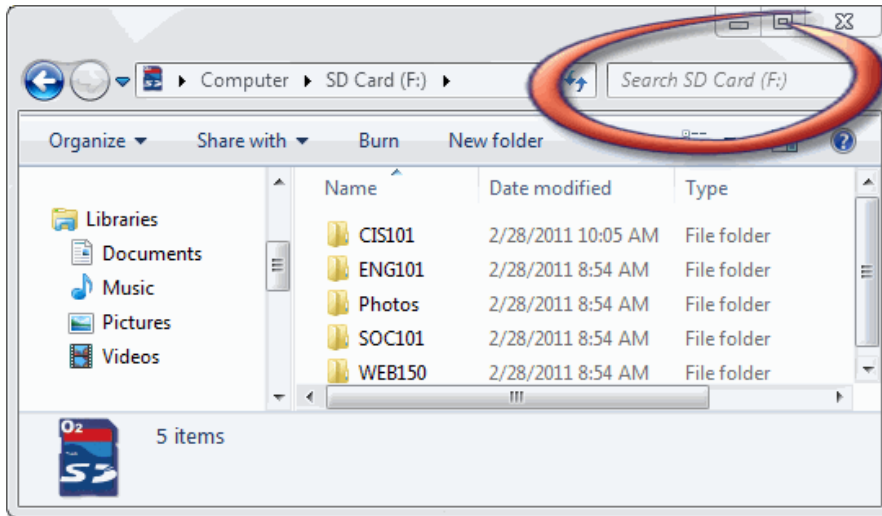
This option is useful to search all the drives and storage devices connected to your computer for a lost document. However, it can be time consuming. To use this feature, type a term in the text box and click the search icon. You can search for text that's part of a file name or is contained within a file. The results will be a display of file names that contain the term you are searching for.

To Search a Folder for a File:

- **If you downloaded a file using a browser:**
Browsers are often configured to save to a folder named "Downloads" or "My Downloads." This folder is sometimes located within your "My Documents" folder.
- **If you saved it using an application:**
Many applications are configured by default to save to the "My Documents" or "Documents" folder on the hard drive (C:). If you choose a different location, often applications will try to save any subsequent documents to the new location, too. You may want to open the application, such as Microsoft Word and select the Button (or File menu option) and then Save As to see where the application last saved a file. Try searching this folder first.

Searching within a Folder:

1. Select the Start Button > Computer to open up Windows Explorer. Navigate to the storage device and folder you would like to search.
2. The example in the figure below demonstrates searching for the Homework.rtf file that was recently saved. Windows Explorer is displaying the main folders on the SD Card. Notice the text box in the upper right corner with "Search ..."

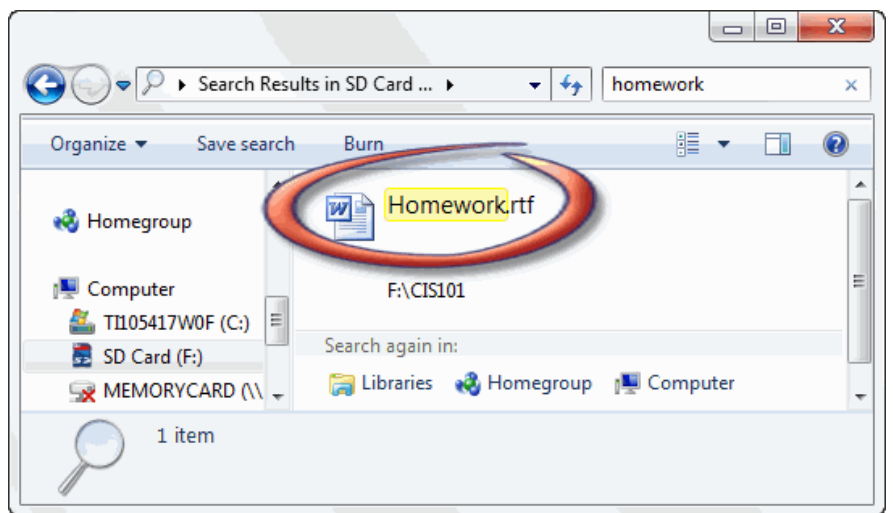


3. Choose a term to search for. The term can be either part of a file name or text contained within a file. Type the term in the search text box and press enter. In this example, we searched for "homework." The results are shown at the right.

4. In this case, only one file was found. You can click on the file name to open the file.

If you need to change your search criteria or look for a different file, you can type the new term in the search text box and search again.

If you need to search a different folder or drive, use Windows Explorer to navigate to the location and search again.



This concludes the Computer Skills: Files & Folders Tutorial.