

Intermediate Vista

Lesson 3

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Lesson 3 — Files & Folders

Introduction

Computers, like some offices, have a highly structured filing system for storing all of the files that may be present on hard drives, floppy drives, CD drives and any other storage device connected to the computer. Most computers running Windows Vista will have in excess of 100,000 files already on the hard drive before you add any of your own! They are required to run the Vista operating system. Fortunately, you won't have to deal with the great bulk of such files in your normal day to day operations. This lesson concentrates on file operations that you commonly use. For the curious, you can find a more detailed explanation of the computer's overall file structure in the Appendix.

Fortunately for us users the computer keeps track of all our files and it provides shortcuts so we can locate our files rapidly. For example, you may have noticed a "Documents" button on your Start Menu. Clicking on that action button will bring up a display of the "Documents" folder and its contents. It's a good place to start with your own filing system.

The File Specification

File names that you see on your computer screen are actually only one part of the entire "file specification" or "filespec" because the computer normally hides

the complete description and only shows you the file name. Internally all files are identified with the entire filespec. Here are some examples.

The filespec for a My First File.rtf document stored on a floppy disk is:

A:\My First File.rtf

Where A: is the floppy drive letter. It is followed by a backslash \ and then the file name with its extension. In this case the extension tells the computer that this file is in the Rich Text Format (.rtf).

The same file located in the Documents folder on the Student hard drive may be identified as follows.

C:\Users\Student\Documents\My First File.rtf

Where C: is the hard disk drive, Users is a folder on disk C: that contains a sub-folder for each account (user), Student is a folder within the Users folder, and Documents is a folder within the Student folder. Finally, the document called My First File.rtf resides within the Documents folder.

Thus, as you can see, the structure of a filespec (that is, the entire file name) has the general format:

Drive Letter:\Folder\Sub-Folder\Sub-Folder\etc.\filename.ext

But most of the time you only see the filename and perhaps the extension. Internally the computer always uses the entire filespec because that is the only way it can keep track of where everything is stored.

The backslashes set apart the various folder names, and that's the reason you cannot use backslashes as part of a filename. File names should start with a letter or a number and should not contain any of the following characters:

. " / \ [] : ; | = , * ?

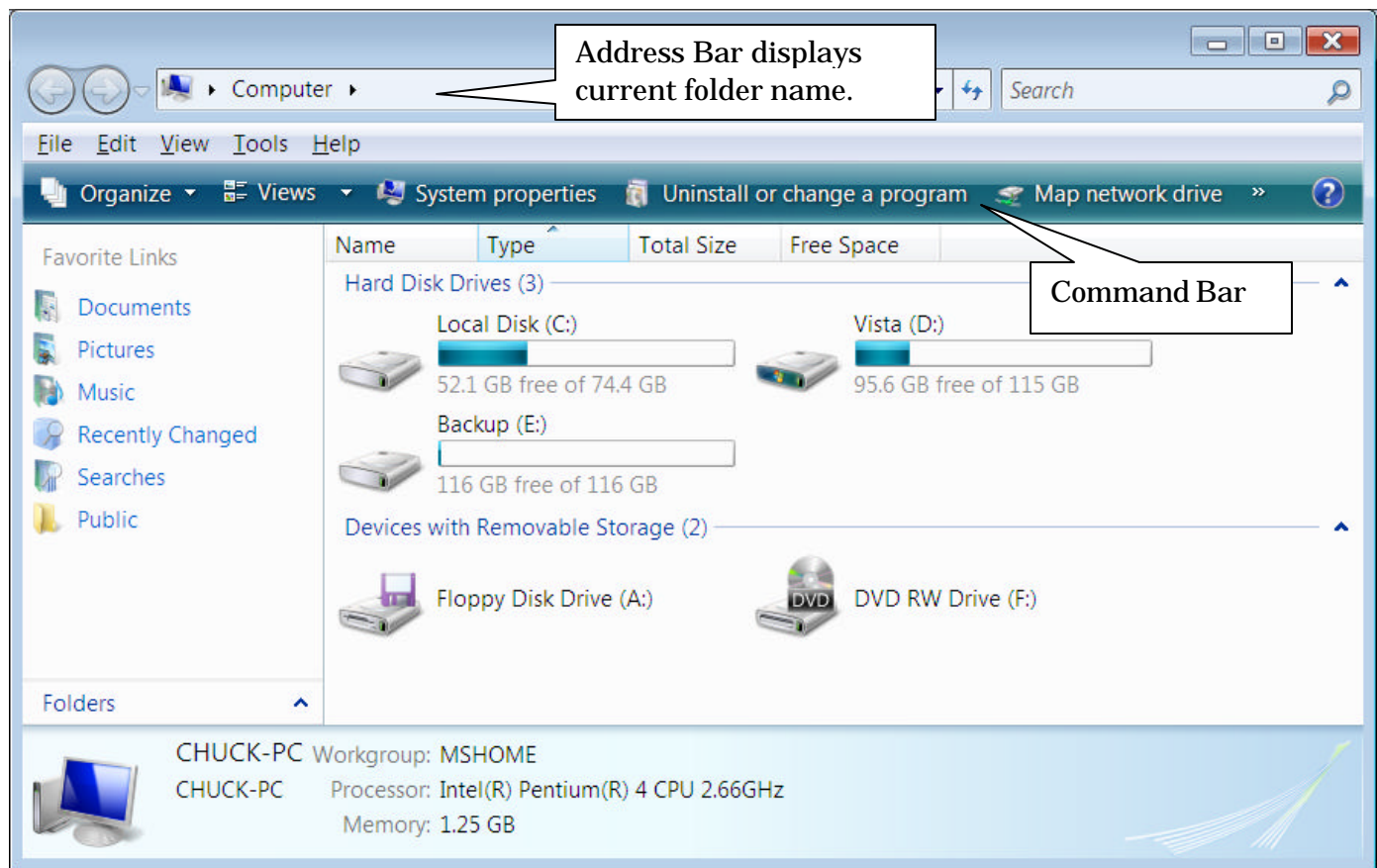
Exercise 3 — Working With Files & Folders

You may already be familiar with file managing techniques from older Windows versions, and they will not be repeated here. We will be covering new features unique to Windows Vista.

At the Start Menu click on Computer to open a window similar to that shown here¹. Your “view” may look different, but you can cycle through all the various

¹ The computer shown here shows three hard disks (C, D & E) with Vista loaded on disk D. Your home computer will most likely have only one hard drive labeled C:

views by clicking the View button on the Command bar. Bear in mind that the same information is presented in each view, it's just shown in different ways.



To view the contents of one of the disk drives you simply double click on the drive icon. You rarely need to examine the entire contents of a hard disk drive, but you may need to see those of a floppy disk, CD or flash drive. (If you insert a flash drive into a USB port on your computer it will show up in the Computer window with a title name "Removable disk ...").

The Navigation pane on the left can be used to go quickly to other folders on the computer such as Documents, Pictures, etc. Click on Documents and note a display of the contents of the Documents folder. Click on the Back button to return to the Computer window. Click on the Fwd button to return to the Documents folder.

Managing Files

In the course of using your computer you will be creating, modifying, copying, moving, and deleting files and folders. However, you need to be aware of the

way computers conflict with English grammar! For example, in English we would say “delete file X.” With the computer we must reverse the order, i.e. first you identify the object (file or folder) you want the computer to act on, and then you tell it what action to take. In other words, you would say “file X delete.” This involves the process of **selecting** or **highlighting** an object such as a file or folder before acting on it.

Selecting

There are several ways to select folders or files prior to taking action with them. (NOTE: The following explanations assumes that you are using the double-click option.)

Single Selection – Open the Documents folder and click once on one of the folders or files. Notice that it takes on a blue background, i.e. it has been “selected.” Click outside the selected area to remove the selection.

Multiple Selection – There are at least three ways to select more than one item at a time.

1. Click on an item near the top of the list, then hold the Shift key down and click on an item below it. Note that this works only on contiguous or adjacent items. All items from the “click” to the “shift-click” will be selected. Click in the open space to deselect.
2. For non-contiguous (non-adjacent) items, click on one item, then hold the Ctrl key down and click on several others. They need not be adjacent. Deselect the items.
3. Use the drag and drop technique to draw a box around the items to be selected. Deselect the items.

Creating, Copying, Moving and Deleting Files

Creating a Folder -- Let's start by creating a new folder. With the Documents folder open, click on Organize and then on New Folder. Notice that a folder appears in the right pane with the name New Folder selected. Type the word “Practice” and notice that it replaces the selected text. Press Enter. You have just created a new folder named Practice.

Moving and Copying – Select one or more of the files in the Documents folder. Put the mouse pointer on one of the selected files and then drag and drop the selection to the Practice folder. (Make sure the Practice folder turns blue before dropping.) The files will disappear from Documents. Double click on

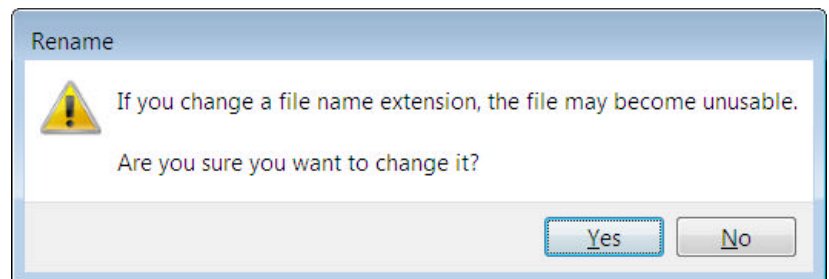
the Practice folder to open it, and you will see the files there. Select the files you just moved and drag them back to the Documents folder over in the Navigation pane. Return to Documents and observe that they have returned.

The above actions actually moved the files from one folder to another. To copy the files simply hold the Ctrl key down while dropping them in the new folder.

Notice, however, that when you do this from one disk to another disk (or storage device such as a flash drive) the files are copied, not moved (and you don't have to hold the Ctrl key down).

Renaming – Open Documents and then right-click on the Practice folder. Select “Rename” and the word “Practice” will become selected (turned blue). Type a new name and press Enter. You have just renamed the folder. This works on both files and folders.

CAUTION – When renaming a file (not a folder), be sure to maintain the same file extension. If you omit the extension the illustrated popup will appear.



It is suggested that you answer No and apply the original extension to the file name.

Deleting – Select a file (or files) then right-click inside the highlighted area and select Delete. Alternately you can select and then press the Delete key. As with earlier versions of Windows, deleting a file actually sends it to the Recycle Bin on the desktop for possible recovery. To restore a file open the Recycle Bin. At the Command Bar note that you can restore selected or all items to their original locations, or Empty the Recycle Bin entirely thereby permanently deleting all items.

Undo – If you mistakenly delete, copy or move a file or folder, click on Organize and select Undo. This will reverse the previous action.

Homework

ÿ Review Lesson 3 and apply what you learned.

ÿ Read through Lesson 4.

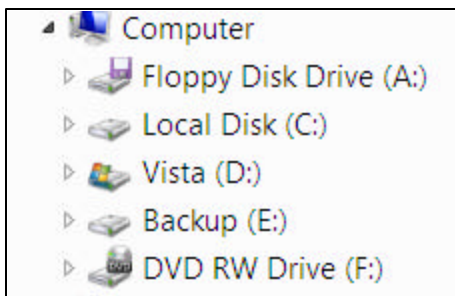
Appendix

File Organization

Organizing and keeping track of thousands of files would be impossible without some way of breaking them down into an efficient filing system. You are probably familiar with the traditional system for maintaining paper files in an office through the use of file cabinets, hanging file folders, manila folders inside the hanging folders, and documents inside the manila folders. Thus, to find a paper file one would go to the file cabinet, open one of the drawers, find the appropriate hanging (Pendaflex) folder, locate the proper manila folder and remove the desired document.

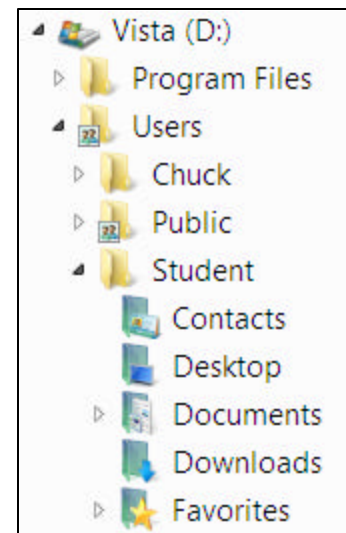
Computers use a similar technique to organize their files. You might think of the computer as an office, and inside the computer are several “file cabinets” — in this case they are storage devices. For example, the computer’s hard drive serves as a very large file cabinet with lots of drawers (although the “drawers” are referred to as “folders”), and the drawers (folders) may contain more folders (sub-folders), and the sub-folders can contain even more sub-folders, etc. Thus, the filing structure is a hierarchy of folders within folders. And finally, one can find individual documents (files) in any of the folders or sub-folders.

The first illustration shows the organization of a typical Personal Computer in its most compressed form. You can readily see that this one (Computer) is fitted with a floppy disk drive (drive A:), a hard drive termed Local Disk (drive C:), a



second hard drive labeled Vista (D:), a Backup drive labeled (E:), and a DVD read/write disk (drive F:). In this display they are all indented underneath which indicates that they belong to Computer.

In the next illustration we have expanded the D: drive to show its contents which are indented under Vista (D:). (With Explore we do this by clicking on the small arrow next to the drive name.) This shows folders “Program Files” and “Users” indented under drive D: . “Users” has



also been expanded showing three other folders “Chuck,” “Public,” and “Student.” Student is further expanded showing several of the default folders available to each user, i.e. “Contacts,” “Desktop,” etc.