

WHAT IS A FILE?

At the end of last class, we discussed the difference between Save and Save As, but the difference might not have been very clear. To help learn the difference, we need to talk about what a file is.

Simply put, a file is a collection of information that the computer keeps together as one object. For example, in the case of a document, every letter and every word needs to be remembered, so the computer packages it altogether as one file. Generally speaking, there are three types of files:

- 1) Files we create – these are the files we will interact with most directly, since we make them ourselves. Word documents are just one example of files we create.
- 2) Programs – programs are what we use to perform any task, but they are also a very complex set of instructions to the computer. This information is stored together as a file. Programs are also sometimes called *applications*.
- 3) Support files – while programs are the actual sets of instructions, sometimes the computer needs additional information. What a desktop icon looks like, or what a particular sound effect sounds like are a couple examples. The main point is that *there are other files we will never see or touch. These files we don't normally ever need to worry about.*

Our focus today is strictly with the first category.

FILE STORAGE

Just like things in the real world, computer files need space in which to be stored. There are a few different places in the computer where you can store files. The most common of these is the hard drive, which is the area inside the computer for holding data. Essentially, all programs and support files will be located on your hard drive.

However, you might choose to put your own files someplace else. For example, you should already have a Flash drive to hold some of your work. The hard drive can store hundreds of times the amount of information that a Flash drive can store, but the Flash drive is a useful tool nonetheless.

Similar to a Flash drive, you might also choose to store your work to a *compact disc* or a *floppy disk*.

The size ratings for each of these devices are measured in bytes, kilobytes (kb), megabytes (Mb), and gigabytes (Gb). Each of these units is 1000 of the unit before it, so a megabyte is 1000 kilobytes. A floppy disk will hold a total of about 1.4 megabytes. A byte is the space it takes the computer to store one letter (of the alphabet), so an essay with 500 words that are each 5 letters with one space in-between each would be 3000 bytes, or 3 kilobytes.

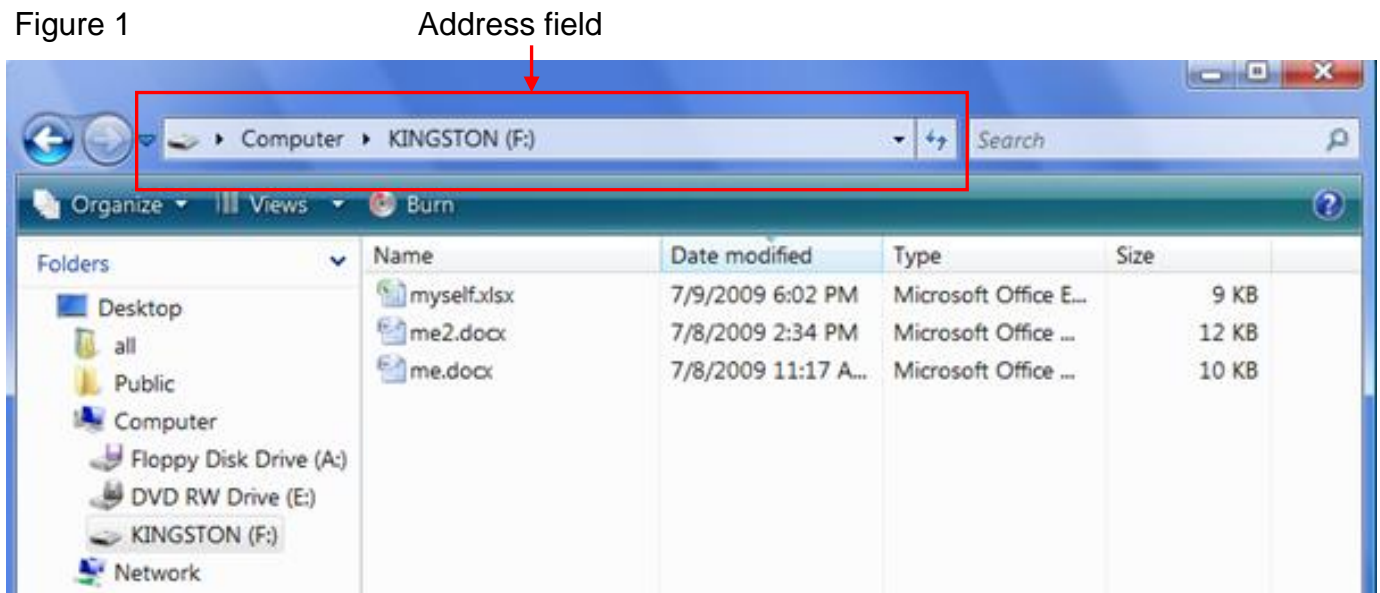
ACCESSING DRIVES

Insert your Flash drive. Typically an **AutoPlay Window** will launch. We won't be using this window but **look at the label that has populated the top of the window.** It says KINGSTON(F:) Some flash drives will have a program on them that will cause the brand name of the drive to populate navigational pathways on your computer. The computer itself assigns the drive letter. The letter could change depending on how many devices are plugged in at the same time. On most computers Drive C: designates the hard drive and Drive A: designates the floppy drive. Other letters get assigned as more devices get installed. **Close the autoplay window.**

On the desktop, there is an icon labeled **Computer.** **Double-click on it.**

Computer is a gateway into the drives onto which you can save files. **Double-Click on KINGSTON (F:)** You are now looking at a directory of all of the files on your flash drive. (see Fig 1)

Figure 1



Notice especially the **address field** which displays the path of the window contents, namely, **Computer**→**KINGSTON (F:)** On the right side of the window, you should see at least three files, among them: **me.docx**, **me2.docx**, and **myself.xlsx**. It is a little hard to see, but notice that **Myself** displays as an **Excel icon** rather than a **Word icon**, because the computer knows **Myself** is an Excel file. How?

The four letters after the file name, separated by a period, are called the **extension**. The extension is an identification system for the computer so it knows what kind of file it is looking at. The '**docx**' extension indicates a 2007 Word document; the '**xlsx**' is a 2007 Excel spreadsheet. Every file type has its own unique extension. Whenever you save a file, the computer will automatically add the appropriate extension, unless we specify a different extension, which is not a common occurrence.

We can also *open* our files from within the flash drive window. **Double-click on me.docx**, and the computer will open Word to that file. This method of double-clicking file names within **Computer** is an alternate way to open files. **Close Word and open myself.xlsx**. The computer will open Excel. **Close Excel**.

INTRODUCING FOLDERS

We don't have that many files so far, but let's suppose this is your office computer, and you are creating several new files every day. Eventually you would have so many files you wouldn't know what to do with all of them.

We can organize our files by putting them into **folders**. A folder is just a storage bin for files. Think of an office file cabinet. You could pile your papers on top of the cabinet, or you could put them in one of the drawers. Once you decide to put them into a drawer, you can put them into the very front, or separate them using dividers. The dividers, in turn, might have manila folders to further help keep things organized. Like this separation technique, computer folders serve no purpose other than for file organization.

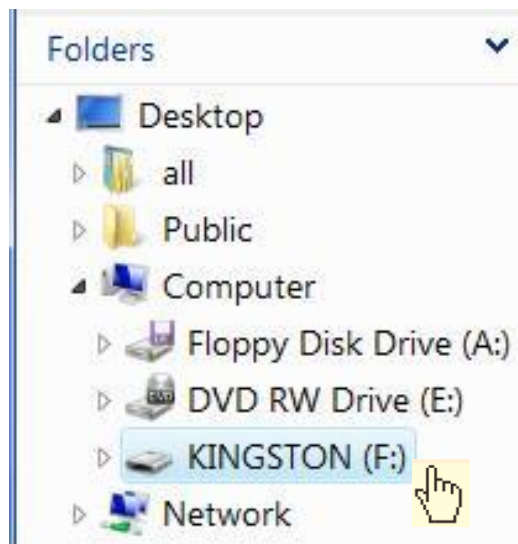
USING THE NAVIGATION PANE

Point your mouse to the list of locations on the left side of the Flash Drive window. Then point to the right pane. Try again. Do you notice something happening as you point to the left (**navigation**) pane?

The marks that appear are called **Chevrons (Fig 2)** and, like an outline, they indicate a heading and a sub-heading, or in this case, a directory and a sub-directory. The dark chevrons indicate a list that has been expanded to show sub-directories. The light gray chevrons represent a directory that has not been expanded or that does not contain any sub-directories.

The listing of "folders" in this pane represents places where files can be stored. As you point your mouse to the drives in the list, notice how the cursor changes shape. (Fig 2)

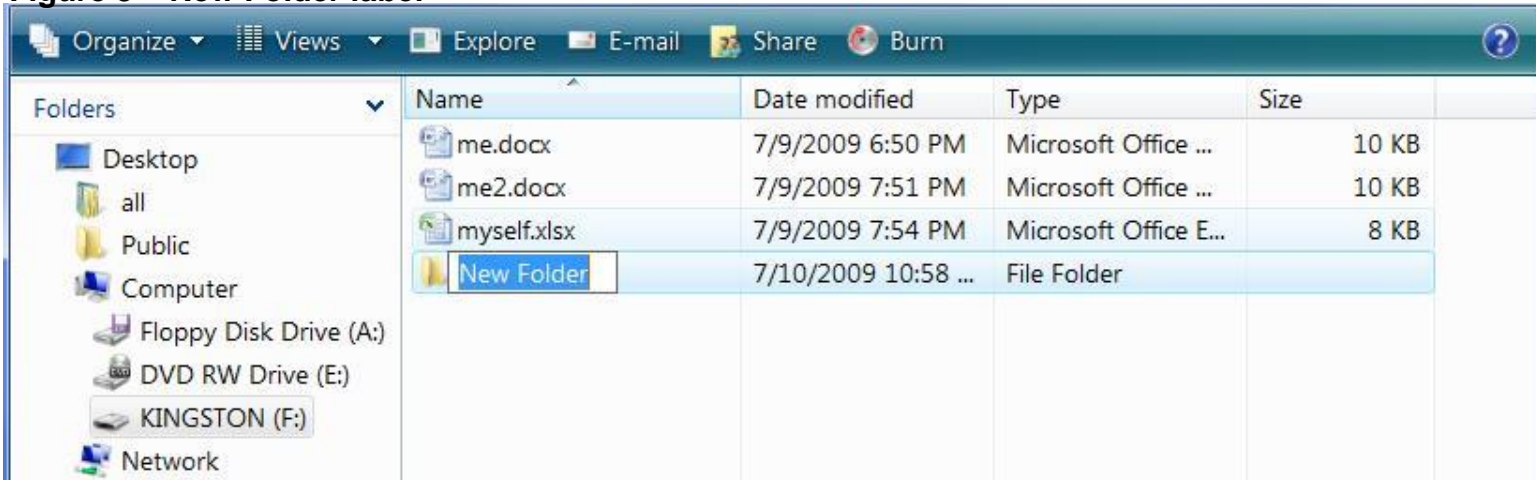
Figure 2 – Chevrons



MAKING A FOLDER

On the toolbar, click on the **Organize** button and select **New Folder**. The computer will place a folder icon in the main window display area. It has a temporary name of New Folder and is in **edit mode** so that you can simply start typing and a new name will go in. **(Fig 3)**. Type **“Personal”** and then click in a clear area (which gets you out of edit mode). Create a second folder and name it **“Business”**. In the **Navigation** pane, click on the chevron next to the **Flash Drive** location and notice how you can see the **folders in the navigation pane but not the files**.

Figure 3 – New Folder label



FILE AND FOLDER TASKS

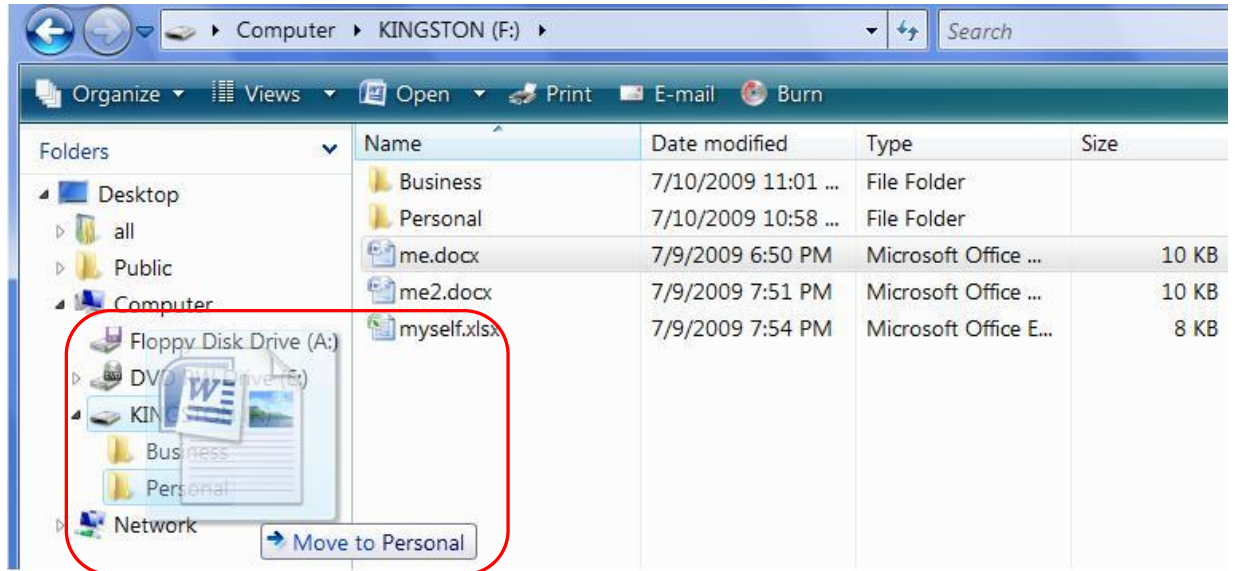
Navigating between files and folders

In the navigation pane, single-click on the **Personal** folder to look inside. Notice, by looking in the pane on the right, there is nothing in it. We are going to move our 3 files into it. To start, click on **KINGSTON (F:)** in the navigation pane. You can now see all the files and folders on the right. This save location is often referred to as the root of (F:).

Moving files by dragging from the right pane to the navigation pane (Fig. 4)

Left click on **me.docx** and, keeping the mouse button held down; drag the file to the vicinity of the **Personal** folder in the navigation pane. **CAUTION –move file down and directly across to Personal Folder or you may get very unexpected results**. If you “miss”, close the CD drive and try again. While dragging you will notice, as you pass over the drive and folder names, a **tip will display** indicating where the file would be moved to if you let go of the mouse button. Drag the other files into the **Personal** folder. Click on the **Personal** folder in the navigation pane to see the contents.

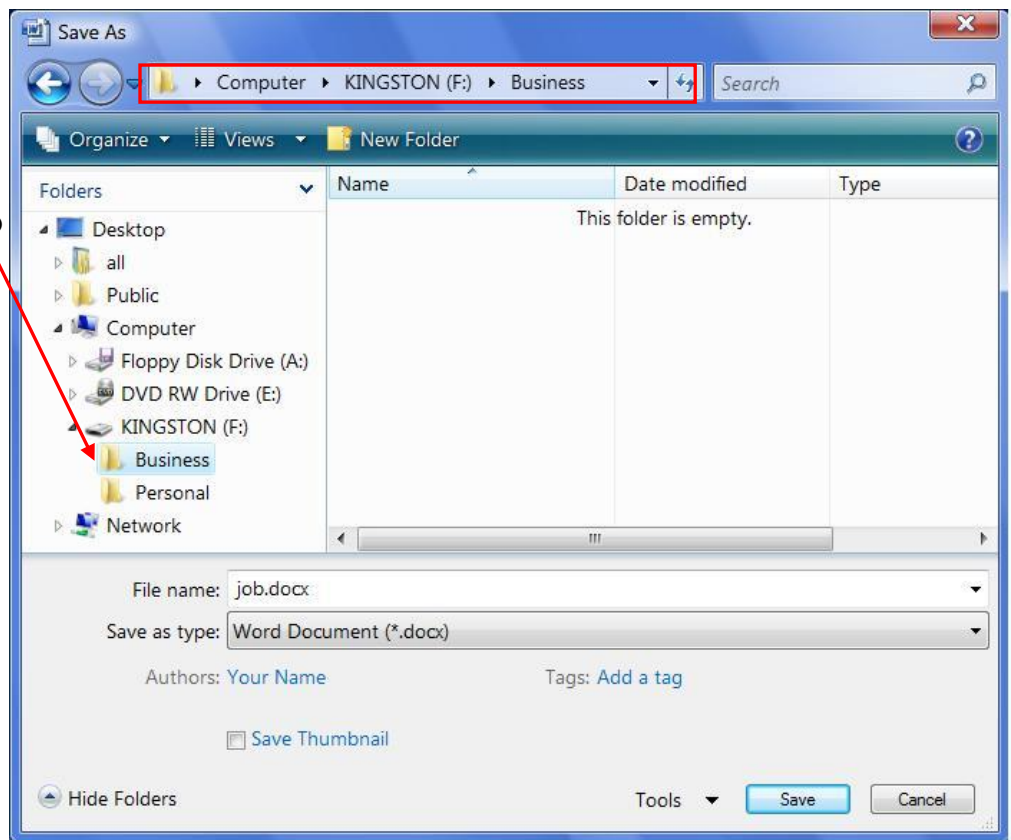
Figure 4 – Move me.docx to Personal folder



Creating A New File And Saving Into An Existing Folder (Fig 5)

Open Word (using the Start Menu,) and type your occupation into this new document. (Make something up if you're unemployed!) From the Office menu, select "Save As"→Word document. Name the file 'job', but don't press the Save button just yet. Before you actually save, single click on the **Business folder** in the left pane. Make sure the file path is correct in the address field, then you can press the save button.

Figure 5 – Save to Business folder



Close Word and return to the flash drive window. Notice that your "job" file isn't visible in the Personal folder or on the root. So open the **Business folder**. The file **job.docx** should be visible now.

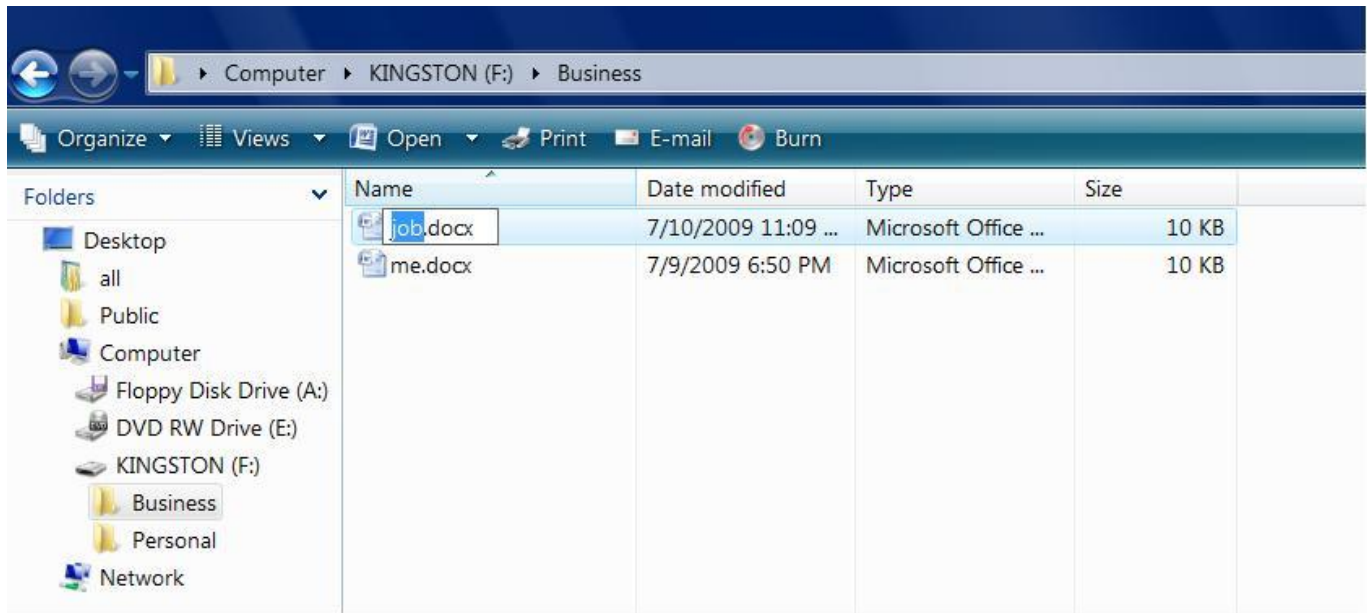
Moving a file from one folder to another

Using the same dragging method as above, move me.docx from the Personal folder to the Business folder. Click on the Business folder to see that it has been moved there.

Renaming Files

In your **Business** folder, right-click on job.docx to get a menu of file tasks. Select **Rename**. The file name is now in **edit mode (Fig. 6)**, just as when we first created our two folders. **Type in occupation and click in a clear area.**

Figure 6 – Rename file in edit mode



At this point in the lesson, you should have:

- Two folders on the root of (F:), **Personal** and **Business**
- Two files in the Personal folder, **me2.docx** and **myself.xlsx**
- Two files in the Business folder, **me.docx** and **occupation.docx**

Call a proctor to have your results checked. Then follow the last set of instructions below.

Deleting Files And Folders

Click on the **Personal** folder in the **Navigation** pane. Right-click on me2.docx and choose “Delete”. The computer will ask you if you are sure you want to **permanently delete it: click on “yes” to remove the file.** **Note:** Deleting files from a location other than removable media will first send them to the recycle bin, where they can be recovered from, should you change your mind, but deletes from removable media are PERMANENT. **Right-click on the Personal folder and select delete to remove the folder along with any remaining files inside it.**

Everything needs to be deleted. Your flash drive should be empty as you start the proficiency exercise.