

Windows laptop: Managing Storage

Saving space on your computer and keeping it running nicely.

You can use Windows 10's **Storage Sense** feature to make sure you don't run out of space for files, and you can also delete files yourself and get them back if you make a mistake.

What you will need

Before you begin the course, your computer must have the latest edition of Windows, which is Windows 10. For more information about Windows 10, refer to the *Windows laptop: Security and privacy* guide. You should also check that your computer is connected to the internet via your home Wi-Fi and, if you're using a mouse, that it's connected properly. You should be signed into your computer, and it should be showing the desktop.

If you'd like to follow along on your own computer, you should also have a USB stick that hasn't been shared with anyone else.

What is Storage Sense?

Your computer stores files on the **hard drive**. If the hard drive fills up, you won't be able to save more files, and the computer may not run smoothly. The **hard drive** is sometimes also called the **hard disk** or **hard disk drive**.

Windows 10 comes with a built-in feature called **Storage Sense** which keeps an eye on the hard drive, and knows which files are no longer needed and can be safely deleted.



Freeing up space on your computer helps keep it running smoothly

Turning on Storage Sense

First, click on the **Start** button in the bottom left corner of the screen.

When the panel opens, click the icon that looks like a cog. **Windows Settings** will open.

1. Click the icon for **System** to open the **System** menu.
2. From the menu, click on the option called **Storage**.

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3. The right panel changes to show **Storage options**. The bar in the middle shows how much free space your computer still has.
4. At the top of the panel, click on **Configure Storage Sense or run it now**.
5. The **Storage Sense** panel opens. To turn on **Storage Sense**, click the switch so it changes from **Off** to **On**.

Making Storage Sense clean your hard drive now

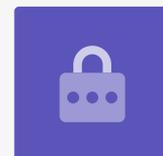
Since this is the first time you've turned on **Storage Sense**, it's best to ask it to clean up your files right away.

Click on **Clean now** button, and **Storage Sense** will say it's cleaning up files now.

It should only take a few minutes, but it depends on how many files your computer has.

When it's finished **Storage Sense** will tell you how much space your computer was able to free up.

Don't download any app that offers to clean up or optimise your computer for you. It will almost always contain a scam that makes your computer less safe to use.

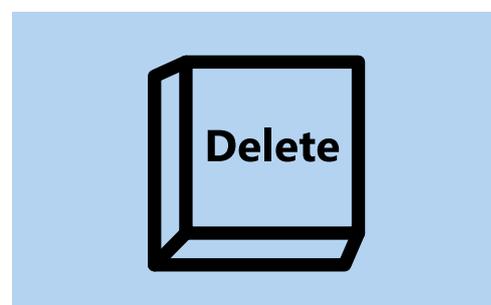


How to delete a file yourself

You can also safely delete an item from your computer yourself.

Of course, there are some items you shouldn't remove, but don't worry – your computer will warn you if you're about to delete important files or applications.

First click the **X** in the top right of the **Storage Sense** panel to close it. Your computer should now be showing the desktop.



Once you've highlighted a file you want to remove, click the Delete key on the keyboard

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To delete an item:

1. Decide which file you want to delete, and then click on it once to **select** it. It is selected when it is highlighted.
2. Press the **Delete** key on the keyboard. The item will disappear, which means it is now deleted.

Getting a file back from the Recycle Bin

If you deleted a file by accident, don't worry! You can get it back right away using the **Recycle Bin**.

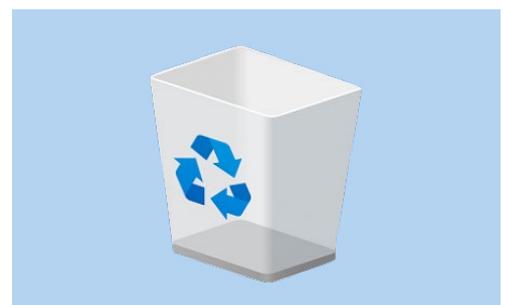
1. Find the **Recycle Bin** on the desktop and double-click it.
2. A window opens showing all the items that have been deleted recently. Find the file you just deleted.
3. Right-click on the file and some options appear. Click on **Restore**.
4. The file will disappear and then reappear on the desktop.

Whenever you restore an item, it returns to the place you deleted it from, such as the desktop or from inside a folder.

Emptying the Recycle Bin

You can make sure items are deleted permanently, by emptying the **Recycle Bin**.

1. Click on the **X** in the top right of the **Recycle Bin** window to close it.
2. Right-click on the **Recycle Bin** icon on the desktop. Some options appear.
3. Click on **Empty Recycle Bin**.
4. A box asking you to confirm that you want to permanently delete all items will appear. Click **Yes**, and you'll see the **Recycle Bin** icon change to an empty bin.



Emptying the Recycle Bin permanently deletes an item from your computer

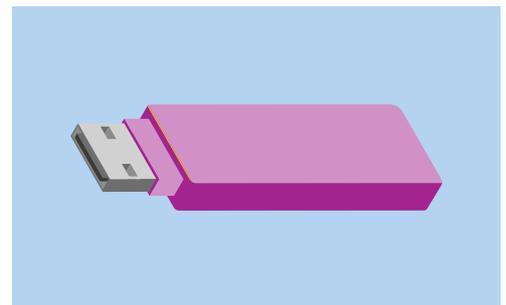
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Getting ready to move items onto a USB stick

A USB stick plugs into your computer's USB port, and is a safe and easy way to transfer and store files and folders.

In this example we'll move a folder from the desktop onto a USB stick. You can keep this guide handy for when you have a USB stick and some files you want to move.

1. Plug the USB stick into your computer.
2. Your computer might ask what you want to do with the USB stick. For now, ignore this notification and it will go away by itself.
3. Click on the **Start** button in the bottom left corner and type the word **File**.
4. The **Start** menu will change to a search panel and you'll see **File Explorer** at the top. Click on it.
5. The **File Explorer** window will open. On the left, look down the list to find **This PC** and click on it.
6. In the right panel, look under **Devices and drives**. You can see an icon with the Windows logo on it, with a name like **Local Disk (C:)**. This is the computer's hard drive.
7. The USB stick will also show in the right panel. It will have a different icon and its own name. The icon might be the brand of your USB stick, or it might look like a tiny USB stick.
8. Click on the USB stick, and the panel will change to show the files on the USB stick. If the window is blank, it means the USB stick has no files on it at all.



To avoid viruses and other unwanted software, use a USB stick that has not been shared with anyone else

Moving items to a USB stick

Now we're ready to move files onto the USB stick. We'll move a folder of files called **Gardening**, onto the USB stick.

1. Click and hold the mouse on the Gardening folder on the desktop.
2. Use the mouse to drag the folder across to the **File Explorer** window.

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3. When the folder is over the window, release the mouse button to drop the folder onto the USB stick.
4. The computer will copy the folder and the files inside it, onto the USB stick.

When you see the Gardening folder appear in the **File Explorer** window, it's finished copying and the files are safely stored on the USB stick.

Deleting files from the computer after they are copied to a USB stick

It's important to remember the Gardening folder is still on your desktop. To free up storage space on your computer you will need to delete the folder.

Click once on the folder icon to highlight the Gardening folder on the desktop, and press **Delete**.

Any item deleted from your computer moves to the **Recycle Bin**, and you will need to empty it before the item is permanently removed. To empty the **Bin**, repeat the steps on page 3 of this guide.

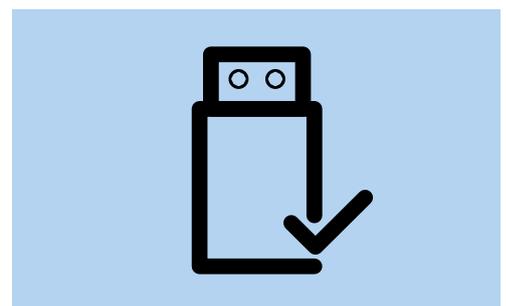
All done! The folder is on the USB stick, and the computer has a bit more space now.

Safely removing the USB stick

When you've finished copying files, it's important not to just unplug the USB stick right away. If you do, your files might become damaged.

Instead, you should safely eject the USB stick.

1. Look in the bottom right of the screen, at the row of icons to the left of the clock.
2. Find the icon of a **USB stick** and click on it. A menu will pop up.
3. The name of your USB stick appears here, and the word **Eject**.
4. Click on **Eject**.
5. A notification will appear saying it's **Safe to remove hardware**.
6. You can now unplug the USB stick from your computer and put it away somewhere safe.



To avoid damaging stored files, always eject a USB stick before removing it from your computer