Apple desktop: Managing files

Keeping your computer organised so everything is easy to find.

Saving files into folders is a good way to keep things neat and tidy, and makes finding documents much easier. You can also change the background picture on the the desktop, and the profile picture you see when signing in.

What you will need

Before you begin the course, your computer must have the latest edition of the operating software, which is **macOS Catalina**. For more information about macOS, refer to the *Apple desktop: Security and privacy* guide. You should check that your computer is connected to mains power, switched on and showing the desktop. You should also check that the mouse and keyboard are connected properly.

Tidying up the desktop icons

The **Desktop** is the screen that appears when you sign into your computer, and it shows your files and applications with icons. If the desktop becomes cluttered and difficult to use, you can easily tidy it up.

1. Right-click anywhere on the desktop except on top of an icon. A **Context** menu appears showing a list of options.

2. Point the mouse over the **Sort by** option and hold it there. Another menu appears alongside the **Context** menu.

3. Try each option to see which you like best. **Name** sorts in alphabetical order. When you click on **Name**, you'll see the icons arrange themselves into rows and columns on the right of the screen. Very tidy!

4. If you want to go back to being able to place icons wherever you like, click **None**.

The desktop is the screen you'll see when you sign into your computer

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Other ways to organise icons

The context menu has many other options to choose from. You can click on each one to try it and see which suits you best:

1. **Kind** will sort documents in order of file type, e.g. all Word documents will be put together, then images, and so on.

2. **Size** will sort your files in order of how much space each file takes up on your hard drive.

3. **Date last opened, added, modified and created** will arrange all the icons from newest to oldest.

4. **Tags** will sort your files by the labels you've added to them.

Your computer lets you group files on the desktop by kind, size and date

Creating a folder on the desktop

If you have lots of files to organise, you can group them together in one or more **folders**.

For example, you might want to put some gardening photos in a folder called **Gardening**, and some files from your latest health-check up in a folder called **Medical**.

To create a folder on the desktop:

1. Right-click on the desktop to show the **Context** menu.

2. Click the **New Folder** option. A new folder will appear on the desktop, and the name will be highlighted.

3. Type a new name for the folder, such as **Gardening** and press **Enter** to finish.

4. Repeat these steps to create a second folder called **Medical**.
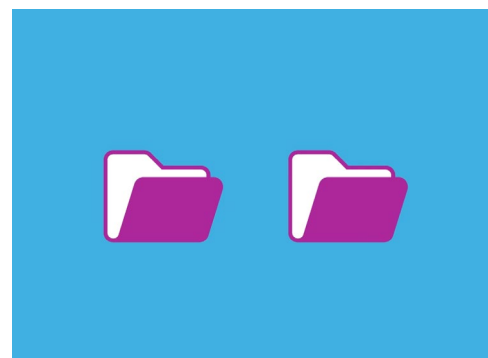

You can group similar files into folders to make them easier to find

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Putting files into folders

To place files into your new folders, you can drag them in using the mouse.

1. On the desktop, find a file that you want to put into the Gardening folder. Click once and hold on the file, then move your mouse to drag it to the **Gardening** folder.

2. When the file is over the folder, remove your finger from the mouse button to release the file.

3. The file disappears, because it is now inside the Gardening folder.

4. It can be a bit tricky, so don't worry if this doesn't work the first time. Just try again by repeating the steps above.
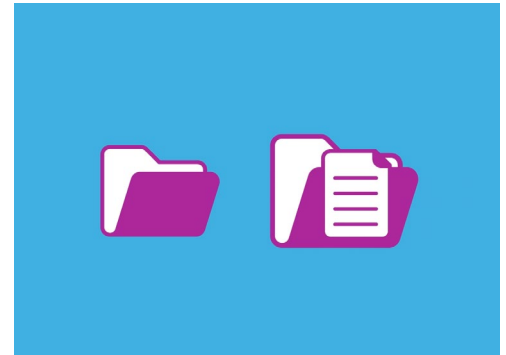
You can use your mouse to place a file inside a folder

You can do this for all the files you want to organise on your desktop. When you've dropped all the files you want into each folder, your desktop will be neat and tidy.

Looking at files inside a folder

To see your files inside the new folders, double-click on the folder. A window will open showing all the files inside.

If the files appear in a list, you can click on the icon at the top of the panel that looks like a grid of squares, to show the files as thumbnails instead.

A thumbnail is just a tiny version of each photo. Files that aren't photos or pictures will show an icon instead of a thumbnail. The icon will let you know what kind of file it is.

To open a file when it's in a folder, simply double-click on it.

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Changing the desktop background picture

Now your desktop is organised, you might like to personalise it a bit more. You can change the picture that takes up the whole background of the desktop.

1. Right-click on the desktop to show the **Context** menu.

2. Find and click on **Change Desktop Background**.

3. **System Preferences** will open, and show the **Desktop & Screen Saver** options.

4. Click on any of the small square pictures on the right to make it your **Background**. The desktop will change right away.

5. You can use a personal photo or other image too. Just click on the **plus** button at the bottom left, to find it. You could use a picture of your garden, a flower, or something you downloaded from the internet.
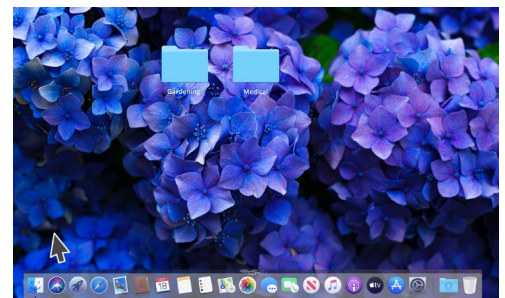
You can personalise your computer with a favourite photo

Changing your profile picture

Your profile picture appears in the circle on the **Sign-in** screen, above your account name. You can change this to a picture of yourself, or anything else you like.

It might also appear on emails you send to others, in some applications and web browsers.

It's safe to set a profile picture that's a photo of yourself, but if you're not comfortable with the idea, don't worry. Your computer will work just as well without one.

Since **Desktop & Screen Saver** is still open, start by clicking **Show All** to return to **System Preferences**.

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1. Click on **Users & Groups**. It looks like two little people inside a circle.

2. You'll see your **Sign-in** name and the current profile picture. Click on the picture and a panel showing the current image will open.

3. On the left, you can click Defaults to choose an image provided by your computer. If your computer has a webcam, click on **Camera** and a window will appear to help you take the perfect selfie.

4. If you don't have a camera or would rather not use your own face as the picture, click on **Photos** to choose from images in your **Photo Gallery**.

5. You can even use a picture of your own. Let's look at how to do that next using an image we saved into our Gardening folder. Click **Cancel** to return to **Users & Groups**.

John Kansas
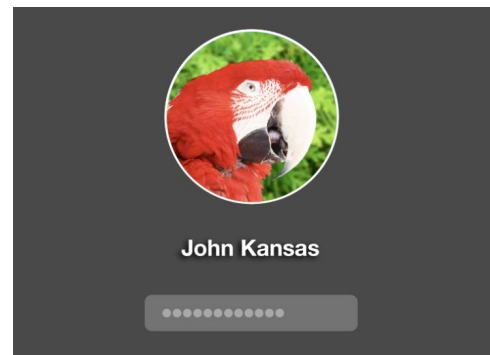
Your profile picture appears each time you sign into your computer

Adding your own profile image

To start adding your own image, move the cursor to the bottom of the desktop to the **Dock**. The **Dock** is where you'll find icons for some of your computer's most commonly used applications. Click the **Finder** icon on the left.

1. If **Finder** opens on top of **Users & Groups**, click and drag it so you can see both on the desktop at the same time.

2. The image we want is in the **Gardening** folder, so click on **Desktop** and then the **Gardening** folder.

3. Next, click and drag the image from the **Gardening** folder onto the current picture in **Users & Groups**. When you see a **green plus** symbol, take your finger off the mouse to drop the image onto your current picture.

4. An editing panel with a slider control will open, so you can adjust the image. Use your mouse to move the button on the slider to the right to make the image larger, or left to make it smaller.

5. When you're happy with how it looks, click **Save**. You've successfully set a new profile picture. Snazzy!