



Search, or Get Organized—Your Choice

Your hard drive is a lot like your desk at work-- when you get something new to work on, it gets stacked onto a part of your desk until you are ready to work on it. That's what we call 'vertical filing', and you know if you're guilty of letting that get out of control. Yes, you know where everything is, and it's trouble if your help moves anything. Windows saves files like that. Everything goes anywhere, and the expectation is that you'll search for it later. And if Windows search was completely reliable and fast, you would do just that. It's not fast or reliable. There are ways around that. Either learn more ways to search, or organize your docs.

Another Way to Search

Windows expects you to search by typing a partial name of a document into the search bar, down in the system tray, just right of the Windows key (formerly the Start key). Or you can type into the top-right search bar in Explorer, which has

at various times been the Windows Explorer or the File Explorer. It's the yellow file folder on the system tray, and you search by typing into the top-right bar, but that's slow. When searching for just one item, the system tray search bar is OK, but for a list of results, search from Explorer.

You can make an Explorer search more specific by using DOS wild cards. Yes, these 1980's tools still work in Windows 11 You use these in DOS searches, and when searching in the Explorer box.

- ? means any single character.
- * means any number of characters.

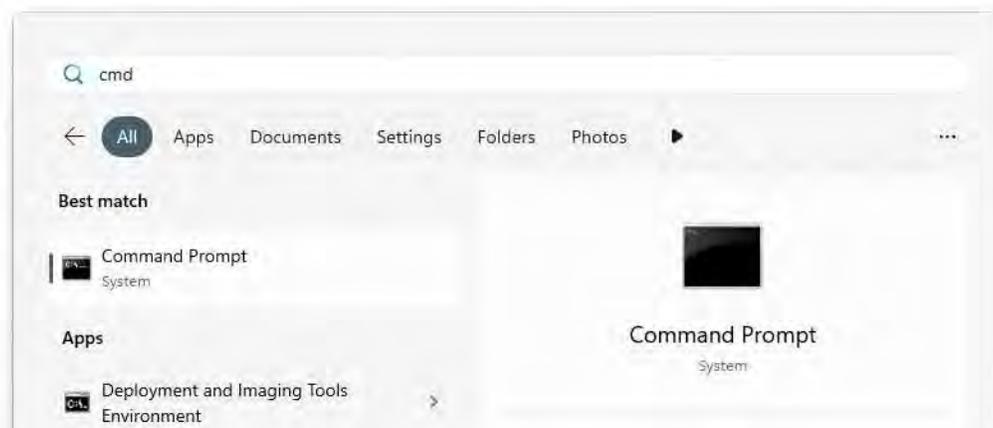
So if you know you're looking for a file that starts with 'mileage', you can search for 'mileage*'. If you also know it's a modern Excel document, you can search for 'mileage*.xlsx'. If the filename might not start with mileage, try '*mileage*'.

DOS Searches

There's a faster way to search an entire drive if you know a partial file name. Use the DIR command, with the wildcards from above.

Use the old Command Prompt, which is still available in every version of Windows.

Here are the steps.



- Click the Windows key. (the logo key, on the keyboard, OR in the system tray)
- Type CMD
- Click on the Command Prompt search result. A black box appears. Everything before the 'greater than' symbol, >, is the current file location on the drive. The box starts in your user folder. You need to be in the root,

the top level folder.

- Click anywhere inside the box so that you can type in it.
- Type this to change folders to the root of the drive: `cd \` and press Enter to send the command.
- Type `dir`, with the partial name to search for, in quotes if there is a space in the name.
- End the line with `/s` to search all subdirectories, and `/p` to show results one page at a time.
- There are many more options for searching. Type this for a list: `dir /?`

```

Microsoft Windows [Version 10.0.22631.4890]
(c) Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

C:\Users\T8>cd \

C:\>cd mileage /s /p

```

The results show up sorted for by folder name. The first two search results are files, and that last one, marked <DIR>, is a folder.

```

D:\>dir travel*.*/p/s
Volume in drive D is SciTrans
Volume Serial Number is BEF8-14EB

Directory of D:\Palm\Jerry\TODO

01/28/2025  11:11 AM                2,672 Travel.TDA
              1 File(s)                2,672 bytes

Directory of D:\Palm-2023-06\Jerry\TODO

09/05/2002  03:58 PM                2,672 Travel.TDA
              1 File(s)                2,672 bytes

Directory of D:\S24

07/06/2024  02:01 PM    <DIR>           Travel
              0 File(s)                0 bytes

```

Tip: In recent Windows versions, you can copy the search results by selecting them with a mouse, or use Ctrl-A to select All, then Ctrl-C to Copy, and paste them where needed with Ctrl-V.

Organize Your Docs

If you never clean your desk you will eventually have too much to sort through. The paper files fall on the floor, and the electronic files run out of room. The solution is to label some folders and then file your work away so that you can save time and find it more easily. The same thing happens when saving documents and files to the hard drive.

You can create a folder inside 'Documents' , or anywhere on the drive. The 'Documents' folder is what most data backup software copies during a backup, so using the pre-built documents area has some advantages. Use 'Documents' for files that should only be available on your own Windows login. Create a folder elsewhere for files that will be shared with all users of the computer.

To create a folder, right-click inside any folder in an Explorer window, and in the pop-up menu, choose, 'New', and then 'Folder'. A folder will appear, named 'New Folder', and it's highlighted, ready to rename--type the new name and press Enter. (Or rename it later by right-clicking the new folder, and choosing 'Rename'.) Then you can drag related files on top of the new folder, and Windows will move them into the folder for you.

What folders should you create? Well, many offices create a top level of folders by a category, and then sort files away by how you would expect to find them later, based on how you do work, how your paper file cabinets are organized, and how you recall past jobs. These categories work well:

- Client names
- Project names
- Locations or street addresses
- Task types
- Years

Years-first is a particularly good way to organize files. Most offices want to take old records off-line eventually, and sorting records by years first makes future archiving very easy.

Example: One of the most organized set of documents I've seen included a few top folders: Bookkeeping (including invoices-out, receipts-in, QuickBooks data), Office (including procedures and notes on office equipment), and Reports (including a set of folders by year, and then work for clients by name). It's not any different than a file cabinet; think of the documents folder as though it was a file cabinet with drawers and hanging folders, and it becomes quite familiar and easy.



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Mailing address:
Science Translations
PO Box 1735
Westminster, MD 21158-5735