

PRINTABLE GUIDE

Find a saved document on Windows

A file may be local, online or on an external drive. Search using part of its name, then inspect the result to confirm it is current.

Windows 11 | 2 min read | 5 steps

Before you start

- ☐ A word from the filename or the approximate date
- ☐ Any external drive used when saving

1. Check the app first

Open the app that created the document and look at its recent files. Open a promising result and check its location or Save As information. A shortcut may fail after a move or disconnection.

- ☐ Done this step

2. Browse likely folders

Press Windows key + E for File Explorer. Check Documents, Downloads and Desktop, then any folder you normally use. Browser downloads often go to Downloads; documents may be in OneDrive.

- ☐ Done this step

3. Search a known place

Open the likely folder and use File Explorer's search box for part of the name. You can also use Search on the taskbar. Allow broader searches time to finish; they may not include disconnected or inaccessible locations.

- ☐ Done this step

4. Check online and external locations

Reconnect an external drive if you used one, or sign in to the correct cloud account through its official app or website. Different accounts can contain different versions. Do not guess that every missing file was deleted.

☐ Done this step

5. Confirm and record the location

Open the result and check its contents and modified date. Note its folder so you can find it again. If absent, inspect Recycle Bin and the service's recovery tools before saving another file with the same name.

☐ Done this step

Try it for yourself

Find a practice document and write down its folder name.

☐ I tried the task.

My notes

Why can I see the name but not open the file?

It may be an online-only file, require another app or belong to a disconnected location. Check its storage and permissions.

Official help and the online guide

Find files and apps in Windows - <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/experience/storage-filemanagement/find-your-files-and-apps-in-windows>

Understand OneDrive file availability -

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/onedrive/save-disk-space-with-onedrive-files-on-demand-for-windows>

Read online: <https://plaintech-guides.pages.dev/guides/locate-saved-document/>