

THE DESKTOP, DOWNLOADS AND RECYCLE FOLDERS

by Don Benjamin

Last month's article explained how to organize your computer files into folders. Now we're going to look at three special file folders—one you use all the time, and two you may be neglecting.

But First...

Some folks ask if having too many files will slow down their computer. The answer is no—IF you leave a small amount of free space (a few percent) for Windows or MacOS to use for themselves.

New PC's come with voluminous hard disks, so the issue isn't so much about running out of space; it's about being able to quickly find what you want. That said, if your disk is maxed out, you'll see a warning that you're not going to do anything else until you clean out the junk.

The Desktop Folder

The desktop—the display that's on your screen with a bunch of icons (unless you're extremely neat)—is unique because the files and folders you keep there are always visible.

The only things I keep on my desktop are those I'm working on—like this article—because I don't like to wade through a sea of icons to find stuff. Once I'm done, it goes into a folder. Also, files here are backed up in your auto-back-up program (Dropbox, Office 365, etc.)

The Downloads Folder

Files you download from the Internet (this includes software you download from websites and mail attachments you read from a browser), go into your Downloads folder. If you install the latest Firefox browser, for example, you'll find the installation file in your Downloads folder. After installing the program, you should delete the file. (You can always download it again.) Some of these files are hundreds of megabytes (i.e., huge). Think of it as a temporary holding area.

Folders et al.

Similarly, when you use a browser to view your mail and need to save an attachment, you'll download it first. Then open your Downloads folder and either move (not just copy) the attachment to a documents folder (see last month's article), or delete it. (Again, for space reasons.) I don't keep more than one month's stuff in my Downloads folder.

The Recycle Bin (Trash)

Anything you “delete” goes into the Recycle Bin —it’s right there on your Windows desktop or Mac dock. I suggest emptying it every month. You can set up a Windows task to do that (we can help); the Mac has a built-in Finder option to do this.

Next Month—Other Odds and Ends, and E-mail You Can’t Part With

Ironically, I’m out of space in this Newsletter. Next month, we’ll deal with hidden folders that accumulate debris, and E-mail you (think) you need to keep (forever). Then I’ll write an article about removing programs you no longer use.

In the meantime, if you need help cleaning up your Desktop, are fearful of deleting a download, or can’t part with trash, come see us on Tuesdays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Wednesdays from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. or Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon.